

# 'I LOVE SEEING THEIR CONFIDENCE GROW'

## SILVER CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER WINS PROVINCIAL AWARD

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When students at Silver Creek Public School approached Elizabeth Cook about starting a crochet club, she didn't hesitate.

There was only one thing Cook needed to do to get the club rolling — learn to crochet.

"I had zero skill at it," she said.

Cook knew she could bring her mother into the school to teach the students, but she wanted to be able to answer students' questions if they ran into problems along the way.

It was the same answer when she was asked about a robotics club. Again,

Cook had no previous experience, but saw no reason for that to stand in the way. The club has been successful with an all-girls team winning the Halton Skills Competition.

"I learned alongside them," she said. "I'd make mistakes and they'd realize it was OK for them to make mistakes too. We learned from each other. We were learning, growing and adapting together."

Cook's willingness to inspire students by continuing to take on new challenges earned her the Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan/Ontario Teachers' Federation elementary teacher of the year award.

"Honestly, there are so many great educators, I don't feel like I'm doing anything different," said Cook.

Others would disagree.

"It is important that teachers like Liz are recog-

"I learned alongside them."

- Elizabeth Cook

nized because they are few and far between," said Carly Davis, a teacher at Hawthorne Public School, who nominated Cook for the award.

Prior to the pandemic, Cook, who splits her time between Silver Creek and Park public schools, filled in every spare minute she had during the day. She ran as many as 12 different clubs ranging from a Harry Potter club to coaching the Grade 4-5 volleyball team.

Outside of school, Cook donates her hair each year to the Canadian Cancer Society to make wigs for people undergoing radiation treatment. The crochet club has also created blankets to be auctioned at various fundraisers, including the ALS Walk, and created

toys and blankets for cats at the North Halton Kitten Rescue.

Cook also has a writing club where students can write whatever they want. She has taken it one step further, though, and over the years has had her students' work published so that it is available in the library. Over the years, more than 400 students have had their work published.

"The library has always had a big spot in my heart," Cook said. "A lot of students that don't find their niche find it in the library. The things that were offered in my library were special to me."

Cook has obviously had an impact on her students. She still keeps in touch with many former stu-



Elizabeth Cook photo

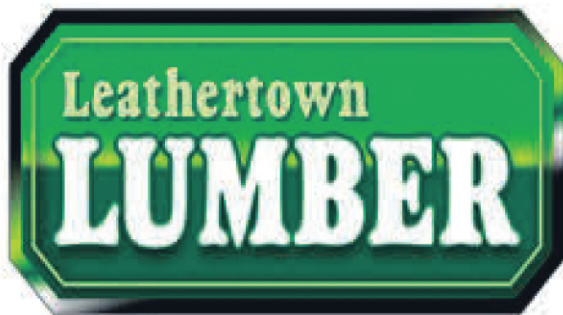
Elizabeth Cook was named the elementary school teacher of the year.

dents, including one who invited her to her university graduation.

Cook's latest venture is a crokinole club. She has been buying crokinole boards in hopes of introducing students to the cottage-favourite game and

organizing tournaments.

"I want to provide them with a space to do things that will spark their interest," Cook said. "I think what I love the most is seeing their confidence grow as they take on something new."



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**Q:** How old would you say children should be for their first dental exam? Five or Six? In years past, it was rare for a child to see a dentist before five or six years old. Would most dentists agree that is too long to wait?

**A:** Today, most dentists recommend the first dental exam to be scheduled around the age of two. Because not all the teeth are present, this visit is mostly a consultation. Parents can ask questions about their child's teeth. The dentist can also show how to best clean the infant's teeth and advise the parents on the best dietary habits for their child's optimum development. This visit also helps the child to realize the dental office isn't something fear. As the child gets older, it is important that the parents not discuss their own negative experiences with dentists. Questions should be answered truthfully and with a positive attitude. Modern day dentistry is much better than when we were children. Keeping your children's teeth healthy begins with timely visits to your dentist.