

Brownie leaders don't know the word 'quit'

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Rockwood Miller

There's a simple explanation as to why Ann Chesworth and Diana Wallace have spent 25-plus years as Brownie leaders with the Eden Mills Girl Guide unit. Kids.

Over the years they have gathered every Wednesday at the Eden Mills Community Hall and taught 7 to 9-year-old girls to be good, honourable citizens, to share, have good morals and set an example.

"It's always the people," Ann, 57, says in explaining her longevity in Guides. "The children are so fabulous. They have this great potential. The group this year is the best we've had. They're funny, creative and talk to you as if you were the same age.

"We feel inadequate sometimes because we don't give them the outdoor program like we should because we don't walk as well as we used to."

Looking back, Ann cherishes the camping trips for disabled children to Doe Lake (north of Huntsville). She recalls one trip when a child who had Down's Syndrome named Tracey took it upon herself to take care of her friend Jane, who was suffering with a brain tumour.

"It was incredibly moving," Ann remembers. Another memory for her was a visit in 1985 by Lord and Lady Baden Powell's youngest daughter and her husband.

Ann was a Guide leader from 1974 to 1991. In 1974, she also started up *Owls and Toadstools*, a 32-page booklet on program ideas for Brownies.

Three years later, *Guidestuff*, a similar Guide and Pathfinders publication, followed. They're both still in circulation and keep Ann moving. She's considering putting the magazines on the Internet.

"I get the most wonderful letters," remarks Ann, who has subscribers mostly in Ontario, Nova Scotia and B.C., but also in other parts of North America and in Europe. "At times I feel this should be my last year because I'm not getting things done.

"But I know I'm going to miss it. And then I think I should continue if I'm going to continue the magazines."

However, it's Diana who considers herself more of the "do-er" in Guiding activities.

"Ann's all knowledge. She's a very well-informed person and into Guiding with both feet," praises Diana, who began helping Ann 23 years ago, when her daughter joined Brownies at age 6. "I think that's why we balance so well."

The many kids and memorable camping trips to Camp Corwhin, outside of Aberfoyle, keep this mother of three from resigning.

"I love the kids. It's been great being with such enthusiastic girls. It brushes off on you," Diana, 63, who was a Guide in England as a child, offers. "I wouldn't want to stay completely out of Guiding. I would miss it too much."

While sifting through old pictures in a photo album, Diana marvels at all the changes through the years, but hasn't forgotten what she's learned along the way:

"To understand how people work together by getting rid of selfishness and self-centredness. To share and give and take, as a leader too," she comments.

Diana has always prided herself on taking the competitive aura out of Guiding. She doesn't want one kid to feel like they are better than any other person. She's been successful.

And that's why it's so hard to leave.



GUIDE LEADERS: Eden Mills Brownie leaders Ann Chesworth, left, and Diana Wallace have worked together for over 20 years with the Eden Mills Girl Guide unit. Both enjoy guiding the 7 to 9-year-old girls so much, neither plans to retire any time soon. (Doug Harrison photo)

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EXCUSE ME! Rockwood Centennial student Graham Marsh, right, battles an opponent for the ball during a pick-up game basketball game during lunch on Thursday. (Doug Harrison photo)

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