

# She dreams of Africa

## Georgetown principal mentors teachers in Capetown

By JENNIFER ENRIGHT

Jacqueline Herman is a Canadian now and she says she feels privileged to live in this country. But at the same time she can't forget what she left behind in her native South Africa. "At times you have to remind yourselves that we live such comfortable lives."

Four years ago, inspired by "the amazing" teachers that taught her to strive to help others and to seek excellence through education, the Georgetown principal decided to journey back to her native homeland as part of a teacher mentoring program. The program is run by South African Women for Women (SAWW), a Canadian non-profit organization dedicated to empowering South African women both in South Africa and in Canada.

In the summer of 2000, Jacqueline went to W. D. Hendricks School in Capetown where she worked to implement a literacy program and to assist teaching staff as well as students. In recognition of her contributions, she recently received the education award from SAWW.

Jacqueline, who is principal at St. Francis of Assisi in Georgetown, says the decision to take part in the teacher mentoring program was an easy one for her to make. She says the program was ideal because it combined what she describes as her two passions, education and service.

Before leaving for South Africa, she lobbied publishing companies and got in touch with municipalities and the province to find resources to send to the school where she would be teaching. The City of Brampton donated pencils, and publishing companies provided much-needed books. All of the resources were then sent to South Africa, with shipping costs covered by the South African

Consulate in Ottawa.

While there, Jacqueline was reminded of the hard life faced by her students and people in general. The students attending her school lived in a shantytown without electricity or running water. And at the home where she stayed in Capetown, Jacqueline says it wasn't uncommon to find kids at the doorstep begging for food.

When she came back to Canada, she decided to continue to assist the school in any way she could. Supplies have been sent to the school and she and others have worked to provide financial support for a lunch program at W. D. Hendricks. Children at her school as well as the local Holy Cross parish have lent their support, as well as many others in the community. "The Georgetown community has been amazing for embracing the project."

Jacqueline says if she does anything she would like to inspire people, to let them know that even a small contribution can go a long way to assisting children in South Africa. "We can help in our own communities right here. We don't have to fly anywhere."



Jacqueline Herman, with the award she received in August from South African Women for Women (SAWW), a non-profit organization that works to assist people in South Africa.



PHOTO BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

After working at W. I. Hendricks School in South Africa four years ago, Georgetown principal Jacqueline Herman decided to continue to offer support to the school, and she has been helped in her work by many people in Georgetown as well as staff and students at her school, St. Francis of Assisi. Some of the students from Nora Fedchenko's class collected school supplies for W. I. Hendricks School through their work with the Holy Cross Parish Kids Klub. To recognize their efforts, the students got a chance to meet Bishop Desmond Tutu when he visited Toronto two years ago. Jacqueline stands beside a picture of them meeting Bishop Tutu that hangs on the wall at St. Francis of Assisi.

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