

Long time school secretary at St. Joseph's loves her job

MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY
The New Tanner

Helen Lenizki loves her job. It might entail answering endless telephones, babysitting a pupil banished to the principal's office, or reuniting a missing dolly with a frantic Kindergartener. But don't ask her to change.

The secretary at St. Joseph's School in Acton has been with the school since it opened in 1977 in the former stone school. She came to the new school on Mill Street West and has just seen the school get its first addition.

St. Joseph's was her first Ontario job and it was also her first time as a school secretary. The mix was right however, and she's still there.

She did take four years off to have her fourth child, but when the secretary who replaced her left, Lenizki came back to the school and brought her child too when he was ready for the educational system.

Lenizki has gotten to know St. Joe's families over the years as well as the kids. She loves being with both the teachers and the kids but firmly separates her position running the office from any role with teaching.

Of course she may find a banished youngster gracing her space while he/she awaits an interview with the principal, but as long as she can get on with her work she



HAPPY: Helen Linizki has been St. Joseph's School secretary since the school began in 1977. Despite the pace, she loves her job. - Angela Tyler photo

won't be saying anything to the offender. That guidance position belongs to the educational staff's domain.

The school's 30 teachers and support staff are all good friends and there's a picture on her wall of the birthday cake someone made for her earlier this year.

Unlike many schools where illnesses and accidents

leave their marks, St. Joseph's has "been very blessed" over the years not to have faced the sort of tragedies seen elsewhere.

"We've only lost one of our students that way," she says. "And she had already left us for high school. But it was a real shocker. All four girls in the car were killed."

While the affect of provin-

cial funding cuts on teachers have made headlines, Linizki says she hasn't fared that badly. She could use some part time help, but there's no funds and other school secretaries are in the same situation.

What has changed in her tenure, she says, is the number of disturbed children in schools these days.

"We find more and more disturbed kids. "I'm just guessing but I'd put it down to the dissolution of families and/or the lack of family life."

Parents need to take a good look at themselves and their family and consider why their youngsters are disturbed, she says.

Whether discipline is involved she's not sure but when parents get a call from a teacher they ought to look seriously at the situation rather than immediately springing to the child's defence.

"Teachers work and try different disciplines time and time again before they'll finally make that call home," she says. "Parents may really need to look at another side to a situation rather than just brushing it off for the child's version when they get a call."



SHARING A CHRISTMAS TOAST: Wine and cheese organizer, Rob Charette, celebrate around the Christmas tree with Joan McCristall, Elinore Wagner and Herb Dodds last Friday night at the Acton Town hall. - Ted Tyler photo



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demand," Basinger said, adding they have a much more

manageable "herd" now.

Hedgehogs were a fad as domestic pets in the early '90s, but Basinger says they've become more of an established pet.

"They are great for kids with asthma because they're basically anti-allergenic. They can be cuddly and they can be very, very friendly. But you have to have one that was socialized properly and that's why it's so important to get one from a reputable breeder," Basinger said as she quietly stroked an apricot-colored pygmy hedgehog.

While some people say their hedgehogs respond to their names, they aren't considered trainable and are usually kept in cages, although Basinger knows people who have rooms for the hedgehogs so they can run free.

Basinger and the Upper Canada Hedgehog Club can be reached at 853-1966 or abcinc@mgl.ca.



SAY CHEESE: Rotarian Jake Kuiken shares a smile with Cindy Jones from Limehouse at the Rotary Wine and Cheese Friday night at the Acton Town Hall. - Ted Tyler photo

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