

Silver Creek principal at the head of the class

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

A Georgetown principal will receive a prestigious national award for her 34 years as an educator—a career which has included presiding over the 2003 opening of one of Canada's top-10 rated schools.

Silver Creek Public School's Wendy Harrison will be honoured at Canada's Outstanding Principals Awards Gala Celebration in Toronto Feb. 27 after a nomination initiated by three of her teachers was recognized by The Learning Partnership (TLP) for her track record of providing quality education in the Halton District School Board. Thirty-one other principals will receive the award, established three years ago by TLP, which bills itself as "Champions of Public Education Across Canada."

The London, Ont. native began teaching Grades 7-8 in Huron County in 1973, but has spent most of her career in North Halton, transferring to Stewarttown Middle School in 1975. After 18 years as a teacher, Harrison moved on to become a vice-principal, a special education co-ordinator for three years and now principal. She cited Silver Creek's birth and its ensuing development—growing to almost 1,000 students from about 600 four years ago—as one of her proudest achievements.

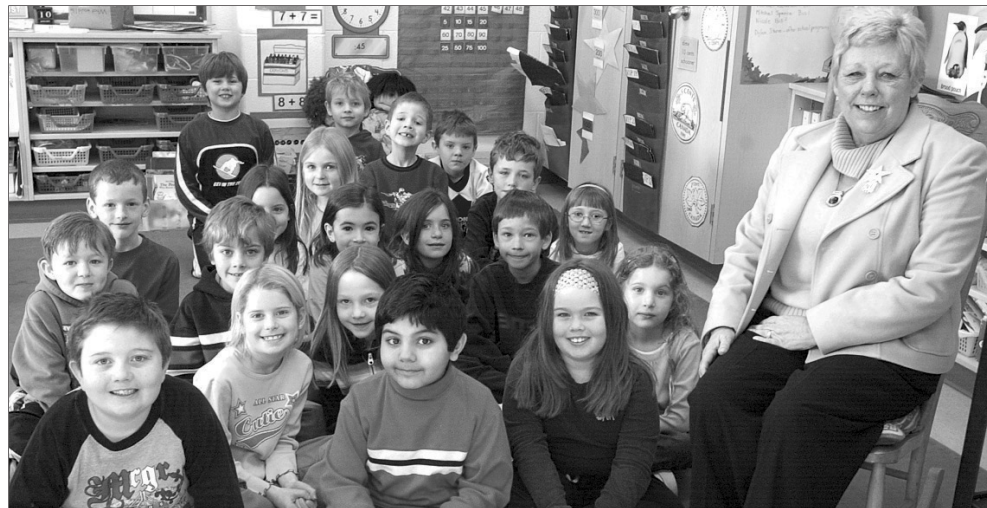
"It was so exciting because everything was new and that, in many ways, most of the page was clean, so you could paint whatever landscape you wanted with your staff and students," said Harrison, a Burlington resident. "Yes, there were hurdles. We had chil-

dren coming from three different learning communities and they all had their way of doing things. But we established rules and a safe environment and we've been able to build our own history and culture. The school is the heart of the community, I'd like to think."

A wireless facility, Silver Creek was profiled in *Today's Parent* magazine in 2004 as one of Canada's "great schools" for its innovative programs, including the relatively new Tribes philosophy, which stresses the principles of mutual respect, attentive listening and appreciation by making them part of the everyday learning environment. Harrison's extensive professional development has also involved becoming a Tribes Trainer, traveling throughout North America to share her expertise, something she said she'd like to continue after her tenure as a principal concludes.

"Wendy had a vision of what Silver Creek could become when it opened and she's carried through with it, and Tribes has been a big part of that. Its time has come," said Marilyn Turner, a Grade 1 teacher at Silver Creek who nominated Harrison for the award. "She knows every student and all of their circumstances and understands that there's a bigger picture of the school in the community. Our learning is structured with Wendy as the Master Teacher...but she is a learner as well."

Students and staff at Silver Creek are fully accustomed to Harrison's presence in classrooms and are greeted some mornings with the result of the previous night's game involving her beloved Toronto Maple Leafs.



As she does on a daily basis, Silver Creek Public School principal Wendy Harrison dropped by Mrs. Truss's Grade 2 class for a chat with students recently. Last week, Harrison was informed that she was one of 32 educators recognized for their work by national public education organization The Learning Partnership as "Canada's Outstanding Principals" for 2007.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

An avid golfer who enjoys traveling abroad with husband Mike, an elementary school teacher in Burlington, Harrison has two sons, Michael, 25, and Ben, 21, who are pursuing teaching-related careers as well.

Teaching colleagues, school staff, students, parents and the school communities supplied each of the nominees with letters of support. Upon being chosen as one of the leading candidates for induction in Ontario, Harrison was asked by the TLP selection committee to write a five-page synopsis of her "journey" as an educator as part of the nomination process. She was notified last Wednesday that she had earned the award and was self-admittedly "soaring like an eagle."

"I've never had an official award like this before and that's why I find it so overwhelming," Harrison added. "The rewards you look for are the comments that parents and staff give you, and the kids. It's the way they present themselves in their everyday behav-

our that shows we're getting it right. We want the kids to be good citizens—in the way they greet you in the morning. It's not put on, it's coming from the heart. That's the reward."

Another Halton District principal, Marleen Warne of Oakville's West Oak, was a recipient of the TLP honour. They will attend a five-day Executive Leadership Training Program at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, where they will have the opportunity to dialogue and reflect on leadership issues with other renowned leaders from the educational, social, cultural and business communities.

"We know The Learning Partnership selection committee has very high and exacting standards and therefore, it is remarkable that two of the 32 recipients from across Canada are from Halton," said Wayne Joudrie, director of education at the Halton District School Board.



Take the next step.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist about Fosavance[®] and whether it's right for you.

