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Community Page

Teacher of the Month

Mrs. Wettlaufer caring and considerate

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

It's a scary experience, leaving mom for the first time. Your knees are shaking under your new school pants and one of the laces mom tied so carefully on your running shoes is coming undone. Who's going to re-tie it?

There's a sea of new faces all around you, and it seems almost everyone else is bigger and braver.

You think you're going to cry.

Although some kids can't wait for their first day of junior kindergarten to begin, others — like Duncan McCallum, now 5 — aren't so sure.

In Duncan's case, his anxiety resulted in many tears for the first few weeks of school. Fortunately, he had an ally — his teacher, Kathy Wettlaufer, whose reassuring words were always forthcoming and whose lap was always ready.

"What makes her special is her kind and caring attitude towards the children," wrote Duncan's mom, Danielle, in a letter to *The Champion*. "She is always there for someone who is crying for mom to sit on her lap."

And she always seems to be one step ahead of any disaster that might arise, Ms McCallum wrote.

"She always has an extra snack at her desk for the child who forgot his/hers and a change of clothes, which she brings herself in case of any accidents."

Ms Wettlaufer is this month's Teacher of the Month, and took a few moments at recess to chat with *The Champion* about the joys of being a teacher.

This is her third year teaching two split junior/senior kindergarten classes at Martin Street Public School. Children in each class attend full days for two or three days each week, depending on the week.

"I have them for two years. I see so much change from when they walk in the door at three or four (years old) and leave at five," she said.

While some kids adapt well to kindergarten, for others it takes time. And there's only one way to be able to simultaneously pay attention to the child painting his face instead of the paper, the child crying for mom and the child yelling at another: "Have 10 hands, 10 arms and 10 legs," Ms Wettlaufer joked.

When an emotional four-year-old Duncan first arrived in her class last year, he didn't know what to expect, Ms Wettlaufer said.

"He had to feel his way into the situation. It took him a while to feel comfortable."

Ms McCallum said Ms Wettlaufer was always



Martin Street Public School's Kathy Wettlaufer sits with her Teacher of the Month nominator, Duncan McCallum.

Photo by **GRAHAM PAINE**

there to comfort Duncan and hand him a well-needed teddy bear to cuddle.

"He had a hard time going to school all day and being away from home. If it wasn't for her (Ms Wettlaufer), he never would've made it. He used to say, 'Mommy, she's so kind to me.'"

When September rolled around this year, Duncan was a different boy, his mom said. He knew he'd be going back into Ms Wettlaufer's class, and he couldn't be happier.

"He was so excited to go back this year," Ms McCallum said, adding she thinks the other kids going into senior kindergarten feel the same way.

Ms Wettlaufer said the change in Duncan is

huge.

"He's the big kid now, and wants to help the younger kids," she said.

Duncan's the perfect example of a student who matured before Ms Wettlaufer's very eyes, she said.

Kindergarten can't last forever, but Duncan doesn't seem to be worried. "Next year I'll be in grade one," he said matter-of-factly. "But I'll always get to see her in the halls."

Ms Wettlaufer didn't start out as a teacher. But after spending 10 years working in an office, she decided she wasn't where she wanted to be.

"I realized I wanted to work with children and make a difference. So I quit my job and went back to school," she said.

The native Palermo resident taught at Robert Baldwin Public School for a year before moving to Martin Street school.

Teachers have huge responsibilities to bear, she said. And kindergarten teachers feel the

brunt of that responsibility all the more, she said, because they can set the tone for the whole school experience. "You're the first person they see when they start school."

Ms Wettlaufer said she hopes her students will take with them the "joy of learning" when they move up to grade one, and be more willing to face challenges and take risks.

For young kids, that risk might be asking someone to play, putting their hands up to answer a question or not being afraid to talk about themselves in class.

When it comes to necessary qualities for a teacher, Ms Wettlaufer included on her list a sense of humour, flexibility — "You never know what's going to happen" — and patience. A lot of patience.

As Ms McCallum put it, "She has the patience of a god."

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Programming Schedule — Tuesday, October 4 - Monday, October 10, 2005

Tuesday, October 4	Wednesday, October 5	Thursday, October 6	Friday, October 7	Saturday, October 8	Sunday, October 9	Monday, October 10
1:00pm SportsZONE Live (Replay)	1:00pm Halton Hills Council Oct 3 2005	1:00pm Milton Council	1:00pm Halton Region Council	1:00pm Gordon Krantz's 25th Mayorial Anniversary Celebration	10:30am TVC Sports: HS Football - Milton vs Pearson	1:00pm Halton Hills Council Oct 3 2005
6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm TVC Sports: HS Football - Milton vs Pearson	6:00pm Halton Hills Council Oct 3 2005	6:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	8:00pm Bottom Line	9:00pm Halton Region Council Oct 5 2005	8:00pm Gordon Krantz's 25th Mayorial Anniversary Celebration	7:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm Halton Hills Council Oct 3 2005	8:00pm Gordon Krantz's 25th Mayorial Anniversary Celebration
7:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:30pm Taking Care of Your Future				9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	
8:00pm Auto Experts (Live)	9:00pm Milton Council Sep 26 2005		11:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA			11:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA
9:00pm Halton Hills Council Oct 3 2005						