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COMMUNITY

Teacher of the Month

Bruce Trail's Mr. Belford 'best teacher ever'

By Stephanie Thiessen
 CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

It was a race against the clock as grade 7 student Brooklyn Harding struggled to get her history test done before the bell rang at the end of the day.

But the bell did ring, and Brooklyn wasn't done, presenting a dilemma: should she finish the test and miss her bus, or leave the test unfinished to catch it?

Thankfully, Brooklyn didn't have to decide either way.

"Mr. Belford asked the bus driver to hold the bus for me so I could complete my test," Brooklyn explained in a nomination letter for The Champion's Teacher of the Month.

His kindness then went a step further.

Knowing a few of his students were particularly worried about how they did, Jeff Belford stayed after school to mark some of the tests.

"He called me that night to tell me that I had done well on it and that I could relax and enjoy my weekend," Brooklyn explained.

With such a thoughtful attitude, it's no wonder The Champion selected Belford, who teaches at Bruce Trail Public School, as December's Teacher of the Month.

According to Brooklyn, he's "the best teacher ever."

Never too busy to help

"He deserves this because no matter how busy he is, he takes time to help other students and myself to do better in school," she wrote.

The fact Bruce Trail Public School opened just over a month ago has presented Belford with a unique set of challenges and rewards.

Due to a delay in the new school's opening, students attended Chris Hadfield Public School until their new school was ready.

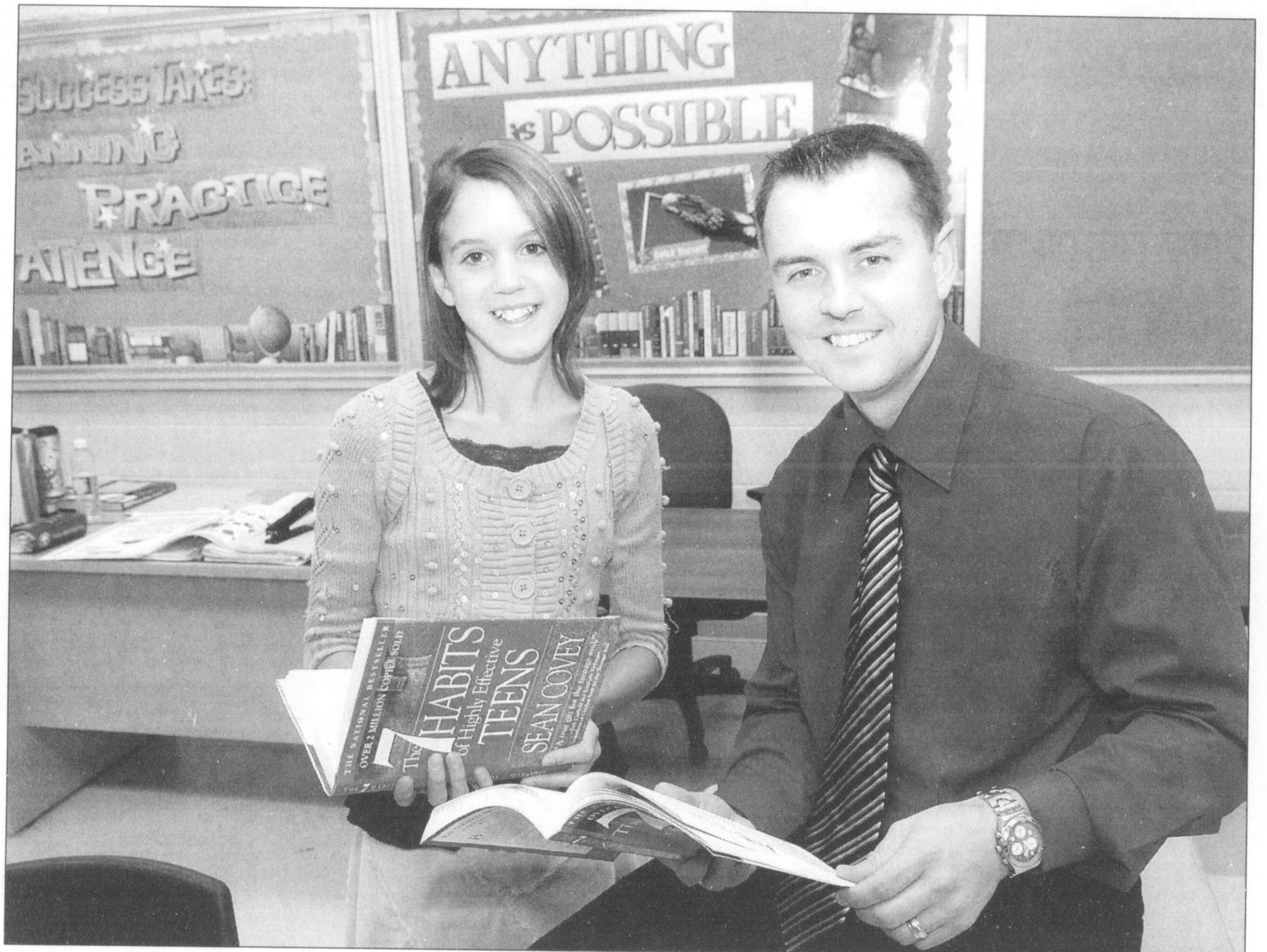
"It's been tough," Belford said. "It's difficult establishing your own identity in terms of a routine and expectations."

His students are just settling in now, said Belford, who's in his seventh year of teaching. His grade seven students are in a unique position this year, since there's no grade 8 class, making them the oldest students in the school. Next year they'll be the first grade 8 class.

He said he tries to impress upon them the fact they're role models for the other students. This comes easier to some students than others.

"They've been thrown into this," he said.

Normally in grade 7, students have a few teachers for the different subjects. But not



BELOVED TEACHER: Brooklyn Harding and Jeff Belford look over some books. Harding nominated him for The Champion's Teacher of the Month. GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

this class.

"The only thing I don't teach them is French and music," Belford said, adding, "If they didn't like me, it would be a difficult situation."

Belford also spends time out of the class with some of his students, since he coaches the volleyball team and helps with the student parliament.

"Because I've gotten to spend so much time with them, I've gotten to know them on a personal level," Belford said.

This has allowed him to do some unique projects with the class, including write a play based on themselves. They'll be performing it for the entire school.

Belford has taught a variety of grades so far, but said he's really enjoying grade 7, where the students are 11 and 12 years old.

"I think it's a fun grade, but it's also challenging because the kids are at a stage where they really need to be motivated," Belford said.

The Milton resident said he's excited about working in the same community in which he lives. He previously worked in Burlington.

Working with kids comes naturally to Belford. It's something he's done for a long time, starting when he was a youth giving swimming lessons in his backyard.

After he graduated from university he worked in a group home for a few years and then decided to attend teachers college.

Unlike many inspiring teachers, Belford said he didn't have a good school experience in his younger years.

"I struggled a lot and found it hard mak-

ing connections with the teachers," he said.

Perhaps that's why it's so important for Belford to connect with his students and to realize not everyone learns the same way.

"I challenge myself to find new or better ways to get information across," he said.

One of the ways he recognizes kids' different learning styles is by not relying on tests alone as a measure of students' abilities; not all students are good test writers, he said.

It's important to teach life skills as well as subjects, Belford said. This year, he's emphasizing goal-setting as well as building a sense of community in the classroom.

"A good teacher recognizes people's strengths and weaknesses and fosters a community where we can celebrate that."

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

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Laurier Plaza
 500 Laurier Avenue
 Milton, ON L9T 4R3
 905-878-9306

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Programming Schedule – Tuesday, December 12 - Monday, December 18, 2006

Tuesday, December 12	Wednesday, December 13	Thursday, December 14	Friday, December 15	Saturday, December 16	Sunday, December 17
11:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! Extra	11:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! Extra	11:00am - Noon Plugged In! Extra	11:00am - 6:00pm Plugged In! Extra	11:00am - 3:00pm Plugged In! Extra	11:00am - 5:00pm Plugged In! Extra
1:00pm - 2:00pm SportsZONE Live	1:00pm - 3:00pm Halton Hills Council (cc) Dec 11, 2006	Noon - 1:00pm Swap Talk (Replay)	6:00pm - 7:00pm Rockwood Farmers' Parade of Lights	3:00pm - 4:00pm Round Table: Garth Turner (Replay)	5:00pm - 6:00pm Rockwood Farmers' Parade of Lights
2:00pm - 6:30pm Plugged In! Extra	3:00pm - 7:00pm Plugged In! Extra	1:00pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! Extra	7:30pm - 8:00pm The Heart of Christmas	4:00am - 7:00pm Plugged In! Extra	6:00pm - 8:00pm Halton Hills Council (cc) Dec 11, 2006
6:30pm - 7:30pm Optimits TV Bingo Live	7:00pm - 7:30pm Simply Halton	6:00pm - 8:00pm Local Inaugural Councils Dec 4-6, 2006	8:00pm - 9:00pm Rockwood Farmers' Parade of Lights	7:00pm - 8:00pm Round Table: Garth Turner (Replay)	8:00pm - 10:00pm Plugged In! Extra
7:30pm - 8:00pm The Heart of Christmas	7:30pm - 8:00pm The Heart of Christmas	8:00pm-10:00pm Plugged In! Extra	9:00pm - 10:00pm Plugged In! Extra	8:00pm - 8:30pm The Heart of Christmas	
8:00pm - 9:00pm Auto Experts Live	8:00pm - 9:00pm Swap Talk Live			8:30pm - 10:00pm Plugged In! Extra	
9:00pm - 10:00pm Halton Hills Council (cc) Dec 11, 2006	9:00pm - 10:00pm Plugged In! Extra				