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COMMUNITY

Teacher of the Month

Learning a two-way street, says Sheldrick

Hawthorne Village teacher beloved by young pupils

By **Stephanie Thiessen**
 CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Grade 1 teacher Lesley Sheldrick will be the first one to tell you she learns just as much from her students as they learn from her.

"One of the key lessons I've learned is to be willing to try new things and that it (sometimes) takes a long time to reach our goals and that's okay," said the Hawthorne Village Public School teacher.

Her enthusiasm for her job is infectious, and she obviously takes it very seriously.

"I hope I raise them like their moms and dads would — to be great people," she said.

Sheldrick was chosen the Champion's Teacher of the Month for April after receiving an impressive nomination package from parent Kim Anderson, whose son Joshua is in Sheldrick's class.

Along with Anderson's complimentary letter was another letter from an appreciative parent, plus 14 letters and pictures from adoring students.

Anderson didn't mince words in expressing her admiration for Sheldrick.

Truly a special person

"Very few times in one's life does a special person come in and touch the lives of so many people in so many important ways. Mrs. Sheldrick is one of those special people," she wrote in her nomination letter. "The children are truly blessed to have such a caring, kind, thoughtful teacher who goes way above and beyond her job description."

Joshua wrote that he likes his teacher because of the "really fun stuff" she does.

"She is very kind and caring and we all love her," he wrote.

Fellow student Mackenzie Woods had this to say about Sheldrick: "(She) is the best teacher because when my baby sister was born she made sure I knew that I was special too."

Keagan Flower said Sheldrick smiles a lot and reads them lots of books "so we can be smart."

Anderson added that the teacher can often be heard saying the children she teaches are her life.

Sheldrick confirmed that to be the case, explaining she doesn't yet have children of



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LEARNING TIME: Lesley Sheldrick prepares to read to her Hawthorne Village first graders, who nominated her for the *Champion's* Teacher of the Month.

her own. Although she recently moved to Burlington, it wasn't unusual when she was living in Milton to drop by unannounced at a student's birthday party or sporting event; students at that age get excited at seeing their teacher outside of school, she said.

This year has been a great one for the class, because it's the second year she's taught them, moving with them from kindergarten to grade 1.

At a time when students are often rather nervous about starting all day, every day school, Sheldrick's presence comforted them and gave them a sense of consistency, she said.

"Grade 1 can be pretty scary. They were already comfortable (with me), so it helped

ease the transition," she said.

Being with the students for two years also allowed her to form solid relationships with students' parents, which is extremely important, she added.

Before her days at Hawthorne Village, Sheldrick taught kindergarten in Oakville for five years.

She obviously has a special love for younger children.

"There's something magical about them," she said of grade 1 kids, who are six and seven years old.

Teaching them so early in life is a special privilege because it sets the tone for the future, Sheldrick said, explaining if they come to love learning in grade 1, that'll like-

ly carry on as they head into the higher grades.

Some people mistakenly think grade 1 teachers are little more than glorified babysitters, but Sheldrick said that's not the case. Her students learn everything from reading and writing to math and science.

"There's a lot of content," she said.

Despite the occasional misconception, at the end of the day Sheldrick said she knows she's doing what she was meant to do.

"When they look into my eyes and say they get it, it's the best feeling in the world... I just love my job."

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