

Courage – More than meets the eye

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.” – Winston Churchill

I recently had the good fortune of being invited to participate as one of three judges at the oral communications competition at Colchester North School. That afternoon we were treated to twelve speeches given by students from grades four to eight. It was a delightful experience. Not only were the speeches well researched, planned and delivered, but they also held the rapt attention of their audience – students, teachers, friends and relatives. The speakers’ topics were interesting and wide-ranging; their voices, mannerisms and styles were uniquely individual; and I was struck, as I always am when I attend one of these student performances, by the common factor that was shared by all of the speakers – the courage it takes to do this.

Do you remember the first school speech that you delivered? Mine was an unmitigated grade six disaster. Please allow me to share my story with you. It may not help you much, but it might just have the long-overdue therapeutic value that comes from “sharing” for me. I appreciate your indulgence.

At that time (let’s call it the “black and white TV era”) grocery stores used to have displays set up at the ends of their aisles from which a complete set of encyclopedia could be purchased. A set was entirely beyond the modest means of our family but we did take advantage of various encyclopedia companies’ offers to purchase vol-

ume “A” for a ridiculously low price (29 cents or whatever). The idea, of course, was that if you enjoyed volume “A”, you might be enticed into purchasing the rest of the set at the regular price. The end result of this was that we had a house overflowing with “A” volumes from various encyclopedia publishers.

Back in “those days” the state of Alabama was much in the news—particularly regarding racial desegregation. All I knew was that everyone was talking about Alabama and, in that “Alabama” started with “A”, I was good to go. Since I was as yet unacquainted with the rules regarding plagiarism, my speech didn’t take long to write. I copied information about Alabama’s size, its population, its major cities, rivers and roads and other information that could only be of possible interest to Alabama’s chief statistician. Neither the encyclopedia nor I mentioned the various relevant social issues that were threatening to tear the state apart at that time. (Looking back on my topic choice, I probably should have gone with my first inclination – “aardvarks”.)

The only aspect of my speech worse than my unfortunate choice of topic would have to have been my screeching, voice-cracking, pre-adolescent, knees-knocking, cue card-dropping, mouth-as-dry-as-dust



i’ve got issues

randy chedour

delivery. Not only did the speech not go well, but I said it so quickly that it went from about three and a half minutes at home in front of the mirror – to a shade under fifty seconds at show time. If anyone in the room heard me or understood what I was saying, they kept it a well-guarded secret.

Perhaps time has dimmed my memory but I also seem to recall cute

Margaret at the back of the room whispering something particularly unkind to even cuter Mary as my speech wound down to its exciting conclusion (“and so Alabama became *our* twenty-second state on December 14, 1819. Thank you.”). Getting from the front of the room back to my seat remains a bit of a blur—but odds are that, after collapsing in a heap, I was probably carried there. Applause for my efforts emanated solely from my kindly and well-intentioned teacher.

Margaret spoke after me (“My Dog Fluffy”) and received a thunderous standing ovation (except from me as I was physically incapable of standing at that point) and a few long, piercing wolf whistles from the boys in row six. Margaret and Fluffy went on to the regional contest. Alabama and I went home for a lengthy, post-traumatic recovery.

“Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not absence of fear.” – Mark Twain

On the day of my Grade six speech, fear was the clear winner. I’ve had better days since. I hope that your experiences with delivering speeches were positive and meaningful and that any benefits that you may have derived from those experiences, in terms of a comfort level speaking in front of others, have carried over to your daily lives. Anyone, adult or child, who can do this with confidence certainly is deserving of my respect.

I have been, and always will be, immensely impressed by the courage that it takes for people to confront and maintain control over their fears, to put themselves into situations that require grace under pressure and in the face of either physical injury or social embarrassment.

Most acts of courage, however, don’t take place in front of large crowds. They are performed by people anonymously, as a regular part of their daily routines. I think of those who are raising children by themselves with little visible means of support; those who are battling with weight issues or addictions; those who stand up for their beliefs; those who, in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, not only survive, but thrive. Their actions go largely unnoticed and certainly unapplauded and yet, somehow, these people are able to summon up the courage to carry on – and, in so doing, provide us all with remarkable sources of inspiration.

Free Nicotine Replacement Therapy for eligible smokers

The Smoking Treatment for Ontario Patients (STOP) Study, the first study of its kind in Canada, is coming to Windsor-Essex.

Windsor-Essex County residents who are smokers, 18 years or older, not pregnant or breastfeeding, and have not experienced any recent cardiovascular problems, are eligible to participate in the STOP Study.

Half-day STOP Study workshops are being held on Tuesday, Mar. 6 in Essex, Wednesday, Mar. 7 in Windsor and Thursday, Mar. 8 in Windsor. Stop Study participants will learn about Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), create a plan to quit smoking and obtain free NRT at the completion of the workshop. The

effectiveness of the NRT for study participants will be monitored for 12 months.

To find out if they are eligible to participate in the Stop Study, interested smokers should call the Health Unit’s Tobacco Hotline at 519-258-2146 x 3218.

Neil MacKenzie, Manager of the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit’s Tobacco Program thinks that the Stop Study is a welcome addition to the Health Unit’s effort to help Windsor-Essex County smokers quit.

“I encourage anyone who is thinking about quitting smoking and interested in accessing Nicotine Replacement Therapy to find out if they qualify for the Stop Study,” said MacKenzie.

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NOTICE

Annual Membership of Leamington District Memorial Hospital Corporation is effective from April 1 in one year to March 31 in the following year.

According to the Leamington District Memorial Hospital By-Law No. 16, a person is eligible to be an Annual Member when he or she pays to the Corporation the annual membership fee of \$5.00, provided at the time of payment of the fee, the person must:

- (i) be over the age of eighteen (18) years; and
- (ii) have been a resident of the Catchment Area for a continuous period of at least three (3) months immediately prior thereto; or
- (iii) be employed in the said Catchment Area or counties for a continuous period of three (3) months.

Any person who wishes to join membership in the Leamington District Memorial Hospital Corporation for 2007/2008, please contact Linda Harfmann, 519-326-2373, Ext. 4101 for an application. Applications must be received by the Board no later than March 15, 2007 in order to be eligible to vote at this year’s Annual Meeting in June.

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