

LIVING

Preserving the past

Take the time now to archive memories for future generations to enjoy

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Cathy Kean has heard all the excuses imaginable for why people have so much trouble keeping their family photo albums up to date.

In fact, she's made it her business to help us get better organized and preserve our memories for generations to come.

The Aurora mother of two began the home-based business after spending a great deal of time getting her own photos and memorabilia in order.

Working with Sue Ferguson, an Oak Ridges resident, she started with Creative Memories, an American-based company that sells museum-quality albums and all the gadgets needed to create an attractive and lasting record of family life.

A well-done memory album reveals not only a bit about the pictures inside the book, but also about the person who created it.

Kean and Ferguson also teach small classes in people's homes, where guests learn the basics of making memory albums — also known as scrapbooking.

Ferguson, who moved to Canada from the United States a couple of years ago, said making memory albums is a \$250-million industry in the U.S. — and its popularity is growing in Canada.

Wander through any craft store in the country and you'll find entire aisles devoted to memory albums.

While it seems quite basic on the surface, Kean said making a lasting record of the people in your life is quite important.

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Finding an old family album at a garage sale is tragic, said Ferguson. "It happens," she said.

"People inherit things and if there is no journaling to go along

with the photos, they don't know who is in the photos. They don't have a clue why the book is important. We need to teach people to preserve their pasts. There is nothing nicer to give a child than to let them see that someone took the time to put a book together that is just about them."

Just getting started can be a huge roadblock, Kean said.

"The best thing to do is get organized first," she advised.

Then, remember you don't have to use every picture. It might be easier to pick a theme for a book — like the holidays or summer vacations. Then, once you have your photos together, you can begin to plan how you want things to look.

The best news is that you don't need to be an artist, or even really crafty.

There are special trimmers available which are used to create myriad photo cuts and fancy edges.

Using special stickers, pens and papers, it is possible to create an album that will be treasured for years to come.

The key to the album's longevity is to keep acidic papers out of the book, said Ferguson, who was once a representative for one of the United States' largest stationary suppliers.

"Acid is what causes photos to go yellow, discolour and eventually crumble," she said.

"When you are doing anything archival, you have to keep the paper acid-free."

Newsprint, for example, has a high acid content. The paper you are reading now will be yellowed before the end of the year. If you put it in an album without the right kind of protector, then you're risking a transfer of acid that will eventually cause the photographs and everything surrounding them to slowly disintegrate.

Once the book is finished, it

should be stored in the same kind of conditions people thrive in, Kean said. "Not too cold, not too hot, not too much moisture and try and keep the book out of direct sunlight."

A well-made memory album, which is put together with archival quality materials, should survive for generations. And if you are careful about journaling, it will be meaningful to people you might never meet.

Kean will be sharing her knowledge at a workshop May 1 at the Richmond Hill Central Library.

The \$10 session gets underway in meeting rooms A and B at 11:30 a.m. and wraps up at 4 p.m.

To register, call 841-6776 or 773-8029. Bring photos to the workshop because you'll be working on a page.



Cathy Kean helps people create a lasting family treasure of memorabilia and anecdotes.



STAFF PHOTOS/ROB ALARY

INSIGHT INTO EYESIGHT

DR. H.H. WALJI (Hons. BSc, MSc, OD, FRCO) OPTOMETRIST

SQUINTING

People who squint a lot probably need glasses. This is often a sign of nearsightedness. Nearsighted people who don't have glasses will squint to sharpen their focus when looking

at something far away. Though it may solve the problem temporarily, it can also cause eyestrain and headaches — and it is not particularly attractive. Some adolescents tend to squint when they're growing up. By the time they are 20 or 21, many of

them will realize that their nearsightedness is a problem that needs help.

In some cases, the nearsightedness will have improved by then; in others it may have gotten progressively worse. For most people, however, the degree of nearsightedness will have reached a plateau by the time they're fully grown.

The problem may be in one eye or both. Only an eye examination

can determine that corrective lenses can be prescribed so that squinters no longer have to strain their eyes to see clearly.

In the interest of better vision from the office of:

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