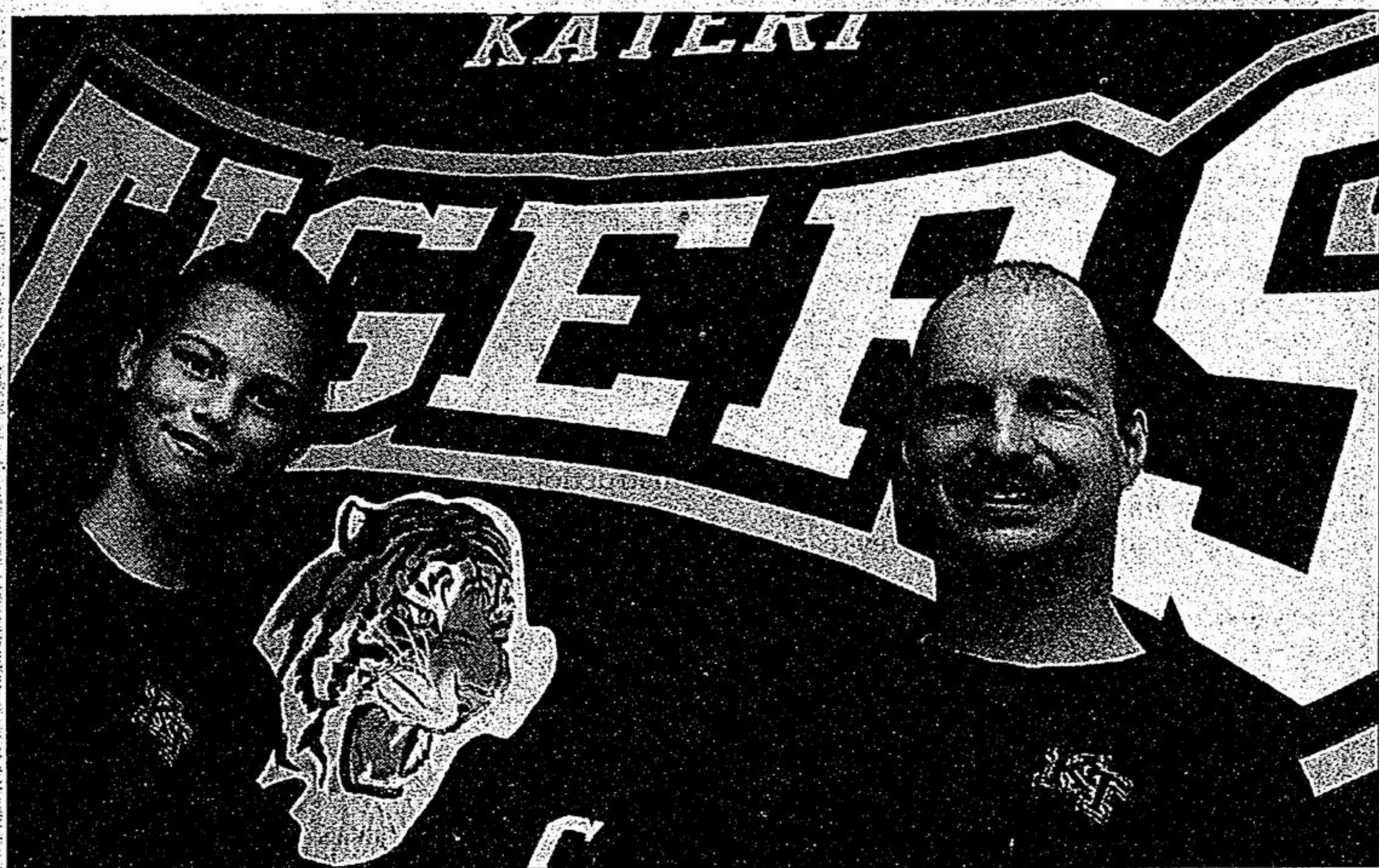


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AT THE SCHOOLS

TEACHER OF THE MONTH



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Bryanna Lundie nominated Luc-A. Lavoie, her French teacher at Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic School in Markham, as the York Region Newspaper Group's teacher of the month for July.

French teacher shapes lives through language, sport

BY LINDA JOHNSON
Staff Writer

When Luc-A. Lavoie accepted a teaching position in Ontario 14 years ago, it was supposed to be temporary, something to do before moving on to another profession.

"I thought I would do it for a year, or maybe two," he said. "But I got hooked."

By that accident, Mr. Lavoie found his ideal career. The students at Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic School in Markham, where he teaches French, would undoubtedly agree.

At the suggestion of Grade 4 student Bryanna Lundie, Mr. Lavoie is York Region Newspaper Group's teacher of the month for July.

Bryanna said she nominated Mr. Lavoie because he not only helped her improve her French, he's also a fantastic track and field and cross-country coach.

"Mr. Lavoie is a great French teacher," she said. "He is very enthusiastic and tries to make it fun for all the classes."

"He has helped me learn the language and I love going to French class."

"Mr. Lavoie is a good coach and I like the fact he has helped us with our running," she said. "We came in first in the Legacy Run. He's nice to be with."

Every year, Mr. Lavoie organizes a running club for students in grades 4 to 8. The club, which now has 100 members, helps

prepare them for the area cross-country meet in the fall and the track and field meet in June.

"It gets the students out running laps after school. So, rather than sit in front of the TV and play video games, they stay after school and jog with me," he said, laughing.

Mr. Lavoie said principal Ron Sculli is always supportive of ideas to encourage physical activity among students.

This year the school, which has only 300 students, placed third in the York Region cross-country finals.

In the Legacy Run, the annual fundraiser for Markham Stouffville Hospital, the school scored the highest participation and the most money raised.

But Mr. Lavoie said students' commitment to the sport is more important than whether they win.

"To me, as long as the kids are committed and they are having a good time, that's what counts. If we do well, that's a bonus."

When I bring the team, if all of them have been working hard and have been committed to come to practice, I'm happy, even if we finish last. But usually we don't," he said.

The running club is open to all students. So he said, even the slower runners have a chance to do well because they compete against themselves, not others.

"So it's up to them. If they want to get their 50 km ribbon, they have come out and jog with

us."

"That's something I try to promote," he said. "Even if you're not a great athlete, if you commit, if you're consistent and come out and jog, you'll see the result at the end."

As they run, each student gets a popsicle stick for each lap completed. The club has a reward system with ribbons, plaques and medallions for students who reach threshold distances of 50, 100 or 150 km.

Mr. Lavoie said, whether he's coaching or teaching French, he always tried to make what he's teaching interesting and fun.

"After all, part of being a kid is to have fun. I think they grow up too fast," he said.

Before becoming a teacher, Mr. Lavoie was an artillery officer in New Brunswick. After six years in the army, he decided to go back to school and went to Quebec City to complete an MA.

When he saw an opening to teach in Ontario, he took it, planning after a year or so to move to the United States.

But instead, he stayed. He said he loves the chance to shape others' lives.

"It's the difference you can make in the lives of those you work with and teach," he said.

"It's the teaching of the gospel, the chance to give the students opportunities to grow and to travel through life with a different view."

Concert enthusiasts responsible for safety

BY PATRICK McALPINE
At the Schools Writer

After spending nearly two hours in line, a music fan checks his watch again.

The fan looks ahead at the thousands of people waiting ahead of him.

Many of these people are fanning themselves with programs or drenching their heads with bottled water to fight the 36 C heat.

This is how more than 32,000 people celebrated Canada Day at the radio station Edge 102's annual Edgifest concert.

The summer concert festival, held at Molson Park in Barrie, has been one of the most popular concert events in Ontario for years.

Unfortunately, this year's date was also the hottest day of summer thus far.

The event featured performances by several well-known hard rock and alternative bands including Canadian groups Default, Finger 11 and Nickelback. Overall, more than 35 groups were on the bill.

Attending concerts remains a favourite pastime for teens and young adults.

It is a chance for fans to experience a performer's talents without the use of studio equipment and as such it provides a more natural environment to their music.

However, as the popularity of a group rises, so do the ticket prices. Tickets for this year's Edgifest cost \$42.50 from Ticketmaster. Tickets for many other concerts can go even higher, reaching \$90 or more.

Upon entry to the venue, summer concert goers probably would have wanted to buy something to drink to battle the sweltering heat.

'As a first-time crowd surfer, I must say that it was the most amazing and craziest thing I have done in a while. It was a very interesting feeling to be taken across the crowd in the air.'

But when they reached the refreshment tent they may have been surprised to discover that bottles of water that normally sell for \$1 in vending machines were being offered at \$3.50. A slice of pizza went for \$4.

So why then would anyone — especially teenagers who need to save money — dish out their hard-earned cash just to see a band whose music they have heard numerous times?

"I go to shows because I like the whole experience," says Stouffville resident and avid concert-goer Danielle Vidinu.

"You get this feeling as the artist walks onto the stage, you feel like a part of it all for one night. It is the best feel-

ing to sing along with the performer, live, to one of your favorite songs."

Ms. Vidinu, 18, has been to more than 50 concerts since the age of six. She has seen everything from pop sensations Destiny's Child and N'Sync to the notorious Eminem and Limp Bizkit.

Limp Bizkit members have been charged several times for inciting violence at their concerts.

Fans have been injured and even killed while "moshing," a form of dancing that involves a large group of people hurling their bodies against each other with as much force as possible.

"If you don't like moshing, don't see a rock concert. Go watch a Britney (Spears) concert or something," says Markham rock enthusiast Michael Mills.

Mr. Mills, 18, says the crowd is inspired to mosh after feeding off of the energy of the band.

On the other hand, he is aware that there can be consequences from getting too into the moment. He has the scars to prove it.

"I've had three concussions, 18 stitches and five open-cut wounds from attending rock concerts," Mr. Mills said.

Crowd surfing, another form of concert entertainment in which audience members are lifted up and held above the heads of fellow fans and passed to the front of the stage, may be an exhilarating experience but it is also another way that people can get hurt at a concert.

"As a first-time crowd surfer, I must say that it was the most amazing and craziest thing I have done in a while. It was a very interesting feeling to be taken across the crowd in the air," says 18-year-old Jennifer Senez.

"Unfortunately, during my crowd surfing, someone accidentally dropped me and I fell flat on my back. It hurt immensely the day after."

While injuries are a major concern of concert organizers, there is also a focus in eliminating any form of drug use or underage drinking on concert grounds.

However, this rarely stops everyone from sneaking in banned substances.

During an Edgifest performance by the band Sevendust, a marijuana cigarette was thrown onto the stage at the lead singer's request.

The vocalist then paused in the middle of a song, lit the joint and smoked it in front of thousands of people.

This is not to say that all concerts will be over-priced, dangerous or littered with drugs. Most are very secure, safe and fun. It is the responsibility of those who attend a performance to stay safe and have a good time.

If they can do this, they will most likely enjoy a performance to remember.

Patrick McAlpine is a student at Brother André Catholic High School in Markham.