

AT THE SCHOOLS

Educator passionate about job

BY MITCHELL BROWN
Staff Writer

All things considered, the middle of August is probably not the best time to ask Stephanie Donaher to multiply five by four. "What?" she says.

The question is repeated and she answers 20. But the fact she had to think about it suggests the 12-year-old Mount Albert student has momentarily forgotten a few things from last year.

"That's not fair," she protests. "It's summer. I'm focusing on summer things right now."

Such as?

"Um ... nothing. Watching TV and I'm playing soccer tonight."

Her teacher, Kyla Dickson, has also been "focusing on summer things", if her tanned skin and rested look are any indication.

"Yeah, it's been a pretty laid-back summer," she says.

The York Region Newspaper Group's teacher of the month for August has earned her time off, Stephanie tells us.

"She is nice, she listens to your problems, she is comforting at bad times, she never yells (and) she can be your friend and not just your teacher," she wrote in her letter nominating her former Grade 5 teacher.

"If someone is fighting with someone else, she tries to help you instead of saying, 'Go to the principal!'"

Ms. Dickson also finds ways to "make hard work more fun", Stephanie adds. She gives the *Top Gun* game as an example, a game where mastery of the times tables is required to come out on top.

For her teacher, it has been just as much an education as it has been for her students.

Having just finished her second year as a teacher, it's clear Ms. Dickson, 26, is still passionate about her chosen career, although she says that isn't hard in a place like Mount Albert Public School.

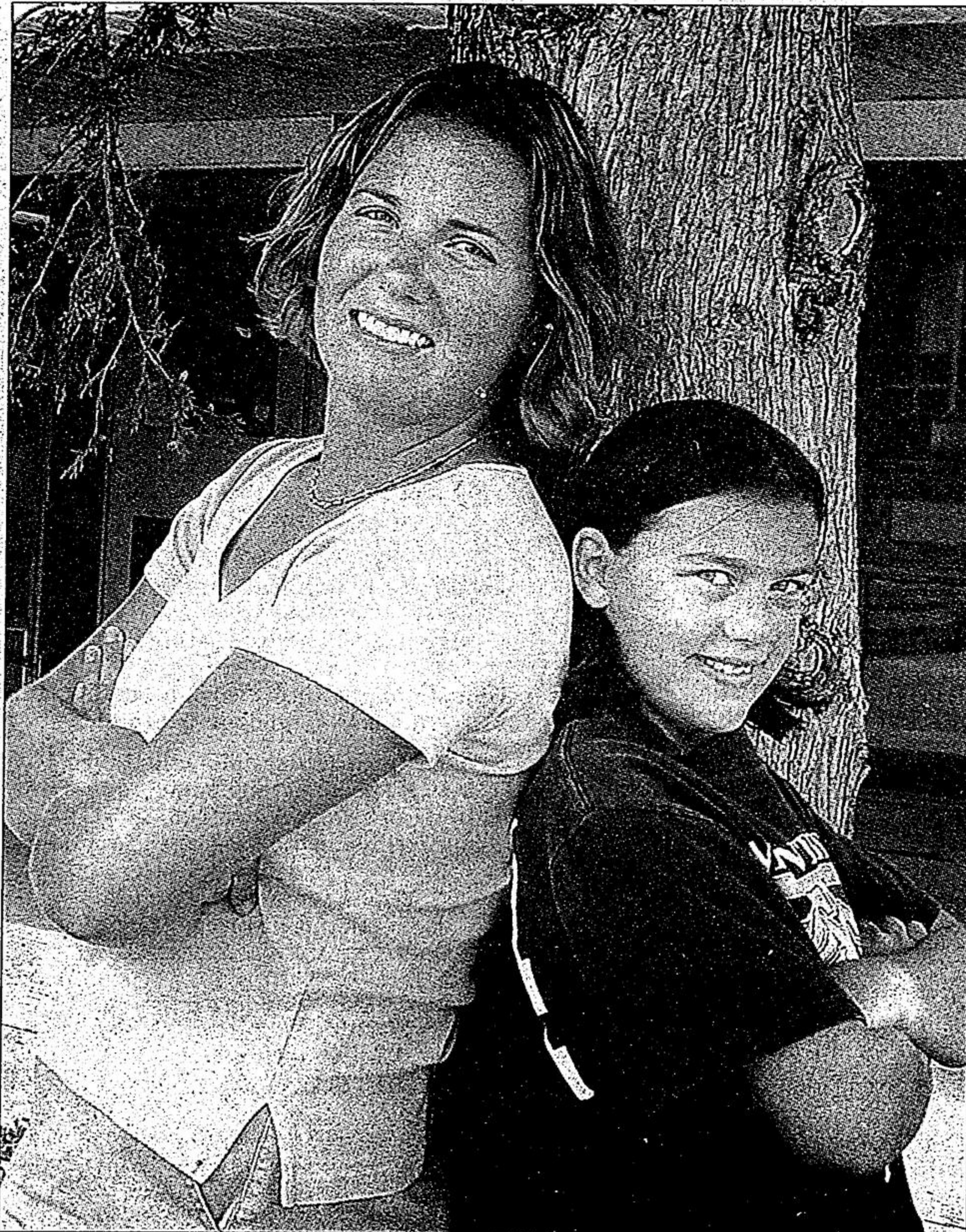
"All the teachers I work with here, young or old, still have that enthusiasm that I saw in teacher's college," she says. "I think it has a lot to do with the school's morale and the people you work with; it's hard to be low when nobody else is low around you."

She says she always knew she wanted to be a teacher, even when she was a child. That led to several part-time jobs during high school working with children and special education students.

After completing her education and kinesiology degrees at York University two years ago, the Kincardine native then set out to land that all-important first job.

"When I got the call from the principal (at Mount Albert Public School), I had no idea where it even was," she says.

"I was, 'Mount Albert? Where's that?' So she gave me directions to the school. It was



STAFF PHOTO/MITCHELL BROWN

Teacher Kyla Dickson from Mount Albert Public School was chosen as the York Region Newspaper Group's Teacher of the Month. She was nominated by Stephanie Donaher, who is entering Grade 6 at the school.

Teacher of the Month

my first interview and she called back that night and said I got the job. I had no idea where it was, or what the school was like, so it was all new to me."

Over the past two years, though, she has grown to know the school of 700 students

and the surrounding community very well, which makes her leaving that much harder.

She's moving back to Kincardine this fall to be closer to her family and has already lined up a new teaching job there.

But, no matter where she goes, she'll likely not forget her first school.

"I've learned so much from the staff here," she says. "The kids are super and so is the community. It's not a big community, so you get more support from them, I guess. It's been a great experience."

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Adrian Corsin

At The Schools Writer

Licensing process hasn't deterred thousands of teens

It's every 16-year-old's dream and every parent's nightmare — driving. For most people, G1, G2 and G are nothing more than a cluster of letters and numbers. But these terms are as essential to getting your driver's licence as driving itself.

The experience of getting your licence with the graduated licensing system has often been called time-consuming and pricey. But this hasn't deterred thousands of teens running to get those plastic cards in their hands.

"It's a liberating experience," says 16-year-old Amanda Gregoris, who recently got her G1. "It's one more step to adulthood and it's a good chance to prove you're responsible."

The Ontario Drivers Handbook states "graduated licencing, which lets new drivers gain skills and experience in low-risk environments, is also helping to develop better, safer drivers". It's a two-step learning process that can be completed in no less than 20 months.

Getting a licence involves three steps: G1, G2, and G. To get the G1 licence, you must be at least 16 years old and pass a vision test and knowledge test of the rules and signs of the road.

With this licence, people are able to drive with a licensed passenger with at least four years of experience. This licence prohibits any alcohol drinking, driving between midnight and 5 a.m. and the use of 400-series roads.

This stage lasts for 12 months and is followed by G2, which allows more driving privileges. Drivers do not need a licensed passenger to be in the car, but they must have a blood-alcohol level of zero and ensure everyone in the car has a working seatbelt. Getting a G2 requires drivers to pass a road test, as does getting the G licence, which permits full driving privileges.

Many contend the cost of these courses, in conjunction with the cost of the road and knowledge tests, is outrageous, by any standards. With the fee of the courses ranging from \$200 to \$800

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