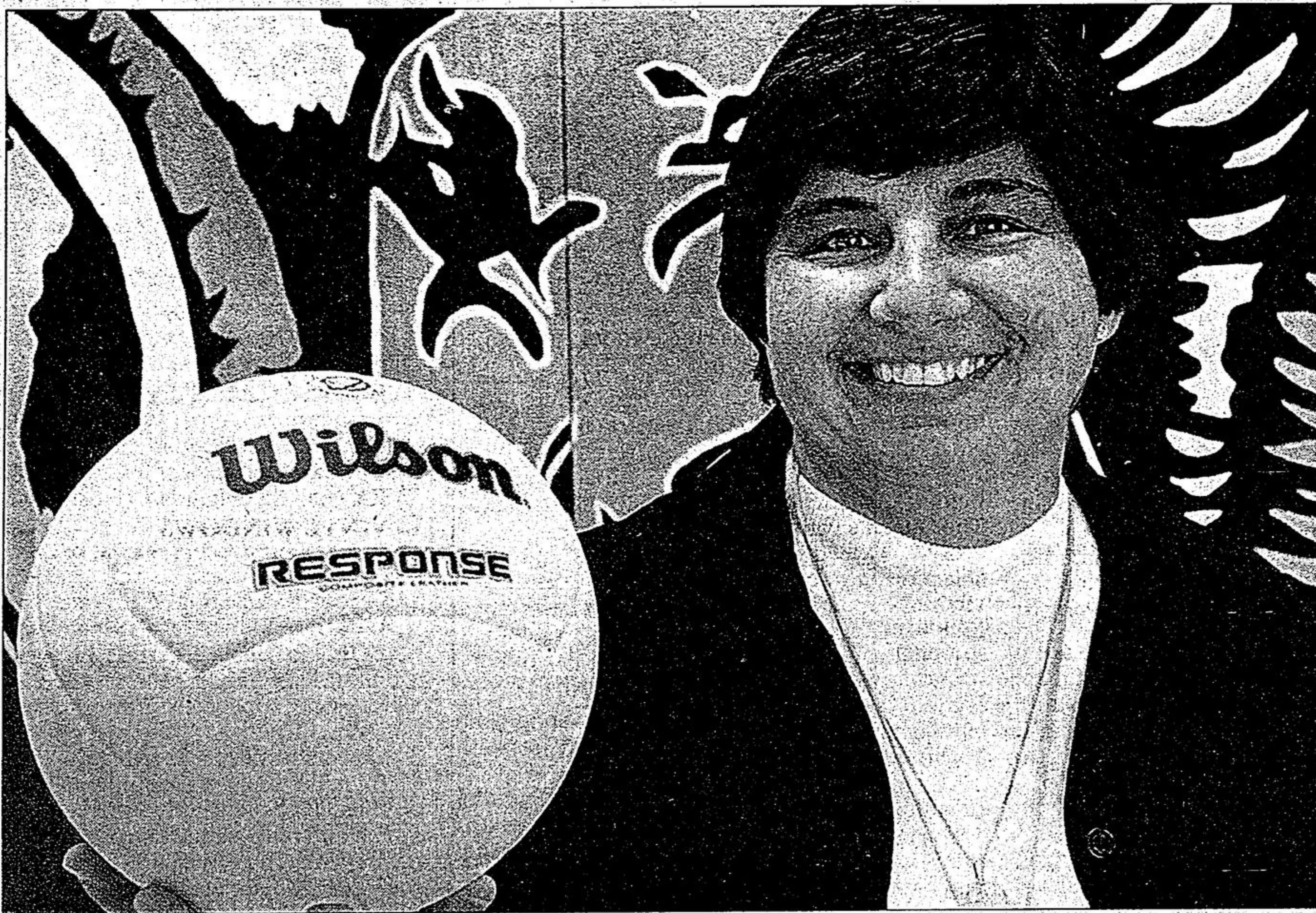


Economist & Sun • Stouffville Tribune

AT THE SCHOOLS



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Grade 8 teacher Emma Galea loves to volunteer in sports and other activities. It pays off with students, she says.

Teacher has multifaceted job

BY SIMONE JOSEPH
Staff Writer

At Newmarket's Denne Public School, Emma Galea is more than just a teacher.

She is a coach, a referee, a bereavement counsellor and a trusted mentor to students like Adam Mill.

Mr. Mill is a Grade 8 student who nominated her for a teacher of the month award. He noted, "She's really devotes her life to her students."

Mr. Mill knew Ms Galea in previous years through his participation in sports. This year, he is a student in her class.

"She's really supportive," he says. Ms Galea, a 21-year veteran of the teaching profession, helped him in French — a subject he had been struggling with — supplying tips on how to study and helping him after class.

In his nomination letter, he wrote: "Emma Galea always volunteers to run the extra curricular activities...whenever you need extra help with your school work, she is always available."

Ms Galea, 45, organizes sports like flag football, volleyball and ultimate

Frisbee. She operates a mentor program pairing Grade 8 students with kindergarten students and runs a book exchange for the kindergarten children.

This year she teaches Grade 8 math, English, French and physical education, and serves as the school's guidance counsellor.

She believes the lessons students gain outside the school can be as important as the ones they pick up inside.

"I want my kids to know learning is beyond what happens in the classroom...It's building community, it's increasing self-esteem, it's teaching kids to work as a team."

Ms Galea has been teaching at Denne Public School for 10 years, commuting 45 minutes each way from Etobicoke. But she would not dream of trying for a job closer to home.

"It's an amazing community and I love the kids," she said.

As one might expect of a caring, conscientious teacher, her daily schedule is hectic.

This past Tuesday was a typical day. She arrived at about 7:30 a.m. An hour

later, she had photocopied two tests, spoken with the creator of a new French curriculum, phoned a colleague, tutored a Grade 8 student and spoken with York Region's mental health centre about new workshops being offered to students.

Ms Galea taught seven classes that day, as well as doing yard duty and running a bereavement group at lunch. After school she had students come in for detention and extra help, and spoke with a tour company employee about a planned field trip. Then she finished marking and called parents.

By the time she had phoned a colleague and spoken with a former student who stopped by to say hello, it was 5:40 p.m.

Often, Ms Galea's time before school, at lunch and after school is filled with extra-curricular and academic duties. On a recent Friday, the school had a parent-student volleyball evening and she didn't leave for home until 8 p.m.

But she wouldn't have it any other way.

"Teaching is not just a job, it's a lifestyle," she says.

Literacy test a big deal for some schools

Recently Ontario students were preparing for a crucial and difficult test and it seems each school had its own way of going about that preparation.

The Grade 10 literacy test was written earlier this week. Many schools knew they had good results before the test was even written.

For example, my high school — Pierre Elliott Trudeau Secondary, a brand new facility trying to make a name for itself — went all out in preparation.

We did exercises from a yellow duotang provided by the school for three weeks, each day in a different class. I think this process was more than sufficient. I knew the material inside and out and I was confident I'd do well.

My previous school, Markville Secondary, went about it a different way. There, teachers told the students to come in on their own time, often during lunch, to prepare for



Rick Schie

the exam.

This was mandatory and yet some students neglected to show up, perhaps suggesting this process was not as effective as that of PET's. On the other hand, should students really be forced to study for an exam that alters their future?

Schools and people in general will always do things in the way that they think best. But is it best for the future of the students or the future of the school?

Rick Schie is a student at Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School in Unionville.

Double cohort affects all in high school

BY ANDREW LAMBERT
Correspondent

Many kids can't wait to graduate from high school and experience the world. Thanks to the elimination of the OAC year, students are a year closer to that goal.

The so-called "double cohort" situation is the result of a reworked education format. Ontario now uses a four-year high school program instead of the previous five-year system.

The effects are being felt all the way through secondary school and into the universities and colleges.

Students must now cram their education into four years, meaning heavier workloads and fewer optional courses. A new curriculum has been developed and

many are complaining it is too difficult. I can confirm this, and really took notice of it when course selection time arrived.

With so little time, there's less flexibility to choose fun courses or experiment with new things. My year now consists mostly of essential academic courses — all of them pretty difficult. And I'm not the only one.

"The elimination of OAC doesn't allow students enough time to adjust to the new curriculum," said Kurt Cheng, a student at St. Augustine Catholic High School in Unionville. "It seems as though there is less time for us to develop quality skills. As with everything, quality comes with time."

See ONE, page 24.

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