

Stouffville high school sympathetic, but financing could be issue

Ex-teacher wants wall of fame moved to new SDSS

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Dave Connell is on a mission. The long-time former Stouffville District Secondary School physical education head is crusading to preserve a part of the school's athletic heritage.

Connell hopes the school's administration will allow the Wall of Fame and glass display cases, located between the gymnasium and cafeteria in their old building, to become an integral part their present facility, which opened two years ago.

"It's sort of a crusade," he said. "But more common sense."

Retiring from SDSS in 1999 after 31 years, Connell said he's met resistance from the school's administration in reconstructing the Wall of Fame, that was constructed in 1985. It includes names of most valuable players from teams the school has fielded since its inception in 1955 to 1999, along with the glass display cases.

"Why wouldn't you want to continue the history of the school?" he said. "There's room at the new school for the Wall of Fame. I'm passionate about it."

After visiting the school's present site, Connell suggested there's space available to reconstruct the Wall of Fame in the hallway outside the south end of the gymnasium.

If the cost to move such items to the new school were a factor, Connell added he would do the work to make it happen on

his own time.

"It's not a matter of money," he said.

In reconstructing the Wall of Fame, Connell said it would also be updated to include the MVPs of teams since he retired.

Principal Beverly Madigan shared Connell's belief that preserving the school's past is important.

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Madigan said the York Region board of education has also expressed an interest and offers assistance to schools that might not have enough available space to display such vintage items at their new plant by presenting them at their Heritage School-

house.

"Our school board values the preserving of items from schools and we want to preserve and showcase all items as they are an important part of our school heritage," she said in a statement. "Our school board has a heritage schoolhouse and we are the only board in Ontario that has a museum and archive facility with a full-time curator in Jan Emonson."

Madigan said all items from the old school, including the Wall of Fame, will be moved to the new school or preserved with the Heritage Schoolhouse.

"The movement of items from the old building to our new building is continuing as we speak," she said. "How we move the Wall of Fame hasn't been decided yet."

The school is working with the board's plant services and Heritage Schoolhouse on a long-term plan to move them and determine how and where they will be archived.

"It is important to me as principal of Stouffville District Secondary School to ensure that all items are moved, preserved and showcased either in this school or through our Heritage Schoolhouse and I must abide by our own board internal processes in order to accomplish this. This includes health and safety and insurance procedures as well as following due process such as tendering to have objects moved," she said.

Jamie Hewitt, the current physical education head, is all for preserving and maintain-

ing the department's accomplishments and felt Connell's agenda has merit.

However, Hewitt cautioned if the Wall of Fame were to be moved to the new school, the upkeep from a financial perspective could present a challenge due to budgetary restraints public schools have encountered in recent years.

As a compromise, Hewitt felt moving the Wall of Fame to the Heritage Schoolhouse would be a viable option.

"It's not like it's being thrown out," he said.

Hewitt also noted in the event some facsimile could be created at the new school, the names that were on the Wall of Fame have been scanned on the school's computer system.

Connell questioned such a move to the Heritage Schoolhouse citing the facility doesn't have a 50-foot wall.

As well, with the Heritage Schoolhouse being located in southwestern Markham off Woodbine Avenue, he did not think many people from Stouffville would bother to make a visit.

"Who would do the wall there?" he added.

In his conversations with many older Stouffville graduates, Connell said they've echoed his thoughts and hope the Wall of Fame and glass display cases will be a part of the new school.

"The Wall of Fame is Stouffville District Secondary School's athletic history," he said.

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