

OPINION



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SATURDAY FORUM

Teacher shows she cares, in and out of classroom

Kristen Payne

I don't know about you, but even at 32 years of age, with my school years 14 years behind me – and my math teacher thought I didn't learn a thing! – I am still able to recite the names of each and every teacher that graced me with their presence.

Perhaps it is nothing more than a memory like a steel trap, but a few of the names on my mental list certainly made a lasting impression.

Whether it was an unorthodox teaching method, a quick temper or my personal favorite – being one heck of a teacher and influence on me as a student and young person navigating my way through early life.

And now, as the mother of two young children in a new generation with union battles, limited budgets and a fair amount of criticism pointed directly at the teachers it makes me feel good that my list of impactful teachers is still able to expand. Not for me, of course, but my children.

As I outlined in my letter to the editor a few weeks back, I consider myself extremely lucky that my kids are enrolled at such a fantastic school.

Harry Bowes Public School and its staff have been a very important part of my children's growth as students. As much as I would love to write about each and every teacher who has impacted my children, it's just not realistic.

The real reason I have decided to write this piece is to give credit where credit is due – to kindergarten teacher Fern Grenon.

From his first day back in September 2011, I knew how lucky my son was. To say she is devoted to her craft would be a definite understatement. Truth be told, she has undoubtedly found her calling.

Starting out as a dental hygienist (completing training at 19), it wasn't until 2000 that she decided to change professions, obtaining her teaching degree in 2004.

Mrs. Grenon joined the staff of Harry Bowes three years ago, always placed in kindergarten, fortunately for us.

A Stouffville resident for the past seven years, she is originally

from Scarborough. She is a wife, mother and grandmother, and an incredibly positive influence on my children, going so far as to use my son's nickname to make him more at ease and advising me on reading programs to help my first grade little girl. It's the little things, don't you agree?

She has always been kind and resourceful, making the children comfortable at the same time she has earned their respect. Firm but fair sums it up.

It is Fern's summer itinerary that inspired this article. She is travelling to Africa for two months. Vacationing? No.

Working as a missionary to volunteer her time teaching English at the Medical University of Mozambique. Oh, and in her off time she will be helping to build homes to house orphans and their foster parents.

Husband Jean-Pierre and university student daughter Martine are volunteering their services, too.

I find it incredibly selfless and generous of this family to volunteer their time, money and energy to help those less fortunate. I felt the town would like to hear of such a touching story.

In addition to delivering themselves to Africa Tuesday, Fern's missionary friend suggested bringing clothing to fit a five-year-old boy.

If anyone is interested in donating clothes or money, please e-mail me (sadie_scoot1@outlook.com) and we can arrange a pick up/dropoff. The organization is called DevXchange International and its website offers more insight.

The school year ended and so did my son's two years spent with this remarkable teacher. She managed to teach my son and myself, no less, the importance of donating your time and helping those less fortunate than yourself.

For this, I say thank you. After all, life lessons have an extraordinary value of their own.

Have a safe trip and an incredible experience, Mrs. Grenon.

Kristen Payne is a Stouffville native and a proud mom.

HOT TOPIC: Why don't you vote?

Online voting would help busy people

Re: We want to find out why you don't vote, June 20.

I have always voted in all elections – federal, provincial and municipal – however, I can understand why some people (my 26 year old son included) do not. Often they do not know enough about the candidates and/or what their jobs will entail and how it will affect the individual voter.

Online voting, along with an online biography of each candidate and description of the various positions (duties and responsibilities) would make voting more informative and convenient.

I assume this could be listed on each town's website.

The article states Richmond Hill explored the idea of online voting, but decided against it. I think that was a mistake.

Many people have to rush home after work to look after families or pick up children or they are just plain tired at the end of a busy day. Voting online would allow them to look



after these responsibilities and still vote.

Some people would still not vote for various reasons, but I think many would use an online system.

The article states Markham tried online voting and saw voter turnout decrease. I wonder if they included a description of the candidates and the duties involved.

I believe these changes would make voting a lot easier for me and my busy friends – all having computers that they use every day.

It might even encourage my son and other young people, who spend many hours on their computers for recreational reasons, to become more informed and involved in a municipal election.

MARY-LOU MONTGRAIN
RICHMOND HILL

Electing chairperson may increase voting

Re: We want to find out why you don't vote, June 20.

Your article on low voter turnout at municipal elections offered a number of possible reasons.

There are more. First, we are not allowed to vote for the chairperson of the region, its key post, since the incumbent is appointed, not elected.

When the issue was last raised of making that job subject to election rather than appointment, Mayor Frank Scarpitti of Markham voted against the idea.

Could it be he is putting his own interest in being appointed to that job without the bother of an election ahead of our right to a democratic vote?

ROBERT J. GALLIVAN
THORNHILL

Editor's note: Did you vote? We are compiling your opinions for our Big 5-0 Project (check Hot Topics at yorkregion.com) to engage you in municipal government and encourage you to vote in 2014. E-mail jmason@yrmg.com

