



WEEK OF DECEMBER 7, 2009

Shawnigan Parent News



Photos: Shawnigan Wind Ensemble! For more photos and stories, go to <http://www.shawnigan.ca/now>

Swordless Samaris – by Emma C. and Sarah P.

Working with the elderly has made an impression on all of us in the service club. Volunteering has been more rewarding than any of us would have thought, especially with one person in particular who we have gotten to know. This woman has Alzheimer's, so she doesn't have much of her memory left at all. In fact, she forgets who we are a few minutes after talking to us so we have to reintroduce ourselves a dozen times throughout the day. But she is still such a kind and friendly person even though she has to live with such challenges. When she tells stories that she does remember, you can tell how meaningful they are to her. Listening to them motivates us to do things in our lives that we are proud of, and that mean something to us. When someone is nearing the end of their life, memories become one of the most important things. Wouldn't you rather come to the end of your life knowing you accomplished what you wanted to, instead of regretting things you never got around to doing? The service club is about helping other people. Working with all these different types of people also helps us by letting us see what we need to improve on our own lives. We can all learn from them.

Chapel Words – Gary Dukelow

Cecily Saunders, the Anglican nurse, physician, writer, and founder of Hospice, wrote:

You matter because you are / You matter to the last moment of your life / We will do all we can to help you to live / Until you die...

I want to briefly focus today on those last four words. The concept of Hospice doesn't necessarily have to involve just the last few days. In those four words lies a mission for us all, regardless of whether or not we visit care homes. It should be our responsibility, as a society, to help our elderly "live until they die."

Mr. Robertson and Mr. Holland have talked to us a few times about attitude in this Chapel. The way to approach aging, and dealing with the aged, whether they are family or strangers, is with an open, compassionate and respectful attitude. If you enter a facility like Sunridge Place, or Acacia down the road, with this approach, magical things take place. These people aren't looking for entertainment, necessarily.

The people in these homes are often lonely and seek simple human companionship, one of the easiest gifts that you can give and one of the most powerful. If you look into the eyes of a 90-year-old, you are seeing someone who has been around here for six times as long as you have, and they have so much to offer in terms of wisdom. The great thing about having a conversation with older people is that you will seldom be judged.

I sincerely believe that people in their later stages give off a powerful, living energy. In fact, I experienced this a month ago over the final two weeks of my Mom's life. She had prepared herself and us, for the inevitable end, in a dignified, faithful and selfless way. Mom taught us so many things about giving over the years, and her final gift came in the form of helping us to move forward, closer than ever, as a family unit. She accomplished this by truly living, despite pain and suffering, until she died.

Many of you will be returning to family and grandparents in a few weeks for Christmas. Try spending a little extra time with them. Ask them to tell you a story about their past. Take them for a walk. Engage them in a conversation that goes beyond, "I love you Grannie (or Grandpa), nice to see you again," and then head off to your computer or out with your friends. The mutual benefits for you and them will be everlasting.

Upcoming Events:

- Dec. 17** Christmas Dinner and Carol Service
- Dec. 18** Christmas Break begins at 9:00am
- Jan. 3** Christmas Break ends. Students must return to School by 8:00pm at 9:00pm. Buses will meet the 5:00 sailings from the mainland.
- Jan. 16-17** Leave Weekend

I'd like to finish with some words that my daughter Alisha wrote to my Mom a few years ago, reflecting the beautiful relationship that they had:

"Thank you for succeeding in putting laughter in the eyes of all that you love, and for teaching me lessons of value so great, that I am only now beginning to understand."

Enjoy your family time at Christmas!

A Timely R.A.G. from Renfrew North – Scott Noble

The girls from Renfrew North have organized the purchase of a live Christmas Tree in the downtown square in Duncan. The purchase of the tree, in fact, becomes a donation to a local charity to help families in need. The girls will decorate the tree in House colours and later plant the tree on the Conroy/Kusters property. In the midst of the Copenhagen Summit, this represents a wonderful random act of green—not to mention a lovely random act of kindness!

Giving Students a Voice – Stephanie Owen

Giving students a voice outside of the classroom not only is empowering but can also be just plain fun! Each year, BCTELA (BC Teachers of English Language Arts) sponsors a writing contest for students taking English Language Arts in the province of British Columbia between grades 6 to 12. Their purpose is to "recognize the excellent work being produced in English classrooms" around the province both in terms of poetry and prose (fiction or non-fiction) writing pieces. As part of my English classroom, I require all of my students to submit their work to one of numerous writing contests. I feel that it is an important step in the writing process to make the leap and expose their work to a broader audience. After the arduous process of writing, editing, re-writing, and then yet more editing, the piece is ready to be set free. I love the feeling of trepidation that ensues as the students fill out the contest entry forms, very careful to spell their names and addresses correctly just in case they are one of the lucky few whose work is chosen. The forms are signed, the envelope stamped and dropped into the dark abyss that is the mail system. Now the waiting begins. Finally, after many months, and quite honestly after the students have filed the experience into the "not needed at the moment" section of their brains, the list of winners arrives...

I am exceedingly proud to announce that the three pieces chosen for publication in BCTELA's student writing journal, *Voices Visible*, for Grade 10 prose went to Claire O. for "What Hides in the Night," Erin M. for "Bent" and Maddie B. for her short story, "Bittersweet." Congratulations to all of you who entered and remember to keep your pen firmly planted on your 8½ x 11 standard issue lined paper so that the rest of us can continue to enjoy your imagination.