

Catholic Community Newsletter

Compliments of the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board



Spring 2012

Leading in the Light of Christ



Eight students from grade 6 to grade 8 and one staff member from each Bruce-Grey Catholic elementary school attended a kick-off to Catholic Education Week in May. Social Justice and Leadership Day was dedicated to living

the Catholic faith and strengthening leadership skills, as well as learning about social justice issues. The event provided students with the chance to explore how they can "lead in the light of Christ" as they deepen

their understanding of our Catholic Graduate Expectations and Catholic social teachings through prayer and dynamic witness.

The students were chosen for their leadership potential. Some were the unsung heroes in their school communities, some were student council or "Me to We"/Feed the Children representatives, while others have demonstrated enthusiasm and passion for their Catholic faith and social justice.

hope that this day ignited a spark that will empower our students to make connections between their Catholic faith and commitment to social justice in their personal lives, school and global communities."

The event was hosted by Bruce Power with additional support from the Society of Engineering Professionals, Enbridge and the Power Workers Union.

Sacred Heart High School students compete in Skills Canada competitions

Three Grade 12 students at Walkerton's Sacred Heart High School began the long and increasingly difficult trek to the Skills Canada national finals this spring. Two of them made it to the Provincial competition winning third and 12th places.

The students, Chris Franken, Ryan Bross and Crystal Chesney "were competing for the crown of the best in Canada," said Mike McCormick, manufacturing, design and auto teacher at the school.

Chris and Ryan competed in the welding division, while Crystal competed in the precision machining division.

"Students are expected to work from technical drawings and perform the tasks in a safe manner," said Mike. "They are judged by members of the appropriate trades."

After the qualifying rounds, Ryan and Crystal continued on to the provincial competition. Knowing the expectations would increase at the provincial competition, the two worked on improving their skills during the day and after class. Ryan found some people in the trade to help expand his skills in the evening.

"The results for our competitors in the Provincial competition were nothing short of impressive, as they placed very well," said Mike. Ryan placed third and Crystal 12th.

"Very respectable considering that is for all Ontario," said Mike. "The bar has been raised as we look forward to next year's competitions."

For more information, visit <http://www.skillsontario.com/index.php/en/competitions/otsc>



The day-long event featured a keynote presentation from Free the Children (see sidebar) and the opportunity to participate in one of four workshops: Habitat for Humanity; Giving Witness – Sacred Heart and St. Mary's High Schools' mission trips to Nicaragua and El Salvador; What's Your Leadership Style, led by Free the Children, which provided an overview of the different types of leaders and how they can work together; and Access to Education which presented an overview of education around the world, barriers to education in some developing countries and what we can do about it.

Working in school teams, students were given the opportunity to create an action plan to support their local community through concrete action and information sharing.

"Our students are the leaders of tomorrow today," said Bruce-Grey Catholic DSB Director of Education Bruce MacPherson. "It is our



"Free The Children believes in a world where all young people are **free to achieve their fullest potential as agents of change**. We are a **charity and educational partner** that empowers youth to remove barriers that prevent them from being active local and global citizens. Our domestic programs **educate, engage and empower hundreds of thousands** of youth in North America and the UK. Our international projects, led by our holistic and sustainable **Adopt a Village** model, has brought over **650 schools and school rooms** to youth and provided **clean water, health care and sanitation to one million** people around the world, freeing children and their families from the cycle of poverty."

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Josh takes a breather while training in London, UK.

Josh Cassidy – Bruce-Grey Catholic’s Awesome Alumnus

Canadian paralympian, and graduate of St. Mary’s High School in Owen Sound, Josh Cassidy, set a record at this year’s Boston Marathon. In the men’s wheelchair race, the 27 year old Oakville resident not only finished first, but set a new world record – one hour, 18 minutes and 25 seconds for the 42.195 km. race.

In addition to the Boston Marathon in April, Josh has competed in events around the world, demonstrating that “there is absolutely nothing we can’t do in this life if we want it bad enough and work at it,” he said.

While he is scheduled to compete in several events this spring and summer, Josh is training for the biggest event of his athletic career, the London Paralympic Games which follow the Olympic Games in August. “I’ve been training for the Paralympics for over four years now and over the next few months I have to put everything I have into it,” he said. While the members of Team Canada won’t be officially announced until July, Josh is confident he will be part of the team. His family members have already booked their flights to the UK.

Life began for Josh in Ottawa in November, 1984. Shortly after birth, doctors discovered that he had neuroblastoma, a cancer of the spine and abdomen. His feet, and then his legs became paralysed, and he underwent a series of operations and chemotherapy. But the outlook was not positive.

“The first six years of my life were spent in hospital,” he said. “But I overcame the condition.”

Josh’s father was a pilot in the Canadian Forces and the family moved across Canada, finally settling in Port Elgin when Josh was nine years old and when his dad began working for a commercial airline.

He attended St. Joseph’s School in Port Elgin and St. Mary’s High School in Owen Sound.

“My years at St. Mary’s were absolutely great,” he said. “I was blessed to have teachers and a school like that. There is so much great energy in those halls.”

While athletics was his main focus in high school – he was Athlete of the Year twice, and had a banner in the gym – he credits art teacher Greg Schnurr for playing a big role in fostering his other passion – art. Josh went on to Sheridan College in Oakville where he graduated with a Bachelor of Applied Arts in illustration.

But it was his passion for athletics that

kept coming to the forefront. He started training in grade 11, upped his sessions in grade 12 and now trains twice a day, six days a week – in the gym, on the road or on the track.

Josh remembers a prophetic comment made by Dennis Farwell, Vice-Principal at St. Mary’s. “I had just won an award at an Athletics Dinner,” said Josh, “and Dennis said ‘you will see this guy in the Olympics sometime’.”

It was in 2003-2004 that Josh entered his first national track and field championships and since that time he has competed all over the world. His most recent itinerary included Switzerland, Manchester, Liverpool, Calgary, Boston and London. “I’m usually out of the country for five months of the year,” he said. For the last five years, Josh has placed in the top five wheelchair athletes in the world.

And when he’s not travelling or training, he still maintains a freelance illustration business in Oakville, and takes on motivational speaking engagements.

But that’s not all. Over the past several months, Josh has been helping a five-year old British girl, Niamh Curry who has neuroblastoma, the same type of cancer Josh was born with.

“Her parents had contacted me via Twitter, telling me about their little girl, and the hope it gave to see someone make it through and doing what I’ve done,” he said in his blog. “I’m very grateful I am here today, and I’ve always just handled every obstacle, constantly focusing on the next big thing. But this definitely made me appreciate what I have, and also recognize the battle Niamh is battling with her parents right now.”

Josh met with Niamh and her parents when he was competing in the Virgin London Marathon.

“I’m glad that I can be an inspiration and a role model, but I want to really make a difference and try to help Niamh raise the funds for her treatments. Her family is trying to raise nearly 450,000 GBP in order to get her to Philadelphia for treatment. Please see www.niamhsnextstep.com for her story and how you can help.

“So I will be racing with ‘Niamh’s Next Step’ on my racing top, along with the text CURE50 to 70070 to help donate to Niamh.”

For more information about Josh, his past performances and Niamh’s progress, visit his website at www.joshcassidy.com



Taste test

Water fountains/filling stations replace bottled water in Board schools

The Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board (BGCSDB) is installing water fountain kits in all its schools, thanks to a campaign started by Student Trustee Katie Walsh. The new kits feature a drinking fountain and a separate place to fill reusable water bottles. In addition, bottled water will no longer be available through school vending machines.

The campaign began at the beginning of Lent and culminated with the first BGCSDB Water Bottle Forum on April 13. More than 170 students from across the Board attended the forum at St. Mary’s High School in Owen Sound.

“Water is a human right,” said Katie, a student at St. Mary’s. “Many people do not realize the amount of oil used in the production of a single water bottle is equivalent to filling up a quarter of a bottle with oil. Furthermore, when you purchase a bottle of water you pay over a thousand times more than tap water.”

Katie’s interest in the subject was piqued by her grade 9 gym teacher who said that bottled water was a waste of money. After attending a student trustee conference and learning how other school boards dealt with

the issue, Katie decided to take advantage of her position as a trustee to raise awareness across the Board.

A number of activities took place throughout Lent. Students and staff were encouraged to use tap water instead of bottled water. Bottled water was removed from vending machines. Daily announcements featured bottled water facts and students created artwork to support the cause.

The Water Bottle Forum featured prayers lead by a local priest and a representative from Saugeen First Nation, presentations by a number of schools, a trivia game which tested the water knowledge of students and staff, and a presentation by St. Mary’s High School student Laurissa Christie who recently visited Antarctica.

Keynote speakers for the event were Sonali and Anjali Menezes, two sisters from Toronto and co-founders of Teens Against the Privatization of Water (TAP H2O). Last year, the sisters helped ban the sale of water bottles in all schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board.



Dinner highlights Catholic Education Week

Some 200 staff, students, community members and parish priests attended the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board’s annual Catholic Education Week Dinner, held at the Walkerton Knights of Columbus Hall.

Bishop Douglas Crosby was the keynote speaker for the evening and challenged everyone present to live – to live fully, live generously, live thankfully, live creatively, and to walk in the light of Christ.

The hall was decorated with numerous samples of students’ work which demonstrated not only the great work being done in Bruce-Grey Catholic schools, but also reminded attendees that the artists – the students – are the centre of all that the schools do.

The turkey dinner was prepared by the Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary.



Port Elgin school scores at Music Festival

St. Joseph's School in Port Elgin received some impressive results at the Rotary Music Festival in Walkerton.

The school's Glee won first place while the Primary Choir won second, along with a scholarship and an invitation to perform at the "highlights" concert. The Choir opened the concert with Oh Canada and sang two songs.

The Beginner Band won a gold while the School Band received gold standing in two categories.



Applause Breakfast recognizes students' contributions

Twenty-six elementary and secondary students from Bruce-Grey Catholic schools received Applause Breakfast Awards at the Board's annual Applause Breakfast held at Klages Mill in Chesley in May.

The awards program recognizes selected students and their parents for their ongoing contributions to their respective school communities.

"The ultimate success of our educational system is dependent upon students, parents, staff and our community partners," said Director of Education Bruce MacPherson. "These students truly let their light shine."

The following students received awards:

Mary Immaculate, Chepstow

Scott Eddyvean
Shayla MacLennan

St. Peter & St. Paul's, Durham

Maddie Bluhm
Austin Squires

Immaculate Conception, Formosa

Veronica McGlynn
Michael Dirven

Holy Family, Hanover

Melena Cook
Danielle MacDonald

St. Anthony's, Kincardine

Brett Colhoun
Sean Castillo

Sacred Heart, Mildmay

Morgan Hickling
Anthony Gowing

St. Basil's, Owen Sound

James Adair
Benjamin Redmond

Notre Dame, Owen Sound

Selina Dias
Chloe Fedy-Williton

St. Joseph's, Port Elgin

Christian Perico-Villamil
Nathan Cannon

Sacred Heart, Teeswater

Alec McKinnon
Lexi Curran

Mother Teresa, Walkerton

Tristan Zettel
Madison Dales

St. Mary's High School, Owen Sound

Damien Besito
Laurissa Christie

Sacred Heart High School, Walkerton

Mitch Currie
Graeme Donnelly

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St. Mary's High School student receives public affairs award

Kirsten Berge, a grade 12 student at St. Mary's High School in Owen Sound, is the 2012 winner of the Owen Sound Zonta Club's Young Women in Public Affairs (YWPA) award of \$500.00.

The award recognizes Kristen's leadership and volunteerism, as well as her commitment to improving the status of women locally and throughout the world. She volunteered in many community organizations including Habitat for Humanity, Relay for Life through the Canadian Cancer Society, and in her local church. She was also a member of a group that volunteered at an orphanage in El Salvador.

The YWPA program encourages young women to participate in public affairs by recognizing a commitment to the volunteer sector, and a dedication to the advancement of the status of women.

Kristen joins several other St. Mary's winners, including Rebecca Krulicki and Hanna Nicholls Harrison.



Holy Family students commemorate Titanic anniversary

The grade 8 class at Hanover's Holy Family School commemorated the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic.

Students read stories and poems about the disaster and each researched one passenger who was on the ship. They also wrote epitaphs for those people as well as a three-day journal, speaking from the passenger's perspective about life on the ship and the events leading up to the sinking.

Each student created a passport for their passenger and came dressed as that person on Titanic Day. They also performed a reader's theatre piece, had a meal in the first class dining lounge, and watched the 1958 version of the sinking called a Night to Remember.

Director to retire this summer

Bruce MacPherson, who has been this Board's Director of Education for the last five years, will retire August 31. He has spent his entire educational career with the Bruce-Grey Catholic Board.

Recently, Bruce was interviewed by the Catholic Community Newsletter. Here are excerpts of that interview.

CCN – You have spent your career at Bruce-Grey Catholic. Is there one event that stands out in your mind as being significant in your career?

Bruce – When I first began teaching, we had special education classes, segregated from the rest of the school. When the Board discontinued those classes all students were integrated into our regular classrooms, it was one of the greatest things that ever took place in our Board. Now those students feel part of the classroom and part of the school. All students are learners and our challenge is to unlock doors.

CCN – What do you see as the major strength of the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board?

Bruce – Putting our students first. Everything we do revolves around students. We always think it's not "if" but "how" we are going to do something for students. In the private sector, it would be called customer service.

CCN – Any other strengths you would like to mention?

Bruce – Yes, our Trustees are very interested in student achievement and well-being. I go with them on school visits – we visit every school every year. We meet with the principal and the assessment team. Each school has a data wall. Every school can speak to the performance of every student. We can see when a student is not on target and what is being done to get him or her back on target. Because of our visits, our Trustees understand student achievement and can speak to parents about it.

Also partnerships. We are a small, rural board and our success depends on many. We are fortunate that we have a number of well-established partnerships with, for example, Public Health, Keystone, our co-terminus board, Kings University College and Bruce Power. And we are always open to new partnerships.

CCN – What is your single most satisfying accomplishment as Director of Education?

Bruce – Our Reading Recovery Program for grade 1 students who are at-risk in their reading skills. Currently we have the highest discontinuation rate (successful completion of the program) where the student reaches the competency level.

We also track them in grade 2 to ensure they maintain their level. We have trained our resource teachers and now have our own trainer. We also redesigned two rooms to be used as observation facilities. I should also point out that we track all at-risk students in addition to our Reading Recovery Program.

CCN – Are there any other accomplishments you would like to mention?

Bruce – We now have sound field systems in every classroom, and even in our boardroom. What began as an aid for students with hearing disabilities, was quickly shown to benefit all our students. One student said, "when the teacher turned on the sound field, the students became turned on."

Also in the area of technology, we use smart boards in our classrooms and other 21st century technologies that our students understand.

Our partnership with Niagara University is another accomplishment of which I am proud. As a graduate of Niagara University where I received my Masters degree, I used my contacts there to encourage the university to offer the Master of Science in Education degree through our Board office. Some courses are also offered in Huron Perth.

I would also like to mention our Early Literacy Program, our Summer Literacy and Technology Camps, and our annual Applause Breakfast where we recognize the outstanding contributions of our students and their parents to their school communities.

The development and implementation of our Strategic Plan was also an important step in the Board's administrative process. It guides us in everything we do.

Open and consistent communication and building relationships with all our stakeholders has been an ongoing goal of mine. In particular, we have a great relationship with our parish priests and with our school communities through our Parent Involvement Committee.

I must emphasize that any successes I've had are due to the people I've worked with.

CCN – What are some of the challenges you have faced over the years and what challenges do you think your successor will face in the years ahead?

Bruce – Declining enrolment is with us now and will continue. Significant changes are going to take place and could result in loss of jobs, which will make it even more difficult to deliver our programs. Student needs are increasing, not decreasing, as are transportation costs. We have a high rate of poverty in Bruce-Grey and our schools are often the hub in their community. As a small board we have to make do with what we have. We must be creative and innovative. For example, we are working on e-learning to see how we can provide more courses to our students.



We are working through those challenges. We have to stay the course, that is, continue to focus on our students.

CCN – What are the most significant changes in education you have seen in your years as an educator?

Bruce – Seeing all of our staff – teachers, educational assistants, administrative and support staff – working as a professional team. Staff development at all levels ensures a continuation of that process.

The other change is the province's full-time kindergarten. It is truly an investment in the future of our children.

CCN – What is the future of Catholic education in the province?

Bruce – We have to ensure everyone working in Catholic education knows our successes and our history. We have great results in student achievement and well-being and we continue to develop a resiliency in our students, based on our faith. We must continue our messaging to our students that with the support of our Catholic faith, there may be times when we will be lonely, but we will never be alone.

CCN – What would you say to a student considering a career in education?

Bruce – Nothing is more fulfilling than working with kids. It moves a profession to a vocation. It's incredible. I would do it all over again.

CCN – What is in the future for Bruce MacPherson?

Bruce – I have a busy life outside of education. My wife and I have a small hobby farm. We have horses, which we show, and we breed and show Golden Retrievers. They are my fitness program.

If any opportunities in education come along, especially in support of Catholic education, count me in.

CCN – A parting thought?

Bruce – Think only the best, Work only with the best, Expect only the best.

CCN – Thank you.



Trish Holland

Tragic death of BGCDSB teacher reinforces organ donation registration

Trish Holland, a popular literacy coach and teacher at St. Joseph's School in Port Elgin and Mary Immaculate School in Chepstow, was killed this spring as the result of a car crash on Highway 21.

Trish had been a teacher at St. Joseph's for four years and had also taught in Hanover and Mildmay.

Her family and colleagues wanted to make it known that Trish was a registered organ donor and that several of her organs were donated to critically ill patients following her death.

"While Trish's death was untimely and she will be missed by family, students and colleagues, we should all be reminded about the importance of both signing our organ donation cards, and registering to be organ or tissue donors," said Suzanne White, who is responsible for the Board's Human Resources Department and a member of the Organizational Culture Committee which spearheaded the Organ Donor Awareness Campaign.

"The numbers are shocking," she said. "There are nearly 1500 Ontarians waiting for a life-saving organ transplant. Every three days, one of those on the waiting list dies because there aren't enough registered organ and tissue donors. That critical need was delivered to BGCDSB staff in each school at special staff meetings during Catholic Education Week."

Suzanne emphasizes the importance of registering at www.beadonor.ca as well as carrying a signed card. "A signed card is not recorded by the provincial health ministry's database, and it might not be available when required."

Don't take your organs to heaven... heaven knows we need them here.

Catholic Community Newsletter

Produced by the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board to inform ratepayers about news and activities.

Editor: Terry Diggle & Associates

Catholic Community Newsletter attempts to provide an overview of the accomplishments, the challenges and issues for the Bruce-Grey Catholic system as a whole.

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Students raise money for clean water

The Me to We group at St. Peter & St. Paul's School in Durham has been raising money all year for clean water initiatives in Kenya, through the Free the Children organization. Students have hosted a Haunted House for Hunger, a New Year's Ball, and several other fundraisers.