

Taking the



Pulse

of Palliser Regional Schools

Volume 2, Issue 2 • November 2009

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



We are already two months into the school year, and it has been one of the most hectic and unique years I've ever experienced.

For starters, we've had some amazing moments to celebrate, including the first-time nominations of Picture Butte High School and Coalhurst Elementary School

for Garfield Weston Awards for academic achievement, and Master's College's second consecutive nomination.

At the same time, this fall has been incredibly difficult for our staff as we go through budget reductions across the division. Every department, from central office and Learning Services, to transportation and technology, will see some

reduction in either funding or staffing. We are doing what we can to keep resources in schools for the good of our students.

Despite those efforts, we know this is causing disruption to the lives of people who have brought tremendous caring to our system and our students.

I'd ask all staff to be especially supportive of each other through this painful process. We are in this together.

We know from experience that if we combine our best efforts, we can create new opportunities, invent innovative solutions and preserve the excellence in our schools, programs and people. This newsletter is full of stories of Palliser people rising to challenges as they strive to provide excellent learning opportunities for children.

Now more than ever, Palliser needs its people to rise to the challenge we know lies ahead.

Kevin Gietz, Superintendent of Schools



Rose Brau and Rena Eveleigh

THANK YOU, ROSE AND RENA

The inaugural Unsung Hero award winners were nominated by Principal Jason Neville from Dorothy Dalglish School in Picture Butte:

At Dorothy Dalglish, we have two wonderful individuals who are always going above and beyond their specific job description. Rose Brau and Rena Eveleigh are hired to be custodians at DDS but their work and influence on the school staff and students surpasses what would be expected of them. Sure, they are excellent at their jobs and have pride in their work. It is what they do outside their normal working hours that make them special to everyone here.

If you have ever visited the gym at Dorothy Dalglish School, you will have seen some of Rose and Rena's handiwork. They are responsible for all the beautiful artwork, school song and bully pledge painted on the walls. It is not uncommon to see them cutting, colouring or decorating something for a hallway or classroom bulletin board. Both have bought and brought clothes for students who don't have winter coats, boots or mitts.

They are amazing people.

Rose and Rena will each receive a Palliser travel mug and a \$25 gift certificate to Moxie's for being this month's Palliser Unsung Heroes.

To nominate a Palliser Unsung Hero, please, email pulse@pallisersd.ab.ca, with the name of your nominee, what they do and why they deserve some recognition.

TECH PROJECT HITS GLOBAL STAGE

Two Palliser Regional School teachers are in Salvador, Brazil this week for four days of sharing and celebrating the incredible ways teachers from around the world are using technology for the benefit of students.

Jen Deyenberg, a teacher at Dorothy Dalglish School in Picture Butte, and Darlene Hubber, a teacher at Coalhurst Elementary, are representing a team of Palliser staff at the Partners in Learning Worldwide Innovative Education Forum, Nov. 3-6.

There, they'll join hundreds of other teachers from around the globe in presenting the ways they use Microsoft software in their classrooms.

Deyenberg and Hubber represent a team of Shelley Davis Forman, a teacher at Arrowwood School; and Doug Pharis and Jeff Bryant, teachers at Coalhurst Elementary. Todd Diakow, one of Palliser's information technology integration specialists, was pivotal in helping with the team's submission to Microsoft.

The submission was one of 13 from across Canada to be presented at the forum in Brazil, Hubber says.

But the team didn't enter the competition with their eye on any international glory.

"The reason we did it was to get free software," says Hubber. Palliser received software, called Marvin, for 120 computers at the three schools. As Deyenberg describes it, it's a programming environment that allows users to create three-dimensional animations by dragging and dropping lines of code.

Students in the participating Palliser classrooms used the software to create their own avatars (digital characters representing themselves) who then tell the individual



student's story.

The project is called "Everybody's Gotta Story," based on the Amanda Marshall song, explains Deyenberg. Grade 5 and 6 students explored the origins of their names and their family roots. She says the project incorporated learning technology, language arts and social studies.

The team hopes some of the best stories will be shown on the big screen at the Movie Mill later this month.

By sharing their stories with other classes, students had "an authentic audience for their work, not just their teacher," Deyenberg says.

Deyenberg and Hubber will present their project to the international audience. More than that, while in Brazil, they'll have an opportunity to collaborate with teachers from around the world, which may well create an opportunity for international connections for Palliser students.

The Canadian teams will be blogging from Brazil at: <http://canadainbrazil.edublogs.org/>

Hubber also will maintain a VoiceThread, sharing pictures and video of the trip at: <http://voicethread.com/share/700942/>

PRINCIPAL LOVING OPPORTUNITY HE NEARLY MISSED

After more than 20 years in school administration, Wayne Tate says he's been reinvigorated professionally as the new principal of Palliser's colony schools.

It was a challenge and opportunity he almost missed.

"I saw the posting and I dismissed it," Tate says, from his office at John Davidson School in Coaldale. "I didn't even think about it."

It took a few days for Tate to realize he didn't know enough about the job to dismiss it. What followed was a series of emails and phone conversations with outgoing colony principal Janice Loitz, whose experiences convinced Tate to apply.

Knowing some current and past colony teachers, Tate realized there were some excellent teachers working in this specialized part of the system and they had high praise for the Hutterite children and their parents.



"I realized this could be really exciting," says Tate, who was vice-principal of Kate Andrews High School last year.

Less than three months into the job, and that's exactly what it's been, as he settles into the challenges of administering 15 schools (including Albion Ridge which opened last month).

Tate says there's work to be done in addressing a misperception that a teaching assignment at a colony is somehow negative. Far from it. Being a successful colony educator requires unique skills in terms of cycling through subject matter for the wide variety of age groups in the class and teaching young children who may start school not knowing a word of English.

"You have to be familiar with the whole curriculum," Tate says. "You have to be quite a

generalist."

In return, teachers will find colony students are just as energetic, good humoured and positive as any students, and they are generally free of worldly distractions students in regular public schools have.

Tate says he tries to be out at the colony schools three of five days a week, observing and offering feedback. It's one way of addressing the isolation colony teachers may feel in schools where they are usually solo.

He uses a weekly mailout, dubbed the "Friday Focus," to help build unity among colony staff scattered across the district. He's also hoping Palliser's teachers and substitute teachers will reconsider if they've ruled out the possibility of ever working at a colony school without giving the opportunity due consideration.

"It's given a lot of renewal to me professionally," he says. "I learn new things darn near every day."

Celebrate greatness

It's become the highlight of Palliser's opening day celebrations. The Wall of Fame inductees, men and women who attended one of Palliser's schools and went on to achieve excellence in their careers and lives, offer their inspirational stories of success.

Since the Wall of Fame program began in 2007, the recipients have covered the gamut from politics, to medicine, to the arts, to athletics. And there are so many more worthy former Palliser students to honour.

Michael Saad, Coalhurst High School teacher and new chairman of the Wall of Fame committee, is counting on the eyes and ears of the entire Palliser community to make sure no worthy individual is overlooked.

"The Wall of Fame is intended to unite our school district, as we come together to celebrate the achievements of the honorees, but also give tribute to the teachers and support staff who helped influence and nurture that person's abilities, ambitions and worldview," Saad says. "Many inductees have told me the honour we bestow on them is one of the greatest achievements of their professional careers, which really tells you something about the impact we, as educators, have on people's lives."

Entry forms can be downloaded from www.pallisersd.ab.ca's documents section. The deadline to nominate is Jan. 31, 2010.

The Wall of Fame committee will begin meeting soon. If you're interested in joining the committee, please contact chairman Michael Saad at Michael.saad@pallisersd.ab.ca.

FROM VULCAN TO DOMINICA

Students at County Central High School in Vulcan know their fundraising efforts are making a difference in the lives of children 6,000 kilometres away.

This fall, the school received an email and photos from Sakina Dorival, a teacher at Bagatelle Primary School in Dominica, expressing gratitude for the donation of two new laptops.

"In this age of information technology greatly impacting and advancing the teaching and learning in schools, this donation has been quite timely," Dorival wrote. "We have started making use of the laptops and we hope to keep in touch with your school through the use of the Skype program, email and mails."

A third laptop was donated to another school on the island.

Paul Forestell, a teacher at CCHS, is a volunteer with the IT for Dominica Project, a partnership between public and corporate organizations, teachers in Palliser and the education ministry of Dominica.

He says money for the laptops was raised last year by his Grade 9 class through beverage container recycling, sponsoring a school dance and a hot lunch program. Their efforts were so successful, Forestell



says he was able to purchase over \$300 worth of teaching supplies to give to teachers participating in the IT for Dominica Project institute this summer.

"This year's grade nines have indicated they would like to do some fundraising as well," Forestell says.

While the donation of computers is a huge benefit to students in Dominica, a poor nation whose schools have scant resources, students in Palliser benefit as well.

"Hopefully by connecting our students with their students, they simply become more globally aware," Forestell says. "They feel more that they are connected to the world and they begin to behave as global citizens."



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