

## MURF fund collection continues

Pledges, promises and timed commitments aside, the total amount of fundraising dollars collected by Wilmot Township for the multi-use recreation facility, currently sits at \$780,574, including interest.

Cash contributions continue to come in regularly, adding significantly to the total banked amount since last reported by Wilmot's finance department. Over the last few months, the MURF Trust Account has grown from seat sales, which generated \$7,750, and individual donations, which brought in \$86,264.58.

The MURF fundraising committee's efforts generated a considerable amount of pledges that have yet to be collected. In total, the committee has raised about \$1.5 million towards its \$2.6 million goal.

## Wellesley post office expansion underway

The major expansion of the Wellesley Post Office building is well underway and on schedule for completion before the end of the year.

Canada Post said the project will add 55 square meters of mail processing and delivery area space to the existing building, bringing the total area to 130 square metres.

The outlet, located at 1166 Queen's Bush Road, will also receive an increase in retail space and postal box area.

There are two full-time staff members at the postal outlet, as well as two rural and suburban mail carriers.

Nith Valley Construction of New Hamburg is completing the work.



# Putting down the chalk

Hope Manor teacher retires after long career

By CINDY MATTHEWS

Rattle, click, rattle, click, rattle, click, rattle, click! That's the sound Shirley Westlake's key used to make as she keyed in and out of locks between her portable and the photocopier. Frankly, no one else but those teachers who work in custody facilities such as Hope Manor, south of Petersburg, can boast that skill set.

After more than forty years as an educator, Shirley Westlake has decided to put down her teacher's chalk. Shirley began her career as a secondary school teacher at Grand River Collegiate when it opened in the late 1960's. Throughout her career, no matter where she taught, Shirley always made her students feel valued, important and above all, like they could learn.

The fondest memories for Shirley evolved through her experiences as a teacher of students in a facility for incarcerated youth. Shirley has always been about taking risks. It was nothing for Shirley to plan and go on a trip to places like the Amazon rainforest or take a ride on an ostrich. Her students, toughened by the choices they have made in their short lives, were always mesmerized by the tales of Shirley's travels across the globe. If they were not fortunate to go with Shirley and travel, she brought the world to them. She challenged them to think differently about themselves as individuals and to recognize they had choices in life.

Prior to teaching in a custody facility, Shirley spent some time doing occasional teacher work as well as home instruction, in which

she built a relationship of trust while taking 'school to the homes' of students unwell enough to attend community schools. The friendships she built with those students still exist today.

Shirley, though, was always enamored by the students housed in the custody facility. Angry, aggressive, and defiant students walked into Shirley's portable situated on the grounds of Ray of Hope, Hope Manor Youth Facility and she was adept at figuring out how to relate to them in a kind manner. Through her gentle approach, one encased in hope for these uninterested learners, Shirley could eventually gain trust. One student wrote a letter to Shirley which stated, "...you are an exceptional teacher who was always here for us..."

Another showed her delight in Shirley with these words; "Shirley cares about us, me and my peers and spends her pocket money on us for our education and needs." Students who initially would not dare read in front of their peers would take the leap to try to orally decode text. What made the difference? Shirley believed in her students. She thought through varying her teaching techniques that she could find a moment of buy-in.

Shirley's portable was filled to the brim with items she had gathered during her world travels, like Native Canadian artifacts, pictures and posters of people from varying religious and cultural backgrounds, masks from Africa as well as student-made carvings, pottery and drums. When the students were not permitted to leave



Shirley Westlake recently retired from a long teaching career. Headed for a much needed vacation in the Galapagos Islands, Westlake said her fondest memories of teaching are working with incarcerated youth.

TIM MURPHY, INDEPENDENT STAFF

the closed custody facility of Hope Manor, Shirley brought experts to her classroom. These included people like: prisoners of war, a Holocaust survivor, a professional drummer, a native healer, and a person who hiked the West Coast Trail, to name a few.

A life-long learner, Shirley never stopped her own professional development. Whether she attended

computer camp to learn more about the latest film making technology, Quantum teaching and other workshops about behavioral management, Shirley quickly incorporated her learning into the classroom at Hope Manor.

I believe that this student summarized Shirley's career best with these words. "Shirley is the best teacher that I have ever had. She got

me to read books and do art. Before I met Shirley I never read or did art. She taught me about slavery, racism and all different types of races. She does wonders for us young offenders."

Shirley, you are a wonderful teacher who has indeed made a difference, with a smile that made your students' days. Thank you.

## Small town boredom leads to drug use: Walker

FROM front

He also said teens attending parties should secure a safe ride home, and talk to their parents about whether they can call for a ride if their driver turns out to have been drinking.

Walker also touched on the legalization of marijuana.

"It sends kids the wrong message," he said.

Noting it affects the hippocampus, the memory centre of the brain, he said high school drug users tend to see a 10 per cent drop in grades as each year passes.

Walker said small areas, such as New Hamburg, provide havens for meth labs.

Crystal meth, a mixture of anti-freeze chemicals, Coleman's camp fuel, rubbing alcohol and other chemicals, is made in homes. Rural areas are perfect for making the drug because of the difficulty in policing.

Small town boredom also contributes to drug use.

In order to curb all these problems, Walker said parents need to take control of their households.

A father himself, he said too many kids these days are growing up with a sense of entitlement, and with the knowledge of how to manipulate parents.

Walker said parents need to start early and help kids make decisions, and not let them out and experience drugs.

"Not enough parents are doing that," he said.

Ideally, parents need to be the boss of their household, and later in life be their kids friend.

There are many resources to help parents, he said, including books and local counselling agencies.

Baden Public School student Amanda Plumtree said she learned a few things

from the lecture.

"Drugs are a very bad thing to do," she said.

Plumtree added she wouldn't want to live in a crackhouse like Walker did growing up.

When asked if she would ever accept drugs or alcohol, she said she'd walk away.

Grade 7 student Drew Bryant said he learned more about marijuana.

"I was surprised how you could die from it," he said, adding he was once told marijuana stimulated the brain.

Bryant added he learned more about the many drugs on the market.

He said he had considered drinking beer later in life, but that may have changed.

"After hearing that, probably not," he said. "I'm into sports and that could screw that up."



Tom Walker spoke with W-O students last week to encourage them to make healthy choices in life.

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