

Catholic Community Newsletter

Compliments of the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board



Winter 2012

Bruce-Grey Catholic alumna sees African HIV/AIDS crisis first-hand

The idea that she would one day work among the sick and dying in Africa never entered the mind of Jody Benninger when she was a student at Immaculate Conception School in Formosa. She was more interested in learning French in the school's French Immersion program and writing her valedictory speech in grade 8.

When she graduated from Sacred Heart High School in Walkerton, again in French Immersion, Africa was still not on her radar. "I didn't really know what I wanted to do after high school, so I travelled to Alberta and spent two years working at the Chateau Lake Louise."

"Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks with compassion on this world, yours are the feet with which he walks to do good, yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world."

— St. Teresa of Avila.

It was during her time at university that the idea of helping the less fortunate began to form. Jody enrolled in Journalism at Ottawa's Carleton University, but made the transition to Sociology, graduating with an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. During the summers, she returned to Alberta to work at the Chateau Lake Louise.

During her first year at Carleton, Jody attended a presentation during HIV/AIDS Awareness Week in Ottawa by Bruce House, a home for those living with HIV or dying of AIDS.

"Volunteering at Bruce House opened my eyes to the epidemic and gave it a human face," she said. "I saw first hand how marginalized, stigmatized and often rejected people with HIV/AIDS were, in our nation's capital."

Just before graduation, Jody learned her father was dying of a terminal illness. "He encouraged me to finish my degree," she said, "but he was too sick to see me graduate." Jody became his caregiver until he passed away.



Jody poses with the volunteers she was working with after a successful campaign in the township of Motala, South Africa, August 2006.

"It was a combination of what I learned at Bruce House, what I learned from my academic studies in Sociology, and the grief I was processing around my dad's illness and passing, that drove me to learn first-hand what was really happening in Africa."

To that end, Jody applied to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for an international internship position but was unsuccessful. However, she enrolled to become a Development Instructor through an international organization where she trained as an HIV Prevention Specialist and an HIV Test Counsellor through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). She then moved to southern Africa and worked in HIV prevention and HIV test counselling.

"I completed the contract," she said, "but I still wanted to work with CIDA."

This time, Jody was successful and was able to choose where she wanted to serve. "I chose Ghana and to do something out of my HIV/AIDS comfort zone, so I chose a contract to work with the elderly."

The elderly in Ghana are at times considered a burden on society, she said. For example, grandmothers who look after grandchildren whose parents have died of AIDS are sometimes considered "witches" because of their connection to the deadly virus. Some Ghanaian communities in the northern regions

have banished women, who were suspected of witchcraft, from their villages. Some are even killed. The temporary solution is for these grandmothers to seek refuge and safety in a "witch camp".

"The camps are basically refugee camps," said Jody, "which keep the elderly and the grandchildren alive. There are currently about 1,000 women and 700 children living in six of the witches' camps in Ghana's Northern Region."

Mental health issues and mental illness are seldom understood or even recognized in Ghana and because of that the psychiatric hospitals are full of elderly people, said Jody.

When her contract with CIDA was completed, Jody returned to Canada with a wealth of knowledge and experience that could only be gained from working in Africa. She currently works for the AIDS Committee of Waterloo Region (ACCKWA) as the HIV Community Educator, teaching prevention education. In her role, Jody works closely with Public Health, service providers and even the local federal prison.

What does the future hold for Jody? "I hope to get my Master's degree and continue unpacking the experiences that changed the way I view the global village we live in," she said.

Program provides mentors for Holy Family students

A mentoring partnership between Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hanover and Holy Family School, has been described as an "excellent partnership" and a "great program for the kids".

More than 100 Holy Family students have been "mentored" by local senior high

school students over the five years the program has been in operation.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hanover trains and makes available the mentors who are then matched with Holy Family students.

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Students who were mentored in the fall, 2011, with Resource Teacher Stephanie Fortney.

Return Canadian undeliverable addresses to:
Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board
799-16th Avenue, Hanover ON N4N 3A1

Director's Message



Although it was extremely cold the past few days I saw my first glimpse of the passing of winter with the arrival of a red winged black bird at the feeder the other morning. This for me is a sign that soon we will be putting away the winter clothes and preparing for spring.

Our Trustees have been visiting each of our schools to dialogue with Principals and Staff on the topic of student achievement and well being. The staff and students in each of our schools take great pride in sharing the good work being done through creative partnerships between staff, students, parents, and our parish priests. It was obvious from the moment we entered the schools that our virtues of deep caring are integrated through everything that occurs within our Catholic learning environments. Trustees were keenly interested to learn where students are tracking and the many supports that are in place to support all students. Our classroom visits were well received and students eagerly engaged Trustees in conversations about their classroom and their school. Trustees shared at our recent Board Meeting their appreciation for all the hard work and dedication staff demonstrate to ensure student achievement and well being in a Catholic learning environment remains our focus.

Our schools are also actively involved in a number of "green projects". During our school visit to St. Anthony's we were captivated by the electricity being generated with the solar panels on the roof of the school. A video monitor is outside of the office which tracks the amount of power being generated and the monetary savings in real time. St. Mary's High School student Laurissa Christie presented a very powerful message at our February Board Meeting about the importance of caring for our environment because "what happens at the Polar Regions, really does affect the rest of the world."

When reflecting on the many good works taking place within our Catholic school system, I am reminded that "Life affords no greater responsibility, no greater privilege, than the raising of the next generation." Thank you to all our Catholic partners for providing our students with truly faith filled learning environments.

Bruce MacPherson
Director of Education

St. Mary's High School students participate in Christmas outreach program

Twenty-five students from St. Mary's High School in Owen Sound participated in the school's annual Christmas outreach program in December.

Some of the students visited Good Shepherd, a shelter for men in Toronto; some went to St. Francis Table, an organization in Toronto's Parkdale area which feeds the poor; while a third group visited A Church in the City, a centre for poverty awareness.

At Good Shepherd, the students assisted in preparing and serving lunch to the homeless, making beds, helping with laundry and organizing donated canned goods and clothing. Prior to their visit, the students were asked to bring donated clothing and blankets for the men's shelter, and bagged winter supplies such as hats, mittens, gloves and socks for distribution.

At Church in the City, Pastor Paul Burke prepared the students for what they might encounter when they walked on the streets of Toronto providing lunches to the homeless. The students also helped to prepare bagged toiletry supplies that are used as gifts for those visiting the centre.



The outreach experience is offered twice a year – before Christmas and during Easter's Holy Week.

Following their Toronto trip, the students decided to conduct a sock drive with more than

600 pairs of socks being donated, which were sent to Good Shepherd centre. The students also talked to a number of classes in the school about their experiences.

Immaculate Conception School student serves as Legislative Page

A grade 8 student from Formosa's Immaculate Conception School recently served as a Legislative Page at Queen's Park in Toronto.

Alli Meyer was one of only 22 students chosen from over 300 applications for the five-week session.

"I was thrilled to have this unique opportunity," said Alli, "since being chosen as a Legislative Page is quite an honour."

Applicants must maintain an academic average of 80 per cent or higher, be active in their school and community, and have an interest in current affairs.

In preparation for her time in the Legislature, Alli memorized the faces, names and locations of all 107 MPPs, as well as gaining a basic understanding of how the Legislature works.

As a Page, she prepared the chamber for debates, delivered messages for MPPs, took classes in Legislative processes and met with key Legislative members. The Pages also met the three party leaders, the Speaker of the House and the Clerk.

"I truly enjoyed the experience," said Alli, "and I made many new friends from across the province."



Alli Meyer with Legislature Sergeant-at-Arms Dennis Clark.

Catholic Education Week, May 6 – 12

Walking in the Light of Christ is the theme of this year's Catholic Education Week. Each day will have its own sub-theme: Listening in the Light of Christ, Learning in the Light of Christ, Living in the Light of Christ, Loving in the Light of Christ and Leading in the Light of Christ.

Activities are planned at each school. In addition, the Board's annual Applause Breakfast, slated for Monday May 7, honours selected students and their parents for their ongoing contributions to their respective school communities. The Board's annual Catholic Education Week Dinner will be held May 9. See sidebar for further details.

Parents, Grandparents, Parishioners,
Community Members

Annual Catholic Education Week Dinner

Wednesday, May 9, 6:30 p.m.
Walkerton Knights of Columbus Hall
Guest Speaker: Bishop Douglas Crosby

Tickets are \$15.00, which includes
roast turkey dinner, and are available
from your local school, or from Sarah
Borth at the Catholic Education Centre,
Hanover, 519-364-5820, ext. 236.

Listen and hear my voice

Listen and Hear My Voice is the title of a new curriculum resource championed and authored by a group of Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board staff members.

Each year the Catholic Curriculum Corporation (CCC) invites proposals for curriculum writing projects. Last spring, Theresa Harrietha, the Board's Computer Resource Consultant, with the support of Jerry Casey, Superintendent of Education and a CCC representative, submitted a proposal to assemble a team of writers to create an Information and Communications media literacy resource for elementary teachers. The proposal was approved by CCC and the team began its work.

Listen and Hear My Voice was published late last fall and provides a uniquely Catholic, faith-based perspective designed to help teachers address a variety of media literacy and cross-curricular expectations through the use of Ministry licensed software. This new resource approaches media literacy by identifying the critical learning and guiding questions which find their underpinnings in the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.

As a result of this work, teachers will have a range of Information and Communications Technology activities that will engage students to think critically about the influence of media in their lives and to provide them with the skills to respond in a manner that is consistent with their faith.

St. Mary's High School student travels to Antarctic



There are few people in the world, let alone, in Bruce-Grey who can boast of travelling to both the Arctic AND the Antarctic. Laurissa Christie, a student at Owen Sound's St. Mary's High School is one of those people. We featured her Arctic expedition in the Fall 2009 edition of the Catholic Community News. A copy of that issue is available at our website: bgcdsb.org.

In this issue, we feature Laurissa's trip to the Antarctic, in her own words. We have edited her story slightly for space consideration.

— Editor

As a victory lap student at St. Mary's High School, I have been fortunate to have experienced many unique opportunities. I have competed at three Canada Wide Science Fairs, been a cooperative education student with the Ministry of the Environment, and participated in the 2009 Students on Ice Youth Arctic Expedition. These experiences have shaped my life and allowed me to be the leader I am today.

Since returning from the Arctic, it has been my goal and dream to travel to Antarctica. This past Christmas break, I participated on the Students On Ice (SOI) 2011 Antarctic Youth Expedition. I travelled with 60 students from around the world and 30 world class educators. I received a partial scholarship from SOI.

My two-week expedition to Antarctica was one of the most educational, inspirational, fun, adventurous, and amazing weeks of my life. I met friends from around the world who I am keeping in touch with and have memories which will remain with me for my entire life.

I travelled to three continents in 14 days. I flew from Toronto to Buenos Aires to Ushuaia, the most southern city in the world. From Ushuaia we boarded a scientific research ice breaker ship to cross one of the roughest seas in the world, the Drake Passage.

It is impossible to pick a favourite moment of the expedition; the places I went were incredible and the people I experienced it with are

amazing. One of my favourite days was our first full day in Antarctica. In the morning we went to the Danger Islands which are home to one of the largest Adelie penguin colonies in all of Antarctica. One of the rules for visitors to the continent is that you must stay three metres from wildlife. In the penguin colony, everyone separated and stayed silent. The penguins were curious about who we were, and slowly they began moving toward us. One penguin came so close to me that I could have touched it. (But I did not touch it!). There were millions of penguins as far as you could see. The sound the penguins made was incredible and very loud! It was really special because Antarctica is one of the only places remaining on the planet where we can go and observe wildlife in their natural habitat untouched by humans.

In the afternoon a small group of us hiked to the top of the volcano on Paulet Island. It was an afternoon I will never forget. I have never climbed at high altitudes before. Climbing up the volcano took about three hours and was an adventure. We were going straight up, with no trail and only pebbles of volcanic material, all while wearing yellow rubber boots. My legs were burning and several times I wanted to give up. I was determined to make it to the top and I knew if I gave up I would be disappointed with myself. When the volcano top was finally in sight everyone sprinted to the top. Standing up on the top we could see the continent of Antarctica a few hundred miles in the distance. We were above the clouds, and we could hear the cries of millions of penguins below. I felt alive, I felt strong, and I felt on top of the world. The small group of us who made it were laughing, and hugging one another because nothing else mattered but that moment. We were all silent for two minutes and we stared into the distance studying the landscape, and wanting to cherish every second. We posed for photos with our nation's flags at the top of the summit, because

we are all the youth of the world. It was one of the best days of my life.

It was an amazing experience to see the impacts of climate change first hand. I saw the disappearing glaciers and the melting icecaps. When I was at Elephant Island, Antarctica, I saw a very active glacier. The glacier was calving, and the ice pounded into the water. It was amazing to see this but it was very sad and showed me one of the many signs of climate change. I cannot begin to describe with words the beauty of glaciers; they were so "big", and so fragile. Icebergs are disappearing at an alarming rate too. This is a concern because more than 70 per cent of the world's fresh water is found at the polar regions. We sailed through the iceberg factory of Antarctica, and I was moved by the size, shape, and unique properties each one has.

I learned about the impact that humans are having on the planet. I also realized the significance of the message of the most recent International Polar Year (2007-2009) "that what happens at the Polar Regions, really does affect the rest of the world." I am inspiring people to make a difference and encouraging people to live their life more green through presentations and initiatives in my school and community.

I was really fortunate to have experienced so much in two weeks. I hiked up volcanoes, swam in the Southern Ocean, hiked up glaciers, played soccer on sea ice, slid down ice caps, and saw the penguins which thrive in the Antarctic environment. I really only did see the tip of what Antarctica has to offer. This has been an experience I will never forget. I learned so much about myself, and am now confident that an environmental career is for me. I feel extremely blessed to have been given this opportunity and I cannot begin to thank all of the wonderful people who have shaped and supported me throughout my life.

— Laurissa Christie

Holy Family promotes school community and culture

Last December, students, staff and families of Hanover's Holy Family School celebrated the Advent season with its first annual "Holy Family Christmas" evening.

Families participated in a number of activities including carol singing, cookie decorating, story telling and making crafts. A highlight for the children was the live nativity complete with sheep, llamas, and a three-day-old calf. The evening concluded with a prayer service, singing Silent Night, and lighting the memo-

rial Christmas tree. Prior to the event, lights were sold on the tree in memory of loved ones who had passed away. The tree was illuminated throughout the Christmas holidays bringing a new light to the neighbourhood.

Parents commented positively about the event. "It provided a chance to participate in crafts, music and activities with my child," said one. Another commented, "The live nativity was a wonderful event that engaged so many children." Others commented that they

were able to meet many of their children's friends and that it was "a night our family could enjoy together and bring our grandparents too."

The Christmas Evening was one of a number of activities at the school designed to promote school community and culture through the engagement of parents. Other events included a Literacy Night and a Pumpkin Carving Night.



Raising responsible children topic of public lecture at Hanover school

Children in today's fast-paced society are rushed and hurried. Parents often don't know how much or how little to do for them. On the one hand, they want to help them; on the other hand, they want their children to learn responsibility.

Colin Sturdy, Ph.D will attempt to sort out those issues parents face and will describe practical ways to change how parents deal with their children to foster independence and responsibility.

Dr. Sturdy has over 27 years teaching experience, including 10 years as a former school principal. In addition to being a professional speaker, he is a father, author, coach, and community volunteer. He resides in Toronto, Ontario.

The talk is slated for Hanover's Holy Family School on Monday, April 16 at 7 p.m. and is sponsored by the school's Advisory Council. Childcare is available for children up to eight years. Please call 519-364-2760 by April 12 if you require childcare.

Kincardine school supports green initiatives

On the grid

In addition to teaching its students, Kincardine's St. Anthony's School is generating electricity for the province's power grid. The school recently installed solar panels on its roof, with the assistance of a grant from the Ministry of Education.

In addition, a video monitor has been installed in the hallway outside the school's main office so that staff and students can track, in real time, the amount of power that is being generated by the solar panels; historical data; and a comparison of the amount of gas, propane or wood that is being saved through the use of the solar panels.

Green Team

St. Anthony's Green Team has taken the lead in the creation of a butterfly garden, thanks to a \$1,000 "Green Apple" grant from the Metro grocery chain. Each class has participated in planting seeds for the garden. The project not only provides valuable educational opportunities for students, but also helps to improve the local ecosystem.



New Logo

The Green Team has a new logo, created by Jeanelle Paguirigan, a grade 4 student. Jeanelle's design was chosen from a number that were submitted by the students.

Earth Day

St. Anthony's is planning a "Green Fair" in April to help celebrate Earth Day. The school is inviting local organizations to set up booths at the event to provide "eco-friendly" information about various products and services in the community.

Water bottle campaign

A student-led campaign to discourage students, staff and families from using plastic, disposable water bottles will run through the Lenten season in Bruce-Grey Catholic schools.

The campaign will raise awareness of the social, economic, health and environmental issues regarding disposable water bottles. A forum for students and staff from all schools will conclude the program and will provide an opportunity for students to share their achievements and what they learned during the campaign.

St. Anthony's School Lego Team competes in Waterloo tournament

The FIRST LEGO League Robotics Team at Kincardine's St. Anthony's School competed recently at the University of Waterloo. The 12-student team was one of 27 competing in the Southern Ontario Regional Tournament.

Every September, FIRST LEGO League (FLL) releases a Challenge, which is based on a real-world scientific topic. Each Challenge has three parts: the Robot Game, the Project and the FLL Core Values. Teams of children with one adult coach, participate in the Challenge by programming an autonomous robot to score points on a themed playing field, developing a solution to a problem they have identified, all guided by the FLL core values. The teams then attend a regional tournament.

Each year, the FLL designates a theme for the team projects. The 2011 theme was designing an engineering solution to improve food safety. For the tournament, the St. Anthony's team divided into two "sub-teams" with one group working on improving the

efficiency of hand washing, while the second group focused on more effective sanitization of cutlery.

Last September, the groups began work on both their robots and on their food safety projects.

"The competition gives the students an opportunity to develop innovative engineering solutions to solve problems," said St. Anthony's teacher and team coordinator Amanda Saxton.

At the tournament in Waterloo, the teams participated in the robot competitions, then presented their projects before a panel of judges.

St. Anthony's School has been competing in the FLL since 2007. Team members are from grades 4 to 8. A \$2,000 donation from Bruce Power to St. Anthony's School helped with transportation to the event, registration and the cost of the LEGO robot.



Shortest day of PLAY

Three Bruce-Grey Catholic Schools teamed up to participate in the Bruce and Grey Counties activity challenge, Shortest Day of PLAY. Sacred Heart in Teeswater, Sacred Heart in Mildmay, and Immaculate Conception in Formosa collectively logged 1191 hours of play on December 21, earning them third place in the two-county challenge.

The Shortest Day of PLAY – and its counterpart, the Longest Day of PLAY on June 21 – are part of a program (PLAY) in Bruce and Grey counties designed to champion increased activity to combat obesity and poor health generally.

"Community members and leaders in Grey Bruce are taking important steps toward championing increased activity which will lead to a healthier, more vibrant region," said a news release from the Grey Bruce Health Unit, a sponsor of the event.

Students from the Teeswater and Mildmay schools spent the afternoon skating, thanks to a donation of ice time by the Municipality of South Bruce. The students walked to and from the arenas, and in Teeswater stopped by the municipal office and sang Christmas carols. In Formosa, activities were organized by the school's student Spirit in Motion leaders.

Program provides mentors for Holy Family students

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"Mentored students are often those from a single parent family, or those with low self-esteem or behavioural issues," said Stephanie Fortney, Special Education Resource Teacher at Holy Family School. "Big Brothers and Big Sisters and school staff try to match the personalities of the mentors and those being mentored."

Mentors spend one hour a week during class time with each of their Holy Family students. The matched pairs participate in physical activities, crafts, reading, games or just talking with each other. While most of the activities are one-on-one, there are also several "theme days" for the entire group. In addition, the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization held a Christmas party for the entire organization and invited the Holy Family "mentored" students to be on the parade float.

"The program continues to be very successful," said Stephanie. "The mentors are always punctual and ask the right questions so they can provide the best advice and support to their younger charges."

Last semester there were four mentors who worked with four students each. This semester 20 students are matched with five mentors.

As part of the mentors' training, the high school students participate in a child safety program presented by a Big Brothers Big Sisters coordinator. The mentors also have regular police checks.

Stephanie points out another, albeit, longer term advantage to this program. "By participating in this Big Brothers Big Sisters program, both the mentors and Holy Family students being mentored form positive memories about the organization which might motivate them to become Big Brothers or Big Sisters later in life. There is always a waiting list for matches."

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.

Comments may be directed to: 519-364-5820
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The Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board can issue tax receipts, in the full amount, for any financial donations made to its schools. Cheques should be made to the Bruce-Grey Catholic School Board Charitable Trust and the name of the school should be noted in the memo line. Check to be sure – if your taxes are not directed to the Catholic school system, you can't vote for Catholic trustees in the next election.