



Local 31 Newsletter

December 2014

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Message from the President

Dear Members,

It is an honour and a pleasure to be able to contribute to our Local newsletter this month, and it is my hope that you will find this newsletter to be informative, engaging and uplifting. I am excited about the opportunity this newsletter presents to us, not only as a means of sharing information, but for serving as a catalyst for member engagement.

A major focus of the ATA over the last few years has been to increase and maintain member engagement in the Local and the Association at-large. Without a membership, engaged in addressing issues in public education, and informed about the political, economic and social realities of our vocation, teachers risks losing their reputation as an ardent advocate for a properly-funded public education system in the province of Alberta. Your involvement, whether that means keeping abreast of educational reform movements in the province or attending a Local Council meeting, is needed.

There is no politician, textbook publisher, Google employee, newspaper editor, superintendent or school trustee who knows what students in your classroom need more than you do, yet, it seems that increasingly these types are feverishly (and in some cases devilishly) cobbling together educational schemes and setting institutional directions extolling the aspirations of something called '21st century learning'.

When was the last time you were ever asked for your 'professional opinion' on educational matters? As a teacher, you are the professional in the field of education and your voice needs to be heard on matters that directly affect the quality of education in this province.

Please find a moment during this holiday-season to become increasingly-informed on issues of educational importance and become ever-engaged in sharing your expertise with your MLAs, members of your community, colleagues and family. To this end I strongly encourage you to visit the latest and greatest ATA platform for engagement and information.

At <http://www.bettereducationtogether.com/> you will be able to find, and share, information and stories about the issues affecting Alberta's teachers and schools.

On behalf of Local 31 Council, thank you for taking the time to become engaged in your profession and informed about the issues.

Sincerely,

Christopher Tuckey
ATA Local 31 President

Happy Holidays



*...bring the best quality
education to our
students...*

Around ECACS News

The current buzz around East Central Alberta Catholic Schools, is letting your light shine! In our 8 schools serving over 3100 students, smiling faces and hard work is common in the hallways and on the playgrounds. We are dedicated to producing outstanding students in all areas of development, including spirituality and technological innovation.

Teachers are working in the spirit of Christ and are sharing their gifts and talents through collaboration. The collaborative teaching [community](#) serves teachers from all our schools to bring the best quality education from our students in rural communities to our more populated towns.

This Christmas season remember to pray, reflect, and celebrate the opportunities we are blessed with. Cherish the tender moments with your students as they walk through their journey of faith, and help them to see the non-commercial side of gift giving this season.

Congratulations on completing the fall term and know that your hard work is applauded and recognized. Merry Christmas and God bless.

Feature School: Blessed Sacrament – Wainwright.



Our school has seen many changes this year, with the addition of new staff members, increased student enrolment, and a new gymnasium floor after some moisture damage occurred in late August.

There has been a greater emphasis on student involvement in tandem with being an engaged thinker spirited with an entrepreneurial drive this year, with increased leadership and student council activities. Senior Leadership teacher Vikki Boyles devotes her Wednesday lunch hours to accommodate students wishing to take the Leadership CTS course, and she has her students running various activities as well, during lunch hour and after school clubs to increase student involvement in the Arts and Athletics.

Gilbert Kohle is growing a Robotics Lego League for Elementary students, wishing to test their skills in creating a motorized Lego robot to automate through a course under a strict time objective.

Adelia Gaydosh has been busy organizing for the Provincial Handball games that will be hosted at Blessed Sacrament in the spring. The Senior girls hand ball players are back to back provincial champions.

In addition to quality learning opportunities, Blessed Sacrament is using Google Chromebooks in various classes with students reducing paper usage by "sharing" their assignments with their respective teachers, and student motivation has increased as they are able to collaborate on assignments in real time, with Google Drive automatically saving their work every few seconds.

Blessed Sacrament wishes everyone a safe and restful Christmas Break. Merry Christmas!



Grade 8 teacher Sharon Romanow teaches jr. high Leadership and runs a 12 days of Giving food drive each year.



Around BTPS News

In the news from Paradise Valley and Vermilion Outreach:

Students and staff at E.H. Walter School in Paradise Valley are gearing up for their annual series of Christmas events. The Elementary Christmas Sale takes place Thursday 4 December. The Christmas Concert and Family Dance will take place on Friday 12 December. The Junior/Senior High Christmas Dinner with local seniors takes place on Wednesday 17 December. Merry Christmas everyone!

Submitted by David McKillop.

Jodi Simmonds, the VIBE (Vermilion Is Being Empowered) and Loranne Ganton, the FSL (Family School Liaison) have done an excellent job this year creating a web of support for our students at the Vermilion Outreach School. A number of individuals from community agencies have been invited to present at our school about the services they provide and how students can access their support. To create a visual of all the supports available to our students Jodi and Loranne developed posters of all of the school staff and each of the individuals from agencies after their visit. Each poster consists of a picture, name of individual, agency represented, job title, description of how they can help, contact information and most importantly a statement that they are another caring adult available if needed. To add to the poster for each individual they will add a summary of the information provided at each session for any students that missed the presentation. The wall of support is displayed in the hallway for all students and parents to see. They have added community agencies such as Addictions & Mental Health, Alberta Health Nurse Practitioner, Alberta Mental Health, Alberta Health Services Sexual Health Consultant. We have a future visit scheduled with a local RCMP member. The developing web of support shows there are many caring adults for the many students attending the Vermilion Outreach School.

Submitted by Kym Wasylik-Nicoll

Feature School: **WHS** COMMANDOS

Wainwright High School has been making upgrades to move to a new website and putting on a fresh face, to help improve their communication with parents and staff.

The Industrial Education department received a 10" Compound Miter Saw from a generous donation by Abe Fast, and students and staff alike are quite thankful.

Coming up this week on Friday is the 26th Annual Senior's Banquet from 11 am to 2pm. Next Friday 35 leadership students will be partying at their West Edmonton Mall Christmas Party, enjoying a scavenger hunt, supper, shopping and a movie.

The outstanding achievement of Wainwright High School students, will be showcased at the Academic Awards Assembly from 7-9pm, Wednesday December 17th.

Have a safe and restful Christmas break. See you in 2015.

...community agencies have been invited to present at our school about the services they provide...

Alberta Health Services: Mental Health and Addictions

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services.asp?pid=service&rid=6921>

Alberta Health Services: Sexual Health

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services.asp?pid=saf&rid=1002273>



Point to Ponder - The White Envelopes

The following story is a bit of a tradition with Insight of the Day just before Christmas. If you have not seen it before it is well worth the read. If you have, it is worth the reminder.

White Envelopes

It's just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past 10 years or so.

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas. Oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it, overspending, the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma, the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else.

Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way. Our son, Kevin, who was 12 that year was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended, and shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church.

These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in the spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge defeat. Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them." Mike loved kids, all kids, and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse.

That's when the idea of his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition, one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on. The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents. As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there.

You see we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning, it was joined by three more. Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation watching as their fathers take down the envelope. Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit, will always be with us.

Nancy W. Gavin

This story is a true story and inspired four siblings from Atlanta, GA to start The White Envelope Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting this tradition and charitable giving. The White Envelope Project founders are regularly in touch with the family in the article and are thrilled to have their support. The Gavin family and now thousands of others continue to celebrate the "white envelope" tradition each year. For more information about The White Envelope Project or to honor a loved one through a "white envelope" gift this year, please visit their website: www.WhiteEnvelopeProject.org