

February 2018

# the torch



Trustees Peter Kotyk (far left) and Brianne Goertzen (second from left) visit a parent-child program at Wayoata Elementary School.

## Free parent-child programs offer value

A person's educational journey isn't limited to the years between kindergarten and graduation.

RETSD and its board of trustees believe in lifelong education that starts as early as possible. That's why the division invests in free parent-child programming for RETSD families that engages children from birth to the weeks before their first day at kindergarten.

"We recognize how important those early years are for getting the best possible start on the road to school," says trustee Peter Kotyk. "And we're very proud of the wide variety of programs we

have and how they meet the needs of our community."

As part of the Early Childhood Matters Parent Child Coalition (a Healthy Child Manitoba initiative), RETSD offers weekly, single-session, and drop-in programs for preschoolers at more than 20 convenient neighbourhood school locations.

The division also supports families with the transition into school, so the kindergarten year becomes a time of learning and joy for both the child and parents.

"These programs are invaluable in encouraging family involvement in education, as well as fostering a closer community in the division,"

explains trustee Brianne Goertzen. "We recognize that children's first teachers are their parents and they are our partners in their children's education."

New students are welcomed with Growing & Learning events, where families move through fun, interactive stations featuring activities with kindergarten teachers, meet-and-greets with health and student services professionals, and even vision and hearing screening. For more, visit: <http://bit.ly/2G9jg8l>

Over the summer, RETSD offers Kinder Camps for children about to enter kindergarten. They and their parents will explore print,

rhyme, music, early math and beginning sounds, and become acquainted with the kindergarten day schedule. For more, visit: <http://bit.ly/2DvMKQu>

As well, families are encouraged to take part in Literacy Links. Trained facilitators provide the whole family with materials, resources and fun ideas for learning and preparing together for the great adventure of kindergarten. To sign up, visit: <http://bit.ly/2DuqKBn>

Free parenting support programs are also offered, addressing topics such as positive discipline, child development, safety, health and behaviour. For more, visit: <http://bit.ly/2DsJe57>







Culture Circle members along with teachers Murray Wichert (top left) and Madison Allford (right of Mr. Wichert).  
(Missing: teacher Christine Kaegi)

## Culture Circle has giving spirit

Staff and students across the division are always on the lookout for ways to give back to their

community, and the Culture Circle group at John W. Gunn Middle School is a great example.

They launched a Siloam Mission Gift Pack Drive in December with the goal of collecting enough items

to create 80 gift packs for those who make use of the mission. Each pack included three toiletries, one warm clothing item, and a treat such as chocolate, a granola bar or a restaurant gift card.

The school community responded with such generosity that the Culture Circle was able to more than double their goal and assemble 163 gift packs. They also held a pizza sale to raise funds for the mission.

The Culture Circle is a group—open to all students—that is dedicated to learning about, supporting and celebrating Indigenous culture with a focus on leadership in the school and community.

This was their first charitable initiative, and they're already in the brainstorming stage for another.



The Grade 3 and 4 students with the calendars they created and endangered stuffed animals provided by the WWF as a token of thanks for their donations.

## Students 'adopt' endangered animals

It's never too early for children to learn they can make a positive difference in the world.

Bird's Hill School teacher librarian

Leslie Dent Scarcello and teacher Katelyn Chuckrey had the opportunity to teach this to a class of Grade 3 and 4 students when they were researching endangered

animals on the World Wildlife Fund website.

The students discovered that endangered animals can be

"adopted" through the WWF. The organization allows for the symbolic adoption of over 30 different species of animals, so it can raise funds to conserve wildlife.

As Ms. Dent Scarcello and Ms. Chuckrey had hoped, the students wanted to help. They used their research to create public service announcement videos that were shared with schoolmates. They also created art that was used to make calendars, which they sold to raise funds.

They intended to adopt one animal, but ended up blasting past their initial target and raising enough to adopt 12!

"They definitely learned their age isn't a limit on making change in the world," says Ms. Dent Scarcello. "We had such a great time leading these endangered animal ambassadors through the experience!"





## Student success: Marcy Markusa

Thousands of Manitobans start off

their day or drive to work enjoying the dulcet tones of a former Kodiak.

Marcy Markusa is the host of Information Radio, the weekday CBC morning show, and has been with CBC since 2001. She is also a former North Kildonan denizen and alumnae of Donwood Elementary School, Chief Peguis Junior High, and River East Collegiate (home of the Kodiaks).

It was as a student in RETSD that Ms. Markusa says she found her voice, discovering the confidence to form opinions and own a stage.

"I really feel like my strengths were encouraged," she says, and jokes, "I apologize to the teachers I interrupted over the years on my

way to a microphone!"

Ms. Markusa's comfort in front of a microphone and enthusiasm for her local community are evident when she's on air. She's also known for being a tenacious interviewer, willing to ask the tough questions to get the answers her listeners want. She recalls a high school gym teacher who showed similar determination in his effort to get her to run 1500 metres.

"I said I could never finish the distance," she says. "But he encouraged me to just try and then ran behind me slowly, and I did it. It might as well have been a marathon for me in that moment."

Ms. Markusa does stories regularly about how school, society and

students' needs have changed, but she says what hasn't changed is the very real impact a teacher can have on a student, and how that can have ripple effects that last a lifetime.

She reminisced about her Grade 3 teacher "Mr. Grywinski," who made special efforts to provide encouragement and show concern for her well-being.

"I saw him years later when I was working at CBC," she says. "I was live on location on a dark, lonely morning and waiting to go on air, and there he was, walking nearby!"

"I rolled down the window and finally got to thank him for helping me find my way."



Members of the Miles Macdonell Collegiate Angling Club present an \$800 donation to the KidFish Ice Derby for the Winnipeg Children's Hospital and CancerCare Manitoba. Every year, the Angling Club fundraises for a variety of charities.



(Left to right) Trustees Colleen Carswell, Eva Pryszney and John Toews with students from RETSD's English-Ukrainian Bilingual Program at Bernie Wolfe Community School for the annual Kolyada (Ukrainian Christmas) celebration on January 25.



Culinary arts teacher Raymond Czakay (left) helps students serve Arctic-char-filled Russian coulibiac to diners at one of Kildonan-East Collegiate's gourmet luncheons. The luncheons are open to the public and provide an opportunity for culinary arts students to show off their talents. Call the school for more information.



## Volunteer spotlight

School volunteer Laura Kornelsen is a well-known face at Hampstead School. She's worked with the school breakfast program for

10 years, and serves nutritious food to students two of the three days each week that it operates. Ms. Kornelsen also serves as the volunteer co-ordinator for the program. She began volunteering at Hampstead after learning about the opportunity through her church. Hampstead's breakfast program is supported by Eastview Community Church and Braeside Church, and through government grants. Dedicated volunteers like Ms. Kornelsen make it all possible. For more about volunteering in RETSD, visit: [www.retsd.mb.ca/Community/Volunteer](http://www.retsd.mb.ca/Community/Volunteer)



# Trustee Brian Olynik marks 20 years

RETSD and the board of trustees would like to thank trustee Brian

Olynik for his dedication as he marks his 20th year serving as a

trustee for the division.

Mr. Olynik was first encouraged by family and friends to run for trustee in 1989. He has been a trustee from 1989–2002, from 2006–2010, and from 2014–present.

“I decided to run to be a trustee for a number of reasons, most importantly because I’m a teacher and education is a passion to me,” says Mr. Olynik.

As a longtime educator employed at Stony Mountain Institution, Mr. Olynik has seen first-hand what can happen to young people who have chosen the wrong path in life. He believes a good education is one of the keys to living a successful adult

life, and he was and is determined to promote and support education in his role as a trustee.

“We’re the advocate and the public watchdog,” he says. “We’re the ones who have to make sure that when money is spent on education, it’s done properly, and the public gets the best value and education possible for their tax dollars.”

Board chair Colleen Carswell has worked with Mr. Olynik for many years and is grateful for his commitment to the division’s students, parents, staff and community. “Only a few trustees reach this pinnacle of providing such a long and dedicated service.”



(Left to right) Principal Susan Reynolds; superintendent Kelly Barkman; trustee Rod Giesbrecht; Ron Schuler, MLA for St. Paul; board vice-chair Michael West; and Brian Duval, councillor for East St. Paul

# New classrooms for Dr. Hamilton

RETSD board vice-chair Michael West and Infrastructure Minister Ron Schuler visited Dr. F.W.L. Hamilton School on November

20 to announce that the school will soon benefit from two new classrooms.

“Adding two new permanent

classrooms will help us to better meet the needs of our students, staff and school community,” said Mr. West.

As the population of East St. Paul has steadily grown and development has increased, the school has been using portable classrooms to accommodate its student population.

While the portables have served their purpose over the past several years, it’s time for permanent classroom spaces to take their place.

The project is supported by planned capital spending by the province in 2017–18 for public school infrastructure projects.

“Once complete, it will be a great space where our students can continue to learn and grow,” says Mr. West. “I can tell you we’re proud of the work that goes on inside this building to educate our students.”

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For more information about the board of trustees, visit: [www.retsd.mb.ca/BoardofTrustees](http://www.retsd.mb.ca/BoardofTrustees)