

Your Candidates Election 2007

Bill Vrebosch passionate about family, music, people



ALL SMILES: Bill Vrebosch cracks a joke during a speech after it was announced in mid-May that he would be the Conservative candidate in Nipissing in the upcoming provincial election.

Andy Campbell
Staff Reporter

ALMAGUIN — There are some who probably won't remember a time when Bill Vrebosch wasn't at least deputy mayor of East Ferris.

Although being mayor has proven to be a full-time job for the past 30 years, the Progressive Conservative candidate for Nipissing has always made time for his two greatest passions: his family and his music. Indeed, the two are closely linked for Vrebosch, who grew up in a musical family. His parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents all played.

"On a Sunday afternoon, we went to my grandmother's place and we played music," he said.

It was in this environment that he learned to play multiple instruments.

"I torture a few," he is quick to point out. "I mainly play the sax and clarinet."

In the 1960s, Vrebosch toured with his own band, Billy and the Belmonts.

"Then I ran into Dion and the Belmonts, and he was making all the money, so we had to change it," Vrebosch recalls.

In the early 70s, he founded a new band, the Descendants of Tyme. It was around this time that Vrebosch was asked to consider turning his night job into his day job. Tom Harrington, a school superintendent in Sault Ste. Marie, suggested to Vrebosch, who was working in a

bank at the time, that he would make a good music teacher. Vrebosch returned to North Bay and attended teacher's college. So began a 30-year teaching career.

Those early years offered little sleep, as Vrebosch, also newly married, taught during the day, played music at night for nearly twice the pay, and spent the rest of his time taking courses to raise his teacher's salary. Since then he's taught students from all over the area, and even some of their children.

"I've had 17-plus thousand students over the years," he said.

It was with the support of his wife, Gisele, that Vrebosch was able to juggle so much, and eventually add municipal politics. That was nothing new for her, as her father was reeve of the township in the 1950s.

"She's my left arm and my right arm," said Vrebosch. "I give her credit for my first election win, because she knew everybody. I was the newbie."

Vrebosch has taken his political involvement beyond East Ferris, playing an active role in the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). This work has already taken him to Queen's Park, and shown him how the rest of the province sees Northern Ontario. He once caught some flak for wearing a t-shirt that proclaimed North Bay "three stop lights north

of Toronto." He discovered long ago that looking out for local interests requires one to develop a wider view. This led him to seek the Liberal nomination about 20 years ago, but that just seemed like the best way to accomplish something at the time.

"I've always voted person," he said. "I've never voted party."

He did, however, scale back his political involvement for a while in the 80s, to spend more time with their four growing children, Lisa, Louise, Bill Jr., and Tanya.

"The job of mayor demands that I'm in the office every day of the week," he said.

Vrebosch decided to run for the position of councillor. He topped the polls in that election, however, automatically becoming deputy mayor.

But even campaigning was a family affair for the Vrebosch family, the kids helping to stuff mailboxes and knock on doors. Some of it managed to rub off on them, of course.

His youngest daughter ran for North Bay city council last year, coming very close to being elected and impressing some of the more experienced candidates.

"I felt really proud as a parent," said Vrebosch, noting that son Bill Jr. also has the makings of a good politician should he choose to give it a try.

"They've come up with it, they've lived through it," he said. Vrebosch recalls attending

many community events as a family, in East Ferris and in the surrounding communities.

"We don't just live in an area, we live in an area," he said. "It's the way we are. We're part of everybody's community."

A few years ago, that community involvement led Vrebosch back to the stage. Along with Gisele, he now plays venues around the area. Without a band, they are free to play where and when they want, and they don't have to charge any money when they play for charity. They are free to enjoy another passion they share: people.

"Between my wife, my daughter and myself, if you put the three of us in a room with 1,000 people, we'd know everybody in the room," he said.

Vrebosch recalls a story from a few years back. An area family had car trouble near his home, so he invited them in to watch his TV and help themselves to soft drinks while he called someone up to get them going again. He likes helping people, which is why he got into politics in the first place. And the community has been very good to the Vrebosch family as well.

"They're all so nice. People know the age of my children, they know where they live, they know where I live. I rarely locked my door until about five years ago," he said. "I live in the community, but the community lives within me too."

Donations for helipad can be given to Lions

The sympathy of the community is expressed to the family, relatives and friends of Wilma Vervaeke of Brantford, who died peacefully on Monday, Sept. 17 in her 81st year. Wilma and her husband Gerry operated a store in Restoule for many years before they retired and moved away.

The community of Restoule is seeking donations for a proposed helipad for emergency patients' transport to hospital. Donations can be sent to Restoule and District Lions Club, market for helipad, c/o Al Proctor, 95 James and Mabel Road, Restoule, ON P0H 2R0.

The Argyle Lions Club is having another fish fry on Thursday, Sept. 27 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Arnstein Community Centre on Hwy. 522. The cost is \$9 for adults, children six to \$13 \$5 and ages five and under are free. Proceeds will go toward community betterment. Contact Lion Mike at 757-2160 for further information.

Euchre results for Sept. 18 follow.

High scorers, Vera Grawbarger and Bob Nichols; low score, Shirley Hankinson; lone hands, Helen and Bob Nichols.

Games begin at 1 p.m. Proceeds go toward maintenance at the Restoule cemetery.

Congratulations to Don and Faye Poole of Golden Valley, who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with family, relatives and friends at Commanda Hall on Saturday, Sept. 15.

There was a better turnout at the annual and election meeting at the community centre last Thursday evening. Those elected to the local services board of Restoule were Dawn Stripe, Anne Fraser, Al Proctor and Bill Whittington and secretary treasurer Jean Mohr. They take office Oct. 1.

Those elected to the local roads board were Al Proctor, Percy Lethbridge and Dan Ellis and secretary treasurer

Jean Mohr. They take office Jan. 1.

Those elected to the Restoule non-profit landfill were Cecile Hoffman, Bruce Wain, Elsa Wain, Doug Harris, Rod Dugas, Herb McVeety and D. Baker, and they also take office Jan. 1.

Many thanks to all the volunteers on the board as they put in quite a few hours on our behalf.

Our best to those in the hospital, at home recuperating or not feeling up to par.

We couldn't ask for better weather lately and the leaves are turning quickly. Thanksgiving is coming and the Restoule firemen's auxiliary turkey supper will take place on Saturday, Oct. 6 at the community centre. More about this later.

Nikki Belec from Chaput Hughes was here for an overnight stay recently.

Bruce and Elsa Wain are back from a round trip to the east coast, including Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ann and Les Fraser are back from a trip to the Norwegian Fiords. Have a good week.

South River could have DSL by mid-November

Andy Campbell
Staff Reporter

SOUTH RIVER — A local councillor has suggested that South River could have land-based high-speed Internet by the middle of November, but service provider Bell Canada has not confirmed the date.

Sundridge councillor Bill de Vries recently reported to his council that Tom Blake, Bell's general manager for

central Ontario, had given him a mid-November launch date for digital subscriber line (DSL) service in the Village of South River.

DSL is the simplest and least expensive of high-speed options, utilizing existing telephone lines without disrupting phone use.

The Almaguin News has attempted to confirm the launch date with Blake, but he has not responded.

Sundridge, Strong hang onto four-bloom rating at 2007 CIB event

SUNDRIDGE — The Communities in Bloom committee for Sundridge and Strong might not have achieved a perfect five blooms this year, but they are very pleased nonetheless.

"We maintained our four blooms again, but we missed our elusive fifth one," said Judy High. "We

scored 22 points higher than we did last year, but still not quite enough."

The results were announced during the Communities in Bloom Ontario awards conference held in Woodstock from Sept. 14 to 16. Sue Ayotte and Wanda Hill represented Sundridge-Strong at the conference.



PHOTO BY LAUREL CAMPBELL
OPENING THE BLUE DOORS: Nipissing riding's provincial Conservative candidate Bill Vrebosch opens his campaign office for business in North Bay. Cutting the opening ribbon on July 27 are, from left, former Nipissing Conservative MPP Al McDonald, Bill and Gisele Vrebosch and campaign manager Sherry Culling.

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