

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing John Hertell

BY PAULA BOON

He's heard every wienie joke there is.

"I get a lot of ribbing about the name of my business," says John Hertell, owner of the Elegant Wienie Roast. "People call me Wienie John, things like that."

But he doesn't mind. When Hertell bought the outfit nine years ago, he chose to keep the name selected by the previous owners.

"It's fun," he says.



Seven days a week, seven months a year, Hertell can be found behind his cart near the town hall on Main Street, chatting with customers while preparing their orders on his portable grill.

"It's a very enjoyable business," he says. "You're meeting people all the time and you're outside."

A steady stream of customers stop by each day, many of them regulars.

"When I see them coming, I put on what I know they want," says Hertell.

The hot dog seller is such an integral part of life on Main Street that when the town held a millennium art contest to find a painting that represented Huntsville, it was an image including him that was chosen to be reproduced on hundreds of posters.

Out of 42 entries, the public voted for a watercolour depicting Hertell, his cart and four teenagers, with the town hall in the background. The original painting, created by Margot Cook, still hangs in the mayor's office.

Hertell's presence on Main Street extends well beyond being part of a pleasant scene, however. Tourists and residents alike see him as their go-to man.

"I hear a lot about what's going on in the community, the word on the street," he explains. "People sometimes come to find out what's going on."

A Silver Ambassador, Hertell is also a rich source of information for visitors to the town. "I like to talk to tourists and make them feel welcome in our community," he says.

From his vantage point, Hertell has ample time to observe the town and think about the direction in which it is headed.

He is looking forward to the completion of River Mill Park, and he also thinks improving the lighting on Main Street should be a priority. "It doesn't affect my business, but I'd like to see it done," Hertell says.

Overall, though, he is very impressed by what he sees. "The improvement to the downtown in the past nine years has been phenomenal," he says. "They've created a really nice atmosphere. I have to give the town and BIA kudos for what they've done."

Hertell particularly appreciates the gardening volunteers who beautify Main Street, and he shows it by feeding them all when they gather to fill the planters and hang baskets each June.

Volunteers in general receive Hertell's praise. He loves the "wonderful spirit of volunteerism in the community" when it comes to both the arts and sports.

No wonder he notices their efforts: Hertell is an active volunteer himself.

With some other members of his congregation at Trinity United, Hertell is working toward the creation of a public garden between the church and the town hall.

A member of the Huntsville-Lake of Bays Rotary Club, he was also on the entertainment committee for last week's Bell Huntsville Dragonboat Races.

"Oh, and I'm an associate member of the Downtown Huntsville Business Improvement Association," he adds, "and I help out with their events when I can."

Between his volunteer commitments and work — he now has three carts, including one at Canadian Tire and one by Price Chopper — Hertell keeps busy. But he says he enjoys the pace of life here.

When asked if he plans to retire in Huntsville, he answers with an emphatic "yes." However, the timing of his retirement is up in the air.

Hertell didn't expect to keep the business this long, but he enjoys it too much to stop. "After nine years I can still get excited about hot dogs," he says.

LETTERS

Faith-based schools would welcome government support

I was pleased to read in last week's Forester that both of the Progressive Conservative candidates for this fall's provincial election say that part of the party's education platform would be to extend funding to other faith-based schools besides the Catholic school boards if they are elected.

This has been done in the past under the former government, but was rescinded under the McGinty government.

Funding for faith-based schools is often not a popular concept to public school supporters and I believe many of the objections are based on misconceptions of what alternate schooling means.

Many people equate these schools with elite enclaves of privileged, wealthy families unwilling to send their children to public schools to mingle with

the general population.

Undoubtedly, schools like that do exist, but the overwhelming majority of faith-based schools are far removed from this picture.

I can only speak from my experience in one of these faith-based schools, as I taught for 20 years at the Muskoka Christian School in Utterson, and have enjoyed ongoing involvement there. However, I have spoken with many teachers and parents involved in other faith-based schools who share the same experience.

When I taught there, many of the families were making financial sacrifices to pay the tuition necessary for the funding of an excellent education, as is in the public system.

What most public school supporters don't realize is that while a faith-based school sup-

porter is paying their own child's tuition, they are also paying the same school tuition through their taxes to support the public school system as the public school supporters are paying. The difference is that they pay twice.

We pay public school tax to supply teachers, classroom supplies and bussing, none of which faith-based school goers are using. They are not even allowed to avail themselves of bus privileges even if a public school bus goes right past their door and passes their school.

This is not meant as a complaint, because it is a choice they made. Many of the parents at a faith-based school choose to drive older cars, take a second job, or do without material things because they want to give their children the education of their choice.

Just think: They are helping to keep public school classes smaller, lessen their supply needs and bussing needs, and are paying to have all these things they don't use.

Choosing to have their children educated from a Christian perspective so that the values that are important to them in their homes are supported and enhanced during their children's school day does not mean that they receive a less balanced curriculum than the public school offers.

Their curriculum is full, fun-filled, balanced and educationally exceptional, and meets all government standards.

The children are not isolated, as many believe, and are not without diversity of friends and culture. Children from the public schools are their friends and neighbours, and many of

their closest friends are often in their sports teams and community clubs.

I admire and respect the fine teachers and administrators in the public system. Many of my relatives and friends teach in it. I know how hard they work and how dedicated they are to their profession.

Faith-based schools are not striving to be competitive. We are all in this wonderful, demanding business of raising

this great country's next generation together.

I hope the above information will help people understand the difficulties faced by many families who struggle to provide for their children the schooling of their choice, and also assist many families who, at the present time, can't afford to send their children even though it would be their greatest desire to do so.

A. Kerr
Port Sydney

No reason to keep funding Catholic schools

Re: Province to fund religious schools? Huntsville Forester, Aug. 8.

How about taxpayers not funding any faith-based religious institutions?

Public education is the great equalizer in society. A publicly funded education system is the

best method of ensuring that everyone has a fighting chance to achieve success. Most people understand why Catholics historically got special rights and privileges, but no educator or policy-maker can come up with a defence of why it continues to be so.

The subject has been raised. So let's talk about a single public school board, where all of Ontario's children would be free to meet, befriend and know children of other faiths including those with no religious affiliation. Public schools teach the value of tolerance, community

involvement and respect for one another. Such values are not solely found in the faith-based system.

And let's ignore the blatant attempt at buying votes in the religious community at large.

Dale M. Peacock
Huntsville

Theft of brand-new bicycle saddens little boy

I am a born and raised Huntsville resident and very proud of our town that I have seen grow and flourish.

However, I write this letter with anger and disappointment. You see, I have a young son who is such a joy. He asks for little and we try, like all parents, to provide him with those

things in life that give joy.

This evening, while arriving home, we noticed that someone has stolen his brand-new bicycle. This bicycle was very special to him as it looks like a dirt bike and is bright yellow with all the racing stickers. The seat is black and has an embroidered red symbol on the back.

The petty thieves left his helmet. However, now he has nothing to ride and there is no more money this year to replace it.

The part that upsets me the most is that the bicycle location was not front and centre of our home, but behind our home in our backyard.

Having said this, I am asking

anyone in the community that if they see a brand-new bright yellow dirt bike-looking bicycle please call the police as they have been notified.

Whoever has done this, I know you feel no remorse. You have made one little boy very sad.

Lisa Smith
Huntsville

Photographic Memory

BACK TRACK: This photograph is of a Model A Ford motorcar with Mary (née Carter) Laycock standing beside it. This car was purchased in 1936 by John (Jack) A. Laycock. John Laycock documented "Fifty Years in Huntsville, 1934 to 1984", in his book by that name, available at The Bookcase in downtown Huntsville.

Downtown Huntsville will be having their 29th Annual Sidewalk Adventure on Saturday, August 18, 2007, with music, amusements, raffles, demonstrations and activities for the whole family. Main Street will close to automobiles at 6:30 a.m. that day so that people may safely wander on foot and enjoy the street fair at will.

There will be a car show downtown at a later date: The Downtown Antique and Classic Car Show is set for Saturday, September 15, 2007. The popularity and size of these events has grown into two separate lively engagements on separate dates.

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HEALTHCARE HEROES

Miles of Coins Volunteers

The Friends of Burk's Falls & District Health Centre held their annual Miles of Coins fundraising event in municipalities throughout East Parry Sound during the July holiday weekend.

Over \$16,000 was raised by dozens of volunteers who asked local businesses and individuals to give for their health centre. The Burk's Falls and District Health Centre will be able to purchase the entire capital "wish list" thanks to these wonderful people. Congratulations to the folks of Burk's Falls who won the municipal challenge. Thank you donors and volunteers - you're great!

The annual meeting of the Friends will be held September 20, all are welcome.

Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Foundation continues to support:

- Huntsville District Memorial Hospital
- Fairvern Nursing Home
- Burk's Falls & District Health Centre
- Muskoka-East Parry Sound CCAC



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