

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Alex Webb

BY PAULA BOON

Anyone who has ever grumbled about "teenagers these days" has obviously never met Alex Webb.

Born and raised on a hobby farm in Huntsville, Webb is an active, compassionate, intelligent, friendly young woman who knows what she wants out of life: to help others.

The 17-year-old Grade 12 student at Huntsville High School (HHS) plans to be a family doctor someday, but she's not waiting until after university to make the world a better place.

Last summer Webb travelled to Tarapoto, Peru with her church youth group for 10 days. There, she helped build a wall to close in a compound.

"We learned in one day how to lay bricks and then went for it," she recalls with a smile.

Webb was impressed by the tools workers made by hand and the goods available at the local market. Most importantly, she says, the experience changed her perspective on what she had and what she needed.

"We went there thinking we were going to help them out and we had all these gifts for them, but they gave so much back to us," she says.



ALEX WEBB

That's why she is part of the HHS group travelling to Ecuador for seven days in March to volunteer through Free the Children. "I can't wait. It's an amazing group of students and teachers going, and we will have a lot of fun," she says.

Webb has made her mark on the local level as well. This is her second year as a member of the HHS Link Crew, a group of senior students who are trained to help Grade 9 students with the transition to high school.

"My first day of high school (when there was no Link Crew) was horrible," she says. "I didn't know many people, and it was a big jump from a school of 350 people."

Webb has nothing but praise for the program, saying it not only helps the new students, but teaches Link Crew members to be leaders.

"It has a way of making you think about how the decisions you make now will follow you through the rest of your life," she says.

Webb is also an active member of the Interact Club. "It's a young Rotary Club," she explains. "Our goal each year is to do something within the school, community and globally."

On top of all that, Webb competes with her school's cross-country running and skiing teams, teaches swimming, tutors younger students and enjoys hanging out with her friends.

"It's crazy, but it's been fun," she says of her time at high school. "The time has flown by."

Webb is quick to credit her parents, especially her mother, for being a positive influence on her.

"My mom has always been involved in my life. I tell her everything," she says, adding proudly that her mother received her Bachelor of Education two years ago.

"She's a real role model about planning time wisely and making sure you still have time for yourself and the people around you," says Webb. "When it comes down to it, school is not as important as the people around you."

Webb says her heart breaks for kids whose parents haven't given them a strong foundation in life.

"I've been so lucky," she says.

She notes that her generation as a whole faces challenges understanding how to communicate with others.

"There's a lack of respect, and a lot of people don't have personal relationships anymore," she reflects. "Technology doesn't help with this because you can be so fake when you're not face to face with someone. This isn't setting us up to have good relationships with our spouses and children down the road."

At the same time, she says, "Teenagers get shafted sometimes. We're not all the same. We're not here to bother people. There are good people out there who are teenagers and want to help. We can do things to help the community, and we want to be involved."

Provincial candidates depart with some last words

One election night, our reporters posed the following questions to each of the candidates. What are some of the biggest issues facing Parry Sound-Muskoka and how will you work to address them in the next four years?

The following is the response from Liberal Party candidate Brenda Rhodes, NDP candidate Sara Hall, and Green Party candidate Matt Richter.

Brenda Rhodes

"The environment. It's certainly important to this riding and it's been important to the Liberal party in the past and will continue to be. The Lib-

erals are looking to cut back on coal-fired plants with a commitment to close the remaining plants by 2014. I also really like the initiatives for individual people and families whereby they get the PST taken off the purchase of any EnergyWise appliances. We will be pushing more conservation and expanding the green belt. Some of these initiatives are great ways to let people know how they can help out."

Sara Hall

We're going to be looking at long-term care because the state of our senior citizens who are in long-term care facilities is distressing, to say the least. We'll be looking at the environment. The

NDP is going to be doing everything it can to sway the government from going ahead with their plan to use nuclear power energy.

NDP candidates who won a seat will also fight to lower poverty levels.

Matt Richter

Ontario's challenge is going to be accepting that there isn't going to be too much change from what's happened in the past four years. The challenges are going to remain energy, education and the environment as a whole, and accepting the fact that the process that we were looking for needed to happen with some actual changes in terms of taking a more green, obviously bit of a

bias, to go more green.

I think our party can help by continuing to make our policies known in the media and with the relationship with the media which our policies get taken up and for the public to see that happening in terms of using our policies, if other parties want to endorse our platform and issues on energy and education and environment then that's one area we can definitely help and I believe just from the tremendous support that we've seen in tonight's election even though it's not translating into seats yet, it's putting pressure on the other governments to take the environment seriously.

LETTERS

There may still be a chance to save town's 'indispensible' restaurant

As a loyal and regular visitor to Huntsville for many years, I was saddened to learn that Little Caesars will close in October. This is not a mere pizza place, but an integral part of the business community, adding incalculably to the town's charisma and charm. It's the most loved summer hangout for visitors and locals alike, the last full facility Little Caesars in North America, with dine-in and complete menu. It's one of the longest established eating spots in the area.

The Passmores were splendid owners and I wish them a happy, healthy retirement. The food was sumptuous, and the servers friendly. However, it is perplexing that a new local owner could not be located. The search should have been expanded. Certainly, had they been interested, the parent U.S. company could have acquired the franchise until a buyer was found. When I phoned they were apathetic, referring me to the Canadian administrative office in Mississauga, where they also could not have cared less.

Every town has a business which is indispensable to the community. In Huntsville it is Little Caesars and thus, it should not be relinquished. If everyone is involved perhaps a solution can be found. If anyone has a suggestion please call me at 905-791-7546.

Terry McCauley
Brampton, Ontario

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

E-mail: letters@huntsvilleforester.com

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Interview with Norm Miller

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was being brave taking that on. But with the election not going the PC way he paid the price for it. But, it would be great to get (him) into the legislature as soon as possible. If it is a year or two, that's doable. You just have a little more free time and you have to be creative in terms of getting the message out."

Is that the plan? That another MPP would give up their seat?

"I don't think there's any plan yet."

Where does the PC party go from here? How can the party re-group and reconnect with Ontario voters?

"It will be getting back to the grass roots and listening to people, and going through a process for our leader of meeting with caucus and with all the candidates. We have a caucus meeting next Wednesday and then he's (Tory) going to be holding meetings with all the candidates across the province to get feedback from them."

What are some of the biggest issues facing Parry Sound-Muskoka, and how will you work to address them in the next four years?

"There's a few issues, but certainly health care is one of them. We're facing budget challenges both over in Parry Sound, with the West Parry Sound Health Centre, and on the Muskoka side, with Muskoka Algonquin Health-

care facing a deficit. So I will lobby the government for increased funding for health care in Parry Sound-Muskoka.

We're also facing some budget challenges with education, particularly with the Near North District School Board, which has had declining enrolments. So for that I would be pushing for a more flexible funding formula and raise that issue, whenever I get a chance, in the legislature.

Thirdly, and probably just as important, the economy is showing signs of weakness. And this is where I wish John Tory was premier, because I think he recognizes that we have to have a competitive economy, and a competitive tax structure. A competitive economy is able to attract business to Ontario. Right now, our tax structure is not that competitive and the government made it worse by increasing corporate taxes. We have some of the highest corporate taxes in the world in Ontario. So that's one (issue) that I'll certainly point out in the legislature when I get a chance.

But, when you get past those bigger issues, there a myriad of smaller issues that affect Parry Sound-Muskoka. All kinds of highway issues, with the four laning going on in both sides of riding. Also, we have areas where improvements to the highways are very important, like Hwy. 522, up in the Port Loring area or Hwy. 518 that heads to Orville. We'll push for improvements for those things.

The riding is interesting. There's no shortage of issues because we have...

year-round residents whose income levels are not very high, then we have seasonal residents with quite high income levels and so the issues tend to be different. We have 26 municipalities, seven First Nations and unorganized territories, so lots of issues come up (there). So I'll work with them and support them on the issues they have."

Being in opposition, how will you work together with the government to address these issues?

"There's different tools. You have some that you don't have in government like, if you're not getting anywhere you can ask questions of the Minister and raise it that way. That sometimes makes sense. Sometimes you have to embarrass the government a little bit. And we'll do that when need be. I used that technique when they (Liberals) were going to cut the funding for the Ministry of Natural Resources' community fish wildlife involvement program last spring. They were going to cut it from \$1 million to \$500,000 and they ended up not cutting it after some questioning. But also, in many cases it's just going and talking to the minister, sometimes right in the legislature, but also setting up meetings if they involve other people, municipalities or hospitals.

I think that's where having good relations with all the members helps. And I think I probably have as good relations as any member of the legislature, with people on all sides.



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2003 GMC ENVOY SLE



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91,909 km.

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\$14,995

2004 CHEV
SILVERADO



4.8 L, 8 cylinder, auto.,
66,663 km.

Stk# TP8048-A

\$15,995

2004 CHEV
IMPALA



3.4 L, 6 cylinder engine,
auto., 41,553 km.

Stk# CP8026-A

\$12,995

2005 CHEV
AVALANCHE



5.3 L, 8 cylinder eng., auto.,
61,519 km.

Stk# T8108-A

\$25,995

2006 CHEV
IMPALA



3.5 L, 6 cylinder engine,
auto.

Stk# CP7557-A

\$18,995 WARRANTY

2005
GRAND AM



3.4 L, 6 cylinder engine, auto.,
47,131 km.

Stk# CP6577-A

\$13,995

2004 CHEV
TRAILBLAZER



4.2 L, 6 cylinder eng., auto.,
90,851 km.

Stk# 206349

\$16,995

2005 BUICK
RAINIER



4.6 L, 6 cylinder engine, auto.,
50,250 km.

Stk# TP5771-A

\$26,995 WARRANTY

2004 CHEV
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