

# Opinion

## MUSKOKA MOSAIC

### Introducing Rev. GailMarie Henderson

BY PAULA BOON

Rev. GailMarie Henderson of the North Muskoka Pioneer Parish is a fan of sandboxes in church yards.

"A sandbox is the perfect symbol," she muses. "It's a place of delight, a place that is safe, and a place where everyone is welcome. In a sandbox, people need to co-operate, and you are free to do what you want as long as you don't tromp on someone else's creation. It's all about getting along together and loving each other. It's not rocket science."

The sandboxes found at three of her five country churches also invite people of all ages to rediscover their playful side.

"Coming to church is intended to be a joyful event. I don't know how church ever became reduced to a duty for many people," she says.

Henderson has been serving the Anglican communities of Aspdin, Grassmere, Newholm, Ravenscliffe and Ilfracombe since 2002.

"I wanted a challenge, something that would call for a radical faith commitment," she says. Five diverse rural churches with no modern conveniences fit the bill.

Although she first trained and worked as a nurse, Henderson was often told by others that she was a natural for the ministry.



For years she was active in many aspects of lay ministry but had no interest in being ordained.

It took the urging of her mentor, Rev. BethMarie Murphy, for her to take that step.

"I went to my husband Jeff and said with trepidation, 'I think I have to test this call; I need to go to seminary,'" Henderson recalls. "He said, 'Well, it's good you've figured this out, because I've been waiting 20 years for this conversation.'"

The decision meant finishing her B.A. and then doing her Master of Divinity at Wycliffe College, an Anglican seminary at the University of Toronto.

"It was a very intensive time," she says. "Jeff was so supportive. The two older kids were away at university, but it was hard on our 16-year-old son. It wasn't so much that his mom was away a lot, but that she was going to be a priest. How do you tell that to the basketball team?"

After accepting the invitation to serve the Pioneer Parish and being ordained in 2002, Henderson and her husband built a house on South Waseosa Lake Road.

"I can't do it at arm's length," she explains. "I have to be immersed in the community."

Henderson says the dearly loved church buildings present

challenges in terms of insurance, building and fire regulations.

"But a church is more than a building; it's the people," she says. "And we need all of our tiny little churches to connect with people as deeply as they can wherever they are."

The diversity in her small congregations is a strength, Henderson says.

"In a small church you're face-to-face with people who are very different from one another," she points out, "and coming together for worship or meetings calls for tolerance and the need to listen and respect one another's perspective. It's the same basic formula in building a healthy society, and it starts in that tiny little unit: the pew."

Henderson thinks it is important for churches to reach out to the communities of which they are a part. The many outside-of-Sunday services and events she arranges provide the chance for people to visit on their own terms, to "respond to what is stirring inside of them," she says. "People need safe places to ask questions and explore their spirituality and to grow."

In fact, Henderson feels so strongly about the value of little country churches that she has applied to do advanced studies in rural ministry through a Doctor of Ministry program at the University of Toronto.

"Rural ministry is disappearing everywhere. We've got to hang on to it," she says. "There are solid theological reasons to do so. If we don't do something about it in an intentional manner, we will wake up one day and an incredible gift will have disappeared."

## Dynamic guest speakers lined up for Canada Career Week sessions

In celebration of Canada Career Week, which runs from Nov. 5 to 9, the YMCA Employment Resource Centre is hosting a career fair featuring a roster of dynamic guest speakers from a variety of local industry sectors. Whether people are interested in a career change, wondering if they are in the right career or wanting to expand their horizons, by stopping by the Employment Resource Centre, they will have an opportunity to hear directly from those in a number of different occupations.

On Nov. 6 at 10:30 a.m., a special apprenticeship information session will be held. Maureen Koski from Job Connect will be available to explain her role in assisting individuals through the appren-

ticeship process. Mark Cerson of Lakeland Mechanical will also give an employer's perspective on what makes someone a strong apprenticeship candidate.

At 10 a.m. on Nov. 7, three dynamic speakers from three different healthcare providers will talk about careers in personal support work and registered and practical nursing. They are Laurie Hetherington of the Canadian Red Cross Community Health Services, Joan Sills of Rowanwood Retirement Home and Christine Maurer of Huntsville District Memorial Hospital.

At 2 p.m. the same day, Brent McIntosh and Brian Stone, both from Deerhurst Resort, will give visitors a closer view of

careers within the food services sector of a resort environment.

On Nov. 8 at 10 a.m., Sandra Bell of First Students Canada (formerly Laidlaw) will discuss the many benefits of a career as a bus driver.

Beginning at 10 a.m. Nov. 9, careers in financial services will be on the agenda as Steven Lavigne of Investors Group and Jeanette Reid of CIBC give their insights on careers as both financial advisors and bank tellers.

Seating will be limited for all sessions. For more information on Career Week activities or to reserve a seat, call the Employment Resource Centre at 705-787-0349.

## Peace-ful photo contest deadline is this Friday

The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka would like to welcome all members of our Simcoe/Muskoka communities the opportunity to submit photos representing their take on this year's Peace Week theme.

Your entry to the contest constitutes your agreement to allow your photograph, name, occupation and city of residence to be published as the selected award winner; published or used on the association's website and other communication mediums; entrants retain ownership and all other rights to future use of their photographs.

We are looking for compelling photographs with a focus on this year's theme: "The Power of Peace...The Power of People."

Each entry must include a brief written statement explaining how that image is representative of the theme; images will be judged by the YMCA's international committee and judged on creativity, relation to theme and visual appeal.

Entrants must not infringe on the rights of any other photographer or person.

Deadline for submitting entries is Nov. 2.

All photographs will be displayed at our various health, fitness and recreation centres during Peace Week between Nov. 17 and 24, with copies of the top 10 photos posted on our website.

Various prizes will be awarded including Peace Week t-shirts, YMCA gift certificates and more.

Each participant may submit up to two photographs total. Photos should be submitted as follows:

1. To your local membership centre marked attention Cat O'Connor, manager, day camps and international programs.
  - or
  2. E-mailed to Catherine\_oconnor@ymca.ca. (Digital photos must be no larger than three megapixels (3 mb). Acceptable photo formats are TIFF, JPEG, GIF or BMP.)
  - or
  3. Mailed directly to the address below:
- Cat O'Connor, manager, day camps and international programs re: photo contest, YMCA Association office, 22 Grove St. West, Barrie, On L4N 1M7.

## Seeking loving home for Willow

The Muskoka branch of the Ontario SPCA is seeking the community's support in finding a loving home for Willow, a 10-year-old Golden Retriever-type dog with cancer that was seized during an animal cruelty investigation in September.

Ontario SPCA investigators first attended a property in Muskoka following a complaint regarding a thin Golden Retriever-type dog that was chained to a doghouse in a remote forested area behind the property owner's home, without proper food or drinking water. Investigators observed the dog and found that she had a very thin body condition and a dirty, matted coat, as well as a large growth on her front leg. After discussing their concerns with her owner, investigators issued Ontario SPCA orders to improve Willow's living conditions and provide veterinary care.

Investigators returned to the residence a short time later and found Willow's owner had failed to comply with the orders and promptly seized the dog. She was taken into the care of the Muskoka branch and a veterinary examination revealed that Willow was very underweight and had the likelihood of a malignant tumor on her front leg.

Willow remained at the shelter for a number of days while awaiting the legal process for the Ontario SPCA to obtain ownership of her. After a couple of weeks of care, she was in joyous spirits and had gained about a pound per day. Willow has won the hearts of the staff and volunteers who care for her and concerns about her having cancer were quickly dismissed as secondary when her potential for adoption was discussed.

Willow is now available for adoption at

the Ontario SPCA Muskoka branch and deserves a second chance to live out her days in a supportive home. The shelter is currently accepting applications from families who can provide the love and medical attention she needs.

Costs incurred by the Muskoka branch to prepare Willow for adoption exceed \$1,000 and include preliminary anesthetic, blood tests, x-rays and a biopsy of the suspected cancerous tumor and we are appealing to the public to assist us with donations to continue with our valuable work.

To make a donation in Willow's name to the Ontario SPCA Muskoka branch please call 645-6225.

To report suspected animal abuse call the Ontario SPCA Muskoka branch at 645-6225, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477), or police.

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