

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Frank Berg

BY PAULA BOON

Frank Berg was one of the few students at his Alberta high school who knew what he wanted to do with his life. After his dream of teaching music came true when he moved to this area in 1999, he felt guilty for the first few years that he was being paid to have fun.

"Then I heard enough comments from people saying they could never do what I do and realized I didn't need to feel that way," he says with a laugh.

Since 2005, Berg has been teaching his younger students using the Music for Young Children (MYC) program. This method, developed in 1980, is now followed by over 900 teachers in five countries.

Berg says he had been offering regular private lessons when several students came to him from a MYC program. "I was impressed with the kids' depth of knowledge for their age," he says.

He looked into the program and found that there was already an MYC teacher in Huntsville. When he learned that she was planning to stop, he undertook all three levels of MYC teacher training in one year so that he could take on her students.

"MYC does group classes with a parent," he explains. "Kids learn rhythm reading and sight reading, ear training, composing, music theory and singing. They learn it in a fun way so they don't realize they're learning. Concepts are sliced thin enough so kids can get it and parents with no training can get it. And parents with training wish they had learned it that way!"

Berg says he always enjoyed teaching younger kids, but pri-

ate lessons were difficult because children had to focus for half an hour sitting on a bench. "Having group classes where you're changing activities every five minutes and reinforcing concepts in different learning styles is way better," he says, "especially for high-energy kids who don't have long attention spans."

From his studio on Main Street, Berg offers MYC lessons to children ages four to 10. He also has a Music Pups program providing music experiences to children from birth to four years and has private piano and singing students of all ages, including some retirees.

"I love it," he says. "For me, to have a new focus every half hour or hour it really breaks up your day. It's not like 10 hours at a desk."

As well as teaching 35 hours of music lessons each week, Berg is the musical director for Church Muskoka Style and also directs the Muskoka Music Men barbershop choir.

"I enjoy that because the men usually don't have a music background," he says. "You sing each part to each person and teach it by rote. That's a lot of fun."

Berg's interest in music began in early childhood, when he spent summers with his grandparents in Saskatchewan. "I'd pick out tunes by ear," he said. Then, when he was in Grade 3, his grandparents bought him a piano and he started taking lessons.



He completed a BA in music at Briercrest Bible College near Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. "It was a well-rounded program," he says. By the time he graduated, he had his Grade 8 singing, Grade 9 piano and had learned conducting, songwriting and recording.

While at college, he met his wife-to-be, Heather Cassie of Huntsville. The two married in 1996 and moved to an old farm north of Kearney in 1999.

"I had never been to Ontario," he says. "Having grown up on the prairies, I was surprised by all the lakes in the way of everything. You couldn't just drive straight there."

When their first daughter, Meeda, was born five years ago, they decided to move into Huntsville, and they now have two more daughters, Sylvie, 3, and Isabel, 5 months.

Berg's is a busy life. Most workdays are 12 hours long, and some nights the kids are already in bed before he gets home. Nevertheless, he feels very lucky.

"There's nothing else I'd rather be doing," he says.

Thanks to Donna Leadston and Janice Roy for suggesting that Frank Berg be profiled. If there is someone you'd like to see in this space, please call Paula at 789-5541 or e-mail pboon@metrolandnorthmedia.com.

LETTERS

Please stop littering

I don't think everyone completely understands the world's effort to go green.

On Saturday, April 26, my two sisters, cousin, neighbourhood friend and myself went out to collect garbage.

In about half a kilometre stretch of road (both sides) we collected six garbage bags of litter. The

sad part about it is nine out of 10 items were recyclable.

We don't mind doing our part to keep the earth clean, but it would be nice if all the absent-minded litterers would help do their part as well.

Shaylyn Bradley (age 16)
Aspdin

Hats off to Huntsville for support of animal shelter fundraiser

Having lived away from my northern roots for some 44 years, I have returned to enjoy retirement to the fullest here in Huntsville.

My husband and I have been involved with several different aspects of retirement for the past three years, mainly socially with the Probus Club of Muskoka North. Several activities have kept us both very busy and as of November, 2007 we chose to take on yet another adventure, volunteering for the Animal Shelter for Huntsville.

I arrived at the shelter to find that with so many lost, abused, forgotten and surrendered animals, volunteers were desperately needed for fundraising, walking dogs, maintenance and the list goes on. The shelter doesn't receive any government funding. They operate solely on the generosity of the community.

As a volunteer our first challenge was to call on local businesses for donations for the Animal

Shelter for Huntsville's auction/dinner held on April 26. I can't express my pride and gratitude enough to the response that the coordinator and volunteers like ourselves have been given through the generous donations that all the local and a few out-of-town businesses and residents have given.

Hats off to all of Huntsville and Muskoka for such a successful event for the shelter. A special thanks to the residents of Rowanwood Retirement Residence for their wonderful donation of a framed puppies picture, particularly when they were going through a tragic upheaval of their own.

I must say that we are very proud to be part of this great Huntsville community in our retirement years.

Jane and Dave McPhee
Huntsville

Film a reminder of the gift of communication

I was reading in the Forester with great delight that Reel Alternatives would be screening the award-winning film adaptation of Jean-Dominique Bauby's memoir *The Diving-Bell and the Butterfly*. What a wonderful coincidence that this film was to be shown in our community during May as May is Speech and Hearing Awareness Month!

This unfortunate story portrays the life of the magazine editor after he suffered a massive brain-stem stroke, resulting in "locked-in syndrome," which left him unable to functionally use any part of his body except to blink with his left eyelid. This small movement became the portal from which he was able to communicate.

As I read through the article, however, I felt compelled to correct a statement in the film's description, which read: "Bauby's nurses develop an ingenious, if exhausting, method of communication, through which he painstakingly writes his memoirs. By listening to the letters of the alphabet and blinking when the correct one is uttered, he is able to preserve his final link to the outside world."

In fact, it was a speech-language pathologist who implemented the system which allowed Bauby to communicate and write his memoir. In his memoir, upon which the film is based, Bauby indicates that Sandrine, his speech therapist, or "guardian angel" as he calls her, "is the one who set up the communication system without which I would be cut off from the world."

He goes on to say, "Speech therapy is an art that deserves to be more widely known. You cannot imagine the acrobatics your tongue mechanically performs in order to produce all the sounds of a language. On my birthday Sandrine managed to get me to pronounce the whole alphabet more or less intelligibly. I could not have had a

better present."

May is Speech and Hearing Awareness Month, the one month in the year when thousands of professionals involved with the treatment of speech, language and hearing disorders come together to participate in a public awareness campaign that encourages early detection and prevention of communication disorders, and seeks to increase the public's sensitivity to the challenges faced by individuals experiencing them.

Many of us take our hearing and ability to speak for granted. Whether we are chatting with a group of friends, playing on the basketball court or listening to the radio, our ability to communicate is vital in our everyday activities. For millions of Canadians, however, speech, language or hearing problems are a daily challenge affecting the work/school, family and social aspects of their lives.

Speech-language pathologists (SLP's), audiologists (Auds) and communication disorders assistants (CDAs) are highly trained professionals who work with Canadians of all ages dealing with many different types of communication disorders and can help people make their lives richer, more productive and enjoyable through improved communication skills.

Whether working with a hearing-impaired child or an elderly person recovering from a stroke, they strive tirelessly to help improve the quality of life and health of the people they serve.

I hope that viewers of this film come away with a renewed respect for our gift to communicate with each other, in whatever form that may be!

Brenda Liddle
Speech-language pathologist
Huntsville District Memorial Hospital

Check that immunization record

Are your immunizations up to date?

Immunizations are the best way to protect yourself from preventable diseases such as measles, pertussis (whooping cough) and tetanus. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health unit provides regular immunization clinics at

all office locations for infants through to seniors.

Please contact Your Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., if you have questions or to book an appointment.



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Maurice Leblond Leader of the PACS

Many of you will recognize Maurice Leblond, Charge Technologist/PACS Coordinator at Huntsville District Memorial Hospital. Most of you think of him as the guy who has taken x-rays at your hospital for almost 24 years. Over this past year, he has been the "leader of the PACS" project, otherwise known as the renovation and digital equipment upgrade project for Huntsville Hospital.

If you need diagnostic imaging services, you may find his department disheveled; Maurice calls it a "bit of a mine shaft these days." But the construction work goes on around the great diagnostic services. We salute Maurice and his colleagues.

Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Foundation continues to support:

- Huntsville District Memorial Hospital
- Fairvern Nursing Home
- Burk's Falls & District Health Centre



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