

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Meredith Hiscox

BY PAULA BOON

When Meredith Hiscox was a child growing up in Huntsville, family canoe trips in Algonquin Park were a highlight of each year. Now, she and her husband Dave continue the tradition with their own children, Jasmine, 15, and Cody, 13.

But Hiscox's love of the outdoors goes far beyond the stuff of summer vacations. In fact, it was responsible for the career move that brought Hiscox and her husband together.

In 1991, a year after graduating from Central Baptist Seminary in Toronto with a degree in Christian education, Hiscox accepted a position as program director at a camp Dave was running in Manitoba. Part of the job involved providing a two-week wilderness experience for teenage campers in the summer. "It was neat to see how the kids grew in that time period," she says. "It was really life-changing for them."

Now living on a 200-acre hobby farm in Port Sydney, the Hiscoxes have come full circle. For the past three years, they have hosted Faith Baptist Church's day camp, Blaze, offering archery, canoeing, kayaking and interaction with animals. "With kids who might be shy or more aggressive, animals do wonders," Hiscox says. "They give kids an opportunity to talk, make a connection."

She sees hosting the camp as a way to give back to her community. "It's a big thing, having all these people here

to support you through tough times and rejoice with you in good times," she says. "It must be difficult for people who don't have people beyond their family to rely on. Church is very important to me. It's the foundation of my faith in Christ."

Hiscox has been a member of Faith Baptist Church since her family moved to Huntsville when she was one year old. She has also worked there for 10 years – the last five as Christian education director, overseeing all the children's programs from the nursery to Grade 8. This includes Sunday school and numerous midweek programs featuring games, stories and activities for children of various ages.

Then there's the Upward athletics program, which started in 2006 with basketball. Open to all children in the community from kindergarten to Grade 8, the program's motto is "Every child is a winner." There was such a tremendous response the first year that the church expanded to include a ball hockey program last spring, which attracted 200 kids.

"Nobody can't make the team," says Hiscox. "It doesn't matter what your skill level is, we'll find a spot for you."

The Upward organization, based in the United States, provides a curriculum of lessons and drills, and at the end of each game, kids receive a star reflecting what they did



well, including helping others and putting their teammates first. "It's not all about winning," Hiscox says. "There's a scoreboard but no rankings, and the kids all have equal playing time."

The ball hockey program was a pilot project for Upward. "They hadn't done it in the States. We were a sounding board," Hiscox says. "Every week we reported what worked and what didn't. We were tweaking it. It was an exciting project to be part of."

Upward is now Hiscox's husband's full-time job: he recently became the Canadian representative, taking the program to different churches across the country.

Meanwhile, Hiscox herself continues to implement it at their home church. "Basketball starts up again in January," she says. "We're also adding cheerleading this year."

One thing she likes about Upward is that it reaches out to the entire community.

"Huntsville is my home and it's been a great home. It's been a nurturing place," she says. "I've made my best, closest friends here. This is like a little haven where most of my memories are. I can go to other places, but there's nothing better than coming home."

Thanks to Orla Carr for suggesting that Meredith Hiscox be profiled.

LETTERS

Help is available for those who are suffering from a mental illness

Mental illness affects everyone, regardless of race, age, or economic class. It is indiscriminate. In fact, one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, yet nearly two-thirds of people with a diagnosable mental illness do not seek treatment.

Mental Illness Awareness Week was Oct. 5 to 11. This is an attempt to broaden the public's perception and knowledge of mental illness in order to reduce stigma and judgment so that people who have a mental illness are not afraid to seek support and are able to live their lives to the fullest. Take time to educate yourself, your family and friends.

The theme for Mental Illness Awareness Week is Face Mental Illness, which is an attempt to bring

mental illness out of the shadows. Many people in society, including many who have a mental illness, are in denial. They minimize symptoms, hardships, and they do not face the problem. Mental illness is legitimate; it is real, it is diagnosable, and it is treatable.

If you have a friend or family member who has a mental illness, reach out to them. Don't be afraid to offer support or ask for help yourself. Get help at the first sign of mental illness. The sooner help is sought out, the less likely the person is to suffer from the illness as a long-term disability. Discussion about mental illness helps others to understand, so share your stories and let them know what it might be like to have a mental illness. Involving many people, rang-

ing from the professional psychiatrist to your landlord, ensures the person in need is being cared for and promotes self-esteem and increases self-worth. Think positive. There are many people who receive help and recover from their symptoms.

For further information regarding mental illness you can go online and explore various websites such as www.cmha.ca (Canadian Mental Health Association), or www.healthyplace.com or you can call the Muskoka-Parry Sound Community Mental Health Service at 1-866-829-7050 for information. Someone you know and love may be in need of support. Help is available.

Mark La Rouche
Community outreach and support team

Reverse the decline in our health care

Health alert! Need a family doctor? Is the hospital overcrowded and less sanitary than it should be? Can't get a nurse when you need one?

How many hours did you wait in the emergency room? Are you ner-

vous about the Listeriosis outbreak and the lapse of food regulations? Do you remember Mike Harris' legacy and death and chronic illness from the Walkerton killer water?

To reverse the rapid decline of our

once-reliable health-care net, we do not need Harris and Harper's health minister cottager Tony Clement.

Mendelson Joe Emsdale

Counting blessings chases fear away

This past Thanksgiving weekend was a time to be grateful for all we have in Canada.

I am thankful for long walks on a country road, surrounded by colourful trees and for helpful neighbours: the boy who mows my lawn in the summer and the gentleman who removes the snow from my driveway in the winter. The stability of their presence in my life is worth much more than the price of their labour.

Change is unnerving. Unplanned

change, with no time to adjust, is frightening. I landed in Huntsville eight years ago, with literally nothing but the clothes on my back, a car and my dad's cabin. With no electricity, no running water, and an outhouse up the hill, the cabin's primitive. If you want any water, you take a pail to the lake and carry the water back to the cabin.

I felt like I'd just stepped off a cliff into the darkness of nothing. So I feel now that my life is so lovingly bor-

ing, that I can assure those Canadians who fear the coming changes, fear as much the unknown of it as the lack of control to direct it, that eventually, all will be well.

Your life will be different. You will have grown. You will accept more and expect less. And you will notice all of the blessings you are living with, whether they be family or neighbours.

Marilyn Laycock
Huntsville

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

E-mail: letters@huntsvilleforester.com

When sending letters to the editor be sure to include your name, address and phone number. Unsigned letters cannot be used.



MOIE'S
PICK OF THE WEEK

2005 CHEV EQUINOX LS



3.4 L eng., 6 cyl., auto, 39,800 km, A/C, power windows
Stk# TP9074-A

\$15,995

2006 CHEV EQUINOX AWD



3.4 L, 6 cyl. eng., A/C, CD player, cruise control, keyless entry, 65,000 km.
Stk# T8648-B

\$16,495

2006 CHEV MALIBU



2.2 L, 4 cyl. eng., CD player, A/C, power locks/windows, 65,300 km.
Stk# CP9043-A

\$11,995

2005 CHEV SILVERADO 1500



5.3 L, 8 cyl. eng., auto, A/C, alloy wheels, CD player, cruise control, keyless entry, 79,500 km. Stk# T8666-A

\$15,995

2007 CHEV UPLANDER VAN



6 cyl. eng., auto, A/C, CD player, cruise control, rear defroster, 7,500 km.

\$15,995

2007 CHEV TAHOE LT 4x4



5.3 L, 8 cyl. eng., auto, OnStar, remote start, cruise control, 49,000 km. Stk# TP7705-A

\$34,995

2008 PONTIAC G5



2.2 L, 4 cyl. eng., auto, A/C, alloy wheels, CD player, 15,207 km.
Stk# CP8615-A

\$14,995

2006 BUICK RAINIER CXL



8 cyl. eng., auto, keyless entry, leather interior, tilt & cruise, 50,203 km.
Stk# TP8593

\$20,995

2006 CHEV SILVERADO Z71 4x4



4.8 L, 8 cyl. eng., auto, A/C, alloy wheels, cruise control, CD player, box liner, 44,000 km. Stk# TP8499-A

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