Free parent-child programs offer value

A person’s educational journey isn’t limited to the years between kindergarten and graduation.

RETSD and its board of trustees believe in lifelong education that starts as early as possible. That’s why the division invests in free parent-child programming for RETSD families that engages children from birth to the weeks before their first day at kindergarten.

“We recognize how important those early years are for getting the best possible start on the road to school,” says trustee Peter Kotyk. “And we’re very proud of the wide variety of programs we have and how they meet the needs of our community.”

As part of the Early Childhood Matters Parent Child Coalition (a Healthy Child Manitoba initiative), RETSD offers weekly, single-session, and drop-in programs for preschoolers at more than 20 convenient neighbourhood school locations.

The division also supports families with the transition into school, so the kindergarten year becomes a time of learning and joy for both the child and parents.

“These programs are invaluable in encouraging family involvement in education, as well as fostering a closer community in the division,” explains trustee Brianne Goertzen. “We recognize that children’s first teachers are their parents and they are our partners in their children’s education.”

New students are welcomed with Growing & Learning events, where families move through fun, interactive stations featuring activities with kindergarten teachers, meet-and-greets with health and student services professionals, and even vision and hearing screening. For more, visit: http://bit.ly/2DuqKBn

As well, families are encouraged to take part in Literacy Links. Trained facilitators provide the whole family with materials, resources and fun ideas for learning and preparing together for the great adventure of kindergarten. To sign up, visit: http://bit.ly/2DvMKQu

Free parenting support programs are also offered, addressing topics such as positive discipline, child development, safety, health and behaviour. For more, visit: http://bit.ly/2DsJe57
Culture Circle has giving spirit

Staff and students across the division are always on the lookout for ways to give back to their community, and the Culture Circle group at John W. Gunn Middle School is a great example. They launched a Siloam Mission Gift Pack Drive in December with the goal of collecting enough items to create 80 gift packs for those who make use of the mission. Each pack included three toiletries, one warm clothing item, and a treat such as chocolate, a granola bar or a restaurant gift card.

The school community responded with such generosity that the Culture Circle was able to more than double their goal and assemble 163 gift packs. They also held a pizza sale to raise funds for the mission.

The Culture Circle is a group—open to all students—that is dedicated to learning about, supporting and celebrating Indigenous culture with a focus on leadership in the school and community.

This was their first charitable initiative, and they’re already in the brainstorming stage for another.

“adopted” through the WWF. The organization allows for the symbolic adoption of over 30 different species of animals, so it can raise funds to conserve wildlife.

As Ms. Dent Scarcello and Ms. Chuckrey had hoped, the students wanted to help. They used their research to create public service announcement videos that were shared with schoolmates. They also created art that was used to make calendars, which they sold to raise funds.

They intended to adopt one animal, but ended up blasting past their initial target and raising enough to adopt 12!

“They definitely learned their age isn’t a limit on making change in the world,” says Ms. Dent Scarcello. “We had such a great time leading these endangered animal ambassadors through the experience!”

Students ‘adopt’ endangered animals

It’s never too early for children to learn they can make a positive difference in the world.

Bird’s Hill School teacher librarian Leslie Dent Scarcello and teacher Katelyn Chuckrey had the opportunity to teach this to a class of Grade 3 and 4 students when they were researching endangered animals on the World Wildlife Fund website.

The students discovered that endangered animals can be
Students ‘adopt’ endangered animals
of thanks for their donations.
The Grade 3 and 4 students with the calendars they created and endangered stuffed animals provided by the WWF as a token
Culture Circle members along with teachers Murray Wichert (top left) and Madison Allford (right of Mr. Wichert).

It was as a student in RETSD that
Ms. Markusa says she found her
voice, discovering the confidence to form opinions and own a stage.

“I really feel like my strengths
were encouraged,” she says, and
jokes, “I apologize to the teachers
I interrupted over the years on my
way to a microphone!”

Ms. Markusa’s comfort in front of
a microphone and enthusiasm for
her local community are evident
when she’s on air. She’s also known
for being a tenacious interviewer,
willing to ask the tough questions
to get the answers her listeners
want. She recalls a high school
gym teacher who showed similar
determination in his effort to get
her to run 1500 metres.

“I said I could never finish the
distance,” she says. “But he
couraged me to just try and
then ran behind me slowly, and I
did it. It might as well have been a
marathon for me in that moment.”

Ms. Markusa does stories regularly
about how school, society and
students’ needs have changed, but
she says what hasn’t changed is
the very real impact a teacher can
have on a student, and how that
can have ripple effects that last a
lifetime.

She reminisced about her Grade
3 teacher “Mr. Grywinski,” who
made special efforts to provide
courage and show concern for her
well-being.

“I saw him years later when I was
working at CBC,” she says. “I was
live on location on a dark, lonely
morning and waiting to go on
air, and there he was, walking
nearby!”

“I rolled down the window and
finally got to thank him for helping
me find my way.”
Trustee Brian Olynik marks 20 years

Olynik for his dedication as he marks his 20th year serving as a trustee for the division.

Mr. Olynik was first encouraged by family and friends to run for trustee in 1989. He has been a trustee from 1989–2002, from 2006–2010, and from 2014–present.

“I decided to run to be a trustee for a number of reasons, most importantly because I’m a teacher and education is a passion to me,” says Mr. Olynik.

As a longtime educator employed at Stony Mountain Institution, Mr. Olynik has seen first-hand what can happen to young people who have chosen the wrong path in life. He believes a good education is one of the keys to living a successful adult life, and he was and is determined to promote and support education in his role as a trustee.

“We’re the advocate and the public watchdog,” he says. “We’re the ones who have to make sure that when money is spent on education, it’s done properly, and the public gets the best value and education possible for their tax dollars.”

Board chair Colleen Carswell has worked with Mr. Olynik for many years and is grateful for his commitment to the division’s students, parents, staff and community. “Only a few trustees reach this pinnacle of providing such a long and dedicated service.”

New classes for Dr. Hamilton

20 to announce that the school will soon benefit from two new classrooms.

“Adding two new permanent classrooms will help us to better meet the needs of our students, staff and school community,” said Mr. West.

As the population of East St. Paul has steadily grown and development has increased, the school has been using portable classrooms to accommodate its student population.

While the portables have served their purpose over the past several years, it’s time for permanent classroom spaces to take their place.

The project is supported by planned capital spending by the province in 2017–18 for public school infrastructure projects.

“One complete, it will be a great space where our students can continue to learn and grow,” says Mr. West. “I can tell you we’re proud of the work that goes on inside this building to educate our students.”

Your River East Transcona School Division Trustees

For more information about the board of trustees, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca/BoardofTrustees