

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Andrea Kelly

Foothills Academy 1985 - 1993



Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday Foothills! I have been asked to share with you my story, and the role that Foothills has and still plays in my life.

I was diagnosed with a Learning Disability when I was in grade two. I don't remember much about those days, but I can remember sitting in my first grade classroom and looking at the girl behind me. It was perceived that I wanted to cheat. In reality I wanted to know why she understood what the teacher had said, and why it sounded like gibberish to me. I remember my last experience in the public system, in a special education classroom in my neighbourhood. All of a sudden, all the kids who lived around my house knew that something was different about me. Kids don't understand kids who are different. At the start of the next school year, I entered the doors of Foothills Academy, thanks to the searching and determination of my wonderful parents. Finally, I found a place where people understood how to program my brain. I often describe someone with a learning disability, as being a person who can understand everything in this world, but while most people are wired like an IBM, I am wired like a MAC. We both can do exactly the same thing; it's just only a few people are trained to understand how the MAC works.

At Foothills Academy I was accepted for who I was. It was here that my teachers could see my potential and helped me to acquire the skills needed to gain the confidence and build my tool kit to meet the real world. I spent 6 years at Foothills. Finally in 1991 I completed grade 9 and was sent on my way to face high school in the real world.

I set off for Central Memorial, as a number of my friends from Youth Singers were also going to be there with me. I knew them well, and felt it was a good place to try the real world out. As a young child my parents discovered my talent and interest in the area of singing, and encouraged me to build up these skills through substantial solo vocal training and the choir setting. It was through the development of these skills that I was able to squeeze my way into University. When I was in high school, I remember attending several meetings where the principals told me...without an advanced diploma, there is little possibility that you will get into university... "Well I will prove that you can!" I thought to myself! I waited until I was 21 and all that was required was a 60% in English 30. It was in 1997 that I enrolled at Augustana University College where I would remain for 3 years and earn a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music.

It was one of the hardest things I have done. I remember watching all my friends as they lovingly went and practiced for hours. They actually sat in their rooms and listened to Bach, Mozart and Handel for hours on end. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy them in small doses...but the more I attended, the more I came to realize that although I love music, it is not what I am called to do. I remember sitting on my bed in my second year and I really began to question why I was there. I had a little chat with God and I said..."O.k., what's the deal?" It was then that I realized...music is not what I am called to do...music is your ticket and a very useful tool that will help me where ever I go...but it is not my purpose! It was then that I realized He had sent me through many challenges with this learning disability. Through it I have learned many great and wonderful things and that I needed to help others strive to reach their potential.

In 2002, I completed my Bachelor of Education degree through the University of Calgary. I have since begun my career as an elementary teacher for the Calgary Board of Education. This year I have landed the job of my dreams and am hoping to find jobs just like it along the way. Currently I am teaching music, drama and assisting students read and write...in a fine arts focused school...What a dream!!!

Life is good!!! True, life has its challenges but the rewards and blessings FAR outweigh the bad! I actually sometimes think my learning disability is a gift. Through it I have met the most amazing teachers who have helped guide, inspire and help me reach my goals! Foothills Academy isn't just a good school because the staff help students with learning challenges...it is a wonderful school because they care and work hard to give each student the best possibilities they can.

Thanks for believing in me!!!

Andrea Kelly



TURN OVER



## *What's New at Foothills?*

### **Robbie Sallows**

We want to wish Robbie Sallows a sound recovery from his recent double lung transplant. The surgery went well and Robbie is recuperating comfortably. Robbie is in grade 12 and continues to work toward graduating with his grade 12 classes in June of this year. This young man is an inspiration to all of us as he maintains a positive attitude and a never "give in" intensity! It is expected that Robbie will remain in care for the next few months in Edmonton. Way to go Robbie, we are all thinking of you and your family!

### **Centre Expansion**

Foothills Academy continues to maintain its high quality of assistance for students and adults with learning disabilities. In addition we are growing with educational support for parents and professionals including research partnership opportunities. Due to our success and growth we are currently in the process of doubling the size of the centre. We will keep you posted on the positive and exciting developments!

### **Next Newsletter**

The last two newsletters have featured students from previous years. John Morris from the beginning of the school; Andrea Kelly (featured in this newsletter) from the middle and next newsletter will feature Ashley Dunfield who graduated more recently.

### **Upcoming Events**



Alumni Students and Parents are WELCOME to attend the Run, Walk 'N' Roll!

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June 4, 2005.  
Prizes, food and fun!

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We look forward to seeing you!

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Call 270-9400 to Register today!!!

