



Alumni News

Spring Feature: Alumni Profiles

The following three are a sample of many alumni who were instrumental in organizing the 25th year reunion held in the spring of 2004. We have changed the format of the newsletter to bring you up to date on more alumni and their families. I hope you find all their stories motivational in moving us all forward in our lives. Also in this newsletter, I have written an article which is close to my heart, talking specifically about the Phases and Faces of Success. Please take a moment to read it and be sure

to forward your comments; it is my perspective on a life that sometimes feels inequitable and darn right difficult from time to time!

- Brenda Martin, Coordinator
Estelle Siebens Community Services
Foothills Academy Society



Inside this issue:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Success Is Measured in Many Ways</i> | 2 |
| <i>Growing Up Foothills Style</i> | 3 |
| <i>Faces and Phases of Success</i> | 3 |

Get Your Skates On!

RUN, WALK 'N' ROLL IS COMING!!

June 3, 2006 is the
15th ANNUAL
Run, Walk 'n' Roll at
Foothills Academy!

Grab your skates, shoes, friends and family and come join the fun!

As always there will be PRIZES for collecting pledges, and the 10km Run is part of the officially timed Timex Road Race Series!!

Call to register:
270-9400



Brad Stark

Brad Stark was one of Foothills Academy's earlier students, attending the school for Grades 8 and 9 in 1981-83. From Foothills he moved on to Crescent Heights High School, which he says was "very different! There were 85 times as many students!" He did well at Crescent Heights, graduating in 1986 as valedictorian of his class.

After graduation, Brad

spent a few years of working at different jobs, including pumping gas and working at the Canada Olympic Park on the Bobsled and Luge track.

"Unfortunately," says Brad, "it was after the '88 Games, darn, missed it by one year." In 1992 he entered the Recreational Vehicle program at SAIT, and worked on RVs for fifteen years. Feeling a bit bored eventually, he decided to leave, and asked a friend who worked for FedEx if they were hiring. They were, as it turns out, and Brad has been working as a courier for a year and a half now.

"Working for FedEx is

great," says Brad. "It is a lot of hard work [but] the customers are usually great and so are the people I work with." Brad describes himself as a "people person" so finds this aspect of the job very satisfying. He was a bit lost for the first month on the job, having been hired to work in the mid and deep south parts of Calgary after growing up in the northwest, but says it did get better; the only part he does not care for so much now is the malls.

Brad is not married, but is close to his father and keeps in touch with many friends from Foothills.

Success Is Measured In Many Ways

By Alison Law

(Dedicated to my parents with love and thanks)

Intensely shy, scared and insecure about the level of my intelligence and physical being, I was one of only six girls that walked the hallways of Foothills Academy - almost 25 years ago. I had no idea that my parents' "cruelly" pulling me out of public school, away from all my friends, would change my life forever.



Over the years, I have come to realize that the skills I've learned, experiences I've gained and the opportunities that were given to me at Foothills Academy (by both the teachers and my fellow students) have all been major contributing factors in the life I have led since then.

I believe my success can be attributed to not only "working hard" but also to "playing hard". It's been about being open to learning new things, adjusting to different situations, people and cultures that have made the journey exciting.

One year after leaving Foothills Academy, I graduated from Junior High School and began Senior High School at Sir Winston Churchill. It was here that I began to realize that I had a passion for the Arts. At 18 years of age I graduated from High School and my once again "cruel" parents presented me with two choices: Door #1 - go to college right after High School and they would pay for it, or Door #2 - don't go to college right away, and when you come to your senses in a couple of years, you can pay for it yourself. Well I may have had learning disabilities, but I wasn't stupid!

Behind Door #1 were three inspiring and hardworking years at Mount Royal College in the Diploma

Program of Interior Design. I was one of the youngest students in the course and my youth and inexperience made it challenging for me. Graduation day for the 20% of the class that succeeded - including me - made it all worthwhile.

In 1990, a burnt-out college graduate, I was now ready to "play hard". I decided to spend the next year living in Lake Louise. In the summer I lead tourists on horse-back treks through the mountains and in the winter I sold sports clothing at the Chateau Lake Louise and had an incredible ski season.

After that exciting year, I headed back to Calgary and I worked for two years learning the creative art of window display and retail accessorizing for Woodwards. It was during that time that my mind began to yearn for world travel. I took the money I had saved, invested it in a backpack and some "Lonely Planet" travel books, and my boy friend (at the time) and I travelled to South Africa, Australia (where I worked as a bar tender for three months), New Zealand, Thailand and Indonesia. At 22 years of age, I was far away from any "safety nets" and anything familiar. Besides learning "street smarts" and embracing new cultures, I became very aware of how lucky I was to have grown up in my family and in Canada.

After a year of adventure I moved back to Calgary to focus again on the "working hard" part of my life. For the next five years, I buckled down and became a successful kitchen cabinet designer at Prestique Kitchens. It was there that I met my husband-to-be who was an installer/carpenter. Besides our regular jobs, we decided to team up and fully re-design, gut and renovate an old inner city war

time bungalow. In 1998 (now married), with a beautifully renewed home, "time on our hands" and the real estate market going crazy, we decided to sell our home, pack everything into storage and backpacked for a year through parts of China, Tibet, Nepal, India, Thailand and Indonesia.

Arriving back in Calgary in the summer of 1999, we threw ourselves back into our careers at Prestique Kitchens. That fall we bought a house that became a three year inside/outside renovation project. Our landscaping job was featured in The Herald in 2004 and the Horticultural Society arranged a tour for its members last year.

While at Prestique Kitchens I was responsible for two showroom renovations and I also directed the planning, designing and set-up of a new kitchen cabinetry showroom in Bridgeland. In 2005 I was fortunate to be one of only 30 local designers selected to create a new space for the "Kids Help Phone" Designer Showcase (and public tour). The kitchen I helped create was also featured in the June 2005 (Calgary) Renovation Magazine.

After 10 years in the kitchen design industry, I decided this past June to start my own Interior Design consulting business. This has allowed me personally to share my experience/skills, ideas and passion for design with my clientele. I always find it both thrilling and humbling to be able to affect people's living spaces and, ultimately, their lives.

So far I am keeping busy, learning lots and enjoying my entrepreneurial adventure. I know that it won't be easy every day, but I try to live by the wise words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Do not go where the path may lead, instead go where there is no path, and leave a trail ..." For me, that will be success.

Growing Up Foothills Style

By Jason Wardle

I never understood why I couldn't keep up with the class, I just couldn't. The teacher would get frustrated with me and move my desk to the corner and continue on with the rest of the other students.

Thank goodness my parents understood this to be a problem, and I ended up at Foothills Academy (fancy that!) in 1980.

I noticed a difference right away. The other students in my class were at the same pace as me, and no one teased me about being stupid.

As students at the time, we never seemed to understand what the teachers were trying to do for us.

I just remember being ticked off for having to do my whole report on Japan in one night. (Right Mrs. Roberts, aka Mrs. Wellington?)

I started to understand what they were trying to do a lit-

tle more after I graduated from Foothills in 1987. I then started grade 11 back in the public system at Queen Elizabeth High School. I didn't have the extra help as I did at Foothills, and I wasn't sure if I could do it.

Then, a scary thing started to happen. I realized later that I was using some of the things I had learned at Foothills without even knowing it (even Mr. Walters's "learning to learn" class...come to think about it, I still use this, and even more now!)

I graduated from Queen Elizabeth in 1989 and started SAIT, taking a 1 year certificate course (Recreation Facility Maintenance and Operations).

Well, that's when the real tough learning started, and it was at a fast pace. I wasn't sure if I could keep up. I hated to admit it at the time, but I had to revert back to my old Foothills notes and methods of studying. I didn't think it was going to work, but

after getting 100% on my small motors quiz, (yes Mr.

Fleury, I actually studied for a test!), and I started using these methods more often.

It wasn't easy, and to this day, I have hard times (especially with my messy writing and punctuation), but I find myself going back to my Foothills teachings.

I know in a lot of ways I'll always be a slow learner, but thanks to Foothills Academy's learning methods, most people will never know, or be able to tell.

Everybody learns differently, you just have to try a few different methods until you find a way that works for you.

None of us knew it at the time, but that's what Foothills Academy teachers were doing for us, and still are to this day, for more students than ever.

Thanks Foothills Academy!



The Phases and Faces of Success

By Brenda Martin

The golden glow of success "phooey"! The notion of success is confusing to me because of my natural tendency to compare myself to others. For example: my perception creates limitations such as "oops, should have done more" and/or "look how great I am". This is nonsense. Over the years I have compared myself to those I respect as successful, according to my value system. I then superimposed their success upon my normal, everyday, life - letting myself appear as less and putting myself down in the process. Let's face it, Oprah Winfrey I'm not! My fantasy is that these individuals have made it, have it all, and have no concerns. I sincerely doubt this is true.

I tested my theory and asked several successful individuals about their worries, struggles and fears. Yes, indeed, misery loves company and even their lives continue with equal amounts of difficulties and joy. The appearance that some people are not as affected by the struggles in life does not mean they do not have them! Conversely, those whom I judged as unsuccessful, according to my values, are living their lives as they have chosen and do not want to change it. It appears from the outside that their struggles, worries and fears are greater than their joys. Again,

this is a mistaken belief. They have joy in their lives as well as difficulties! Nature gravitates to balance.

Perhaps the most damaging habit (for people in all walks of life), is to engage in the comparison of yourself to others and basing their success or failure on your values. This concept is critical for those who have been constantly measured against a yard stick that is inappropriate to their needs. Having Learning Disabilities is neither a

good thing nor a bad thing; it is a reality. Those that I have spoken with who (Continued next page)

Learning Disabilities are "invisible" and are not necessarily referred to on a daily basis... focus on your strengths and enjoy the uniqueness of your disability!

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► **Challenging Learning
Disabilities**

Visit us on the Web!
www.foothillsacademy.org



**Foothills Academy
Society**

ARE YOU FEELING DEPRESSED?

HAS ANYONE EVER CALLED YOU MANIC?

- Have you ever had a period of a week or so when you felt so happy and energetic that your friends told you that you were talking too fast or that you were behaving differently or strangely?
- Has there been a period when you were so hyper and irritable that you got into arguments with people?

You may be eligible to participate in a clinical research study for manic-depression (bipolar disorder) testing a new nutritional supplement. This study is being conducted by Dr Bonnie Kaplan of the University of Calgary, in partnership with the Calgary Health Region.

Some people with bipolar disorder do not take medication for their condition. In order to be in this study, you must be an adult who is currently medication-free. All participants will be monitored by a psychiatrist.

For more information, please check out the website MoodStudy.com, or phone at 617-6066

The Phases and Faces of Success (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

have adapted well are generally those who have lost the image of needing to measure up to an invisible guideline. Instead, they recreate their own guidelines, which can benefit them and their families, to assist them in moving forward in life. Remember that those who have Learning Disabilities are often gifted and accomplish in areas opposite their disabilities.

I recently spoke with a gentleman (age forty or so) about his struggles with Learning Disabilities. He believes that people who have Learning Disabilities often focus on their areas of strength and do not advertise or make public their struggles. He perceived that the general public can acknowledge, without discussion, a person with a physical disability such as sight, hearing or movement simply because of the awareness that it exists. It

does not mean the general public is able to understand and adapt to the disability. Learning Disabilities are "invisible" and are not necessarily referred to on a daily basis. Yes, there are troubles with organization, timing, memory, attention, social interaction - to name a few. However, it becomes an integral part of the benefit of the individual. There are benefits of Learning Disabilities; focus on your strengths and enjoy the uniqueness of your disability!

In the alumni newsletter we seek to celebrate those who are carrying on as adults in their world with Learning Disabilities. It is not meant as a means to compare; instead as a way to enjoy our differences. I would encourage you to reflect upon those times you felt you were less than the person next to you, for whatever reason, and understand they experi-

ence as much success as they do failure. My grandmother, who lived to 101 years of age, seldom seemed too upset about much of anything but was very quick to let you know her values! She frequently said that you cannot have good without bad, up without down, and pleasure without pain. I am beginning to understand my grandmother and hope that I can somehow live more gently. There is no pity party for those who feel they have failed and there is no time for false persona for those who adore their success. Enjoy the wonderful person you are, capable of having great potential. Your gift may be in the workplace, in the home, or in the community! All are important, all have their place and all are necessary.