



Rosthern Junior College

CONNECT

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RJC Connect is published as a joint effort between Rosthern Junior College students, staff and alumni. This semi-annual publication celebrates our past, our present and our future, as together we shape the ongoing RJC story.

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We invite alumni to submit items of interest: births, deaths, marriages and other exciting events and transitions. Pictures will also be considered.

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EDUCATION WITH A PLUS FOR 2017 AND BEYOND

In 1975 Frank H. Epp published *Education with a Plus – The story of Rosthern Junior College*. This book describes the first 70 years of history of RJC. After many interviews and exhaustive research Epp concluded that:

The plus education represented by the Academy and College were not always defined or understood in the same way during its 70-year history. But always it had the common denominator of true religion and the relation of that religion to culture and, indeed, to all of life. The graduates of the school were intended not only to make a better living, but to live a better life, to maintain a stronger identity, and to offer a better service to mankind.

Epp also noted that, "RJC...viewed its role as relating to the thought processes and value systems of the students. The intention was to give to those students a richer and fuller life and through them, in their respective professions, a strong contribution to society." He goes on to highlight faith development, academics, fine arts, athletics and dorm life as areas that collectively make up the "plus" of RJC.

An important part of DO MORE BE MORE is the work we're doing to enhance the programming at RJC. Put another way, we are answering the question "what does education with a plus look like in 2017 and beyond?"

On the one hand, RJC must stay consistent with our purpose and mission as found in our Vision Statement:

As a Christian educational community within the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition, Rosthern Junior College understands that the education of children is a shared responsibility of the school, the home and the church.

We will strive to integrate sound academic learning, growth in character and faith, peacemaking and service to God and all creation. This educational endeavour is upheld and undergirded by our Christian values. We are convinced that learning, at best, occurs when academics are bound together with faith and positive relationships, and where the focus is the development of the whole person.

At the same time in order to remain relevant RJC must stay current in pedagogy, course offerings and programming. IMAGINE, RJC's initial step to address these two realities in our grade 10 class, is providing an exciting glimpse into what the "plus" will look like.

From its start in fall 2016, IMAGINE has provided rich and meaningful learning experiences for our grade 10 students focusing on the core ideas of "imagine a better world" and "imagine what

you can do." In the past few months the IMAGINE class has covered several thousand kilometres, finding classrooms in downtown Saskatoon, at Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan and at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

Lessons in English, history, Christian ethics and Spanish classes have already been challenged and enriched by the

contributions provided by over 20 community partner organizations and individuals. Opportunities still to come include a Treaty Day in partnership with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, as well as a week of learning and service in Oliver, BC as volunteers at the Okanagan Gleaners project.

This initiative has encouraged us at RJC to plan for more of the same learning

opportunities for students in grades 11 and 12. We look forward to announcing more details later in spring of 2017. We are excited about the direction RJC is taking to provide innovative and meaningful learning experiences for our students.

- Jim Epp, Principal

ALUMNI NEWS



FALL FUNDRAISING DINNER A STAR-STUDED EVENING

On October 22nd we celebrated the RJC community with our annual Homecoming and Fundraising Dinner. This annual event was once again a great success with almost 375 people in attendance.

This year's theme celebrated the rich history of musicals at RJC. Since 1964, RJC has produced 51 year end musicals and other productions, involving over 3,000 students and staff as actors and musicians or through technical support, lighting, set building, costume design, ticket sales and more. The students, staff and volunteers come together year after year to produce a magical show that captivates audiences in a much loved RJC tradition.

For the banquet this year we wanted to celebrate the commitment that RJC has shown to the arts by producing



our own show, "The German English Academy Awards!" — the original name of our school (German English Academy) combined with the well-known Hollywood awards show.

Guests were welcomed with a promenade full of white twinkling lights and ushered into the lobby complete with a red carpet and photo booth. Entering the gymnasium, decorated in gold and black with stars to capture the opulent feeling of Hollywood, guests received a glass of sparkling punch called "Mennonite Champagne."

From the moment our favourite host (and RJC Vice Principal) Ryan Wood stepped on stage he wowed us with

his wit and humour, beginning with his opening monologue. Throughout the evening we had eight musical performances featuring over 60 alumni from 1955 to 2014. The phenomenal performances celebrated musicals that have been performed at RJC over the years, from *HMS Pinafore* to *Sound of Music* and many others in between. Each number was complete with choreography and costumes—thank you to all who committed their time to performing.

We were once again treated to an amazing supper prepared by the RJC culinary staff who on top of all the cooking put many hours into menu planning and seeking out food sponsors.





We have a new RJC tradition of using the fall dinner as an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of our alumni. This year we had three talented artists who are recognized not only in Saskatchewan but across Canada for their work. Current students presented “awards” to Vickie Dyck (1977, and former RJC staff), founder of the Saskatchewan’s beloved Barn Playhouse; Elise Epp (2005), singer, songwriter and graphic artist; and Eric Paetkau (1989), music director of both the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra and Toronto’s acclaimed Group of 27 chamber orchestra. Hearing each of their stories and the way RJC influenced them as musicians and leaders in the community was inspirational. Thank you to each of our guests for coming “home” to RJC and for sharing your story.

The annual musical production tradition was started at RJC in 1964 when teachers Rudy Friesen and William Krueger pushed the limits of traditional offerings and brought in the concept of musical theatre with *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. We publicly recognized them for their forward thinking by presenting them with a framed certificate and an original score from the musical they first produced.

This evening is one of the major fundraising events for RJC and as such



we offered plenty of ways for supporters to contribute throughout the evening. In addition to our over 50 silent auction items we also had a live auction by auctioneer Paul Tiessen, with the crowd favourite prize of peppernuts made by alumna Elva Epp.

A special part of the evening’s festivities is recognizing staff who have hit career milestones. This year we recognized Valerie White (5 years), Mel Siemens (15 years), Colette Penner (15 years), Jim Epp (30 years), Lloyd Schmidt (30 years) and Bev Epp (35 years). In addition, Jim Epp delivered a heartfelt “lifetime achievement” tribute to Lloyd Schmidt who retired in June 2016 after 30 years of teaching and service to RJC. We thank him for all he did for RJC —we are all better for having Lloyd as our teacher, colleague, mentor and friend.



Overall the evening raised close to \$60,000 in support of the programs and mission of RJC. Most importantly though it brought our community of staff, students, alumni, parents and supporters together to reminisce and celebrate a school that has been a part of our lives and the lives of generations of students since 1905.

Thank you to the many people without whom this evening would not happen, from staff to students to board members and volunteers. And thank you to our corporate sponsors and donors of our live and silent auction items — we appreciate your generosity and support.

Lastly thank you to all who attended this year’s “German English Academy Awards” — your support of these events is what makes the RJC community vibrant and strong. Stay tuned for this year’s theme to be announced in late summer 2017!

We look forward to seeing you all at the RJC Homecoming 2017 in October!

-Nicole Tiessen, grad 1998
Current RJC Board Member and
Chair of RJC Homecoming Dinner

HOMECOMING SPONSORS 2016

Thank you all for supporting the RJC events that bring alumni, parents, friends and students together to celebrate!

GOLD LEVEL SPONSORS

Associated Engineering

BJM Contracting Ltd.

Double E Grain

Double E Grain Corp is a grain farm operating from a home base four miles west of Rosthern. We have a long-term partnership with Jim Flath (Rahan Farms) and more recently our son, Matt Enns, and our neighbour and friend, Chad Krikau. We run a modern grain farm that proudly produces healthy, nutritious and safe food in an environmentally sustainable manner.

RJC has been part of my life as long as I can remember. My earliest recollections of the school were of my dad, Ed Enns, heading to the school to do some voluntary work from building projects to fundraising or heading to the school to print the bulletin. I remember, as a preschool child, literally cranking the bulletins out and getting Gestetner ink on myself. Dad loved (and still loves) the school. Like cheering for the Toronto Maple Leafs, it is just a part of our DNA! He has passed along his dedication to the school to his family.

Our relationship with RJC had its beginnings with my Oma, Helena Enns. Although she had very limited means, having her children attend RJC was a priority. Dad and Uncle Len Enns both attended and created their stories there. All nine of Oma’s grandchildren also attended the school. Our three children have gone to RJC and we are looking forward to seeing our

grandchildren attend. All three of these generations have many interesting stories about their experiences at the school that have shaped their lives.

Our preschool grandchildren already love to visit the school, and go quite regularly to "Auntie Margo's workshop." We are currently planting the seeds for their future attendance! The emphasis that RJC places on developing an inclusive, loving community, its service projects, the top notch academics, music and sports programs are all reasons that we love to support this place!

-Elmer Enns

Lakeshore Garden Centre

The Krahn family has a rich connection with RJC stemming back to the German English Academy; many family members have developed deep friendships in this place. In the 1950s and 1960s constituents raised significant dollars to build the school we look to renovate now. Lakeshore Tree Farms LTD has partnered with RJC for more than 50 years. As we plant these memorial trees on campus, which represent patron's significant contribution to our school, we are reminded how special this place is to us, and how enduring its legacy is for so many people.



Lakeview Insurance Brokers

At Lakeview Insurance Brokers, our greatest pride and sense of accomplishment comes from contributing to our communities. Offering all types of auto, home, farm, church and commercial insurance across the western provinces allows us to communicate and interact with many different organizations and groups! Places like Rosthern Junior College hold a special spot in our hearts as they combine so many values that we share. The sense of support, learning, fellowship and community are strongly

felt and inspire us at Lakeview to be involved. Thank you to the staff and students at RJC for creating such a place and allowing us to play a small role in your success. Best wishes throughout 2017!



SILVER

Rosthern Agencies

BRONZE

aodbt architecture + interior design

Fenestration Components International

Funk's Funeral Home, Rosthern

The Marketing Den

TOURNAMENT OF MEMORIES

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

By Mitch Dahl

Flash-back to 1986 as a scrawny grade 10 student joined his RJC basketball teammates in the inaugural RJC Basketball Tournament of Memories (TOM). He prepared to battle the formidable alumni squads including legendary names such as Penner, Dueck, Regier, Hooge, Epp, Pankratz, Nickel, Peters and many others. Epic men's and women's games of historic intensity ensued, with the veteran alumni usually disposing of the current RJC squad despite their enthusiastic efforts.

Flash-forward 31 years to the 2017 RJC

Tournament of Memories as an enlarged 46-year-old former RJC student attempts to negotiate the court, facing the formidable challenge of the younger, fitter current RJC squad (actually all the other teams are generally younger and fitter now, but I digress): Forrester, Ho, Hildebrandt, Zakreski, Perrault and more. Once again, epic men's and women's games of historic intensity ensued, with the veteran alumni again usually triumphing over the current RJC squad despite their enthusiastic effort. Phew, at least that hadn't changed, we need to carry that alumni torch high.

The other constant: Denelda Fast, and the staff and students at RJC, provided the alumni with an outstanding Tournament of Memories experience. The competition on the court may be intense at times, but the post-game invariably consisted of hand shakes, lots of smiles, hearty laughs and stories of current and past glory (as well as plenty of stretching, foam rolling, hydrating and any other possible options to aid in recovery between games).

Once again, the 2017 TOM didn't disappoint in the multi-generational category, with several games having some form of mother-daughter, father-son, sister-sister or brother-brother competition. Several clans including the Fasts, Boldts, Hildebrandts, Kosokowskys, Stefaniuks, Epps, Forresters and Dahls were represented by two or more members as students, alumni, parents, coaches or refs. The longevity of the Tournament of Memories, and the multigenerational aspect, continue to speak to the tradition and sense of community generated by our shared RJC experience, whether in 1986 or in 2017. Looking forward to 2018!



Carter Dahl (2016), Josh Dahl (gr. 11, 2012), Maria Dahl (gr. 11 student), Mitch Dahl (1988), Bonnie Dahl (1988)



Melanie Boldt, Liam Boldt (2016), Adam Boldt (grade 10 student), Kevin Boldt (1985)

A FAMILY TOURNAMENT

By Melanie Boldt

The friendly teasing amongst siblings and parents starts about a month in advance. Brother rivals brother as they shoot hoops and brush up past moves in the church gym on the weekend.

Parents reminisce about their high school “athletic glory” and quietly promise themselves to run on the treadmill at least 10 times before the tournament so maybe they can score a lay-up and survive the inevitable post-game muscle soreness.

This is the Boldt household of Kevin, Melanie, Liam and Adam before the Basketball Tournament of Memories 2017 where for the first time all four of us played on teams ranging from “most mature” to the current RJC boys team. The guys were particularly excited about playing their dad and schooling him on the court— although those Old Guys

showed up and went undefeated!

I did not attend RJC (now I wish I had), but have close friends who went and Kevin is a 1985 grad. Our kids now attend RJC together. For me, one of the unexpected joys of RJC has been the new community of friends that we, as parents, have discovered. We’ve rekindled friendships and sparked new ones with other parents and alumni. Not only are we cheering our kids from the bleachers together, but we’re on the court playing, cheering for each other. This friendship and support carries into everyday life as well.

The RJC family readily adopted me, put me on the team, and I am so grateful.

So next year, ask yourself “It’s only a few games of basketball once a year. How hard can that be?” Dust off your shoes, run once or twice on the treadmill, and come out to play!

DECADE GRAD REPS

Does your grad year end in a “7”? Then you’ve got a reunion coming this summer! Contact your rep with questions, your RSVP or to help with the planning!

See page 9 for information on the alumni banquet.

1947 GRADS

Ag Peters
ronpeters@sasktel.net 1-306-343-0904

Jac Nickel

Frank and Irma Gerbrandt

Marg Peters

1957 GRADS

Paul Enns
penns@sasktel.net

Norma Rempel
normajrempe@gmail.com

Hilda Patkau
chpatkau@gmail.com

Elsie Epp
mennoelsie@shaw.ca

Hertha Friesen
aafriesen@sasktel.net

1967, 1977, 1987

Pending

1997 GRADS

Allison Fairbairn
allison.fairbairn@usask.ca 1-306-380-5467

Andrew Neufeldt
mr.neufeldt@gmail.com

2007 GRADS

Sarah (Hooge) Warkentin
snl_warkentin@live.com

BEGINNINGS & ENDINGS

Kennedy Laine Strudwick was born October 26, 2016 to Natasha Esperance (2005) and Daryl Strudwick.

Elwyn Loewen (1967) — April 19, 2016

Ruth (Neufeld) Lowen (1962) — August 22, 2016

Irene Epp Stuart (grade 11, 1945) — August 28, 2016

Harry Block (1948) — September 11, 2016

Helen Elfrieda (Dyck) Klassen (1936) — December 5, 2016

Leonard Enns (1948) — December 30, 2016

Alfred “Fred” Wieler (1953) — January 7, 2017

ADMISSIONS



Friday Night Live is RJC's opportunity to invite prospective students and youth groups to the school for an evening of entertainment, good food and fun!

JOIN US AT RJC!

PROSPECTIVE STUDENT FAMILIES

RJC is currently accepting registrations for the 2017-18 school year and we invite you to send in your applications today! **IMAGINE, our new experiential learning approach for grade 10 at RJC, continues to be popular** — over one-third of the seats in next-year's class are spoken for. If you are interested in being part of this class please register as soon as possible. In 2016-17 the class was full with a waitlist, and we anticipate the same level of interest this year.

Exciting new learning initiatives for grade 11 and 12 students are being planned for this fall.

RJC SHUTTLE SERVICE

To help make RJC more accessible to families in neighbouring communities, RJC has a daily shuttle service in the Warman, Martensville, Osler and Hague area. If you or someone you know lives in the Sask Valley area this may be a great option for your family.

GENERATION NEXT (GRADES 5-9)

Generation Next is a program that connects students in grades five through

nine to each other and to RJC. Our GenNexters are invited to several youth events at RJC including **"Friday Fun Nights,"** where GenNexters get to spend time on the campus and meet current RJC students. These events are great opportunities for youth to meet each other as well as feel a sense of belonging at RJC.

If you are interested in touring the campus, coming for a visit or just want to find out more about the RJC school, community and programs, please contact admissions director Valerie White by phone at 1-306-232-4222 or email admissions@rjc.sk.ca.

DO MORE BE MORE UPDATE



We are thrilled to be learning about science in our newly renovated chemistry and biology labs. Thanks to all of those who have supported the DO MORE BE MORE campaign to help RJC continue to grow into the future!

RJC, A PLACE TO BE YOURSELF

Completing phase one of our DO MORE BE MORE strategy, the senior science labs opened in the fall of 2016, nearly catching the start of the school year. For

over five decades, our students have studied in labs that functioned but didn't function well. But with that space RJC has still educated many scholars that have focused their life work on science. One of these alumni is Rebekah "Missy" Janzen (1993) who grew up on a farm near Cochrane. This is her story and the

impact the RJC learning environment had on her life:

There was never any doubt in my mind that I was going to go to RJC. My parents met there, my sister and brother both went, and almost every single one of my cousins went before, during or after me. I graduated from RJC in 1993, and still

some of my closest friends are those I made there.

My passion for science, and particularly biology, was largely inspired by my dad, a veterinarian specializing in bovine reproductive health. A significant aspect of his work has been harvesting cattle embryos and transplanting them, and since we lived right across the field from the clinic I have very early memories of watching him work. He often referred to the embryos as “eggs”, (really what they are), which lead to a transformative memory from in kindergarten when the teacher asked the class where eggs come from. I stuck up my hand with absolute confidence and said “cows.” When the teacher told me I was wrong I was quite shaken, but also firm in my knowledge that I was right.

Despite that “error,” I continued to be an A student throughout my elementary and junior high school years, and that didn’t change at RJC. I loved all of my teachers at RJC; I always thought it was so cool that we called our teachers by their first names, which made my previous high-school experience seem utterly juvenile. I always felt that this allowed a very different type of student-teacher relationship. It almost felt like our interactions were a lot closer to being between equals, instead of student-teacher or superior-subordinate interactions.

All aspects of my RJC education allowed a different type of growth than I would have experienced in my local high school. Particularly that brains and good grades were celebrated at RJC, as opposed to at my old high school where we were termed “nerds.” Sounds pretty stereotypical, but it was true. I had a nice group of nerdy friends there, but RJC was so much more inclusive.

I believe it was early in grade 11, when we were given a list of potential biology projects to pick from. Strangely, the word “taxidermy” was on that project list and for some reason it stuck with me. In the next day or so, I was talking with my parents on the phone in the dorm hallway and they mentioned that our dog Coco had caught a muskrat under

my Dad’s truck. For some reason, my brain made an instant connection and I told my Dad to stick that dead muskrat in the freezer!

The next time us Alberta kids piled in the white and blue RJC van to make a weekend trip home, I had my dad bundle the muskrat up tightly in garbage bags and a box and unbeknownst to my fellow passengers (except maybe my cousins Julia and Heather) I brought the corpse back to the dorm. I sneakily stored the box in the tuck shop freezer, along with everyone’s favourite snack —frozen chocolate bars —once again without anyone knowing.

When it came time to complete our projects, I collected my “specimen,” let it thaw and spent some pretty interesting after school hours in the lab with a scalpel, some borax and a wooden plaque. In a few days I had mounted a tanned muskrat hide. It looked pretty amateur, and I don’t remember my grade for the project, but I was quite proud of my effort.

In grade 12, we all spent several days or even weeks with fetal pig dissection. I had done some dissecting before that, but the fetal pig was the first mammal and the biggest thing I’d ever dissected. There is a very distinctive smell that goes along with dissecting a preserved animal, and it’s a smell that I came to be very familiar with in my post-secondary education.

I went on to the U of M where I majored in biology. There were a few RJC grads in Winnipeg at the same time, some of them were my roommates—it was nice to have that feeling of familiarity. The U of M is a large school, and my first year biology class consisted of lectures on giant screens played in large auditoriums. I did very well but it wasn’t overly inspiring and after another year at U of M, I transferred to the University of Saskatchewan.

If you’ve never been to the biology department at U of S, you should go. It’s like a little natural history museum, and I loved it there. I spent hours in the labs, dissecting things, and looking at stuff under the microscope. I graduated from

U of S in 1999, with a Bachelor of Science degree, major in biology. I loved my university experience, but I was clueless about what I was going to do next. So me and two RJC friends hit the road and travelled to Yellowknife, where the three of us were hired on the spot at the campground we stayed at on our very first night. We got other jobs there as well, and two of us ended up staying for almost two years.

I then moved back home, and got a job working for my Dad’s company while I tried to figure out what I was going to do next. The job was a combination of answering phones, data entry and chasing cows, and I loved it. I kept working there part time while I continued my education at Mount Royal College, taking industrial ecology — essentially teaching how environmental protection can be an integral aspect of industrial development.

It was through the program at Mount Royal College that I landed my first — and to date only — “real” job. I was hired as a co-op student at TransCanada pipelines to help out with post-construction monitoring and reclamation. The job worked out and I moved on to an environmental planning role for new pipeline projects, which I’ve been doing for 14 years. I’m now managing a team of seven people on the biggest pipeline project in the country.

This story of my journey might not make as much sense as others. A few detours for sure. I was always a bright kid, but RJC was the first school experience where I could be my true self, and be loved for it. It gave me confidence that I never had before. Other than my husband and family, I still feel most at home with my RJC friends, even if I haven’t seen them in a long time. Family — that’s what all of those crazy people are to me. And I wouldn’t be the person I am today without that experience.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

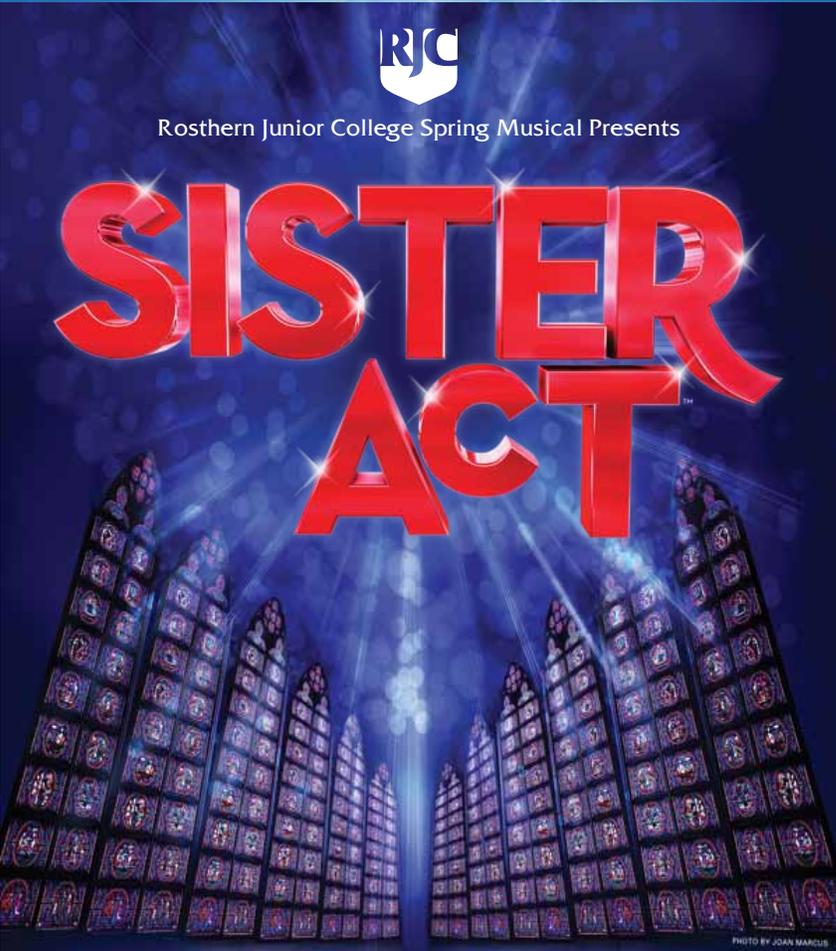
RJC SPRING CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT

MAY 27 Join us for the RJC Spring Classic Golf Tournament at Valley Regional Park, Rosthern. There are a number of ways you can participate: **Four-person team Texas scramble:** Entry fees are \$125 per person (enter as a team or individual), which includes green fees and a ticket for the banquet following the tournament. Tickets are also available for those who don't want to golf but would like to join us for the banquet and silent auction. A tax receipt is available for a portion of the tournament fees.

Corporate or business sponsorship: We're looking for businesses or companies that might be interested in supporting this golf tournament as an event sponsor, hole sponsor, or by donating team (4s) prizes or silent auction prizes. Please contact the RJC Office at 1-306-232-4222 or email rjcgolf@rjc.sk.ca if you or your company might be interested. All sponsors and donors will receive recognition for their contribution to the golf tournament.

GRAD WEEKEND AND ALUMNI BANQUET

JUNE 24 Alumni Banquet, Saturday June 24 at 5:30 pm.
Cost: \$14 for adults, \$10 for children ages 6-12, free for children 5 and under.



RJC
Rosthern Junior College Spring Musical Presents

SISTER ACT

Music by ALAN MENKEN Lyrics by GLENN SLATER Book by CHERI STEINKELLNER & BILL STEINKELLNER

Additional Book Material
DOUGLAS CARTER BEANE

Based on the Touchstone Pictures Motion Picture "Sister Act" written by Joseph Howard

June 23-24, 2017
7:00 pm

TICKETS: \$20/\$10 16 & under
306.232.4222 | office@rjc.sk.ca

Rosthern Junior College
410 6th Avenue, Rosthern, SK

MUSICAL
JUNE 23, 24 Tickets go on sale to the public Tuesday, May 23. (See poster above for details.)

ALUMNI TOURNAMENT
OCTOBER 13TH & 14TH
Annual soccer and volleyball tournament.

CONNECT INTERVIEWS



SEWING SEEDS, A NON-PROFIT RUN BY SIX RJC ALUMNI

You could have forgiven Sylvia Rempel and her family for taking time off after selling their business. They had grown the skiwear brand Sun Ice from a start up doing fashion shows in high schools, to a company that outfitted Canada's first expedition on Mount Everest and provided uniforms for the 1988 Winter Olympics. But when the family business was sold in 2004, they didn't just stop working.

About 18 months after the sale of Sun Ice began, Sylvia and her daughter and RJC grad Tammy (1979) were invited to visit Sierra Leone with *100 Huntley Street*. While there, the two realized that their knowledge of sewing and business could make a difference. And that's when Sewing Seeds was born.

Sewing Seeds helps communities set up local sewing schools, giving women a skill to make a living. With their years of experience the family could have started another business, but a non-profit felt like the right step. "After a while it's time to give back," says Kelly Grams, also an RJC grad (1976), one of Sylvia's son-in-laws who has worked with both Sun Ice and Sewing Seeds. "[Sylvia and Tammy] went there and they saw a huge, huge need for sewing lessons, so what better than to pass on our gift in the sewing business."

In addition to Kelly and Tammy, other RJC grads helping run Sewing Seeds are, Dick "JD" Bartel, (1975), Angela (Rempel) Grams (1977), Carol (Rempel) Bartel (1981) and Wilfred Bartel (1978).

The mission of Sewing Seeds isn't to continue sending teachers from Canada, but to help establish a school, provide the curriculum and train teachers so a local organization can run the school.

"We don't want to be the one week mission, we want to go out there and invest in them so they can move forward and do incredible things," says Kelly. From its first school in Sierra Leone, Sewing Seeds has now established schools in Ukraine, Peru and Mexico and they will be setting up a new location in Haiti.

Every year the organization receives many requests for schools, and they have to determine where they can be most effective: finding an appropriate building, checking that machines and fabric can be purchased, and working with the local organization to make sure there are opportunities for new graduates.

Once they've decided where to start a school, Sewing Seeds provides the machines, fabric and other supplies to get started and brings in skilled sewing teachers. They start with the basics, sewing straight lines and making pillow cases, and by end of the third set of lessons students are making their own coats.

Kelly estimates that over the years Sewing Seeds has trained over 1,000 students. Some graduates use the skills primarily at home, "Now their kids can afford to go to school because they made the uniforms. If you don't have a uniform, you can't afford a uniform, your children don't go to school," he says. Some students take their new skills and get a job in a tailor's shop or factory while others start their own businesses.

And while all the schools have been international so far, Kelly says they're looking at ways to work in Canada as well. They have a centre in Calgary where volunteers cut fabric and prepare supplies to be sent to the schools. They're also exploring the idea of taking pop-up sewing schools to Indigenous communities in Canada, in partnership with Olds College and Mount Royal University.

The spirit of serving others is at work at home as well as around the world. "I think [service is] inbred in us as Mennonites," says Kelly, "I think it's part of our culture, it's part of our DNA."

WHERE EXACTLY IS SAIPAN?



Before August of 2016, Dan Driediger was just like most people, he had no idea where Saipan was. It was the summer after he completed a degree in disaster recovery at Canadian Mennonite University. He was looking through the service opportunities with Mennonite Disaster Service and saw an opening in Saipan.

The difference between Dan and many others is that while he didn't know

where this place was, he thought he'd go ahead and ask if they'd take him for a two month placement. "Somebody once told me that the worst thing you can do is not ask," he says. "Once I found out where [Saipan is], I was thinking 'uh oh, what did I ask for?'"

If you look for Saipan on Google Maps, you'll need to zoom out about seven times until you find the closest major land—the Philippines. Saipan is the largest of the Northern Mariana Islands, a commonwealth of the U.S., but geographically much closer to Asia. Even though the location was far from his home in Saskatchewan, Dan took a two month placement, leaving in October of 2016.

His first week there got off to a rough start: long days in high heat, adjustments to jet lag, and a mishap with a measuring tape that left every board he cut 1/8" too short. But the second week brought a new crew, as well as adjustment to the heat and time zone, and he began to enjoy Saipan.

MDS is helping rebuild on Saipan after Typhoon Soudelor in August of 2015. While the major infrastructure has all been rebuilt, many people are still living either under patched roofs or in shelters next to homes too damaged to live in.

Dan has helped frame new homes, replace windows and repair damaged roofs. He's also spent a lot of time driving around the island, just over 115 square kilometres, in search of supplies. "The island doesn't have any Home Depot kind of store where you can get all your hardware," he says, "you have to know which of the 13 hardware stores has what you need. And there were many days when I had to go to all 13 stores to find something and I didn't find it."

Despite some days of monotonous driving, he's enjoyed life in Saipan,

meeting owners of the businesses and the people whose homes they're rebuilding. "Many of the people we're rebuilding the homes for... they often worked alongside us. So we got to know them quite well."

After his first term ended, Dan asked to return to Saipan in January of 2017 to provide overlap between the group leaving and the mostly new crew arriving at the beginning of the year. And he was then asked to return again in February for four and a half weeks to work as a project manager.

"I really enjoy helping others," Dan says, "Even doing the behind the scenes work, knowing that the work that I do has a purpose and that it will have a lasting effect."

It was his year at RJC that started Dan down the path of disaster recovery—during grade 12 he joined a team that helped build a daycare in Guatemala. And living in dorms with many extra curricular activities provided more opportunities than homeschooling had. "It pulled me out of my comfort zone, expanded my horizons for sure," he says.

He participated in Chorale and the musical, played football, and enjoyed living in a community. Including the night he got caught cooking burgers in his dorm room after friends decided he wasn't getting into enough trouble and brought patties and a hot plate. Did he get caught? "Sure did. You could smell it down the hall," he says.

After RJC Dan participated in Outtatown with CMU before continuing with studies in disaster recovery. "I think [RJC] developed a need for me to travel, to be pushed out of my comfort zone. To do more service," he says. "It definitely pushed me to Outtatown, pushed me to CMU and then to where I am today."



is MCC's largest emergency response since the Second World War.

Working with MCC's response to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti has been a highlight for Bruce. "I have worked on the earthquake all the way from the beginning of the early days in emergency response all the way to the difficult work of constructing hundreds of homes in Haiti. And it's satisfying to see that through to the end," he says. He has visited the country several times as part of his work, and was inspired to meet Haitians responding in their own communities and enjoyed finding ways to support those local efforts.

In addition to coordinating MCC's relief work, Bruce also oversees coordination of MCC's food program. And an important part of that is trying to respond to situations before they become emergencies. In his nine years with MCC, Bruce has tried to emphasize responding more to seasonal hunger—the time of the year when small farmers are planting new crops but have often run out of food or cash from the previous season.

"People think about the role of food assistance in an emergency situation, after people's crops have failed," says Bruce. "But the problem is that crisis happens at that time because people have already been in a very desperate situation for the months prior to that. So if we can help them during that period then we are able to prevent or be on top of the larger crisis."

While at the time he didn't imagine this particular role, Bruce does remember thinking about the importance of service as far back as his time at RJC during Deeper Life Days. "Growing up and being at RJC I was nurtured in a way in my faith

DISASTER RESPONSE AND DISCIPLESHIP

When a drought leaves 10 million people in need of food in Ethiopia, or an 7.8 magnitude earthquake hits Nepal damaging almost 800,000 homes, most of us are quick to write a cheque or pull out a credit card and make a donation. But we don't often think of the people behind the scenes making decisions

about the best way to use that money.

One of those people is RJC alumnus Bruce Guenther (1999), the disaster response director for Mennonite Central Committee. He has served with MCC for nine years, taking on his current position five year's ago near the beginning of the crisis in Syria. Responding to that conflict

that to be a disciple means that you are to serve the least of these," he says. "One could easily be discouraged by the largest refugee and food crisis since the second world war, but as a person of faith you're called to take that next step to be a witness and to be a disciple in the midst of that, but to always remember that God is in control."

In addition to emphasizing the importance of service, Bruce also says the many opportunities RJC offered helped prepare him for his work today. "At RJC you're very busy, there are many

different involvements, you really have to make good use of your time to balance academics and sports and fine arts and all the socializing time in the dorms," he says. "I think with all those opportunities, including student council, I was able to take on roles that built my leadership skills."

In his two years at RJC Bruce was on the basketball, track and field and volleyball teams, helping win the provincial championship on the RJC volleyball team in his grade 12 year. He also participated in Chorale and musicals and

sat on student council.

After graduation, Bruce earned a bachelor of theology from Canadian Mennonite University while also taking a year off to participate in MCC's Serving and Learning Together program in Jamaica. He then studied international development at Menno Simon's College before going on to do a Masters of Philosophy at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. He began work with MCC shortly after returning to Winnipeg.



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We hope you enjoy this edition of our semi-annual newsletter that will keep you updated on student life, alumni happenings, school events and everything that makes the RJC community such a vibrant, exciting place.

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