

Thomson TRADEWINDS

DAVID & MARY THOMSON C.I. ALUMNI NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2015

IN GOOD HANDS

For those Alumni members who are convinced the school has fallen apart since losing them, we are sorry to report that Thomson is still blessed with quality students, two of whom have won the Alumni Awards for 2015, based on their enthusiastic contribution to school life in their Grade 9 year. We'd like to introduce them to you.



Adam Bacanin was involved in rugby 7s, rugby 15s and ice hockey and is continuing those sports in Grade 10. He is also hoping to join the Thomson Athletic Council this year. His academic achievements have kept pace, with an average in the mid-80s. His favourite subjects are history, science and, of course, Phys Ed! Outside of school he also plays rugby (flanker) and ice hockey (left wing). In addition, he volunteers in the Scarborough Youth Hockey League, helping out as a time keeper and with other duties.

A lifelong Scarborough resident, Adam attended St. Andrew's Public School before arriving at Thomson. He really likes being at Thomson and is busy persuading his younger brother (in grade 8) and sister (in grade 6) that they have to follow his footsteps. He has university/college in his future plans, possibly working towards a degree and career in architecture.



Hasma Habiby was a busy girl in Grade 9, being part of the Student Council and the Robotics team, while also participating in track and field, her specialties being the triple jump and the running long jump. In Grade 10 she is adding Prefects, DECA (a business-oriented group) and the Muslim Student Association to the mix. Academically, she has averaged 93%. Her favourite classes are in drama and business. She has loved acting since being bitten by the theatre bug in elementary school, while she has already decided that her future career direction lies in business, with the Schulich School as part of her plans.

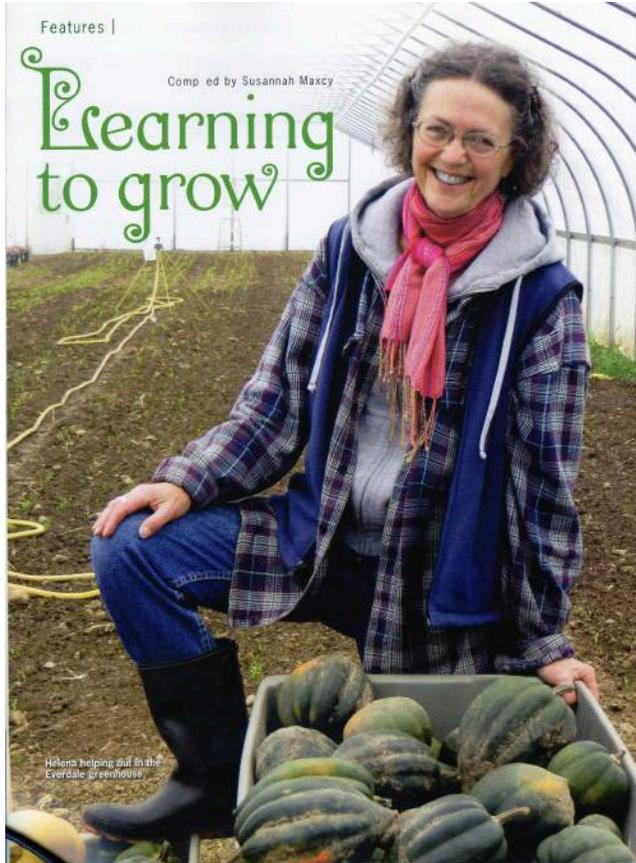
Outside of school, she provides loving day-care for her younger siblings, but also babysits for neighbours. She takes religious classes at the mosque almost across the road from Thomson. She volunteers at schools and day care facilities and has even helped out with the political campaign for the local Liberal candidate in the federal election.

Hasma is also a lifelong "Scarborian", graduating from Donwood Park and Edgewood Public Schools. She loves Thomson, contrary to what some of her friends told her to expect. Comparing notes with those who went elsewhere, she finds the teachers at the school very committed and helpful. The addition of an AP (Advanced Placement) program at Thomson is another bonus.

We congratulate our two winners, thank them for their positive contribution already to our alma mater and wish them well in all their future endeavours.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

*In the Summer 2015 issue of Renaissance, the Retired Teachers of Ontario magazine, an article appeared, featuring **Helena Wehrstein**, a Thomson alumna from 1967. We made contact with Helena and asked her about her life at Thomson and beyond. Perhaps you'll find echoes of your own experiences in her response.*



Learning to grow | Features

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."
— Audrey Hepburn.

Studies¹ show gardening has many physical and mental health benefits, but that doesn't mean you need to read a study to get out and enjoy the beauty and bounty that comes from getting your hands dirty in the garden. From school yard to back yard, we caught up with members, Helena Wehrstein, Don Tremmer, and Lyndia and William Hendry to discover the wild, wonderful joys of gardening.

Growing with the garden by Helena Wehrstein, District 16, Toronto

I live in downtown Toronto, but also rent a place on a 50 acre farm one hour away: Home Alive! It is a straw bale home with a beautiful permaculture garden at Everdale Place, the location of a free school from 1966 to 1974 and current home to Everdale Environmental Learning Centre, which I cofounded. My partner and I have been on the property since 1992, but moved into Home Alive! in 2009.

I used to garden years ago, but switched to a low maintenance yard at my Toronto home as priorities changed and interest waned. Although the main focus of the Learning Centre is training farmers, my involvement has been in financial and board matters, supporting our farmers, but with no interest in actually farming myself, until the Home Alive! garden grabbed me. At first, I felt obliged to tend to its lovely, rather wild garden, as the home is occasionally open for tours, but gradually over the past five years, I have spent more and more time there during the growing season and have become more ambitious with our garden, the garden and growing has grown on me.

We grow veggies and herbs, but also have a bounty of berries and fruit from bushes and trees planted by the landscape designer who created the garden in 2003. There are flower beds, three small ponds with water plants and frogs, a hugelkultur² area, a greywater wetland, and, of course, lots of weeds to control. Farmers and interns are always at hand to answer questions and to give gardening advice.

Benefits? They are many: relaxation, good exercise, soul renewal from being surrounded by nature, fresh air, and natural beauty and satisfaction from eating and sharing inexpensive, home-grown, fresh produce. I love using my creativity in planning and photographing the garden, and coming up with ideas on how to use yet another darn zucchini. I also get much inspiration and hope for the future by being around young, enthusiastic farmers and being a part of the local food movement.

This spring I also got my hands into the dirt at Black Creek Community Farm, an urban farm run by Everdale and community partners at Jane and Steeles. We have an RTO/ERO Project — Service to Others grant to help fund school visits, so I've been learning, teaching, and sharing my enthusiasm for growing food with local kids. Can't wait until this year's harvest! To learn more: visit <http://everdale.org>.

Fun fact
Home Alive! is the world's first prefabricated straw bale house and is designed to have a minimal environmental impact, seen here with its garden designer Brad Peterson.

1 Michigan State University: http://msu.edu/extension/news/what_are_the_physical_and_mental_benefits_of_gardening. Accessed March 13, 2015.
2 Hugelkultur (also spelled hugelkultur; simply translated from German as "hill culture") is the practice of composting large woody material to create a raised garden bed. It is a way of dealing with excess amounts of garden waste, for example prunings, hedge clippings, tree snags, or brushwood. www.garden.org/hugelkultur.
3 Harvest Homes: <http://www.harvesthomes.ca/news/story/everdale-the-house-that-lets-children-and-older-people-live-together>. Accessed March 13, 2015.

Having recently found one of my long-lost Thomson friends, thanks to Stan Farrow, I've been thinking about my Thomson years and the paths I have taken since....

I was a good student and mostly enjoyed my classes and teachers at Thomson. But I was quiet and shy and did not get involved in too many extra-curricular activities. I was in the gymnastics club for a couple of years, was a prompter for the *Romeo and Juliet* production, went to only one or two dances in my whole time there, was not interested in sports and missed out on the wonderful musical opportunities that were available. Mostly I hung out with a couple of good friends. I do have some good memories, but those teenage years were not the easiest for me, and I wasn't sorry to leave them behind; I actually chucked out all my year books and photographs after high school, only to very much regret it years later! (I did manage to scoop copies of some pages from the banners put up at one of the reunions.) I graduated as an Ontario Scholar but flunked out of my first year of a Modern Language program at U of T; a new social world had opened up to me and my studies took a hit. But also, writing was not my forte and I didn't have a clear idea of what I wanted to do in life. My highest marks at Thomson were in maths and sciences, yet I had dropped all those subjects in Grade 13 and graduated from Thomson with 8 language courses. What was I thinking? Where was the guidance department?

After working for a year at a bottom-level office job, I was motivated to go back to school to get a post-secondary education. I still was not clear on my path, but this time I did pass and obtained a general arts degree from U of T in 1972. I got a government job processing GIS applications, then spent a year travelling and working in Europe.

In 1975 there was such a shortage of elementary school supply teachers that I was able to do supply work with no teaching certificate; I jumped at the opportunity even though my only credential was some volunteer experience helping out in a classroom for a few months. Despite some interesting situations (not sure how I or



some of the kids survived...remember how awful you were to supply teachers??!), I was not put off. I had found my calling and went to teachers' college in September, 1975. I taught Grade 1 and 2 from 1976 to 1978 in the Toronto Bd. of Ed., then was laid off with all the other new teachers hired the same year as me, as the demographics had changed. I continued to work for the Board, but as an itinerant music teacher, teaching recorder to junior classes. Although music had always been part of my life, my recorder playing skills were limited, so I went into high gear with private lessons, theory and harmony classes, Orff training, etc. After 11 years, the job market in the Toronto Board opened up and I was rehired as a classroom teacher specializing in music.

In the meantime, I developed an interest in making textile art, using sewing skills I first learned in my Grade 9 Home Ec class at Thomson. I got a leave of absence from the Board when I adopted my daughter from Guatemala in 1992, went back to teach for a couple of years when she started school, then left the teaching profession to pursue my artwork. But she kept me in touch, as I served on the parent council at her elementary school, volunteered at the school when there was no music teacher and got involved in political organizing around education policy.

However, in another twist of fate, at that time my partner (never married, but we'll celebrate our 40th anniversary next year) and I started renting a cabin with friends at Everdale, a farm just outside Toronto that was the site of Canada's first free school from 1966 to 1973. Together with three other residents on the property, we launched a new initiative there in the late '90s: an environmental learning centre which I am proud to say is still going strong, although the focus has changed now to training a new generation of small plot veggie farmers in and around the GTA. I was in charge of setting up the bookkeeping and CRA accounts, incorporation, getting charitable status and so on, and remained treasurer until last year; when I started, I knew nothing about bookkeeping, accounting or business budgeting, but over the years I learned a lot (math /problem-solving brain at work!). This venture took up a lot of time and energy, so my art career has been on again/off again. But I am determined to get back to it this year and am in the process of building a website, which will also include some photography, another longtime interest. My concern about the environment, which was an impetus to build the Everdale organization, spills over into my art: I reuse/repurpose things as much as possible now in my artmaking.

I live in downtown Toronto but continue to spend a lot of time at Everdale, where we now rent a lovely strawbale eco-home, HomeAlive!. Working the permaculture garden there has become another passion over the past few years. I've been a healthy food nut for years, so it brings me great pleasure to produce my own organic food. As I write, I'm munching on delicious raspberries picked this morning. Working in the garden has led me to take an interest in plant behaviour and identification; I am becoming an amateur botanist, working on photographing and identifying as many plants as possible on the property, which has a variety of habitats: fields, forests, wetlands, waste areas.

Music has been important all my life to my sense of well-being. I learned recorder and violin as a child, then classical guitar in my teens; I started learning the flute in my 20s and played a lot of classical chamber music over the years. I sang in a couple of choirs for a number of years. During the '80s I was a member of a political feminist women's singing group, the Red Berets, singing at benefits, rallies, demonstrations and picket lines. We've had a few gigs in the past 10 years also, the most recent on September 17 this year. My latest musical venture was to take up the saxophone and jazz six years ago; I continue to learn and will do so as long as my lip can manage it! Learning/playing jazz presents constant challenges to my brain....no sudokus required to keep it active!

Other interests: hiking, canoetripping, camping, archiving, dancing (folk/contra/modern), volunteering at the Textile Museum of Canada, learning Spanish for visits to Guatemala, anti-nuke politics in the '80s...

Life is short and there's so much to do!! Right now, it's time to harvest food for dinner...

PS: I'm still looking for another Thomson friend, Karen MacDonald (graduated from Thomson in 1967). I would appreciate any leads to find her.

www.everdale.org

<http://harvesthomes.ca/project/item/name-of-sample-project/> (for HomeAlive! info)



Helena's 1967 Yearbook photo



IN MEMORIAM



(left) Hans Vanborrendam

(right) David Emlay



(left) Jean (Hollands) Turton

(right) Elizabeth (Bream) MacDonald



(right) Sylvia McIntyre (nee Solveiga Kalnins)



Sadly, we have several deaths to report. Keith Woodend sends word that **Hans Vanborrendam**, his friend of 57 years, whom he met in Grade 9B in 1959, suffered a massive heart attack at his home in Brownsville, TX in March. Susan Botelho-Lee reports that **David Emlay**, a student from the mid-1980s, passed away in June. **Jean Hollands**, a member of our first graduating class in 1961, who returned to teach English from 1968 to 1970 as **Mrs. Turton**, is really a double loss to our ranks. Two other staff members died in April: **Elizabeth McDonald** (English/Library 1959-1962) and **Sylvia McIntyre** (Commercial/Business 1968-1973). We send our sympathies to their families and friends - and to former colleagues and students who may remember them fondly.

BORSALINO'S PUB NIGHT A BIG SUCCESS

On a beautiful May 1st spring evening, a group of 50+ Thomson alumni turned out for our most successful pub night in many years. Our first-time location, Borsalino's, located at Sheppard and Brimley, was in a superb venue, not too far from where most of us grew up. The combination of friendly service staff, delicious food and an area dedicated for our alumni kept the conversations and reminiscing going right up to closing time. Special mention should be made of contingents from the 1990s and 2000s which helped to elevate our attendance level! Hope to see more of you at future events.

Our alumni committee looks forward to all of you attending one of our next functions. If you have any ideas and/or you would like to volunteer your services, please drop us a line at "www.ThomsonForever.ca" or reply to one of our Pub Night email blasts or email us at "info@ThomsonForever.ca". Here's hoping to hear from you soon! **Bob Doi** Class of '78 (who was also responsible for the photos below)

