

## Dufferin Youth Festival of the Arts...The Early Years

From its earliest days, the Dufferin Youth Festival of the Arts has been about relationships and meaningful discussions towards enabling good ideas in community. Individuals linking arms beyond the caps they wear as administrators, principals, teachers, parents, school council members, students, volunteers, artists, art councils, congregations and corporations as they explore ways in which the arts can encourage empathy and respect among the various circles in which we live and work. Specifically, the Dufferin Youth Festival of the Arts provides a venue each May in which the students of each school and school sector in this county, are invited to share what is creating excitement in the school community they reflect. As students perform in front of over 200 others students in diverse school sectors, empathy is developed and we have much to be proud of in this community in this respect.

Discussions began in the fall of 1997 and start up funding was provided through the Shelburne and Dufferin Arts Council and the Dufferin School Board. Public forums encouraged a band of volunteers, teachers and administrators involved with the Dufferin County Music Advocacy Committee, along with Theatre Orangeville, and Orangeville Baptist so that the OBC congregation opened their doors to host the inaugural celebration on May 7, May 1998. Thirteen public, two private, and two separate schools took part. A student from Princess Margaret Public School wrote, *"I thought it was worthwhile to go and spend time with Eric Nagler, Jim Betts and you wonderful people. I had a fun time and I thought it was successful. One hundred percent of us students vote that the festival should continue. And I think that the public should be able to come and watch what schools are doing nowadays. I had a great time."*

Ann McAlpine, at Hyland Heights Elementary School wrote that one student in her HHES choir said, 'It made me want to sing a lot more songs.' Ms. Mc Alpine reported in a school arts newsletter *Music Matters*, that HHES students loved preparing for the Festival and it was great to involve several age groups in a wide variety of artistic performances. Several grade 6 students wanted to create a dance and many children expect to see next year, more bands, more dancing, original songs and costumes. HHES parents were impressed with the good variety demonstrated and overall, it was an enjoyable experience.

Martha Rogers wrote in her Director's Dialogue after the second annual DYFA that the level of comment of parents, staff and students was instrumental to its success. As the UGDSB Director of the newly amalgamated Upper Grand District School Board, Ms Rogers stated that a DFYA highlights video was going to be produced by Reesor Draper at the Silvercreek Education Centre of the UGDSB that would be offered to all schools which attended.

Several teachers from Princess Elizabeth Public School, Donna Allen, Jill Robinson-Quill and Tracy Gray, wrote to thank one and all involved in DYFA May 2000 for PEPS students had enjoyed their opportunity to perform and were impressed by things other school presented.

In a letter to all teachers attendees attending the DFYA 2000, the planning team of the DYFA 2000 stated their belief that there is tremendous potential in working towards cooperation and meaningful partnerships between the stakeholders in education . A mass choral piece introduced by Joy Bell, was sung to bring closure to the final moments of the celebration - May 2000

*The world is out there waiting. The future's in our hands  
Together we will work for peace. Together we will stand.  
Who knows the future? Who knows what song the lark will sing?  
The dawn of each new morning can hold most anything.  
Look toward the future and what tomorrow brings.*