

Grandpals Gala program held at Spencer Ave. Elementary

By Constance Scrafield

The students were all dressed up; the boys were wearing ties! Susan Parker was enthusing over the reception she and her husband, Don, as Grandpals, were given June 19 at Spencer Avenue Elementary School. This is a school for gifted children and it is where the Grandpals program was re-launched in April of this year.

The gala for which Ms. Parker had such praise was the wrap-up event of six weeks of meetings between the students from grades four and five. The event was worth the fuss for the production that the students put together for each of their short term mentors was quite overwhelming.

Each student prepared a presentation for his or her individual grandpal with so many of the details from the conversations they had shared over the weekly meetings. There was station to review each relationship.

They each had their own laptop, with pictures going through. We all went around to all the exhibits, she told the Citizen.

At 8:00 p.m., each student talked about their grandpal with slides and there was my picture and I had brought in a clown outfit because I like clowning!

The students thanked their grandpals for listening to them and introducing them to another generation.

It was very special for us, Ms. Parker confirmed. Some grade eight student was putting music into the presentations. The whole gala, the whole theme of what we were doing. It is a real step up from a simple get together.

The gala was very well attended, not only by the families of the students, their own grandparents and parents, but also the principal of the school and a superintendent from the Upper Grand District School Board.

The grandpals program was introduced at in this area at Montgomery Public School but was apparently dropped from lack of seniors to participate. With a renewed interest in the idea, there has been good response to the latest round of junior-senior talks, resulting in real growth and benefit. Let it be clear, everyone has learned and benefitted, children and adults all.

With the very satisfactory completion of this year's program, the coordinator, Elisabeth Mangos, is deeply impressed with the level of conversations and thinking the program encourages, starting with a list of question to be discussed by the young and older. What is a citizen? What was a difficult time in your life and how did you deal with it? What were some of the good times? They discussed all manner of ideas. One conversation lead to other ideas.

It came about that the discussion delved into family history and, for her own information, as well as providing a thumb sketch of her own, Mrs. Parker discovered that her great grandmother was adopted and was actually born in Orangeville.

So, I have a historical connection to this town where I now live, said she, still amazed by the discovery.

Interestingly, Mr. and Mrs. Parker have taken separate stances on continuing to be a grandpal. For Don Parker, it was entirely rewarding in another way, in spite of their having several of their own grandchildren.

The difference for was simple: These are not my grandchildren so the relationship is completely different.

Retired from the computer business, Mr. Parker has, nevertheless, kept up date and the three boys with whom he was a grandpal, were enthralled at an older person's very modern knowledge. They were his youthful colleagues and he is prepared to meet others. Thus, he plans to offer himself as a grandpal again.

Mrs. Parker, on the other hand, has a specific activity always scheduled on the same day of the week as her obligation at the school. So, while she was delighted to have walked the path with her students, she feels that she would like to return to her normal routine.

For Mrs. Parker, Both benefitted with the question about difficult times in your life. You use your inner strength.

It was good to be able to share that valuable knowledge.

So, whether once or more, if you think you would like to have a go at being a grandpal for the short term, Ms. Mangos invites you to the following link: <https://grandpals.ca/contact/>