



The Tenth Restigouche Turnaround Achievement Awards were held at the Campbellton Regional Memorial Civic Centre on Tuesday night, honouring students who had taken the positive step of turning their lives around (Mary Cameron/Tribune)

'Turnarounds' get recognition

BY MARY CAMERON

CAMPBELLTON ► "Perseverance" was a word mentioned many times at the Tenth Restigouche Turnaround Achievement Awards ceremony held at the Campbellton Regional Memorial Civic Centre on Tuesday evening. The event, which is put on by Jeunesse Restigouche Youth, recognizes students from the educational centres across the county and their efforts towards making changes in their lives. These students have overcome medical, learning, personal, and behavioral challenges to find success.

Since its commencement in 2001, the Turnaround Achievement Awards have celebrated 300 recipients who Jeunesse Restigouche Youth felt were not recognized by conventional awards.

"When we started this activity, we felt that often we recognize the person who's the athlete, or the person who has great marks in school, but we often don't recognize the kid who's struggling, that might have personal problems, that might have problems at school, learning disabilities, they might have health problems. And often they go unrecognized and we don't talk about them," said Donna Cormier-Pitre, Jeunesse Restigouche Youth chairperson.

This year, 31 students received the

awards, selected by teachers and administration from schools, learning centres, and NBCC locations from Belledune to Saint-Quentin. Recipients received a certificate, a plaque to be displayed in their schools, a bookbag and gift from Jeunesse Restigouche Youth, a gift of \$75, as well as a professional photo by Studio Mario.

Throughout the evening as supper was served, a video montage of testimonials from previous recipients and selectors of the awards was played. One former recipient said receiving the award was "my turnaround, it was my point to move forward."

The 2011 Turnaround Achievement Award winner from Dalhousie Regional High School, Melissa LeBlanc, spoke about the honour of being named a recipient. "It's honouring to know that people care about you, and that there are people who believe in you...I just feel honoured by that, that people think I can actually make it in life."

LeBlanc, who faced learning challenges, will graduate in June and plans to attend NBCC Fredericton to study to become a medical secretary. Her goals don't stop there though. She plans to some day return to school to obtain her Grade 11 mathematics at the "2" level, complete a Bachelor of Adminis-

tration and some day become an event planner. She said her mother has been the main thing keeping her going through school and encouraging her to succeed, and also thanked her teachers and friends for their support. With exams coming up, LeBlanc said the Turnaround Achievement Award will encourage her to study more and try her best.

Cormier-Pitre said the awards also encourage the people working with students. "It gives the parents, and the teachers, and the interveners a special boost to keep helping these kids and to not give up. It's really, really important."

There were handshakes and hugs as the selectors presented the recipients of the awards. Many recipients sported brave smiles as they stood in front of the crowd, some choosing to say a few words while others gave simple thank-yous. Some recipients spoke openly about the challenges they've faced, acknowledging their pasts and thanking the people who have helped them move towards success in the future.

Perhaps most emotional were the presentations of the older students. Some of these students, who attended NBCC locations to complete the equivalency of their high school education, had been out of school for 20 years.

The mature students have always been recognized with the Turnaround

Achievement Awards said Cormier-Pitre.

"We felt that the older individuals had special messages that they could give to youth too, because when they quit school they were young, they were at that age. As you heard tonight, there were several that were 14, 15, teen moms, and so on," she said. "We felt that they had special messages that they could offer to younger kids who might be thinking about quitting school and not finishing their high school and so on."

Cormier-Pitre said she believes the awards leave an impression on the students and said some recipients still have their certificates on the wall 5 and 10 years later.

"It does make a difference. It's a start to a new beginning and being recognized in front of a lot of people, it's like 'Gee, I can make it! I can do it, and I better not get discouraged, because I can look at that certificate. I can look at my picture and say, you know, don't turn the other way, keep on going in the right direction and you'll make it, you'll be successful.'"

Recipients were: Shane Parker, Sugarloaf Senior High, Campbellton; Karanne Levesque, Centre d'apprentissage, Campbellton; Andr e Rousseau, Polyvalente A.J. Savoie, Saint-Quentin; Jonathan Lavoie, Ecole Mgr M lanon, Val D'Amours; Keandra Adams, Lord Beaverbrook

School, Campbellton; Jessy Cormier, Ecole Echo-Jeunesse, Kedgwick; Justin Perron, Dalhousie Middle School; Selina Imhoff, Coin des Amis, Dundee; St phane Leclair, Ecole Arthur-Pinard, Ed River Crossing; Austin Boddie, Tide Head School; Melissa LeBlanc, Dalhousie Regional High School; Joel Roy, Ecole Aux Quatre Vents, Dalhousie; Kevin Furlotte, Versant Nord, Atholville; Cassidy Culligan, Jacquet River School; Keith Anglehart, Ecole Marie-G tane, Kedgwick; Alexandre Boudreau, Ecole Apollo XI, Campbellton; Harley Martin, L.E. Renssborough, Dalhousie; Jamie Lavoie, Ecole Domaine des Copains, Balmoral; Nad ge Galant, Ecole Mgr-Martin, Saint-Quentin; Anika Valley, Ecole Acad mie Notre-Dame, Dalhousie; Bianca Legacy Dube, Campbellton Middle School; Danick Roy Ouellette, Polyvalente Roland-P pin, Campbellton; Patrick Isaac, Centre Priorit  Jeunesse, Campbellton; Ashley Durette, Campbellton Learning Center; Tracy Br ub , Centre d'apprentissage Vitral, Restigouche Ouest; Samantha Eslinger, Dalhousie Learning Center; Maxime Robichaud, Centre d'apprentissage, Dalhousie; Annie Albert, CGNB R cup ration scolaire, Campbellton; Carmen Dumais, CGNB R cup ration scolaire, Saint-Quentin; Jeannine Chamberlain, NBCC Academic Studies, Belledune; Irene Joseph, NBCC Academic Studies, Campbellton

Helping people since 1971

BY MARY CAMERON

DALHOUSIE ► A community institution on the North Shore has turned 40.

The thrift shop at St. John's United Church in Dalhousie celebrated its anniversary on Thursday, May 5. People from all over the area stopped into the church hall on Brunswick Street to check out the merchandise and enjoy some cake in celebration of the shop's milestone.

Margot Hamilton is one of the head organizers of the thrift shop. She said the store draws people from all over the area.

"We've had people come from Bathurst, but mostly from Bessford to Glenlevit, and from across the river."

When the thrift shop began in 1971, it was run by the United Church Women, a group of eight members at the time. The shop grew out of the Equal Opportunity program brought in by Premier Louis Robichaud. Hamilton explained that Robichaud said churches were not doing enough to help the poor in their communities. The UCW wrote to the government asking for ideas of what they could do. Though there was a change of government in 1970 with Richard Hatfield becoming premier, the UCW even-

tually received a response from the province which suggested helping the poor with used clothing or something of that nature, Hamilton said.

The thrift shop saw humble beginnings.

"The church allowed them to have two tables in the parlor," said Hamilton. "They had no clothes, so they brought clothes from home and they had a few customers come in. [Prices were] 10 cents, and 25 cents. Sometimes they'd ask how much they thought it was worth."

Over the years, business has picked up with donations coming in from all over the community, and the tables piled high at the shop's weekly openings. Though most of the stock is clothing, there are also household goods for sale. The items used to be priced individually, but Hamilton said since September, the shop has been running "bag day" where customers can fill a bag for \$7.

"We just haven't been able to get out of it because we have so much stuff coming in, and it's the only way we can reduce our stock in a sense. It keeps our garbage down too. We've been master recyclers way before the word was invented, since 1970."

There are currently 21 volunteers helping out at the thrift shop with Margot Hamilton and Janet Doucet as the main organizers. Every church in Dalhousie is represented by volunteers. Ages range from 49 to 86 now, but there was once a woman 99 years old volunteering at the shop.

There's been a growth in customers over the past 10 years, but even more so recently. "Especially in the last few years since the mill went down we've seen a big increase," said Hamilton. "We give an awful lot away in the run of a day. There's hardly a Thursday that goes by that we don't help some family, or hear of somebody who's having a hard time and just give things."

A portion of the money raised at the thrift shop goes towards paying the heat and lights of the building, while other funds are donated to local groups.

The low prices of the merchandise have allowed community members to help others as well.

"It's surprising how many people come in and buy a bag and they're helping somebody else in the community. They say it's economical for them to do this, to help a neighbour or to help someone who's having a hard time. That's kind of a lesson for us in kindness and sharing."



Here are some of the volunteers at the Thrift Shop. Front: Sharon Good, Fierette Terrio, Margot Hamilton. Rear: Sally Reinsborough, Diane Good. (Mary Cameron/Tribune)

In 2009, the thrift shop was awarded the Rotary's Paul Harris Fellow Award for their contribution to society. Though the award is usually an individual one, the thrift shop received it as a group.

"That was a real honour for us, to be recognized in the community as an outreach program," said Hamilton. Even though 40 years have passed since

the thrift shop's establishment, Hamilton said the purpose of it has remained consistent: to provide some social time, to get some exercise, and to reach out to the community.

The store is open Thursdays from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.. As is customary, the thrift shop will close in June for the summer and reopen in September.

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