



Looking Back with Pat

After 19 years, Pat Stefanchuk is stepping away from the Seven Oaks Education Foundation Board.



There are few people as synonymous with the Seven Oaks School Division as Pat Stefanchuk – and it's because her involvement goes beyond sitting on the Seven Oaks Education Foundation Board for almost 20 years.

Pat began her Seven Oaks School Division teaching career in 1971, hired by then Superintendent Glenn Nicholls. Glenn had actually been Pat's history and English teacher when she was attending school in Flin Flon (showing once more what a small world Manitoba can be sometimes!).

After spending her first twelve years teaching music, Pat became an Arts Consultant, helping shape young minds through music, art and drama. Then in 1989, she made the transition to Vice-Principal of Ken Seaford Junior High before becoming Principal of what was then Centennial School, the home of the Hebrew Bilingual program.

When the Hebrew program moved to Margaret Park School, Pat went as well. She remained at the school right up until her retirement in 2004, leaving the school in good hands. "There was an excellent staff, well chosen by Cynthia Dutton and myself," says Pat of the school.

"You don't want to walk away from everything when you retire."

Retirement wasn't the end of Pat's association with the Division, however. Not by a long shot!

When the Families And Schools Together (FAST) Program began in 1998, Pat was among the very first volunteers to help provide community supports for those who needed a helping hand. This most often came in the form of a collective dinner led by one family with assistance from staff and other parents.

"There were an awful lot of families that needed this program," recalls Pat. "We all pitched in getting the food ready. There was always a family in charge every week."



It wasn't all making meals though. There was working with those with addictions, with the help of social workers. There was assisting resource people as they guided students from outside Canada. It was a learning experience for Pat, but one she relished.

Eventually, Pat stepped back from the FAST program... but didn't slow down. Instead, she began working on the Seven Oaks Education Foundation (SOEF) Board in 2005. Here was an opportunity to play a role in ensuring more students had the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education. Including in an area near and dear to Pat's heart.

"I wanted to make sure some of these scholarships were for the creative arts," says Pat. "We voted them in pretty early on."

"I actually established one this year in my own name, and I want it to go to an Indigenous or Métis student who is interested in pursuing any kind of arts."

"I need to stay connected with lots of things."

So as Pat steps away from the Board – a second retirement, if you will – will she slow down at all? Not likely.

She continues to flex her creative muscles as part of a seniors' writers' group ("That is a really interesting group of people. They come from all walks of life, of course. You pick up a lot of interesting ideas when you listen to them."). She regularly attends performances of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, productions at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre and the New Music Festival "I think we have a lot of young people who are writing really interesting music."

But a piece of her heart will always remain with the Seven Oaks School Division and SOEF in particular.

"I'm guessing that we're one of the only divisions that work so hard on scholarships," notes Pat. "And we've been lucky to have Wayne Shimizu and Ed Johns before him, and now Jennifer West, who know how the system works and how to keep scholarships moving forward."

"I'm so happy that I was part of this Division. I was inspired by the leadership of so many, including our Superintendents throughout the years: Glenn Nicholls, Norm Isler, John Weins, Brian O'Leary and now Tony Kreml. I believe he'll fit in and do well with the Board, because everyone wants what's best for students."



In memory of past members.

Everyone who sits on the Board of the Seven Oaks Education Foundation wishes to acknowledge the memories of Ajit Deol and Cory Juan. Both were former members of the Board whose dedication helped to keep scholarships thriving in the Division. Our thoughts are with their families, and we hope there is comfort in knowing their legacy continues with every scholarship awarded.

Here's to These Volunteers!

A Special Shout-Out to SOEF Board members, Cheryl and Avrum Senensky!



Cheryl Senensky

Three years ago, as Cheryl Senensky was getting closer to retirement, an SOEF Board member reached out to her to see if she might want to be part of the Board.

Cheryl didn't take much convincing and didn't hesitate.

"I thought it would be good to give back," recalls Cheryl. "I'm certainly familiar with most members of the Board, the scholarship fund, and how to raise money!"

Cheryl put her expertise into action when, along with her husband, Avrum, and others, she helped co-chair the 50th anniversary celebration of Garden City Collegiate ... which raised \$40,000 (which is now, with interest, worth about \$60,000).

Garden City Collegiate is actually Cheryl's own alma mater, having graduated from the school in 1980. She would later continue her relationship with the Division by working as an Administrative Assistant for an incredible 38 years!

"I loved being in the school every day," says Cheryl. "Every bit of it. Watching it evolve with the never-ending construction, from connecting Jefferson Jr. High and Garden City Collegiate with the Commons being built in 2011, then the TAA (Technology and Applied Arts) wing, then the SOPAC theatre, the new Science Labs, and finally the exterior of the building and the new track. And perhaps most importantly, the pickleball lines on one of the tennis courts behind the school!"

Though she's no longer at the school every day, Cheryl remains connected to Garden City, whether it's enjoying the theatrical productions that take place at the Seven Oaks Performing Arts Centre or tearing up the pickleball court behind the school with Avrum.

But perhaps her strongest connection to the Division is the fact her sons, David and Josh, went through the Hebrew Bilingual Program from their early years at Margaret Park right through to their own graduation from Garden City Collegiate. And like their father, Avrum, the boys also received a scholarship, which is why Seven Oaks Education Foundation means so much to her.

"Our students are quite special," says Cheryl. "And I love how the Seven Oaks Education Fund continues to grow to support them. The dollar amount is fabulous, really."

"I believe every student deserves the opportunity to pursue their educational dreams. I'm thankful I can be part of making that happen."



Avrum Senensky

Avrum joined the SOEF Board after he and his wife, Cheryl, helped raise \$40,000 at the 50th anniversary Garden City Collegiate celebration.

"I've always really enjoyed volunteering," says Avrum. "And this has been a good fit for me."

I was the chair of the Seven Oaks Childcare Child Daycare Centre. when our kids went there, and now I'm the chair of the Simkin Centre, a personal care home where Cheryl's mom currently lives."

What drew Avrum to the SOEF Board? Two things: the people and the students the Board supports.

"The members on the Board have always been a really good group of people," says Avrum. "They're a good working Board that is really dedicated to enhancing education through scholarships. I'm happy to help out in whatever way I can."

Avrum is no stranger to the importance of scholarships. Before his two sons received scholarships, Avrum himself had been awarded one when he graduated from Garden City Collegiate in the mid-70's. He's seen how scholarships are not just a source of support but also encouragement.

"When you look at some of the people who were awarded scholarships in the past in Seven Oaks School Division, you see a list of professionals that includes, doctors, lawyers, accountants."

"That list includes my own sons! One is an actuary and the other is a Chartered Professional Accountant."

At the end of the day, the biggest reason Avrum is volunteering is simply because he enjoys giving back.

"Volunteering has always been an important part of my life," notes Avrum. "And I find what I'm doing in Seven Oaks quite fulfilling."

SOEF Raffle

The Seven Oaks Education Foundation raffle fundraiser can help you with your travel dreams! First prize is 300,000 Avion points, and second prize is our 50/50 draw. Tickets can be purchased until 11:45am on April 26th, 2024.

[Purchase Tickets Here](#)

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