

GREAT KIDS of THE GULF ISLANDS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2008 • SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE GULF ISLANDS DRIFTWOOD

{the question}

WHAT'S YOUR GREAT GOAL FOR 2008?

Dakota Saunders
To get at least 80 per cent in every class.



Luke Stevenson
To go snowboarding as much as possible.



Ella Bronstein
I want to go to Mexico because it's such a great place.



Silken Conradi
To become a jazz pianist.



Julius Bruder
I'm an international student and will decide whether or not to stay here for another year.



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Abundance of life lessons shared by youth

Gail Sjuberg
Driftwood Editor

People often express sympathy for me when they learn I'm the mother of a teenager. Their response usually comes in the form of an undulating "ohhhh!," and I get the feeling they wouldn't bat an eye if I came unglued at any moment and flung myself off this current rung of the parenting ladder.

On the contrary, I find parenting gets easier as the years go by, and I can't help but think that's partly because my child has more to teach me about human relationships as she grows up.

Whenever I consider my daughter and her peers, I marvel at their ability to heed their needs and positive instincts, consider the feelings of others, to solve problems, make responsible decisions and manage what can be daunting schedules and demands.

They are way ahead of me and my clan of some 30 years ago, when we were caught between either doing exactly as we were told or rebelling wildly against such edicts.

I've often wondered what role the Respectful Relationships (R+R) program administered in our school district by the SWOVA Community Development and Research Society has played in positively shaping our youth.

Through R+R, students in grades 7-10 participate in workshops that address bullying, racism, homophobia and sexism, and explore self-esteem and skills for creating healthy relationships.

Now, with funding from the Ministry of Community Services, the United Way of Greater Victoria and the Salt Spring Island Foundation, SWOVA and the school district will deliver a series of free workshops to parents beginning in February.

As you can read in the first section of this week's Driftwood, it gives parents a chance to "get on the same

They are way ahead of me and my clan of some 30 years ago, when we were caught between either doing exactly as we were told or rebelling wildly against such edicts.

page" as our children — to help us catch up a little when it comes to understanding and supporting our community's youth.

In the meantime, take a moment to savour the wisdom and energy of the seven kids featured in this Great Kids section, and the themes of helping others and pursuing dreams that wind through their stories.

We're proud to employ all these great Island kids!

Ben Desrosiers
Ben Hunter
Bonny Peter
Brandon Shaw
Brendan Jimenez

Brittney Sikora
Cameron Barter
Cole Eadie
Dave Outerbridge
Dave Piperno

Deva Middleton
Drew Storey
Dylan Hatchard
Dylan Carter
Graham Wrigley

Heather MacDonald
Jade Robichard
James Vine
Jayla Gidora
Jesse Cervenka

Joline Malcolm
Kaeli Dragomir
Kerry Finer
Kristi Lee
Logan McLeod

Luke Benson
Morgan Luna-Rose
Olivia Budd
Olivia Keddy
Ryan Clemente

Ryan Jones
Stephanie Lundy
Stephen Greenwood



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GREAT KIDS of THE GULF ISLANDS



PHOTO BY DERRICK LUNDY

Donna Huang poses for a photo in front of a mural in Ganges.



Donna Huang Stats

Full name: Donna Huang
 Age: 17
 Grade: 12
 Lived on Salt Spring: 3.5 years
 Parents' names: (Cannot translate from Chinese)
 Siblings' names: Rob and Sheila
 Likes: Yellow colour, sunshine, drawing, laughter, helping people
 Dislikes: Spiders, racism
 Favourite book or author: Life of Pi
 Favourite movie: Ever After
 Favourite quote: Don't be conceited when you succeed and don't feel ashamed when you fail. (Chinese proverb)
 Future ambition: Being able to help those who are suffering in Africa

Passion to change world drives student

By Elizabeth Nolan
 Driftwood Staff

Teenagers don't always carry the reputation for being the happiest age group around, but it's rare to see Donna Huang without a smile on her face.

An international student who has spent her high school years far from her home in Taiwan, Donna has made the most of her time at Gulf Islands Secondary School (GISS), where she has made good friends, enjoyed being creative and discovered a passion to help others.

Donna's parents chose GISS for her Canadian schooling because they felt it was safe and a better place for her to learn English than cities with higher Asian populations. Since arriving here in Grade 9, the 17-year-old has lived in three different home stays, all of which she has enjoyed and found instructive in aspects of Canadian culture.

"Each of them has their unique way to live," she explained. "I liked everyone because I learned something [from each of them]."

Despite the challenges inherent in learning a new language and culture while living away from her family during the school year, Donna has been quick to participate in GISS activities

that promote teamwork and leadership skills. In grades 10 and 11 she was involved with the student government; for the past year she has been part of the SWOVA youth team, helping teach other students about the importance of respectful relationships.

"I've been really liking it a lot because in Taiwan we don't have this type of program and I think it is really important for students to learn to have respect for each other," Donna reported, adding, "I'm passionate about changing the world to be a better place."

Donna was initially attracted to SWOVA when she took the three-week curricular session in Grade 10. While she was hesitant to try her English in front of large groups of kids, she passed the recruiting session and became part of the team. Since joining, Donna says she's gained confidence in her speaking skills, learned important aspects of teamwork, and has learned to be open-minded.

One eye-opening experience that has increased her passion to change the world and inspired future career plans was the AIDS conference hosted by SOLID and attended by Stephen Lewis a few years ago. Meeting students from Africa completely changed Donna's perspective on the problems happening there.

"They were so educated and willing to go out and make a difference," she said.

Donna, too, is now poised to make a difference. Heading to university next fall (perhaps in Montreal or out east so she can see a different part of Canada), she plans to take business education. Donna's dream is to take her skills to Africa and teach people there how to build small businesses themselves instead of relying on foreign aid.

Although she thinks some of her passion to help others is probably due to maturity and education, Donna gives much of the credit to people at GISS and on Salt Spring. In addition to groups like SWOVA and SOLID, one thing she loves about going to school here is the potential for creativity that is absent from the Taiwanese curriculum.

"GISS has amazing elective courses, which allows students to be creative and have another opportunity to explore their careers," she observed.

"I know I made the right choice to be here on Salt Spring Island because the school is so full of spirit and the community is so warm and welcoming. I know I will be sad when I leave here this summer."



They were so educated and willing to go out and make a difference.

Donna Huang



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ArtSpring presents a dynamic play for young people from Vancouver's Shameless Hussy Productions about the history of women's rights in Canada. We invite everyone to a public performance on Tuesday, February 5th at 8:00 pm.

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Aspiring dancer launches dreams

By Dawn Hage
Driftwood Contributor

It's not often that a 10-year-old boy feels he has to make a decision that will profoundly impact the rest of his life. But that was the case when Sam Neville opened the letter from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School (RWB) confirming that he was accepted into their summer session.

"I felt pretty excited," said Sam. "It felt like my heart skipped a beat. But I was also pretty scared. The decision feels like playing chess . . . if I make one wrong move, it could affect everything."

Parents Andrea Rabinovitch and Lindsey Neville were also stunned and thrilled with the news.

"Reading that letter was like finding the golden ticket in a Willy Wonka movie," said Neville. "It was a joyous shock."

"We had no idea," said Rabinovitch. "We went to Victoria to give Sam the experience of taking an audition and training class."

Literature from the RWB School describes the four-week summer program as "an intensive audition period for the RWBS full-time Ballet Academic Program. Students are introduced to the discipline, cooperation and high standards required for the training of a professional dancer."

The audition took place at the dance studio of the Canadian College of Performing Arts in Victoria where Sam's dancing abilities and physical attributes were examined by Johanne Gingras, director of teacher training at the RWB and Bruce Monk, faculty member at the school.

Ballet dancers have a very specific physical look, explained Rabinovitch. The ideal ballet dancer will have a high arch, long limbs, long legs and a long neck.

"Sam physically fits all the criteria," she said.

After the audition, Neville found himself, as usual, one of only two boys in a large class of teenage girls.

"It gets annoying sometimes to be the only boy in dance classes," he said.

Neville has learned to ignore the razzing from other kids and has earned new respect as his ballet skills translate into some dynamite street dance and hip hop styles that are more socially acceptable.

Sam has been dancing since he was four years old, when Rabinovitch was executive director of Dance Alberta in Edmonton and he joined a boys-only dance class that was offered at the school.

"None of the other boys ever showed up, so he had a private class," said Rabinovitch. "It was great."

The family moved to Salt Spring when Sam was six years old and he continued his studies with his mother, plus Jill Smith, Sue Newman, Lisa Hall and other Dance Intensive guest teachers.

"All of his teachers are to be congratulated," said Rabinovitch.

Sam takes part in the Dance Intensive through Stagecoach School for the Performing Arts which has meant a commitment of six hours a week of dancing for the past two years.

Neville was one of 100 students selected by the RWB School out of a group of 1,000 competitors from across North America. It is an



Dancer Sam Neville with his ballet shoes.

PHOTO BY DERRICK LUNDY

outstanding accomplishment, but with the success comes some hard decisions and sacrifices for the whole family.

"If you go to the RWB school, it's a commitment for your whole life," said Sam.

"It's the choice route to becoming a classical ballet dancer, but we are not ready to send him off to boarding school yet," added Rabinovitch.

Instead, the family will travel with Sam to Winnipeg for the month-long session and then they plan to leave Salt Spring for the greater opportunities that Vancouver can offer.

Sam will attend school and participate in Arts Umbrella, a performing arts organization that integrates dance and other arts, allowing passionate students to immerse themselves in their discipline while still achieving an excellent academic education.

And when Sam hits Grade 11, his family will be willing to make the move to Winnipeg, which will virtually guarantee him a career in the dance world.

"If he still wants to go, we will move mountains to get him there," said Neville.



Sam Neville

Stats

- Full name: Sam Neville
- Age: 10
- Grade: 5
- Lived on Salt Spring: 4.5 years
- Parents' names: Andrea Rabinovitch and Lindsey Neville
- Sibling's name: Ari
- Likes: Dancing and basketball
- Dislikes: Cats and eggplant casserole
- Favourite book or author: The Hobbit
- Favourite movie: The Godfather
- Favourite quote: "What, me worry?"
- Future ambition: To be a professional dancer



The decision feels like playing chess . . . if I make one wrong move, it could affect everything.

Sam Neville



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Young island athlete hits high notes

By Chris Stephenson
Driftwood Staff

A fine balance between kicking the soccer ball and hitting the high notes on the trumpet keeps Jeremy Marchi at the top of his game in and out of school.

Jeremy, a Grade 10 student at Gulf Islands Secondary School (GISS), plays soccer, basketball and volleyball. When he's not practising sports, Jeremy is playing one of three instruments.

In between notes, Jeremy studies five classes at GISS. Last semester he took social studies, math, English, planning and physical education.

"I got more than 90 per cent in all my classes," he said during a recent Driftwood interview.

Soccer seems to be high on the list of Jeremy's favourite activities. He's played for five years and currently belongs to two island teams: the senior boys at GISS and one in the Salt Spring U18 division. The GISS senior boys did so well in 2007 they qualified for the provincial finals.

"I went to the provincials last year with the senior boys and we came in eighth."

In addition to soccer, Jeremy plays on the GISS junior boys basketball and volleyball teams.

"I like the feel of playing and the teamwork involved," he said.

Jeremy also likes the sound of music. He plays piano, acoustic guitar and trumpet.

"I like to practise them all. Sometimes it's nice to do something different."

He currently plays the trumpet in the Salt Spring Concert Band, which he joined in 2007, and also performs with Swing Shift Community Big Band.

Jeremy said one reason he took up the instrument is because of the influence from his dad Randy Marchi, who plays professionally.

Jeremy said while he likes to play all three instruments, he enjoys the trumpet the most because it allows him to play with other people.

Beyond sports and music interests, Jeremy is an active member of GISS' student government.

"It's pretty interesting for me," he said.

Jeremy also has a desire to help other students and has enrolled in the school's peer tutoring program.

"I go to the Grade 9 classes and help students who need it," he said.

Despite Jeremy's busy schedule this school year, he said now is the time for him to try many new things since life becomes more serious in later years and he'll have less free time.

Jeremy said the only downfall to practising sports or playing music most of the week is that he doesn't have enough time to watch his favourite TV shows.

"Sometimes I have to tape them and watch them when I have free time," he said.

Looking to the distant future, Jeremy aspires to become a sports doctor for a professional team.

For now, though, Jeremy is content with his busy schedule and activities.

"I'm just going to keep on doing what I'm doing," he said.



Jeremy Marchi and his trusty soccer ball.

PHOTO BY CHRIS STEPHENSON



Jeremy Marchi

Stats

Full name: Jeremy Ray Owen Marchi
Age: 15
Grade: 10
Lived on Salt Spring: 6 years
Parents' names: Randy, Shawna
Siblings' names: N/A
Likes: Sports, music, protein shakes
Dislikes: People who chew with their mouths open
Favourite book or author: The Da Vinci Code
Favourite movie: Blood Diamond
Favourite quote: "You miss 100% of the shots you never take."
Future ambition: To be a sports doctor



I like the feel of playing and the teamwork involved.
Jeremy Marchi



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and much to do with direction. - UNKNOWN

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Island basketball champ off to Idaho State

By CHRISTINE VOPEL
Driftwood Contributor

Very few of us know what profession lies in wait for us after high school — nor are we given money to practise a sport we already love. Kayla Gromme of Gulf Islands Secondary School (GISS) is about to start living the dream.

Last summer Idaho State University (ISU) offered the 17-year-old student a full four-year scholarship beginning in the fall of 2008. The university only grants three. Today, scouts and academies alike consider Gromme one of the best basketball players in all of B.C.

Looking back to my team sport days when leaders argued back and forth as to who would take me on their team — I was too short and afraid of the ball — I am unable to relate to Gromme's tale.

However amazing, winning a basketball scholarship did not surprise Gromme, as she had met and talked with recruiting scouts since the ninth grade. Nonetheless, she dove at the opportunity. "I'm really excited to go somewhere new. I've lived here my whole life."

For Gromme, living competitively began in Grade 6 when her older brother challenged her to basketball games in their driveway. Upon entering Grade 8, she no longer lost games to her brother.

At 13, Gromme decided to push herself and pursue basketball even further. She stepped outside her circle of friends and GISS teammates and began competing for the Central Vancouver Island basketball program in Nanaimo. The team practised three days a week and played in tournaments on the weekend. Gromme enjoyed the extra challenge the program provided, "It showed me what was out there."

Two years later, while playing for a provincial team in Seattle, Gromme injured her knee during a lay-up. She came down from the jump and fell, hearing a loud pop resound in her ears. The prognosis: a torn ACL requiring surgery. After one year of intense physiotherapy three days a week, crutches and lastly a cane, Gromme returned to the court for the summer provincial season in better shape than ever before.

"The recovery made me so much stronger both mentally and physically. I came back 110 per cent," she said.

Tall, slim and strong with a confident stride, Gromme resembles an athlete, but she is quick to remind me, "Height is not what's important, commitment is important. You have to be able to take whatever comes at you. It's a physical and mental process."

Gromme enjoys working out and lifts weights at least twice a week.

"I'm a jock for sure. I was a tomboy as a kid but I also went through my girly phases."

In Grade 11, Gromme was granted the first team all-star award while consistently ranking number one on player charts. ISU gave close attention to her game and the improvements she was making. That summer head coach of ISU, John Newlee, told Gromme, "There's a full-ride scholarship waiting for you."

But it took more than a scholarship to completely win Gromme over.

"I was so excited, but I wasn't dead set on it until I visited the ISU campus in mid-September. Then I fell in love with it, the coaches, the players, everything." After that visit Gromme



Kayla Gromme on the Gulf Islands Secondary School basketball court.

PHOTO BY JOHN CAMERON



Kayla Gromme Stats

- Full name: Kayla Sierra Anne Gromme
- Age: 17 years old
- Lived on Salt Spring: 17 years
- Parents' names: Jenny and Lane
- Sibling's name: Dylan
- Likes: Pasta, basketball, smiling people
- Dislikes: People chewing with their mouth open
- Favourite book or author: It's Not About The Bike by Lance Armstrong
- Favourite movie: Love and Basketball
- Favourite quote: "You miss 100 per cent of the shots you don't take."
- Future ambition: To play basketball in Europe with the pros



My dream is to go play in Europe with the pro leagues.

Kayla Gromme



dropped all pre-existing offers she had received from universities such as the University of Washington, Santa Clara and RICE.

In the airport, Gromme told her father, Lane, "I want to sign."

As one of her biggest fans attending Gromme's every game, along with wife Jenny Grom-

me, Lane was happy to let her go.

What will Gromme's next achievement be?

"My dream is to go play in Europe with the pro leagues."

With the amount of drive and talent this young powerhouse exhibits, Gromme is moving in that direction fast.

Next Great Kids

September 3, 2008



Driftwood GULF ISLANDS
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GREAT KIDS of THE GULF ISLANDS

When in doubt . . . improvise

By SEAN MCINTYRE
Driftwood Staff

Many Salt Springers may recognize Dejan Loyola as the friendly face behind the counter at the Core Inn where he's been busy paving the way for another generation of great kids.

Dejan, 18, began organizing activities at the island's teen club when he joined the Gulf Island Secondary School's Youth Advisory Committee when he was in Grade 9. Since joining the group to help bridge the sometimes awkward transition between home-schooling and high school, he's helped schedule dances, hockey tournaments, game nights and other activities that have helped make the Core Inn the "in" place for middle and high school students to hang out after school.

Since graduating from high school last year, Dejan has taken on more hours and additional responsibility for the ever-expanding set of services and activities offered at the centre.

In less than four years, Dejan has gone from service user to service provider. He now works in conjunction with the Salt Spring Community Services Society: a transition he finds quite comfortable.

"I feel as though I am in between generations," he said. "It's a pretty heartwarming thing for me to be accepted as a younger person while still getting the same respect as everyone else."

With extended hours, more programs and bright hopes for the future, the mood at the Core Inn is at an all-time high.

It re-opened last year following a long period of renovations required after an arson-caused fire in 2004.

"The Core Inn is literally at the point where it is coming up from the ashes," he said. "When I'm thinking of the Core Inn, I'm thinking of a place where we are trying to limit the amount of judgment. There's a certain level of comfort here."

Following on the progress he has inspired at the Core Inn over the past several years, Dejan soon intends to open a new chapter of his life in either acting or public relations.

Dejan has already had several interviews with talent agencies in Vancouver and hopes to make the big jump as an actor sometime in 2008.

"They want me there in the fall," he said. "Hopefully that will mean some film and television roles."

Dejan's love for acting was reinforced by his team's strong showing at the Canadian Improv Championships in Ottawa last year where players from GISS finished seventh.

"That was definitely the highlight of my high school career."

As a member of the Gulf Islands School of the Performing Arts, Dejan starred in several high school productions. Dejan fondly recalled his role as Mr. Nimby in *Take Five*, a production created entirely by students.

"I finally got to go over the top and play that character I've always wanted to be on stage: an ultra neo-conservative paranoid nutjob."

In case his dreams of working as a comedic actor don't work out, Dejan said life as a public relations consultant will still allow him to make the most of his love for acting, showmanship and the English language.

Being based in Vancouver means Dejan will no longer need to catch a float plane to make his auditions when the calls come in, often on the night before he's needed in Vancouver.

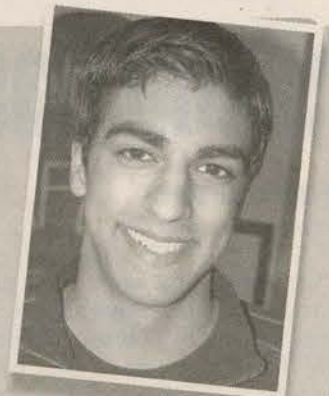


PHOTO BY SEAN MCINTYRE

Dejan Loyola hangs out at the Core Inn.

And though he'll surely be missed by the legions of students who visit the Core Inn, Dejan is confident there will be plenty of kids ready to step up and fill his shoes on the island. "There's always somebody to rely on and

always somewhere to go for help," he said. "It's just a beautiful place and sometimes we take it for granted. Some people might call it 'sheltered' but I think the island breeds a pretty good kind of mentality."



Dejan Loyola Stats

- Full name: Dejan Loyola
- Age: 18
- Grade: Graduated in 2007
- Lived on Salt Spring: 15 years
- Parents' names: Fenton and Kerrie
- Sibling's name: Tyan
- Likes: Outgoing folks with a good sense of humour
- Dislikes: Uptight people and bandwagon hockey fans
- Favourite book or author: *The Hobbit*
- Favourite movie: *Superbad*
- Favourite quote: "There is technique to it, but you must have a little respect for the invisible." (Personal motto about comedy)
- Future ambition: Comedic actor and producer, or public relations consultant.



I finally got to . . . play that character I've always wanted to be on stage: an ultra neo-conservative paranoid nutjob.

Dejan Loyola



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"It's not what happened to you, but how you react that matters" - EPICTETUS



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Football star gives 110 %

By SEAN MCINTYRE

Driftwood Staff

Aaron Hoffman has come a long way since playing ball boy for the senior boys football team during the provincial championships last fall. Especially when you consider he's only played football for little more than a year.

Aaron's involvement with the island's junior football program is proof that some talents are stumbled upon rather than honed and cultivated through years and years of practice.

"I started after a friend of mine said he thought I'd be a good player," Aaron said. "I tried it out and ended up really liking it."

Since hitting the turf last spring, Aaron, 13, has developed a love of the game and excelled at a number of different positions. Football is an exciting game, he said, because it combines an emphasis on personal performance with the importance of working as a team.

The camaraderie shared by Salt Spring's junior bantam team, he said, persists through the season's highs and lows. That's a good thing since life on the field can, at times, get pretty low.

A case in point was during last fall's championship game against Nanaimo's Harewood Park. From the outset, the odds were clearly against the visitors from Salt Spring.

Not only were the Nanaimo fans out in force, but the home team had allowed only a single touchdown against them all season.

If that wasn't enough, days of unrelenting rain had turned the field into a gigantic mud pit where players faced the very real prospect of getting sucked into the earth before game's end.

The verdict is still out on whether the team lost 30-0 or 40-0, but the score is now a mere detail. The important thing is that everyone made it back to the bus after a full game on the field. The players were muddied, bruised and beaten, but they'd made it through the game.

It is often said that one can learn more through defeat than through victory and that's exactly how Aaron felt about his team's performance.

"Most of the teams who play them end up forfeiting half way through the game," he said. "They played a pretty good game."

Aaron must also have played a "pretty good game," having been named the squad's most valuable player.

By the time the two teams meet again next fall, it won't be surprising if Aaron has managed to play every position on the field. Since joining the team in early 2007, he's already tried his hand at tight end, full back, back-up quarterback, kicker, safety, punter and receiver. Playing both offence and defence means he rarely gets a chance to catch his breath on the sidelines.

"I play lots of different positions," he said. "I mainly like the positions on offence because I like to run a lot when I get the ball. I like to dodge people and run as fast as I can."

It has been that way since Aaron scored his first touchdown during a nail-biter of a game against Campbell River last spring. Since then, Aaron has scored plenty more touchdowns, won (and lost) his fair share of games, and even attended the annual summer football



Aaron Hoffman on a muddy football field.

PHOTO BY JOHN CAMERON

camp at Simon Fraser University alongside five other Salt Spring athletes.

When he's not on the field or practising for the next big game, Aaron can be found hitting the links at the Salt Spring Island Golf Club or

fishing off the Fernwood dock.

"It's kind of relaxing and you don't have to do that much," he said. "The sports complement each other nicely."



Aaron Hoffman

Stats

Full name: Aaron Robert Hoffman
 Age: 13
 Grade: 8
 Lived on Salt Spring: 13 years
 Parents' names: Trish and Harold
 Siblings' names: Christopher and Bradley
 Likes: Football, golf and fishing
 Dislikes: Mushrooms, except in Chinese food and on pizzas
 Favourite movie: Pirates of the Caribbean III
 Favourite quote: "Never stop trying."



I like to dodge people and run as fast as I can.

Aaron Hoffman



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GREAT KIDS of THE GULF ISLANDS

Salt Spring youth aims for action

By Chris Stephenson
Driftwood Staff

Despite being anchored on Salt Spring after five years spent living on a sailboat, Kelsey Mech still has plenty of wind in her sails.

Now she directs that energy towards animal rights and saving the environment, and pursuing political and musical interests.

Now in Grade 11 at Gulf Islands Secondary School (GISS), Kelsey spent grades 5 to 9 sailing to Central America with her parents.

While she missed spending quality time with her peers, she feels the experience opened her eyes to global issues such as poverty, the environment and consumerism.

"The first couple of months after coming back were difficult," she said. "A lot of people were based on material things and I really changed as a person."

One of Kelsey's extra-curricular activities is planning an Environmental Action Day for February 28 along with five other people.

"There's a lot of work behind the scenes in facilitating that."

The Environmental Action Day will feature 18 workshops dealing with food issues, consumerism, ecosystem destruction and climate change.

She said the overall goal of the day is to educate students and give them options for acting on environmental issues locally and globally.

"I created the idea this summer and since then it's become this massive thing."

Kelsey is currently fine-tuning a guest speaker list that includes Dr. Peter Ross, a research scientist with the Institute of Ocean Sciences, and Shiv Garyali, the architect who designed GISS.

While planning the event is time consuming, Kelsey is also involved in other environmental issues such as the proposed development of the Swanson's Pond property near GISS.

In an effort to save the pond from development, Kelsey led a student-based petition to put a stop to the current plans. She collected more than 450 names and met with Eric Booth, who is acting on behalf of property owner Salt Spring Ventures Inc.

While her petition brought the issue into the spotlight at GISS, Kelsey had to pass ownership of the project off to another student due to time constraints.

In addition to getting her feet wet in Salt Spring land use issues, Kelsey is also interested in provincial politics.

Between December 27 and 31, 2007, Kelsey was one of 95 representatives from across B.C. who gathered at the Provincial Legislature in Victoria for a session of B.C. Youth Parliament.

As an active member of the GISS student body, she was excited to be immersed in how the provincial government works.

The members learned about and experienced the parliamentary process, debated topics and planned activities for the upcoming year.

To balance her academic pursuits and activism, Kelsey also plays the guitar and sings with the school choir.

She also has a minor role in this week's Second Story Theatre musical called Urinetown, which hints at the importance of sustainability.

Although Kelsey admits she has a lot on the



Kelsey Mech with brochures and posters of causes close to her heart.

PHOTO BY CHRIS STEPHENSON

go, her career path and passion belong to the animals.

Kelsey is not only a vegetarian but campaigns against industrial farming of livestock.

She said eating meat is cruel for the animals and an unhealthy practice for humans.

And she felt so strongly about animal rights that her parents have followed suit and quit eating meat.

In the future Kelsey hopes to continue her work with the environment and animals as a conservation biologist.

"I want to preserve bio-diversity," she said.

At this point in her life, Kelsey is not sure what university she will attend to pursue her career.

Until then, her projects will keep her land bound on Salt Spring.



Kelsey Mech

Stats

Full name: Kelsey Joanna Mech
Age: 16
Grade: 11
Lived on Salt Spring: 13 years, minus the five I spent cruising
Parents names: Michelle and Karl
Sibling's name: Terry
Likes: Animals, nature, writing, travel, music, SCUBA diving and the great outdoors
Dislikes: Animal exploitation and the inhumanity of man towards the earth and its inhabitants
Favourite book or author: The Kite Runner Khaled Hosseini
Favourite movie: Too many to chose from
Favourite quote: "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little." — Edmond Burke
Future ambition: Conservation biologist, environmental and animal rights activist, and writer



I want to preserve bio-diversity.

Kelsey Mech



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