

## The end of a musical era at NHHS



By Bill Kilpatrick

When music educator Dianne Winmill, formerly Garbutt, first arrived at North Hastings Highschool in 1995 to teach music, things were not looking good for the music program. The principal at the time was looking to cut the program and it was in serious disrepair. "When I walked into the high school in 1995," Winmill told Bancroft This Week, "nine instruments worked and there was no money. I fixed as many as I could with duct tape, wire, moulded paper towel and masking tape." Winmill was frustrated, but her love of music and her dedication to the students kept her forging ahead.

The spring of 1996 brought her some hope when the people who organized a school reunion decided to donate \$5,000 to the music program and she was able to repair many instruments along with the program itself. Winmill had decided that she would only stay in Bancroft for three years and then she would move on. However, Winmill never moved on. She decided to stay in Bancroft. She explained that herself along with other music teachers spent over a decade fundraising selling chocolates, citrus fruit, and flower bulbs just to ensure that the students had sufficient instruments, but this was quite exhausting for the teachers and the students alike. "Me nagging kids to fundraise is not why I got into education," she said with a laugh.

Later she decided that a better way to raise funds would be through concerts performed by the students. Winmill instituted two fundraising concerts per year where all the funds raised go back into the music program. Now, after three decades of teaching and one Juno Award later she will be performing her last concert as the high school music teacher on June 2. To celebrate her retirement Winmill has also organized an alumni concert for June 1 to help raise money for her replacement as she wants to ensure that the person who will be taking her place starts on the right note and does not have to sell chocolate or flower bulbs to buy instruments. The money will be going into the Vince Childs' instrument repair fund.

The retirement/ alumni concert will see close to 200 performers including 40 for the alumni choir and some 140 for the concert. The concert will see performances by Peterborough threesome Blue Hazel which consists of former students Caitlin O'Connor, Meisha Browne and Rico (Ryan) Browne, former bassist for "I Mother Earth." Blue Hazel will be debuting a special song written especially for Winmill called "She Knew." Other performers include Scott Stewart of the Canadian Tall Boys, Kim Stelter, Morag (Menzies) Mercer, Jordan Marshall, Brad Carleton, Jackie (Boyle) McLean, Kara Buelow Fleck, Melanie Dalley, Samatha Gosse, Ali Grenier, and many more. Winmill is also giving former students a chance to pick up their old instruments and belt out a tune or two. If there is enough interest, explained Winmill, some of those alumni may also be performing a simple piece at the evening concert.

When the idea for an alumni concert first began to evolve Winmill had only planned to have an alumni choir sing at the end of the student concert, but things quickly took on a life of their own. "Some people said I'd love to perform a solo or could I perform with you," explained Winmill. She had to inform them that there probably wasn't enough time for extra performances and the concert was supposed to be a kid's band, but as more and more people asked Winmill if they could perform, she had an idea: "Why don't I give them their own concert?" she said. Now instead of one day of music people can enjoy two days of music.

The alumni concert begins at noon on June 1 with a meet and greet at the high school cafeteria and music room followed by an alumni choir rehearsal from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Then from 2:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. the alumni are invited to play their old instruments with the possibility of playing at the concert that evening. The main concert begins at 7 p.m. at the Bancroft Village Playhouse followed by an after party at the Bancroft Brew Pub. Tickets for the alumni show are \$30 and can be purchased at the Village Playhouse.

Winmill also wanted to invite any music lovers to her final student concert on June 2 at the Bancroft Village Playhouse for two shows 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

For anyone who has had the pleasure of attending one of Winmill's concerts, they will know that her signature closing song is "Thank you for the Music." And it appears from the number of alumni who are attending the concert that it is in fact they who are thankful for having such a talented and caring music teacher and mentor. Winmill invites everyone out to attend both final concerts and to hear some of the amazing talent from both current and past music students. In the words of Winmill "It's gonna be awesome."

To make a donation to the Vince Childs' repair fund a cheque can be brought to the concert or dropped off at North Hastings High School. Please make the cheques payable to the "HPEDSB Learning foundation" for the Vince Childs' repair fund.