

# localnews

■ **DISPATCH HOME:** Barrie girl returning after being stuck in France by ash cloud

## Mom's visit perks up student

Jenny Campbell is a Grade 8 student at Steele Street Public School. She was completing a two-month exchange in France, when a huge cloud of volcanic ash prompted a shut-down of air travel in Europe. Her trip has been extended by three weeks and she'll finally return home Sunday. Here is another dispatch about her extended stay.



Submitted

Jenny Campbell, of Barrie, has spent an extra three weeks in France on an exchange after being grounded by a volcanic ash cloud.

Since we lived in the mountains, mom really wanted to see the view.

But it was cloudy and rainy (one of the first times since I had arrived) all weekend, so our hikes went down the drain.

Fortunately, there were a few cloudy breaks so she still got to see the mountains up close.

We went bowling on Saturday and that was great just spending time together.

The next day we played soccer in the rain and came back soaked and covered in mud.

It was really great and funny, too. After that we played badminton in a makeshift court in their backyard. That night we played family card games late into the night.

Monday morning we got up early to see mom off at the train station.

We arrived 45 minutes early so we changed her train to a different one that took off 15 minutes earlier.

After sprinting to catch the first train, we said our good-byes.

It wasn't as hard as I thought it would be, though of course I was sad to see her go.

I think that is mainly because I got to see her again in a week and we had a totally amazing weekend together.

Follow Jenny's journey home in Monday's Examiner

The Monday after I was first supposed to leave, my mom sprung some exciting news on me: she was coming to visit.

I couldn't believe it. A million thoughts were going through my head. When? How? Why? I guess the why was pretty easy to figure out but the how, not so much.

As it turns out, she had to go to Africa with her work and the connecting flight stopped in Paris. She came three days early then took the train down to see me for a weekend.

Even though it was a short time, I was thrilled because I hadn't seen my mom for two whole months. Just the thought that she was coming helped get me through the week.

On Friday, I took the day off from school and went to work with Manon's mom, Cathy, to do three hours of math homework while waiting for her to arrive. When we finally got to go (it seemed like forever) it was amazing to see my mom.

Cathy dropped us off at a big shopping mall while she went back to work. My mom speaks no French, so I had to order lunch and do all of the asking. We talked and caught each other up on what had been happening. We went walking around and found out that you have to pay to use the wash-room. Maybe that's not uncommon, but for it was for us.

Back at the house, everyone was delighted to finally meet my mom. The good thing is that Manon's parents are bilingual and both their daughters had taken part in English exchanges, so we were able to communicate well.

■ **ENVIRONMENT:** Public information session on Wednesday

## County seeking certification to aid its forests

(STAFF) — Simcoe County is pursuing forest management certification for the woodlands it oversees.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international, non-profit organization that supports environmentally

appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.

"Our forests are among the County of Simcoe's greatest assets," said Warden Cal Patterson. "This certification process allows the county to ensure we

are managing our forests appropriately now and into the future to ensure they are sustainable for generations to come."

A public information session will be held Wednesday beginning at 7 p.m. at the Simcoe County Museum.

■ **MENTAL HEALTH:** A mom's mission

## Family under stress

FROM PAGE 1

This week was mental health awareness week, and Leonard welcomed a chance to educate the public on living with children with mental illness.

It wasn't the life, or the motherhood Leonard signed up for. But, even through all the turmoil mental and physical exhaustion the disorder has put her through, she doesn't love her 15-year-old and seven-year-old sons any less.

"Have I been traumatized? Absolutely," she said. "I've had two heart attacks because of this, and had counselling. And, I can't work because I parent my youngest still."

Both Leonard's children were adopted from the same birth mother, who she said drank during both her pregnancies.

Her oldest son, Adam (not his real name), started showing signs at age four, but Leonard wasn't able to tell.

"He was all over the place, very busy and hyper. He might have been out of control then, but I was too naive to realize something wasn't right," Leonard said, looking at her son's school picture. "Then, in Grade 1, (Adam) was suspended for throwing snowballs at the principal."

"The challenges got more extreme as he grew, because of his frustration about his severe learning disabilities," she said, adding that at age 8, Adam became enraged with her and grabbed a butcher knife from the kitchen to threaten her with.

"He gets mad and has punched holes in our walls. He has disappeared and been out all night," she said. "He was doing drugs at age 10, skipping school. And he refused any assistive devices at school because he didn't want people to think he was stupid. He's in Grade 9 sitting at a Grade 3 learning level."

Now, her youngest boy, Andrew (not his real name), is diagnosed with the same disorder, and Leonard fears starting the whole process over again.

"His actions are starting, but I'm trying to corral him now and not let him get to where (my oldest) is," Leonard said.

Sadly, FASD is not a commonly-known disorder in Simcoe County. But that's something Tonya Millsap and Catulpa Community Support Services in Barrie are trying to change.

"We focus on raising awareness across the business sector,



MARK WANZEL The Barrie Examiner

Joanne Leonard, of Barrie, has seen first hand the effects Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder can have on a family.

and with families about what FASD is," said Millsap, project manager of the Simcoe County Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Initiative. "We're also trying to work with existing community organizations to help them effectively address this disorder."

"At this point, FASD is seen as a medical/physical disability, but there's the question of, is it also a mental health disorder," she added.

The initiative began two years ago, and is researching the prevalence of the disorder in the county, as well as the risk factors and long-lasting effects.

"Most of the affected children won't have the visible facial characteristics, but some do," she said. "The one consistent thing is the fact that the brain is affected on some level."

"(FASD) is a very complex diagnosis and it doesn't affect everyone the same," she added. "It's case by case, but there's often a high rate of inability to understand consequences, tell time, use their own judgment, and affect sensory integration."

A child can also be hypersensitive or hypo-sensitive because of FASD. The disorder affects one in 1,000 newborns, or 300,000 Canadians annually, but it's not clear how prevalent it is in our area.

"We're working on learning about that, but the most we can say is it's 1% of the community," Millsap said.

Leonard said the disorder has put a considerable amount of stress on her marriage, family life and Adam's school life.

"He's been kicked out of different schools for his behaviour, and one group home, because they didn't know how to deal with his condition," she said. "I've done a lot of damage control from all the stigma they receive. The school systems and group homes need to change the language and programs they have to teach FASD students the way they can learn, and not expect them to conform to their ways."

Mother's Day is Sunday, but Leonard said it won't be much of a special day for her.

"It's nothing special. It'll just be a normal Sunday for me," she said with a shrug. "There's no respite at all with kids with FASD. I still have my youngest and he still needs me."

Still, after all she's been through, Leonard loves being a mother to her sons.

"I wouldn't change my decision to take these two kids in. It just would have been nice to know (what they had)," she said. "I want my kids to grow up and be good members of society and function, regardless of their mental illness. But the awareness and the help has to be there for them."

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