

Military medals handed out

Ribbons and medals recognize hard work done for Canadians

By Kristen Oelschlagel

Decoding messages and planning missions might sound like something out of a movie, but for Cpt. Sophia Polwin, it was real.

"I'll remember lots of planning. Having to get up in the middle of the night and plan missions and decoding some messages we got," said Polwin.

"They're called tasking order, like ATO is an air-tasking order. We'd have to decode that and go and fly the mission based on the coded message we got."

Polwin is one of 166 military personnel from CFB Trenton who were deployed in support of Operation Unified Protector. The NATO operation, which was a military intervention in Libya in response to events during the Libyan civil war, formally began on March 23, 2011 and ended Oct. 31, 2011.

On Nov. 16, Polwin, along with 58 other members of 8 Wing Trenton, were awarded the Non-Article 5 NATO Medal for service. The medal is awarded for 30 consecutive or 60 cumulative days of honourable service under NATO Operation Unified Protector.

Polwin was deployed in Sicily for 64 days, flying the airbus in air-to-air refueling missions. It was her first real deployment and she said it was exciting to be able to put all her training to use.

"It was a real wartime situation so we it was pretty intense at times. Taking off in the middle of the night, having fighters come to you that were on their minimum fuel and needed to get to the hose right away to fuel and go drop their bombs over Libya," said Polwin.

Lieutenant-General Yvan Blondin, the commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, was at the medal ceremony to present medals to those in attendance.

Blondin said what the medal symbolizes mean more than the medal itself.

"It's just a piece of ribbon and medal, but it means so much for us. It's what you do, you get the recognition from Canadians, that's what it means," said Blondin.

"It's something you can put on your uniform and wear proudly, it's a symbol of the sacrifices you need to make to serve Canadians."

Polwin, whose dad was there to watch her, said the ceremony was nice



Photo by Kristen Oelschlagel

Sophia Polwin receives her medal from the Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, Lieutenant-General Yvan Blondin. Honours were bestowed upon several military personnel during the event.

for those receiving the medals, as well as their families.

"It's my first medal, so it's nice to have the general come here and give it to us in a formal setting with all our spectators here. It's nice for the families because obviously some peo-

ple were away for a long time so it's nice to have the parade and recognize them and their families as well," she said.

Polwin said there are some memories from her deployment that she'll never forget.

"Working with all sorts of different nations. We were working with the Spaniards, Italians, Brits, UAE (United Arab Emirates), French, and the Canadians of course. So it was a big multinational operation and that was one of the best parts I think."

United Way sustains organizations in community

By Kristen Oelschlagel

Susanne Quinlan knows how important it is for the United Way of Quinte to reach its goal.

Quinlan, the director of operations at Gleaners Food Bank in Belleville, said the funding from the United Way is important to Gleaners' operation.

"The service we provide to the community is like water, it needs to sustain life. So the money from the United Way is greatly appreciated to help pay for the staff wages," Quinlan said.

The goal for this year's campaign is \$1.925 million and so far over \$730,000 has been raised.

"We know where these dollars are coming from and where they are out there, it's just a matter of campaigns finishing up and recording," said Judi Gilbert, executive director of the United Way of Quinte.

This is week 10 out of 17 for the campaign, and there are still several workplace campaigns which still be starting up in the final weeks.

"Many major banks are starting their campaigns, they usually kick off in the latter part of November, and QuintEssential Credit Union is about to kick off as well," said Gilbert.

The United Way distributes the money raised from the campaign to 42 agencies in the community.

"Last year, 55,000 people accessed one or more of our 42 agencies, so there's a huge need," said Gilbert.

Gilbert said there is a strict application process agencies have to go through when they apply for the funds, so that the money gets distributed fairly based on need.

Quinlan said that without the United Way they would have to do even more fundraising.

"We operate a food bank that serves 4,400 families in Belleville and we serve out of the Tri-County Warehouse to nine area food banks, including Loyalist College, and 150 non-profit agencies," said Quinlan.

"We are the lowest paid executive director and staff members in any food bank across Canada, so we don't have high wages. That funding is very important."

Major companies, like Nestle and Proctor and Gamble, will also be finishing up their campaigns in the coming weeks.

Gilbert says even though the campaign officially started the last week of August, the United Way gets support throughout the year.

"There are lots of workplace campaigns that do events throughout the year, so the United Way is top of mind with many workplaces throughout the year."

Youth benefit from YALE program at John Howard Society

By Sarah Armour

Walking through the doors of the John Howard Society on Wallbridge Crescent in Belleville, you get an immediate cold feeling as you approach the large white room equipped with two basketball nets.

While the feeling is cold, something special is happening inside these walls. Upstairs, in between a dance studio and a games room, is the tutoring room which is slowly filling up with teens.

A brunette boy with glasses, Patrick Thompson, 16, sits at a small square table sipping a juice box with two other teenage boys. The Grade 11 student began

volunteering at the John Howard Society in Belleville after his English teacher told him about the YALE program.

"This room should be filled on Thursdays," said Thompson.

Thompson said there aren't enough volunteers for the Thursday afternoon youth program.

"Not many people want to volunteer, because they think it's a waste of time," said Thompson. "I'm not working, and its only two hours after school once a week."

Thompson's role as a volunteer is to oversee the students during their tutoring hour, then take part in free gym time with them.

"Seeing the kids dance is definitely my favourite part," said Thompson with a laugh.

The Belleville John Howard building is home to the YALE (youth academic learning exposure) program. The after-school program is for local youth ages 10-17. It runs from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. every Thursday. The first hour is dedicated to the tutoring portion, and the second is open gym time.

One of the few students who is able to take advantage of the YALE program is 16-year-old Matt Snider. Snider was encouraged to join after returning from a school trip to Germany.

"I had fallen behind in schoolwork and

needed a way to catch up... this program is really helping me in chemistry," said Snider.

After a quick glance around the high-energy tutoring room, it is obvious there is one person at the centre of this group: program director Brenda Gabriel.

Gabriel said the program provides opportunities for youth to discover different life passions and propel them to a brighter future.

"This is a place where they can feel accepted, and somewhere they can call home," said Gabriel.

As for the lack of volunteers, Gabriel is unsure of the reasoning.

"People are busy, and can't commit... if

people want to volunteer, they will," said Gabriel.

It's not in the program's funding to pay for advertising so they rely on word of mouth to encourage people to volunteer.

The John Howard Society's mission is to have an avenue for the youth of the community to explore, inspire, discover and achieve success for better wellness of life. The society has many future plans for the program including a dance program, boot camp and art classes.

Anyone interested in volunteering, donating or learning more about the programs offered to youth can call 613-968-6628.

Staff and students share steps to reduce bullying

By April Lawrence

Courtney Ketcheson is one of the students at Deseronto Public School who participated in the bullying awareness and prevention week kick off by sharing her bullying poster.

In a presentation Monday morning, staff and students at the school shared the steps they are taking to reduce bullying. Deseronto Public School use programs to help students learn in a positive environment.

Classroom circles are one of the practices being used. They encourage students to listen intently to each other.

"Everybody gets to have their voice heard," said student Aliya Cherneskie.

Ketcheson said that the programs should continue. She said it's good that the students get to learn more about each other and more about the other classrooms around the school. Other students had similar opinions.

Classroom circles are being used to teach lessons, promote equality, community and wholeness. Each student is given the opportunity to speak while everyone else sits quietly and listens. These circles are used in classrooms from J.K. through to secondary school.

It is one of several programs used to encourage student voice and positive relationships. Another program used at the school is Focus on Character Education, which teaches students elements of good character. Students and staff demonstrated a classroom circle during the presentation.

Playing throughout the presentation was a slide show with pictures of students'



Photo by April Lawrence

Courtney Ketcheson, a student at Deseronto Public School, explained her antibullying poster to everyone at the bullying awareness and prevention week kick off at her school earlier this week.

bullying prevention posters. The posters are based on the presentation the Power of One. In the presentation, the students learned ways to identify the bully, the target and the victim. Students were able to sign a pledge following the presentation.

Ketcheson shared her poster at the presentation Monday. In her poster, she drew two scenarios. In one, she showed a person being bullied and in the other how to not be a bully. She said that a strategy that could be used to stop bullying was including people in activities so that they have friends.

The school received the Speak Up grant which goes to schools that apply for special funding for programs that support student voice. To encourage this, a second presentation to kick off bullying prevention and awareness week was held the following day that was largely put on by the students.

Teachers are just as enthusiastic about these programs as the students, said principal Heather Seres. Teachers are also using classroom circles to start their meetings. They want to have good, supportive relationships throughout the school.

"We believe strongly that students should treat each other with respect. Students should treat teachers with respect and staff should treat each other with respect. It's really about being kind to each other," said Rob McCall, director of education for Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board.

The school board has designated the third week of November to be bullying awareness and prevention week.