

LAUREN TOYOTA:
VJ, HOST AND SO MUCH
MORE



SPRING 2014 | VOLUME 82

Reflections

Durham College Alumni Magazine

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



Greetings everyone,

This month we will have an opportunity to congratulate over 4,000 students at convocation. We are also proud to say that this will put us over 67,000 alumni members!

As your President, I am pleased to provide you with an update on what we have accomplished on your behalf since I last wrote in the winter.

At our recent board meeting, the following graduates were selected as this year's Durham College Alumnus of Distinction winners: Alex Berube, Jeff Gagne, Ron Hooper, Debbie Low, Jennifer McCool-Closs, Russ Montague and Michelle Roberts.

All of these alumni have had extraordinary career achievements and commitments to their community, including Durham College. We look forward to recognizing them at this June's convocation.

The Board has also been working diligently on raising the profile of your association with the following activities and events:

Exposure at open house by welcoming hundreds of new students and their families this past March;

Starting the "Text to Give" campaign, where current students can give back by donating \$10 to the college for future

scholarships and bursaries to help future students;

Attending the donor reception at the Centre for Food to honour the students who received scholarships and bursaries. The Alumni Association donated six bursaries totalling \$6,000.

The Alumni office ran a very successful inaugural School Cup Challenge (SCC) which tied into our Countdown to Grad event. Over 700 graduating students enjoyed free pizza, shared DC memories and received information about the Alumni Association. SCC winning schools START (Skilled Trades, Apprenticeship & Renewal Technology) and JES (Justice & Emergency Services) will award bursaries to two DC students for the 2014/15 academic year. These bursaries were sponsored by the Alumni Association. In addition, Courtney Bashaw, a student in the Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE) program (School of Interdisciplinary Studies & Employment Services) was the winner of \$500 for sharing her favourite DC experience as part of the challenge. Jessi Post, a Culinary Skills program student (Centre for Food) was the recipient of a pair of Toronto Maple Leafs tickets.

We are now offering Alumni members an opportunity to purchase our new DC Alumni jackets together with class rings from the year of their graduation. Please see our website or email us at alumni@durhamcollege.ca

Finally, the Alumni Association will be making a donation to the Centre for Food (CFF) toward completing the landscaping. The landscape plan will help students to plant, cultivate and harvest crops for Bistro67 as well as learn about a variety of specimen trees, shrubs and other plant material.

Please watch for new website updates and perks as we work to raise the profile of your Alumni Association. Follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn.

I encourage you to share any DC memories, career successes or just update us with your personal information. We would love to hear from you. ☺

Sincerely,

Lesley Wagner

Legal Administration – Class of 1985

REFLECTIONS

Published by the
Durham College Alumni Office

2000 Simcoe Street North
Oshawa, Ontario L1H 7K4

T: 905-721-3035
F: 905-721-3134
E: alumni@durhamcollege.ca
CIRCULATION: 20,000

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

PUBLISHER: Lori Connor
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Ginny Colling
STUDENT EDITORS: Laura McKenna,
Kristen Schaffrath
ART DIRECTOR: Zamir Visram
COPY EDITORS: Ashley Bain, Chantel
Coffey, Jarah Crawford, Christine Drage,

Samantha Ferguson, Sandra Franchi,
Danielle Limcaco, Nicola Llewellyn,
Michelle Lonski, Melissa Muzyczka,
Sarah Osaduke, Natasha Paris, Dana
Ranchod, Stephanie Servinis, Katherine
Sheppard, Micaela Turco, Natalie Weber

*Reflections is written and edited by
Durham College second-year Public
Relations students.*

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Running Past Impossible

BY LAURA MCKENNA

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANNAH ELKINGTON AND IMPOSSIBLE2POSSIBLE

Some people strive to run a marathon, while others would just like to make it around the block. Hannah Elkington's goal was a little bigger than this. She wanted to run across an entire desert.

In 2012, the Police Foundations student accomplished this seemingly impossible feat when she joined a team of six other youth and ran 200 kilometres across the Kalahari Desert in Botswana. The expedition was organized by a not-for-profit organization called Impossible2Possible (I2P), which plans these treks for youth on all continents.

"I2P delivers education to classrooms around the globe and focuses on diversity, biodiversity, and experiential learning," says Elkington. "What's happening is while we're running we're actually collecting information about where we're running and then satellite feeding it up to classrooms around the world."

After hearing about I2P in high school, Elkington decided to apply for the 2012 Botswana expedition, which would bring her back to the continent she grew up on. Being from South Africa, she was familiar with the culture before heading to Botswana, but still found the experience eye-opening.

"We went to some very remote areas, so you get to see what people who live in those areas see," says Elkington. "The Bush people of the Botswana desert live in that desert environment all year round, and they find water, they hunt, they live off the land. So in an environment that we would call completely inhospitable, there's actually a culture that lives there."

The conditions these Bushmen deal with every day presented Elkington and her group with some challenges on their run. The temperature averaged between 40 and 50

degrees Celsius, and as the team ran across salt pans the sun not only beat down on them, but also was reflected back up. Dehydration was always a concern for Elkington and her teammates.

"When you become dehydrated, your ability to think actually becomes impaired so you're not able to think and reason through things properly," she says. "And then, of course, you're running with a team, so you're dealing with their issues as well as your own."

In order to prepare for the challenges of running across the Kalahari, Elkington began her training 10 months before the expedition. I2P set her up with a team of coaches and sports therapists

who had her running six days a week, three hours a day. Prior to her training, the longest distance she had run was a 10-kilometre fun-run for charity.

"For me I had this perceived physical limit, and you find you're hitting those limits and then breaking them, and then hitting them again and then breaking them again. It definitely changes you as an individual, and [you learn] what is possible versus impossible."

As a new college grad, she has turned her focus from running, to co-ordinating the Youth in Policing program in Durham Region, and is looking forward to a career with the police department. While her physical training is still a large part of her life, it is much less extreme these days. Elkington completed her first half-marathon this past year. She also continues working with I2P and recently joined an expedition in Peru, but this time just as a crew member. 



Recent grad Hannah Elkington (front right) ran across the Kalahari Desert as part of a team organized by Impossible2Possible, which plans treks for youth.



The Impossible2Possible team ran through areas in Botswana with temperatures as high as 50 degrees Celsius.

“I2P delivers education to classrooms around the globe and focuses on diversity, biodiversity, and experiential learning.

While we’re running we’re actually collecting information about where we’re running and then satellite feeding it up to classrooms around the world. ”



While on the 200 kilometre run, Elkington and her team stopped in remote areas to visit with locals.



WE DON'T CARE
WHAT'S ON
YOUR HEAD.



Grad Behind the Ad

BY SAMANTHA FERGUSON

PHOTO COURTESY OF LAKERIDGE HEALTH

What started off as a regular job ad drew attention from cities around the world. From Europe to the Middle East and even Australia, Lakeridge Health was creating a buzz on a global scale.

The “We don’t care what’s on your head, we care what’s in it” ad was created by Lakeridge Health’s senior communications director to increase interest in applying and working for the reputable hospital.

While he didn’t create the ad, as vice-president of Human Resources and Hospitality Services at Lakeridge Health Oshawa, Business grad Darrell Sewell was at the forefront of the campaign, fielding media inquiries. He responded to calls from Minneapolis, to Montreal and Hamilton to be a guest on various talk shows to answer questions regarding the ad.

From the moment the ad was published in McGill University’s campus newspaper, news of Lakeridge Health’s campaign spread like wildfire. Just a few weeks before it ran, the Parti Québécois unveiled a new Charter of Quebec Values that proposed to ban hospital workers, police and school teachers from wearing religious symbols during working hours. Lakeridge Health seized this opportunity to create an ad that showcased what they look for in their employees and why their hospital would be a great place to work. After the ad was released, Lakeridge received more than 78 job applications.

“There were three objectives in placing this ad. One, that at any time we have over 150-plus job vacancies available and we want to attract the best and brightest in Canada to come work for our hospital.”

“There were three objectives in placing this ad. One, that at any time we have over 150-plus job vacancies available and we want to attract the best and brightest within Canada to come work for our hospital. Two, we wanted to let the public know that we are an inclusive workforce in a growing and increasingly diverse community. And three, we wanted to get our name out there and put Lakeridge on the map,” says Sewell.

With print and broadcast media from all over North America and abroad covering the story, it seems they have successfully accomplished their objectives. Sewell said the ad itself received overwhelmingly positive support, although he did hear from a couple of disgruntled individuals.

“The majority of feedback we received was very positive. I mean a few negative comments here and there, but overwhelmingly positive.”

Outside of work, Sewell has been on Durham College’s Board of Governors. In 2011 he became chair of the board, a position he held for a year. In that role he was in charge of overseeing the college’s strategic plan and overall performance. He says the college has changed dramatically since he graduated from the Business program in 1989.

“Durham College has grown leaps and bounds with its expansions, the number of students attending, their relationship with UOIT, academic pathways, service centres and infrastructure. Durham College has become one of the top colleges in the province and has a lot to be proud of,” says Sewell. ☩

Striking Gold

BY CHRISTINE DRAGE
PHOTO BY CLIFTON LI

Securing that first job out of school can be intimidating. Becoming the president of a billion-dollar company at 32, well that's just about unheard of – but not for Ian Ball.

Ball's jump into an executive role at McEwen Mining was due to hard work and a bit of luck. He started in investor relations in 2004, doing basic office tasks. But he rapidly climbed the ladder, using his youth to his advantage with fresh, new ideas that are helping to change the mining industry.

At 26, Ball discovered a new silver mine, El Gallo 2, which is scheduled to become one of Mexico's largest silver mines. He used unconventional methods to do it. Local prospectors on the project were motivated with stock options and bonuses up to \$5,000 whenever a metal showing was discovered on the property. Ball cut costs by choosing cheaper drilling techniques and updating the lab in order to get results at a much quicker rate.

The discovery proved that it was time for a change in the outdated industry. His new way of getting the job done was just the push chief owner Rob McEwen needed to promote Ball. It was an unprecedented move, and it couldn't have come soon enough.

"Honestly, my goal was to become president of a mining company sooner than 32," Ball jokes. "There were hurdles I had to overcome. The mining industry is full of older people, and I had to prove myself to a lot of them."

On a typical day, he can be found analyzing reports, reading over expenses, and negotiating contracts dealing with everything from cyanide to explosives. His main priority is managing the production, construction and exploration of McEwen Mining's operations. Before he was president, he took a crack at being vice-president for the mining company at the tender age of 25.

It wasn't always glitz and glamour for Ball, however. He did a brief stint underground at the mining site at Red Lake, Ont., all in order to learn as much as he could about the industry. It wasn't long after joining McEwen that Ball was shadowing his mentor at mining sites across the world. Throughout his time with McEwen Mining, the young president has helped raise capital, structure transactions, and build one mine. He has also overseen large mergers and acquisitions in the natural resource sector with a total value of \$11 billion.

Before the jump into mining, Ball first attended Durham College for Business Administration. After finishing with the highest GPA in Durham's three-year business program in 2002, he took a page out of a classmate's book, enrolling in Ryerson University. There, he also graduated at the top of his class.

During his time at Ryerson, Ball one day found himself in an elevator with McEwen himself. He took the opportunity to present his research and findings on McEwen's then company, Goldcorp. That led to an interview, and Ball was offered a job on the spot.

"You have to set yourself apart," says Ball. "Everyone knows who the fastest man in the world is. No one knows who is second best. You have to find something that gives you an edge." ☀



At the age of 32 Ian Ball, Business grad, has already worked his way into the president's position at McEwen Mining.

Durham's International Man

BY MICHAELA TURCO

PHOTO COURTESY OF ZAIN SHAFIQUE

Back home in Pakistan, Zain Shafique co-hosted a national radio show sponsored by UNICEF. It was a call-in show focusing on youth issues. Today, the computer programmer student is back on air, this time at Durham College. He hosts RIOT radio show Culture Shake, which focuses on helping international students on campus.

"To be honest, most international students come here for the first time and don't know where to go or who to speak to," said Shafique. "So, I thought because I had been at the campus for eight months I knew more about the Canadian culture, therefore I could help them with their issues."

In his first year on campus, Shafique also became an international student mentor with the international office in student services, helping others lead a successful college life. In addition, he has a blog on i-studentglobal.com, a website that profiles international students in Canada. His blog focuses on topics ranging from what it is like to study in Canada to promoting his RIOT radio show.

After working as an international student mentor, Shafique thought that if he could help the international students of the college, he could help the entire college population. In September 2013, he was elected student representative to the Durham College Board of Governors for the 2013/2014 school year. As student governor he is not only the voice of the student body, but also a college representative at meetings and seminars across Ontario to promote the school.

"Higher management can tell people how good their school is, but when it comes from the mouth of a student it matters more. Communication is one of the best parts about this job. I get to meet new people and represent every single student," he says.

Before immigrating to Canada, Shafique moved to the United States for an exchange program. He was just 16 years old when he served as a cultural ambassador for Pakistan and completed eleventh grade. Based on his good performance, community service and winning fifth place at a literary rally, he was appointed honorary Louisiana State Senator. Winning this led to Shafique being awarded with a Gold Medal, President's Volunteer Service Award and a letter signed by



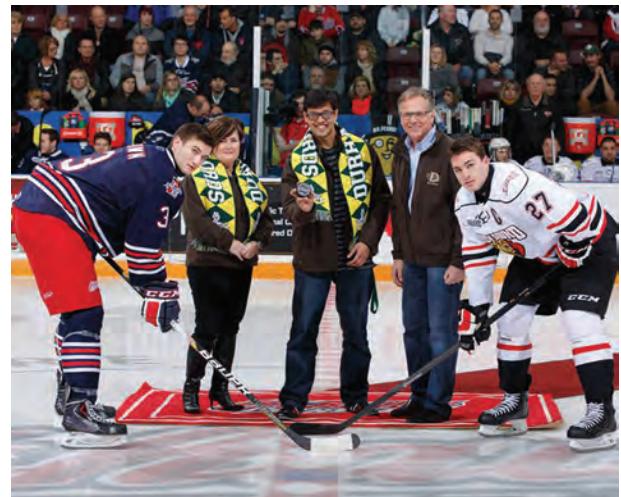
Computer Programmer student Zain Shafique on the air during his RIOT radio show, Culture Shake.

President Barack Obama. After his experience in the U.S., Shafique decided to move to Canada to broaden his educational opportunities.

"The education that you receive in Canada is more hands-on and practical. Back home it is more theory-based," said Shafique. "I wanted to get a better opportunity by moving to the western part of the world."

While in the United States, he stayed with a Christian family. Being Muslim, this gave him further insight into different cultures. After his time in the United States, Shafique enrolled in the Computer Programmer program at Durham. Since he has relatives in Mississauga, the move was easy for him to make, he says.

Durham College was Shafique's first choice over all the colleges in the Greater Toronto Area. He based his decision solely on the fact that the college would represent the Canadian culture he wanted to experience, he says. After graduating from computer programming this year, Shafique plans to go to the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) to further his education. ☪



Board of Governors student representative Zain Shafique drops the puck at an Oshawa Generals game alongside DC Alumni Association President Lesley Wagner and Durham College President Don Lovisa.

Feature Teacher Retires

BY STEPHANIE SERVINIS
PHOTOS COURTESY OF GINNY COLLING

Ginny Colling is packing up her things and taking a step in a new direction. After 29 years at Durham College, the School of Media, Arts & Design professor – and editor-in-chief of Reflections – is saying goodbye to a big part of her life.

Colling began her career as a reporter for the London Free Press after earning a Masters in Journalism from Western University. Her passion for writing then led her to a job with the Red Deer Advocate in Alberta, followed by a public relations position for provincial government there.

"When I was in PR with the Alberta government I did a newsletter all by myself – wrote all the stories and did the layout and design," says Colling. "There was no desktop publishing software at the time so it was literally typing up columns using a typewriter." She began at Durham College in 1985, teaching Feature Writing to the Journalism students and Copy Writing to the PR class. The Journalism students were writing their stories for the Chronicle, but the PR students were simply writing assignments for class. Realizing there was a chance to build more real-world experience into the program, Colling started a campus newsletter called Corridors, so the Public Relations students would have the chance to write for something tangible. In the fall of 1993, the students took over production of the college's alumni magazine, Reflections. By then, some

of her students had begun referring to her as the "Feature Teacher". Colling wanted the soon-to-be PR professionals to have hands-on experience, and she believed this was the best way for them to get it.

"Reflections is a great vehicle to pull together a whole bunch of skills the PR students are learning, and put them into one project," she says. "They include photography, writing, editing, and layout and design using electronic publishing. So it has been great as a vehicle for that and it's also super for their portfolios."

Although Colling is retiring, it doesn't mean she is going to stop writing. She is very concerned about rising CO₂ levels and would like to use her journalistic skills to help get the message out. Along

with doing some freelance writing and editing, she aspires to do some travelling. She plans on spending her new-found free time with her family being active and doing things such as kayaking, running, and bicycling. It's going to be a huge change not having the school, her colleagues, and her students to come back to in September, but she promises to keep in touch. Meanwhile her legacy, including Reflections, will remain prominent in the Public Relations program.

"The thing I am most proud of is being able to have the publication for PR students and having the college support to do it," says Colling. "Reflections is such an important learning tool for the students and I'm going to miss being a part of that and the Chronicle, but it's time to move on to new things." ■

“Reflections is a great vehicle to pull together a whole bunch of skills the PR students are learning, and put them into one project. They include photography, writing, editing, and layout and design using electronic publishing.”



Ginny Colling, Public Relations and Journalism professor and editor-in-chief of Reflections, retired this month after 29 years at the college. Far left, Colling stands outside the Gordon Willey Building on campus during the spring of 1986, in her first year of teaching.

Firefighting graduate Brittany Borja (centre right, and inset) recently spent some time volunteering at an orphanage in Kenya.



From *fighting fires* to *fighting for causes*

BY MELISSA MUZYCKA

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRITTANY BORJA

From volunteering as a coach for the Special Olympics to working as a member of the pit crew for the first Nascar Truck Series in Bowmanville – there's not much Durham Firefighting graduate Brittany Borja doesn't do.

However, it's her most recent accomplishment that she truly takes pride in. In October 2013, Borja travelled alone to Kenya to live and work in an orphanage for a month.

The orphanage housed 23 children, ages four to 15. When Borja arrived, the house was falling apart. During her stay, she and other volunteers from International Volunteer HQ (IVHQ) assisted in the construction of a new roof and resurfaced the floors. Borja had planned to work at only the orphanage during her trip, but ended up also teaching at the local school for a few days.



Although she finds it difficult to talk about how some of the children came to be at the orphanage, she said she found inspiration in their stories as well. She recalls a 9-year-old girl — a victim of sexual abuse with an alcoholic mother — who was always smiling and happy despite all that she had been through in her short life.

"Listening to their stories really changes your view of life," Borja says.

In late September 2013, a terrorist group attacked the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi. It resulted in over 72 deaths, 61 of those being innocent civilians. Borja flew to Kenya five days after the attack, staying in the village of Githuari, just 30 minutes outside of Nairobi. Although the attack frightened both she and her family, Borja's parents pushed her to go through with the trip, knowing that she might regret the decision later if she didn't.

"You can't experience Africa from a car window," she says. During her stay, she and a few others from the IIVHQ program ventured into the local village to gather supplies. While there, they had the opportunity to use facilities with running water — a luxury Borja had gone weeks without. She encountered a wealthy family on safari who were disgusted by the facilities and refused to use them. It was then she realized how valuable it was to have the full experience of living with no luxuries.

"This kind of trip changes you," she says. "These kids have absolutely nothing, and I realized how little we value what we have. I appreciate my family more now. I tell them I love them every day."

In the future, Borja plans to travel to South Africa to volunteer as a surf instructor, she said. Since graduating in 2012, she has continued to advance her knowledge in the field of emergency services by taking a variety of related courses. Borja one day hopes to work for the Town of Ajax as a firefighter. ☐

WINNING WAYS

TAKING CARING FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

BY JARAH CRAWFORD
DURHAM COLLEGE FILE PHOTO

When nursing is the topic, there is no mistaking Patricia Mazzotta's passion. Mazzotta has been following that passion ever since graduating from Durham College's Registered Practical Nursing (RPN) program in 1997 and the Nursing program in 2002.

Today, she's both a professor and co-ordinator of the RPN to BScN Bridging Program at Centennial College. On top of that, she's working towards her PhD in nursing. Mazzotta spends most of her time supporting her students and giving back to them as much as possible.

“The education I received at Durham College was fundamental to what I am doing now.”

“Multiple things motivate me,” she says. “First are my students, because I care about their success and empower them to be the best that they can be. Also, a factor is the autonomy that I have as a nurse, and the respect that I receive from my colleagues, patients and their families. It’s phenomenal!”

Her hard work in the classroom and extensive background in nursing have not gone unnoticed. She has received several awards, including the John and Suanne Roueche Award for Excellence from the League for Innovation in Teaching and Leadership. This award was given to Mazzotta to recognize her outstanding contributions and leadership within a community college. She was one of only six recipients across



Nursing grad Patricia Mazzotta recently received a Durham College Alumni of Distinction award.

Canada to win this special award in 2012 in Dallas, Texas. In addition, she received an Alumni of Distinction award from Durham College in 2013.

She is grateful to Durham for launching her career. “The education I received at Durham College was fundamental to what I am doing now. I still remember the teachers that truly influenced the way I nurse today,” she says. “I had amazing teachers there, and I continue to follow in their footsteps.”

Mazzotta's original plan following high school was to attend university to study medicine, until her mother became ill. As the oldest of four children, she decided to stay home to look after her three siblings, so she needed a program that was fast-paced and quick to finish, which led her to Durham and the RPN program.

Today, juggling a busy lifestyle may be hard, but for Mazzotta it's worth it. Most important to her is to be supportive, especially for her two young children, ages 10 and 14. She also manages to find time for herself. In her spare time she enjoys travelling, especially to Central American countries, volunteering, dancing, and giving back to individuals around the world who are less fortunate. She achieves this by taking part in mission trips, for example to Guatemala, where she can help nurses there by introducing North American nursing standards.

When it comes to her life, “I wouldn't change a thing,” she says. “When a door hasn't opened for me, that's because it wasn't meant to be. I think that's why I have so much success in my life.” ☀

STEPP Into



PING to the *SPOTLIGHT*

BY CHANTEL COFFEY

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NOREEN HAMID

From kicking it back with some of the biggest names in the industry, to conducting countless red carpet interviews at major A-list events such as The JUNO Awards, the MuchMusic Video Awards, and the Toronto International Film Festival, Music Business Management (MBM) grad Lauren Toyota has been keeping herself busy since graduating in 2003.

Now working for MTV Canada, you can catch Toyota hosting shows like MTV News and After Degrassi. Co-hosting three MuchMusic Video Awards alongside artists like Selena Gomez and PSY and interviewing some of today's most influential artists, like Lady Gaga and Kanye West, Toyota can fairly say she has a job to be envied. From writing scripts, to researching for interviews, doing voice-overs, shooting outside on location or doing live television in studio, every day is a new one for the Durham grad.

A self-proclaimed TV junkie and obsessive music fan, she had always pictured herself in the music industry, and would do whatever it took to get her there — including moving across the country for a once-a-week job in Vancouver.

Toyota's jumpstart in Canadian television was hosting and producing the youth lifestyle series '969' on Razer. After two years wowing Canadians with her alluring and witty personality, she combined her extensive knowledge of the music business with her drive to be an on-air personality to land herself a job as a Much Music VJ, and now, MTV's newest host.

She recently returned to Durham to moderate Songs Revealed. The annual song-writing competition was developed to showcase local talent to a panel of industry professionals during the student-organized Reel Music Festival. Each year the festival provides MBM students with hands-on experience in event planning along with insight into the music industry.

Although the knowledge she acquired in Durham's MBM course has been an asset in her career, Toyota attributes much of her success to her strong sense of motivation.

"If you really want to succeed in a competitive industry like the music business, taking this course will assist and perhaps connect you to some influential people. But it's really up to how proactive and self-motivated you are," she says.

"You have to put the pieces together, hone in on what part of the business you're good at, and work hard to make a career out of it after you graduate."

Although it may seem as though Toyota has been particularly lucky when it comes to her career, she has the track record to prove success is largely based on how you promote yourself.

"Success is in doing, and so even outside of the course, I was active in the industry," she says. "I volunteered at Canadian Music Week and North By North East, I was out at events networking, and I tried to really embody being in the music industry already, in order to make it happen after I was out of college."

Along with her tenacious nature, Toyota acknowledges Durham's MBM course for giving her the hands-on learning that helped her get where she is today.

"It was the practical portions of the curriculum that really helped me," explains Toyota. "Any presentations or talks I had to do in front of a group, creating and executing a music festival, and of course the job placement period, were the most rewarding and valuable parts of the Music Business Management program."

While it may seem as though she has done it all in the years since she graduated, Toyota says she's just getting started.

By the end of 2014, she hopes to check travelling across the world to tape a special, having a show air outside of Canada, and hosting an award show in the United States off her bucket list. You can catch Toyota on her new live show, After Degrassi, Thursdays at 8:30 p.m. E/5:30 p.m. P on MTV. ■

Engineering Her Success

BY NATASHA PARIS
DURHAM COLLEGE FILE PHOTO

She's always enjoyed solving a tough problem and had an early interest in cars and planes.

"It's the styling of them. How complex a system they are and their capabilities."

Marnie Ham graduated from Durham College's Engineering Technology – Air Transportation program in 1991. She was a professor in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) between 2007 and 2014.

Today, she is the lead engineer in Applied Statistics at GE Aviation in Cincinnati, Ohio. She deals with various data involved in aircraft manufacturing and use, trying to improve manufacturability and operating experience.

Ham has extensive experience in engineering. Before be-

maintenance. They didn't want to believe that I knew what I was doing, because I was a girl," says Ham. "The best compliment I ever got – and this is when I knew they truly trusted me – was when one of the more experienced workers refused to listen to another male engineer until he got me over to look at the job, and I approved it. That was when I knew I was accepted and trusted as an engineer by all the guys in maintenance."

Hard work and perseverance has paid off for Ham – even beyond her career. While working at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Worcester, Mass. as a graduate student, she met her husband. They worked together as friends and colleagues for three years before deciding to date.

Before her career in engineering began, Ham completed a three-year-program for Engineering Technology – Air

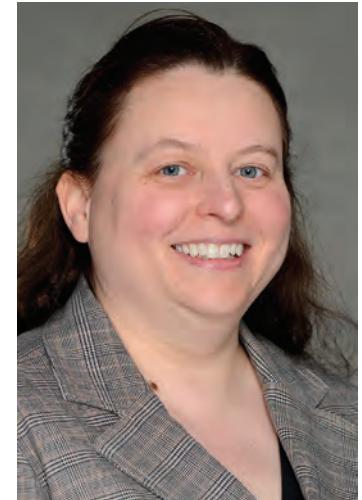
“On a larger scale, as at Ford and Bombardier, I was part of the team that made the vehicles and aircraft.”

ginning her career at UOIT, she was working with prestigious organizations such as Ford Canada, UPS Canada, Bombardier Aerospace and MeadWestvaco Canada.

"My research was manufacturing sheet metal parts, so I made many different parts," says Ham. "On a larger scale, as at Ford and Bombardier, I was part of the team that made the vehicles and aircraft."

Ford Canada was where she found the work most memorable. Challenging projects using large equipment like the under-body press, which is large enough to weld three vans at once, earned her respect in the male-dominated industry.

"I can clearly remember some of the guys I worked with in



Durham grad and former UOIT professor Marnie Ham is now lead engineer at GE Aviation in Ohio.

Transportation at Durham College. She then completed two engineering degrees at GMI Engineering & Management Institute in Flint, MI, and a Masters in engineering at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont. From 1995 to 1997, she also worked as a research assistant in the chemistry and chemical engineering departments at the Royal Military College of Canada. Following seven years in industry Ham returned to Queen's University to complete a PhD in mechanical engineering.

After a long commitment to her education and career, she was awarded an Alumni of Distinction Award from Durham College in 2013. Ham has always known what turns her gears in life, and what steps she needed to take to keep them going. 

“ The combination of Colin’s journalism background and my PR experience gave us credibility to sign clients early on. ”



Scott Ledingham, 2002 PR grad and senior partner at PR MediaNow, takes time out of his day to enjoy the beautiful weather at Mooney's Bay in Ottawa.

Building Business from the Ground Up

PHOTO AND STORY
BY SANDRA FRANCHI

A passion for sports, a true understanding of the web and social media, combined with the essential writing skills every public relations professional must have, has been a formula for success for Scott Ledingham. In 2008 he launched PR MediaNow, a communications firm specializing in securing targeted media coverage for tech companies, websites, and apps.

Upon completion of Durham College’s Public Relations program in 2002, Ledingham was already a fixture in the small communications department of the now-defunct Ottawa Lynx, a Montreal Expos minor-league affiliate baseball team in the nation’s capital. It was there that he honed his skills, perfected the press release, pitched ideas to media, and learned the all-around functionality of an office. Eventually, with his love of professional sports, he decided to venture onto bigger brands such as the Ottawa Senators and the Toronto Raptors, as well as the Ottawa International Jazz Festival, where he says the excitement was as constant as the work hours.

Changing gears and direction once again proved to be fateful for the PR grad. He shifted his focus to a start-up tech company based in Montreal. While working at its satellite office in Ottawa meant frequent, and sometimes inconvenient, trips between the two cities, it was nonetheless a perfect opportunity to learn another area of PR. This new position introduced Ledingham to Colin Trethewey, a former CTV technology/business reporter. It was the beginning of a lasting friendship that led them to create PR MediaNow.

“I think the combination of Colin’s journalism background and my PR experience in a number of different fields allowed the transition [from employees to business owners] to be a little bit easier, and gave us credibility to sign clients early on,” says Ledingham.

The two worked diligently at the Montreal-based start-up, pitching different story ideas, switching up angles to better suit different beat reporters, and they found they had quite the knack for it. They were able to work alongside a number of high-profile PR firms, allowing them to gain an understanding of the operations involved with running successful campaigns and how much work was needed. It was then that Ledingham and Tretheway saw the potential for another start-up — this time, their own.

On any given day, PR MediaNow secures media coverage for clients, plans launches, and monitors social media. Be it via Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter, Ledingham insists it’s a crucial part of modern-day business success.

“It’s the quickest, most effective way to reach mass markets these days, while the best media monitoring tool is Twitter,” says Ledingham, who adds they have no plans to expand the dynamic duo in the immediate future. “We like it this way and haven’t thought too much about expanding just yet, but it’s certainly a possibility. For now, and the next three to five years hopefully, we will just continue to work with a variety of different clients from all around the world.”

Although business is already competitive, Ledingham gladly offers advice to future PR practitioners — namely, those from Durham College. First, he says to take advantage of the program’s internship opportunities even after graduation to gain more tangible, on-the-job experience that potential employers search for when hiring. Additionally, Ledingham suggests avoiding what he calls “tunnel vision” when it comes to the job hunt. Expand your horizons as you never know what opportunities await — it just might pay off one day.

In Ledingham’s case, it certainly did. ■

PLAYING for Kids

BY NATALIE WEBER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF
JOHN GOODWIN AND
NATALIE WEBER



Durham College professor John Goodwin (right) had his students put on their “game faces” to raise money for SickKids.

It wasn't just fun and games.

John Goodwin, professor of the Game Development program at Durham College, united his students' love for gaming with something that helps the lives of sick children. Last October he introduced the Extra Life fundraiser to the college.

The 25-hour gaming marathon, held across North America, raises money for local Children's Miracle Network hospitals. For Durham College, that is SickKids Hospital in Toronto. The money is used to buy books, games and movies to entertain and brighten the spirits of children in the hospital.

“If you have ever been in SickKids, it's the most amazing place you will never want to be,” said Goodwin. “The kids have to live in their beds most of the time, and it can be a long time before they can go home. This is a children's hospital and some of them are suffering from some very serious illnesses. I really liked the idea because the money goes towards making their lives a little better, since their lives are in their beds.”

When he presented the idea to the students in the Game Development program, the support was overwhelming. In less than two weeks they had raised \$6,300. Extra Life facilitates a secure and easy-to-use website for people to set up personal sponsorship accounts. Students created accounts and posted the link to their personal Facebook and Twitter pages to spread awareness.

“We take a lot of things in life for granted these days,” says Goodwin. “The students took it as a great opportunity to give back to their community. A lot of them had some sort of per-

sonal connections to the hospital. It could have been a family member, a friend, or a friend of a friend who needed SickKids' services at some point in time. One of our students might not even be with us today if it wasn't for SickKids Hospital. Everyone thought this was a great idea.”

The students played every kind of game imaginable — Minecraft, World of Warcraft, Grand Theft Auto, and a variety of sporting games such as NHL '14 where gamers competed head-to-head on a large screen. Students even brought their own personal Xboxes and PS3s, hooking these devices up to PC monitors. The first six to 12 hours of the event were easy, Goodwin says. It was the additional 12 hours afterwards that were tough. They only lost a few students during those hours to go home and sleep. Some just nodded off in their chairs.

“Playing games is a ton of fun, even though you are just sitting in a chair with a controller. It's not like running a marathon or anything, but your brain is constantly processing what is going on and thinking about the games you're playing. Doing this for 25 hours can be a little brutal,” says Goodwin. “But at the end of the event I asked if anyone would want to do it again next year, and every single one of the students was on board.”

The event created a lot of buzz, raising over \$4 million nationwide. The college was featured on CHEX Channel 12 news and Good Morning Wakeup Call on Breakfast Television.

“It was a great opportunity for the college to take part in, and for the students to give back to the community,” says Goodwin.

So great, in fact, that he intends to make it an annual event. ☺

“If you have ever been in SickKids, it's the most amazing place you will never want to be. The kids have to live in their beds most of the time, and it can be a long time before they can go home.”

Farewell to a founding coach

BY MICHELLE LONSKI

As golf coach he led his team to win back-to-back gold medal championships in 1988 and 1989 as well as four bronze team medals and one silver. Gerry Pettit was such a successful coach that his teams made the top 10 in Ontario every year except for three. He was inducted into the Durham College Sports Hall of Fame in 1997 as well as the OCAA Hall of Fame in 2009. He eventually retired from Durham in 1993 and remained involved in the college's athletics program as a fan, friend and casual advisor. The college lost one of its biggest fans when Gerry died Nov. 28, 2013 at the age of 79.

"An outstanding golfer himself, it was on the course as the head coach of the DC golf program for 23 years where he enjoyed his greatest accomplishments," said Ken Babcock, campus athletic director.

Born in Toronto, Gerry came to Durham College in 1969 where he was the director of Admissions for upwards of 25 years. That same year he became the first-ever head coach of the college's men's basketball program. In addition to this and his golf coaching, he was also the coach of Durham College's hockey program. Because of this involvement in varsity sports,

Babcock knew him well.

"Combining a professional and first-class presence in whichever sport he coached, Gerry guided numerous teams throughout the years to team and individual successes."

Gerry was respected for his integrity and professionalism.

"I admired how he carried himself around the college, talking to students, and especially as the DC golf coach. When I took over the program from Ryan (Hughes) and Gerry, I wanted to emulate their coaching styles because it was done with Class, for the love of the game," says Mike Duggan, former head coach of Durham's golf program.

Having the chance to coach fine young golfers, like four-time OCAA Champion Ryan Hughes, meant a lot to Gerry, Babcock said. Their relationship also meant a lot to Hughes.

"He was a great friend, coach and mentor, but most of all he was an example of how incredible leaders touch everyone with their passion, dedication and selflessness," said Hughes, now club manager at Beach Grove Golf and Country Club in Windsor. "We have all lost an amazing man." ■■

A memorial sports bursary has been established in Gerry's memory. To donate, go to

<http://www.durhamcollege.ca/office-of-development/giving-to-dc/honorary-donations>



Former golf coach and Durham College administrator Gerry Pettit passed away in November, 2013.



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Former Champs Reunite

BY DANA RANCHOD

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AL FOURNIER

Durham College's 1985-'86 women's volleyball team and 1987-'88 men's soccer team recently tied for first place. Both teams were inducted into the Durham College Sports Hall of Fame at the end of 2013.

In 1986, the women's volleyball team won the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association (OCAA) Tier II game against Fleming College. The team moved on to win the OCAA Tier I game against previous champions, the Centennial Colts. They then accepted the challenge of competing in the CCAA National Championship in Burnaby, B.C., where they medalled.

Team member Leslie Seeley, a Sports Administration grad, now works as a business manager at General Motors. She still feels proud of their achievements and the successes of each one of her teammates.

"It was a great group of ladies that were together in our second year," she said. "We were there to win the Tier II and Tier I championships. We were then able to go to British Columbia to compete in the Canadian championship and to come back with a bronze."

The team celebrated their induction at the awards ceremony last November and later at a small house party. Through social media and email, Seeley is able to keep in touch with her teammates. She said she feels honoured to be remembered as a Sports Hall of Famer.

The captain of the men's soccer team, Charlie Brand, feels the same way about this award. He was initially surprised at the team being remembered for winning a bronze medal at the Canadian championships.

"It was a surprise — we just didn't expect anything like that. Once we found out about it, it was a real honour and we sort of looked back at what we accomplished. It was deserving," said the Business-Accounting grad.

Brand understands the importance of teamwork and leadership. He uses the skills he learned from playing soccer in his current role in information technology. He also believes in get-



The 1985-'86 women's volleyball team and 1987-'88 men's soccer team celebrated their victories at the 16th Durham College Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.

ting to know the people he's working with and still has a great connection with his teammates.

"It wasn't until after playing our third league game that we really started to gel. The coaches rearranged the line-up and positions based on our strengths, and we really began to play as a team. We had a mix of rookies and veterans," said Brand. "The guys on the team were great. There was no one that was above everyone else. We all knew our jobs, and it was just a really amazing experience."

Prior to the hall of fame induction ceremony, Brand hadn't seen his teammates in about 26 years. He was really looking forward to seeing them all grown up and healthy, and learning about how they had progressed and the families they had started. He appreciated the opportunity to remake that bond with his old teammates.

"The whole ceremony was amazing. Ken (Babcock – campus athletic director) and his group did a really excellent job. We looked at some old pictures, and at the same time we were there with the ladies' volleyball team, and there were also a few of the ladies who were friends with some of the guys. We were able to share this special moment together." ☺

Hitting One out of the Park

BY KATHERINE SHEPPARD

PHOTO COURTESY OF MELISSA SEMENIUK

Whether she is training as a physiotherapist assistant, spiking a volleyball, or hitting a home run, varsity athlete Melissa Semeniuk is destined to hit one out of the park. While that journey as an athlete hasn't always been easy, it has had its rewards.

The powerhouse dual athlete plays varsity softball and volleyball for the Durham Lords. With her tireless work ethic and dedication to athletic training, defeat is not an option. This natural-born leader has won several prestigious awards while playing for the Lords, including Athlete of the Year, Leadership Athlete of the Year, MVP for Women's Softball, and Ontario Colleges Athletic Association (OCAA) Top Batter of the Year. She also broke the OCAA record for most hits in a season, and was named National All Star third baseman.

While hard work can bring rewards, Semeniuk faced a setback when she tore her rotator cuff in 2013. Despite the injury she continued to play through the season. Semeniuk underwent major surgery in March 2013 to repair her rotator cuff, and that meant a long rehabilitation period. Determined to get back onto the court and field, Semeniuk credits her teammates for helping her through the process.

"You always face the risk of setbacks as an athlete, it's just part of the game. When you're injured, you need to have a positive outlook," says Semeniuk. "It's important to be optimistic about gaining your strength back again, and luckily I have great support from my family and teammates. My teammates are like family to me and I can turn to them for anything. They have really helped me through the healing process and pushed me to go outside of my comfort zone."

Semeniuk's personal experience with a serious injury has inspired her to help other athletes who have injuries like her-



Melissa Semeniuk is a multi-award winning athlete who holds the OCAA record for most hits in a season.

self. The 2013 Fitness and Health grad came back to Durham College this year for the Occupational Therapist Assistant/Physiotherapist Assistant program.

"I've always been interested in the rehabilitation process and have faced many injuries throughout my sports career," says Semeniuk. "I already know how much an injury can impact everyday life, so I think it would be really awesome to help others gain their strength back and progress back to their normal self." ☺

Durham's Boss of Baseball

BY KRISTEN SCHAFFRATH

DURHAM COLLEGE FILE PHOTO

World traveller? Check. Successful coach? Check. One of Canada's top 100 people in baseball? Definite check. Sam Dempster (also known as Coach D) has been the head coach of the Durham Lords baseball team since it began in 1992. The humble coach has been recognized multiple times by his peers and Major League Baseball (MLB) for his dedication to developing the sport around the world.

In 2012, a big year for Dempster, he was listed as one of the top 100 most influential Canadians in baseball. Also that year, the European Baseball Coaches' Association flew him to Prague to present him with a career achievement award. It was in honour of his work in growing baseball internationally. He was inducted into the Whitby Sports Hall of Fame

In 2010 and in 2007, Dempster was awarded with the Julio Puente Envoy International Award by the MLB. The award, similar to his career achievement award, recognized his efforts in expanding the sport internationally.

"We had a reception with the International Coaches Association at the American Baseball Coaches Convention in Orlando, Fla. There was a mix-up with our flight, so I didn't make it," says Dempster. "I remember walking around the convention the next day and people were congratulating me. I assumed they were talking about Durham's season. At our next Envoy meeting, they presented it to me. I realized that was what everyone was talking about, and it was pretty cool."

Dempster has many awards because of his involvement with baseball on local and international levels. Currently, he scouts for the Milwaukee Brewers and he has previously scouted for the New York Yankees. On top of that, he coaches the Great Britain national team, working with ex-pats as well as homegrown British athletes.

As if scouting and coaching multiple teams was not enough, every year Dempster travels with the MLB Envoy program for three months to the United Kingdom. He has also travelled to Germany, Holland, Sweden, Italy, Spain and Uganda, just to name a few. During this program, he teaches

the sport to players, coaches and clubs from all across the United Kingdom.

"The experience of travelling and working alone in the Envoy program has taught me to grow as a person," says the coach. "You really learn how to coach, because in some cases you are working with people without any background in baseball. You also have to teach them the baseball culture. But it's a lot of fun."

At home, Dempster has had a successful coaching career with the Lords, winning over 328 games in his 22 years with the college. Every year (except once) since 1995, he has guided the team to qualify for the Ontario championship finals. Also, the team

consistently either wins or comes in a close second at the league championship. Because of this, the Lords have been able to advance to the Canadian Intercollegiate Championship Tournament. This past season, the Lords took the silver medal at the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association finals.

"Sam is baseball at Durham College," says the college's athletic director Ken Babcock. "His knowledge, integrity, commitment to academics, and professionalism combined with a hall of fame resume of baseball success places Sam annually on the top 100 most influential Canadians in baseball. We are extremely fortunate to have Coach Dempster leading our varsity baseball program and teaching our student athletes."

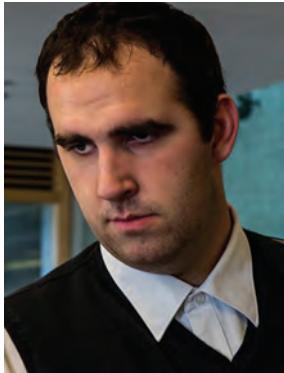
After over two decades coaching at the college, Dempster is still inspired by baseball, the people he works with and the athletes he coaches. With numerous achievements, tales of travel and game wins, the coach treasures the sport and makes the most of it.

"Any time you can get on the field with young people to throw, hit and catch a few baseballs, that's the excitement," says Dempster. "But the baseball itself pales in comparison to the people that you've met and you've worked with over the years. You remember the people, not necessarily whether you won or lost." 



Sam Dempster, coach of the Durham men's baseball team, says he's inspired by the athletes he works with. He has been named one of the top 100 most influential Canadians in baseball.

Work HARD PLAY Hard



BY DANIELLE LIMCACO

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RYAN COLPITTS

Just seconds before hitting a homerun, 11-year-old Special Olympian Tyler points at Ryan Colpitts and says, "This one's for you!" Running past each base with a smile, Tyler slides into home and immediately runs up to Colpitts and hugs him with excitement.

It's moments like these that remind fellow Special Olympian, Colpitts, to continue being involved with the organization.

When he's not at school, working hard in his third year of the Advertising program to maintain his excellent grades and continue with his internship at QMI Agency, you can find him fulfilling his duties as Athlete Ambassador for Special Olympics Ontario, all while also playing on their baseball and basketball teams.

Colpitts joined the Special Olympics in 2006 when his friend approached him to play on their baseball team, The Durham Falcons. Being diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome at a young age, he was allowed to join the team as third baseman.

However, he doesn't let a disability block his path to success. His exemplary qualities off the field have translated directly to the field with his baseball team. After successfully defeating seven teams in a row, the Durham Falcons have been invited to play at the National Games in Vancouver this sum-

mer. As the team prepares for Nationals, Colpitts continues to be an inspiration to his fellow athletes and peers.

"Working with Ryan has been a great learning experience for me. I admire the way that he is always helping out the other athletes to improve," says Ryan Sheridan, Team Ontario representative. "He is a very friendly, personable, and caring individual."

Colpitts has been committed to helping out in any way he can, whether it be in his fundraising efforts, volunteering at events, or even just being a supportive team member. In 2010, he was given the title of Athlete Ambassador.

As Athlete Ambassador, Colpitts has taken on the responsibility of representing his fellow athletes across Ontario. He's able to travel throughout the province speaking at events like the Durham Regional Police Service's Torch Run, as well as at elementary and high schools. He loves being able to talk to people about his experience with Special Olympics and how it has shaped him to become the person he is today. He hopes to become a role model and motivate others to pursue their passions.

"Anything is possible. Follow your dreams because you never know where you may end up," he says. ☺



Advertising grad
Giles Bridgnell uses
his skills to promote
his own company,
YorkDurham
Interlocking

Rock, Paper, Success

BY NICOLA LLEWELLYN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GILES BRIDGNELL

To make some extra cash while in Durham's Advertising program, Giles Bridgnell worked for True North Interlocking.

Bridgnell is now the founder and owner of YorkDurham Interlocking, where he takes his client's image of the perfect backyard and turns it into reality. To do that he applies the knowledge of colour and visual theories he acquired from the Advertising program, which he graduated from in 2010.

One of the biggest transformations he has created was at a house in Whitby, Ont., where he installed a pool-side patio and an oasis for lounging, excavating 1,000 square feet.

"It allowed me to interpret my own vision of what a particular client requested," says Bridgnell. "The challenge of taking someone's words and turning them into an image is what drove me."

The 26 year old not only uses his advertising background for his clients, but also to promote his business. He designs his own promotional ads, including posters and business cards.

In addition, Bridgnell has done freelance graphic design work for SkyWords Media and 101.9 Dawg FM, where he created artwork for promotional items such



Bridgnell uses his knowledge of colour and visual theories to transform a client's vision into reality.



as vehicle wraps, airplane banners, and business cards. Under his own company, GK Design and Photography, he gained clients in dentistry, flight-wear apparel, fitness gyms and retail outlets. Advertising is anything but cheap, so being able to provide your own is a huge plus for a small company, he has found.

"Being an ex-freelance graphic designer, I know the ins and outs of production, especially costs. Branding myself and producing all visuals for the company is very cost effective. Recognition grants you success," says Bridgnell.

YorkDurham Interlocking is currently in its third successful year of business. In the transition from the first to second year, the company doubled its income. He hopes to double his gross again this year.

As with all companies, there is always room for improvement. Bridgnell says he is confident in making YorkDurham Interlocking the "face of affordability, quality and reliability." Price and product are two of the main things a homeowner is on the lookout for. Information is another key to success. Knowing the products and how they work is ideal for any company when completing a job for someone else, he says. With only himself designing all the advertisements and one other employee helping with the installations, together they make quite the team.

After finishing a job, he is always the happiest when he sees the client's reaction to the final result.

"Many can say money is great, but having that artistic integrity, the final glance on a finished canvas says more than I ever could," he says. "Seeing my clients' faces and reactions to my hard work and efforts makes the job worthwhile." ☺



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