

The  
**GOLDEN THREAD**  
Le  
**FIL D'OR**



**The Terry Fox Humanitarian  
Award Program Newsletter**

**Le journal du Programme du  
Prix Humanitaire Terry Fox**



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Cover photo of Monique Begy (left) at the Terry Fox Run in Montreal, QC.

**Winter 2012**

## **Ditch the Workout, Join the Party!**

By Sarah DeBay

Zumba is a Latin-inspired dance-fitness program designed to get people in shape while partying to international music, it is fitness in disguise. Since the creation of the program in 2001 Zumba has become one of the world's largest and most successful dance-fitness classes, whose vision is to spread health and happiness.

My journey into the wonderful world of Zumba began three summers ago when I attended first Zumba class after being convinced by a friend that it would be the best workout that I ever had. I am not the most coordinated person in the world and I spent much of my first few classes tripping over my feet and struggling to follow beats and learn new steps, but despite my difficulties something kept me going back, class after class four times a week. Maybe it was the catchy Latin inspired music, the puddles of sweat we were dancing in, or maybe it was the crazy amount of Zumba love and energy that came with every class, but I was hooked.

However, when I returned to school the following semester I missed Zumba classes so much as there were no teachers in my area and I found it so much harder to stay motivated to get fit. The next summer I was back at Zumba classes in full force attending over six various types of Zumba classes every week. I decided there was no way I could go another school year without being able to attend these amazing classes. In September 2010, I became a licensed Zumba instructor and started teaching classes four to five times a week at university with my roommate.

Teaching Zumba is one of the most amazing opportunities I have experienced. I have always been a shy person who was not very outgoing or self confident and I never would have believed it if someone had told me that I would be able to stand up in front of a crowd of 100 plus people and shimmy and shake my way through an hour fitness class. Zumba has made me much more outgoing and much more confident in both my physical appearance as well as my personality. Not only do I love seeing a change in myself but I also get to see my class members become more confident and fit with every class they attend. It is an amazing experience to know you are helping change someone's life by making them happier and healthier.

Teaching classes at school has been a great experience but I was not stopping there! This July I took part in the 2011 Zumba Instructor Convention. I went by myself which before my new found Zumba confidence was something I never would have done and made many new friends and learned some great moves to take back to my class. I also challenged myself to

become an Aqua Zumba instructor. I am looking forward to a new semester to begin teaching these classes, I know it will be challenging but I can not wait for the new learning experience I will get from the new style of fitness class.

## **The Transition from High School to University**

by Alicia Silliker

On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011, I packed up all of my things and moved to a new province and city. I had lived in Prince Edward Island my entire life, and now I was finally getting the experience of living with 3000 people who I didn't know, in a city with over 50,000 people, compared to my hometown of just over 1,300.

My high school was also one of the smaller on the island, containing only 400 students from grades 7-12. I love growing up in a small town because it was easy to make friends and when we all went our separate ways, it was truly heartbreaking because we all made incredibly strong relationships with one another. This was one of the reasons why I chose St. Thomas University.

St. Thomas has a small campus, but is located in the city of Fredericton. The guaranteed biggest class size that you will have at STU is 60 (which is fantastic compared to bigger universities where you could over 300 in a first-year course). I truly feel like I can talk to the professors about anything, and I'm fully comfortable interacting in classes and giving my opinions.

Also, since the campus is small, it has been really easy for me to meet lots of new people (including students from places like Peru!). Welcome Week was filled with awesome ways to get to know people, and great exercises to help us feel more comfortable in our "new home".

Of course university isn't always fun and games. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication on your part- especially since you're paying for it!

In high school, I got by pretty easily without too many hours of studying and homework. The difference with university, is that concepts are harder to grasp, and in order to do well, at least 4-6 hours of studying and homework is needed a night. This was the biggest adjustment for me, especially when I began learning about things that I had no previous experience with. If you can handle the work, you'll be fine, you just have to put forth that effort and time.

Although living on my own has made me struggle and

work hard, it has also been an amazingly rewarding experience. When you live on your own, you're able to grow up and make a lot of your own decisions. During high school I relied a lot on my parents to wake me up in the mornings, and cook my meals, but now, I rely on my alarm clock and my will to get up!

Also after leaving home for a month, you really realize how much you miss being there. I really miss my close friends, and my comfy bed at home, but when you do get the chance to go home, you truly take full advantage of it and fill your time with the important things. It's funny how last August I couldn't wait to leave, but now I'm looking forward to going back!

In the end, university has made me a better person. I appreciate the little luxuries I had at home, as well as the alone time that I get back here on campus. You also appreciate those teachers in high school who pushed you hard, because they will be the reason why you are able to keep on top of the work at university.

Appreciate your times in high school, and look forward to your times in university. It is your time to figure out who you are and what you want to do!

"The quality of a university is measured more by the kind of student it turns out than the kind it takes in." - Robert J. Kibbee



## Life is a Chapter Book

By Katie LaForce

I truly feel that each of us is constantly entering new chapters of our lives. Each chapter is filled with new events, new people, the same people, new routines, old ways, good times, bad times, positive thinking, negative thinking; everything is constantly changing as our new chapters are being written. We have all opened and closed many chapters in our lives no matter how young or old we are. We never know what our next chapter is going to be about, we cannot pre-order a copy of our new chapter, we have to wait and live our new chapters. Each chapter is full of surprises, and sometimes dullness, whatever it entails one thing is always for certain, each chapter is different, each chapter is changing. Though we cannot control new and exciting things that come into our chapters, we can motivate ourselves to try and create change to better ourselves. While we have absolutely no control on the way our stories get written, we are never helpless. We always have the power to change; we can change our lives and other people's lives. We do not have the power to change the events which happen to us, and sometimes we will never understand why certain things happen to us or the ones we love but the one thing we can control is our mindset. A positive mindset can create the change that is needed in anybody's life. If you think about any change that has ever been created within our world it has all begun with a positive mindset by someone who had the courage to know we always have the power to change our own chapters and even the world. Each of the people we consider our heroes all originated from a positive mindset and urge for change, most of them went through a great deal of hardship before they made change but what is special about these people is the reason why we call them our heroes; they never gave up. Although none of us know exactly what our stories will bring or even how our chapters will end, we do know that we have endless possibilities. Many of our pages are still blank but awaiting the writing of our new chapters, these chapters have the greatest potential of all because they are our future. Our future is never set in stone, and like our chapters has the potential to change. Like each of our heroes and their own chapters, we should never give up hope and always remember our potential to create change. Whatever chapter you may be living now, make the best of it, fill each page with whatever it is you want to be read.

## Light in the Dark

By Rowena Cacapit

When you read the title of this article you'll probably think to yourself, "Gee how original..." But when I think of any other way to say it, nothing better comes up. Because it's that simple. It's a light in the dark. Or rather, *they're* a light in the dark. "*They*," are the group of youths I work with in a dance program that offers a healthy alternative to teens. I remember walking into this thinking of how many things I would teach them, what lessons to go over and what methods to use. I wanted to teach them everything I know, but it turns out they were the ones who ended up teaching me. Now I always say, "A student can always teach and a teacher can always learn." And that's what these kids have done for me and still continue to do for me. If you met these kids, you would truly know how amazing they are. They're determined, they're persevering, they're strong, they're wise, they're caring, they're and so much more in so many different ways!

During the course of this program throughout the years I've learned all of their stories and heard about all of the things that they have had to go through and I'm pretty sure that there's a lot more that they keep inside. And yet I see their beautiful faces everyday, laughing and smiling and sometimes crying together. Whatever they go through, they're there for each other... we're there for each other. We've become this closely bonded family who started out as just a group of people who just

wanted to learn some new moves or join a new club and we've come so far. I'm sure many of you have referred to certain people as a second family before and this is exactly what these kids are to me. They tell me that they look up to me or that they've learned so much from me but what they should know is that I look up to them and that I've learned so much from them.

Everyone has their different set of problems and everyone has those moments where they just want to break down and cry. We can be surrounded by so much darkness that sometimes we forget about the light that's in our lives. These kids have helped me hold on to that and whenever you get to work with kids, youths or people in general I'd encourage you to keep an open mind to them. I don't mean to get all sappy or anything I just thought it might be important to establish and build families outside of those just in our house and to learn from them. No one's ever a master, we're always students and while we are leaders we must also follow. You just might find something truly special.

The picture attached is a great moment that was captured. The crew got invited to perform for a book launch in downtown and on our way back we found a cool and interesting spot to relax and play around at and I ended up taking pictures of all the random things they did. This particular one is a picture that not only matches the whole "reach for the light" theme but it could also have many other different meanings that reflected the lives of these kids, myself and many other people. That and I thought it was a pretty awesome picture.



## L'Assemblée Générale 2010 de la Fédération Internationale des étudiants en médecine

Par Julie Hébert

**IFMSA** : *International Federation of Medical Students' Associations*

**SCORA** : *Standing Committee on Reproductive Health, including AIDS*

Il y a un an, lors de l'Assemblée Générale 2010 de la Fédération Internationale des étudiants en médecine (IFMSA) à Montréal, j'ai vu la présentation vidéo de ce qui promettait être une assemblée d'août 2011 incroyable à Copenhague. J'ai rêvé de cette rencontre de centaines d'étudiants en médecine passionnés par la santé mondiale et à l'arrivée des délégués, tout le monde était bouillant de commencer, les idées se bousculaient, les conversations s'enchaînaient. Retrouver des amis longue distance, se raconter des souvenirs, sentir l'énergie de dizaines d'étudiants ayant les mêmes passions que vous, voilà en quoi a consisté le début du fameux *August Meeting*.

Les réunions SCORA, ont été pour moi la meilleure partie de mon expérience de l'Assemblée Générale de IFMSA. En tant que coordonnatrice nationale du comité de santé sexuelle et reproductive (SCORA) pour la division québécoise de IFMSA (IFMSA-Québec), ils étaient la principale raison de ma présence à cette rencontre internationale. Les sujets présentés et discutés au cours des différentes sessions m'ont ouvert les yeux sur des perspectives et des réalités que j'avais jusque-là très peu explorées. Je pense entre autres à l'atelier sur le trafic humain. La présentation d'un

étudiant grec, Dimitris, a été donnée en session conjointe avec les membres du comité *Droits humains & Paix*. Suite à l'introduction sur le thème, des scénarios variés ont été discutés en petits groupes et des pistes de solutions qui peuvent être empruntées par les futurs médecins ont été évoquées. Les histoires, inspirées de faits vécus étaient désolantes lorsqu'on pense à la situation de certains de ces personnes qui sont déportées, spécialement les femmes qui sont volées à leur vie pour le trafic sexuel.

L'une des séances qui m'a aussi particulièrement bouleversée a été la présentation par des déléguées norvégiennes par un film nommé *Gender matters*. Le vidéo sur le thème était incroyablement touchant. Elle soulignait les inégalités flagrantes liées au genre, telle que le fait que les femmes font 2/3 du travail mondial, mais ne reçoivent pourtant que 10% des revenus et ne possèdent que 1% de la propriété privée. C'est toutefois la partie sur les inégalités vis-à-vis les personnes LGBTQI (Lesbiennes-Gais-Bisexuels-Transsexuels-Queer-Intersex) qui fut la plus bouleversante et choquante. Il donnait l'exemple d'une jeune fille qui avait quitté son mari et s'était fait à battre presque à mort en raison de son homosexualité affichée. Ou encore, le cas des deux adolescents homosexuels qui se sont fait exécutés en Iran en 2005 à l'âge de 18 ans. Le film soulevait de grandes passions et il était difficile de ne pas baisser les bras pour une seconde, devant l'immensité de la lutte que nous avons à continuer. Je crois qu'il faut une certaine humilité pour travailler au sein de IFMSA ou de tout autre organisation qui a la même vision, car la tâche à accomplir est immense, les inégalités à combattre si nombreuses.

Pendant l'après-midi des présentations de projets, *IlluminAIDS* (projet contre la discrimination des personnes vivant avec le VIH/Sida) et *Sexperience* (projet d'éducation par les pairs sur la santé sexuelle) ont pu aller chercher de nombreux intéressés dans les comités de santé reproductive (SCORA) de d'autres pays, mais aussi d'autres comités, tel que celui de droits humains & paix (SCORP) ou de l'éducation médicale (SCOME). Notre emplacement était à côté du kiosque de « La Journée de la Femme » du Liban, et je compte rapporter les éléments que j'ai pu apprendre d'eux afin d'implanter des célébrations importantes pour cette journée au Québec cette année. J'espère sincèrement que les projets de lutte contre la discrimination des personnes vivant avec le VIH/SIDA trouvera sa place dans d'autres pays et qu'on parviendra à des résultats concrets au cours de la prochaine



SCORA Group

année de même qu'à davantage de partenariats avec d'autres projets tel que le *Red Party* fait en Australie, pour amasser de l'argent pour le VIH/Sida!

De manière générale, les sessions SCORA étaient animées par des activités énergisantes et stimulantes. S'impliquer au niveau local et national m'a permis de comprendre davantage les bases des rouages de l'organisation de la *Fédération Internationale des étudiants en médecine* (IFMSA), mais les assemblées générales sont très enrichissantes du point de vue des comités de projets. Cela me rappelle pourquoi je suis en médecine et que dans le monde, il y a partout des étudiants qui veulent faire le part pour voir avancer les choses. Les attentes ont été atteintes: l'Assemblée Générale 2011 a été une source de motivation, de rencontres et d'énergie pour l'année à venir.

Lors de son discours, le tout premier président de IFMSA fût, quant à lui, touchant de par son émotion de voir les résultats de ce qu'il a créé, il y a maintenant 60 ans. Je ne doute pas qu'un tel anniversaire doit être touchant pour l'un des créateurs étant donné le nombre élevé de pays et d'étudiants maintenant impliqués dans l'organisation. Espérons que ce nombre reste croissant et que nous pourrons fêter les 100 ans de la Fédération regroupant encore davantage d'étudiants en médecine qui s'impliquent!

*"Pour qu'être médecin ne soit pas qu'un titre, mais aussi un engagement social."* – IFMSA-Québec



Délégation Québec Canada

## Snowflakes

By Stephanie Foote

Snowflakes are floating down carelessly from above,

Settling onto the ground and turning the sidewalks white

Like a snow globe that has just been shaken.

Christmas carols can be heard from afar

As a variety of coloured lights are strung

Along the roofs of the neighbourhood,

Tangled amongst the trees,

And dangling across the balconies.

Brightly lit Christmas trees can be seen in many windows,

Surrounded by many wrapped presents

Impatiently awaiting Christmas morning.

I stand at my window with a cup of hot chocolate,

Welcoming the warmth of my coffee cup to warm my cold hands.

I take a sip, watching a couple walk down the sidewalk

Bundled up in toques, mittens, and heavy, winter parkas,

Laughing and smiling, enjoying the peaceful snowfall.

The laughter quickly turns into squeals of excitement

As they suddenly engage in a playful snowball fight.

I smile and let out a private chuckle,

Thankful that true love like that still exists,

And I hope that everyone out there

Has a joy-filled Christmas.

## What it takes to be BC's Coach of the Year

By Mark Ballon

Chris Fuoco re-created the wrestling team in John Oliver Secondary in 2003 with the intention that at-risk youth from the Vancouver East-side could join to be involved and stay out of trouble. He did not mind the development of the sport, as much as, the development and success of the lives of these children. He cared less what medal his athletes received, whether it be a gold medal or last place, just as long as they learn and grow from their experience.

Chris Fuoco started the John Oliver Wrestling program with no funding and nowhere to practice, yet alone wrestling mats to practice. He worked endlessly, calling businesses and organizations to donate funds to buy wrestling mats, only to have old-worn-out mats be donated to his cause. As for a place to practice, he constantly tried to reserve gym space, but being new to the school and its faculty, his seniority was equivalent to his voice. After a long while, he figured that his proposals for gym space would never see the light, so he pushed for practicing in the cafeteria. It was not an ideal place to practice, but it got the program started (every year, the practice space would change; cafeteria, auditorium foyer, boys changing room, and finally the gym [after 4 years]).

His contribution to the sport of wrestling is immeasurable. He is continuously devoting time and resources to make wrestling available to anyone in any social class. Chris organizes interactive wrestling demonstrations for people with disabilities, low-income

families and high-class families. He coordinates and helps the B.C. Wrestling Association with their wrestling promotion as well.

In the 7 years of his coaching, he saw the team grow and accomplish what those said they could not. The first year was a learning experience for Chris and the team. He did not expect more than to have the athletes bond and mature. The following years got a lot better with the wrestling team working harder than ever, both on the wrestling mat and in classrooms. Athletes soon emerged from under the radar and began competing at their full potential. On the 4<sup>th</sup> year, one athlete made it through cities to compete in the B.C. Provincial tournament. On the 5<sup>th</sup> year, one athlete placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the B.C. Provincial tournament, sending him to the national tournament in Oshwa, Ontario. The 6<sup>th</sup> year, three athletes were bronze medalists, sending two to the national tournament in Saskatoon with one winning the tournament. The 7<sup>th</sup> year, seven athletes competed in the Provincial tournament, with three placing: one champion, one bronze and one in sixth. That year, he sent six athletes to the national tournament in Burnaby, B.C. with all six placing: one champion, three silver, one fifth and one sixth. It is clear that Chris Fuoco works hard to develop the team as much as developing the lives of the athletes. As a result of their involvement with the wrestling team, athletes learned the meaning of hard work. They excelled in competitions, but most importantly in the classroom environment.

Chris Fuoco is always seeking new learning environments. He is constantly attending British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) seminars to gain new knowledge of how to improve personal life and the lives of others. He then applies the knowledge he acquires to his Sunsational Summer Day Camp program, which he created in 2003, as well as his wrestling team.



Chris is not shy to take on new a challenge, which is why he took on the role of Zone Representative of the Vancouver-North Shore in high school wrestling. With this big responsibility, he had to attend a number of B.C. Wrestling meetings, map out the wrestling schedule for the year and coach the B.C. Summer Games Wrestling Team. To qualify as a Zone Representative, you must be a level 2 certified coach.

In school, during wrestling and at work, Chris is seen as a leader. His co-workers adore him and athletes admire him. He offers his time equally as best he can: giving more attention to those deserving. He does not criticize the level of ability that one may possess, nor does he judge what a person is capable of. In actuality, he

encourages athletes of all levels of abilities to be a part of the team. In the past, Chris has welcomed athletes with learning disabilities and vision impairment. His compassion is what drives him to better the lives of those around him.

The Vancouver East-Side is notorious as Vancouver's sector of low-income families, so money was a big issue. The majority of wrestling tournaments are out of town: Kelowna, Port Alberni, Burnaby, Kamloops and Chilliwack. Paying for tournament fees and additional costs (transportation, food, gear and a place to stay) would be very difficult for the athletes. Chris spent countless hours of his personal and family time applying for grants, bursaries and running fundraisers to give athletes the opportunity to compete without financial stressors.

On the wrestling mat, Chris pours his knowledge of the sport into his athletes. He does this progressively depending on the skill level and competency of each individual; building a foundation comprised of safety and rules then the structure which is technique and finally the cosmetics which is the hard work that it takes to become a champion. The skill level and competency of athletes is a wide range in the John Oliver Wrestling team from learning disabilities to vision impairments to straight A students. Chris treats everyone fairly and offers more of his time to those who deserve it.

The amount of voluntary work Chris undertakes is an indication of his humanitarian behaviour, which is why he is an alumni of the Terry Fox Humanitarian Award. The award itself reads: "In recognition of having demonstrated the highest ideals and qualities of citizenship and humanitarian service while in pursuit of excellence in academic, amateur sport, fitness, health and voluntary community service. In so doing has reflected those ideals of courage, humanitarianism, service and compassion, which Terry Fox embodied." As a recipient of this prestigious award, it is no wonder why Chris has helped athletes acquire scholarships of their own. In the past 3 years, he had helped 5 athletes excel to their full potential. He assisted Mark Ballon, PardeepRekhi, Rowena Cacapit, Sanjay Rekhi and Cean Bod-oy acquire various scholarships, which inspired them to strive at their full potential.

What has really inspired me to nominate Chris Fuoco as the BC coach of the year is that he had always believed in me. From the first time I met him to the our present relationship, Chris was and is always there as my mentor, my friend, my employer, my coach, and most importantly, the father I never had.

## **Easter Seals Camp**

By Sarah Cormier

This summer was my second summer working at Easter Seals Camp Woodeden. It was very different than last summer but only in a good way. It is the best job I have ever had and I would suggest to anyone to work at a summer camp. What made this camp so special was that it is a camp for kids with physical disabilities. These kids are amazing and they are what made the experience so great. They are so amazing because of their personalities and the fact that they do not let their disability rule who they are. The whole camp is great because it is geared towards the kids doing everything to the best of their ability. They do anything from Pottery and Arts & Crafts to the High Ropes Course. I was born missing my left leg below the knee as well as parts of my fingers. I have never let my disability get the best of me; I always go above and beyond with proving what I can do. However, there can be days when I feel like my disability might get the best of me. The kids that I have met make me realize that I should not let my disability get the best of me. I learned that as a camper and that lesson carried on to when I became a counselor.

Not only are the kids great but the staff are also great. I have never met so many great people in my life. The staff that I have met at camp have become some of my closest friends and I am proud to know them. They work at the camp for the children and only the children. These great people are completely selfless. They make me want to be a better person and my life is better now that I know them. Working at Camp Woodeden has given me the opportunity to meet these people and make some of the best memories of my life.



## One Unforgettable Experience

By Hayley Pipher

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has" – Margaret Mead

This past summer I had the incredible opportunity to travel to Ecuador with the Free the Children organization. I was part of a group of twenty-one students across Canada that assisted in building three schools. Although we may have only spent two and a half weeks setting stones on walls or hunched over digging an eight-foot trench, the community taught us so many unique lessons that will forever be embedded deep within each of us.

Every day was a humbling experience. We participated in events ranging from school building to working alongside an alternative income project with an assiduous women's group, to attempting to buy a family meal in a crowded market for a measly \$0.69. Throughout our trip we were challenged with visceral issues which countless people face every single day. As a result, this journey helped me realize that I don't need an infinite amount of fame or fortune to really make an impact in someone's life.

I was incredibly inspired by the children that we met throughout our trip. From friendly waves on the bus to a little girl named Jessica who sat on my lap during a wedding which we were kindly invited to, their friendly giggles and smiles were always contagious. One of my

favourite parts of our trip was leading activities with them and seeing how open-minded and excited they were to learn any new game. They were always so welcoming and appreciated every last-stitch effort we made during the school building. These children will certainly inspire me throughout my International Development studies, especially when notebooks and exam papers can seem to narrow a student's outlook.

Throughout this trip, I also discovered many major parallels with an experience that I partook in 2010 when I traveled to Kenya with the same organization. Time and time again it's equally inspiring yet humbling seeing the strengths that communities possess. Incredible resiliency takes place across the world. One encounter I witnessed of this was in Ecuador when I was helping build the school. I glanced over to the road and noticed quite a public scene taking place. A father, who was incredibly drunk, was being helped and directed by both his wife and child back to their home. In the midst of all this, he decided to slap his wife across the face in the open street. I felt defeated. During this trip, I witnessed how hard-working women are in these communities. Many of them get up before dawn and fall asleep after dusk most often without any validation. As heart wrenching as this encounter was for me to see, I realized that no matter what obstacle I may be facing in my comfortable life at UBC, someone is always facing a much more difficult circumstance. This event made me ponder about the women in Kenya who walk miles per day to fetch water for their families, oftentimes skipping an education as a result. However, their upbeat and resilient spirits were always incredibly admirable and inspiring.



During our travels in Ecuador, I also realized the difficulties that arise when trying to create a self-sustainable project. Instead of barging into these communities with a "hand-out" approach, I have learned that in order to truly make an impact, I must first see community members as equals and never put myself on a pedestal. I must not ever forget that these community members truly can teach us far more than we can ever give them.

This trip has taught me so many lessons which words cannot always do justice to. I have learned the power in women, the courage in resiliency and the inspiration and wisdom that children teach us. Most importantly though, I have realized that any individual can truly make an influence in society.

Me with one of the school girls, Jessica.

## I Wish

By Viktor Nnabuihe

*“The most important thing in the Olympic games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not to triumph but the struggle.” – Olympic Creed.*

Struggle is a word that people do not entirely comprehend even though everyone, no matter his or her status in life, has struggled through soul defining obstacles. Some have challenged their barriers more than others, although no struggle is less valid. There are those that hide their misfortune within their black box to keep up a façade of happiness in order to survive another day: Their black box contains situations and obstacles that other people cannot comprehend, due to the different limitations that sculpt each and every life. God made us in the image of himself, but we are not perfect; no one is. Life is not easy, and it is not meant to be. It is meant to be lived and experienced to the fullest. Life is meant to be cherished within relationships, not from wealth, items, or lust but through the experiences we gain from one another. A person is only as strong as the greatest obstacle he or she has been challenged with.

When I try to figure out what my life is, or what my life is going to become, I draw a blank. I cannot entirely figure out life by planning what I want to do in the future, because life is full of curveballs and you never know what is going to happen next. All I can do is accept and experience it. People tend to create a subconscious safety barrier, restricting themselves from the experiences that define their life. Is life not meant to be lived? Living a life in fear is not living at all.

I always reiterate the saying, “You only live once.” I have come to realize that those are only words to an extent: an extent to which we have the power to control. We do only live once, but as humans we want to survive. We are hesitant to challenge our world by challenging our everyday niche because it gets us through. Are we just supposed to get through? I have noticed the restrictions that have made and sculpted me into who I am today. When did you last appreciate

your life?

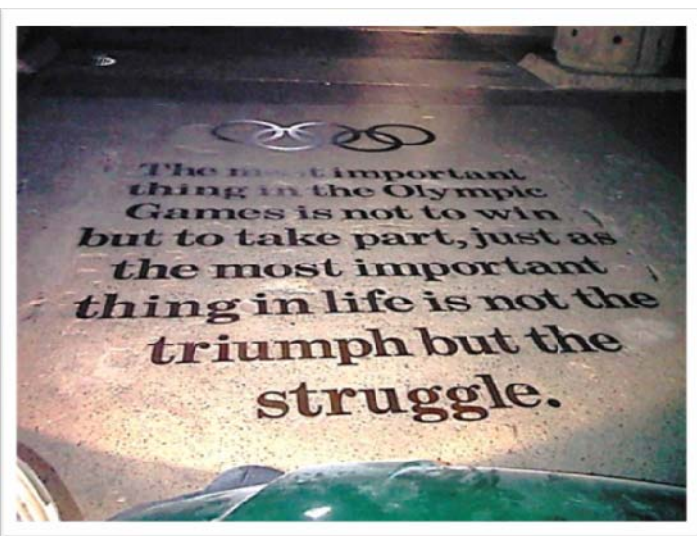
People often struggle to do the simplest things in life, which is just to live; to survive, to appreciate, to achieve a life of happiness and freedom. But when will you know that you lived a great life? Only you can define the changes in your life whether they are for the better or for the worse. When you understand yourself through challenges and triumphs, you can attain the unattainable to the best of your ability. As my father always said “A man’s best is never his best. There is always room for greatness”.

As a student I wonder why I have all of these pressures and obstacles in my life. I know that I am not the only one who feels alone, I am not a child that bears nothing, I am not worthless, because for each breath I take I define my soul, I define my life, and I define my perseverance. We can choose to sit on the sidelines of life and follow the decaying purity of life, or we can choose to take that leap of faith into the world and begin to live. We may not know what is going to happen next, but it is in that step that we begin to experience life. We are not guaranteed to succeed, but we are guaranteed to learn and understand more about ourselves.

There are people that have taken that leap of faith and have made something out of their lives, experiencing what living really is. Terry Fox made an entire country proud to be Canadian. Martin Luther King Jr. changed the way lives are valued and gave a voice to equal rights. There are people who have changed the world by making a difference in their community, their home, or even a child’s life, by providing hope—people like you and I. I wish I knew the answer to life; everyone does. I wish I could comfort and bring back purpose to the people I see at the hospital who have just lost someone. I wish I could instill confidence in the young teenagers that believe they are alone, that believe they are their own barrier, that believe they hold everyone back. I wish I could bring back the meaning of love to a child who lost his or her parents, who lost the only sanctuary he or she had in life, who feels their life is lost, in asking “Why me?” I wish I could ensure unity among people that is essential in this world. I wish I could just be myself. Who says I cannot do all of these things? What I do know is that I can try – try to bring a smile

to the person who has lost someone, the person who is scared, and the child who is lost. That is where I can start; that I know I can do.

I just have to start, and with that smile, there is a chance of hope in their eyes. I will know that somewhere along my journey I made an imprint on that person's life. My goal is not to be recognized, it is not to be acclaimed, it is to influence change in a heart or two. Everyone has the potential to be great no matter how devastating or confusing their life is. There is always a way. There is comfort knowing that there are others experiencing the same trauma, the same triumphs, and the same challenges. There is a better day to come, and there is unity after struggle. Take part in life, experience it for yourself not others. Have no regrets. Struggle through the hard times, and remember that everything happens for a reason. If you can look at yourself in the mirror and accept the imperfections of the world that have influenced change, within your soul, then that is your life experience, through struggle



***"How do you want to be remembered?"***  
- Thom Elniski.

## **Where We Come From**

By Brandon Gillespie

Many people often forget their beginnings, that is to say, that many people lose sight of where they have come from. Regardless of our accomplishments we need to reflect upon our beginnings, what has constituted our upbringing, who has assisted in shaping us, and most importantly what factors have

ultimately determined who we are as human beings.

If you look at the most influential people in our society it always clear which people have accepted their beginnings. A great example is Canada's former Chief of the Defense Staff General Rick Hillier. Hillier will be the first to tell you that he is from a very small community in Newfoundland and Labrador. He faced the trials and tribulations of small town life as well as the difficulties of living in a somewhat isolated and arguably forgotten area. Even with all of his successes, he embraces his humble beginnings and is more than willing to credit much of them to where he came from, the people he came in contact with, and the lifestyle that helped shape him.

If we forget our beginnings, we ultimately lose sight of who we are. As human beings we are conditioned by our life experiences. I would even argue that we *are* what we have experienced. As a young child I frequented hospitals on an almost biweekly basis in order to receive medical help for my hearing disability. I traveled quite a lot and was forced to mature very quickly. I had undergone twelve operations by the age of 15 and I personally think that each experience helped me to grow and appreciate my situation, and the hardships that others faced a great deal more.

I try to influence the youth that I instruct in the cadet program that reflecting on their beginnings is just as important to being successful as hard work and perseverance. I try to encourage them to reflect on their biggest influences. What has caused them to determine their life path? Who was/is their biggest influence? What memories do they have that have shaped their ideologies? Most importantly I tell them that it is important to take these thoughts and adapt them to their ever-changing life.

I consciously make an effort to reflect upon the things that have shaped my life on a daily basis. I would encourage everyone to do this. It is a practice that allows for greater appreciation of who you are and why you are just as important as everyone else in this world.