

A Message from School Council

by: Brenda Stokes Verworn

Supporting students and promoting school spirit is the primary focus of Thorold Secondary School Council. How do students soar like eagles and achieve their dreams? They do when teachers inspire, instruct and believe in them and when parents encourage, mentor and support them. TSS School Council is helping to accomplish this objective in tangible ways.

School Council provides a forum for parents and community members to contribute to improving student achievement and school performance. The involvement of parents enhances the lives of students at their local schools and it keeps parents informed on the issues and challenges facing students today. The School Council meetings provide a venue for administration and teaching staff to communicate with families.

Each year the school council meets up to 6 times per year to be consulted about upcoming educational events and activities offered at TSS and to organize such events as the Honour Roll Banquet and the Thorold Christmas Arts and Craft Show. The Honour Roll Banquet was established by School Council to recognize the academic excellence of students in each grade level. A family style Italian dinner is held at Club Capri and students are presented with certificates acknowledging that their grade level average over 8 credits each year is 80% or better.

Likewise the proceeds raised from the annual raffle hosted by School Council each year at the TSS Arts and Craft Show are directed toward the presentation of graduation scholarships for outstanding TSS students who have contributed significantly to the school to assist

them in their post secondary career plans. Other monies raised have been used toward the purchase of technology equipment and the school mascot "Ormond." These are just a few examples of how TSS is fostering a shared ownership with parents in the overall educational process and specifically their own child's high school experience.

It is often a big myth in our education system that parents feel they do not need to be involved with students at the high school level. "Many parents mistakenly take a peripheral bystander role during a crucial time in their child's life," said school council member Charles Verworn. "During this critical 4-5 year period students will make course selections that determine their future careers, be offered optional extra-curricular leadership opportunities and forge friendships that will last a lifetime, so we as parents need to stay informed and be involved in these significant decision-making years." Those same sentiments were voiced by Janet McArthur who said, "At first I thought that once my children got to high school it was expected that parents would be "hands off," as was the case when I was in high school. However, I soon learned that parental input was encouraged and actually put to good use at TSS." Another parent Pamela Easson admits she was initially reluctant to join school council, fearing she may not have the necessary time to commit, but has discovered she has forged friendships with other parents who share a common mandate. "I have found a common thread of real interest among the other parents in our youth and in their education, and the social aspects are wonderful too. Working to-

gether the results are phenomenal."

School council members support activities in high school that provide a wonderful opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate leadership skills. "I am committed to the future of our TSS youth and so I participate actively to show students they are important to us and to demonstrate to them you CAN make a difference by being involved," said parent member Sandra Cusick-Duerden. Likewise Kim Shook, who played an active role in the recent two day Arts and Crafts Sale and who was one of several TSS school council members who attended the District School Board of Niagara's Parent Involvement Committee Conference, said "I joined to be more involved with my children's education and I am committed to being involved because it is fun and interesting."

Parents have a vital role in partnering with school staff and administration, especially at the high school level. As current council member Eric Nixon so aptly said, "to influence requires involvement!" There is no doubt that including parents as educational partners creates a rich school environment that fosters positive student self-esteem and academic success. As School Council Chair I extend a warm welcome to all parents to attend our next scheduled Council meeting on Monday February 7th at 7:00 at the School.

