

**A great pleasure in life is doing what  
people say you cannot do.**

**Enjoy this new found  
opportunity**



**Congratulations  
to the  
Wild Rose School Division's  
2017 Retirees**



## Julie Andrew

Loving retirement! My husband, Dwayne, and I both retired at the end of 2016. We've really been enjoying our time together. There are so many things that we enjoy doing and we now have more time to do just that.

Living on an acreage there always seems to be little jobs to do and we love gardening and undertaking improvement projects.

We also love travelling and this winter we spent some time in Barbados and recently returned from a "bucket list" trip to Ireland. We have many more travel plans in the works. Other activities we enjoy include golfing, riding our motorcycles, fishing and hiking. Having more time to spend with our families has been great as well.

I really enjoyed my 18 years with WRSD. It was a great opportunity to be able to work with so many great people. Thank you to everyone and Dwayne and I wish you much health and happiness in the years to come.



## **Marielle Battersby**

Marielle moved to Drayton Valley in 1986 from Beaumont. She is a mother to three wonderful children and Grandmother to four soon to be five Grandchildren. Prior to moving to Drayton Valley, she was a house mom for 14 years. She began working for Wild Rose School Division in 1994 at Aurora Elementary School as a teaching assistant in the kindergarten classroom. Marielle has since been working as a teaching assistant at Aurora for the past 23 years. During this time, she has worked in every classroom and with every grade within the school.

In 2006 under the supervision of the Principal, she began to coordinate and run the French option at Aurora. During her 11 years, leading the French option close to half of the students in the school enrolled in French each and every year. Being born in Quebec, this was a great way for her to relive and discuss her roots with the students and she always gave each student a taste of the French culture.

Her involvement in the school did not stop there. Over the years Marielle has been involved in the school reading expedition program, coordinating and running the Volunteer Tea and Talent Show, decorating the gym for Christmas concerts, organizing the house-league tickets, organizing the annual speech competition, and making sure all staff are recognized at the school for their years of service through our milestone booklets.

Marielle's motivation to come to work at Aurora every day has always been the children and seeing the smiles on their faces, their eagerness to learn, and the progress that each and every student makes from year to year. The "Aurora Family" atmosphere and the staff have kept her coming back year after year. Marielle considers herself extremely fortunate to have been in a career where she was able to work with such amazing students, staffs, and families.

The things that Marielle looks forward to in retirement include fishing, scrapbooking and spending quality time with her family. Marielle will be greatly missed by the entire Aurora School Community. Good luck in retirement Marielle, you deserve it!



# Susan Campbell

I was born and raised in Vancouver with two siblings, a sister and brother. I moved to England in my 20's to live for 14 years and completed my College education with a Business Diploma which included Law, Economics,

Management, Accounting and Personnel. I started my career as a Personal Assistant to the Executive Director at the Chester Grosvenor Hotel in Chester, England until I became a mother of 2 beautiful daughters. I moved back to Vancouver and continued my career as Personal Assistant to the Executive Director of Roland Canada Music and later the Executive Director at Hughes Aircraft.



After moving to Rocky Mountain House 23 years ago. I started with Will Sinclair High School for a very short time and was then hired by the Division Office. I worked at the WRSD District Office for the last 22 years in various positions, my last being the Student Information Systems Coordinator for Wild Rose. This included being responsible for all the student information and records for reporting to Alberta Education for student record keeping and funding purposes.

During my last 23 years in RMH, I have also volunteered for Victim Services for 10 years and taught night school for adults for several years for the Rocky Learning Council. I found I had a passion for helping people and being there in any small way for someone in need.

The raising of my 2 beautiful daughters, seeing them educated and living their lives successfully, has been the focus of my life. I was lucky enough to meet and marry a wonderful man 9 years ago, Hal Campbell. Along with my 2 daughters, son-in-law and 2-year-old Granddaughter, I gained 2 more step daughters and a step son, their partners and 8 more grandchildren. I truly am blessed with 9 beautiful Grandchildren who of course are so smart, beautiful and handsome.

I thank Wild Rose School Division for allowing me to be an important part of their team for so many years. The last 22 years has been full of learning opportunities, challenges, some laughter, great colleagues and much personal stretching and growing.

# Karen Denham

I grew up on a dairy farm in James River, Alberta. I was the middle child in a family of four girls, but we were all great farmers. I attended Caroline School from grades 1-12. After graduating, I attended Red Deer College for two years and transferred to the University Of Calgary where I completed my degree in Education in 1984.



I subbed for the first six months out of University, and then landed my first full-time job as a teacher in the fall. Guess where? In Caroline - where I continued to teach for 33 years, until my retirement in February. My first job was half-time in the Resource Room and half-time Language Arts. Wouldn't you know it- my first year in the classroom and they decided to do a Division-wide review of the Resource Room programs. I spent hours trying to get things ready so I could impress the evaluators, and it must have worked as I remained at that school for the next 33 years.

In 1986 I married Daryl and we built our house on the farm. This is the year I started teaching grade one and remained in that position until 1994 when Stefanie was born. I decided not to take any time off and continued to be a full-time teacher. However, I soon found that working full-time and being a Mom, wife and weekend farmer was too much. So in 1997, I went to work half-time as the grade 1-6 art teacher. Since I loved crafts and lots of glitter, I really enjoyed this job.

From 1998 until February 2017, I worked half-time. I even went back full-time a few years along the way. I taught a variety of combined classes, as well as straight grades anywhere from grades 1-3. I enjoyed the new challenges each year and working with numerous half-time grade partners that were as passionate as I was about inspiring children and making their learning experience a memorable one. I would like to thank all of the individuals that have supported me throughout my career: Wild Rose School Division, my colleagues, my students and their parents; but most of all my husband, daughter, and my family for their unconditional support.

I look forward to spending more time with my family, travelling, doing crafts (with LOTS of glitter) and some volunteer work. Throughout my career, I have made many memories that I would love to share. However, I will instead share the philosophy that I have always held regarding the education of my students: "The best teacher lodges an intent not in the mind but in the heart."

## Brenda Geary-Dusterhoft

I graduated from Northwest Nazarene University in 1981 and started my teaching career in Anchorage, Alaska that autumn. After four years of teaching kindergarten in a one-room school building, I was looking for a change and volunteered for a short term mission of teaching in Recife, Brazil.

Returning from Brazil, I decided to settle back in Canada. I signed my contract to start teaching in Drayton Valley in 1987, 30 years ago! Drayton was still part of the County of Parkland at that time. The “plan” was to teach in Drayton Valley for the required two years until I received a full-time teaching contract and then to transfer into Stony Plain/Spruce Grove. But, as so often happens with our well-laid plans, things change. Drayton Valley left the County of Parkland and a few years later became Wild Rose School Division. I stayed in D.V. and taught at Eldorado. When “the new school” was built I transferred to Aurora and taught Grade One and Grade Two there ever since.



During this time, I completed my Master of Education Degree from the University of Portland. Throughout my career, I have been passionate about assisting children as they learn to read. Over the years, I have spoken at conferences around Alberta for the International Reading Association, English Language Arts Council of ATA, and Speech and Language Development conferences.

I have been blessed with a career that still warms me, as I meet students I have taught and see how they have grown. As with any good lesson plan...you plan then you deliver the lesson but need to be flexible to let it unfold to see where it takes you. So, although life does not always go according to our “plans”, I am grateful for my wonderful, fulfilling calling of teaching and learning.

I know that as I close one area of my life there are other “plans” that await me.



## **Gina (Grazyna) Gilbertson**

Gina was very shy and reserved (and spoke very broken English) when she first started working. As the years progressed, so did her confidence and English. She is very dedicated and takes a great deal of pride in her work. She always gives her very best. Her colleagues love to hear her stories about Poland at break time and would describe her as helpful, friendly and kind.

Over time, Gina would fill in for the head custodian, and assist with lockdowns and fire drills; but, she still preferred her shift the most. Rain, cold, or blizzard, she would always be a little early for her shift walking 98.9% of the time. Gina loves her family, especially her grandchildren and Mom. In retirement, we are sure she will enjoy time with family, spend more time gardening, and travel with her husband, Boyd, to the Cayman Islands!

# Kathleen Gordon

When I was three years old, my mother, who ran a private kindergarten, took me along to the class, as I was, unbelievably, a very difficult little girl, and she thought it would be too hard for my grandmother to care for both my younger brother and me. I have been in school ever since.



After completing a B. Ed in May of 1979, I was hired to complete the year in a special ed class in Hanna, Alberta. The following September I began teaching grade three at Rocky Elementary School. While I have continued to teach at the same school for the past 37 years, my career has involved many assignments and grade levels. I have taught special ed, music, Phys Ed, art and health to several grades at the school. In 1998, I decided that I should demonstrate my love of learning and my belief in lifelong learning to my five growing children by enrolling at the University of Alberta in a Master's program. I graduated from in 2000 with a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction. This educational experience was revitalizing and invigorating. I must also note that my goal – to demonstrate a love of lifelong learning to my own children – has been realized. At this moment, they are all enrolled in postsecondary schools and appear to have no thought of ending their quest for learning.

How can the years have passed so quickly? As I retire and look back on my school career, I believe, as I did 37 years ago, that teaching is the greatest and most enjoyable profession on the planet. The time has flown, and I still feel as though I am in my early thirties. I have been fortunate to have had a career that has brought me more smiles and laughter than tears, and that I have felt passionate about from beginning to end.



## Joanne Lewis

I joined the newly formed Wild Rose School Division No. 66 in the spring of 1995 as Executive Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent, Geoff Tagg and leave as Administrative Specialist in Student Support Services. Back then, Division Office had a skeleton staff having been pared down with the amalgamation of the previous Twin Rivers and Rocky Mountain School Divisions. I was very excited about this new challenge and happy to get on board. I had lots to learn and first up was learning the Apple operating system that Wild Rose was using across the division.



The internet was in its early stages at that time so that was another learning curve. Eventually, we left the Apple world and skipping ahead a couple of decades, all is Google and almost everything is online. Over the past twenty-two years, there have been many changes at Division Office, both in staff and organization. My own “desk” moved several times so I’ve been privileged to experience different departments and learn a range of skills and duties. If I had to choose, I’d say I especially liked working in the Human Resources department – the enthusiasm of new employees can be contagious. The move to electronic sharing and communication made the most dramatic and positive changes in practically everything else. I do love Google sheets and I continue to find ways to use them at home.

Of course, it’s the people I’ve met and known over the years that I will remember and miss the most. Since my last day in March, the switch from continuous daily busy-ness and human contact to a quieter, more isolated routine (or lack thereof) was hard to get used to but I’m adapting quite nicely! I’m happy to have more family, yard, pet, home, hobby, travel, and me time. I have so many interests that I hope to visit again, including origami, music, sculpture, dance, horses, and oh yes, maybe that kitchen renovation project will finally take off... but no promises!

I am grateful to Wild Rose School Division for the great career and generous benefits these past two decades. Going forward, I consider myself very lucky to have a wonderful and supportive husband, three amazing adult children, two adorable granddaughters, and great friends and family.

Thank you for this celebration in honor of fellow retirees and long service employees – I know that I am among great people and I wish my fellow retirees all the best!

# Barb Lotnick

You could call Barb a rolling stone, or was it her husband who was constantly on the move? Over the course of her 32 years of teaching, she has worked for 6 different school divisions but has always stayed true to the grades she loves; Kindergarten and Grade One. Barb started teaching in Fort McMurray and quickly moved to Camrose. She then worked for the Sturgeon School Division and taught 5 years with them before choosing to stay at home to raise 3 young girls. When Barb returned to the work force she spent 4 years with Fort Vermillion School Division before moving to Drayton Valley. Barb started as a substitute teacher in both the public and Catholic systems before calling Evergreen her permanent home.



Barb will be remembered for her organizational skills. Her Grade One team quickly learned that Barb was the keeper of the binder that contained the units, tests and grade standards. She could be counted on to know where everything was and find it at a moment's notice. Barb liked to stay under the radar but always knew what was happening in both the school and town community. She enjoyed the social events and always had some new card or stick game to keep her friends entertained. My favorite memory is hearing each new version of her name that the new grade ones would come up with. Mrs. Rotnick/Wotnick/Lotnig enjoy this next chapter of your journey after retirement. You certainly deserve a break after so many years working with those little ones.

# Rebecca Soppit

Rebecca was born in Rocky Mountain House went to Rocky Elementary and went to the Rocky Mountain House Junior, Senior High School. She always knew that she wanted to be a teacher (started early when she discovered that only teachers were allowed to write on the blackboard...), so the September after she graduated from high school, Rebecca headed to Edmonton to study Education at the U of A. This was an enormous step for a farm girl who went to Red Deer once a year! She got married to Dale between her third and fourth year of university and headed for Malta as Dale was working for Schlumberger in Libya. They spent a year there, traveling when he was on days off, and then returned to Edmonton so that she could finish her degree, the idea being she could teach wherever they lived. Little did they know what the future held!



After finishing her Education degree she worked at Capilano Elementary then decided to be a stay at home mom when they started their family. They moved to Calgary and then back to Sherwood Park not planning on going back overseas unless they got AUSTRALIA. They did have the opportunity to live in Australia and they took it and moved their family Down Under. She worked at the Flagstaff Hill Primary School helping out with children that needed extra help. They lived in Adelaide for 2 ½ years before Dale was transferred to Jakarta Indonesia.

They packed up again and moved to a place of which she had little knowledge. This is a third world country and it was a steep learning curve for all of them. The kids were enrolled in the British International School and the following September, Sir Ronald Stones (knighted by Queen Elizabeth) the headmaster of the school hired her to teach Year 4. It was a most rewarding experience. The standards of excellence were comparable to the English Private Schools and she learned so much. Rebecca shared that the group of teachers at the school were amazing and she formed close friendships that remain to this day. After 5 years, they decided it was time to move back to Canada as Dale was away most of the time, and they felt that their children needed to grow some Canadian roots. So they came home to Rocky. The kids were now in grades 5, 7 and 9. It was a huge adjustment for them. Small town Alberta was a shock!!!

In September 1996 Rebecca accepted a ½ time position teaching grade 5 Language Arts and Science at Lochearn. Following this, she set up the Reading Intervention Program at Lochearn as well as being part of the Early Literacy Cohort for the School Division. For two years she taught ½ time Reading Intervention and ½ time in grade 3 and then grade 2. The last 15 years she has taught grade one.

Rebecca will miss Lochearn, the staff and the parents...but especially the children. Rebecca plans to: Travel back and see old friends around the world and explore new places, spend more time with her grandchildren, plans to become an avid golfer and to spend time camping.

# Pat Spruyt

I was born in Kitchener, Ontario but moved to Saskatchewan and then to Red Deer in Grade four. All of my schooling from that point was in Red Deer and I graduated from Education at the U of A with a B.ed Degree and an Early Childhood diploma, in 1977. I started my teaching career in Settler in the fall of 1977 where I taught kindergarten for two years. I then moved to Red Deer where I taught grade one and then a grade three/four split. I moved to Rocky Mountain House in 1981.

Early Childhood jobs were scarce, so I accepted a grade six position at Pioneer School. When my twins arrived six years later, I took a leave of absence and then a half-time position at Lochearn Elementary in 1989, teaching special ed. I then took some more time off to be with family. I substitute taught in various grades throughout the division. In 1995, I returned to the classroom full-time, teaching grade one on a temporary contract at Condor School. Over the next few years, I substitute taught in ever grade, almost, and had full-time temporary contracts at Leslieville, grade 2 and Lochearn grade 3. In 1999, I landed a position at Condor School teaching grade three. That is where I was happily employed until my sick leave in 2012.

I have enjoyed having the opportunity to teach in so many grades and in so many schools, giving me the chance to network with wonderful staff, parents and students. I look forward to spending my retirement doing all the things I love to do. Quilting, golfing, gardening, reading, travelling, writing and spending time with my adorable grandchildren.





# Wendy Von Hollen

I was born in Calgary, Alberta and received a Bachelor of Education degree in 1980 from the University of Calgary. While still in school, I interviewed for a teaching job in Rocky Mountain House, and I think I got the position primarily because I could name fishing spots around Rocky.

I began my teaching career in Rocky at Ecole Rocky Elementary in 1980 under the principalship of Alan Marshall, and I taught there until 2012. I taught a total of 33 years at ERE - 22 in grade 2, 10 in grade 3 and 1 year in grade 4. A highlight of my teaching career was when I won an Excellence in Teaching Award. I always loved teaching at ERE and miss it to this day. The school will always hold a special place in my heart, with its wonderful staff and students. In 1981, I met Wayne von Hollen and we married in November of 1982. We settled on an acreage north of town where we remain to this day. In 1986, our son Kenton was born followed, in 1993, by our daughter, Kelsey.



In 2012, I became unable to work full time, but starting in the fall of 2013, I began volunteering at Leslieville School, which I continue to do two mornings a week. I became a member of Rocky's Organization for Animal Rescue in 2003, as animal welfare has always been another passion of mine. I was president of ROAR for five years and still volunteer as the secretary. I was fortunate to have a very supportive principal, Bill Snyder, who allowed me to have many cats and kittens in my classroom over the years. It was a very hands-on experience for the students as they learned about animal stewardship and the importance of caring for our animal friends.

In my retirement, I hope to continue to volunteer at Leslieville School, with ROAR and to keep on quilting. I am also hoping to become a "winter Nana" for my "some day" grandchildren, as my son just recently married, and he and his wife live in Los Angeles. I can hardly wait to be a Nana - I am all set, with baby quilts already made and special books ready to be read!

## CONGRATULATIONS AS WELL TO THE FOLLOWING

Congratulations as well to the  
following retirees:

**Bill Brown**

Pioneer School

**Jeni Gallichan**

Division Education Centre

**Rita Steele**

Drayton Valley Community Outreach School

*“The best part about retirement is no longer having to wear  
pants”*

