

Teachers Make a Difference

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Teachers who make a difference

Muriel Hill-Latimer



*NSTU president Shelley Morse presents Muriel Hill-Latimer with her **Teachers Make A Difference** award on April 1. They are shown with Cape Breton District Local president Sally Capstick and Riverview's vice-principal Joe Poirier.*

Muriel Hill-Latimer retired from teaching on March 31, but she was back at school on April 1—and it was no April Fool's joke. She came back to receive her *Teachers Make a Difference* award and a \$300 cheque for Riverview High School from NSTU president Shelley Morse.

A College of Cape Breton and Acadia University graduate, Hill-Latimer started teaching in 1982 and spent 18 years of her career as a special education teacher, teaching in over 35 schools including schools in Truro, Maitland, Walton and even a two-room school house in Gabarus.

"I was happy to come back and teach in my home area," says Hill-Latimer. She gradually switched from special education to English after completing her Master's of Education from Mount Saint Vincent University, and has been teaching at Riverview High School in Coxheath for over 20 years.

A Sydney River native, Hill-Latimer was nominated for the *Teachers Make a Difference* award three years ago, but she was still "surprised, overwhelmed and humbled," when she received the news that she was the chosen 2015 *Teachers Make a Difference* award recipient for the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board. "I've decided to use the \$300 towards the school's library program," says the English 10 and 11 teacher.

"It was really humbling to be recognized through this campaign," she says. "I think this kind of recognition is important. Teachers need

to be commended," she continues. "The staff here are so incredible—it truly could have been any one of them," so she admits that it was a little embarrassing to be the one chosen.

Her nominator highlighted Hill-Latimer's focus on building positive relationships with students in the written submission on the *Teacher Make A Difference* website: "*She always encourages students to do their best and is genuinely invested in the outcome. She always is kind and makes sure students feel comfortable in class.*"

"It's how you make them (students) feel that's important," comments Hill-Latimer. She truly believes and tries to live by the adage that for every negative situation, there is always a positive. "I feel that positivity is all around us if we look for it," she comments.

Ms. Hill-Latimer says she was very involved in one of NSTU's professional associations earlier in her career, the Association of Teachers of Exceptional Children (ATEC) and was a special education adviser. "My involvement in this association helped me greatly in meeting the needs of my students over my career."

While she admits that she'll have trouble letting go, she was happy to leave her teaching career on such a positive note—"in such an upbeat way." Her colleagues will greatly miss her too. "We will miss all the social gatherings she organized," says vice-principal Joe Poirier.

And just because she has retired, doesn't mean she's not going to continue to make a difference. "I'll be around to help with graduation, and then will come back in the fall to volunteer at the school," she states.

When she comes back during the next school year, she wants to be a support for her colleagues. "I will help wherever I'm needed and support teachers where necessary, especially helping out with students with learning disabilities."

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