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City school parents lend a helping hand

Gerry and May LeDrew are giving back to the school in which their boys got their start in the Edmonton public system 40 years ago.

"It is quite unusual for us (to be volunteering there)," admits May, "but I think Rundle (elementary school) has done very well for our boys."

May is into her fourth year volunteering at Rundle school, less than a block from where she and her husband purchased their home 40 years ago.

Gerry asked his wife when she started volunteering if she thought there was anything he could do at the school. The answer was a resounding yes.

Volunteer Edmonton

For May, it's the second time around volunteering at Rundle.

When her youngest son started there, she helped out in his class before ending up shelving books in the library. That was when the Beverly Heights neighbourhood was full of young families and the school population numbered 700.

FROM 700 TO 200

Today, the portables are all gone and the school has a multicultural mix of 200 students.

When May returned to Rundle four years ago, she went back to the library. This year, she's providing one-on-one help with Grade 1 students who need extra attention in reading.

Gerry's time is spent one-on-one with students in Grade 3 in both reading and mathematics. He tells of one success story from last year in which he helped a Grade 5 student bring his reading skills up from a Grade 1 level to his grade level.

It's things like this, says Gerry, that keeps him and his wife coming back. That and the hugs.

"It's such a nice feeling," says Gerry, who has been retired from truck driving for 10 years.

"We walk in that door and the kids come and give us a hug."

Adds May: "They meet us in the community, on the street, and they come up and say hi."

The LeDrews' volunteer hours are also spent outside of the classroom, going along on field trips and tying skates or helping out at the annual pancake breakfast hosted by the school.

It's important to interact with the youth, says Gerry. "The younger generation needs guidance."

"Helping a young person gives them a start on the right foot," says May, who's been retired from her work at Canadian Tire for seven years.

When the LeDrews aren't volunteering, whether at Rundle school, with seniors or Operation Red Nose, they're going on daily walks, carpet bowling, travelling in their camper, or dog sitting.

THE BEST OF IT

Life is what you make of it and this couple is making the best of it.

How long do they plan to keep being the honorary grandparents at Rundle elementary.

"As long as our health holds out and as long as they'll have us - until they have to come and get us in a wheelchair," laughs Gerry.

Look to this space to see the work that the city's volunteers and non-profit organizations are carrying out. For more information or suggestions for story ideas, please contact Evelyn Pham, at epham@volunteeredmonton.com, call 780-732-6655 or check out our website at www.volunteeredmonton.com. Volunteer Edmonton is a program of The Support Network.



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