



NWARTA's Busy Members

Susan K Thomson

... an active, vibrant retiree



Retirement has not slowed down Susan. She continues to be a passionate, energetic community member and educator. When asked about her job of choice as an educator, she remained thoughtful for a moment and then replied, "I've liked all of them ... I just love teaching ... all ages ... all subjects." She added that being a teacher offered the opportunity for change every few years; she has loved taking on a variety of challenges as well as continuing to be a learner. Susan reflected on one experience – teaching home economics. She found it especially rewarding when her students were able to create basic meals for their families.

Susan retired in June 2010 as principal of Valhalla Community School. The passage into retirement only led her to more opportunities to be a community volunteer and to pursue a retirement career as an instructor in Teacher Education North at GPRC.

... a dedicated volunteer along with a retirement career

In 2019, she was recognised as an extraordinary member of the community and received the George

Repka Outstanding Achievement Award. This award recognizes volunteers who have devoted their time to the community for over 20 years. <https://everythinggp.com/2019/02/09/grande-prairie-hands-out-volunteer-recognition-awards/>

One of her long-time colleagues, Perry Schofield, posted this on NWARTA's Facebook (February 11, 2019)--

Congratulations to one of Our Own! Susan Kim Thomson was awarded a major award last Wednesday, February 6, by the City of Grande Prairie. Susan was recognized as a long-time and dedicated volunteer for many organizations and events.

The following information and pictures are from the press release on the City of Grande Prairie Website--

Susan Thomson and Willie Braun each received the George Repka Outstanding Achievement Award. This award recognizes long-service volunteers who have significantly contributed to our community in the areas of recreation, culture, or social services for over 20 years ...



For over 30 years Susan Thomson has contributed in ways big and small to develop the vibrancy of our community, with particular focus on supporting children and celebrating culture. A teacher by profession, Thomson contributed in many roles including saving the Valhalla School from closing and mentoring the next generation of teachers through the Grande Prairie Regional College, University of Alberta and the Alberta Teachers' Association. Upon retirement, Thomson remains dedicated to bringing rich, cultural experiences to the children of the Peace Region through roles in the Destination Imagination tournament, the Northern Alberta Regional Heritage Fair, the Grande Prairie Children's Festival, Tiny Hands of Hope and more. Thomson enriches our community in many ways and is a well-deserving recipient for carrying on the tradition of George Repka's contribution to this city.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/796535143807419>

Grandparenting



Susan and her husband, Ron Boyce, have always been active grandparents but since the onset of the pandemic and their oldest daughter's return to school, they have taken on full-time grandparent caregiving. Susan and Ron can be seen driving their granddaughters to school, at the library, or at community activities such as the Forbes House Tea, or the Festival of Trees. They take every opportunity to lovingly teach their grandchildren through conversation and storytelling. For Susan, the saying rings true, "Once a teacher, always a teacher."

A continued life of service in retirement comes naturally to Susan, pre-pandemic she and Ron balanced this with opportunities to travel to various European destinations, Hawaii, and the beloved home of their youth, Nova Scotia. Post-pandemic travel will allow them to check off destinations that remain on their bucket list.

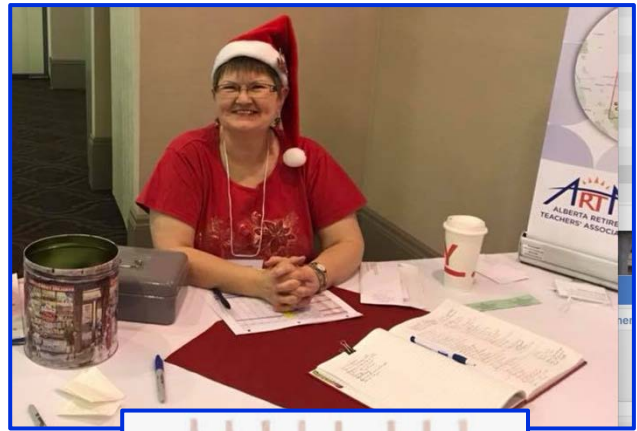
Advice to Beginning Teachers

Susan is enjoying an active retirement, especially working with individuals who will be entering the profession. When asked what advice she might give them, she relays that, "they need to consider what unique passions and skills they have to share ... teachers

don't just teach". She adds, "... they [teachers] need to create personal relationships with every child and every parent ... parents send us their best" and teachers help these children "be the best they can be".

Advice to Retiring Teachers

It takes time for some retirees to passage into retirement; it can be a tremendous adjustment. When we asked what advice she might give those considering retirement, she pointedly said, "You need to ask – What can I do that gives me energy? What would provide me with a focus? ... What reason will you have to put your feet on the floor each morning?" Susan has most certainly found focus and purpose which continues to energize and bring joy to herself and others.



Upon her second retirement as an instructor from GPRC and UofA in May 2012, Susan completed the Mayfair program in office management. She uses these skills working with various community organizations including NWARDA. She has been a long-time NWARDA member and served as secretary-treasurer until June 2018. Colleagues of the Northwestern Branch are thankful for her work