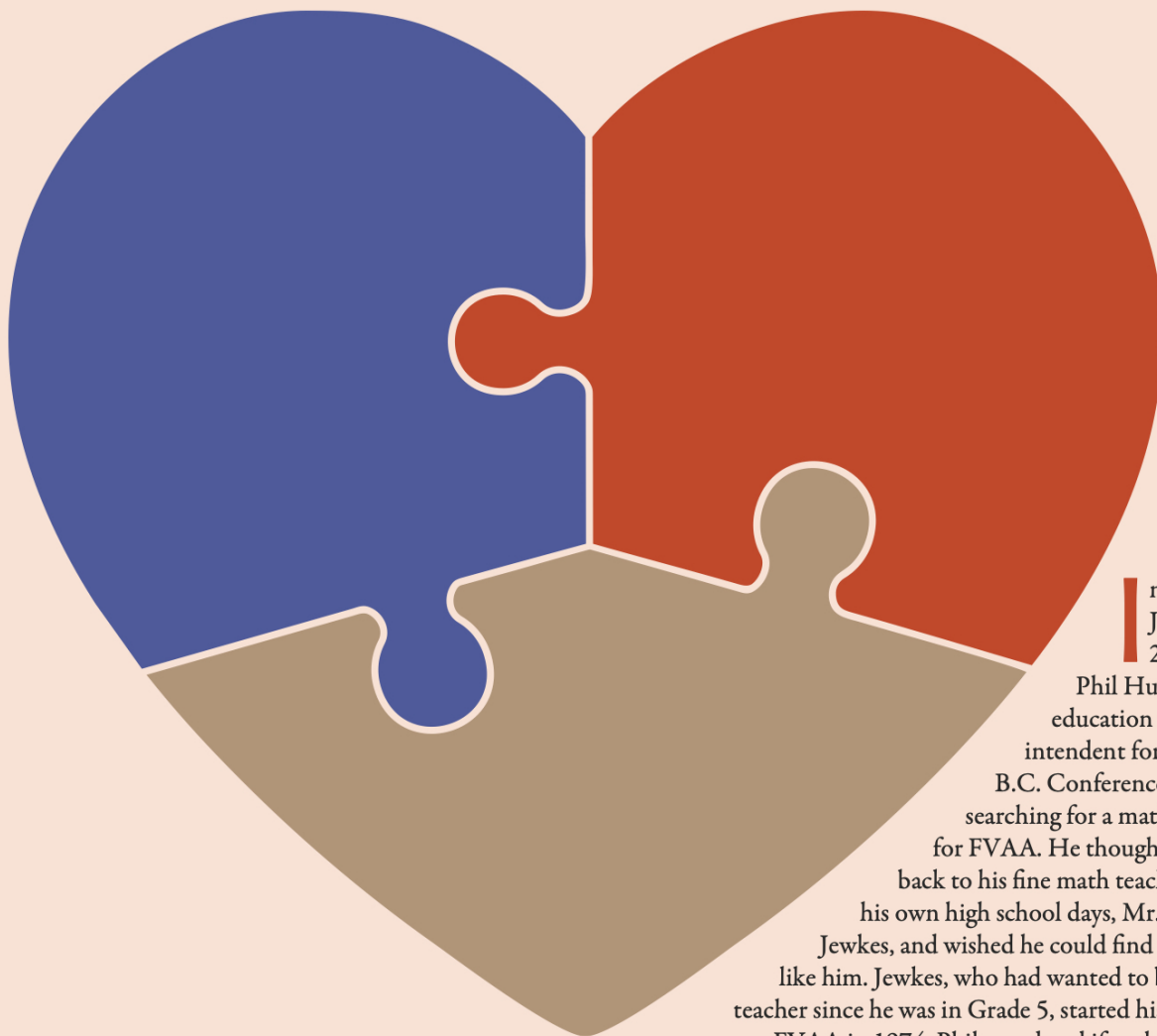


A Place Where We Belong:

Teachers Parents Students



In June 2021,

Phil Hudema, education superintendent for the B.C. Conference, was searching for a math teacher for FVAA. He thought fondly back to his fine math teacher from his own high school days, Mr. David Jewkes, and wished he could find someone like him. Jewkes, who had wanted to become a teacher since he was in Grade 5, started his teaching career at FVAA in 1974. Phil wondered if perhaps Mr.

Jewkes might be interested in coming back, after a 40-year absence, to the place where he had begun his teaching career.

When Jewkes was given the opportunity to return to FVAA after a year of retirement, it seemed it was “meant to be.” His passion for math, his sense of humour, and his friendly manner with students made a new generation of students appreciate his commitment to their education. Two years later, he is sure that coming “full circle” was “one of the most rewarding decisions” of his life.

Jewkes explains his calling: “My parents had instilled in me a commitment to use the talents God had given me to be of service. I felt strongly that my calling was to work with students and to pass on that desire to serve the world. The Adventist emphasis on ‘making people whole’ made teaching in Seventh-day Adventist schools the natural choice. The lifelong friendships and the reward of seeing the accomplishments of my students has been a most welcome bonus.”

Adventist education offers rewarding careers that make a difference, not only in preparing generations of students to contribute to society, but even more importantly, in providing opportunities to build lifelong relationships with God and others. Linda King, long-time educator and language arts co-ordinator at Fraser Valley Adventist Academy (FVAA) in British Columbia, reflects on the influence of Adventist teachers.



Phil Hudema's connection to Jewkes was only one of a series of connections. Jewkes was now a colleague of another former student, Linda King, who taught English just down the hall. King had been a student in Jewkes' Grade 10 and 11 math classes in the 1970s. She found herself fascinated by the logic and precision of math the way David Jewkes taught it and soon came to love learning in a new way. She had now been teaching at FVAA for 24 years and felt privileged to have Jewkes as a colleague. Her children and grandchildren had attended FVAA, and it was a delight for her to see her grandson having Mr. Jewkes as his math teacher.

Linda King says that she also wanted to be a teacher since she was a child. "I was blessed to attend Adventist schools all the way through university. I could clearly see God's love for me reflected by my teachers, and I was attracted to the acceptance and grace they demonstrated. Teaching in Adventist schools, I have been privileged to work as a missionary every day, passing on the message of faith to God's next generations. It has been both more challenging and more satisfying than I ever could have imagined. Though I am acutely aware that the work is more than I can handle, I have found that, in spite of my weakness, 'God's grace is sufficient' for me each day I serve wherever He has placed me."

In another classroom near King's, a young social studies and English teacher is in his second year at FVAA. Sean Olit was once a student of Linda King's and has come back to his school to share his love of learning. He and King often collaborate on course content and student needs. It took Olit a few years to decide that teaching was his career of choice, but once his path was clear, he found himself back at his alma mater.

Olit has often said that, in his high school years, he never would have imagined himself there. "I've always said I liked to help people," Olit explains. God has put a burden on his heart to support young people through life's challenges by pointing them to the only real Solution. "Considering how quickly the world has and is changing, I also wanted to be present to help the youth through these physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually challenging times. As for coming back to our own denominational institutions, I was inspired by one of my mentor teachers who said that she wanted to teach at our schools because she wanted to be able to pray with and for her students."

Across the campus is another one of King's former students, Katelyn Agustin, teaching the Grade 2 class. When she was a senior at FVAA, she led out in a chapel where she told her classmates to pursue their passions with their whole hearts. She explained that her goal was to become an elementary teacher and return to FVAA to teach. Four years later that's exactly what she did. She is known for her emphasis on kindness and acceptance, and she likes to lead out in activities that build respect for others.

Agustin was a student at FVAA from kindergarten to Grade 12. She says that coming back to teach "was a full-circle moment and a gift" because she can give back to the school that taught her so much. "It is because of attending FVAA that I got baptized, learned immensely from my teachers and classmates, and discovered my passion for teaching."



Linda King and David Jewkes

"Through generations of Seventh-day Adventist educators, committed men and women have answered the call of God to influence young hearts and minds for Jesus by teaching in the church's global school system."



Sean Olit and Katelyn Agustin

Through generations of Seventh-day Adventist educators, committed men and women have answered the call of God to influence young hearts and minds for Jesus by teaching in the church's global school system. Jewkes, King, Olit, and Agustin represent three generations of teachers who have been blessed to experience the joy of working on the "front lines" of this grand evangelism. Many who have come before them have left this same legacy of love. Their names may be forgotten, but their influence will last for eternity.

A song by Casting Crowns, "Only Jesus," comes to mind. The lyrics talk about legacy, and how our goal isn't to leave a legacy for people to remember us by; the goal is to leave an impression so people can remember Jesus. The legacy our teachers leave might not be very apparent on earth, but they desire to inspire others to love and serve Jesus. "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24, NIV). This is the mission call for Seventh-day Adventist teachers, the only legacy they ever need to leave. ■

Linda King is the language arts co-ordinator and teacher at Fraser Valley Adventist Academy in British Columbia.

