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**OCEA President: 1998-1999**

In 1987, my principal asked me to consider implementing this new program called “Co-op”. I was a Technological Studies teacher with the Durham Board of Education at General Vanier SS for more than nine years, and was ready for a new challenge.

The energy of Cooperative Education has motivated and inspired me to find valuable placements for students in a work destination ... this was in 1988. The local community welcomed the students and provided them with the first steps to employment. Many students found a lifelong career, and I often meet them working in my community.



The OCEA News arrived at my school, and I was immediately interested in the Co-op conference advertisement. In 1990, I attended the conference in Windsor and found more than 400 excited and interested cooperative education teachers. It was the most exciting conference I had ever attended. The learning, the resources and the networking and keynote speakers were the best part of the workshops.

In 1994, Gail Freiburger approached me about my interest in working with the OCEA Executive and Directors. I went to my Principal and he encouraged me to be involved in a provincial organization that could provide benefits to the school and the board. Imagine ... a Cooperative Education teacher in the Durham DSB, now part of a provincial organization. It was an exciting challenge!

As Director-at-Large, I worked with the Regional Representatives and learned of the concerns and successes across the province. What a talented grass roots group!

As Membership Chair, the names of members were matched with faces and voices. The fax and phone at my school were always busy with communications and inquiries. It was also the year that Carol Madsen-Tapley started as Membership Secretary. Together, Carol and I created a new computer database and revised the membership application form.

During my year as Vice President, the value of working in a team was learned as Richard Charette and I kept pace with the looming changes to Cooperative Education. Together, Richard and I talked with the Ministry of Education representatives and the OCEA membership.

As President of the OCEA, I started my career on the picket line and learned humility and patience. As we walked, I thought about meeting agendas, questions from members, and organized plans for new initiatives during the year. I learned how to identify needs and respond with a solution that could help Cooperative Education

teachers across the province. In November 1999, Vice President Hal Humphries and I sat with the Minister of Education and learned to understand that staffing for Cooperative Education meant "count the credits, not the bodies".

As Past President of OCEA, the Editor of OCEA News became my passion. I learned the value of a good wordsmith, the look of a good picture for a newsletter, the terminology used by a graphic artist, the skills of a printer, and how to motivate others to contribute to the OCEA News.

Deadlines continued to sneak up on me, and yet somehow a team of graphic artist, typist, printer, and talented members managed to produce a high quality newsletter. The first look at the final product is similar to looking at your first born child!

Thirteen years as an OCEA member has provided me with many resources that have been implemented in my Cooperative Education programs. During the last six years on the OCEA Executive, I have had the honour of working with talented and committed Cooperative Education practitioners. Your communication skills are sharpened as you debate your concerns, your patience is strengthened as you work toward a consensus, and your knowledge is increased as you strive towards a solution that will benefit the membership.

This type of learning can be found in other experiences, but I would not change the placement. For me, this has been rich and rewarding. A higher power has opened many doors for me and helped me to achieve things I could only dream about in 1988. I have worked with wonderful people across the province of Ontario that I might have never met. I have learned from many, admired others who have been part of my learning and achieved many personal and professional rewards. The road has been rocky, sometimes it has been lonely, but it has always been an exciting road for a country girl from Thamesville, Ontario.

I encourage you to think about taking your turn at the leadership of OCEA. Every one of us has one thing to contribute and it can make a difference. Cooperative Education will continue to be my passion, and the OCEA members will continue to be my networks of learning. It has been an honour to be part of their hearts and their leadership.

During 1994, I accepted the invitation to join the OCEA Board of Directors. The people of OCEA were an inspiring group of dedicated professionals. The professional learning was the most memorable during my years with the OCEA Board of Directors and Executive.

During my year as President, the time was approaching for the writing of our new policy document. It was an exciting time for cooperative education across Ontario. With the Secondary School Reform, and new curriculum, the cooperative education teachers needed and requested a new policy document.

Conference plans, Symposium planning and Regional events were part of the professional teacher learning that was supported by the OCEA Directors and Executive. This provided a great opportunity to meet many professional teachers across the province. It was inspiring for me to meet teachers who were passionate for the experiential learning programs that benefited the students.

As President of OCEA, I enjoyed meeting many people who are now friends, and who constantly remind me of the good things that have happened when OCEA is the leader for teachers involved with Career Education and Cooperative Education.

My final words: Thank you to all the teachers across the province of Ontario who have provided a great cooperative education program for students.