

Our Lady of Grace school prepares for 60th anniversary bash



By Brock Weir

Hey, millennials ? put down your selfie sticks and listen up for a sec.

Look, you probably take more pictures than any generation, but if you went to Our Lady of Grace Catholic Elementary School between 2000 and 2010, you left very little behind.

And organizers of the school's upcoming 60th anniversary celebration want to change that.

As they put the finishing touches on their milestone May 1 party, the organizing committee has uncovered and collected memories, photos and memorabilia from the late 1950s through the late 1990s, but there is a significant gap in artefacts from the early years of the new millennium.

?When you talk about the 50s, 60s and 70s, people cherish photos because they weren't as common and the photos are now more available,? says parent councillor and organizing chair Eric Poblete. ?In a strange way, when you get to the 2000s, it just became so ubiquitous.?

?It's all digital,? adds principal Ines Donato Legace. ?The digital age was upon us, so we think [the photos] are somewhere, but we don't have actual copies.?

As the clock counts down to the school's significant anniversary, they say they welcome all contributions but, in the meantime, everything is falling neatly into place.

The community celebration is set to begin Sunday, May 1 with a special mass at 2 p.m. at Our Lady of Grace Church, the school's parish. Following the service, the party will get underway at the Aurora Heights Drive school at 3.30 p.m., with a formal ceremony ? followed by the fun stuff, which will include the dedication of a new piece of artwork created by current OLG students, the first public performance of a new school song, performances by alumni, and special rooms dedicated to each of the school's seven decades and the students, teachers, and community members that helped shape them.

From 4.15 p.m. onward, anything goes in the open house format and there is no formal end time to gather, meet and reminisce.

?It is almost like planning a huge wedding,? says Mr. Poblete. ?You know it is going to happen and you know certain things have to happen, which includes the mass and the formalities, but outside of that, because we are one of the few schools who have actually

made it to 60 years, we're setting some precedents.?

The school chose May 1 to coincide with their traditional ?summer? barbeque. This year, however, the Optimist Club of Aurora is coming in to do the cooking, letting the entire OLG community focus on the anniversary itself.

?The whole school is involved and the majority of the teachers have all been assigned a decade,? he explains. ?We have music from every decade and it is going to be a really nice feeling. People will not only get to see some of their old friends, but they will also be able to catch up with people in the community. It is funny; just the mention of it and all of a sudden they can come up with a memory of themselves or their neighbours and they just start to reminisce. Hopefully that will translate into people coming out to attend!?

That is the main thing for Ms. Donato Legace. Word is spreading, alumni are coming, and they are bringing their talents with them. And their talent will rub off on the new generation as they too aim to leave their marks.

?The present community is doing a legacy keepsake with a mural tile project,? she says. ?Every child has made a tile to demonstrate their experiences here. They have used a symbol around Catholic education that commemorates their time here and each of the 320 tiles will be placed in the image of Mary that represents Our Lady of Grace.?

?The interesting part is the [school community] has gone up and down, it has changed and shifted with the community, but a very strong community still exists here,? says Mr. Poblete. ?People still come back to the school and, large or small, the spirit is all the same. ?