

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

*Volume 15 Issue 34
September 14, 2007*



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THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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Rose-Coloured Glasses

Love her or hate her, there's no denying that Rosie O'Donnell has broken a lot of barriers on the road to success, both personal and professional.

She succeeded as a woman in the male-dominated stand-up comedy world. She went on to host a successful Emmy-winning daytime talk show. She has also faced—and overcome—the obstacles presented by being part of a same-sex couple who has adopted children.

Which makes it all the more surprising that, as a strong, independent, outspoken (like I said, love her or hate her) woman, she would suggest that one of the strongest female role models in public life should retire because of her age.

In a recent news article, MSNBC reports that in O'Donnell's upcoming memoir, *Celebrity Detox*, the comedian says that journalist Barbara Walters should "step back" from her job.

According to the article, O'Donnell writes that "At some point, a person gets tired. It's inevitable. Barbara Walters is almost twice my age . . . at some point it becomes necessary to step back."¹

The most remarkable thing about a statement like this is that, without the barriers that Barbara Walters and other women of her generation have fought against—and in many cases removed—the younger women that followed in their stead would, arguably, not have had as many opportunities open to them.

And in a world where billions of girls and women still have no legal rights, are not allowed to vote, have no access to education, and are looked at as little more than disposable property, the successes of positive female role models should be celebrated—especially when they have years, even decades, of experience to share.

In our youth-obsessed culture, an age of dime-a-dozen Britneys and Christinas, we should be celebrating women who have achieved success by their brains, and who, precisely *because of* their years in the trenches, still have a hell of a lot to say and accomplish.

The same goes for males, but there are far fewer women in the halls of power—law, government, business—than men. If women are ever to achieve true equality (even in countries that still treat them like chattel), strong, experienced women like Barbara Walters are exactly the role models we need.

Women like Jane Goodall, who at 73 inspires people the world over through her ongoing work with wildlife at the Jane Goodall Institute, including her Roots and Shoots program and many initiatives in Africa.

Women like Gloria Steinem, 72, whose many years of experience give a credibility and depth to her ongoing work as a writer, lecturer, and activist in the women's movement.

And yes, women like 77-year-old Barbara Walters, whose years on the front lines of journalism bring a finely honed touch to her interviews with world figures.

Maybe, just maybe, it's time to adjust the view through those Rose-coloured glasses.

¹ MSNCB, 2007. "O'Donnell says Barbara Walters should retire." Retrieved September 14, 2007, from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20729470/>

AU Profiles:

Sharon Holtz

by Christina M. Frey



In this week's profile we introduce Sharon Holtz, a BSc student living in Edmonton, Alberta. She shares how teaching her children helps her study (and puts them ahead of the curve!), offers encouragement to students experiencing difficulties, and tells how her own struggles and setbacks have made her all the more determined to succeed.

Sharon, who is studying biology and chemistry, enrolled in AU's Bachelor of Science program a few years ago. "I chose AU because life cannot wait while I attend school for [four] years," she explains. AU was the ideal choice for her, since it allowed her to carry a full-time job and raise her three children while working toward her goals.

Shortly after, however, personal circumstances caused her to fail several courses. "Life hit me with a few things I couldn't deal with, and school got dropped," Sharon says. She put her education on hold until she felt she could commit "financially and mentally" to her studies. At this point, she notes, "I'm back to square one in some respects."

That hasn't dampened her drive to complete her degree, however. On the contrary, her problems have made her desire for education stronger. "You can look at the struggles as something that can demotivate you, or you can look at them as something that propels you into action," Sharon says. "Through all of this, I find myself still wanting to finish the degree and pursue the rest of my goals."

Sharon is working toward a very specific goal: she hopes to attend medical school after graduating. It may be a lofty goal, but it's a persistent one. "Every time I've tried something else I've hated it, and I am drawn back," she explains.

How does she manage school, a full-time job, and three children? A good plan helps. "My day generally starts around 6 a.m. when I make time to spend with [my] spouse," she says. During her lunch hour at work, she spends time previewing the chapter she will study that evening. "After supper . . . I hit the books for three to four hours if possible," she adds.

This means that she and her children (ages 17, 14, and 12) often end up doing homework at the same time. In fact, under Sharon's guidance, the four have done many of her chemistry labs together.

"I find that if I can explain it to them, I somehow remember it better," Sharon says. "I had my daughter model some of the molecules that we needed to build . . . to help remember the carboxyl groups, aldehydes, etc."

Not only does it help Sharon digest the material, it also allows them to have a little fun. "Sometimes as a mother I feel like I'm being selfish in reaching out for my goals," Sharon says. "It's a good way to combine both."

At the same time, Sharon takes the opportunity to teach life lessons along with the chemistry, particularly regarding the importance of education. "I tell them constantly how I wish I'd taken the opportunity to finish school in a quicker fashion."

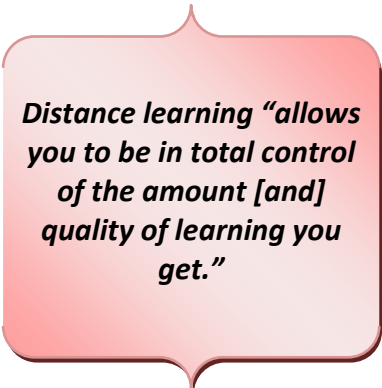
In addition to her already busy schedule, Sharon also plays goal in local hockey leagues. She's found that the action gives her a way to release tension, especially before a big test. "When I wrote a bio final at the end of last month I played hockey the night before . . . [which] seemed to release all the stress and apprehension I had," she says.

Sharon feels that the independence that comes with studying by distance is both a positive and a negative aspect of distance learning. It "allows you to be in total control of the amount [and] quality of learning you get," she says. It also allows the student to allocate more time to the more difficult courses. On the other hand, she feels that motivation and commitment to studying often wane over time. "Because of the mode of instruction," she advises, "procrastination becomes your worst enemy."

While AU students may be confronted with many different struggles and setbacks while pursuing their educational goals, Sharon feels that this is an important part of the growth process. She uses an interesting analogy: "If you think of it in a fiscal sense, the stocks that do the best in the market tend to rise and fall a lot," she says.

Furthermore, she feels that difficulties help students to figure out what they need to change in order to work more efficiently toward their goals. After dealing with her own struggles, she believes that she is better able to deal with "the slumps" when they arise. "I take that desire and harness it, and I push myself towards the end goal," she says.

Athabasca University "will give me the skills to be successful," says Sharon. But in the end, she says, it's your "struggles and what you do with them [that] indicate whether you will succeed or fail."



Distance learning "allows you to be in total control of the amount [and] quality of learning you get."

If you would like to be profiled in a future issue of the Voice, please contact the Editor at voice@ausu.org



Than to Curse the Darkness

"It is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness."

- Confucius

Better to walk a mile along an empty beach on a moonless night, with the banshee wind howling in your ears, taking away your breath.

Better to hold a laughing infant, with all the love and care in your soul, high above your head.

Better to learn the foxtrot, learn the Charleston.

Better to eat a peach in a rowboat drifting out on the surface of a bottomless lake.

Better to drink rum drinks from a hollowed out pineapple shell, and sing sentimental ballads by the light of tiki torches.

Better to run off with the circus, and become an apprentice to the human cannonball.

Better to fall madly in love with a Chinese trapeze artist, who may or may not be some sort of a double agent.

Better to get naked with your very best lover, and eat a bowl of blood-red grapes on a Persian carpet in front of a wood fire.

Better to summon occult forces by drawing necromantic equations in chalk on the rec room floor.

Better to write an epic poem in the belly of a whale.

Better to sit on a gravestone and whistle a song.

Better to take your guitar and amplifier on top of the roof on a stormy night, and play "All Along the Watchtower."

Better to fall down, get up, fall down, get up, fall down, get up . . .

Better to fall in love with a vampire's daughter.

Better to dedicate whatever time is remaining to you to the study and betterment of sperm whales or glowworms.

Better to plan a trip to the Arctic Circle.

Better to take up unicycling.

Better to read *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*.

Better to spend your life tracking down someone who can teach you the trick of walking barefoot across molten lava.

Better to eat chow mein in your long underwear on top of a mountain, while wolves are howling.

Better to build a rice-paper mansion on the edge of the ocean at the start of monsoon season.

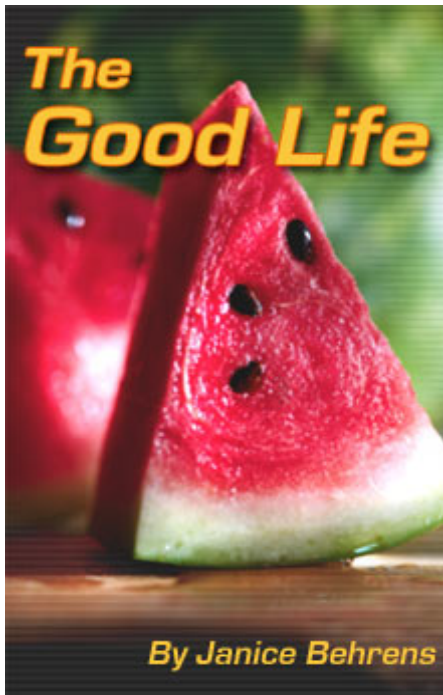
Better to weave a mask of tree bark and green feathers.

Better to fall to your death from the topmost branches of a poplar tree at 95 years of age.

Better to woo your lover by depicting a story of your future life together with Balinese shadow puppets.

Better to cleverly disguise yourself as a flamenco dancer.

Better to say "Fuck going gently into that good night."



The End of Innocence?

As much as I enjoy the stage of life I am experiencing right now, there are times when I very much miss the simple faith and trust of my childhood days. I remember things like being able to eat an oatmeal cookie from a package, or spread peanut butter over slices of rubbery white bread, or wolfing down a tuna fish sandwich in the school cafeteria without giving a moment's thought to the nutrient content or possible health repercussions, or environmental consequences of these food choices.

I had no idea that, later in life, I would not be able to eat these foods without being ruefully aware of such things as saturated fats, GMO farming practices, depletion of agricultural lands, factory farming, or potential for mercury contamination.

Likewise, I remember blissful mornings spent in Sunday school, drawing lambs and loaves and fishes on sheets of construction paper. I remember making a thick, white beard for God (who was sitting on top of a cloud in the sky) out of cotton balls. Never once did I have to worry

about the checkered legacy of the Church—its witch burnings, inquisitions, residential schools, intolerance, and cultural genocide.

When my daughter's class has been visited by an RCMP officer, there is a part of me that is proud of the fact that she respects this officer and her uniform. Small-town girl that I am, there is this part of me that desperately wants to believe in the virtues of peace, order, and good government. Unfortunately, I have seen and heard too much in my life to completely buy into this anymore.

I have seen too many reports of police brutality, and of political corruption. I have seen the way that our laws and our government are used by the wealthy and the powerful to ensure the poor and marginalized are kept in the shadows on the edges of society. I have seen way too much in my life to believe that any sort of power can possibly be absolutely benign.

One of my struggles, as a parent, is to ensure that my belief that society needs to be changed, and that voices need to be raised in protest, does not turn into bitterness or cynicism. I still believe, very strongly, in the beauty and wisdom of the people of this country. I believe that, despite the recent political turns to the right, Canadians are caring and sensible people. Above all, I believe that things can be changed for the better when we use our minds and voices.

I no longer have the luxury of naïveté and innocence, but I'm still filled with a childlike sense of hope for the future.



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

DVD: *Land of Plenty*

Release date: October 10, 2006

Directed by: Wim Wenders

Young Lana returns to America after years in Africa and the Middle East with her missionary parents and walks right into a volunteer role in a mission in Los Angeles's homeless district.

You will not often find a character like Lana in the movies, although you may be blessed to know someone like her in real life; she is no idealist, not if that means the opposite of a realist.

She is familiar with poverty and violence, and in spite of a sensitive and compassionate nature she doesn't crumple in the leprous underbelly of present-day America. Lana's moments of joyful communion with God and humans comprise some of the most poignant scenes in the film.

Lana is determined to deliver a letter from her late mother to her estranged Uncle Paul, a Vietnam veteran recently thrown into flashback mode by the 9/11 attacks. Lana and Paul are both, though in different ways, victims of the American government's decades-long practice of destroying socialist democracies and replacing them with capitalist dictatorships in the name of freedom.

Paul, a scruffy, greying man in army surplus who drives a splendidly garish old van full of bygone technology, devotes every waking moment to sniffing out Arab terrorist cells. He sees suspicious activity on every street corner, and the leads he follows are hilarious (he thinks a bulging blue tarp is hiding a one-man submarine).

This is a movie about America's motley crew of saints and the diverse ways they express their grief in the wake of the terrorist attacks. How appropriate that a German tackled this subject matter! America's peace activists are squelched and derided at home and when abroad must still endure the hatred the rest of the world bears toward the United States, just as Hitler's German opponents were, if not killed outright, silenced, imprisoned, and later demonized by a hypocritical West.

This is the first in a proposed series of low-budget films shot with the latest and best digital cameras. The cinematography is breathtaking. The cameras are nearly always hand-held and can squeeze into spaces too cramped for conventional cameras. Close-ups are jarringly compelling, and so unobtrusive to actors that truly intimate performances emerge. These cameras can also use available light, and this makes night shoots much more realistic.

But a truly remarkable achievement is this film's production model. Everyone working on the project, from painters to lead actors, was paid a hundred bucks a day. Such voluntary equality is a shining jewel in the muck of the film industry's phenomenal income disparity. It bears a close resemblance to the sharing of goods portrayed in the New Testament church, a freely entered communal arrangement of which Stalin's Russia now looks like a bad parody.

It is also fitting that it is a Christian who is holding a mirror up to a government that rationalizes its ungodly acts in the name of its religion. In responding to the 9/11 attacks, Wenders does not succumb to the same cynical poseur escapism that afflicted artists and intellectuals in the aftermath of the Second World War.

There is a life-wish embedded here, a wish whose attainment depends on the spiritual integrity of those with the persuasive grace to turn America around.

This brave wish is sung by Leonard Cohen in the final scenes: "Let the lights in the land of plenty shine on the truth some day."

The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.

CLICK ON THIS - Blast From the Past - 1970s

Lonita Fraser

Just when you think some things have finally gone away, or you at least hoped they had, oh no, there they are, right there, on your walls, on your floors, on the bodies of your children. It's the '70s, and they're baaaack.

Wallpaper From the '70s

Sometimes I think the '70s was a giant acid test, and this kind of wallpaper proves it.

Furniture and Decor of the '70s

Oh, lordy, that flowered bathroom. I don't think I could function in there.

Elegance After Dark

I saw stuff like that—in "Return From the Planet of the Apes."

Cars

Good heavens; you could house a family of four comfortably in the trunk!

The '70s Preservation Society

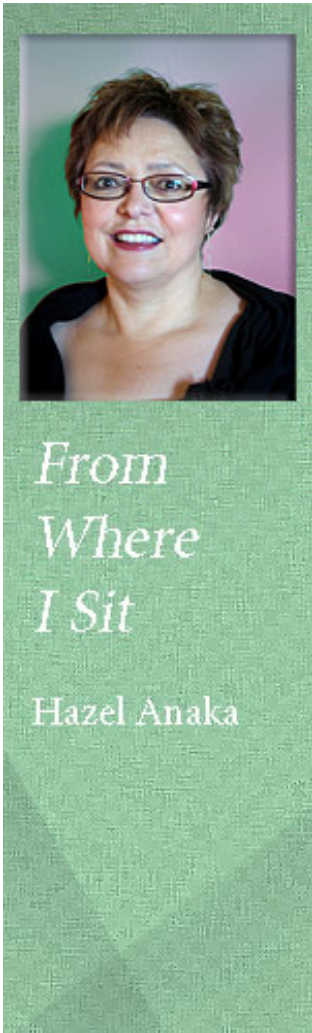
Well, it wasn't all bad, and even if it was, save it anyhow!

In the '70s

Food, clothing, music, and everything '70s—whether you want to see it or not.

Stuck in the '70s

Yet another in a plethora of sites dedicated to preserving the decade that has been described as the hangover after the party.



Attention Getter

Death is God's way of getting our attention. Just how much attention is determined by several factors.

Was the person Pavarrati, or my cousin from Vegreville, or a teen drug dealer, or an elderly neighbour? Did it become a media event or a private affair? Were there floral and plush-toy shrines à la Princess Diana?

Was the death spectacular in either its tragedy or circumstances or senselessness? Did death come way too soon or at the end of a full and complete life?

Was the death preventable? Inevitable? Self-inflicted? Was it natural causes or the result of a criminal act?

These are age-old questions with no simple answers. Small towns are famous for their support during times of tragedy. And this past week in my small town there's been no shortage of death. Last week our son called to say his father-in-law had died in his sleep.

It's a shock and a tragedy when anyone dies, but far more complicated when a farmer dies during harvest. We spent a few hours at the farm, trying, like everyone else, to come to terms with this shock and yet the harvest continued.

I also saw first-hand the universal language of mourning—food. Food began arriving. Is this a Ukrainian thing, or do other people do it as well? Of course, it helped feed the ever-growing numbers who dropped in to share their condolences and disbelief.

Many of us had literally only a few hours between that funeral Monday morning and a prayer service Monday evening for another popular retired farmer who had succumbed to lung cancer.

I left the prayer service to news that my cousin's 19-year-old daughter was in critical condition following a motor vehicle accident earlier in the day. Our prayers go out to that young woman and her family.

It was a short and troubled sleep and we thought we were dreaming when we heard sirens early this morning in our quiet country neighbourhood. A trip to town a few hours later provided the explanation. Our neighbour was dead of a heart attack. Later that day, an ambulance showed up at that neighbour's field. A farming accident? We haven't heard.

So if death is an attention getter, what's the message? What's the lesson? And are we paying attention? The lessons are straightforward, oft-repeated, and easy for all us mortals to ignore. Know your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers. If they're bad, fix them. Don't smoke. Don't drive aggressively or speed. Wear a seat belt.

Consider each day a gift and use it wisely. Live each day as though it was your last. Say I love you often. Mend fences. Keep your relationships and affairs in order. Don't leave a huge mess for your survivors to clean up. Remember that life is precious and there are no guarantees.

The shock of these events will scare many of us straight—for a while. Then inevitably we forget, get complacent, think we're immortal. We fall back into bad habits and laziness. We get careless. Please, no more lessons for a while, from where I sit.

The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by
Wanda
Waterman
St. Louis



AUSU THIS MONTH



Coalition for Student Loan Fairness

AUSU is currently investigating the Coalition for Student Loan Fairness (CSLF) to determine if participation with this group would be advantageous to our members. The group, a grassroots movement of student loan borrowers from across Canada, supports fairness in the loans repayment process.

The CSLF notes that Canadian students are charged a rate of 2.5 to 4.5% above prime for loan repayment, resulting in interest charges that can amount to as much as 33% of the loan principal over the lifetime of the loan. Borrowers who utilize interest relief during low-income periods may pay considerably more. Given that student loans are offered as a public service and incentive to learning, the high profitability of these loans is of concern to AUSU.

CSLF also notes that students over the age of 30 are not included in government surveys of student loan experiences. This is of particular concern to AUSU as the majority of our membership is 30 years of age or older and we know from our experiences with our members that the current loans program does not adequately serve these members, nor does it serve members who wish to work to support themselves while studying part-time.

CSLF also asks that the government provide an Ombuds office to handle student loan complaints—a change that would help address many of the problems we hear about regarding lost forms, incorrect instructions, and confusing requirements. Additionally, CSLF supports providing for consolidation of multiple student loans into a single loan with a single payment, a change that many students have asked for.

Members are encouraged to check out the [CSLF website](#).

AUSU Frappr—Show Us Where You Are

On June 20 AUSU launched a Frappr member map on the front page of AUSU.org. Just three days later, nearly 140 members have added their dot to our map, and a "picture" of the dispersion of our website visitors is taking shape. We're thrilled to see so many of you leaving your little mark on our site, and we love all the great pictures and shoutouts people have uploaded. Members who have left anonymous pins are encouraged to add their name (or alias, if you are shy) so we know you are all different people! If you haven't added your mark, drop by [ausu.org](#)—and don't forget to read the posting information if you are new to Frappr.



At Home: Newfoundland and Labrador politicians living it up—at taxpayers' expense

While the West may be booming, provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador aren't usually thought of as rolling in dough—but it seems that some politicians haven't heard.

John Noseworthy, the provincial auditor general, uncovered as much as \$2.2 million in lavish spending claimed on expense allowances, including claims for luxury goods, alcohol, artwork, and seasons' passes to hockey games.

The report examined the claims of 115 politicians between 1989 and 2005. Nearly all the politicians had used portions of their allowances to donate to school, sport, and community groups, and although "most members did not abuse the system,"¹ the ones who did were living in high style.

Three of the lavish politicians had each claimed season's tickets to the St. John's Maple Leafs hockey team. One of them, former PC finance minister Loyola Sullivan, had purchased the passes for five years in a row.

Yet another, former Liberal finance and justice minister Paul Dicks, claimed expenses for items including a Cartier pen, jewellery, and books. Perhaps the most questionable amount, though, was spent on alcohol: a total of \$34,145. He also claimed over \$59,000 in artwork.

Other unwarranted expenses by various politicians include things like \$13,255 in airfare for family members; a \$288 clock radio; cookware; CDs; a hotel room in England; and tools.

An earlier report, in 2006, that also investigated questionable payments on constituency allowances has resulted in fraud-related charges against several politicians, included a civil servant (now suspended) who had directed the legislature's finances.

This most recent report comes at a key time, only days ahead of the official launch of an election campaign, expected September 17.

It's hard to know for certain what the fallout from this latest audit will be, but politicians—and constituents—are sure to be reading it closely, especially since last year's report on spending practices led to criminal charges.

¹ CBC News, 2007. "Booze, art and hockey tickets cited in N.L. audit." Retrieved September 14, 2007, from <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2007/09/14/audit-report.html>

In Foreign News: HIV infections cause closure of Peru's blood banks

Officials in Peru have closed that country's 240 blood banks, a decision that follows at least four HIV infections caused by blood transfusions in a public hospital.

Peru's health minister, Carlos Vallejos, told reporters Thursday that a commission will be appointed to inspect the blood banks, and that officials from the World Health Organization will be involved.

At a news conference, Vallejos confirmed that "This situation cannot continue. All of Peru's blood banks are being reviewed."¹

The four individuals infected include Judith Rivera, a 44-year-old mother of four. She received the HIV-tainted blood at a state hospital in Callao during an operation on a tumour.

Three other cases, all originating at the same hospital, have been confirmed, including that of an 11-month-old infant. Another case, this one involving a 17-year-old boy, has been reported to the media, but the case has not been confirmed yet by the ministry.

The situation has been called "worrying" by one advisor who works at the Washington-based Pan American Health Organization.

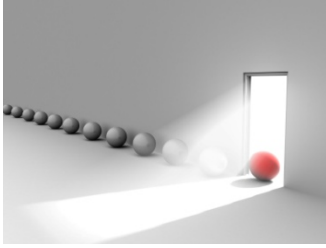
The advisor said that, along with countries such as Mexico, Bolivia, and Columbia, Peru is on the organization's list of countries that do not perform "preliminary disease screening"¹ on all the blood collected in its banks.

Vallejos contradicts this statement, saying that Peru does in fact fulfill "international standards for blood donation screening."¹

According to estimates by the United Nations, approximately 93,000 of Peru's 27 million inhabitants are infected with HIV.

¹ CBC News, 2007. "Peru closes blood banks after HIV infections." Retrieved September 14, 2007, from <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2007/09/14/peru-hiv.html>

EDUCATION NEWS



University students “net” a challenge from Rick Mercer

In a challenge to university students across Canada, Rick Mercer launched the Spread the Net campus campaign on Thursday, September 13.

Co-founded by Mercer and Belinda Stronach, and in partnership with UNICEF Canada, Spread the Net is a campaign that aims to provide anti-malarial mosquito beds to children in Liberia and Rwanda.

At a cost of just \$10 each, the bed nets are a simple yet effective way to protect African children from their number one killer—malaria. Over the next two years, Spread the Net hopes to raise enough money to supply 500,000 of the anti-malarial nets to kids for free.

Launching the campaign at the University of Ottawa, Stronach stated the aim of the anti-malaria fundraiser succinctly: “One net. Ten bucks. Save lives. It’s that simple.”

The Student Federation of the University of Ottawa was quick to take up the challenge.

“When we heard about Spread the Net,” said Pam Hrick, president of the student federation, “we knew that the student body would get behind the cause.”

The challenge will run from September 13 to December 31, and university campuses across Canada are encouraged to hold fundraisers—from faculty challenges to charity balls and more—in aid of the cause.

As Nigel Fisher, president of UNICEF Canada, stated, “Student support for global initiatives has always been strong in Canada.” But along with philanthropic motives, there’s another reason for students to get involved: the campus that raises the most money will be featured on the *Rick Mercer Report*.

“We know students like a challenge,” said Mercer, “especially when it comes to beating their university rivals!”

Donations to the fundraiser can be made at [Spread the Net](#).

Simon Fraser moves to defederate from Canadian Federation of Students

by Jason Sunder, *The Peak*

VANCOUVER (CUP) -- Simon Fraser University may be one step closer to separating from the largest collective student group in Canada.

The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) submitted a petition with the signatures of at least 10 per cent of its members as the first step to submit a withdrawal bid to the Canadian Federation of Students.

“Some 2,700 students at SFU signed the petition,” stated Derrick Harder, current president of the SFSS.

CFS national chairperson Amanda Aziz said that the national executive now has to sit down and work with the SFSS executive to schedule a referendum date.

“We have received notice,” she said. “At this point it all looks in order.”

Harder feels that withdrawal will allow the student body more financial autonomy.

"Redirecting that money that we give to the CFS to the SFSS means more money for on-campus projects with more control, more money at the discretion of students on campus. [For example] we can build a student union building if we have more money, more capacity, more time on campus. And that's something that we desperately need," he said.

"That's not being done by the CFS," he added.

Aziz disagrees. "Obviously we're concerned why this council of people want to take this isolationist approach," she said, noting that defederation from the CFS would result in their removal from CFS-BC, the provincial chapter, as well as CFS-Services.

"The referendum question would have to be all three," Aziz said.

"This spring, this March, a non-binding referendum was held," Harder said. "The result was that 78 percent of members of the SFSS . . . the students, voted in favour of leaving the CFS."

The unofficial referendum, meant to determine the sentiments of the student body, was not an official move towards defederation.

"There was a bit of an argument [with the CFS] about what the process was to get out. And rather than go through a debate, we decided to pursue the route outlined quite clearly in their bylaws and that is to say, submit a petition of over 10 per cent of our membership to the federation, asking for a vote on defederation," Harder says.

According to CFS bylaws, the recently submitted petition is a notice that a referendum on membership can be held in six months, giving both sides until the spring to campaign. Quorum for the spring referendum is five per cent of the members at the defederating society.

Even after the referendum has passed, though, the SFSS must submit a formal request to defederate to the CFS national executive. The request, based on the referendum results, must then be ratified by a vote of the CFS membership at opening plenary of the next general meeting.

Harder expects that the CFS will make efforts to maintain its relationship with the SFU student body, and persuade it to stay within the federation.

"This year, we can be expecting a lot of noise from the CFS on our campus. The students will already have seen the 'I am CFS' campaigns at bus stops, on buses, on the Skytrain. That campaign is being paid for with our money, quite simply. The SFSS gives the CFS almost half a million dollars each year and they're using that money not for the campaign that they purport to run, but to convince us to stay in the organization."

According to CFS-BC Chairperson Shamus Reid, though, "campaigns are driven by members of the various campuses."

Reid, who was on the SFU campus on Sept. 6, said that the campaigns would receive the assistance of the provincial and national branches of the CFS, though.

According to Reid, when he visited the campus "the reaction is overwhelmingly positive to the representation that they're getting through the Canadian Federation of Students."

For Harder, though, the issues go deeper than simple representation and services. He feels that a SFSS unhindered by the CFS will be more accountable to students.

“Over the past year the board has worked very hard to . . . democratize the student society. Part of that [stemmed] from the impeachment last year. We’ve worked very hard to make this a strong, open society that everyone at SFU can be proud of, and getting rid of the CFS is absolutely part of that.”

Seven members of the SFSS executive were impeached last year when the SFSS board of directors sent home seven senior staff members for a week of paid leave with no notice prior to the request. All staff were asked to hand over their office keys and passwords to their computers. Their computers were then removed from offices, and moved to a location off campus. The subsequent firing of the graduate issues and university relations coordinator, who had been with the SFSS for almost 30 years, raised a series of questions that the student body felt were left unanswered.

Questions of student privacy were also raised about the computer which housed information about the graduate health plan. The seven SFSS executives who supported the firing were unable to answer the questions [about] their actions to the satisfaction [of the] student body, leading to their eventual impeachment.

Following the impeachment, Harder ran for president on a platform of accountability. According to a July statement, Harder considers last spring’s non-binding referendum “a mandate to leave the Canadian Federation of Students in accordance with their by-laws.”

BITS AND BYTES



X doesn’t mark the spot (yet)

With the release of Microsoft Office 2007 a few months ago, a new letter was added to the popular computer vocabulary: X.

The letter is an addition to the familiar extensions (such as .doc , .xls, and .ppt) on files that PC users create every day (Office 2007 extensions are .docx , .xlsx, and so on).

But with millions of copies of Office 2003 in use, it will take some time for universities and other large organizations to convert—and Athabasca University is no exception.

The conversion is in process, but not all staff members—including tutors—have the new software in place. This means that, just like when sending documents at work or to friends, students should make sure that the person on the receiving end will be able to open their files, especially when it’s something important like an assignment.

AU will announce when the conversion to Office 2007 is complete. Until then, check before you send; if the recipient isn’t running the latest version yet, simply save files in the older format.

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THE VOICE

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