

# Douglas College Alumni E-news



## Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient a Trailblazer for Students with Disabilities.



**(l - r) Maria Iaquinta CSD learning specialist, Vince Tomasseti 2008, Distinguished Alumni winner and Olivia.**

Vince Tomasseti is blazing a trail for people with disabilities in BC. Building on his education and his own experience with blindness, the 2008 Douglas College Distinguished Alumni Award winner has made helping others with disabilities his passion.

Tomasseti is known and respected across the province for his work as an operations manager with Assistive Technology BC (AT-BC). But his ingenuity adapting work and education environments to be more inclusive of people with disabilities started years ago, when he was dealing with his own vision loss.

When he first came to Doug-

las College in 1994, "I could navigate but I couldn't read print on a document or computer monitor," says Tomasseti, who lost his vision to retinitis pigmentosa, a genetic condition. By the time he graduated with a General Business Diploma in 1998, he was completely blind and needed a guide dog to help him get around the campus.

"It was like starting from scratch. I learned how to learn as a blind person. How do you do math without seeing an equation?" says Tomasseti.

"Vince was always on the leading edge of technology - he scanned his own textbooks so that he could have print materials in electronic format rather than wait for a talking book in taped format," recalls Gladys Loewen, a former College employee who also worked with Tomasseti at AT-BC.

Tomasseti excelled in all of his subjects. He tutored sighted and blind students in statistics and business math, subjects traditionally deemed visually dependent.

"His legacy continues to this day as I and other instructors in the Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD) and across the College implement the methods we learned from Vince," says Maria Iaquinta, a

CSD learning specialist.

Tomasseti started working at AT-BC in 1996 and continues to be a pioneer in his field. His redesign of AT-BC's computer information systems is based on a format he initially devised for himself. Today, it is an industry standard.

"Vince has made unique contributions to his workplace beyond that possible for a sighted person," says Iaquinta.

In addition to his volunteer work with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Tomasseti supports his teenage daughter's rise as a competitive swimmer for the Coquitlam Swim Club.

"As a successful professional, manager and parent, Vince serves as a role model for all students with disabilities," says Iaquinta.

The Distinguished Alumni Award recognizes the quality of Douglas College graduates and their contributions to the community.

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### **Alumni Association AGM**

All Douglas College Alumni are eligible to attend the Annual General Meeting. If you have questions about eligibility please call 604-777-6171.

**When**  
Wednesday, October 15, 2008

**Where**  
David Lam Campus (room B3011 1250 Pinetree Way Coquitlam)

**Time**  
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
To RSVP, please call 604-777-6171 or e-mail alumni@douglas.bc.ca. by Friday, October 3.

## Message from the Alumni Association President

Welcome to new students, existing students and to all Douglas College Alumni and friends!

For those of you who have not met me, my name is Brenda your President of the Alumni Association. I have held this position for a period of five years and had served the Board previously for one year as Treasurer and two years as Vice President consecutively. I have been associated with the College since 1989 first as a student, following that an employee for fourteen years (not related to the Alumni Association).

The Alumni Board and I have had the honor of awarding many alumni with numerous bursaries to help them in their continued studies at the College and beyond. It has also been my pleasure to ac-

knowledge and present our Distinguished Alumni Award to five very distinct individuals at convocation ceremonies.

Why have I volunteered and kept busy in the Alumni Association? I like our values and mission statement in which it states *"The Alumni Association fosters a lifelong relationship between the members of the Douglas College community and its graduates"*.

We now have over five thousand alumni in our database, all of whom receive the Alumni E-News. Many alumni from various disciplines of the College have requested reunions for past graduating classes. There are many positive activities the Alumni Association has helped organized for alumni, current students and yes for future alumnus.

I encourage all alumni to submit your bursary applications, if you have a need, in your continued studies. Also if you know of an alumnus who meets the requirements of the Distinguished Alumni Award, including yourself, please forward these to our office.



I wish all of you the best and please keep in touch with us.

Brenda Pickard (President, Alumni Association)

## Dr. John Belshaw has come full circle!

Dr. John Belshaw has come a long way since his first foray into post-secondary education.

John grew up in Burnaby and attended Cariboo Hill High School, graduating in 1975. Although he very much wanted to go to UBC or SFU, his grades were "far from impressive," as he puts it.

"I might have snuck in under the wire, but I really lacked the confidence to succeed at university," John says. "My father, who was a single parent, encouraged and valued education but there wasn't a strong post-secondary tradition in our family. University was a place other people's kids went."

John felt that a year at Douglas College would help reveal whether he could make it in post secondary - and it did. Even today, John recalls the positive influence Douglas College had on him, as he was introduced to subjects as varied as geology, psychology, meteorology, and philosophy.

"I still call upon the moral argument lessons I learned at introductory philosophy. While my peers at UBC were wrestling with *The Iliad*, our English classes dined on Atwood. It was great. It gave us all

such a tremendous advantage."

One landmark experience for John came in George Porges's European History classes. "Porges was a brilliant, funny and mischievous, erudite, and disciplined lecturer. He could make your braincells bubble. Once I completed his first course, there was no question: I would major in History. That simply wasn't on the cards a year beforehand."

Following his success at Douglas, John transferred to UBC where he completed his B.A., before heading to SFU and a Masters degree, and then on to the London School of Economics, where he completed a Ph.D.

Following his passion for teaching in a student-centered, college environment, John accepted an appointment at Cariboo College in 1989 moving to his current position as Associate Vice President for Education at North Island College in 2006.

"I believe that the college system has contributed far more to the educational well-being of B.C. than is generally acknowledged," he says, adding that the college environment provides students with a range of opportunities that may not exist in other educational settings.

John believes that Douglas College was "absolutely central" to his career development. The college environment can and does "open doors and give sustenance to curiosity," he adds, noting that his experience at Douglas College was "transformative, exciting, and stimulating."



**Dr. John Belshaw Associate V.P for Education at North Island College.**

## A Class Act - Friday, October 24th, 2008

Set for Friday, October 24, 2008 at our Coquitlam Campus, the 11<sup>th</sup> annual *A Class Act* promises to be another sold out event with more than 350 regional business and professional people expected to mingle and meet around an evening of wines, beers and appetizers from around the world.

This year we are featuring the sights and sounds of Thailand in honour of our Thai exchange program. For 10 years, students in our Hotel and Restaurant Management Program have done work exchanges with students in Thailand, learning and sharing

tourism and hospitality know-how.

We hope you'll join us at *A Class Act* 2008, a great event that educates and entertains, provides opportunities to learn and laugh, and supports students who are working to achieve their post-secondary dreams.

Tickets are \$65 each and can be purchased by calling 604 777-6176 or emailing [foundation@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:foundation@douglas.bc.ca).

A Class Act would not be possible with-

out the support of our guests, generous sponsors and donors.

For sponsorship information, please contact Alexis Smith at 604 777-6172 or [smitha@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:smitha@douglas.bc.ca).

To donate an item to our live or silent auction, please contact Andrew Senjack at 604 777-6171 or [senjack@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:senjack@douglas.bc.ca).

## Meet Douglas College Alumna Cheryl Jeffs

Meet Cheryl Jeffs – faculty member at Douglas College's Faculty of Child, Family and Community Studies, and a Douglas College alumna.

Cheryl grew up in Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, and following her graduation from high school she worked in retail while trying to figure out what she wanted to do with her life.

"I wasn't ready to go back to school right away," Cheryl says.

When she heard about a new interior design program at Douglas College, she decided to learn more about it. "I hopped into my '71 VW Beetle, got on a BC Ferry, drove over to the New Westminster Campus and inquired about it. It would have been so much easier to have googled it! But it was 1974 after all," Cheryl laughs.

She liked what she heard and enrolled in the Interior Design Program for two years. She remembers a field trip they took to San Francisco.

"The entire class and three instructors went on the trip. We raised money to help

finance the trip by holding a dance and art sale. It was so much fun. I still keep in touch with friends I made at Douglas College," says Cheryl, "and I keep my original Douglas College student card on my fridge."

The interior design program was the start of Cheryl's lifelong learning. Although she chose not to make interior design her career, it was "excellent training for the rigors of academia," she explains. Cheryl has since completed a bachelor and master's degree at UBC, and is currently working on her doctorate at SFU.

"I never dreamed I would be on the faculty at Douglas College when I graduated in 1976, but I know the positive experience I had at college influenced my career path," Cheryl says.

She is aware of how dynamic public colleges are in British Columbia. Through her work at the Faculty of Child, Family and Community Studies, as well as through her doctorate research on public community colleges in BC, she continues to appreciate the value of public college education.

"The colleges are essential to our communities and provide educational opportunities through comprehensive programs and services," she says.

Cheryl believes it is important to give back to the college through the student aid fund because she understands how a few extra dollars can make a difference.

"I know the difference an education has made in my life and I hope bursaries, scholarships and awards will help other students pursue their educational goals," Cheryl says.



**Cheryl Jeffs – faculty member at Douglas College's Faculty of Child, Family and Community Studies.**



## Douglas College

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## Your Gift Matters

Thanks to the generosity of many supporters, last year close to 1,800 Douglas College students received financial assistance through the Douglas College Foundation.

### **The need for additional student assistance continues to grow.**

More and more people recognize that education and training can change their lives by allowing them to earn more and be more productive citizens. And they are choosing Douglas College as the high-quality, affordable route to university and long-term careers.

Tuition fees continue to increase at post-secondary educational institutions throughout BC and Metro Vancouver's high cost of living coupled with reduced government assistance is having a serious impact on some of our students. In fact, our Financial Aid office has already ex-

perienced a 15 percent increase in applications for bursary assistance. As a Douglas College Alumni you know what education can do for you. We invite you to invest in our students.

We believe in the power of education to change lives and improve the future and we know you do too. We invite you to join us in supporting those who are pursuing their dreams to make a better future for everyone.

### **How to support students**

You can:

- mail a cheque payable to Douglas College Alumni Association at PO Box 2503, New Westminster BC V3L 5B2
- call 604 777-6171 and make a donation using VISA or MasterCard

## Calling all Douglas College Alumni:

As a graduate of Douglas College, you are automatically a member of our Alumni Association and can continue to be connected to Douglas College for as long as you want.

Douglas College's Alumni Association website will help you keep in touch with the college and your classmates.

We will also send you E-newsletters three times a year with information on events such as class reunions and services, such as the Douglas College Alumni card.

The Douglas College Alumni card provides alumni with access to many on and off campus services and discounts. A premier benefit of the Douglas College Alumni card is the use of the library, student rate discounts on all Douglas College performing arts shows, athletic events, discounts at the Douglas College Vision centre and recreational facilities.

Your card, which includes a photo, can be purchased from the Client & Learning Services department at both Campuses for \$10. Please call 604-777-6171 to book your appointment.

CLS is located in room #3100 at the New Westminster Campus and room #B1250 at the David Lam Campus.

If you would like more information about the Alumni Association, or would like to get involved, please call us at 604.777.6171 or e-mail [alumni@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:alumni@douglas.bc.ca).

- sign up for our monthly giving plan and donate via direct debit, credit card or post-dated cheques
- donate stocks and shares, real estate and other assets. Call 604 777-6171 for more information

Donate to:

- Alumni Bursary
- Program of your choice

Tax receipts will be issued for all donations of \$20 or more. Douglas College Foundation is a registered Canadian charity. Registration #118887587 RR0001.

For more information, please call 604 777-6171 or email:

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