Sandy Lake Academy

40th Anniversary and Alumni Weekend

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Psalm 126:3

Sandy Lake Academy’s 40th Anniversary and Alumni Weekend held October 3-5 was an amazing, uplifting event! It was a time of looking back at what the Lord has accomplished in our Adventist academy in the Maritimes as well as a time of looking forward to continued Christian education for our youth.

Elder Gordon Pifher, a founding minister from the Bridgewater District, was the guest speaker for the weekend. On Friday evening, his message emphasized that when God’s children have a vision and the Lord is behind it, they will begin experiencing many miracles and lives will be changed. He alluded to the story of the Paralytic whose friends were willing to do anything, even dismantle a roof, to help their friend meet Jesus. He challenged each attendee with the question, “Are we so confident that our children will meet Jesus in a very special way at SLA that we are willing to do anything to enable our children to attend?” Elder Pifher continued, “We are celebrating that for 40 years people have said, ‘Whatever it takes—we want our kids at SLA’. Hundreds of kids have heard the good news about Jesus. If we want our kids to see a picture of Jesus, God will work miracles to make it happen. When Jesus saw the man at His feet, He said the man would be healed, in part, because of the faith of his friends. Jesus looks at the faith of our founders and supporters and says, ‘Because of your faith, I will perform miracles.’”

Two lovely musical numbers completed the evening. Bill Gay, a long-time supporter of SLA, shared a beautiful rendition of "When Jesus Passes By". And the gym resonated with the Slaunwhite family’s breathtaking harmony as they sang “When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder”. Various members of the Slaunwhite family have attended SLA since it opened 40 years ago.

Victor Chant, who has been involved in Education for 62 years and is a former SLA principal, presented a wonderful Sabbath School lesson highlighting the truth that Christ crucified is what changes people. He also pointed out James’ teaching that we must live righteousness by faith—not just know it! Following the Sabbath School program, SLA’s MasterPeace choir performed a beautiful hymn of consecration, and the Elementary group sang “He’s Able”.

During the Worship Service, Gordon Pifher shared that Christian education is only strong when we put into place big dreams and aspirations. SLA is a living demonstration that God is good. It is living proof that “If God be for
us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31. SLA is a growing, dynamic school. It is a mission field in which to share the good news of salvation with the world. Just as God placed the right people at the right time to establish SLA, He will continue to place the right people at the right place at the right time to make sure that His work is carried out. Referring to 1 Samuel 17, Pifher declared that God placed David specifically to fight the giant and He will send the right people to fight SLA’s giants. If we are aggressive in defeating the giants against Christian education, God is with us. No other can be victorious when God is on our side! In closing, he challenged everyone at SLA to love as God loves. The power of love will grow any classroom and school for God. He earnestly encouraged each one to “keep your eyes on Jesus. With your eyes on Him, you can never fail.”

This message was complemented by two stirring musical selections performed by Sandy Lake Academy students. The Elementary students sang about Samuel willingly answering God’s call and MasterPeace choir shared an inspiring piece “Behold, He Cometh!” The offering collected on Sabbath to help establish the new Junior Primary program totalled $1,000.00!

At sundown, in a short worship thought to close the Sabbath, Gordon Pifher quoted Acts 2:17, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.” He reassured us that although keeping a vision alive is not easy; in these last days God will continue to give dreams and visions. He is continuing to do this at SLA. Lives have been and are being changed! In conclusion, SLA teachers, Victoria Brunets and Kristii Rasmussen, played a beautiful violin duet accompanied by Kay Graca.

A thrilling interview with two of SLA’s founders, Melvin Boutilier and Verena Longard, revealed many miracles that took place in establishing our school. It all began in 1927 as a church school in the basement of the Halifax SDA Church with a small enrollment and one teacher. With the nurturing of Pastor Fred Crump and School Board chairman, Melvin Boutilier, the school grew to 43 children and three teachers by 1970. Elder Percy Manuel, head of the Department of Education for Canada, strongly encouraged that a better facility be procured, as the church basement was bulging at the seams.

After much searching, Elder Manuel located the current property of 52 acres on Hammonds Plains Road, bordering Sandy Lake, not far from Bedford, in Halifax Regional Municipality. Through a series of miraculous events over a one-and-a half-year period, Mrs. Lively, who was not eager to sell her property, came around to being willing to sell her property for $100,000 to establish Sandy Lake Academy. Melvin shared that the Halifax Church Board gave him a cheque for $10,000. He had no idea where he would find the other $90,000 within 30 days. President Jim Wilson, Floyd Coolen and Melvin stood on the point and prayed that God would make it possible to purchase the property. Just days later, in an unscheduled Kingsway board meeting, Melvin was presented with a cheque for $90,000. The General Conference had earmarked these funds for Canada and they had become available at exactly the right time! The foundation was poured, and a year later when they were ready to begin building, they were informed that there was a steel shortage in Canada. It would be a 14-month wait to obtain steel. Miraculously, there was a cancellation for a steel order and the company bumped SLA’s
order to Number 3. Two and a half weeks later the steel was delivered! Two years later, in 1974, the building was completed and the first classes were held in the new school. In 1975, the dedication took place with Sandy Lake Academy operating as a full-fledged 12-grade academy with five teachers.

Verena’s responsibility as chairlady of the Founding Finance Committee was largely to raise funds to build the school. She and Thelma Boutilier began catering wedding receptions. Verena also sold Regal products, sold a cook book, held auctions and organized bake sales. At one event, in a bidding war, she sold a lemon pie for $500! To raise funds to build the dormitory, pop cans were collected which brought in $10,000. The estimated cost of building the school was $1,000,000, but it only cost $268,000 which was paid off in just three years!

Principal Chris Dupuis also presented SLA’s exciting and challenging vision for future growth within the five pillars of SLA’s mission:

- Extraordinary Spiritual Program
- Exceptional Academic Program
- Outstanding Music Program
- Excellent Practical Skills Program
- Terrific Health and Fitness Program.

Although Sandy Lake Academy faces giant obstacles, as David faced Goliath, we are assured that “If God is for us, who can be against us!” Romans 8:31. Chris Dupuis quoted Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Bill Gay sang a lovely song he composed, highlighting the miracles at SLA. In closing prayer, Robert Beanlands, secretary of the Founding Finance Committee, reminded attendees that we have nothing to fear for the future, unless we forget how we’ve been lead in the past.

The weekend culminated in loads of fun activities, entertaining games and tasty food at the SLA Fall Carnival. Eager participants crowded into the gym to enjoy numerous activities including face painting, throwing wet sponges at friends and competing in a washer toss game. Many thanks go to John and Dawn Graves for the incredible amount of work and planning they put into this event! In all, $900.00 was raised for SLA’s spring mission trip!

We would also like to say a big thank you to each one who attended and participated in the 40th Anniversary celebration!