

Building Dreams - A Teacher Profile of Andy Payne



By Gerry Brach, Brooks Secondary Counsellor

Andy loves using his hands to make things, especially out of wood. He comes by his woodworking skills honestly, as his grandfather was a cabinetmaker/undertaker who was involved in Winston Churchill's funeral! Andy's father was an electrical engineer who also liked working with his hands.

When Andy was five, he started banging nails in his grandfather's workshop. Later when he was a high-school student in the United Kingdom, he was inspired by a wonderful woodwork teacher who also ran a school kayaking club that Andy was part of. "I thought my teacher had a pretty cool job of teaching woodwork during the day and kayaking in the evening, so that was when I decided to become a teacher. During that time, I also became interested in building fibreglass boats and kayaks that I would use on the water."

After graduating from high-school, he attended Brunel University in West London to study Design Technology. His first teaching job was at a high-school near Oxford, where he taught shop classes along with Graphics and Electronics. Three years later he was looking for some adventure, so he ended up taking a position teaching Design Technology (mainly electronics) at United World College of South East Asia in Singapore. As it turned out, Andy loved his teaching job in Singapore so he stayed on for 15 more years before leaving for Canada. While in Singapore he met his lovely wife, Mary and together they travelled extensively in Asia, Africa and Europe. Andy and Mary both love travelling, as they feel it exposes them to different cultures and makes them appreciate what they have. According to Andy, "Travelling is one of the best educations you can get." The picture above features Andy on a trip to Malaysia, enjoying eating a banana leaf curry with his hands.

Wanting to give something back, Andy and Mary have travelled to Cambodia ten times over the years to participate in a Non-Government Organization called "Tabitha" which works with the poorest of the poor in that country. During their trips to Cambodia, they helped build homes, improve water supply systems and supported cottage industry. They continue fundraising efforts for Tabitha.

Andy and Mary came to Powell River in 2004 after visiting Mary's sister who lives here. Since coming to Powell River, Andy has taught Middle School Math/Science and Shops at Oceanview and Brooks. It is no surprise that Andy's favourite subject to teach is Woodwork. "I get so much satisfaction from seeing the beautiful projects that the students make." Andy feels this past COVID year has been challenging and said, "Because of having to work within different cohorts and the students not having access to a wide range of activities and electives but we are getting through it." He has enjoyed teaching Math and Science this year to Grade 9's, but he is looking forward to getting back into the woodshop next year so that he can continue his passion.

Andy is a soccer (his beloved Chelsea have just become champions of Europe) and motor racing fanatic and also loves downhill skiing and hiking.

Future plans include reconnecting with his family overseas when it safe to do so, and travelling to Peru and Chile in South America.

Andy's humanitarian efforts along with his classroom teaching, helps him build dreams for many people.

