

Peel Brio

# Parent volunteer awarded for feeding young minds

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MN March 11, 2011

Eunice Peterson is an easy-going person.

But she doesn't joke around when it comes to education.

A parent volunteer at Malton schools over the past 10 years, Peterson is a firm believer in helping students stay on the right path.

Peterson believes that you can't feed a healthy mind on an empty stomach.

That's why she works so hard to provide healthy eating opportunities for students in the surrounding community.

A resident of Malton for the past 20 years, Peterson, 57, received the Helen des Roches Starfish Award on Tuesday during a special assembly in the gym at Morning Star Middle School.

Presented annually by the Peel District School Board's social workers, the award, now in its 12 year, is given to an individual who has made a significant difference in the lives of students who are facing obstacles in obtaining an education.

The award is named after the board's first chief social worker and the winner is announced during National Social Work Week to recognize someone in the school community, other than a social worker, who is making a difference.

Peel District School Board chief

social worker Jim Van Buskirk says Peterson is most deserving of this award for her "remarkable commitment to supporting students and families in the Malton community."

"She is a leader on various community initiatives, believing if you want to live in a good community then you have to give back to that community," he said, adding that Peterson understands that, in order to be ready to learn and stay focused throughout the school day, students must have proper nourishment.

Peterson prepares lunches for students everyday in Morning Star Middle School's kitchen.

She also takes on other roles at the school, including working as a lunch room supervisor, a mentor for children and a school council member.

Outside of the school, she's been helping newcomer families with their settlement needs.

She's served as a volunteer with Peel Health, Malton Neighbourhood Services and the Malton Black Development Association.

Peterson said she's humbled to receive the award for something that she loves to do to.

She says she loves being the mother of a 15-year-old daughter and volunteering in the school has provided her with 700 more children to love.



Eunice Peterson (right) received the prestigious Helen Des Roches Starfish Award for her work with students at Morning Star Middle School. Shaidah Williams presented flowers on behalf of the students.

Staff photo by Fred Loek

"Listening is the key (to getting through to the children)," she said. "I listen to them, I give them respect and in return they give me respect. I love them and in return

they give me love."

Peterson says giving back to Malton is important to her.

"I look at Malton and I see it's so unique," she said. "It reminds me of

my hometown in Jamaica. All my neighbours watch out for me. I can communicate with my neighbours, no matter where they're from."

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