

local news

▼ EDUCATION

Spanish language preschool sparks a new venture

Ileana Reyes had been embracing the idea of becoming a teacher of young children for several years prior to actually commencing the journey as a preschool teacher at the Westhill Institute in Mexico City, her birthplace.

Under the leadership of dedicated principal Laura Collazo, Ileana adopted the skills and commitment that she brought along in her visit to Canada approximately four years ago as a tourist exploring the potential of Canada.

Little did she know that she would discover a French-Canadian gentleman who was also vacationing on the west coast who would inspire love in her heart and, as they say, the rest is history.

Her husband Georges and Ileana settled for a few years in Peachland, where Georges was a mine manager until the seed of entrepreneurial cre-

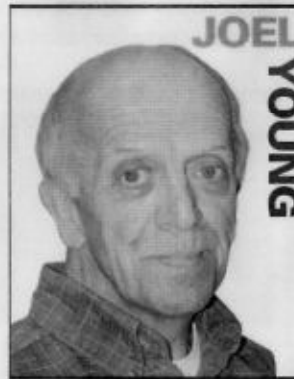
ation took root.

The couple had spoken over the dinner table about creating a preschool for a time and Georges told me over coffee that he could see the longing in his wife's eyes to begin her "dream".

With a larger population base to draw from for the early age preschoolers, the couple moved to the Westside on a wonderful piece of property that has their home and an adjacent building that was a hair salon.

They moved to the location on Boucherie Rd on June 23, 2007 and had an objective of opening the preschool in time for September, 2007 at the beginning of the traditional school year.

Ileana remarked that it has been a rather hectic time for Georges and herself since moving to the Okanagan. Ileana started her Early Childhood certificate program with



JOEL
YOUNG

Entrepreneurial Spirit

.....

the idea of offering Spanish lessons because, as she shared with me, in her early residency in Canada, she identified an entrepreneurial "opportunity" when she observed that young preschool children had a natural ability to learn languages. Teaching a foreign language to preschoolers was a virtually untapped po-

tential that she believed could be the exact venture path that she wished to follow where she could both enjoy teaching the children she loved and offer a cultural language gift of her native Spanish to them as well.

Ileana enjoyed a wonderful pathway to complete her early childhood training practicum from the people that opened their child care centers to her for such experience. The Westbank Boys and Girls Club, Archangels Centre and TLC for Kids were three centres which made a tremendous difference in Ileana's personal advancement as she honed her teaching style and enriched her personal life in the performance of working with the children of these centres.

After the new property was purchased, Georges's and Ileana's two children from a previous marriage all pitched in to complete the renovations for the launch of the new facility. The personally triumphant moments for Ileana came when she officially obtained her licence to open the school about one week before opening Mi Escuelita Preschool in Lakeview Heights on the Westside.

Both Ileana and Georges are admitted perfectionists who share the Preschool responsibilities with Ileana focussing on the teaching materials, the curriculum, the programs, the toys and the children. Georges jumps in with primarily the administrative functions and repair and maintenance if required. Ileana emphasizes that the relative newlyweds complement each other both personally and professionally.

Now, just in case you think that this new immigrant entrepreneur is only a preschool teacher, let me set the record straight.

For the third time in less than one year, I have had the privilege of meeting talented female athletes and Ileana is certainly one of them. She was on the national kayaking team of Mexico, competed in nine triathlons and completed an Ironman in 1999. Thus, her determination and commitment to creating her first entrepreneurial venture through the Mi Escuelita Preschool development was absolutely no surprise to this columnist.

I talked with the couple about what the future might bring in offering Spanish lan-

guage teaching and Ileana suggested she has begun some investigation in teaching both mothers and toddlers together and maybe later on, adults and children together. These thoughts have come about through the expressions of interest directly from the parents themselves.

Who should try to become entrepreneurial I quickly asked as I was moving to the doorway sated with delicious Columbia coffee. Ileana remarked that "anyone who wants personal change can become an entrepreneur. It requires hard work with risks, planning and an abundance of self-discipline. But the reward is immeasurable."

For any readers that may become intrigued by this innovative preschool concept to teach Spanish to early age children, you may contact Ileana at miescuelita@telus.net and she will be please to share her program information with you. Internationally, both culturally and linguistically, right in our back yard. *Gratias mi amigos. (did I get it right Ileana?)*

Joel Young is an entrepreneurship coach, educator and consultant.

eagleyoung@shaw.ca