

Farewell, and thank you!

By Wendy Gabrek

Dear Times readers:

Last week's paper (Jan. 14) was my final edition as editor of this newspaper.

I have chosen to step down from my position at The Times to pursue a different career path in marketing.

The decision to change jobs was a difficult one, and something I take very seriously. I spent countless hours in personal reflection, looking at all angles of the transition, but ultimately, I felt it was the right thing to do for myself and my family.

I have worked for 11 years at this publication, and my journey began after answering a classified ad looking for a photographer.

I started at The Times in July of 2005. Bruce Haire, editor emeritus, hired me to cover Tottenham Community Week happenings. He was headed out east on vacation, and told me, "not to screw up his newspaper?" while he was away. That assignment led to another, and after a while I quit my other part-time job, accepting a position at The Times as staff reporter.

In the early days, I did a lot of "fluffy pieces," while Bruce continued to cover council and report the hard news.

Knowing that he would eventually step down as editor due to illness, Bruce began to groom me for the takeover, giving me more responsibility and turning council coverage over to me.

Five years ago, the paper was sold by Bruce and John Archibald, his partner, and the new owners kept me on.

Bruce then retired, and went on to become a councillor in Ward 7, Tottenham.

I became the editor of The Times, and for a short period of time, at the Innisfil Scope as well "one of our neighbouring papers," purchased by the same new owner.

Soon after that, I was named editor at the Shelburne Free Press, and my days became very busy, very fast.

The Scope was sold, and I remained on as editor at the two remaining publications.

Staff came and went, and for The Times, I knew my best efforts were in community reporting. So even though we've had reporters in the past, I remained "on the beat" covering events myself.

I am not, nor have I ever claimed to be, a sophisticated writer. Those of you who have read the paper over the years, and followed its many transitions, will note that my strength is in getting out there, volunteering my time, and contributing to the community I live in and love. Not spelling or grammar.

Over the past 11 years I have learned many things. I now know how municipal politics work; I know the people that I share my community with, including our leaders and those whose stories have touched us all; and I know more about myself, who I am, what I want, and how much I have to be grateful for.

I have ignored the nay-sayers and negative, and pushed through to produce a product each week that I feel proud of. It's not easy to have your work critiqued by thousands every month!

Late last year, I was at an event for the town. A conversation started between Eric Vant Spyker, general manager at Trillium Ford Lincoln Alliston, and myself. He was without a marketing coordinator, and I hadn't had a full weekend off in over a decade.

Talks turned to contracts, and a fork appeared in my career path.

After deliberating the idea with my husband, I decided to take the leap, trusting that the universe had my back, and believing I was making the right choice changing careers.

Being the editor at a newspaper is more than a job, it's an identity. My self-esteem, worthiness and notoriety has been tied to my position for many years, and I was afraid that letting go of that would have me fade into the background. My higher self beat out my ego, however, and when I sent my resignation letter to the owner, in tears, I knew I had made the right decision.

I still know I have made the right choice, and I look forward to the challenges ahead.

Taking a leap of faith is not something I've done in my adult life "other than marrying my husband in 2013" and I feel brave and in control of my destiny for the first time in a long time.

I look forward to the challenges and rewards my new position will bring, but I will always look back on my time as an editor as one of the best times of my life. The skills I have learned, through public trial and error, have made me who I am today and I am confident that it's enough to take with me into the world.

To all of my readers, thank you for your patronage, caring, love, acceptance, and for allowing me to be a part of your weekly routine. I will miss knowing you in this capacity, but look forward to knowing you as just Wendy, not the editor at The Times.

Mark Pavilons, our editor at the King Weekly Sentinel, will be taking over from here. Please send your comments, story ideas, and letters to him at: newtectimeseditorial@gmail.com

Mark has been part of our team for many years too, and knows that the community of New Tecumseth, his neighbour, requires much

love.

As for me, I will be staying on at The Times for the time being, as a freelance reporter. I will continue to cover council and community events at Mark's request. So, I'll still be around ...

Thank you to my reporters in New Tec and Shelburne ? Brian Lockhart, Richard Blanchard, Marni Walsh, and Michelle Janzen for your dedication. To my support staff: Lisa Clendening, John Speziali, Debbie Freeman, and my cutie pie, Annette Derraugh, know I appreciate everything. I will not let go of our personal relationships.

In the future, my show will return to Rogers Channel 65 this spring, with a new twist. And in 2018 I plan to run for municipal council myself.

I am most grateful for having had this experience and I thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart for the contributions you've made to my life, as I've shared your personal stories.

Take good care, be well, and remember to give thanks daily for all of your blessings.