

People



Joyce Helweg, Rosehip Award Winner



Singers Tony Bennett and Ambur Braid

This Spring, Notary **Joyce Helweg** received the Rosehip Award, given to outstanding women in the community of Fort St. James, BC.

Chris Shepherd, staff reporter of the *Caledonia Courier* (www.caledoniacourier.com), recently wrote an article about Joyce. The following information comes from that piece.

Because of Joyce's special efforts, books are travelling thousands of kilometres between the communities of Puerto Vallarta and Fort St. James. With the help of friends and family, Joyce has helped expand the Puerto Vallarta library's collection of books.

Joyce has learned a lot from reading—including carpentry, wood lot management, wiring, and sewing hay bales together—and she wants others to have the same opportunity. Her mother **Vivian Miller** was one of the area's first librarians. Joyce recalls boxes of books arriving from the library in Prince George. "I remember people coming to our home to borrow them. We had shelves full of books. I had all the reading I wanted at my fingertips," she says. "I took it for granted that everyone had lots of books to read."

Decades later, at a children's literature course, she met a man from Vietnam who had not had access to books growing up. "That was an

eye-opener. It sparked my interest in libraries."

Whenever Joyce travelled, she made a point of visiting the library. In 1996, the Puerto Vallarta library was new and spacious but its shelves weren't full. The librarian told Joyce they were having trouble getting books from outside Mexico. They would order them, but the books would not get past the border.

Touched by the librarian's plight, Joyce asked if there was a way she could help get books into that library. Because tourists can take books into a foreign country, the librarian suggested that Joyce leave behind any books she did not want to take home, along with a note asking the hotel maid to call the librarian to pick up the books.

The system has worked well. Joyce has been able to send many books and an entire set of encyclopaediae to Mexico via friends. This Spring, two of Joyce's grandchildren carried books with them to libraries to Mexico.

The system can work anywhere. Joyce encourages travellers to leave books behind for local libraries.

"Sharing books is important. I would like others to have the opportunity to learn from books, as I love to do."

Wayne Braid's daughter **Ambur Braid** recently competed in the finals of the largest opera vocal competition in the Eastern USA. She was 1 of 7 finalists in a field of 300 contestants and performed at the Gala event with the Palm Beach Orchestra.

Selected as one of the winning competitors, Ambur earned US\$4000.00 in prize money and an interview with the manager of the Metropolitan Opera; they are already booking her for future appearances.

After receiving offers from four schools, Ambur will move to San Francisco this Fall to study for her Master's degree in Music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music on a significant scholarship.

She recently opened for **Tony Bennett** at his fundraising musical event in Toronto on May 29.

Impressive achievements for a person not yet 24! ▲

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