

**R**emember the school reports you used to get when you were a child? Remember those once-or-twice-a-year score cards on which teachers used to grade your progress (or lack of it)? Remember taking them home to your parents, knowing (if the results weren't good) that you would face the music? Well, here's what Grapevine's school report for the past few months might look like ...

## SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

### Student Report Card

STUDENT: Grapevine Magazine

TERM: Winter 2009

SUBJECT	TEACHER'S COMMENTS	Grade
Reading	Very good. Enjoys a wide range of books and articles. Shows interest.	A
Writing	Excellent. Has a good vocab and a bright creative style. Continues to make real progress. A promising student whose output is well above average. Should go far.	A
Arithmetic	Disappointing result. Poor performance over winter. Inconsistent and erratic: up one month, down the next. Lacks focus and gets easily distracted. Can do LOTS better! Must catch up during the spring term. Requires much greater effort. Needs help.	D
Art & Crafts	Excellent. Displays very high standards and a willingness to learn.	A
General Behaviour	Popular. Well liked by almost everyone. Only very minor complaints.	A
Attendance	100%.	A
Punctuality	Never late. Turns up right on time once each quarter.	A
General Remarks	This student contributes well. Tries hard to be positive and helpful. Always fun to be around, but sensitive to the hurts and headaches of others. Takes obvious pleasure in extending encouragement and giving classmates a 'LIFT'. Mature, friendly and much appreciated.	A

**I**N READING AND WRITING, I RECKON GRAPEVINE would score well – maybe even ‘A’s. But arithmetic (today they call it maths) we’ve got the teacher sounding like some of my teachers used to sound: “Disappointing result. Poor performance over winter. Inconsistent and erratic: up one month, down the next. Lacks focus and gets easily distracted. Can do LOTS better!”

And the grade? An embarrassing ‘D’ ...

I thought about this the other day. While searching through some old files, my wife had come across some even older school reports – mine and hers. And these ancient documents gave us an excuse to wander briefly down memory lane, share a few stories and enjoy a few giggles.

But it occurred to me later that there are parallels with Grapevine ...

It’s no exaggeration to report that the past few months HAVE been difficult for Grapevine’s ‘arithmetic’ department. Our income through winter has been up and down ... but mostly DOWN. And okay, that’s not surprising – given the recession, and the belt-tightening that’s been forced on most people, and the downturn many charitable organisations have experienced in their giving.

But Grapevine’s down an alarming \$34,000 in general donations. We dropped \$12,000 (ouch!) in July alone! And that shortfall (gulp!) is rather serious. Because, despite the fact that Sponsorship dollars now cover the magazine’s big print and delivery costs, we still rely on DONATIONS (from Update and general fundraising activities) to meet production costs, wages, promotions, etc.

I HATE writing bad-news newsletters. They remind me of Grapevine’s early years, when we used to lurch from one financial crisis to another ... barely scraping through ... month after month after painful month.

We’ve left those years behind, thankfully. But it HAS been a very quiet winter on Grapevine’s donation-front ... and like our report-card says: “Must catch up during the spring term. Requires greater effort. Needs help.”

**t**HERE’S STILL PLENTY OF GOOD NEWS, BY THE way. It’s no exaggeration to report that we’re scoring high in most other areas. And our colourful, hopeful, fun-filled magazine is truly “Well liked by almost everyone.” Just check our mail-bag ...

VICKY emailed us recently: *“I saw your little magazine in a Christchurch café. They had it on the table we were at. So I had a squizz through – and it was excellent, thank you! Some of the pull-out quotes really spoke to me, and I felt so inspired I wanted to sign up as a sponsor so others could receive it too.”*

YVETTE wrote: *“I’ve just read your ‘Beating the Budget Blues’ newsletter, and thoroughly enjoyed your spin on it.”* She went to share what she called “some positive recession-busting stories” and

explained: *“You hear so many negative stories these days, I just felt to pass on some positive stuff that’s happening for me and family/friends during this tough time. God is bigger than all of us, the economy, the world. He hasn’t promised us an easy ride, but if we buckle down, trust him, and try to bless as many people as we can on the way, we’ll come out right eh!”*

BILL expressed something we hear often: *“It’s so exciting to get the feedback and to know that we are making a difference!”*

And KIM delighted us with her recent report, after she’d handed out copies of our latest edition ‘Three Weddings & Three Funerals’: *“I’ve been stunned at how many corners Grapevine gets into. As I’ve passed out our spare mags, people have been excited to know it’s still going! Lots of them remember it, used to love reading it, and are thrilled to know it is still out there!”*

*“I must admit I was excited to rediscover Grapevine. We got it from day one, until the late 90’s when it stopped coming to our street. I loved reading it, and I belonged to that cartoon club with Twerp – it was the only club Mum would let me join as a kid! I think I learnt more from your magazine when I was growing up than I did from anything else, and it’s great to be putting what I’ve learnt back into my own family now. So thank you!”*

And today as you read these words another powerful edition is being printed → →



**R**IGHT NOW, WE URGENTLY NEED TO MAKE UP that \$34,000 ... and I’m hoping you’ll help us.

Maybe one generous supporter will decide to invest \$34,000 ... or 34 generous supporters will choose to donate \$1000 each ... or 340 generous supporters will gladly give \$100 each. (See what I mean – it’s DO-ABLE!)

But this is not just about money, eh. It’s about putting Grapevine into the hands of couples whose marriages have gone stale ... parents who are at war with their kids ... grandparents who’ve lost hope ... and young people who are just getting started in this business of being a family.

Please act quickly, so Grapevine can get on doing what Grapevine does best. Please send a GENEROUS DOUBLE-SIZED SPRING-TIME DONATION.

And please accept my thanks in advance.

(JOHN COONEY – FOUNDER/EDITOR)

