

## *Gretchen Dunn, Kindergarten Teacher at Mont Vernon Village School*



Trying to write a feature on our inimitable, Gretchen Dunn, is a good deal more challenging than one might imagine. At least the way I planned to write it. I envisioned settling down for a nice chat with this larger than life presence that has been the head gardener in the creative growing niche of life known as Kindergarten at Mont Vernon Village School. But that didn't happen: that woman is on the GO!

Throughout the years one iconic vision endures. The kids call her Mrs. One- Hundred Days. The name refers to the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school, a turn the tables bit of fun celebrated at the school by having Mrs. One- Hundred Days visiting each and every class in the school. A February 2002 article from a local paper captured this apparition perfectly:

*Decked out in a mink coat and pink marabou over her great aunt's floral duster, Mrs. One- Hundred Days floats through the classroom, disrupting organized routines and shocking newly enrolled students.*

It's not just that she has this mirthful, zany thing going on that makes Mrs. Dunn such a treasure. There's so much more.

Most of us fondly recall making pictures and stretching our creative wings under the tutelage and encouragement of a kindergarten teacher. But how many of us can recall drawing pictures of presidential candidates?



During the 2004 presidential campaign, Kindergartners at the Village School were busy drawing pictures of the candidates. Representative Dennis Kucinich of Ohio, even visited the class on October 28, 2003, providing a great experience not only for the Kindergartners, but the whole school!

As I mentioned at the beginning of this piece, gaining access to this energetic educator can be difficult. As we begin a second decade of kindergarten at the Village School, December can be a difficult time to gain an audience with Mrs. Dunn as she is, (in addition to all the marvelous daily activities and lessons of a 'typical' Kindergarten day), deep in leading rehearsals for the always much anticipated Christmas Play. These plays are conceived, written, directed and given life through her affinity for taking a small mob of wee folk and turning them into a troupe of tiny thespians. Each year brings a new play and a new troupe, but we never doubt that a splendid time is guaranteed for all.