

A man with short brown hair, smiling broadly, is sitting outdoors. He is wearing a dark blue polo shirt with light blue horizontal stripes and khaki shorts. He is giving a thumbs-up with his right hand. The background is a lush green hedge.

Mr. Burlington

There's No Place Like Home...

by Adrienne Roman

Passionate people fuel the world. They just emanate a certain magnetism. You can feel the energy in the air. With genuine intention anything is possible. Just ask Dorothy in Kansas - she knows. She accomplished a goal that she thought was virtually impossible, only to realize in the end that she had the tools to succeed within her all along. For one Burlington advocate, the courage to step outside the box in pursuit of adventure has catapulted him into a brave new world.

Trent Schwartz wasn't looking for the spotlight, or anticipating any fanfare. What he did want was change. Frustrated by feelings of inactivity and indifference he vowed to abandon his daily routine in favour of something a little more exciting. Families often fall victim to the stagnation of video game addiction and endless hours of television, but this wasn't the way Mr. Burlington wanted to roll. He knew that there was, "Life on the other side of the screen" and decided to find it. Of course there were the ever-so-popular events we've all come to appreciate, Sound of Music, Ribfest, but this venture was urging him to explore uncharted

territory. Mr. Burlington wanted to do something innovative. "It came to me while I was driving" he quipped with a grin, "I wanted to encapsulate the experience of life's local adventures."

On New Year's Eve 2012, Mr. and Mrs. Burlington and their two mini Burlington's set out on a mission, to spend 2013 living 100 different homegrown adventures, with a promise to document the entire journey. "Many of us have that bucket list of grand adventures in far off places that we plan to check off one day, but those dreams are often delayed because real life kicks in. There are so many places to explore right here at home that often go undiscovered" he says.

He wasn't going to let real life stop him; he was going to *really* live.

What he didn't anticipate was the multitude of interesting people he would meet along the way. "Seeing the passion that Burlington residents put into what they do has been the best part of this journey!" He says. Seniors, volunteers, entrepreneurs, or environmental crusaders, he's truly enjoying meeting them all. Trent discovered a new found appreciation

for all the people who work diligently behind the scenes, often for free, to ensure that their programs and events run smoothly from start to finish. There are countless committees and organizations with dedicated workers who simply glow with a genuine passion for what they do.

One of these organizations was Nemo 7G, a committee formed to develop and support a proactive generational plan for the future preservation and education of the Mount Nemo Plateau. Mr. Burlington's Adventure # 38 took place on Mount Nemo Day, when admission to the public is free once a year. Five kilometers of lush hiking trails provide stunning views from atop the limestone cliffs, and soaring turkey vultures glide overhead as you make your way along the winding forest trails—a definite must-see.

If you're fit and fearless, brave bunches of climbers also converge on Mount Nemo, eager to conquer their fears. With route names like "Fat Man's Honor" and "I Owe a Lot of Money to a Guy Named Guido" you'll be sure to get a laugh just reading the map.

Adventure # 26 gave Mr. Burlington and his family an inside look at the Burlington Teen Tour band, Canada's oldest and largest youth marching band.

"I wanted to encapsulate the experience of life's local adventures."

They sat in on a rehearsal at the Burlington Music Centre, and went on a personal guided tour, hosted by the band's passionate ambassador, Chris Harrison, Senior Drum Major. Chris's animated stories succeeded in bringing the band's colourful sixty-six year history to life. The family also went on a special tour of the mini-museum, filled to the brim with mementos of their incredible travels as award-winning musicians representing Burlington around the globe.

Thanks to resources supplied by the Burlington Historical Society, Adventure #23 took them downtown on a walking tour published by Heritage Burlington. They visited a number of impressive heritage properties, including a gingerbread house with a window in the chimney, and stopped in at the Lakeshore Coffee Shop,

once the home to Vaudeville style stage shows.

Mr. Burlington enjoyed reading about the interesting history behind the Queen's Head Pub at the corner of Elgin

and Brant, a striking three-story brick house that has continuously operated as a tavern since it opened in 1860. Once upon a time it was called The Queen's Hotel, and was a radial line stop for the electric streetcars that ran from Hamilton to Burlington and Oakville.

Adventure #9 was a particularly memorable one for the family, taking them snowshoeing MEC-style along the Bruce Trail; Canada's oldest and longest footpath. It's maintained by thousands of volunteers dedicated to upholding its successful land conservation efforts. Also connected to the Bruce Trail is Kerncliff Park, beside the Niagara Escarpment, the original site of the Nelson Quarry. It's now been transformed into a peaceful place to escape. With outstanding views of our city and Lake Ontario, it's no wonder it's a favourite spot. You can wander aimlessly through the deciduous forest or watch for wildlife along the wetland boardwalks.

With Adventure #50 recently completed there's no stopping this train. The countdown to #100 is on! They're relishing the new found connection with their community and taking it all in day by day. Of course with anything worthwhile there's always a few bumps in the road. Luckily Mr. Burlington can rely on his sense of humour to get through the rough patches. "I don't know if you've ever tried a long hike with a toddler and a chatty six year old in tow, but let's just say it's not quick going!" he says. A little comic relief along the way is always a welcome bonus.

Life often comes full circle. Mr. Burlington met his wife at Walt Disney World, a magical place

Mr. and Mrs. Burlington at Epcot
Photo courtesy of Mr. Burlington



where dreams can come true and happily ever after is a way of life. What a place to fall in love. They were working together making Beavertails in the Canada Pavilion at Epcot. As Canadian Ambassadors their job entailed helping tourists to learn more about Canada, shattering stereotypical images of igloos and dogsleds, and answering unrelenting questions about the popularity of our favorite word- "eh".

Today he's once again facilitating the same genuine connections. Only this time it's closer to home, enabling a real-life introduction to the incredible amount of undiscovered beauty and adventure that can be found in Burlington and the surrounding areas. He was tired of constantly hearing, "I wish I'd known about that." He wanted live action, taking the experiences we peruse on a page in the newspaper and transforming them into reality. How clever. With a growing following of almost five thousand friends on Facebook, and one thousand on Twitter, word is on the street-literally. He's still getting used to people stopping him in the strangest of places. Luckily for his fans he's all smiles and doesn't mind posing for a picture. "Everyone has a story" he says, "I like hearing about them all." With his friendly face and an easy-going swagger it's no wonder people are gravitating in his general direction. He's one of the good guys.

Mr. Burlington is following his heart, expanding his social circle, and inviting others to hop aboard. He's discovered the true essence of living, taking the time to fully experience life's moments in the now as they unfold. Living isn't a dress rehearsal, it's the main act, and we only have one shot at it. He's aware that the most insightful outcomes often stem from





Mr. Burlington on his 50th adventure on Canada Day, 2013

the simplest of experiences, and he's simultaneously succeeding in bringing attention to a number of important issues. Boldly promoting his city has also allowed him the opportunity to participate in a number of community events, such as being the Keynote Speaker for the Burlington's Best Awards Committee in May 2013.

Mr. Burlington proves that our capabilities are truly without limit. What we dare to dream we can just as easily make happen. It's that simple. It's a process of choice, of taking something in from the outside, bringing it into your life, and making it into something new. The foundations for change are ultimately constructed by the voices of those who choose to be heard. Serendipitous events occur in mysterious ways when we let it go and let it be. Magical things do happen, and not just at Disney.

Mr. Burlington is living, breathing proof of that. Dorothy in Kansas knows the secret too. Every life is a journey of self, and, "There's no place like home."®

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