

by Nancy Derrer

Marmora – What does having a degree in English language and literature from a Hungarian University, being a bank teller in Toronto for a year, studying and then teaching computer programming at Seneca College have to do with teaching violin in Northumberland? On the

surface, not a lot but it's the route Gabriella Hamley took before arriving in the Marmora area in 1984 and taking up residence on 100 acres on Iron Bridge Road with her husband Peter Hamley.

"I always played violin," Gabriella explained in an interview at the Marmora Herald office this week, "having begun to study violin at the age of six. When people here found out, they asked if I would teach their children. I completed my Royal Conservatory ARCT qualifi-

cations as a violin teacher and starting teaching my neighbours' children in 1985."

She also credits joining St. Andrew's United Church as a turning point in her life. "In joining the church, I immediately had 100 friends!" And, when a second violin teacher, who taught violin by the famous Suzuki method, left the area, Mrs. Hamley was ready and willing to step in.

"The idea of children playing the violin together in



Gabriella Hamley.

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r groups from the very start
y is the Suzuki method,
n involving the whole fam-
ily in the learning process.”

t. Dr. Suzuk's genius popu-
s larized violin teaching to a
n level never before achieved.
- His slogan is 'Every child has
” talent'. He introduced fun
n and games that help students
y through the difficulties, mak-
l, ing the long, difficult road to
y violin playing accessible to
p everyone, she explained.

n And so, three years after
n moving to the area, she 'in-
herited' the students of a
Suzuki teacher who was
leaving the area. The stu-
dents take weekly individual
lessons and monthly group
lessons. Families go to les-
sons together, listen to mu-
sic together, and many par-
ents buy an instrument for
themselves to play along with
their child.

“Playing with a group
doesn't scare children off
and it works because the
parents are fully involved;
they learn everything the
child learns and become the
teacher. Music lessons give
parents a unique chance to
be close to their children, not
just to watch but to share the
daily pleasure and excite-
ment, as well as the difficul-
ties and pains that are part
of learning.” In all, she has
55 students.

Mrs. Hamley teaches
three groups: St. Andrew's
Strings is for beginners; Stir-
ling Singing Strings is com-
prised of those at the inter-
mediate level and the ad-
vanced group can play with
the Quinte Youth Orchestra
of which Mrs. Hamley is the
former conductor. For
adults, there is the Carpe
Diem Ensemble of which
Mrs. Hamley is a member.
Lessons take place in space

arranged by through the
churches: St. Andrew's
United Church in Marmora;
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church in Stirling and one in
Belleville. In Peterborough,
Mrs. Hamley teaches stu-
dents at the Peterborough
Symphony facility and, as
well, is Principle Second Vio-
lin with the symphony. She
is also an 'extra' with the
Quinte Symphony Orches-
tra.

From Monday to Thurs-
day during the school year,
Mrs. Hamley travels to
Belleville, Stirling or Mar-
mora, teaching from 1pm to
9pm each day. On Fridays,
a few students come to her
house for lessons. Over the
years, one student has gone
on to become a professional
viola player, one has entered
McGill University's music
program majoring in violin,
one 10 year old, she feels,
has the potential to become
a concert violinist, and one
is now a violin teacher in
Orillia. A few of her students
also study piano, band in-
struments and voice.

Many of her students will
participate in the Stirling Fes-
tival of Sacred Praise at the
end of the month; there are
50 violin entries in the com-
petition, almost all are Mrs.
Hamley's students but she
tries to de-emphasize the
competition aspect in favour
of learning orchestrated
four-part music. And she is
delighted that a local dress-
maker, Elke Wegner, has of-
fered to make unisex red
gabardine vests for the stu-
dents participating in the
Festival; their parents will
supply the fabric. Combined
with white shirts and dark
trousers or skirts, they'll
make a fine impression on
the adjudicators!