

## CDDHS graduate sworn in as Ontario Court Judge

Written By MARNI WALSH

Centre Dufferin District High School graduate, Valerie Leigh Brown, was recently sworn in as a judge in the Ontario Court of Justice. Raised in Mansfield with her two siblings, Valerie is the daughter of Gary (deceased) and Ruth Brown.

Valerie attended Mulmur Mono Public School and graduated from CDDHS with Honours in 1993. She was the recipient of the Debbie Matthews Memorial Award for Music and received the School Letter for Activities.

Valerie's mother, Ruth Brown says, 'Valerie's aspirations for a legal career were known early on, and she remembers when her English teacher, Mr. Dryburgh gave her a 'word of the day' calendar excerpt with the legal phrase 'prima facie', which she kept for several years.'

Ruth Brown told the Free Press that Valerie attended McMaster University from 1993 to 1997, graduating with an Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology. She then attended the Faculty of Law at the University of Western, Ontario from 1998 to 2001 and was called to the bar in 2002.

'Valerie then established her own Law Firm focusing on Family Law and appeared in court on family matters in York and Simcoe County and in all levels of Ontario Courts,' says Mrs. Brown. Subsequently, Valerie served as a panel lawyer with the office of Children's Lawyer and as a dispute resolution officer in Newmarket and Barrie. She also served on numerous committees and as President of the York Region Law Association, Family Law Chair for the Federation of Ontario Law Associations.

Mrs. Brown says, 'Valerie credits being raised in the small community of Mansfield, with an emphasis on community involvement as the foundation for her career choice.' She says her daughter put an emphasis on the more vulnerable in society as a children's lawyer and assisted others through Legal Aid Certificates.

The Honourable Justice Valerie Leigh Brown will preside over Criminal and Family Court matters in Owen Sound, Walkerton and Goderich with Chambers in Owen Sound.

'Valerie continues to make her family very proud,' says her mother. 'I'm proud of her, her work ethics and her achievements.' Mrs. Brown says, 'Valerie realizes that hard work and perseverance definitely do pay off. She continues to try to serve, but in a different role, and is happy to have been welcomed to her new position by a very friendly and supportive group of colleagues.'