

# Family Man First

By Royden Potvin  
Thunder Bay Ventures

When I first approached Bob Vander Ploeg with the idea of profiling him as one of our 'Everyday Heroes', he was silent for a moment, taken aback at the request, then said that he was flattered. When I met him to discuss this write-up, in true Bob modesty, he said that he had had second thoughts but was agreeable because he was supportive of our objective of celebrating local people who make a difference in our community but get little public acknowledgement. That is the essence of who Bob Vander Ploeg is, a solid community member who contributes to his family and community and makes Thunder Bay the positive City it is.

Anyone who knows Bob Vander Ploeg knows that he has a good sense of what is important to him in life. First is his family, then everything else; his job, friends and community all rate behind his concern and care for his family. Don't get me wrong, Bob has lots of interests and is good at many things, but he is a man who knows his priorities in life, and those are with his family first.

Bob is married to Lori and they have 3 teenaged boys - a handful for any couple. Bob and Lori go about raising their family and caring for their community with quiet confidence.

Bob has lived in many parts of Ontario from the far South (he was born in London) to the far North (his family lived a couple years in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation Big Trout Lake, where his Dad taught school). But Bob considers that he is from Geraldton where he went through most of his grade school and highschool. After leaving Geraldton for employment within the Silviculture industry across Northern Ontario and a time at Lakehead University, he chose to settle and live in Thunder Bay.

He has been a firefighter with the City of Thunder Bay for about 15 years now and Lori is a nurse at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Bob is



Bob Vander Ploeg

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involved with his boys' many activities, and also finds time to give back to Thunder Bay in many ways. Bob is an elder in his church and does the mundane things like mowing the lawn to keep the property in respectable order. Someone does these things and Bob is one of them who does.

As a member of the Thunder Bay Firefighters Association, he has been the volunteer Chairman for the Toys for Tots campaign for many years. This is an annual fund raiser for needy children and involves a lot of work and a significant time commitment to see good things done for the less fortunate in our City. In addition, Bob has organized a team from the Firefighters Association to be involved in support for literacy, through Idea Quest, a project for literacy by the Friends of the Public Library and run by the Thunder Bay Public Library. Appropriately the firefighters' team several years ago was called 'the hosers' and were a great hit with their participation. Anyone who has been to 'Definition Quest' will know how good that team was.

Bob Vander Ploeg is definitely an "Everyday Hero".

*Everyday Heroes is a community initiative by Thunder Bay Ventures. Everywhere there are people living, working, playing and contributing to the fabric of our city. Nominate a hero - [heroes@thunderbayventures.com](mailto:heroes@thunderbayventures.com). Read about past heroes at [www.thunderbayventures.com](http://www.thunderbayventures.com)*