

survey of about 200 students on the topic of dieting. She asks for input on the list of proposed questions.

Two other regulars report that they've been successful in getting a local coffee shop employee to stop harassing young female patrons.

"The guy was brushing by you, making sexual gestures, and being very vulgar," says one girl. "We wrote a letter to the manager and it's stopped."

"It makes me so mad when people say we don't need feminism any more!" fumes Penelope.

Another girl talks about an abusive relationship she was in. The case went to court and her ex-boyfriend pleaded guilty. Going public paid off, she says. "Don't be intimidated."

The hour-and-a-half meeting is winding down. Kate stays behind after almost everyone leaves to stress how comfortable she feels being an openly pro-life member of the coalition. To be able to speak out and be accepted as a feminist "was a landmark for me."

"I see a lot of low self-esteem," she

says. "Girls need a place where they can support and educate each other."

"The classroom can be a really hostile place," she adds. "Boys dominate the classroom still. I know a lot of girls who are afraid of looking like a stupid girl. Girls communicate on a different level than boys. Here we can get right down to issues."

In future, Kate wants to find out about volunteer opportunities for coalition members at women's shelters and other organizations. It's important, she says, for girls to get experience and have goals and aspirations.

Staff sponsor Grimshaw has been with the group since the outset. She has no doubt that a girls' coalition is as necessary now as it was then. "Girls still need a place to talk" in a non-competitive environment.

Over the years, the group's regulars have grown more diverse, which makes for livelier discussions, says Grimshaw, a "longtime feminist."

"It's really gratifying to see the girls becoming more aware of things. They're great kids to be with and it's really nice to have contact with them

outside the (traditional) classroom."

Grimshaw is unfazed by any suggestion that the group may alienate boys. "Any time there's any group that's female-centred, there's going to be flak and this doesn't just apply to schools."

The most significant concerns of adolescent girls include self-image, sexuality, relationships, and personal safety. And questions relating to those issues, Grimshaw insists, are too important to be left unanswered.

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Janice Turner is a staff reporter at The Toronto Star.

JOANNA M. WESTON

Grandfathers

One died before I was born
but this one
passed on a mystery:
he is, we believe, locked
in a large, brown trunk
in the attic.
He didn't like
carrots or parsnips
and voted consistently
red. And, for reasons
unknown to his wife,
he labelled his socks
with paint.
He scorned mild pornography,
preferring
it blatant and raw.
He died in a hoax
played by my sister,
something to do
with a child's revenge,
she said.

Joanna M. Weston has been published in several anthologies and magazines, including Chiron Review, Dandelion, Writer's Own Magazine, Green's Magazine, and Tidepool. Her most recent chapbook is All Seasons (1996).

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