

# Challenge coins are like hotcakes at public school



## People IN COINS

MELANIE CUMMINGS

### Meet 'Frankie the Mascot'

'Frankie the Mascot' is making his rounds among the young numismatists and alumnus of Kitchener, Ontario's Franklin Public School.

The falcon bearing the school's name is emblazoned on professionally minted Challenge coins and given to every senior student upon graduation day. They are also for sale and the first 200, sold like hotcakes at a maple syrup festival.

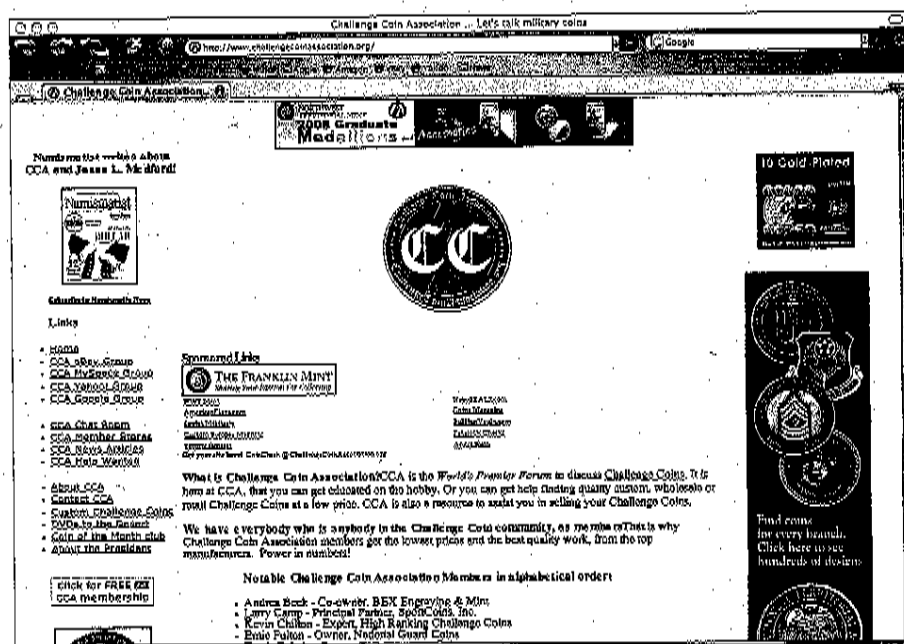
"To our knowledge we are the only Canadian school to issue such a coin, making it a first," said the school's grade six teacher, challenge coin cheerleader and coin club head honcho, Chris Boyer. Challenge coins have a long military history, as a sort of medal signifying membership and used to instill camaraderie.

The intent is the same at the Franklin School but the competitions and wagers are more suited to the young collectors' interests, running the gamut from a challenge for a chocolate bar, candy or push ups.

"Challenge coin activity remains high at Franklin," said Boyer whose desk drawer is routinely stockpiled with chocolate bars to pay off his debts. Just-for-fun competitions created by Boyer such as 'trojan challenge,' 'challenge coin poker' and 'challenge coin duel' are restricted to lunch breaks and recesses to avoid class disruptions. One includes producing the coin, when asked, within four movements.

Boyer is a big fan of the competition coins. He collects the pricey pieces and has been "fortunate" to acquire more than 50 Canadian challenge coins over the last five years.

U.S. challenge coins are legion, he said, but Canadian ones are



The Challenge Coin Association's place on the World Wide Web at [www.challengecoinassociation.org](http://www.challengecoinassociation.org).

relatively scarce and in Boyer's opinion, "under appreciated." For a time the teacher ran a small, successful home-based business after school hours, making challenge coins for the RCMP.

Last year, Boyer got wind of a new club dedicated to his coin intrigue, called the Challenge Coin Association (CCA). Founded by Jesse Medford, the CCA is a forum for like-minded collectors to chat about their favourite pastime but also connect related companies and graphic design artists, with collectors, assuring the standards and quality of the coins are upheld.

In just one year, the CCA has attracted military, police, fire, sports and fraternal organizations to its membership ranks, to the tune of 400 avid participants. Best of all, for Boyer, is the club has no annual dues and is an Internet-based ([www.challengecoinassociation.org](http://www.challengecoinassociation.org)) group.

Therefore, when Medford contacted Boyer wondering whether he had a project in mind, the enthusiastic teacher forwarded scans of his school's mascot 'Frankie' the falcon, as well as the Waterloo Region District School Board logo and school motto.

"With a little modification to

the colour schemes, and the addition of the legend 'For Excellence,' we arrived at a pleasing design, which evidently also pleased the school administration," said Boyer.

The words 'For Excellence' were added to replicate the notion of a 'commander's coin' which is presented to soldiers for a particular derring-do, said Boyer.

"There are numerous examples in existence of this type of coin; for example, General Rick Hillier is known to have presented a similar type of challenge coin, which is considered by the recipient to be equivalent to a military medal."

With Franklin Public School's principal and vice-principal on side for the project, they gave the go-ahead to have a school challenge coin struck, both as a tangible memento for the grade six graduates, and as a piece that members of the Franklin Coin Club could add to their collections.

The club is very active, it meets biweekly and has more than 120 members in grades one through six. It operates with a small budget, courtesy of the supportive administrators, to cover the cost of draw prizes.

An initial run of 200 enameled pieces (as well as a special

gold-plated sample coin bearing 000) serial numbered by the mint arrived with much fanfare.

About 90 pieces were set aside for the grade six graduates, school administrators, including the board's superintendent and director of education.

The others were offered to a few classrooms, Franklin Coin Club members, and staff members at \$4 each.

Future runs of the coin will continue the same serial numbers (201 onwards) and Boyer and the coin club will continue to keep meticulous records of the purchaser and their assigned coin number, just in case it's ever lost. The large run of 200 coins, combined with the anonymous donation of the one-time die fees, helped keep the coin cost low and affordable for the students.

Plans are under way already for the next 2008-2009 session of the Franklin School Coin Club.

"Who know," said Boyer, who is a past recipient of the Canadian Numismatic Association's Louise Graham Club of the Year, for another school-based club he ran. "Perhaps we'll have even more children galore sporting their challenge coins." ☺



The Franklin Public School challenge coin presented to grads and sold to members of the school.