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**A PROUD CANADIAN:
Photo by Bev McMullen**



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The skills you need may lie within, says author

By KELLY McSHANE

So you've read the autobiographies of all of your idols and still don't have the secret to success?

Maybe you should be looking a little closer to home and delving a little deeper into yourself.

"I don't think people realize how much we can learn from the people in our lives because we always just stay on the surface," said bestselling author and Gravenhurst cottager Nellie Jacobs, who recently launched a self-help book — with a twist.

"I thought it would be really neat to make a self-help book where each chapter highlights real stories from regular people, not stars," said Jacobs. "It really upsets me that we're so star-struck when we could be turning to people within our own circles and learning from them."

The first in a series of four, *Making Opportunity Knock* explores the lives of six people, each offering at least 10 tips for success taken from their own experi-

ences — good or bad.

"These stories are very, very honest about things they've done and things they could have done differently," said Jacobs, who used her successful online radio show as a springboard for her new series.

The format of the book includes a section at the end of each chapter with in-depth questions for the reader, which she hopes will open people's eyes to what their life has to offer them.

"You have to be really open to the possibilities because you never know when an opportunity can happen," said Jacobs, a Toronto-based mother of four successful children whose impressive careers range from entertainment lawyer to tennis pro.

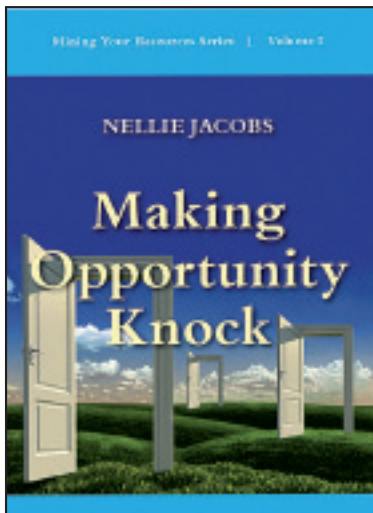
As an example from her own life, Jacobs recalled an attempt to have an

article published in the *Toronto Star*. Then a frustrated elementary school teacher, Jacobs' article was rejected by the editor because it wasn't long enough, so she submitted a letter with a report card she



TAKING HER OWN ADVICE. Muskoka cottager and bestselling author Nellie Jacobs will be at Walker's Point Marina on July 2 to promote her new self-help book, *Making Opportunity Knock*. She wrote the book while recovering after donating a kidney.

Submitted photo



had designed for grading school teachers. A reporter then interviewed her about the report card, creating a stir in the education community.

A friend suggested she take her report card idea and run with it, prompting her to write a book on the subject, which was published by Penguin Books Canada in 1996. When *Grading the Teacher* reached the bestsellers list, the editor who rejected Jacobs' original piece acquired first rights from Penguin for an interview with her.

"It came full circle," said Jacobs. "She didn't even remember me."

Jacobs explained many people are ignorant about their own talents and miss out on opportunities because of it. The first step to your success could be as simple as taking inventory of your skills and unique experiences.

"In adulthood, you really need to stop using these things that hold us back and just figure out how to overcome them," said Jacobs. "We can be defined, diminished or expanded by what we think of ourselves, what others think and our prejudices ... there comes a point when you have to take responsibility for your own future."

Jacobs is no stranger to life's tribulations. She and her husband Paul were faced with a life-threatening hurdle just last year when Paul, a trial lawyer who had previously been diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease, suffered sudden kidney failure.

"He was having internal bleeding ... they never really figured out why, but there comes a point where you don't even care — just help me!" said Jacobs. "We thought he was going to die."

After months of testing, Jacobs was approved as a donor match. Although the procedure to remove one of her kidneys and implant it was risky, she said she had to do her best to ignore her fears.

"I had to do it. It was for my husband and

I love him, and he would do the same for me," she said.

Despite all of the associated risks, the procedure was a success, said Jacobs, noting she used writing her new book as a distraction from her anxiety about the surgery and the loneliness of being quarantined in her home before and after the procedure.

Having been through the publishing process already, Jacobs said she decided to publish her new series herself.

"This time I wanted total control because I knew where I wanted to go and I wanted to do it my own way."

The second instalment is ready for print, but Jacobs said she isn't planning to rush it. She said she plans to wait until at least half of her first instalment has been sold before publishing the second edition.

In the meantime, Jacobs will continue to share her experiences through presentations for various community groups. A portion of the proceeds of her book sales and presentations will be donated to the Toronto General and Western Hospital Foundation to support kidney research and transplantation.

Walker's Point Marina in Gravenhurst is offering the opportunity to meet Jacobs face-to-face and pick up a copy of her newest book during their Canada Day celebration on July 2, when Jacobs will be on-site to sell and sign copies from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Jacobs' core piece of advice for those searching for direction: "You have to have insight. Insight will help you identify fears and resources you took for granted. The more insight you have into yourself and others, the more opportunities that will come knocking."

Making Opportunity Knock can be purchased online through Jacobs' website, www.ignitingimagination.com.



GLASS GENIUS. Artist Krysia Bower shows off her artwork, titled *Reflections - Antique Muskoka at Home*, at the Muskoka Multicultural Society Exhibit and Art Show at Zensations, at Gravenhurst Wharf on Saturday.

Photo by Louis Tam