

shortlist and Miami's first. If Falls were to win, he would be the third three-time winner of the medal, alongside Will Ferguson and Stuart McLean.

While no one is playing favourites, Leacock Associates president Nathan Taylor is intrigued by the prospect of something unprecedented happening at this year's gala.

"He's been such a huge supporter of the medal and the organization," said Taylor, who is also editor of the Packet & Times. "It is exciting that we could have a back-to-back winner."

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Nathan Taylor, president of the Leacock Associates, and Bette Walker, director, hold the three books shortlisted for the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour at a luncheon Friday at Orillia's Best Western Mariposa Inn.



Siblings deliver message of acceptance

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THE PACKET & TIMES

In Tommy Glatzmayer's case, words can speak louder than actions.

Hurt by his schoolmates making fun of his older sister's disability, he decided to write a book with his mother.

"I'd always come home crying, almost every day, because it happened all the time," said Tommy, 13.

Wanting to make things better for Melanie, who is now 16, Tommy felt the best way to educate his peers would be through the written word.

"I just thought if my friends saw it on paper, they'd learn better," said Tommy, who, in 2010, co-authored *Melanie and Tommy Have Two Pet Rats* and *One Syndrome*. "If someone doesn't know it, they're obviously going to make fun of it. But if they learn, they're going to stop

teasing."

And it worked.

"They just all of a sudden stopped teasing," Tommy said in an interview Friday morning before he made a presentation at Rama Central School. "I guess they noticed what they were doing, and I guess they decided to stop."

Melanie was born with Cornelia de Lange syndrome, a rare condition that has left her with several developmental delays, including hearing and vision problems, speech delays and difficulty eating, and operations, and the condition seems more controllable now, said her mother, Nathalie Wendling. Over the years, with the help of hearing aids and intervention with Tommy, Melanie has developed a vocabulary of 1,000 words and also knows American sign language.

Since the book was released six years ago, Tommy and Melanie

have made more than 80 presentations at schools, hospitals, fundraisers and at conferences across Canada and the U.S.

Accompanying Tommy and Melanie on their tours are their parents, Don Glatzmayer and Wendling, and their furry friends, Rideau, Prosty and Tinker Bell, the family's pet rats.

The brother-sister duo engaged the audience with a multimedia demonstration of how Cornelia de Lange syndrome makes Melanie different from her peers, displaying, by example, how she will always have feet and hands smaller than those her age.

The two also answered questions from the audience. But what drew in students for a closer look was the concluding rat race that took place on a closed track the family brought along.

"I liked it a lot," said Gavin Lapp, a 14-year-old, Grade 8 student. "It's a connection about some-

body my age doing something for the good of the community and it inspired me to help them by raising awareness."

Tommy's mission in support of his sister isn't showing signs of slowing. This year, he started a drum circle for both able-bodied students and those with disabilities at his current school: St. Mark Catholic High School in Manotick.

"It gets everybody together and people can make friends," he said. "There are so many clubs for me to take part in at school, but they have no clubs for people with disabilities."

Tommy and Melanie hope their message — "If you see someone different, smile and say hi" — resonated with the Rama Central students and will help discourage discrimination against those with disabilities.

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nology, innovation and research centre at its Barrie campus has lifted the chance of failing with Barrie city council Monday.

The \$30-million centre would prepare more job-ready graduates for in-demand careers in the area.

But the project's merits don't make councillors any less apprehensive about the city's share of the timelines.

"I am comfortably uncomfortable with the funding request," said Coun. Michael Prowse, chair of Barrie's finance committee, noting municipal governments receive just nine cents out of every tax dollar in Canada, yet are being forced to fund projects that are not their responsibility.

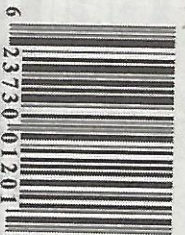
"The flip side of that is that, in reality, the horse has already left the barn on this issue," he said. "Starting many years ago, Barrie helped fund the new hospital and then helped fund the expansion of the hospital and cancer care centre."

Georgian College wants to build a new, three-storey advanced technology, innovation and research centre for 800 students. The federal government's infrastructure program could pay as much as half of the cost, subject to Ottawa's approval, the County of Simcoe's \$5 million and the remainder could come from the province and other unspecified sources.

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