

The Citizen

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LOCAL NEWS

Majority Vote No Water Hookup

■ After a survey of Niverville well owners, the town will not proceed with water project.

Details on Page 3



LOCAL NEWS

HSD Trustees Under Scrutiny

■ In late April, a group of concerned parents reached out to the province to make a formal complaint against six current members of the Hanover School Division's board of trustees, accusing them of discriminatory practices.

Details on Pages 12-13

SPORTS & REC

Nighthawks Name New Coach, GM

■ The Nighthawks have named their head coach and GM ahead of the new season.

Details on Page 18

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Music and Movies in the Park this Summer

■ The parks of Ritchot will host concerts and movie viewings throughout the summer months.

Details on Pages 22

St. Adolphe Next on List for Main Street Renewal

The roadwork is tentatively scheduled for summer 2025. [▶ READ MORE ON PAGE 5](#)

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Majority Vote No to Water Treatment Plant Hookup in Niverville

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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Based on a survey conducted by the Town of Niverville in March, the majority of Niverville's well owners are content to keep the status quo with their well water systems, at least for now.

According to the town, approximately 700 households in the older section of Niverville currently derive their water from private wells.

Roughly 51 percent of those homeowners took the time to respond to a survey which asked if they'd be prepared to hook up to the municipal water system if the cost was subsidized by the province.

The majority, 79 percent, said no to the question. The remaining 21 percent were in favour.

"I want to say thank you to all the residents who took the time to respond to this survey," says Mayor Myron Dyck. "Council listens to its residents and has decided to not proceed with this proposed project at this time."

It wasn't an easy decision for council, Dyck admits, since there was \$3 million in provincial funding at stake. This would have covered half of the cost of water main infrastructure installation throughout all the unserved areas.

Still, a commitment was made to the residents, and council is keeping to that promise.

With the survey results in, Dyck says they've spoken to the Manitoba Water Stewardship board, the agency providing the grant monies, and informed them of their decision to not proceed.

According to the mayor, the board has since graciously decided to keep the \$3 million offer on the table until 2026, should council



Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck and CAO Eric King.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

decide to reintroduce the idea to residents down the road.

At this point, council is resigned to letting it go. With cost-of-living concerns at the forefront of so many homeowners' minds, they will broach the subject at a later date if interest is shown once residents are no longer under such financial duress.

The question begs asking, though, whether the \$3 million offer from the province will still cover half of the water infrastructure cost in a year or two, or if residents will be on the hook for more than 50 percent at that point.

Dyck is quick to admit that the topic of water main installation has not been an easy one for council. Discussions over the last few months have been lively, he says, but always respectful even when council has struggled to agree.

It's a nuanced issue, he says, when evaluating the individual's rights versus what might be considered the greater good—for example, the safety consequences of not having fire hydrant installations across the entire community.

Deciding how to interpret the survey, Dyck says, came with its own struggles.

When half of the residents weren't inclined to voice their

opinion via the survey, what is council to make of their position? Is 80 percent of half the homeowners still a majority vote?

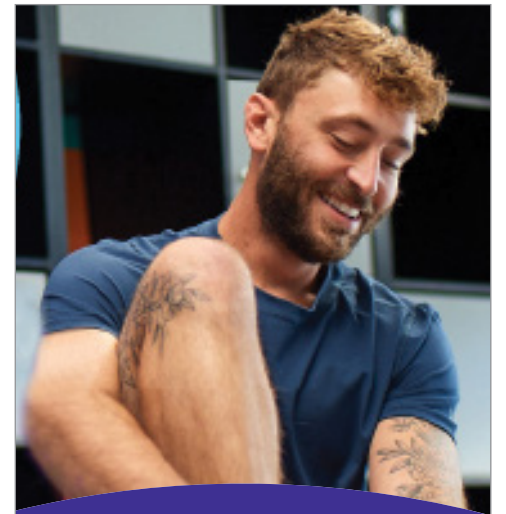
In this case, council decided that it was.

The 20 percent voting in favour of municipal water hookup are not residents living in close proximity of each other, according to Dyck. So council doesn't anticipate that specific streets or sections of the community will pursue hookup anytime soon.

If, at some point, a neighbourhood does approach them on the subject, Dyck says that the town would need to seek the province's permission to use some of the \$3 million for a partial retrofit. The lump sum was offered, Dyck says, based on the province's anticipation of full buy-in.

At the end of the day, the mayor is proud of his council and the way they worked together on the town's behalf.

"The town of Niverville should be very thankful for the councillors that they have," says Dyck. "They are engaged, they are knowledgeable, and they have done a lot of research and taken a lot of time to talk to people. I just want to say thank you to council for all that they have brought to this discussion."



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The Immigrant Experience: Adding Rich Culture to Our Colourful Human Tapestry

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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This is the first article in a series which explores the lives of newcomers to southern Manitoba. Everywhere we look, new and diverse faces surround us. Let's get to know our neighbours.

Harkirat Singh is a 24-year-old student hailing from the Punjab state of India. He's known to his family and friends as Anmol.

Anmol recently made the decision to move to Niverville from Winnipeg, where until the spring he attended the University of Manitoba. In June, he will graduate from Applied Business Management. This is in addition to his master's degree in commerce.

One year ago, Anmol first set foot on Manitoba soil. It was also the first time he'd ventured out of India.

As an adventurous man, he wanted to experience the world while building his credentials. He chose Winnipeg because it's smaller than Toronto or Vancouver.

"It's a very fast-paced life there," Anmol says. "Everyone is on their own. In smaller cities, in my experience, there's more of a sense of community."

So far, he says, Manitoba has lived up to its friendly reputation. Of course, it doesn't hurt that the Indian local community is vibrant.

"Whenever I walk into an Indian grocery store, I feel like home."

But there's been some big adjustments for Anmol, too. First, he was expected to address his university professors by first name, which would be considered very disrespectful back home.

Mostly, anyone who is your senior is referred to as

uncle or auntie, but never by their first name unless it is accompanied by the prefix "ji," which indicates reverence.

"We respect our elders," he says. "We touch their feet and they put their hand on our head to transfer blessings to us."

Anmol is an only child. Leaving Punjab was very difficult for his parents to accept, he says, but they sent him off with tears and a blessing.

He describes the family culture back home as very communal and supportive. Multiple generations often live together.

Anmol's parents share a small rural farm and homestead with his two uncles and their families. His grandparents used to run it.

Here, they grow potatoes, sugarcane, wheat, and rice.

Unlike in Canada, where farming has become very corporate, small farms still thrive in India. To help, the Indian government established a regulated minimum selling price (MSP) for certain crops, as well as the maximum retail price (MRP), which legislates the maximum price any grocer can charge for a product.

Another tenet of Anmol's culture is the selfless way in which people live. In his country, you don't make arrangements to visit friends or family. You just drop in.

"Punjab is known for its hospitality. If someone is there and we see them in trouble, we always help because we are emotional people."

Anmol says this kind of caring community exists in Indian cities, too, only in smaller pockets. This kind of communal philosophy transcends differences in religion, social status, or financial means.



Harkirat "Anmol" Singh of Niverville.

EVAN BRAUN

While Hinduism is the primary religion of the Indian people, Sikhism is the dominant faith for many in Punjab. It was founded there in the fifteenth century.

Anmol and his family are believers in the Sikh faith. From a young age, he was taught to never judge others based on religion, appearance, or any other factor, as it sets people on an uneven plain. To further promote equality, every boy is gifted with the name Singh (lion) and every girl Kaur (princess).

While gurdwaras are places of Sikh worship, all are welcome. Visitors are regularly treated to a free meal. Everyone sits on the floor so all are on the same level.

According to Anmol, Punjab is home to the world's most significant gurdwara, the Golden Temple, where visitors from around the world stop for visits.

According to Sikh tradition, there are a number of external symbols a person could wear to demonstrate devotion to their faith: the turban, a steel bracelet, a ceremonial knife, and cotton undergarments.

As well, a deep commitment to the faith might require one to refrain from smoking, drinking alcohol, and sharing from a common plate of food. The

most devout shower daily to cleanse themselves and do not cut their hair or beard.

Like other tenets of the Sikh faith, though, a follower isn't judged by their adherence to these outward symbols. Anmol, for instance, has chosen not to smoke or consume alcohol. The only outward symbol he wears is the steel bracelet.

Anmol's father, on the other hand, follows more of the traditional adherences.

"My parents never pressured me to follow tradition. They said, 'If you want to do it, do it properly.' But it's hard to do it properly. It's very strict."

Anmol says it was his faith that helped him when he first arrived in Manitoba. One of his first stops was a gurdwara in south Winnipeg where he prayed for help finding a good place to live. Within a short period of time, he found an inexpensive room for lease.

With his courses now complete, he hopes to apply for a Canadian work visa and stay longer.

"I just want to get into the workforce so I can learn some skills and also contribute to your country. Because if I work, I will pay taxes and it will go to the greater benefit."

To put himself through school, Anmol has already worked a few part-time jobs.

Only one racist comment has tainted his stay to date, this from a stranger in a parking lot who told him to go home to his own country.

Still, many Canadians live under the notion that foreigners take jobs from locals and abuse a system that helps its own.

According to Anmol, nothing could be further from the truth.

Administrative assistants and service industry jobs are in demand in Manitoba, with not enough young people to fill these more menial positions.

"I have a master's degree, yet I'm willing to work in the fast food sector. Your government won't allow people in randomly. If we bring some value, then they allow us."

Case in point, Anmol says most employers would take a Canadian student over an international one any day since they wouldn't have to worry about language barriers or work visa regulations.

But look around and one sees how many service positions are filled by immigrants and students.

Another misconception, he adds, is that the Canadian government makes it too easy for immigrants to study and settle here.

For Anmol and other students, that was certainly not the case. He says international students pay substantially higher education fees than their Canadian counterparts.

That's not all. In order to study here, Anmol was required to make a \$10,000 deposit into a Winnipeg bank to be held in savings until, and if, he needed it.

"A new international student from India now needs to bring in even more to your country. Your bank will use it to grant loans and help the

economy. The international student also spends money here and pays rent and taxes. And we're willing to do jobs that you guys don't want to do. Would a regular Canadian with a master's degree work at Tim Hortons?"

There is no question that Anmol will continue finding his way. He's outgoing and talkative and willing to share stories and experiences with the people he meets.

One friendship was developed with Niverville book editor and *Citizen* co-owner Evan Braun. The pair met through creative endeavours and continue to meet regularly, bonding over music, writing, and other areas of commonality.

In no time, Anmol was warmly invited into the Braun fold, enjoying Christmas, Easter, and other celebrations like a family member.

Whether his career remains in commerce or branches into new areas remains to be seen. He is gifted as a musician and writes lyrics in three languages. He's also collaborated with other musicians from around the world.

Anmol has no aspirations for great wealth. He knows how to get by in tough times, having experienced living on a mere \$1,000 per month in his initial months here.

He only dreams of his own home and car and taking care of his parents as they age. He hopes to generate enough income to pay back all the people who have helped him.

Also, he says, a little fame at some point wouldn't be discouraged.

"I thought if I moved to a different country and did everything from scratch, it would make for a great interview when I get famous," Anmol says, tongue in cheek. "So this is my first interview."



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Major repair work is currently underway on Main Street in Île-des-Chênes.

BY BRENDA SAWATZKY

St. Adolphe Next on List for Main Street Renewal

By Brenda Sawatzky
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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St. Adolphe just got one step closer to the top of the province's list for road repair projects.

According to the Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI) online projects map, a plan to resurface Main Street is officially in the design phase.

According to an MTI spokesperson, the project will come in at an estimated cost of \$3.7 million and cover the northbound and southbound lanes of the 1.8 kilometre-stretch of street from Highway 210 to the town's southern boundary.

"Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure is currently working on a detailed design for PR 200 and will be working in collaboration with the RM of Ritchot on the project," the spokesperson told *The Citizen*. "The project is a thin lift overlay, which is a layer of pavement that is applied to the surface which will greatly improve the surface conditions and extend the service life of PR 200."

Tendering for the project is anticipated for the spring of 2025 and, weather permitting, work will be completed by fall of the same year.

It's unclear how many years the residents of St. Adolphe have had to wait for a Main Street renewal. MTI would not provide that information. In 2016, Highway 200 south of St. Adolphe underwent a major renewal but St. Adolphe's Main Street was not included.

For years, this stretch of busy road has been subjected to constant use due to residential growth both in St. Adolphe itself and beyond.

As a popular commuter route, the street's surface hasn't fared well.

Because the street falls under provincial jurisdiction, the RM's hands have been tied on the matter, apart from appealing to the province for action.

Until now, the province's response has been to patch the growing number of potholes.

Frustrated, a group of about a dozen St. Adolphe residents reached out to their local MP Ron Schuler in February of this year, requesting that something more permanent be done.

This month, the residents received letters from MTI, indicating the department's intent to monitor the street's condition and repair holes as needed. Residents were advised, as well, of the impending 2025 resurfacing project.

IDC MAIN STREET

This spring, after many years of lobbying the provincial government, the RM of Ritchot was proud to announce a complete renewal of Île-des-Chênes's Main Street, which also falls under provincial jurisdiction.

According to the RM, this stretch of road hadn't seen any major repairs in almost 50 years. In that time, it had also reached a desperate state of disrepair.

When the IDC Main Street project was announced last year, Public Works manager Mike Dumaine informed *The Citizen* that the RM would be applying to the province to take jurisdiction over IDC's Main Street once the province brought it back to a state that meets provincially regulated standards.

That work is now in full swing.

"Right now, we are focused on completing the IDC Main Street revitalization project," says CAO Mitch Duval. "Once complete, it is our hope that the province will grant it to us. At this time, though, nothing has been formalized."

According to the RM, the total estimated cost of the IDC project is \$2.7 million, shared between the province, the RM, and local developers. The province's share comes to \$1

million.


"The province's investment into the Île-des-Chênes Main Street project is for the surface of the road, which is MTI's responsibility," says the MTI spokesperson. "The RM of Ritchot's investment is for components of the project beyond the surface of the highway such as improved sidewalks, bicycle paths, and other improvements that fall under the municipality's jurisdiction. By partnering together, all improvements can be completed in one project, resulting in various efficiencies."

They add that MTI department staff are in the habit of meeting with municipal governments to seek information on local issues and concerns.

"While there is no official cost-share program at present [for the St. Adolphe project], MTI continues to consider municipal requests/proposal for cost-sharing upgrades based on available budget and other provincial priorities," MTI says.

As to whether the current plan for a thin lift overlay on St. Adolphe's Main Street will match the major destruction and reconstruction of IDC's Main Street, the MTI spokesperson failed to offer any comment.

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IN BRIEF



Expansion Project Begins at Niverville Medical Clinic

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Renovations are set to get underway at Open Health Niverville, the medical clinic located on the Heritage Centre campus.

The expansion project is expected to add more clinical rooms, which in turn will allow the facility to take on more doctors. Once complete, the clinic will boast 15 exam rooms, a lab, and a minor procedures room.

“This expansion is just one more step in the direction of fulfilling Open Health Niverville’s vision to be a regional hub in providing timely and effective health care services,” says Nathan Dueck, town councillor and president of Niverville Health Care Services Inc. (NHCSI). “More and more residents of Niverville are seeing the benefit of receiving healthcare right in their own community, and this is creating the welcomed need to expand our facility and bring more doctors on staff.”

Twelve physicians currently share the space at Open Health, up from the two physicians and one physician assistant who worked from the clinic when the Town of Niverville took over ownership in 2020.

According to Dueck, two guest suites in the Heritage Centre were recently closed, providing the additional space needed for the expansion.



The Louis Riel Bridge in Ste. Agathe is about to get a major overhaul.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

Construction to Soon Begin on Ste. Agathe Bridge

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Sixty-five years after the Louis Riel Bridge was first constructed in Ste. Agathe, the community’s iconic Red River overpass is set to undergo a major overhaul.

Construction is expected to begin this summer and will be carried out in three phases, spanning two years.

Once complete, the new structure will have rebuilt girders which meet current federal standards, allowing for heavier truck use. As well, the entire deck and railings will be replaced.

In the end, the current narrow lanes will be widened, with shoulders added on either side. The sidewalk bordering the eastbound lane will be separated from traffic by concrete barriers, providing an increased level of safety for pedestrians.

The project’s estimated cost will land between \$25 and \$30 million. It is anticipated that the new bridge should be ready to withstand another 60 years of use.

Repairs will get underway this summer on the bridge’s substructure. Traffic flow will be maintained as usual throughout this phase.

In the fall, the eastbound lane will be closed to traffic and reconstruction is expected to run for about a year. If everything progresses according to schedule, the westbound lane will begin reconstruction by the fall of 2025.

The bridge will be open to traffic throughout the process, although it’s anticipated to be slowed considerably. Oversized vehicles will be temporarily diverted to Aubigny or St. Adolphe.

Also beginning this fall, Pembina Trail will be closed at the Highway 305 intersection for the duration of the bridge’s

reconstruction. The walking trail running beneath the bridge will also be closed.

The crosswalk to the west of the bridge will remain open and the 30 kilometre per hour speed zone will remain in effect year-round until repairs are complete.

Public engagement with Ste. Agathe residents and stakeholders first began in 2021. Two public open houses were initiated by landscape and urban planners in 2021 and later again in 2023.

Stakeholders were also encouraged to complete a questionnaire on the EngageMB site, providing feedback to aid the province in determining what mattered most to the community in terms of the reconstruction process.

Eventually, two designs were presented, along with traffic management options for the construction period. This resulted in feedback from more than 200 respondents, which clearly

favoured one over the other.

The other design option provided less sidewalk width and no shoulders adjacent to the traffic lanes. It also had the potential for a quicker construction.

However, it would have required approximately 16 weeks of full bridge closure.

The majority of respondents in the public survey indicated that uninterrupted access to the bridge was highly important.

In the end, the final design and traffic management plan has answered all of the community’s primary concerns apart from one: the speed at which traffic currently passes over the bridge.

“The preliminary design could not address this issue,” reads a report from engineering firm WSP, “but Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure will continue to investigate strategies for traffic calming.”

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Dentist Opt-In Low for New Federal Dental Care Plan

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@niverillecitizen.com

In December 2023, the federal government began rolling out a new publicly funded dental care plan, intended to make oral healthcare more accessible to lower income earners across the country.

So far, though, dentist buy-in across Manitoba has been low, making accessibility still a problem for qualifying individuals.

Called the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP), the program is being introduced in phases, beginning with senior citizens. By 2025, all Canadian residents with annual household incomes below \$90,000 will be eligible to apply.

The CDCP will cost taxpayers \$13 billion over the next five years and \$4.4 billion ongoing to implement.

FRUSTRATION OVER LACK OF DENTIST BUY-IN

The daughter of a Niverville resident says she was thrilled to find out about the CDCP rollout for seniors. Her 91-year-old mother lives on a fixed income. In today's inflationary times, even the most basic dental work is a luxury this aging senior can barely afford.

In an effort to protect her mother, the daughter has asked for anonymity. We'll call her Linda.

Upon receipt of her mother's CDCP registration card, Linda contacted the local dental office where her mother and other family members have been patients for years. Before she was able to book an appointment, though, she was told that oral healthcare providers working there aren't registered for the federal program.

The reason provided, Linda says, is that there's been poor governmental communication with the dental industry prior to implementing the program. As well, the coverage provided by the CDCP comes to less than the regular dental fees charged at the clinic.

When asked if her mother could apply the CDCP subsidy and pay the difference, the answer was no. The receptionist was not shy to admit that they'd received numerous calls from patients who all got the same answer.

"Honestly, my feeling [toward this] was anger," Linda says. "We had been waiting to take my mom to the dentist



DEPOSITPHOTOS

for close to a year in anticipation of this program. She has an issue that's been causing her pain [and] we were waiting until we got this magic CDCP card. Turns out, it's not so magical after all."

For Linda, it's unclear how to go about finding a dentist that is registered for the program. And when she does, she wonders about transport logistics for her mom if the dental office isn't nearby.

"Many seniors are on a fixed income," Linda says. "I imagine that's why the government qualified them first for this coverage. Seniors, like everybody, deserve proper dental care. Healthcare is a basic human right. That's why we have single payer healthcare in Canada. Why should dental care be any different?"

MANITOBA DENTAL ASSOCIATION RESPONSE

The Citizen reached out to a local dental office who deferred the inquiry to the Manitoba Dental Association (MDA).

MDA president Dr. Daron Baxter was quick to respond on behalf of all the province's oral healthcare providers.

"At this point, the sign-up of Manitoba dentists is low, but that is not because of a lack of support for the plan," says Baxter. "The Manitoba Dental Association and dentists across Manitoba and the country believe that this is a historic opportunity to improve access to care for patients who have financial barriers."

In the end, she says, the lack of

buy-in boils down to two primary factors.

Firstly, the details about what is expected from dental offices are still quite ambiguous. If dentists are going to register with the government to become CDCP providers, Baxter says, they want to be clear on the full terms of the contractual agreement.

"The government put a lot of work into getting patients ready for the CDCP," Baxter says. "The work that's been put into getting providers ready has been very late stage. We're not ready to run this program."

Baxter adds that dental associations across the country were making themselves available to the federal government for consultation long before the CDCP was implemented. There is much valuable expertise to be provided there, she says, which could help create a program that benefits everyone.

Unfortunately, she says the association didn't get an audience with the federal Minister of Health, Mark Holland, until after the program had been designed. Since then, attempts at negotiation have been slow-moving.

Regardless of unclear expectations, though, Baxter says the bigger concern for oral healthcare professionals is the idea that registration by the provider is necessary at all. In the end, all this does is limit a patient's access rather than improve it.

Baxter is unclear as to why the government would have taken this approach. There are currently no other dental plans, whether private

or public, that require dentists to register in order to treat patients.

This includes the Canadian Dental Benefit plan, another federally funded program which provides subsidies for children under 12 years of age who come from low-income households.

According to Baxter, benefits from this program are paid out directly to parents, giving them the autonomy to receive treatment at their dentist of choice.

"It's run much more like a health spending account [for parents] and it has a low administrative burden for both the patient and the dentist," Baxter says. "It's a nice way to get the subsidies [directly] into the hands of patients."

The way the CDCP appears to operate, though, is to remove the patient from the process altogether. In so doing, the extra administrative work to manage the program falls to the dental office.

This isn't completely unusual, as they already do the extra work for many private insurance providers, she says, but it's a factor to be considered when looking at a vastly larger segment of the population, especially when the government is vague in terms of what that administrative work will entail.

"What we're strongly advocating for is that registration of oral healthcare providers should not be a component of the CDCP," says Baxter. "It restricts access to care in that patients no longer have the freedom to see any licensed provider that they choose.

This program should offer the same freedom of choice that all Canadians currently enjoy."

This is something that dental associations have been trying to communicate for months, using the example of the national dental program adopted by the United Kingdom's government some years ago.

"There are some challenges within their program that we've communicated to the federal government because we want to learn from their challenges and not repeat them," says Baxter.

Those challenges, she adds, revolve mostly around the need for providers to register, which has caused a significant decline in registrars since the program began.

Another big concern shared by oral healthcare professionals is that there seems to be a common misconception that the CDCP is a way for low-income earners to get free dental care.

That's simply not the case, says Baxter. The program is set up to act as a subsidy for dental treatment.

"For cleanings, [the coverage] gets the closest," she says. "The cleaning itself has coverage levels close to 100 percent, but that doesn't include the exam or [x-ray] cost and it's certainly different for restorative or other treatments."

Thankfully, in recent weeks the dental associations have been making some headway with the federal health department. If all goes well, patients will see a lot more oral healthcare providers accepting CDCP cards in the very near future.

"Through our advocacy, we've seen some success," Baxter says. "A couple of weeks ago, Mr. Holland announced a non-registration pathway, but that won't be available, according to the federal government, until July 8."

If the feds follow through, she adds, it has the potential to operate like a private insurance plan, giving the patient more autonomy and better access to more dentists.

In the meantime, she recommends that patients get in touch with their preferred oral healthcare providers after that date.

"We just want to see CDCP-eligible patients have the same health autonomy that existing private and public plan patients have and we think non-registration is a simple fix for that."



The current fire hall in Niverville.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

Niverville Fire Hall and Operations Get Big Provincial Boost

By Brenda Sawatzky
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Thanks to a \$1 million provincial grant, the Town of Niverville is excited to begin planning for upgrades to the community's fire hall and operations building.

"Continuing to keep the residents of Niverville and their property protected from fire is always a priority for the town," says Mayor Myron Dyck. "With Niverville being the fastest growing municipality in the province, fire protection is more important than ever. This investment from the province of Manitoba into an upgrade of our fire hall and operations building is more than welcome, and with the police station nearing completion, this announcement

today will help facilitate the next phase of improving emergency services in Niverville."

Dyck says the town applied for the grant last fall. The delay in response, he believes, is likely due to the changeover in government.

On the heels of this recent news, council anticipates tendering out the conceptual design work this fall. Construction of the multi-phase project is expected to happen somewhere between 2026 and 2027.

In the meantime, council will collaborate with team members from the fire and operations department for their input.

"Now that we have this grant, it allows us to sit down with the fire department," Dyck says. "In an effort to bring value to the ratepayers of Niverville, both in terms of

emergency service and also from a dollar side, these are the conversations that we have to have together."

When the Town of Niverville purchased the building and land at 329 Bronstone Drive five years ago, it was a proactive move in terms of growth. The new building provided enough space for the town's growing staff needs, storage for the Public Works department, as well as just enough space to accommodate the town's new RCMP detachment.

The property also borders the existing fire hall at 309 Bronstone. Between the two locations, council is hopeful that there's enough room for a fire hall expansion.

It won't be until designers have begun their work, though, before decisions can be made.

Dyck says they expect to see a variety of options, which might include a retrofit of the existing fire hall, an addition to the fire hall, or a teardown of the current building and construction of a replacement.

Worst case scenario, council may be required to relocate the fire hall to a completely different site, if space proves to be a problem.

According to Dyck, this is the start of what he expects to be a four-year journey.

In the meantime, he hopes that the fire department can continue to make do as they have been for a while now. They're cramped, he says, and at present some emergency vehicles must be parked outdoors. Lockers are shared among members and the civic office staffroom doubles as a training location.

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REPAIRS & PARTS ON ALL MAKES & MODELS

Weak Ankles? How Physiotherapy Can Help You Bounce Back from Ankle Sprains

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Physiotherapists are at the forefront of treating ankle sprains, starting with reducing initial swelling and pain. Techniques like ice therapy, gentle compression, and keeping the ankle elevated are often recommended. As recovery progresses, our focus shifts to getting you back on your feet safely.

For those with weak ankles, no matter the cause, physiotherapy is especially important. A tailored rehabilitation program strengthens the muscles around the ankle and enhances balance. This may include exercises like standing on one foot or using a balance board, which are not only effective but can be easily practised at home.

The goal is clear: to heal your current injury and to fortify your ankles against future injuries. By following a physiotherapist's guidance, you can regain your mobility and confidence, ensuring that your ankles are strong enough to keep up with your active lifestyle.



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Summer Street Repairs Soon Underway in Niverville

By Brenda Sawatzky
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It wouldn't be summer in Manitoba without street construction crews redirecting traffic or slowing down the daily commute. At least one major repair and a variety of minor repairs are planned for some of Niverville's residential streets, coming in at a collective cost of \$1 million.

During the months of July and August, residents living on Edelweiss Crescent, Church Avenue, and Errington Way should prepare for some temporary inconvenience.

Edelweiss will see a complete street rebuild for a short stretch along the southwest section. The west half of Church will also be completely rebuilt.

The installation of a new concrete drainage swale is planned for Errington next to Hampton Drive. This will include the removal of existing asphalt and a resurfacing of the entire street.

Around the beginning of June, two blocks of Fourth Avenue South will undergo a major overhaul, long awaited by area residents. The project, initially planned for 2023, was curtailed due to unexpectedly high construction estimates.

Between the intersections of First Street South and Third Street South, homeowners along Fourth Avenue South can expect more than just a street surface renewal. Once complete, the two-block stretch will include new sidewalks, curbing, and land drainage piping. As well, a parking lane will be created.

Grassy boulevards along each side of the street will be relandscaped.

"New driveway sections will match existing driveway construction as much as possible and new driveway grades will be constructed to match new street grades," says Cyrus Reimer, director of communications for the Town of Niverville. "As well,



Fourth Avenue South in Niverville is one of many streets to undergo repair work this summer.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

the Fourth Avenue Bible Church parking lot will be reduced to one or two access points off Fourth Avenue instead of access along the entire parking lot."

Reimer says that poor drainage along this stretch has been a major culprit in the street's deterioration over the years. The street surface, too, has long passed its expected lifespan.

"Fourth Avenue South is one of the oldest streets in Niverville," Reimer adds. "The town had planned to fix the road years earlier but knew that construction was going to happen, thus it was decided to delay the rebuild until the construction was complete."

Reimer refers to the construction of apartment complexes located at 74 and 93 Fourth Avenue South. These complexes began construction in 2018. Large trucks and heavy equipment worsened the infrastructure issues in this part of town.

Even so, Reimer says the cost of street repairs and maintenance along this stretch will be borne by the taxpayers and not the developer, especially in light of the condition the street was in prior to the build.

And thanks to the addition of the two apartment blocks, the

taxbase along this stretch has grown from 18 homes to 85 homes.

Of course, new developers aren't completely off the hook for infrastructure development. Reimer says that capital development fees are attached to every new house or building permit issued, and those funds can be used for projects such as street repairs and maintenance.

"We want to bring Fourth Avenue South up to modern design standards," Reimer says. "I want to thank those who live on [the street] for being flexible and understanding during the reconstruction of this street, and we hope that they will be able to enjoy the newly constructed roadway to its fullest extent once it is finished."

If you're a resident living in any of the proposed construction zones, it's important to understand how to properly navigate the street while it's under repair.

As for parking and accessibility, the contractor will be responsible for providing the town office with written traffic control and pedestrian accommodation plans.

Council asks that residents make every attempt to respect traffic control signs and delineators which are there to provide efficiency for the work and safety

of everyone.

If residents living along the construction areas have any mobility concerns, they are asked to contact the town office in advance of the work so the developer can be notified.

"Flexibility and understanding will be required in this process, as there are many factors that influence when access will be available or not," states the town's website.

Special access will be granted to residents living in the apartment complexes along Fourth Avenue during construction. For a period of time, they will be allowed to use the parking lot of Fourth Avenue Bible Church as a thoroughfare to and from home.

Garbage collection along construction routes will not change. Residents are expected to drop their bins at the usual collection point. The contractor will be responsible for taking it to a designated pickup spot for Bristol Hauling and then return it to the property owner after pickup.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more or to sign up for construction updates, visit: www.wheretheyoubelong.ca/2024/02/29/feb-26th-summer-road-repairs-open-house-summary

IN BRIEF



✉ HANOVER SCHOOL DIVISION

New Principals for Niverville and Bothwell

By Brenda Sawatzky
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Beginning in September, two local schools will have new faces behind the principal's desk.

Niverville High School (NHS) will be led by Paul Grosskopf, who was appointed to the position this last month following the announcement that current principal Kimberley Funk would be moving on to a role at the SRSS.

Grosskopf will be a new staff member to the Hanover School Division (HSD).

He comes to Niverville directly from his previous position as vice-principal and instructional coach at École St. Adolphe, a dual track French immersion school.

Prior to 2022, Grosskopf served for five years as acting principal at Arbogate School in La Broquerie.

His teaching experience also includes seven years at the same school where he taught Grades 3/4 and Grades 7/8.

In addition, Grosskopf was a physical education instructor.

He received his bachelors of education from the University of Manitoba in 2015 and is currently enrolled in the university's postbaccalaureate program in educational administration.

As well, the fall of 2024 will bring a new face to the administration of Bothwell School, where Amanda Dent will replace Laura Rekrut as principal.

Dent brings 20 years of teaching experience to the role, two of which were served at the Blumenort School in her earlier career.

For the past 18 years, Dent has filled the role of educator in the Kindergarten to Grade 8 levels at the Anola School in the Sunrise School Division.

In 2003, Dent graduated from the University of Manitoba with Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Music degrees.

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HSD Trustees Face Scrutiny Following New Discrimination Allegations

By Brenda Sawatzky

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For the second time since 2016, the Hanover School Division's (HSD) trustees have found themselves under fire over accusations of discrimination. In both cases, the concerns have revolved around the division's lack of inclusivity for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

The earlier story began when parent Michelle McHale stepped forward to challenge HSD's policy to prohibit discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity issues in the classroom.

The topic gained national attention that year, especially in light of the Winnipeg School Division's approval of a comprehensive Diversity and Equity Education Policy to protect 2SLGBTQIA+ students and staff just months prior.

Now, eight years later, HSD trustees are in the same spotlight, this time thanks to a group of parents and professionals calling themselves the Hanover Parent Alliance for Diversity (HPAD).

"We keep our names confidential as an Alliance due to past threats against concerned parents, but we will not be silent," HPAD says. "The well-being of Hanover students is in jeopardy, given the ongoing pattern of discriminatory and illegal actions of several Hanover School Board trustees."

This statement forms the opening of the group's letter to Nello Altomare, Manitoba's Minister of Education. That letter, dated April 25, was accompanied by a petition with nearly 900 signatures.

That letter made a formal



The administration offices of the Hanover School Division in Steinbach.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

complaint against six HSD board trustees, including board chair Brad Unger, assistant chair Jeff Friesen, Lynn Barkman, Shayne Barkman, Cheryl Froese, and Dallas Wiebe.

Unger and Barkman both held positions on the board back in 2016 when the previous discrimination assertions came to light.

Further, the HPAD letter requested that specific corrective actions be taken by the Minister.

Firstly, it called for the removal of all six trustees. As well, it requested that the board's policy undergo a thorough review to ensure that it aligns with the Public Schools Act and the Human Rights Codes and, further, that an oversight person be appointed by the Minister to ensure that the Act is followed.

In many ways, the current situation bears similarities to 2016. At that time, Minister of Education Ian Wishart was called on to provide the

HSD board with awareness training on sexual identity issues.

Wishart assured the media that his office would follow through on that pledge.

RESPONSE FROM EDUCATION MINISTER

On April 30, Altomare responded to an inquiry from *The Citizen* regarding the allegations.

Altomare said it's not uncommon for his department to receive emails from concerned parties regarding the province's public schools. And it's the government's job, he added, to respond to them.

Whether it's a simple email or formal letter with a petition, he said, all communications are treated with equal weight.

"In the end, we're here to serve Manitobans and we take that job very seriously," Altomare told *The Citizen*.

As a result of the letter, Altomare

said that he had arranged for a meeting with HSD's trustees.

Members of HPAD would also have their opportunity for face-to-face dialogue with the Minister.

"We'll see where it's going to go from there," Altomare says. "It's going to be based on the good conversations we're going to have. In the end, we're all about ensuring that kids feel included and safe in Manitoba schools. I really don't see that [the HSD] board will feel differently about that than I do."

Questions were to be asked about recent motions put forward by the board, he added, in order to determine how the board felt these motions are intended to improve on student learning and outcomes.

Altomare declined discussion with *The Citizen* regarding the similar situation from eight years ago, clarifying that he was only interested in talking to the current board about

the current issues they were in the process of confronting.

BASIS OF HPAD CLAIMS

The accusations made by the HPAD were based on a variety of claims. In October 2023, HPAD alleges that one trustee expressed concern over the decision by two other trustees, Shayne Barkman and Jeff Friesen, to attend a 1 Million March for Children rally.

This rally, they said, was organized to encourage the elimination of sexual orientation and gender identity topics from the school curriculum. According to internal reports, the result was a series of HSD board meetings flavoured with "discriminatory dialogue."

"Discussions took place, essentially unchecked, about limiting Indigenous educational content because it's 'racist to white people' and removing Pride flags (for starters) from schools because they are 'sexualized,'" states the HPAD letter.

The group became further frustrated following an April 2 public board meeting at which a parent delegation was given an extended amount of time to lodge their complaint over a gender-diverse child using the "boys" change room at the Steinbach Regional Secondary School.

This delegation, HPAD says, should never have been allowed to make a presentation to the board in the first place.

Three motions were also put forward by the HSD board at that April 2 meeting, all of which HPAD found highly disturbing.

The first motion recommended that trustees be involved in the hiring of the division's music and gym

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teachers going forward. To date, all teaching staff have been interviewed and hired by administrative staff without the inclusion of trustees in the process.

HPAD has said that the board's rationale references the idea that gym and music teachers represent the face of the division to the community. But the parent group is concerned that teachers applying for these jobs may themselves identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, putting them at risk of discrimination from those in hiring authority.

Five out of the six previously named trustees voted in support of this motion.

Days later, the president of the Hanover Teacher's Association, Kevin Martens, noted that the division's teachers were also concerned with this proposal, noting that provincial legislation doesn't recommend trustee involvement in the hiring process for teachers.

Some of the same trustees voted in support of a second motion which would ensure that trustees be made privy to applications coming in from all prospective teaching staff.

That motion didn't make it to a vote.

Finally, a motion was made to revert the delivery of the division's sex education curriculum to pre-COVID days, at which time Grade Seven students were separated by gender for instruction.

"This motion is harmful and exclusionary to any

students who don't identify with the debunked concept of a gender binary," HPAD said in their letter. "Fortunately, it did not pass, but chair Brad Unger allowed the transphobic, discriminatory motion to be put to a vote."

Based on all the conversations supposedly held around the HSD board meeting table in recent months, HPAD has said that it's only a matter of time before other disturbing motions come to the fore.

They worry that trustees have the power to limit Indigenous educational content in the curriculum, thus limiting a child's education on the subject of colonial racism.

Regarding the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, these parents are concerned that a prohibition of symbols such as Pride flags may be imminent.

"Representation matters, and the rights to identity expression are protected under the Manitoba Human Rights Code," HPAD said. "Again, a motion such as this would not meet the diverse needs and interests of the entire student population, as the Public Schools Act directs."

Finally, based on the board's discussion around sex education curriculum, HPAD worries about other motions being put forward that may attempt to limit 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusivity and evidence-based sex education.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are topics currently included in the

provincial curriculum.

"We have a revised Phys-Ed/Health curriculum that will be coming out in the next school year and we look forward to it being implemented," Altomare says. "We're all about ensuring that students have the information they need to be safe out in the world and to be responsible citizens."

Since the HPAD letter was released to the public, another HSD parent started a petition in support of the division's trustees.

This parent lauded the board for their continuing efforts to align with old-school values, unlike most other divisions in the province.

THE DIVISION'S RESPONSE

The Citizen reached out to HSD for a response to the allegations and correctives brought forward by HPAD.

"The board is reviewing the document submitted to the Minister of Education by the Hanover Parent Alliance for Diversity," reads a statement released by the HSD the board in response to inquiries. "We are committed to thoroughly understanding the concerns expressed and addressing this matter with the attention and seriousness it deserves. We will respond as soon as our review is complete. The board remains dedicated to ensuring an inclusive and equitable environment for all our students and staff."

OPEN LETTER FROM A TRANS PERSON

After the April 2 meeting, *The Citizen* received another letter, dated April 3, titled "Open Letter as Trans Person to Hanover School Board."

While the writer of this letter remains anonymous, they speak to the struggles they have faced in light of anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiments in the division.

"As a child, who grew up in a Christian household and who went to church regularly, I was told I was a child of God, and would sing about being a child of God in my church choir," they write. "Now as an adult and a trans person, I live, work and worship in the Steinbach area. The actions of the Hanover School board would suggest that God is wrong, and that I am not worthy of Christ's love."

The April 2 board meeting, they said, brought back lots of emotion and thoughts of moving away from the area. The writer reminds the board that this kind of thinking makes students four to six times more likely to attempt suicide.

"Many immigrants have come to the Steinbach area to flee discrimination and trauma for who they are and who they pray to," the writer continues. "I hope and pray that Steinbach and area residents, and Hanover School board members, remember not to cause discrimination and trauma as was done to them by people in power."

CITIZEN POLL

Do you feel that the sex and gender education taught in your local school is handled appropriately?

- Yes. I am confident that our teachers are handling these subjects in line with provincial curriculum guidelines.
- No. I have concerns with how these subjects are currently taught and would like to see them handled differently.

Have a more nuanced opinion? Leave us a comment online.

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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

To what degree do minimum wage increases, or the switch to a living wage, benefit the economy and low income earners here in Manitoba?

To a great degree. Higher wages ensure that fewer people live in poverty, which keeps money flowing into the economy and reduces the need for government programs.

23%

To a small degree. The primary beneficiary of higher wages is the government, at the cost of small businesses.

77%

YOUR COMMENTS:

In a perfect world a living wage sounds great, but at a time when we are battling inflation, higher wages will only drive interest rates higher as the bank of Canada struggles to control inflation and increase the value of the Canadian dollar.

Raising the minimum wage in Manitoba could give low-income workers a much-needed boost, but we have to be smart about it. Doing it gradually would help small businesses adjust without breaking the bank. Tax breaks or incentives for businesses could also soften the blow. But money isn't the only issue—housing costs are through the roof, literally. The days of affordable "starter homes" are gone, and even entry-level housing is now a luxury. To truly support low-income workers, we need a broader approach that addresses both wages and the high cost of living. That way, we can lift everyone up without hurting the businesses that keep our town going.

No one ever asks or analyzes where this money comes from. It is never at the governments expense. Unions act as if the money can just be legislated into existence with no consequence. If wages go up, something else will go up as well. Many use large profitable corporations as the justification for this, when the reality is that small businesses would be affected the most and seem to be viewed as collateral damage in the conquest to get workers a "fair share" from large corporations. It is very narrow minded thinking.

IN BRIEF

Niverville's Council Talks Multifamily Housing and Population Density Targets

By Brenda Sawatzky

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On May 7, Niverville's council met to discuss multifamily housing starts and the requirement to meet provincial and federal density targets.

Council approved an amendment to their multi-unit residential development incentive grant policy which will be available to builds containing 20 or more suites.

Mayor Myron Dyck says the grant does not operate as a cash incentive. Rather, it gives council the flexibility to make allowances on when certain developer fees have to be paid.

"It's a payment plan to help with cashflow when they start," says Dyck.

These days, council is looking favourably on all kinds of housing options that will help the community grow inward and not just outward.

It's not just for the community's sake that housing infill has taken on a new level of importance.

One year ago, the province made it a requirement for Niverville to join the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region.

Capital regions exist in every province. They are collaborative bodies which include the capital city and its surrounding municipalities, all with the goal of working cohesively on land use, economic development, environmental initiatives, and other matters of regional concern.

As a member of the WMR, Niverville is expected to track and move toward population density targets as set out by the two higher levels of government.

Councillor Nathan Dueck noted that these targets must be met for public funding to

be made available.

"So if we're not hitting our targets and losing funding from [the province's project grants], what does that mean to the community in terms of long-term sustainability?" Dueck asks.

Mayor Dyck says that Niverville's density is around five dwellings per acre. New legislation, he adds, has created a target of eight.

According to Dyck, one of council's concerns with the mandated density targets set out by the province is that Niverville is the only urban municipality within the WMR which borders a municipality that is not a part of the WMR.

This is the RM of Hanover, bordering Niverville's immediate east.

According to CAO Eric King, Hanover has no population density targets to meet in order to be eligible for funding.

It's concerns like these that Dyck hopes to take with him to this year's annual Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference held in Calgary in early June.

According to Dyck, the 2024 conference promises to focus on housing trends and land uses across the country.

The conference provides mayors from across the country a chance to come together to raise concerns relevant to their communities and share creative ways in which hurdles are being overcome.

The weekend will include a three-hour walking tour of Calgary's east village to show how one city is managing to enhance density by developing pockets containing a wide variety of housing options.

While there, Dyck hopes to meet up with some of the city's business owners in order to sell Niverville's many attributes.

Niverville Pizza Wars a Savoury Success

By Brenda Sawatzky

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In recent years, a surge in pizza restaurants in Niverville has become fodder for many a "Pizzaville" and "Niverville pizza cartel" joke.

When the Niverville Chamber of Commerce decided to host a week-long event and call it Niverville Pizza Wars, satire quickly turned to celebration.

In the end, two champions arose from the oven smoke.

Chicken Chef's Honey Blaze pizza entry is enjoying the well-deserved distinction of "best tasting" pizza.

Santa Lucia, with their unique Nighthawk creation, reigns supreme in the "most creative" department.

Bre-Ann Boulet is the executive director for the NCoC and the event's organizer. According to Boulet, this first Niverville Pizza War was a resounding success with 114 participating voters.

Coming in a very close third, she says, was Hespeler's Cookhouse and Tavern with their FFG entry (Fantastic Fig and Goat). All three of these restaurants developed new pizza flavour combinations.

The final two contestants included Domino's Pizza with their take on a Philly cheese-steak sandwich called Irresistible Oven Baked Bread Sticks.

Pizza Pizza stepped up with two entries, one for each category: the Hawaiian Strombo and Gourmet Creamy Mushroom Florentine.

Two voters were also lucky winners at the end, receiving gift certificates redeemable at all the restaurants.

Boulet says that every restaurant in the community received an invitation to participate about a month prior.

"[The idea] wasn't a hard sell for the restaurants," Boulet



Niverville Chicken's Honey Blaze pizza was awarded best-tasting pizza.

SARA BETH DACOMBE

says. "There were restaurants that couldn't participate this year but really want to participate next year."

All in all, Boulet says, every one of the participating restaurants put forward some really amazing pizza creations.

She was mildly surprised at the popularity of one particular pizza ingredient.

"There seemed to be an overwhelming theme of honey between [the top] three."

During the week of the event, Boulet sampled every pizza offering. In the end, she's not altogether surprised at Chicken Chef's win.

"I'm craving that pizza again," Boulet says of the Honey Blaze entry. "It was sweet and tangy, but it wasn't spicy, which I was a little worried about with the banana peppers. It had just such rich flavouring."

Niverville Pizza War 2025 is already in talks. Next year, she hopes to attract competitors from around the whole region.

Laura Mulvena, owner of Niverville Chicken Chef, is thrilled with the win.

"We wanted something completely different, so we

tested a few of our toppings with the hot honey," Mulvena says. "A lot of restaurants are starting to use hot honey on different items, so we just thought pairing it with a pizza would be good."

Eventually, salami, hot banana peppers, and two kinds of cheeses, including goat cheese, made the cut.

"Everyone that tried it really loved it," says Mulvena. "Even Chicken Chef as a chain is starting to rethink the way they look at [artisanal] pizza."

Honey Blaze pizza will remain on their menu, Mulvena says. In the coming weeks, she hopes to incorporate hot honey into other menu items as well, such as the hot honey chicken burger and hot honey wings.

"I hope [the Chamber] does more of this because it brings people in and gets the community talking and we get to showcase our [food]," Mulvena concludes.

For Dean Delorme, co-owner of Santa Lucia Pizza, the win is equally sweet. To create the Nighthawk pizza, he solicited feedback from staff and customers.

"At the end of the day, we decided to go with our famous barbecue sauce with a boneless dry rib chopped up and some lemon pepper, banana peppers, and pineapple and a drizzle of our electric honey," says Delorme. "That was a fantastic idea."

As for the name, Delorme admits he's a proud fan of the hometown MJHL team.

For Santa Lucia Niverville, the week would have been a terrific success even if they hadn't won.

"We sold hundreds of pizzas [that week]," says Delorme. "We also sold it by the slice and we had people coming in from the garage sales. Being out all day long, they came in here and grabbed a slice of pizza and a pop for five bucks."

The Nighthawk pizza will remain on Santa Lucia's local menu for foodies to enjoy.

"I loved the whole idea of a pizza war and I love that a lot of people decided to participate," Delorme says. "Hopefully, next time around we get a few more pizza restaurants and get everyone involved."

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Commentary

When Were the Good Old Days?

By Jennifer Lavin

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In 1976 in Chowchilla, California, a bus full of children was hijacked by three men who had the intention of holding the students for ransom.

A dreadful 36 hours later, the children all made it home relatively unscathed. They were hungry, thirsty, and absolutely terrified, but they were physically unharmed.

There were no cell phones or GPS to help track these kids or their bus and the fact that they were missing at all took some time to discover. When the children were able to escape and were returned to their parents, they were offered no counselling, no therapy, no real help of any kind.

Because the children were physically unharmed, and because it was 1976, it was assumed that they would be fine. In fact, the parents were given instructions not to “baby” their kids.

If the children had trauma-related nightmares and woke up screaming, the parents were told not to even go into their rooms to check on them, as that would be “rewarding” their behaviour.

Most, if not all, of these kids suffered for decades with the terror and trauma of their kidnapping. After all, the very concept of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was not yet a thing, not even for war veterans.

So much could have changed for these 26 kids if the Chowchilla kidnapping had happened in more modern times.

When I hear people refer to “the good old days,” especially in a wistful tone, I often think of the Chowchilla kids.

It’s a dangerous thing to look back on, say, our formative years and call them the best years. I went to high school in the 1980s and while it’s true that the 80s had the best music of all time, I don’t



DEPOSITPHOTOS

know if much else was, frankly, all that great.

Many kids in my high school were bullied relentlessly, gym classes were ridiculously segregated, and there was no room for kids who were different in any way.

Were these the good old days?

My husband, an American, remembers road-tripping as a child in the 1970s and driving through so-called “sundown towns” where

signs blatantly read, “(N-word,) don’t let the sun set on you in this town.”

Were these the good old days?

My mother talks about how in the 1940s, she and her siblings would take lard sandwiches to school and all nine family members bathed once a week, reusing the same bathwater as the sibling or parent before them.

Were those the good old days?

The so-called Greatest Generation grew up in the Great Depression, then endured World War II.

Were those the good days?

Terrible and scary things happen to people around the world every day, as do joyous and wonderful things, and this has happened since the beginning of humanity and will continue until the end.

There always has been and always will be good and bad.

In 1274, a priest called Peter the Hermit wrote, “The world is passing through troublous times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they knew everything, and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness with them.”

Peter obviously wasn’t thrilled with the times in which he lived.

Going two thousand years further back, Hesiod, a Greek poet in the eighth century BCE, seems to have felt the same way. He wrote, “We live in a decaying age. Young people no longer respect their parents. They are rude and impatient. They frequently inhabit taverns and have no self-control.”

Even the Bible weighs in on this subject. Ecclesiastes 7:10 reads, “Do not say, ‘Why were the old days better than these?’ For it is not wise to ask such questions” (NIV).

Particularly pernicious are the innumerable variations of “Well, back in my day we didn’t use seatbelts and I survived.”

But so many people did not survive. Seatbelt use was determined to lower the potential of fatal injury by 45 percent, and non-fatal injury by 50 percent.

“Back in my day I put my babies to sleep on their stomachs and they survived,” some say.

But so many babies tragically did not. Around the turn of the century, victims of sudden infant death syndrome dropped by 50 percent, coinciding with new recommendations to place infants on their back.

Some of us just got lucky. Perhaps our loved ones weren’t casualties of lack of safety protocols, but many other beloved people were.

So I posit that these days, right now, are the good old days. And they’re also the bad new days. And a generation from now, it will be the same thing. The best of times, the worst of times, are all times.



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Sports & Recreation

New Coach Leads Force to First Season in Division One

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

The fate of the Niverville Force soccer team was briefly up in the air earlier this spring after a bit of an off-season shakeup.

However, the team has hit the pitch again for another exciting season.

In 2021, Thompson and Andry Giesbrecht bought and created the Force. With Giesbrecht as coach, in three short years the pair guided the athletes from a Division Three team to a Division One team.

This year, however, Giesbrecht made the decision to move back to his native Paraguay with his family. Thompson says that Giesbrecht's decision was a real blow to the entire team but that he will remain a co-owner and will be cheering on the Force from South America.

"We hope to make him proud," says Thompson.

Thompson says the players were so devastated that Giesbrecht was leaving that some of them decided to leave. But she was determined to keep her soccer family together and began a campaign to keep the Force



The Force are taking on their first season as a Division One squad.

📷 SUE THOMPSON

going strong.

Tryouts were recently held to refill the team's roster, resulting in four new players.

And after the first practice, some of the old players changed their minds and decided to stay with the squad.

Thompson has also needed to find a new coach. To fill this all-important position, she turned to an old friend,

Walt McKee.

McKee and Thompson created the Niverville Rush U15 soccer team back in 2017. McKee is a huge name in soccer in Manitoba, and in athletics more generally.

After giving the decision some thought, McKee signed on.

He first came on the scene in 1969 when he joined the University

of Manitoba Bisons football team. This team was the first in the Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union (CIAU) to win back-to-back Vanier Cup championships.

McKee then played in the CFL from 1972 to 1975, first with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and then as a member of the Edmonton Eskimos in their Grey Cup-winning 1975 season.

He has since remained active, coaching soccer for many years.

There will be another change for the Force this year, in that Division One games have professional linesmen. Thompson explains that although it increases costs for the team, it's important to have professionals who can make accurate calls.

One thing that hasn't changed is that the Force has tremendous sponsors. This year's players will don new black uniforms thanks to Negash Coffee and Urban Flavours.

Chris Hofer, a local realtor, and John Schmitke, owner of Your Grocery People, also made donations to lower the registration cost for each player. And Marcus Giesbrecht of Onova Classic Consulting is providing each athlete with personalized Adidas track jackets.

Thompson has high hopes for the season, which has already started off with a bang. The Force won their first game in early May.

She also hopes to get even more fans out for home games this year.

"I hope that we can get more than 100 or 150 spectators," Thompson says. "Like, I hope we really can crush it in town this year."

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IN BRIEF

Nighthawks Hold Successful Spring Camp

By Ty Dilello

✉ tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Nighthawks held their annual spring camp from April 25–28 at the CRRC for future prospects and players.

Over the course of that spring weekend, players and goalies were put through a series of drills and scrimmages so the club's brass could get a good look at the organization's future.

The team's general manager, Mike McAulay, came away feeling impressed with the talent on display.

"We were really impressed with the turnout, and I thought things went really well at spring camp," says McAulay. "There was good competition in the camp, and everything went off without a hitch."

The camp had a good mix of players, from 2006-born players who are signed and committed and ready to step into the lineup next season all the way down to 2009-born players.

"We had players out from places like Newfoundland and Alberta who had been identified by scouts or coaches and who are looking for a Junior A opportunity," McAulay says. "They're looking to win a spot on the team this year."

The camp was also a great chance for McAulay and his scouting staff to look at players who they might select at the upcoming 2024 MJHL Draft on June 2.

This year's draft will feature Manitoban prospects who were born in 2008.

"We're looking for players who are going to be Junior A players and not WHL players, so they can help us of course," says McAulay. "We have a good scouting staff that can help identify future talent for us, so we're excited for the draft."

There's going to be a new batch of players coming into the fold when the team hits the ice this fall, so it's going to be an exciting time for the young franchise.

In other Nighthawks news, fans recently had a chance to own their favourite Nighthawks' game-worn jersey. The auction closed on May 5 at 6:00 p.m., after which pickup was arranged for local winners. All monies donated have gone towards the Nighthawks organization.



Dwight Hirst.



Mike McAulay.

Nighthawks Name McAulay as GM, Hirst as Coach

By Ty Dilello

✉ tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

On May 22, the Niverville Nighthawks announced some changes to its hockey operations department, naming Mike McAulay as general manager and Dwight Hirst as head coach.

Tyler Anderson has also been named assistant coach.

According to Nighthawks president Clarence Braun, the team's chair of hockey operations, Kevin Lansard, has been the lead on all conversations and negotiations relating to these key decisions.

With a deep-rooted passion for hockey and an extensive understanding of the game, McAulay's commitment to excellence and his unwavering dedication to the team's success make him the perfect fit for the crucial general manager role with the club.

Hirst stepped in late last season and quickly cemented his place

within the club.

His immediate impact and deep understanding of the game have been evident from the start of his tenure. He is focused on building the Nighthawks program, and his strategic approach will be essential to the success of the team in the future.

Hirst was elated when he found out that he would have the opportunity to become the full-time coach of the Nighthawks next season.

"It was a feeling of opportunity to have the organization believe in my ability to coach this program," says Hirst. "There is overwhelming support from the entire organization, from the management, the coaches, trainers, board members, and volunteers. I try to make a point of engaging in conversations with everyone involved at the rink during practices and games. It's been a very easy transition into the coaching role for me since there is

a lot of community support."

Hirst plans on getting to work during the offseason, doing everything possible to prepare the club for the start of training camp at the end of summer.

"[For one,] getting familiar with our staff and coaches who support our players during the offseason is key," says Hirst. "Being prepared for the opening of training camp starts now for our athletes. And putting together plans on how we want our club to play and act as a team."

Hirst is excited at the prospect of settling into his leadership role and helping the team reach new heights.

"As we finished the season, we were a team that had pushed our compete level up and improved upon our special teams. We will strive to be a team that is very hard on pucks—puck possession is a priority—and resilient with our approach will help guide our group

next season."

Finally, just like McAulay, Anderson has been an integral part of the Nighthawks since the team's beginnings. His dedication and hard work behind the scenes have not gone unnoticed, and the club is excited to see him take on a more prominent role as an assistant coach.

Anderson will be given the opportunity to make a significant impact on the team, bringing his unique perspective and innovative ideas to the forefront.

The Nighthawks organization notes that this dynamic team brings a wealth of experience, dedication, and fresh perspectives that will undoubtedly elevate its program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the Niverville Nighthawks staff, please visit www.mjhlNighthawks.ca/hockeyops

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How is sinful man declared righteous before a just and holy God?

This, of course, was the epicentre of the controversy during the time of the Reformation. Rome and the Catholic Church said that salvation was to be obtained by stages working a “sacramental treadmill.” They said that “God’s grace is great and that through the cross and His Church salvation is possible for all who work and suffer for it.”

The Reformers said God’s grace is greater, “for through Christ’s cross and His Spirit, salvation, full and free, with its unlimited guarantee of eternal joy, is given once and forever to all who believe, so come to Christ, and trust and take.” Essentially the difference between the Catholic and Reformed view on justification (how we are righteous before a holy and just God) is that Catholics earn and merit salvation by works and the Reformers maintain the truth of Scripture by affirming that our righteousness is only by faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning work.

This, of course, does not mean that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, for only “the satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God” but I can receive this righteousness by imputation and make it my own by faith only.

All this of course does not mean that “works” are not important, only that they do not form in any way the basis for our salvation. They do, however, flow as a fruit of thankfulness for those who are grafted into Christ by a true faith.

Sadly, today, many Protestant churches have abandoned the theology of Sola Fide (faith alone) for a “works” based righteousness and in so doing have cheapened the cross of Christ.

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RUN Niverville to Hit the Streets for Inaugural Run

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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On June 22, RUN Niverville will host its inaugural run event at Hespeler Park at 10:00 a.m. After covering costs, any funds raised will go toward Niverville Fire & EMS.

Melanie Rideout and Candis Logan are running enthusiasts who live in Niverville. As organizers of this new community-minded event, they aim to bring together people of all ages, including families, who share a passion for fitness and an active lifestyle.

“With both a three-kilometre and five-kilometre run planned, there’s something for everyone, whether you’re a seasoned runner or just starting out on your fitness journey,” says Logan, race director for RUN Niverville.

The shorter route will start at Hespeler Park and take runners into Fifth Avenue Estates along Hampton Drive.

The five-kilometre route follows the same route while incorporating a short leg along Fifth Avenue before continuing east along Spruce Drive and taking runners around Edelweiss Crescent.

A NEW RUN FOR A CAUSE

The two runners noticed that Niverville had no formal running events and wanted to organize something close to home.

“Both Mel and myself are avid runners who race both locally in Winnipeg and larger scale events,” says Logan. “Almost all road races in the province are held in Winnipeg. But Niverville is a very active community.”

Previously Niverville hosted the Imagine Run in support of mental health. With a history of supportive runners in Niverville, Logan hopes



Melanie Rideout and Candis Logan.

the community will be similarly receptive to the new event.

“We are aware of the Imagine Run and the success it had within Niverville,” she says. “We are raising funds for our local volunteer fire department. The fire department does so much for our community, and this is our small way to give back to them.”

Registration has since closed, sold out due to early response.

RUN Niverville is also affiliated with the Manitoba Runners Association (MRA) as a participant with their Youth Series. At year end, youth who have completed three, six, or nine of the approved races will be celebrated at the MRA seasonal awards banquet.

Logan and Rideout anticipate many families will participate and have incorporated safety protocols for runners pushing strollers.

“Strollers are allowed,” Logan says. “They just need to be the last to start at the starting line for safety reasons. Parents who want to run alongside their child will need to register. Nobody is allowed on the course without a bib.”

Local sponsors have stepped up. While details are still coming together, all runners will also enjoy a complimentary T-shirt and a

medal for participating.

“In April, we approached businesses in Niverville looking for sponsors to assist in the cost of putting this event on,” Logan adds. “We have had great feedback and support for our event. RUN Niverville relies on revenue and sponsorship from businesses to assist in costs for food, swag, prizes, and overall costs. In addition, we will have prizes... There are gift cards from City Park Runners, a Yeti cooler package, a kids scooter package, and wireless earbuds, to name of few.”

RUNNING FOR HEALTH AND FUN

Rachel Drader, another local runner from Niverville, is excited for the event. She says there are many mental health benefits to having an active lifestyle and she would love to see the community put their full support behind RUN Niverville.

“I initially started running with friends as a way to improve my fitness,” says Drader. “Since I started running three years ago, my motivation to continue has shifted more towards the mental health benefits and the reward of challenging myself with further and faster distances.”

As someone who works from home, Drader has seen the benefits of getting out for a run to clear her head on days when she’s stuck inside working alone.

“The social aspect definitely keeps me running as well, as I’ve found the running community in Niverville to be pretty amazing,” says Rachel. “I believe being connected to other runners is very beneficial.”

Drader says that when people commit to being active together, it not only reduces individual isolation but fosters community wellness.

“I was quite intimidated to join a few friends for runs, as I was a lot slower than them and could not do the same distances they could,” she says. “The support and encouragement I received was incredible and really helped me to push through when I wasn’t feeling my best.”

She also looks forward to seeing families and people of different ages participating together.

“I think it’s great how many kids will be running this event, my own included,” she says. “They’ve seen me put in the time and effort training for runs and have asked to start coming on runs with me. They have been learning about how to properly fuel their bodies for workouts and they’re both very excited to train for and complete their 5k.”

Although RUN Niverville 2024 has already sold out, the organizers encourage people to view themselves as equally involved if they come out and cheer.

Volunteers are also needed. If you are able to help out with the event, reach out to Logan and Rideout by email: runniver-villemb@gmail.com.

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The Junior Pilots Girl 16U Navy team.

LISA MURRAY

Prov Junior Pilots 16U Are Provincial Champs

By Jennifer Lavin

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The Junior Pilots Girls 16U Navy team won gold at the provincial championships this spring.

From January to April, the Junior Pilots competed in five tournaments with excellent results and placed first at Volleyball Manitoba's Premier Tournament.

The team is coached by two Niverville couples: Kyla and Dylan Zacharias and Carl and Heather Fast.

"We love coaching these girls," says Kyla. "We started coaching the core of the team in 2022 when they were 14U. We are looking forward to [continuing to coach] them next year at the 17U level. The girls are hungry to learn more and keep advancing their skills. They have also set goals to compete at a high level provincially and nationally that we are excited to support."

The Junior Pilots 16U Navy entered the provincials ranked first in Manitoba.

The girls swept the round

robin against second-place Winman Attack and third-place Junior Bison Gold in two straight sets each, solidifying their first-place spot overall entering playoffs.

The quarterfinals pitted the Junior Pilots against the Bandits D and the girls won in two straight sets yet again, this time advancing them to the semifinals against Junior Bison Brown.

And once again, the Junior Pilots won the match in two straight sets.

The Junior Pilots entered the final against their season rivals, the Winman Attack. Although the Pilots lost their first set 29-27, they took the second set 25-22.

In the deciding third set, the girls dug deep and won with a final score of 15-10 to claim the provincial title.

The coaches say they could not be more proud of the team's accomplishments.

"This group of girls is amazing," says Kyla. "We have cultivated a strong sense of community with our girls and we also have one of the best

parent groups in the province! Some live in different areas or go to different schools, but these girls make their own effort to connect as a group. We have never experienced this level of cohesiveness amongst a roster of 13 girls, nor experienced a parent group so supportive."

The coaches said their goal at Nationals, which took place in late May, was to rank among the top 16 teams in Canada.

The members of the Junior Pilots Girls 16U Navy team are Tanya Gauthier of La Broquerie; Halle Smith, Bella Peters, and Sage Wiebe of Altona; Mady Friesen, Olivia Unrau, and Abby Voth of Steinbach; Jill Loeppky and Carly Friesen of Niverville; Kiersten Reimer of Mitchell; Willow Murray of Rosenort; and Danica Chateau and Abbie Parker of Île-des-Chênes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can stay up-to-date with the team by following their Instagram account: coach.kyla.and.dylan

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Arts & Entertainment



Visitors check out a concert in the park last summer in Ritchot.

▣ KOBY WILSON

Music and Movies Coming to a Ritchot Town Near You

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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The RM of Ritchot's recreation team is launching a range of summer activities for 2024, including live music and movies in the park.

Homegrown Harmonies is a free outdoor concert series put on by the municipality.

The shows will visit several communities in Ritchot to showcase local musicians.

"This is the second year we are running this music in the park summer concert series, Homegrown Harmonies," says Danielle Peters, coordinator of Community Engagement for Ritchot.

She says that the events began last year as an idea from recreation director Shane Ray.

As the name implies, the majority of musical groups will be local.

"The RM of Ritchot has four main communities—Ste. Agathe, St. Adolphe, Île-des-Chênes, and Grande Pointe—and we are hosting a concert in each one, hence why technically it's travelling. Last summer was our first time launching this event and we did them solely in St. Adolphe and Grande Pointe. With the success it got last year, we wanted to run it again, but this time in all four of our towns."

Organizers saw around 100 to 200 people attend the first concerts last year, and this year they are hoping to see many more.

The first show, on May 30, is coming to Ste. Agathe. It will feature the sounds of a variety of artists delivering multicultural music to listeners of all ages.

DC Sound System is bringing their own blend of Canadian and French West Indies sounds, treating the audience to a unique ska, dub, or "dance hall" sound set.

The Wagons, a family band, will perform a repertoire of original French, English, and Spanish compositions.

Happy Ouimet, another family-based band, is showcasing their rock, pop, and folk selections, including everything from heartfelt ballads to upbeat anthems.

On June 13 in St. Adolphe, guests can enjoy DC Sound System, Nic Messner, and the Prairie Joggers.

On July 11 in Île-des-Chênes, enjoy The Wagons, Theo Delaquis (and band), and Heartbreak Highway.

Finally, just before the August long weekend, come out and enjoy

Kori Plesiuk and Lorrie Stade, Mel Bergen accompanied by Brad Buhler, as well as the Castaways on August 29 in Grande Pointe.

This year's artists were selected after Peters put out a call for performers months in advance.

"I put out a call for artists back in January and got lots of interest," says Peters of the lineup this year. "We also reached out to the groups from last year to see if they would want to come back, and two said yes. Like I mentioned, most are local to the RM, but also French-speaking, which is exciting for us as we are a bilingual municipality."

All shows run from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. and attendees should bring their own lawn chairs, shades, or blankets.

There are also washrooms at each

site, as well as food and beverage vendors, and lawn games organized by the RM.

"It's an opportunity for community members to get outside, enjoy some free, live music, connect with their neighbours and spend time with friends and family, all while supporting local music," adds Peters.

The Movies in the Park series is also launching, showing the Disney/Pixar movie *Elemental* on May 24 at Parc Auteuil in Île-des-Chênes.

"Same idea as the concert," says Peters. "We're doing one movie per town, each month from May to August."

Ritchot Rec invites residents to vote for the movies they want to see throughout the summer. You can visit Ritchot Rec on social media for more information and to learn how to vote.





The Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair.

NIVERVILLE FAIR

Niverville Fair Introduces Changes to Reduce Lineups

Jennifer Lavin

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The annual Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair is almost upon us, and this year is bringing a few noteworthy changes to the way the midway operates in an effort to streamline the ticket-buying process.

As usual, volunteers for the fair will be selling tickets and redeeming online tickets at Your Grocery People (YGP). However, the volunteers have expanded their hours at the store. Tickets will be sold there on the Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday before the fair from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. and on Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

On Thursday and Friday,

people can also purchase their midway wristbands at YGP. For those who buy their wristbands here, they won't have to wait in line at the midway to redeem vouchers. They will already have the actual wristbands and can just show up and enjoy the rides.

There is an important caveat: the person who will be using the wristband must be in attendance so fair staff can put the wristband directly onto their wrist.

"The people using the wristband must be present at the time of sale to have the wristband put on them," says Dustin Krahn, general manager of the Olde Tyme Country Fair. "So if it's a mom, dad, and kids, they all must be present.

Wristbands will be applied by our volunteers and cannot be taken away loose. Volunteers are not able to make any exceptions to this."

If customers wish to buy a wristband for someone who is not present, they can still pay for the band but will receive a voucher instead. This voucher can then be redeemed later, either at YGP or at the midway ticket booths at the fair.

Fairgoers who have received vouchers as part of sponsorship or as a prize can also redeem them at YGP or at the midway booths at the fair.

For customers who still prefer to buy their wristbands at the event, Wonder Shows midway representatives suggest bringing cash, as it's the

best way to get through the lineups quickly.

Krahn stresses that the midway is owned and operated by Wonder Shows and not by the fair organizers, so he is simply passing on their recommendations.

"We are helping [Wonder Shows] to hopefully reduce lineups during the event when people want to be on the rides and not standing in line," says Krahn.

In another effort to further streamline entry to the ride area, there will be more midway ticket booths this year as well.

FORMORE INFORMATION

www.nivervillefair.com



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