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LOCAL NEWS

Canadian News Faces Possible Social Media Ban

■ Google and Meta are threatening to block Canadian news in retaliation for a new federal law that will require them to pay for clicks.

Details on Pages 6-7



LOCAL NEWS

St. Adolphe Residential Complex Voted Down by RM Council

■ A proposed housing complex on Main Street, on the plot of land across from Tourond Creek, will not proceed as council opts not to rezone the property from its current commercial designation.

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SPORTS & REC

Local Firefighters Compete in Games

■ Firefighters from our communities are taking part in the biannual World Police and Fire Games, hosted in Winnipeg.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Ritchot Hosts Summer Park Concert Series

■ The RM of Ritchot will be holding outdoor concerts in August in both St. Adolphe and Grande Pointe.

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Niverville Helping Hands Expands Location, Service Model

➤ [READ MORE ON PAGE 10](#)

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Niverville Open Health Undergoes Oversight Restructuring

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
 bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

It's been three years since the Town of Niverville assumed ownership of Niverville Open Health, the medical clinic once owned by Drs. Chris and Mairi Burnett.

Since that time, Niverville Healthcare Services Inc. (NHCSI), the board formed to oversee the functioning of the new social enterprise, has revived the floundering clinic and restored it to a robust state.

This July, council voted in favour of folding the current NHCSI board and launching a new chapter in clinic oversight by creating a tiered approach to Open Health's governance.

"Over the last six months or so, we've been taking a look at the role of the board for the medical facility and acknowledging that it was having trouble serving the need that we wanted it to," says town councillor and NHCSI board member Nathan Dueck.

Until now, the oversight board has been comprised of a local physician, a Chamber of Commerce member, a town councillor, a community member at large, and the business manager hired to see to the clinic's day-to-day operations on the town's behalf.

While the NHCSI was managing just fine, Dueck says that it was becoming clear that a restructuring needed to take place.

"We started off where the town purchased the medical facility for a dollar and we've grown it so much," says Dueck. "It's become an extremely valuable asset... and now we're looking at the entire business model expanding to become more community-owned with more community input, as opposed to something that the town is just running as a business."

Earlier this year, council hired



Niverville Open Health.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

consultant Kathy McPhail, former CEO of Southern Health-Santé Sud, to assist with the restructuring plan. McPhail was instrumental in helping to create a smooth transition from private to publicly owned facility back in 2020.

Dueck says that nearly a dozen different options for oversight were explored this time around before the board settled on the tiered system they'll be putting into place.

The top tier of governance will continue to fall to town council, which will manage the budgeting and all other financial aspects of the clinic. All final decisions regarding its management will be made by council.

Answering to council will be two separate advisory boards.

A newly formed medical council will be comprised of self-appointed local physicians, the clinic's business manager, and an Open Health staff representative.

Their job will be to work on physician recruitment, recommend opportunities for the clinic to improve, and advise council on new modalities, needed equipment, and capital investments.

A secondary advisory council will be created, operating separate from the medical council. Members of this board will be members of the community who can represent residents and provide external perspectives on the clinic.

"It would be composed of likely eight to ten different individuals from different walks of life with

different experiences," Dueck says. "[They] would advise council on ideas and visions for the Niverville medical facility's future."

This secondary council will guide council by participating in strategic planning sessions for the clinic and advising on how best to reinvest its revenues.

They will also gather data to help assess the changing health needs of the community.

It is expected that this council would meet three to four times annually and each member would fill a two- to three-year term.

Dueck is excited about the new tiered approach to oversight and he's confident that it will serve the community better in the future.

"When I was sitting on the [NHCSI] board, there was a realization that this is not going to last beyond a term of council, because four years from now you'll have a brand-new council and it might completely fall apart," says Dueck. "That was one of the biggest fears at the end of the day, that you would end up having a changeover in municipal government who don't have an interest in health or the social enterprise... It's better to change it now so we can grow into it over the next three years."

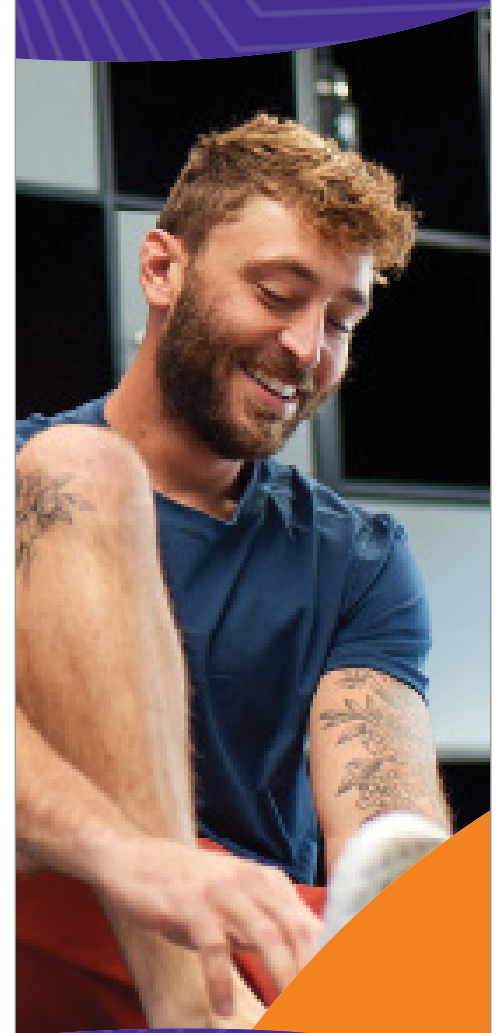
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Province Promises More Niverville-Style Senior Care Campuses

By Brenda Sawatzky
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On July 7, dozens gathered on the lawn of the Niverville Heritage Centre's aging-in-place campus for a senior's housing announcement from the provincial government.

According to Seniors and Long-term Care Minister Scott Johnston, the province will invest \$15 million into the planning and design of six new personal care home facilities across Manitoba.

This initiative, scheduled for Stonewall, Arborg, Lac du Bonnet, Oakbank, and Winnipeg, is expected to add 670 long-term care beds to the healthcare system.

The new PCHs will follow the model of those found in Niverville, Steinbach, and Carman. This model has been studied by other jurisdictions and recognized for its innovative approach to creating spaces that feel like home while providing a full continuum of care.

"Throughout our comprehensive consultations and engagement that helped shape our senior's strategy, we've heard that Manitobans want accessible and affordable housing options close to home so that they can stay connected with their communities and their families for as long as they can," Johnston said.

In addition, the province will pilot a second initiative called Community Supportive Living, which will act as a bridge for seniors who require more advanced care but are

not yet ready for long-term care.

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Manitoba has the highest percentage of long-term care residents who could have been cared for in the community had they been able to take advantage of the appropriate supports.

In phase one, 105 supportive care units will be constructed in three health regions, including Southern Health-Santé Sud, totalling 288 units by the end of phase two.

"This housing-with-supports program will provide safe, supportive care to seniors with chronic and complex needs in a home-like environment, preventing premature placement in a PCH," Johnston said.

The province will use a standardized rate for accommodation and services and provide subsidy assistance to maintain affordability for all.

Finally on the government's upcoming agenda is the introduction of 42 behavioural beds. These will be constructed in Brandon and Winkler and provide highly specialized care for seniors with complex mental health or behavioural needs.

Also speaking at Friday's event was Connie Newman, director of the Manitoba Association of Senior Communities and member of the provincial senior strategy panel of experts.

"The World Health Organization and United Nations launched the Decade of Healthy Aging in 2021 and

Manitoba is on the right track," Newman said. "We're following the outline of the WHO, which stated we need to change how we think, feel, and act towards age and aging."

According to Newman, this includes helping communities develop ways to foster the abilities of their seniors while delivering person-centred integrative care at home.

Indicating to the backdrop of the Niverville's Heritage Life PCH behind her, Sue Vovchuk of the Long-term and Continuing Care Association said she was pleased with the province's decision to move on this aging-in-place model.

"I've had the good fortune of coming out to Niverville about three times in the last couple of months and I always leave here feeling so hopeful and so happy," Vovchuk said. "It's just so encouraging to see what is possible."

Allowing seniors to live out all their years in their home community, she adds, will help them maintain the support networks of family, friends, and neighbours right to the end.

"This is essential for seniors to live a positive, productive, and health life," said Vovchuk. "In all journeys of care, it truly takes a village."

Invaluable lessons were learned, she says, as a result of events that unfolded in personal care homes during the years of pandemic.

Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck remembers the early stages leading up to Niverville's aging-in-place campus and the hard work and vision

it took to get there.

"When I joined council in 2004, seniors were having to leave, even though they raised their families here, worked at and owned businesses here, coached kids teams, and volunteered in the churches and local fair," Dyck says. "And then [they get sent] 60 to 80 miles away. It's heart-breaking. So to see mayors and reeves and community members here today based on a model that we were fortunate enough to partner with the province on, it's a great day and we're very thankful for what we have here."

Niverville's model includes senior options from independent-living life lease units to assisted and supportive living options and finally the PCH. They're all under one roof.

To build on this village-like model, the campus also provides social enterprise and retail space, medical and dental facilities, a restaurant, and a daycare facility.

Johnstone added that the seniors strategy, developed collaboratively by many partners, will pave the way for many more such announcements in the coming years.

"The seniors strategy is a living document," said Johnstone. "We didn't just put it together and put it on the shelf. It will continue to be implemented and enhanced. Why is that so important? Because we all know that our senior population is increasing significantly... People are living longer and therefore the demands that we have to meet are substantial."

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Canadian News Media Caught in Crossfire Between Feds and Tech Giants

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On June 22, the federal government passed a bill that has the potential to forever change how millions of Canadians access news. For journalists and news agencies across the country, both large and small, this could mark the end of an era.

Bill C-18, also known as the Online News Act, introduces new rules requiring that tech giants such as Google and Meta financially compensate Canadian media companies for the news stories that get shared on their online forums.

Meta is the parent company of social media platforms Facebook and Instagram. Google is far and away the most prevalent search engine in the western world.

The bill was first introduced in Parliament in April 2022 as a means to force big online conglomerates to share the profits they earn from online advertisers.

The bill's biggest defender, Canadian Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez, says that the goal is to ensure an income for the Canadian news industry so they can stay afloat in these changing times.

In the past decade, the advertising revenue that used to drive the news business—whether print media, television, or radio—has rapidly migrated to platforms like Google and Meta, allowing those companies to amass near-monopolies that have shut out the competition. Those advertising dollars, instead of circulating locally and supporting journalism close to home, tend to leave the local economy altogether.

At a recent press conference, Rodriguez noted that about 80 per cent of all money spent on online advertising funnels into these two companies.

This indicates a major disparity in market share and power imbalance. But his concerns go beyond the equitable sharing of profits.

"All these media [outlets]... that play a fundamental role on informing Canadians are gradually

disappearing, leaving room for the extremes and also for disinformation," Rodriguez said. "And I think that it's bad news for our democracy."¹

Google and Meta's response to the bill, however, has not been amenable. As critics of the bill since it was first proposed, both have indicated their intent to block access to all Canadian news sources before the bill comes into effect later this year.

Starting in June, Meta put their threat to the test by quietly blocking Canadian news content for five per cent of Canadians who use Facebook and Instagram.

The federal government retaliated by announcing that it would pull all government advertising from those companies. The Quebec provincial government and City of Montreal have since followed suit.

The standoff has since escalated, with Meta announcing that they tend to completely remove all news links by mid-August.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO AVERAGE CANADIANS

Consider, for a moment, how you get your news. What is your primary means of discovering what's going on in your neighbourhood, your country, and your world?

Statistically speaking, if you're under the age of 64, the vast majority of your news is derived from online sources such as Facebook and Instagram. News agencies post links to their articles there on a daily basis and hundreds of readers in turn share that news on their own feeds.

Consider, too, where you go when you want in-depth coverage of breaking news. How about when you have a burning question that may best be answered by a journalist who's done the research? Chances are that you search for it using Google.

Imagine now if all Canadian news content disappeared from Facebook, Instagram, and Google. How would you get the facts about the previous night's stabbing incident in your town? Where would you get daily updates and coverage of a fatal bus crash involving a group of Manitoba

seniors?

Will you find what you're looking for when your Google search only turns up articles written by international sources such as the BBC or *The New York Times*?

Evan Braun, editor of *The Citizen*, says that people should have grave concerns over the potential loss of local and national online news.

"In general, the role of a free press is critical to the healthy function of any democracy," Braun says. "But it goes beyond that. Imagine a situation where a wildfire starts up and the news isn't able to get to the people who need that information, because people are looking on social media and the official warnings and facts are nowhere to be found there. Or consider weather warnings, or crime reports. Like it or not, social media has come to dominate the distribution of news."

Case in point, just last month wildfires raged near a town called Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia. Residents were being evacuated and emergency updates were constant, many of them via the big social media platforms.

Today, social media is commonly used by most levels of government to provide instant and up-to-date communication.

"We were following social media because that was our insight into the actual local area," one resident told the CBC. "And we did find that a lot of places used Facebook, like the B.C. Wildfire Service and the district."²

That situation came to a head when a highway advisory feed run by B.C.'s Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure was blocked from continuing to post emergency alerts on Twitter after the social media company deemed them to have exceeded Twitter's post rate limit.

"It's mind-boggling to have that kind of dramatic, immediate effect," said Peter Chow-White, professor of communications at Simon Fraser University, in a CBC article. "There's a continuum of risks, from anxiety to confusion to being disconnected from people in your lives. But obviously, in times of crisis, where

it's something like a fire and earthquake, it can be human lives... It hasn't reached that stage where it's lethal, but it could be."²

This event speaks to the vast reach of social media and the potential for harm if news agencies are blocked.

The potential harm goes beyond protecting the financial positions of Canadian media companies, which is the focus of Bill C-18.

There is an additional harm now to every Canadian citizen, with corporate giants having the power to decide what people can and cannot see on the internet.

Braun speaks to his concerns for small independent news sources like *The Citizen*, which is extremely local in its focus. The articles published by *The Citizen*—local government, local business, local issues—are typically about subjects not covered by larger media companies, which have a wider regional, national, or international focus.

"For small organizations like *The Citizen*, assuming *The Citizen* falls under the bill's umbrella, it would be very bad for us," says Braun. "The majority of our web traffic currently comes through Facebook, and it can't be understated how bad it would be—for us, for everyone—if news content like ours wasn't searchable on Google. I can only hope these threats are bluffs because the consequences would be grave."

A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

What's at stake for news agencies is their very existence in our internet-driven world. From 1950 to 2011, a graph created by the Newspaper Association of America shows print newspaper advertising revenue on a steady incline, surpassing \$60 million around the year 2000.

Just one decade later, in 2011, the needle on the graph plummets to a point below \$20 million.

That's in America, but the situation in Canada is largely the same. In this country, hundreds of newsrooms have been forced to shut down and print newspaper subscriptions have taken a major hit. Thousands of journalists and

photojournalists have found themselves without a paycheck.

To stay alive, news agencies have followed the trend and moved online. Virtually every one of them, from major corporations to small independents, have a website presence made possible by online ad sales.

Still, advertisers will go where the greatest viewership can be obtained, putting giants like Google and Meta at the top of the game while media companies scramble for what remains.

Some news agencies are in favour of Bill C-18. And these agencies do feed the cycle by driving news seekers to social media to access content.

The catch-22 for news agencies lies in the fact that the very companies that now rake in the lion's share of advertising profits are the same ones providing the media with an avenue to reach the masses at no cost.

To that end, Google and Meta believe they have already done their part in helping to ensure the success of Canadian news outlets. Because of this, some news agencies worry that enforcing Bill C-18 will be like biting the hand that feeds them.

But there may also be some public misconceptions that could be set right by all the discussion surrounding the bill.

"The problem is that social media has led to an environment where news is largely considered to be 'free' nowadays, and it's not," says Braun. "It does need to be paid for, especially if it's going to be high-quality. If social media makes it too difficult to earn a profit as journalists, by eating into advertising revenue streams and subscriptions, then other workarounds must be found. Asking social media conglomerates to pay their share is one such workaround that is worthy of exploration."

WORKING IN AUSTRALIA?

In March 2021, Australia passed a bill that, at least in the short term, seems to have accomplished the very thing that Canada is attempting to do.

The News Media Bargaining Code, imposed by the Australian



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government, requires Google and Meta to negotiate content supply deals with Australian media outlets.

At the outset, Meta retaliated by shutting down Australian news access on Facebook for a brief time, as it is now threatening to do in Canada.

However, deals were negotiated and that ban was soon lifted.

According to the Australian government, the strategy has been a success. More than 30 deals have been negotiated with media outlets to compensate them based on clicks and advertising dollars generated.

An Australian Treasury Department report suggests, though, that more work needs to be done to extend the code to include other online platforms.

Even so, some are looking to the outcome of Canada's eventual bill to set a precedent. Both the United States and France are considering similar legislation and are watching with keen interest to see what happens here.

Closer to home, some critics say that the Canadian government won't win this war and there are better ways to level the playing field between big tech and the news media.

One example, they say, would be to impose a tax on online advertising revenue rather than force profit negotiations. The proceeds raised through this tax would help

subsidize reporter salaries.

For Braun, this scenario is also worthy of exploration.

WHO WILL WIN THE WAR?

There are real sceptics of Canada's tit-for-tat approach so far. These people would say that the government's threat to pull its advertising from social media is akin to David facing off against Goliath.

Rodriguez says that Canada's advertising pullout would amount to around \$10 million of lost revenue for Meta.

To put that in perspective, in 2022 alone Meta made more than \$100 billion from advertising.

The federal government's revenue is chump change to a company of that size, which speaks to the power imbalance in the current standoff.

WHAT WOULD THE CONSERVATIVES DO?

The Citizen reached out to Ted Falk, MP for Provencher, to find out how the Conservatives would respond to the advertising profit disparity between the tech giants and Canadian media, were they in power.

According to Falk, we should ask whether media companies need to be defended by the government at all.

"C-18 is the government choosing to side with large corporate media while essentially shutting out or shutting down small, local, independent news like, for example, The Citizen, which Canadians

and communities actually rely on," Falk says. "While most Canadians would agree that Canadian content is important, ultimately they will speak with their dollars and behaviour. Rather than running to government for protection, the onus should be on Canadian content producers to ensure they are adapting to today's market to best serve the interests of Canadians, guaranteeing themselves relevance and continued viability."

Falk says that his party offered amendments to the Liberals on Bill C-18 which would have made the bill more effective in supporting Canadian news outlets.

As it stands, he adds, the Liberals and NDP voted down those amendments.

"The Liberal government has made their bed," he says. "They need to sleep in it. It's up to Canadian media corporations if they want to stay there with them or try to work out a deal on their own with the tech giants—what they probably should have done in the first place."

Braun has a somewhat different point of view. He suggests that the power imbalance would make negotiations challenging between small companies like his and mega corporations. If such negotiations could feasibly be undertaken, that could be a viable approach

"Honestly, I think C-18, in principle, may very well be the best approach," he says.

"Should this specific bill be amended to make it more palatable to social media companies or more effective? Yes, that is undeniable. But the idea that social media should be part of the solution in terms of paying for news, since they distribute it for free, is reasonable. And in other parts of the world, like Australia, it seems to be happening."

Though the bill effectively became law in late June, it will be months before the wording is set in stone, so to speak. For this reason, it won't be binding until sometime late this year.

What's happening in the meantime, Braun says, including the pledge by Meta to remove news content as early as August, is hopefully just a matter of posturing between the government and the tech giants, flexing their muscles before they come to some negotiated agreement.

"At least, cross your fingers that it's posturing," Braun says.

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CITIZEN POLL

How would you be affected if Google and Meta (Facebook and Instagram) banned the viewing and sharing of all news on their platforms?

- I would be greatly affected. Much of the news I consume comes to me via social media and Google searches.
- It would not affect me. I don't search for or share news on those platforms and would not miss it.

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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Is it justifiable for the federal government to withhold carbon tax incentives from our communities based on our proximity to Winnipeg?

Yes. We are close enough to Winnipeg that we should be considered urban.

8%

No. Urban boundaries should end where city amenities, such as public transit, cease to become available.

92%

YOUR COMMENTS:

This is a great example of just how out of touch our elected officials and policy makers are... unless their ultimate goal is to completely kill rural areas and force people to move to large urban centres.

Is the point of the carbon tax not to change behaviour by way of a punitive tax, and incentivise going green with rebates? Well, we aren't able to sell our cars and join public transit. Paying for green technology is rather expensive... something these incentives could actually help with in rural areas. However, we seem like we are now stuck in this middle ground where we get the worst of it from both ends.... we still have to buy gas and commute, and we get no rebates to help with any green transition. What a brilliant move.

I feel like this is an admission by the federal government that their whole carbon tax mantra is based on mass assumptions and virtue signalling rather than data. It is an income redistribution scheme. If it is not directly tied to your actual carbon use, at least to some degree, how is it doing anything other than collecting and redistributing money? They just assume -en-masse- that people within a certain distance of a city must be using less carbon? Those kinds of assumptions will do nothing, but that is what I have come to expect from this government.



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Council Denies Developer's Request for Housing on Main Street St. Adolphe

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Echoes of earlier times reverberated through the RM of Ritchot's council chambers on Wednesday, July 19 as residents gathered to object to the loss of more commercial space along St. Adolphe's Main Street.

In 2018 and 2019, public hearings brought out residents in droves pertaining to proposals to rezone commercial land as residential in the Tourond Creek development, most, if not all, of them in opposition.

This latest meeting was quieter, but the sentiments were very much the same.

Developer Luke Wiebe of Kingdom Home Building Inc. was in house for the meeting to present his case for rezoning a section of his land at the southwest corner of the community. The ask was for a change in zoning from Agricultural Limited (AL) to General Residential 8000 (GR8).

Council denied the request with a vote of five to zero.

THE PROPERTY AND ITS HISTORY

The 2.8-acre property in question is some of the last remaining vacant land bordering St. Adolphe's Main Street. It rests to the south of the community's old dike and just north of the site where the new community daycare will soon be erected.

In 2021, council entertained a similar request from Wiebe regarding this same plot of land. At the time, council voted in favour of Wiebe's request to rezone the property from AL to Commercial General.

Wiebe's goal at the time was to construct a professional centre with retail shops and, possibly, industrial



The proposed rental apartment complex.

© C/O KINGDOM HOME BUILDING INC.

spaces, depending on demand.

According to Tanya Waddell, the municipality's planning administrator, Wiebe never pursued a development agreement with the RM following that public hearing. As such, the property remained under its AL zoning.

Fast-forward nearly two years and Wiebe returned to council, this time seeking to rezone the land to GR8 with the intention of building multifamily housing.

LUXURY RENTAL UNITS

Through a PowerPoint presentation, including renderings and details, Wiebe laid out a plan for council for him to build an apartment complex containing approximately 100 luxury rental units.

According to market research, he said, there is a near zero percent vacancy rate in rental suites at present. At the same time, due to the rising cost of living, demand for rentals is increasing in the retirement, semi-retirement, and professional

demographics.

For those looking for more affordable housing options, Wiebe indicated a willingness to incorporate some smaller studio and one-bedroom apartments. These would likely start at around \$1,200 per month.

This project would be set apart from other small-town apartment complex, he said, by the inclusion of a series of potential concepts. The specific concepts, which would be determined through a future survey, could include on-site garden plots, a swimming pool and hot tub, outdoor workout stations, and a walking trail.

"I've seen this done in Winnipeg," Wiebe said. "If you build an in-ground pool with efficiency in mind, and if you have enough [tenants], it can make sense."

Other concepts under consideration include a guest suite and a tenant lounge with golf simulator and coffee bar.

"Some of these ideas I've never done yet in my smaller complexes,

but I've seen them done in... cities across Canada," he said.

In terms of providing adequate drainage, parking, and traffic flow requirements, Wiebe said that all of the RM's bylaws would be followed.

RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT

In total, eight residents voiced their opposition in person and on the phone. Nine letters of objection were received prior to the meeting.

Ron Rochon is a 40-year resident of St. Adolphe who supports the idea of rental housing like this in the community, but not on the land that's being proposed.

"When I drive through the main streets of similar towns with similar populations... the first thing I notice is how vibrant their main street is and how many businesses they have," Rochon told council. "Another thing I notice is how few residential properties exist on [their] main streets."

He appealed to council not to allow a further crippling of Main

Street, as has been done by past councils through bad rezoning decisions.

A second resident conveyed grave concerns over the safety of this intersection, which is becoming a hazard since it's the only access and egress for the still-expanding Tourond Creek neighbourhood.

Once the daycare traffic is added here, she said, this intersection will only get worse. Add an extra couple of hundred residents from a new housing development and the scenario becomes treacherous.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

Following resident feedback, some council members chose to weigh in. Councillors Lemoine and Bodnarchuk both admitted to having serious reservations.

Lemoine reminded those in attendance that 10 or 15 years earlier, based on feedback from the community, the council of the day voiced a decision to save the remaining vacant Main Street property for commercial use.

Even so, he said, residential units were approved along the way. It was time, Lemoine concluded, for council to step up and honour that earlier commitment.

"I've heard from everyone that commercial won't survive in St. Adolphe, but it doesn't mean that we don't try," Bodnarchuk agreed. "Once you lose that land, it's gone. We're never going to get it back."

As for the demand for luxury apartments in St. Adolphe, Bodnarchuk struggled to believe that there would be enough to justify such a concept.

In terms of the rising traffic volumes at this intersection, he could only foresee big problems.



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Local Student Appointed to Provincial Advisory Council

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Edlynn (Eddy) Paez is no ordinary high school student. She's precocious, witty, and a self-admitted overachiever. Having recently turned 16, she has already set her sights on an eventual career in environmental law.

As such, it stands to reason that this soon-to-be Grade 11 student from Niverville High School (NHS) was invited to represent Manitoba students on the provincial Student Advisory Council (SAC).

"I got this email from the Honourable Wayne Ewasko," Paez says. "And I said, 'Wait, I think I know that name.' I checked my email and it's like, 'You've been selected,' and five days later I had to go to his office and have a meeting with the new advisory council and all of the people that work in the Ministry of Education."

The SAC was created as part of the province's K-to-12 Education Action Plan and provides opportunities for Manitoba youth to lend their voices in shaping the province's educational system.

"Manitoba students are at the heart of our education system and their opinions play an important role in the decisions that affect them," reads a statement from the province. "The SAC consists of 30 students... with diverse interests, identities, backgrounds, and perspectives from across Manitoba. Council members will provide insights and advice to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning regarding current and emerging issues and topics that relate to Manitoba... students."

The opportunity to sit on the SAC, which has 30 seats, is open to high school students across the province based on an application they can submit.

The first SAC meeting took place at Ewasko's office in Winnipeg.

"The morning was mostly icebreaker [time], getting to meet each other," Paez says. "We did a couple of really fun workshops. As we got into the afternoon, we started discussing topics and had a Q&A with the deputy minister and the minister of education."

Part of the discussion period, she says, revolved around discussions held at the 2023 G7 meeting of education ministers in Japan this past May, where Ewasko



Edlynn Paez of Niverville.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

represented education ministers from across Canada.

In this, their first of four sessions, Paez's and her fellow SAC members provided feedback to Ewasko on topics such as developing sustainability in education and creating equal opportunities for students regardless of their socioeconomic status, location, or ethnicity.

SAC ON A DIVISIONAL LEVEL

Paez is no stranger to student advisory councils. Last fall, she was selected by her peers to represent NHS's Grade 10 classes on the divisional SAC, organized by superintendents of the Hanover School Division (HSD).

Each high school in the division appoints representatives from Grades 10 through 12. Paez says last year's division SAC was comprised of 12 students working together with superintendent Shelley Amos and a collection of assistant superintendents.

An appointment to an SAC position is a three-year commitment, says Paez.

"We basically give [the superintendents] insight on our school

personally... and it really fosters community between the high schools in the division."

The divisional SAC meetings rotate between the various HSD high schools. The hosting SAC reps are responsible for choosing the topic to be addressed that day.

When Niverville played host, Paez says she and her NHS associates chose the subject of educational under-representation for specific minority groups.

"We talked about how the Indigenous graduation rate is really low for our region and we also brought up that Indigenous students have not [challenged] the precalculus exam in five or six years. We wanted to address how we can fix these problems before they even become problems."

In other sessions, she says, SAC members considered topics such as the use of artificial intelligence in schools.

"We talked about how we can use AI ethically as a society," she says. "Should we be teaching students how to use AI effectively?"

As the school year came to a close, SAC reps from each school met independently with the HSD

board of trustees to raise one topic of interest to them.

"We talked about how budget cuts and underfunding are negatively affecting our student population."

For Paez and her peers, this meant drawing attention to the fact that rural high schools typically have fewer subject options, which can foster dispassion among many students.

"We talked about how Niverville is losing [courses] and the SRSS is gaining classes. Even though Niverville is actually gaining [more] students, we're not [advancing] at the same rate as the SRSS."

INITIATING A MODEL UN AT NHS

As if meeting the demands of high school while participating in two SACs isn't enough, Paez has dreams of creating another opportunity to get involved. This past year, Paez was inspired by the Model United Nations (UN) clubs being formed at high schools around the globe.

Participating Model UN clubs act as global think tanks for young people in their own school settings. These clubs also collectively gather with other clubs in their region.

Last year, Paez says, a Model UN summit was held at the Canadian Mennonite University.

"It was a three-day conference for students where you could send two delegates," she says. "I found out about the opportunity a little bit late, so we weren't able to enter, but I started setting the groundwork for next year."

Model UN has been a springboard for many who have gone on to become leaders in law, government, and business—and even United Nations Security Council members.

Many, though, only dream of having Paez's level of drive and determination. Her list of school activities also includes drama club, sports, and the NHS Student Action Group. This fall, she'll be coaching Junior Varsity volleyball.

Her advice to students like herself is straightforward.

"If you find an opportunity, just go for it. When I found all the amazing students on this provincial student advisory council, I felt like, 'Why am I here?' But then I realized that's how everyone feels."

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IN BRIEF

Manitoba Looks to Philippines for Nurses

By Brenda Sawatzky

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This month, a group of University of Manitoba nursing faculty assessors will travel to the Philippines to perform in-person clinical competency assessments for 20 internationally educated Filipino nurses.

Almost 90 percent of the 348 candidates offered jobs during a February recruitment mission have accepted positions here.

"More than 300 internationally educated healthcare professionals have accepted job offers to work as registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, or healthcare aides in communities located right across our province," says Health Minister Audrey Gordon.

The province is funding the first round of assessments at a cost of around \$100,000.

Immigration and licensing processes are underway for many candidates. Arrivals are expected to begin in late summer or fall.

Darlene Jackson, president of the Manitoba Nurses Union, says her union has been in talks with Shared Health for five years regarding the local healthcare crisis.

Several hundred nursing recruits, she adds, will only scratch the surface of the 2,800 vacant positions. She welcomes the recruits but wishes to be pragmatic.

Of the potential 300 recruits, Jackson estimates that maybe two-thirds will have RN or LPN training, while the rest will be healthcare aides. There's still a long road before they'll be ready to work here.

Niverville Helping Hands Expands Location, Service Model

By Jennifer Lavin

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Niverville Helping Hands (NHH) has been providing food hampers to families in need for more than 30 years. As the need for their services has increased, so has their need for space.

As of this August, NHH will be moving to 101-106 Main Street in Niverville.

Larissa Sandulak, a volunteer at Helping Hands since May 2020, began serving in the role of board chairperson in January. She says that the need for their services is booming.

"Over the past three years, we've seen a significant rise in hamper applications," Sandulak says. "Throughout 2020 and 2021, we were serving 18 to 25 families twice a month. In 2022, that number increased to approximately 35 to 38 families. As of March 2023, we are now serving just under 50 households twice a month, the majority of these being large families."

In the past six months, NHH has consistently received between three and five new family hamper applications per month.

"And considering the current economic climate and forecast, as well as seasonal layoffs come fall, we are expecting these numbers to continue to increase."

Currently Helping Hands operates in much the same way they have since the beginning. Families can apply by phone or online to request a food hamper and pick it up between 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. A few hours before each biweekly pickup, a small crew of volunteers arrives to pack the hampers.

Sandulak explains that although this model has worked well in the past, it no longer serves the needs of the volunteers or



The Niverville Helping Hands board: Dan Macloskie, Phyllis Ens, Alexandra Rezanoff, and Larissa Sandulak. Missing: Sjana Fehr.

GLORIA NICOL

patrons the way it should.

First, there is the issue of space.

"With [so many] hampers now being requested, our current pantry space where we pack and hand out hampers has become too small," she says. "There is not enough room to work with a team, and the pantry shelving doesn't hold the quantity of food needed for 48 hampers, and so we were also having to restock while packing. This adds to the already increased time and energy needed to pack this many hampers."

Adding to the lack of space is the fact that they don't have a storage room large enough to hold the amount of food needed. As NHH currently operates out of a basement, the area must be accessed by descending a flight of stairs, creating accessibility issues for both clients and volunteers.

Sandulak points out that there is an even greater concern for her and her team: a loss of connection with their patrons.

"At Niverville Helping Hands, we seek to not only fulfill a tangible need—food—but to also offer support, encouragement, and build relationships with our patrons," says Sandulak. "Many of our clients are hungry for

connection. They tend to linger and visit, if given the chance. Due to the influx of hamper registrations, and the cramped space to pick up their hampers, we have noticed that we are not able to spend time connecting with our patrons as we've previously done before. We are limited to handing off food and shuffling the crowd along and out the door."

Recognizing all of this, the board has decided that the time has come to move to a larger space. It's also time to offer a new model of help, allowing them to operate a bit more like a traditional grocery store.

Clients will still call or apply online, but now they will choose a shopping time slot that suits their schedule. These time slots will be spread across new extended hours, eliminating the chaos of serving everyone in an hour. It will also allow a greater opportunity for volunteers to connect with the clients.

This shopping model also benefits the clients in that they can pick and choose the items that best suit their families.

"One of the reasons we are going in this new direction is because we were having clients

sending in very specific requests for what we packed for them," she says. "And we get it. Every family has different needs and preferences. So rather than customizing every hamper, we decided to put the client in the driver's seat and let them pack their own hampers. Once clients have finished shopping, they will 'check out,' at which time we will verify that they honoured our limits."

The only criteria to apply for a hamper with NHH is that the client must reside in Niverville, New Bothwell, Otterburne, or Ste. Agathe. Helping Hands will also provide emergency hampers when needed.

"Throughout the visits we have with clients, we've come to realize that they need more support, especially support that doesn't require driving to Winnipeg or Steinbach," she adds. "Our new location is the first step in pursuing this organization to grow beyond food, and to offer other services such as employment resources and computer stations, a shuttle service for medical appointments, counselling, and things of that nature. We anticipate this vision taking multiple years to grow, and it will likely include interim steps, but we're excited to see what the future holds."

Niverville Helping Hands is entirely supported by donations, both in finances and food. Financial donations over \$20 are accompanied by a tax receipt issued in February of the following year. Nonperishable food can be left at the donation bin at Your Grocery People (formerly Niverville Bigway) or dropped off at NHH if a time is rearranged.

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New Prospects: The Future Is Strong

By Ty Dilello

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The Niverville Nighthawks entered the Manitoba Junior Hockey League in a big way back at the 2022 MJHL Draft. In addition to a team of scouts, head coach and general manager Kelvin Cech and assistant general manager Mike McAulay had the task of drafting the team's first set of prospects.

Lorette's Avery Laliberte was the first-ever draft pick of the Nighthawks when he was selected fifth overall in the first round. Nathan Brown (Winnipeg) was then chosen in the second round, while Raiden LeGall (Morden) was the team's third-round pick.

These three prospects are spread out position-wise in a forward (Brown), a defenceman (Laliberte), and a goalie (LeGall).

So the future is bright for the Nighthawks. All three of these players are likely to have an impact on the team for the upcoming 2023-24 season.

McAulay notes that they all had a great training camp last year, and it was a difficult decision to send them back to their U18 teams.

Laliberte went on to have a fantastic season playing for the RINK Hockey Academy Winnipeg U18 team, scoring 30 points in 34 games on the blue line.

"Avery has had a really good year," says McAulay. "His game really grew this year, and



CRYSTAL STOTT

you can tell he's getting better, stronger, and more confident. He's going to be a really good player for us and a solid presence on the blue line."

Brown scored at more than a point-per-game clip last season with the Winnipeg Bruins U18 AAA, tallying 59 points in 44 games. He also made his Nighthawks debut, skating in three games with the club.

Brown is committed to playing at St. Cloud State after high

school, a powerhouse college hockey program. So while he's likely only going to be a Nighthawk for one season, it's going to be fantastic for Niverville fans to see him in action.

He was also identified by some colleges at an exhibition game in Selkirk early last season. St. Cloud reached out to him, and they saw so much runway in his game that they committed to Brown and offered him a scholarship.

"To have a player of his calibre, he's a really good combination of skill and grit," says McAulay. "So we're super excited to get him in the lineup next year and to get him to give that commitment to us to play in Niverville next year is great."

Finally, LeGall is looking like a heck of a great goalie after a tremendous season with the Pembina Valley Hawks U18 AAA team. In 23 games, LeGall put up a 17-4-1 record with a 2.16 goals against average and a .942 save percentage.

"Raiden's play speaks for itself," McAulay says. "He was the MVP of his entire U18 league, and that's not just top goalie, but the top player. His game has just taken off, and he really has so much talent. His future is really exciting. He's going to do lots of really good things."

Although all three of these prospects were cut from their first Nighthawks training camp last year, they went down to the U18 level and did exactly what Niverville's coaching staff wanted them to do: develop their game and dominate.

McAulay is excited for the team's near future.

"All three of these players are ready to make that next step," he says. "Character and compete are two things that we need from every player, and these three guys have that. They'll be great ambassadors for the community of Niverville as well as excellent hockey players."

IN BRIEF

CRRC Arena Upgrades Coming This Fall

By Ty Dilello

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The Nighthawks are in the process of making a major addition to their home rink. The state-of-the-art Community Resource and Recreation Centre is set to increase its capacity.

From the standpoint of the team's board of directors, every aspect of the CRRC venue was a major success during the inaugural season.

"I could not believe the community support and the amount of volunteers that came out for every event to help our organization be successful," says Scott Wallace, head of infrastructure for the Nighthawks. "We had some challenges along the way, but for an inaugural season, it met and exceeded my own personal expectations, mainly because of the success of our volunteers, the town of Niverville, and our ownership group."

The board is installing additional seating with a second level in the northeast corner, through the help of a government grant. The CRRC's seating capacity sits at approximately 700 seats, but this will increase to 1,000.

The upgrades include a bar on the main floor, main floor seating, and a second-level seating/gathering area.

All infrastructure added to the CRRC by the Nighthawks will transfer to town ownership. The team has worked closely with the Town of Niverville to align its goals as a community-based club.

"These new seats aren't

necessarily required in year two of the Nighthawks, but as an organization such as this, we need to be planning not only for the Nighthawks but potentially attracting other major events for the town, such as major curling bonspiels, winter games, and convention events in the summer," says Wallace.

The upgraded seating will be a great feature to help people to meet and mingle during Nighthawks games, but it goes further than that.

"Companies can have team events in this area, and it will definitely be required for any playoff run we have," says Wallace. "As we build our Nighthawks culture, the goal is to ensure the community understands the team belongs to them, as without community support there is no team. We couldn't be more impressed with our community support."

The Nighthawks are in the midst of construction, having signed a contract with Three Way Builders to complete the work. As of now, the materials are being procured and manufactured.

The project will take about three months from the start of construction onsite.

Construction is slated to begin in late August and be complete by the end of November or early December.

"The home games will not be overly affected, as we only had limited use of this space, which only allowed for 40 to 50 people at best," Wallace says. "The area will be boarded so the construction is not visible during events."

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SEP. 22	SELKIRK STEELERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	NOV. 15	NEEPAWA TITANS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	JAN. 26	SELKIRK STEELERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
SEP. 23	WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	NOV. 18	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ NEEPAWA TITANS	FEB. 3	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES
SEP. 29	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS	NOV. 22	NEEPAWA TITANS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 7	WINNIPEG FREEZE @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
SEP. 30	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ OCN BLIZZARD	NOV. 24	WINNIPEG BLUES @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 9	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS
OCT. 6	OCN BLIZZARD @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	NOV. 25	DAUPHIN KINGS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 14	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WINKLER FLYERS
OCT. 7	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ NEEPAWA TITANS	NOV. 29	WINKLER FLYERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 16	OCN BLIZZARD @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
OCT. 11	WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	DEC. 6	WINNIPEG BLUES @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 17	VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
OCT. 13	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WINNIPEG FREEZE	DEC. 9	SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 19	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ PORTAGE TERRIERS
OCT. 14	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ PORTAGE TERRIERS	DEC. 10	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WINNIPEG BLUES	FEB. 24	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ DAUPHIN KINGS
OCT. 20	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ STEINBACH PISTONS	DEC. 13	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ STEINBACH PISTONS	FEB. 25	WINNIPEG FREEZE @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
OCT. 21	PORTAGE TERRIERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	DEC. 15	WINKLER FLYERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 27	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WINNIPEG BLUES
OCT. 23	DAUPHIN KINGS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	DEC. 16	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ SELKIRK STEELERS	MAR. 1	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WINNIPEG BLUES
OCT. 24	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ OCN BLIZZARD	DEC. 20	PORTAGE TERRIERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	MAR. 2	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ STEINBACH PISTONS
OCT. 27	WINNIPEG FREEZE @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	JAN. 5	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WINKLER FLYERS	MAR. 5	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES
OCT. 29	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WINKLER FLYERS	JAN. 6	WINKLER FLYERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	MAR. 8	SELKIRK STEELERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
NOV. 3	PORTAGE TERRIERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	JAN. 13	WINNIPEG BLUES @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	MAR. 9	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WINNIPEG FREEZE
NOV. 4	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ SELKIRK STEELERS	JAN. 14	STEINBACH PISTONS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	MAR. 15	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS
NOV. 8	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ PORTAGE TERRIERS	JAN. 19	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS	MAR. 16	SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
NOV. 10	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ WINNIPEG FREEZE	JAN. 20	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @ DAUPHIN KINGS		
NOV. 11	VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	JAN. 24	STEINBACH PISTONS @ NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS		

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The Unsung Heroes: Billet Families

By Ty Dilello

tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

Among the most underrated heroes in any junior hockey organization is the local billet families who host players throughout the season and give them a home away from home.

In their inaugural season, the Nighthawks had a solid base of billet families.

“Our first goal as billet families was to make all the players feel welcome,” says Nighthawks billeting coordinator Gail Chornoboy. “At the end of October, the question I was getting from billet homes was, ‘I do not know if I am feeding enough or the correct foods?’ Towards the end of December, we had made connections with the players and we had tears in our eyes when the guys went home for Christmas.”

Chornoboy noted that January 10 was a big day, as it marked the final day for the Nighthawks roster to be locked in.

“All of the billet families were scared to take a call from me around that time because that usually meant someone had been traded or cut.”

Everything went without a hitch last season, so although the first season of billets was a learning experience, it was also a big success.

THE GERBRANDTS (CARTER SPIRIG)

Kristina Gerbrandt and her family welcomed Nighthawks forward Carter Spirig into their home for the 2022–23 season.

“My husband Kevin’s family used to billet for the Winnipeg Saints a long time ago,” says Kristina. “So when we found out Niverville was getting an MJHL team, we figured it would be a great idea. Also, since our oldest started playing hockey for the first time last year, it was a great way for him to see and experience firsthand a higher level of hockey.”

The Gerbrandts have three young boys: Brody (9), Wyatt (4), and Hunter (2). When the family welcomed in Spirig as one of their own, he quickly became a role model to the boys.

“We invited him to everything we did, familywise,” Kristina says. “He spent his evenings with us, playing mini sticks with the kids, helping out with our oldest hockey team practices, watching movies, playing games, and even grocery shopping trips. Our family is busy and loud, and clearly it didn’t bother him!”

The Gerbrandt kids have enjoyed texting, video-chatting, and calling Spirig during the off-season and can’t wait to see him again in August.

“We didn’t just gain Carter, but we gained a friendship with his family too. It’s been a great experience,” says



The Friesens.

Kristina. “If you’re on the fence about billeting, give it a try. Open your home if you have room to one young man who’s learning to navigate a whole other world.”

THE FRIESENS (CHRIS FINES)

Karly Friesen and her family billeted Nighthawks netminder Chris Fines last season.

“My husband read an article in *The Citizen* about the team needing billet families and showed it to me, saying, ‘Hey, this would be cool!’ From that moment on, I knew it was something I wanted us to do,” says Karly. “I loved the idea of providing a loving, safe, and supportive home and family for someone away from their own home. And our kids loved the idea of gaining an older brother. However, pretty much everyone else in our lives thought we were crazy for taking this on with two young kids and another on the way.”

Like all the other billet families, the Friesens weren’t prepared for how fast Fines would become a part of their family, which included Karly and Adam and their three children, Isabel (4), Lucas (2), and Hannah (4 months).

“Personally, I was not prepared for what being a goalie mom would feel like,” she says. “Chris is an amazing young man and someone I genuinely love spending time with. Our kids look up to him and bragged about having the Nighthawks goalie as a brother. He was a part of family outings and gatherings. He helped with running errands and watching the kids. We played games, watched movies, ate lots of food, and laughed a lot!”

Karly adds that the relationship they have with Chris is one not many people are able to fully understand.

“He’s just a part of our family now and will always have a place in our lives, no matter where he lives. He has a great bond with our kids, including our youngest, who was born during the season. It has been a hard adjustment to life without him, but we look



The Gerbrandts.

forward to opening our home and hearts to another player this next season.”

The Friesens would also encourage

people to think about billeting. Karly says it won’t be a disappointing experience.

“Communication is key,” she says.

“Set clear expectations, rules, and guidelines. Encourage them to spend time with the family and be someone they can rely on. You will feel heartbroken when they move out. But that’s when you know you’re doing it right. This Nighthawks community is supportive and encouraging. These boys need stability and encouragement from loving families while they’re away from home and under an incredible amount of pressure. But it’s also an amazing experience to be loved by them in return.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you’re interested in becoming a billet for the upcoming 2023–24 season, please contact Gail Chornoboy at billeting@mjhlnighthawks.ca or 204-371-5258.

Nighthawks Make Numerous Pickups in Busy Offseason

By Ty Dilello

tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

The 2023–24 Niverville Nighthawks will have a different look. Throughout the off-season, the team has been making changes to its roster.

On June 4, the Nighthawks made their first big move by acquiring goaltender Keegan Gordon in a trade with the Winnipeg Freeze for future considerations.

The Nighthawks will be using Gordon heavily next season, since incumbent goalie Chris Fines recently committed to play next season out of Great Falls, Montana with the University of Providence Argos in the ACHA Division II hockey program.

On June 23, it was announced that Nighthawks’ leading scorer Josh Paulhus had committed to playing for the University of Manitoba Bisons.

Another important player, Evan Bortis, is heading to Saskatoon to play for the University of Saskatchewan Huskies men’s hockey program.

“The opportunity came along to play at the University of Saskatchewan back in January when the coach reached out and said they were watching and interested,” says Bortis. “The recruiting process is a long process, but I enjoyed it all. We exchanged phone calls throughout the rest of the season. I then got the

opportunity to play at the U of S and further my education, and I couldn’t be more thrilled to get the opportunity to play at home. I am beyond excited to be a part of such a high-class school with an elite hockey program. It really is special for me to play there, as my older brother played there, and it’s always been a dream of mine to one day become a Huskie.”

Saskatoon is home to Bortis, and he adds that he is both thrilled and honoured to have the opportunity to attend and play in his own hometown.

“I wish I could have had more time in Niverville, as it was a season I will never forget,” he says. “The support from the community and our fans was amazing every day. The community really brought all of us guys into Niverville with open arms and formed a town where everybody wanted to play. I will forever be grateful for my time in Niverville, and I will always be thankful for my teammates, coaches, billets, and staff. I made friendships that will last a lifetime and will always be a Nighthawk. I will miss Niverville and hope everyone returning the best.”

Another player is also on the move. Star blueliner Carson Reed was recently drafted by the Waterloo Black Hawks of the United States Hockey League (USHL) in the third round.

Reed’s plan for next season is

to try and make the team in Waterloo. If that doesn’t work out, he’ll come back to Niverville for another campaign.

“I loved it in Niverville,” says Reed. “Amazing team, amazing coaching staff, and an amazing fanbase. It was the best first year of juniors that anyone could ask for, and I wouldn’t have changed anything about it. I was happy to be selected on the all-rookie team as I worked hard and got rewarded.”

With all these changes, the Nighthawks have acquired many new players as well. So far they include Michael Tanchak (Winnipeg Blues), Wyatt Taron (Shawinigan Lake School), Matty Healey (Prairie Hockey Academy), and Kyle Bochek (Bonnyville Pontiacs).

In addition, the Nighthawks have hired a new assistant coach in Ben MicFlikier, who had previously played in the MJHL for two seasons.

MicFlikier most recently spent time as a coach for the St. Paul’s Crusaders high school team and the St. Boniface Riels of the MMJHL.

“I kept tabs on the Nighthawks throughout last season and actually saw the job posted and knew it was a great fit,” MicFlikier says. “Since I accepted the position, I’ve been catching up on everything I can almost daily to prepare for camp and the season, so I can’t wait to get started.”

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Terraco Announces Opening of Crop Protection Supply Warehouse

By Brenda Sawatzky

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On July 25, agricultural representatives gathered with area farmers to celebrate the grand opening of Terraco's newest supply warehouse located on Highway 210 near Île-des-Chênes.

Retail manager of the IDC location, Marc Davy, addressed the crowd alongside Cory Trumbla, co-owner of Terraco. Ritchot mayor Chris Ewen helped with the official ribbon-cutting. The event continued with a customer appreciation dinner.

Davy has managed Terraco IDC for the past three years and says his branch of the agriculture supply company has been growing steadily ever since. The opening of the new onsite climate-controlled warehouse is something he's been eager to incorporate.

"What we've done for multiple years here is transport the crop protection chemicals from other locations," Davy says. "We were putting it on our water trucks, our custom application trucks, and on our delivery one-tons and hauling them down the road and bringing them to farmers' locations. But now they can safely come down here and pick it up."

The large new warehouse is equipped with in-floor heating



Mayor Chris Ewen cuts the ribbon with Terraco manager Marc Davy.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

to keep temperature-sensitive ag chemicals stabilized during the colder months.

In past years, Davy says major shortages in many of the crop protection products has made it difficult to service farmers adequately.

"This has [encouraged] us to add storage facilities to Terraco so we can have good inventory supplies when products become short," he says. "First and foremost, securing the product and having it in our facilities is the number one goal."

If a supply company like Terraco

can accept and store product during the off-season, he adds, supply is much easier, giving these companies a competitive edge during the spring and summer when demand is high for quick supply.

Being competitive is important in Manitoba, he says, when your competitors include Patterson Grain, Shur-Gro, and other well-known ag suppliers.

What makes Terraco stand out, Davy says, is their service model.

"We're one of the few companies that works seven days a week. The

seasons are short and fast, with long hours. We don't work around the clock, but sometimes it comes very close."

Davy believes that some of the success of the Terraco IDC location comes from the expertise he is able to bring to the table. With a background in agronomy, he's been in the business for 38 years. Seventeen of those years were spent working for some of the biggest ag product companies in the world, like Monsanto, Dupont, and Koch Fertilizer.

"As my career rolled out, I found

that one of the weakest links in agriculture was the retail sector giving poor advice to farmers," Davy says. "Part of the problem is that nobody wants to work in this sector because of the long, crazy hours. So it's hard to get really dedicated, certified, trained people."

But client consultation is something Davy is passionate about. He'll make personal visits to the farmer's field to assess the situation before recommending any product. From there, the farmer is welcome to apply it or let Terraco staff do it for them.

Terraco IDC has the equipment and crew to offer full-service options. They store and apply anhydrous ammonia in the spring and fall and can dribble-band fertilizer in windy conditions.

Aside from crop protection products, they also carry a broad range of branded seed, including InVigor and Dekalb. For soybean alone, Terraco carries 19 different options.

To improve efficiency in product delivery, Terraco uses a centralized inventory system that keeps track of product availability at each of their five locations. When one branch is short on product, it can be mobilized out of another branch quickly.

Terraco is an independently owned local retailer that's been serving Manitoba farmers for the past 80 years.



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Super Citizen: This One's for You

By Jennifer Lavin

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In this series, *The Citizen* profiles locals who strive to make our little corner of Manitoba a better place. Each month, we feature a person, family, or organization that helps brighten the world in some way. If you have someone in mind for a future month, please nominate them: jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

This month's Super Citizen is you. You know who you are—or honestly, maybe you don't. You're not the one who normally gets the attention, but your small acts make the world bearable. To the unsung heroes.

To the customer service representative who smiles and really tries to help.

To the cashier who engages

in meaningful chats as they scan groceries.

To the delivery person who bent down to pet a dog.

To the dad who lies down on the floor next to his child's bed during a big thunderstorm.

To the little boy who just gave his precious five-dollar bill to a man on the street who was holding up a sign that said "Please help."

To the mom who didn't eat dinner last night because there was only enough for her kids. And to the mom who goes to bed so angry that she has to live this way.

To the neighbour with a chronic illness who struggles with pain and anxiety every day but still gives her all to everyone she meets.

To the friend who gets up the courage to leave her abusive spouse. And to the one who just couldn't do it.

To the lady at Walmart who gives a tired, crying mom a tissue and a hug.

To the child who sees someone playing alone and invites them into their group.

To the teacher who sees the potential in the "difficult" child.

To the niece who works in palliative care and gives each dying patient the same loving care at the end.

To the daughter who wants only to be a mother but worries she never will be.

To the driver who smiles and waves to let someone into their lane.

To the friend who comes over at midnight in taped-up glasses and torn sweatpants because she got a text that just said, "I'm losing it."

To the educational assistant who makes so much less money

than she deserves but still gives every student her very best.

To the young man who pays for an old man's groceries when he couldn't find his wallet.

To the coworker who finds out you're having a tough day and immediately says, "I'll bring you food."

To the mourner who was just behind me as I drove into the cemetery to visit my dad but chose to wait outside the gates while I had my time with him.

To every woman who ever stood up beside another woman and said, "I believe you."

To the sister who listens every day.

To everyone who ever apologized and meant it.

The world can be a brutal place, a cold and unforgiving home—but you? You make it better. I promise.

Used Auto Sales and Detailing Centre Coming to Niverville

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On July 4, Niverville's council held a special meeting to consider a conditional use application for an automotive sales and detailing centre.

Council voted unanimously in favour of granting a permit to 616 Auto and Sales.

The Winnipeg-based ownership team, Derek Lafrenais and Ciara Piwniuk, will be busy readying their new business over the coming weeks at 2-645 Pauls Street in the business park. The 1,200 square feet of space inside the commercial building will allow for a comfortable office area with plenty of additional room for auto detailing.

The lot in front will serve as a showroom for up to a dozen used vehicles to start. Using online sales and social media sites to advertise, the couple says half of their

vehicles are often sold before they arrive in Manitoba.

"[The news] spreads like wildfire because the vehicles I bring in are rust-free," says Lafrenais.

Lafrenais's experience with vehicles is broad. He has expertise as a trained body man who also dabbles in mechanical repairs.

Until recently, he worked at a similar business in the city until the couple decided to venture out on their own.

Their used car inventory comes primarily from British Columbia, where vehicles get little exposure to the kind of heavy salt usage our roads are treated to during the winter months. His top sellers are reliable commuter vehicles like the Ford Focus and Honda Civic, but he deals in pickup trucks and almost any vehicle a customer may be in the market for. If a customer has something specific in mind, he'll try and source it.

All of the vehicles sold at 616

Auto and Sales will come with a complimentary one-year warranty, which includes the power train and some mechanical parts.

Extended warranty options will be available, ranging from three months to four years.

In the coming weeks, Lafrenais and Piwniuk anticipate having signage in place and vehicles on the lot. Shoppers are welcome to browse through the inventory during and after hours.

"From our [past] experience, we always leave our vehicles unlocked," Piwniuk says.

Locked doors on the lot, they say, is an invitation for vandalism and attempted break-ins.

While Lafrenais manages the car sales, Piwniuk will be the company's primary detailer.

"I know how to get smoke odour out of vehicles and remove pet hair," she says. "I can take the seats out of your car, so I can get under there really well. [I do]

headlight polishing, so if you have hazy, yellowed headlights, I can literally sand that out and make them look crystal-clear again."

Other services will include headlight replacement and fog light installation as well as the removal of paint scratches and scuffs through a polishing process.

While the couple lives with their children in south Winnipeg, their choice to put down business roots in Niverville was primarily thanks to the low cost of commercial rental space.

"We've lived in small towns before," Piwniuk says. "We also have kids and being here might bring us to move here [someday]."

The couple is excited about adding something new to the retail and service offerings in Niverville. They're hopeful that their business will attract outsiders to the outdoor showroom, too, helping to boost the economy for the everyone.

IN BRIEF

Highway Fatalities Hit Concerning Level

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

The St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP would like to issue a reminder to everyone that the practice of safety on Manitoba highways is a matter of life and death.

According to Corporal Julie Courchaine, at the halfway point of this year, fatalities on Manitoba highways are already way up from previous years.

"So far this year we have had 68 people die in motor vehicle collisions in Manitoba," says Courchaine. "Well above last year's number of 40 and above the five-year average of 38. This is very concerning, as these deaths are preventable."

In many of the collisions, fatal or otherwise, alcohol has been a factor.

To keep you and your passengers safe, the RCMP are asking drivers to be extra vigilant behind the wheel. For everyone's benefit, drive sober. Wear your seatbelt and pay attention to the road. Keep your hands off your cell phone, follow a safe distance behind other vehicles, and just slow down.

So far in July, the local detachment has already responded to one fatal and several serious collisions.

For example, on July 10 two passengers were involved in an accident near New Bothwell, including an 18-year-old driver from Niverville and a 19-year-old female passenger from Lorette. The next day, the female succumbed to her injuries.

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IN BRIEF

Winkler Council Responds to Library Defunding Outcry

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Following up on an article from May, after months of debate over the demands of a group to defund the local library, Winkler's council has reached a decision.

At a July 11 meeting, they voted six to one in favour of adopting a resolution intended to effect change on the library board.

Earlier this year, the Winkler group petitioned council for a defunding strategy after the library refused to remove three sex and gender education books geared toward children. According to the group, the books' illustrations were pornographic in nature.

While council hasn't gone so far as to withdraw the city's share of public funding from the South Central Regional Library (SCRL), they have assigned one councillor, Don Fehr, to the SCRL board. Fehr, to date, has been a vocal ally of the defunding group.

Additionally, they will select one Winkler resident to fill another opening on the SCRL board.

Cathy Ching, Director of Library Services for SCRL and a member of the board, says she's not surprised by the move, but in her view it demonstrates an overreach of power.

"There's been clamouring for something to be done and the resolution makes it look like they're taking a harder line with us," Ching told *The Citizen*. "But as a municipal council, that is not their job. Their job is to fund us and leave the running of the library to the appointed representatives."

Eight Rural Families Benefit from Habitat Homes in 2023

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Thanks to Habitat for Humanity Manitoba, eight rural lower-income families are about to receive keys to their own newly built homes. This year's Habitat builds are taking place in Morden, Brandon, Dauphin, and Portage la Prairie.

Nearly 500 Habitat homes have been built in Manitoba since 1998. Eighty of them are located in rural communities. In the southeast, new Habitat homeowners have settled in Steinbach, Mitchell, Blumenort, La Broquerie, Richer, Grunthal, and Landmark.

According to Steve Krahn, Habitat Manitoba's senior vice president, 2022 was a year unmatched by any other.

"We are extremely proud that the [Habitat] network started more homes in 2022 than in any other year in our history and also had an exceptional fundraising year," says Krahn.

Last year, Habitat Manitoba was the beneficiary of \$4.1 million in cash contributions and grants. Because of this, a record-breaking 16 families were ushered into new homes at key ceremonies held around the province.

"Key ceremonies are an incredible way for families, volunteers, donors, and staff to experience all the hard work that brought them here," Krahn adds.

Since 2019, the federal government has contributed more than \$7.5 million to Habitat Manitoba. Ahmed Hussen, the federal Minister of Housing, Diversity and Inclusion, was at this year's Morden key ceremony to help celebrate.

"Everyone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home," Hussen said. "This is why the



STEVE KRAHN

government of Canada is helping families achieve the dream of homeownership in Manitoba through the National Housing Co-Investment Fund. Thanks to this investment and partnership with Habitat for Humanity Manitoba, deserving families here in Morden and across the province will realize their dream of owning a home—homes they can proudly call their own—and I hope they find great happiness in them."

This year, Habitat Manitoba is also launching a 55-unit urban housing development on Pandora Avenue in Winnipeg. The five townhouses, taking up three acres of land, will be the largest Habitat development of its kind in the history of the organization.

With a proposed completion date of 2025, the project will house approximately 275 people, with potential for more than 60 percent of those to be children. Exceptional energy efficiency is one of the key factors in these

units, creating a net-zero carbon footprint when completed.

Founded in 1976, Habitat for Humanity has grown to have chapters in more than 70 countries around the globe. The first Manitoba Habitat home was built in Winkler in 1985. Two years later, Winnipeg became home to the first Habitat chapter in all of Canada.

What drives Habitat for Humanity is their belief that everyone deserves a safe, decent, and affordable place to live.

The organization's model of partnership housing is a unique one. Drawing support and volunteerism from the community in which a Habitat home is being built helps to ensure the family's long-term success.

Becoming a Habitat homeowner is an involved process requiring hard work, time, and commitment.

"Habitat selects future homeowners by assessing their need,

ability to pay a mortgage, and their willingness to partner with Habitat," says Krahn.

Essentially, Habitat provides affordable home ownership solutions to lower income working families who don't qualify for conventional mortgages. Through Habitat, qualifying applicants receive a renewable interest-free 15-year mortgage plan requiring no downpayment.

In return, they are expected to contribute at least 500 hours of sweat equity into the build of their home or at one of the Habitat ReStore locations. They are also required to attend financial education workshops to help prepare them for the many facets of home ownership.

"As soon as a family starts to pay off their mortgage, Habitat for Humanity Manitoba puts those dollars to work helping build the next home for the next family," the Habitat website states. "As families pay off their mortgages, these dollars are reinvested and used by Habitat for Humanity Manitoba to build more homes for working, lower income families in our community. We keep our build costs low through volunteer labour and, as much as possible, donated or reduced-cost building materials and services."

Habitat Manitoba runs a variety of fundraisers throughout the year to keep the momentum going. This summer, three cycling events will take place around the province. An annual golf tournament is scheduled for Starbuck in September and the House Party gala will close off the year's fundraising at Club Regent in November.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To volunteer or for more information: <https://www.habitat.mb.ca>



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Commentary



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Talking to Kids through a Crisis

By Daniel Dacombe

On July 3, 2023, sometime after 10:00 p.m., a fight broke out in Niverville between a group of teenagers. This in and of itself is not news, as teenagers have been breaking out into fights as long as teenagers have existed.

However, what made this incident newsworthy was its severity. Weapons were involved, youth were transported to hospital, and RCMP officers made the rounds to look for witnesses.

For a relatively small town like Niverville, it was a big deal.

Though this was a crisis and certainly generated a sense of fear, the response from most people was healthy concern for all parties involved. Traffic on social media changed as people started checking in to ensure other members of the community were safe, and the admins of the popular Niverville Community Group on Facebook made a statement about the incident and shut down commenting and speculation while the RCMP did their work, to prevent the spread of misinformation.

The youths in question appear to have since been released from hospital, and it seems the incident has mostly been put in our collective rearview mirror.

However, on that fateful evening, and in the hours after it when information was scarce, parents in Niverville may have noticed that their children were affected by it. Children hear their parents talking, after all, and news can make its way across a small town faster today than ever before—and that's saying something.

For adolescents, especially, the incident had an impact. Teens messaged their friends to ask if they were all right, if they knew who was involved, and if they knew whether everyone was okay. Parents may not even have been aware of the flurry of communication throughout the teenage network.

However, it's safe to say that by the time the RCMP made their official statement, most of the local youth had a better grasp of events than their parents did.

This brings up an interesting consideration for parents who may, in the past, have been able to control their children's exposure to information. How do you help your child with the fear of navigating a crisis when they have a network of gossip, half-truth, and speculation literally at their fingertips?

Thankfully, recent world events have inspired educators in the social sciences to share their expertise.

Dr. Stephanie Sarkis, a

psychotherapist and author, released a podcast episode shortly after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic about how to share information with children during times of crisis.

Based on more than 20 years of clinical work with young people who had lived through challenges such as natural disasters, terrorism, and war, Sarkis offered several suggestions for parents.

She suggested taking a proactive approach by asking children what questions they might have about the event. Sarkis asserts that we should acknowledge our children's fears and concerns while acknowledging our own limitations—that there are questions we can't answer and events we can't control—but assuring them that we will always do our best to keep them safe.

Other mental health professionals have also weighed in.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center, one of the largest providers of mental health services in the United States, has released free guides for parents who wish to help their children navigate complex thoughts and emotions after traumatic events.

Here is one possible plan for handling these discussions.

1. Create an opportunity to talk

with your child about the events they're hearing about.

2. Provide information at an age-appropriate level. Adolescents can handle more details than younger children and may ask more complex questions.

3. Allow them to discuss their fears and concerns, even if those fears and concerns don't pertain to the incident in question.

4. Reassure them that there are no "bad" emotions and that their reactions are normal.

5. Create a plan together for what they would do if they found themselves in a crisis. This can help both parent and child feel more prepared.

6. Continue to create opportunities for them to talk to you about the event, since more questions may arise in the future.

Finally, parents must inevitably confront a key question: what should they do about social media? How much good can all the tips and tricks in the world do if your young person is on the receiving end of all their friends' fear and anxiety?

Research about the mental health impact of social media has so far produced mixed results, with some studies showing mainly negative impacts and others showing surprisingly positive ones.

While a full exploration of social

media's impact on adolescents will have to wait for a future article, one thing seems clear: social media is here to stay. And removing your teen's phone every time there's a crisis may not be practical.

Limiting your teen's screentime in general is still an appropriate action to take, but instead of taking away their access entirely during a crisis you might want to try accessing their phone with them. If they're concerned about their friends, encourage them to reach out—and sit with them while they do it.

When they're getting information, read the messages with them and discuss them together. What kind of questions might you ask? Here are some examples. Is this person a reliable source of information? Does this seem true to you? If it is true, what does that mean? If it's not true, what does that mean?

In this way, you can help your child process the information coming at them.

You can't control events in this world and you can't control the influences your children may be exposed to, but you can control the kind of support they get. By proactively taking steps to explore their reactions to a crisis, you can ensure that they navigate the crisis in the safest and most supported way possible.

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Sports & Recreation

Local Firefighters Enter Prestigious World Games

By Brenda Sawatzky

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From July 28 to August 6, firefighters from Ritchot and Niverville competed with athletes from around the globe in the World Police and Fire Games (WPFG). The WPFG are the second largest Games in the world, surpassed only by the Summer Olympics.

For the first time in the Games' 40-year history, Winnipeg will play host to thousands of WPFG competitors, as well as their fans, family, and friends. The participant record for the Games is currently held by the 2011 event in New York, which drew more than 16,000 athletes.

The WPFG is held every second year and brings together law enforcement, firefighters, and police officers from more than 50 countries around the globe.

In total, 67 different sporting disciplines are offered by the WPFG.

RITCHOT FIREFIGHTERS GET THEIR GAME FACE ON

According to Ritchot's deputy fire chief, Paul Houle, 2023 is the first year that volunteer firefighters be-



Paul Houle, Marcel Courchaine, Sylvain Lemoine, and Matt Wilson.

📷 BRENDA SAWATZKY

came eligible to enter the Games.

For the first time, therefore, nine of Ritchot's 60 volunteer firefighters, including Houle, are competing for high level stakes.

Houle has been with the Ritchot fire department for 20 years. For his day job, he works for the federal government as an explosives inspector.

For almost the same length of time, Houle has been actively

involved in the International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC), participating in handgun competitions both locally and nationally.

It stands to reason then that Houle's WPFG sport of choice would be Police Action Pistol (PAP).

"It's basically firing a handgun in a course with multiple targets," Houle says. "It's a game of skill in

that you need to know which direction to go and which targets to engage first."

Recognizing that it's a police-dominated WPFG sport, he mentally prepared himself to be the butt of some good-natured jokes from his competitors. With 150 spots available for PAP entrants, he wasn't getting his hopes up for a big win.

"I was looking forward to not



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being last," Houle muses. "I'm in this for fun and I think it's going to be a good time."

Without question, one of his biggest concerns was the outdoor aspect of the WPFPG competition—at least, if the heat continues.

"Because it's largely a mind game, the heat is going to have an impact on me," Houle says. "I don't do that well in the heat. I'm thinking that the competitors from Saudi Arabia will do very well!"

Houle may have some advantage, though, since he's competing in the over-50 age bracket.

Sylvain Lemoine, a Ste. Agathe resident who works for Canada Customs at his day job, is registered to play in the hockey competition along with teammates from the Vancouver police department.

"One of the guys on our department [heard from] someone on the team saying that they needed a couple of more players," Lemoine says. "So they asked me to play."

Lemoine has been playing hockey for as long as he can remember. He currently plays in Ste. Agathe's local league.

His Vancouver team, entered as division three competitors, are playing over a five-day period at the Hockey for All Centre, formerly known as the MTS Iceplex.

Lemoine had never met any of his Vancouver teammates and wasn't expecting that he would before his first game. Part of the thrill of this experience, he says, is meeting new people.

"It's an experience of a lifetime—so I figured, why not?" says Lemoine.

Matt Wilson, also a Ste. Agathe resident, has volunteered with the fire department for just over two years, allowing him to just clear the WPFPG's participation requirements.

When not volunteering as a firefighter, Wilson works for Manitoba Hydro.

His WPFPG sport of choice is cornhole, which he describes as a good old-fashioned game of beanbag toss. His two-person team includes fellow Ritchot fire department member Marc Chateau.

Wilson's cornhole experience to date, he says, is limited to backyard and tailgate parties.

"I'm not sure what I'll bring to the game, but I'm just hoping to have some fun," says Wilson. "If this goes well, maybe I'll go cornholing somewhere else in the world."

Wilson and Chateau are



Chris Rideout and David Aitken.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

competing at the Winnipeg Convention Centre throughout the event.

Ste. Adolphe resident Marcel Courchaine is the only Ritchot competitor entered in the over-60 age bracket of the Games. He's served with the Ritchot fire department for 43 years and works a day job in the IT department at the University of Manitoba.

Courchaine is entered into a 44-kilometre race in the road cycling category. His event is taking place on August 2 at Birds Hill Park.

In terms of the distance, Courchaine isn't concerned. He's been an avid cyclist for the better part of 35 years and has completed up to 60 kilometres in a single stretch. This summer, he hopes to challenge himself to a 100-kilometre ride.

Training for a worldwide competition like this comes naturally to Courchaine. In the summer months, he cycles about 40 kilometres per day, five days per week. Inclement weather isn't a concern, but he says that wind direction and speed can definitely change the outcome of his ride.

"The wind is always a factor," Courchaine says. "So if we're going in a circle, it'll probably be a lot easier than if it's in just one direction."

Either way, he's keeping his expectations realistic.

"There's people coming in from

Europe that cycle 10 or 11 months out of the year," says Courchaine. "So I'm not there to win. It's about participating and to have fun."

Deidre Perron is entered into the open-water swimming category, and Jaren Madden and Mario Mendes are registered to play hockey.

A few Ritchot members have been volunteering at the event.

Each entrant has been responsible for paying their own way, Houle explains, so they're not relying on the RM to subsidize them.

"There's an expectation that all of our members will meet a certain level of physical fitness to continue to be firefighters," says Houle. "That's very important not only from a performance aspect but from a personal safety point of view. We don't want someone having a heart attack on the fire ground or be unable to do their job effectively. So what this has done for some members, me included, is it's kind of heightened their interest in working out leading up to the Games. I've seen at least one of the members run a lot this summer."

NIVERVILLE FIREFIGHTERS READY TO RUMBLE

Just two of Niverville's volunteer firefighters are competing in the WPFPG in Winnipeg this year. It's a first for both of them.

David Aitken is employed

full-time with the Winnipeg Police Service. For Aitken, curling was a natural choice since he's been playing the game from a very young age. As an adult, he curls with teams in both Niverville and Winnipeg.

Aitken's WPFPG team consists of Winnipeg police colleagues who have been competing together for many years.

"We're assured five round robin games and then playoffs, if you make it," says Aitken. "I think we have a fairly good chance. We'll see."

His confidence is likely warranted since his team took third place in the 2023 Canadian Police Curling Association (CPCA) championships in Quebec.

"The gentleman that won the CPCA [championships] this year, Dale Hockley out of B.C., is coming [to the WPFPG]," Aitken says. "He'll be good. And then I know that there's a couple of firefighter teams."

Chris Rideout works for the Winnipeg Fire Department during his regular hours and volunteers on Niverville's department in his off time.

Rideout has known about the WPFPG for quite some time, having been invited to participate in the press conference when Winnipeg was announced as the host two years ago.

Rideout is playing hockey on a team from Ukraine.

"Basically, all of the guys on my crew were playing for a team out of Winnipeg already and there's just so many [players needed], so I didn't get a chance," Rideout says.

Sometime after, however, his department was contacted by the Winnipeg WPFPG coordinator. Some of the Ukraine players were unable to secure visas to come to Canada, allowing Rideout and a handful of others to answer the call.

The Winnipeg and Ukraine members were able to make contact prior to the Games.

"We've got a WhatsApp group with a translator, although I think two of them speak English," Rideout says. "We're hoping to get together before [our first game], but we'll see what happens."

The mixed team will play one game per day for three consecutive days starting on Friday. Regular games are scheduled for the Hockey for All Centre.

Rideout says that if things go well, he can see himself participating in future WPFPG events around the world.

"This is a great opportunity to meet other people and I'm just glad to be a part of it."

RESULTS

At the time of this writing, Lemoine's team had played three games and came out on top in two of them against the RCMP and the Vancouver Fire Department.

However, they lost their third game to the Winnipeg Hound Dogs, a Winnipeg fire department team.

They will be playing in the quarter finals.

As for Houle, he was pleased with his personal results, coming in fifth in the over 50-age bracket and in 22nd place overall.

"I definitely did better than I expected," says Houle. "I was expecting to land in about the middle of the pack. There were some incredibly fast shooters at the match. They were impressive to watch!"

All in all, Houle's thrilled with the experience and the level of Ritchot's participation in this year's Games. His department has someone entered in every age and gender category.

Rideout's team, representing Ukraine, lost their first two games.

They went on to beat the Los Angeles Police Department in their third game, though. The team from Ukraine was headed to the playoffs.

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The 2023 Niverville Force.

SUE THOMPSON

Niverville Force Win Six Straight

By Jennifer Lavin

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The Niverville Force is back on the pitch for their third regular season in the Manitoba Major Soccer League.

According to head coach Andry Giesbrecht, the team had a slow start, dropping three of the first four games. Since then, however, the Force have won six straight matches and now sit at the top of their table.

The next few games will be vital as the Force play teams clustered around them in the standings.

“As of right now, the Force have the best attack in the division, scoring 38 goals in 10 games and playing really fast, entertaining soccer,” says Giesbrecht.

The season so far has seen multiple injuries, including some that have proved to be season-ending.

While this is unfortunate for individual players and the team as a whole, Giesbrecht explains that the injuries have not affected the high-calibre of play.

“Due to the depth of the squad, [the injuries] haven’t really affected the team or the performance,” he says. “That is due to the quality and hard work that each player brings to the team on a weekly basis.”

The Force also features five new players this season, although some of them had already joined the team for their indoor games during the winter. Giesbrecht says that these new arrivals have made big contributions so far to the team’s success.

The squad’s fans may also be part of the team’s success. Force co-owner and team manager Sue Thompson says that their fanbase is incredible.

“We have fans that come from all over, that are dedicated, and we love that,” says Thompson. “We really feel like that we are a big family. Our home games average 100 spectators and even our away games average 20 or more.”

Giesbrecht believes this to be the best fan turnout throughout the league.

Thompson also gives credit to the team’s sponsors.

“Our sponsors are very dedicated. Most have been supporting us since day one. We are definitely blessed!”

For the second year in a row, the Niverville Force will host a golf tournament later this summer.

“Last year, we held our first golf tournament,” Thompson says. “It was a ton of fun but didn’t raise any money for the team. This year, we are putting it out there for our Force

players and for anyone that wants to support the team.”

The tournament will be held at the Maplewood Golf Club near St. Pierre-Jolys on Friday, August 11 at 1:00 p.m. For an entrance fee of \$95, participants will have their golf fees and cart rentals covered and be given a burger and drink ticket. Prizes will also be available.

Those interested in playing in the tournament can join as a single player and be placed on a team or enter as a complete team.

Giesbrecht would like to encourage youth soccer players throughout the region to show up at Force games to see if they might have a future on the team.

“Anyone that is looking to take that next step and play a good level of competitive soccer, maybe there is a spot for them in the future,” he says.

Even younger players are welcome, too. Giesbrecht is running a volunteer soccer program for U7 boys all summer on Tuesday evenings.

He is grateful for the volunteer participation of many players from the current Force team.

“I’d like to thank those players that are volunteering and helping to give back to the community and the kids,” he shares.

So far, between 25 and 35 kids have been showing up each week. Giesbrecht says he is excited to teach these young enthusiasts more about the game.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the Force, the golf tournament, or the youth soccer program please email: nivervilleforce@gmail.com

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Ritchot Launches Summer Concerts in the Park

By Brenda Sawatzky

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The RM of Ritchot's recreation team has been hard at work this summer dreaming up creative ways to enhance community well-being by keeping residents active and engaged. Their newest initiative includes a series of concerts they call Homegrown Harmonies.

The outdoor events will be held on August 10 at St. Adolphe Park and on August 24 at Grande Pointe Park. Both events will run from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Danielle Peters, the coordinator of community engagement and activation, says that her secondary goal in planning the concerts is to provide a venue for local artists to showcase their talents and celebrate diversity through a wide range of musical genres.

She adds that the concerts will cater to everyone from retirees to young families.

"We're hoping that [everyone] comes out," says Peters. "We'll have a booth set up and we're bringing out our lawn games. We might have some vendors there and food and drink trucks. It's just going to be a big fun evening in the park."

Entry is free and each night will feature a line-up of three bands or artists.

"For the most part it's all really



Grande Pointe Park will host an outdoor concert later this summer.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

relaxed and folk," Peter says. "Nothing too crazy."

On August 10, Niverville's Melanie Bergen will hit the stage with her rich, soulful sound. From East Selkirk comes fiddler Morgan Ginther, who along with her father on guitar doles out some fast-paced Metis instrumentals. Finally, The Prairie Joggers are a gritty folk rock band out of Winnipeg who are making a name

for themselves across Manitoba.

August 24 will include Bergen and Ginther for a second time, plus a band called Surf 'n Turf with members from Ste. Anne and Winnipeg.

"They have a really interesting genre of music," Peters says. "If you can picture a mashup between the Beach Boys and Elvis, that's the vibe that they're bringing to us. So that should be really exciting."

Concert attendees are asked to bring their own lawnchairs or picnic blankets. Snacks and picnic lunches are welcome. Plenty of parking is available at both venues and the areas are mobility-friendly.

St. Adolphe Park is located behind the dike on the west side of town. Bands will perform from a flatbed trailer stage.

The park in Grande Pointe comes

equipped with an outdoor stage located near the picnic shelter so guests can enjoy both sun and shade.

"We're really just trying to foster community engagement and run a successful event," says Peters. "And hopefully, if we get a good turnout, we'll maybe make it a monthly thing next year during the summer."

Keeping future concerts in mind, she asks local musicians and artists to reach out to her for their opportunity to play on a Homegrown Harmonies stage in 2024.

These concerts aren't the only way for families to engage with their communities this summer. Ritchot Rec has partnered with the St. Adolphe Market to provide games and activities at every market event.

Also new this year is Rec on the Road.

"One week out of the month we'll visit all five of our communities," Peters says. "Essentially, I load up my vehicle with a bunch of crafts and games and we just set up in a local park and invite people to come by. Our first week was very successful."

Finally, the RM offers a game-lending program all summer long, providing rentals of outdoor activities for weddings, corporate events, or family gatherings. Items for rent include giant Jenga, giant checkers, cornhole, spike ball, bocce ball, and more.

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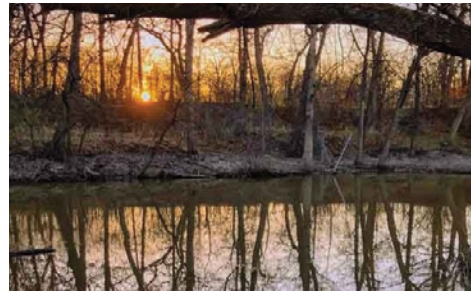
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 1,520 SQFT 3 bdrm 2 bath



HENLEY \$282,665
 1,520 SQFT 4 bdrm 2 bath



HAVEN \$281,219
 1,536 SQFT 2 bdrm 2 bath



MADLOCK \$307,019
 1,680 SQFT 3 bdrm 2 bath



MIKE FAST
 204.381.1136

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ROYAL LEPAGE



PAUL MARSCH
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