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LOCAL NEWS

Niverville to Hold Cannabis Plebiscite

■ Residents of Niverville will decide this November 26 whether cannabis retail should be allowed in the community.

Details on Page 3



LOCAL NEWS

Manitobans Go to the Polls

■ On September 10, Manitobans will elect a provincial government, and many residents in the region will vote together for the first time in the new riding of Springfield-Ritchot. The Citizen reached out to the candidates from all four major parties.

Details on Pages 18-19

SPORTS & RECREATION

Hespeler Park Unveils New Play Structure

■ Niverville's new, innovative, and accessible play structure in Hespeler Park honours the town's storied history.

Details on Page 23

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Introducing the First Annual Sunflower Expo

■ A Maze in Corn, known for its corn and snow mazes, is currently hosting a month-long celebration of sunflowers.

Details on Page 26



Niverville High School Opens Its Doors

»» DETAILS ON PAGES 6-8

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Cannabis Retail in Niverville? Council Will Let the People Decide

By Brenda Sawatzky
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

At a public hearing held on the evening of August 20, Niverville council held a vote regarding the possibility of cannabis retail. The question posed to council members by CAO Eric King queried whether a plebiscite should be held in the Town of Niverville on Tuesday, November 26.

Mirroring the vote held a few weeks ago regarding a conditional use application from Canna Cabana, council's vote was split. Councillors Kevin Stott and John Funk voted in favour of holding a plebiscite, and councillors Nathan Dueck and Chris Wiebe voted against.

The tie was broken by Mayor Myron Dyck, who voted in favour of holding a plebiscite.

The affirmative vote from council means that residents of Niverville will be faced with a formal opportunity to vote on the following question: "Should licensed retail cannabis stores be allowed in Niverville?"

Since denying Canna Cabana's application a few weeks earlier, the cannabis retailer had already submitted a second application in the hopes of addressing the concerns council had with their first presentation.

According to council's understanding of municipal bylaws, a split vote on a conditional use application requires a waiting period of one year before a second application can be addressed. The only way to avoid this is if at least one councillor submits a letter indicating the reasons he feels a majority vote could be reached on the second go. Such a letter needs to be submitted before the next regular public meeting of council.

None of the councillors submitted such a letter.

So council was faced with two options: to wait a year before considering any further cannabis retail applications, or to hold a plebiscite. According to King, these same options would apply to any conditional use application where council's vote ends in a stalemate.

"We need an answer to this," Mayor Dyck told those gathered. "I really don't see how [waiting] a year... could change... two fairly entrenched positions on council, so therefore I would suggest that we should have this plebiscite and the town will have their opportunity to have their say."

King explains that there is a difference between a plebiscite



DEPOSITPHOTOS

and a referendum. The results of a plebiscite vote are binding, he says, meaning council is required to honour the public vote without question. A referendum, on the other hand, only provides guidance to council as to their constituents' general position.

"If you have 50.1 percent one way or the other, that is the way [council will have to go]," says King.

If the majority of residents vote against cannabis retail, the town's zoning bylaws will need to be changed to reflect that decision.

As well, the only way to reverse a plebiscite decision in the future is to hold another plebiscite down the road. Without referring to The Municipal Act, Kings says he's not clear on the exact waiting period before the next plebiscite can be held, but he believes it may require a three-year wait period.

That's not to say a cannabis retail application can't be denied by council again, even if the majority of residents vote in favour of cannabis retail in the community. A conditional use permit would still be required by Canna Cabana or any other cannabis retailer. Council has the right again to deny any application that doesn't meet zoning criteria such as parking spaces, signage, hours of operation, etc.

"[A cannabis retailer] would still have to come forward for a conditional use [hearing]," says King. "The question of morality cannot be considered [by council if the community votes in favour]."

As per the Manitoba Elections Act, a plebiscite follows the same criteria as a general election and must be held a minimum of 90 days from council's decision to hold such a public vote. Unlike a general election, property owners who do not reside in the community will not get a vote.

King says the cost of holding a plebiscite will be an expense born

solely by the town. He's confident that it can be done for under \$5,000. He assures residents, though, that plenty of advertising will go out before the official vote.

Advance and mobile polls will be made available for residents unable to make it to the voting station on November 26.

At this stage, Canna Cabana is unwilling to comment on whether they are prepared to wait until the November 26 vote or if they will simply choose to withdraw their application and move on.

Bryan Trottier, owner of the building Canna Cabana proposed to lease, says, "In light of this new announcement, we will need to regroup and make a decision that will serve our company best in the future."

Nick Kuzyk of Canna Cabana says no one from council reached out to them to indicate the reasons for council's original denial of their application.

"Our primary reaction was one of confusion," Kuzyk says of the application denial, indicating that they were met with a warm reception by council members right up until the day of the meeting. "We didn't anticipate this reaction or outcome to our application, especially based on the positivity and success that we've experienced in dozens of communities across multiple provinces to date. However, we understand and respect that every community is different and unique."

Mayor Dyck is hopeful that a resolution to the question of cannabis retail can be achieved on November 26.

"We need to deal with this," Dyck says. "We have many other things in the community that we need to move forward with. Let's get a decision on this, let's live with it, let's move on."

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IN BRIEF

Wastewater Treatment Plant Considered for Town of Niverville

By Brenda Sawatzky

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Niverville's town council met on the evening of Tuesday, August 20 to discuss a proposal to invest in a wastewater treatment plant.

The plant, if it were to be built, would provide for the needs of the community for many years to come. The project is being proposed as a supplement to the existing lagoon.

Such a facility would purify wastewater from the town and return it to the Red River.

Council will be applying to the federal government's Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program for a grant to help cover the costs—and those costs are substantial. The projected cost of the treatment plant added up to \$40.5 million.

If accepted, the town would be prepared to invest up to \$11 million in its own funds, derived from resident sewer rates and a special wastewater levy charged to new homeowners.

Mayor Myron Dyck says that council has for some time been looking at ways in which it could create a smaller environmental footprint when dealing with wastewater.

"We have a lot of really good agricultural land in this area and any time that a community needs a new lagoon, it [requires more acreage] and that is [productive land] that is being taken out of our economy," Dyck says. "So by going to these types of mechanized facilities, there's less land that we [need]. It's part of being environmentally responsible."

Passing the Baton on the Niverville Seniors Lunch Program

By Brenda Sawatzky

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For the past three years, Fred and Susan Bergmann of Niverville have passionately poured themselves into coordinating the seniors' lunch program held at the Golden Friendship Centre every Tuesday.

On August 6, the Bergmanns, along with more than 20 dedicated senior volunteers, served up their last lunch to a crowd of about 120 regulars of the program.

"We loved it," says Susan. "There's a huge satisfaction in seeing people so thankful."

But while the program filled a deep need in the community and surrounding area, the Bergmanns admit that, at 80 and 72 years of age, they're tired and it's time for the baton to be passed to someone new.

As they said their final farewell, the couple was showered with hugs and well-wishes.

Service to Seniors coordinator Damien Gagne will soon head up a new program, but it will be scaled back to once-per-month in order to allow him to fit the extra responsibilities into his already crowded schedule.

"When I found out that [the Bergmanns] were stepping away... [I realized the program] was going to die," Gagne says. "The responsibility that these volunteers took on is really unbelievable. I feel bad that I can't do more, but that's all I can do right now."

Indeed, with regular attendance of anywhere from 100 to 150 people every Tuesday, it became a place where seniors could bond and build lasting friendships around home-cooked meals and great local entertainment.

Attendance wasn't exclusive to Niverville seniors. The Bergmanns say regulars also came from Vita, La Broquerie, Ste. Anne, Winnipeg, and Steinbach every week.

Susan recalls one Steinbach couple, in their 90s and long-time attendees of the lunch program, who chose to celebrate their



Back row: Fred Bergmann, Susan Bergmann, Debbie Litman, Helen Friesen, Norma Rempel, Walter Rempel, Bernie Falk, Damien Gagne, and Doug Houlbrook. Front row: Doug Adams, Irene Adams, Susan Funk, Orpha Schryvers, Lillian Falk, Elma Doerksen (standing), and Helen Toews (standing).

sixtieth wedding anniversary at one of the seniors' lunches since so many of their friends would already be there.

It's just one testament, she says, to the relevance of a program such as this.

"That's why I had a hard time giving it up, and hopefully people will come back for [Damien's] program," Susan says.

"Today, saying goodbye to the French Connection was the hardest for me," Fred adds.

The French Connection, he says, is a playful title that a regular group of French-speaking seniors had given themselves. They attended every week without fail and Fred often joined them, finding an opportunity to build new friendships and practice the second language he'd learned as a child.

Fred says the community built around these senior lunches also provided a meaningful support group when attendees fell sick or were going through a difficult time. It's something the Bergmanns will surely miss, along with their dedicated team of volunteers.

When the Bergmanns announced their resignation, all but four volunteers decided that their time was done as well.

"They all said to me, 'We're

[getting older] and we'd rather step down when it's been going so well,'" Susan says. "They're tired because every week is a lot [of work]."

Food prep, she says, usually required hours of work the day before. On lunch day, it wasn't uncommon for volunteers to arrive as early as 6:00 a.m. and put in a six- to eight-hour shift, going nonstop with dining room setup, cooking, baking, serving, washing dishes, and concluding with tear-down of the entire dining room once everyone was gone.

As coordinators, much of the rest of the Bergmanns' week was consumed with meal-planning, grocery-shopping, assigning volunteer tasks, booking entertainers, and taking RSVPs for the weekly meal.

Shopping trips alone could consume more than a day as they searched for deals in Niverville and at warehouses in Winnipeg, buying 50-pound bags of potatoes and carrots and large-lot quantities of non-perishable food items. Susan says they got some stares and curious inquiries as they piled their carts high every week.

To the best of their memory, the Niverville seniors' lunch program began some 30 to 40 years ago by a group of local women who wanted to provide a social setting

for seniors, and it's been going ever since.

The program was eventually picked up by Abe Goertzen, the community's first Service to Seniors coordinator, and for a while it became an integral part of that position's role.

It remained a part of that organization's mandate until 2016 when the Service to Seniors programming was growing at such a pace that the coordinator felt it necessary to drop the lunch program.

That's when the Bergmanns stepped up and assumed full responsibility for keeping the program going. The couple had already been volunteering with the lunch program for 14 years, Fred as chief cook and Susan as admissions collector. For 12 years Susan, also worked as coordinator of the adult day program.

"The people here kind of bombarded me and said, 'We don't want this program to die,'" says Susan. "This has become a community [of seniors] and that's why it's so important."

As the new program coordinator, Gagne is seeking volunteers to keep this institution alive. Any age can help, he says. He'd even be glad for organizations that want to make a further investment of time into the seniors that built this community.

Opportunities will be available for meal prep, cooking, baking, setup, and takedown—and he wouldn't say no to anyone interested in coordinating a specific part of the program with his help.

In the meantime, the Bergmanns are looking forward to spending a little extra time with their four grandkids. Susan will continue her volunteer work at the MCC Thrift Store and Fred gets excited at the thought of spending this fall helping out on his brother's farm.

Very soon, the seniors' lunch committee will be using up their excess funds to make significant donations to other local organizations and causes within the community.



Katie Knebel

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Updates from the Ritchot Chamber

Announcement - New Staff

The Ritchot Regional Chamber of Commerce would like to introduce you to our new Member Relations and Membership Marketing Representative, Patrick Trudeau. For existing Members, expect a visit from Patrick over the next few weeks for an opportunity to record a quick 60 second Member Showcase Video on your business and get an update on some new benefits that are now included in your membership. Patrick will also talk about our upcoming Business Awards Gala event, how you can nominate local businesses and sponsorship opportunities that are available for the Gala. (The 2019 Business Awards Gala is taking place on Saturday, November 16th at the TransCanada Centre in Ile des Chenes).

Affinity Program Partners Showcase

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Niverville High School Opens Its Doors

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The beginning of a new school year is upon us, and with that comes the first day of classes at the new Niverville High School, which will open its doors to more than 300 students on Wednesday, September 4.

Before getting into the nuts and bolts about what makes this new facility so special, let's review the timeline. Because although it might seem like the school has been a long time coming, it's surprising how quickly the project has gone from pipedream to reality.

In the spring of 2017, the province indicated a new Niverville school was a priority. Then, on a cool and rainy August 1, 2017, local officials gathered in an empty field to announce that the school was definitely going to happen. At the time, the deal was remarkable in that it had come together in a single month over the summer, an unusual occurrence of three levels of government and the private sector all reaching final terms during a time of year when the gears of government tend to grind all too slowly.

The lightning-quick speed of the announcement caught many people off-guard.



Panoramic view of the high school's main foyer.

EVAN BRAUN

Eight months later, shovels were in the ground.

Now, 16 months after that, the doors are open—and once you walk through them, you step into a building so sparkling new and state-of-the-art in its attention to detail that you have to pinch yourself to remember that, yes, you're still in Niverville.

FIRST DAY OF CLASSES

So what can students expect Wednesday morning when they walk inside for the first time?

"Well, we hope that there will be a lot of awe," says Principal Kimberley Funk. "We want to just give them time to wander, explore, soak it all in. We're not having regular classes on the first day, so we've developed a whole first day that's just a welcome to Niverville High School and orientation day. A relationship-building day. They'll just get their feet in here,

make connections with old friends, new friends, get to know teachers, get to know the building. Where is everything? How does it work? It'll be a fun-filled day with a lot of new things."

In addition to helping students get situated, according to the school website there's going to be a free hot dog lunch to mark the day.

SPACIOUS FOYER

When you first step inside, you find yourself in an open, breezy foyer that opens up to the second floor. This area leads seamlessly into the spacious multipurpose room, the gymnasium, and the Learning Commons.

A full-service kitchen is right next door, allowing for food service when special occasions call for it, and there will be café tables and chairs for 80 to 100 students to eat here, with spillover into

designated classrooms.

"One of the cool things I love about this space is it was very much designed for a lot of natural light," says Randy Dueck, superintendent of the Hanover School Division. "It's the gathering place of the school. We've got glass doors into the Learning Commons, and openness right to the gym and up to the top through to the skylight. And, well, it's going to be this open all the time. It's truly as open as we can make it. I think it's a really well designed central area."

He says that although the Public School Finance Board had already provided for a lot of open space in this part of the school, the school division threw in a "good chunk" of money to make it even bigger.

"With our trustees, we deliberately said we wanted another five-foot strip here," he says. "We wanted this even more

open... it's something the Hanover school board specifically paid for."

Funk adds that it makes a big difference to arrive every morning in a beautiful space with lots of light and good energy.

"It really does improve your mood," she says. "It makes people happy and feel good, so I think that's going to be a huge component to staff and student well-being, just being part of building a culture where we love being here... Also, this space will allow people to move outside classrooms and work in small settings and different settings. It provokes thinking in different ways... all these little spaces and open spaces throughout the school provide different opportunities for learning and we're really excited about that."

LEARNING COMMONS

The Learning Commons, to the east of the enormous foyer and multipurpose area, is the Niv-

erville High School's closest equivalent to a library. It needs to be phrased that way, because it's not quite a library in the traditional way we've come to think of one. Funk says the new school re-thinks the library concept, coming up with something new and innovative.

The Commons is divided into two distinct areas. One features a series of taller shelving units for books, and some couches and tables where students can read, do schoolwork, and settle down in a quieter environment.

The other area is a more interactive space, with a large touchscreen for students to gather around, as well as couches and tables.

There will also be a coffee shelf installed, as well as charging ports—although these features hadn't yet been installed as of Wednesday, August 28 when media toured the facility.

"You can tell that we don't have a traditional library in the sense that, you know, it's all enclosed and it's a quiet, no-talking place," says Funk. "While we definitely promote literacy and reading, and there's a nice spot to do that, this will be a very collaborative learning space where teachers can bring down classes... Again, there's just lots of opportunities to [get out of] enclosed environments and broaden throughout the school."

One might expect computer stations in a space like this, but Dueck says that a conscious





The school's sprawling gymnasium.

CARA DOWSE



Principal Kimberley Funk shows off the new touchscreens.

EVAN BRAUN



Café tables look into the Learning Commons.

HANOVER SCHOOL DIVISION

decision was made to exclude them. After all, every student from Grade 9 to 12 will have access to their own, school-supplied Chromebook laptop for use in school and at home.

THE GYMNASIUM

On the west side of the multipurpose area, students and visitors can step into the gymnasium, which is quite a bit larger than the one we're used to at the former Niverville Collegiate. This, says Dueck, is now the standard size for school gymnasiums in Manitoba, although the one in Niverville High School is taller than any other in the school division. The walls are adorned with the school colours—red, grey, and charcoal. Along the top of the north wall are a row of remote-controlled windows to let in natural light.

An impressive feature of the gym are the bleachers, which can be separated from the wall with the press of a button on a handy control device.

"What's nice about that is you can pull out as many rows as you need," says Funk. "So when we do have to split the gym and pull the curtain and have two

basketball games going on, we can just have separate rows for that. But when we're doing full court, we can bring it all the way out and have seating for 300."

Perhaps the most readily identifiable feature of the gym is the new Panthers logo emblazoned at centre court.

"We knew that the Panthers meant a lot to this community," says Dueck. "We weren't going to mess with the name Panthers! The middle school is still the Panthers, too, but we felt there needs to be some distinguishment between the two... So we've updated the actual image of the Panthers and there have been some small tweaks."

The gym opens onto a fitness room, a first for Niverville students.

This brightly lit room surrounded by windows with a west-facing view will come equipped with stationary bikes, treadmills, rowers, and weight-lifting equipment.

The room, covered with cushioned sports flooring, will also include a screen which can be used to pull up group workout videos.

As for the change rooms, Dueck points out that their

layout reflects an important divisional philosophy.

"We have included more privacy stalls than would be the norm," he says. "I think the Public Schools Finance Board has seen what we've done here, like it, and are probably going to move in that direction with a lot of other schools. If you think of yourself when you were in school and in the change room, there's a lot of great reasons to have privacy stalls. Student health issues. Student body issues. [The change rooms] were intended initially to be more open, but we said we wanted more stalls."

As visitors walk around the building, they'll note that there's no need to flick light switches. In every room of the school, from classrooms and labs to washrooms to the Learning Commons, motion sensors detect when people enter and gradually dim the lights up.

The washrooms, too, are equipped with motion-activated toilets, faucets, and dryers.

LIFE SKILLS SUITE

One of the spaces that is new to Niverville is the Life Skills Suite.

"There's obviously a

demographic of our students that come with special needs, and this room is [for them]," says Funk. "It's got a full-functioning kitchen that allows us to focus on developing specific life skills that students will need after they leave us."

This suite will be the home to students in Grades 9 to 12, of course, but the school also has a program for special-needs students between the ages of 18 and 21. This includes those who are blind, hearing-impaired, wheelchair-bound, or have intellectual deficits.

"Some of [these students] stay with us for another three years until they transition into adulthood," she says. "So we can offer them different options here, and often it's a combination school-slash-work-placement. We have space for physiotherapy in here, too, for students that need that, and then a full grooming room that has all the other needs addressed... This space is really fabulous in terms of giving them a place to make their own."

Dueck points out that the Public Schools Finance Board mandates these suites in all new schools in the province.

INTERACTIVE DIGITAL MEDIA PROGRAM

With the new school comes a new vocational opportunity for Niverville students: the Interactive Digital Media (IDM) program, which until now has only been available at the Steinbach Regional Secondary School.

The focal point of the program is the digital learning lab.

"We love this space," says Dueck. "Initially when we started to develop this space, the Public Schools Finance Board referenced it as two computer labs. And we said, 'No, we don't talk about computer labs anymore. There's no such thing.' These are digital learning labs and we consider them quite a bit differently."

The lab can be divided into two rooms and comes equipped with an 85-inch interactive digital touchscreen. There's also a sound booth with high-end audio equipment. All in all, Dueck says the school division received a grant of \$165,000 specifically for the equipment in this lab.

Funk says Interactive Digital Media is a full eight-credit program that students can participate in through Grades 9 to 12.

"We have all our Grade 9 students doing the introductory course to expose them to the program and get them excited about what's coming," she says. "This is brand new for them. And then we're hoping to find ways to mix that up and cross into business, arts, and lots of the other disciplines. How do we use the digital media piece in science and social studies? We're not going to just have traditional classes in here. This program will filter throughout the school and be very collaborative."

The teacher who has been hired to build the program, Funk says, is a graphic designer by trade and has lots of experience and connections in that industry.

A NEW STANDARD FOR CLASSROOM DESIGN

All classrooms in the school come equipped with interactive touchscreens, replacing the projectors that have until now been standard equipment throughout the Hanover School Division. Dueck says there's a little bit of extra cost to upgrade from projectors to monitors, but that he expects these costs will prob-

(continued on page 8)



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A science classroom.

HANOVER SCHOOL DIVISION



The school has been busily getting the grounds ready to receive students on the first day of classes.

BEN FUNK

(continued from page 7)

ably be recouped over time.

In the days leading up to the school's opening, teachers have been engaged in specialized training to familiarize them with the new screens. A training seminar was in progress during the media tour.

Another feature of the new classrooms is that instead of desks students

will orient themselves around tables of varying heights. The taller tables along the back walls of the classrooms will allow students a different vantage point and the chance to change things up.

The rooms also feature sound-deadening panels around the tops of the walls and ceilings to create better acoustics. Also, each room comes equipped with three

banks of lights that can be controlled separately to dim or brighten different parts of the class.

"This is something that the teachers are just thrilled about," says Funk.

SCIENCE ROOMS

The school has two science classrooms and two science labs upstairs. The science classrooms are a little bit larger than a regular class-

room, and they have sinks and counters. A prep room straddles the two adjoining science classrooms.

The science labs, on the other hand, have more sinks, as well as gas hook-ups, a shower, and an eyewash station. The tabletops are chemical-resistant, so that experiments don't accidentally wreck the furniture. Duelling fume hoods can clear out fumes in a hurry, which is a standard science lab feature in Manitoba.

Dueck is also proud of a small room between the science labs which will be used as a garden, and its hallway-facing windows ensure that all students will get a good look at it as they go back and forth between classes.

ART ROOM

The second-floor art room has one of the best views, with a bank of windows overlooking the front street. Although not fully set up yet at the time of the tour, several art pieces had already been erected on the walls.

"Art rooms typically aren't the cleanest room in a school," says Dueck. "They have stuff all over because they're creative and interactive. So it's a room we fully expect to get a little bit messy over time."

The art room comes with a kiln, easels, drafting tables, and a pottery wheel. Also: art donkeys. What's an art donkey, you might ask? They look a little bit like bench presses, but their intended use is far from it. Artists straddle the seat and mount their easels on the donkey's "neck."

A display case for art projects is also on the way, but it's currently on back order.

PHASE TWO

As a reminder, currently only the first phase of the school is ready to move in. The second phase, which includes the drama room, the band room, and a child-care centre, is in the final stages of construction. Although Dueck says it's too early to commit to a concrete timeframe, he says those spaces are humming along and will likely open ahead of schedule.

Even without a band room, though, the band program will continue this year without disruption. There will be two bands, one for Grades 9-10 and another for Grades 11-12. Students will be bussed to Niverville Middle School for band classes every other day.

When completed, the school will have a corridor linking it to the Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC).

Dueck is enthusiastic about the school being located on the larger campus and points to the many opportunities this will create.

"We're creating a really special campus here," he says about the location. "To be able to partner together with the Town of Niverville and to see the [CRRC] starting to go up over here, with the gym space, with the young kids interactive play area that they're going to have in there, with the arena... there's just a boatload of possibilities. Over time we're going to have to sort out what those possibilities look like and what a campus looks like as opposed to us thinking just about a school."

OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME

"From that moment [on August 1, 2017] when we stood in a bit of rain at the field, making the announcement that the school would come, maybe we were standing right about here," Dueck says from the school's foyer at the end of the tour. "And here we are! It's for real. It's pretty cool."

As principal, Funk's eagerness for the first day of school is palpable. Although she acknowledges that a big push is needed to get everything ready for students.

"It's all hands on deck right now," she concludes. "It's been a beehive of activity with teachers moving in, furniture being assembled, floors being cleaned. Every room has something going on in it, but we will get it done. It actually feels quite surreal. So many things have had to happen in order to get to this point—being involved in the construction aspect, picking different colours and all the technology, choosing your staff, focusing on the learning opportunities, bringing in the right people to do that, building a team so that we can just really support student learning and get them excited about being here... it is an opportunity of a lifetime, and I've enjoyed every minute of it."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ For members of the community who are interested in visiting the school, a Community Open House and Meet the Teacher night is scheduled for Wednesday, September 11, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

■ www.nhs.hsd.ca

■ nhs@hsd.ca

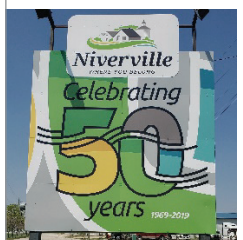
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Thanks to the supporters of our annual Texas Scramble!

The Niverville Chamber of Commerce held another successful Texas Scramble fundraising golf tournament thanks to members and friends who support the work of the chamber.

Taking home the chamber trophy for 2019 was a mixed team. Pictured above (l to r) Ray Dowse, Dowse Ventures; Ferd Klassen, Niverville Autobody; John Magri, chamber president, presenting the trophy and cheque; and Mac Penner and Tanner Harms, Golden West Broadcasting.

The Niverville Chamber of Commerce would like to thank the following for making the tournament a success. Platinum, Gold and Silver sponsors also entered teams in the tournament.

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CITIZEN POLL

Do you think enough has been done by the town, developer, school division, and CP Rail to ensure pedestrian safety around the new high school?

- ☐ Yes. The new crosswalk, rail crossing sidewalks, and changes to speed limits are all good measures, once they take effect.
- ☐ No. The new measures haven't been undertaken fast enough, and some dangers still haven't been accounted for.
- ☐ Have another opinion? Share your thoughts in a comment online.

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Yes.	No.
58%	42%

YOUR COMMENTS:

Niverville is not ready for people who use pot and other mind altering drugs and these people are not ready for a taste of Christianity. Then we have a local newspaper, that seems to get a high out of dividing our town. After 40 years it is time to leave.

Keep drugs out of our town.

I do not support a cannabis retail outlet in Niverville.

My prayer is it's a done deal. Adios, legalized drug-dealers.

Council has definitely made the right decision the first time around. Whatever it takes, my fellow citizens and I who actually give a thought or two about morality will fervently oppose any cannabis related activity within Niverville or the surrounding region. Cannabis is only, and can only ever be one thing: evil.
-A.Q. Rogulzinski

It's bring a safe and innocent community and making it bad

Kudos to the Town Council for doing "due diligence." I understand that some of the companies selling the product are not all the same, and some have already been into illegal activities, so due diligence is needed.

New Crosswalk, More Sidewalks, Lower Speed Limits in Niverville

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Pedestrians in Niverville are about to get a more convenient way to cross the busy Highway 311, with the announcement this week that a new lit crosswalk will be installed at the corner of Highway 311 and Mulberry Avenue.

Eric King, CAO of the Town of Niverville, says that the installation will take place shortly, and that the work is being undertaken by the town and the developers of the new Fifth Avenue West residential development. King adds that all parties are working hard to make sure the approvals are resolved prior to the school's opening.

"The crosswalk will be operational within the month of September," King says. "The signs are on their way and Fifth Avenue Estates is hoping to have work completed prior to the paving [of their new streets]."

While this location will help young people from The Highlands cross to the new high school, the main impetus has been the prospect of large numbers of students crossing the highway to access the new commercial strip, which includes the Dairy Queen, Tim Horton's, the Shell station, the Great Canadian Dollar Store, Negash Coffee, and Niverville Pizzeria—all businesses with the potential to draw a lot of foot traffic.

"The town invested in the pedestrian crosswalk for those people," King says.

Some questions remain about how the high school will change the way pedestrians move across Main Street east of the tracks, especially when



Construction underway at the corner of Mulberry Avenue and Highway 311, where a crosswalk will soon be installed.

✉ DUSTIN KRAHN

it comes to people living on the south side of Main.

"We can't tell kids where to go," King points out. "We have to wait to see how they cross. If we invested in [a crosswalk] at Second Avenue, would they cross at Heritage Trail? The town's hope [for now] would be to see people cross at existing intersections on the east side of the tracks where speed limits are 50 kilometres per hour."

King says that the province highlighted the need for the crossing at Mulberry Avenue in a recent traffic impact study.

"We are doing more traffic counts to ensure the data being used is accurate," he says. "There is a difference between 1,000 and 1,500 cars a day, and with the rapid growth and the change in who lives and works in Niverville and plus the changes to flow [due to] west-side development, it is important we understand where people are moving to and from. You need time to properly plan,

and using two- or three-year-old data just doesn't work, in my opinion."

To conduct traffic counts, the town hires an engineering company that uses cameras to monitor the road for a 24-hour period. This provides accurate data about who drives through, turns in which directions, etc.

The town has also previously announced that they're undertaking new sidewalk work in that part of town. King says sidewalk construction could begin this fall already. Failing that, the work would get underway in spring.

These new sidewalks will link up to the new pedestrian crossing installed last week at the railway tracks.

Another announced change is a reduction in speed limit. Currently, the speed limit on Highway 311 at Krahn Road is 100 kilometres per hour before lowering to 70 at Mulberry, and 50 as traffic approaches the rail line.

Mayor Myron Dyck says that the province has given

their approval to move the 100 kilometre per hour speed zone to the west side of Krahn Road, lowering the speed limit in the area of Krahn Road and Mulberry Avenue.

King adds that council's overall goal is to minimize interactions along Highway 311, and another way of accomplishing that would be to change Arena Road from a two-way street to a one-way street, a change they are seriously considering.

"The one-way at Arena would allow the town to develop two controlled intersections rather than paying for three," he says. "It's a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars in the long run. Plus, it moves cars away from the tracks, which puts less residents at risk of being caught on the tracks for some unforeseen reason."

The town is monitoring the area closely. Mayor Dyck has commented that the situation is fluid, and more changes could be coming in the near future.

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Seniors Present Donations to Niverville Fire Department

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Five Niverville seniors made a special appearance at the Niverville fire hall on August 13 to thank local fire and emergency service volunteers for their commitment to the community. On behalf of the seniors' lunch program, coordinator Susan Bergmann presented a cheque for \$7,100 to assist the fire team in the purchase of a new self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).

"On behalf of the seniors' lunch program, we want to thank all of you for your service and dedication to our community," Bergmann told the gathered volunteers. "This year we had a surplus and we were looking to donate the money within the community."

To one firefighter's surprise, a second cheque of \$4,000 was presented to Lindsey Kehler to assist her through her first year of paramedic training. Kehler has been volunteering in Niverville for the past four years as a level-two firefighter and emergency medical responder.

"Paramedics is a full year of school and it's more



Seniors' lunch program volunteers Fred Bergmann, Doug Adams, Irene Adams, Susan Bergman, and Ann Nickel along with the Niverville Fire and Emergency Services team. **BRENDASAWTAKZY**

[about] medical training so I'll be able to... help out with more medications and more responsibilities," says Kehler. "I've been applying for bursaries through the college because it is quite a bit of money. I won't be able to work during the year because it is such an intense program. It's full days [of school] and then nights and weekends of studying and volunteering here... I'm very, very thankful and blessed [by this gift]."

The donation will take a big bite out of the \$6,000 cost for tuition, books, and uniforms for Kehler. At the completion of her course,

she hopes to land a job with the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service or with Southern Health-Sante Sud.

She doesn't anticipate giving up her volunteer services with the Niverville department, though, which is where she got her start.

The substantial donations made by the seniors' lunch program committee were a result of the bitter-sweet ending of that weekly program in August of this year. Coordinators Fred and Susan Bergmann, and a good number of the volunteer committee, were already well into their golden years and the demands of the program

became too much.

Deputy Fire Chief Brad Wasilinchuk gratefully accepted the committee's donation on behalf of the fire department and hopes they can continue the collaboration they've had with these seniors over the past eight years, adding that this group has been integral in organizing and assisting in the fire department's annual perogy supper fundraiser.

"It's a great donation," Wasilinchuk says. "They've been a great help to us... We've had a great relationship with them since 2011."

IN BRIEF



DEPOSITPHOTOS

Fire Chief Announces Free Smoke Alarm Program

By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Niverville's Fire and Emergency Services Department is again offering to install free smoke alarms. The offer is earmarked for those who live in older homes with battery-only alarms, as opposed to newer builds with hard-wired alarm systems.

Fire Chief Keith Bueckert emphasizes that homes should have at least one smoke alarm on every level—and he adds that it should be located close to sleeping areas.

Bueckert says the new alarms have lithium batteries that are designed to last for ten years and only require regular testing to make sure they're still operational.

If a resident isn't sure whether they have a hard-wired alarm or a battery-only alarm, they can make the determination by taking the unit off the wall or ceiling. If wires are hooked into the alarm, it's hard-wired. If the unit comes off with nothing attached, it's battery-only,

which means this year's free alarm program is for you.

Residents are encouraged to email the fire department to set up an appointment, or they can be contacted through their Facebook page. Bueckert says that all people need to do is include their address, and someone from the department will get back to them.

"It's important to remember that smoke alarms should be replaced every ten years," says Bueckert. "If replacing a hard-wired alarm, ensure they have a battery backup in case of home power failure. If you have gas appliances, when changing hard-wired alarms get a smoke and carbon monoxide combination alarm."

Residents of other communities, too, should check with their local fire departments on the availability of free alarms.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ firechief@whereyoubelong.ca

■ facebook.com/nivervillefireems

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Heritage Centre Restructures Upper Management

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Less than 20 years since the project began, the Niverville Heritage Centre's aging-in-place model is complete. The Heritage Centre includes seniors housing options that range from fully independent life lease suites to personal care home units and everything in between.

"The growth has come to an end at the Heritage Centre because the lot has been filled," says Tom Schmitke, chairperson of the Niverville Heritage Holdings Inc (NHHI) board. "Everything that can be built there as far as buildings go is there."

With no further growth and development in mind, the NHHI board of directors, along with the executive team of Steve Neufeld, Wes Hildebrand, and Robert Manchulenko, recognized a need to restructure upper management to better reflect the changing vision of the facility.

Since Neufeld's role over the past many years included developing a vision for the centre's future, the group agreed that his position would be terminated. Neufeld resigned in June of this year.

"It was the collapse of the [seniors housing and daycare] project in St. Adolphe that began to make it clear that my tenure in Community and Development [at the Heritage Centre] would be coming to an end, perhaps sooner than I expected," Neufeld says. "Coupling [that] with the fact that I am turning 58 this year and experience relatively good health and energy, it made sense that now was the right time to move on, in spite of not having a clear career path going forward."

Since Neufeld's resignation, Hildebrand has been appointed the sole CEO position of the Heritage Centre, overseeing all of the current lower management positions. A position of Operations Manager has



The Heritage Centre's former executive team of Rob Manchulenko, Steve Neufeld, and Wes Hildebrand.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

been created for Manchulenko. Both Hildebrand and Manchulenko will be assuming the aspects of Neufeld's portfolio that will be required for the ongoing management of the various facilities within the Heritage Centre.

This new structure, Schmitke says, is in line with NHHI's mission to be fiscally responsible in these tight economic times.

"Finances come into play on everything," Schmitke says, adding that provincial funding for the PCH has levelled off in the past few years, with no funding increases in sight. "We don't know when that may change and it's a little bit harder to provide the same level of services when the costs keep going up but the income is frozen, so we've had to adjust."

Neufeld's interest in the Heritage Centre began when it was still in its dream stages. As a town councillor in

2002, he participated in the development of the master site plan and operating budget, the mission and vision of the facility, as well as the capital fundraising campaign.

Two years later, as the project got underway, Neufeld applied for and was awarded the position of Chief Operating Officer. In 2017, he accepted the position of Chief Officer for Community and Development as well as Executive Director of the PCH.

"While the Heritage Centre project has been an incredible career journey for me, it has been my personal prayer for a couple of years that if there was another journey that God wanted my wife Helga and I to be on, that he would put us on that path," Neufeld says. "While I had been sensing a change would be in the offing, I just wasn't sure what the timing would be on that."

The past few months have provided Neufeld with time to contemplate where his ambitions will take him, but he's confident they'll include a focus on using the skills he's developed at the Heritage Centre to partner with non-profit organizations that work towards transformational change in areas of societal need.

A few opportunities, he says, have already come his way. Because of his volunteer work with Finding Freedom, a Winnipeg-based addictions treatment centre, he's been offered the role of campaign co-chairperson for another organization working towards developing an addictions and mental health treatment centre.

As well, another organization has invited Neufeld to join them in their mission to develop a gang exit program, a video series on complex

trauma targeted at high school students, and the development of entry-level housing for the homeless.

On top of that, Neufeld has recently revived a consulting business he ran years earlier. His goal is to work alongside small business owners who need assistance in marketing and development.

"What I have found over years of running my own business, private businesses for others, and of course social enterprise with the Heritage Centre," Neufeld says, "is that when the pressure is on and the walls seem to be closing in, it is very difficult for those responsible for the business to focus their efforts on ongoing business growth when they have so much on their plates."

Schmitke agrees that this is an area that would lend itself well to Neufeld's strengths.

"Steve is very good at [business consulting]," Schmitke says. "He's got a lot of connections and he has the drive and the passion for it."

While the Heritage Centre management team is being scaled back, Schmitke says that the NHHI board hopes to gain a few new members in the coming months. Currently, four members sit on that board, including Schmitke, Randy Baldwin, Terry Carruthers, and Sandy Wallace.

Very recently, the board had to say farewell to Nancy Finlayson and Kathy Neyedley, leaving them a few members short of their minimum six- to seven-member ideal. Schmitke says the positions are strictly volunteer with no remuneration, although he adds that it doesn't require a significant time commitment.

"It's not all that difficult," Schmitke says. "It's just to help guide and direct the [Heritage Centre] management to make sure that the facility remains focused on the community and not just to make a profit."

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Niverville Council Looks at Options to Clean Up Lakes

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Many Niverville residents enjoy backyard views of idyllic lakes—idyllic, that is, until those lakes develop a thick moss-green blanket. Hot, dry summers like this year's provide the perfect climate for this kind of growth, and residents of Fifth Avenue Estates and The Highlands have grown concerned.

To the untrained eye, the lakes appear to be covered in algae, and when it's the blue-green variety such algae can be extremely hazardous to pets and wildlife.

But Niverville CAO Eric King says they've consulted with environmental experts and the growth is, in fact, a plant called duckweed. This summer has produced the ideal conditions for duckweed growth, and its spread hasn't been exclusive to Niverville.

"We're going to be testing a chemical that has had positive results and doesn't have environmental impacts," says King. "It affects only the duckweed."

But he adds that some environmental groups have warned that killing the duckweed could



Duckweed growth on the surface of a lake in Fifth Avenue Estates. ✎ BRENDA SAWATZKY

introduce the dreaded blue-green algae, so the town needs to exercise caution.

Duckweed is a flowering aquatic plant which floats on or just beneath the surface of still or slow-moving bodies of water. Once it gets started, it can double in size in just one to two days.

While it looks similar to algae from a distance, its effect on the environment is actually the opposite. In some places, the growth of duckweed is encouraged for its many benefits. For

example, it acts as a natural water filter, effectively absorbing chemicals and runoff from intensive farming.

The plant also acts as a mosquito deterrent, preventing the insect from laying eggs on the water's surface. In countries that see high levels of malaria, yellow fever, dengue fever, and the Zika virus—diseases all spread by mosquitos—duckweed is considered to be a natural defense.

Duckweed is also a completely safe and protein-rich food source

for fish, wildlife, and even pets and humans. Fish farms around the world have taken note of the benefits of growing duckweed for this reason.

Finally, and perhaps most important, because of its dense surface cover duckweed actually works to prevent the growth of algae.

King says that town staff have been looking at a variety of different treatment options over the past year. While the idea of bulrushes was effective in the decommissioned lagoon, King says there has been public pushback over its use in residential areas since bulrushes may provide the right environment for mouse and vole nests and mosquito proliferation.

"There's no perfect scenario," King says. "You're always going to have some issues. [We could use] biochemicals and make [the lakes] sterile, but... I don't think we want to go there."

Since duckweed doesn't pose a public threat, King asks residents to be patient.

"No one's getting the answer they want in the time they want it, but we want to make sure that we do it right," says King.

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Niverville to Host Big 50th Anniversary Party

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

It's a big year for the Town of Niverville, commemorating 50 years since its incorporation as an independent community. To celebrate, the town is throwing a party—and they want you there.

On Sunday, September 8, Hespeler Park will be abuzz with free activities for everyone, all day long. The day will kick off with Foga—a combination of fitness and yoga—at 9:00 a.m. and continue with nonstop activities until mid-evening.

Every part of it will reflect the town that residents have come to know and love, supported by Niverville's churches, businesses, and sports teams.

People can choose to join in on the morning worship service, which will celebrate the area's diverse ethnic roots, from Mennonite to Metis and First Nations peoples. Roger Armbruster, the service's organizer, is excited to host Island Breeze Manitoba as well as Alisa Tina Moose, who will participate in the service with cultural dancing, singing, and spiritual blessings.

"Since we all live on the same land, this blessing [will] include all of the people who live on this land, and we all have a part to play in contributing to its future peace and prosperity," says Armbruster.

In keeping with the theme, the churches of Niverville will serve up a hearty lunch of farmer sausage burgers, frybread, and bannock.



Fiftieth anniversary signs greet visitors to Niverville.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

Kids will be kept busy all afternoon with bouncers, Ninja Warrior games, face-painting, glitter tattoos, and balloon artists. They'll also be among the first to try out the newly installed play structure beside the splash pad.

The whole family will enjoy an obstacle course created by ShopGym Inc., some fitness fun with Average Joe's Fitness, as well as circuit/off-ice training with the Niverville Skating Club.

Children can collect toothbrushes and treats provided by the staff of the Niverville Heritage Dental Centre and then explore the park in an organized scavenger hunt with a chance to win free summer camp registration in 2020.

Adults can put their competitive spirit to the test in games of spikeball, hosted by the Niverville Beach Volleyball organization, or try the Accurate Shooter provided by Clipper Ice Sports. If competition isn't your thing, you

can relax and focus with some lessons in tai chi or just catch up with your neighbours.

Of course, it wouldn't be a great day without celebrating some of Niverville's finest talent. Award-winning musician Jordan St. Cyr will treat the town to the music that's been garnering him international attention. Comedian and actor Matt Falk, the guy who the CBC calls "effortlessly funny," will have everyone in stitches with a family-friendly stand-up routine.

A smoked pork loin dinner will be served at 4:30 p.m. with all the fixings, including cake, compliments of Niverville Bigway, the Heritage Centre, and the town. Evening stage performances will include the musical sounds of Wildflower and dance demonstrations by the Prairie Soul Dance Company. All this will be topped off with an unforgettable fireworks show at 8:00 p.m.

Niverville's fiftieth anniversary celebration is where you belong on September 8.

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Local Refugee Sponsors Welcome New Family

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On August 9, a group of local volunteers gathered at the airport in Winnipeg to welcome some of Niverville's newest residents. The family of three was exhausted but overjoyed—their harrowing journey on the run had finally ended.

The parents, still fearful from years of running for their lives, have requested anonymity for this story. I will call them Sarah and Mark.

Open Doors Niverville, a local refugee sponsorship committee, learned about Sarah and Mark's plight in February 2017. While the committee hadn't been actively pursuing a family for sponsorship at the time, a need was shared by City Church of Winnipeg and the committee jumped into action.

Elaine Kehler of Open Doors says the local committee was encouraged to help out due to their unique affiliation with MCC Canada, which generally helps makes sponsorship easier. The committee was presented with a thick file of refugees awaiting sponsorship from countless locations around the world.

"It was really hard," Elaine says. "I said, 'There's thousands that need our help. How are we going to do this?' We [finally] chose them based on their story."

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Born in Pakistan, Sarah became a target in early adulthood when it was discovered that she held to Christian beliefs in a country where Islam is the only accepted religion.

"[There was much] discrimination of Christians," Sarah says. "They forced people to convert to Islam... Because they say the country [practices] the Islamic religion of peace, they don't want people [of other faiths] to spoil [their country]. They have the concept that Christians are not really believers, they are disbelievers... We are forbidden peoples... We are [like lepers]."

Being a non-Muslim in Pakistan, she says, means not having the right to higher education. Getting a job is near impossible. Worst of all, the government's anti-blasphemy law means the mere practice of another faith is considered blasphemous and is punishable by death.



Sarah, Mark, and their son are greeted by members of Open Doors Niverville.

ELAINE KEHLER

According to Sarah, this law gives power to the country's citizens to not only accuse but also carry out the punishment. She says it is considered laudable for Pakistanis to mete out such a punishment on non-Muslim citizens and that they believe it will be rewarded in the afterlife.

"I saw Sarah's paperwork long before I started having contact with her," says Elaine. "I have [seen] three documents that are death threats... [She was accused of] blasphemy, shaming her family, and escaping the [potential] marriage to a Muslim man. So, if she had stayed in Pakistan, there were three reasons they could have killed her."

ON THE RUN

Sarah met Mark at a small house church run by her Christian grandfather and uncle. Her mother, too, was a Christian but adhered to her faith in silence while married to Sarah's Muslim father.

When the death threats on Sarah's life first surfaced, her extended family sent her away for fear of their own safety. When Mark pledged to marry Sarah, he too was alienated by his family for the threat she now posed for all of them.

The couple began a life on the run, living for short periods of time in different communities, attempting to escape the death threats that followed them.

"It is incredible to describe," Sarah says. "They searched [our homes], they [physically] attacked us and we were trapped. Can you imagine that for seven years?"

During those years, the couple gave birth to a son. By mere affiliation, his life was also in danger. Escape from Pakistan seemed the only answer. But with a government-issued warrant against Sarah, they were unable to get past airport authorities to board a flight out of the country.

They befriended a Pakistani Christian missionary who had become known for aiding Christians in their escape from Pakistan. He arranged for a large sum of bribe money in the hopes that Sarah and Mark would be permitted to fly to Thailand.

"They could have killed us [for bribing officials]," Sarah says. "They could have just handed us over to fundamental groups or extremists. They have that authority."

HIDING IN THAILAND

Sarah, Mark, and their infant son were eventually allowed passage to Thailand, a country already inundated with asylum seekers. But the Thai government was busy developing their own extreme measures, meant to deal with the illegal aliens who were arriving in their country by the thousands.

To be caught as an illegal alien in Thailand meant deportation or spending time in one of the country's International Detention Centres (IDC).

"If you look up information on the IDC in Bangkok, you will see that [the conditions] are horrific," says Elaine. "There's standing room only for some of them. They separate the men, women, and children.

The [inmates] take turns sleeping because there's no space. They don't necessarily get food unless there's someone from the outside bringing them food. So either they get sick and die or they go crazy and die. Most people die in detention."

For the next five and a half years, the couple struggled for survival while keeping a low profile. A kind-hearted landlord provided a small apartment, putting himself at risk in the process.

For a while, the couple was able to subsist on small donations of food and money from local Catholic churches or volunteer organizations. Eventually, those gifts stopped coming as the country's refugee problem grew.

"We suffered a poor life in Thailand," Sarah says. "We didn't have enough money to survive."

Police raids on apartment buildings and workplaces were also a regular threat. Sarah recounts numerous times when she and Mark hid in their tiny apartment, trying to silence their young child as doors were being broken down throughout the block in search of illegal refugees.

Even so, Mark had no choice but to venture out of doors and seek employment to feed his family and pay the rent. In 2017, police removed Mark and five other men from their workplace, holding them at a police station until they could be moved into detention. He was certain he'd never see his wife and child again.

As the Open Doors committee worked on this end, Mark experienced something Sarah believes was the hand of God at work. Two

strangers appeared at the police station with bribe money that would provide for the release of Mark and the other five men.

Following the couple's terrifying journey closely, Open Doors found themselves at a loss to move the sponsorship process more quickly. Instead they sent monthly cash transfers to a friend of the couple to help keep them alive. In the meantime, Elaine pursued help from local leaders and out-of-country officials to try and get the family out of Thailand before it was too late.

"We can't imagine that people would do this really hard work for us," Sarah says. "[Now] we are here, but it still feels like a dream. I just feel the warm hug and love from people."

AT HOME IN NIVERVILLE

Since their arrival in Niverville, a furnished apartment and car have been provided for Mark, Sarah, and their six-year-old son. Open Doors has made it their mission to provide everything the family will need for their first year in Canada while they hone their English and learn the subtleties of life in a new country.

Various Open Doors members have divvied up the responsibilities which will help make the family's transition as smooth as possible, including teaching them to budget, assisting them in acquiring needed documentation, and eventually filling out resumes and helping them find work.

Open Doors Niverville is now welcoming assistance from the community for a variety of financial and practical needs. Elaine says the committee is still in need of \$4,500 to meet their goal of a full year's support. In-kind donations are also being accepted.

But, not to be disregarded, human connection and friendship is something the family hopes to build here in their new hometown.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To donate, visit the MCC Open Doors Niverville Project (donate.mcccanada.ca/registry/open-doors-niverville) or reach out on the Open Doors Niverville Facebook site (www.facebook.com/OPENDOORSNiverville).

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New Florist and Gift Shop Blossoms in IDC

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

A new open sign has appeared in an Île-des-Chênes strip mall. Fleuriste XO Flowers and Gifts is open for business and ready to serve customers throughout the region.

"We're a family- and community-supported business," says Brenda Chaput, owner and head florist.

Chaput's mother, partner, and sons also help out, providing assistance with customer service, flower and plant care, and delivery. And while the trendy little shop provides a great destination for flowers and gifts, Chaput emphasizes her desire to cater to the southeast through speedy delivery services.

For a nominal fee of \$5 to \$25, bouquets and arrangements can be delivered to St. Malo, Ste. Agathe, Winnipeg, Richer, and everywhere in between.

Since her June 6 opening, Chaput has already been booked by nine bridal parties. She anticipates another large source of business will be corporate clients who appreciate the personalized touch and ease of shopping that a qualified florist can provide.

As a small business owner, though, she works hard to provide top-notch product and service to every customer who calls or walks through her door. As well as family, she has one part-time floral designer and two part-time bilingual staff trained to provide the best possible customer service.

Her spacious shop at 597 Meadowlark Boulevard has a modern-chic theme with ceilings open to the ductwork and walls painted in black and garden-green. The barnwood accents and antique windows lend well to the rural setting.

"When designing this store, [I decided] to have a lot of space for foot traffic," she says. "It's nice if we can display [arrangements] on the floor and not have them all squished into the cooler. I like it when people can walk around and see product [all over the store]."



Brenda Chaput in her flower shop in Île-des-Chênes.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

Here, shoppers will find both premade arrangements and assortments of fresh-cut flowers. The inventory, Chaput says, will be well stocked for every holiday with flowers coming in from around the world.

Chaput is able to fill same-day custom floral arrangements of almost any variety and size. For special orders, customers should expect to give her one day's notice.

"A special order is if you don't have a second choice in mind," Chaput says. "So, if there's something you want in a very specific color, variety, and size, then that's a special order."

To round out her business, Chaput also carries an assortment of gifts, candles, and cards, as well as a selection of items by local producers and artists. Among those you'll find pottery by Île-des-Chênes resident Michael Astill and whimsical art pieces created by Susan Hope of Yellow Door Art. You'll also find fresh honey and preserves by Marg's Organics.

"The nice thing about being a small business is to be able to support other small business,"

Chaput says. "And the nice thing about being an artist is to be able to invite other artists to showcase their work."

The showroom includes a coffee bar and bistro tables on the front patio for those who just want to enjoy a great cup of joe with a friend.

Beginning this fall, she'll be offering workshops on floral design, indoor fairy gardens, and Christmas art. Classes will be held on Thursday nights and will be advertised on the company's Facebook page.

Without question, Chaput loves what she does and she's been doing it for more than 30 years.

"At 15, my first job was in a flower shop and it's lived inside me forever," she says. "[I love] to express myself through flowers, through nature, just even being able to create something. There's an even bigger satisfaction in being able to create something for someone [else]. Their appreciation for what you've created is just heartwarming."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ www.facebook.com/fleuristeXOflowers



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Meet the Candidates in Springfield-Ritchot

By Brenda Sawatzky
& Graham Schellenberg

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com



SAM OKOI, NDP

Obasesam “Sam” Okoi, the NDP candidate for the riding Springfield-Ritchot, is busy canvassing his constituency as Manitobans prepare to go to the polls on September 10. The Ile-des-Chênes resident was nominated in June.

Okoi is a research affiliate for the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society in Waterloo, Ontario. He previously worked as a faculty member in the University of Winnipeg’s Human Rights Department, and before that he had a role in the Department of Global Studies at Wilfred Laurier University in Ontario.

The NDP have promised in their election platform that, if elected, they will reopen emergency rooms and hire replacement nurses for positions vacated by the incumbent government, make “significant investments in infrastructure” while simultaneously creating what they estimate to be 50,000 jobs, and reduce early elementary school class sizes.

“This election is about ordinary people and ordinary families struggling to put food on the table,” says Okoi. “It is about ordinary families struggling to save for their children. It is about ordinary families fighting to get jobs. I want to fight for jobs. I

want to fight for healthcare. I want to fight for education and I want to fight for seniors.”

With changes to the health-care system implemented by the incumbent PC government, Okoi argues that rural Manitobans have been put at risk.

“Almost everyone is concerned about healthcare... We are all suffering,” he says. “Healthcare is a serious concern to my constituents... and people who live in rural communities, like me, are at risk... I think something needs to be done.”

He states that while canvassing the constituency, he’s heard of some traditional Progressive Conservative voters retracting their support of the party, recognizing that healthcare is a “fundamental need.”

Okoi says it’s essential to prioritize the needs of youth and seniors in Manitoba.

“We have a growing population that are mostly disconnected from politics because of the bad decisions our leaders are making,” Okoi says. “I want to live in a society where I am consulted when people make decisions that affect my life and my family. I believe the NDP has a platform which puts people at the centre of political discourse.”

The long-time community organizer also brings with him a wealth of leadership experience.

“I volunteer each year to raise thousands of dollars to support the fight against diabetes in Manitoba, [and] I co-founded Winners Chapel International Winnipeg as a place of worship and have played various leadership roles in the organization.”

He also coordinates the AWG Consortium at the University of Manitoba, an organization which, he says, unites scholars, students, professionals, and community groups to explore innovative ways of building peaceful and prosperous communities.

Recognized for his efforts, Okoi received the University of Manitoba’s Nahlah Ayed Prize in 2017 for demonstrating exceptional commitment and

leadership skills. He was also awarded an Ambassador for Peace Award by the Universal Peace Federation in 2016.

Okoi holds a Ph.D. in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba, a Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Windsor, and a Master of Public Policy from Wilfred Laurier University. He also holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Development from Trent University.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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GARRETT HAWGOOD, GREEN

Garrett Hawgood may be a political newcomer, but if life experience and passion have a say he could become a force to be reckoned with.

Hawgood and his family are residents of Niverville, and much of his working career has been spent as a paramedic and firefighter with the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service. He also volunteers on Niverville’s Fire and Emergency Services team. Prior to that, he worked as an operating room attendant at the Victoria General Hospital.

Three years ago, his passion

for saving lives led him to open his own first aid and CPR training company. Recently, his company began an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) donation program with the primary goal of providing AEDs to First Nations reserves and organizations that serve Manitoba’s most vulnerable populations.

“Helping people is a big part of who I am, but so is helping the planet,” says Hawgood. “I realize there is only one earth that we all call home. Although life can be busy and making good choices for the environment can sometimes be challenging, I believe that instilling these habits into the next generation will give them the foundation to become leaders and innovators in the green solutions needed for the sustainability of our planet and mankind.”

As a parent of three daughters, one a cancer survivor and another profoundly disabled, Hawgood has also been a vocal challenger of the government’s current healthcare system and an advocate for better family healthcare.

“I want to ensure that every resident in Springfield-Ritchot has access to the best healthcare, including preventative medicine. I am passionate about ensuring access to affordable, healthy food options and quality primary and dental care.”

Hawgood is also a strong proponent for available and affordable childcare.

“For many families, the cost of childcare eats up a significant portion of their income,” he says. “The Green Party is dedicated to increasing childcare spaces while decreasing costs.”

As well, he says that changes to the education system are overdue. His wife Kate works as a teacher and has seen the many challenges firsthand.

“Ensuring our kids receive twenty-first century skills... will prepare them for the workforce they are entering,” Hawgood says. “We are preparing our kids to be future innovators and entrepreneurs, tasked with

solving long-standing problems such as poverty and climate change. They deserve an education that will prepare them for this future.”

Hawgood is similarly committed to finding better ways to carry out the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action. Equitable access to education, healthcare, childcare, and other services is crucial, he says, to righting the wrongs of the past.

The Green Party recognizes the importance of financial accountability and transparency within government, he points out. As well, they are deeply committed to seeking out effective approaches to climate change and environmental impacts.

“We have to find ways to transition from our reliance on fossil fuels,” says Hawgood. “Manitoba can be on the cutting edge of the climate fight, contributing positively to our economy and our planet.”

He’s confident that the Springfield-Ritchot riding can also be leaders in waste reduction and landfill diversion by creating better composting solutions and eliminating unnecessary single-use plastics from the region.

This is Hawgood’s first foray into politics, and his desire to run stems from the endless cycle he’s witnessed between the other political parties. Traditional Conservative funding cuts, he says, leads to overspending by the NDP or Liberals whose platforms are aimed primarily at defeating the Conservatives.

“This is how it’s been and will continue to be until enough constituents decide to step back and try a different approach,” he says. “The Green Party is a different kind of party.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To read more about Garrett Hawgood’s AED donation program, a story which The Citizen covered in April: www.nivervillecitizen.com/news/local/entrepreneur-embarks-on-aed-donation-program

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SARA MIRWALDT, LIBERAL

For this year's provincial election, the Manitoba Liberal Party nominated Sara Mirwaldt to represent them in the new constituency of Springfield-Ritchot.

Sara Mirwaldt, Chair of the Young Liberals of Canada (Manitoba) board—the Liberal Party of Canada's provincial youth chapter—now faces MLA Ron Schuler (PC), Dr. Sam Okoi (NDP), and Garrett Hawgood (Green) when Manitobans head to the polls.

Little is known about Mirwaldt, who didn't respond to The Citizen's requests for an interview.

It is no secret that the Manitoba Liberal Party, which Mirwaldt has been a member of for about a year, has been slow to nominate candidates for the upcoming election, citing an early election launch.

The 20-year-old recently completed her second year of undergraduate studies at the University of Manitoba and plans to become a lawyer.

Mirwaldt graduated from Springfield Collegiate Institute in 2017.

The Manitoba Liberal Party has promised that, if elected, they will significantly focus on the environment, healthcare, and the economy.

The party's healthcare commitments include prioritizing system efficiency, investments in mental healthcare, and better access to affordable medications.

The Liberals have also promised to make Manitoba carbon neutral by 2030 and to implement various natural resource protections, including helping municipalities upgrade sewage treatment infrastructure.

Its economic commitments include increasing the minimum wage to \$15 by 2024, a "buy local" campaign to support local businesses, and \$16

billion in promised infrastructure investments.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ www.manitoba.liberal.ca



RON SCHULER, PC

Ron Schuler isn't new to the political arena. He served as a Progressive Conservative MLA from 1999 to 2011 in the Springfield riding, and then again from 2011 to 2016 in the redrawn constituency of St. Paul.

"With recent changes to Manitoba's electoral boundaries, Ron

is excited to be seeking re-election in the newly formed constituency of Springfield-Ritchot," says campaign manager Gladys Hayward Williams.

Schuler has also served the people of Manitoba as Minister of Crown Services, and since August 2017 he has occupied the office of Minister of Infrastructure.

During these years, Schuler has had the opportunity to be involved in several major infrastructure projects. One such project was the announcement the first of the staged openings of the \$250 million interchange at Highway 59 and the North Perimeter. He was also responsible for awarding the second phase of the Shoal Lake Road construction, a \$12 million initiative providing Shoal Lake 40 with better access to clean drinking water.

A graduate of the University of Manitoba with a degree in International Relations, Schuler began his career as a junior executive with the T. Eaton Company. He eventually ventured into small business ownership, operating a variety of businesses such as Christmas Traditions, Espresso Junction Inc., and Gingerbread World Inc.

Schuler also served as a trustee of the River East School Division,

serving as Chair of the Education and Policy Committee, and in his final term he took on the role of Chair of the Board.

"Ron supported many important initiatives, including technology upgrades and the expansion of the heritage language programs offered throughout the division," says his bio on the PC Team website.

He has also been an active community volunteer with organizations such as Big Brothers, Citizens on Patrol, the Kidney Foundation, Max Reinhardt Theatre Canada, the German Canadian Heritage Foundation, and the Manitoba Inter-cultural Council.

Schuler is father to three children who also enjoy involvement in the community in which they live.

"Ron looks forward to continuing his service... as part of a strong, united PC Team that is properly managing Manitoba's finances, growing our economy, and improving the services we rely on," says the PC Team website.

Schuler did not respond for requests for an interview.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ www.ronschuler4MLA.com



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Commentary

It's Time to Take the Straighter Path

By Greg Fehr

Looking at our slate of candidates for the new Springfield-Ritchot constituency, I'm encouraged. Regardless of our political leanings, we are blessed by a group that seems to be passionate and engaged. As a typical Tory stronghold, this hasn't always been the case. Having better choices can only lead to better discussion.

What is unfortunate is how little bearing our local candidates have on the political system. We have progressed—or perhaps digressed?—to the point where the centralized party provides so much direction that there's little room left for individual points of view. While our elected officials do engage in discussion, much of their messaging is based on party strategy rather than a true intention to move our province in a new direction.

This is truly a shame, because we need to engage in more open discussion and make some tough decisions. We need to talk about our political systems, which quite frankly aren't sustainable.

We all know this. Even the candidates acknowledge that we cannot continue the way we've been going.

For example, to latch onto a hot topic, we have a healthcare system that takes up nearly 50 percent of the



The Manitoba Legislature.

ADOBE STOCK

budget, and it's getting bigger all the time. Yet it doesn't meet our expectations for service delivery.

Do we look for efficiencies within the system and try to reduce the share that healthcare takes up? Do we reallocate resources to other areas? Are we willing to accept reasonable changes or slightly lowered expectations on service delivery? Do we accept that health delivery is too important and decide instead to commit to more taxes to fund it? Does that taxation take the form of

conventional taxes or new taxation, including sin taxation on non-healthy life choices?

Solutions may lie in a combination of the above. A non-partisan, or rather cross-partisan, approach is called for.

While I'm not one to sugarcoat the past, it's clear that our system of partisanship has made this a more difficult proposition than it would have been in previous years. We've moved to a system where touting the merit of "our" ideas is only secondary to bashing the

alternatives, which leaves little room for a cooperative approach.

Through the pendulum swings of PC and NDP governments, we have achieved a rudimentary balance. This produces some benefit, since we never move too far to any extreme, but these swings tap valuable resources; from severances to changing letterheads, the costs of undoing what the last government "did wrong" is expensive. It's like zigzagging across the field instead of heading straight for the

goalpost.

Ask any seasoned politician, regardless of stripe, and you'll find that the longer they're in politics, the more they realize that there are ideas of merit in all philosophies. We may be at a critical point where the idea of taking non-partisan action isn't just prudent but absolutely necessary.

Tories are great at looking through the business lens at government services. Our NDP brothers have a feel for the need of frontline workers. The Liberals understand

compromise and balance. The Greens have a clear understanding of merging environmental and economic sustainability.

I'm not so naïve as to think the ruling party would give up much control to the opposition on these topics, but perhaps some portfolios—such as health, given its current crisis and importance—require a collaborative approach. Establishing just such a long-term plan may be the only way to save our universal healthcare model without suckling further on the already chapped teats of the taxpayer and spending the spoils inefficiently. With the size of the health budget, changes in this department alone could provide much-needed resources to other dysfunctional areas that are on the verge of collapse.

It's strange that we truly no longer elect governments. We don't choose the government we want. Instead we just decide whether we're tired of the current one.

In other words, we decide to zig because we've zagged long enough.

What a foolish path we have taken. The true solution is a straighter path—one with fewer steps and which requires less energy. A path where we get where we're going faster.

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Sports & Recreation



Some of the inaugural athletes of Phoenix Cheer Athletics.

NATALIE BATKIS

Phoenix Athletics Resurrects Competitive Cheer Program

Graham Schellenberg

Organized cheerleading has found a home in southeastern Manitoba once more. After months of planning by parents, coaches, and athletes, Phoenix Cheer Athletics (PCA) announced on August 1 its plan to succeed Scorpions Elite Cheer, which had closed unexpectedly earlier this year.

After its closure in June, former Scorpions Elite members rallied to ensure local athletes could continue cheerleading competitively. According to the organization, within weeks of Scorpions Elite's disbanding, the group found "investors to purchase the equipment from the former gym, assembled a steering committee to set up the business, found a new gym location, and secured seven coaches."

Phoenix Cheer Athletics Steering Committee co-chair Natalie Batkis says that PCA is in

the process of converting its new location in Ste. Anne into a gym, but they hope to expand into a larger facility in the future.

Now located in a facility at 8-520 Traverse Road, half a kilometre south of the intersections of Highways 207 and 210 in Ste. Anne, Phoenix Cheer Athletics will continue to deliver programming to its athletes in Île-des-Chênes, Niverville, La Broquerie, Marchand, Steinbach, Winnipeg, Landmark, and Lorette—with some coming from as far as Kenora, Ontario.

"While there are other respected cheerleading programs in Winnipeg, the close-knit rural cheer community wasn't ready to break their teams apart," says a press release from PCA, "and many couldn't commit to the financial and time burdens involved in driving to Winnipeg a few times a week."

Scorpions Elite Cheer, founded

by Andrew and Tiffany Reckseidler in 2010, achieved much success operating out of a converted Quonset near Steinbach, capturing six provincial titles and multiple national titles.

"After almost 10 years, the owners decided they wanted to take a break and focus on family," says Batkis. "They definitely deserve it and we support them one hundred percent. They laid the groundwork and now we will continue on with their legacy."

Phoenix Cheer Athletics is searching for more athletes ages five to 14.

"Our competitive program will focus on athletes ages five to 14 this year, which means we will have mini, youth, and junior teams," says PCA program director Kamille Wieler. "Our goal is to include a senior team next year for athletes ages 15 to 18 years old."

Two recreational cheerleading groups, which involve less

commitment, are also in the works.

"Our top priority is to ensure our athletes have a safe environment where they can be challenged and grow in the sport. If we win a few trophies along the way, it is just an added bonus," said Batkis. "We have a lot to live up to, but with nearly all of our first 30 registered athletes being former Scorpions, and our coaches all being former Scorpion athletes and/or coaches, we are confident we can build a very successful program."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Information about registration is available on the Phoenix Cheer Athletics Facebook page (www.facebook.com/phoenixcheerathletics) or by emailing registerwithpca@gmail.com.

IN BRIEF

Golfers Raise Money for Family in Need

By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Every year, a group of local men gather for their annual Masters tournament. The 2019 event was the seventeenth year of this long and proud tradition.

More important than playing golf and enjoying each other's company, the golfers raise money to donate to local families in need. Over the years, they've donated more than \$50,000.

"Something the players are really proud of is the money the tournament raises," says organizer Ray Dowse. "For the past five tournaments, the funds have gone directly to local families."

Dowse says that this year's donation of \$5,000 went to a young family with small children, where one of the parents has a severe illness.

On August 17, all 36 golfers converged on the Hecla Island Golf Course and Resort for the two-day event. On Saturday, they held their eighth annual Ryder Cup competition, which divided the players into Team Red and Team Blue. After two rounds, Team Red won by a score of 20.5 to 15.5. The win puts Team Red ahead 5-3 overall in the eight years that this event has been held.

On Masters Sunday, a newcomer won the title. Nick Hagidiakow, owner of the Niverville Dairy Queen, took home the green jacket after carding the low gross score of the day, shooting a sizzling 80. Last year's green jacket winner, Steve Fast, came in second with a score of 86.

The winner of the low net score, after handicap calculations, was Joey Sawatzky with a score of 70, earning him the gold jacket.

"It was another very fun weekend with a lot of great people taking part," says Dowse. "We had amazing weather and an ideal facility. Those who attend really look forward to it each year!"



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The new playground at Hespeler Park in Niverville.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

Hespeler Park Playground Reflects Niverville's History

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

The Town of Niverville has recently added an extra dash of fun and whimsy to Hespeler Park. The nearly \$400,000 play park is situated immediately next to the splash pad and provides a variety of interactive activities.

A whimsical element of the play park is the mini-village, which includes iconic structures reflecting those of the community's past. Here kids will find a schoolhouse, a grain elevator, a chicken hatchery, and a market café.

At the centre of the village stands the Odyssey Tower, a multi-level play tower with slides, climbing ropes, and viewing windows at the top which overlook the entire park. The tower was

custom-designed to reflect the original grain elevator which has become a visual icon for the community.

"We used inspiration from old town photos and the grain elevator is iconic to Niverville, of course," says CAO Eric King. "We had the architect provide conceptual [drawings] and we just gave them some direction."

Set to open in early September, the park will also include a swing set and an Oodle Swing, a multi-person swing which encourages cooperation and imagination. As well, the Oodle Swing can be used by mobility-challenged children and has been shown to provide excellent developmental benefits for kids with autism.

To encourage inclusivity, much of the surfacing of

the park is done in concrete or engineered wood fiber. Nearby, the changerooms and washrooms at the splash pad have been recently outfitted with push-button wheelchair access.

"This design addressed many aspects we were looking at with a new playground," says King. "Accessibility was a major factor, and there are a number of play options that are inclusive."

King adds that children with mobility concerns will find many interactive things to do at the mini-village from the ground level.

The total estimated cost of the project comes to \$384,000. Federal and provincial grants were received to the tune of \$174,000 for this project.

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Annual Ste. Agathe Golf Classic Brings Out the Fun

By Gabrielle Taylor

On Saturday, August 17, the Ste. Agathe Community Development Inc. Golf Classic had a smaller turnout than years previous, but that didn't discourage the teams who showed up from having a great time.

"It's a fun day, it's a fun event," says Claude Lemoine, a member of the Ste. Agathe CDI and one of the tournament's organizers. "The team that has the best score, we give them a gift card."

"It's not going to make a mortgage payment," laughs Joel Gagnon, the CDI's vice-president.

Indeed, the prize for the winning team was a symbolic gesture, but that didn't discourage people from attending. Gagnon and Lemoine believe the main draw is how much fun people have.

The Golf Classic is one of the town's annual summer fundraisers, and it's far from a stuffy occasion. Homemade



Mark Manness, Andrew Kaminsky, Kyle Barnett, Martin Préjet, and Dan Barnabe, winners of the Ste. Agathe Golf Classic.

JOEL GAGNON

T-shirts and a mangled trophy are part of the day's charms.

"Way back when we first got started, we went to Value Village and we got four ugly green jackets," Lemoine explains. "This year, [the

players] actually left with them!"

This year's Golf Classic hosted 89 golfers for the day-long tournament. The teams were bussed in to La Vérendrye Golf in La Broquerie, where they enjoyed

a non-competitive round of golf with friends and community members due. It was a very relaxed environment.

"I think everyone enjoyed themselves," says Lemoine. "[The] revenue that we make off the tournament, we

are donating it back to the community."

Since its inception, the Ste. Agathe CDI has raised \$109,000 for the community. This money has come from hosting events, but it also includes revenue from the

Riel Industrial Park and Parc Cartier.

"One of the main reasons that our tournaments are successful is because of our sponsors," adds Lemoine. "When we approach our businesses, they are sponsoring our Cheyenne Festival and our golf tournament."

Twenty-two business from the community and the surrounding areas made contributions this year, a testament to the town's strong roots of volunteerism. Approximately one hundred Ste. Agathe citizens have volunteered for the CDI in some way in the previous year.

The town has never been short on volunteers, with many having served in the community for years, and Gagnon says the philanthropic environment is something they hope to see continue as the population grows.

"We're just pretty darn nice guys and girls," says Gagnon.



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Christine Toews at Soul Family Fitness in Niverville.

CHRISTINE TOEWS

Soul Family Fitness: A Gym for the Whole Family

Crystal Isaak

Moms and dads, rejoice! On August 19, a new fitness centre opened in Niverville that caters to the whole family. Soul Family Fitness operates out of 9 Heritage Trail.

So what inspired the owners to open a new gym in town? Christine and Mike Toews pointed to the need for fitness classes that are accessible to the entire family, especially busy parents who sometimes find it hard to prioritize a healthy lifestyle amid the busyness of life.

"My goal for Soul Family Fitness is to make it a peaceful and serene environment... a place for people to come and realize their full potential at work, home, and gym," says Christine. "Being a mom, I get that it is not easy committing to a gym. We want to be with our kids, not take valuable time away from them. So that leaves going to the gym while they are asleep [in the] early mornings and late evenings."

She points out that

watching parents pursue a healthy lifestyle encourages children to be active as well. Because of this, the couple has taken care to design their centre to help the whole family stay active together. A play area is available to children who visit with their parents.

Christine says that she hopes to offer kid and pre-teen girl programs in the near future, as well as initiate playgroups to help families stay active throughout the cold winter season when they may otherwise tend to hibernate.

The upcoming kickboxing class, which begins September 10, is another example of the owners coming up with programs that service people of all ages. There will be class options for kids (ages seven and older) in addition to the teen/adult class. The class will run for a ten-class session.

Soul Family Fitness has a holistic approach to fitness, addressing both mental and physical health through their attention to fitness, sleep, stress, and diet. Christine

says that she recognizes that importance of balancing these factors to achieve true health.

"As a busy mom, I started years ago by attending fitness classes," she says. "I quickly realized that it was a great stress relief and mentally I felt a lot better."

As she pursued this lifestyle, she began teaching in New Bothwell and has since moved her teaching to Niverville. She will be leading fitness classes alongside trainers April Klippenstein and Montana Quiring.

The fitness centre has both an open gym option and a class membership option. Memberships range from unlimited classes to day passes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- www.facebook.com/Soul-Family-Fitness-1419062098243080
- soulfamilyfitness1@gmail.com

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- ☐ Yes, they should be allowed.
- ☐ No, they should not be allowed.

VOTING PLACE

A voting place will be open for voting on November 26, 2019 between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. at the Niverville Town Office, 329 Bronstone Drive, Niverville.

IDENTIFICATION MAY BE REQUIRED BEFORE BEING ALLOWED TO VOTE. A person may be required to produce one piece of government issued photo identification (for example - driver's license or passport) or at least two other documents that provide proof of identity.

Non-resident property owners are not entitled to vote in the plebiscite. Only Canadian citizens over the age of 18 who have lived in the community for at least 6 months before voting day are eligible to vote.

Advance Voting Opportunities will be announced at a later date.

Audrey Neufeld

Senior Election Official
Town of Niverville

Audrey.Neufeld@whereyoubelong.ca
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Arts & Entertainment



A Maze in Corn Launches the Sunflower Expo

By Fiona Robinson

A Maze in Corn near St. Adolphe has added a new activity to its roster, a roster which already includes the annual corn maze, zipline runs, and a snow maze that went down in the Guinness Book of World Records earlier this year as the largest snow maze in the world.

Since Saturday, August 17, the venue has been in the midst of hosting the Sunflower Expo, an opportunity for visitors to get up close and personal with more than 40 different varieties of sunflowers across eight acres of fields. The expo is expected to continue until mid-September, although the exact end will be dependent on Mother Nature's cooperation.

So who is the Sunflower Expo for?

"Anyone who loves sunflowers!" says Clint Masse, founder of A Maze in Corn. "We will have wine and craft beer available, so it's a great outing for a group of friends. Or bring the whole family and explore!"

Masse's entrepreneurial imagination was sparked by the sunflower craze last summer that saw so many Manitobans heading out into fields across the province—often without the farmers' permission.

"We know it is so tempting to get up close to such gorgeous flowers, but it really damages the farmers' crops," says Masse. "So we wanted to put on an event that would help protect local crops and

provide a unique experience for all those who love sunflowers! We've never actually grown sunflowers before, so this has been a learning experience for us. They are very prone to weeds, and we had a bit of a battle with some hungry grasshoppers at the start of the season. But it is all coming together. They're looking great!"

Masse says he was selective in the sunflowers he chose, ensuring that all shapes and sizes would be represented.

"Some are smaller, more decorative flowers while others, like the King Kong, can grow up to 15 feet tall," he says. "In addition to the variety, we also planted them over the span of a few weeks to ensure we'll have blooming sunflowers throughout the event.

Sunflowers only bloom once per season, so we've worked really hard to get the timing right!"

The event will offer amazing photo ops, and every visitor will also receive a free sunflower in order to bring home some of the magic. In addition to the photo ops, guests may choose a sunflower to cut and bring home. Additional bouquets will be available for purchase.

At a planned scavenger hunt, guests can try to find all 40 types of sunflowers.

Masse also sees the Sunflower Expo as an opportunity to support craft beer brands and feature live music from local artists, most of which will be featured on weekends.

"We're working with some great local brands to

put together this event," says Masse. "So far, we have local breweries such as Farmer, One Great City, Two Wolves Brewing, and Dead Horse Cider, as well as Fools and Horses serving iced coffee and iced tea. We're also thrilled to have local musicians coming out to provide entertainment."

Although the schedule may be subject to change, so far artists include Joshua Dyck, Prairie Wynd, The Webster Project, and DB and The Deadbeats Duo. The line-up of artists and beer tastings are available on the A Maze in Corn website and the event's Facebook page.

Throughout the expo, the hours will be 11:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. in August. Once September comes, the site will open from 5:00–9:00 p.m.

on weekdays, and from 11:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. on weekends. Beer and wine tickets can be pre-purchased either online or onsite.

Sunflower goers should also know they can buy an all-access pass that lets them enjoy both the corn maze and the Sunflower Expo. Ziplines, however, need to be booked separately, since those are guided tours. It should be added, though, that zipline participants will get amazing views of the sunflower fields from the top of the towers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- www.cornmaze.ca
- facebook.com/events/2321380371451127/
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Deadline for application: September 30. Pick up applications at NHC Administration Office and the Town Office.

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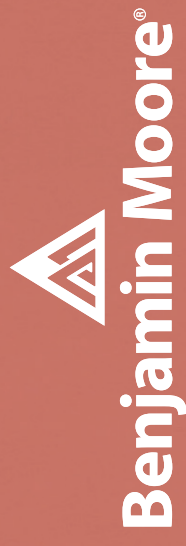
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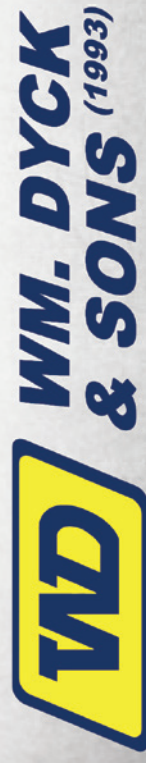
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SAT: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. **NEW EXTENDED HOURS**

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