

The Citizen

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LOCAL NEWS

Town of Niverville Assumes Ownership of Medical Clinic

■ Amid questions about the ongoing viability of Open Health Niverville, the clinic is now being operated directly by the town. The turnover took place March 2.

Details on Pages 3-4

LOCAL NEWS

Home Invasion Raises Questions of Safety

■ A violent home invasion in Niverville last month has some residents worried about the seeming rise of crime.

Details on Page 11

COMMENTARY

What Is the Business of Government?

■ With the Town of Niverville acquiring a medical clinic, we ask the question: is this even in the purview of local government?

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Niverville-Based Band Releases New Music

■ Plain as Ghosts has released a new five-track EP. Frontman Trevor Lux discusses the inspiration for the album.

Details on Page 18



Niverville to Host 2022 Manitoba Winter Games

➤ DETAILS ON PAGE 16

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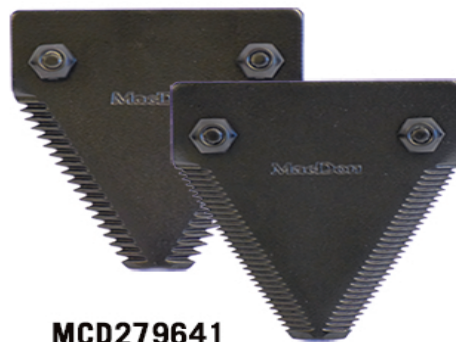
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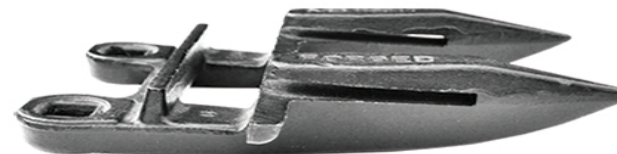
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Open Health business manager Kristen Fyfe, Niverville CAO Eric King, and Mayor Myron Dyck.

CARA DOWSE

Town of Niverville Assumes Ownership of Open Health

By Evan Braun
editor@nivervillecitizen.com

In a move to implement a health-care model unique to Manitoba, the Town of Niverville has assumed ownership of Open Health Niverville as of March 2. Open Health is the community's primary health clinic and has been owned and operated by Drs. Chris and Mairi Burnett for 15 years.

However, the clinic has been in crisis since earlier this year when it was announced that the unexpected illness of Dr. Mairi, who's been forced to discontinue her practice while she undergoes treatment, had rendered the business financially unsustainable.

One month ago, Niverville's town council hired Kathy McPhail, former CEO of Southern Health-Santé Sud, to write an independent report detailing the community's options.

"Kathy McPhail's report was transparent and clear, with no reservations, indicating that while healthcare services in Niverville currently face challenges, Open Health is viable and can be stabilized as well as sustained for the future," reads a press release from the Town of Niverville. "Council deeply appreciates the good and hopeful work Ms. McPhail has provided for our community and is proceeding on a path reflective

of the recommendations outlined in her report."

NEW MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
In order to manage Open Health, the town has formed a new entity, Niverville Healthcare Services Inc. (NHCSI). Council is in the process now of appointing board members. Once complete, this board will include an Open Health clinician, a member nominated by the Chamber of Commerce, a couple of town councillors, and one at-large member.

The town has hired a business manager, Kristen Fyfe, to will report directly to the board of NHCSI and the town's CAO.

"[Fyfe] will be responsible for ensuring efficient and effective client-centred care in a positive customer service environment and in a fiscally accountable manner during this transition period, ensuring a long-term future for Open Health," the press release continues. "The manager, along with the board and CAO, will be actively recruiting additional professionals, in addition to working with those professionals already a part of Open Health, to expand the offerings and hours in the coming months."

While the town assumes responsibility for the clinic, all of the current doctors and clinicians, including the Burnetts, will

continue to operate there, meaning patients will experience minimal disruption.

OPERATING COSTS
Mayor Dyck says that the clinic has been transferred to the town's control in exchange for \$1. However, there will be some significant costs associated with the lease and overhead.

Dyck explains that doctors in Manitoba work under a fee-for-service structure, where they bill the province for their services. Previously, Open Health had a 70/30 pay structure for its doctors, meaning that the doctors kept 70 percent of their pay and contributed the other 30 percent to the clinic's overhead.

"However, from a recruitment point of view, what we've been told is that 80/20 is where we need to be if we're going to attract doctors," Dyck says. "When doctors are coming out of school, they can go to community X and pay 20 percent overhead, or they can come to Niverville and pay 30. So they're not coming here. Why would they pay the extra 10 percent? So part of the model is we're going to an 80/20 split."

He acknowledges that the next six to nine months will be difficult, and the town has forecasted

(continued on page 4)



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(continued from page 3)

overhead costs in the range of \$75,000–\$90,000. In order to avoid new taxation, this money will come from the sale of the former municipal building at 86 Main Street, which sold for almost \$200,000 last year. That money had originally been allocated to go towards improvements at the new municipal building on Bronstone, but now it will go instead towards keeping Open Health running.

However, beyond this initial rough patch, Dyck says there is every reason to expect a bright future for the clinic.

“Within 12 months’ time, based on the forecasts we’ve [gotten from] Kathy McPhail and others, we expect to be flush or in a slightly profitable position,” he says. “So basically we’re looking at a one-year cost to transition.”

One reason to expect Open Health to become more profitable in the short-term is that a physician assistant who’s currently on maternity leave will be back at work in September.

“There are two new physician recruits anticipated for late summer,” McPhail writes in the report’s executive summary. “One physician currently on maternity leave will return to work during that timeline as well. It is anticipated that physician assistant opportunities are available.”

McPhail reemphasizes that in addition to the physicians, the clinic currently employs a range of other clinicians which are available to patients, including two nurse practitioners, a public health nurse, a dietician, mental health workers, and a chronic disease nurse specialist.

If all goes according to plan, by this time next year the clinic will be operating at its previous capacity. Mayor Dyck adds that they’ll be actively recruiting. Although there’s a shortage of full-time doctors right now, council would like to see that number climb to six or seven.

“We want to see this centre be profitable and build on the services that we know are vital to our community,” Dyck says. “We don’t just want to scrape by on the basics. But we have about a six-month rough patch, I’m not going to lie.”

FIRST OF ITS KIND

With NHCSI, the operating model for the clinic will be a social enterprise. Under this model, once the operation

becomes profitable all those dollars will be reinvested in the clinic. Mayor Dyck says that Open Health profits will never be used to cover other town expenses, such as clearing roads, building parks, etc. Rather, profits will go towards recruiting doctors and purchasing new equipment, such as an X-ray machine.

“So then we continue to expand the services,” Dyck says. “The role of council is to say, ‘Okay, now we have this. We want to continue to build it.’ And that was always Dr. Burnett’s dream.”

In the short term, the Town of Niverville will provide an initial grant of about \$30,000 to NHCSI to provide fiscal support during the clinic’s transition from a deficit-run centre to one that generates a profit.

This will be a unique healthcare model in the province of Manitoba, and very probably beyond our provincial borders as well.

That said, Eric King, Niverville’s CAO, reminds us that it’s not unique for a municipal council to support healthcare clinics. Although it usually doesn’t come in so direct a form.

“Communities spend lots of money on doctors of facilities, just in a variety of different ways,” says King. “But we have not seen anything exactly like the way we are proposing.”

A similar model exists in Winkler, where the local municipalities own the clinic’s building. However, those municipalities have no hand in the clinic’s operation.

“We’ve already received congratulatory emails from Southern Health-Santé Sud,” Dyck says. “Because without going this way, it was very likely that the health clinic in our community would be minimized, if not lost. Kathy McPhail’s report says that she talked to a lot of community members, and she told us directly. [She spoke to] members of the Chamber, too, because it’s the whole issue of business and government. [The feedback she got] was overwhelming in support that, yes, the town should be doing something.”

Another key part of the decision, Dyck says, was considering the substantial economic spinoff that occurs as a result of Open Health’s 6,500 patients, many of whom come from other communities.

“People are coming into

the community, they’re buying some meals here, they’re buying fuel here... who knows what else they’re doing. We know that from an economic development angle, we need to keep these people coming to our community.”

IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUITY

While this means that the Burnetts are having to give up ownership, Mayor Dyck wants to emphasize that they haven’t had to give up on their dream for exceptional primary healthcare in Niverville. He says council consulted extensively with the couple in coming to their decision.

“They’re still able to realize their dream,” Dyck says. “We want to honour that. And we want to make sure there’s continuity.”

This continuity comes in a couple of different forms. For patients, it means that they don’t have to change their doctors. Although there will be rough spots in the next couple of months, Dyck says patients don’t need to pull their files and go elsewhere.

There will also be continuity in terms of the board. Although members of council will change from time to time, as new councils are elected and members come to the end of their terms, the board will have stable representation from the clinicians and from the Chamber.

“Council wishes to thank and acknowledge the patience and support our community has shown during this disruptive and challenging time for Open Health,” concludes the press release from the Town of Niverville. “Particularly, our community owes a debt of gratitude to the Burnetts for the investment, commitment, and vision in birthing Open Health. All that they have done and will continue to do for the betterment of our town and region is inspiring. As a community, we continue to stand with and pray for their family as Dr. Mairi navigates her healthcare journey to full recovery.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact town council with questions: feedback@whereyoubelong.ca
- Read the full McPhail Report here: https://whereyoubelong.ca/images/latestnews/Final_Report_02-14-2020.pdf

CITIZEN POLL

Knowing what we know now, do you support the decision by the Town of Niverville to assume the ownership and ongoing operational control of Open Health?

- ☐ Yes. Healthcare is a critical service, and I’m glad the town is rolling up its sleeves to take responsibility for it.
- ☐ No. I’m concerned that the town is overseeing our healthcare now and doing it on an ongoing basis.
- ☐ Have another opinion? Share your thoughts in a comment online.



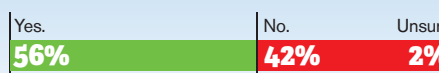
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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Would you be in favour of the Town of Niverville offering financial support to help keep the Open Health medical clinic open, were such an option officially proposed?



YOUR COMMENTS:

I am generally not in favour of the local government getting directly involved in a private business, but in this case, let's hear the report from Kathy McPhail, and make an informed decision after the facts are in. At this point, most of us do not know enough to make an informed decision. We do uphold Drs. Chris and Mairi in our prayers. They have been a terrific blessing to the community of Niverville and beyond, and we are grateful.
- Roger Armbruster

No. Southern Health should be helping and making it more enticing for new medical grads to come and work in Niverville with a return of service grant to help pay for their housing like what is done in other health regions in Manitoba.

The Province of Manitoba should purchase the clinic, making it a provincially run medical clinic. Their resources are much bigger than our town can provide and residents would not have to fear that once again their taxes will rise for something that is completely out of their control. The clinic has to be part of this community if they want to continue attracting newcomers. It has been one of the reasons they move here. Also, to not have a clinic is reckless considering the seniors that are in desperate need of assistance with in that location.

No way.

Why should the tax dollars of every citizen be going to support a private business? Corporate welfare is inherently wrong and should not be partaken of by any form of government.
-A.Q. Rogulzinski

The clinic could be purchased by another doctor, but Dr. Chris doesn't seem to want to sell. Please DO NOT inject town funds into a privately owned health clinic. There are other great doctors that would love the opportunity to take over a thriving community clinic!

I am already paying for healthcare with my taxes, I don't need to pay again through town taxes.

The word privately owned says it all. If I had a privately owned business and fell into hard times i would not expect any tax dollars to help me out.

Yes - but I feel there would need to be strings attached. I think that is always an option for something important for the community such as a health clinic. However, since it is a private, for profit business after all, that complicates things. I think it would be reasonable and fair to say that the town could consider treating it as a loan or should receive some stake in the business (similar to how federal government helped GM or bombardier). The other option obviously would be to turn the clinic public. While the value and need of a health clinic in town is very real and important - care should be taken in analyzing the implications of simply handing 'no stings' money to a for profit businesses. (regardless of what type of business it is)

Normally I would say the local government should not get involved. However, this clinic is already established and is part of the services in our town that we would like to keep. The local government involvement would be on a term basis, allowing the clinic to continue during this special circumstance.

Public funding yes, but only as a short-term solution. Not as a long term plan.

Without this clinic, people would require to find means of transport to outside communities which is a great inconvenience & may have side effects due to health abilities to move away from this wonderful community

They have done so much for our community. Surely we can help them at there time of need.

I vote yes up to the point where the clinic is able to operate effectively on its own. It would be very difficult for thousands of people to find new doctors and its important for those of us who suffer from chronic illness that we don't loose the ability to see a regular doctor.

I have to go to Winnipeg all the time to see specialists and it is so convenient for me to be able to see a doctor in town. It would prove to be a serious hardship for 6500 people to have to find a new doctor. And just look at the state of WRHA right now. I don't want my primary care provider in WRHA. I love the doctors Burnett and I would personally donate money to keep this clinic open.

I find that there needs to be distiction between this being a health clinic/doctors office vs. a private business. While the need for this exists in town, does that justify the town financing a private business that ultimately seeks to profit? If that is the course of action decided upon, the town should require some level of return or perhaps treat it like a loan. This clinic is already established and may be easier to 'save' as opposed to starting from scratch, however, simply doing a "bailout" does not seem like the most suitable option in this scenario.

RITCHOT REGIONAL CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Chamber News



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Updates from the Ritchot Chamber

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Date: March 28th - 29th

Time: 10am - 4pm

Location: TC Energy Centre, Ile Des Chenes, MB

Admission: Adult \$5, Free under 18

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IN BRIEF

Campground Proposal Voted Down

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

At a meeting of Ritchot's council on February 19, a lengthy discussion took place about whether to approve a landowner's application to build a campground and RV park at 2188 Lavallee Road, a property on the east side of Grande Pointe.

The application was eventually denied by a vote of 4-1. The only vote in favour of the proposal came from Mayor Chris Ewen.

This was not the first time the applicant, Andy Feng, had proposed a commercial business on this property, which is otherwise zoned as agricultural land.

After a presentation by Feng that had some members of council questioning the feasibility of his business plan, a series of neighbours came forward to speak. One by one, each voiced their strong objections to the proposal.

Their objections included concerns over noise and traffic, inadequate infrastructure in the area, and the potential for the flooding of nearby properties should the low-lying land at 2188 Lavallee be filled.

Some councillors cited Feng's obviously poor relations with his neighbours as a key reason to deny the proposal.

Bistro 290 Takes on New Ownership

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Shereen Rashwan may be new to business ownership, but what she lacks in restaurant management experience she makes up for in zeal and creativity. On March 10, Rashwan is excited to become the new face of Bistro 290 in Niverville.

"My dream was actually to own a food truck," Rashwan says. "I've always loved small cafes, too, and I just thought that would be so much fun [to own]."

While Rashwan grew up in the Niverville area, studies, work, and travel have taken her around the world. Immediately out of high school, she left for London, Ontario to get a degree in business. This eventually landed her a job in San Francisco.

But home is where the heart is, so she quit her job with the intention of spending a year travelling the world, followed by a return to Manitoba to seek new employment.

Six months into her travels, while staying at a hotel in Lisbon, Portugal, Rashwan got word about the imminent sale of Bistro 290 and made the quick decision to return home early and get started on a whole new adventure.

Upon takeover, Rashwan says the bistro will undergo a few minor changes to the interior and then reopen for business as usual on March 16. During the opening week, customers can expect a different savoury special every day.

There will be some menu changes, she says, but many of people's favourite items will remain a fixture.

"I've been trying the different menu items every time I go in, and everything I've tried I've really loved," says Rashwan. "So I don't think that there's any need to take



Shereen Rashwan is about to take over ownership of Bistro 290 in Niverville.

© BRENDA SAWATZKY

[items off the menu]."

Most of the staff will be staying on as well, including the restaurant's head cook.

"A lot of the people around town know her for her soups," Rashwan says. "She's amazing and I'm so excited that she's staying on."

Still, Rashwan has big plans for personalizing the bistro's menu by adding keto and vegetarian selections. As a health-conscious person herself, she hopes to offer more made-from-scratch options, such as salad dressings, perogies, and desserts.

"Something that I've taken advantage of a lot while I was travelling was going to the small bistros," Rashwan says. "I ate out every day, twice a day pretty much for six months, and that was part of my research... I want to incorporate a lot of the things that I liked."

Some of the new menu items foodies can expect are the brie and berry sandwich as well as a buffalo chicken wrap. Breakfasts will include quiche, a salmon and cream cheese bagel, as well

as everyone's favourite: eggs benedict.

New to the Bistro 290 dining experience will be an assortment of appetizers for sharing with friends, including bean dip and garlic shrimp, to name a few.

But new menu items aren't the only thing being launched on March 16. Diners can also expect longer hours, which will stretch to 9:00 p.m. every evening from Monday to Saturday. Sunday hours are yet to be determined.

With that in mind, Rashwan will add courses beyond just the soup and sandwich fare the restaurant has become known for. Entrees will include a quinoa bowl with falafel, pulled pork sandwich, perogies with cream gravy, and chicken fettuccini alfredo.

"I'm encouraging everyone that if you ever try some [menu item] somewhere and think we should have this, let me know," Rashwan says. "I can very easily decide that next week that's going to be the special and make sure that we have all the ingredients for it. I never want it to get boring

[at Bistro 290]."

For the adults, a full selection of beers, wines, and cocktails will round out the full dining experience. The kids will be able to enjoy a unique kids menu plus colouring pages and toys to keep them busy while they wait for dinner.

Rashwan has hopes that the bistro will be a place for more than just eating out. In the near future, she expects to begin hosting events such as paint nights, sushi-making classes, a stand-up comedy night, or just about anything that might fill the entertainment gaps in the community.

"It's definitely going to become a place where people won't feel rushed," Rashwan says. "I want it to be more than just a place where you stop and eat quickly. [I envision it as a place where] students can come and study and grab a coffee late at night. It's definitely going to be a homey place."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Watch for updates on Bistro 290's Facebook page and on Instagram.

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Ritchot Council Approves Two-Family Homes for Tourond Creek

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

At a council meeting on Wednesday, February 19, Ritchot's council approved an application by the developers of Tourond Creek to rezone a section of lots from single-family homes to two-family dwellings.

This decision followed an earlier council decision in November to deny a similar plan by the developer, the St. Adolphe Land Corp.

Representing the developer was Brandon Powell, who told council that his group listened to the concerns expressed by residents in November and went back to the drawing board to come up with a revised plan that takes their feedback into account.

Earlier, the developer had sought to convert 37 single-family lots into 74 two-family units. The revised plan calls for reduced density, lowering the number of units to 66. He explained that the new lots are larger, the front yards will be more expansive, and that the side yard setback will be upped from a minimum of four feet to five feet. The average lot will be about 400 square feet larger.

Powell listed the main concerns that have been addressed this time around.

"Some of the concerns that came up were, 'We don't want to see more multifamily. We moved to St. Adolphe to get away from multifamily in the city,'" Powell said. "To that, we'd like to say that we understand that people have their preferences. However, the most successful communities are those that offer places for people to live, work, and play no matter their age, stage, or wage."

Another common refrain from those who opposed the addition of multifamily lots in the subdivision is that the developer has tried too many times to change the plan. In addition to the failed multifamily proposal in November, the St. Adolphe Land Corp succeeded last year in rezoning a plot of land in front of the development from commercial to residential.

"It's not uncommon for developers in large communities to alter their development plans to better align



The Tourond Creek development in St. Adolphe.

JOEY VILLANUEVA

with market needs," Powell said. "The Planning Act allows developers and landowners to amend municipal planning policy and regulatory documents, subject to council approval, to better meet the property needs. Without this flexibility, developers are vulnerable to risk, which could not only lead to adverse outcomes for the development but also to the community."

Some residents have questioned whether the quality of the homes would be high enough to fit in with the rest of the development. Powell unveiled a couple of examples of two-family home builds which he says are representative of what the Tourond Creek units will look like once completed. One of those homes, containing two three-bedroom 1,500-square-foot units, won its category at the Parade of Homes for two years running.

He says the proposed location will create an effective transition area between the higher-density homes to the west and the lower-density homes to the east and south.

"The developer is not creating a precedent here when it comes to two-family dwellings in the RM," Powell added. "There are already two-family development design concepts in Ste. Agathe, and the absorption of these housing types in Ste. Agathe demonstrates that the concept of two-family homes works. It's a proof of concept. The RM has also approved two-family dwellings as a compatible use adjacent to single-family homes, which is what we're proposing here."

Powell concluded his presentation by reminding council that, according to The Planning Act,

council must approve or reject an application on the basis of two main requirements: compatibility and conformance.

"This two-family home concept would be surrounding by existing residential lands contained within Tourond Creek," he said, addressing the issue of the compatibility between single-family and two-family homes in the development. "Increasing the density from single-family to two-family residential homes is an appropriate change of use amongst other adjacent residential land uses. It will have no detrimental effects to health or welfare on adjacent properties. [And regarding] conformance, the proposal is consistent with the McDonald-Ritchot development plan, the St. Adolphe East Dike Secondary Plan, and is in general conformance with the zoning bylaw... In closing, I feel that the developers have made a reasonable attempt here to balance the developers' needs with council and community needs."

THE OPPOSITION SPEAKS

More than a dozen St. Adolphe residents made their presence known, and six of them proceeded to address council with their objections to the proposal.

"I just purchased a lot in Tourond Creek two years ago and this will impact me," said one resident.

Another questioned issues of density. Despite the concessions mentioned during Powell's presentation, this resident warned about too-small lots and potential parking problems.

"You know, the plan looked so

great, the one we looked at initially," they said. "I understand [the developer] wants more houses, but I just think it looks so congested, the whole idea of it... I don't see anyone wanting to buy a home of that square footage and have such a small yard. It just doesn't seem right to me."

A third resident, who moved to town last fall, said, "We were very exciting about coming out to St. Adolphe. We were looking for something that gave us more space, a larger, more substantial lot being the main purpose we moved out here... I don't understand how the appeal of multifamily dwellings will draw people in. I don't know what age groups we're drawing in. I just don't know. Because for ourselves, in our 20s buying our first home, we're not looking for duplexes."

This resident also expressed concerns about the possibility that the new units will be rented out, creating a higher rate of turnover with residents who may not take care of their lots the same as if they owned them.

"One of my concerns with this developer is that the community was designed initially looking grandiose, with beautiful conceptual drawings," said a fourth resident. "A more upscale development is what we were sold on."

Still another resident said these two-family homes would serve as an eyesore when people first drive into Tourond Creek.

In addition to the residents who showed up to voice concern, another nine letters of objection were received by council. On the other hand, several letters of support

were also received, written by local builders.

After the various people had their chance to speak, Councillor Janine Boulanger asked Powell a pointed question: "What drove you to this, the duplexes? What was the main driver?"

"We want to find some way to create some momentum for Tourond Creek," Powell replied. "We're not seeing the demand that we want to see for single-family housing... [And we want to] allow for lower price points, so that either first-time buyers or people downsizing will have an affordable option to look at other than a single-family home. Generally speaking, we believe that communities that offer [a larger] range of housing will be more successful communities."

Powell added that this proposal has generated quite a bit of excitement from local builders, with a number of them having reached out to say they would like to participate in this next phase of development.

"We were at 74 lots last time, and now we're at 66," said Councillor Curtis Claydon in summation. "[This] may not seem like a huge difference, but... it's roughly about \$300,000 a home. That's a concession of about \$2.5 million dollars in home sales that's off the table [for the developer]. So I think we need to respect that. I like hearing from the residents in the area. They're living right there. And I know there's talk about some potential maybe of devaluing their homes or property. But I think what would be the biggest shame is if there's a lack of growth in that area and it becomes stagnant. I think that's where you'd see the biggest amount of devaluation to someone's residence."

Claydon then proposed that council could work with the developer to add further mitigations to the development agreement, such as requiring a six-foot privacy fence between the single-family and two-family lots. He also contemplated asking the developer to complete some of the landscaping in the area.

When it came time for the vote, council voted unanimously in favour of the developer's proposal.

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This month, students have been taking up resident in the school's new band room.

BY BRENDA SAWATZKY

Final Phase of Niverville High School Complete

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

As of February 3, students and staff of Niverville High School have been making full use of the final phase of their school, which includes a drama room, a band room, and a bright, airy corridor to get there.

In keeping with the concept used throughout the rest of the school, the new band room has almost a full wall of floor-to-ceiling windows which floods the space with natural light and gives visitors a feeling of connection to the outdoors.

The room is equipped with lockers for instrument storage and a number of smaller rooms for private individual instruction or small group practice sessions.

The walls and ceiling are padded with acoustic panels, creating an ideal setting for exceptional sound quality.

"The band teacher has noticed that the sound in here is much different than in her

previous space at the middle school," says Principal Kimberly Funk.

Funk adds that conversations are now taking place regarding band instruction for the two schools.

Hanover School Division will have to decide whether the current instructor, Ms. Jennifer Horne, will continue to be appointed to both the high school and middle school, or if a second band teacher will be required.

The drama room is already in use by the school's two drama classes, one consisting of Grade Nine students and another of students from Grades Ten through Twelve.

"They were holding drama in just a regular classroom for the first semester and so this gives us a lot more space," Funk says.

By design, the drama room can be significantly increased in size by opening a removable wall, which joins it to the multipurpose space next door. This allows the drama

room to become the stage and backstage area, with the large multipurpose space serving as seating for approximately 200 audience members.

The drama room is also equipped with lockers and a large storage room for sets, props, and costumes.

According to Funk, the drama program is gaining in popularity among students and she anticipates expanding it in the coming years to meet demand.

Teacher Janelle Malech instructs the drama curriculum. Classes are part of regular class time and students can gain credits from the program.

By the end of March, this year's drama students hope to pull together their first event in this venue.

"It's not a large drama production, but just a variety night to get a feel for the space and see what it feels like to set up staging... and get a sense of what the venue can actually do," says Funk.



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Fundraiser Supports Victims of Fine Haus

By Brenda Sawatzky
& Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

On Saturday, February 29, a man from Niverville hosted a fundraiser to help the victims of Fine Haus Builders, a disgraced home construction company whose customers are dubbing them a scam. The company abruptly shuttered operations this fall, leaving many homebuyers and tradespeople out thousands of dollars.

Barry Piasta was so moved by stories of these victims that he decided to turn empathy into action. The Leap Day event, featuring renowned comedian Matt Falk, took place at the Ste. Agathe Community Hall.

"Matt Falk was on fire," says Piasta. "He had everyone laughing, with audience members from 10 to 60 years of age. We also had four families that had been affected directly by Fine Haus. They were from Niverville, La Salle, and Kleeferd."

Along with the family-friendly stand-up comedy show, attendees were treated to a variety of games and auctions. Pizza and drinks were also provided for \$5.

Ultimately, Piasta says that although the event did succeed in demonstrating to the families impacted by Fine Haus that the community cares and wants to help, the turnout was disappointingly low. He says that members of the local municipal councils were conspicuous in their absence, despite many having received invitations.

Piasta had encouraged adults to bring a little extra cash to participate in games, the proceeds of which went towards the victims fund. There was also a looney auction, which is a variation on a coin toss, with a hint of musical chairs.

The evening also included unique twists on games like Simon Says and a chance to put on one's detective cap on and be the first to solve a mystery.

Forty-five large pizzas were donated by some of Niverville's finest pizza restaurants. Piasta also received cash donations to cover



Local comedian Matt Falk performed at the fundraiser.

■ MATT FALK

other expenses, and a variety of locals offered to whip up some delectable pies for the auction.

A notable highlight was the bidding war that erupted over a particularly delicious caramel apple. The winning bid came in at \$50.

"We had lots of leftover pizza and sold many whole pizzas at the end of the night," Piasta says. "I had the opportunity to speak with everyone who attended, to listen to how they felt and how they wanted to show that they cared."

Piasta adds that several business owners attended who offered free help and to stay in contact with the victimized families. These businesses include professionals like interior designers and plumbers.

DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS

When Piasta first began soliciting donations for the event, he was overwhelmed by the immediate response from the business community. Everything from signage to tickets, from the hall rental to auction items, were graciously provided for.

As well, Falk provided his half-hour stage show at no cost.

"So many have told me they want to help and that they feel for those hurt by Fine Haus," Piasta says. "It's those who donate time, items, and skills that make the fundraiser. It's the people who attend that make the fundraiser. They do all the important stuff. I just throw out the marbles and hope they land in the right spot."

In the end, Piasta points out that his goal was not to attempt to recoup all the losses experienced

by the many victims, but rather to provide a community gift to demonstrate the acts of kindness that small towns are known for.

"No matter the outcome of the event, I will continue to work on helping our community heal from this incident and organize groups in our community who can help [the victims] through their skills, labour, and connections," he says.

FINE HAUS VICTIMS MOVE ON

The Kaminskis were just one of the many families forced to count their losses and move on after realizing their new home build would never happen. Thankfully, they're enjoying the purchase of another home in Niverville and trying to put the nightmare of the last six months behind them.

"We'll survive and move on," says Chris Kaminski. "I'll use more due diligence in the future, but what more can you really do?"

Kaminski and his wife began house-hunting in Niverville several years ago. They wanted a rural home close to plenty of amenities for their family of four. The right opportunity seemed to present itself last summer when they saw an ad by Fine Haus, a company taking orders for new builds on Briarfield Court in Fifth Avenue Estates.

The price was good, the salesman was friendly and accommodating, and things just fell into place. Within a month of putting down a deposit for the lot, the Kaminskis sold their home in Ste. Agathe and squeezed into a 900-square-foot rental with their two children and two dogs to wait for the home to

be ready. It was promised to be move-in ready by late October.

"We had seen other houses [on that street] already going up and they seemed to be going fairly quick," says Kaminski. "We were sidetracked with selling and moving into a condo, so it wasn't until about a month after moving that [we realized] still nothing had started [on our home]."

This is a similar story to others who claim to have experienced the same. Thousands of dollars in deposits were collected, but they say the lots remained as empty and barren as Fine Haus's promises.

Realizing something was amiss, Kaminski began to reach out to representatives of Fine Haus, but his every attempt at conversation was met with excuses or complete silence.

Eventually he got through to Fine Haus's top brass, Jason Cianflone.

"I couldn't even go down to see [Cianflone] in an office somewhere, because he was in Texas," Kaminski says. "He called me back from a freeway in Texas somewhere as he's cruising down the highway... [You could tell] I wasn't a top priority for him."

He describes the next couple of months as a rollercoaster of emotion and stress, trying to get answers and feeling stuck in a building contract with no legal recourse.

Finally, two months after the Kaminskis should have taken possession of their new home, they were officially released from the contract.

By January, the couple began negotiating on the purchase of another home in Niverville, a home which they assumed ownership of this month. As for the Fine Haus fiasco, they're just glad to put it all behind them. Kaminski says he's not holding his breath that they'll ever see their \$15,000 deposit again.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Read more about the Fine Haus story: <https://nivervillecitizen.com/news/local/families-and-contractors-lose-thousands-to-fine-haus-builders>

IN BRIEF

Niverville Proposes New Construction Standard

By Sara Beth Dacombe

Niverville's engineer-in-training, Daniel Wiebe, has proposed updates to the standards for the design and construction of public works.

"The goal is we update it in spring and fall," said Wiebe. "If we update in spring, it's ready for construction season. If we update in fall, it's ready for any [winter] planning."

Wiebe's report includes suggestions that will bring Niverville's standards in line with Winnipeg's. The updates focus on changes that are more environmentally friendly while also allowing for flexibility and compliance on the part of the contractors.

These updates were already used for the recent Arena Road project.

Some standards that are due for an update include water main depth, which will be changed from eight feet to nine feet due to frost risk. Changes to the location of town catch basins will disallow catch basins from being installed under roadways.

"Storm water retention is now being addressed," said Wiebe. "For example, the lakes in the new developments serve as storm water retention and any new developments need to show their plans for water retention moving forward."

Before tabling the resolution, various councillors expressed the desire for more information on some of the updates, and changes to a few others, including adding a minimum requirement that one tree be planted per residential lot.

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Officials gather to mark the opening of Muriel Taylor Hall.

SYLVIA ST. CYR

Grand Opening of New Residence at Providence College

By Sylvia St. Cyr

In 2017, Providence University College in Otterburne endured a devastating loss when their men's dormitory, Bergen Hall, was destroyed by fire. On February 10, 2020, they hosted the grand opening of its state-of-the-art replacement, Muriel Taylor Hall.

Many people from south-eastern Manitoba gathered to celebrate the grand opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, speeches, tours of the building, plus afternoon snacks and coffee. Two MLAs were in attendance, including Andrew Smith (representing Lagimodière in south Winnipeg) and Dennis Smook (representing La Vérendrye). The ceremony ended with a prayer of blessing from the President of Providence College, David Johnson.

While Bergen Hall was used solely as a men's dorm, this new space is multifunctional. The main floor contains a large open-concept space for students to hang out, a space that includes a stone fireplace, a contemporary kitchen accessible to all, and couches around tables, flatscreen TVs, and a ping pong table. This area is called The Hub.

Also included on the main floor is a classroom which will bring more students to the new space. Nine different classes have been taught here

since the building became fully functional on January 13. Next to this classroom is a room that hosts weekly Friday chapels.

The second and third floors are home to women's dorm rooms, which at capacity can accommodate up to 60 women. While the rooms themselves are quite small, holding one to two women each, the common areas in the dorm are meant to bring students out to share community life.

Part of the design are floor-to-ceiling windows that allow for plenty of natural light. There are also two apartments on the main floor, one for the resident director and the other for another faculty member. The close proximity between these apartments and the dormitories will allow for stronger integration and connection between staff and students.

While the interior is in full use, the exterior will be finished by the summer.

Twelve months passed from the time they put the first shovel in the ground until students moved in, including one month of lost construction due to bad weather. The contractors, local company Three Way Builders, managed to stick to the timeline even with weather setbacks.

The preparations to plan and design Muriel Taylor Hall account for a much longer

period of time, and it began immediately following the fire in 2017. The design phase lasted two years, until the team was satisfied with the end result and their vision for the space.

As part of the process, the planners took a trip to see buildings at Baylor University, a Christian school in Waco, Texas, from which to draw inspiration.

The new building cost \$7.5 million, which was partially paid for by 1,400 donors.

"We wouldn't be here without our faithful alumni supporting us," said Cody Quiring, Vice President of External Relations, at the grand opening.

The new hall was named after the late Biblical Studies professor Muriel D. Taylor, the longest-serving female professor in Providence's history. She taught for more than 55 years before she passed away in 1972.

Of the 500 students who attend Providence University College each year, 60 percent live in the dorms or student housing, while only 40 percent commute. The international population of Providence remains at roughly 20 percent.

President Johnson welcomes the public, alumni, and anyone interested in attending Providence in the future to come and explore this new space and all it has to offer.

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Niverville Home Invasion Raises Questions About Community Safety

By Sara Beth Dacombe

On Monday, February 10, a Niverville woman endured a horrific home invasion when two men entered her home and briefly grabbed her. The event triggered many reactions in the community—and it has raised questions about the safety of this community.

Now she will need time to recover mentally—and she is asking the community to consider taking further action.

The home invasion, which is still under investigation by the RCMP, happened when she was at home with her two sons around 9:50 p.m.

"I was doing homework with my son and he went out to the garage and he could hear the lock jiggling," she says. "He ran back in and told me he'd seen two guys at the window. It was instinct, so I just went back to the garage and the door was half-open. And they grabbed me. I didn't even have time to think. There were two guys with light grey ski masks. One guy had what I know was a machete. It was huge. They had my arm and my shoulder in a lock."

The woman, who worked as a nurse for 25 years, says she dug into her attacker with her long nails and screamed.

"As a nurse, you take non-violent crisis intervention, but when it's happening to you, I was just praying and started screaming," she says. "My son realized I didn't come back right away and heard me screaming, so he yelled for his older brother. My older son is a big boy, and between the two of them they started yelling at the intruders and they scared them off."

When the police arrived, they immediately began a search of the



After dark, residents feel that crime is on the rise in Niverville.

EVAN BRAUN

area. Police dogs picked up a scent and followed it to a point, but they eventually lost it—an indication that the intruders likely got into a car.

She adds that someone in the neighbourhood saw two men getting into a car, and that the car may have been white.

"The RCMP's response time was amazing," she says, estimating that it took about ten minutes for police to arrive. "You'd never get that response time in the city and our investigator has been amazing. 911 stayed on the phone with us the entire time and they were amazing."

NOT FEELING SAFE

The woman moved to Niverville with her two sons approximately two years ago after a divorce. She says crime has been a notable issue in the community in that timeframe, and her vehicle has previously been broken into.

"I moved here after my divorce to feel safe and I certainly don't," she says.

The ordeal has caused her to reflect on the community at large and what it's been like moving from

the city to a small town.

"The people here hold very big stigmas. If you're in a certain group that's already established, people already have made their friends. So it's hard to make friends, especially if you're different."

She describes the reactions of her friends and local professionals as being concerned and supportive, but she also sees a problem with the level of community gossip that goes on.

She says she now struggles with the ability to feel safe. "It's a violation. Until it happens to you, you don't know how it feels to not feel safe. It changes you and gives you OCD to check the house and check the house. I remember their piercing eyes, the man's eyes. When I close my eyes, that's what I can see, and so I'm not sleeping. I keep my blinds open in winter so that they don't have frozen build-up of moisture with the cold weather. I have them closed now."

She has also taken other steps to help her feel safer. She has a security system, although she's been told it's too difficult to install cameras when it's cold. She also owns three dogs...

but none of them barked or came to her rescue when the attack occurred. Inside she uses LED nightlights. She's gotten new locks, too, and she's ordered a personal alarm that rings at 140 decibels.

"We need an RCMP presence here full-time, not just in St. Pierre. People are feeling violated and people can't defend themselves," she says. "Online, people may be watching and reading, knowing when you are going out. Don't put it on Facebook when you're not at home."

CITIZENS ON PATROL

The woman adds that she wishes more people would participate in community safety programs, such as the local Citizens on Patrol Program (COPP). The Niverville COPP began patrolling in July 2019 and currently has 12 trained volunteers who each patrol once a month. The group's objective is to be a visible, active presence in the community to deter criminals.

"While we do not engage in situations, we carefully evaluate and monitor things and can be a very useful tool in helping RCMP locate

criminals," says Lindsay Unrau, coordinator for the Niverville COPP. "We also host the Niverville COPP Facebook group. Here we keep residents in the loop about criminal activity happening in our neighbourhood which they should be on the lookout for."

In Unrau's opinion, crime is on the rise in Niverville.

"Ten years ago, the most prevalent types of crime generally fell under vehicle vandalism. Within the last five years we have seen somewhat of a shift in violence," Unrau says. "We recognize that it is of the utmost importance that we grow our COPP team to better monitor our neighbourhood. We really need more help from our community to make this happen."

To attract more volunteers, the COPP held a recruitment event in the wake of the attack.

"We called an emergency recruitment night based on the criminal activity," said Unrau. "A home invasion, and thefts have been an almost everyday occurrence of the last week. The Niverville COPP plans to be proactive."

Even though the local COPP is putting in more effort to recruit volunteers, the home invasion victim sees some challenges ahead for the program.

"I know a lot of places are doing it, even communities in the city, because people don't feel safe. I don't know how effective COPP is, but I think it's a very good thing," says the woman. "But a lot of people don't have a lot of time to volunteer. Until you're the victim, you don't think about it. From what I understand, they need more volunteers."

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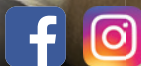
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Wheels of Hope Transportation Program Returns to Region

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

While there's been some confusion over the years as to the continuation of the Wheels of Hope service to this area, Niverville Service to Seniors coordinator Damien Gagne is pleased to say the program has been reinstated to support local cancer patients.

The Canadian Cancer Society program is one of the largest volunteer-run programs in North America, providing transportation to medical appointments for patients since the 1950s.

"It's a huge godsend for people that are already sick and don't need that [added] stress [offinding rides]," Gagne says.

Those who have been in these shoes understand the challenge of finding friends or family who can be available to drive them to appointments.

"[Wheels of Hope] picks you up and they'll drop you off at your appointments and all you have to do is pay \$100 per year,"

says Gagne.

According to the Cancer Society's website, compassionate assistance is also available for those who find the fee difficult to manage.

Gagne discovered Wheels of Hope while looking for cost-effective ways for one of his senior clients to get to her cancer appointments. While he runs a ride program through Service to Seniors, at \$25-\$35 per ride to Winnipeg or Steinbach, it would have meant spending thousands of dollars for this person.

However, a call to the Canadian Cancer Society produced an unwelcome answer: the program no longer provided direct pickups in Niverville and the surrounding area.

Upon hearing the news, Gagne says several of his clients and friends began making their own calls, requesting the return of the program.

Within a short time, he received an email from Katharine Yurkiw, Prairies Division Manager for Practical Services for Wheels of Hope.

According to Yurkiw, an executive team performed a review of the situation.

"We understand how important it is to ensure our program does not prevent those who need it the most," Yurkiw told Gagne. "The decision has been made to allow the volunteer drivers to continue picking up clients in the areas surrounding Steinbach to ensure we deliver them to attend the Cancer Treatment Centre in Winnipeg."

The Citizen also contacted Yurkiw for answers as to why the program had been cut to this area in the first place. Yurkiw says it had never been cut and she is unaware how information of that nature got out in the first place.

Whatever the situation, Gagne is glad that the service is once again available to his client dealing with cancer.

"I want to say how grateful I am to the Canadian Cancer Society for bringing back Wheels of Hope to our community," Gagne says.

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New signs are popping up



Over the next several weeks you will be seeing new door or window decals showing up at member businesses of the Niverville Chamber of Commerce. Above (left) chamber director Nick Bergmann and RuffMutts owner Guy Britton; (centre) director Nick Bergmann and Rob Manchulenko, vice-president, operations for the Niverville Heritage Centre; (right) John Magri, general manager of Wm Dyck & Sons and president of the Niverville chamber.

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It goes without saying that Niverville's population is growing quickly. But what about business?

Guest speaker Mark Baxter, principal of Outlook Market Research and Consulting, will give us a look at what other communities have done to grow and sustain their economic development. He'll touch on some of the factors that are key in community economic development.

Mark and his team have nearly a quarter century of experience in rural economic development. Outlook assists clients market their communities, organize their economic development efforts, attract new investment, and retain existing businesses.

When: 7:00 p.m. Thursday, March 19, 2020

Where: Niverville Heritage Centre West Ballroom.

Welcome to these new members

Wes Dowse is a local real estate professional specializing in residential sales whose areas of expertise include new built and resale homes; attached or detached condominiums; investment properties; and more.



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Commentary

Defining the Business of Government

By Greg Fehr

The role of municipal government has changed considerably over the years. Our local councils were originally assigned the sorts of responsibilities that required local flavour—such as ditches, roads, and drainage.

Yes, the flavour of local government is still local, close to the people and accountable to its ratepayers. But the menu, the scope of its responsibility, has expanded to the point that it's become almost unreadable.

Even though our councils are recognizing important gaps that need to be filled for the good of the people, they're getting involved in areas that were never intended to be their responsibility—both by choice and by necessity.

Today's blue-plate special in Niverville is the medical clinic.

I doubt anyone disagrees that it's important to have doctors in Niverville. The medical service provided to the town at large, and especially the seniors living at the Heritage Centre campus, is essential for the general well-being and economy of the community.

In fact, the very value of our homes depends on the availability of these services, since prospective buyers will ask about them.

Yes, it can certainly be agreed upon by all that the grocery store, our great schools, and our medical clinic are important.

But for some, this is the end of our common ground. Libertarians, anarchists, and Marxists can sign off here.

The rest of us may share another point of agreement: in a perfect world,



Open Health Niverville.

DUSTIN KRAHIN

our municipal government should not be running a medical centre. The Burnetts' dream would remain in their hands and continue to build towards the vision they had when they first came to Niverville.

And I'm sure the town was not in the market for another venture, another project to take up their time and energy.

But the world is an imperfect place, requiring us to change plans and make tough choices.

Is it the best option for the town to assume ownership of a medical clinic? Now, this is where we can delve into some really interesting discussion.

Medical services straddle two

worlds: there is the world of business, and then there is the world of social services. Much like with agriculture, a for-profit industry that also happens to feed the world, it would be inadequate and inappropriate to say the medical field is only one or the other. The for-profit side of medicine must be protected, not for the sake of the operators of medical clinics, but rather for the continuity of their services, which they provide for the greater good.

Given the current situation, however, it became clear that someone needed to step up... and quickly. We can debate the merits of other doctors taking over, but the reality is that the business could not move to a new

owner quickly enough. Without a new set of doctors ready to take over, it would seem that government was the logical choice.

If government decided to stay out of it, that would have meant the closure of the clinic... so governmental involvement became inevitable.

But the question remained: how deep should the government have dipped its toe? What should government involvement look like? Should it be long-term? Should the government merely offer a subsidy and otherwise remain hands-off?

Personally, I would rather see the model chosen by Niverville's council—full ownership—than a long-term commitment to a

taxpayer-funded subsidy, which is the sort of model that has been applied in other communities. Yes, there may be years when the clinic doesn't make money and the difference must be drawn from tax revenues, but this would have happened with a subsidy anyway.

If there's good management and a balanced board in place to operate the clinic, the operation may show a profit, allowing reinvestments in the clinic that strengthen and enhance its service offerings.

I'm not a gambler, but it seems pretty damned simple that the chance of a win is better than the guarantee of a loss.

But for how long should this go on? We just don't know. There may come a time when prudence dictates an exit, a turnover of responsibility back to the professionals in the clinic.

Or maybe not.

Will our young up-and-coming doctors seek the yoke of owning a medical clinic of their own or will they instead seek an environment in which they can do what they love with a greater degree of professional flexibility?

Despite all the unanswered (and unanswerable) questions, it's clear action was required and the local government, the kind of government that's closest to the people as well as the most capable, stepped up.

The stability and availability of Niverville's medical clinic isn't just about personal health, but also about the economic health of the community. As I keep the Burnetts in my thoughts and prayers, I will add the new board of this endeavour to my list as well.

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Sports & Recreation

Niverville to Host 2022 Manitoba Winter Games

By Sylvia St. Cyr

On February 25, Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck, standing alongside representatives from the Province of Manitoba, Sport Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro, announced that the town will host the 2022 Power Smart Manitoba Winter Games. The big announcement took place at Niverville High School.

The previous Winter Games were held in Thompson in 2018 and generated \$1.7 million in economic activity. Niverville's Games will take place February 26–March 5, 2022.

The Games are the largest ongoing multi-sport event in Manitoba. They typically bring together more than 3,000 people from across the province, including athletes, officials, staff, coaches, and volunteers.

"This is significant for our town, as we haven't done anything of this magnitude before," Mayor Dyck exclaimed in his opening remarks. "But we're ready!"

The Honourable Minister Cathy Cox, Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, also attended the announcement. "The games are an introduction on the competition circuit for many who go on to compete in the Canada Games, and even the Olympics," she said.

The ages of the athletes competing in the Games range from 13 to 17 years old. The events include archery, alpine ski, badminton, cross country ski, curling, figure skating, futsal (a type of



Caption.

CREDIT

indoor soccer), gymnastics, hockey, ringette, speed skating, and wrestling.

Of the 12 sports, ten will take place in Niverville. Other communities have agreed to help host events that the town is unable to accommodate. Alpine skiing will be held at Spring Hill Winter Sports Park just north of Winnipeg, and curling will be played at the Morris Curling Club.

Artel Farms has generously agreed to host the archery competition on their land. The cross country skiing event's destination has not yet been determined.

The indoor sports, including the ice rink sports, will be held at the Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC) currently being built beside the high school. The final financial boost from the federal and provincial governments of \$11 million for the CRRC has made this event possible. The new facility will be the focal

point of the Games.

The Town of Niverville hopes to have the construction of the CRRC finished by early 2021, leaving a year for it to become fully functional before the Games. The brand-new building is 99,000 square feet and will house a multiuse fieldhouse, a new arena, and a two-storey playground. The fieldhouse and arena will each have 500 seats to accommodate spectators.

"We would hope that an announcement like this would encourage our business community to maybe see an opportunity," Mayor Dyck says about the notion of building a hotel in Niverville. "Obviously it would have to happen soon to meet construction demands, but it would be exciting to see one go up."

Two employees of the Town of Niverville, Angela Janz and Chantel Todd, have been instrumental in winning the bid to host the Games.

Chantel Todd, Niverville's Recreation Programmer for the past five years, has worked with various sports groups to assist with program building, communications, and facility scheduling. Her strong interest in grant and proposal writing was an asset when it came to submitting a bid for the Games.

"We're super excited and the next step is getting volunteers on board and able to help," says Todd.

The Games will require between 800 and 1,000 volunteers from Niverville and the surrounding communities, which is almost double the amount needed to put on the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair.

Angela Janz, a Recreation Programmer for the past two years, has experience as an administrator for the Eastman Minor Hockey Association.

"This is an opportunity to display Niverville as an athletic centre of excellence and have all the sports of the Games be exposed to the amazing venues and hospitality in Niverville," Janz says.

Jeff Hnatiuk, President and CEO of Sport Manitoba, concluded the announcement by saying, "It's an exciting opportunity that allows participants to advance their skills, build on their accomplishments, and gain a truly rewarding experience that will create memories to last a lifetime. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to work with the people of Niverville to put on a fantastic Manitoba Games as part of the Manitoba 150 celebrations."

IN BRIEF

Red River Rage Mark End of Season

By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

As the season draws to a close, the Red River Rage are looking back at an exciting season full of ups and downs, highs and lows.

For one group, the season has already drawn to a close. The R4U program includes the youngest players of all, between the ages of four and eight, and they have now hung up their skates for the winter.

This year, 14 girls took the ice in R4U every Thursday, learning about passing and teamwork from their Ringette Manitoba instructors.

Four of the R4U girls will be moving up to the U10 level next year.

There are two teams at the U10 level—the A and B squads.

The U10A team was a strong group of girls who found themselves getting bumped up to the A2 level halfway through the season, where they faced some stiffer competition.

Coaches Matt Exner and Scott Wallace say the U10B team made great strides over the course of the season.

"At their first game, they were still learning basic rules and figuring out how to do line changes," say the coaches. "Now, at the end of the season, the girls have played strong and have been consistent against the other teams in their division with several close games. They haven't won many, but that hasn't stopped them from going

out there every game with smiles and determination. With these girls, every goal has been celebrated and every teammate has been cheered on. They epitomize what it means to be a team—and together they are only going to get better."

Another team that levelled up halfway through the season were the U12A girls.

"They faced huge competition," says Heather Wallace. "It was a steep learning curve, but it helped our team learn how to work hard. Needless to say, we didn't make it far in the playoffs, but we had a great season."

The U14 team merged with players from Steinbach this season, and the team gelled well together. Their season hasn't quite ended yet, as they're still in the midst of playoff action.

The U16 also combined with players from a neighbouring region—in this case, Lorette. This team is also still on the ice, and they have their sights set on the top prize.

"We have had another fantastic year," says Wallace. "How could you not with Coach Mel and Coach Bill as your coaches? At the moment we are battling it out in the Winnipeg Ringette League playoffs and hoping to win gold! After that, we will be on our way to Provincials, planning to make it all the way to the end."

The Rage program would like to extend a great big thanks to all of their coaches and managers for pulling off another successful season.

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FEBRUARY 29
to MARCH 22

Newly Acquired Jets Defender Settles into Team Role

By Dan Hoeppner

Prior to this year's trade deadlines, Winnipeg Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff boosted the team's defensive depth by acquiring veteran defender Dylan DeMelo in exchange for a third-round pick in the 2020 NHL entry draft.

The relatively low price made DeMelo a low-risk acquisition.

The London, Ontario native was drafted in the sixth round of the 2011 draft by the San Jose Sharks, where he was originally drafted as an offensive defenseman. At the time, it was said that DeMelo defended aggressively while displaying solid offensive skills—but he was on the small side and needed develop greater patience while on the attack.

Fast-forward nine years and DeMelo has registered only seven goals and 57 assists in 265 games.

He has changed his game, however, and morphed into a stay-at-home defender who prides himself on making smart breakout passes from the defensive zone.

And although he still only weighs 191 pounds, he brings a wealth of experience to the Jets' inexperienced defensive group.

Like most players, DeMelo wants to be a guy the Jets rely on during their playoff run, if a playoff run materializes, and he appears to be earning the trust of Jets head coach Paul Maurice.

This is evidenced by the fact that DeMelo is so far playing an average of 21 minutes and 33 seconds per game, four and a half minutes

longer than his career average.

He appears to be embracing his role as a strong defender and has been very effective at helping the team control play.

Since being acquired by the Jets, he ranks second on the team and twenty-ninth in the league among defenders at shot attempts percentage (SAT%). When he's on the ice, the Jets account for 56 percent of shot attempts.

Given these impressive short-term results, combined with the team's overall lack of depth on defense and the uncertainty around pending unrestricted free agent Dmitry Kulikov, there are plenty of reasons why the Jets should view DeMelo as more than just a short-term rental.

A Busy Month for the Clippers

By Evan Braun

With Clipper Ice Sports entering the final stretch of the season, the various teams are buzzing.

Some of the region's youngest players had an opportunity to shine a couple of weeks ago. On February 17, the Initiation White team entered a tournament in Landmark where they played three games.

"They worked hard and had fun," says coach Becky Cameron. "They even received a medal for their participation. These players have improved so much this season and they have been a joy to coach. Most of them will be moving up to Novice next year!"

For the Pee Wee B team, the coaches say the standings don't accurately reflect the sheer effort put in by each player. It's a welcome reminder that when it comes to sport, winning isn't everything.

"This season provided numerous challenges for the Pee Wee B team,

who faced some very skilled hockey teams this year," say the coaching staff of Jay Roberts, Rick Saurette, Garrett Hildebrandt, and John Loepky. "It would have been easy for our players to make excuses, complain, and quit, but their determination and willingness to compete for their teammates right to the last shift of each game was impressive and speaks to their individual character. We believe that hockey doesn't just build character—it reveals it—and not every victory shows up on the scoreboard."

Last weekend, the Novice B team participated in the Ultimate Hockey Championship Tournament in Souris, Manitoba. They played twice on Friday, first against Killarney and then against Swan Valley. Both of those games resulted in tough losses.

"The Clippers then played their third game of the tournament on Saturday against Portage, with a strong win and a final score of 21-4," says Ashley Chamberlain. "Ben King earned player of the game."

It was a special day for Ben. In addition to putting in a great athletic performance, he also celebrated his birthday—a rare occasion, since he has the distinction of being a bona fide leap year baby.

Aside from marking Ben's birthday, the whole team enjoyed spending time at the hotel pool and playing mini-sticks.

"The team then advanced into the playoffs and faced off against Carmen Sunday morning, Chamberlain adds. "We won, and it was a nail-biter, very close until near the end. The final score was 13-10."

With this hard-fought victory, the Novice Bs advanced to the final, at 2:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon.

Unfortunately, they lost by a score of 8-7.

"Every single Clipper played exceptionally well in all five games this weekend," says Chamberlain. "They are heading home today with a ton of great memories and their heads held high."

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First-time author Sarah Brandt.

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Local Author Sarah Brandt Launches First Book

By Sylvia St.Cyr

On March 15, Sarah Brandt of Niverville will be launching her first book, *Blossom like Eden*. Brandt entered her non-fiction manuscript last year in a women's publishing contest hosted by Winnipeg-based Christian publisher Word Alive Press. Her title was shortlisted and she started the publishing process shortly after.

"I wrote *Blossom like Eden* because I wanted the truth inside of it to be available to share with those I love, especially my daughters," Brandt says.

The book's theme is about finding the fullness of life, which follows the unveiling of

eight gifts found in the book of Ephesians.

"The title for the book is found inside a passage from Isaiah 51:3, where God shares that he will redeem Israel again one day, so that it's desert will blossom like Eden."

When she's not writing or volunteering at her church's kids club on Wednesday evenings, she's kept busy homeschooling her and her husband's three daughters.

Brandt recalls the six months in which it took her to write the manuscript.

"I had experienced a life transformation and a passion erupted," she explains. "As God led me into deeper vulnerability and freedom to share my story, the words

became a travelling tool for the reader to journey alongside me in my transformation."

As an accompaniment, Brandt has written a women's book study. She will be hosting the first study right after the launch.

Writing a book, she is quick to acknowledge, is no small feat—and she has some advice for other people working on their own books.

"With writing comes self-doubt and a lot of detailed steps, much redoing and reworking," Brandt says. "If you have a message or a passion to write, come to your computer every day and write. Don't let fear keep you from expressing what is your unique message to tell."

The official launch will take place at McNally Robinson Booksellers at the Grant Park mall on March 15 at 2:00 p.m.. Refreshments and music will be available, and the evening will include a short set of worship music from Joanna Froese, the co-founder of New City Church.

The book will be available for purchase wherever Christian books are sold.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To follow Sarah's journey as an author, check out her blog at www.meetmeinyourdeepplace.blogspot.com.

■ Women who are interested in the book study can join by email: joelandsarahbrandt@gmail.com

IN BRIEF



Plain as Ghosts, who are about to drop a new EP. JENN WYMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

New EP Release for Plain as Ghosts

By Sylvia St.Cyr

On February 21, Niverville-based rock band Plain as Ghosts released their brand-new five-track EP, *Sleepless Shadow*. Their self-produced debut album, *Rendering*, was released in 2016. This is the band's second album, and this time they worked with producer Jordan Voth.

The members of the band have worked through a few personal obstacles during the last couple years that they say pushed music to the background in terms of their priorities.

However, Plain as Ghosts is back on track to push their music with renewed vigour.

The songs on this new EP reflect the experiences they've been through, providing a personal connection to each song they play.

"I like to write music about experiences, situations that are close to me," says frontman Trevor Lux.

These experiences range from raising a family and office politics to handling family members who struggle with addiction.

Plain as Ghosts also features Adam Halstrom on bass guitar, Rodrigo Ramirez on drums, and Daniel Friesen on guitar.

The title track is a hauntingly mellow ballad with simple melodies and guitar,

while the other tracks punch with a more grunge rock feel. The 90s-influenced alternative rock is a flashback to music from bands such as Filter or Failure.

The band has made waves on campus radio, which in turn has earned them opening spots for groups like Pop Evil, Royal Tusk, and Tom Cochrane.

On top of playing during Niverville's Olde Tyme Country Fair, they've also entertained crowds at Steinbach's Summer in the City three years in a row.

With the release of this EP, the four-piece band will be playing a few festivals and fairs this upcoming summer. So far they've lined up a gig playing at Bankside Music Festival near Letellier on July 18. More dates will be announced shortly.

"After summer, I anticipate that we will tackle another remix album," Lux adds. "And the hope is to do an acoustic EP down the line."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To grab your own copy of *Sleepless Shadow*, check out iTunes, Google Play, Apple Music, or Spotify. The band will also be selling hard copies at each show. To keep updated on events, check out www.plainasghosts.com or follow them on Instagram or Facebook.

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or e-mail moni@roceastman.ca

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the matter of the Estate of **GOBENA J. BUTTA**, late of Niverville, Manitoba,
Deceased.

All Claims against the above estate, supported by Statutory Declaration must be sent to the attention of: Amanda Semenchuk, Estates Officer, at 155 Carlton St. Suite 500, Winnipeg MB, R3C 5R9 on or before the 15th day of April, 2020.

Dated at Winnipeg, Manitoba, this 19th day of February, 2020.

JANA TAYLOR

The Acting Public Guardian and Trustee of Manitoba
Administrator

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