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VOLUME 6 - ISSUE 4

APRIL 2020

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## LOCAL NEWS

### Tales from Quarantine

■ Stories help. Sharing our stories is an action we can take to bring us closer together during social distancing. At a time when we're forced to connect virtually or not at all, the authenticity of sharing our experiences helps build community. Read along as The Citizen presents these experiences.

Details on Pages 4-7

## LOCAL NEWS

### Introduction Kristen Fyfe of Open Health

■ Open Health in Niverville has a new business manager, Kristen Fyfe, and she is at the heart of the region's new healthcare reality.

Details on Page 10

## COMMENTARY

### How We're Responding to the Global Pandemic

■ Our lives have undergone eruptive change in the last few weeks. Our writers look at the various ways people are coping.

Details on Pages 14-15

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

### Need a Good Book?

■ With so many people staying home and looking for distractions, what better time is there to check out one of our region's many local authors?

Details on Pages 16-18



# Traffic Lights Coming to Fifth and Main

» DETAILS ON PAGE 3

EVAN BRAUN

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The intersection of Fifth Avenue and Main Street in Niverville has been a trouble spot for years.

EVAN BRAUN

# Traffic Lights Coming to Fifth and Main

By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The news broke on Thursday, March 19 that Niverville is about to take its next step towards eventual city status. It's official: a traffic light is going to be installed at the corner of Main Street and Fifth Avenue.

The traffic lights are scheduled to be installed sometime in late spring or early summer.

According to MLA Ron Schuler, Manitoba Infrastructure has been coordinating with the town on the placement of the signal poles and has purchased the majority of the equipment required for the project.

"Our goal is to complete this project by late spring/early summer, but this is contingent on material delivery," Schuler wrote in a letter to the town. "We are still waiting for a few traffic signal poles to be manufactured and delivered."

This busy intersection has long been a source of concern of motorists and pedestrians alike. At high congestion times, such as during the daily rush hours and when the schools are opening or letting out, traffic is often backed up a block or more along Fifth Avenue.

"Safety on Manitoba highways remains a top priority for the Department of Infrastructure," says Schuler. "This announcement will enhance the overall safety of citizens in the Niverville community and for all who travel through this intersection."

The project is currently in the final design stage.

Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck says that the town has been advocating for this particular traffic light for about five years. Some urgency was added to the request when a traffic study two years ago pinpointed the corner as an ongoing concern.

"As the community's continued to grow, and as we have more and more residents utilizing that corner, being that we are largely a commuter town, that corner was identified in the Main Street engineering study we did," Mayor Dyck says. "It was suggested that lights would be applicable there. And so I'm obviously very, very excited about this announcement. It will really go to ensuring the safety of motorists, be they residents, or be they visitors to our community. Everyone will be able to safely pass through. It's very welcome news."

One aspect of the final design that is still up in the air is the question of whether turning lanes will be installed along Fifth Avenue. Dyck indicates that so far his understanding is that there won't be turning lanes, but that the final design is still being drawn up.

Dyck adds that this is an especially welcome announcement given the current coronavirus pandemic and the onslaught of bad news about businesses closing, events cancelled, and services being reduced.

"When there are times in our lives that are... I'll use the term darker, we need to have some things that we can look forward to, some things that give us hope," Dyck says. "We've seen in the media people singing to one another on their balconies if they can't leave their buildings, or people that are trying to volunteer to help seniors, whether it's trying to advocate for them to get into stores. We need this. The world doesn't stop spinning, the sun doesn't stop shining, we're still breathing... I believe that any semblance of normalcy that one can have is a good thing."

Dyck adds that his heart is heavy when it comes to people already dealing with mental health struggles. And even those who don't have a history of this, he says that more people could be experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression.

"I feel for all of that," he says. "So yes, as a leader I believe that if there's anything I can do to help, even if people are living vicariously through what we are doing as far as making such announcements as a traffic light, it all helps... My point is that no one suddenly just killed the power to the world. The power is still on. We're just minimizing it in some ways. So whatever we can do to cast light into the darkness right now, let us do that."

Even if that light, in this case, comes from shiny new traffic signals.

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The Niverville Citizen is published monthly and distributed through Canada Post to all those with a postal box in Niverville, Il-des-Chênes, St. Adolphe, Ste. Agathe, New Bothwell, Otterburne, and Tourond. Additional copies are manually distributed to businesses in the aforementioned communities, as well as the town of Landmark. The paper is printed in Canada by Derksen Printers Ltd. Republishing of this paper in whole or in part without prior approval is strictly prohibited.

The advertising deadline is 5:00 p.m. on the 15th of each month. The paper will be distributed the last week of every month.

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# Tales from Quarantine



Raesha and Joel Enns of Niverville.

## Isolating While Pregnant

By Sylvia St. Cyr

A local Niverville couple, Raesha and Joel Enns, are expecting their first child in August. Joel runs his own roofing company, JJE Roofing & Construction, while Raesha stays at home working on the accounting side of the business.

"As small business owners," Raesha says, "we are anxious to see how this will affect our spring start-up for our construction company."

But even more top of mind for Raesha is her pregnancy.

Pregnancy always comes with a multitude of appointments. The most recent one, the 20-week ultrasound, has already led to a change of plans.

"Unfortunately, Joel wasn't allowed to join me for that appointment, as they're trying to limit the amount of people entering the hospitals," she says. "I had to go through security and sanitize before I was escorted by a nurse to my

appointment."

At this point, there has been no change to the number of her prenatal appointments. The couple are also still on track to give birth at the Women's Hospital at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg, which was their original birth plan.

"The only changes we've heard about so far is that you're only allowed one support person in labour and delivery with you," Raesha says.

This means there won't be any option for a birthing coach or doula, for those who had wanted one.

In the meantime, the couple and their two dogs have been finding ways to pass the time. "We've started spring-cleaning, going for walks, spent time watching some of our favourite pastors online, and we've really enjoyed spending more time in the kitchen trying new recipes!"

The biggest concern for Raesha and Joel will become a reality once the baby is born. Becoming a parent changes your whole world, and having grandparents and other experienced moms and dads around to help out can be a huge comfort. The Ennses originally intended to be proactive by scheduling time with these supporters, to help lessen the chance of postpartum depression after the baby arrives.

Obviously that has changed. With the uncertainty of how long the current social

distancing measures will last, Raesha predicts, "We won't be able to have visitors come see the new baby."

The silver lining in all this? "While I was taken by surprise at everything being implemented at the hospital, it was reassuring that our hospitals and their amazing staff are doing everything they can to keep their patients safe and healthy!"



Kyle and Cyndi Wiebe.

## The Paramedic's Family

By Sara Beth Dacombe

Kyle and Cyndi Wiebe normally lead very busy lives, enjoying country living with their five children and three dogs. Kyle is a Winnipeg paramedic and Cyndi does freelance graphic design/illustration and works part-time reception for the Town of Niverville.

Their children, ranging in age from 10 to 15, enjoy

so many divergent weekly activities: school, church, youth group, going to the YFC Drop-In, Awana, kickboxing, guitar lessons, board game club, sports club, indoor soccer, and participating on eSports Council.

Of this wide array of extra-curriculars, the only ones which haven't been cancelled are school and church—and even those are happening

Kyle's already stressful job as a paramedic.

"I never know what Kyle's workdays will include on a 'regular' shift, whatever that means," she says. "Now we also worry about what he's been exposed to, despite every precaution they take. He came home the other day saying he feels like his hands will never feel clean again, even though he has washed them nearly raw. The physical and mental toll this all takes on him is huge."

Kyle's work falls under the category of essential services, and Cyndi's work with the town is continuing as well. Her reception duties now include assisting with the town's proactive cleaning and distancing measures within the office.

Maintaining an optimal work-life balance is a struggle for the big family, one this couple works hard to maintain despite a few health issues they have.

"I am a type-1 diabetic and Kyle has lung issues," Cyndi explains. "We are very worried about our health but know we need to keep working as long as we safely can to meet our family's needs. While my art lessons have stopped for now, I continue to do my freelance work from home. However, given that the majority of my clients are small businesses/organizations, or musicians/performers, they are struggling with economic uncertainty as well."

Social distancing isn't all doom and gloom, though, and Cyndi points out some

of the benefits their family has experienced. The family is able to enjoy a slower pace of life, sleeping in and simply having a lot more family time. She especially enjoys not having to rush through meals to get out the door, and not having to spend so much time in the car driving to get to so many activities.

Cyndi's advice for all the families out there having to stay home? Besides cooking and baking, she suggests board games and looking for ways to keep in contact with friends, such as through text and video chat services—like Discord, Google Hangouts, and Messenger Kids.

"It will be over soon," says Cyndi. "Just stay home so it's over sooner! Protect other people by staying home. Cuddle your family members and your dogs."

## From Mexico to Isolation

By Sara Beth Dacombe

Meet the Unraus. Joe is a technical assistant for Manitoba Hydro and Sherry is a health-care aide at the Heritage Life Personal Care Home in Niverville. They have four children: Ashley, Hailey, Ryan, and Kelsey.

For this busy family, a typical week is full, with something up every single evening.

"Ryan has jujitsu Monday, Hailey has soccer Tuesday, Ashley has youth

(continued on page 6)

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## Niverville Chamber announces new Executive Director



The Niverville Chamber of Commerce Board is pleased to announce Brenda Desjardins as the new Executive Director effective April 2020.

Brenda moved to Niverville 5 years ago and enjoys the many aspects of life in a smaller community.

She comes with small business experience and a lengthy career in the financial institution industry.

Brenda looks forward to her new role in the community and meeting local businesspeople and residents.

The board wishes to thank Dawn Harris for her 5 years of dedicated service to The Chamber of Commerce and wishes her well in her future endeavours.

## We are all in this together

Everyone is doing their very best to stay healthy and protect family, friends, neighbors, and the community at large as we find our way through this pandemic.

Local businesses are also doing their best to provide their customers with what they need during these difficult times. Some have limited hours, limited customer access or closed in order to protect their customers and staff.

When visiting a business, please observe the rules of social distancing, especially at check-outs. Do not enter a place of business if you are not well. If you must cough or sneeze, do it into your elbow. Wash your hands often. Pay with a credit card when possible. This is for everyone's protection.

Please make your purchases at those Niverville businesses that remain open. By shopping and supporting local, you will contribute to helping those businesses still be in Niverville when COVID-19 is over.



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## CITIZEN POLL

## How has the global pandemic affected you and your family?

- ☐ Nothing has changed. I don't have children in school and I'm still going to work.
- ☐ Making the best of it. I'm working from home and managing the household and family differently.
- ☐ It's been difficult. I've been laid off from work and I feel unsure about the coming months.
- ☐ This has turned our world upside down and I truly fear and dread what's happening around me.



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## LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

**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?**



## YOUR COMMENTS:

I am very happy that the healthcare in Niverville will be maintained during this difficult time, but would like to think that in due time it will be re-established as a privately run business rather than the Town's (taxpayers) responsibility.

I believe all people of this community should be able to be patients. If they are going to turn away people that are new to live in Niverville because they aren't previous patients then I don't think that's fair and that leaves out the majority of this expanding town. If they plan on changing that I'm all in favor if not then I could care less if that health clinic closes.

Really glad the town stepped up to continue the Burnett's dream. Imagine the possibility of the town and its elected representatives not seeing the value in health care for the community and regional area. Imagine the possibility of Southern Health reducing its support to our community because we didn't see value in the Burnett's dream. This is a great example of healthcare transformation in Manitoba. Thank you everyone for being brave and taking on ideas that will benefit our future generations.



The Wiebe family of Niverville.

SHERRY UNRAU

(continued from page 4)

Wednesday, the girls and I have Girl Guides Thursday, and Friday is swimming for the older three," explains Sherry. "Ashley also has soccer either Tuesday or Thursday and Saturday is a soccer game for both older girls in the city, usually in opposite directions."

If that wasn't busy enough, the family just returned from a trip to Mexico—a gift from Sherry's father. This meant they had to go straight into isolation when they returned to Manitoba.

"Not only have all the activities stopped, we can't even get our own groceries," Sherry says.

While she admits the situation has been inconvenient, the family has also been able to view their isolation period as a blessing. It's an opportunity to see how education can be found in everyday life—not just in a classroom.

"The unexpected benefits have been seeing how much the kids can get along. The sleepovers and giggles are music to a parent's ears," she says. "[We have] no schedule. Schoolwork will get done. For now, it's been school of life. Kids have been baking and cooking—home economics. Going outside for play, that's recess and Phys Ed. Deciding how long each sibling has been playing a game and when the next can play, that's math."

Sherry notes there will be more routine once she and Joe return to work.

But she's also concerned about returning to work. As a healthcare aide, she is very worried about the impact of COVID-19 on the elderly.

"I've missed my residents. They are the loneliest age group and now they can't even have physical visitors," says Sherry. "We become like family and we are the ones that are there for them. Also, my dad is 73, so I'm worried about him, especially since I lost my mom a couple years ago."

While candid about her worries, Sherry also encourages people not to give in to fear.

"While this is an unknown time, stressing about it won't help. Enjoy your families. Have fun. Make this

a time they will remember fondly instead of a time of fear."

## Coming Home Early

By Sara Beth Dacombe

Ron and Sherri Hildebrandt are semiretired and currently serving a mandatory self-isolation order since their unexpected return from working with the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in Rockport, Texas. The site was closed abruptly and they were directed to return to Canada.

"None of our usual life has

having daily contact with people," explains Sherri. "This has been harder than we thought it might be. It's a good thing we still like each other! 24/7 with the same person in a small condo is a test that I think we'd both get a passing grade on, but it's not always easy! Also, I'm a hugger—and those elbow taps are not doing it for me!"

Maintaining mental health is another struggle. Between TV and online media, it can get overwhelming to be constantly informed about COVID-19 and the social distancing measures being implemented in Manitoba, even though it is necessary.

"It's hard not to let this barrage of media scare you," she says. "Even if you don't want to admit it, there seems to be an underlying sense of unrest because your world has been disrupted, and you have no idea what normal will look like on the other side—or when the other side will arrive! We pray for our children and grandchildren to be safe and healthy as they figure out how to do life in this chaos."

The Hildebrandts say they rely on faith during this stressful time as they worry for their children,

much more now."

Talking and connecting with each other as a couple during isolation is just as important as finding others to talk to. Ron and Sherri recommend turning off the TV and actually talking to diffuse the tension that builds up.

"Laugh," she adds. "Read each other jokes or watch a comedy and laugh together. Find the humour in the situation. If it's all gloom and doom, you've lost the battle! Do something together—we baked buns yesterday. And if it gets to be too much, and you know you're spiralling, reach out. Call someone and let them know. We need each other now more than ever and without being able to reach out and physically hug someone, do it virtually if you can. Call a friend, chat online, or text."

## Visits with Grandpa

By Sara Beth Dacombe

Barry Locke and his granddaughters share a special connection—and just as a cord of many threads remains strong under tension, they are finding ways to remain close even during these times of social distancing. Barry's three granddaughters are continuing their regular visits to Niverville Credit Union Manor to see their grandpa.

They just don't step foot inside.

Throughout the week, the girls walk up to the building and then use their cell phones to call him. Barry views the girls through the large windows in his room. They all say their connection is strengthened because of the proximity and being able to see one another, even if they cannot be together in person.

"They were coming pretty near once a week," says Barry. "Sometimes one is working or the other can't be off at the same time. One is still in school. But before this bad stuff happened, they would take me out for coffee and a tart or something quite often... I miss them terribly. We've been so close through their young lives and before my wife passed away they would come and visit us and stay overnight or come for supper or take us out for supper. We've been very, very close and we still are very close."

On March 17, the province mandated the suspension of visitors in long-term care facilities across Manitoba to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Exceptions for compassionate reasons or end-of-life care are being made on a case-by-case basis.

Barry says that he and the other residents understand why this is necessary. "It's a very difficult thing, but I think they're doing a



Sherri and Ron Hildebrandt.

SHERRI HILDEBRANDT

resumed as we patiently wait for the 14-day isolation period to be done," says Sherri. "We moved to a senior's housing complex in the past year and everyone here is being vigilant in making sure we stay virus-free if we possibly can!"

Ron is an appliance technician and Sherri is a human resource advisor, as well as an author and public speaker. They had arranged to be away for two months this winter, but even if they hadn't been out of country they would've been active with part-time work, as well as curling, painting, and traveling to visit their children and grandchildren in other provinces.

For them, the biggest challenge so far has been the lack of in-person social contact.

"We drove straight home in our RV from Texas after almost two months of living with others and

since one of them is immunocompromised, one is a nurse working in trauma, and another has asthma. They also both have elderly parents.

The couple says they are playing games, discussing life, cooking together, and cleaning together. Another benefit is having time to reach out and reconnect with friends and family via the internet.

"I've had chats online and on the phone with people I haven't seen or talked to in a while, which has been so rewarding and filled my social interaction tank," says Sherri. "Our children and grandchildren have had time to talk to us. They are all working and raising their own families and don't always have time to keep in contact. Now they are all working from home, except for the nurse, and we have been getting in touch



very good job, and I dearly hope that we can keep it out of here. We're hoping that it's not going to spread in the manor here. So far we're all right, but we don't want to see anyone get sick."

Granddaughters Cory, Jesse, and Megan also understand the necessity of taking precautions.

"It's sad that we cannot go and actually sit with him," says Cory. "But I'd rather have to do this than go in and get somebody actually sick with the virus. It's hard, but at least we don't worry."

Barry says he and his fellow residents are keeping busy, encouraging each other not only to continue following the protocols but to stick together. They enjoy taking their meals together and staying active by going for walks around the upstairs walkways of the Heritage Centre.

Walking is something residents don't have to give up, but Barry was asked to give up something even more special to him: his birthday party.

"My birthday falls on March 30, and we had big plans, but they all had to be cancelled," he says. "I'm happy to talk to the newspaper because I want to get people to know it's my birthday and I want them to say happy birthday! I hope I get lots of phone calls. I'm a child at heart."

For some residents in care homes or assisted living, visitors are necessarily rare these days.

"Some of the comments you hear from the residents are sad," says Terry Dowse, healthcare aide at NCU Manor. "Even the ones who do have visitors can't have them anymore. We're in lockdown. It's been very hard. It's been heartbreaking... When I heard [Barry's] granddaughters were coming to visit him, but they can't come inside, I thought this was so heartwarming. He waits for them to come. They come, with the dog even sometimes, and then chat with him on the phone. In all this horribleness, there's a light that



Barry Locke, who lives at the NCU Manor in Niverville.

TERRY DOWSE

shines here. These stories bring us happiness in a time when it's not so happy. We need to hear the good."

Cory has a message for anyone feeling the strain: "There's always some sort of way, you've just got to be able to create it and figure it out. For us, standing in the parking lot and waving is better than not doing anything. You have to be creative and just keep on visiting the people we love. You have to be creative and find a way."

## Homeschooling the Kids

By Sylvia St. Cyr

Niverville's three schools recently had hundreds of children roaming the halls—and now they stand barren, except for teachers.

This means all those children are at home, trying their best to follow some sort of system or schedule to stay educated, informed, and entertained in this uncertain time. It's a huge change for everyone involved.

One such family is the Kosmans. Parents Kelsey and Dan have two children, a nine-year-old daughter and a seven-year-old son.

"We are still adjusting to our new normal of a slower-paced lifestyle," Kelsey says. "Although hockey and ringette were coming to an end when the virus hit, we were gearing up for spring sports."

The couple also work full-time. Dan is a sheet metal journeyman, and as of now his work remains ongoing. Kelsey runs her own company, Dollhouse Design, in



Kelsey and Dan Kosman, with their two kids.

KELSEY KOSMAN

which she offers expertise in interior design and drafting.

Since COVID-19 arrived, her work has changed.

"Because of social distancing, I have had to cancel all meetings," she admits. "But I have been doing virtual meetings whenever possible."

Being self-employed allows Kelsey to help the children out with school at home. The children's Grades Two and Four elementary school teachers have

sent home workbooks, alongside daily emails with different ideas and resources.

"I'm having to learn a whole new level of organization and patience," Kelsey says. "We are focusing on reading and math, and each day have been trying to do something fun while learning something new."

While learning is an important part of childhood development, teachers have encouraged parents not to stress about teaching everything perfectly.

Officially, schools in Manitoba are due to open again on April 13. However, at this point it's hard to say if that can actually come to pass, due to coronavirus cases rising in the province. Almost certainly, school will remain out for a long time to come.

So what's the hardest part of parenting in this uncertain time?

"It's trying to keep a sense of normalcy for our kids," Kelsey says. "Trying to protect them from the panic and fear in the world right now. We also miss our families and friends."

Although it's been difficult, especially for a family of extroverts, Kelsey acknowledges that the best part of social distancing has been the time they now have to reflect on what's really important.

## IN BRIEF

### Province Enacts Further Distancing Measures

By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

As the calendar turns to April, and the pandemic marches on, the Province of Manitoba has enacted some further measures.

It was announced on March 31 that not only will the school closures be extended beyond the original three-week suspension, they will not reopen this spring at all. Classes for the rest of the school year have been cancelled indefinitely.

The Minister of Education has assured that all students on track to graduate will do so, and no students will be held back because of the pandemic. In the meantime, teachers will continue to work remotely.

Also, starting April 1 all non-essential businesses have been ordered to close until April 14. Restaurants are allowed to remain open to continue takeout and delivery services, but dine-in options have been banned.

Finally, no gatherings will be allowed of more than 10 people.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ For full details about which businesses are affected by the closure, visit: <https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?archive=&item=47337>



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## IN BRIEF

## Niverville Unveils Tree-Planting Initiative

By Sara Beth Dacombe

A new tree-planting project in Niverville has been tentatively unveiled that would see 40 new trees available to the community at no cost to residents. The 2020 Niverville Community Tree-Planting Initiative is a partnership between TC Energy, the Town of Niverville, and Niverville Communities in Bloom.

"We want to thank TC Energy for their donation, which makes the trees available," says town councillor Nathan Dueck. "And also Communities in Bloom. That committee has done a wonderful job in keeping Niverville green in the past years and they are doing an amazing job in organizing this initiative."

The trees will be allocated to specific areas around town. Trees will be planted in front yards, subject to soil sampling and location approval by the committee.

The tree-planting is set to begin on Saturday, May 23, unless social distancing measures get in the way. Property owners would need to agree to care for the trees post-planting and be given instructions for tree care as well as access to the town's arborist for support.

Ongoing canopy enhancement programs will be approved based on the success of this project and available funding.

# Ways Families with Kids Can Thrive While Social Distancing at Home

By Sylvia St. Cyr

The provincial government has cancelled classes indefinitely, with classes unlikely to resume until the fall. As a result, we are all spending an abundance of time inside our homes.

So what are parents supposed to do with this time?

First of all, set a schedule and a routine. Any child who's used to attending school five days a week is accustomed to having a schedule, and keeping a routine going will help to remove some variables in your children's lives.

One way to accomplish this is to break up the "school day" into one-hour increments—for younger children, perhaps half-hour increments. How can these time slots be spent? It will depend on the children and family, but some ideas include reading, active play, creativity time, academic time, personal time, and spring-cleaning.

Try making a dry-erase or washable checklist using the ideas in this article. Just write them down or print them out, then place the paper inside a Ziploc bag and zip it up. You can use a dry-erase or washable marker to check off each item as you go through your day.

Now, on to the activities!

When it comes to reading, kids can take turns reading aloud, or they can each read their own book.

For active play, kids can follow along with a programmed workout, simply dance, or go out for a walk. Remember, though: keep your distance from other people.

Staying active produce endorphins which help keep our emotions in balance. Thankfully, we're seeing nicer weather now with the

onset of spring.

As for creativity time, there are countless ways to be creative. A few ideas would be to colour, paint, write a story or song, journal, play an instrument, build something with Lego, or do a craft.

We should also put in place some academic time, but this doesn't mean kids need to sit at the table and stare at textbooks. There are lots of ways to keep the mind engaged through household activities.

Consider baking something together in the kitchen. This can be a great way to practice fractions—not to mention, you'll end up with a delicious product at the end.

You can also stage all manner of mind-bending science experiments using regular household items. You could learn to make your own ice cream, create a tornado in a bottle, or build a marshmallow catapult.<sup>1</sup>

Because social distancing is forcing us to keep to ourselves, certain programs and websites have stepped up to help parents out. For example, *Scholastic* is offering a free "Learn at Home" program that lasts 20 days. To get going, you just have to choose the appropriate grade level and begin.<sup>2</sup>

*National Geographic* has a kids page that includes games, videos, information on different types of animals, as well as an exploration tab. This is a great tool to keep your children engaged.<sup>3</sup>

Were you one of many who had to cancel an upcoming trip? While that will have forced me to make a difficult decision for yourself and your family, there are still ways to tour the world from the safety of our own homes. At least 12

museums from around the globe are offering free virtual tours. From New York to Los Angeles, from the cultural hotspots of Europe all the way to Brazil, this is a fun way to immerse kids in culture and history.<sup>4</sup>

Next, give each member of your family the opportunity for personal time. One of the challenges of staying at home with your family for long stretches of time is that, although it's a good time to bond and connect with each other on a deeper level, you can also get on each other's nerves. Make sure to give everyone a chance to be on their own—to think, nap, or even have a bath—to destress when tensions are running high.

Another option is to get your kids involved in spring-cleaning. We may as well make sure our homes are a clean and healthy place to hang out! Many families will no doubt be taking this time to reorganize their homes, air out the rooms after winter, and deep-clean the spaces we use each and every day.

Outside of these scheduled routines, there are bound to be a lot of unstructured family time. Perhaps you could consider a family board game tournament. Ensure there's a prize for the winner. It could be as simple as extra time on electronics, or a pass from doing chores for the day.

Another popular activity will be taking advantage of the many streaming services available. Between Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+, and Crave, there are a lot of family-friendly movies and TV shows to keep us entertained for hours. That said, it would be a good idea to get in some walks and jumping backs between movies or episodes to keep everyone's blood

pumping!

Fortunately, we live in a very technologically connected age. Using phones, tablets, and computers, check in regularly with your isolated family and friends. After all, being alone with just our thoughts for long periods of time can be dangerous. Although you may not be able to see your grandparents, or even parents, in person for a while, that doesn't mean you can't connect in meaningful ways.

And we're not just talking about talk—consider cooking or baking something and leaving it on the doorsteps of those in isolation, along with an encouraging card. Please also wash your hands before making any of these items, of course.

While these ideas are far from extensive, hopefully they'll provide a good starting point for families as they face the unusual spring and summer ahead. Even in a time of social distancing, as a community we can thrive.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

<sup>1</sup> You'll find countless household science experiment ideas here: Karyn Marciniak, *Mommy Poppins*, "63 Easy Science Experiments for Kids Using Household Stuff," February 13, 2020 (<https://mommypoppins.com/kids/50-easy-science-experiments-for-kids-fun-educational-activities-using-household-stuff>)

<sup>2</sup> "Scholastic Learn at Home," *Scholastic* (<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com>).

<sup>3</sup> Visit National Geographic Kids (<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com>).

<sup>4</sup> For ways to access free virtual museum tours, visit: Andrea Romano, *Travel and Leisure*, "Stuck at Home? These 12 Famous Museums Offer Virtual Tours You Can Take on Your Couch," March 12, 2020 (<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>).



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# Tattoo Studio to Leave its Mark on Niverville

By Sara Beth Dacombe

Twenty Twenty Tattoo Studio is set to open in Niverville in early April, or at least it was until the province announced the mandatory closing of non-essential services starting April 1.

Twenty Twenty's owner, Jason Majury, is a graduate of the Red River College Business Administration program who has been running a successful tattoo shop in the south end of Winnipeg for the last seven years.

Although not a Niverville resident himself, Majury and his family have lived in the surrounding area for many years. He feels he can better serve the southeast Manitoba area clientele who had already been coming to Winnipeg for services by opening up a shop in Niverville.

"Over the last 13 years, I've managed to build a strong clientele from many of the southern rural communities," says Majury. "Niverville is a young, vibrant town and a hotbed for growth in southern Manitoba. I felt that bringing my services to Niverville would not only diversify the growing business community, but would be an excellent opportunity to add to its economic development by attracting many of the surrounding communities, including Winnipeg."

Twenty Twenty will offer services in laser tattoo lightening and tattoo removal, but custom-designed tattoos is where the business will primarily focus.

"Designing custom tattoos makes up about 90 percent of



Jason Majury is opening a new tattoo studio in Niverville.

© JASON MAJURY

what I do," says Majury. "But I do have a book of my own pre-drawn designs to choose from and am always open to tattooing flash designs or specific images the client has in mind. I try my absolute best to give my clients something unique or put my own spin on things so that they receive something one-of-a-kind."

Choosing a tattoo, and choosing the right artist to apply it, is highly personal. So getting to know your tattoo artist can really help. Majury's passion for the art of tattoo keeps him dedicated to being on the cutting edge of his profession.

"Besides studying the different styles of tattooing over the years, I draw a lot of inspiration from everyday life, and the world around us," he adds. "The wonders of nature

and the outdoors specifically hold so much beauty and inspire me endlessly. I get very excited whenever I have the opportunity to incorporate organic elements into my designs, or creating a natural flow within the subject matter to truly compliment the person wearing the design. There are so many great styles of tattoos that I love and appreciate, including Japanese- or Asian-influenced designs, to American Traditional and everything in between. I really enjoy the challenge of cover-ups, and making the possible out of the impossible."

As a tattoo artist, Majury also sports multiple tattoos himself. When asked about how many tattoos he has on his body, he says, "Too many to count! I am pretty close to full coverage and am working

on completing my body suit."

Twenty Twenty will be located at 226 Main Street, using the side entrance next to Anya's Hair Studio. Bookings can be made by appointment by contacting Twenty Twenty through the email address listed on their website.

If you're interested in a tattoo, there's one main piece of advice Majury would like you to know: "Outside of researching your artist and making sure they are the right fit, being open to your artist interpreting your ideas and taking them to the next level for you is very important. An experienced artist will make sure that your idea will not only fit and move with you properly but will ensure that you get something unique that will stand the test of time."

## IN BRIEF

### Province Ramps Up Funding in Case of Spring Flood

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

As part of a plan to improve flood prevention measures south of Winnipeg, the RM of Ritchot and Town of Niverville are receiving approximately \$95,500 worth of new equipment. In total, about \$2 million is being dispersed amongst the 13 municipalities that make up the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region.

The municipalities will be provided with instructions about how to procure items and receive provincial reimbursement. They will also be encouraged to make the new equipment available to neighbouring municipalities when needed to improve regional preparedness and resiliency.

The Town of Niverville will be acquiring a PTO-driven pump and hose, barricades and signage, a sandbag machine and sandbags, and equipment for an emergency operations centre, all of which will be eligible for \$57,200 in funding.

Ritchot will receive water

rescue equipment, a Zodiac and motor, and equipment for an emergency operations centre, to be covered by \$38,349.94 in funding.

In the province's most recent flood outlook report, released on February 27, the risk of major spring flooding along the Red River basin is moderate to high.

"Due to the above normal to record high soil moisture at freeze-up in southern and parts of central Manitoba and normal to above normal winter precipitation to the end of February in most parts of the U.S. portion of the Red River basin, the Red River valley is at a higher risk of major flooding," the report says. "Generally, the risk of major spring flooding is moderate to high for southern and southeastern Manitoba, including the Roseau River and the Pembina River. However, this could change depending on weather conditions between now and the spring melt."

The risk of flooding along the Assiniboine River remains low.



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## IN BRIEF

## Hanover School Division to Invest in Frontline Staff

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The Hanover School Division has passed its budget for the upcoming school year. The division expects enrollment to increase by 2.5 percent in September, which equals approximately 204 new students.

This time, the budget process took into account extensive consultation with the community, including parents, guardians, division employees, and residents. Earlier this year, they launched a community-wide survey to ask people how they felt about the way the division allocated its finances.

"Over 1,200 constituents participated in the online survey, providing the board with guidance in the budget planning process," reads a statement from the Hanover School Division. "In response to the feedback received, the board has responded by prioritizing funding for frontline support services."

These frontline supports will come in the form of several new positions throughout the school division. The 2020–21 school year will see the introduction of 15 new educational assistants, five guidance counsellors, several learning support teachers, as well as an additional social worker, learning support teacher, youth social worker, and school liaison.

"The new positions will be funded through budget reallocation and the use of divisional surplus," says HSD. "The 2020–21 budget will also meet the needs of projected enrollment growth with the addition of 12 classroom teachers."

With the increase in enrollment and new jobs created, the division's expenditures will also rise, bringing operating expenses to an estimated \$94.3 million. This is an increase of 2.7 percent over last year, with provincial funding increasing by 2.1 percent. The average homeowner will see no school levy increase on their property taxes, for the third consecutive year.

"The board of trustees worked diligently to find budget cost savings while balancing the educational needs of students. Administration expenses and educational costs, per student, remain among the lowest in the province."

# Introducing Kristen Fyfe, Open Health Business Manager

By Sara Beth Dacombe

In early March, the Town of Niverville announced that they assembled a new board, Niverville Health Care Services Inc. (NHCSI), to assume operational control of the Open Health clinic in Niverville under a social enterprise model. They also hired a business manager to oversee operations. Her name is Kristen Fyfe, and we'd like to introduce you to her.

Fyfe has previous certification and experience in athletic and massage therapy, as well as a Bachelor of Applied Health Sciences. She has worked as a health management specialist in a multidisciplinary clinic that included a variety of health professionals, including a physiatrist and psychologist.

In her previous management experience, she was responsible for planning, budgeting, and managing long-term rehabilitation programs for individuals recovering from illness or injury. The position also included coordination with case managers and third-party insurers in order to advocate for optimal patient care while remaining fiscally responsible.

Fyfe is also local. Having grown up nearby, she has been a resident of Niverville for about ten years. She and her husband have two daughters.

"I grew up in a nearby community and spent most of my life in a rural setting," says Fyfe. "My husband and I... have loved living here, but especially so since having our children. We have met so many other families and have a whole new experience in the community."

One of the first tasks given to Fyfe as business manager is to deliver a complete review of the current



Kristen Fyfe, Niverville CAO Eric King, and Mayor Myron Dyck.

© CARA DOWSE

operation of Open Health, including drafting the 2020 operational budget, creating job descriptions, working on initial clinician recruitment contacts, and sitting down with key stakeholders within and outside the clinic environment.

The clinic currently employs a few part-time physicians, one full-time physician, and two nurse practitioners. Other professionals who work out of the clinic's space are employed directly by Southern Health—a primary care nurse, dietitian, speech therapist, chronic disease nurse, public health nurses, and mental health workers, among others.

To remain viable, Open Health will need to hire more clinicians to fill short- and long-term positions.

NHCSI is also looking to fill vacancies on its board, which so far includes Mayor Myron Dyck, founding physician Dr. Chris Burnett, and Councillor Nathan

Dueck. The board is looking to appoint a representative from the Niverville Chamber of Commerce and one member at large from the community.

"The board is still working towards being finalized," says Niverville CAO Eric King. "The Chamber of Commerce is reviewing and will provide us an update... Currently the board is populated by council until the community members are brought up to speed."

The town is looking for Fyfe to get a handle on the current operating environment, and from there improve the patient experience and financial operations of the clinic while developing a long-term growth strategy to fill the clinic and meet the needs of patients.

"I am highly motivated to be a part of the clinic, as I know the history of the Burnetts starting it so many years ago and the growth it has already had," Fyfe says. "They

have been so important for this community, so I only hope to live up to and exceed their expectations—and not only keep the clinic open but be a part of it prospering for years to come. I have been warmly welcomed by the clinicians and staff at Open Health. There is a great team there right now. I look forward to working with them."

Fyfe has been well received in her new role, but she admits that the sudden arrival of COVID-19 has meant she is attempting to learn a business while dealing with intense external stressors from the current health environment. This has made a challenging situation much more so.

When asked if COVID-19 would change any of the most pressing tasks, such as hiring new physicians, Fyfe says, "The plan never changes—our goal is to look after our patients, to serve them. The needs and reasons will ebb and flow... Yes, we will still focus time on growing the social enterprise and hope to have an announcement in the weeks ahead. In the meantime, our current clinicians are available to meet the needs of our current patients."

A new innovation—new to the whole province, not just to Open Health—is the introduction of virtual doctor visits. These are available to residents in Niverville and the surrounding area.

Fyfe values communication and is determined to learn about each of her team members' strengths.

"I think open communication is so important," she adds. "I consider myself to be a good listener and I am able to take an individual's ideas and concerns and implement those into positive changes."

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# Province Launches Volunteerism Website, Local Reaction So Far Lukewarm

By Sara Beth Dacombe

On March 23, the Province of Manitoba launched a new website to help volunteers safely connect with fellow Manitobans in need of assistance. Intended to be a province-wide hub, Help Next Door allows people to ask for help or answer people's requests by volunteering to help.

The safety of both types of site users is important. Help Next Door asks users to create a profile and enter a government-issued identification number, such as your driver's license number.

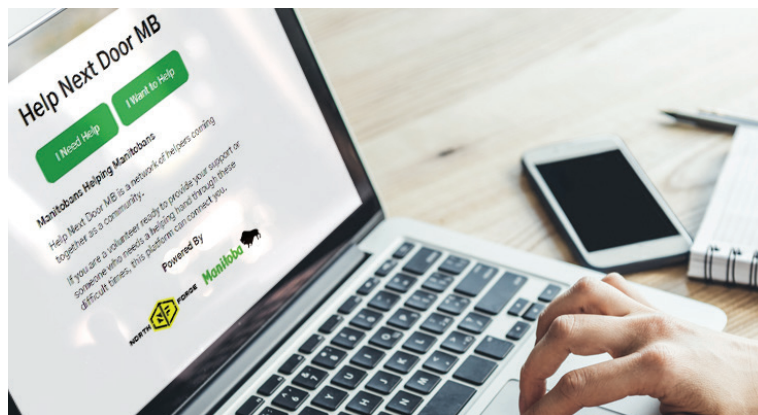
The website is intended to serve those unable to leave their residences—elderly, disabled, and medically vulnerable—and in need of groceries, medication, and emergency snow clearing, to cite some common examples.

Premier Brian Pallister has described the online tool as innovative. "[It] puts people all over the province who need assistance easily in contact with those nearby, while adhering to social distancing protocols, who want to help them," he says.

But local reactions have been mixed and requests for help have so far been slow to appear.

"I think it could be useful if people are using it properly, reading the rules and keeping social distancing in mind," says Catherine Casper, a local woman who has worked in social services for three years. "It could even be used after this is all over, to continue to help those who are elderly or physically handicapped, and even those who have no car, being able to ask for a ride with some degree of safety, as the site requires ID information to be inputted. In a lot of communities, though, there are Facebook groups... who already do many of these things."

In this time of social distancing, volunteers and community organizations are feeling the need to effectively increase our ability to connect using virtual means that



DEPOSITPHOTOS

still produce tangible help.

Daniel Williams, a pastoral administrator for Maranatha Niverville, says the church has been facilitating online connection, since the COVID-19 crisis has put so many restrictions on social gatherings. They already had an existing online presence, and like many other churches they have made their weekly sermons available online as a podcast. Since March 22, regular Sunday services have been cancelled for the foreseeable future and have moved to streaming services.

"We're figuring things out day by day," says Williams. "We already had a website and a couple of Facebook groups for general connection in our church... More so, from a church body, it's an opportunity to share what we have, material needs, or service needs, and an opportunity for the church to respond. You can offer things you have or don't need, freely based, no buying or selling."

Aside from their Facebook groups, which help facilitate requests for help, the church is uncertain if they will make use of the Help Next Door website.

"We've had these conversations about using a volunteerism site like [Help Next Door], but at this time I'm not sure if we'll try to make use of that one," Williams says.

After its first two days of

operation, all the requests on Help Next Door had come from Winnipeg, and some requests had even broken the rules of the site by requesting home-cleaning or placing spam-like advertisements.

"Some people are not reading the rules very clearly and not understanding the usage," says Casper. "I know that I didn't see the rules until I read the FAQ. There's an email with the rules, but it went to my spam folder and I almost missed it. Perhaps it needs to be a bigger part of the initial application process to join the site."

While the site may be slow to take off and existing local online initiatives may still serve the needs in their immediate communities, Casper feels there is at least some benefit for the government to try to manifest the same help that other organic initiatives are already doing.

"But I think the idea will need some tweaking," says Casper. "It has too much of an ability to be used to spam or ask for things outside of the listed options. A dedicated admin? An ability to 'report' maybe? It was likely rushed, which I understand, and these details will come with time."

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

■ [www.helpnextdoor.ca](http://www.helpnextdoor.ca)

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# The Business of Getting Back to Nature

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

One local entrepreneur has made it her business to spend less time at the desk and more time in the great outdoors—and she's taking others with her. Lesley Gaudry of St. Adolphe recently launched a new business called Nature's Edge Tourism.

Gaudry is the company's sole instructor and tour guide, and she hopes to provide clinics and tours all year round. In winter, she focuses on snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. In summer, she anticipates getting clients into the water with stand-up paddleboarding.

"The premise behind [this business] is just to help people get outside," says Gaudry. "My slogan is 'access to adventure,' because it's about giving people access to try something new."

Like so many adults, Gaudry's regular jobs keep her bound to a desk for much of the day. Working as the manager of the Economic Development Association of Manitoba and running her other company, Ohana Writing Services, means she spends a has too much sedentary time.

"I wanted to be a lot more intentional with my own health," Gaudry says. "Last year I started thinking about what I enjoy, and I love being outside."

The idea for the business, she says, had been simmering for a long time, but it wasn't until the summer of 2019 that she finally decided to do something about it. First, she applied for her Resource Tourism License. Then, in the fall, she earned her stand-up paddleboard instructor's certification through Paddle Canada. She has since geared up, gathering



Taking in Manitoba's wintry beauty on snowshoes.

LESLEY GAUDRY

the equipment her clients will need to enjoy an afternoon in the snow or a summer day on the water.

Despite the late start to her winter season, Gaudry has already provided a number of group snowshoeing clinics at A Maze in Corn and the Roseau River area. Each clinic covered information on the different types of snowshoes and the conditions in which they should be used. After that, participants headed out for a two-hour guided tour.

Her last snowshoe tour of the season took place on March 15. Gaudry calls it the Sweet Treats tour, which includes a snowshoe trek through picturesque areas of Marchand, stopping en route to sample sweets baked by a local pastry chef.

"They say you can burn up to 700 calories in an hour while snowshoeing," Gaudry says. "It's a great activity because it's affordable and it's also very accessible."

With summer just around the bend, Gaudry will soon be packing up the winter gear and preparing

for a season of stand-up paddleboarding. She will offer two kinds of boards: solid and inflatable. As well, registrants will be provided a personal flotation device for safety.

"Paddleboarding is for everyone, it really is," says Gaudry. "Even if you're four years old, you can tandem on the paddleboard with a parent... On your own, you can do it from seven or eight years old."

A paddleboard looks and acts a lot like a surfboard. Users can sit, kneel, or stand while paddling the board, much like you would a kayak. Gaudry says they are generally very stable on the water and don't easily tip, making it an excellent activity for any age or level of experience.

Gaudry says even seniors are getting into the sport in a big way. There are senior stand-up paddleboard clubs in every province of Canada. Many of them find paddleboarding to be a great exercise for post-knee and hip replacement because it's a low-impact exercise that helps to strengthen the body's core.

For seniors and anyone learning this new sport, Gaudry's business is perfect. Registrants not only learn the skills needed to safely use the board in water, but they also gain insight that will help them make the right board purchase for their needs.

Gaudry will offer more than just clinics to teach the sport. She also hopes to provide a number of uniquely themed tours this summer that will allow registrants to explore Manitoba's waterways from a whole new perspective.

So far she plans to kick off her summer season on May 31 with a paddleboarding tour of Oak Hammock Marsh. Along with a nature interpreter, registrants will explore the marsh on paddleboard. Gaudry will provide wetsuits and water socks if the water is still on the cooler side.

In June, she hopes to build on her skills by completing a River Run Skills course, which will allow her to take groups on rivers with class-1 and class-2 rapids.

For late summer, Gaudry hopes to

host a Women, Water and Wellness retreat near Pine Falls, Manitoba. The weekend will include paddleboarding, kayaking and canoeing, or if attendees prefer, just reconnecting with nature.

As well, Gaudry will be ready to customize clinics and tours for corporate events if there's a demand.

"[I'm excited] to showcase just what Manitoba has to offer," Gaudry says. "We have beautiful waterways and such a variety of waterways. Everything from whitewater rivers to flat, serene ponds and it's all beautiful and fun to paddle on. If I can showcase that and teach people how to be safe in the water, it's really about education."

For Gaudry, Nature's Edge Tourism is really just an extension of who she has always been. She was raised by parents who loved outdoor sports. As an adult, she's spent much of her free time kayaking and enjoying backcountry canoe trips with friends and family.

"I've paddled [in canoes and kayaks] for years and years, but when I tried stand-up paddleboarding, I just got hooked."

Her children, too, have been infected with Gaudry's love of water sports. By the age of four they receive their own kayak. By the time they reach six years of age, they know how to independently use their own paddleboard. Gaudry family trips usually revolve around enjoying Manitoba's beautiful bodies of water.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Check out the 2020 events calendar at [www.naturesedgetourism.ca](http://www.naturesedgetourism.ca), or visit them on Facebook.

# Young Manitoba Proud Entrepreneur Touts Clothing Line

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Aaron Brandt may be only 16 years of age, but the Niverville High School student has already taught himself some valuable lessons in commerce and entrepreneurship.

In December 2019, Brandt launched a line of T-shirts and hoodies emblazoned with his own original logo. Two months later, he's sold more than 100 articles of clothing.

The idea, he says, began with a sketch that combined identifiable parts of the logos of six different Manitoba sports teams. The result was a synthesis of logos Brandt

believed could be marketable.

"When I first realized how well the jet and the Bomber's W fit together is probably when I was lying in bed and should have been sleeping," Brandt says. "I first drew the logo when I was sitting in church... and I thought, 'I've got to put that on a T-shirt.'"

By the time the design was complete, Brandt had found ways to incorporate logos from the Jets, Blue Bombers, Goldeyes, Moose, Valour football club, and Winnipeg Ice hockey team.

After that, he set out to research the best avenue to market and sell his design to the public. That's when he discovered Teespring.com, an e-commerce company that provides

a risk-free means to market and sell custom clothing products.

Brandt says the online store provides everything from marketing to production and delivery so that sellers can become instant entrepreneurs without any investment in inventory and with limited business savvy.

"I had very little start-up costs because it's free to sell on [that site]," says Brandt. "I just had to pay to get the logo [converted to a vector file]."

Teespring produces clothing items on demand, charging the seller a base price and allowing them to set their own profit margin. Brandt has since created a variety of social media sites to promote his

clothing line to sports fans across the province.

"I had an interview with CJOB and I sold 60 shirts that weekend," Brandt says.

The young entrepreneur says he's not too concerned about borrowing parts of copyrighted logos to create his design.

"I did brush up on a little bit of copyright law and found that, basically, the worst they can do is tell me to stop."

In the meantime, he calls the experience a fun experiment. His real post-graduate aspiration is to pursue a degree in engineering. Even so, Brandt exudes a can-do spirit and encourages other young

entrepreneurs not to get stuck in the dream stage of an idea.

"It's always good to try new things," he says. "Especially when there's low risk."

He recommends that the process of selling a product should begin with lots of research as well as an analysis of other people's successes and mistakes.

Finally, he says, start small and work your way up from there.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Instagram: @mb.proud  
■ [www.facebook.com/mbproud](http://www.facebook.com/mbproud)  
■ [www.teespring.com/stores/mb-proud](http://www.teespring.com/stores/mb-proud)



RITCHOT REGIONAL CHAMBER of COMMERCE

## Chamber News

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## Updates from the Ritchot Chamber

### COVID-19 and YOUR Business

The COVID-19 pandemic is here and its effects are being felt around the world. The Ritchot Regional Chamber of Commerce would like to reassure all local businesses that they are not alone. We all feel the strain of the economic downfall and social distancing measures in attempts to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but together we can ensure that our businesses continue to thrive.

### Small Business Financial Relief

In March, Canada's six largest banks have committed to taking action to help their customers who have been impacted by COVID-19. These banks will work with personal and small business customers on a case-by-case basis to help manage challenges such as pay disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If your business is in need of relief, contact your financial institution.

Likewise, the Government of Canada has released a resource guide for Canadian businesses that includes support for employees, support for businesses and a how to: prepare your workplace for COVID-19. This resource guide can be found at [www.canada.ca](http://www.canada.ca).

For more information, conversation, links and resources please contact [marandarosko@hotmail.ca](mailto:marandarosko@hotmail.ca) or call (204)270-0116.

### Events Postponed

Due to the quick spread of the COVID-19 virus, all foreseeable events have been postponed. We appreciate your understanding on this matter and will be announcing reschedule dates as soon as it is safe to do so. See list below for events that have been postponed:

- Grow Your Business Workshop (RevGenApps.com) – March 18th, 2020
- Southeast Home and Reno Show – March 28th - March 29th, 2020
- Ritchot Regional Chamber of Commerce AGM – April 8th, 2020
- Edge Business Expo – April 14th, 2020

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# Commentary

# A Pandemic of Kindness

**By Brenda Sawatzky**

"What do you remember about 2020?"

Already I look forward to the day when my grandchildren will ask me for stories about the infamous year of 2020... when I can talk about this global crisis in the past tense.

What will I tell them? No doubt it will have some haunting parlance akin to a movie script, an almost unbelievable tale of an invisible foe that

brought the world to its knees.

But like every great tale, this one too will have a moral: it's in our darkest hour that the brightest lights shine.

Of course, I speak of the everyday heroes, the community champions who step up when the going gets tough.

Generally speaking, it doesn't take long for these community champions to jump into action. Literally within hours of the Town of Niverville and the RM of Ritchot calling

for volunteers to aid the vulnerable, residents responded.

"I literally had 20 people jump to the task within 20 minutes," says Janice Burnett, the RM of Ritchot's Service to Seniors coordinator. "I have people from every community within Ritchot ready to go if needed."

Warren Britton, recreation facility manager for the Town of Niverville, has had the same experience. Currently, he has a list of 22 names—and that list is

growing daily.

"I think on our side of things, it's good to be proactive and ready if we do get requests," Britton says. "We don't want to be scrambling for volunteers if issues start to come in."

As for Burnett, she says her volunteers have already been put to work picking up groceries and food hampers from Winnipeg Harvest for those who need to remain home.

"There is one senior community member sewing masks

for use by volunteers," Burnett says. "She is using all her own materials and not charging for the masks. She's stressing that they will not keep the virus out but [it is still] a reminder to not touch your face."

Already this volunteer has made more than 250 masks.

Many others are using social media as a medium to bring people cheer and connection.

The goal, of course, should be to spread joy and not the virus, so people are getting incredibly creative.

Lisa Letkeman of Niverville, along with her daughter Olivia, wasted no time after the schools closed to initiate a family-friendly activity to give parents and their little ones something fun to do.

"I'm a helper by nature, so when there's a crisis my mind automatically starts thinking of ways I can help," says Letkeman.

The duo created a safari in the park by printing and laminating 14 exotic animals and placing them throughout Hespeler Park for families to hunt for as they go for walks.

"I've had so many positive comments on Facebook... people messaging me to thank us for doing it," Letkeman says. "If families don't find all the animals the first time they are out, they make plans to go back to try again... It's very rewarding to know such a simple act can bring so much joy."

In a similar vein, teddy bears and other stuffed animals have been appearing in windows of many Niverville homes, providing an opportunity for families to go on a "bear hunt." Others are taping up their art projects or messages of love and hope for the neighbourhood to see.

One especially heart-warming story is that of a thoughtful group who reached out to their neighbour, four-year-old Braelynn, who was born with a genetic disease called spinal muscular atrophy. This disorder restricts her to a power wheelchair and compromises her lungs, putting her at high risk of contracting pneumonia.

Other than the occasional walk for fresh air, the family will be strictly quarantined until it's once again safe to socialize.

"Our neighbors are familiar with Braelynn's disease and disability and our family's challenges," says Braelynn's mother Maylia. "They knew we were isolating, so on Sunday they messaged us that they wanted to plan a scavenger hunt for her. They [sent] us pictures of what she had to find and had prizes beside each item. When we went outside, they were in the street to cheer her on and give her clues, all while practicing social distancing and staying a good distance away from us."

Maylia says they've been missing out on the usual extended family support which they'd normally have. This experience has buoyed their spirits more than their neighbours will ever know.

Natalie Batkis is another who is finding a distraction from the bad news by helping people in her community.

"It makes you feel like you are doing your part," Batkis says. "I'm not a healthcare worker and I don't work in essential services, so I'm just trying to contribute the best I can. I think it's a great time to evaluate what your gifts are and use them in a way that helps others."

Batkis says it's not just the vulnerable who need extra support right now. The children, too, have had their world shaken. She's thankful to her son's teacher for providing the almost daily video connection that helps him stay grounded.

"I think in times of crisis you will see the best of humanity or you will see the worst," Batkis says. "While the information from health and government officials is grim most days, there are those beautiful moments when you see people cheering for healthcare workers on their front porches, or stores giving seniors and those most vulnerable the chance to shop safely. We need those moments of light in what feels like a lot of darkness."

## The High Cost of Low Connection

**By Daniel Dacombe**

Social distancing is a subject no one was thinking about six months ago. Now it's top of mind. The need to slow the spread of COVID-19 has us all on lockdown, and the number of faces we each see on a daily basis has shrunk dramatically in the last two weeks.

While the general themes (and memes) on social media alternate between humorous and frustrated, the unexpected lack of human contact is causing some very real experiences of isolation. It's also causing us in the social services concern, because we know how prolonged isolation can negatively affect us—not just by making us feel lonely but also by changing our brains and our bodies for the worse.

What happens when people are isolated from one another, voluntarily or involuntarily, is both compelling and concerning.

A growing body of social science research indicates that when people are prevented from being connected with each other for extended periods of time—when they live in social isolation—there are dramatic psychological effects, including increased rates of depression, difficulty in thinking and problem solving, increased feelings of anxiety and anger, increased

rates of substance abuse and gambling, increased risk of suicide, and increased symptoms of personality disorders and psychosis.

There is even some indication that isolation can increase the risk of Alzheimer's.

The effects of isolation on our bodies is just as dramatic, and includes markedly higher blood pressure, heart disease, chronic illnesses, and overall increased rates of mortality.

By contrast, the benefits of social connectedness are considerable. People who are highly socially connected tend to live longer, healthier lives, with lower rates of heart disease and chronic illnesses. They also generally have lower rates of mental illness, especially depression, and seem to experience less decline in mental abilities as they grow older.

One famous study in the 1970s isolated rats and made them physically dependent on cocaine. But when those same rats were introduced to other rats, they began to ignore the drug in favour of spending time with their new community. That's amazing!

We've always known we are thoroughly social beings. We live in community, it's just our nature. But the social networks we live in aren't just a web of relationships we have and hold; they are a framework that

envelops, sustains, and helps us to remain our authentic and healthy selves. It stands to reason that removing this framework can feel very threatening to us on so personal a level.

Living through a pandemic can generate feelings of fear and helplessness. Combined with the economic stressors many of us are facing, it makes sense that Canadians are reporting increased levels of anxiety this month. What are we to do when job number one these days is "stay home and stay isolated"?

Thankfully, many people have already started to get creative in maintaining connection despite our distancing practices. Social media is booming more than ever, and while some of the subject matter trends toward negativity, the overwhelming message is one of hope and resilience. Stories about families getting creative by using video calls and other technology to stay connected are becoming the norm, even with older relatives who might have balked at using this technology before.

Communities are forming online as parents, suddenly and involuntarily home-schooling their children, seek support and support each other.

For many, the internet is living up to its potential: to bring people together and connect us when we are apart.

For those of us who are struggling more than Facetime can readily fix, resources exist to help through this challenging time. Community mental health workers are still available through the regional health authorities, as are crisis and suicide helplines, and primary care locations continue to be a good first point-of-contact for individuals seeking help for a mental illness.

The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba is available to serve Manitobans, with its Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine walk-in clinics, in-house programs, and 24-hour addictions helpline still in operation.

And the Manitoba government recently announced a free online counselling service, which is intended to go into effect in the next few weeks. If you or someone you know are having a difficult time, please reach out to the resources mentioned below.

Whether it's online or over the phone, stay connected. It's good for all of us.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Southern Health Mental Health Crisis Line: 1-888-617-7715
- Manitoba Suicide Helpline: 1-877-435-7170
- Manitoba Addictions Helpline: 1-855-662-6605



# Crossing the Rubicon: When Everything Changed

By Greg Fehr

When Julius Caesar forded through the Rubicon River in defiance of the Roman Senate in January of 49 BC, the expression “crossing the Rubicon” was born. It marks a point of no return, a moment of society-altering change.

We are today in such a moment—as individuals, as a community, as a nation, and as a world—and not through the act of a great military general from the annals of history, but rather a small protein wrapped in a layer of fat.

And because of it, our daily lives have changed completely, both for today and into the foreseeable future.

Challenge and adversity have the innate ability to bring out the best and worst in us as humankind. As the COVID-19 situation has shown, when things look dire, some will rise to help their neighbours while others become selfish, through intentional action or otherwise.

This should not come as a surprise to anyone.

Sometimes it's a fine line between self-protection and self-protectionism. Well-intentioned and community-minded folks need to keep themselves safe in order to continue to help others. To help without regard for one's own well-being is a path towards ensuring that your help is short-lived... figuratively and perhaps literally. Those supplying our essential services right now must be prudent to ensure that those services aren't interrupted even further.

It would be easy to look at social media and think the

whole world has gone to hell in a handbasket, but the reality is that we are seeing the extremes. The bulk of the people in our communities have found the right line of keeping themselves safe while assisting those who need our help.

Staying at home for most of us is all we are called to do. And for most of us, this could hardly be called a hardship.

For some, this is a challenge. Those whose homes are not a safe haven need our help. Those who don't have family to lean on need our help. So it is not as simple as #stayathome for everyone.

This simple virus has created a variety of issues in our complex and interconnected world, which is precisely what makes our collective experience a game-changer.

I suspect that public policy itself will adjust because of this event. Whether we want to hear it or not, this will not be the last pandemic we see in most of our lifetimes. Our global connections and systems have set a wave of consequences in motion.

But I'm more interested in seeing what we all take out of this experience—and I hope it will be more than a renewed commitment to thorough handwashing.

We have seen the vulnerabilities not only of our systems but of ourselves as human beings. If our understanding of which professions are truly essential hasn't gone through a full-180 degree turn, it sure has turned a damned lot. This baring of the truth is too large and dramatic to be forgotten when the crisis

is over.

Will we remember how we worked together as neighbours and a community? Will we continue to seek out those in our community who need assistance and put out calls for help? I wonder if the website launched by the province, Help Next Door, will continue to see the same traffic.

Will we cheer on those providing our essential services, if not with clapping and banging of pots then at least with a renewed respect and gratitude?

While my respect for the medical professionals will increase, I also know that I'll be more inclined to hold the door open at Tim Horton's for that truck driver who's stopping for a much-needed break. Heck, I hope a few of us even take the opportunity to buy him a double-double out of gratitude.

And the next time we're at the grocery store, will we complain about the line-up or lack of open cashiers? Or will it be a word of thanks that comes out of our mouths?

It is my hope that this attitude of gratitude does become the new normal... when normal returns. I can stomach the rotten tree of this pandemic if I know there's the fruit of renewed community soon to sprout from its limbs. Whether we choose to pick it will be up to us.

When history records the Great Arse-Wipe Crisis of 2020, I hope it's not just the toilet paper hoarders who are documented but also the offers for delivery of rolls to those in need—not just for accuracy and posterity, but because this is a lesson we all need to remember.



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# Arts & Entertainment

## Need a Good Book? Our Local Authors Have You Covered

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

At the onset, self-isolation can sound like a welcome challenge—almost vacation-like, especially if you'd been burning the candle at both ends for a while beforehand. But because we're a society driven by structure, alarm clocks, and deadlines, unless we get really creative boredom is bound to set in eventually.

Readers know there are few better ways to beat boredom than by getting lost in a really good book. Books can inspire. They can take us on a journey through other cultures and times. They can teach a new skill or give our wild imaginations a place to run uninhibited.

So while you're searching Goodreads or scrolling through the selections available on your e-reader, consider taking a different approach and choose to become a little more acquainted with all the local talent we have right here at home.

### Inspirational Reads

In this first section, we'll explore some of the inspirational writers who reside here in the rural southeast. These are authors who have courageously told their own

stories or shared their wealth of knowledge and experience to bring hope and light into other people's lives.



### SARAH BRANDT

One of Niverville's newest published authors is Sarah Brandt, who released her debut book *Blossom like Eden* in February of this year. This work of Christian non-fiction analyzes the eight gifts found in the book of Ephesians and explores how, through them, the reader can find fullness of life.

The book takes us alongside Brandt as she sets out to find true identity and worth in the eyes of her Creator.

"I had experienced a life of transformation and a passion erupted," Brandt says of her desire to write the book. "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."



### SYLVIA ST. CYR

Another author is Niverville resident Sylvia St. Cyr, who published her first tome back in 2017. Its title, *Love vs. Fear*, is perhaps more timely than ever in these days of uncertainty. Through the pages of this book, St. Cyr finds hope for overcoming fear in her deeply rooted faith.

"Everyone battles some sort of fear, whether that is fear of flying, public speaking, your mother-in-law, or failure," says St. Cyr. "So the question remained, how do we fight fear so that it doesn't ruin our lives? A couple of years ago, I read the Bible verse 1 John 4:18, which says, 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear,' and I was intrigued. What does this mean in a practical sense? How can I live in that love zone?"

From the pages of her book rise stories of imperfect people who came face to face with perfect love.

St. Cyr says she spent years on a journey of discovering God's love, and she eventually felt the desire to share this journey with others.

"I love reading non-fiction books that uplift and inspire," St. Cyr explains. "I find the best non-fiction to be books that I can relate to in some way, but that also push me to grow and learn something amazing, either about myself or the world. This is the hope for my book as well, that anyone who has ever wondered if God's love was actually real and personal, come to know God, who is love, in a deeper way. When you know your identity, it allows you to live in love, which means that the fears in your life diminish more and more."



### CHAD EDDY

Self-published author Chad Eddy hopes to reach young men who have become sceptics of the Christian faith

through his book *Remember the Gospel*. Eddy released the book in the summer of 2017.

"I spent over a decade in pastoral ministry and I have many friends who have struggled with, or even walked away from, their faith for reasons that have nothing to do with the essential message of Jesus, what we call the gospel," says Eddy. "I've found that there are many peripheral issues in Christianity that can trip us up, distract us, and cause us to doubt. I want to bring people back to the gospel again and again, and that's the heart of this book."

Eddy's goal through the book is to help people get unstuck in their faith and begin to make positive forward movement. He says the essential message of the gospel can easily get buried beneath religious agendas, political positions, moral issues, personal freedoms, and ethical beliefs.

### Fiction

In this section, we're going to look at the fiction writers who live among us as well as their works of well-crafted prose. Truly, fiction-writing is the most difficult in this craft, as it not only requires a skill for the written language but an imagination that's captivating enough to draw readers along (willing-

ly) on a sometimes fantastic journey.



### SABRINA FALK

*Not Far from the Peach Tree* is the debut novel of Niverville resident Sabrina Falk. Published in early 2019, Falk's story follows the life of 22-year-old Abigail Hartley, a young woman with not much going for her.

When tragedy strikes the Hartley household, Abigail sets out, alongside her younger sister, to uncover the answers to years of family secrets that have just begun to surface.

While the story's primary characters are in their teens and early adulthood, the theme of the book is ubiquitous enough to draw in readers of all ages. By the final page, the power of forgiveness and the strength of the family bond will be the clear takeaway.

(continued on page 18)

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### Creative Arts Camp

July 6-10, 9:00-4:00, Ages 6-12

### Kinder Camp

July 13-16, 9:00-12:30, Ages 3-6, Cost \$65

### Holiday Camp

July 13-17, 1:00-4:30, Ages 6-12, Cost \$75

### H<sub>2</sub>O Camp

July 20-24, 9:00-4:00, Ages 6-12

### Animal Lovers Camp

July 27-31, 9:00-4:00, Ages 6-12

### Amazing Race Camp

August 4-7, 9:00-4:00, Ages 8-14

### Kinder Camp 2.0

August 10-13, 9:00-12:30, Ages 3-6, Cost \$65

### Science Camp

August 17-21, 9:00-4:00, Ages 6-12

### Day Camp

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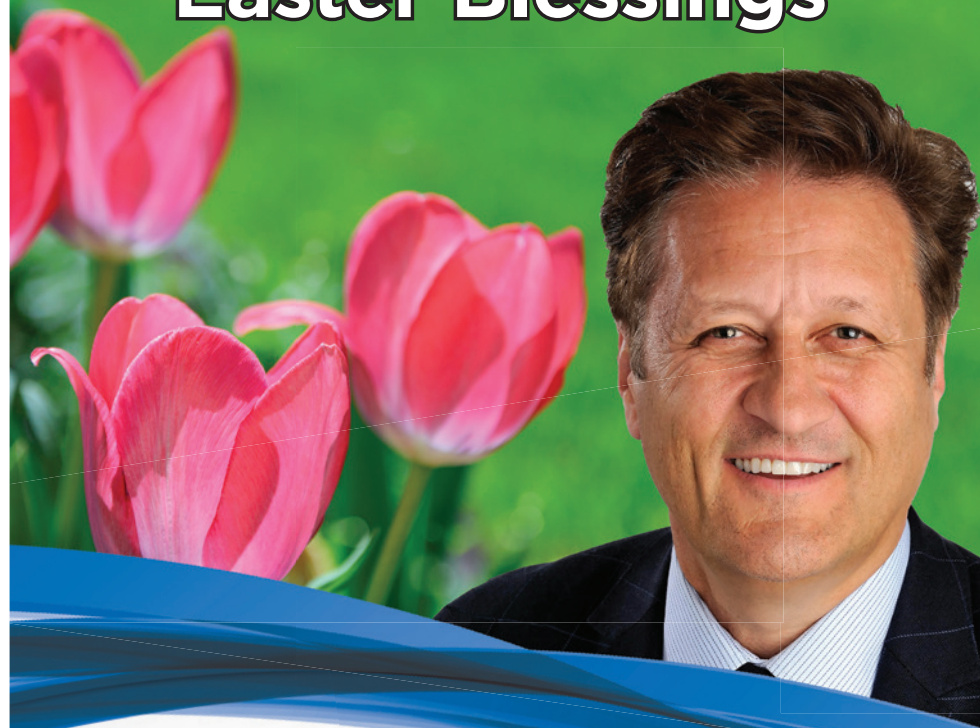
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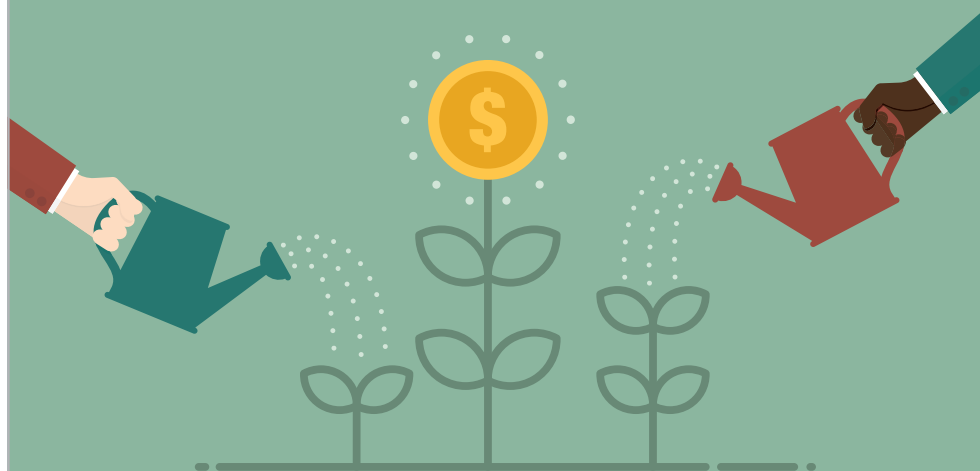
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## COVID-19 INFORMATION

The Town's Local Emergency Response Control Group has been meeting regularly to prepare for managing Niverville's response to COVID-19. Please visit <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/index.html> for the latest updates from the Province regarding the pandemic. For local updates on Niverville's response to COVID-19 please visit [www.whereyoubelong.ca](http://www.whereyoubelong.ca), the Town's Facebook page and Twitter @TONiverville.

For those who are vulnerable, under self-isolation or quarantine and in need of assistance during the pandemic such as picking up groceries or other essential supplies, please contact the Town at 204-388-4600 or [feedback@whereyoubelong.ca](mailto:feedback@whereyoubelong.ca) to request volunteer assistance. Please note that those requesting assistance will be asked to provide their contact information as well as confirm/clarify their need for assistance.

If you are interested and available to assist the Town's vulnerable population or any group within our community that is in need of assistance, please email [feedback@whereyoubelong.ca](mailto:feedback@whereyoubelong.ca) or call 204-388-4600 to be put on our volunteer call-out list. Please note you will be asked to provide contact information plus answer some questions of interest and availability. Thank you for your willingness to serve your community!

(continued from page 16)

"I definitely relate with my protagonist, Abigail, most of all," Falk says. "She's not me, but her struggles with anxiety hit close to home. I've always been a quiet, introverted type with social anxiety. I can get really in my head at times, so it was kind of cathartic writing that out."

In terms of the story's setting and interwoven relationship struggles, Falk worked with details that were familiar to her, including small-town living and a history of interesting family dynamics.



### SHERRY PETERS

Île-des-Chênes author Sherry Peters completed the final novel in her first fantasy trilogy in 2017. In this series, Peters dives right into the fantasy world of dwarfs and elves, focusing on one primary character named Mabel.

"Writing Mabel, having the opportunity to play with fantasy tropes and have fun with them, gave me the freedom to address something that all of us face: how to be ourselves when family and society expects us to be something else—married, with kids, looking a certain way, having a certain job or income, etc," says Peters.

The series, *The Ballad of Mabel Goldenaxe*, is available through Amazon and Kindle. The first book, *Mabel the Lovelorn Dwarf*, follows the ups and downs of a young female dwarf who just doesn't fit in. For Mabel, though, that's just the way she likes it.

But she must deal with an overbearing family, jealous friends, and deep family secrets on the road to her self-actualization.

In book two, *Mabel the Mafioso Dwarf*, the young protagonist finds herself a pawn of the Elven mafia. In this volume, betrayal, missteps, and intrigue threaten to stand in the way of the life Mabel seeks for herself.

The series concludes with her finding love and infamy as *Mabel the Notorious Dwarf*. But even while she's finally found love, and with her career soaring, Mabel is forced to navigate the mire of tumultuous relationships and betrayal that often come with achieving great things.

As well as writing, Peters also provides coaching services to aspiring writers. She's written two non-fiction books to assist new writers, *Silencing Your Inner Saboteur* and *Blueprint for Writing Success*.



### EVAN BRAUN

Our final fiction writer is none other than The Citizen's own Evan Braun, editor and journalist. In 2015, Braun completed his own fiction trilogy, *The Watchers Chronicle*. The series, he says, follows a genre he'd consider more supernatural thriller than fantasy.

"There's definitely a blend of genres in these books," Braun says. "The overarching story has been called a blend of *Indiana Jones* and *The DaVinci Code*, with the characters running around the world in an *Amazing Race*-style hunt for ancient artifacts, each one leading to

more and more compelling questions and mysteries. It's got suspense and a touch of science fiction. Regardless of how you might classify it, it's designed to serve as a sprawling, fast-paced adventure—and the last few years have shown that it appeals to a broad audience, from teenagers to senior citizens."

Braun says the inspiration for the series developed through brainstorming sessions he shared with a good friend, Clint Byars, who was instrumental in crafting the stories and is credited as a co-author.

The individual books in the series, *The Book of Creation*, *The City of Darkness*, and *The Law of Radiance*, share as their premise the possibility that our understanding of Earth's ancient history may, on some levels, be completely wrong.

"The books piece together puzzles of biblical origin and bring them into contact with some of the world's best-known mythologies," says Braun. "The events of the first book are kicked into motion with a paradigm-shifting discovery in the ruins of ancient Pompeii: a master index to the Library of Alexandria, from which no manuscripts are otherwise known to have survived. This hint at the content of that fabled library offers some tantalizing breadcrumbs for the novels' protagonists to chase after."

In the five years since his last novel was published, Braun's been busy with a new series of science fiction novels.

"There are three completed volumes so far, each standalones," Braun says. "I've been actively shopping them around the last few years to agents and editors at major publishing houses. Hopefully it's just a matter of time before they lead to my next big opportunity."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ You can find these authors and their books on online reading platforms such as Amazon and Kobo.

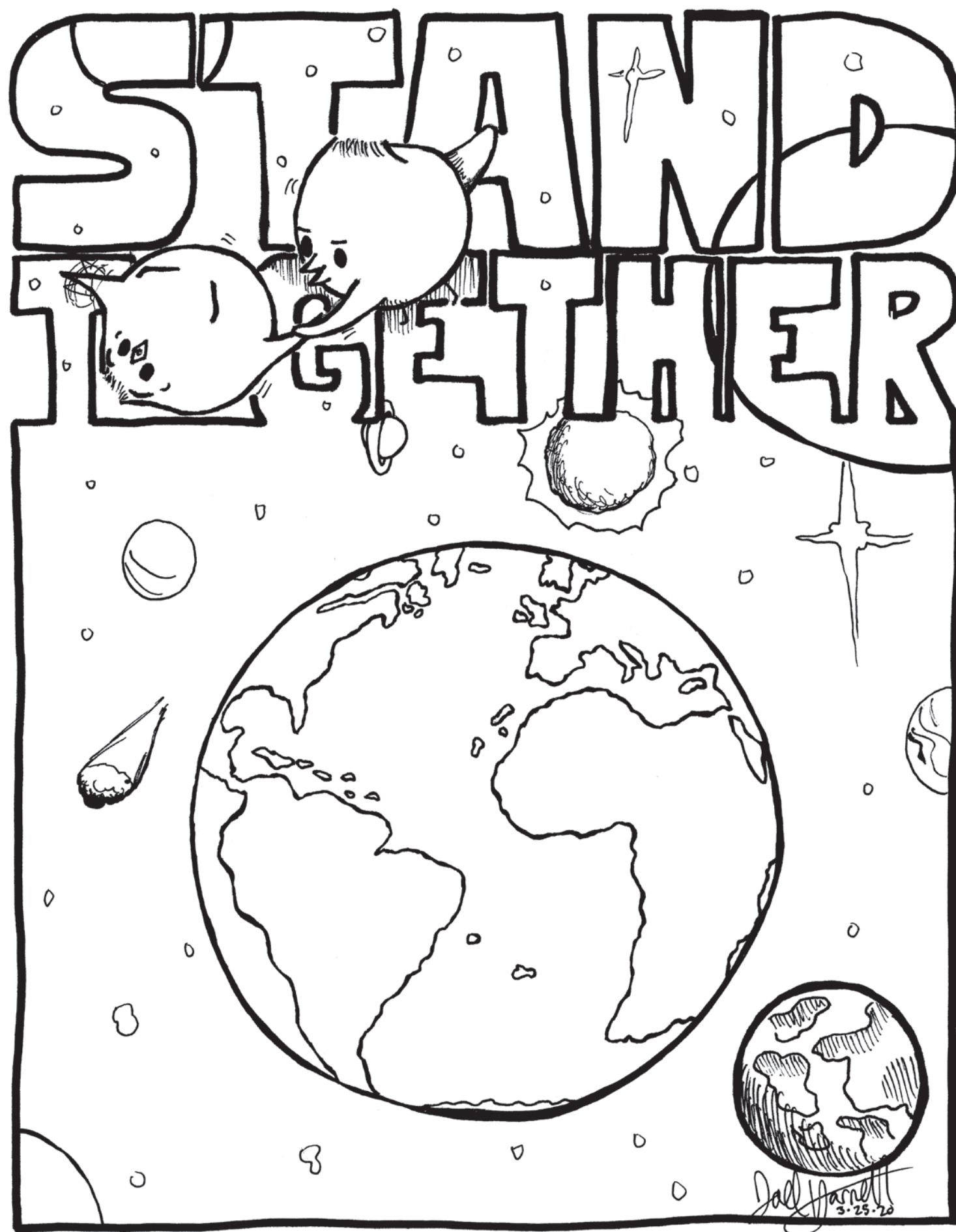


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## APRIL COLOURING CONTEST

### Colouring Contest Instructions

With past colouring contests, we've encouraged people to drop off their entries at local businesses. In this time of social distancing, we'll be running the contest more remotely.

To enter, simply scan or take a photo of your completed page, and upload it to The Citizen's Facebook or Instagram page. If you post it on your own page, be sure to tag us! You can also email your entry to us at: [info@nivervillecitizen.com](mailto:info@nivervillecitizen.com).

The prize will be a \$25 gift certificate at a local business of the winner's choice!

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Joel Harnett, a young artist in Niverville, has been discovering the power of storytelling through his art for years.

The ninth grader has been drawing ever since he was able to hold a pencil, starting out with smaller illustrations before progressing to larger drawings as he's gotten older and expanded his skills.

Like most artists, he has found a style that speaks to him, and tends to create characters and storylines within the comics genre.

While he's still young, Harnett is enjoying honing his craft and creating drawings and comics as a hobby. However, he already hopes to work in animation when he gets older.



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