

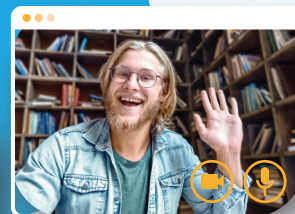
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LOCAL NEWS

Dual Pizza and Burger Restaurant Announced

■ A new Santa Lucia franchise will soon open in Niverville, alongside a restaurant that will specialize in burgers.

Details on Page 7



LOCAL NEWS

Farming and Climate Change

■ After enduring the same long, hot growing season, two local farmers—one with a large operation and one with a small farm—both sat down to talk with *The Citizen* about the challenges of facing changing weather patterns in the rural southeast.

Details on Pages 8-10

LOCAL NEWS

Food Bank Preps for a Busy Season

■ Helping Hands talks food insecurity and growing need.

Details on Page 18-19

SPORTS & REC

Teenage WHL Draftee Launches Junior Career

■ Evan Groening of Niverville has signed with the Brandon Wheat Kings, and is starting the season playing MJHL in Virden.

Details on Page 23



READ MORE ON PAGES 16-17

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The Town has many new and familiar Fall Programs for children and adults!

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and to register for upcoming programs and events.

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The Citizen

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Niverville/Ritchot, Other Communities Exempted from Capacity Restrictions

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

On October 26, the provincial government extended the current public health orders for an additional three weeks—although there are many reasons to expect that these orders, or similar iterations of them, will remain in place through the winter.

One major change, however, does affect our local area. Last month, due to rising COVID-19 infections in the southern part of the province, the province placed 50 percent capacity restrictions on retail in all regions of Southern Health as a whole.

As those rules first came into effect, Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck called for the province to reconsider its broad regional approach.

He called on Dr. Brent Roussin, the province's chief provincial health officer, to meet with him and discuss the reality that some health districts within Southern Health do, in fact, have vaccination rates at or above the provincial average.

Dyck's concern was that this rule would force local businesses to take a financial hit unnecessarily. He also cited the rule as being a hardship to the staff who are required to enforce it.

In general, he felt that Niverville was being unfairly penalized for being associated with its rural neighbours.

That message did ultimately get through, and after a period of consultation the province agreed to waive the 50 percent capacity rule for several regions within Southern Health with high vaccination rates.

The health district of Niverville-Ritchot (with 83.4 percent vaccine uptake), as well as the municipalities of Tache, Macdonald, Headingley, Cartier, and St. Francois Xavier, will be allowed to return to full retail capacity.

"Treating these municipalities like Winnipeg makes sense, given their stronger vaccination rates as



Dr. Brent Roussin.

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

well as their daily commute and close proximity to the city," says Dr. Roussin. "We need Manitobans across the province to step up and be vaccinated against COVID-19. We continue to monitor several indicators such as vaccination rates, test positivity rate, case counts, and the strain on our health system to determine our next steps and make contingency plans if needed."

All other public orders remain unchanged.

The orders continue to allow fully vaccinated Manitobans to enjoy as much freedom and as few restrictions as possible, while unvaccinated individuals continue to be restricted in their activities in order to reduce transmission and the most serious outcomes of COVID-19 infection.

As a reminder, the current orders are as follows:

- limiting private indoor gatherings for households to guests from one other household when any unvaccinated person who is eligible to be vaccinated is present on the property (even if the unvaccinated person lives at that location).
- limiting private outdoor gatherings for households to 10 guests when any unvaccinated person who is eligible to be vaccinated is present on the property (even if the unvaccinated person lives at that location).
- reducing indoor public

gathering group sizes to 25 people or 25 percent capacity, whichever is lower, for gatherings that include unvaccinated people who are eligible to be vaccinated, including weddings and funerals.

- setting indoor group sizes for faith-based gatherings to 25 people or 33 percent capacity, whichever is greater, for gatherings that include unvaccinated people who are eligible to be vaccinated.

- limiting all outdoor public gathering sizes to 50 people.

- retail capacity remains at 50 percent in the Southern Health-Santé Sud health region with the exception of capital region communities to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in this region.

The new orders will remain in place until November 16, at which time they will be re-evaluated.

"Manitoba must stay vigilant in our fight against COVID-19 and the fourth wave," says Audrey Gordon, Manitoba's Minister of Health. "Our case numbers, hospital admissions and ICU numbers continue to fluctuate but we need to remain steadfast in our approach with the current public health orders we have in place. We know that vaccination works. Currently, the vast majority of hospitalizations and ICU admissions are people who are unvaccinated. To fully bring an end to the pandemic, we all need to do our part and get vaccinated."

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EnVision: Helping Those with Intellectual Disabilities Thrive

By Jennifer Lavin

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Although there are those who don't know about enVision Community Living, chances are many do know somebody whose life has been impacted by their work.

EnVision, a non-profit headquartered in Steinbach but which operates throughout the southeast, has a mandate to provide support to those with intellectual disabilities.

The organization was founded in 1956 by a group of parents. At that time, they were known as the Association for Community Living, Steinbach Branch. Parenting a child with special needs can be overwhelming, and the group formed to lend each other support through the challenges and joys of raising their special kids.

The ACL dreamt of seeing their children live and thrive in the community, and so the first thing they did was set up a school to provide their kids basic education. At the time, there was no government mandate to provide any schooling to children with intellectual differences.

In 1967, the Manitoba government changed their policy to require that all children receive an education regardless of special needs.

The ACL then widened their mandate to provide vocational support to young adults who were graduating from high school.

In 1973, the group inaugurated Kindale Manor in

Steinbach to provide a home for special needs adults. After that, they began offering other services, leading to 2008 when they changed their name to enVision Community Living.

Today, residential services are a cornerstone of the organization, and a core value. Through enVision homes, adults with intellectual disabilities can either live alone or with up to three roommates based on their needs. Services in these community homes can range from independent living all the way to 24/7 staff support.

So far, these homes are operating in Niverville, Steinbach, St. Pierre-Jolys, LaBroquerie, and Ste. Anne.

MORE THAN BASIC CARE

Jeannette DeLong is enVision's executive director, and she explains that they provide more than just basic care.

"Although a lot of our work involves caregiving and supporting people with many areas of their daily living, a very important focus of our work is about helping people to get connected to their communities, finding places of belonging and interest, and developing and maintaining relationships," says DeLong. "The people we support have historically been excluded from community life and community members don't always know how to include them. Our role is to help facilitate this inclusion and belonging."

With supported independent living, the organization



Jeannette DeLong, enVision's executive director.

ENVISION

offers support of two to 35 hours a week to enable adults with intellectual disabilities to live in their own home. They receive help with maintenance, laundry, cleaning, and other household duties.

EnVision also helps their clients with budgeting and understanding and meeting their own nutritional needs.

Another option is shared living, in which clients are placed in a home where they live as a member of a family. The person is matched with an individual, couple, or family who shares common interests with them.

For families with a special needs member, enVision offers respite services, to

give caretakers a temporary break from their responsibilities. Respite can be a regular occurrence or just happen occasionally. It can be facilitated anywhere, including at enVision's dedicated respite apartment.

They also provide day services, through two operations in Steinbach, Edith's Place and the Martha P. Rempel Centre.

Finally, there's a retirement program that offers daytime opportunities for senior citizens to participate in a variety of leisure, recreational, volunteer, learning, and social activities in the community.

EnVision's wide scope of support means they are also a major employer of

residents throughout southeast Manitoba.

Niverville itself has four residential locations housing eight individuals. Roughly 40 employees work in these homes.

COMMUNITY VALUE

Lindsay Unrau, who lives in Niverville and serves as the organization's fundraising and promotions coordinator, has made it her mission to help the people of her community understand how valuable the organization is to the entire region.

Unrau explains that on top of providing services for intellectually challenged people, and employment, enVision is a boon in other ways.

"Our staff facilitate community participation and contribution through supporting people to maintain employment, access to local recreational facilities, active participation in local churches, supporting local restaurants, and generally participating in all that Niverville has to offer," says Unrau. "EnVision also supports the local economy by purchasing the majority of its needed goods and services locally."

The majority of enVision's day-to-day operating dollars come from grants through the provincial government's Department of Families.

These grants don't provide for everything, though, and that's where the enVision Foundation comes in.

"The Foundation does fundraising for the benefit of enVision Community Living,"

says Unrau, "thus providing grants for capital and demonstration projects that add significantly to enVision's range or quality of services."

Fran Giesbrecht is the mother of a long-term client of enVision, and she says that her son Mark has been part of the enVision family for 16 years.

Mark started attending the day program at Edith's Place when he was 21, and a few years after that he was accepted into the residential program. He now lives in a community living home in Niverville with two other men. The home is staffed 24/7 by enVision community support workers.

"Mark has become much more interactive," Giesbrecht says of how enVision has helped her son. "His communication skills have improved and he has developed his own sense of independence."

Giesbrecht adds that in many ways the transition was more difficult for her than it was for Mark.

"I would be lying if I said it was easy to let go and allow perfect strangers to look after my son's daily physical needs," she says. "Today I can say that it was the best decision we could have made for Mark and for us as a family. He is happy and cared for, loving his life. We can enjoy spending time with him, without needing to follow his daily routines... EnVision has been so supportive walking us through this transition."

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Few Local Services Impacted by Vaccine Impact

By Sara Beth Dacombe
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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On October 18, Manitoba's provincial government brought in a vaccine mandate for frontline workers. Public employees in education, licensed day-cares, hospitals, and other workplaces are now required to be fully vaccinated or undergo regular COVID-19 testing.

In our corner of the rural southeast, the Heritage Life Personal Care Home and nearby school divisions are so far reporting minimal disruptions to frontlines services.

Wes Hildebrand, CEO of Finance and Human Resources at Heritage Life, says that the PCH's staffing situation has been largely unaffected and communication surrounding the vaccine mandate has gone smoothly.

"I would definitely say, for the most part, that communication for all levels has been good," says Hildebrand. "I've been very thankful for the leadership in Southern Health for guiding us through some of the wording of the different public health orders that have been rapidly changing at times throughout all of this. So they have been able to convey what they saw coming and what they needed to be changed. On campus, we have a COVID committee made up of different leaders from all the areas of the campus, so we've been able to communicate to staff all around the campus and been able to disseminate what needs to be done. There were a few questions we heard, not about what needed to be done really, but about what it all meant when it came into effect."

Hildebrand says that the staff is prepared to continue serving effectively as Manitoba continues to face the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"On Monday or Tuesday, there was some information presented that it was believed we were only at



the beginning of this fourth wave, and it might only be burgeoning, based on the numbers we're seeing on a daily basis in Manitoba," says Hildebrand.

The PCH saw one outbreak in January 2021, but Hildebrand says the staff members are the ones to thank for keeping the centre safe.

"Other than the outbreak at the beginning of the year, we've had no reflection to date as to the virus impacting any of our residents since then. I think we've done well," says Hildebrand. "I have an incredibly awesome staff. I know I'm not the one in the rooms on a daily basis, and I am only one person, so I know they are the ones keeping everyone safe."

One employee who works at the PCH agreed with Hildebrand, saying there are very few staff members who have refused vaccination and the staff is all working hard to prevent any incidents of COVID transmission.

"We are short-staffed, but that happens in cycles so I don't feel it is related to [the vaccination mandate]," says the staff person, who requested to remain anonymous. "No one is being fired and there are only a handful of employees that aren't vaccinated. We've always been encouraged to get the shot, even the flu shot, but we've never been forced or talked down to by management. Most staff here have had firsthand experience with COVID when we had our outbreak, so we know how awful it is and want to do

what we can to prevent it."

STAFFING IMPACT IN SCHOOLS

The low vaccination rate in the Hanover health district has left many to wonder if the vaccine mandate coming into effect would impact staffing numbers in the Hanover School Division at large.

While the vaccination rate for eligible Manitobans is around 52 percent in the Hanover health district, the Hanover School Division says that about 85 percent of their staff are fully vaccinated and more than 90 percent of teachers in particular are vaccinated.

"Eight-five percent of our regular staff are fully vaccinated," confirms Shelley Amos, interim superintendent for the HSD. "The percentage reported is based upon a total of 1,100 staff."

Amos has also confirmed that the flow of communication with staff has been timely and clear as to information about the vaccine mandate and regular testing options for staff who aren't vaccinated.

"HSD remains committed to keeping our employees updated and informed with any new information as soon as it becomes available," adds Amos. "Internal communications are detailed, transparent, and ongoing. As always, the Hanover School Division will continue to follow the public health orders and

Manitoba Education guidance to ensure the safety of our students, staff, and school communities. Working together, we can keep the risk of transmission low in our schools, which will help keep our schools open for in-class learning."

The pandemic has impacted Manitoba education dramatically for about 20 months and Amos says that the staff are hopeful as the province faces a fourth wave.

"Our staff are committed to providing the best education possible and have worked diligently to adapt their work/teaching environment to meet the needs of our students and their families," she says. "I continue to articulate pride in the HSD team. The work is both challenging and fulfilling. The pandemic has impacted all areas of our work and personal lives. We hope for brighter days in the months ahead."

In the Seine River School Division, the one area experiencing a staffing challenge right now is transportation. Specifically in the Lorette and La Broquerie areas, many bus routes have been cancelled due to a lack of bus drivers.

Parents were left scrambling after receiving an alert from the division on October 18 saying that many bus routes would be cancelled beginning the following day due to driver shortages. Formal communication with parents did not give a reason for the

bus driver shortage and the division stated that many other divisions have been struggling to staff enough bus drivers.

However, co-superintendent Simon Laplante confirmed that they did have some bus drivers go on leave due to the vaccine mandate.

"We're trying to be open with our parents," says Laplante. "Bus transportation is an issue with just about every division right now. Bus drivers are retiring, getting new jobs, different jobs, moving on. People will say it's because of the testing, but it's not just that. The [required COVID] testing does have an impact, and some don't want to be tested, so it is an issue, too. Yes, we have had bus drivers go on leave."

Regardless of the impacts of the province's vaccine mandate, Laplante says it seems to be more and more difficult to get applicants to fill vacancies in the transportation department. He says that the school division is actively seeking bus drivers and will provide the training and driving test fees required.

Laplante also wants to thank parents for their understanding during this transportation challenge.

"The parents have been responsive and amazing," he says. "They are organizing themselves to do carpooling, which is appreciated. We appreciate their support immensely."

While transportation has been disrupted, Laplante says that frontline teaching and other staff positions have not experienced the same challenges.

"There has been very little classroom disruption," Laplante adds. "I won't talk about teacher vaccination rate specifically, but we are at 93 percent for staff-wide vaccination. What's happening in the school is we are keeping our children safe and prioritizing their education and our staff is doing their best to ensure that happens."



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Local Developers Announce New Commercial Strip Mall

By Jennifer Lavin

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One of the last residential homes on Main Street Niverville is set to be demolished to make room for another commercial strip mall. The local real estate development team of Ray and Cara Dowse, along with brothers Jeremy and Colan Braun, is poised to transform 31 Main Street.

Ray Dowse says that the new building will have 4,960 square feet, divided into three retail units. He also owns 41

Main Street, right next door.

"Upon completion, 31 Main Street will have a similar look and feel to the completed next door at 41 Main Street, where BSI Insurance and Urban Flavours are operating," Dowse says.

There will be a joint parking lot for both buildings and a single access from Main Street.

"The combined commercial site will offer a total of six commercial units and 13,325 square feet of space in two separate buildings," he adds.

Dowse hopes to start construction

of 31 Main Street by the end of this year and anticipates completing the building in the late spring.

At that point, the new commercial renters will be able to start finishing out their respective units.

One of those three new units has already been scooped by Dean Delorme of Niverville and Kos Simeonidis, the primary owner of Santa Lucia Pizza. They will occupy the unit at the far west end of the new building.

They will be opening a takeout-only Santa Lucia location with a 12-seat

patio.

"As landlord," Dowse says, "it has been great working with the Santa Lucia team to develop a site and space that will meet their long-term needs in the community."

News on other tenants and businesses will be coming soon. Dowse is already working with two additional businesses to rent the remaining units.

"We are optimistic that things will become official with them in the coming months," he says, "so we can begin construction by the end of the year."

The Town of Niverville requires that 31 Main Street provide 25 parking stalls and that 41 Main Street provide 41 stalls. These 66 total stalls will be spread out as 11 street parking spots, 55 spots in parking lots behind and between the two buildings, plus eight additional spots in the back lot, if needed.

"It is really exciting to work together with all of these different entrepreneurs and organizations and help bring their plans to reality," Dowse says.

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An Environment Act Proposal has been filed by Terraco for the construction and operation of an agrichemical warehouse located on private land at SE ¼ 28-8-4 EPM in the R.M. of Richot, near Iles des Chenes. The development will consist of a 12 by 18 meter warehouse that will store various herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and other pest control products.

Anyone likely to be affected by the above operation and who wishes to comment on the proposal should contact Krystal Penner, Pesticide and Agricultural Program Specialist, in writing or by email at Krystal.Penner@gov.mb.ca not later than December 2, 2021. Further information is available from the Online Public Registry: www.gov.mb.ca/sd/eal/registries

Information submitted in response to this proposal is considered public information and will be made available to the proponent and placed on the public registry established in accordance with Section 17 of The Environment Act.

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Manitoba 

Dual Restaurant to Serve Up Pizza, Burgers, and More

By Jennifer Lavin

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Construction on the new commercial strip mall at 31 Main Street in Niverville hasn't even begun yet, but the storefronts are quickly being snapped up.

Santa Lucia Pizza will be moving in once the building is complete—and they'll be opening alongside an as-yet-unnamed burger place.

The two restaurants are the brainchild of lifelong best friends Kosmas Simeonidis and Dean Delorme.

Simeonidis, who has been an active member of the Winnipeg business community for years, is the owner of the very successful Santa Lucia Pizza chain.

His interest extends beyond pizza, though. Last year, he opened a George's Burgers in Steinbach.

These two restaurants have been doing so well that Delorme suggested that the two men team up and find a town in which to open both restaurants together.

Delorme and Simeonidis considered several towns and locations, but Delorme had his eye on Niverville.

After meeting with developer Ray Dowse, the owner of 31 Main Street, Delorme realized they had found their spot.

"I decided to open in Niverville because the people here deserve the best pizza!" Simeonidis says. "But honestly, [we have been doing this for] 50 years, so we must be doing something right."

Simeonidis's parents were part of the original Santa Lucia team when it started in Thompson—and he wants



Kosmas Simeonidis.



Dean Delorme.

to carry on the family tradition.

He says that he's excited to become part of the community of Niverville and to create jobs as well.

He's also looking forward to teaching young cooks to become great chefs.

Santa Lucia Pizza and the burger restaurant will start to feel more tangible to residents once construction of building begins, which is expected in December. The team hopes to open their doors in August 2022.

Delorme estimates that they'll hire 15 people from the community. He speculates that he will need at least six delivery drivers alone.

It's a bit awkward to talk about the

burger restaurant before it has a name, but Delorme temporarily is referring to it as "Kos's Burgers."

As for an official name, they have some more concrete ideas. He's also pondering the possibility of holding a naming contest in which the winner gets a gift card for the establishment.

All told, Simeonidis and Delorme feel that they have a unique concept. Their dual restaurants will have take-out and delivery as well as a 12-seat patio. In appropriate weather, they will also have a walk-up window where customers can grab a slice of pizza or hard ice cream cone.

Delorme is especially excited

about the menu. Of course there will be pizza. After all, Santa Lucia's pizza has been voted best pizza in Winnipeg every year since 2007 by the Consumer Choice Awards.

But Santa Lucia also features an extensive menu of very popular Greek dishes.

As for the burger place, he says they'll have seven or eight different burgers, and the same number of poutines.

They'll also sell gyros—and not just any gyros but, according to Delorme, "the best gyros you've ever tasted."

Simeonidis adds that the menu will include Brokenhead sausages.

He and three of his friends have purchased the Brokenhead processing plant and will be taking advantage of the product in their restaurants.

"Brokenhead are makers of fine quality sausages and our beef patties will come from there also," Simeonidis says. "The smokies are gluten-free, MSG-free, all-natural, and Manitoba-made."

The menu will offer vegetarian items, as well as keto-friendly options.

Delorme says they're considering adding cheesecake, traditional Greek baklava, and a classic Filipino dessert called turon.

Even before the restaurant begins, they've already nailed down their eventual hours. They'll open at 11:00 a.m. and close at midnight, seven days a week. From 9:00 p.m. until closing, they anticipate offering a limited menu of pizza and appetizers.

Delorme says that in the future he wonders if he and Simeonidis may be able to run a shack in the new CRRC during hockey games and other events. There are already plans for liquor sales in the facility, and he figures people may very likely want to buy a slice of pizza to go with it.

Delorme and his family live in Mitchell, but that they are excited to get to know Niverville better. He's chatty, charismatic, and wants to use that skillset to volunteer locally and do what he can to become an active business owner in town. He hopes to participate in local fundraisers, too.

"I am happy to hear all the positive comments that Santa is coming to town," Simeonidis says in closing. "We're just like Santa Clause!"

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Farming and Climate Change

Supporting Producers while Encouraging Sustainability

By Sara Beth Dacombe
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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Around the world, climate change is affecting the way humans grow food.

Farming has always been highly dependent on weather conditions and the length of the growing season, and it takes both knowledge and experience to determine when to plant which crops and where.

Even experienced farmers have no guaranteed formula for success.

Although the Canadian prairies are sometimes called the breadbasket of the world, local farmers are not unaffected by changing climate trends.

In fact, they are in the midst of ongoing discussions surrounding agricultural practices right here at home and how farming in our area both contributes to and is affected by climate change.

Many are facing these changes with openness and curiosity. Others find it difficult to engage in climate discussions without feeling anxiety for the future. Still others actively look for ways to introduce new initiatives to their farms. And of course there are those who are resistant to change and prefer to do things the way they have always done them.

All of them desire to continue feeding the local and global community more effectively, while making sure that viable farmland remains healthy for generations to come.

THE LONG HOT SUMMER

Marc Loeppky and Holly Lamont are two farmers from southeast Manitoba.



Holly Lamont and her two children.

While Loeppky works a large-scale operation and Lamont owns a small family farm, their reflections on climate change come at time when both have just come through the same growing season that brought the concurrent challenges of high temperatures, low rainfall, and long periods of strong wind.

It hasn't been an easy ride, any any means.

"The 2021 growing season was a rollercoaster," says Lamont, who owns ten acres between Highway 311 and Prefontaine Road about four miles west of Highway 59. "There was quite a bit of wind erosion in this area for people who had tilled in the fall of 2020, leaving all that topsoil loose, and then 2020 also had a windy winter with not as much snow cover. So by spring our topsoil had been tossed around. That was a lesson for us."

Lamont and her husband have owned their property for four years since moving from Saskatchewan.

Both have post-secondary degrees in agriculture and have worked hard to put that education to use when developing their approach to farming.

"This spring, we had started off with thinking that much of our seeds would not germinate due to being overly saturated early on," she says. "Then it started to dry up and we saw some plants—first our cucumbers, then pumpkins—start to emerge. There wasn't much emerging, so I kind of thought that our season was going to be very minimal."

The Lamonts' farm doesn't provide a full-time income stream for the family.

In fact, the pair only started the farm very recently, when Lamont decided to stay home after having taken a maternity leave.



Marc Loeppky and his two daughters.

"Well, then it got really hot," Lamont says. "Those little seeds began to emerge like crazy. All of a sudden we had all these cotyledons showing and so I filled up our water truck and started watering. Then it stayed warm for quite some time and things began to get too dry."

Lamont says they tried to keep up with the watering, but that wasn't sustainable.

Another challenge was the grasshoppers that showed up to eat most of the flowers as they appeared.

"Again, I thought we would have nothing. The flowers were eaten pretty badly and it just looked quite sad out there."

In farming, patience is often rewarded, and eventually things turned around. With a couple shots of rain, the plants came back.

With the warm weather extending into mid-October, they ended up having a high

yield.

Considering their small acreage, the Lamonts were able to sufficiently water their rows with a flatbed truck holding two large tanks of water.

"We use a fire hose setup and drive up and down the rows watering our plants," she says. "It's a little backwoods, but it does the trick and we have a lot of fun with it. We make sure to seed our rows far enough apart that we can drive the truck down the rows and have room to turn around on the headlands."

On Loeppky's land, a larger farm immediately south of Niverville, they experienced the same dry conditions.

However, Loeppky was able to identify an upside: no rain meant no wet mud, a real drain on time and energy for big operations.

"We were dry, there's no doubt about that," says Loeppky. "We're already behind the eight-ball on

moisture for next year. But there have been benefits, too... In the Red River Valley, there's about ten days from the ground thaw to when you should be done putting in your seed. If it's too wet, it's muddy and you can't seed. So this year, we didn't have that problem."

Overall, Loeppky refrained from calling it a drought year.

Although he does go on to describe the great degree to which crops in this area struggled under the oppressive heat.

"If it doesn't rain in a July like it did this year, it doesn't have to be called a drought, like as a blanket statement," he says. "This year we didn't have the rain in July, so it was dry. We saw slow growth, very slow, but if you caught one little rain shower, it changed things drastically. It took a 50 percent crop to an 80 percent crop in one rainfall. So I would say the season went well; yield is always your biggest gauge as to how the season went."

With little to no rain at midseason, Loeppky says that the farmers already knew what kind of yields they would be harvesting off the fields...

...and they were bracing themselves for the worst.

Loeppky acknowledges that the immediate area had it better than some other parts of Manitoba.

His farm ended up gleaned about 60 percent of what they would normally get.

"Soybeans were surprisingly okay, and some did well on spring wheat," Loeppky says. "Canola was by far the worst hit by the heat and lack of rain. It was spotty."

Despite the lower yields, Loeppky expresses optimism that the fall soil conditions



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aren't any worse than they already are.

"We really are one year away from a bumper crop or one year away from a drought at any given time, and so we don't worry about that," he says. "We've had a good long and proper fall and we've had time to get our fields in as best a condition as we possibly can. The soil is dry on top but is showing signs of holding moisture further down where we need it. So I would say that summer was hot, and our yields were down, but the harvest was decent."

CHANGING PATTERNS

Manitoba weather is known for its unpredictability.

It is well known that the degree of snow accumulation during the winter often dramatically influences the upcoming summer's moisture levels.

But sometimes a dry winter is followed by an early spring snowstorm that delays seeding, threatening the whole growing season's sensitive planting, growing, and harvesting timeline.

Managing these uncertainties is no easy feat.

According to a report from the Prairie Climate Centre, "Manitoba's climate is changing, and the province is projected to continue to warm much faster than the global average—a product of the region's northern latitude and continental geography. These changes are likely to have very large impacts on the province and its people."¹

Upon studying data that stems back as far as 1976, the report forecasts that in a high-carbon scenario parts of Manitoba will continue to experience large shifts in climate, the widespread effects of which are already being

seen.

In the coming decades, regions all across the southern part of Manitoba should expect to see approximately 36 more days above 30°C per year, about 15 more 20°C nights, and 33 more frost-free days.

Climate models show that Manitoba's winters will get shorter as well, resulting in a longer growing season.

This is expected to lead to new opportunities in agriculture.

However, the longer growing season will also come with higher temperatures, which will increase the risk of drought, crop heat stress, and pest problems.

Science-based flood and drought predictions help, but weather models don't always get it right.

One thing they do reveal, however, is that extreme weather in Canada is here to stay.²

"If I think back 15 years, I was in college studying agriculture. And I can't say for sure if I remember that it rained more or if growing conditions were different back then," says Lamont, who studied livestock production in Alberta. "Recently, I do remember more snow in October than we have had for the past couple of years. But it's hard for me to say for sure. This year it didn't seem like we had many storms. Last year seemed stormier to me. What I do know for sure is that the experts and people who do pay attention and study weather patterns and climate change are saying that change is happening. They are saying that the earth is warming up. I believe it is."

Lamont has noticed that the patterns are changing.

She says that spring seems

to come a little later than it used to and fall seems to stay a little longer.

Even though people tend to say we've had plenty of "wonky" weather like this in the past, she says that it's really critical to acknowledge when the changes show themselves to be consistent over long periods of time.

Loeppky doesn't necessarily feel like there have been enough years to demonstrate a pattern of consistent enough weather changes to impact his seeding or harvesting schedules.

At least, not yet.

"When things are changing, and you can see it, it makes things real. We know things are changing. We all see the black topsoil blowing."

Marc Loeppky | Local Farmer

"The spring doesn't seem to be coming much earlier, and so we've found that you can't really push your spring-time plant any earlier," he says. "In the fall, yes, we've noticed a longer and longer fall. But it's not dependable. Typically, our first frost would be October 13, or around there, and we've seen that change a bit. We went almost a month beyond our concern for first frost this year, which is remarkable. But who's to say we don't get an August frost next year? We still can get an early frost in Manitoba, and one year or two years isn't enough to start putting in seeds counting on a long frost... the risk is still too great."

When it comes to other risks, severe storms didn't pose much of a threat this past summer.

But southern Manitoba, positioned at the northern-most tip of tornado alley, has experienced devastating storm damage to crops in previous years.

There may not have been rain washouts and hail, but most farms experienced an increase in soil erosion.

"One of my biggest concerns right now in regards to our operation is wind erosion," says Lamont. "It does seem that the wind has been exceptionally persistent these past two years, and that comes with huge concerns. It strips away the fertile topsoil and

does countless other damage. There are better ways to preserve and care for the soil and I'm trying to learn to work with the land rather than against it."

Along with most Manitobans, Loeppky has seen all the ditches turn black from the thick layers of dirt being blown in from fields.

"Topsoil loss has been very concerning. I've observed it a lot," he says. "Wet earth doesn't blow, but dry dirt does. So we know it's been dry for a few years. We've gone through many seasons where it's been wet, too, and the dirt doesn't blow. But when things are changing, and you can see it, it makes things real. We know things are changing. We all see the black topsoil blowing."

Loeppky points out that

the last time the Red River Valley had a long dry spell was back in the 1980s.

Since it's been quite a long while since those drought years, seeing the recent dry weather and blowing soil does start to make people feel anxious.

"WE KNOW OUR DIRT"

Loeppky acknowledges that many farmers like to talk about the weather, but it can be difficult for many big farm owners to talk openly about the larger issue of climate change.

"I'm not a fan of the term climate change," he admits. "I'm not a climate denier by any means, but it's a challenging thing to talk about without people going really negative, really fast."

He feels that the finger of public perception—and the political policy changes that tend to go along with it—often points unfairly at agriculture, blaming food producers for the effects of climate change and expecting them to bear the responsibility to change.

"Farming doesn't change on a dime," Loeppky says. "The political pressure of zero emissions or cutting rates of fertilizing, it's in some areas going to be easy to do and in some areas it won't be easy to do. There will be negative effects of putting those policy changes onto farms, too. From a major food producing area, we will tell you, some of the things that are proposed or handed down to us, that's not the way to produce more food. It's frustrating when people say, 'You should go organic, you should go zero till.' But we know our dirt. That's how we make our living... What works in another area may work and then we try it and it doesn't

work in Manitoba."

SUSTAINABILITY

Agricultural experts and hobbyists alike have been finding that some plants previously known to be ill-suited to our cold continental climate are now able to be grown more successfully here.

Like peas, for example. The hearty plant is known to endure heat better than other crops.

"In 2016–18, we never would've tried peas in the Red River Valley in our heavy dirt," Loeppky says. "But now some of us in the area have been trying it more and more. But with my luck, I'll plant them in spring and then it will be a wet year."

Being able to grow new types of crops might be seen as a silver lining, which has led to some Manitobans developing an attitude of acceptance, downplaying or even rejoicing in the effects of climate change.

After all, in our area of the world, not all the farming changes related to climate change are necessarily negative.

And indeed, it is hard to argue with a field that boasts blossoms and bears fruit.

"I mean, selfishly, I'd love to say that I appreciate the extended warm weather because my garden, my flowers, and our field of pumpkins and other produce grew right up to last week," says Lamont. "Vibrant colours, fresh veggies, lots of life in the fields... It's nice to see."

But Lamont says that she understands the short-term benefit from experiencing these small thrills has a long-term detrimental effect on us all.

(continued on page 10)



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IN BRIEF

Manitoba Gets First Female Premier

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Manitoba has a new premier. Members of the Progressive Conservative party concluded a two-month campaign to choose a new leader, and by extension premier-designate, with the result being announced on Saturday, October 30.

It was a close contest, with Heather Stefanson narrowly edging out rival Shelly Glover by 8,405 votes to 8,042, a difference of just two percent.

It was a historic race between the two women to determine which would become Manitoba's first female first minister.

Stefanson is a long-serving member of the provincial government, having served as MLA of Tuxedo for 21 years. Most recently, she served as Minister of Health, a position from which she stepped down in the spring.

The race was not without controversy. Of the 25,000 party members eligible to vote for the leader, approximately 1,200 say that they never received a ballot.

On November 1, Glover announced that she planned to contest the result of the election, citing fluctuating vote counts on the day of the final announcement.

According to some legal analysts, the only entity to which she could appeal is the PC party itself, which oversaw the vote.

Stefanson was sworn in as premier on Tuesday, November 2.

(continued from page 9)

"I see climate change as a threat and not beneficial at all," she says. "Because we live in Manitoba, we get excited for that extension of warm weather, but in other parts of the world the extra warm weather means wildfires and rising sea levels. Eventually that catches up to us here in Manitoba, too."

It has been a learning opportunity for Lamont to witness firsthand all the regular practices that are in place here in Manitoba agriculture. For example, she has had frequent offers from her farming neighbours to help out by spraying her crops as they pass by with their machinery.

She says that she is very much thankful for these offers, which exhibit an intrinsic desire for neighbours to show support for one another, but she has so far been committed to being pesticide-free.

Lamont wants to see if a small farm can produce food while keeping its environmental impact as low as possible.

"We are small growers," she says of their operation. "In that, though, we have sure learned that small acres doesn't mean small impact. It's been a lot of fun and learning to be able to farm less, better. We don't have the opportunity to farm on a big scale here, so we have learned to take account of every plant, every vegetable harvested, and it just feels really personal and intimate. I think there is something to be said for growing food this way."

For Lamont, it's not just about putting food on the table right now, but to encourage all farmers—and all families—to talk about what it means, and what can be done, to ensure that there will be healthy and sustainable ways for farms to produce food for generations to come.

"I think that we all need to put climate change in the forefront of our thoughts these days, in everything we do, from the small to the big," she adds. "Being a mom, with two young children that I hope get the chance to grow up

in a healthy, safe, and sustainable world, I try to do better and learn how to be a better advocate for the environment. I think that it's also important to teach our children the importance, too."

RISK VS. REWARD

For Loeppky's larger operation, doing things in new ways is a lot more costly an investment at the outset and a lot riskier if the innovations don't work.

That being said, even though change is hard, he is not at all opposed to it and has seen some good changes come to the industry.

"Climate change discussion and the government policies have definitely caused some innovation and changes to come to large-scale farming," Loeppky says. "The pressure to change might be tough. You fight it a little bit, especially if you have been at it

So we've been learning from them, and they've learned not to turn their crop over as much. Yes, we want to work the leftover growth into the ground and we also want to have a nice seedbed for next year, so we used to run the fields a number of passes... With the weather changing the way it has, you have to adapt and maybe not till quite as much."

The Prairie Climate Centre has found that the farmers they talk to are saying some of the same things as Loeppky. They offer assurances that farmers are not only aware of climate change, they are already taking action.

For some people, the entire farming industry can't change quickly enough, but farm owners will tell you that the changes must be made slowly and with great care so as not to endanger the food supply chain on which we all depend.

"I think we all need to put climate change in the forefront of our thoughts these days, in everything we do, from the small to the big."

Holly Lamont / Local Farmer

a while... But you know you need to change, and in hindsight you may realize, yeah, that was a good change."

Loeppky says his farm hasn't employed any really drastic changes yet, but small changes can be effective, too.

One area which he describes as a good example is just being more aware of tilling strategies in general and deciding to till the soil less, which can help it hold more moisture. This, in turn, can ensure healthier crops and higher yields if the weather get drier.

"The Red River Valley is unique," says Loeppky. "We do more tilling in our heavy clays than most of North America, but if you go to Saskatchewan, what we call a drought, they call normal.

"I know it's hard to talk to some farm owners about climate change," says Loeppky. "There's a lot of stuff in farming that's like, 'I'm doing this 'cuz my dad did it and my dad's dad did it.' And they didn't do it for fun. They did it because it works. They knew their land and what to do to produce crops... But it's going to change and we're going to adapt. As far as the large farm goes, we need to take a focus toward sustainability and think about the future. For my operation, yes, I'd like to continue to grow, but if I can't expand my land base, I'd like to do more and better with what I have."

MENTAL HEALTH DEMANDS

Farming in Manitoba, and elsewhere of course, is often a strenu-

ous mental exercise as much as it is physical.

Staying positive in the face of challenges is a very real demand placed upon farmers, and supporting the mental health of the farming community is an increasingly important need.

"Farmers are often called eternal optimists, and it's true," adds Loeppky. "It's a challenge to know what is good for us and what is bad or not useful, and sometimes you need to block out the noise. For me, I'm not at all anxious for the future. We got 60 percent of a normal yield after a challenging year. For those outside the farming industry, think about it as if you took 40 percent of someone's salary away. They'd be devastated! The politics of things make us farmers anxious sometimes, but it's not enough to change my overall demeanour toward farming or my overall perception of the future. I'm just out here working the land and I'm telling you that it looks good and I'm excited for next year already."

The rest of the community can help support farmers by encouraging positive discussions around climate change that doesn't cast blame.

We can learn about and affirm the positive changes farmers are able to make, conserve water, and change our spending habits to make environmentally conscious consumer choices.

We all have a fundamental role to play in discussing climate change and supporting the development of the resilient agricultural systems that are necessary for us all.

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The Cart and the Cairn: Re-Enacting the Arrival of the Mennonites

By Ernest N. Braun

A re-enactment of the 1870s Mennonite arrival in Manitoba took place on the morning of October 8.

For the occasion, Terry Doerksen of Winnipeg hitched up his 18-month-old ox to a replica Red River cart at the Mennonite Landing site, southwest of Niverville where the Rat River flows into the Red.

Doerksen then drove the cart to the Shantz immigration sheds, two miles south of Highway 311 at Niverville, following a route that took him along Sixth Avenue South.

The trek was the first part of a longer two-day journey from the Landing into the East Reserve, in commemoration of the experience of the Mennonites who made that exact journey in 1875.

The re-enactment was undertaken on the Thanksgiving weekend, honouring the experience of both the Mennonites and Métis, who not only brought the Mennonites to the immigration sheds but also often escorted them to selected village sites throughout the region.

The idea arose in part from Doerksen's cousin Phil, a retired electrician who built a true replica of the unique Red River carts used by the Métis to haul freight and people after 1802.

When the Mennonites arrived at the mouth of the Rat River aboard the *International* in 1874–1876, Métis men with their Red River carts



Terry Doerksen re-enacting the arrival of the Mennonites in southern Manitoba.

ERNEST N. BRAUN

freighted the luggage and those who couldn't walk from the Landing to the immigration sheds about eight kilometres east.

A year or two ago, under the expert instruction of Armand and Kelly Jerome, Métis cart-builders in Oakbank, Phil learned the mechanics of the trade and then built his own cart while the province was under COVID restrictions.

This is the same cart used by Doerksen to make his run over the Thanksgiving weekend, outfitted with a Mennonite church pew for a seat and flying the Manitoba

provincial flag.

Doerksen arrived with his wife Patty, along with his cousin Phil and his wife Carol, at the Landing on the evening of Thursday, October 7, with a motor home and long cattle trailer which housed the ox and dismantled cart.

They assembled the cart before dark, allowed the ox to graze, and made their final arrangements to begin the following morning.

Early on Friday, additional support arrived in the form of friends who helped the trek get started. Terry invited Ernest Braun to sit on the cart

with him as it departed the Landing, the first time since at least 1878 that Mennonites had travelled from the Landing by a Red River ox cart.

After 1878, the railway through Niverville made the ox cart route from the Landing redundant.

The group left the Landing at about 7:45 a.m., arriving about three hours later at a cairn that marks the original location of the Shantz immigration sheds.

Braun, spokesperson for the Mennonite Landing Site Association, led the ox the last few hundred yards and stopped beside the cairn, recently

furnished with a new plaque by the EastMenn Historical Committee.

Here people took turns posing with the ox, the cart, and the cairn.

After an hour-long rest, Doerksen continued east along Road 39N, also known as Hespeler Road, but scaled down the length of the journey when the ox became increasingly recalcitrant.

They overnighted near Highway 59 to give the ox some downtime, then proceeded east again on Saturday morning towards New Bothwell. Although the original had plan had been to journey all the way to Blumenort, they decided to stop in light of the rain.

Even having stopped short of their ultimate destination, they considered their goals to have been achieved: to re-enact the journey from the Landing to the immigration sheds, and in doing so honour the Métis role, express thanksgiving for the land and opportunity received at the expense of the Indigenous peoples, continue on into the East Reserve as had their ancestors, and gain valuable experience in ox-driven travel in a cart made entirely of wood.

For Doerksen, it was an adventure—and a rare glimpse into the past. This was Doerksen's first sustained trek via cart, but it will serve as training for a much longer run he plans to undertake next year: journeying along the Crow Wing Trail all the way to St. Paul, Minnesota.

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The Challenges of Running a Restaurant During a Pandemic

By Sara Beth Dacombe

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

The hospitality industry has been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic. Service-based operations have dealt with public health restrictions and lockdowns that specifically target environments where staff has to have close contact with the public.

Restaurants in particular have had to pivot multiple times in order to stay open.

And unfortunately, some are forced to make the decision to close their businesses entirely.

Shereen Rashwan opened Bistro 290 in Niverville in March 2020, but after a year and a half of operation through tumultuous times, she made the difficult decision to close the business on October 30.

BURNOUT AND UNCERTAINTY

The challenges of trying to run a restaurant in the middle of a pandemic is one of the main reasons Rashwan decided to put the restaurant up for sale.

"Obviously, having your business being told that you have to close your doors to in-person dining, which makes up a huge portion of your sales—which we've had to do three times now—that just takes a financial toll," says Rashwan. "And a mental toll as well. You always feel a sense of uneasiness that there are more lockdowns coming."

Many restaurants have attempted to be flexible by staying open for takeout and delivery during past lockdowns, but in doing so many have had to let staff go or change their hours to adapt to a new business model.

"Customers thrive on consistency," Rashwan points out. "If you change your business hours too often, people start to second-guess coming to you. So they come less. And people were coming less anyway, so it's hard to keep your hours at what they were when financially it doesn't make sense to do so."

Rashwan says that she coped with these stressors by personally putting in more hours at the business, trying to make up for scheduling uncertainty and being short-staffed.

She also found herself using up more mental energy by inventing new ways to continue providing food services, such as offering take-and-bake meals and adding a patio and barbecue area to pick up the slack when indoor dining was limited or not permitted at all.

Another strategy of Rashwan's was to seek federal and provincial grants when they became available.

But as a new business, Bistro 290 didn't qualify for the federal rent or



Shereen Rashwan, right, has made the difficult decision to close her business, Bistro 290.

SHEREEN RASHWAN

employee subsidies, because the requirements were based on previously established income.

As a new business, she didn't have previously established income.

The provincial grants she did qualify for were very helpful, including the Manitoba student wage subsidy, which enabled the Bistro to employ a handful of high school and university students.

"The first summer in between lockdowns, we hired a lot of students," she says. "Which helped. We loved having them, no matter what their backgrounds were, interested in restaurant as a career or not. We trained them no matter what. And this last summer and heading into fall, because we just weren't sure what was going to happen with COVID, we kept our team pretty small."

Throughout the pandemic, Rashwan says her customers have been amazing.

However, it was yet another mental burden on her when the provincial government forced restaurants to bear the brunt of making sure their patrons were fully vaccinated.

"Even though I 100 percent understand why the government had to put this in place, it doesn't make it any easier to ask someone for their private information," she says. "It's a sensitive topic for some people. And especially if I've had someone coming to my bistro for the last year and half and supporting us through all of what we've been going through... and now I need to look at them and tell them, 'No, you're not allowed to dine here because this is the new mandate'? That is extremely difficult for me as a human."

The restaurant business has always been known for being a difficult industry. The mental and physical exhaustion, which increased during the pandemic, took its toll on Rashwan.

Ultimately, the reason for closing came down to burnout.

"I think that owning a restaurant in general is a very difficult occupation," she says. "When you leave for the day, you may leave—but there's always a million things going on that need to be thought about, and I found that my mind isn't able to turn it off. When I started to feel run down, we hired the staff we needed so I could take a step back, but at the end of the day, with all of the things piling up that were COVID-related, I found I didn't want to own a restaurant anymore if the passion and love for the business that I had was fizzling away."

STAFFING CHALLENGES

Another major challenge confronting restaurants is finding enough employees to keep their businesses up and running.

In a recent survey, Restaurants Canada reported that 80 percent of food service operators were finding it difficult to hire kitchen staff, and 67 percent were having trouble filling serving, bartending, and hosting positions.

Rashwan found that opening and closing so often made it very difficult to keep staff.

"I've read a few reports that say restaurant staff began to find other positions in other industries, which makes perfect sense. And I support those people wholeheartedly," she says. "It's also been a time where

people are watching the rules very closely. Cleaning is important and sanitizing and making the environment safe between diners can feel like it's a higher pressure, more difficult job right now. There are also those who do not feel comfortable asking people for their vaccination card, which I also understand."

Laura Mulvena owns Chicken Chef in Niverville and says she has had a really hard time finding people to work.

"It's always been an issue, but just not to this capacity," says Mulvena. "I'm always more of a person to be proactive, stay on top of staffing, and try to have good people coming in. But obviously, COVID had a big impact."

Mulvena and her husband Tim bought the Chicken Chef in Niverville two years ago, just before the start of the pandemic. They were prepared to deal with some initial staff turnover during the transition.

"We found we lost almost half our staff, but then we also had some amazing staff who had some good training and knew well what was expected of them to run things at the restaurant smoothly," she says. "Then COVID hit and we had to juggle and the result is that we just kept losing staff."

Mulvena says they have tried all sorts of avenues to secure staff, including registering employment opportunities on job websites and utilizing online ads.

She sees many reasons why possible employees may be staying away.

"It's just hard to hire right now with the perception that it's not a safe industry, but it really is," she

says. "People still don't know that we're open, for vaccinated only, and we're training on how to check. Maybe some potential employees have some hesitation to be hands-on with that process. But we are really committed to making things safe. Our restaurant is a safe environment for employees and the public."

GETTING INNOVATIVE

Restaurants have been forced to get innovative to stay open.

Chicken Chef was fortunate to have loyal customers who were already comfortable with phoning for pickup, but they also tried some new tactics to reel in customers.

One of the first things they did was apply to the town for a permit to develop an outdoor eating space. The patio opened this past summer.

"The patio is something we had always wanted when we took over ownership," Mulvena says. "We're hoping next year to have an even stronger summer on the patio. We want to add a few TVs and increase the atmosphere there. We just decided to get it open as soon as possible and I think people really enjoyed it. It went over well. It's a fun space."

They are also working on getting a mobile order app in place with the help of Chicken Chef's head office.

"We are a franchise, so we are lucky we have the support of our corporate office," she adds. "We are looking forward to joining the mobile order platform that Chicken Chef corporate uses, so we will be offering delivery and pickup options where people could place their whole order online. The mobile ordering system will help unload the phones from our serving staff. When the customer can navigate the system on their own and in their own time, we can process the orders really smoothly."

With the relaxation of lockdowns over the summer, Chicken Chef is back to operating at their regular hours. Mulvena eagerly invites the business's customers to continue supporting them.

She also emphasizes that if she and her fellow owners are able to see success at Chicken Chef, they also want to see that success shared across the other restaurants in the community.

"We've been in many restaurants that are struggling with staff even more than we are and are down to one cook and one staff, so I know we don't have it as bad as some others," she says. "We have been very fortunate. We're thinking of the other businesses in town and we want to be seen as partners and not competition directly. We want to spread the support and attitude that we're all in this together."

CITIZEN POLL

Do you think the federal and provincial governments have done enough to support small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- ☐ Yes. Various forms of adequate financial assistance have been provided to the businesses that need them most.
- ☐ No. Some businesses have fallen through the cracks and are still in need of support in order to stay afloat while restrictions remain.
- ☐ Have a more nuanced opinion? Leave us a comment online.

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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Should Niverville and the RM of Ritchot be subject to public health orders meant to target vaccine hesitancy in Southern Health?

Yes. The whole of Southern Health should be subject to the orders. It shouldn't be piecemeal.

13%

No. Our region's high vaccine uptake should exempt us from the health orders.

85%

Other

2%

YOUR COMMENTS:

Niverville has done well with vaccine uptake. That's great news. The rest of southeast Manitoba has been a huge disappointment. Niverville isn't the biggest problem and shouldn't be punished. However I don't think we should look at it as punishment. The restrictions are in place to limit exposure to unvaccinated people. If you don't have those people in your circle, carry on. If you do, it certainly won't hurt to limit the group sizes. The powers that be are doing their best to control this problem as best they can. It's a huge job. It would be difficult and time consuming to say these folks do this, those people need something different. They have to group us somehow. So it is what it is. We all need to stop complaining and just do our part to limit the spread, follow the orders, and just get vaccinated. Stop splitting hairs. If everyone did as asked we wouldn't need to discuss any of this.

The complicating factor is that people within the Southern Health region i.e. Hanover shop and do business here... so we remain at a higher risk because of those around us. We have done our job at rolling up our sleeves, but because those around us have not, we will remain grouped within Southern Health restrictions.

No. I think the governmental pressures are causing more distrust in the government and in the vaccine. I think the harder they push, the more the remaining willingly unvaccinated people will push back. Bearing this responsibility on the town of Niverville for places as from town as they are from Winnipeg is illogical and grounded in fearful and subpar leadership.

No. All of Southern Health and Manitoba should not be subject to any of the vaccine mandates as it is causing a divide in people.

I think a better poll question might be, "Do vaccinated people feel they made the right choice

in being vaccinated?" Knowing they can still get COVID and still pass it on, does it make sense they are able to have more freedom than unvaccinated?

No. No one should be targeted for their personal medical choices.

There should be no restrictions anywhere.

I'm not a doctor or a politician, so I don't know if this is done for health or punitively. If there's no evidence of widespread retail transmission, then there is no health justification to reduce retail capacity for any of the health districts. If there is evidence, then retail capacity should be reduced provincewide, as vaccinated people could still spread that to the under-12 crowd.

No, and I don't think we subject ourselves to discrimination of any kind whether someone is vaccinated or not.

We have done our part. We are being punished for low-vax communities. Winkler people won't be coming to Niverville. They will be going to Costco in Winnipeg.

I applaud Mayor Myron Dyck for taking a stand to Dr. Roussin on this issue inasmuch as our vaccination rate is above the provincial level, and yet we get linked in with Winnipeg when they are being targeted, and with Southern Health when they are being targeted.

I am fully vaccinated and run a home childcare. I would like to endure the safety and health of my family as well as the children and their families that are in my care to be a high priority. If that means putting in stricter restrictions and guidelines for COVID-19 to help keep us all safe and healthy then I am all for it. But if this brings on more strikes and protests that further backpedal things, then maybe a different approach is what's needed. I feel a lot of people feel like they are being dictated to by the government and forced in-

to making a big decisions about their households. Maybe its time we reword things so that they have a better understanding and for all those who are not vaccinated to talk to their doctors. And for those who fear that the vaccine has killed millions, maybe the government can start putting in the true facts about those reports. And know that there are people out there that have doctors telling them they cannot have the vaccine due to health reasons. Regardless we need to start learning how to live with the virus.

Richot, also considered the "metro region," was included in targeted restrictions earlier in the pandemic. It seems silly to include the "metro region" (which typically has a similar vaccine uptake to the city of Winnipeg) in the Southern Health region this time.

Niverville was grouped with Winnipeg because of our high level of commuters in October 2020 when Winnipeg went into code red and the rest of the province was code orange. There shouldn't be a double standard this time around if our vaccination numbers are high.

Southern Health shouldn't have extra public health orders at all.

I don't agree with these restrictions. Those who wanted the vaccine have it.

We have complied but are being "lumped" with those that refuse vaccine. How is that fair? Is this being done in the city in the various areas that have higher cases? If the provincial government does this for provincial regions, it should be the same for city regions.

The fact unvaccinated individuals are keeping the remainder of the population hostage and forcing ICUs to be overweight is wrong... don't cry when your family members become sick and die... follow the guidance of the intelligence and respect their impressive work on these vaccines that have saved lives and the entire world.

Human circulation is extensive. A general directive is needed. It will require some patience from all. Remember, some lives will be saved. Be patient, and love thy neighbour.

Exemption would just draw people to town from nearby areas with low uptake. Even hovering at 80-81%, first dose uptake isn't that impressive. It means there's still roughly 1,000 citizens (give or take) that either can't get vaccinated because of their age, or they actively choose not to get vaccinated then whine about their reduced access to services. The eligible percentages are so misleading because it just pretends kids don't exist. I've grown frustrated and tired of the anti-vaxxers/anti-maskers screaming about the mandates being Charter violations when the Charter is very clear that rights are not absolute and can be restricted in certain cases. A public health crisis is one of them. We are Southern Health-Sante Sud and we are making our bed. No exemptions needed, just go and get vaccinated, for yourself, your family, and your friends. Enough is enough.

Saying yes because don't want people from other parts of Southern to come here if they are not vaxed.

If we are vaxed, what is the great risk to us? I understand there is still some small risk even for the vaccinated, but with high vax uptake, where is the major risk outside of the actual low uptake communities? At what point have we finally "done our part" and can continue with some semblance of normality? We can all still get and transmit... but the vax is supposed to save us... so again, if we are largely vaxed, where is the imminent risk for us? Those who can't get vaxed or are compromised will have to be careful (that is an unfortunate reality that will stay with us for quite some time) but meanwhile, why is the 80%+ of the population supposed to keep pretending like we are unprotected? Does the vaccine work, or not?

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IN BRIEF

COVID Cases on the Rise in Local Schools

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

As COVID-19 cases rise in parts of Manitoba, particularly in areas with low vaccination uptake such as the RM of Hanover, cases are also adding up in local schools.

At the time of this writing, there were 222 current school cases in Manitoba. Of those, a disproportionate number are located in the Hanover School Division, which has 34 across its various schools.

One frustrated educator, who granted an interview with the *Winnipeg Free Press* last month under the condition of anonymity, has contended that the official numbers are very likely higher than are being reported—the reason being that many students and their families in the region don't appear to be seeking out tests when symptoms appear.

This individual reported that an unusually high number of students are being turned away from their school due to COVID-19 symptoms, an indication that infections may be rampant in some area communities.

A music teacher from Green Valley School in Grunthal, Vernon Neufeld, was intubated at a Brandon ICU two weeks ago.

In place of demonstrating proof of full vaccination, there are approximately 100 staff members in the Hanover School Division currently who have chosen to be subjected to frequent testing.

Since the start of the year, Manitoba has seen 617 school cases in total, 529 of them among students and another 88 among staff. In total, 196 individual schools have been affected.



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Questions Remain About Planned Niverville Police Detachment

By Jennifer Lavin

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Some time in the first half of 2023, as previously announced, the rapidly expanding town of Niverville will finally get its own RCMP detachment.

The new station will be built on the same campus as Niverville's municipal offices.

A few new details have come to light about the this plan, although there are still a significant number of unanswered questions.

Currently, people from Niverville have to travel the 23 kilometres to St. Pierre to access administrative services, such as criminal record checks, fingerprinting, and special occasion licenses.

Mayor Myron Dyck says that plans are being worked out to offer some of these administrative services at the Niverville office, but so far it's unknown precisely which ones will be available here.

Also, there are no plans for the detachment in Niverville to include any holding cells.

The cost of this new endeavour is also unknown, but Mayor Dyck notes that it would have cost more for the town to establish its own independent police force, based on a study which was done in 2018.

"The RCMP cost is based on population," says Mayor Dyck. "[The cost to] Niverville has been at \$250,000 for the past years. This new census will see our population jump, and thus the percentage of the total cost jumps. Somewhere above \$500,000 is our expectation."

The study referenced by Dyck was a 30-page report prepared by Rick Hiebert, the former police chief for the city of Winkler. The town received it in December 2018.

This report was commissioned in large part in response to the efforts in July 2017 by a pair of local residents, Barry Piasta and Lindsay Unrau, who petitioned



DEPOSITPHOTOS

the town to pay for a comprehensive review of the town's policing options. That petition garnered 540 signatures.

The Citizen has requested the opportunity to view this study more than once, but both Dyck and town CAO Eric King have declined, citing copyright issues.

Outside of an executive summary provided by the town in 2019, the full study has never been released.

NUMBER OF OFFICERS

When the new detachment opens, a team of officers will be based in Niverville, although they will remain under the command of the staff sergeant in St. Pierre.

According to Mayor Dyck, there are currently 14 officers based out of St. Pierre. Four, or potentially more, officers are anticipated to be stationed in Niverville permanently. Niverville's officers would be in addition to the current squad.

Some concern has been expressed that there simply will not be enough RCMP officers available to fill the positions in Niverville.

In March 2020, the RCMP Training Depot in Regina, Saskatchewan closed down for almost three months due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 600 officers in training were left hanging. All of them have now completed their

training, but the effects of that delay may be felt for some time to come in the recruitment of new officers.

RISE IN CRIME

There is little reason to doubt that Niverville needs a stronger policing presence.

Statistics compiled by the RCMP show that property crime has been on the rise in the Niverville area.

In fact, it rose steeply between 2019 and 2020.

Property crime in the region in 2020 was up 21 percent from 2019. Theft over \$5,000 saw a whopping 76 percent increase between 2019 and 2020. Both break-and-enter and theft under \$5,000 rose a small amount in that time period as well.

Several Niverville residents have been willing to share stories of how recent crime has affected them.

One local resident, who prefers to be identified by only his first name, witnessed a concerning incident in November 2020.

Brett says that he happened to notice a white work van at a set of community mailboxes at around 3:00 a.m. one night. As he drove towards the van, two men jumped into it and the vehicle drove away.

"I thought that was weird, so I followed them," Brett says.

The van was driven down a dead-end street, so Brett parked

nearby with his lights off.

Approximately 15 minutes later, the van came out of the bay and proceeded to stop at another mailbox.

"I watched them get out and start fumbling with the box," he says. "Trying to break in. I turned on my light bar and pulled up and they ripped out of town. I pursued and called the RCMP. I followed them to St. Adolphe, then down back roads, but in the end the RCMP told me to stop pursuing and go home. By the time I got back to Niverville, the RCMP were driving around town."

By that time, though, the perpetrators were long gone.

Brett feels that if there had been an RCMP detachment in town, the would-be thieves would have been caught.

MACHETE ATTACK

Another Niverville resident, Bonny Fehr, has a good reason to want a police presence closer to home.

In the wee hours of the morning on January 3, 2017, she was lying in bed when she heard a loud bang outside her home. She peeked out the window and noticed that a door to her garage was open and a light was on.

She screamed to her husband Bob that someone was in their garage.

Bob and Bonny ran outside and Bob yelled at the intruders to leave. The intruders seemed to listen and two of them walked out past the Fehrs.

The third one, however, stopped and stared at Bob. After a moment, the man's hands went up in the air—and it became clear that he was holding something.

"He brought it down so fast as Bob put his arm up to defend himself," Bonny says. "I saw a machete and knew he was going to seriously hurt my husband. I was screaming at the top of my lungs for him to stop! He raised the machete again as I screamed to him to please not kill my husband and just leave. He lowered

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the machete, not striking Bob. Then the three of them casually walked down our driveway and off into the night."

Bonny ran inside her home to call 911 and Bob followed.

Once inside, they could see that Bob would need medical attention quickly.

"He was dripping blood everywhere and I could see the gaping hole in his arm," she says. "We were told to apply pressure with towels over the wound."

As Bonny continued to apply pressure to her husband's arm, she received a call from the RCMP.

She received some bad news: the road conditions were very bad and it was going to take them a while to get to the scene.

"I was panicked and concerned with the amount of towels we were going through," Bonny continues. "We knew the ambulance was at the end of our street waiting. I couldn't understand why they weren't coming to help. I learned later that they are unable to enter the scene of a crime unless it's cleared first by police."

It was 45 long minutes

until the RCMP arrived with the ambulance right behind, although both Bonny and Bob say that the RCMP were nothing short of amazing.

"They took the time to talk to me even after Bob was discharged," she says. "They were always willing to give updates when I called and even calmed me down when I cried over the phone from feeling overwhelmed."

In retrospect, the Fehrs feel that they were lucky.

And they're grateful to hear about a new detachment coming to town.

"I will feel safer knowing that the RCMP [will be] right here," Bonny says. "I am excited to have a detachment here."

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

It's clear that Niverville needs a more significant police presence, but another local resident feels that the new detachment may not be quite what's needed.

Lindsay Unrau was one of the people to spearhead the police study petition in 2017, and she ran for town council in 2014 on a platform that relied heavily on improving

policing in Niverville.

Although she didn't get elected, she has continued to doggedly pursue the public safety cause in the several years since.

Unrau wonders if implementing the new RCMP detachment as it's currently been described will actually change how crime is enforced in Niverville.

"This station is not going to be an independently run station that will only manage Niverville's community. It is simply an extension of the St. Pierre dispatch."

Lindsay Unrau / Community Activist

She feels that there are two major objectives to implementing a local police station.

The first objective is visibility.

"An effective way to deter crime is to create a visible landmark that will say to potential criminals who would attempt to make Niverville their target, they will

be caught by local enforcement—quickly," Unrau says. "The problem here is that the current plan is to open a small office in the Niverville town office. This will not be a regularly sized RCMP station. This will be similar to what we currently have, a satellite office located beside the fire hall. Nobody really knows that it's there and therefore

nobody really cares. To be a meaningful deterrent, we need a standalone building that has its lights on and is staffed 24/7 with exemplary signage."

The second objective of a local police station, as Unrau sees it, is to have an effective and efficient response time.

She stresses that the

current wait times are in no way the fault of RCMP officers. The problem, rather, is that the St. Pierre detachment covers such a massive area that it's physically impossible for them to always be where they need to be.

"This station is not going to be an independently run station that will only manage Niverville's community," Unrau points out. "It is simply an extension of the St. Pierre dispatch. Therefore, an officer working within Niverville could be as far away as St. Malo when an urgent call comes in for Niverville depending on the current call volume. There will be four officers stationed in Niverville, but my understanding is that that does not mean that there will be four officers in station all at once. Four officers will rotate shifts so that there will always be at least one officer working at a time. Will one officer be enough, especially if it's more than certain that they won't always be in town covering our community? Really, that's nothing more than what we have currently."

As Mayor Dyck has acknowledged, the results of

the latest census will reveal with certainty that Niverville will have to pay more for protective services.

"This additional amount of taxpayer money doesn't promise more deterrence or better response time," Unrau says. "It simply means that the RCMP recognize that they may need to come to Niverville more often for emergent services. However, if our town council is going to settle on an RCMP station instead of an independent police department and charge the citizens more money for this decision, they need to be able to market it in a way to compel residents to believe that it's something better."

Nonetheless, Unrau is cautiously optimistic about the new plan.

She hopes that the town council will commit to a 10-year plan which sees our local RCMP office grow in size to become something more independent of the St. Pierre detachment.

"Ensuring that it covers Niverville and only, say, a 20-kilometre radius would make me feel a lot more optimistic," she says.

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IN BRIEF

CRRC Adjusts its Proof of Vaccination Requirements

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

There have been some recent changes to the operations of the Community Recreation and Resource Centre in Niverville.

Late last month, the town announced that their process for checking people's vaccination status has needed to change.

This comes in response to incidents of residents attempting to access the building illegally.

"Unfortunately, we have been experiencing issues with visitors entering our facility using false vaccination proof and ID," the town wrote in a statement last month. "We will be tightening our policies and procedures, based on RCMP recommendations."

In addition to providing a valid QR code for proof of vaccination, visitors to the facility must now show a government-issued ID. The actual ID is required, not just a photo of it.

Examples of government ID include a driver's license, a passport, a Canadian military identification card, a Canadian citizenship card issued before February 1, 2012, or a Canadian permanent resident card.

"These enhanced policies are put in place for those who are required to show proof of vaccination, as per the current public health order," the statement continues. "If the user is unable to provide the required information, they will be denied access to the facility. We are working on a stamping system for those who have left and returned within the same day. The expectation is that everyone must enter through the front doors and confirm with front desk staff before proceeding through."

Additionally, the facility is extending their hours of operation.

Starting November 1, they have been open on Wednesdays and Friday from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. For the rest of the week, the hours remain 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Food Bank Gears Up for Busy Holiday Season

By Sara Beth Dacombe

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Food insecurity is a growing problem in Manitoba, a problem that the COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened. The price of food has risen significantly in the past few years, and the result is that many households no longer have sufficient access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food.

One organization in Niverville is working to shine a light on the problem, and in the process get food into the hands of the people who need it most.

Niverville Helping Hands provides food assistance to those in need in our area, and its organizers say that they see a direct correlation between food insecurity and low income.

In fact, they have always seen this correlation. But the need has recently been growing in a way they've never seen before.

"For Helping Hands, at the beginning of the pandemic, we had pretty much tripled how many hampers were requested and we thought that number would prove to be a spike and go down. Now we've seen that number has not gone down," says Lillis Coriveau, chair of the board for Niverville Helping Hands. "We are instead seeing more and more large families struggling, families that have multiple people under their roof, maybe multiple generations and parents living with them. Or maybe they have around four to six kids in the home. So we're seeing more and more requests for hampers to feed a significant amount of people, whereas we used to see smaller hampers needed for a smaller amount of people in the home."

Coriveau says that there is no average type of person requesting food assistance. The profile for someone requesting a hamper isn't simple and clear-cut, because the reality is that food insecurity can affect anyone.

"We used to see a lot of requests from seniors, someone living alone, single-parent families, or pensioners when their allotment doesn't cover all of their needs," she says.

One risk factor they've identified is that people sometimes



The pantry at Niverville Helping Hands.

CHRISTINA ABOLADE

don't ask for help until they're in an emergency situation.

"People wait until it's an emergency because it's a huge, huge deal to ask for help. It's a very vulnerable place to be," Coriveau says. "We know that people are in a position where it's hard, never mind asking for yourself, but for your family. Naming out loud that you have a need feels like you are having to say that you cannot provide or have fallen short. Admitting that out loud is challenging. It's been really hard for people, but the experience we are giving people is to say, 'It's okay, and we've got your back.'"

Many people's incomes have not risen at the same rate as inflation. As this becomes more of an issue, an increasing number of families are realizing that they have even less money to spend on healthy food.

"If you have a vehicle, you are in a position of privilege," says Coriveau. "You can drive around and find a better price or find a place that is supplying [the item you need]. If you don't have a vehicle, or if you are in a household where there is one vehicle and the income earner needs it to perform their transportation for the day, it is harder to find good food, never mind the expense of the gas to go around and gather it."

Empty cupboards exist where

we may not expect them, Coriveau wants people to know. And the average person can reduce stigma by learning about food insecurity as well as the supports that exist in the community to help.

"We want people to know that, in general, if you're an average person with an average family household income, you don't know who needs help," she says. "It could be your mother, your sister, your neighbour, or your child's best friend whose parent could not provide a lunch for them that day. It could be you someday. So let's talk about it. We see need from all walks of life and we are here to be the welcoming and accepting voice for those who ask."

MEETING NEEDS DURING THE PANDEMIC

When the need for hampers rose at the start of the pandemic, so did the logistical challenges of organizing volunteers and safely securing and storing essential items. Helping Hands helped follow public health restrictions by limiting the number of people in their building, carefully scheduling volunteers to come in stages. They also arranged for hampers to only be picked up outside.

"It's definitely been interesting and challenging," says Coriveau. "We have navigated the COVID restrictions by saying that no one

is allowed in the pantry anymore. We bring the hamper out to the car in the parking lot. But we run into a challenge in winter when it's cold and people are waiting outside, so we have started purchasing coffee and muffins. This is to keep people warm... and it also enables us to converse with our clients in a safe atmosphere."

In addition to exacerbating people's food needs, the pandemic has also highlighted people's existing mental health issues and the feelings of isolation that run rampant in the community.

"We noticed people were feeling anxious and alone, and we know that there are more needs here than just food insecurity," she adds. "So it's not just food we're helping with. It's also community and mental health help and spiritual help. Some people live alone or just found themselves completely overwhelmed with the pandemic. Still, they are hungry for community interaction and they haven't yet been able to get back to normal life, to get out of the house to find community and combat isolation."

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Coriveau explains that at the start of the pandemic, it was incredible to receive help from other non-profits, churches, and business owners who all said they were



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observing these same sorts of needs in the community.

Last year, many local churches banded together to create an initiative called the Love Niverville Project.

"It was a really big thing for us to provide that piece of the puzzle," she says. "We brought the churches in Niverville together for the first time in who knows how long, maybe ever, in a powerful way to extend help to the communities of Niverville, Otterburne, New Bothwell, and Ste. Agathe. This helped increase the entry points for us to receive requests, as we have contacts now in all of those communities."

Coriveau explains that they network with Southeast Helping Hands as well as other like-minded organizations. These connections help them to source much of the food and monetary donations they rely on. The generosity of local businesses is especially helpful in terms of securing fresh meats, cheeses, milk, and other items.

"We receive donations from Niverville Bigway and we place orders with them to use our donated funds to purchase food and necessary items. We receive meat donations from Country Style Meats and Unger Meats, and we also use funds to place orders through them."

HOW TO GET HELP

Niverville Helping Hands operates out of the Niverville Community Fellowship Church. Volunteers meet every second and fourth Thursday of the month to pack hampers.

For those who may be in need, individuals can contact a variety of non-profits listed on the Helping Hands website, but the best way to directly request a hamper is to use the organization's online request form.

"The online request form is good for convenience, for those with internet access, and it helps protect their identity because there's just an added element of anonymity there," says Coriveau. "If people don't know how to use online forms or don't have internet access, we take requests over the phone. Sometimes people won't use the online request form because they didn't know they would need it or were putting off acknowledging that they would need it. So we can take a request by phone for more

emergent needs."

Helping Hands is not affiliated with other food banks and is completely sustained by the donations they receive.

"Being a self-sustained initiative alleviates some of the red tape and enables us as a small organization to avoid income testing, which is required by the larger food banks," says Coriveau. "That's when a client requesting a food hamper needs to submit a T4 employment income form to prove they need a hamper. Supplying a T4 can be a problematic request for those in immediate need. For us, we are able to hear of a need and meet it immediately."

THE IMPORTANCE OF NUTRITION

In addition to providing food hampers, a big goal of Helping Hands is to increase people's awareness of the importance of nutritious food.

"When trying to feed people on a budget, whether you're making your own grocery list or working to source hamper items like we do at Helping Hands, it's easy to end up with a lot of canned goods and a lot of pasta and bread," Coriveau points out. "But the sources of vitamins and minerals and nutrients that your body needs are harder to find. Canned goods are often too high in sodium, and this is important for both our donors and our clients to learn more about. Our brains and our bodies need adequate protein."

During the summers they partner with Niverville Homegrown, a local food producer who provides access to fresh produce. They also give away vouchers for milk and eggs and work with local butchers to source fresh meat, which is the best source of protein.

CURRENT NEEDS

The current season, as we hurtle towards Christmas, is a busy time for all food banks—and Niverville Helping Hands can confirm that they're experiencing a larger need now than in previous years.

"We were very, very blessed by having a large amount of donations in the last two years," says Coriveau. "We were funded by the Love Niverville Project, which facilitated the influx of donations when the pandemic started... but we are struggling now as the funding has slowed."

The most needed items

right now include canned vegetables, canned fruit, fruit juice, soups, Kraft dinner, and crackers.

And due to the large number of families looking for food help this year, they also see a significant need for school lunch foods.

"We've gotten lots of requests for snack foods for kids, which is not something we used to get a lot of requests for," she says. "Maybe [the previous night's] supper wasn't able to be a large supper, so there are no leftovers. Lunch and snack items are very much needed, like granola bars, fruit cups, and applesauce."

Food isn't the only form of donations that make a difference, Coriveau says. Monetary donations are extremely important.

Nearly as important, they also would like to receive new toys to help make Christmas a special time for their clients.

Another helpful type of donation is wrapping paper.

Coriveau adds that when donations are low, food banks must continue to provide basic foods and essentials, and so they sometimes aren't able to provide as much as they would like.

"We know other food services are saying their hampers are getting smaller and smaller," she says. "We have so far been very fortunate where we haven't cut ours back very much, but it is a risk."

VOLUNTEERISM

The team is also looking for more participants to donate their time between now and Christmas. Volunteers assist in sorting food, packing hampers, sorting toys, and wrapping gifts.

"Anyone who would like to prepare hampers or wrap presents, just let us know," she says. "It's not a huge time commitment. We have to stagger our volunteer schedule anyway, so we can be flexible with when and how often you come. We have a call list so we can ensure we have the volunteer support we need for that week, so even if you can't commit for every week, we can use you when you're available."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For anyone able to donate or volunteer, please email info@nivervillehelpinghands.org.

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DEPOSITPHOTOS

Murder Spree Rocks Small Town

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

When major crimes take place in rural areas, it often comes as a shock.

There is a perception that these sorts of events only take place in cities—not out in the rolling countryside where life is usually slow and sleepy.

On Wednesday, October 27, that serenity was shattered by a brutal murder in the small town of New Bothwell.

According to RCMP reports, 73-year-old Judy Swain was found dead at her New Bothwell area farm around 12:45 p.m.

Officers came across the scene while conducting a wellness check after having received a tip from acquaintance of the deceased.

In a very short period of time, the death was deemed to be suspicious by the officers who attended the scene.

Swain's murder was only the first in a series of grisly crimes to be committed in quick succession over a period of two hours.

Quickly, the RCMP's investigation settled on a suspect: Trevor Robert Farley, Swain's adult son.

"Speaking with residents [in New Bothwell], we determined a suspect," said Sergeant Paul Managire at a media briefing on Monday, November 1. "Officers advised the Winnipeg Police Service

of a description and a name."

At approximately 2:30 p.m. that afternoon, Farley, 37, was spotted in the area around Seven Oaks Hospital in northwest Winnipeg.

Farley has been reported to be an employee at the hospital.

As police responded to this sighting, an attack was already in progress, this time on the nursing supervisor of the hospital, Candyce Szkwarek. A suspect assaulted her with a knife.

Another hospital employee, Dr. Ken Hawlweg, intervened before police arrived, tackling the suspect. When the man attempted to flee the scene, he was taken into custody by the arriving officers, who were just coming in through the doors when they saw the suspect running towards them.

The stabbing victim, Szkwarek, is currently in stable condition although her wounds have been characterized as severe and life-altering.

Later that same evening, police attended a residence on Toronto Avenue in Winnipeg's West End neighbourhood. Their goal was to inform Swain's ex-husband, and the suspect's father, of the events of the day.

Upon arriving, however, they came upon another murder scene. Stuart Farley's body was discovered in his home.

The RCMP have described both murders as having been violent, and they currently believe that Stuart Farley was killed first, before the suspect drove to New Bothwell.

As of October 31, charges have been laid against the suspect, Trevor Farley, in all three crimes.

He has been charged with first-degree murder in the death of Swain, second-degree murder in the death of Stuart Farley, and attempted murder in the case of Szkwarek's stabbing.

The authorities have so far declined to confirm reports in the media that the suspect may have made efforts to access psychiatric help before the crimes were committed.

However, while in custody Farley has undergone a medical assessment.

There are no reports that Farley himself sustained any injuries in the course of the killing spree.

No motives have yet been determined, either, and the investigation is still considered to be very much in an active phase.

"[A motive] is probably one of the bigger pieces of the puzzle," said Sergeant Managire. "That is something we definitely want to find out."

At the present time, Farley is in police custody, having made his first court appearance on Tuesday, November 2.

Commentary

Too Big to Be Scary: Our Brains and Climate Change

By Daniel Dacombe

It's hard, if not impossible, to think of a greater existential threat to our species than climate change. Wildfires, droughts, crop failures, the slow erosion of the ozone layer, and the melting ice at our poles are all evidence of a massive shift in the earth's climate.

Climate change is so widely accepted among experts that the debate is no longer about if climate change exists but how bad it's likely to get if we continue on our current path.

Most tellingly, even after more than a year of a global pandemic, virtually everyone in the scientific community views climate change as being orders of magnitude more dangerous to our survival than disease. And with overwhelming evidence showing us that the situation is truly dire, we would expect from those of us who live on this planet an overwhelming response to the climate threat at least equal to the COVID-19 pandemic.

And yet individuals and governments often behave as though climate change is not only a minor concern but one beneath our notice. Corporations continue to contribute to rising carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, and a bare handful of them contribute more than 70 per cent of all emissions.

One doesn't need to be Greta Thunberg to notice the discrepancy between danger and awareness.

Which begs the question: why don't more people demand action? Or more accurately, why don't we seem to register climate change as the very real threat that it is?

Harvard psychologist Dr. Daniel Gilbert has suggested that climate change is actually incredibly difficult for our brains to recognize as a threat precisely because of what we're so good at as a species.

We are wired to recognize threats to our existence, and we are incredibly good at doing so—on a certain scale. Through natural selection, those humans who were



DEPOSITPHOTOS

exceptionally good at addressing immediate, local, and physical threats to their survival were able to pass on their genes to future generations.

While these skills have paid off in a big way, as billions of descendants can attest to, they are beginning to work against us.

Dr. Gilbert coined the acronym PAIN to explain why our brains have evolved to become so good at recognizing certain kinds of threats.

Personal. We're more likely to recognize threats that are directed at us by the agency of a human or other predator. Climate change, by contrast, is impersonal, faceless, and unconnected to any personal

agency.

Abrupt. We're more likely to recognize threats that are sudden as opposed to gradual. As a process that takes decades and longer to metastasize, climate change simply doesn't register as a real threat for many of us.

Immoral. We're more likely to recognize threats that are offensive, in that they break a moral code we hold dear. As an impersonal and environmental threat, climate change has no moral aspect... although many of the actions that have gotten us where we are today certainly do.

Now. We're more likely to recognize threats that are immediate. With

many of the end results existing in the future, climate change is outside our brain's "temporal threat range." It's just too far away in time for many of us to pay attention to.

Simply put, we evolved these wonderful brains that are dedicated to our safety, but then we managed to create an existential threat that we're not adapted to recognize.

Compounding this, the process of scientific inquiry—for all its miraculous impact on our health, life expectancy, and connection to each other—is slow and uncertain. In science, there are many course corrections along the way as we seek greater levels of understanding. As a result, many of the climate

change predictions that have been made over the last few decades have been revised over time to be more accurate.

But to those who don't have a strong understanding of the scientific process, these course corrections make it seem like the science is unreliable or untrustworthy.

This, combined with our evolutionary tendency to ignore threats that don't fit within our PAIN threshold, relegates climate change to the back of our minds, where we comfortably ignore it in the here and now at the expense of future generations.

Thankfully, we aren't just at the mercy of our brains and their ability to perceive threats. When it comes to dealing with climate change, scientists have been alerting us to the danger—and people are starting to listen.

While scientists around the world work on practical solutions, regular people like you and me should be demanding more from our elected officials. Climate change is more important to the average citizen than ever before, and every party's political platform in Canada now acknowledges it.

Yes, science will be essential to reverse the damage of climate change. But more importantly, the actions we demand from our elected officials and corporations are going to make the biggest difference for our survival.

Because while climate change may not be an immediate, abrupt, and personal threat, there will come a time when it will be all of those things at once.

When that happens, even our limited brains won't be able to deny the trouble we're in.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about climate change and why we struggle to recognize it, check out *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*, a ground-breaking book from environmental communication expert George Marshall.

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Sports & Recreation



The Niverville Force.

SUE THOMPSON

Local Soccer Squad Ends Season Second Overall

By Jennifer Lavin

jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Force, a local team playing in the Manitoba Major Soccer League, has just completed its inaugural season—and according to coach Andry Giesbrecht, it has been a tremendous success.

The Force competed in the league's third division, finishing in first place. They placed second overall in the league.

Giesbrecht points out that the team's record after the regular season is what matters most.

"The playoffs are just extra games," he says. "Of course you want to win, but they do not have the significance that league games have."

He attributes the team's success to the hard work and commitment of everyone involved. He adds that the Force were also lucky when it came to injuries, suffering only a few minor ones that didn't cause any problems.

The team's manager, Sue Thompson, is thrilled with the level of support the Force have received from the community in their first season.

They averaged 150 spectators per game and 14 local companies chipped in to help cover the cost of kits, field rentals, and refs.

"If there was a prize for the best fans, we would have won it in all of the MMSL," Thompson says. "We felt truly blessed to be a part of this amazing community... The jersey

kits are washed and ready for next year. If COVID doesn't interfere, our season should start at the end of April with more home and away games to watch!"

The hope is that the team can complete a full season next year of 18 regular league games.

Giesbrecht says that the team has a solid core group of local players, but they will be looking to add more players in the near future.

"We are most definitely going to be looking to add some quality players as we work to build a team that can be competitive and move us to a higher level," says Giesbrecht. "Tryouts will most likely be happening during spring training."

As for Thompson, she shares that she couldn't be more proud of the team.

"There are teams out there that have worked together for years to get to where they are," Thompson says. "We ended on top with just months of working together. I can't imagine where the Force will be in a few years."

Giesbrecht feels that Thompson herself has been integral to the success of the team.

He's also proud of the players for their commitment and dedication.

Finally, he adds a note of appreciation to the team's sponsors.

"Without them," he says, "this would not be possible."

IN BRIEF



Melissa Zapp of Niverville.

GERALD NEGRAVE

High School Senior Named MHSAA Athlete of the Week

By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Every week, the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association, sponsored by the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, name a rural high school athlete of the week—and for the week of October 14 they chose to honour Melissa Zapp of Niverville.

A senior at Niverville High School, Zapp was a scoring powerhouse on the soccer field this season, helping the Panthers finish with a perfect 10-0 record. The gifted striker had nine goals and eight assists to lead her team in scoring. Overall, the Panthers scored 45 times.

The Panthers won their home tournament this fall, as well as the Zone Championship, with Zapp striking the winning goal in three matches.

Not only was she an offensive star, but her hustle on defence in the finals was an important factor in leading the Panthers to capture their first Zone banner in eight years.

"Melissa has developed into a talented forward with both speed and skill in beating defenders," says her coach, Gerald Negrave. "You never know which way she is going to go when she has the ball. Defenders absolutely do not like playing against her!"

In addition to her skill, the senior is an honour roll student and maintains a 95 percent academic average. She also plays volleyball.

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Teenage WHL Draftee Launches Junior Career

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

A local high school student is taking his first steps toward playing professional hockey. In August, Evan Groening of Niverville had the opportunity to sign contracts with both the Western Hockey League (WHL) and the Manitoba Junior Hockey League (MJHL).

Currently, Groening has begun to play with the Virden Oil Capitals in the MJHL.

"Although I did sign a WHL contract with the Brandon Wheat Kings, I will be playing for Virden to help my development," says Groening. "I am living with a wonderful billet family and attending Virden Collegiate."

The training and experience in Virden put Groening in line to be called up to play for the Wheat Kings, a team renowned for producing notable NHL stars like Dustin Byfuglien and Jordin Tootoo.

Since being interviewed for this article, Groening was called up for a game with the Wheat Kings on October 30.

Despite being in a position to follow in the footsteps of hockey greats, he resists feeling the pressure to perform.

"I was really excited to be drafted by the Wheat Kings because of their history to develop so many star players, but I don't feel nervous to be there," Groening says. "It just feels exciting when I'm there because of their history of developing top calibre players. When you walk into the players area, it's like having a hockey history lesson, seeing all of the big names and faces on the walls. It's an honour to play in the same facility they used."

This excitement comes hand in hand with the regular challenges of training, camps,



Local hockey star Evan Groening.

COURTESY OF EVAN GROENING

and games. Being connected to both the MJHL and WHL gives Groening the chance to connect with team members and training staff in an arena space and training level that very few teenage players ever get to experience.

"There is so much to appreciate about this organization, from the coaches, trainers, equipment managers, and staff," he says. "Everyone works together to make you the best player you can be. Being able to skate with some of the guys that went to NHL camps really opened my eyes and gave me perspective on where I need to take my game."

In a regular week, the teen's schedule keeps him fully immersed in hockey six days at a time, all the while juggling school and other responsibilities.

"While I am playing in Virden, I attend school for the first half of the day and then go straight to the rink where we practice five times a week and have our off-ice workouts," says Groening. "We have two games per weekends, and then Sunday is usually a day off. We also have a few team meetings in a week where we review game tape and strategy."

The opportunity to elevate his hockey training came right at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic when sports facilities needed to focus on keeping players healthy and safe.

The WHL appointed a special taskforce in each of its six jurisdictions to work directly with government and health authorities. In June 2021, they created a return-to-play protocol and in

September both the WHL and MJHL announced they would require staff, players, and officials to be fully vaccinated.

Throughout these times, Groening felt grateful to be able to continue to train safely.

"This summer I attended both main camps for the Brandon Wheat Kings and the Virden Oil Caps, where there was very stringent rules and regulations in place because of COVID. I had to have a very thorough medical exam just to be able to attend."

Groening has now played one exhibition game and one regular season game with the Wheat Kings and has kicked off the regular season in Virden. In his short time with the teams, he is already seeing his skills sharpen from the valuable experience of competing alongside his more seasoned teammates.

"Compared to the Canadian Sport School Hockey League where I played last year, it is a big step up," he says. "The players are older, up to 20 years old. They are bigger, stronger, faster, and the overall pace of the game is much quicker."

Stronger and faster is exactly where Groening hopes to be in five years—and he's putting his all into leveraging as much knowledge and skill as he can in the hopes of being welcomed into an even higher league one day.

"Overall, this opportunity means so much to me and gives me a chance to become the best player I can be," Groening adds. "It's tough to say what the future holds, but in five years my goal is to be in the NHL. Right now my immediate goal is to have a successful year in the MJHL, and as of for next year I hope to play for the Wheat Kings full-time."

IN BRIEF



CORY CLARK

Jets Lack Killer Instinct

By Dan Hoepfner

The Winnipeg Jets lost to the San Jose Sharks on Saturday night to complete a three-game road trip through California.

The team managed to win two out of three games, but they lacked a certain killer instinct while facing a team that had been recently decimated due to COVID-19.

Seven members of the San Jose team and their head coach tested positive for the virus hours before puck drop, forcing five emergency recalls from their American Hockey League affiliate, the San Jose Barracuda. Two of the five recalls were making their NHL debuts.

This game should have been a cakewalk for the Jets, who were in the midst of a four-game winning streak and were reintroducing captain Blake Wheeler to the roster after his own stint in COVID-19 protocol.

"They inserted some guys that were chomping at the bit to get in the lineup, and it looked like it was the last game of a road trip for us," Jets forward Blake Wheeler said. "No excuse, though. We've got to be better than that through two periods. We expect more out of ourselves. I thought it was a positive sign in the third period. We pushed hard and finally got rewarded there. Sometimes getting a point out of a down game like that is a real positive."

Head coach Paul Maurice's line blender was in full

force as he tried to ignite a spark in his team.

The reunited trio of Kyle Connor, Pierre Luc Dubois, and Nikolaj Ehlers finally solved James Reimer at the tail end of the third period to send the game to overtime.

It was Connor's seventh goal of the season, which extended his point streak to six games.

"Those guys that are goal scorers, when they start coming into their prime, they have a high expectation to score goals," said Maurice. "And they have a real nose for that net and when to get there."

Goaltender Connor Hellebuyck turned away 34 of 36 shots and was the only reason the Jets were able to steal a point.

Hellebuyck has been a workforce for the team as they continue to try to find chemistry with their new pieces on defence.

Newly acquired defencemen Nate Schmidt and Brendan Dillon both look like solid additions throughout the first eight games of the campaign, but the entire unit needs to start clicking as the Jets embark on a seven-game homestand.

"From what I've seen, a lot of it is the start of the game," Jets defenceman Neal Pionk told reporters in California. "We've got to start off on the right foot. It's a great thing, being able to salvage a point after playing a game like that. But again, it's not sustainable over 82 games. We know that and we'll clean it up."

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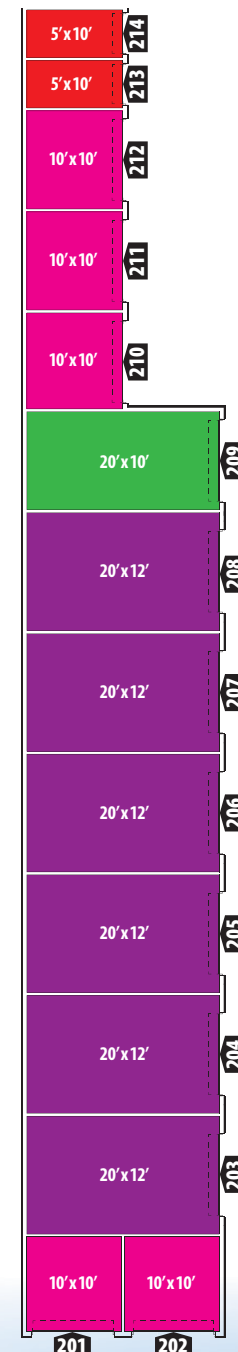
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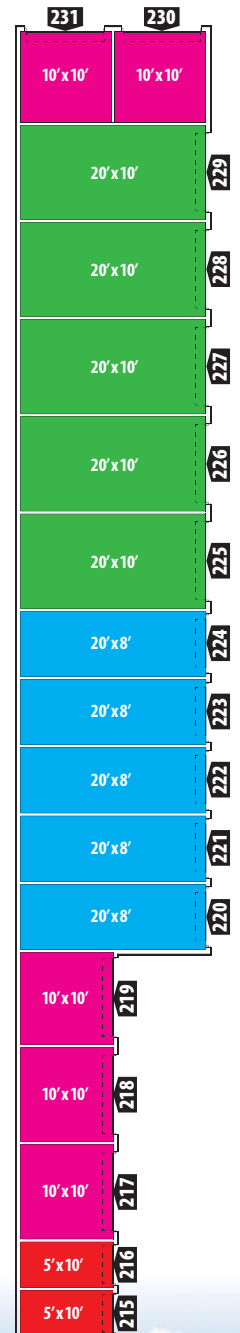
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