

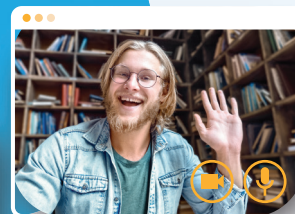
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LOCAL NEWS

Locals Increasingly Embrace the Work-from-Home Trend

■ Since the start of the pandemic, more and more people have been making career decisions based on the ability to work their jobs from home, a trend that has picked up steam since 2020.

Details on Pages 8-9

LOCAL NEWS

Municipal Election 2022: The Candidate Profiles

■ More candidates have declared their intention to run for our local councils in this year's election on October 26.

Details on Pages 14-18

COMMENTARY

Signs of Grooming in Your Child or Teen

■ Recent news out of Steinbach has renewed concerns about sexual abuse. This month, we discuss signs to watch out for.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Pickering Drafted by Pittsburgh Penguins

■ Last month, Owen Pickering of St. Adolphe was drafted in the first round by the Pittsburgh Penguins.

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Torque Brewing Teams Up with Niverville Nighthawks

» READ MORE ON PAGE 23

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Wm. Dyck & Sons in Niverville.

Wm. Dyck's to Host Community Appreciation Event

By Jennifer Lavin
jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

Wm. Dyck & Sons has been one of Niverville's anchor businesses for more than 60 years, and now they want to once again show some appreciation to their valued customers.

On Sunday, August 14, from 2:00–5:00 p.m., the team at Wm. Dyck's is going to be throwing a community appreciation event.

"It is a big thank-you to our community for all their support over the last few years," says co-owner Heather Fast.

The afternoon event, to be held in Wm. Dyck's parking lot at the corner of Main Street and Fifth Avenue, will include a concert by local cover band Last Call, the Prancing Pony Petting Zoo, Monster Truck Bouncer and Slide, and face-painting.

There will also be a dunk tank featuring local celebrities—and who doesn't want a chance to watch their favourite, or least favourite, local celeb get dunked?

"More details on which local celebs have graciously agreed—or perhaps I should say have been coerced, for a good cause!—to sit in

our dunk tank will follow on Wm. Dyck's Instagram and Facebook pages," says Fast.

There will be free cotton candy, canned drinks, popcorn, ice cream treats, and Negash Coffee. Guests will also be able to purchase food from Extreme Fries and Thunderbird food trucks.

Fast suggests bringing a lawn chair so you can relax under their big tent and enjoy your food while listening to the live music.

The business will also be accepting cash donations to the Mennonite Disaster Service in support of wartorn Ukraine. They will match these donations dollar for dollar.

Wm. Dyck's is a fourth-generation family-owned business. When Heather and Carl Fast first took ownership of the store, they had a staff of 15. They now employ more than 80 people. Their son Ryan has worked in the business for 13 years and has also become part of the ownership team.

"Even though our company continues to grow and expand along with our community, we still firmly believe in the value of relationships with our customers and

the community at large," says Fast. "We ourselves live, work, and play in the same community that we continue to serve, and we wouldn't have it any other way!"

She says that part of the team's commitment to the community is hosting customer appreciation events such as this one. In fact, Fast recalls how popular their last event was.

"Before the pandemic, we had a customer appreciation event that consisted of a ball hockey tournament," Fast says. "We had never organized a ball hockey tournament before, but with the help of a local farmer bringing in some rather large bales to use as hockey boards, and our great Wm. Dyck's team, we did just that! We made three ball hockey rinks in our parking lot and the tournament was a huge success! We hope to see just as many families attending our customer appreciation event this year."

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Looking for your 2022 Property Tax Bill?

The Town of Niverville is anticipating that the 2022 property tax bills will be mailed out to property owners by mid-August. If you haven't received your bill by August 29th, 2022, please feel free to contact the Town Office for a copy (email feedback@whereyoubelong.ca or call 204-388-4600 ext. 1107).

New property owners are reminded that they are responsible for the payment of the taxes whether or not they have received a tax notice in their name.

All payments must be received in the Town Office, 329 Bronstone Drive, Niverville by 5 p.m. on September 29, 2022. Cheques may be post-dated to the due date (Sept. 29, 2022) but must be received by the Town Office on or before September 29, 2022 by 5 p.m. or they will be considered late and will be subject to a penalty. Receipts may be emailed upon request or picked up at the Town Office.

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Local Competitors Take Grand Prize in BBQ Cookoff

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

The air around the Niverville Centennial Arena on Saturday, July 23 was fragrant with the enticing smells of the town's first annual Niverville Smokemaster BBQ Competition.

The event was emceed by Jim Johnson of Memphis, Tennessee, himself a 78-time Pitmaster champion.

Twelve adult teams from around Manitoba spent the day putting their culinary skills to the rest, aiming to impress a team of trained judges.

Competitors in the amateur competition worked in two meat categories: chicken and ribs.

Lorette neighbours Stephen McCabe and Kurt Carter walked away with the ultimate grand prize, which included a trophy, a cash purse, and a Golden Ticket invitation to one of the most esteemed food competitions in the world.

"It's the first time in Manitoba that an amateur has ever been invited to the World Food Championships," Johnson said proudly to the gathered crowd.

For this pair of Lorette pals, whose team goes by the name Brews and Ques, it was their first time entering a competition on the official barbecuing circuit. The only other cooking competition they'd entered before was at their hometown's annual summer festival three years ago.

"We barbecue for the neighbours all the time," says McCabe. "We've been practicing for years at home and decided that we would do this this year."

Taking their time and being methodical, he says, may have played a part in their big win.

"I think last time we rushed some of the critical steps, and this time we knew that [we needed to] take the time and do it perfect," he adds.

As for attending the world



Stephen McCabe and Kurt Carter of Lorette win the grand prize at Niverville's first Smokemaster BBQ Competition. **BRENDASAWATZKY**

championship in Dallas, Texas, at which the grand prize totals \$300,000, the only thing that would stop them is a death in the family, Carter joked—and maybe not even that.

Saturday's competition wasn't restricted to the big folk, though. Eight children between the ages of five and 14 faced off for the Kid's Q competition.

Twelve-year-old Ashton Eidse of Niverville performed some grilled burger magic which earned him top marks from the panel of judges.

While the young Eidse says he loves to cook at home, he'd never dreamed of entering a cooking competition.

"I was a bit nervous at first and I probably wouldn't have [entered]," Eidse says. "But [a friend] kept texting my mom so I finally got convinced and I'm like, 'I'm going to win a free barbecue.'"

In the week leading up to the event, Eidse says his grandpa stepped in to teach him some important grilling techniques which would help keep the juices inside the patty and indicate when

the meat was fully cooked.

The young man says his trick to winning, though, likely resulted from his use of a special meat seasoning and the patty garnish: onions fried in his personal special sauce.

When asked if he'll be back for next year's competition, Eidse says, "One hundred percent yes!"

Jason Reimer of the Niverville BBQ Society was pleased with how the event went down, from the competitions to the live bands and beer gardens later on.

Event staff, Reimer says, were challenged with only one big snag when the main generator blew early in the day.

The Red River Barbecue & Grill Society (RRBGS) are promoters of southern-style barbecue and support cooking classes and outdoor cooking events such as the Niverville Smokemasters BBQ Competition.

"One of our main goals is to bring larger professional Kansas City Barbecue Society [KCBS] competitions back to Manitoba," says RRBGS member Brad Biehn.

Until now, Biehn says Manitoba

was the only Canadian prairie province where there was no professional barbecue competition being held annually. The last one held in the province at all was in Morris in 2018.

He adds that the RRBGS committee decided to be a bit more ambitious after the pandemic and they helped pull together three KCBS competitions.

The first took place in Steinbach in May. Niverville's event was second on the roster. And in September, Luxe BBQ Company in Winnipeg will be the site of the last event.

"I know I can speak for the board that we were all impressed with the facility in Niverville," Biehn says of the local competition. "The volunteers from the community were fabulous, including some local business owners who helped sponsor the event. Even Mayor Dyck, who was a celebrity judge for the Kid's Q event... Niverville certainly has the venue, support, and local talent to grow this into a major annual event for Manitoba."

IN BRIEF

New Niverville Boutique Turning Heads

By Jennifer Lavin

jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

There is a charming new store in Niverville that's garnering rave reviews. JC Little Ones Boutique has opened its doors at 229 Main Street, Unit B.

Courtney Shepherd and her partner Jamieson Taylor are new to Niverville. When Shepherd found out about this cozy little retail space, she jumped at the chance to open a store there.

"This is something I have always wanted to do," she says.

Before opening her boutique, Shepherd ran a daycare and did nails at a salon. After her son was born, she decided to work from home.

"I started by making handmade leather baby moccasins," she says. "Then I decided to expand my line to include infant sleepers, bibs, and locally poured soy candles."

Shepherd has a seven-year-old girl and a two-year-old boy at home. Her son's name is Jayce, but she often called him J.C. before he was born.

When it came time to name the boutique, she decided his name was a perfect fit.

"It also works out that it's the first initials of Courtney and Jamieson," she explains.

Shepherd's boutique features her own products as well as items from local suppliers that make adult clothing, jewellery and other accessories, hot sauces, mugs, and coffee.

"[JC Little Ones Boutique] is always welcoming to kids and pets," says Shepherd, whose own two children are often there with her. "Thank you to the community so far for all the support. I am so passionate about supporting local and small business."

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Rural Commuters Exhausted from Rising Gas Prices

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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After two years of disruption due to COVID-19, many Manitobans were finally able to make a full-time return to the workplace this spring.

Unfortunately for these commuters, the skyrocketing cost of fuel plunged them into a whole new kind of crisis—a crisis of the pocketbook.

This year, the cost at the pump nearly doubled over the late spring and early summer. Times like these may get people to start rethinking their choice of a rural life so far from public transit.

According to an article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, a recent Angus Reid survey indicates that 87 percent of Manitobans feel the Progressive Conservative government is doing a poor job of handling inflation.

In provinces where government rebates and subsidies have been introduced, residents are only nominally more impressed.

Manitoba Finance Minister Cameron Friesen says that the province is calling on the federal government to take action, since they are currently collecting three taxes on gasoline sales: an excise tax, the five percent GST, and a carbon levy.

"The federal government makes out like bandits when the price of gas goes up," Friesen told the *Free Press*.¹

COMMUTING WOES

Samantha Bisson is a Niverville mom who, when not on maternity leave, commutes 50 minutes to work near Route 90 and Inkster Boulevard. Bisson has worked mostly from home since the pandemic began, travelling to work only to relieve colleagues as they go on vacation.

With the rising cost of gas, she says a full tank for her van at one point

came to \$140 as opposed to the \$70 it was at more typical prices. When her maternity leave is up, returning to work full-time could mean two fills per week, or nearly \$600 per month just for gas.

She's thankful that her partner works locally.

"As much as I would love to carpool, unfortunately I can't, as I have younger kids," Bisson says. "If something happened at school or daycare and they got sick, I would need to be able to leave on a dime to get them."

Bisson is hopeful that her employer will make allowances for her to continue working from home part-time after her maternity leave is over. In the meantime, she says she and her partner have been making conscientious changes to their shopping habits.

"We can't afford driving to the city every other day for things," Bisson says. "So we buy locally now and it pays off to support our town."

One Winnipeg resident commutes to Niverville for work every day. He chooses to remain anonymous but says he and his partner are finding that inflation is making it a struggle to get by.

"The sudden doubling of our fuel cost has taken a bite out of our disposable income," he says. "Gas used to be \$400 a month. Now it's \$800 and we drive very reasonable vehicles with efficient engines. We have less money for birthday gifts, groceries, household repair money, clothing, etc."

These same rising fuel costs have put a halt to their dream of travelling abroad to visit family anytime soon.

"All my wife's family lives in Indonesia, so she never gets to see them

in person," he says. "It's been four years since we've been there and my son is five years old. They only spent four weeks with him when he was nine months old. Then COVID hit. Now this."

The price of one ticket to Indonesia, he says, jumped from \$1,400 to \$2,400.

Another rural resident who requests anonymity agrees with Bisson that carpooling wouldn't be a viable option for shift workers like herself.

"My shifts are random, so planning to drive with someone else

compared to a gas vehicle.

Amber Ward took the plunge and traded her vehicle in for a hybrid model this spring. It runs on gas during highway driving and switches to electric at lower speeds. So far, she's pleased with the gas savings she's experiencing. Hybrid models regenerate the battery through the braking system.

"I noticed how much gas I was using weekly, and with the rising gas prices I decided to look at trading it in for a smaller vehicle," says Ward.

"I found out that I could trade it in for more than I originally got it for and more than what I still owed on my loan. Thank you, crazy car market! My salesperson helped me find a hybrid Ford Escape which would help us with our gas costs."

Even with a daily commute, she says she can go two weeks between fill-ups and her fuel savings come to around \$300 per month. Her fiancé drives a hybrid Ford F150.

"We can't afford driving to the city every other day for things. So we buy locally now and it pays off to support our town."

Samantha Bisson | Niverville Resident

FUEL COSTS AND LOCAL BUSINESSES

Steve Kehler owns Peak Renovations in Niverville. His small business runs a fleet of four vehicles, providing services all over the southeast and into the lake regions.

Current fuel prices mean that Kehler has had to pad his rates by an additional 15 to 20 percent.

"Our prices are all going up," says Kehler. "We can soak up the inflation just by charging [the customer] more."

Despite the jump in price, Kehler says he's astounded by the continuing demand for trades services. His company has never been busier and he suggests that most trades would

say the same.

"It's not sustainable," Kehler adds. "Everybody's buying houses and everyone's renovating houses. COVID had something to do with this, and the stimulus [packages]. It's been going like this for two years now, but it's going to come to a crashing halt, I think. Once interest rates go up a bit."

Ryan Scheurer runs a small trucking company out of Ste. Agathe called Upper Deck Transport. He says rising gas costs have already added 30 percent to shipping rates, and this too gets passed on to the customer.

In the end, though, he says it affects everyone as the majority of Canadian goods travel in by transport.

"The fuel price means everything," Scheurer says. "In one trip, that's half your cost. To take a semitruck from Winnipeg to Edmonton, you're spending \$800 in fuel, one way."

To add insult to injury, the entire industry is witnessing a shortage of experienced drivers to move those goods.

If things don't change soon in terms of fuel costs and inflation, Scheurer feels that a recession is imminent, which means even tougher times are ahead.

"The trucking industry has seen its ups and downs, but this is kind of unprecedented in a way," Scheurer says. "We haven't seen something like this before."

REFERENCES

¹ Carol Sanders, "Little Relief on Manitoba Horizon as Inflation Pressure Mounts," *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 26, 2022 (<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/little-relief-on-manitoba-horizon-as-inflation-pressure-mounts-576625652.html>).



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Locals Embrace Work-from-Home Trend

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of workers across Canada transitioned to working from home, or from other remote locations, while business closed their doors or restricted access.

The practice, known as telework, is a growing trend—and it's here to stay.

According to a Statistics Canada study, in 2016 approximately four percent of Canadians between the ages of 15 and 69 were putting in the majority of their work hours from home.¹

Compare that to a study from February 2021, during the pandemic, and the number had jumped to 32 percent. This amounted to 3.1 million Canadians working remotely.

This led Statistics Canada to investigate the impact of telework on a worker's productivity and preferences. The study was restricted to those who were still with the same employer they'd been with in March 2019, one year prior to the start of the pandemic.

The result? About 90 percent of teleworkers reported being at least as productive as they had been previously at their place of work.

More than half of the study group said they were equally as productive as they were before, while 32 percent indicated an increase in their productivity in their home work environment.

A mere 10 percent reported feeling less productive while working from home.

In the spring of 2022, as pandemic restrictions lifted in Manitoba and people began to transition back to their "regular" lives, many also returned to their original workplaces.

Others, though, were able to embrace the benefits of telework and



Andrew Gorozhankin and family.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

collaborate with their employers to continue the arrangement on a full- or part-time basis.

For some workers, in jobs where this was not possible, a complete career change was in store.

The Canada Job Bank is an online portal where Canadians can get leads on new employment opportunities. One of their job categories is dedicated specifically to work-from-home jobs.

"In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic," the site states, "remote work and home-based employment have become very popular and

in-demand."²

PAULINE GROUETTE

Pauline Grouette lives in Howden, in the RM of Ritchot. In April of this year, Grouette left her job as a dental assistant after 22 years in that profession.

During the pandemic, Grouette decided to broaden her skillset and study to become a cognitive behaviour therapist and certified life coach. Little did she know that it would result in a complete career shift just one year later.

"At first I was working in a dental

office while coaching part-time, but I soon realized that coaching had become my new passion," Grouette says. "After such a long career slouching over patients, my body told me to make the hard decision."

She admits that it wasn't an easy decision, but she has no regrets.

"The benefits of working at home are great," she adds. "The costs saved from vehicle expenses like fuel and gas and the time travelling to and from the office. I can manage household and personal errands easier since I manage my own schedule. In terms of my mental and physical

health, I can also concentrate on these areas as I need to so that I can aim for my most fulfilling life."

After working for years at a job where her time was highly structured, with schedules created by someone else, Grouette admits it's been a big learning curve now that she's responsible for structuring her own work-life balance.

Her husband and adult children were shocked by her decision at first but have been fully supportive.

"I think if people are able to work from home, they will," Grouette concludes. "Families in general may feel less anxious as they save time as well as money, creating a domino effect. The children may feel less anxiety if parents are able to leave stressful work environments. Of course, every position is different, though employers are realizing the value of good and faithful employees."

AMY ALLEN

Amy Allen's experience didn't include a complete career swap, but it did require a change in employer. Allen is in e-commerce and had been working out of a Winnipeg office until March 2020 when COVID restrictions forced everyone to work from home.

She says that the challenges were great during the periods of time when mandates required her three children to school from home. Most days her husband also worked from home, so at times distractions were aplenty, especially when their internet bandwidth lacked.

In the summer of 2021, Allen began making the transition back to the Winnipeg office a couple of days a week. But within a short time, she found herself on the hunt for job opportunities that would allow her to work from home.

She soon landed a telework job with a company based out of Minneapolis.

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Admittedly, Allen struggles with establishing a definitive start and stop time to her daily workday routine. But all in all, the change has done her good.

"There is such an increased flexibility in my day," Allen says. "No added commute time, the ability to run a quick errand, help out my kids with something, or start a quick chore between calls."

Prior to COVID, she says, people working in the tech industry were limited to about three brick-and-mortar companies in Winnipeg. But with the bulk of the workforce adjusting to a telework environment, the playing field has changed—and even the pay rate, she adds.

"There has been an incredible amount of churn in tech companies in the last two and a half years as a result of the rapid growth of companies [that are] able to hire remote employees," Allen says. "I personally know multiple people that have doubled or even tripled their salary in tech as a result of branching out to remote work, when previously they were only really able to work locally."

Allen is confident that telework is here to stay, at least in the tech industry. Many companies, too, are giving up their office space to reduce overhead costs.

For Allen, being able to work independently without direct management oversight has been refreshing. She recognizes, though, that it requires a lot more trust from the management side of things.

Even so, the move to working from home has had its drawbacks.

"Company culture and a team environment has always been very important to me, something that I feel

is definitely lacking when working from home," she says. "I've never even met most of my team in person and only know them from video calls."

She predicts that this lack of personal connection with fellow colleagues will likely result in an overall reduction in employee loyalty in the long run.

And it may not come up roses for the industry as a whole either.

"Long-term, these hiring levels and COVID-accelerated salary ranges are likely not sustainable, especially in the downturn of economic conditions," says Allen. "During COVID, there was an explosion of online shopping, so e-commerce companies were hiring to match that demand. But now that things are reopened, e-commerce has taken a huge hit. There have been layoffs at my company and many others that I know of."

ANDREW GOROZHANKIN

Andrew Gorozhankin moved to Niverville last August with his wife and two children. The couple has given birth to their third child since the move and the household is undoubtedly a busy one.

Gorozhankin works for Westeel, a grain storage manufacturing company based in Winnipeg. Until May of this year, he served the company in his role of commercial coordinator and customer experience agent.

"This winter it was totally horrible," Gorozhankin says. "I missed at least one day a week almost every week due to the road conditions... Luckily for me, I was promoted to another position in the company and my current team and management all work from home."

Not only is he glad to lose the daily commute, he says the current gas prices would have made it almost impossible to afford.

Most importantly, the flexibility of working from home allows him to be much more involved in raising his children. Hailing from Ukraine and Israel, there are no family or friends nearby for the couple to turn to for help with the children.

In his new role, Gorozhankin is responsible for sales and aftersales support to the company's export customers in countries around Europe and New Zealand.

"It is a full-time job and considering my customers have totally different time zones, I have to participate in meetings in the early mornings or late evenings," he says. "So working from home... is a big advantage."

While there are aspects of office life that he misses, like rubbing shoulders with his colleagues on a regular basis, there are few other drawbacks to working from home.

"I didn't notice [much disadvantage], unless my PC was blocked by my kids when I left my workplace door open," he jokes.

Gorozhankin is keeping his fingers crossed that his telework can continue long-term. His employer, he says, is currently looking to increase their Winnipeg office space.

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Town of Niverville Announces Subsidized English Language Classes

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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In mid-June, Niverville's town council announced the introduction of English language classes to the line-up of programming being offered at the Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC). The classes, to be held in the

fall, will be fully subsidized by the town. Registration will open August 1.

Council's purpose in offering these classes is to assist struggling local businesses by hopefully increasing the size of the local labour pool.

"I received a call from a business owner asking for help," says Mayor Myron Dyck. "They said they cannot find

staff."

Dyck says the business owner had resorted to taxiing people back and forth from Winnipeg to fill their vacant positions.

Following a conversation with the Chamber of Commerce and the rest of council, Dyck instructed staff at the town office to locate and hire a qualified instructor and make

the arrangements to launch the first classes as soon as possible.

"If you look at entry-level jobs, I believe you can see who the people and cultures are that are working those jobs," Dyck says. "Most of them are first-generation Canadians. With the federal government accepting 500,000 immigrants each year, some will find their

way to Manitoba and Niverville—and they need jobs. Some have English. Many do not."

The classes will also check off another proverbial box, Dyck says. They will be an opportunity to fulfill a commitment made by the town to use the CRRC to help immigrants assimilate to Canadian culture. Between the existing cooking classes and the coming English language classes, Dyck feels the town is doing their part.

"[This was] done so businesses will have access to more staff, to stay open more hours, so people can shop in their own town instead of having to leave to go elsewhere," explains Dyck.

An added benefit, he says, is that people tend to buy or rent homes and shop in the communities in which they find employment. That could produce an added boon to the local economy.

"The struggle is real," says Niverville Chamber of Commerce vice-president Elvin Krahn. "Fifty-five percent of Canadian entrepreneurs are struggling to hire the workers they need."

Amanda Wiens, the Chamber's president, agrees. "This is a concern we have heard echoed by our business community as well," she says. "Any barriers that we can help remove for those that want to enter the workforce will help our local employers have access to a larger pool of skilled labour."

Wes Hildebrand, human resources manager for the Niverville Heritage Centre, is all too familiar with the struggle. Between the campus's personal care home, restaurant, and event centre, staff always seem to be in short supply.

Their greatest need, Hildebrand says, is in support services such as dietary aids, cooks, housekeeping, and custodial staff.

On the event centre side of things, serving and hosting staff are desperately needed. These positions, he adds, are harder to fill because they mostly provide part-time employment.

"People that are past high school or college, they're

wanting more hours," Hildebrand says. "And so a lot of times we have to rely on the immigrant part of our labour pool for filling in some of those positions."

A high percentage of the immigrants Hildebrand hires already reside in the Niverville or Ritchot region, he adds.

"We definitely have hired some that have struggled with English, and we're fine with that," he says. "We just work with them. But had they had an opportunity to study English in an evening class, that definitely would have made them more comfortable with being here."

Spectis Moulders of Niverville and its sister company, Exclusive Cabinets, employ a good number of people whose first language is not English. Owner Kenton Pilek currently has about 80 workers between the two plants. For most of them, lack of English fluency isn't an impediment.

"It depends on what language it is," Pilek says. "If it was Czechoslovakian, that might be a challenge. With French, English, Spanish, Mexican, Low German, and High German, we get by no problem... I have people here that speak many languages and I speak a few, so we get by."

Even so, Pilek says he hasn't hesitated to cover the cost of English language classes when his employees request them. So far, they've mostly attended classes at the Steinbach Regional Secondary School.

A course in town, Pilek says, would likely encourage more of his staff to learn English.

Meanwhile, Wiens says that she and the local Chamber are thankful for the open dialogue they have with town council. And they're especially thankful when council responds in such innovative ways to the needs of the business community.

"The government has announced in May that they were investing \$1 million into a project that would support the post-COVID recovery of the hardest hit sectors, which includes restaurants, food and beverage, hotels, and supply chain," Wiens says.

She adds that attracting new employees has been a real struggle in their recovery.

Ste. Agathe COPP Needs Volunteers

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Ste. Agathe's Citizens on Patrol coordinator Sylvie Dorge is putting out a call for help: the program needs more volunteers.

The community's COPP currently has approximately nine resident volunteers. According to Dorge, however, during the summer months that number should be double that due to the regular rotation of people on vacation.

"We would take whatever we can get at this point, because I know people are quite busy," Dorge says.

The program offers complete flexibility in terms patrol frequency, and days and times when a person can work a shift into their schedule. Patrols go out in teams of two, so couples or pairs of friends are welcome. Interested individuals can also help and would be paired with another individual.

"We basically have our list of volunteers and they tell us when they'd like to go out," says Dorge. "Some of them are retired, so they like to go out at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning for their shift."

The establishment of the Manitoba COPP (MCOPP) dates back to 1991. The program was an initiative of municipal law enforcement agencies and Manitoba Justice with the goal of making communities safer.

Today, MCOPP still works to partner with volunteer coordinators in communities

across the province. The organization provides support through the provision of information, training, basic equipment, and networking opportunities.

Each active COPP is partnered with their local RCMP or police detachment.

Volunteers are expected to patrol their towns in vehicles or on foot, effectively becoming the eyes and ears of the community. They are outfitted with reflective vests and magnetic car door signs so they are easily identifiable.

The risk is minimal, since volunteers are discouraged from becoming directly involved if mischief or a crime is detected. Rather, details of the incident are reported to the police liaison for further investigation.

Whether a specific crime is averted or not, details of suspicious activity are still useful as they are logged by the police and often prove helpful in locating repeat criminals later on.

There are currently 50 active COPP groups in Manitoba, including Ste. Agathe.

But the success of the program relies heavily on volunteerism, both on the organizational end of things as well as boots on the ground.

Dorge states that, statistically, crimes tend to occur late at night or very early in the morning. For this reason, volunteers who take overnight shifts are extremely useful in reducing crime.

Even so, when COPP volunteers become a visible presence in the community

at any time of day, it serves to remind everyone that the area has an active neighbourhood watch program in effect.

As far as Dorge is aware, there has only been one reported incident of suspicious activity in the community since the program began last November.

Outside of that, things have been fairly quiet.

Of course, one could ask if the lack of mischief and crime is a direct result of patrols.

Either way, it can't hurt.

Dorge believes in the effectiveness of the program, especially when coupled with efforts the RM of Ritchot has made to curb crime across the municipality.

"We do have the Commissioners as well," says Dorge, referring to the paid patrol company hired by the RM. "I don't know if it has to do with that, but apparently... the crime rate has gone down by 60 percent."

Dorge refers to a recent report provided to Ritchot's council by Sergeant Guy Landreville of the St. Pierre RCMP detachment. Reporting on crime statistics for 2021, Landreville said that reported crime in all areas of the RM was down from the year before.

Decreases ranged anywhere from 17 to 70 percent, depending on the area.

Ste. Agathe saw a 62 percent decrease in reported crime.

But while Dorge works hard to keep the program afloat in Ste. Agathe, other communities have had no

active COPP programs for the past couple of years.

In 2016, Île-des-Chênes resident Marianne Curtis organized a Ritchot COPP program with the hope of establishing a group in each community. Curtis also coordinated the IDC group.

Volunteers were rounded up and the program ran until 2019.

When Curtis retired as the coordinator, the program died.

Ste. Agathe was successful in restarting their program in 2021, but even now Dorge says it's not easy. She originally took on the volunteer position of assistant COPP coordinator.

The main program coordinator has since moved away from the province, leaving Dorge to go solo.

The main coordinator position, she says, is available for anyone wishing to get involved in the administration end of things.

As for Curtis's years as COPP coordinator, she says that locating enough volunteers was always a concern.

"Everyone wants COPP, but they don't actually want to dedicate the hours to patrolling," says Curtis. "I really hope we can get it going again."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the Ste. Agathe COPP, email steagathecopp@gmail.com or find them on Facebook (username: Ste. Agathe COPP). Ritchot COPP is also on Facebook (www.facebook.com/groups/RitchotCOPP).

Happy Valleys Cannabis Opens Shop in IDC

By Jennifer Lavin

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Happy Valleys Cannabis in Île-des-Chênes is ready to invite customers throughout the region to check out their story at their grand opening weekend, to be held August 19–21.

Supervisor Bobby Loewen says that the weekend will be a celebration of cannabis and cannabis culture.

On Friday, August 19, customers will be able to meet the staff, meet some cannabis reps, learn about new products, and take advantage of some great sale prices. For the rest of the weekend, customers can continue to meet staff and check out the sales.

Happy Valleys Cannabis has been open in Île-des-Chênes since June of this year. They also have a location in Winnipeg, which has been open since November 2021.

After 20 years in the music



Bobby Loewen of Happy Valleys Cannabis.

📷 C/O BOBBY LOEWEN

industry, Loewen decided that it was time to move on to something new. Just before the pandemic, he chose to dive into the world of cannabis.

"I wanted to focus more on the science aspect of cannabis, as well as the benefits it can provide the consumer," Loewen says.

He feels strongly that cannabis and its users have gotten a bad reputation in the past and is

working to change that reputation.

"We are always learning, evolving with the industry, and willing to educate as well as listen, to help people find the most enjoyable experience possible, cater to their wants and needs, and help set aside the negative stigma that's surrounded cannabis for decades," he adds.

Happy Valleys Cannabis has a goal to focus on the health and

wellness of their customers. And of course, Loewen says, they also want to provide a great variety of quality products at affordable prices.

They sell many local products including Natural Earth and Highway 59 from Winnipeg, as well as Rogue Botanical from Niverville.

"Happy Valleys's fantastic, fun, and enthusiastic staff are ready and willing to help all levels of consumers from those who are curious about cannabis to the most seasoned cannabis enthusiasts," he says. "The team is super excited to serve our customers and we are looking forward to being a part of the Île-des-Chênes community."

Happy Valleys Cannabis is located at 4-597 Meadowlark Boulevard.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ www.happyvalleys.ca

IN BRIEF

Steinbach Teacher Charged with Sexual Assault

By Evan Braun

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A teacher at the Steinbach Regional Secondary School (SRSS) has been charged with a series of sexual assaults. David Bueti, 41, taught at the high school and coached rugby.

As of Bueti's arrest on July 4, six female students between the ages of 15 and 18 had come forward. The charges include five counts of sexual assault and three counts of sexual interference, all of which are alleged to have occurred between February 1 and May 31, 2022.

The incidents are also alleged to have taken place at the school.

Many students from Niverville and the surrounding area study at the SRSS.

According to RCMP, they initially received the reports of sexual assault on June 17. The victims are said to have brought their stories to a trusted person, and from there the Hanover School Division made a report to police through a social worker.

The division immediately put Bueti on leave upon hearing of the allegations, and since that time they have confirmed that Bueti is no longer employed with them.

Bueti has previously taught at four Winnipeg schools for more than a decade: Holy Ghost School (2006–2007), St. John Brebeuf School (2007–2018), Holy Cross School (four months in 2020), and River East Collegiate (six months in 2021).

The RCMP have indicated it's possible further victims will come forward, given Bueti's extensive employment history. The police have sought to remind people that there is no time limit on reporting sexual assault.

Rural Buds Brings Retail Cannabis to St. Adolphe

By Jennifer Lavin

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The cannabis industry is booming in Manitoba, and one of the latest new stores is Rural Buds in St. Adolphe.

The shop, located at Unit B-511 Main Street, opened its doors for the first time back in April, but their grand opening was held on Friday, July 15.

District manager Stacie Rasmussen says it was a big hit. Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen attended the occasion to help with the ribbon-cutting.

Rural Buds is a full-service cannabis store. They sell flower, pre-rolls, edibles, beverages, and accessories—everything you need to enjoy your cannabis journey.

They also offer advice. Rasmussen says that the budtenders at Rural Buds thrive on spreading accurate knowledge about the products they carry. They want to get to know their local customers and be able to guide each one to



The ribbon-cutting for the Rural Buds shop in St. Adolphe.

📷 C/O RURAL BUDS

the right products for them.

Pat Schmitke is the owner of Morris Bigway, and after the legalization of cannabis he realized that there was the potential for him to start up another successful business.

He opened his first storefront, Rasta Lady Cannabis Shop, in Morris in January 2021. Rasta

Lady is a small store, but it allowed Schmitke to see that there was definitely room in the market for small-town cannabis dealers.

By May he had opened Rural Buds Cannabis Shop in Carman, and just two months later he unveiled another Rural Buds, this time in St. Pierre-Jolys.

Rasmussen has only been

with the Rural Buds family since last October, but she has worked in the cannabis industry since it was legalized in 2018.

"I love this... family so much," says Rasmussen. "We all work together, managers and budtenders, for the success of this company. And now we are super excited to have been able to open our fourth location. St. Adolphe is such a beautiful community and we're proud to be a part of it!"

The Rural Buds/Rasta Lady team prides itself on being involved in each of their small communities. The team participated in the Carman parade this month and now looks forward to participating in the Morris Stampede weekend. They have 150 cookies baked and ready to give away at Rasta Lady during the Stampede.

"We are very proud to say that Rural Buds and Rasta Lady Cannabis Shops are a growing business that might just come to your town!" says Rasmussen.



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Macdonald-Ritchot Development Plan Getting Update

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On June 27, an open house was held at the TC Energy Centre in Île-des-Chênes to provide the public with an overview of the newly updated Macdonald-Ritchot Planning District development plan.

Staff members of WSP, the land use planning company responsible for the creation of the development plan, were on site to provide insight and accept public feedback.

Kari Schulz, senior planner with WSP, admits that the plan hadn't undergone any major changes since it was last updated in 2010. Mostly, the policy wording was adjusted to reflect a more modern approach to land use planning.

Planning districts, such as Macdonald-Ritchot, are collaborations created by neighbouring municipalities with the intention of sharing resources and creating terms on land use that help prevent conflict between the RMs.

These districts are subject to the provincial government's Planning Act, which governs land use across the province.

Under these guidelines, planning districts can further create their own policy which is specific to their region. This becomes the district's development plan.

The Macdonald-Ritchot development district was first established in 1984 and covers the almost 1,500 square kilometres of land under the jurisdiction of the two municipalities. Council members from each RM make up the board of directors. Councillors Shane Pelletier and Janine Boulanger represent Ritchot on the board.

The first phase of the



David Paton and Kari Schultz, at an open house about the Macdonald-Ritchot Planning District development plan.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

development plan renewal project began in December 2020 with the hiring of WSP to review and rewrite the plan. In the summer of 2021, public input was sought from all residents in the district.

"A year ago we did visioning workshops... where we surveyed people about what they like and what they don't like, and from that we derived a vision statement," says Schultz. "So a lot of what we heard was [that people want] a strong sense of community, the rural feel... and we also heard that a lot of people were wanting to protect the agricultural land base."

At the same time, key stakeholders—such as developers, government departments, and agencies—and the utilities were drawn into the conversation on land use policy change.

Based on all the feedback received, WSP determined that the new plan needed to focus on four key areas: preventing fragmentation of agricultural land, preserving the rural character of the district, encouraging residential and industrial growth in specific areas, and providing more housing diversity.

For future residential

growth, the plan has established two primary types of communities: rural centres and settlement centres.

In the rural centres, councils will focus on encouraging housing diversity, commercial and industrial development, and employment and transportation options for all ages. These hubs will also act as centres for most recreation.

In Macdonald-Ritchot, the rural centres include Île-des-Chênes, La Salle, and Oak Bluff.

All the remaining communities in both RMs fall under settlement centres. These are communities where the primary residential focus will be on large lot single-family dwellings.

"Settlement centres tend to have less diversity in terms of housing stock, less commercial and industrial uses," Schulz says. "It's not quite as diverse in terms of land uses... The intent is to kind of keep them as is to maintain that rural character."

Three enterprise centres have been established for the district as places where larger scale commercial and industrial growth will be directed. These locales include Ste. Agathe, Oak Bluff, and the

strip of land along the western leg of McGillivray Boulevard.

The updated development plan does include two new principles to direct land use designation in the future. These principles require that councils promote climate resilience by taking actions that will reduce negative impacts on the natural environment.

As well, a new emphasis has been placed on preserving the historical attributes that make each community unique.

By far the dominant land use in the district is agriculture and Schulz says the focus on preserving that is as strong as it's ever been.

"Macdonald-Ritchot is one of the few districts that we have in the capital region that has really strong policies to protect agricultural land... and directing residential growth to either the rural centre or settlement centre," Schulz says.

The final stages before approving the new development plan will include a review by the province and then a public hearing, at which time the two councils will vote on its acceptance.



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Taylor has completed additional coursework in Acupuncture, Functional Movement Systems, Strength Training, and Canadian Academy of Manipulative Physiotherapy Level 1.

Taylor has spent her career working with patients of all ages and with a variety of injuries and conditions. She utilizes different manual therapy techniques, patient education, and exercise programming to assist patients in achieving their health and wellness goals.

Taylor grew up in Killarney, Manitoba and now lives in Niverville with her husband Macauley. In her spare time she enjoys a wide variety of sports including; softball, hiking, mountain biking, camping, gardening, water sports, figure skating, downhill skiing, and learning new workouts.

Niverville Physiotherapy is very excited to have Taylor join our team. She is seeing current clients on a limited basis now and will begin accepting new patients on August 29th. You can call the clinic at (204)388-5217 to book an appointment with Taylor!

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Municipal Election 2022

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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More candidates have declared their intention to run for council in this year's Manitoba-wide municipal election, to be held on October 26.

This month, we are providing a breakdown of the latest candidates in Ritchot and Niverville who have announced election bids.

However, this is by no means a complete list. In the next few months, there will be even more candidates, and *The Citizen* will run a profile on each one.



RITCHOT MAYOR TO RUN FOR ANOTHER TERM

Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen is throwing his hat back in the ring for another four-year term. Unless the position goes uncontested, Ritchot residents will have to go to the polls to decide.

"Running for council for a third term has been a decision I've contemplated heavily for the last six months," Ewen says. "I've been very appreciative of the positive messages and emails from residents encouraging me to continue."

Ewen first took office in a 2017 by-election when Jackie Hunt, who was mayor at the time, resigned from council along with two councillors. At 29 years of age, Ewen won the position over three other candidates.

Ewen was back on the campaign trail one year later when Manitoba's regularly scheduled municipal election was held. That time, he took the seat by acclamation.

Come this fall, he will have served a total of five years in office.

From the start of his mayorship, Ewen says he has made it his mandate to bridge the communication gap between local government and residents of the RM.

"Improving municipal transparency and communication is something I've worked on from day one," he says. "Although it's not perfect, both have become much better since my first term."

In 2018, council took pride in launching the Ritchot Connect app, which provides municipal updates to residents by email, text, and phone notifications. The app proved especially useful this past spring when it came time to release daily flood updates.

Continuing along the same theme, Ewen says that he and the rest of council are looking closely at adding a communications officer to the RM's administrative team, which should help improve media relations and info-sharing between residents.

Assuming he resumes his role as mayor in October, Ewen has set his sights on a few other areas that he believes need special attention.

"Community safety and quality of life for our residents will be my focus over the next term, if re-elected," says Ewen. "This ranges from communication and opportunities with our local police and bylaw patrol to improving our greenspace and active lifestyle pathways throughout each community."

The past five years, he says, have provided a unique learning curve for him in terms of understanding the roles of other levels of government and learning to collaborate with them.

"Learning to work with all levels of government was a challenge at first. As I continued each year, I realized that each level has a hand to play to ensure improvement is made in the RM."

Of course, he's the first to admit that a mayor is only as good as the team of councillors that surrounds him. Working with the current council members, he says, has been a real pleasure.

"Council as a whole has been a team that, if chosen at a draft pick day from a professional sports association, would cost a lot of money!" he says. "I couldn't have asked for a better blend of people to work beside."

Apart from campaigning this summer, Ewen anticipates that he'll be continuing his focus on the current projects keeping council busy. Main Street revitalization is high on that list and they continue to lobby the province for funding on that.

As well, the site of the civic office in St. Adolphe will soon see some important improvements that he says will help attract tourism and give residents a place to hold summer markets and other events.

As rewarding as that work has been, Ewen says hearing that his constituents are happy ranks pretty high in his books.

"I have received nothing but positive feedback," he says. "The last three months especially have been very rewarding in terms of feedback."



RITCHOT COUNCILLOR RON MAMCHUK SEEKS THIRD TERM

On election day, October 26, Ron Mamchuk hopes that the residents of St. Adolphe will support him for a third term in office.

"I've learned a lot, and there's a lot more to learn," Mamchuk says.

Mamchuk has developed a great respect for the teamwork ethic that's developed between the current group of council members. It was a refreshing change, he says, from his first term in office when division within

the ranks resulted in a dissolution of council and forced a by-election.

And since this new council assumed power four years ago, a lot of residential growth has occurred. According to the RM office, more than 2,000 new voters have been added to Ritchot's voters list since 2018.

Just under 700 of those new residents have settled in Mamchuk's hometown and he couldn't be more thrilled.

But growth like this will require some effort going forward to ensure that water and sewer infrastructure doesn't lag behind. It's a tricky dance, he says, planning for the future without neglecting aging infrastructure.

Being a council member, Mamchuk adds, means recognizing that each individual community is only a small part of the whole. Sometimes this means that residents of St. Adolphe may have to wait while more pertinent projects are completed in other communities first.

"We just can't do everything in one community and not the other," Mamchuk says. "That's why we have staff going around and prioritizing what needs to be done. People need to understand that I'm only 20 percent of the vote on council."

Another message Mamchuk would like to convey to his constituents is the limited range a municipal government has in terms of spending and control. While there's so many things he'd love to do for his community, he says, in many cases the final decision lies in the hands of the provincial government.

One good example of this, says Mamchuk, is St. Adolphe's main street, which is in a state of major disrepair this year. Because the street falls under provincial jurisdiction, council's hands are tied when it comes to repairs and how quickly they'll happen.

The issue of speeding cars along that same street has also been a cause of resident concern, one that Mamchuk has been grappling with since first taking office. He's reached out to the local RCMP detachment and Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure over the years with little to show for his efforts.

Even with the recent acquisition of traffic speed display signs, he says that council is at the mercy of the province to approve their use and hook them up electrically.

In the meantime, Mamchuk has an appeal to commuters who travel through the community on a regular basis.

"Please slow down, as this is a big concern for all residents," he says. "This is a big safety concern for pedestrians and young children who live along this road."

Other amenities have also been slow in coming to the community, Mamchuk adds, but it's not for lack of trying.

Aging St. Adolphe residents still have few options when it comes to remaining in the community they love. And since council's mandate does not include dabbling in real estate, Mamchuk says all they can do is hope that the right developer comes along.

"This is another thing we've been fighting for and we're just not making any progress," he says.

He hopes, though, that it's just a matter of finding that sweet spot where residential growth inevitably results in adult-living housing options and growth of the commercial sector.

Looking back on this past term in office, Mamchuk says that many accomplishments have been made. One of his proudest moments was the day council gave the final stamp of approval on the St. Adolphe Childcare Centre.

"They are at capacity with the number of spots their staff is able to fill, plus there's a waiting list," Mamchuk says proudly.

As well, the completion of sidewalks between Tourond Creek and the older neighbourhoods of St. Adolphe is a major win for the community.

"In the future, we want to improve our walking paths and greenspaces. It takes time. Rome wasn't built in a day."

For Mamchuk, being retired affords him time to dedicate to council work. On an average week, he says he spends six to eight hours in local meetings and doing research. But



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additional time is also required to participate in the other four or five regional board meetings he attends regularly, not to mention St. Adolphe Community Club and recreation committee meetings.

In the end, Mamchuk says a councillor is never really off-duty, especially in a small-town setting where he runs into residents with questions and concerns on almost a daily basis.

"I like dealing with people, especially in our community," Mamchuk says. "My wife and I have lived here for 46 years and we have a son and daughter and four grandkids growing up here. And I hope they carry the baton into the future, whether it's by sitting on boards or eventually being a councillor or mayor or whatever. I want them to be involved in the community's affairs."

As for his current campaign, Mamchuk isn't completely clear on his strategy but knows one thing for certain: he won't accept any donations toward his campaign costs.

"I don't want someone giving me, say, \$500 and then expecting something in return... [and] I won't promise anything I can't deliver."



THREE DECADES IN, JOHN FUNK HOPES TO STAY ON NIVERVILLE'S COUNCIL

After 34 years of service on Niverville's town council, Councillor John Funk still isn't ready to hang up his hat. On October 26, Funk's name will appear on the ballot for the ninth municipal election in a row.

Funk first won a seat around the council table during a by-election in 1988. For the latter 20 years, he's settled into the role of deputy mayor,

stepping in to fill the mayor's shoes when needed.

For seven years he's been retired from his career as a teacher of the construction trade, and Funk feels that he's got more time to give than ever before.

"[Retiring] has really helped," Funk says. "I can be way more productive on council now."

Having lived in Niverville for more than 40 years, Funk has been witness to enormous change in the community's fabric—change that he believes is thanks to the many forward-thinking councils he's had the pleasure to sit on.

In 1988, Funk ran a campaign to improve on what the town lacked in two significant areas: seniors housing and recreational activities for young people. Now, just better than 30 years later, the town boasts a thriving seniors aging-in-place complex as well as recreational facilities rivalled by few other communities in the province.

His decision to run again, he says, is because there's never a dull moment on council.

Looking back, Funk was among the first to recognize a problem with the way council was handling the town's lagoon a quarter-century ago. The lagoon, once located at the southwest corner of the plot of land now known as Hespeler Park, was leaching sewage byproducts into the surrounding land. To compensate the neighbouring landowner, council was paying him an annual fee for the crop damage.

"I said to council, this can't be," Funk says. "We won't pay this for the rest of our lives. Let's buy the land and that's the best thing we ever did. How else would we have a central park like [Hespeler]?"

It would be years further until the town had the financing to build out Hespeler Park, so Funk made it his mission to create outdoor space for kids to play on two small sections of land that had been donated to the town for this purpose.

One was Opa's Park, and the other the Lion's Club Park. Funk approached council with a proposal to allocate \$2,000 per park towards landscaping and play equipment. With those funds in hand, Funk challenged the land donors to match the town's investment, which they did.

Shortly after, \$4,000 in play features were created at each location.

Funk also has unique ties to the inception of the Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC).

"When I campaigned eight years ago, I knocked on all the doors. There was a number of younger families and they said to me, 'We have nothing for our kids to do in winter. We have to take them to McDonalds to play.'"

This, he says, is when he approached the town's CAO about the possibility of allocating a cool \$5 million in Hydro grant monies to a new recreation facility with year-round indoor options for all ages. Funk was with that project from start to finish.

Funk says that his background in construction has made him a useful resource for community projects of all kinds.

Most recently, Funk was behind the building of dugouts at the Hespeler Park baseball diamonds and the construction of the Red River ox cart feature that sits at the CRRC to commemorate the region's Metis and Mennonite heritage.

He was also there, back in the day, when the firefighters of Niverville were first feeling the squeeze in their tiny fire hall located on the property behind Chicken Chef.

"Being a builder all my life, I said to council, 'You let me sell that building and I will add onto the Public Works building for the same amount [I sell it for].'"

And so he did, giving the fire department twice the space as before without any cost to the town.

If re-elected, Funk's next term will have him brainstorming for a second time on how to address the needs of a growing fire department.

As for adding diversity to council, Funk is confident he's got what it takes to empathize with the needs and desires of virtually every demographic in the community.

"I think I'm probably the best suited [for council]," he says. "I have a close connection with the seniors and my wife was in Services to Seniors [for a while]. All four of my children live in town. All of them work or run businesses in town... so I hear their thoughts on how things should be done."

Thanks in part to Funk's efforts, his grandkids are actively involved in local hockey, ringette, badminton, and volleyball. One of his grandsons plays for the Bison Juniors and has had the privilege of travelling with the team across western Canada.

His biggest learning curve over 34 years of service, he concludes, was when council attempted to go paperless under Greg Fehr's mayorship.

Online meetings have really not been his thing, he adds with a chuckle. He still prefers meeting with residents in person. And he takes pride in listening to what his constituents are saying.

As for his feelings about working with the other members of council, he says it's been a pleasure.

"When I look at some of the other councils and the headbutting that can happen, we don't [have that]," he says. "We definitely have some very lively discussions sometimes. But when it's done, we work as a team."



NIVERVILLE COUNCILLOR CHRIS WIEBE WILL RUN FOR THIRD TERM

Chris Wiebe is incumbent number three on Niverville's town council to announce his plan to run for re-election this year. If he wins back his seat on October 26, it will be his third term in office.

Wiebe sees himself as the guy behind the scenes getting stuff done.

Running for mayor was never a consideration for Wiebe, although he readily admits that his decision to run as councillor again was sealed when Mayor Myron Dyck decided to let his name stand for another term.

Already into retirement, Wiebe says that he's got a lot more to give

and his position on council has helped him to feel relevant in the community that he loves.

"I think I have stuff to add," he says. "I'm enjoying it and enjoying the people on council."

Municipal governance, he adds, has its perks and limitations.

"Local is the purest form of government. You have interactions at the grocery stores and coffee shops... with the very people that have elected you to government."

But that same electorate needs to recognize that no municipal government has carte blanche decision-making power, Wiebe explains. They are still very much regulated by provincial and federal policy.

A self-employed businessman for 38 years, Wiebe began his first term on council with a passion to open up opportunities so that other small or up-and-coming businesses could thrive in Niverville.

Just eight years ago, Wiebe took note of the state of the local business park, which was failing to meet its full potential.

"It was a shared initiative with the Hanover municipality," Wiebe says. "The industrial park was in Hanover and controlled by Niverville, but nobody marketed it. Nobody did anything with it."

Today, the land on which the business park stands has been annexed by the Town of Niverville and phase three of the site is almost at capacity.

"We're making provisions for larger lot sizes for bigger industry [in phase four]," he says. "As we're filling up, we're seeing more interest."

Wiebe was integral to the development of the business park. Using a model from back in his business days, Wiebe says they hired a contractor to develop the lots at the developer's expense, leaving the town to hold no debt on it. The developer, in turn, was compensated by a portion of the proceeds from each lot sale.

Wiebe also says council determined that infrastructure such as water and sewer could be added by the landowner later, based on the business's needs, thus allowing council to keep lot prices low.

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"We wanted an incubator-type industrial park. We wanted people to be able to start here and grow here rather than us trying to invite [existing] businesses from Winnipeg or Toronto."

Water and sewage infrastructure for the residential parts of town, though, will be of high importance to Wiebe if he's re-elected. Aging sewer pipes in the older neighbourhoods are eroding and the lagoon north of town is nearing the end of its life.

"We have to address how we are going to continue to grow," he says. "Our lagoon system is full. We are at the point where we would have to stop development. We're that close."

With the near completion of the new water treatment plant, which will service up to 15,000 residents, plans for a wastewater treatment plant located at the site of the existing lagoon are already underway. Wiebe says council has been happy to collaborate with at least three other neighbouring municipalities on what will be a multimillion-dollar cooperative investment.

While these projects are necessary and somewhat innovative, Wiebe says not many projects over his past eight years can trump what the Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC) and attached high school have done.

Wiebe was proud to work together with different levels of government and the Hanover School Division (HSD) to help create the first-of-its-kind complex in Manitoba. Wiebe says he was able to offer insight from his many years of experience dealing with contractors.

Here again, council opted for a unique approach on the CRRC build. They invited contractors to draw up designs based on the parameters provided by council regarding the components the facility needed to have and the budget restrictions they were under. Council received eight designs in total and, with the help of an engineering firm, chose the best one.

"We went with a design build," Wiebe says. "That took some pressure off us. One of the advantages to the community [of a design build], for one, was that we didn't have to put up almost \$3 million for the design."

Collaborating similarly with HSD, Niverville High School is now the only

school in the division with a paved parking lot.

The two most important character traits he's had to develop during his years on council he says was accepting the fact that decision-making was done as a team rather than solo, as it had been during his years running a business.

The second trait, he adds, is something he continues to work on.

"You have to be able to take criticism," Wiebe says.

The most difficult for Wiebe is the criticism from residents who don't understand the full story behind the decisions that council makes.

As for getting along with the rest of council over the years, Wiebe says there's plenty of respect to go along with the teamwork happening in council chambers.

"We have good debates. We come from different angles on almost every subject, but we walk out of there as a team."

Regarding diversity on council, Wiebe says there's no easy way to ensure a mix of genders, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.

"We have to enable diversity," he points out. "We can't guarantee it, but we have to make it an equal playing field for everyone... From everything I've seen around our table and within our staff, we're very sensitive to inclusion."



NIVERVILLE COUNCILLOR NATHAN DUECK READY FOR ANOTHER ELECTION RUN

It's been six years since Niverville resident Nathan Dueck was first elected to a seat on town council. On October 26, Dueck hopes voters

will show the same faith in him as he prepares to run for another four-year term.

Dueck's career on council began in 2016 after a by-election was called to fill a vacant seat that was created when John Falk left council to run for the Manitoba Liberals in the provincial election.

Dueck ran against incumbent Falk and newcomer Louise Billows.

In 2018, the mayor and councillors, including Dueck, won their positions by acclamation since no new challengers ran for council that year.

Dueck says that his main reason for running in this election is the same as it was when he first began: to give back to his community.

"For me, it's always an extremely easy decision to get involved in anything that is a passion of mine, whether it's volunteering in the community or being a part of something bigger," says Dueck. "Sometimes it takes a toll on your personal life, but it's something that's an incredible experience and an incredible journey."

Running for the position of mayor crossed his mind this time around, but that role comes with time commitments beyond that of a councillor. As a father with young daughters and a long-term career to manage, the timing wasn't right just yet.

Even as councillor, though, Dueck says that he hasn't shied away from giving of his time beyond the typical 20 hours per month invested in council duties.

Over his six-year tenure, Dueck has acted as director on a number of local boards, including the Niverville Community Development Corporation, the Niverville Business Park Inc., and the Niverville Recreation Committee. He's sat as president for Niverville Healthcare Services Inc. and is an active member of the Healthcare Task Force.

He's also the town's communications liaison, website and marketing spokesperson, and an active advocate of the tree-planting initiative sponsored by Niverville Communities in Bloom and TC Energy.

If re-elected, Dueck has his sights firmly set on a number of initiatives that will be of key importance to

the community in the coming year. The first of these will be to relocate the Niverville firefighters and first responders to a larger facility.

"I will be their biggest advocate in terms of getting them a new home, because they deserve it and our community deserves it," Dueck says of an intended move from their existing cramped quarters.

As well, Dueck says much work is needed to prepare the community for its rapid progress towards becoming Manitoba's next city.

"We will be needing a lot of infrastructure, a lot of money, and a lot of grants to get us to where we need to go."

Taking a look at what's happened in Niverville over his six years in office has been humbling and rewarding for this councillor.

He feels especially moved by the number of times council has been gifted with surprises such as Chamber of Commerce announcements of new businesses coming to town or government grants that expedited projects which would have otherwise taken much longer to see through to completion.

"Those are the rewards," he says, "when you've made financially constrained decisions that you can't go ahead with but then something turns around that gives us the ability to do them."

For Dueck and the rest of council, Niverville's population explosion has meant facing some hard decisions in terms of saving the community's faltering healthcare services and adding policing services. But, easy or difficult, Dueck says that he is glad to have been a part of it.

"Policing was a big issue," he says. "Personally, I'm really glad that we went with RCMP, because when you're dealing with another level of municipal responsibility in terms of a private police force, it's too much for any one person on council to have that kind of responsibility."

All in all, though, he says the current council has worked together like a team.

As to the question of whether council should be more diverse, Dueck believes it has more to do with a councillor's approach to diversity than their own race, skin

colour, or gender.

"The job as a representative for an entire community should not be biased to one specific group or one specific idea," Dueck says. "It should be about what's best for the common good of the community, which is to be an inclusive and diverse community. I think it's fair to say that we are already a diverse community and anybody that sits on council is a representative of a diverse community."

At the end of the day, Dueck reminds anyone interested in running for council to have an attitude of servitude and a realization that it can put extra demands on one's career, family life, and social life.

"You go into politics thinking you're going to change one or two things and make a difference in this world," Dueck says. "It's not about your own personal agenda or your neighbour's agenda. It's about what's best for the community. It's something you truly have to be passionate about and willing to give up almost everything in your life to effectively do."



JASON ALDERSON OFFERS FRESH FACE TO NIVERVILLE RACE

Jason Alderson, 42, of Niverville is a fresh face on the local election scene. Though he's relatively new to the community—18 months and counting—he brings municipal council experience with him from his previous hometown of Rocky Mountain House, Alberta.

He's stepped into the ring for a position as councillor and hopes Niverville residents will give him some serious consideration on



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"The reason I'm running, for one, is because it's my passion," Alderson says. "And two is just to offer people change. It's not because I'm any better than anybody else [on council], but I just think that it offers a fresh perspective—and if people want change, then I'm somebody that's on the ballot that they can vote for."

Alderson is a family man, married with a total of five children. Already successful in his previous career, he is retired and a stay-at-home dad to his three younger children.

The couple moved to Manitoba to aid a family member in their local business. They were drawn to make Niverville their home for the same reasons they once settled in Rocky Mountain House: it's a growing community that has effectively maintained its rural feel.

"It's small enough that it could one day grow into a city but still have that small-town flare," says Alderson. "I think it should be one of the goals [of a council], trying to keep that [small-town feeling] as much as possible."

Small town or not, he feels quite strongly that council isn't benefited by long-term politicians. In his mind, two terms in office is sufficient for any one councillor unless they choose to run for the mayor's seat after that.

Even as mayor, he says, two terms in that position is probably enough.

"If it's always the same people on council, then it's always the same set of eyes on problems," he concludes.

While Alderson served over six years on a previous council that boasted a much more gender-diverse team, including a female mayor, he says diversity is only achievable if the right mix of people run.

In the end, though, a good diversity of people of different ages is what he feels every council needs. Unfortunately, he says, too many councils are comprised primarily of senior retirees.

One way to make council positions more appealing to the younger generation, he concludes, is by reconsidering council remuneration so that the work will financially compensate for the hours taken away from someone's full-time career.

And to those residents who are reluctant to run for council due

to a lack of political experience, Alderson offers some encouraging advice.

"A lot of people may be scared to run because they think they don't know as much as the people who are already there," he says. "But the reality is, they had a learning curve once as well."

For Alderson, fiscal responsibility and reducing residential property taxes by growing the commercial sector rank high on his priority list.

"Right now, we're heading towards tougher economic times and so we definitely need to look at how we're spending our money... It's more about needs than wants during these times. [It's also about building] a strong foundation, which means continuing to grow that commercial tax base."

And to help grow commerce in the community, Alderson says he'd take a close look to ensure there isn't a lot of administrative red tape, which in many communities is inhibitive to a business owner who's looking for a location to put down roots.

If elected, Alderson says he'll work at bridging the gap between council and the community by bringing a live stream to all council meetings and making recordings available on the Town of Niverville website.

"The reality is that, at the times when meetings [occur], most people have a job during the day and at nighttime are getting the little ones to bed," he says. "Right now, I think people are not [seeing everything that's coming out of council meetings] so we don't know the whole story."

This would go a long way towards building trust and transparency with constituents, he adds.

In order to demonstrate a high level of trust right out of the gate, Alderson promises voters that he won't accept any donations to cover his campaign costs.

"I don't want anyone believing that if I'm taking funds from somebody, that those are the people I answer to."

A seat in government should be won, he says, not by the size of a candidate's purse but by the size of their character.

As well, Alderson commits to running a campaign that won't create needless waste or unnecessary expense. Residents shouldn't

expect to see his campaign signs cluttering up the local landscape. Instead they can find him online and possibly, if time allows, at their door.

He's hopeful for the opportunity of a public candidate debate at some point during the campaign. In the meantime, he welcomes any feedback and questions in person, by email, by phone, or on his social media sites.

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MEGHAN BEASANT EYES SPOT ON NIVERVILLE COUNCIL

Meghan Beasant of Niverville is giving residents one more reason to go to the polls on October 26. Beasant's name will appear on this year's ballot—and if she wins a seat, it will be the first time in eight years that the town has had female representation.

Beasant and her husband Scott have lived in Niverville for ten years. Come fall, the second of their two young kids will enter the school system, giving this stay-at-home mom more free time to invest in the community she loves.

While she's been active in a variety of local volunteer positions over the years, including that of president of the preschool program, this will be Beasant's first foray into municipal politics.

She openly admits to feeling a level of excitement and nervousness over her recent decision.

Beasant was inspired to give it a go, she says, because of an article she read in the May edition of *The Citizen* which provided guidance on how to run in a municipal election.

"I read the article and I don't know what came over me," Beasant muses. "I just got really excited. The year that I was the preschool president had been very challenging, but very rewarding. To be that involved in the community and to have an influence has been really fulfilling for me."

Why has she decided to throw her hat into the ring? She says it has nothing to do with the current council members. She holds a lot of respect for the team of individuals that has worked hard to keep up in the face of an unprecedented population boom.

Instead it has more to do with the age diversity she feels every council needs. At 36, Beasant feels like she's in a good position to represent the many young families who have settled into town and those who have yet to move in.

"The infrastructure and the commerce has to grow," she says. "Those are all very important things. But I do feel like there's already a lot of that being represented [on council]. What I don't feel is being represented is the needs of the younger families."

And indeed, there are a lot of younger families. By demographics, the results of the 2021 census reconfirmed Niverville's status as one of the youngest communities in the country. Niverville's average is just 33.2—significantly lower than the average age in Manitoba (39.7) and Canada (41.9).

According to Beasant, her focus would be to pay closer attention to the small details that make a community great. For instance, the addition of a library and possibly a public pool, if those are fiscally viable options. She'd like to see paved pathways around the retention ponds, washroom facilities in more of the parks, and more shady areas at the outdoor recreation spots in town.

"Those things, to some people, might seem very minor. Is it really important to a community that's growing? In my opinion, it is, because otherwise the [young families] in this town are going to feel overlooked."

Another goal for Beasant is to work at bridging the communication barrier she sees happening between town council and residents. While occasional mailed newsletters serve a purpose, she says they can't convey things like

last-minute water use bans and the like.

Setting up community announcement boards at strategic locations around town, for example, would go a long way to helping people stay informed, she concludes.

Community billboards, in locations where people naturally gather, may also be a way to help the growing town maintain its small-town feel. This is a sentiment she sees shared often on social media and one that is a tricky balance to maintain as the community moves closer to city status.

"Often you can keep the small-town feel by being respectful of the [look] of a town," she says. "So when you're building new things, try and keep it in that appealing aesthetic... Otherwise you can very quickly lose it. If a town is going to look like a slab of concrete, which is what happened to my hometown in [Ontario], it no longer feels like a small town."

She says that parks, too, can be constructed in such a way as to bring in modern elements without losing the historic character of a place.

As the election draws closer and people return from vacation, Beasant hopes to campaign door to door.

"I'd like people to be able to see me and see my energy and to feel my excitement for it," Beasant says. "I like the face-to-face option. That is where I'm most effective."

In spite of her zeal, Beasant jokes that she has no natural talent for anything in particular. This just means that she has to work very hard at every new thing she takes on. This, she says, is the strength that pushes her into the political arena.

"I'm not a politician at heart. I'm a volunteer at heart and a fellow community member at heart, and that's why I want to be on [council]. I feel very connected to lots of people in this town from all walks of life. I have a lot of appreciation for the history of this town and I also have a lot of hope for the future of this town. I don't intend on going anywhere."

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34%

YOUR COMMENTS:

This is a hard question to ask of most people in my opinion. The amount of work that goes into being on council is much more than meets the eye, and a much bigger commitment than most people would realize. With that in mind, I do still think it is valuable to have some level of volunteerism on council, which promotes people who truly want to help the community to step up. If you turn it into too much of a "job", then I fear you would see a lot more people - with less passion - show up and ultimately leave us all worse off.

(continued from page 17)



LONG-TIME NIVERVILLE RESIDENT BILL FAST ENTERS COUNCIL RACE

Bill Fast is a familiar name in Niverville, and on October 26 he'll also be an option on the municipal election ballot. Fast is vying for one of four councillor positions and hopes to serve the next term in office.

"I know that I can make a difference," Fast says. "And I've got lots of time and energy. Everybody who knows me personally knows that I'm just not a [sit-still] kind of guy."

Recently retired, Fast says he's been looking for ways to stay busy. So he volunteers his time working on the sponsorship committee for the Niverville Nighthawks. A gifted musician, he also takes his talent to residents living in the assisted living complex who were shut-ins during the pandemic.

A good council works together as a team, he says,

but a council should also bring to the table some diversity in skillsets.

At the end of a 40-plus year career in sales, his public relations skills are just waiting to be put back into service.

"I have a real understanding of people and I love to deal with them," Fast says. "That's my forte... You have to be able to listen to people to make any decisions [on council]."

It begins at the grassroots level, he adds, discerning what your constituents are telling you and valuing the broad nature of the many perspectives you'll hear.

He may be a senior, but Fast says it's unfair to assume that getting up in age disqualifies a person from being able to relate to younger generations and the issues they face today.

"I consider myself someone who's not just in his own little world with his age category. I care about the younger generations, and I think it's too easy to just put us older people in a box and assume we don't know what's going on."

According to Fast, he's always been actively involved with his grandchildren. He also works alongside a group of teens and young adults in his church's worship band.

"I'm inputting into their lives and they're inputting into mine," Fast says. "It's what keeps me young... And I think we have to communicate because it is the younger generation that's going to [grow] up to make a difference in this

community."

Beyond mere communication, Fast also believes it's the responsibility of his generation to be pulling in young people and grooming them for active community involvement.

Equally important to communicating with residents and youth, Fast adds that it's imperative that council establish and maintain good communication with the heads of every local volunteer organization, as they are the boots on the ground that push the community forward.

This isn't Fast's first crack at politics. He was elected to Niverville's council for one term in the early 1980s when Gil Wiebe served as mayor. He was the youngest councillor at the time and had to work hard to prove himself.

"I remember fighting for artificial ice [back then]," says Fast. "The money that this community was spending on having to find [available] ice time somewhere else during playoffs [was excessive and unnecessary]."

Fast had discovered a government grant which would match monies raised for improvements to community sports facilities. He set to work, rallying local businesspeople and residents for financial support.

The community quickly got behind the project and all resistance Fast previously faced from council waned in the wake of the project's

success.

Fast's ancestry goes back two generations in Niverville, to his grandfather who began the business known as Wm. Dyck & Sons. Fast's parents, as well, were community leaders in their day and gave tirelessly.

Fast was born in Niverville and, apart from a few brief years away, he's been a resident all his life.

He's not hung up on keeping the community the small town it was for so many years of his life, though. Instead he sees opportunity in the population's steady upward climb—opportunity to bring in top-notch recreation, sports, retail, and jobs.

And despite the town's recent growth, he says we haven't lost the small-town feel.

"The fair that we've got here is second to none," he says. "It's well known... and that's part of the small-town flavour [we still offer]."

In spite of his many years as a resident, there will be many voters who don't know Fast on a personal basis. To those voters, Fast would like to convey his intent to fill the role of councillor with honesty, integrity, and determination.

"I consider myself progressive as well as fiscally responsible," Fast concludes.

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Commentary

Signs of Grooming in Your Child or Teen

By Daniel Dacombe

Content warning: physical and sexual abuse, grooming, victimization, and trauma.

Readers who were around in the 1960s, or who were parented by folks who were growing up in the 60s, may be familiar with the concept of “stranger danger.” Similar to the fears of satanic ritual abuse in the 1980s, stranger danger was a form of moral panic—a widespread fear spreading through a population that may or may not be based on reality.

According to many books, television specials, films, and news outlets of the day, child abductions and abuse by nefarious individuals lurking in the shadows was alarmingly common. Parents were urged to educate their children about the potential threat around every corner, to treat unknown individuals as dangerous, and to only talk to trusted adults. By doing so, parents were told, they would protect their children from becoming victims of kidnapping or worse.

In the decades since, our approach to protecting children from victimization has changed greatly, and stranger danger no longer features as prominently.

This is not to say that strangers can never be a source of abuse or assault for children and adolescents, and not getting into a stranger’s van when offered candy is good advice no matter your age.

However, data from every corner of the Western world shows that trusted adults, not strangers, are overwhelmingly more likely to be the perpetrators of sexual abuse and assault against children and teens.

These trusted adults can play many different roles in a child’s life. They can be family, older friends, coaches, or religious leaders.

As was recently seen in Steinbach, they can be teachers.

Sometimes these abuses are spontaneous or opportunistic; an abuser finds themselves in an unexpected situation with a young person and exploits it. Oftentimes, though, the abuser will take weeks, months, or longer to prepare their victims.

Experts in the field of child victimization call this process grooming.

Grooming is a complicated process by which an abuser attempts to build a trusting relationship with a



child or adolescent, and often their family, with the aim of committing sexual abuse and decreasing the risk that they will be caught.

Abusers have specific goals that follow a pattern: gaining access to the child, gaining the child’s compliance, escalating the inappropriate behaviour, and maintaining the child’s secrecy. Grooming can happen in person or (increasingly) online and often occurs from someone who is in a position of confidence with the child or family.

Even if the grooming never leads to actual abuse—due to the abuser getting caught, moving away, or losing access to the victim—the victim may still experience lasting harms.

The process of grooming involves isolating the victim, destabilizing their trust in relationships with people other than the abuser, coercion, and subjecting them to confusing and often distressing patterns of behaviour.

Decades later, individuals who were subjected to grooming can have issues with trust or having healthy relationships as adults.

Some situations or contexts may facilitate grooming more than others. Religious groups have long been an arena in which abusers are able to not only find victims but have

their behaviour willingly covered up by fellow believers.

While most people will be familiar with the clergy sex scandals that have been coming to light for decades, this tragic trend is not limited to the Catholic Church. A significant body of data exists showing that the issue is rampant in evangelical churches. For just one example, see the recent Southern Baptist scandal.¹

Social scientists from the University of Alberta have concluded that religious contexts can facilitate both the grooming process and the secrecy after abuse occurs. Some of the contributing factors they identified included power imbalance in relationships, reverence towards religious leaders, patriarchy, the emphasis on obedience, and fears about spiritual punishments (for example, going to hell).

Parents of victims who have been abused in the church may even be shamed into not believing their child could have been abused by a trusted religious leader, further eroding the relationship of trust between parent and child.

Here are some common signs in your child or youth’s behaviour that may indicate that they are being groomed: (1) being secretive about how they spend their time, whether

it be online or elsewhere, (2) having unexplained money or gifts, (3) being unwilling to talk about their recent activities or feelings, (4) showing signs of distress such as being withdrawn, anxious, or avoiding their usual friends or activities, and finally, and especially, (5) demonstrating sexualized behaviour—that is, the knowledge or use of language about sex that would be more appropriate for someone much older.

After reading this alarming content, most caring parents will likely feel highly motivated to prevent their child or youth from falling victim to the grooming process.

Here are some selected strategies developed by experts in the field that you can use to reduce your young person’s risks.

1. Teach your child that their body belongs to them. This can be as simple as making sure they always have the right to say no, even when it involves hugging a grandparent or otherwise showing affection when they don’t want to. An abuser may try to shame a child into accepting unwanted touching, and it’s important for your child to know that this is never appropriate.

2. Talk about secrets and secret-keeping. Explain the difference between a surprise (like a

present you’ve bought for a friend) and a secret (something you aren’t supposed to tell anyone), and that they will never be in trouble if they tell you something that another adult asked them to keep secret.

3. Teach your child about consent in relationships, early and often. Use examples you see together in television shows, movies, and real life, and ask your child if they see people asking for consent or respecting each other’s boundaries.

4. Talk to your child about when it is appropriate to be taking and sharing photos, especially photos of themselves. Abusers will often coerce the victim for photos and use the earlier photos as blackmail for other, more serious acts.

5. Talk about being assertive. Let them know that saying no to unwanted touching is a complete statement. They never need to provide an explanation for not wanting to be hugged, touched, tickled, or picked up.

6. Provide age-appropriate sexual education. This will reduce the effectiveness of grooming tactics, especially tactics intended to desensitize your child to sexual touch.

7. Finally, and this cannot be emphasized enough: always believe your child when they report unwanted touch, requests for secrecy, or other distressing behaviour from adults—even when those adults are people you know and trust.

The effectiveness of grooming can be greatly reduced when an open, frank, and trusting relationship exists between parent and child.

And as a reminder to our readers, in Canada there is no statute of limitations for reporting sexual abuse or assault to the police. If you or someone you care about needs help, please contact your local RCMP detachment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

¹ Edward Helmore, “US Southern Baptist Churches Facing ‘Apocalypse’ Over Sexual Abuse Scandal,” *The Guardian*. June 12, 2022 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/12/southern-baptist-church-sexual-abuse-scandal>).

■ For further reading and resources, please check out: “Creating Safe Environments for Youth,” Michigan State University. Date of access: July 28, 2022 (<https://www.canr.msu.edu/creating-safe-environments/resources>).

Sports & Recreation



The Niverville U11 Gladiators.

ASHLEY LEJEUNE

Soccer Squad Overcomes Absences to Claim Bronze

By Jennifer Lavin

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The Niverville U11 Gladiators soccer team came away from a recent tournament with a bronze medal.

This tremendous achievement came about despite the team not having one of their coaches in attendance, which should have served as a significant disadvantage over the late-June event.

The Gladiators play in the Eastman Youth Soccer League.

There are so many kids from the Niverville area in this league that there are actually four different Niverville U11 teams, all of whom participated in a tournament on June 25.

The tournament took place in Beausejour.

The Gladiators' regular coach, Chantelle Dueck, was unable to attend this particular tournament, leaving her young co-coach, Bella Arauz,

to lead the team.

Bella is the older sister to E.J., who also plays on the team and was one of the tournament's leading scorers.

Bella is only 15 years old.

Despite her young age, Bella was able to step into the coaching position and, according to the team, handled the challenging day admirably.

"The boys did amazing," Bella says. "They won almost all their games, only losing one game and tying one game. They did outstanding during the tournament. The way they all worked together and communicated was just outstanding."

Lauren Kushner, mother of goalkeeper Brody Kushner, volunteered to help out as Bella's assistant for the day.

Lauren says that she was very impressed with the Gladiators' performance throughout the season, and in particular at the Beausejour tournament.

"They were third overall out of 24 teams and came away with a bronze medal in Pool A," Lauren says. "So they did great."

Their regular coach wasn't the only team member absent that day.

In fact, several players were also missing from the squad.

As a result of the absences, the team was reduced to only one sub. This meant that the players received few breaks from game play.

One consequence of the shortfall is that 10-year-old Brody had to play goalkeeper for the entire tournament.

"[Our team] had a lot of good players and really good chemistry between teammates," says Brody. "Everyone was just really nice to each other."

When asked why he likes soccer, Brody says that he just finds it a lot of fun.

"Getting a goal is the best feeling you could ever experience," he says.

Last year's soccer season was cancelled because of COVID-19 after the Gladiators played only one game.

On top of that, this year's team included two members who had never played soccer before.

Nonetheless, they rose to the challenge.

Brody says the team loved having Bella as a coach.

"She's really calm and not always screaming her head off like some coaches do," he says.

His mother agrees. "She was very positive and made the boys believe they could do it."

According to Bella, the main highlight of the tournament was seeing how happy the boys were when they won bronze.

"Overall I had an amazing time working with everyone and co-coaching the boys," Bella says. "I would 100 per cent coach the same group again!"

IN BRIEF

Owen Pickering Drafted in First Round by Penguins

By Ty Dilello

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Last month, St. Adolphe's Owen Pickering was a first round draft pick (twenty-first overall) by the Pittsburgh Penguins at the 2022 NHL Entry Draft in Montreal.

It was a dream come true for the 6'4", 181-pound defenceman.

Pickering is expected by many to become a force on a National Hockey League blueline for many years to come.

"I can't really describe it," says Pickering. "It was the best feeling in the world having Kris Letang announce it. It's super special as he was someone that I've looked up to."

Pickering has come a long way from the time when he was three years old and started learning to skate in St. Adolphe.

Sports were a significant part of his childhood. Besides hockey, he played lots of baseball in the summer at the AAA level and even represented Team Manitoba at Nationals.

He also played volleyball, basketball, and curling.

Pickering's mom Dana is a public health nurse, and dad Tom is an engineer at Manitoba Hydro. Tom built Owen a backyard rink every year so he could hone his craft as a youngster.

Tom and Dana were always supportive of their son, spending plenty of time and money travelling wherever young Owen needed to go throughout his early hockey-playing days, while also ensuring that he could play at a prep school before heading to the junior hockey ranks.

"My parents and family have given me everything and have sacrificed so much for me to achieve my

dreams," Pickering says. "So to have them here with me at the draft was very special."

Pickering came up through the Eastman Selects AAA system before spending two years at the Rink Hockey Academy in Winnipeg.

He has now played a season and a half of WHL hockey with the Swift Current Broncos.

This past season, Pickering scored 33 points in 62 games for the Broncos.

He also suited up for Team Canada at the IIHF World U18 Championships in Landshut and Kaufbeuren, Germany.

Pickering was in talks with several NHL teams in the months leading up to the draft, as the big event could have unfolded many different ways for him.

However, he is very pleased to have landed a spot with the Pittsburgh Penguins.

"I talked to Pittsburgh quite a bit," he says. "It's hard to know which teams are doing their due diligence and which are showing interest, so I didn't know who was going to take me, but I'm just thrilled."

A fun fact is that Pickering is also a cousin to Dominion City's Denton Mateychuk.

Mateychuk also got in on the action on the first day of the NHL draft, being chosen eight picks before him at twelfth overall by the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Since the draft, Pickering has headed down to the Pittsburgh Penguins development camp. Come September, he will join the team's official training camp.

Pickering is likely to head back to continue his junior career for the upcoming 2022-23 season, where he is a stalwart defender for the WHL's Swift Current Broncos.

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Thank you

Jason Kehler — Committee Chair Liaison
On behalf of the Nomination Committee
Andrew Neufeld, Nick Bergmann and Aaron Redekop

Nighthawks Hire Marketing and Business Manager

By Ty Dilello

✉ tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Nighthawks' latest hire is 38-year-old Lindsay Unrau, who will serve as the team's marketing and business manager.

Born and raised in Winnipeg, it was Unrau's husband who first brought her out into the more rural setting of Niverville.

"Eldon, who has lived his entire life in Niverville, convinced me 17 years ago that we should make Niverville, what was then a quaint little community, our home," says Unrau. "We got married and have spent the last almost 16 years raising our four children here."

Unrau doesn't have much experience in the hockey world, aside from the excitement of watching her friends play in high school and, of course, cheering on the Winnipeg Jets. Instead her experience is based in the non-profit sector, where she has worked for more than 20 years learning, creating, and advocating.

"My experience in leadership is founded in retail, human resources, and marketing," she says. "I am a graduate of the Business Administration program from Red River Polytech and am currently studying part-time at the University of Manitoba. I have spent my entire adult life being passionate and working towards making a difference within our community. Whether that's taking on local volunteer projects,



Lindsay Unrau of Niverville.

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creating local opportunity through the creation of safe and beneficial programs for our kids, or advocating for equality, inclusion, and the value of all people, the goal has always been to make the world a little more inclusive, to enhance community connection, and to recognize and value all the differences and strengths found within our community."

When Unrau got the news a few weeks ago that she had been selected for the position of marketing and business manager for the expansion Niverville Nighthawks, she was humbled and honoured.

"Working for a not-for-profit is the ability to create and dream big, and my passion is fuelled by the possibilities of what can be," says Unrau. "The induction of the Niverville Nighthawks into our community brings with it an exciting, dynamic energy that I feel everyone is beginning to experience, and to be a part of that and to help that energy grow is thrilling! I look forward to working within our community with so many incredible people, from our board of directors, our GM and supporting staff, sponsors, volunteers, and of course our fans—our biggest

supporters. I look forward to what we as a team can accomplish!"

Although she's very fresh into her new job, Unrau notes that she has lots of goals that she's looking to accomplish in the team's upcoming inaugural season.

"I look forward to building connections and developing a strong team of volunteers who will help deliver a one-of-a-kind experience for fans. We have so much on the go, and I'm excited for the challenges and the creativity that comes with this thrilling new endeavour."

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Torque Brewing Teams Up with Nighthawks

By Ty Dilello

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Last month, it was announced that the Niverville Nighthawks would partner up with Torque Brewing to create a unique lager beer for the team's inaugural season.

Torque Brewing is about to celebrate its sixth anniversary as a company. Since day one, they have made it a rule to partner with local institutions and sports organizations for fundraisers, sponsorships, and other forms of support.

Making great beer and giving back to the community has always been its mission.

Over a year ago, when it was clear that Niverville would be home to the newest team in the MJHL, the people behind the nascent team identified a number of key revenue drivers to consider. Of course, one of those was the beer that would eventually be sold at home games.

A traditional system of beer supply and sale would see the Nighthawks purchase beer from a supplier and resell it at games for a markup, with the margins covering the cost of goods, staffing, licensing, bar infrastructure, and security, in addition to contributing to the team's operating budget.

"I could see the potential for a very unique partnership beyond the traditional supply and sale model," says Ray Dowse, vice-president of the Niverville Nighthawks board of directors. "It just required the right brewery to partner with who had a similar vision of the potential opportunity. Over the course of several months, [fellow board member] Jeremy Braun and I spoke with a number of different breweries about the opportunity in Niverville with our new MJHL team, each of whom discussed ideas and options to consider. But there was one brewery that really recognized the scope of the



Matthew Wolff and Adam Olson of Torque Brewing.

TORQUE BREWING

potential partnership with the Nighthawks and could embrace and build on the vision to create something unique for the team and community."

Torque Brewing started chatting with the Nighthawks last year, proposing to brew a co-branded beer to be served in the arena, as well as at local establishments, beer vendors, and liquor marts. The idea is to support the community and local sports, using a local product while offering a great experience to hockey fans.

"My first conversation with Torque was with one of the owners in early summer 2021," says Dowse. "This was before the team had even considered name options, as we were just getting the details of the new franchise finalized with the MJHL. West Hawk Lake in the Whiteshell is a place my family will frequent as a camping destination in summer, and one of the owners of Torque also has a cottage in the Whiteshell, so our first meeting to discuss the opportunity took place at the lake when we were both out one weekend."

It just so happened that the

pair met at the Nite Hawk Cafe in West Hawk Lake for their first real meeting. In hindsight, that was a sign of things to come.

"From that initial meeting, we continued to add ideas and concepts and built on the details of how this partnership could come together," Dowse adds. "Over the course of many months of dialogue, we were able to complete our agreement, which was incredibly exciting! From the beginning, the Torque ownership group, their board of directors, and management team clearly understood that this was not just a contract to sell beer, but an investment into the team and the region."

The partnership between Torque and the Nighthawks is billed as a win-win, as it will build up awareness about the league. And it will work as a fundraiser, with a portion of the profits benefiting the Nighthawks organization.

Part of the agreement includes an exclusive Nighthawks-branded beer, which is something both Torque and the Nighthawks board of directors are excited to see roll out to the public this summer.

Adam Olson, co-founder of Torque Brewing, is one of the faces behind this partnership.

"It has been a pleasure to plan and organize this partnership, from the first draft to the final stages," says Olson. "After a lot of hard work and heart that the Nighthawks and their crew put into their area, we are more than excited to see the beer pouring and the crowd cheering."

Matthew Wolff, vice-president of operations at Torque, agrees. "The connection between beer and sports is centuries old, and there is no better way to cheer the team than sipping a Nighthawk lager while watching the game."

The Nighthawk lager will be available in 30-litre kegs and 355-millilitre cans.

Stay tuned for an announcement soon about when the Nighthawk beer will be available at a store or pub near you.

"It's been a lot of work to get to this stage," says Dowse, "but we are looking forward to seeing the next steps come together as our partnership continues to grow and evolve over the coming months and years."

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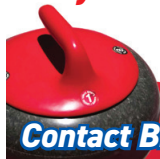
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REG. ~~\$2249~~ **48.73/MONTH**

Tempur Align-Soft

Queen Mattress

Featuring: Premium fabric cover, Tempur-ES® comfort layer and support core base layer.



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Ronald McDonald House Charities Canada 2

Queen Mattress

Featuring: Euro Top, CleanProtect™ cover, SealyAir™ fibres, CertiPur-US® SealySupport™ gel HD foam, 900 SealyResponse™ HD coil, SolidEdge™ HD and targeted GelBoost™ HD memory foam.

*O.A.C. ON APPROVED CREDIT WITH FAIRSTONE. SCAN THE QR CODE TO APPLY. ON THE PURCHASE OF FURNITURE, APPLIANCES AND MATTRESSES. EXAMPLE: FOR A PURCHASE OF \$1,000 BEFORE TAXES, AT AN ANNUAL INTEREST RATE OF 9.99%, THIS REPRESENTS A MONTHLY PAYMENT WITH PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST OF \$25.36 FOR A PERIOD OF 48 MONTHS. THE TOTAL OBLIGATION FOR THE LOAN IS \$1,217.28 WITH \$217.28 IN TOTAL INTEREST CHARGES. THERE ARE NO ADMIN FEES TO PAY AT THE MOMENT OF THE TRANSACTION. THIS FINANCING PLAN IS OPEN AND REFUNDABLE AT ALL TIMES WITHOUT PENALTY. DETAILS ON YOUR FAIRSTONE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT. THIS EVENT IS IN EFFECT FROM **JUNE 23 - JULY 11, 2022**. ALL DISCOUNTS HAVE BEEN APPLIED TO THE PRICES SHOWN IN THIS FLYER. THE OFFERS ADVERTISED IN THIS FLYER ARE AVAILABLE AT PARTICIPATING STORES ONLY. PRODUCTS AND/OR COVERINGS SHOWN IN THIS FLYER MAY BE DIFFERENT IN STORE. ALTHOUGH WE STRIVE FOR ACCURACY IN PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS AND PRICES, WE CANNOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR TECHNICAL AND TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS OR OMISSIONS. WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE THIS MAY CAUSE OUR CUSTOMERS.



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CZZZ700 Queen Mattress

Tencel fibres, Serta support foam, BestEdge® foam encasement and 700 zoned pocket coil.



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