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Taking one for the team



Gateway Resources managers got a pie in the face last week after staff hit their fundraising targets in support of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Pembina Valley. Here, from left, Tim Hamp, Chelsey Delaquis, Kim Nelson, and Kyla Scott deal with the aftermath. For the full story, see Pg. 2.

PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

news > sports > opinion > community > people > entertainment > events > classifieds > careers > everything you need to know

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Saturday, June 7, 2025

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• 2:00 - 4:00PM – Refreshments and displays
St. Paul's United Church, Morden
• 1:00 - 4:00PM – Car rally -
Self guided historic tour starts at 1:00 PM

Sunday, June 8, 2025

**100th Anniversary
Celebration Church Services**
• 9:30 AM Zion - Calvin United Church, Darlingford
• 11:00 AM St. Paul's United Church, Morden
Refreshments and cake following each service
Special Outreach Collection to support local
Truth and Action Working Group

Gateway fundraiser leaves managers with chocolate cream pie on their faces

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Six managers at Gateway Resources started off May 14 with pie on their faces, much to the delight of the Winkler facility's staff and program participants.

Department heads Tim Hamp, Chelsey Delaquis, Kyla Scott, Erin Peters, and Deb Korne along with CEO Kim Nelson gamely lined up that morning to let a randomly selected employee hit them in the face with a chocolate cream pie as a reward for successfully collecting \$700 in pledges for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Pembina Valley.

It all goes back to this year's Bowl for Kids' Sake fundraiser back in March, shared Delaquis, where Gateway was invited to send teams to help fill a few empty lanes.

"This started out as a competition

between myself and one other manager. We said if we got to a certain amount [in pledges for Big Bros] then whoever lost in our game would get a pie in the face."

It quickly expanded from there to rope in other departments, with fundraising goals set to get more pie victims involved, all the way up to Gateway's CEO.

"It's been a lot of fun," Delaquis said, noting the friendly competition saw donations pour in so staff could see their supervisors take part.

For her part, Nelson observed the \$700 goal to get her involved was set in haste—she perhaps should have made that number a little higher, she reflected, wiping chocolate off her face.

"I set it very last minute thinking they would not get it," she said, laughing. "I was fairly confident with



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

Gateway Resources staff got the chance to hit their managers with a chocolate cream pie last week as a reward for raising \$700 for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Pembina Valley.

only a few hours left to go that they were not going to be able to reach me. I was wrong."

Both Nelson and Delaquis came prepared with goggles, while other

participants donned shower caps, though the protection could only do so much—their faces were covered with whipped cream and chocolate, much to the delight of onlookers.

Morris robotics team returns from VEX Worlds

By Siobhan Maas

A three-day experience in Dallas,

Texas earlier this month for four members of the Morris Advanced Robotics team brought learning to a

global level.

Team Blue Bombur guided by Morris School teacher JP Jamieson represented Manitoba at the VEX Robotics World Championships, the largest robotics competition in the world, from May 6-8, finishing with a record of 3-7.

"The event was a great opportunity to play with and against teams from around the world, and to see their robots up close," Jamieson said. "Being a part of the opening ceremony was a really fun experience."

Chief engineer Josh Hildebrandt, 17, was the flag bearer for Team Canada on opening day.

Through fundraising efforts over the last couple months, the Morris team was able to bring in enough funds to support the purchase of equipment to replace hardware on loan for the 2024-25 school year.

"Fundraising allowed the purchase of new parts like thinner gears that allowed for a more compact robot [at the championships]," shared Cody Dueck, 15, mechanic and coder for the team. "The machines have less weight, are less bulky, and allow for mechanisms that score points. Our old model would overheat because we had to sacrifice weight."

Continued on page 3

Giveaway Weekend

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Place branches in a neat stack on the boulevard, parallel to the curb by no later than 7 am for our team to collect.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Morris School's robotics team— Kayden Grattan, Josh Hildebrandt, Andrew Hildebrandt, and Cody Dueck—at the VEX Robotics World Championships in Texas earlier this month.

Breaking ground on the Stanley Community Pathway

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Project leaders symbolically broke ground on the Stanley Community Pathway project between Morden and Winkler last week.

Officials from both cities and the RM of Stanley gathered to celebrate the start of construction on the 10 kilometre paved path that will run alongside the south side of Hwy. 14/3 corridor, separated from the road by the ditch.

Project committee chair James Friesen from the Stanley Trail Association shared that the tender for the path was recently awarded to Meseyton Construction, which plans to get to work this week and to wrap up paving sometime in fall.

"The community has talked about this idea for decades: how do we connect these communities with a pathway?" Friesen said, noting the plan has undergone a few different iterations and false starts, with numerous community members, business leaders, and companies like JDB Project Engineering working behind the scenes to keep it alive.

Wayne Rempel of Kroeker Farmers

and James Elias of Triple E Developments have spearheaded a corporate donation campaign that has reached over \$440,000.

"I'm still shooting for half a million," shared Rempel. "I'm glad to be a part of it."

"I think it's good for the communities," added Elias, noting it's been a long process to get to this point, but the idea to connect the three communities was always a sound one. "We look at this as a big community—southern Manitoba—because we look at our employee base and probably 50 per cent come from Morden and surrounding areas versus just Winkler. So it's good to connect to communities and we think it's important to try to work together."

"That's the big story here," agreed Friesen, noting the committee has long "felt the energy around three municipalities working together on a community project."

Through the divisive years of the pandemic, this trail "became kind of a physical sign of connection," he said.

The project has received \$250,000 in funding from each of the three munic-



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

Representatives from Morden, Winkler, and Stanley joined project leaders of the Stanley Community Pathway in breaking ground on the 10 kilometre paved pedestrian path between the three communities last week.

ipalities, along with grants from the provincial (\$75,000) and federal (\$2.1 million) governments.

The committee has also applied and received a few other grants soon to be announced.

Friesen figured they need another \$325,000 in community donations to take the \$4.2 million project over the

top.

"That'll help us have capacity to do some of the rest stations and things like that," he said.

Donations can be made online at stanleytrailmanitoba.ca or by dropping off cheques payable to the Stanley Trail Association at the Morden, Stanley, or Winkler municipal offices.

> ROBOTICS TEAM, FROM PG. 2

Andrew Hildebrandt, 15, communications, added, "proper construction is smooth and aligned with low friction for the robot."

Funds raised from a 50/50 draw and jersey raffle at the Spring Fling Craft Sale, alongside local business sponsorship and private contributions, allowed the team to travel to the competition.

"We are thankful to all the sponsors," said Dueck.

Lead driver and logistics overseer Kayden Grattan, 15, was quick to stress that a huge part of the team's success was having the support of the remaining class members in Morris.

"Although Team Blue Bombur didn't qualify for the elimination playoffs, we finished higher than expected," added Jamieson. Of 820 teams competing, Blue Bombur finished 221 in the skills competition.

Back in the classroom a week after their experience, the team members were enthusiastic.

"We learned a lot and saw many different ways of approaching the same problem. There is no one set solution to a task," commented Dueck. "All robots perform the task, yet some do it better. They might be stronger or faster."

Andrew appreciated that "the big

event allowed for more education. We played alongside teams from other countries like New Zealand and Senegal, learned from how they do things, and can now integrate that into our own designs."

Teacher Jamieson's pride is evident as he shares his philosophy of letting the students learn from each other.

"They can run the show themselves," he said, content knowing that as he moves to a different school next year, they have the experience and knowledge to guide them.

Dueck is thankful for his mentor.

"He has brought us together into a team and we're excited because he will grow other teams [in the province]."

Andrew Hildebrandt added, "Mr. Jamieson makes things happen. He provides opportunities and learning experience and will always find a way to get things done."

For Jamieson, the best part of the Worlds experience was "when they revealed next year's game, you could already see our team members' planning excitedly for how to build a new robot for the new challenge."

Anyone interested in mentoring the robotics team next season or learning more about it can reach out to Jamieson at jjamieson@rrvsc.ca.

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Winkler chamber hands out business awards

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The Winkler and District Chamber of Commerce honoured four businesses and one non-profit with its 2025 P.W. Enns Business Awards last week.

The May 14 gala brought the community together to honour Tri Koating Inc. with the Business Excellence Award, The Property Brokers Real Estate Group with the Community Builder Award, EMCO Corporation Winkler with the Customer Service Award, Mulligan's Restaurant with the Business Builder Award, and Katie Cares with the Not-for-Profit Service Award.

"This evening is about celebration, honouring the outstanding businesses and organizations that make our community stronger, more innovative, and more connected," chamber president Doug Eidse said in opening the night's festivities.

"Success in business is not just about numbers or profit. It's about vision,

resilience, and the impact we leave on those around us. Tonight we recognize those who have gone above and beyond setting the standard for excellence in our region.

"Each of you represents the very best of our business and community spirit."

First up to receive an award was Ruth Reimer of Katie Cares, which operates the Katie's Cottage respite home near the Boundary Trails Health Centre and also distributes care packages to children in hospital.

"This recognition is deeply meaningful to us and the work that we continue to do," she said, sharing the charity was the creation of her late daughter, Kaitlyn.

"It was Katie's dream and vision to offer comfort and support to children and families, beginning with the simple yet powerful gesture of giving a Beanie Baby. That dream has grown far beyond what we could have imagined. Last year alone we handed out 2,995 Beanie Babies to children across Southern Manitoba.

"Katie's Cottage welcomed 798 guests in 2024, represent-

From left: Mulligan's Restaurant's Sara Bueckert, Andrea Knight, and Anthony Proulx with the Business Builder Award.

"EACH OF YOU REPRESENTS THE VERY BEST OF OUR BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT."



Above, from left: Brad Nelson, Adrien Unrau, and Hank Fehr accepted the Customer Service Award on behalf of EMCO Winkler. Right, from left: Dennis Kehler, Rob Suderman, Ruth Reimer, Randy Reimer, and Charlene Friesen from Katie Cares received the Not-for-Profit Service Award.



PHOTOS BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

The staff and management of Tri Koating Inc. received the P.W. Enns Business Excellence Award from the Winkler and District Chamber of Commerce at its awards gala last week.

ing 128 communities from across Manitoba," Reimer shared, stressing the facility offers family members with loved ones in hospital more than a place to sleep. "It offers compassion, and the care and comfort of a home, whether it's for a restful night or a quiet place to stay."

Reimer thanked the cottage's volunteers and staff for their dedication and commitment, and the community for its unfailing support through the years.

"Your encouragement, generosity, and support have helped Katie Cares grow far beyond what we envisioned."

EMCO Winkler manager Sherri Hoepfner wasn't able to accept the award in person but recorded a video to express her thanks.

"Receiving this award is a huge honour, alongside my team from EMCO," she said. "This award is a testament to the outstanding efforts of my remarkable team."

"Since we opened our doors in the fall of 2022, delivering exceptional customer service has always been our highest priority," Hoepfner said.

"We strive daily to say yes to as many customers as often as possible.

"We are deeply grateful to our many loyal customers and to this fantastic community. Your feedback has guided us in selecting the right product, understanding your preferred brands, and finding practical solutions together.

"Each partnership we have formed over the past two years has been instrumental in bringing us to this moment, and your ongoing support has truly made this award possible."

Mulligan's owner Andrea Knight accepted the Business Builder Award in recognition of the restaurant's growth, vision, and innovation.

"I purchased Mulligan's in 2013 and for the past 12 years we've strived to stay on top of new trends by creating new and original dishes," she said. "We continue to find new ways to keep our guests coming back for more."

The eatery weathered the challenges of recent years—including the pandemic and rising operational costs—with resilience, Knight noted.

Continued on page 5



getinformed

> AWARDS, FROM PG. 4

"We couldn't have done this without the amazing support we've received from our community," she said, stressing they in turn seek to give back wherever they can.

Knight thanked God and her family for their support and her staff—including head chef Anthony Proulx and front of house manager Sara Bueckert—for their hard work and dedication.

"Your commitment to the success of this business has been invaluable, and it's because of you that we are able to provide the kind of service and experience we do. You go above and beyond every day."

Thanks as well went out to Mulligan's many loyal customers.

"You are the reason we are able to do what we love. I'm so grateful for each and every one of you," Knight said. "Building a business has never been easy, but it has been made possible with a great team, an encouraging and loving family, and a supportive community. I'm excited for what's ahead, and look forward to continuing to serve you all for many years to



Chamber executive director Tanya Chateauneuf was surprised with an award recognizing her 10 years with the organization.

come."

Honoured with the Community Builder Award was The Property Brokers, a real estate company headed up by Tim Friesen and Wes Harder. This award is given to a business that strives to make a lasting impact in the community.

"As Wes and I stand here tonight,



PHOTOS BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

From left: Tim Friesen and Wes Harder from The Property Brokers receive the Community Builder Award from Mayor Henry Siemens.

it's really hard for us to believe that three and a half years ago we were dreaming about what a new real estate company could look like in this community," shared Friesen. "We talked about innovation, we talked about relationships, building something different, something that our

communities could be proud of. And so today, just a few years later, to be standing here receiving the Community Builder Award is really humbling beyond words.

Continued on page 7

Zodiacs thank business community for its support

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Business leaders at the Winkler and District Chamber of Commerce's annual awards gala got a special thank-you from local students last week.

Garden Valley Collegiate's business management class put together small packages of seeds for each table thanking businesses for their support of the high school through the years.

"For our class we are expected to plan and manage an event, and this is the event we chose to do," explained Dishika Bansal.

"We wanted to pay it forward to the community and basically thank them, because a lot of businesses have given so much money for scholarships, they've taken on students to mentor them, and we just wanted to thank them for all that," added classmate Judith Fehr.

The class also handed out gift baskets to several area businesses earlier in the week, and were at the gala to

voice their gratitude to the business community as a whole.

The seed packets they distributed tie in with the Winkler Community Foundation's theme for Pay It Forward May: planting seeds of kindness and growing the community.

"The card has a little thank-you note on it," said Bansal. "It's something that's very little, but it's something that we can give to everyone."

Addressing the crowd that evening, Fehr shared that she's the first person in her family to pursue post-secondary education, and the scholarships available to her thanks to the support of Winkler businesses are "absolutely astounding."

"The number of opportunities that you give us students is much appreciated," she stressed. "You've made it possible for students to continue education without having to worry about financial burdens. You make it possible for students to focus on learning and achieving their best. The fact that



PHOTOS BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

GVC business management students were at the Winkler chamber awards gala last week to mark Pay It Forward May with thanks and seeds (right) for the business leaders who have supported the high school.

you believe in us and are willing to invest in our future means everything to us."



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EDITORIAL > VIEWPOINTS > LETTERS

Prepare for the Plague Parties?

Remember the ancient days of COVID when we were all locked down and the virus was spreading throughout the world like wildfire? Thankfully those days are long behind us because we learned so much and have implemented solutions to avoid such a thing ever happening again.

We did learn something, right? We learned that vaccines actually work for the VAST majority of us, protecting not only ourselves but the most vulnerable from serious harm, didn't we? I thought we did ... maybe it was a dream.

Fast forward to 2025 and guess what? We have a wonderful new viral outbreak to deal with: measles.

As of the time of this column being written there have been 1,506 measles cases across Canada.

"Hey, that's not so bad. Stop fear-mongering you crazy idiot," some might say.

I suppose bad is relative. I mean, it's not so bad for me and people like me who have been vaccinated against the virus. But here's a fun fact: did you know that in 1998 (a mere 27 years ago) Canada achieved measles elimination status? That means there was no transmission of measles in that

year in Canada.

So why is measles on the rise now throughout Canada, the United States, and Mexico? Reduced vaccination rates. I mean, this is the reason given by the experts who have dedicated their lives to studying and protecting us from such things.

You may prefer to trust Aunt Olga's opinion that it's all a conspiracy designed to trick us into receiving evil vaccines that do more harm than good according to that one research report out of the thousands of others that say they are fine. Each to their own, I suppose.

Throughout this current outbreak the majority of those infected have been children. Of these cases 84 per cent were unvaccinated and a further 12 per cent didn't know if they were vaccinated.

The truth is vaccination makes a difference. An additional truth is that those people who do not trust vaccines or just don't like being told what to do are unlikely to change their minds. The consequences of course will be a higher rate of measles (and other diseases) amongst their population than the rest of us.

In 1996, Canada implemented the two-dose Mumps, Measles, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine. Since then,

measles cases have dropped by more than 99 per cent. Coincidence?

Unfortunately, some people are not able to receive vaccines because they may be immunocompromised. In these instances they are left to the mercy of those who simply don't care. Infants and the elderly are of significant risk to see some of the more serious effects of the disease such as pneumonia, encephalitis (swelling of the brain), and death.

"Yeah, well it's not a problem cuz we have herd immunity here."

Herd immunity occurs when a population reaches a certain level of immunity either through vaccination or infection or a combination. In the case of measles you need a population reach more than 95 per cent immunity to have herd immunity.

The first question that comes to mind when someone says "we have herd immunity" is the obvious "how in the world do you know this? Have you spoken with every person in your community?"

The best and safest way to achieve herd immunity is through vaccination.

I have lately heard that there have been "measles parties" occurring in

Continued on page 7

Letter policy

The *Voice* welcomes letters from readers on local and regional issues and concerns.

Please keep your letters short (excessively long letters are less likely to be published), on-topic, and respectful.

The *Voice* reserves the right to edit, condense, or reject any submission.

Please include your full name, address, and phone number for verification purposes. Your name and city will be published with your letter. We do not print anonymous letters.

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• GUEST COMMENTARY

It's time to get to work

I want to thank the people of Portage-Lisgar for once again placing their trust in me to serve as your MP in Ottawa. I am incredibly humbled and honoured to have received such strong support.

Over the course of the campaign, I had the chance to visit every municipality in our vast riding. I knocked on thousands of doors and had countless conversations with folks about what matters most to them. The message was consistent: families, seniors, and our youth are struggling, and Ottawa needs to change course.

Now, with the government preparing to deliver its first Throne Speech at the end of May, we will get a glimpse of how they intend to govern. As your MP, my focus remains firmly on the priorities you shared with me during the campaign.



By **Brandon Leslie**

The number one concern I heard is the cost of living. Families are making impossible choices. Seniors are skipping meals. Young people feel defeated before they even begin their adult life. The prices of food, rent, fuel, and basic necessities are climbing beyond reach. Inflation is more than a statistic; it is a daily hardship. While government spending spirals out of control, its impact on inflation is real and everyday people are forced to pay for it through increased prices.

The current level of federal spending is unsustainable. The new Liberal government is on track to spend even more than the previous Trudeau government. Incredibly, we are now spending more servicing our national debt than we send to the provinces for health care. That should be a national alarm bell, not a footnote.

I also heard from young people who feel left behind. Many are working hard, doing everything right, yet home ownership is still out of reach. Those building our homes can no longer afford to buy one. Families are stuck renting or living with parents, not by choice but because the system has failed them.

Despite the challenges, I remain optimistic. Canada is a land of opportunity. We have abundant natu-

ral resources, a skilled and educated workforce, and some of the world's most fertile land. But instead of moving forward with confidence, we are stuck. Endless red tape, broken infrastructure, and government delays are holding us back. It is time to fix what is broken and get this country building again.

Public safety is also top of mind. Many of our communities are seeing a rise in crime. Drug use is rampant, and violent offenders are too often released back into the community, only to reoffend. We need to restore consequences for repeat offenders. That does not mean abandoning compassion, but the status quo is not acceptable. We must also support those facing addiction and mental health struggles, but law-abiding citizens should not have to live in fear while criminals walk free.

In our region, agriculture is more than an industry, it is a way of life. Our farmers are the backbone of our economy, yet they are being hindered by both tariff and non-tariff trade barriers, such as what is happening with China and the United States. We need to support value-added processing at home rather than sending raw goods abroad. This would create jobs, strengthen supply chains, and boost

our rural communities.

Speaking of rural life, it is something I will always defend. Too often, policies are written with cities in mind while forgetting the realities of those who live in the smaller communities. Whether it is restrictions that target responsible firearms owners or federal programs that ignore the needs of rural infrastructure, the result is the same — rural Canadians are left behind.

Basic infrastructure like expanded water systems and better roads should not be out of reach simply because a community is small. Ottawa must do better.

It has now been over five months since Parliament has sat due to former Prime Minister Trudeau's prorogation. That is five months without legislation. Without accountability. Five months without action on the issues that matter. That is far too long. I am ready to get back to work. The challenges we face are real, but so are the opportunities. I am more motivated than ever to work on your behalf and to get results for our region.

Brandon Leslie is the MP for Portage-Lisgar

> AWARDS, FROM PG. 5

"In our mission statement, we say that we want to create a culture of giving back to the communities that have given so much to us," he continued. "With a community like Winkler, we're constantly reminded about how much we've received, and this motivates us to find new ways to give back and to continue to serve."

Harder thanked everyone who mentored and supported them through the years.

"We're where we are because somewhere along the way in our lives, somebody saw something in us that we didn't see in ourselves," he said. "We can't help but be very grateful."

"Today, as we think about what it means to be a community builder, we don't think it's something that you accomplish or arrive at," he added. "Rather it's something that's continual, something that's living, something we keep building into."

Accepting the final award of the night, the Business Excellence

Award, was Tri Koating Inc., who were honoured for their consistently outstanding performance, innovation, leadership, and community engagement.

Joe Wall, CEO of the industrial painting company, said the award is an incredible honour for them.

"This recognition means a lot to us and it's a pretty big deal. It serves not just as a symbol of our achievement, but also a reminder of our core values, hard work, and dedication that brought us here."

"During this journey, the community has been amazing to be a part of and we're looking forward for that to continue."

Wall thanked his staff for all they do.

"This award is a reflection of our team's commitment to excellence. Every member of our staff has played a vital role. From those working behind the scenes to those on the front lines with our clients, their passion, resilience, and hard work are the real reason we're standing here today."

"I also want to extend our deepest

gratitude to our customers and partners," Wall continued. "Your trust and support have allowed us to grow, evolve and continue to push forward every day."

"We accept this award not as a finish line, but as a milestone. We're excited for what's ahead and we remain committed to raising the bar and everything we do within this community as we seek to see it grow and prosper."

The chamber wrapped up the evening with one special, previously unannounced award to honour executive director Tanya Chateaufneuf for

her decade of service.

A surprised Chateaufneuf expressed gratitude for the chamber's members and their support through the years.

"I am so grateful to all of you for showing up here today and for all of the many events that you've showed up to in the past," she said, thanking the City of Winkler as well for its partnership with the chamber.

"I'm really emotional—it's hard for me to

not cry right now ... I'm so, so lucky to have the role that I have in the community."

**"I'M SO, SO LUCKY
TO HAVE THE ROLE
THAT I HAVE IN THE
COMMUNITY."**

> CANTELON, FROM PG. 6

our region. I would like to believe that this is a completely unfounded rumour and that people aren't foolish enough to subject themselves and their children to the potentially serious side effects of measles. But who knows, maybe they are.

Do you want to get vaccinated or simply have questions? Speak to a health care provider and follow their advice.

Stay tuned for next year's column when I offer tips on the best decorations for your Black Plague party.



South Central Cancer Resource held its most successful fashion show yet May 15, with 497 people coming out to enjoy the evening at the Meridian Exhibition Centre in Winkler—a record-setting number in ticket sales for the fundraiser that started in a church hall back in 2013. Money raised from ticket sales and a rainbow auction go to support SCCR programs that strive to improve the lives of patients and their families as they navigate a cancer diagnosis. This year's show theme was "Stronger Together." Walking the catwalk as models and sharing their stories were cancer survivors and loved ones of cancer patients. Clockwise from above left: Brendan Heppner, Pam King, Susan Fehr, Katie Beckett, and Cathy Dueck showcasing clothes from local retailers.



Stronger Together

PHOTOS BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE



hanging baskets, roses, perennials, herbs, vegetables, assorted annuals, patio planters gift certificates & much more!

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Plum Coulee YIP members are aiming to collect 30 blankets to donate to the fire department so first responders have something comforting to hand out to fire and accident victims.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Plum Coulee students collecting blankets for fire dept.

By Lorne Stelmach

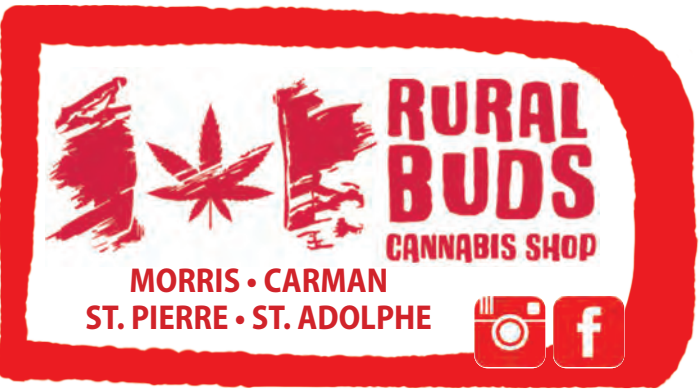
Students in Plum Coulee are making a difference in their community by paying it forward through the month of May.

Their efforts were being spearheaded through the Youth

in Philanthropy (YIP) committee that involves students from Gr. 6-8 at Plum Coulee School.

The committee put forward two collection challenges to the students of the school for Pay It Forward May with the aim of helping two Plum Coulee organizations that are always there to help others.

One beneficiary is The Centre on Main, which is a facility that offers many opportunities for area residents, including hosting countless community celebrations, children's programs, and senior activities as well as serving as a rental space for group events.



Classrooms can 'tackle finances' with Bomber-led workshops

By Annaliese Meier

Manitoba classrooms have a chance to score a touchdown in financial literacy, thanks to a returning partnership between Access Credit Union and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

Schools across the province are invited to apply for the "Tackle Your Finances like a Pro" workshop—an engaging, 60-minute session co-led by an Access Credit Union Financial Literacy trainer and a Winnipeg Blue Bombers player.

Back for the 2025-26 school year, the workshop uses interactive activities to help students build practical money management skills. Exciting giveaways and prizes are also part of the experience.

"These workshops were introduced last year to great success. We found students were very engaged, asked thoughtful questions, and showed genuine interest in learning how to take control of their financial fu-

ture," said Emily Suderman, Financial Literacy Specialist at Access Credit Union.

Last year, Blue Bombers receiver Nic Demski attended every workshop—a highlight for many of the participating students.

"We are excited with all the interest from the local schools for the Financial Literacy Program and look forward to

building on last year's success," said Wade Miller, president and CEO of the Winnipeg Football Club. "We are thrilled to be in partnership with Access Credit Union on this important community initiative."

Schools interested in applying can visit accesscu.ca/bombers. The application deadline is June 30.

> BLANKET DRIVE, FROM PG. 8

"When people use this facility, they often access the games, puzzles and books that are available on the bookshelves," noted Claire Goertzen, school vice-principal and YIP leader. "The committee was asking the students to donate some new books, games and puzzles for people to enjoy when visiting the centre."

Another beneficiary is the Plum Coulee Fire Department, which likes to have blankets on hand to give to the victims of fires and accidents.

"The YIP committee has been accepting donations of new blankets for the fire department," said Goertzen. "Donated blankets can be for children or adults. These blankets are used to provide comfort and warmth to individuals who have just been through a trauma."

"The YIP committee is hoping to collect 30 new blankets for the department by May 30. As of May 13, we were half way to our goal," Goertzen shared. "The YIP members are grateful for all the donations that are coming in and encourage everyone to take time to Pay It Forward."

Record-breaking weather



VOICE PHOTO BY LYNDA KELLY

Manitoba experienced a record-breaking heat wave last week, with 13 communities setting new records on May 13. Altona was among the record setters, reaching 35.7 C. The previous record was 30.6 C set in 1977. The heat, mixed with wind gusts up to 59 kilometres per hour brought favourable conditions for the raging fires across the province. On May 17 Altona experienced unseasonably cool temperatures with near freezing conditions, bringing snow. The daytime high was approximately 4 C, and the overnight low dropped to around -2 C. These temperatures were notably below the typical May averages for Altona, where daytime highs usually reach around 18 C and nighttime lows average near 8 C.

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Cutting the ribbon on Healthians Wellness Spa and Morden Plaza

By Lorne Stelmach

It's a dream come true for Sachin Jain to open the Healthians Wellness spa on the east end of Morden in the strip mall now known as the Morden Plaza.

A large crowd was on hand recently for the official opening that included performances by the band Seven Pines and dance troupe BB Babes.

The event also marked the naming of Morden Plaza as a key commercial site majority owned by Sachin Jain through the Tradewalks Group.

"Seeing this vision come to life has been personally very exciting for me," said Jain.

"Healthians was born out of a clear gap I noticed in our region," he said. "There was no integrated facility that offered spa, sauna, steam, massages and healthy food services under one roof.

"Our community is vibrant and health conscious, and I felt a strong need for a space that supports holistic wellness in an upscale yet accessible way," said Jain. "With that inspiration, we developed Healthians

Wellness not just as a business but as a wellness destination designed with care, innovation, and comfort in mind.

Healthians is a holistic wellness center combining luxury and health in a private space with key features that include three saunas: Himalayan salt (respiratory and detox benefits), infrared (deep tissue relief), and traditional hot stone (classic dry heat).

There are two separate steam rooms with rain showers and four private heated shower and changing rooms as well as heated massage beds, full-body pedicure stations, hydraulic facial chairs, and massage chairs with facial oxygen mist.

A Nutrifresh health food bar offers fresh salads, smoothies, wraps and shakes, and full salon services will be launching shortly.

It is part of what is now called Morden Plaza, which included a variety of other businesses, including Tradewalks Immigration, All-in-One Management Services property maintenance, Wefley Tech Lab IT and branding, Tradewalks Venture real



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Healthians Wellness cut the ribbon at the newly named Morden Plaza earlier this month. The strip mall, located east of town behind the Morden sign, is home to a variety of businesses.

estate investment, and CC Bistro & Bar.

"We've already had a tremendous response to our services and infra-

structure," said Jain, noting clients can now book their appointments online or call 431-77-43177 for any bookings or inquiries.

Police Week BBQ



PHOTOS BY RICK HIEBERT/VOICE

The Morden Police Service marked National Police Week with a free barbecue for the community. Above: Sgt Scott Edwards and Special Cst Morgan Reimer serve a hot dog to Nathan Castillo. Right: Adrian, Mateo, Levin, Lucia, and Melia got a tour of one of the police vehicles at the event.



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Morden FD releases anniversary coin

By Lorne Stelmach

A student's high school project is helping Morden Fire and Rescue mark a milestone.

Brayden Baumgart, who is a Gr. 11 student at Morden Collegiate, needed to design a logo for his marketing class, and he initially couldn't settle on an idea for his project.

His father Jon happens to be a captain with Morden Fire and Rescue, so he suggested doing something around the department's 120th anniversary.

"I looked through a bunch of different logo ideas ... and my dad gave me some thoughts on colours and fonts, so I put it all together," the younger Baumgart shared. "I was looking at past logos for other fire departments, and I just kind of combined these different elements."

The front features the 120th anniversary patch while the back showcases a rendition of the department's first fire truck alongside the new tower ladder truck that is arriving sometime this year.

"We wanted to celebrate the anniversary somehow, just at least acknowledge it in some way," said Chief Andy Thiessen.

He was pleased when Baumgart ran with the idea, and Thiessen saw the potential for them to make good use of the logo.

"He ran with it and provided us with a logo that we've incorporated now onto our trucks," Thiessen "We also got some new shirts for the members this year with that logo on it as well."

"We designed a challenge coin with that logo in mind as well," the chief said, adding they also plan to prepare some paraphernalia incorporating the logo for when they host an open house in September.

"It's worked out really well for us," said Thiessen. "I just think it's kind of cool an idea like this could come up ... and I think for Brayden to design a logo that we could really make use of is pretty cool."

"I had never thought it would be used like this," said Baumgart. "To actually be used for their 120th anniversary, it's kind of surprising. I'm really happy with it."



Morden Fire Chief Andy Thiessen with Brayden Baumgart, who designed the logo for the department's 120th anniversary, now available on a commemorative coin (right)



The coins are available for \$20 each plus \$5 for shipping. They can also be

picked up at the fire hall.

All proceeds from the sales will go towards supporting the Morden Firefighters Association's initiatives.



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Morden Police are looking for help in identifying this man in connection with an armed robbery that took place on May 8.

Police ask public's help to ID robbery suspect

By Voice staff

The Morden Police Service are asking for the public's help in identifying the suspect in an armed robbery that took place earlier this month.

On the evening of May 8, officers were called to a hold-up alarm at a business on Thornhill St. When they arrived on the scene, they found the suspect had already fled.

The investigation determined that a

lone man entered the business, brandished a weapon, and demanded goods from a store employee.

Police are asking anyone who can aid them in identifying the man shown in the supplied photos to call them at 204-822-4900. You can also call Manitoba Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-822-8477 or submit a secure tip online at www.manitobacrimestoppers.com.



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Local French students at provincial competition

By Lorne Stelmach

Local French Immersion students recently showed how well they are doing in the program here in Western School Division.

After competing in a local speaking competition, a group of students earned their way to a provincial competition.

The Concours d'art oratoire is Canada's larg-

est annual French public-speaking competition, and it is open to students in every province and territory in a wide range of age/grade categories and French abilities.

Thousands of students participate every year in communities big and small for the opportunity to win prizes and/or scholarships to post-secondary institutions.

Local organizers were proud of the Morden

area students for their participation at the event.

"French Immersion students in Western School Division continue to make gains in their French speaking abilities," said Sara Convery, who is involved with the Canadian Parents for French chapter in Morden.

"It's events like Concours d'art oratoire that really help students further develop their French language skills," she said. "Students learn how to craft a speech that will be engaging, coherent and entertaining while also gaining valuable skills like speaking in front of a group."

In February and March, French Immersion students in Gr. 3-8 prepared speeches to present to their classes. From each class, two representatives were chosen to compete at the division level in various categories.

"IT WAS A GOOD EXPERIENCE SPEAKING IN FRONT OF A CROWD. IT'S GOOD TO LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE."

The winners of the divisional finals went on to compete at the provincial finals at the Université de Saint-Boniface on May 3. They included Gabriella Jerema (Gr. 3/4), Oak-

Continued on page 14



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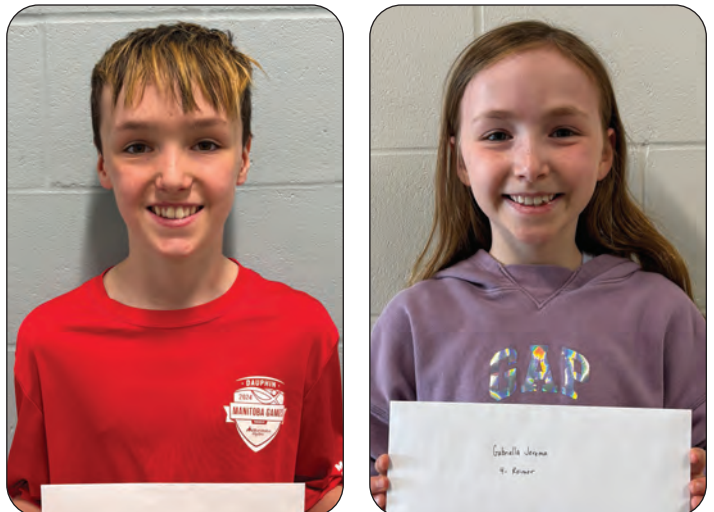
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SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Western School Division students competed in the Concours d'art oratoire in Winnipeg earlier this spring, going up against French-speaking students from across Manitoba. Above: Jaid Berard, Taliya Penner and Chloe Ha. Below, left: Oakley Jerema. Below, right: Gabriellea Jerema.



Cheers to the newlyweds!



Choosing your wedding dress: 5 mistakes to avoid

Have you set the date for the big day? If you're the blushing bride-to-be, you now have a list of exciting tasks to complete, including choosing a dress. Whether you decide to buy or rent, you don't want to take your choice of dress lightly. Avoid these five mistakes:

1. Procrastinating. Experts recommend choosing your dress six months to a year before the wedding. This will allow time for fittings and alterations or ordering a specific style. Remember, delivery times can be quite long.

2. Overspending. Setting a budget is essential to avoid overspending on a dress. Without a budget, you might

end up with a gown that strains your finances for months or even years after the wedding celebration is over. Avoid regrets by thinking ahead.

3. Asking too many people for advice. It's great to have input from loved ones, but limit the number of people you bring along dress shopping to avoid feeling overwhelmed. For example, asking your mom, sister and best friend for feedback is plenty. Ultimately, it's YOUR opinion that matters most.

4. Sacrificing comfort for style. Does the dress look great in the mirror but feel stiff and hard to move in? Is the style beautiful, but the fabric irritat-

ing to your skin? Make sure that the dress not only looks incredible but also feels comfortable. After all, you'll be wearing it for hours on your special day.

5. Choosing the wrong size. Did you fall in love with a dress that's too small with the hope of losing weight before your big day? Don't bet on that happening. Instead, opt

for a dress that's your size or a bit larger so it can be tailored to perfection.

Happy shopping!

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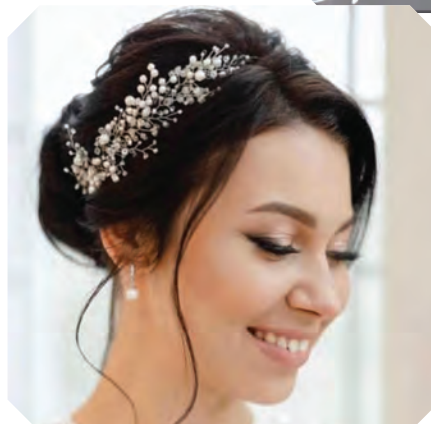


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Allyssa Alegro receives Make It a Reality Award

By Ashleigh Viveiros

This year's Make It a Reality Award recipient has her sights set on becoming a doctor and returning to the Winkler area to serve the community.

The Winkler Community Foundation presented Allyssa Alegro with the award at a ceremony at Northlands Parkway Collegiate May 14.

At \$25,000 over four years, the Make It a Reality Award is the most significant one given out from the foundation's Gordon Wiebe Education Fund.

Alegro was selected as this year's recipient based on her academic achievements, demonstrated commitment to the community, and work ethic, shared Tena Lane, chair of the foundation's scholarship committee.

"Qualities that set Allyssa apart in choosing her to receive this award include resilience, integrity, kindness, discipline, and open-mindedness," she said, noting it's always a difficult decision to choose from the numerous outstanding youth they receive applications from each year, but Alegro stood out. "She is a resilient, hardworking, kind, respectful young woman who's going to do great things."

Alegro has achieved high marks in

her Gr. 12 classes, earning her direct entry into the Faculty of Science at the University of Manitoba this fall. She also gives of her time volunteering as a tutor at her school, a youth leader at her church, and at the Salem Home personal care home.

Alegro thanked her family, friends, and teachers for their ongoing support through the years.

"It is truly an honour for me to be standing here today to accept this profound award," she said. "I never thought that I would reach this point, but here I am now."

"Receiving this award brings me one step closer to my dreams of pursuing a science degree as a pre-med route into medical school," Alegro said. "In the future, I plan to become a doctor and create

meaningful change in society."

It's a path that will require a lot of time and commitment, she noted, and this financial support will go a long way towards easing some of the challenges that lay ahead.

"This scholarship not only provides assistance with tuition fees for post-secondary, but most importantly it helps lift the financial burden on my parents and older siblings who have tirelessly provided for my needs all these years."

**"SHE IS A RESILIENT,
HARDWORKING,
KIND, RESPECTFUL
YOUNG WOMAN
WHO'S GOING TO DO
GREAT THINGS."**



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

Northlands Parkway Collegiate Gr. 12 student Allyssa Alegro (second from left) receives the Make It a Reality Award from the Winkler Community Foundation's (from left) Natalie Neudorf, Barb Neufeld, and Tena Lane.

Reflecting on the award after the ceremony, Alegro shared that a career in medicine has been on her radar for some time.

"Growing up, I got sick a lot," she said, noting the care she received from medical staff coupled with seeing her sister's career as a nurse inspired her to pursue a life in the health care field.

She's worked hard academically to make that career a possibility, and has also enjoyed giving back through her many volunteer involvements.

"Volunteering was the start of me stepping out of my comfort zone and becoming more independent," Alegro said.

Since the scholarship fund was created in 2017 from the \$2.2 million bequest of its namesake, over \$890,000

has been distributed to hundreds of area students pursuing post-secondary education.

"It was Gordon Wiebe's wish that we support young people in our community to get a higher education," said Barb Neufeld, foundation board chair. "Traditionally we've had a bit of a lower uptake on post-secondary education. There are barriers when you have to live away from home or no one in your family has ever gone to university, and so we've been able to connect with students who are in that position."

Neufeld said that this and the fund's other scholarship opportunities are supporting and empowering youth like Alegro so that they become tomorrow's community leaders.

> FRENCH COMPETITION, FROM PG. 12

ley Jerema (Gr. 5/6), Chloe Ha (Gr. 7/8), and Taliya Penner and Jaid Bérard (Gr. 7/8 duo).

Convery said their chapter was extremely proud of all the students who participated and gained valuable ex-

perience. The Concours d'art oratoire has proven to be highly beneficial for students as it stimulates their interest in learning French, improves their speaking and pronunciation skills, offers them the experience of speaking French in public, provides an opportunity to foster a

community of active French language learners, and demonstrates the relevance of French language instruction in the real world.

"It was pretty fun," said Taliya Penner. "It was a good experience speaking in front of a crowd. It's good to learn a new language."

"It was a great experience to be in front of a crowd and speak in French," added Jaid Bérard. "I've been learning French for eight years, and it was great experiencing this ... you learn how to speak and perform in French."

"I had fun competing. It was a great opportunity," said Bianca Lanthier. "It gave me a lot of good experience to practice my French."

"I'm really happy that Canadian Parents for French Morden has been able to provide this experience to our students," said Convery.

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PHOTOS BY RICK HIEBERT/VOICE

Orioles Karsten Peters executes the force out at second against Bisons Reece Fehr and then throws to first to get the double play in Monday's game. Right: Altona's Reese Fehr gets the out at second on Pembina Valley's Owen Goertzen

Orioles best Bisons 3-2

By Voice staff

The Pembina Valley Orioles' season got off to a mixed start as they faced off against the Elmwood Giants and the Altona Bisons in Manitoba Junior Baseball League action this past week.

The team's season opener May 14 saw them fall 18-13 to the Giants in Winnipeg.

They then bounced back with a 3-2 victory against the visiting Bisons at Arctic Field in Winkler Monday afternoon.

Altona, meanwhile, struggled

against the Interlake Blue Jays in their second game of the season and home opener last Wednesday night. They lost that one 10-0. They had previously fallen 16-2 to the Giants a few nights before.

Coming up, Pembina Valley hits the road to play the Winnipeg South Wolves Wednesday, May 21, and then hosts the Interlake Blue Jays for a double-header on Sunday, May 25.

The Bisons play at the St. Boniface Legionaries Friday night and then host the Carillon Sultans for a double-header on Sunday.



Winkler Storm ready for another season in Div. 1

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The Winkler Storm will remain in the Manitoba Major Soccer League's Division 1 this summer.

Despite finishing the regular season in first place last year and thus earning a spot in Premier Division, the team has opted to stay where they are, said coach Chad Bergen.

"There's a variety of factors, some of them just having to do with how the league is set up, and some of it has to do with the abilities of our players," he shared. "Some of our older players have aged out or moved away, so we have a lot of young guys coming in again."

Premier is a truly demanding division, Bergen observed, and one the Storm aren't quite ready for.

"I feel like this is where we can compete best," he said. "In the past when we played Premier, we could kind of compete with the bottom half of the teams and even then we would have to play our best game and the other team would have to make some errors for us to capitalize on."

"If you're always just surviving then you develop bad habits. These guys need to develop the confidence and the good habits of just playing their own style."

The team has been practising weekly at Winkler's indoor soccer field

since January, ramping it up to twice a week outdoors the last month or so.

Bergen is feeling good about what he's seeing from the players, veterans and rookies alike.

"Their biggest strengths are commitment, loyalty, putting in the hard work and effort. These guys are willing to work hard. They train on their own time as well, they run as a group, and that's definitely a strength."

On the other side of the equation, there are some hurdles the team needs to overcome to be competitive.

"One of our weak points is definitely experience," Bergen said. "Much of a soccer game is very mental, and one of the things I found at the Premier

level is we would have times where we were actually meeting a team that would be ahead of us in the table and then all of a sudden maybe they start playing tricks, intimidating us ... and all of a sudden now you're distracted by that."

It's something they'll be working on as they start the season with road games against Northern United May 20 and Lucania United FC2 May 27.

The full schedule is not yet available but the Storm's first home game should be sometime in June. Bergen hopes the community will come out to cheer the guys on.

Continued on page 16

Morden 4-H club year in review

Submitted by the Morden Achievers 4-H Club

The Morden Achievers 4-H Club wrapped up another successful year with Club Achievement Night on April 28.

Twenty-six members completed projects this year including wood-working, foods, crafts, babysitting, sewing, and more.

Members were led by 11 dedicated volunteer leaders.

This year's club executive was elected by the members at the November 2024 club meeting. Jeri-Lynn DeJaegher (president), Elyana Rowley (vice-president), Cameron Davison (secretary), and William Derksen (treasurer) learned about leadership in their roles on the executive.

Members participated in many events through the year, including the Red River Area 4-H Curling Rally, a family 4-H Christmas Party, and 4-H Day at the Royal Winter Fair in Brandon.

Public speaking is an important part of the 4-H program. Club members prepared speeches and visual presentations for the Club Communications Events in February.

Winners from this event included Levi Gavigan (Cloverbud Speech), William Derksen (Junior Speech), Leah Rachul (Alternate, Junior Speech), Avery Buelow (Intermediate Speech), Leah Wolfe (Alternate, Intermediate Speech), Jeri-Lynn DeJaegher (Senior Speech), Raquel Vallotton (Junior 1-Person Visual), Hudson Derksen (Alternate, Junior 1-Person Visual), Elyana Rowley (Intermediate 1-Person Visual), Emily and Madelyn Chawrun (Junior 2-Person Visual), Lyric Schwarz-Peters and Chaslyn DeJaegher (Alternate, Junior 2-Person Visual), and Harley and Vanessa Hildebrand (Intermediate 2-Person Visual).

Thanks to the volunteer judges for this event: Paula Wilson, Ti'an Hildebrand, and Amanda Seward.

Public speaking winners went on to compete at the Red River Area 4-H



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Morden Achievers 4-H Club members competed at the Red River Area 4-H Communications event in March. Left: Emily and Madelyn Chawrun won gold in the Junior 2-Person Visual Presentations event. Right: Harley and Vanessa Hildebrand came in first in the Intermediate 2-Person division.

Communications event in March. Emily and Madelyn Chawrun, and Harley and Vanessa Hildebrand were winners in their respective categories. They went on to the Provincial 4-H Communications Extravaganza in Winnipeg on April 26 and both teams were the winners in their categories.

4-H members and leaders are recognized with certificates and seals for their 4-H participation of five years

and more.

This year, Avery Buelow received her five-year member certificate, Emily Chawrun and Raquel Vallotton received their six-year seals, and Jeri-Lynn DeJaegher received a seven-year seal. As well, leaders Roberta Buelow (five years), Teresa Hildebrand (six years), Janelle Chawrun (nine years) and Norma Wood (43 years) were recognized for their volunteer service

with the 4-H program. Thanks to all of the volunteer leaders in our club for your dedication.

The club plans to participate in the parade and volunteer in the Cider House at the Morden Corn and Apple Festival this summer.

4-H registration for youth ages 7-25 for next year will be held in September and projects and meetings will start in October.

6v6 soccer league looking for teams

From Pg. 15

"Our home games are the best—we draw a crowd," he said. "When we go to Winnipeg they'll have two or three people in their stands, but when you come to Winkler we'll have a couple hundred. It's really impressive."

This season will see the Storm as the only Winkler team in the league—the Storm 2 team, which served as a development team for Storm 1 and played in Division 2 last summer, didn't come together this year.

"We would love to see a second team, but unfortunately we couldn't find a coach," Bergen said. "In place of that, though, there are some guys who want to pick up the [local men's rec. soccer] league again."

It would give players a chance to play closer to home and also potentially foster younger players who

may one day choose to move up to the Storm.

"We've got a lot of very good soccer players in Winkler, but travelling to Winnipeg to play games ... doesn't work for everyone," Bergen said. "It's a big commitment."

NEW REC LEAGUE LOOKING FOR TEAMS

Heading up the six-versus-six league is Philipp Unruh and Emil Rode.

"There used to be leagues like this run, and there was also a winter league for a little while, and then over COVID a lot of things kind of died off," Unruh said. "We decided to host a tournament last summer, which was successful, and then we did have a winter league run at the [Meridian Exhibition Centre] over

the winter, which was also a success, so now we want to take it into the summer season as well.

"There's a lot of players in town that don't really have a place to play," he said. "Storm 1 is quite competitive and it takes a lot of commitment, and Storm 2 was a nice thing in between, a development team, but we don't have that team this year ... so we created this, and it's going to be a relatively short season."

Games will run Mondays from 7-9 p.m. starting June 16. The season will wrap up with a playoff tournament Aug. 16.

There's room for eight 12-man teams, and Unruh encourages those interested in putting one together to contact Rode at 204-332-2263.

Team admission is \$500 for the season. Players can be as young as around 16 years of age to take part.

Walking for awareness: Manitobans step up for celiac disease

Walk-a-thon and BBQ on Saturday, June 7 at Assiniboine Park

By Lana Meier

The Canadian Celiac Association – Manitoba Chapter is inviting Manitobans to lace up and speak out as part of a growing movement to support those living with celiac disease.

As part of Celiac Awareness Month, the organization is hosting a Walk-a-thon and gluten-free BBQ on Saturday, June 7 at Assiniboine Park. The event aims to raise awareness about celiac disease—an autoimmune condition triggered by the ingestion of gluten—and to foster a stronger sense of community among those navigating the challenges of a strict gluten-free lifestyle.

Chelsea Lukawy, president of the Manitoba chapter, says the day is all about connection, education and visibility.

“From the outside, you may look fine,” said Lukawy. “But even the smallest amount of gluten can cause significant harm internally. That’s why we’re walking—to make this disease more visible and understood.”

While celiac disease isn’t typically referred to as an “invisible illness” in clinical contexts, many of its effects—such as internal inflammation, fatigue, or nutrient deficiencies—aren’t always immediately apparent to others. At the same time, over 300 known symptoms can manifest in highly visible ways, including rashes, digestive issues, and delayed growth.

Lukawy knows the realities of living with celiac disease all too well. She was diagnosed at age 12 after struggling with digestive issues, extreme fatigue, sore joints and delayed growth.

“I remember constantly feeling sick and so tired I couldn’t keep up with my friends at school,” she said. “At first, doctors weren’t sure what was wrong. It wasn’t until celiac disease was suggested that things started to make sense.”

Celiac disease causes the body’s im-



Chelsea Lukawy, president of the Canadian Celiac Association - Manitoba chapter.

mune system to attack the small intestine when gluten—a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye—is consumed. The resulting inflammation damages the intestinal lining and interferes with nutrient absorption, leading to symptoms that can range from stomach pain and brain fog to infertility, osteoporosis, and neurological problems.

The only treatment is a strict, lifelong gluten-free diet, and even trace amounts of gluten—such as crumbs from shared cutting boards or toasters—can be enough to cause damage.

“WHEN YOU CAN’T PARTICIPATE SAFELY, IT’S ISOLATING.”

“When I was diagnosed and started the diet, it was honestly a relief,” Lukawy said. “I finally had energy again. The headaches, the joint pain—it all started to go away. Giving up favourite foods wasn’t easy, but feeling better made it worth it.”

Navigating life with celiac disease, however, comes with daily challenges. Eating out, travelling or attending social events requires constant vigilance.

“You learn to ask questions and advocate for yourself. I always call ahead at restaurants and ask if they use a dedicated fryer, separate prep area, or fresh gloves,” said Lukawy. “I’ve learned to never assume that ‘gluten-free’ on a menu means ‘safe for celiac.’”

Lukawy says the misconception that celiac is simply a dietary preference continues to be a major hurdle. Gluten-free diets have risen in popularity,



PHOTOS SUBMITTED

The Manitoba Celiac Association Annual Walkathon & BBQ supporting Manitobans living with celiac disease and gluten intolerance is being held Saturday, June 7 at the Assiniboine Park.

but for people with celiac disease, the consequences of cross-contamination or misinformation can be serious.

“People sometimes think you’re being picky or dramatic,” she said. “But this isn’t a trend. Even a crumb of gluten can set off a severe reaction. For some people, that means days of illness.”

The Manitoba Chapter of the Canadian Celiac Association is working hard to educate the public and support those newly diagnosed. The organization holds bimonthly support meetings, runs workshops, and advocates for improved understanding of celiac disease across sectors, from healthcare to hospitality.

One of their newer initiatives, Kids’ Corner, creates space for young children with celiac to learn about their diagnosis and connect with others who share their experience.

“When I was diagnosed as a kid, I felt very alone,” said Lukawy. “Programs like this can make a huge difference—they show kids that they’re not the only ones and help build confidence early on.”

The June 7 walk and BBQ at Assiniboine Park will feature a short, accessible walking route, a safe and certified gluten-free barbecue, children’s activities, and resource tables with information for the public. Everyone is encouraged to wear green—the official colour of celiac awareness.

The event caps off a month of ad-

vocacy that has included radio campaigns, public interviews, and outreach efforts throughout Manitoba.

“Celiac Awareness Month is our chance to amplify real stories from real people,” Lukawy said. “There are still so many who are undiagnosed or struggling silently. Awareness can change that.”

She said it’s especially important for restaurants, schools, and workplaces to offer safe, gluten-free options—not just for convenience, but for inclusion and safety.

“Food is such a big part of how we connect and celebrate,” she said. “When you can’t participate safely, it’s isolating. Having true gluten-free options available means we can be part of those moments without fear.”

Above all, Lukawy hopes the walk and BBQ sends a message: those with celiac disease deserve to be heard, respected, and supported.

“To anyone living with celiac, especially those newly diagnosed: you’re not alone, and you’re not being ‘too much’ by asking questions or taking precautions,” she said. “You’re taking care of yourself—and you deserve to feel safe.”

For more information about the June 7 Walk-a-thon and BBQ, or to learn more about the Canadian Celiac Association – Manitoba Chapter’s support programs, visit www.manitobaceliac.com or email manitobaccachapter@gmail.com.

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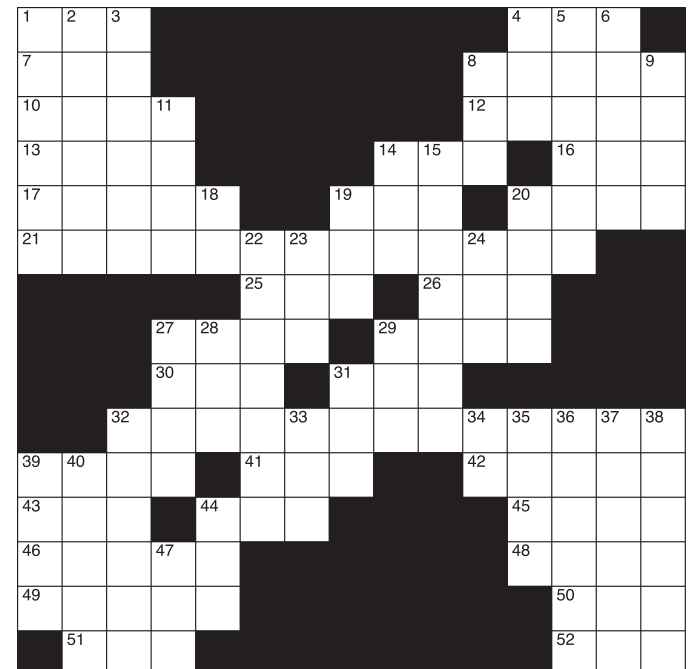
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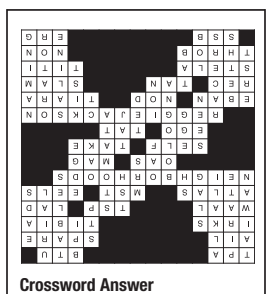
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