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Valley residents rally round good causes

DANIELLE PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Wherever you look in the Valley at this time of year you will find neighbours helping others in need; it's truly the time for giving. *The Current* highlights just a few instances of old-fashioned Valley generosity witnessed during the past several weeks.

This year's Tree of Lights Celebration on December 6 at the Barry's Bay train station was well-supported as the St. Francis Valley Healthcare Foundation raised funds for its Christmas campaign to purchase much-needed X-ray equipment for the hospital.

On December 7 the Madawaska Valley Lions Club held their annual Santa Claus Parade and clothing/toy giveaway at the children's Christmas Party after the parade. Kids got a visit with Santa, a free hotdog lunch, face-painting by Paige Mask and balloons twisted by mother/daughter duo Mary Lou Wills and Sarah Wright. Daly Contracting gave out one hundred turkeys at the arena that day.

The annual MooseFM Radiothon to benefit the Madawaska Valley Food Bank ran from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Dec. 5, with volunteers taking two-hour shifts to help MooseFM morning man Trevor Smith-Millar. The one-day fundraising marathon netted \$9825 for families in need in the Madawaska Valley and area. *The Current* arrived at the studio as Smith-Millar was chatting with former MooseFM DJ Devon Jolander who had called in from his new radio station in Regina to see how the Radiothon was going. Jolander wished the Radiothon team well and said how much he missed the Valley and the friendships he had made here.

In the run-up to Christmas, many businesses actively engaged in giving back. Northern Credit Union held its third annual winter wear drive to ben-



Balloon artists Sarah Wright (wearing hat) and Mary Lou Wills.

efit CPAN Child Poverty Action Network in Renfrew County. Madawaska Valley Family Health Team had a mitten tree this year. Executive Director Susan Farrar said this was their First Christmas in the Valley since the FHT was officially launched last January, so staff were very happy to return the warmth they've received by collecting hats, mittens and scarves for local residents in need. Following on from their Food For Fines drive during Library Week earlier this fall, Madawaska Valley Public Library continued to collect donations of non-perishable food items during the Christmas season. The Barry's Bay Post Office participated with collections for its annual Food and Toy Drive. Access Work Service shared skills this season with a Christmas Card workshop on Dec. 11. The first card was free and subsequent cards cost just \$2 each, all materials provided.

A Christmas dinner set the scene for

more than 90 Valley seniors to load the "Angel Tree" at the Opeongo Seniors Centre with toys and gift cards for local children and teens. The occasion was marked by a visit from 1st Barry's Bay Spark/Brownie/Guide/Pathfinder/Ranger Unit who received a donation of \$100 from the Seniors Centre in recognition of the girls' work in the community.

Just about every Valley church, school, business and service club worked hard to raise funds to help other residents and non-profit organizations in need; e.g. giving table space at craft and bake sales. And then there are those who give their time, like our hospice volunteers and grief counsellors who help families and individuals with end of life concerns. MV Hospice Palliative Care held a Help for the Holidays seminar at the Opeongo Seniors Centre to ease the challenges many recently-bereaved peo- — *Continued on page 2*



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Continued from page 2—
ple feel during the first Christmas season without a loved one.

We must also thank the volunteers who make it possible to enjoy winter sports. Yes, minor hockey, figure skating and sledge hockey couldn't exist here with the support of countless residents. But let's also give kudos to our volunteers who clear trails ready for snowmobiles and cross-country skiers. Out in all weathers in December were stalwarts from the local snowmobile clubs Opeongo Snowbirds and Peterson Pathfinders. Equally industrious were the cross-country ski volunteers who cleared the Opeongo Hills trails in time for kids programs starting in January and the annual loppet on Feb.2. Let's also give a shout-out to the Wilno Rec-

reation Committee, Combermere and Area Recreation Committee, and Barry's Bay Recreation Committee (along with both Halls from the Madawaska Valley Fire Department) for their help to prepare the outdoor rinks so each community can enjoy skating, broomball, pick-up hockey and more. So whether you participate in winter sports or you rely on year-round tourism for employment (or for your business survival), remember the volunteers!

There are many other hard-working Valley residents who, through their giving to those in need both at Christmas time and all year long, help to make this such a great place to live. Let us know of any good cause dear to your heart, as *The Current* loves to feature great community stories.

The Current as watchdog — 2019 in review

ROGER PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

In my review of *The Current's* 2019 contribution to local news coverage, two events stand out as being especially revealing. I refer to the bland response by members of council to one of their own swearing at and threatening me during a Madawaska Valley council meeting, followed by the manufactured and malicious attack on me and *The Current's* editor during the August 27th council meeting. These events served to confirm that, as was the case in 2018, *The Current* continued to ruffle feathers as a result of its reporting.

It is perhaps ironic that *The Current* had started off 2019 by reporting on a local panel discussion entitled "Newspapers – our community link." Among the speakers was Gerald Tracey, publisher of the *Eganville Leader*, who disclosed that the *Leader's* first editorial in 1902 stated that its aim was to be "bold enough to be honest and honest enough to be bold." In modern parlance that objective is commonly described as "speaking truth to power."

Later in the year came the announcement of a new federal government program entitled "Local Journalism Initiative." It was conceived in recognition of the fact that community newspapers, especially in smaller communities, were becoming a diminishing commodity

as so many of them had fallen on hard times and had folded. This meant that residents of those communities were being "underserved" through being deprived of the "watchdog" function that community newspapers are expected to provide. The Initiative, which applies to both print and digital media, was therefore felt necessary so as to maintain "public awareness, transparency, knowledge so that citizens can hold their government and institutions accountable."

In March the *National Post* published an article entitled "As newspapers close, role of government watchdog disappears" and said the following: "Newspapers typically have played the lead role in their communities in holding local officials accountable. That includes filing requests to get public records or even filing law suits to promote transparency."

At the time of the arrival of *The Current* in January 2018, the Valley did not benefit from having a journalistic "watchdog" holding "their government accountable." Residents were able to read reports of what elected officials said and did at public meetings, but nobody was "looking under the hood" and holding them to account for their actions when appropriate. *The Current's* owners were motivated to fill this void after learning of a number of instances where obligations of transparency, accountability and integrity seemed to



have been flouted with no consequences, let alone public disclosure.

The Current continued performing its watchdog role last year adding more information to justifiable concerns about, for example, the financial burden placed on taxpayers through unduly long and correspondingly expensive Integrity Commissioner investigations followed by some head-scratching decisions. We also reported on the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements that hide from taxpayers what they are spending in secret out-of-court settlements. This sort of conduct raises fundamental issues of transparency and should be of concern especially when there is no disclosure in cases where maladministration and abuse of power is alleged.

These articles and others this past year predictably rattled some cages resulting in the aforementioned consequences. However, these unfortunately obscured the fact that *The Current* also published many other less controversial reports about the Valley's municipal governance so as to ensure that our readers were kept fully informed of township business as well as other newsworthy events—one of the most widely read of our stories was the report on the sale of the ski hill. It is also worth noting that we have never received a single letter of complaint about any of the stories we have published. This is probably explained by the fact that, despite allegations from some sources to the contrary, we scrupulously avoid publishing “fake news” or opinions that might offend without first seeking both sides of the story.

Turning now to more pleasant subjects, I am pleased at the continued

growth during 2019 of our readership numbers for both the online and print editions. This is in large part due to our design and production team who are responsible for the much-appreciated, clean, uncluttered look of both print and online versions of *The Current*. A shout-out as well to our talented contributors, both regular and occasional, whose work has attracted the many compliments we receive about the quality of our writing. Also, I acknowledge the important role that our distribution partners throughout the Valley play to ensure that readers without internet in all three communities (and beyond) can still receive news of their community—free of charge. Thanks also to the local businesses and organizations who support us with advertising so that we can continue to provide a free source of community news.

Finally, readers also tell us they appreciate the advantage of having 24/7 digital reporting through our website without having to pay for a subscription and many say they have bookmarked madvalleycurrent.com so they can check the latest stories and upcoming events along with local Valley weather each morning.

Our goal is to continue to build on *The Current's* achievements during the past two years through the first year of this new decade and, recognizing that there is always room for improvement, we always welcome any suggestions from readers as to how that might be achieved. In the meantime rest assured that this watchdog will do its best to remain on guard.

All the best for 2020.

Roger Paul, Publisher

www.madvalleycurrent.com

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Being a parent is just a walk to the pond

JAMES DI FIORE
KILLALOE

Do you remember the smells of your childhood? Yeah, me too.

Specifically, my sense of recall for the fragrances of the cottage in Quebec where my family visited as a child is instant. It's also intoxicating. It's a mix between general cottage mustiness, the lingering aroma of my grandmother's cooking, and a slight hint of pine needles.

I do not have specific memories of individual trips to this cottage. At 43, the best I can muster is a pleasant cluster of moments stitched into the fabric of my childhood. These are the memories I've stolen from myself, for myself. My parents were still together. My sisters and I didn't bicker endlessly at each other yet. We still had our grandparents on the Italian side and a loving respect for our extended family.

Time stood still at that cottage. There was always just so much to see.

Life was everywhere, like the insects and critters along the short walk from the cottage to Lac Bleu. The red ants, the caterpillars, the moss, the chickadees, the chipmunks, and a set of cement stairs that led into the water. There was a small dock perched to the left of the stairs. My grandfather and I used to set crawfish traps near the shore beside the dock. Sometimes he used garlic bread as bait, telling me the olive oil is what attracted the crawfish, and in the morning we would find 4 or 5 of them, which was a considerable haul. He would joke that the crawfish were Italian too.

My grandfather and I fished on that lake for hours at a time. More granular memories stretched into a stand-alone vision; fishing with worms on a small motor boat, catching perch, crappies, catfish, walleye, and bass. After a good seven hours or so we would call it a day, bring in the fish we kept and clean them in the garage. We then gave the fish to my grandmother who would turn them into magic with a side of tomatoes, onions, and dandelion.

When the family all ate together it was really loud. Everyone was talking,



Caspar and Lizzie Di Fiore. PHOTO JAMES DI FIORE

arguing, laughing. We played cards, pretended not to notice when my grandfather was drunk, watched hockey, and I could choose at any given moment to pause so I could take in the fragrance I would recall so easily decades later.

Those trips to Quebec hold so much meaning for me, to the point where I wonder if I have over-romanticized these moments. Maybe the echoes of these times are disproportionate to their actual impact. Hindsight tells me I needed that nature before the shit hit the familial fan at home. Teenage pregnancies, divorce, delinquency, and a wicked step-mother from the nether legions of hell needed the softness of peaceful memories to offset the stress.

These memory fragments of this cottage in Quebec also strengthened how much I value the importance of a tight knit family, concepts that I lost after early childhood.

I was raised in the suburbs, a town called Whitby, Ontario. After college, I spent 20 years living in Toronto where I met my wife in 2009. By 2016 we had two young children, and that year we moved to Michelle's hometown of Killaloe, Ontario. After a stint living with her parents, we began renting a house adjacent to a cattle farm, with a rocky driveway that snaked a half kilometre to a lovely, small pond.

Almost every day we take a walk to that pond, and almost every time we see the things I used to see when I went to that cottage in Quebec. My kids see ants (black ones instead of red), caterpillars, frogs, chickadees, chipmunks, and other creatures. On rainy days they get on their rubbers and jump in the puddles. On wintery days they walk on the frozen pond and ask me to get a stick so they can tap it against the ice. We look at the footprints in the snow

and decipher them. Some are deer, some are wild turkeys, some are from stray cats, and some are from rabbits or wolves or coyotes.

But most of the footprints are from my family, evidence of time shared, a fold in the page of a chapter of their lives when our family was young and together. Hopefully it will be just another detail in a happy childhood for them, when their family would stroll inside our own private piece of nature. When everything was simple. When time stood still.

Keeping a family together and happy can be challenging. Sometimes it can feel like bliss, and other times it can seem as rocky as that driveway that leads to our family pond. I have noticed the older I get, the more I gravitate towards a mindset where giving kids two parents under one roof is more important than almost everything else. On those walks Michelle and I are a unit, a force trying our best to condition our kids to inherit the building blocks for their future bouts of bittersweet nostalgia. They may even learn a few other things along the way.

I wonder which scents they will carry once these memories begin to fade into one experience for them. I wonder if they will feel the same urge to revisit the part of their minds where these moments live on, the lens getting dusty and blurry. I wonder if Michelle and I will be successful making sure their home does not become broken, turning those walks into the ground floor of family stability.

My daughter has learned to love butterflies. My son watches where he steps so he can avoid crushing ant hills. He even taught my daughter to mind the ants, and my daughter now reminds me every time. They are developing a sense of environmental responsibility, and an appreciation for critters, nature, and hopefully togetherness as well.

Time stands still, and even though life can often tick by at a comet's pace, I can always retrieve the best moments of today and put them away for when I am old and rickety. I steal those from me, for me, after all.

Editor's Note: This article was previously published on blackballmedia.ca and is republished with the author's permission.

Bay Blades tops in sledge hockey standings

THE CURRENT
BARRY'S BAY

Congratulations to Barry's Bay's competitive sledge hockey team, Bay Blades, who are currently tops in the standings with 8 points. There's a three-way tie for second place (Kawartha Blazers, Hamilton Sledgehammers and London Blizzard each have 5 points) while the Northumberland Predators and the Cruisers Red Dawgs linger at the tail end of the group. Valley readers

can keep an eye on the game schedule that Anita Jessup posts on the Bay Blades Sledge Hockey Facebook Group and come out to root for the Blades at their next home game.

Although this is the first competitive team from the Bay Blades, sledge hockey as a sport is all about inclusivity. It provides the opportunity for disabled and able-bodied athletes to play side by side. The motto of Sledge Hockey of Eastern Ontario says it all: "Sledge hockey is for every body."



Grade 9-10 St. Joseph's Barry's Bay 1952-53

BOB CORRIGAN | BARRY'S BAY

This grade nine and 10 school picture was taken in 1952-53. If you see a mistake and you can make a correction, please let us know.

FRONT ROW: Sylvester Shulist; Floyd Skuce; Stanley Glynsinski; Howard Etmanski; Paul Recoskie; John Hildebrandt; Basil Gutoskie; Andy Etmanski; Garry Mackin.

SECOND ROW: Jerome Prince; Hilary Conway; Kenneth Coulas; Bernice Golka; Marie Gregoire; Veronica Matusheskie; August Biernaski; Mervin Coulas; Ron Coulas; Wayne Skuce.

THIRD ROW: Yvonne Dupuis; Mary Chapeskie; Shirley Mackin; Mildred Bryzinski; Loretta O'Malley; Noelle Chapeskie; Shirley Lehovitch; Adele Hildebrandt; Leona Yantha; Joan Mintha. Teacher: Sr. Carmelita

If you are interested in having a picture and story featured in The Madawaska Valley Current, please submit the information to Bob Corrigan at The Current, PO Box 1097, Barry's Bay, ON K0J 1B0. Originals will be returned.

A familiar face in a new role at SFVHF

DANIELLE PAUL
BARRY'S BAY

St. Francis Valley Healthcare Foundation remains in good hands as Erin Gienow assumes the role of Executive Director following the recent retirement of Toni Lavigne-Conway. Gienow is no stranger to the Valley having grown up and attended school here before heading south to train as a pharmacy technician, acquire a Bachelor of Liberal Science and work. She and husband Chris always knew they wanted to move back to raise their family. She said, "Living in the city is a great experience. We learned a lot, but our hearts were really here in the Valley."

And Gienow is no stranger to healthcare, either. Hers has been a familiar face around our hospital and doctors' offices since the 2000s. The Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee hired her as the Valley's first Physician Recruiter. "The position didn't exist before I came aboard so I was responsible for the overall creation and implementation of the recruitment program. Through that position I learnt a lot about our healthcare system and about our local community. I met a lot of people through that position... [from] all the local municipalities, hospital administration, physicians, and the community at large. It was a really great experience. That was a part-time position and when my daughter started grade one I had a little bit more time."

So Gienow started volunteering for the foundation to learn more about it. It was August, but by October Lavigne-Conway had hired her as a part-time fundraising assistant. During the past eight years, Gienow moved from a front-line administration role to full-time Donor Relations Coordinator. She is now SFVH Foundation's Executive Director, with the responsibility for carrying out its strategic plan while promoting its mission, vision and values.

She admits she never envisioned herself in this role but says, "I'm so happy I am involved in it because I always wanted to help in some way. Because I'm not a direct care provider, not a nurse, this is my way of giving back and making a difference in our community. And I do



Erin Gienow, Executive Director, SFVH Foundation

think it's important. A lot of people don't understand that equipment is not funded by the government—I didn't know that when I started volunteering here."

The challenges of healthcare fundraising in our region are many. Gienow explains, "We need the same equipment that an organization has in the city, but they have a bigger population base than we do. So we do have to get really creative around here and think outside the box – but that's part of the fun too." Her acknowledgement of the problem is tempered with optimism. She says, "And we have such a great community—extremely generous, kind. Our community never ceases to amaze me really."

Gienow's first step is to recruit a Donor Relations Coordinator. She says this will take a little bit of time and says,

"But we have such a great team here at the Foundation. We're supported by an amazing team of volunteers. Our board [members] are volunteers. We also probably have close to 70 other volunteers." She agrees that many of them volunteer for a lot of different organizations but says she is always looking for new volunteers. Many people start at The Bean Coffee Shop but all kinds of skills are needed.

Foundation Board Chair Karen Tierney says, "Our board is delighted to welcome Erin in her new role as our Executive Director. We are confident that with the knowledge and expertise she has developed over the past eight years at the Foundation, and her commitment and understanding of local healthcare and our donors, she will provide great leadership for us into the future."

Valley municipalities to collaborate on community safety and well-being plan

THE CURRENT

Under the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Safer Ontario Act has been passed with the objective to modernize Ontario's approach to community safety.

This legislation mandates every municipality in Ontario to create a community safety and well-being plan (CSWB) by 2021. The municipal councils of the Townships of Brudenell, Lynndoch and Raglan; Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards; Madawaska Valley; and South Algonquin have taken the significant action to work collaboratively. All four municipalities have passed resolutions announcing community safety and well-being (CSWB) as a priority and committing to work together on the development of a regional plan.

The aim is to enhance the provision of services and quality of life across the area. This collaboration is inspired by the seven municipalities in North Hastings who originally adopted this unique approach.

To facilitate the planning, a CSWB coordinating committee has been formed which includes CAO/Clerks from each municipality. The member municipalities have hired Dr. Meara Sullivan to provide professional expertise and coordination of the plan development. Dr. Sullivan has advised the North Hastings CSWB planning process and has taught development of CSWB at Loyalist College. "It makes a lot of sense for the municipalities to work together," Dr. Sullivan said. "Especially in rural areas, organizations which will be pertinent to the process almost always serve across multiple municipal boundaries. By working together municipalities can break down barriers, and help build community across the region."

According to a letter last March from then County Warden, Jennifer Murphy, "community safety and well-being planning aims to reduce a community's dependence on reactionary, incident-driven responses to crime and social disorder by focusing on the long-term benefits of social development, pre-

vention, and, in the short term, mitigating acutely elevated risk." She said Renfrew County's mix of small urban communities and rural municipalities made the task of developing CSWB plans a "significant challenge" and the "requirement to create a new standing committee comprised of councillors, community members, agency representatives, and OPP officers to monitor, implement, and evaluate the plan and its activities is an unnecessary cost to already cash strapped municipalities."

Madawaska Valley Township, along with other municipalities throughout Eastern Ontario, had opposed the requirement that lower tier municipalities should be responsible for preparation

and implementation of CSWB plans. Collaborating with neighbouring municipalities is one way in which smaller, rural communities can share the cost.

The plan development will continue over the next twelve months. The next phase will include recruitment and meeting with advisors from local communities, agencies and organizations. That will be followed by a period of public consultation which ensures that the plan reflects the lived experiences and desires of community members. (Further information is coming soon on how you can share your views.) The final plan will be shared with the community and sent to Ontario's Solicitor General prior to 2021.

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MV Hospice values new volunteer recruits

Madawaska Valley Hospice Palliative Care last fall put out a call for new volunteers and received an excellent response. Hospice Clinical Director Karen Wagner said of the new arrivals, "Welcome everyone. Thank you for recognizing a need and stepping forward to be part of a team willing to help. Together we are making a difference!" Shown above some of the new recruits and hospice staff (Photo submitted).

In November MV Hospice trained fourteen new hospice volunteers. Wagner said they bring a wealth of experience and talents from across the Madawaska Valley and area. "Three new volunteers are Therapeutic Touch providers. One is added to our Madawaska team, two from Golden Lake, three from Killaloe, four from Quadeville /Palmer Rapids/Combermere and three from Barry's Bay, and one halfway between everywhere (Behind Killaloe/Wilno/Barry's Bay) which helps greatly



November new volunteer recruits 2019. PHOTO SUBMITTED

in many points of our catchment."

Wagner said these new volunteers will slowly be introduced to both home teams and institutional volunteering as their police checks get processed. MV Hospice will notify Team Leaders when the new recruits are able to begin on a home team.

Three new male volunteers brings a total of ten men to the Visiting Hospice program. Wagner explained, "We often have male patients that request only males to visit. I believe a Male Team would be very beneficial and allow for easier scheduling. I hope this can be initiated by January."

Laundry customers want MV to reconsider discount request

DANIELLE PAUL
BARRY'S BAY

Bay Coin Laundromat opened in Barry's Bay last October to cheers from residents, but the owners' plea for a temporary reduction in water rates while they establish the new business was refused by Madawaska Valley Council.

Laundry customers think the township should reconsider that decision, say Robylin Bautista and Alia Bayat, who showed *The Current* pages of signatures from people across the region. During the holiday period, 93 customers have signed a petition that reads: "We the undersigned support the owners' request to Madawaska Valley Township for a temporary reduction in their water charges, just to help them for a year or two until they are established."

While over half come from Barry's Bay, other communities these customers come from include Bancroft, Combermere, Cormac, Foymount, Killaloe, Kitchener, Madawaska, Maple Leaf, Palmer Rapids, Quadeville, Rockingham, Whitney and Wilno. Bayat said this proves his statement to MV



Council that there is a significant economic spin-off for other businesses in town when customers come here to do their laundry.

During the wash and dry cycle, he said customers usually spend money on eating or shopping. He repeated that he does not want to increase what Bay

Coin charges because of the negative effect on customers with low incomes. He said their prices are competitive, citing an \$8 fee for a heavy-duty washer load and the rate of \$1.50 for wash and fold.

Bayat says he will continue collecting signatures before approaching the municipality again.

Cannabis edibles now legally available

THE CURRENT MADAWASKA VALLEY

As of January 6, edible cannabis products are legally available for sale in Ontario in authorized retail outlets, with some products available later online through the Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS). Cannabis edibles are food or drink items made with cannabis or cannabis oils and can be used as an alternative to smoking or vaping cannabis.

According to media sources, OCS says retailers can offer 59 new products at first, including a variety of vapes, edibles and a tea. The products will be available for sale online effective January 16, although supplies are expected to be tight during the first few weeks. Commentators disagree on whether the new products are likely to offer significant competition to the illegal market.

Edibles come in many different liquid forms and food types such as baked goods, teas, soft drinks, cannabis infused butter.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF CANNABIS EDIBLES

As reported in Huffington Post, Dr. Lawrence Loh, at UofT's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, says first-time users could be most at risk of overdosing on cannabis-infused edibles, warning they may keep nibbling while expecting a high. He said seniors are especially at risk because of a slower metabolism of non-lethal overdose from edibles.

It takes longer to feel the effects of cannabis when you consume edibles compared to other forms of cannabis. The feeling of getting high is often delayed. If you take too much too soon you can experience cannabis poisoning. Consuming edible cannabis has some of the same health risks as consuming other forms of cannabis.

The provincial website suggests that if you choose to consume edibles, start low and go slow. Cannabis edibles can be more potent than other forms and may affect you for longer periods of time. Take your time to understand how

your body reacts.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) explains the different between edibles and inhaled cannabis:

The effects of edibles can be delayed up to two hours and may last up to 10 hours.

After smoking or vaping cannabis, ef-

fects are felt almost instantly and may last up to four hours.

RCDHU points out that dosage, potency, mode of use and tolerance all have an influence on the levels and duration of impairment. More information is available at ontario.ca and at rcdhu.com.



Madawaska Valley
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Toddler Time: Fridays, January 17 to February 28, 10:15 to 11 am. Stories, songs and crafts for toddlers.

First Nations Early On Program: Monday January 13, 10 am. Indigenous crafts, stories and teachings. Recommended, but not limited to, children up to 6 years. Please register for this program by contacting the library.

Lego Club: Saturday, January 18, 2 to 4 pm. Join us for an afternoon of creative fun. Recommended, but by not limited to, children from K to grade five.

Library Book Club: Wednesday, Feb 5, 10 to 11 am. We will be discussing the book "Crossing the Continent" by Michel Tremblay. Copies are available at the library.

Cabin Fever Trivia Night: Thursday, February 27, 7 to 9 pm, at the Barry's Bay Legion. Contact the library to register your team.

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symptoms that are
preventing you
from enjoying life?*

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December message from MPP John Yakabuski

JOHN YAKABUSKI MPP
PEMBROKE

I'm always excited when I have the opportunity to talk about forestry, one of the bedrock industries in the province of Ontario and certainly one that played a huge role in making the Ottawa Valley what it is today.

We all know the history of the lumber barons and the communities that were built on the tremendous natural resource that was found in the areas that we call home. Some would say those were the glory days of forestry, when it seemed like there was a never-ending supply of timber of the highest quality, that no matter what we did we could never exhaust it.

However, we all know that resources are exhaustible. Fortunately, in the case of forests, they're also one of the most renewable, and the forest management practices of today ensure that we will have a sustainable supply for generations to come.

We also know that over the past 15 years, the forest industry has struggled and one of the reasons is that it was handcuffed by restrictive government policy that seemed bent on curtailing the harvests even at the expense of the jobs that so many families depend on.

I don't have to tell you that a well-managed forest is a healthy forest, and harvest conducted in a sustainable way is a major component of forest management. Well-managed forests are not only healthier, they are less susceptible to fires, because the wood is harvested before it reaches a point where it is certain to become fuel for a fire.

With this in mind, I proceeded to embark on the development of a new forest sector strategy for Ontario and began that by holding seven roundtables across the province to gather input from stakeholders, municipalities, and Indigenous communities, as to where we needed to go to ensure that the industry could achieve more of its potential. Just a few weeks ago, we released a new draft forest sector strategy and it stands on four main pillars, namely stewardship and sustainability, putting more wood to work, improving cost



MPP John Yakabuski, pictured at Santa Claus Parade in Barry's Bay (photo Sharon Gardiner) sent this December message to Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke residents.

competitiveness, and fostering innovation, markets and talent.

Analysts have indicated that the demand for wood products is expected to grow by 30 per cent by 2030 and we have to make sure that we are in a position here in Ontario to get our fair share of that market. I believe this draft forest sector strategy, which is now posted to the Environmental Registry and open to public comment, will serve as a blueprint to help us get there. Coming from the Ottawa Valley myself, I know how much of a difference our plan would make to the businesses and families in Renfrew County who depend on a thriving forest sector. You can submit your comments on the Environmental Registry until February 5, 2020.

On another subject entirely, I was extremely pleased that our government recently announced new health

care funding for hospitals here in Renfrew County. This is funding that is in addition to their original allocations. As part of our commitment to support small- and medium-sized hospitals and correct longstanding funding inequities, hospitals in Renfrew County received a total of \$2,184,000 as top ups to their budgets. We all know how important health care is and supporting our local hospitals is a fundamental priority for me.

Lastly, at this very special time of year, I do want to take the opportunity to do what so many others do and reflect upon the year that was, to join with family and friends, and do as we always do – celebrate the birth of our Saviour. On behalf of Vicky, our children and grandchildren, please accept our best wishes for the merriest of Christmases and health and happiness in 2020.

Preparing a community feast



Participants at earlier workshops learned how to weave on a loom with tutor Shirley Murphy and were taught by Eva Gallagher how to hand-build pottery. PHOTO: OV-CAOS.

ANYA GANSTERER KILLALOE

The Handmade Feast, running from October to April 2020, is a project by the Ottawa Valley Creative Arts Open Studio (OV-CAOS) that culminates in a community feast next spring. Curator Anya Gansterer is working with artists Andrew Trull, Lydia Vanderstall, Eva Gallagher, Zosia Kosinski, Theresa Prince, Joyce Lorbetskie, Catherine Bloskie, Talli Chaimovitz, Tanya Lyons and Shirley Murphy to create an art installation based on "setting the table." Free workshops are being held throughout the Valley to develop each element of the table settings which will constitute an art installation to be revealed at the springtime meal on Saturday, March 29.

There's still time to participate in these Handmade Feast workshops:

Kashubian Embroidery with Zosia Kosinski, Theresa Prince, Joyce Lorbetskie and Catherine Bloskie. Use Kashubian embroidery techniques to create a napkin. Opeongo Seniors' Centre, 19 Stafford Street, Barry's Bay. Friday

January 10 • 1 to 3 pm (rain date: tba).

Candle-making with Talli Chaimovitz. Learn how to make dipped beeswax candles. Palmer Rapids Community Centre, 2-62 Burnt Bridge Road, Palmer Rapids. Tuesday February 11 • 1-3 pm (rain date: Tuesday February 18).

Friday Mar.6 (Killaloe) Mixed Media Collage with Wren Crossland and Jennifer Bennet Pond. Use mixed media collage techniques to create a placemat. With your permission we will scan your artwork and turn it into a placemat for the community meal. Killaloe Friendship Club, 12 Lake Street, Killaloe. Friday March 6, 1-4 pm (rain date: tba).


Workshop spaces are limited so pre-registration is necessary. These workshops are open to everyone. People over the age of 60 are given priority. OV-CAOS is leading this project with funding from New Horizons, in collaboration with Barry's Bay and Area Home Support; CRC, Senior Active Living Centre; Killaloe Friendship Club. For more details about this series of free community art workshops call 613-633-1236 or email anya@ov-caos.org.

www.madvalleycurrent.com



TRIVIA NIGHT

Thursday, February 27
7 to 9 pm • BARRY'S BAY LEGION
Contact Madawaska Valley Public Library to register your team.
613-756-2000
mvpl.programs@gmail.com
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**BARRY'S BAY
Legion**

**YOUTH PUBLIC
SPEAKING CONTEST**
Saturday February 22 (snow date: Sat. Feb. 29). Contestants do not have to compete at school level competitions to enter. Parental authority is required. More info: Youth Education Officer, Bill Cunliffe, rclegion406@hotmail.com

BID EUCHRE
Tuesday January 7, 14, 21, 28 • 7 pm

BINGO
Thursday January 9, 23 • 7 pm

EUCHRE
Monday January 6, 13, 20, 27 • 7 pm

PANCAKE BREAKFAST
Sunday January 19 • 8 am to 1 pm

GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday January 22 • 7 pm

SIX-HAND EUCHRE
Friday January 31 • 7 pm

CLUB ROOM HOURS
Monday to Saturday • 2 to 6 pm
FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK



Valley families rock in the New Year at glow-skate

DANIELLE PAUL
BARRY'S BAY

Families in the Madawaska Valley enjoyed a fun, fit way to rock into 2020 at the Glow-Skate in Barry's Bay on New Year's Eve. More than two hundred people of all ages donned their skates, grabbed the free glow-sticks on offer and hit the ice at the event. The free Glow-Skate began at 7:30 p.m. following a free public Family Skate session from 6:00 p.m.

Both initiatives were organized and sponsored by the recently-formed Barry's Bay Recreation Committee. Spotted among the spectators were Councillors Mark Willmer and Carl Bromwich, while Councillor David Shulist was one of the skaters on the ice.

Barry's Bay Recreation Committee Chair Dr. Jason Malinowski and family were on hand, as were many other committee members and volunteers, both to ensure safety of the participants and to enjoy the skating. Talk O' The

Town owner and Barry's Bay Business Improvement Area Secretary Val Manion chatted during a short break to adjust her skate laces and agreed it was a fun way to start the countdown to 2020. Committee member Ryan Williams, President of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College, took a turn on door duty handing out candy canes and tracking new arrivals. He told *The Current*, "We're really happy about the numbers."

He admitted though that as a Texan, he wasn't much of a skater himself.

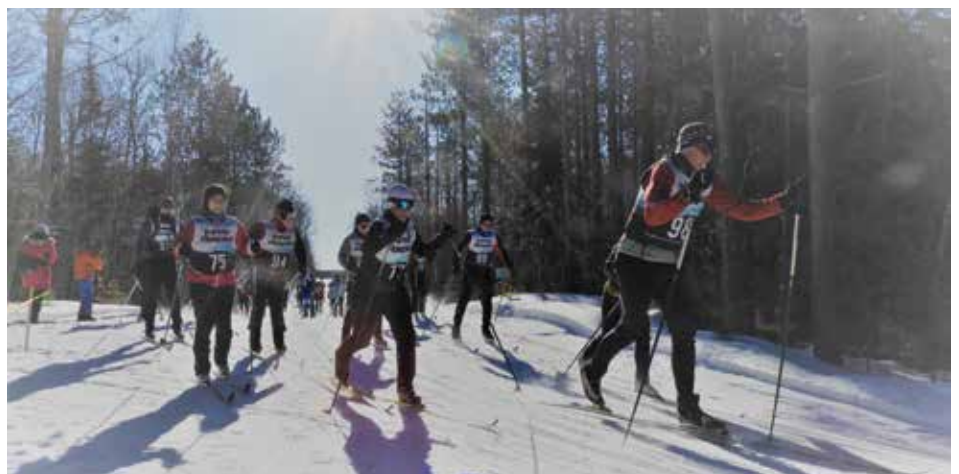
Register now for the Opeongo Classic Loppet

THE CURRENT
BRUDENELL

Mark Sunday, February 2, 2020 in your diary! It's the date for the Sixth Annual Opeongo Classic Loppet—a classic cross-country ski race hosted at Opeongo Nordic in Brudenell. The mass start is at 11 a.m. Adults can compete at distances of 5, 10 or 12 km; for youth under 18 the distance is 5 km and for kids under 10 the course is 2.5 km long.

Loppet Director Peter Cruchet said, "New this year is the Team category. Gather your friends, family and neighbours to form a team. Awards will be given to the largest team and the team with the best costumes. Team members can still compete for individual prizes."

Last year's loppet participants said they competed for the challenge of racing or just to enjoy the scenery. Competitors and spectators to the loppet should bring warm clothing for after



the race—there is no lodge, but there is a yurt to warm up in, an outhouse, and a safe place to leave bags. Stay after the event for awards and hot refreshments, and chat with other racers and the friendly volunteers.

Participants can register on-line at www.Zone4.ca until 9 p.m. on Saturday,

February 1st or before 10 a.m. on race day, February 2nd.

Non-skiers can enjoy this amazing day out as a spectator or as a volunteer. Club membership is not required, just contact Cruchet and he'll put you to work: 613-334-0980 or email pdcruchet@gmail.com.