

## St. Francis Herb Farm major expansion gets green light from MV Council

DANIELLE PAUL  
BARRY'S BAY • PEMBROKE

At a Special Meeting of Madawaska Valley Council on October 1, members of Council (with the exception of Councillor Ernie Peplinski who was absent) reviewed and unanimously passed a By-Law approving a Site Plan for an expansion of St. Francis Herb Farm (SFHF) in Barry's Bay. Council's approval means that SFHF is one step closer to achieving its ambition to become Canada's leading herbal brand.

Previously, at an open meeting of Renfrew County's Development and Property Committee in Pembroke on March 10, 2020, SFHF owner Paul Rivett-Carnac and Engineering Manager Paul Enns explained the project to County in a presentation which *The Current* attended. On June 9, 2020, SFHF repeated the presentation with slight modifications to MV Council during an in camera session. Following both meetings, *The Current*, as requested by Rivett-Carnac, agreed not to report the presentations until a Site Plan had been approved.

At the County meeting in March, Rivett-Carnac reminded committee members that SFHF had been in Renfrew County for 31 years, 21 of those years in Combermere, and in that period SFHF had proven its reputation for a high-quality, legacy product. He explained that SFHF had outgrown its existing premises situated at various locations in Combermere. He also advised the committee that the new 37,000 square foot facility would not just bring administration, manufacturing and warehousing under one roof; it would also include first-in-Canada capabilities due to new technologies, equipment and processes. The facil-



Enns at left and Rivett-Carnac at County Hall, March 2020

ity would include a new ERP technology platform. *Editor's Note: Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is defined as software that manages and integrates the entire organization such as customer relationships, sales, engineering, production, procurement, inventory and finance.*

To the items discussed at MV's October meeting, *The Current* can add that the presentation to County in March included retraining existing SFHF staff to upgrade their skills, the eventual addition of ten new jobs in the area, and the considerable cachet of having an industry leader located in the municipality.

Rivett-Carnac discussed the increased efficiencies for SFHF and said,

"The new facility will not only allow us to have more space but also allow us to develop more manufacturing capabilities." Referring to SFHF's ultimate goal, he said, "We believe we could be in a position to become Canada's leading herbal brand. With our unique story, the business history, the fact that we're building this facility on a plot of land right beside our farm, [it] is very exciting. We want to ... pick on growth awareness and education about herbs in general.... [and to] be the leader in extraction processing."

During the discussion, Councillor Mark Willmer said, "I think it's great that we're doing this. It's such a good addition to the township." He asked staff about the —Continued on page 2



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Rivett-Carnac (left, in silhouette) at County Development and Property Committee

*Continued from page 1* — implications of the project for residents on Lane Street in Barry's Bay. After speaking to some residents, he said they wanted to understand the projected effect on traffic in the area, as well as how the finished facility would look from the street. On that point, staff told Willmer that they had not yet seen a final landscape plan but that SFHF plans to include a buffer zone between the facility and nearby residences.

The Traffic Study included in the Site Plan package anticipates that once construction is complete, the majority of increased traffic would come from employees' personal vehicles and small delivery vans. It also anticipates one transport trailer per day during

off-peak periods. Staff pointed out this actually means fewer large trucks than would have travelled Lane Street when a planing mill was in operation there.

Willmer's final question on behalf of Lane Street residents related to the construction schedule and CAO Suzanne Klatt said that Enns had already applied for the building permit in the hope of getting the foundation in before frost sets in this year. SFHF said it will be communicating the start date as soon as it can be confirmed.

Councillor Carl Bromwich thanked MV staff for their diligence and speed in reviewing and processing the documents in the SFHF application, saying, "It's such a great initiative for our township."

## Community survey for Safety & Well-being Plan

The municipalities of Brudenell, Lynndoch and Raglan; Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards; Madawaska Valley; and South Algonquin have been working collaboratively to develop and implement a Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) plan for the region. Due to COVID-19 planning was temporarily suspended in March and the planning deadline was extended until July 1, 2021. The initiative is now moving forward and planners want to hear from you as this phase focuses on public consultation.

Paper copies of the Community Safety & Well-being Plan Survey are available through your local municipality and select libraries. The voluntary, anonymous survey is for adults aged 16 and older. The survey will run until November 30. All submissions will be collectively analysed, the results will be shared publicly, and will aid in directing the CSWB plan.

Find the online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/P3B3R5Q> or contact CSWB plan consultant, Meara Sullivan, at [mearasullivan@hotmail.com](mailto:mearasullivan@hotmail.com).



# New paralegal service in the Valley

*Editor's Note: In recognition of Access to Justice Week (Oct.26-30) we publish this article by paralegal Nicholas McLeod who recently relocated to Madawaska Valley.*

The Law Society of Ontario is marking its fifth annual Access to Justice Week to reflect on the necessity of the legal system and the barriers to those who need it. In a recent report, the Law Society found over 40 percent of Ontarians do not believe they have fair and equal access to the justice system. In addition, 71 percent of people found it intimidating, 69 percent confusing, and 59 percent "not for people like me."

These views bring up feelings of deep sadness. The rule of law and our justice system is the glue which holds our vast and diverse society together. It permeates every aspect of our life and allows us to live freely — and fairly — together. That the majority has lost faith is an indictment on how we run our most important institution. I think this feeling stems from the report's other findings: 31 percent of Ontarians have no confidence that they could afford legal services; 31 percent have only a little confidence; and just 9 percent of Ontarians had a great deal of confidence that they could afford representation.

These results explain why it makes sense that almost two-thirds of people thought that the justice system "serves the rich."

As a Licensed Paralegal, my profession was created to fill the needs of those who can not afford legal representation at lower court levels. I am proud to serve those who may have no other option but to navigate the ancient and archaic legal system themselves. In reality, the justice system is the great equalizer that allows the vulnerable and the poor to stand up and overcome those who wish to abuse them.

I was having dinner with my family when I received a call from a disabled single mother of five children. Through tears she cried, "My landlord is coming right now to kick me out of my house." I got directly in my car and drove over to her house where the landlord was berating this poor woman. I told the landlord to leave, and assured the distraught mother that no one would be making her homeless. After a letter to



The Action Group on access to justice, Law Society of Ontario

the landlord describing their numerous illegal actions, they wrote a cheque to my client and apologized.

I began my practice in Brantford and relocated to Barry's Bay in April. I was astounded to find myself as the only paralegal within an hour's radius. Since the legal system reopened in September I have been inundated with requests for help — from accused persons needing criminal representation, to a retired veteran ripped off by a roofer, and a pair of elderly parents whose adult son refuses to leave the house calling himself a "tenant."

Access to justice is a problem we must continue to work on, but the paralegal community is here to help fill that gap. I hope once people experience excellent legal representation, at reasonable cost, their views on the legal system will begin to change and they will see the system as the great equalizer there to protect them.

Nicholas McLeod is a Paralegal licensed by the Law Society of Ontario. He can be reached through his website at [www.mcleodbls.com](http://www.mcleodbls.com) or by phone anytime at 647-469-4726.



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## OPINION

# New BLR Administrator best opportunity for better things in 25 years

MIKE MCCLOSKEY  
QUADEVILLE

The recently announced departure of Brudenell Lyndoch and Raglan's Clerk/Treasurer represents the greatest opportunity for positive change in BLR I have seen since moving here 25 years ago.

The full-time administrator of a township is the single most important position because they are the eyes and ears of what is going on day in, day out. Professional administrators stand outside politics. They are subject matter experts for the public and members of Council. They know and follow our procedures and when they tell you something you can take it to the bank. They spend their time worrying about doing "the job" right instead of spending time worrying about "their job." They have the professional bearing to be able to push back against pressure from Mayors or Councillors who attempt to influence or intimidate them to ignore laws and procedures. They strive to be models of fairness and equity on the matters they and their staff deal with.

My professional assessment of the current BLR Township Office shows that we are far from this ideal.

The recent controversy surrounding a \$75,000 untendered gravel purchase tells me that, from a public finance perspective, things are not good. The lack of immediate and coherent answers from the staff, particularly the Clerk/Treasurer, on the matter is, well ... alarming. An organizational analysis indicates an inefficient workflow, reluctance to delegate work and a generally suspicious office culture. The historical staff turnover of receptionists tells me that the atmosphere appears toxic. Lastly, few people will say that the Township Office exudes an attitude of "customer service" in dealing with either the public or with Councillors looking for information. Instead, information is closely guarded and requests are greeted with a feeling of "Well, why do you want to know about that?" All of



this combined indicates an administrative system that is clearly broken and in need of overhaul.

## SO HOW DO WE FIX IT?

First, BLR Council needs to finally acknowledge that there is clearly a problem. The recent questioning of Council by a former member, Rick Clements, shows there is not going to be an opportunity for "papering over" the fact that this organization does not understand, let alone follow, its provincially mandated financial controls. There is no "gaslight" they can deploy to take away from what looks on the surface, to anyone trained in accountancy or public administration, like procurement fraud in their gravel purchase. The OPP will determine criminality, if any, but we can certainly make the immediate judgement of incompetence quite quickly. Sadly, Mayor Keller and Councillor Kauffeldt appear in their public comments to believe that having any daylight between what we say we do on paper, what we affirm to our auditors we do, and what we actually do in practice is okay. In fact, Ms.

Kauffeldt even went to so far as to say the practice was ingrained enough to be bordering on traditional. So we are apparently left with three council members (Budarick, Lidtkie, and Rutledge) to lead this Council back into the light.

Second, BLR Council needs to assess the situation. How bad is it? It is safe to say that none of the members of this Council have any knowledge of forensic accounting so they will need some help. We need to hire an interim administrator to come in and assess how bad our situation is and make the necessary fixes, re-establish the necessary guardrails, start the necessary investigations, and basically clean house. I would also recommend that we get another audit done immediately by a third party.

The terms of reference, established by our Council, for the interim clerk should be to set the place up so that the incoming permanent person can start with a clean slate. In an interim period, of say, six months, alterations to the structure and staff would be made. This six-

—Continued on facing page

# Some Valley trades condemned for rudeness

ROGER PAUL  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

A number of local residents have recently used social media to criticize trades for not returning calls, not keeping appointments, and generally showing disdain toward potential customers.

Real estate broker Pat Scott started the ball rolling on October 9th when she posted, "I find it extremely frustrating that our local trades do not at least return calls. Setting aside 30 minutes a day to do proper customer service goes a long way. I get that everyone is busy, I am too, but I always return calls. Scratching them off my recommendation list."

This prompted several other residents to join in, posting comments including:

*"Have learned this lesson since moving here for sure. Now I'm never surprised."*

*"It definitely is an issue. Returning calls is a key part of business I believe ... especially in small communities."*

*"The entire Contracting in The Valley*



*Needs a Make Over ... I could tell you so much your hair would change colour ... Don't Call Back, Don't Show."*

*"I had to bring a trade person in from the city for one job ... that was a one day job."*

These complaints resonate with me and my wife because of our experience

when we built our retirement home here. We were determined to use as many local trades as possible, but were frustrated and disappointed at the lack of courtesy on the part of some of those that we approached.

Our construction was delayed because of appointments for site visits that were not kept or promises of quotes that never arrived, etc. When we asked for an explanation from locals, we were told that the reason was that they were probably so busy, they didn't need our business. That's all well and good – but at least they could have shown common courtesy by telling us!

Scott told *The Current* that, "Fifteen months ago we had a contractor come to the house to quote on a job. We accepted the quote, not a big job, around \$15,000. After we accepted the quote we never heard from him again. No show or not returning of calls is so typical, it is sad."

So, for those guilty of this behaviour, you know who you are. Shape up—after all, there may come a day when you may need to go knocking on doors for business.

*Continued from facing page—*

month interim period also gives flexibility to the Council to take its time on the selection of a permanent administrator.

Third, we have to finally address the necessary change in our structure. There is a reason that practically every other municipality you can think of has a Chief Administration Officer (CAO) instead of simply a Clerk/Treasurer. It is this: the complexities and pitfalls of administering a municipality in 2020 have increased dramatically. The effect of provincial downloading to municipalities, changes in the Municipal Act, increased interest in transparency and the need to interact with more complex technology has increased the public's expectations of their municipal structure. To match these challenges, we need people with an increased set of skills. CAOs have those skills.

We need the fortitude to finally acknowledge that we are not living in 1971 anymore. We should note the former BLR Clerk/Treasurer is in fact going to an organization (North Algonia

Wilberforce) that has a CAO! Now I can already hear the well-worn moan of "Well, that sounds like a lot of money to get one of those!" I will counter by simply saying this:

## **LOW-QUALITY STAFF PROVIDE LOW-QUALITY ADVICE LEADING TO LOW-QUALITY DECISIONS.**

These low-quality decisions end up costing all of us more in the end. Think of the money spent on legal fees by BLR after the series of low-quality decisions this Council has made. A high-quality CAO would have stickhandled us out of trouble with french fries or gravel purchases or harassment complaints or marijuana policy or Ministry of Labour enquiries or the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commissioner ... you get the point.

So now that we know the way we need to go, I have to disappoint you. I can't envision that we are going to do the right thing in the case or get anywhere near an empowered Interim Ad-

ministrator or professional CAO with this Council.

The idea that the file cabinets would get opened and reviewed by an interim clerk with freedom and authority to actually fix problems and expose irregularities is hard for me to see happening, especially if members of Council would then be exposed to public scrutiny or investigation because of it.

The idea that a professional independent administrator whose loyalty is to doing their job, instead of personal loyalty to particular elected officials, is also sadly beyond anyone's reasonable expectations for the majority of the current BLR Council.

*About the author: Mike McCloskey is a veteran and retired Canadian Forces Officer with over 20 years of experience in public finance, personnel management, organizational analysis, and administration. He holds an Honours Degree in Political Science (Laurentian University) with post-graduate studies in organizational management.*



# The dream of a library extension becomes real in Killaloe

DANIELLE PAUL  
KILLALOE

The long-awaited addition to the Killaloe & District Public Library (KDPL) was officially opened on October 22. In attendance were many people who had collaborated on the project. Mayor Janice Tiedje welcomed them on behalf of the Township of Killaloe Hagarty Richards before cutting the ribbon.

Mayor Tiedje introduced the KDPL Board members: Glenn Allen (Chair), Brian Pecoskie (Councillor and Vice-Chair), Bil Smith, Sharon Cybulski, Laurieann Norris. Michelle Bozak (Secretary) was absent due to illness. She thanked all those involved saying, "On behalf of the people that live in this beautiful municipality what an asset we have. Congratulations to everybody. Thank you to everybody that had anything to do with this.... We've got this beautiful touch and it's all of you in this crowd that put that touch into making this library so special."

The Mayor acknowledged the support of Council, the KDPL Board and Friends group, and thanked Cathy Lyons who wrote the grant application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation. She also commended KDPL staff CEO Nicole Zummach and Assistant Librarian Cheryl Keetch, volunteers, past Board members, Council members, Township staff, and the builders Zuracon.

Glenn Allen spoke about his lifelong love of libraries and his recent reading of "The Library Book" which relates stories about the Los Angeles Public Library. Allen got a chuckle from attendees when he observed two major differences between the Los Angeles Public Library and KDPL that, he said, might be worth implementing here: the LA Library has 70 branches and is open 24/7. He then pointed out the basic similarity that KDPL has with all other libraries, "A sincere dedication to learning, education and community."

Nicole Zummach acknowledged the contribution of the Ontario Trillium Foundation saying the project could not have happened without their



**Top:** Library supporters give a cheerful thumbs-up at official opening. **Bottom left:** Nicole Zummach, CEO, applauds the work of KDPL supporters. **Bottom right:** Glenn Allen, KDPL Board Chair.

\$150,000 grant. She talked about the great support from the KDPL Board, the municipality and many community volunteers, saying, "I have been here for ten years and I have worked with four fantastic Board Chairs who are all here today: Janice, Glenn, Megan, and Lee. From the get go, all of you believed in the dream of a bigger library, got behind it and fought for it. Working so well as a team with the municipality, that's how we make things happen. It's a real dream come true for me to see this and now have this for the community. Thank all of you very much for believing in little dreams that become big dreams."

No one mentioned the challenges

of construction during a pandemic, or how heart-breaking it was when the site had to be temporarily shut down in April. Instead, the focus at the opening was on the satisfaction of seeing the new 1,095 square foot addition that has effectively doubled the library's space.

KDPL Board member Michelle Bozak later told The Current, "I think it is just such a coup for the entire community. The Library has wanted that for so long; trying to accommodate so many needs and expand those needs and finally they have that. The space is gorgeous. It is so well done and makes use of every little nook and cranny that they have—as they always did—but it's a different experience in that library now."

# Valley Heritage: Tips from Valley old timers

GIL GLOFCHESKIE  
BARRY'S BAY

Valley old-timers were wise to the ways of nature. Now it's my turn to pass on what I've learned, here are a few pointers that may help you.

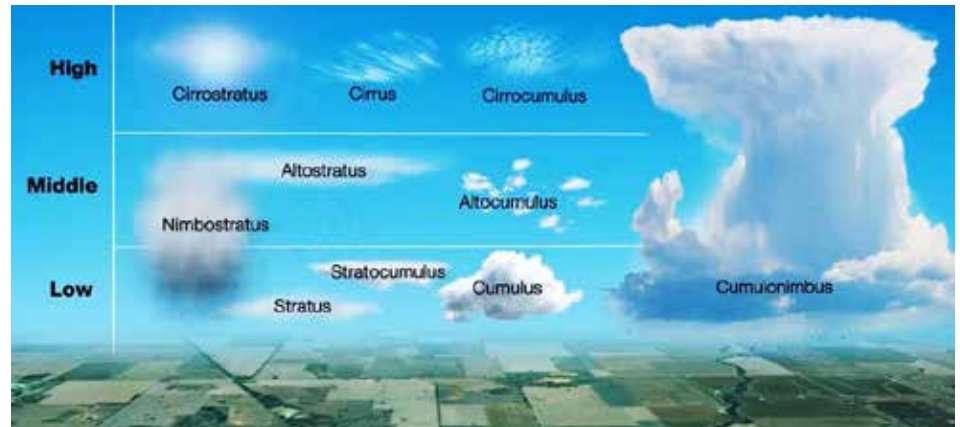
- **The higher the clouds, the fairer the weather.** Rain clouds tend to be lower to the ground.
- **Nimbostratus:** dark clouds, hang low, are normally associated with rain clouds.
- **Cumulus:** towering clouds indicate the possibility of showers later in the day.
- **Cumulonimbus:** typical thunderstorm clouds appear early in the day or developing through the day indicate a high likelihood of thunderstorms or other severe weather.
- **Cirrus:** stringy, fluffy clouds, bad weather within 36 hours when they appear high in the sky.
- **Altostratus:** fish scale clouds an indicator of bad weather within the next 36 hours
- **Cirrocumulus:** small puffy clouds in rows mean that cold weather is coming.
- **Mammatus:** flukey clouds can bring both nice or poor weather.

## OTHER INDICATORS:

- Falling or rising barometer: rain or clear weather.
- Rainbows in the east or west: passing or coming rain.
- Ring around the moon at night indicates snow or rain.
- Red sky night, high pressure. Red sky morning, rain or snow.
- Bats in the evening, fair weather the next day.
- Frogs are noisier when rain is coming.
- Cats clear their ears before the rain and dogs eat grass before it rains.

## HERE IS THE BEST ONE, TRY IT:

Being cold-blooded, crickets are affected by temperature. Count the number of times a cricket chirps in 14 seconds, add 40, and you will get the temperature in Fahrenheit.



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Check online for COVID-19 related announcements and all the need-to-know information for Valley residents at: [madvalleycurrent.com](http://madvalleycurrent.com)



# Finding the key to unlock mental imprisonment

BRENDA STRACK  
BARRY'S BAY

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be imprisoned, physically detained? Most of us haven't. We have never given any thought to it simply because it doesn't have any direct influence on us. We are accustomed to, and embrace, freedom as a limitless commodity, taking for granted what is available to us at any given time.

But try to consider for a moment how someone's life would change should they commit a serious crime that led to incarceration. The freedom that was once theirs, to do with as they wished, would suddenly be taken away from them. A delegated authority figure would be appointed to make choices and decisions for them regarding every aspect of their existence, without even a hint of consideration to how they felt about it.

Imagine the feeling of being held captive, like an animal in a cage, without the ability to think, plan and dream of the future, because there isn't a future—not in their eyes. There is nothing to look forward to, no one to reach out to and no one that cares. They are alone!

They are surrounded by walls, walls that keep them confined, confined with the realization that they are now a prisoner.

They struggle to find a sense of purpose and for a time build up some strength to fight for a new identity, but soon decide that the barriers are far greater than the motivation. Even if they try to break free from the pain and suffering by shifting their focus to something other than their destiny, reality immediately reminds them that life no longer holds purpose or meaning, except for the sake of existing.

The outside world becomes a fleeting memory that begins to fade with the passing of each day. They begin to accept their fate as fatigue sets in, and eventually succumb to solitude, to the darkness and the isolation that imprisonment brings.

It is only a matter of time before they feel compelled to aggressively pursue a means of escape.

Although the above description paints a bleak picture of what a convicted felon might experience while in



prison, the harsh reality is that, much like the convict, over 200 million individuals globally have lost the ability to thrive in their everyday lives.

They too, are imprisoned, held in captivity both physically and mentally, incapable of accomplishing even the simplest of tasks.

They are overwhelmed with virtually everything and as a result begin to withdraw from friends, family, activities and personal hygiene, becoming oblivious to the world and everything in it. Their mind becomes a battlefield, a place where every move, or lack thereof, is influenced and acted upon by what they feel and perceive to be real.

Although they are equipped with sufficient weapons to win the battle and escape the torment, oppositional enemy forces, better known as toxic thoughts, begin to apply such great pressure that they cause all defences to weaken to the point of complete surrender. All that remains is an incredible darkness, a place where lethargy immobilizes the body and intensifies the pain. They desperately seek for relief and turn to whatever is accessible to them, regardless of cost, and there is always a cost, be it loss of relationships, loss of health or loss of life.

The end goal is to either numb the sense of hopelessness or bring it to an end. It is important, however, to keep in mind that although suicide might be an end to your own suffering, it will be the beginning of it for all those who are left behind.

## SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

If this sounds completely unrealistic and hard to believe, think again. Depression has captured the lives of many and will

continue to do so until these individuals are provided with a lifeline, a sense of hope when all else is lost. Be kind to those who struggle; judgement only brings further despair. This is not something that anyone can just snap out of.

Whether it's visible or not, depression can show up in ways such as:

- feelings of sadness or emptiness
- low energy
- sleep problems, sleeping too much
- feeling worthless
- trouble concentrating or making decisions
- loss of enjoyment in previously enjoyed activities
- considerable changes in appetite
- thoughts of suicide

If you or someone you know has experienced any five of the above symptoms consistently, over a two-week period, it is important to seek the advice of a professional who can work with you, to help address and manage your symptoms.

You hold the key to unlocking the prison doors, don't allow fear to prevent you from using it. It may feel uncomfortable and take some effort but you are worth it! Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. You are important and deserving of love, acceptance and a fulfilling future. Make the decision to use that key!

*Author's note: If you need help, I will do what I can to make that happen. Prices per session have been discounted until the end of 2020. • Brenda Strack, a Valley native, is a certified counsellor in Barry's Bay practising as Madawaska Valley Counselling Services. She uses Integrative Counselling to tailor a therapeutic approach specific to the needs of each individual. For more information see [mvcounselling.com](http://mvcounselling.com)*



## OPINION

# There is only one watchdog in this town

JAMES DI FIORE  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Back in 2005 I was working as a reporter for a newspaper in the small town of Weyburn, Saskatchewan. It was the only paper of record in Weyburn, and much of its focus was on generating ads rather than reporting news.

My assignments were the typical types: photos at one of the elementary schools during an athletics event, local curling coverage, energy sector news, etc. I thought the reporters who stood out were the ones looking to find the truth, no matter how ugly it may be.

I was fired from that job after I had witnessed a local police officer sell cocaine to two waitresses at the local bar while he was off duty. I approached my editor professionally, informing her of what I witnessed and suggesting I attempt to purchase cocaine from the officer and secretly record the exchange. The paper responded by sending me home. They fired me the following day, and since I was only there about ten weeks, they did not have to give me a reason for my termination, but I knew why—I had attempted to disrupt the symbiotic relationship between corrupt public officials and the local media who turn a blind eye to egregious behaviour, careful not to jeopardize their share of the town's annual advertising budget. After all, why come down hard on elected officials if it means risking profits?

The answer, of course, is ethical journalism.

So you could say I was quite surprised in mid-October, as it was National Newspaper Week, I see *The Valley Gazette* using a lot of print ink to praise itself as being a valuable source of local news, given its track record on not holding local officials' feet to the fire. *The Valley Gazette* spent many years before *The Current* was launched not holding local representatives to task, not investigating issues that could shine a negative light on officials, all the while enjoying a monopoly on the municipality's ad budget.

Some might say that's just a coincidence.



IMAGE: GOODFON

Since 2018, the VG has continued to print mostly only what politicians say instead of asking “Why” or looking under the surface. In contrast, *The Current* has filled a void by taking seriously the obligation to be a community “watchdog” over local institutions — a role that the federal government's Local Journalism Initiative actively promotes to compensate for the fact that small communities rarely benefit from such scrutiny.

Just as an aside, even though we are officially recognized as a news media outlet by the National NewsMedia Council, we have yet to receive one dollar from Madawaska Valley Township's ad budget, despite several requests to be considered. We have even been refused permission to tender for it. Apparently, reporting the truth is a concept that has negative ancillary impacts, such as not piercing the monopoly the VG currently enjoys, even though the Township is well aware that *The Current* is operated on a not-for-profit basis and is distributed free to residents.

The VG has taken shots at us in the past including contemptuously referring to us as a “blog,” but we feel as though we can stand on our own reporting. Several big local stories since *The Current's* launch were ignored by *The Valley Gazette*, such as Mayor Love firing the Integrity Commissioner Jack Rosien after he had told a member of council that he was about to uphold a complaint against her. Rosien then sued the Township, making serious accusations that included mispending of taxpayers' dollars as well as allegations which challenged the professional conduct of the Township's lawyers. The law suit was ended with a settlement which taxpayers were not allowed to know about as Rosien was, he told *The Current*, required to sign a non-disclosure agreement. A source told *The Current* that he had been paid compensation but we have not been able to verify that.

If you only read *The Valley Gazette* you probably did not know about that story. Which is surprising as all the sources of information *The Current* relied on for its reporting were also available to the VG.

A more recent example was the lack of reporting by *The Valley Gazette* regarding the Township Auditors' annual financial report. The auditor spotlighted “a number of deficiencies that met the definition of a significant deficiency.” The auditor also mentioned that this was the second year of such deficiencies.

*The Valley Gazette* did not report on this story either, and I think readers of the Gazette should ask why they are being kept in the dark, especially when it comes to matters that have a direct impact on the public purse.

The following question is vital to the credibility of *The Valley Gazette*: why are they calling themselves a “news” paper when they do not investigate and report on such important local news items? Another question I think should be posed to Gazette publisher Michel Lavigne is one he is not likely to answer—how much ad revenue has *The Valley Gazette* received from the Township since *The Current* began?

All of this takes me back to my early days as a reporter in Saskatchewan, when it became clear to me that any town with just one media outlet will inevitably become an enabler of the local government, a quiet quid pro quo that allows public officials to go unscrutinized as long as a revenue stream flows towards the outlet.

Until *The Valley Gazette* decides it should be a full service newspaper and not a media lap dog of local government, *The Current* will remain the Valley's sole source for unbiased news complemented by investigative reporting.

Because that's what you deserve.

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## Tips to stay healthy in mind and body in challenging times



CHELSEA CLARKE  
WILNO

The rollercoaster that is 2020 is nearly coming to an end. Between shutdowns, quarantine, and adjusting to a new way of life as we navigate the murky waters of a global pandemic, there's never been a better time to put more onus onto your health and well-being. Whether you're struggling to stay active while working from home, dealing with waning motivation to cook healthful meals, or have noticed your usual bubbly spark losing its brightness, these factors all play into chipping away at your overall health. And while exercise and nutrition are important components of a vivacious life, your mental health should hold equal weight. Read on for tips to amp up your healthy lifestyle in a holistic way, taking both your body and mind into consideration.

### STAY ACTIVE

Okay, so we here in the Valley may not have been affected by fitness facility closures during quarantine, but we most certainly felt the effects of transitioning into a work-from-home situation or maybe have lost the motivation to get out for daily walks as we stayed glued to the TV screen to get the latest pandemic-related news. Time to snap out of it! Try these ideas to spice up your active lifestyle:

Get moving with kids or pets. Kids and pets are two creatures who never

stop moving. Schedule some time in your day to walk the dog, play with your cat, or bundle up the kids for a few hours at the park.

Bust out your old workout DVDs or download an app. You know you have some old step aerobics or Tae Bo videos lying around. Fire them up and not only will you enjoy a great workout; you're also guaranteed to have a laugh, which can do wonders for your mental health. If you were born after 1990, check out apps like Obé (literally ALL fitness formats you could imagine). You can surf YouTube for free options (Yoga with Adrienne is a favorite).

Find a new hobby. Winter is approaching, but that shouldn't keep you from staying active. Instead, take up a new hobby that gets you moving such as skiing, skating, or sledding. Hey, even making snow angels can burn up to 100 calories. Engaging in new activities has also been shown to boost brain health.

### EAT BETTER

When it comes to nutrition, the little things can add up. Instead of viewing "eating well" as cutting out all the foods you can't have, reframe your thinking in a way that lends itself to abundance. For instance, replacing your sugar-laden breakfast cereal with a nutrient-packed smoothie and an omelette with tons of heart healthy veggies can feel like a decadent experience.

Watch the booze. If having a glass of wine or beer (or two) each night has be-



come a ritual for you, consider nixing it, or cutting back. Not only are you looking at around 150 calories per beverage, but the negative effects of alcohol include increased risks of heart disease and some cancers.

Up the veg. Aim for half your plate to be chock-full of veggies at each meal. You'll save money by decreasing your meat consumption, and more vegetables in your diet will help to support your immune system against cold and flu (or otherwise).

Cut the sugar. Your daily double-double and a donut habit isn't doing you any favours. The average Canadian consumes 26 teaspoons of sugar per day, and you might be surprised to learn how much of that number can come from strange sources such as condiments or fruit juices. Check your food labels and opt for whole-food sources whenever possible.

### BE HAPPIER

Mental health is perhaps one of the most important health considerations when it comes to living in our COVID-19 world. From instant shutdowns, to worrying about loved ones, to income anxiety, it's no wonder our brains are having a tough time coping. If you're feeling more stressed or quicker to anger than usual, or have days where it takes all your effort just to get off the couch, you're not alone. Try these tips to gain control over your mental health, and remember that if you need extra help, it's always available. If you or someone you know is in a mental health crisis, call Pembroke Regional Hospital's hotline at 1-866-996-0991.

Practice mindfulness. Is your mind spinning faster than a hamster on an exercise wheel? Try taking a deep breath and gently bring your mind back to the present task instead of splitting your attention. If you're still having trouble, write down all the things that are going through your mind so you have the chance to sort them out one by one when the time is right.

Talk it out. Give your ruminating thoughts a place to land and call up a friend. Not only does it help to talk things through so you can process your feelings, but research shows that being social can add years to your life and support your brain health.

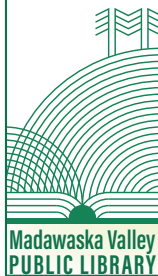
Count your blessings. It's easy to

get caught up in feeling like you're doomed, especially now. But practicing gratitude has a host of health benefits, namely, improved resilience and self-esteem, and even better quality sleep. Next time you're feeling down in the dumps, list three things in your life that you're truly grateful for, and watch your mood improve.

*Consult your healthcare practitioner before starting a new exercise program.*

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## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

### Social Worker – Permanent Full Time

The Rainbow Valley CHC (RVCHC) is a Community Health Centre in the provision of primary health care services and is a partner of St. Francis Memorial Hospital. The RVCHC Social Worker functions as an important member of a dynamic, innovative and integrated primary health team in the provision of assessment, individual and family counseling, case management and facilitation of groups operating within the values and objectives of the Centre. Crisis intervention services, in partnership with the other mental health programs in the County, are also an element of the position. The Social Worker works closely within the interdisciplinary team, providing consultation to members of the team.

#### QUALIFICATIONS:

- A Registered Social Worker with a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree and two to four years of counseling experience (or an equivalent combination of education and experience). Master's degree preferred.
- Extensive assessment and counseling skills.
- Thorough knowledge of and proficiency in current assessment and psychosocial counseling techniques.
- For more information, or to apply in writing, please email the Manager of Health Services at pecarskiej@sfmhosp.com.



# Killaloe plans parade despite pandemic

THE CURRENT  
KILLALOE

When kids ask, “But why can’t we?” their parents’ response this year is usually, “Because... COVID.” That wasn’t good enough for Chris Neff, Community Development Coordinator for the Township of Killaloe Hagarty Richards (KHR). Neff was determined that kids in Killaloe would not miss out on a parade this Christmas season because of COVID protocols.

From a starting point centred on a live Nativity, Neff told The Current that he had to think really hard to find a solution that could protect all participating community members. Once he had the bright idea that the easiest way to prevent people from crowding together while watching a parade was to have the spectators do the walking in small, socially-distanced groups, Neff worked with the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) until he came up with an approved plan. The next step was getting approval from KHR Council, and on September 29 Council members voted unanimously to give him the green light. So now he’s going public with his idea.

## HOW DOES A WALK-THROUGH CHRISTMAS PARADE WORK?

Neff explained that his requirements were to protect everyone involved, utilize community resources, involve as many community groups as possible, and avoid spending any more than the cost of a traditional parade. He showed KHR Council a map of Station Park and indicated where approximately 20 floats could be located yet still maintain the 10 foot distance between them that Farmers’ Market vendors have implemented between their stalls this season. He pointed out that sufficient parking was available to accommodate local families’ vehicles.

Now for the tricky part: how to keep people in small groups. Neff’s concept for a Walk-Through Parade follows:

- issue advance tickets to local community members
- each ticket allows timed entry for a small group to the float area
- before the entry time, the group



A float from the 2019 traditional parade. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/KILLALOE AND AREA LIONS CLUB.

- checks in at a holding area
- the group walks for about ten minutes down a one-way path through the floats
- children receive treat bags at the end and the group members return to their cars
- the next group is then allowed into the one-way system

When Neff presented his plan to KHR Council, Ontario was still permitting up to 25 people to gather in an outdoor setting. While Ontario has since “paused” social bubbles, smaller household or family groups could still participate. He admits that everything is fluid and will depend on government protocols in effect at the time, but as he is developing this event with the involvement and support of RCDHU, Neff is fairly confident he will find a way to implement his

resourceful solution. At this time he is aiming for a “parade date” of November 14th, but he seeks community input before finalizing the date.

With permission from both public health and the municipality, Neff is now reaching out to the community. For more details contact Chris Neff at 613.757.2300 or email [community-development@khrtownship.ca](mailto:community-development@khrtownship.ca)

The Madawaska Valley

# Current

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