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MARCH 2014

NEWS » EDUCATION

## Local school is a community hub

St. Alphonsus Catholic School cements ties with neighbours



(Above) Summer camp students from St. Alphonsus Catholic School in the Koinonia program pose for a group shot. (Right) After-school Koinonia program students make their own hula-hoops. >> MELANIE KIDDER

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

St. Alphonsus Catholic School is eerily quiet on a Tuesday afternoon. Instead of being crowded with hundreds of energetic, noisy children, the halls are empty and the lights dim.

"The students are away at an Oil Kings game," explained school principal John Groton. "It's what we call a hockey hooky day."

Giving students a well-rounded education, including hockey games, is all part of the St. Alphonsus philosophy. For elementary and junior high school students, that means everything from reading and math literacy to hot lunches and sports teams.

St. Alphonsus is also part of the Schools as Community Hubs (SACH) program, introduced in response to the 2009 City of Edmonton's Reach Report. After a massive city-wide study on crime and crime prevention, a recommendation was brought forward to intro-

duce SACH as a crime-prevention program. The program now includes six schools: three Catholic and three public.

Melanie Kidder, SACH co-ordinator for Edmonton Catholic Schools, has organized dozens of activities over the program's four years.

"My job is to look at the school and see what it needs. Then I go out and find a community partner that can fulfill that need," said Kidder.

All activities are carried out in partnership with outside groups.

Koinoinia is an after-school program for kindergarten to grade six students. Koinoinia partners with Boys and Girls Club Big Brothers Big Sisters and Action for Healthy Communities.

The Rock and Roll Society of Edmonton provides a junior high music program called the Centre for Arts and Music. St. Alphonsus students perform a public concert every 10 weeks.

Kidder also helped recruit Tyler Austring, a success coach

working for the Family Centre, to connect with students. Encouraged by Austring, they raked lawns in the fall. This winter, they shovelled neighbourhood snow.

"The neighbours see there is positive news coming from the school," said Groton.

Parents appreciate the after-school programs that keep their children in a safe environment. For many St. Alphonsus parents, having a few extra hours in their day has meant getting a part-time job or extending work hours. The extra financial security benefits everyone in the family.

As one parent participant observed, "It's a wonderfully welcoming environment. My son is allergic to gluten, so they make him special cakes. They get to do lots of crafts. And they have a special music program. The boys always come home happy. And because the after-school program is free, I can maintain my job."

St. Alphonsus parents can also take free Cree language

classes. The Thursday night zumba classes in the gym give locals a chance to work out free-of-charge.

SACH is waiting to hear whether it will have the funding to continue.

"The evaluation completed to this point has been very positive. I'm hopeful we'll get funding to continue," said Kidder. "We're exploring different funding possibilities."

### EVALUATION BY SACH FOUND:

- 96 per cent of parents were more aware of services available
- 90 per cent of parents experienced less conflict at home
- 48 per cent of parents were able to take on more work hours
- 50 per cent of adult participants were able to get part-time jobs
- 81 per cent of students feels more satisfied with themselves
- 88 per cent have a positive group of friends
- 87 per cent will ask for help if they need it
- 48 per cent of parents were able to take on more hours at work

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## NEWS » ECONOMIC

# Make Tax Time Pay

Non-profit program connects people with resources

CADENCE BERGMAN

For many people, tax season is that annoying time of year to find receipts, fill out forms, and perhaps pay an accountant.

Tax time can be even more challenging for some low-income people. Tax preparation services are available for a fee, but this is yet another burden on an already stretched budget. Many do not have a computer with internet access. Add a mobility or language barrier and there is a good chance taxes won't be filed at all.

What's worse, in order to qualify for many available government programs and services, low-income people must file a tax return every year, and failing to do so worsens the effects of poverty.

E4C is a non-profit organization in Edmonton. Some services they offer include providing snack and lunch programs for school-age children; early childhood programs like ArtStart; and housing, nutrition and mental health services for people of all ages.

This time of year, E4C also helps people file taxes and apply for government benefits through a great program called Make Tax Time Pay (MTTP).

During March and April, E4C sets up tax preparation sites around the community.

Site volunteers assist clients with completing their tax returns and applying for GST cheques. They also have application forms for other programs such as the City of Edmonton Leisure Pass, Alberta Health Benefit programs, the Alberta Child Care Subsidy, and the Canada Child Tax Benefit.

In order to be eligible for this service, incomes must be below \$30,000 for a single person or \$43,500 for a family of four. Visit the website at [www.e4calberta.org](http://www.e4calberta.org) or call 211 to make an appointment or to find out more information about eligibility or locations.

MTTP has a major impact on the community: In 2013, MTTP had 324 volunteers, filed for \$1.5 million in refunds, and submitted 670 applications for government benefits and subsidies. Since its start in 2006, E4C has helped clients to access over \$7 million in tax refunds.

Teena Gill, MTTP program manager, estimates a family of four can supplement its income by 22 per cent just by filing tax returns and applying for available programs.

"This volunteering opportunity was a humbling experience that opened my eyes to the shocking reality of many families from Edmonton. I had the privilege of assisting single parents, young adults, newcom-

ers and seniors. My experience with these wonderful people ranged from helping them prepare many years of taxes that they couldn't do because of a lack of resources, to providing refunds so they can pay their rent," wrote David, an MTTP volunteer, in a supplied quote.

"My family were newcomers and we've been helped by organizations such as these. What a joy it is to be on the other side," wrote another MTTP volunteer, in a supplied quote.

Services can be provided in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Amharic, Somali, Hindi, French, Arabic, Portuguese, Punjabi and Oromo. Information is also available for seniors' benefits and for people with disabilities.

What an impact an incredible group of volunteers can have on the lives of individuals and on the whole community!

#### 2014 TAX DEADLINES

March 3 - RRSP contribution

April 30 - income tax filing

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Ph: 211 (Edmonton Support Network)

Email: [mttp@e4calberta.org](mailto:mttp@e4calberta.org)

#### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Think about being an E4C tax-time volunteer! Visit the website at [www.e4calberta.org](http://www.e4calberta.org) for a sign-up form, or email [mttp@e4calberta.org](mailto:mttp@e4calberta.org).



Make Tax Time Pay volunteers prepare free income tax returns. >> EC4

#### DEBUNKING TAX MYTHS

**MYTH:** You can make tax-free withdrawals from your self-directed RRSP.

**THE FACTS:** If you use your registered retirement savings plan (RRSP) as security for a loan, the value of the RRSP will be added to your taxable income. Similarly, if you use your RRSP to purchase shares of a private corporation, and the shares are not a qualified investment under the rules, then the value of the shares will be added to your taxable income.

For more myths and facts visit <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/myths/#m7>

#### REVIEW » FOOD

# The newest kid on 118 Ave

T & D Vietnamese Noodle House is well worth a visit



#### T & D VIETNAMESE NOODLE HOUSE

8405 118 AVENUE

PHONE: 780.477.0022

DINE IN AND TAKE OUT

HOURS: MONDAY TO SUNDAY  
10 AM - 9 PM; CLOSED TUESDAYS

VAL MELLESMOEN

The first thing that strikes you when you walk into the T & D Vietnamese Noodle House is not just the clean lines of earth-toned, modern décor, but overall cleanliness.

The second thing you notice, as you sip the hot tea that arrives promptly, is the extensive menu. It includes many things you expect in a Vietnamese restaurant, as well as a few hand-written extras, and less familiar but tempting dishes.

The third – and perhaps the best – are the prices. The majority of items range in price from \$6.95 to \$13.95, with no item over \$15. As a result, you might expect smaller portions,

but when the food arrives, the portions are generous, filling and sharable.

Opened about a month ago, T & D Vietnamese Noodle House is the newest kid on a tasty block of world cuisine along 118 Avenue.

The business name comes from the names of the owners, Thien and Diep Truong, who moved to Canada with their daughter Laura – who runs the restaurant with her parents – from Vietnam in 1992.

For people new to Vietnamese fare, Laura will happily offer explanations and recommendations.

For those who love and savour Vietnamese food, this new restaurant is well worth a visit, as the dishes offer a slightly different take on familiar dishes as well as offer new ones worth exploring. All food on the menu are Diep's own creations, adapted and refined from her culinary roots as a street food vendor in the city of Hue, in central Vietnam.

One of her specialties on the appetizer menu is the grilled

beef wrapped in guise leaves. The taste is hard to put into words, but suffice to say the dish has the potential to become a "must try" in Edmonton's foodie community.

Green onion cake fans will be pleased as this Asian standard is flaky, hot and delicious and can be enjoyed with various options of chili and hot sauces, including the hot fresh peppers on every table. Other appetizers include a variety of salad rolls and the pork and shrimp tapioca dumpling wrapped in a banana leaf.

If you have a hankering for a vermicelli bowl, there is a wide range of options, and in particular the lemon grass stir fried shrimp is just spicy enough to make your tongue tingle, but not too hot to overwhelm your taste buds.

When it comes to their noodle soups, the broth alone will leave your lips smacking for more.

And speaking of noodles, the beef and vegetables stir fried on a bed of thick rice noodles is filled with fresh, crisp vegetables. It's served with a sauce that will



Truong family, owners of the T&D Vietnamese Noodle House. >> VAL MELLESMOEN

have you ordering it again, or perhaps checking out the seafood variation of this house specialty.

For the undecided, the menu also offers three combination dishes for between \$12.95 and \$14.95, which includes won ton soup, spring rolls and grilled meats, shrimp served with rice or vermicelli.

The Truong's have paid close attention to customer feedback to help refine their menu, including looking at more vegetarian and gluten-free options. Until then, because the dishes are prepared from scratch, they are happy to adapt

some dishes to accommodate every taste.

T & D Vietnamese Noodle House is currently unlicensed, but will soon be adding a selection of domestic and imported beers and wine. Until then, they offer fresh juices, soft drinks, and the obligatory Vietnamese-style coffee.

While the menu is still evolving, if the hospitality and food are a glimpse of things to come, there is no question the T & D Vietnamese Noodle House will soon establish itself as a tasty and popular addition to the 118 Avenue business community.

NEWS » DEVELOPMENT

# Norwood Village Apartments set to open

New residents begin to move in with eligible households able to take advantage of below-market rents

TALEA MEDYNSKI

Walk along 95 Street between 113-114 Avenues and you'll find a new apartment building in the midst of construction.

Owned by Glenwood Development, Norwood Village Apartments is a 154 unit, four-story building with approximately half of its suites available for below market rent.

Laurel Erickson, one of the managing partners, explained Glenwood Development sought out grants when building the apartment complex. The Province of Alberta and Cornerstones, a program within the City of Edmonton's housing branch, each provided one-time capital cost grants, meaning they committed a certain amount of money towards building Norwood Village Apartments.

These grants allowed Glenwood Development to provide reduced rent for eligible households for the next 20 years.

"We knew there was a need for affordable housing," said Erickson. "It can be challenging to find affordable rent."

Erickson grew up in the Norwood community – in fact, only a block away from the building. She said it's an outstanding neighbourhood with many exciting developments taking place.

According to the apartment website, households below a certain income level qualify for the building's Rental Assistance Program. For a one-bedroom apartment, eligible households earning up to \$36,000 qualify for the program. Households earning up to \$44,500 are eligible for a below-market rent

two-bedroom apartment. Three bedroom apartments are available only at market rate.

There is no difference between apartments offered at reduced rent and market rent, said Erickson.

For a reduced-rent apartment, rent ranges between approximately \$840 a month for a one-bedroom suite to \$1,027 for a two-bedroom suite. Market-value suites can expect to start at \$1,199 for one-bedroom suites, \$1,379 for two-bedroom suites, and \$1,549 for three-bedroom suites.

Erickson said an interesting feature of the building is that all main floor apartments have a fenced yard with a front door entryway.

"Right from the beginning, we wanted to maintain the feel of a single-family home," said Erickson.

Erickson explained there was a lot of row housing in the area, and wanted to keep the feeling of community in the building.

Glenwood Development is completing the Crime Free Multi-Housing program, a thorough process involving different stages. Established by Edmonton Police Service, this program provides crime prevention practices for properties such as apartment buildings.

Police were involved in the construction of the building, providing advice in making the building as safe as possible.

Some amenities include on-site daycare (YMCA of Northern Alberta), a secure entrance, and a meeting room.

Glenwood Development is offering apartments in two phases, with half of the building being available on March 1 and the other half on May 1.



Norwood Village Apartments will be accepting renters March 1 and May 1, 2014. >> KAREN MYKIETKA

Erickson said many apartments in the first phase are already full.

Karen Mykietka, president of the Alberta Avenue Community League, encourages neighbours to welcome the new residents. "I know not everyone was happy with the project but it's here now so let's get to know our new neighbours and show them what a great community they moved to."

Construction on the building will be finished sometime in April.

**NORWOOD VILLAGE APARTMENTS**  
[www.norwoodvillageapartments.com](http://www.norwoodvillageapartments.com)  
 95 Street between 113-114 Avenues  
 Ph: 780.471.3000  
 Interested renters may also use the contact form on the website.

**BUILDING STATS**  
 154 suites  
 1 bachelor apartment  
 49 one-bedroom apartments  
 101 two-bedroom apartments  
 3 three-bedroom apartments  
 Availability March 1 and May 1

**RENTAL RATES**  
 Market value rent starts at:  
 \$1,199 for one-bedroom suites  
 \$1,379 for two-bedroom suites  
 \$1,549 for three-bedroom suites  
 Reduced rent range:  
 \$840 for one-bedroom suites  
 \$1,027 for two-bedroom suites

Who qualifies for below market-value rent? Households earning up to \$36,000 qualify for a one-bedroom apartment. Households earning up to \$44,500 qualify for a two-bedroom.



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## WHAT'S ON » FESTIVAL

# SkirtsAfire Festival: where ideas collide

Local festival is a hotbed of opportunity for female writers, creators, and performers



Meet one of the puppets featured in the *Heart Shaped Box*. >> JOANNE PEARCE



A tiny world of wonder is contained in JoAnne Pearce's and Laura Raboud's cabinet of curiosities. >> JOANNE PEARCE

MARY-ELLEN PERLEY

Incredibly, it was a rather warm night in January. In my living room sat three highly articulate and passionate women: passionate about theatre written by women, performed by women, but for everyone!

As I prepared refreshments, I could hear Annette Loiselle, SkirtsAfire festival director, talking about the festival and the need for a skirt or several skirts. Interesting, I thought.

When I returned, the talk quickly turned to the reason for our gathering: my interview with three SkirtsAfire artists: Loiselle, Candice Fiorentino and JoAnne Pearce.

Loiselle began the interview by explaining the three-year plan for the festival's core aspect, theatre development, which showcases new works in development by female writers.

The first phase is the Peep Show. Last year, five new works were given 10-minute readings. This year, four new works will be read.

Phase two is staged readings of new plays one step further along in development. Kristen Finlay's play *The Easy Road* debuted last year and receives a staged reading in this year's festival.

Next year, the third phase showcases a complete produc-

tion of *The Mothers* by Nicole Moeller.

SkirtsAfire's assistant director Sharla Matkin and Tracy Carroll of the Alberta Playwrights Network, a partner in the first two phases of development, choose the plays for the Peep Show.

What a hotbed of opportunity for female writers, creators and performers!

Speaking of performers, Candice Fiorentino will present *Anatolia Speaks*, a one-woman show written and directed by Edmonton's own Kenneth Brown.

Matkin saw *Anatolia Speaks* at the Edmonton Fringe Festival and knew it would be great for SkirtsAfire.

Anatolia, a Bosnian refugee, tells her story in her ESL class as part of a getting-to-know-you project. The audience becomes Anatolia's classmates listening to the narrative and watching the slides of Anatolia's life in Bosnia and her journey to Canada. This play is a retelling of struggle and survival with an uplifting ending.

"I have performed this script many times. I still find it a terrifying but exciting experience," said Fiorentino.

Fiorentino is certain the audience will leave the theatre having "experienced an emotional ride" that is transforming.

Pearce is an artist and equally passionate. Pearce's creative partner in the SkirtsAfire Heart Shaped Box presentation is her long-time friend and Edmonton artist Laura Raboud. They attended high school together, lost touch and then reconnected when Pearce recently returned to Edmonton.

Their renewed friendship came with a spark of inspiration. Raboud wanted to do a puppet show and incorporate Pearce's interest in cabinets of curiosities, but using suitcases. Wunderkammer, also known as cabinets of wonder or wonder rooms, have a long history as miniature theatres of the world.

The two women put their imaginations together and created a family presentation with music, puppets and seven cabinets of curiosities under a blanket fort.

The audience goes on a journey of discovery into these little worlds to find a story that is ultimately their own creation.

But back to those skirts! At the beginning of our evening, Loiselle had been discussing the need to expand on the skirt theme of the festival. We've come full circle and that serendipitous, spontaneous combustion of ideas ignites.

Last year Nicole Bach, a University of Alberta theatre design graduate, came up with a skirt design one week before

the festival and built it in three days. This year, Loiselle hoped to find someone to coordinate an art installation of eight to 10 skirts chosen by submission. Imagine if you will a significant pause in the conversation.

"I'm a designer. I could do that," said Pearce.

Loiselle turned to Pearce.

"Do you want to take this on? Do you have time?"

"Yes! I need to connect with the arts scene here," said Pearce.

Then Fiorentino announced she was involved with a fashion show.

"I know some women who do marvelous fashions," said Fiorentino.

I wasn't to be left out of this flash fire of ideas.

"What about having Candice put JoAnne in touch with these designers and find out if they want to design a skirt for the festival? Voila! A skirt installation in the making," I said.

Loiselle turned to me.

"This is how things happen with SkirtsAfire: these kinds of collaborations just happen. The festival keeps growing. It is taking off!" said Loiselle.

#### SKIRTSAFIRE FESTIVAL

118 Avenue 90-94 Street  
March 6-9, 2014

Various venues on 118 Avenue.

Tickets to events available by donation at door.

#### THEATRE

**ANATOLIA SPEAKS:** March 6-8, 8-9 pm; Avenue Theatre

**NATIONAL ELEVATOR PROJECT:** March 7, 7-8:30 pm and March 8, 2-3:30 pm; Arts Hub Elevator

**HEY LADIES!** March 7, 8-10 pm; Alberta Avenue Community League

**PEEP SHOW:** March 9, 2-3:30 pm; Alberta Avenue Community League

**THE EASY ROAD:** March 8, 7-8 pm; Nina Haggerty Centre

**DANCE & PERFORMANCE ART**

**CAN'T CONTAIN MY DANCE:** March 6-8, 9-10 pm; Avenue Theatre

**WORDS UNZIPPED:** March 7, 7-9 pm; Nina Haggerty Centre

**HEART SHAPED BOX:** March 8, 1:30-2:30 pm; Nina Haggerty Centre

**FILM**

**LADIES IN THE LENS:** March 6, 7-10 pm; Alberta Avenue League

**MUSIC**

**REBEL SKIRTS!** March 8, 8 pm-midnight; Alberta Avenue League

**THE KEY OF SHE:** March 8, 1-4 pm, The Carrot Coffee House

**NUELA CHARLES: FESTIVAL FINALE!** March 9, 3:30-5 pm; Alberta Avenue Community League

**VISUAL ART**

**SKIRTS INSTALLATION:** at the Alberta Avenue Community League

Go to <http://skirtsafire.wordpress.com> for details on festival listing.



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WHAT'S ON » FESTIVAL

# GOBFEST on the Avenue

Board game enthusiasts can flock together for two days of fun

RUSTI L. LEHAY

Maybe you grew up in a board game-playing family and your beloved despises all games. Or you find yourself single and with grown children and miss that camaraderie over thrashing a sibling (who just thrashed you) in a competitive board game.

If this sounds familiar, there is a group for you here in Edmonton called POGO (Players of Games on Boards).

"We founded POGO because no one wanted to organize it so it would never happen," said Catrin Berghoff, one of the POGO founding members.

Berghoff and her partner set aside every Sunday afternoon. She would tell people, "Steve and I will be there. Take or leave it."

It was futile to expect RSVPs. Once people said no, they didn't feel they could come even if they found themselves available.

POGO has been a public gaming group open on Sunday afternoons from 2-6 o'clock since 2006. It was founded on the principles of "same time, same place, no RSVPs required."

The best part about being a POGO Bite, Berghoff said, "is that it is exactly what you want it to be. You can be there every Sunday or twice a year. I'm just happy that every Sunday,

magically at 2, nerds carrying games start streaming into the Students' Union Building!"

It now runs on autopilot.

Berghoff remembers playing Scotland Yard, her first board game, with her sisters. The game won The Spiel des Jahres, Germany's Family Game of the Year award, in 1983. It's the most prestigious board game award. Award-winning games are fun to play with plenty of strategy to interest adults and rules simple enough for children 10 and older. You can find the complete list of SdJ board game winners here: <http://tinyurl.com/mm9o6hn>.

Berghoff finds games are a great way to meet new people. Everything but the board and her fellow players disappear.

"It's also my way to tune out and relax. When you play a strategic game, you have to pay attention," said Berghoff.

After six months of dating her partner, one of them tentatively said, "I like games..." almost like a confession. They now own over 300 games. The average family may own 10-20 games.

Offering a weekend of fun here on the Avenue, POGO is staging their second ever GOBFEST (Games on Boards Festival) on March 29-30.

POGO wanted to host its own festival after being inspired by running successful Settlers of Catan tournaments and playing

games for 36 hours at FallCon, the Calgary board game festival.

"I really liked the no booths/sales aspect. Just playing," said Berghoff.

The first GOBFEST attracted 150 players, exceeding Berghoff's hopes for 100 registrants.

"This year we wanted more space and 80 per cent of those who attended said they would come back if it was a two day conference."

That bigger space is Alberta Avenue Community League. Games await you all weekend, so register at [www.gobfest.ca](http://www.gobfest.ca).

Once there, play tournament or free-style, open gaming (randomly pick games and opponents,) or a theme pack, quickly learning and playing three to four games. There will be prizes.

Bring your own lunch to workshops and ask board game designers all about designing and publishing your own game.

It is all about fun rather than competition. If you do drag a "not a board game" groaner along, you can both be sure to discover there is far more to games than a Monopoly weekend marathon.

**GOBFEST (GAMES ON BOARDS FESTIVAL) at the Alberta Avenue Community League (9210 118 Ave) Runs March 29-30, 2014 Register at [www.gobfest.com](http://www.gobfest.com)**



Last year's GOBFEST organizers, from left to right: Catrin Berghoff, Steve Smith, Jake Troughto (in the back), and Chris Samuel. >> CHRIS CHAN



Here are only some of the games to be played at this year's GOBFEST, Edmonton's board game festival. >> CHRIS CHAN

WHAT'S ON » EVENT

# Dig into Seedy Sunday and start growing

Swap, donate, or buy vegetable, flower or fruit seeds at this annual one day family-friendly event



An interested gardener peruses the variety of seeds available at a previous Seedy Sunday. >> MACK MALE [HTTP://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/MASTERMAQ/3377618679/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/mastermaq/3377618679/)

Get a head start on gardening with Seedy Sunday on March 16 from 11 am to 4 pm at Alberta Avenue Community League (9210 118 Ave).

Seedy Sunday began as a way to preserve certain types of seeds. Now an annual event held on a Saturday or Sunday across the country, interested gardeners gather and swap, donate, or buy vegetable, flower, and fruit seeds. Vendors will also be selling heritage, organic, and open-pollinated seeds.

Learn more about gardening with displays, organizations, and presentations. Gardening magazines and books will be available for exchange.

This is a family-friendly event, with a crafts table available for kids. Snacks will be available for purchase at the Seedy Café.

Admission: free  
Donations accepted

## EDITORIAL

# Mingle with other cultures

The ethnic mix on Alberta Avenue is a learning opportunity

CHANTAL FIGEAT

The Alberta Avenue neighbourhood is a mosaic of ethnicities with varying worldviews.

Some may find this mix of unfamiliar outlooks difficult to understand and even frightening. But they would be missing an opportunity to enrich their lives.

With expanding globalization, it's important to interact positively with people from different cultures to lead a fulfilled and successful life.

Travel beyond North America reveals many countries are very homogeneous compared to the multicultural nature of Canada. Canadian multiculturalism is very evident in the Alberta Avenue neighbourhood. Rather than treat it with suspicion, we should look at this as a great learning opportunity.

Interaction with different modes of thought enables individuals to approach their life more creatively by "thinking outside the box." Confidence develops as a result.

Intercultural social interaction helps us become more open and tolerant towards those from other parts of the world.

According to a Wikipedia article on intercultural communication, it's easy to run into problems when you don't

understand why someone from another culture is behaving a certain way. It's all too easy for members of two different cultures to become frustrated with one another. Communication

**“All of us have an invisible but very real psychological comfort zone. Stretching beyond this comfort zone is often scary at first.”**

in particular can be challenging. The way in which one culture interprets words and body language may be completely different for another culture.

For example, members of Korean culture are reluctant to say no and seek interpersonal harmony at all costs. Bad news will be delivered with a smile. This communication method

may seem vague to a westerner. Many words are left unspoken, but that doesn't mean body language isn't used.

Those of us unfamiliar with this culture may be easily frustrated by this "beating around the bush." Confucius, who sought to achieve harmony in society, influenced this communication style. Once you understand how much members of this culture value interpersonal harmony, you realize that it is best to work with them collaboratively. The key is to practice acceptance and open-mindedness.

All of us have an invisible but very real psychological comfort zone. Stretching beyond this comfort zone is often scary at first. But the good news is that this stretch becomes easier with practice. It ultimately leads to a more meaningful life.

Life becomes richer with variety. Go along 118 Avenue to soak up the diversity. Taste some delicious Portuguese custard tarts and enjoy the decidedly European atmosphere at Handy Bakery. Walk a few steps east to take in Ethiopia at the Family Injeera Bakery and Spice shop.

When you mix with different cultures, you come across people and things that you like and in time adopt them into your everyday life.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Staff at the *Rat Creek Press*,

I hope your day is going great and all is going well. I wanted to email you letting you know I've been living in Edmonton for half a year and have always received your newspaper in my mailbox. What a great newspaper. Great articles, great topics and great coverage of what is happening around Edmonton. Thank you for providing the city with such a great paper.

Sincerely, William

## CORRECTION

In February's issue of the *Rat Creek Press*, we mistakenly misspelled Abdo Salman's last name as Salmna on page 11.

Mr. Salman was featured in the *Revive your phone* business article and is the owner of Fix My Phone.

## NEWS » UPDATE

# Film screening

Followed by community discussion

MIMI WILLIAMS

As reported in last month's issue of the *Rat Creek Press*, at the end of 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the laws preventing sex-trade workers from working indoors, screening clients, or hiring bodyguards. The Court ruled the laws expose sex workers to danger and denies them the life, liberty and security guaranteed under Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Alberta Avenue resident Sophie Ares Pilon and Delton resident Mimi Williams have organized a film screening and discussion about this issue on Thursday, March 13. All community members are welcome to join them at the Alberta Avenue Community League at 7 pm to view *Buying Sex*, a National Film Board documentary exploring the state of Canadian prostitution laws.

Kate Quinn of the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation (CEASE) will introduce the film, following which audience members will be invited to participate in a facilitated discussion about the state of prostitution laws and what steps the federal government might take as they rewrite legislation to comply with the court's decision.

Canadians have been invited to participate in an online consultation on the federal Justice Department website that runs to March 17. This film screening and discussion provides you an excellent opportunity to become informed about the issue before offering the government your input. We hope to see you there!

## BUYING SEX

A NATIONAL FILM BOARD DOCUMENTARY

Thursday, March 13 from 7 to 9:30 pm  
Alberta Avenue Community League (9210 118 Ave)

Kate Quinn of the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation (CEASE) will introduce the National Film Board documentary *Buying Sex*.

Following the film, community members are invited to participate in an open, informed, and respectful discussion about the state of prostitution laws in Canada.

Free admission. Light refreshments will be served.

*WARNING: This film deals with mature subject matter. Viewer discretion is advised.*

RAT CREEK PRESS ASSOCIATION 9210 118 AVENUE, EDMONTON, AB T5G 0N2 | T: 780.479.6285

## ABOUT US

The *Rat Creek Press* is a non-profit community newspaper in north central Edmonton serving the communities of Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue and Westwood.

## COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATION, CAPACITY

The *Rat Creek Press* goals are to help connect residents with what is happening in the community, provide a forum where information and ideas can be exchanged, and help individuals learn new skills, acquire experience and develop leadership.

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## EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Rat Creek Press* is a forum for all people. We encourage comments that further discussion on a given article or subject, provide constructive criticism, or offer an idea for community activity. **Letters** should be no longer than 250 words and must include the full name, location and contact information of the author. **Op-Ed columns** should be 400-700 words and observe formal rules of spelling and grammar. The RCP reserves the right to edit all material and to remove any electronic comment at any time.

All columns, letters or cartoons submitted are attributed to the author and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the *Rat Creek Press*. Send submissions to the *Rat Creek Press* Editor via email at editor@ratcreek.org, or 9210-118 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5G 0N2. Mail may also be dropped at the address above.

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Space is available to non-profit groups for event and program listings as well as volunteer opportunities on a first-come first-serve basis and will be printed as space permits.



**Want to garden this spring?**

**Community garden spots available**

Alberta Avenue Community League (9210 118 ave) has room for new gardeners! Fill in an application at [www.albertaave.org/community-garden.html](http://www.albertaave.org/community-garden.html) or call 780.477.2773 for more details.

CULTURAL » IMMIGRATION

# Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

Help for new immigrants to succeed; stories of strength, courage, and spirit provide inspiration



Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers staff pose in a group picture. >> EDMONTON MENNONITE CENTRE FOR NEWCOMERS

MARI SASANO

When Eun Jin Kim came to Canada from Korea 14 years ago, she, like many other immigrants, realized Canada would not recognize her credentials as a counsellor.

Kim and her husband enrolled in graduate school in Ottawa, then relocated to Edmonton in 2004. Knowing she wanted to work with immigrants, she Googled some key words and found the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN). Shortly thereafter, she landed a job as a career practitioner, helping newcomers settle in Canada and find work. Now the team lead, she co-ordinates employment activities.

“Under our contract, we serve immigrants and refugees here. Newcomers, mostly – that means people who have been here for less than three years. That’s our main clientele. But our agency, we never turn anyone away, so we serve other people. For example, we are not supposed to service refugee claimants, but we do. And we provide services

for citizens if they have barriers,” she said.

Most of her clients find EMCN through word-of-mouth. They come from everywhere around the world, mostly refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea and professionals from India, Philippines, and Pakistan. Immigrants from China, Colombia, El Salvador and some areas in Europe also find their way to the door. The range of education, skills, and needs varies.

“Some clients have a very professional background. They have a master’s degree from back home, or even a PhD. But some clients, especially if they came from a refugee camp, they have no formal education. So, it’s kind of extreme.”

Immigrants who were professionals in their home country are given support to get Canadian credentials, additional education or experience. Bridging programs are available in engineering and accounting. Less educated or skilled workers often need English language training before entering the job

market, so EMCN places them in Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) classes.

Once they are job ready, EMCN assists with resume writing and employment liaison workers match clients with potential employers.

Finding employment is one service that EMCN provides. Settlement services help newcomers find homes and connects them to the community, and language services provide ESL classes.

A community development team and a mental health team also support these services for a holistic approach to helping immigrants succeed.

“Imagine when a newcomer comes, they need a house, they need a job and they need to improve their English skills. Some of the clients have had a traumatic experience and they need to talk to somebody. We have social workers, psychotherapists, English teachers, settlement workers and then we have employment counsellors. Step by step.”

Kim notes clients who success-

fully find work will often return to help other newcomers.

“One client,” she recalls, “he became a manager and one day he came to see me. He said, ‘I want to hire newcomers.’ They need some help when they first come here, but once they get some help, they get settled and they support other immigrants. To me, that is beautiful.”

Kim has heard stories of strength, courage, and spirit in over the five years she’s worked there. She has helped many succeed, but she has found inspiration in a refugee’s power to cope and survive.

It takes tremendous courage to seek better opportunities far away from the familiarity of home. But Canada’s generosity and openness is what made Kim and her family settle in this country and not another, and those values are reflected in the work she and the other staff do.

She and her family could have chosen any other country to emigrate to, but she chose Canada: “To me, I like the support system here. We provide support for less fortunate people.”

**EMCN FACTS**

**VISION STATEMENT:**

“We see a future where many citizens walk with newcomers to bridge their transition into community. To achieve this vision we will serve as a key catalyst and leading collaborator in positively shaping the attitudes, behaviours and practices of organizations and individuals to value the diversity that newcomers bring to community.”

A steering committee made up of Edmonton’s Mennonite community members founded the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers in 1982.

Services are provided based on four core values: social justice, diversity, compassion, and responsibility.


**PARTNERS INCLUDE:**

Immigration and Citizenship Canada, The Wildman Institute, Alberta Human Services, the City of Edmonton, and the Edmonton Inner City Housing Society.

There are a number of locations, but the main building is located at 11713 82 Street. Contact info: 780.424.7709 or e-mail info@emcn.ab.ca



## PLAY BALL!



**NEZ SOFTBALL AND BASEBALL are ready for the 2014 season.**  
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**If your community league is not holding registration then register at**


# NEZ CENTRAL REGISTRATION

**NORTHEAST ZONE SPORTS COUNCIL OFFICE**  
 7515 Borden Park Road (Behind the tennis courts in Borden Park)

Sunday, March 9 from 12:00 to 3:00 pm  
 Saturday, March 15 from 12:00 am to 3:00 pm  
 Wednesday, March 19 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm  
 Wednesday, March 26 from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm  
 Wednesday, March 26 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

**WWW.NEZSPORTS.COM**

REGISTRATION INFORMATION, FEES AND PROGRAM INFORMATION  
 For Baseball: Dave Ball at 780.475.5609 or balldr@shaw.ca  
 For Softball: Janet Henderson at 780.477.2696  
 or j.hender@shaw.ca






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## COMMUNITY » GARDEN

# Permaculture

What the heck is it and why is everyone talking about it?



The bounty from Shelaine Sparrow's permaculture yard. >> SHELAIN SPARROW



A permaculture environment looks something like this lovely yard, taken on a tour in Olds, Alberta. >> SHELAIN SPARROW

SHELAIN SPARROW

Whether you have heard of it or not, permaculture is surely coming to a site near you. The movement is on the rise – and for good reason.

Permaculture offers something most of us are desperately seeking – a path to sustainable living not harmful to the environment or others and not jeopardizing the future. I know I was.

Despite my efforts to upgrade efficiency, make conscious food choices, reduce waste and consumption, I felt a frustration that I was working with pieces of a larger puzzle – a puzzle that I longed to complete.

Then I came across permaculture. It promised not only solutions but integration. I dove in and it delivered.

Permaculture gets its name from combining the words permanent culture and agriculture. An ethically-rooted ecological design practice, permaculture can be applied to daily life.

The universality of it makes it notoriously difficult to define.

The approach is to design and maintain eco-systems in which “plants, people, and all forms of ecological diversity interact to produce a prolific, ecologically sound, and regenerative system with the ability to support itself indefinitely,” as described by the transition-to-permaculture.org website.

Essentially, permaculture is about people and the landscape existing together in harmony. When this happens, sustainability occurs.

Permaculture design principles were developed by observing patterns in nature. These patterns are used to establish productive systems.

Connections are fundamental to permaculture practice –whether it is applied to a garden, building structure, or social system. Nature shows us how to regenerate health through symbiotic and synergistic relationships. Interconnectedness is key.

So what does permaculture look like?

Well, at my urban lot it can look a bit messy compared to your average lawn. But it is also much more productive, enjoyable and, in my opinion, beautiful!

Practitioners like to install food forests, which are self-maintaining layered ecosys-

tems. They also combine plants for companion planting, and build soil full of diverse micro-organisms.

Permaculture welcomes the work of bees, insects and birds; it celebrates natural nutrient cycling and stores water in the ground as much as possible.

This practice embraces the web of life to meet the needs of life. It is a co-evolving partnership with nature and that relationship and perspective alone is enriching to the human body and soul.

But please don't take my word for it. Start your own journey. You can find a growing number of permaculture designers and practitioners here in Edmonton happy to help you. The Edmonton Permaculture Guild is a good place to start.

Shelaine Sparrow is an Alberta Avenue permaculture practitioner, owner of Living Ecology Design, and board member of the Edmonton Permaculture Guild.

#### TWELVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

- Observe and interact
- Capture and store energy
- Obtain a yield
- Accept feedback and use appropriate scale
- Use renewables
- Produce no waste
- Design from patterns to details
- Integrate rather than segregate
- Use small and slow solutions
- Embrace diversity
- Maximize edge
- Creatively respond to change

(Design principles source: David Holmgren's *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*)

## Heart of the village

A neighbour's garden yields more than beauty

SHELAIN SPARROW

Perspective changes when you become a parent. Priorities change. I started seeing things from the eyes of a growing child and assessing the health of my home with new purpose.

I gave birth to my daughter Lida five years ago. It was then I started my quest for a healthy village.

It was about that time things started changing on the corner lot down the street.

Bob Pellern had started gardening. “When I started the garden, there was nothing but a tiny stem of lily of the valley between the houses,” said Pellern.

Today you'd be hard pressed to find a piece of earth not thriving with life. The front yard is a bounty of perennials stretching into the neighbour's

yard and down the length of the street side.

Over coffee at my kitchen table, I praised Pellern for the impressive multilevel, tiered garden beds he developed last summer. They're made of stacked urbanite and wrap around from the front all along the side lot – and it looks great.

“We had a pile of broken concrete; I put it to use. I didn't want that manufactured stone you can buy, I wanted it to look like old ruins,” said Pellern.

It does; ruins filled with a polyculture of plants. Lida and I aren't the only ones regularly admiring the blooms of his garden. It attracts many visitors.

“I have met more wonderful people because of this garden,” said Pellern. “One woman, she changed her daily route from work just so she could see the

garden on her way home.”

He shakes his head and I can see his joy as he reflects on the interactions and exchanges his garden has produced.

Pellern tells me that besides adding a few annuals for that “pop of colour”, it is an organic, easy-going, labour-of-love with few rules.

“If the plants don't survive they won't be here – the plants have to be hardy,” said Pellern.

Pellern has a low-maintenance approach he may have gotten from his father, who Pellern said was a masterful gardener himself.

“Dad gardened because he had to – there were nine of us. But also because he loved to. He grew food and flowers, and could grow everything well,” said Pellern.

His father has a special representation in his garden.



Over the past five years, Bob Pellern has transformed his yard into a lovely garden everyone in his neighbourhood enjoys. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

“My first plant was in honour of my dad – a bleeding heart – his favourite.”

There is also one for his mother and this year he will plant one for his brother.

We talk about the relationship that he and his garden have with my daughter. Pellern has seen Lida grow up.

“Each spring – I say ‘ohhhh look how much she has grown.’

And I always pick her a flower. It is our thing. When Lida is a woman, she might come by this place and remember that this was where she'd come and some man would always give her a flower.”

My mama heart smiles with gratitude. The village I want for my daughter is blooming. On our street, the heart is Bob and his garden.



COMMUNITY » SCHOOLS

# Local schools shine with special programs

Our terrific community schools are a beacon for young minds and active bodies

**ST. GERARD SCHOOL**  
12415 85 Street

Ph: 780.474.5208  
www.stgerard.ecsd.net

**CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION**

Starting in September, St. Gerard will accept 3-year-olds into the 100 Voices program that continues to grade six. Learning through play at this early stage has a major impact on their future experiences in school. A teacher and early learning facilitator guide children in a half-day program.

A multi-disciplinary team works in collaboration with the school with services such as: emotional behavior specialist, occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, early learning consultant and family liaison worker.

**NORWOOD SCHOOL**  
9520 111 Avenue

Ph: 780.477.1002  
www.norwood.epsb.ca

**NATURAL LEARNING GROUNDS CONNECT STUDENTS TO NATURE**

Birds sing, bees buzz and children learn about biodiversity in the school's Natural Learning Grounds. Built by parents and students with community donations, the garden provides access to natural spaces. The expanded area, now in phase two of a three-phase project, includes 37 trees planted by the City of Edmonton. Students weed, water, and mulch. This spring will see the blossoming of 150 bulbs planted last fall and logs will be installed to provide seating for families to enjoy nature's beauty.

**DELTON SCHOOL**  
12126 89 Street

Ph: 780.477.8742  
www.delton.epsb.ca

**A SCHOOL IS A COMMUNITY STRENGTHENED BY ITS PARTNERSHIPS**

Reading Rockstars' after-school activities foster a love of reading in partnership with Sprucewood Library. Another literacy-based program, Start2Finish, is an after-school club that combines running and reading. Forty-five students meet weekly, set goals and train to complete a five-kilometre race. A volunteer runs with students and encourages them all the way. Students can also read with an adult or be read to each week. The school keeps a waiting list of students hoping to join this popular club.

**ST. ALPHONSUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL**  
11624 81 Street

Ph: 780.477.2513  
www.stalphonsus.ecsd.net

**A WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION IN A SUPPORTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD**

Giving students a well-rounded education, including trips to hockey games, is all part of the St. Alphonsus philosophy. For elementary and junior high school students, that means everything from reading and math literacy to hot lunches and sports teams. The school is also part of the Schools as Community Hubs (SACH) program, introduced in 2010 to bring the school into a supportive relationship with its neighbours.

**SPRUCE AVENUE SCHOOL**  
11424 102 Street

Ph: 780.479.0155  
www.spruceavenue.epsb.ca

**COMMUNITY SERVICE DEVELOPS SELF-ESTEEM**

The Giving Project mobilizes classes to plan and implement projects benefiting the community. Students shovel sidewalks for neighbors, make and deliver cards, read to students in nearby elementary schools and visit sick children in the hospital. Students learn they have talents to share with others and build self-esteem through community service. Inspiration comes from Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of the Leader in Me program.

**ST. BASIL ELEMENTARY/JR HIGH SCHOOL**  
10210 115 Avenue

Ph: 780.477.3584  
www.stbasil.ecsd.net

**INSPIRING STUDENTS TO DEVELOP PRIDE IN THEMSELVES**

St. Basil is home to two unique programs. Now approaching its tenth year, the Jean Forest Leadership Academy for Girls, grades seven to nine, is flourishing. The academy is the first all-girls program in Edmonton Catholic Schools. Its mission is "to provide the finest Christ-centred learning environment which inspires young women to develop spirit, leadership, intellect, self-discovery and service."

Jan Pawel II Polish Bilingual-Program is available to students in kindergarten to grade nine and is the only Polish bilingual program in North America.



St. Alphonsus students in the after-school Koinonia program try out their new hula-hoops they made with the help of a volunteer. >> MELANIE KIDDER

## ABC Head Start

A program that encourages early success

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Ana Rivera has just dropped her daughter off at ABC Head Start, a program located in St. Alphonsus Catholic School on 81 Street and 116 Avenue.

The El Salvador-born mom waits for the bus and smiles as she talks about the teachers in the program. "They're kind and friendly," she said. "They make my child feel welcome."

Rivera herself arrived in Canada when she was 8 years old. Enrolled in grade four, she spoke only Spanish.

"The teachers talked English to me and I didn't understand a word. No matter what they said, I just nodded my head and kept smiling."

ABC Head Start begins in preschool and includes parents as well as their children. The program is spread across the city at 10 different schools and one commercial location.

"The first five years are criti-

cal to a child's development," said Paula Jaramillo, ABC Head Start supervisor. "What we experience at this early stage sets the foundation for educational and life success."

The staff will go the extra mile to develop a child's full learning capacity.

Through a special service at ABC Head Start, Ana's daughter Selina receives extra attention to help her with speech challenges. In addition to classroom time with other children, the 4-year-old enjoys weekly home visits from an ABC Head Start home educator.

"Our goal is to give very young children a good feeling about learning," said Jaramillo. "Parents are included in the classroom once a week in a parent group. The children feel secure and everyone learns together."

Children can enter the program beginning at age 3½ years on Sept. 1 of the school year.



Norwood School students help with the fall harvest in their school garden. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



St. Gerard students beautified a nearby wall. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

**BLOOMIN GARDEN SHOW MAY 31 | SHARE YOUR PERENNIALS, SEEDS, MAGAZINES, BOOKS**

## EDITORIAL » LITERARY

CHANGING SCENERY -  
CHANGING SEASONS

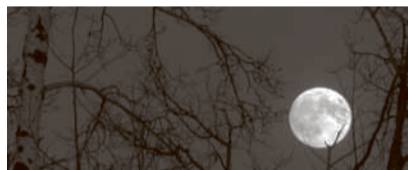
RUSTI L. LEHAY

It is that time of year when the light returns and higher temperatures tease us, giving hope that winter may close out its act. The theatre props crew prepare for spring to stride on stage. The sound of applause is building.

Book launches, festivals, and side-walk café may soon bring you out of hibernation. While you wait for that first real spring day, check out Julie Robinson's newly launched *Jail Fire*, a poetic tribute to Elizabeth Fry, who was a tireless advocate for early 19th century imprisoned women.

It is likely safe to assume that Robinson's Charlotte would have welcomed a plethora of extra winter days and Carstens' Janne (see poem at right) knows the pain of a series of little deaths of a relationship gone cold. A different perspective on the discomfort of winter may make it easier to bear.

Find some metaphorical warmth at the SkirtsAfire herArts festival held from March 6-9 in support of 21st century women artists. After that, it is only two short weeks to spring. Hang on, watch the moon and the return of daylight. You can always write to pass the time and send your musings to [lit@ratcreek.org](mailto:lit@ratcreek.org)

REMEMBERING  
THE DEARLY DEPARTED

PAT TRUDEAU

"She was droll, wasn't she?"

"Yep, that down-home humour she had is the way I remember her."

"Well, yes. She came from down Prince Edward Island, didn't she? And her brother Dinny. He had the same kind of humour."

"Indeed he did. It must have been a jolly family they came from."

"It was kind of sad, though, when they reached their late eighties and the mind began to wander."

"Yes, poor Dinny, the time he parked his car in front of the hardware store and forgot it, then came out and walked four blocks to visit his sister."

"Yeah, I remember hearing about that. When he came out of her house and saw no sign of the car, he reported it stolen. Police found it the next day right where he'd left it."

"That was the start of it. Do you mind when he wasn't allowed to drive anymore? He'd still walk down to see Margaret. That day when he took the wrong direction home? His wife phoned to see what was keeping him, and Margaret said he'd left a couple of hours ago."

"Uh huh. We found him halfway up Carling Avenue hill and drove him home."

"I think he went downhill after that."

"Are you trying to be funny?"

"No, no. I'm just saying the dementia got serious, and he didn't live all that much longer. Then Margaret caught it."

"I don't think dementia's something you catch."

"I just mean, her mind wasn't the same. She didn't always recognize people."

"That's when the family got a live-in companion for her."

"And after that it was Extend-a-care. Flo and I went to see her there. She was bedridden and very weak but still welcomed us with that droll smile of hers. I'm not sure whether she even knew who we were, though."

## REFLECTIONS

SANDRA MOONEY-ELLERBECK

February moon at dusk  
seems unreal in the real—  
a crystal disc on the east horizon—  
a chance sighting  
looking up from straight  
ahead focus on the road  
from work to home—  
moonstruck yet nowhere  
to stop to be still in the  
timeless allure.

Alberta's Distracted Driving Law  
follows too close  
like the truck behind me,  
but when I turn west,  
the moon is at my back—  
more a comrade,  
than a diviner's stone  
reflecting in  
every eye  
lunar gazing.

although  
it was  
minus forty,  
Janne  
was outside  
smoking,  
he had  
been  
married  
so long  
the cold  
no longer  
bothered  
him.

WOLFGANG  
CARSTENS

## CHARLOTTE PRAYS FOR HER SOUL

JULIE ROBINSON

What she sees now is not the small  
quadrangle of mingling prisoners her  
eyes have fixed upon through one  
narrow window of the condemned cell.

Nor does she hear the din  
of disgruntled convicts filtering  
through iron gratings of the interior.

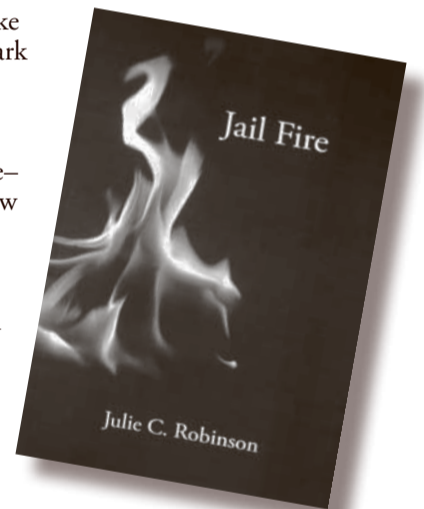
The cold in her hands is not  
a brisk winter wind chilling  
through worn cotton.

It is not her feet that will take  
her beyond, though they mark  
a pensive pace across stone.

She no longer remembers  
the aberration in her routine—  
she needed flour, thread, how  
did she pay?

She does not imagine  
tomorrow's scaffold, or even  
her husband.

It is six o'clock  
and she has not one  
moment to spare.



## WHAT KIND OF TREE AM I

MARJORIE ZELENT

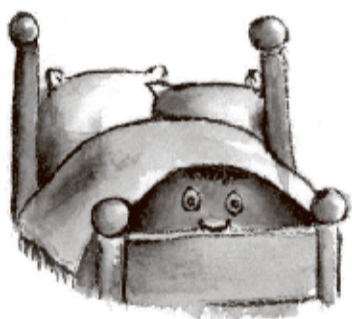
Unprepared for sudden storm  
I stand hunched, leaning  
A struggling tree almost ripped free  
Roots barely clinging to earth

Unsure of my identity today  
I reach sunward for new growth  
Avoid the extreme flexibility of the willow  
That bends with slightest breeze or stormy gusts

Unfamiliar with this "alone" journey  
I stretch tall, yet hesitate  
Afraid of joining the rigid oak  
Too firm, unbending, unyielding

Undesirable qualities loom large  
I touch scarred, imperfect tree bark  
Examine bruised fruit  
Tossed aside on ground where I settle

Unbidden feelings come with pause  
I wrestle away negative thoughts  
Consider fruit tree heavy with harvest  
Choose productive path, ways

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**BUSINESS » THE LEMONADE STAND**

# Find the missing piece

Why do some businesses get results while others don't?

HENRI YAUCK

You have a business plan, a good product, and good staff that deliver your product consistently. Yet, your results are inconsistent. It's almost like starting over again every month.

Although many business owners are mostly prepared, they don't have the "missing plan." All successful businesses and franchises have it: a marketing plan.

Every business needs customers. Without regular, paying customers, everything else means very little and your business is dead in the water, no matter how solid your business plan looks or how great your product or service is.

You may have watched the dragons on Dragons' Den deciding in which business they will invest some of their money. They look at three things every time. One: how much has the business owner invested in his business? (he must be serious). Two: is there a demand? (realistically). Three: where are the customers going to come from? (the missing plan).

If these three don't line up, there is no investment. It's just that simple.

It doesn't matter whether you're pitching your business on Dragons' Den or not: you need a marketing plan to succeed.



In its simplest form, a marketing plan is a twelve month strategy, with customer-attracting and building tactics for every week of every month. Or at bare minimum, the first week of every month.

Your marketing plan should also identify media within your marketplace, or the various ways you will reach and

communicate with customers and potential customers.

In many ways, each month of the year presents its own opportunities for marketing your business and products. For example, this past month opened the door for Groundhog Day and Valentine's Day promotions. This month brings St. Patrick's Day, the beginning of daylight time, and let's not forget the first day of spring.

What did you do with last month's opportunities and what are you doing with this month's opportunities? If you've watched what is happening in your marketplace, you probably know your customers and potential customers have been consistently contacted by your competitors.

As a resident of the area, I have been contacted by car dealers, real estate companies, pharmacies, dentists, chiropractors, health food retailers, restaurants, and jewelry retailers to mention only a few.

Yup, it worked! Businesses gained a couple of sales from me: a down-filled jacket and lunch at a restaurant.

**BUSINESS » SHOP LOCAL**

# Quality traditional food

Marchyshyn's has provided Ukrainian fare for over 88 years



Mary Marchyshyn with her son and grandson, who help operate the family business. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

**MARCHYSHYN'S HOME MEAT MARKET**

11104 96 STREET  
OWNER: MARY MARCHYSHYN  
HOURS: MON-FRI 10 AM-5 PM,  
SAT 10 AM-4 PM  
WWW.MARCHYSHYNS.COM

REBECCA LIPPIATT

If you are craving home-made Ukrainian food this Easter, Marchyshyn's is the place to get it. The family business has been operating for 88 years, and moved to the corner of 111 Street and 96 Avenue four years ago.

Marchyshyn's first opened

near Victoria School in 1925. Mary Marchyshyn worked in the business with her husband and father-in-law, and took over after her husband died in 1981. She is still the matriarch of the business, coming in to make perogies, nalesniki, and hand-made additive, preservative and filler-free sausages.

The business is truly a family affair. When Mary's children and grandchildren were small, they would come to the shop (and former café) after school to sit, eat and work with her. Her daughter used to run a sewing business next door, and her son

operates a family law practise upstairs in the current building.

Christmas and Easter are the busiest times of the year. The food is still prepared in the traditional style, although Marchyshyn admits she hasn't made her own cottage cheese for a number of years.

Clients range from people of the matriarch's generation (Ukrainian immigrants from the 1920s) and their great-grandchildren to new Ukrainian immigrants, or those Albertans influenced by the Ukrainian diaspora and simply love a good perogy.

**BUSINESS » SHOP LOCAL**

# Game nostalgia

Nexwave Video Games; for all ages



Games fill each wall of Nexwave from floor to ceiling. >> DYLAN THOMPSON

**NEXWAVE VIDEO GAMES**

10402 118 AVENUE  
OWNER: RYAN KAIN  
HOURS: MON-SAT 10-7 PM,  
SUN 12-5 PM

DYLAN THOMPSON

Like many millennials, the glow of a television screen and the plastic clacking of game controllers remind me of nights growing up. Perusing the walls of Nexwave Video Games was like looking through a photo album.

There were hit titles like Mario and Zelda, and lesser-known favourites: Pilot Wings, Zombies Ate My Neighbours, and every Final Fantasy. There were consoles from PlayStations to Sega Genesis to a Pokémon-themed Nintendo 64. Retro-looking posters filled every inch of space not dedicated to product.

Ryan Kain is the owner and founder of Nexwave. An avid gamer, he opened his first Nexwave 12 years ago on 104 Avenue but moved to 118 Avenue when the business outgrew its space.

"I started collecting video games a few years after I got out of high school," said Kain. "Like everyone else I had nostalgia about what I used to play when I was younger. I started picking stuff up but I had issues finding [retro titles] locally. I thought 'I can't be the only one doing this,' and thankfully, I wasn't."

Finding hard-to-find titles

has necessitated building relationships with like-minded collectors.

"We've cultivated a really good base with a lot of local collectors and collectors across the U.S and Canada," said Kain. "I've got more than enough guys that I can draw upon. I can pretty much find anything."

A hot-ticket item now is the Nintendo 64. But Kain is quick to point out that these trends change regularly.

"Five, six years ago it was all about Atari and stuff like that," said Kain. "Then NES came in and had its heyday – still a little bit. And the Super Nintendo is at the peak of its day right now."

Quality is critical to Kain. Nexwave has four televisions dedicated to performing quality-control checks on everything coming into the store.

"We pay close attention to the condition of box and manual," said Kain.

Nexwave also provides a warranty on the products they sell: 21 days for consoles and seven days for games.

While a passion for the past fuels a lot of what happens at Nexwave, Kain is adamant that they don't neglect any segment of gamers.

"We deal in everything, not just the retro stuff," said Kain. "That's definitely what we're passionate about but we do also have a lot of the 360, PS3, even PS4 and XboxOne stuff as well."



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## WELLNESS » FOOD

# Bringing in the bounty

Going from killing vegetables to harvesting them seemed like a small miracle

DAVE VON BIEKER

As we yank massive carrots from the ground, the kids and I may as well be plucking some magical rabbit by his ears. That is the wonder and whimsy we feel as we giggle disbelief at the size of what we've grown. What we planted months ago as tiny seeds became ragged green shoots, then ferny stalks. And now, enormous carrots. For the first time, we've grown a garden.

We carry our bounty inside to the kitchen table, where my wife Christie shucks peas like a pioneer. I hose down dirt-cloaked carrots on the sidewalk. We rinse tomatoes and bag green beans. I imagine this was normal once.

I grew up foreign to the farm. My food arrived dug, washed and packaged in the shining aisles of Safeway.

Most of my former experience with plants involved death. Even a cactus collapsed in our horticultural house of horrors. I'd tried gardening half-heartedly, but the houseplants had put up danger signs for the vegetables.

"Turn back!" they'd warn, "There is only death here!"

Those first few summers, the vegetables heeded. To turn things around, I had to prove I could care for them.

I turned to that trove of timeless truths for gardening wisdom – Google. I peered in

on my wife's Pinterest. I got ideas. I moved our fence eight feet back, carving out a sunny spot for hand-built garden boxes.

This is my kind of construction project. It allows me to feel manly without any level

“ Between the miracles came the quiet and alone. Out there yanking weeds, I thought thoughts and dreamed dreams. My garden grew me.”

of skill or precision. A big rectangle to hold dirt? I can build that! Except I used pressure-treated wood. If the plastic barrier wears through, we might all die. But probably not, and that'll take years.

I ordered real, grade-A dirt. Good riddance to the rock-hard wasteland we'd tried to till. If I were a head of lettuce, I'd

want to raise a family here. Any day now, we'd have a backyard Eden.

When it was time to plant, I brought out the kids. There are moments you hope your offspring will remember, and perhaps reflect on in some community newspaper decades later. Gardening is one of those gifts I hope to pass on. In these digital days, I want my children to stay connected to the living earth. I want them to know that the land is good and waiting for our partnership – as I never knew. I invited them to plant, and I made darn sure they had fun doing it, too. Even when they whined and wanted to go back inside and quit. A few times.

Long and silent days followed – a blur of waiting and watering and weeding. Before too long there were signs of life. The first green bean unfurled its tiny finger through the crust of earth to touch sunlight. I called the family out to see. The lettuce joined the party. The tomatoes exploded and kept on coming. So did the endless weeds. Finally, the carrots arrived.

Between the miracles came the quiet and alone. Out there yanking weeds, I thought thoughts and dreamed dreams. My garden grew me.

Finally, we had a harvest. Remembering that joyous evening at summer's end, I cannot wait to start all over again this



There's something about the satisfaction of a fruitful harvest. >> DAVE VON BIEKER

spring and end with the shared joy of picking, washing, and storing. The honest work of it. The validation. And the eating. The ancient goodness of it all, deep as family and friends.

There is no magic to gardening. The good earth's miracles are predictable. There is reaping and there is sowing. It has been this way forever, and that is the best part.

## Chicken Tamales

An involved, though worthwhile, Salvadoran dish

LARISSA SWAYZE (CONTRIBUTED BY EDWIN VISCARRA)

Chicken tamales are usually reserved for special occasions as the dish, made up of a chicken and vegetable filling wrapped in corn flour dough, has a lengthy preparation process. However, with patience and diligence, they are sure to delight at any meal!

### CHICKEN TAMALE RECIPE

#### CHICKEN STOCK:

- 1 whole chicken, skinned and rinsed
- 1/2 onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 tsps chicken bouillon powder
- 1-2 tsp salt
- Water to cover chicken

In a pot, add water, onion, garlic, chicken bouillon powder and salt. Bring to a boil. Add whole chicken, cover and boil for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Once chicken is tender, strain and save broth. Shred chicken and set aside.

#### SAUCE:

- 1/4 cup oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/2 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cans whole tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tsp chicken bouillon powder
- 1 tsp salt

Add all ingredients to a blender and mix. Once pureed, add to a pan and bring to a boil, then let simmer.

#### DOUGH:

- 5 cups dry Maseca corn flour
- Water as needed
- 10 cups chicken stock (see above)
- 1 cup oil
- 1 1/2 cups pork butter
- 1/2 cup sauce (see above)
- Salt to taste

Place flour in a large, deep pot – it will grow as it cooks. Add chicken stock and mix until a smooth, pancake-like batter is achieved. Stir over medium-high heat until it begins to boil, then add the oil, pork butter, 1/2 cup of the sauce and salt to taste. Continue to stir for 30 minutes, continuously scraping the bottom of the pot – do not leave unattended!

#### FILLING AND WRAPPING:

- 30 banana leaves
- Water
- 30 large pieces aluminum foil
- Dough (see above)
- 1 whole chicken, shredded (see above)
- 4 potatoes, cut into 2 inch long strips
- 4 carrots, cut into 2 inch long strips
- 2 jars pimento-stuffed green olives
- Sauce (see above)

Cut the banana leaves into rectangles and submerge in water. Then remove and pat dry. Pass each leaf through fire until it turns bright green and then place on a piece of aluminum foil. Use a large ladle to spoon some dough on the banana leaf.

Add some shredded chicken, potatoes, carrots, olives and sauce. Fold the banana leaf around the dough, chicken and vegetables, then quickly wrap in aluminum foil. Repeat until all tamales are wrapped.

Line the bottom of a deep pot with banana leaves. Pile the wrapped tamales on top of the leaves and add enough water so that only the top stack isn't submerged. Cover the pile with banana leaves, put a lid on the pot and bring to a rolling boil. Let boil for 60 minutes.

Turn off heat and carefully drain as much water as possible. Remove the tamales and let cool a few minutes before serving.



Chicken tamales are filled with shredded chicken, potatoes, carrots and olives.

>> LEONEL VISCARRA



Ana Gloria Viscarra in the midst of making chicken tamales. >> LEONEL VISCARRA

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WELLNESS » MENTAL

# Running out of steam?

Finding balance amidst the hurly-burly of life



Finding balance in life can be tricky. >> TALEA MEDYNSKI

TALEA MEDYNSKI

Recently my boyfriend and I were visiting friends and family in Manitoba. We were talking with my mom and stepfather about careers. My stepfather brought up an intriguing point about how there is so much pressure for a career that people tend to forget to live life.

That's certainly true in my case. Often I'm not enjoying the moment because I'm too focused on my internal to-do list. I'm trying to build a new career (my passion), while at the same time trying to make a living.

Sure, careers are a big aspect of life, but it's not the only part of life that demands attention. The fact is life is busy and far from simple.

For example, lately it's been dawning on me that I have a lot to do. I'm at an age where many of my peers have an established career, a home, a family, and the beginnings of a retirement fund (ha!). It's over-

whelming and I really ought to get on with making these things happen. But where's the balance?

That's life for you: a juggling act where priorities clamour for attention. Throw in daily tasks, fitness and health, personal goals and on and on and on. The list is endless.

We put an awful lot of pressure on ourselves. It's no wonder we scratch our heads when it comes to finding some sort of balance. Where do you even begin?

Dani DiPirro, creator of PositivelyPresent.com, wrote a post about balance on the blog Little Dumb Man. Some of DiPirro's suggestions included prioritizing, time management, and taking breaks. She also suggested learning to say no. Those are all great suggestions.

Everyone will have different ideas of finding balance, whether it's practicing yoga, making a vision board, creating a pie chart of your schedule

or taking a walk.

If it feels impossible to get everything done, sometimes it's true. As much as we want to do it all, sometimes we can't – and that's okay. Our society fosters the ideas of achievement and productivity. While those are great standards to strive towards, it's easy to get overboard.

Despite all efforts, sometimes life just gets crazy and you simply do the best you can.

Maybe what's most important (and challenging!) is learning to slow down. Take time for yourself and enjoy life. Do what makes you happy and surround yourself with great people. Because without life's little moments, all we have is a pile of to-do lists.

How do you find balance? Write to the *Rat Creek Press* at [info@ratcreek.org](mailto:info@ratcreek.org), or post on our Facebook page (*Rat Creek Press*) or on our Twitter account ([@RatCreekPress](https://twitter.com/RatCreekPress)).



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## HISTORY » BUSINESS

# One hundred years of working together

The Bissell Centre Thrift Shoppe puts ideals into action and empowers people to escape poverty

CHANTAL FIGEAT

It's hard to miss the Bissell Centre Thrift Shoppe, which has been a fixture on 118 Avenue and 88 Street since 1959.

Until the recent fire, a friendly group of women worked at this location to provide affordable items such as clothing and toys for up to 6,000 people a month. Items also went to Bissell's Community Closet, a source of free clothing. Many Edmonton social agencies sent clients there.

The Bissell Centre has its roots as a Methodist mission. Rev. William Pike and his wife Florence founded the centre in 1910 and were based out of a storefront office located in the current home of the main Edmonton police station on 96 Street and 103A Avenue.

During the 1930s, Torrence E. Bissell donated money and a new brick building was built, this time on the northeast corner of the same address. The Bissell Institute was named after him.

The Bissell Centre serves many people, including those who are impoverished, homeless, living with past abuse, and

those with mental illness. Bissell Centre staff work to change lives, find homes, and provide programs to help people escape alcoholism and drug addiction.

The origins of the Bissell Centre Thrift Shoppe were in late Depression era. Women volunteered by sorting clothing donations, making rugs and quilts, and mending clothing, later sold or donated. In 1959, the Bissell Economy Store opened on 118 Avenue.

On Sept. 2, a fire at the Shoppe caused an estimated \$900,000 in damage, leaving no salvageable donations and forcing the store to close temporarily. No one was in the building at the time of the fire and the cause remains unknown. However, it is suspected that it was the result of spontaneous combustion.

Despite the setback, Bissell Centre Thrift Shoppe has rallied thanks to the care and help of the community.

"When we experienced the tragedy of our Thrift Shoppe being knocked out of operations by a \$900,000 fire, the community responded with clothing drives, donations of thousands of socks, gloves, and caps. Six

of our funders stepped up to provide some extra resources. Government and business leaders contacted us to see how they could help," wrote Mark Holmgren, Bissell Centre CEO, in a post on the Bissell Centre website.

A temporary store opened in early December at 11817 80 St., next to the Burger Baron. Unfortunately, the Shoppe lost many former patrons who walked there and now find the new location too far away.

The new building has less floor space, resulting in a smaller, but higher-quality selection. The Shoppe still offers great bargains for good causes.

"Everybody is happy, because everybody gets a good deal," said Silvia Gutierrez, who has worked at the Shoppe for the past three years.

Gutierrez has a friendly, easy smile, and shoppers often see her working the cash at the front of the Shoppe.

The Bissell Centre Thrift Shoppe hopes to return to their former location on 118 Avenue next June pending an insurance investigation.

Historical info taken from the Bissell Centre website.



Silvia Gutierrez displays some new stock at the Bissell. >> CHANTAL FIGEAT

Interested in learning more? Bissell's 100 year history book is available for order on the website for only \$15.  
<http://bissellcentre.org/about/history/>

TEMPORARY Bissell Centre Thrift Shoppe is located at 11817 80 Street  
Ph: 780.471.6644

STORE HOURS  
Monday thru Saturday: 10-6 pm  
Sunday: Closed

#### MOST NEEDED ITEMS

- clothing for all ages and seasons
- new socks and undergarments
- footwear
- backpacks and purses
- linens and bedding
- kitchen items
- small electrical appliances
- collectables
- toiletries and personal care items



**PETER GOLDRING**  
Member of Parliament  
Edmonton East



## AN IMPORTANT INDUSTRY

Canada's annual seal harvest comes with accompanying emotional propaganda from "animal rights" groups. They have been effective in convincing the European Union to ban Canadian seal exports through misinformation, though interestingly the Europeans have no problems with the popular spectator sport of animal torture known euphemistically as bull fighting in France, Portugal and Spain. There is no fight. Bulls are cruelly crippled by the picadors then

teased mercilessly by the matador before being slaughtered. For these groups, misleading information about the seal harvest is a very effective fundraising tool. The truth is that Canada has strict, science-based, regulations which are reviewed regularly, to ensure a humane harvest. Certainly there is no conservation issue: the most harvested seal, the harp seal, has a population nearly three times what it was in the 1970s.

New commercial sealers must work under an experienced sealer for two years to obtain a professional licence. In addition to that two-year apprenticeship program, governments, industry and other stakeholders deliver comprehensive information workshops in advance of the season.

Approximately 6,000 individuals derive all or part of their income from the seal harvest. Some of these are indigenous people, while others are what I call "eurigenous," the descendants of the early Europeans that came to Canada and who to this day hunt seal to augment their family incomes. It is likely that the curtailing of the harvest in recent years has resulted in a decrease in fish stocks, an inevitable result of the increase in the seal population. The economic impact of a ban on the seal harvest therefore also affects Canada's fishing industry.

The truth is the seal harvest is closely monitored and tightly regulated to ensure the animals are harvested in a humane manner, as are our hunted animals and farm animals that end up on our grocery store meat counters.

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