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VOLUME 4
EDITION 16

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Honouring the past

Jolanda Friesen and Bonnie Hildebrand at work restoring the floor designs at the Neuberghal Klippenstein house. For the full story, see pg. 17.

PHOTO BY LORI PENNER/VOICE

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

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Shelly Voth named Citizen of Distinction

By Lorne Stelmach

Morden's newest Citizen of Distinction award winner is being celebrated as a tireless champion of the community.

Shelly Voth was cited for having contributed immensely to the development and diversity of Morden for over two decades now.

A reception will be held for her May 25 at 2 p.m. at the Morden Legion Hall, although, like most recipients, Voth is reluctant to be singled out to be honoured.

"I think that most recognized people feel that perhaps they shouldn't be recognized or don't want recognition," Voth said after the award was announced by the Morden Area Foundation last week. "At the same time, I greatly appreciate the Morden Area Foundation and its staff and its programs, and I'm grateful for all they do and for their efforts to highlight different groups and people who are

contributing to the community."

As the immigration co-ordinator for the City of Morden, helping newcomers come to and settle here is obviously a particular passion for Voth.

"I've got a fantastic team at the City of Morden," she noted. "It has brought in a lot of people who have contributed to our community over the years, and we are really proud of those people.

"I've also been able to be involved in a lot of different boards and committees and projects in Morden, and I've really loved seeing the synergy between them when they're involved in a bunch of different things ... I've also had the chance to meet and work with a lot of fantastic people."

Voth sits on multiple volunteer boards, including Regional Connections, 500 Stephen Street Community Centre, and Winterfest, and she can regularly be found welcoming newcomers to the community after hours during monthly welcome night



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Morden 2025 Citizen of Distinction winner Shelly Voth (centre), shown here with Lalaine Cabrera and Linda O'Connell, fellow members of Morden's Community-Driven Immigration Program.

events.

"She contributes daily to growing the cultural richness and diversity of our community in her professional capacity," noted Jason Dyck and Reg Braun in their nomination of Voth. "However, she continues her work supporting cultural diversity in a volunteer capacity in several ways as well.

"Her vision and leadership on the

[Morden Multicultural Winterfest] committee has helped this festival grow each year with more attendees and resources," the nomination noted.

Voth has served the community in many ways over the years, but never has her impact been more apparent than last year with a number of

Continued on page 5

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Altona 2025 Pesticide Control Program

Public Notice: the Town of Altona intends to conduct the following Pesticide Control Program.

Control pests & noxious weeds on public property in the Town of Altona at various times between May 30th, 2025 & October 31, 2025 using the following pesticides:

- Par III, R/T 540, Trillion, Round-Up, Reglone

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getinformed

United Way Pembina Valley hands out 2025 grants

By Lorne Stelmach

The generosity of local donors means United Way Pembina Valley is able to give back \$110,000 this spring.

A total of \$102,500 was handed out to 19 local non-profits for a variety of different programs and services last Thursday. The United Way will also be distributing \$7,500 in scholarships and bursaries to graduates of Garden Valley Collegiate, Northlands Parkway Collegiate, and Morden Collegiate in June.

On top of that, the United Way is dipping into its savings to commit an additional \$15,000 towards the Genesis House transitional housing project. The shelter is raising funds to build a 25-unit apartment complex in Winkler to support the victims of domestic violence as they work to get back on their feet after leaving an abusive relationship.

"This project is an incredibly important one in our community, and we're so excited to support it," Taylor said. "Our board unanimously supported this ... it wasn't a matter of whether or not we were going to support, it was how much can we support in a given year?"

Taylor said the United Way was thrilled to be able to support agencies in their efforts to make a difference in our communities.

"It's amazing ... it's amazing to get the organizations together in one room, to see how many people are involved," he said. "It's really awesome for us to have this event and bring the community together in this way ... we're just kind of the intermediary where we collect donations, and it's all because of generous support from the community, and then we can just redistribute those into organizations that support local individuals and families within the Pembina Valley."

Taylor said it was great to be able to support a broad range of organizations, noting the United Way especially looks for those that have a more

direct local involvement.

"We want to make sure that the organizations align with the United Way ... have a direct impact in the Pembina Valley ... we do try to support a wide range. We're looking to just make an impact in the community."

"We know that there's a trickle down effect," Taylor added. "We know there's dozens of volunteers and hundreds and perhaps thousands of people affected by those organizations."

"We'd like to thank everyone who made a donation to this year's campaign," concluded Taylor.

This year's United Way grant recipients include:

- 500 Stephen Street community centre: \$9,200 in support of community programming.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Pembina Valley: \$8,700 for mentoring programs.
- Cerebral Palsy Association of Manitoba: \$1,500 for the local sledge hockey program.
- Child and Family Services of Central Manitoba Foundation: \$6,800 in support of the Chance 2 Camp and Chance 2 Grow recreational financial aid programs for youth.
- Eden Health Care Services: \$5,350 in support of the volunteer program.
- Gateway Resources: \$7,650 to build an accessible ramp at the residential home.
- Many Hands Resource Centre: \$10,000 towards a walk-in cooler for the food bank.
- Morden Activity Centre: \$3,950 towards improvements to its security system.
- Morden Christmas Cheer Board: \$7,300 towards the Christmas hamper program.
- Morden Community Handi-van: \$3,500 towards a new vehicle.
- Morden Family Resource Centre: \$3,450 towards rent/insurance expenses.
- Pembina Valley Counselling Services: \$4,100 in support of the sliding

"IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF THE GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY."



PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

United Way Pembina Valley board president Levi Taylor with treasurer Anna Wieler at the agency's grant distribution event last week. In addition to \$102,500 donated to 19 local non-profits, the agency is also making a \$15,000 donation to the Genesis House transitional housing project and giving out \$7,500 in bursaries and scholarships to high school graduates in June.

fee scale as well as training of additional staff to meet growing demand.

- Pembina Valley Pregnancy Care Centre: \$3,800 for pregnancy support services.
- Salem Home Foundation: \$5,550 to support the director of community engagement position.
- Small Wonders Nursery School: \$2,550 in support of extra child care staff.
- Winkler and District Multi-purpose Senior Centre: \$4,150 in support of the volunteer coordinator position.
- Winkler Day Care Centre: \$6,250 towards a new furnace, air conditioner, and duct work.
- Winkler Family Resource Centre: \$4,550 towards operational expenses.
- Youth for Christ Morden: \$4,150 in sup-

port of free programming for at-risk youth.

- Special donation: \$15,000 to Genesis House for their transitional housing project.



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SCRL's giant used book sale runs May 1-3

By Lorne Stelmach

Preparations are well underway for the region's biggest annual used book sale next week.

The South Central Regional Library sale runs May 1-3 at the Access Event Centre in Morden. The hours will be 2-9 p.m. on the Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

It is the second year back for the big sale after it had been scaled down during and following the pandemic.

Recent years have seen the library's donated books joined by a mountain of leftover material from the Winnipeg Children's Hospital sale.

"Last year, when it was all said and done, we cleared about \$12,000," shared Morden branch administrator Gail Hildebrand, noting they've changed the way they charge for the books in recent years to make things a little easier for book-lovers and volunteers alike.

"We have gone to the by-the-bag format just because we don't have the volunteers that we used to have ... it is a lot of work to have all five branches with volunteers pricing things," she said, explaining they now charge a flat fee of \$10 per bag (though super-sized bags brought in by patrons may be charged a little more, accordingly). "We decided we would do just the bag format for simplicity, and we move a lot more books this way. While

it is good that we get budget money for this, the main thrust behind this project has always been about getting books into the community."

The funds raised through the sale are important to the SCRL network.

"Everybody's working within budgets ... and we don't use this money to buy more books. We have a book budget that's set at the beginning of the year," she noted. "This is money that we can't rely on one way or the other so it's kind of penciled into the budget very, very lightly ... it goes towards special projects. It goes toward upgrading our libraries, upgrading our furniture, or doing different programs and services for our patrons."

Running the sale requires a small army of volunteers, including members of Morden Fire and Rescue who help haul the books to the arena.

They're still looking for more volunteers to ensure everything runs smoothly.

"We need help setting up the book sale," Hildebrand said. "Right now, I had about 40 volunteers signed up from Winkler and Morden and Altona area. People have been very receptive to helping out ... we want to keep the big book sale going."

It is a lot of work for everyone, but also rewarding.

"It is fun. It's exhausting at the time but there's also adrenaline," Hildebrand said.

"Last year, I was nervous. I had nev-



PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

The Morden Library's Gail Hildebrand with just a few of the hundreds of boxes of donated books that will be up for grabs at the South Central Regional Library's used book sale next week.

er done the big book sale," she continued. "When we came back about a half hour before the big book sale was to start up, we had a line from the arena doors all the way in front of the offices around to the hall and back around to the bathrooms ... and we watched the people just silently walk in down the ramp."

And she suggested people don't necessarily need to worry about getting to the sale right away on the opening day.

"No matter what day you come, I think there's lots of good stuff to be found."

Finally, she noted a question they have often heard is what happens to the leftover books?

"This year we have formed a partnership with Gateway [Resources] in Winkler, so they are going to be taking all the books as recycling ... they tear the books down and then the books come back to Morden to Northstar Fibre and it's turned into insulation."

Time running out for SCRL prize raffle tickets

By Lorne Stelmach

There is still time to get in on a chance to win major prize packages through a raffle in support of the South Central Regional Library.

As part of marking its 60th anniversary, the library network is offering the Spring Fling raffle with four big prizes. Whether you're looking to travel in style, enjoy some backyard fun, experience a thrilling football game, or treat yourself to a luxurious spa day, there's something for everyone.

The grand prize Ultimate Getaway package includes a \$2,000 VIA Rail travel voucher, \$1,000 in travel cash, and luggage.

The second-place prize is Backyard and Beyond featuring a Stihl chainsaw, weed whipper, hand vacuum, a Weber 'Smokey Joe' grill, double seater gravity chair, and \$100 gift cards to Co-op and the Liquor Mart.

The third prize is dubbed Fun and Games and features tickets to a Winnipeg Blue Bombers game, fishing gear, a round of golf in Miami, and a Boston Pizza gift card.

Last but not least is the Treat Yourself prize which includes a \$300 Thermana gift card, \$200 Appelt's gift card, bath and beauty products, and a wine basket.

Tickets are limited and are available at 10 for \$100, three for \$50, or one for \$20. All proceeds will benefit special projects at each library branch.

The raffle drawing will take place May 16 at 11 a.m.

To get tickets, simply go online to www.fundingchange.ca/scrl or stop by the South Central Regional Library branches in Winkler, Morden, Altona, Miami, or Manitou.

ÉMMS food drive collects 1,700 lbs for Many Hands

By Lorne Stelmach

Middle school students worked together this month to support the food bank in Morden in a big way.

The École Morden Middle School's student council organized their annual food drive April 8-15, collecting over 1,700 pounds of food for the Many Hands Resource Centre.

"It's exciting to see how much the kids get into it and how excited they

are about the piles of food in all of the classrooms," said Gr. 5 teacher Ali Wiens, who works with the student council.

"It's a great way for the kids to see what's going on in our community and an easy way that we can help," she added. "I hope that they just understand that there's lots of little ways to help and to be proud of our community. And if there's a place that needs help that anyone can step up

and help, even just kids."

Every class in the Grade 5-8 school collected as much as they could, and students then went through all the donations to sort and organize them ahead of handing it all over to the food bank.

"Kids from all of the classes and adults in our school brought in food, and we brought it to the food bank ... and some of our student council was checking expiry dates, sorting it out and getting it ready to give to families in Morden," Wiens said.

It is very much a hands-on project for the students in every respect, as they even helped load up the trucks headed to Many Hands.

"It's something that we look forward to doing every year," Wiens said, noting a big part of it is having the students take charge of the project.

"The students bring in the food, they weigh the food and sort the food at school," she said. "This was our first year of actually coming to the food bank and having the student council see the food bank and help put the food on the shelves and get it ready ... so it's pretty exciting for us."

"We're really impressed with how willing all of the classes were to help out," said fellow teacher Tara Chewings who also works with the student

council. "We feel like if we can make a bit of a difference in our community, that's good. And it's also kind of transferring that to the next generation of volunteers."

"It's fun to help out ... it's fun sorting stuff out here. It feels good," shared Gr. 5 student Tristan Kehler while sorting food items. "I think it's helpful to know that people need food, and it's helpful that we can help those who are in need."

Many Hands executive director Mariyam Tsygankova said it is especially gratifying to see youth getting involved in the community in this way.

"It means the world to us ... it is so important that our youth can be so involved ... and that they care about what we do here. Every time I see these young people helping ... they are really interested. It really means something for them and for us."

And she noted how every little bit counts, recalling a recent conversation where someone was almost apologizing that they only raised about \$300.

"I said, 'Do you know how much that means for us?'" shared Tsygankova. "It is really something important. Every dollar counts. Every can of beans or whatever counts."

> VOTH, FROM PG. 2

signature charitable volunteer initiatives that she spearheaded, Dyck and Braun noted.

She led two significant efforts to support those in need in the community, including the Ukraine to Morden committee and 500 Stephen Street Community Centre.

"She was an unsung hero in both initiatives, quietly planning and working through countless evenings helping over 200 Ukrainian refugees find pathways to Canada and a place to rest upon arrival," the nomination said. "She also helped find employment for many of the applicants to assist them in the complex transition from an emergency travel visa to permanent resident status."

"She drew from her professional experience as the immigration coordinator of the City of Morden's Community Driven Immigration Program to facilitate this work, but since it fell outside the purview of the city program, she did this work as a volunteer coordinating with local Ukrainians and concerned citizens to support these at risk individuals."

The committee helped 75 families settle here with emergency travel permits, and this work could not have happened without the leadership, professional attention to detail, and industry-specific knowledge of Voth, Dyck and Braun stressed.

A second major effort Voth led was the creation of the 500 Stephen Street Community Centre. While the push for its creation was supported by a committee consisting of a large group of volunteers from Westside Community Church, Voth was the unofficial champion of that project.

"In addition to being the spark that got 500 Stephen off the ground, she continues to support their success ... most recently helping recruit and establish a board for the organization," the nomination noted. "This helped 500 Stephen transition from a committee to a registered non-profit with a board of directors. She also raised

funds and wrote grants for the project, raising tens of thousands of dollars in the process to support the non-profit work taking place there.

"In this way, she not only provided the spark for this initiative but also the follow through to ensure the effort was a sustainable and enduring contribution to the community."

Reflecting on her community involvements, Voth encouraged everyone to try to find some way to give back.

"I think everybody should seek to be involved in some way as their passions lead them, to find a way to contribute and a way that energizes them as well," she said. "I think there's a lot of different opportunities to get involved in a lot of different ways."

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Letters

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OUR SISTER PUBLICATIONS



A CELEBRATION OF DEMOCRACY

I am writing in response to the column "Get out and vote" by Peter Cantelon, which appeared in the 10 April 2025 edition of the *Voice*.

Whether at the municipal, provincial, or federal level, I feel each individual should be able to participate in decision-making on his or her own terms; everyone of voting age should retain the option of whether or not to vote.

There are a number of reasons why an individual may abstain from voting or may experience difficulties with the voting process.

Rather than implementing compulsory voting laws, perhaps an increased level of community involvement would encourage citizens to vote. I feel the most genuine engagement in decision-making will emerge not by enforcement or coercion, but by providing individuals with the information, resources and support needed in order to participate in ways in which they feel most comfortable.

Let's consider Denmark's annual Folkemødet as an example. Folkemødet is a democracy festival which facilitates political dialogue across the full philosophical spectrum. Its goals are to develop trust between decision-makers and citizens, to close the distance and encourage cooperation between citizens, businesses, NGOs and other organizations, etc. During the three-day festival each June, over 2000 political events by 650 organizations take place, with no entry fees.

Denmark's last national election in 2022 reported a voting rate of 84 per cent, one of the highest voter turnout rates in the world in recent years, yet, Denmark does not appear on the list of countries with mandatory voting.

Folkemødet was inspired by Al-medalsveckan, the political festival in Sweden, a country where voter turnout was 84 per cent in 2022. Sweden is also not listed as having mandatory voting.

All columns and letters published are the personal opinions of the submitting writers. They are not objective news articles, nor are they necessarily the viewpoint of the Voice.

I feel that providing safe, open spaces for citizens to ask questions, discuss concerns, as well as exchange ideas and opinions would be the most balanced, healthy way to encourage participation in decision-making within a population. Taking a cue from the Danes, it may not hurt to add speakers, seminars and workshops, food, music and dancing, along with other festive events.

Another creative example of how citizens can be involved in national decision-making is La Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat which took place recently in France.

Further, does a high voting rate in itself translate into a better overall quality of living for a nation?

A subject as multi-faceted as this I feel would require much more study before drawing conclusions.

All this said, I do encourage you to vote and to ask for assistance if you experience difficulties or have any misgivings about the process. I would advocate respectful dialogue in creative ways, so individuals who may be uncertain of who to vote for or of what relevance there is in voting, have a safe place to express these concerns.

If one chooses to abstain, I think it wise to respect this decision.

Part of creating a safe, open space for discussion begins with refraining from using condescending language, making assumptions about others

and speaking on another individual's behalf, unless you have been asked to do so.

Let's remember to be respectful in all that we do and to take time to celebrate our democracy.

Holly Driedger,
Altona

LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

It seems as if our world, as has happened numerous times before, has once again reached a tipping point on the issue of war and peace.

Over the eons, humanity has not performed admirably when it comes to violent struggle and combat, barely leaving time in between wars to repair the damage.

As in times past, Canada is once again complicit in warfare as if we are hardwired to do so or driven by blind loyalty. I hope we can change that and make the world a better, more peaceful habitat for all to enjoy, cherish, and appreciate something humanity will truly benefit from and be grateful for.

Since your cabinet is relatively small in numbers, I encourage you to appoint two additional members to form a task force, a commission for a peace quest rather than spending more money on military equipment, a move that will only perpetuate vio-

Continued on page 7

Letter policy

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

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

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

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

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View the Voice online at www.winklermordenvoice.ca or altonavoice.ca

> **LETTERS, FROM PG. 6**

lence and evil.

Their mission would be to repair historic war damage (psychological and otherwise) and promote peace by sowing seeds of diplomacy, compromise, and negotiation. Such efforts could steer us, and the world, away from the path of destruction, violence, and war.

SO, LET'S GET TO WORK!

Art Hildebrand,
Crystal City

VOTE DESTRUCTION UNDERMINES DEMOCRACY

In an age where democratic freedoms are more accessible than ever before, the act of casting a vote remains one of the most sacred and powerful tools of civic engagement. It is the cornerstone of democracy, the instrument through which citizens express their will and shape their future. That is why it is both disturbing and disheartening to witness individuals intentionally destroying their ballots on camera and discarding them in the garbage as a form of protest.

Let me be clear—disagreement with political leaders, policies, or parties is normal and healthy in any democratic society. But destroying your vote publicly is not a sign of strength or conviction. It is a reckless, careless, and frankly immature act that betrays the very system you claim to critique! It does nothing to advance your cause and everything to

weaken the integrity of the democratic process.

Ballots are not merely pieces of paper; they represent the voices of countless people who have fought, marched, and even died for the right to vote. They are a symbol of agency and civic responsibility. When someone records themselves destroying a ballot and posts it online for views or applause, they are not sending a message to politicians—they are telling fellow citizens that the system is not worth engaging with.

There are better ways to voice dissent. Organize. Run for office. Campaign. Vote for a protest candidate. Spoil your ballot formally if you must—but do it through the legal, recognized means that at least signal your disapproval within the bounds of the democratic system. Throwing it in the garbage, literally and figuratively, only shows a disregard for those who still believe in change through participation and democracy.

There is no coherent or logical argument that can be given to support this kind of voter indecency. This kind of behavior is not just corrosive, it displays the highest disrespect to our Constitution and the Charter of Rights. What kind of message are we trying to send to first time voters or the next generation of leaders? But if whoever did this nefarious act considers themselves angels, then let them cast the first stone! If the goal is to bring awareness to a broken system, then the solution is to engage with it constructively in a way that honours civility.

We need maturity, not melodrama. And above all, we need to remember that change comes not by throwing away our ballots—but by using them

wisely!

Josh Okello,
Winkler

BILL GOES AGAINST FREE SPEECH

Bill 43 is set to be passed at lightning speed—a bill that makes using the wrong pronoun a violation of the law.

Bill 43 undermines our civil liberties and holds potentially serious implications for Manitobans who stand on the biological truth that there are only two genders—that a man is a man and a woman is a woman. Under Bill 43, you will lose the right to freedom of speech, to freedom of conscience, and to freedom of expression. You will be forced to deny your beliefs, values or religion to satisfy an ideology.

Never before has the Manitoba government dictated which words a person must use, under threat of legal sanction. Regardless of how they spin it, Bill 43 is compelled speech.

This Thursday, April 24, at 6 p.m., any Manitoban can express their opinion at the Legislature in Winnipeg. Register to speak by calling the clerks' office at 1-204-945-3636 or by registering in person upon arrival.

Free speech is not just another value. It is the foundation of Western society. And it's worth defending while you still have the chance.

Jennifer Friesen,
Gretna

FEDERAL ELECTION / MONDAY, APRIL 28

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Quilt Show runs May 2-4

By Lorne Stelmach

The spring show of the Barnswallow Quilters always serves as a showcase of the creative talent in the region.

Every year it brings a wide variety of work that is both traditional and contemporary, and that is something organizers are always keen to highlight.

"It's a pretty diverse group of artists and work," said Lesley Andrew, who is one of the lead organizers of the May 2-4 event. "We have some very traditional quilters who feel that hand quilting and hand piecing all these pieces together is what they grew up ... some of the newer quilters have gone to sewing machines and then they are quilted by a long arm quilter, so it's all done by machine."

The show runs at the Access Event Centre in Morden from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on the Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. on the Sunday.

It is part of a busy few days at the centre with the facility also hosting the South Central Regional Library used book sale.

"It's a busy weekend, and I think it's one that a lot of people look forward to," Andrew suggested.

Registration for the quilt show takes place on Wednesday, April 30. Andrew noted it is open to anyone, although some preference will be given to Barnswallow members if space be-

comes limited.

"Anyone can register a quilt for the show. You don't have to be a Barnswallow member ... although if we have a lot of quilts, we may not be able to hang up all of the quilts."

The show had modest beginnings in the loft of a barn southeast of Morden, but it has continued to grow and expand and eventually made the move to the larger space offered by the event centre.

The variety of work displayed has grown to include all manner of fabric work by artisans and group members from all across the region.

"It has really grown and diversified from the very traditional quilts to the modern quilts of today," said Andrew. "Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder ... it always amazes me what these artists can do with fabric and fiber."

The feature quilter this year is Barb Westfall.

"She has stretched her boundaries. She is an amazing artist and very talented," Andrew shared. "She does really quite wonderful work."

New this year will be a display by the Textile and Fiber Artists of Manitoba. Their show entitled *Dual Impressions* will feature 38 wall-mounted fiber art pieces.

Andrew described them as "an inclusive, diverse group of Canadian artists whose foundation rests on the four pillars of education, networking, exhibiting, and promoting fiber as an



VOICE FILE PHOTO

Quilts of all shapes and sizes will be on display at the Access Event Centre in Morden next week for the annual Barnswallow Quilters show.

art form."

Another feature of the show is the annual challenge where creators are given a theme to work with for the following year. This year's theme is "connection."

"It is always interesting to see," Andrew said. "They take a theme and what one person sees with it is different from what another person sees."

There will again be the merchant mall overseen by Aspen Grove Quilting and featuring a number of ven-

dors from across the province.

And of course, the Barnswallow's Boutique allows members to have some of their work available for sale.

The proceeds from the rainbow auction will support South Central Cancer Resource and Boundary Trails Health Centre women's health services.

More information about the show is available online at the barnswallowquilters.wordpress.com.

Friesens, Valley Fiber honoured with Manitoba Champions Awards

By Lori Penner

Two southern Manitoba companies have been named recipients of the 2025 Manitoba Champions Awards, a newly launched initiative by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce to recognize purpose-driven businesses and individuals contributing to economic and social innovation across the province.

Friesens Corporation, based in Altona, and Valley Fiber Ltd., headquartered in Winkler, were among 10 organizations recognized with the Future Champion Award.

Chuck Davidson, president and CEO of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, said the new awards aim to spotlight "the remarkable leadership and innovation that define our province."

"These recipients are building a better future for Manitoba – not only through economic excellence but by investing in people, communities, and purpose," Davidson said.

For Friesens Corporation, the recognition reflects more than a century of growth rooted in small-town values and a commitment to employee ownership. The company began in 1907

as a one-man confectionery and has grown into one of North America's leading book manufacturers, employing nearly 600 people.

"We humbly accept this recognition," said CEO Chad Friesen. "As an employee-owned company, we know that when employees benefit from ownership, great things happen – not only for our company, but for our families and for our community."

Friesen noted that the decision by the company's founding family to transition to employee ownership helped preserve the business in Manitoba. That legacy continues through the launch of the Tallgrass Employee Owner Equity Fund in 2023, a social enterprise designed to help other Manitoba companies transition to employee ownership.

"The Tallgrass Fund exists to ensure more businesses stay rooted in their communities," Friesen explained. "Without employee ownership, our company may have been sold to an outside buyer years ago. We want to help other founders keep their companies locally owned while also sharing wealth with their employees."

Continued on page 15





April 28 – May 4, 2025

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Winkler, Altona students medal at Skills MB

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Students from Winkler and Altona brought home the hardware from the 27th Annual Skills Manitoba Competition earlier this month.

The event, held at RRC Polytech, pitted hundreds of technical vocational high school and post-secondary students against one another in an Olympics-style competition across a broad range of disciplines. It's meant to shine a spotlight on the skills of tomorrow's trades professionals.

W.C. Miller Collegiate Gr. 12 student Wesley Klippenstein, who studies electrical technology at Northlands Parkway Collegiate (NPC) in Winkler, won gold in the electrical installations event, while fellow Altona student David Winkler, Gr. 11, clinched bronze in carpentry and NPC aesthetics Gr. 11 students Harleen Tahim and Kailey Doerksen won silver and bronze, respectively, in skin care.

All four were first-timers at the event, and they share that it was quite an experience.

"You have this five-by-five mock-up of a house, so just some studded walls and one wall with plywood on it," Klippenstein explained of his event, which had him up against several other competitors. "Then we had to mount a whole bunch of boxes for lights and switches and a baseboard heater and a doorbell and breaker panel and some plugs."

He went into the competition feeling pretty confident—he's spent some time helping out at his father and uncle's electrical business, so he's certainly no stranger to the job—but walking away with the gold was still a bit unexpected. The win means he'll be competing at the Skills Canada competition in Regina in May.

"I'm excited and I'm nervous too," Klippenstein said of that competition, where he'll be going head-to-head against students from across the country.

Family ties are also what drew Winkler to the carpentry program in Altona.

"My father works in the construction trade, he has a company there, and I just grew up working with him and I've always enjoyed it," he said.

For his event, Winkler had six hours to build a children's playhouse from scratch, following a set of provided plans.

"It was really fun," he said of the experience, noting he might like to give it another go next year. "It's nice to give someone else a try, too, but it would be fun to go back."



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

W.C. Miller students Wes Klippenstein (above) and David Winkler (top right) with the gold and bronze medals they won at Skills Manitoba. Right: Northlands Parkway Collegiate students Harleen Tahim and Kailey Doerksen

won silver and bronze in skin care at the event.

Tahim and Doerksen found themselves competing against each other and two other students in the skin care event.

"It was pretty challenging at first, but then I got settled down and, honestly, I did better than I expected," said Tahim.

"I was confident, but I was also really nervous," admitted Doerksen. "Overall it was a really good experience, but there was a lot of work and a lot of stress leading up to it."

The duo said they spent countless hours with their teacher, Brenda Richer, training for the competition, which had them administering an advanced facial and also doing make-up for two different seasons. The latter task left lots of room for creativity.

"We got to pick our seasons," explained Doerksen. "And our teacher definitely helped us bring designs together for that."

"I was focused on putting all of my effort and focusing on what I had been training for—trying my best 100 per cent," added Tahim, who noted the experience was worth it. "I wanted to try something new and make myself a career challenge."

Doerksen shared that she overcame the nerves that saw her back out of last year's event to really give it her all this time around.

"It was really scared, but I'm glad I did it now."

Both plan to pursue careers in cosmetology after high school.

PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

April 26 is
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Manitoba community foundations distributed more than 1,800 grants in 2024!

Altona rallies to save its iconic easel landmark

By Lori Penner

Altona's towering tribute to Vincent van Gogh may be temporarily bare, but it hasn't lost its place in the hearts of the community.

After last month's removal of the iconic Sunflowers painting due to weather damage and structural wear, residents had plenty to say about what should happen next.

In a recent Town of Altona survey, 589 residents weighed in on the future of the 76-foot easel that has long stood as a symbol of Altona's identity. Representing over 13 per cent of the town's population, the results showed overwhelming support for keeping the landmark alive.

"It does lean towards restoration," said Altona Mayor Harv Schroeder. "The survey was actually very clear. Of the people who responded, 68 per cent said the easel should remain, and 46 per cent felt it was very important to keep it standing."

The survey also revealed that people don't just want

the easel to remain—they want it to continue showcasing hand-painted artwork, specifically Van Gogh's iconic Sunflowers. Sixty per cent of respondents said they would like to see original art displayed on the structure, while 61 per cent supported maintaining the Van Gogh tradition.

The feedback came after February's high winds tore off an eight-square-foot section of the painting, exposing significant damage. The untreated wood backing had deteriorated over time, leading to paint peeling and structural concerns. For safety reasons, the painting was removed, leaving the steel easel temporarily without its centerpiece.

"We're in that phase where we're assessing the damage and talking with the original artist," Schroeder explained. "He's expected to come out at the end of the month or in May, along with the insurance adjuster, to evaluate what needs to be done and what the cost will be."

This isn't the first time Altona's big easel has needed care. In 2017, the painting was restored by artist Cameron Cross following a hailstorm, with most of the repair costs covered by insurance.

"I don't think it's been made clear enough that the last restoration was actually a hail claim," Schroeder said. "We only paid the deductible. So, when people say, 'Stop putting money toward it,' the truth is, we didn't foot the whole bill last time."

Looking ahead, town officials are considering two possible paths: a full restoration using marine-grade plywood, which would give the painting a lifespan of over 20 years, or a more temporary fix using printed wraps, which would last around 8-10 years. The price difference is significant—just over \$70,000 for a full rebuild



TOWN OF ALTONA PHOTO

The Van Gogh painting sustained damage this spring and has been taken down while the Town of Altona decides what the next steps are for the iconic landmark.

compared to \$27,000 for the wraps. "Right now, we're waiting for the numbers from the artist and the insurance company," said Schroeder. "The insurance claim may cover a good amount, but we don't know the exact portion yet."

Although residents clearly value the easel, the town must balance priorities carefully.

"It's a big hit," Schroeder noted. "You can't sacrifice things that are necessary to things that are aesthetic. There's needs, and then there's wants."

Council will revisit the topic at its strategic planning session on May 1, with a decision to follow once all the financial details are in place.

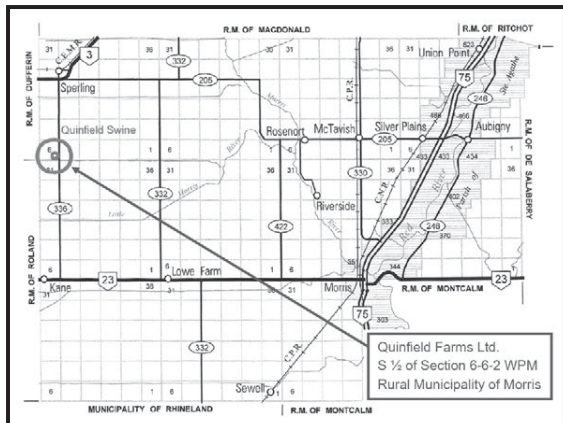
Continued on page 11

Attention Residents of the Rural Municipality of Morris

Share Your Views

concerning the proposed expansion of a pig operation - Quinfield Farms Ltd. (TRC 12-111)

The Rural Municipality of Morris has received a conditional use application from Quinfield Farms Ltd. to expand a pig operation at S 1/2 of Section 6-6-2 WPM, increasing sows, farrow to weaning from 3,000 to 5,200 animals and gilts from 165 to 280 animals (774 to 1,340 Animal Units in total). This application has been sent to the Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations for review, pursuant on Section 112 of The Planning Act.



If you would like to share your views concerning this proposal, you are invited to contact the Manitoba government by letter or email (TRC@gov.mb.ca) no later than **May 24, 2025**. After this date, the Livestock Technical Review Committee will complete its assessment of the application. Your letter or email must include your name and reference TRC 12-111.

All submissions in response to this proposal are considered public information and will be made available to the proponent and placed on the public registry with identifying details removed.

For more information:

Please visit http://www.gov.mb.ca/mr/livestock/public_registries.html or the RM of Morris office at 207 Main Street North, Morris, MB, R0G 1K0.

Technical Review Co-ordination Unit

Municipal and Northern Relations
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Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N4
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Merger Announcement

MMJS

LAW OFFICES

McCulloch Mooney Johnston Selby LLP

MMJS Law Offices is excited to announce its merger with Bruce Gregory Law Office effective June 1, 2025.

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YOUR LOCAL LAWYERS

Provincial funds support local water and sewer expansion

By Lori Penner

The Province of Manitoba is investing \$24 million into municipal water and wastewater infrastructure upgrades, a move that promises long-term environmental protection, improved public health, and enhanced economic opportunities across rural Manitoba.

Among the recipients is the Altona Rural Water Services Co-op, a grassroots initiative that began in 1985 when a group of farmers grew weary of hauling water and banded together to form a co-operative. Today, the co-op provides potable water to approximately 1,500 people across multiple rural communities including Altberghal, New Hope, Thames, Horndean, Plum Coulee, and Rosenfeld.

With demand on the rise, the co-op is planning a major expansion of its reservoir capacity near the Altona lift station on 14th Ave.

"We're looking at tripling the capacity from what we have now," said Ronn Smith, co-op board president. "We currently have a 40,000-gallon reservoir—so we're in the ballpark of half a million liters. When the project's complete, we're aiming for two million liters of distribution capacity at that site."

Smith explained that the need stems from both increased residential usage and expanded agricultural demands.

"There's a combination of more hookups and some livestock operations on our system as well. Water

consumption overall has just gone up over time."

Smith noted that June in particular poses challenges for the entire system.

"On peak consumption days, we were using up to twice our storage capacity. If the Pembina Valley Water Co-op ever had an outage, the expanded reservoir would provide us with backup for a few hours. It's all about resilience."

The reservoir serves a blend of residential, agricultural, and commercial users. Smith estimates about 60 per cent of the water usage is residential, with the remaining 40 per cent supporting ag and commercial operations.

The estimated cost of the reservoir expansion is \$2.5 million.

"We've applied for an additional \$1.5 million through the Manitoba Water Stewardship program, which can cover up to 50 per cent of the cost," said Smith. "We also have some reserve funding to help make up the difference if needed."

Meanwhile, the Town of Altona has also been approved for funding to support a long-awaited upgrade to its wastewater system—a new sewer forcemain that would relieve pressure on the town's aging infrastructure.

"We're looking at a project to run a direct forcemain from Lift Station 3 to our lagoon," said Mayor Harv Schroeder. "Right now, everything runs through town to Lift Station 1, creating a bottleneck. During heavy rains or high flow, the system gets overwhelmed."

Lift Station 3, located near W.C. Miller Collegiate, currently sends waste to Lift Station 1, alongside Lift Station 2 near Elmwood School. When volumes spike, this creates a major pinch point.

"This new direct line from Lift Station 3 to the lagoon would help ease the strain and give us the capacity to expand southward in the future," Schroeder explained. "All of the lift stations except Lift Station 1 have been replaced in the last five to six years, so this would build on the upgrades we've already made."

The estimated price tag for the project is around \$2 million. While specific funding amounts have not yet been disclosed, Schroeder said the town was pleased to be selected.

"We haven't been given the numbers yet from the province, but we're hopeful. It's not part of this year's municipal budget but could be in next year's depending on their timeline. Sometimes these funding models give you a few years to get the work done."

Schroeder emphasized how valuable provincial support is for communities like Altona.

"It's very good news. For this kind of infrastructure to come entirely out of local coffers would be a big price tag. So, it's reassuring to know that help is coming."

For Altona and its surrounding communities, the funding couldn't come at a better time. With population growth, increased agricultural demands, and climate-related pressures all converging, both the town and the rural water co-op are preparing to meet the future with stronger, more resilient infrastructure.

As Schroeder put it, "These are the kinds of surprises we like—good surprises that help us build a stronger community."

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Authorized by the Official Agent for Janine Gibson

> EASEL, FROM PG. 10

In the meantime, the outpouring of support from the community has reaffirmed the easel's place in the town's story—not just as a piece of public art, but as a shared symbol of local pride.

"We'll consider what's been put before us and take our time," Schroeder said. "It's not in the budget for this year, so we have a bit of breathing room. But it's clear people care deeply about this piece. It's not just a painting on a structure. It means something here."

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BRANDEN LESLIE





AUTHORIZED BY THE OFFICIAL AGENT FOR BRANDEN LESLIE



How to successfully transition to retirement: make a plan

If you've been working for several years, it may soon be time to retire. Whether you're looking forward to it or feeling anxious, these strategies can help you navigate the transition smoothly.

TAKE A GRADUAL APPROACH

Do you love your job? Are you in good health? If so, you don't necessarily have to stop working overnight. Talk to your employer about the possibility of gradually reducing your working hours over a few years.

This way, you can enjoy having more free time to care for your loved ones, pursue hobbies or take courses. The more familiar you become with your new routine before fully

retiring, the less anxious you'll feel about the change.

FINANCES

Transitioning to retirement can significantly impact your income. Therefore, it's essential to carefully manage your finances before altering your work schedule. Speak with a financial expert to ensure you can achieve your retirement goals while maintaining your quality of life.

Retirement is a significant milestone that requires proper preparation. Your thoughtful planning can help you face this transition with confidence and peace of mind.

Stay in shape by gardening

If winter causes you to shift into a sedentary lifestyle, the arrival of spring is the perfect time to embrace a more active way of living. Are you looking for an activity that offers physical and mental benefits during the warmer months? It's an excellent time to give gardening a try.

Start slow

Gardening involves various movements like walking, bending and stooping. If you want to enjoy this hobby pain-free, try a little pre-gardening warm-up. Before putting on your gardening gloves, take a few minutes to stretch and rotate your wrists, ankles and shoulders.

As you slowly familiarize yourself with the different movements involved in gardening, you'll engage all your muscles and joints more effectively. Don't forget to take breaks.

Better physical condition

Gardening helps improve and maintain your physical fitness. Activities like lifting and digging strengthen your thigh and arm muscles and increase bone density. Weeding also enhances flexibility and supports good posture. All these activities contribute to improving your overall stamina.

Boost your mood

Working with plants is an effective way to distract yourself from your daily worries. Focusing on the present moment and the small tasks at hand can help lower your stress levels. Gardening will certainly make you feel calmer, which is excellent for preventing anxiety and depression.

Heavenly care agency and new home care facility in Neuenberg

When it comes to finding ways to keep an elderly or disabled family member in their own home and communities longer, safely, every bit of help is a blessing.

Heavenly Care agency has opened a new Care home facility in a small town called Neuenberg located south of Winkler.

This facility will allow for families to keep their family member within the community and not having to be displaced far away from home.

To that end, Heavenly Care Agency CEO and president Celma Pinto lauds the concept behind the Manitoba government's Self/Family Managed Care (SFMC) program, which provides financial support for individuals or families who accept responsibility for managing personal home care needs themselves or

want to supplement provincial home care services.

"This program is giving options for those families who want more care or want to get more involved in the care of their loved ones," she said.

When families apply for SFMC funding, an assessment is done by provincial staff to determine their eligibility.

They can then use that approved funding to hire an agency like Heavenly Care to provide their loved ones with home care that best fits with their needs and schedule.

Heavenly Care prides itself on providing a caring, nurturing, and respectful environment for anyone who requires some level of support to improve their quality of life. Their staff are available around the clock to aid with everything from

meal preparation to grooming to light house-keeping.

The SFMC program is a vital one, Pinto stressed, in terms of empowering families when it comes to a loved one's care.

"The good thing about this program is it is adaptable," she noted. "It gives the flexibility for a family."

As the cost of living rises in our province, Pinto hopes to see the program's funding and approved hours of care increase to help lessen

the financial strain on families and individuals who need care.

"Improving the SFMC program will keep seniors at home instead of occupying a bed in a care home," she stressed. "It's really a win-win solution for the resident and the over-burdened care homes."

You can learn more about the Self/Family Managed Care program at gov.mb.ca/health/homecare/nonprof.html. To connect with Heavenly Care Agency about the services it offers, visit heavenlycare.ca.

204-822-5522 SELF & FAMILY MANAGED HOMECARE PROGRAMS

SCCR seeks drivers to help local cancer patients

By Lori Penner

South Central Cancer Resource (SCCR) is reaching out to residents in Altona and Morris with an urgent request: more volunteer drivers are needed to help cancer patients get to life-saving medical appointments.

Since its inception in 2003, SCCR has provided vital support to individuals navigating cancer diagnoses. As a community-based charitable organization, SCCR operates independently from CancerCare Manitoba and receives no government funding. Instead, it relies entirely on donations, fundraisers, and a dedicated team of volunteers to deliver its services.

One of the organization's most critical programs is its volunteer driver service, which Erika Friesen, project coordinator at SCCR, describes as "an essential aspect of SCCR's services, providing significant assistance to our clients."

The transportation program offers door-to-door rides for clients attending cancer-related appointments,

including chemotherapy sessions, radiation treatments, scans, and consultations with specialists. Trips are most commonly made to Winnipeg hospitals, Boundary Trails Health Centre, and occasionally to Brandon.

"These are people who may not otherwise have a reliable way to get to their appointments," said Friesen. "Many of our clients rely on this program because family members can't always take time off work. Our volunteers make it possible for them to receive the treatment they need."

Currently, SCCR has about 70 active volunteer drivers serving a wide region that spans from the RM of Roblin in the west to the RMs of Morris and Montcalm in the east, south to the U.S. border, and north to the RM of Dufferin. But growing demand means the organization is in urgent need of additional drivers—especially in the Altona and Morris areas.

Volunteer drivers use their own vehicles and are offered a modest honorarium to help cover fuel, parking, and vehicle-related expenses. There's



SUPPLIED PHOTO

One of 70 active SCCR volunteer drivers who make it possible for patients to receive the treatment they need.

no fixed schedule—drivers sign up based on their availability and work closely with a local driver coordinator to arrange rides.

Friesen encourages anyone who may be considering the opportunity to reach out, even if they're unsure.

"If you think this might be a good fit for you, but are unsure, feel free to contact us for more information. There is no obligation, we are happy to help you learn more to decide if this volunteer role is something you would like to do."

Being a volunteer driver is a highly flexible role. The number of rides

needed is based on who is currently signed up as a client in your area and what their appointment schedule is like—therefore, the quantity of rides will always be fluctuating based on the clients' needs.

"Having people who are flexible and often available during weekdays is fantastic," she added.

SCCR offers an initial training package to get new drivers started, and they host annual meetings to keep them supported and connected.

Continued on page 15

• ENERGIZED FOR 50 YEARS AND COUNTING • ENERGIZED FOR 50 YEARS AND COUNTING •

Have you heard about the power of meditation?

The body's natural aging process brings about changes that can cause issues like aches and pains, slower metabolism and sleeping difficulties. These physical changes can also impact your mental well-being. Fortunately, meditation can help reduce many of these symptoms. Here's a quick overview of this ancient practice and its proven benefits.

The principle

Meditation can take many forms, but

they all focus on breathwork. By concentrating on inhaling and exhaling, you can achieve a calm state that enables you to view your thoughts and emotions more positively. Meditation also promotes stress release, resulting in a deeper sense of peace.

The benefits

Numerous studies have investigated the effects of meditation. Many findings indicate that it can alleviate physical pain. Meditation has also been shown

to lower blood pressure and slow heart rate, which can help prevent cardiovascular diseases.

The positive impacts of meditation on mental health have also been well-documented. It can help improve concentration and stimulate memory. Meditation also supports management and prevention of anxiety and depression - challenges commonly faced by older adults who sometimes experience feelings of isolation.



If you'd like to start meditating, look for group activities in your area or visit your local library for inspiring books on the subject.

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Access CU reports on another year of steady growth

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Access Credit Union reported on a year of growth and fielded questions from concerned members about changes connected to that growth at its annual general meeting last week.

The meeting, held virtually April 16, saw board president Curt Letkeman go over some of the highlights of 2024. "Following two years dedicated to amalgamations—Noventis and Suno-

va in 2022, and Casera, Carpathia, and Amaranth in 2023—2024 focused on aligning business processes from the legacy credit unions and building the culture of the new Access," he said. "This process has been exciting and has opened new opportunities that we all can be excited about. Opportunities such as the corporate sponsorship with the Blue Bombers, support of the St. Boniface Hospital Research

Foundation, the Children's Hospital, Elm Creek Arena, and many more."

Letkeman stressed that community-building remains a core focus of the financial institution, and they were honoured for prioritizing that by being named as the Outstanding Corporate Philanthropist for the year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals of Manitoba.

"[It's] an honour all members can be

proud of," he said.

On the business front, Access CU continues to strive to offer competitive rates and services, Letkeman said, delivered by dedicated staff members.

"We're proud of our employees who greet you with a smile and are happy to serve our more than 200,000 members across Manitoba."

Continued on page 16

• VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION • VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION •

How to show your appreciation for volunteers

National Volunteer Week takes place this year from April 24 to 30. This annual campaign promotes volunteerism and celebrates the contributions of millions of Canadians who donate their time and energy to making their communities better places to live. This year's theme is Empathy in Action, which highlights how volunteering helps develop strong connections among people with diverse backgrounds and fosters genuine care toward others.

Volunteers are often mobilized by empathy, but their efforts are best sustained by demonstrations of appreciation. When volunteers feel recognized, they're more likely to remain connected to your cause and continue to give back. Here are

some ways your organization can say thank you to its volunteers.

- Create a video. Collect footage of your organization's volunteers at work with a smartphone or other device. Then, string the clips together and incorporate some music into the mix. Once the video is edited, you can share it on social media or on your website.
- Plan a social event. Consider bringing the volunteers in your organization together with a social event. You could host a movie night, put together a meal or throw a party. Social events help encourage your volunteers to connect with each other, the cause and the organization.



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To all our Volunteers: Thank you for making waves of impact that inspire us every day!

Many Hands reflects on a year of successes, challenges

By Lorne Stelmach

It was a year of both successes and challenges for the Many Hands Resource Centre in 2024.

Volunteer leaders reflected on both last Wednesday as the organization held its annual meeting at the 500 Stephen Community Centre in Morden.

"We are focused on strengthening what we have and building a solid foundation for future growth," said Julie Plett, who is co-chairperson with Darcy Wolfe.

"The number of people coming to the food bank is still growing, so that's always a challenge, making sure that we have enough good hampers that we can give to the people," said Wolfe. "There's also always challenges finding volunteers who will come consistently and volunteer their time. The ones that we do have are amazing, but there's always room for more."

"We had some challenges with our staff retention as well," added Plett. "I think it's just a matter of circumstances that had happened throughout the year that led to that ... but now with Victoria Nash on, we're really hopeful we can maintain the staff we have so we can focus more on programs and responding to the needs of the community."

"Having our staff here has really helped," added Wolfe. "It's helped with the growth. We're looking at new programs that we could possibly pick up, so that's something we are really excited about now."

"Also, a pamphlet we sent out at the end of the year had a lot of information about what Many Hands is doing and ways for the community get involved and to donate, and that's something that was a big success for

us, so we are looking to repeat that again this year," he said. "It really created a lot of awareness, and it got a lot of people through our doors asking a lot of good questions and learning about what Many Hands does."

Many Hands saw a significant increase in food bank use last year. Compared to last December, the numbers had grown by 20 per cent. The agency is currently serving around 120 families a week, with emergency hampers and deliveries on top of that. So that's over 1,000 individuals getting a helping hand, including about 400 children.

Beyond food distribution, it's also been working hard to build a stronger community.

On that front, the farmers' market had another successful season with the community food currency vouchers helping more families access fresh, local produce. Through this program, they were able to provide vouchers for 100 families, which brought about \$42,000 to farmers at the market for the summer.

"And part of that is Mariyam Tsygankova [executive director] was able to secure a grant to hire a student throughout the summer, and they spearheaded the voucher program," said Plett, who noted they are also able to get that grant again this year.

Many Hands also resumed its community kitchen program, creating a welcoming space where people can come together to learn cooking skills, share meals and build stronger connections.

This initiative has been an incredible way to support food security while

fostering a sense of belonging, the chairs noted.

"I think something we have always wanted to do at Many Hands is build community," said Wolfe.

"One of the favorite things that we do here is have the monthly community meal," he added. "People can not only come in to get a free meal but they get to sit down with people they might not otherwise sit down with ... that's a program where people can share their stories and they can bless their neighbour."

In addition, Many Hands launched a soup kitchen during its regular food bank hours in partnership with Westside Community Church. This collaboration has been a meaningful step in expanding support for those in need, as clients can enjoy a hot, homemade meal while they wait for their hampers or after receiving them.

The soup kitchen addresses immediate food insecurity while also offering a warm, welcoming environment where people can sit, connect and feel seen, noted Wolfe.

"A lot of it is togetherness and building community, and we want to make sure that the community knows they can come to these programs and participate and be part of it."

Their report also highlighted a few other important milestones:

- Approving the hiring of a full-time program coordinator to meet growing program demands.
- Rebranding more publicly as Morden's Food Bank run by Many Hands.
- Advocating to the community and various levels of government about the importance of lifting up the vul-

nerable and supporting the less fortunate.

- Continuing to look for ways to deepen our volunteer and donor appreciation efforts.

A major issue for Many Hands moving forward now is increasingly having inadequate space.

"Looking ahead, space does look like it will turn into an issue. We are already cramped in the space that we do have," said Wolfe. "We are very blessed to be in this building and in this space ... but it is something where we are starting to have think about options."

"We don't want to have to turn away donations of food, especially when we have so many mouths to feed. That would be heartbreaking," added Plett. "So we definitely need to find short term solutions and look ahead for a long term one."

"We are confident that the people of Morden and our community will step up like they always have," Wolfe said.

The duo concluded their written report with deep thanks for all of their volunteers.

"If our donors are the lifeblood of Many Hands, then our volunteers are the heart. We cannot overstate how vital they are to everything we do. Every week, volunteers pack food hampers, unload deliveries, serve soup, clean, organize, greet guests with kindness, and quietly make sure the work gets done.

"Many of them take time out of their day, again and again, to ensure that others are fed and welcomed with dignity. They don't do it for recognition. They do it out of love. And we want to take this moment to say, with full sincerity: we could not do this without you."

"WE COULD NOT DO THIS WITHOUT YOU."

> CHAMPIONS AWARDS, FROM PG. 8

The fund supports transitions to employee ownership through Employee Ownership Trusts, offering a model that's gaining traction in Canada—particularly as a large number of business owners near retirement. Sellers may also benefit from a federal capital gains tax exemption on the first \$10 million of the sale, creating an incentive to explore this alternative path.

At Valley Fiber, a company known for bringing high-speed internet infrastructure to rural Manitoba, the Future Champion Award comes as validation of its community-centered mission.

"With something as simple but essential as fast, reliable internet, success has no borders," said CEO Ryan Klassen. "We're proud to help connect communities that have historically been underserved and left behind."

Since its founding, Valley Fiber has invested more than \$300 million in

> VOLUNTEER DRIVERS, FROM PG. 13

Volunteers must complete a criminal record and vulnerable sector check, provide references, and have a valid driver's license and vehicle registration.

The impact of the program goes far beyond transportation.

"One of our clients came into the

infrastructure and employs over 300 Manitobans. Its expansion into rural areas has been key to helping residents and businesses access the connectivity they need for modern life and work.

Klassen said the recognition is a tribute to the company's values of integrity, excellence, and care for commu-

office recently to thank us," Friesen shared. "They had over 30 radiation appointments and no one in the family who could take them during the day. They told us, 'It's unbelievable to know you're here, and you're not even government funded. This service is amazing.'"

nity.

"This reflects the hard work of our entire team, and our belief that great businesses—and great futures—can grow from anywhere," he said.

The 2025 Manitoba Champions Awards will be presented May 12 in Winnipeg.

Another client expressed their gratitude simply: "SCCR makes life just a little bit easier for families dealing with cancer in the different ways they offer support."

To learn more about becoming a volunteer driver visit www.sccr.mb.ca.



Bonspiel winners

SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Twenty-five teams hit the ice for the Morden Senior's Curling Club's Farmer's/Haze Shore Memorial Bonspiel March 14-16. The multi-generational event drew competitors ranging in age from eight to 89. Thanks to generous support from local businesses and participants, the weekend raised funds to make the curling club more accessible with mobility improvements to the entrance and washroom facilities. Bonspiel winners include (clockwise from above) Team Randal Siemens for the A-Event, Team Jon Doell in the B-Event, Team Lauren Weslak in the C-Event, and Team Marcus Titchkosky in the D-Event.



> ACCESS CREDIT UNION, FROM PG. 14

Looking to the future, Letkeman acknowledged the uncertainty looming from the effects of tariffs, global conflicts, and cyber threats.

"Spending on technology is becoming more crucial and expensive," he noted. "In fact, in 2023 one of the big five banks spent roughly \$725 million just on AI research alone. These costs are going to continue to increase, making it difficult for smaller financial institutions to compete."

Manitoba's credit union network has seen an increasing number of amalgamations in recent years—there are just 15 credit unions right now, down from 70 a few years ago—and it's expected more mergers are on the horizon.

"We expect amalgamations both provincially and nationally to continue," Letkeman said. "As we move ahead, know that your board's focus is on providing our members with excellent service and creating a credit union we can all be proud of."

In his report, retiring president and CEO Lar-

ry Davey highlighted the organization's work, post-mergers, on providing a consistent level of service across all its branches as well as on its online and mobile platforms.

"We're immensely grateful for the patience that all members provided us during that transition and we expect that they will continue to benefit from that work for many years to come," he said.

Access gave back over \$2.2 million this past year to support a variety of projects and causes in the communities it operates in, Davey shared.

"Whether it was capital investments in hospitals across our area or investing in community centres that enable a wide demographic of participants, we know that our members hold great value in these initiatives and we are pleased to play a significant role in supporting, promoting, and championing these exceptional opportunities."

He also shone a spotlight on their financial literacy program, which reached over 1,200 people in 2024.

Access saw strong growth this year, Davey noted.

"We are reaching more Manitobans than ever before, and in building those relationships we continue to see our business expand," he said, noting they've also been working to control expenses and increase efficiencies across their service network. That has included consolidating or closing branches in communities where there are other nearby locations able to service members.

The decision to close the Lowe Farm branch drew questions from members at the meeting, who stressed its value to the community, expressed frustration at the decision to shutter it without consulting members, and asked if the board might reconsider.

"The board looks at all branch closures and branch operations," Letkeman said in response. "The reality is we are operating in a very unique system. When we look at some of our competitors, the largest competitor in Manitoba would probably have three branches, whereas Access has 50+."

Continued on page 17

Honouring Mennonite matriarchs one brush stroke at a time

By Lori Penner

In the heart of Neuberghthal, where tall poplars sway and time moves just a little slower, something quietly beautiful has been unfolding inside the Klippenstein house. It's not just a renovation—it's a resurrection.

Recently, artist and heritage enthusiast Margrui Krahn has been hosting painting bees for women with roots in the village. The project? Recreating the hand-painted floor patterns once crafted by the women who lived in these homes generations ago.

These delicate geometric designs, often inspired by Fraktur folk art, are being lovingly restored by their descendants, right on the floorboards where they first appeared more than a century ago.

"This is a tribute," Krahn explains, gesturing toward the living room floor now bright with carefully traced patterns. "It's a lot of work, but I realized as I was restoring that floor, why not invite the women connected to Neuberghthal to come and honour their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers who did this?"

The Klippenstein house, built in 1910, belonged to Elizabeth Klippenstein, one of the first Mennonite women in Manitoba to manage a farm.

"She ran the farm with her father-in-law after her husband Bernhard died young," says Krahn. "She was strong, independent—and the women in the village remember her."

Now, women are once again gathering in this historic space—not for baking bread or quilting, but to paint. To restore. To remember.

Ty Linklater, whose grandmother grew up in Neuberghthal and who has also volunteered for the Neuberghthal Heritage Foundation, reflected on the emotional weight of the experience.

"This is such a neat event. It's brought so many people together who have connections to this place that might not have reconnected otherwise," she said. "Getting to create these designs that have been a part of the history of Menno-

nite women has been really neat. I'm excited to see how it all turns out."

Another volunteer, Jamie Karr, holds a special connection to the house—Elizabeth Klippenstein was her great-grandmother.

"It feels amazing to decorate the floor like this," Karr shared, kneeling down with a smile. "It's neat to come back here and dedicate her memory in this way. It's a little hard on the knees, but it's so rewarding."

Krahn, together with curatorial team members Marilyn Hauser Hamm and Pauline Villeneuve, has worked meticulously to ensure authenticity.

"We've stuck to the original designs," she says. "Under the old flooring was the original painted pattern. I wanted to preserve that."

Restoration began with peeling back layers—of linoleum, paint, and time. The team scraped, sanded, matched colours, and used Norwegian linseed oil mixed with natural pigments to replicate the century-old designs with stunning accuracy.

"It's more than petals and flowers," Krahn notes. "It's really abstract, geometric motifs. Those kinds of patterns were rare. That's why I think either Bernhard or Peter Klippenstein, both Fraktur artists, designed them."

The walls, too, are being brought back to life, dressed in vintage wallpaper and wainscoting chosen to match the era.

"Marilyn, Pauline and I did the wallpapering," Krahn smiles. "It's part of the aesthetic—when people come to the café, they'll be surrounded by this beauty. They'll see what the women have done."

That's the ultimate vision—a fully functioning café housed in the Klippenstein house, expected to open this summer. It will serve as a gathering place for the community, and a visual love letter to the village's past.

The tradition of the nepharane—women gathering for crafts, conversation, and coffee—is being reimaged here.

"And people don't always know what it's about," Krahn chuckles. "I've heard that several



PHOTO BY LORI PENNER/VOICE

Jamie Karr, Iris Hiebert, and Tanya Sawatzky at work on restoring the paint designs on the floor of the Klippenstein house in Neuberghthal.

times. But then they come here and it's like, 'Oh my goodness, this is fun.'"

Since 2001, Krahn has been unearthing and documenting painted floor patterns in Mennonite housebarns across southern Manitoba and beyond. Her research, which has taken her as far as Mexico and the Netherlands, culminated in the exhibition *Resurfacing: Mennonite Floor Patterns*, a celebration of these hidden works of art and the stories they hold.

Now, in the quiet of Neuberghthal, those patterns are resurfacing not just on gallery walls, but in the very homes where they began. And the hands restoring them are connected by memory, community, and a shared reverence for the women who came before.

> ACCESS CREDIT UNION, FROM PG. 16

"We really look to see a lot of things that go into these closures. One of the realities is also traffic. In some of the smaller branches, we run the numbers and in some cases we have fewer than 10 members a day coming into some of these branches, which really makes it challenging to operate.

"And also it provides some security challenges, as we've had some unfortunate instances of robberies in the past few years, which has jeopardized the safety of our staff. So these are all things that play into it. Proximity to other branches in the nearby area plays into it.

"Branch closure are something we continue to take seriously," Letkeman said. "We look at all aspects of it."

Davey noted their data shows many members living in communities with small branches are already making regular trips to larger markets for shopping or work.

"We don't take [closures] lightly," he said, echo-

ing Letkeman, "but at the same time we're trying to provide the same competitive rates that are put forward by credit unions with much fewer number of branches."

"The reality is ... we have a responsibility to all 200,000 members of Access," Letkeman said in response to the impact the Lowe Farm closure specifically will have on that community. "When we make a decision, it's taking the overall organization into account."

Davey noted Access has reached out to the large account members potentially impacted by this particular closure and have found they are generally understanding of the metrics behind the decision.

"To date, we have not seen any sort of large impact," he said in response to concerns members may move their business to other financial institutions.

The meeting saw the board announce a combined member rewards payout of \$5.7 million in 2024, paid out to members as a dividend in the form of

surplus shares.

Further financials shared include the \$13.4 million in assets Access CU currently has—an increase from \$12.3 million the year before—as well as \$11.5 million in members' loans, \$11.6 million in deposits, and a net income of \$48 million (down slightly from \$49.3 million the year before).

Gross operating expenses came in at \$181.5M, up from \$152.3M the year before. Davey noted the increase reflects the fact the expenses of Casera CU and Carpathia CU were only on the 2023 financial statement for six months of that year, whereas it's for the full year in 2024.

He noted administrative expenses also increased, owing largely to increases in technology costs and in prices-per-transaction on payments, which were anticipated.

"Technology costs continue to rise, which is again [one of] the benefits of being a larger organization. Allowing us to absorb and spread these costs has really been beneficial to Access," Letkeman noted.

Check out the Voice online at www.winklormordenvoice.ca or altonavoice.ca

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PUBLIC NOTICE

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE PLANNING ACT NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

On the date and at the time and location shown below, a PUBLIC HEARING will be held to receive representations from any person(s) who wish to make them in respect to the following matter:
 THE RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF STANLEY BY-LAW 4-25
 Being an AMENDMENT to the R.M. OF STANLEY ZONING BY-LAW 8-18, AS AMENDED.

HEARING LOCATION: R.M. of Stanley Council Chambers
 1-23111 PTH 14, SW 7-3-4W
DATE & TIME: May 8, 2025 at 9:05 a.m.
GENERAL INTENT: To amend Appendix 1 Use Table within Zoning By-law 8-18 to allow for the use of "Self or Mini Storage" as a conditional use in the Agriculture Limited Zone

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:
 Melissa Groening,
 Planning and Development Officer
 Rural Municipality of Stanley
 1-23111 PTH 14, Stanley MB R6P 0B1
 Phone: (204) 325-4101
 Email: mgroening@rmofstanley.ca



A copy of the above proposal and supporting material may be inspected at the location noted above during normal office hours, Monday to Friday. Copies may be made and extracts taken there from, upon request.

CAREERS

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING UNDER THE PLANNING ACT

On the date and at the time and location shown below, a PUBLIC HEARING will be held to receive representations from any person(s) who wish to make them in respect to the following matter:

GENERAL INTENT: To amend the following sections of City of Winkler Zoning By-law 2271-21 as amended: 2.3, 2.7, 3.2, 3.5.2, 3.6.2, 3.7.2, 4.8.1, 5.1, 6.1, 6.3.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 6.10, 9.1, 9.2, 9.8, and 9.10
AREA: By-law 2341-25 will apply to the entire limits of the City of Winkler.
CONTACT: Planning & Engineering Department
 City of Winkler
 Phone: (204) 325-9524-2
 Email: permits@cityofwinkler.ca

DATE OF HEARING: May 13, 2025
TIME OF HEARING: 6:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Winkler Council Chambers,
 185 Main Street, Winkler, Manitoba

A copy of the above proposal and supporting material may be inspected at the location noted above during normal office hours, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Thursday and 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 pm Friday. Copies may be made, and extracts taken therefrom upon request.

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Prairie Spirit School Division invites applications for a School Counsellor to commence September 2nd, 2025. Deadline for applications: **Noon May 9th, 2025.** Details available at: www.prairiespirit.mb.ca or phone 204-836-2147.

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	1		4		5			
4			6			8	7	
5			3		6			
	6	8				9		
	9			2				1
8			7	1		2		
	7	2						

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8	5	3	4	6	9	2	7	1
9	6	2	3	1	7	4	5	8
7	1	4	8	2	5	9	6	3
1	9	5	2	4	8	7	3	6
3	4	9	7	5	1	8	6	2
2	8	7	6	3	4	1	5	9
5	7	8	1	3	9	6	2	4
6	2	9	5	8	4	3	7	1
4	3	4	9	1	7	2	5	8

Sudoku Answer

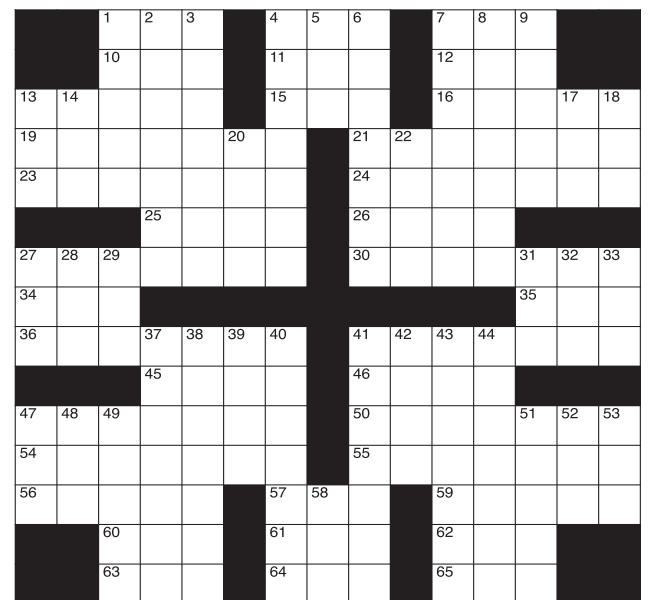
A	H	I	V	R	E	O	E	H
W	E	R	B	V	O	E	O	V
O	W	T	O	B	V	N	N	V
S	U	O	J	S	E	O	I	V
U	E	G	V	E	S	E	T	B
E	R	E	E	T	E	S	S	E
D	E	V	O	S	O	V	N	E
K	O	V	O	S	O	V	N	E
S	E	S	V	T	I	V	S	E
D	E	T	O	V	S	E	N	I
V	A	I	E	N	N	N	T	O
V	H	V	E	N	E	O	V	T
T	P	S	V	G	O	B	B	

Crossword Answer

CROSSWORD

CLUES ACROSS

- English TV station
- It fuels cars
- Where ships dock (abbr.)
- Indigenous people of Thailand
- Midway between northeast and east
- Small Milky Way constellation
- Fritz __, Austrian chemist
- A Brit's grandmother
- Colombian city
- Visualize
- Charged
- People's assets
- Informative books
- Jeer
- You can do it with your horn
- Agents of your downfall
- Central Uganda city
- Supervises flying
- Type of tree
- Alfalfa
- Dishwasher soap brand
- Hall where military eats
- Ancient Greek City
- Speaks incessantly
- Discuss again
- Extreme greed
- Adopt or support
- Fantasy writer Russell
- Seize
- Early Mesoamerican civilization
- Noted pet detective Ventura
- Automobile
- Georgia rockers
- Color opposite green
- Amount of time
- Attempt



CLUES DOWN

- Sheep sound
- Some can be emotional
- Inflammation of colon lining
- Origins
- Comedienne Gaster
- Perceived by the senses
- A place to play ball
- Occur before
- Animal body parts
- Thanksgiving dessert
- Root mean square (abbr.)
- 1960s teen idol Bobby
- Promotional materials
- One point east of northeast
- Piers Anthony protagonist
- Popular sports league
- Cologne
- Partner to cheese
- Constrictor snake
- Not good
- Supplement with difficulty
- Hug with fondness
- Enforced again
- Small amount of time (abbr.)
- Substance
- Anterior parts of the brain
- Brews
- Where ships load cargo
- Holiday season singer
- "__ humbug!"
- Monetary unit of Macao
- Popular children's book elephant
- Glutinous
- Function
- Old world, new
- Swiss river

Latest EP marks a new musical era for Brett Schulz

By Lori Penner

Winnipeg-based musician Brett Schulz has released his latest EP, *Reasons*, marking a new chapter in his musical evolution. With a refined approach to songwriting and production, he believes this collection best represents where he is as an artist today.

"I have a better idea of what I'm doing production-wise," the Altona native explains. "I do most of it myself, recording guitars and vocals, but I'm fortunate to have friends who let me use their spaces. My buddy Joe and I work together a lot, recording vocals and acoustic guitars, and then I bring in some incredible musicians from Winnipeg to add drums and bass. After that, I take everything back to my home studio to mix and layer more instruments."

His creative process has also evolved over time.

"Songwriting has changed for me. The more you do it, the more you get to what you're trying to accomplish. My songs now feel more in tune with what I want to express."

Two songs stand out as defining this new phase: "Reasons" and "Say."

"They speak for me the most. They were finished a while ago, and I finally decided it was time to release them."

"Reasons" is deeply introspective.

"It's about realizing that sometimes I have no idea what's going on," he laughs. "There's a humorous element to it. The chorus says, 'Sometimes I can't even reason with myself. I stand and stutter, wondering what will come of it. Maybe someday, I will try again to listen to reason.' There's a bit

of cynicism in there."

Schulz wrote "Say" for his wife.

"It's about those moments when you want to tell someone something important but can't find the right words."

The EP also includes live, acoustic versions of "Your Life Is a Mess" and "Say."

He compares creativity to an 'antenna' that picks up frequencies and ideas.

"David Byrne talks about ideas floating around, and the more in tune you are, the more you can grab them. That's how 'Say' came to be. The opening lyric —'Oh darling, I love you my dear'—just popped into my head one day."

Schulz's songwriting often starts with the guitar.

"It usually begins with a riff or chord progression. But I don't sit down with an intention; I let melodies and words develop naturally."

His lyrics are introspective.

"A lot of my writing is about how I feel about things happening in my life or world. Not every song has to be some deep, philosophical insight."

Schulz grew up in Altona and credits his family for his early musical influences.

"I always liked music. My parents had great taste and were encouraging. Some of their friends were musicians, and they showed me how to play. I learned guitar at 10. Singing was a learning curve—I was very shy at first."

Like many independent musicians, Schulz balances his creative pursuits with other commitments.

"It can be taxing. I have a day job



SUPPLIED PHOTO BY LYNETTE GIESBRECHT

Brett Schulz perfecting his sound at the No Fun Club recording studio in Winnipeg.

and gig a lot at restaurants and bars, often playing with other bands. That doesn't leave much time for writing. I released my first album during COVID when I had more free time. Now, it sometimes feels more procedural, and I have higher standards, which makes it harder to finalize things."

Despite the challenges, he remains committed to making music on his own terms.

"The best advice I ever received is to separate creativity from outcomes. If I make an album, I don't want to measure success by streams or shares. It's about making art for the sake of making it. Fall in love with the process, and the outcome will take care

of itself."

Schulz has no plans of slowing down.

"I'd love to release a few more EPs this year to complete a full album. It would be cool to put it on vinyl. I also have a bunch of live gigs coming up, including an acoustic trio show with Joe Curtis on April 27 in Gimli at The Ship & Plough."

Fans can listen to *Reasons* and Schulz's other work at brettschulzmusic.com.

"I just hope people enjoy the music and the musicians who played on it," he says. "That's what it's all about."

Spring Fling & Job Fair in Morris May 3

By Siobhan Maas

The Morris Spring Fling Vendor & Craft Market is returning to the Morris Multiplex with 66 vendors on Saturday, May 3.

As one of the largest craft shows in Southern Manitoba, the organizers are happy to continue hosting a well-organized and welcoming event with no admission fee.

"We're excited to offer a fantastic range of handmade goods, treats and more at this cherished community

event – it just keeps getting better every year," shared Arien Peterson, facilities manager of the Morris Multiplex.

Visitors to the day-long event can enjoy a mixture of local creativity and community spirit; everything from homemade baking to handmade pottery, alongside the infamous PERK Coffee Bar and a full canteen.

For a second year, the Morris & District Chamber of Commerce is hosting their Volunteer & Job Fair in conjunction with the market.

"The job fair offers a unique opportunity, especially for the community's youth, to engage with multiple employers and non-profit organizations and volunteer opportunities," said chamber president Cheryl Demarcke. "The Multiplex serves as a gathering spot for the entire community, with the Spring Fling bringing in people from town and surrounding communities. Being able to host both events together creates a family friendly feel that is attracting to all ages."

With many favourite vendors re-

turning this year and the event offering fundraising opportunities to local groups, community dedication is always important.

"The Spring Fling is more than just a craft show," said Peterson. "We celebrate local talent and as one vendor put it: 'It's not just about selling, it's about connection.'"

Both events begin at 10 a.m. The Job Fair ends at 2 p.m. while the craft sale runs until 3 p.m.

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