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Fun in the foam

Deborah Diezel, Lylah Sawatzky, and Emily Sawatzky were all smiles at the foam party at the Gretna Hot Spot Festival last weekend. For more photos, see Pg. 12.

PHOTO BY EDWARD VINCENT ARCENAL/VOICE

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

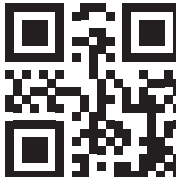


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18th annual Tractor Trek

The 18th annual Tractor Trek set out from Eden Health Care Services in Winkler Saturday morning on a route that took over 50 trekkers through Winkler to Morden, Chortitz, and Schanzenfeld before returning back to Winkler for a celebratory supper. Before the tractors set out that day, the community was invited to come check them out at a Tractors Through the Ages Show & Shine and by-donation barbecue. Organizers with the Eden Foundation were still crunching the donation numbers at press time, but every penny will go to support mental health programming across the region.

PHOTOS BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

Solid Waste Special Service Plan Public Hearing Notice

Special Service Plan 2026-01 is for the collection of garbage, recycling, and compost, as well as the operation of the landfill. It proposes to finance the cost of these services by a special service levy, which is a separate tax on properties.

This is not a new tax.

It is a continuation of an existing charge that currently appears on your property tax bill under By-law 1789/2020. That by-law expires at the end of 2025. The new plan would replace the existing levy starting in 2026, with updated rates.

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If you have concerns or objections, you may:

- Submit a written objection to the Chief Administrative Officer at 111 Centre Avenue or dan.gagne@altona.ca before the hearing starts
- Speak at the hearing to ask questions, share your views, or register an objection on July 22, 2025 at 6:00 PM at the Altona Civic Centre (111 Centre Ave).

Learn more at **Altona**.ca

Racially-motivated assault condemned by Regional Connections, PVLIP

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Regional Connections Immigrant Services and the Pembina Valley Local Immigration Partnership are speaking out after a troubling incident that happened in Winkler last month.

Winkler Police report that in the early morning hours of June 15 they received a 911 call in the area of Harmony Lane during which a female could be heard screaming.

Upon arriving in the area, police were flagged down and advised that a male had been seriously assaulted and had his turban removed by three male suspects who fled the scene on foot.

The suspects were said to have been yelling racial slurs at the victim as they punched and kicked him.

Winkler and Morden police officers located and arrested the three suspects nearby. They face a range of charges, including assault.

Regional Connections board chair Michael Grenier and executive director Steve Reynolds addressed the incident in a joint statement on Friday.

"We are saddened and deeply disturbed by the recent racially motivated assault that occurred here in

Winkler," they said. "We care and are concerned for the victim, their loved ones, and everyone affected by this act of hate.

"At Regional Connections, we stand firmly against violence, racism, and all forms of discrimination. No one should ever be targeted or harmed because of their race, ethnicity, or beliefs. Such acts are not only illegal, they're contrary to our core values as Canadians. We remain committed to our vision of building community together, which includes equity, justice, and safety for each of us.

"We call on our community to come together, to support one another, and to speak out against hate. Silence speaks volumes at a time like this. Today we have friends and neighbours who will be more fearful of a simple act like walking home from work at night in Winkler."

The agency hosted a drop-in counselling session Tuesday night for anyone impacted by the event. Community members are also encouraged to contact Regional Connections any time for additional counselling support, resources, or referrals.

Continued on page 4

Winkler Day Care celebrating 50 years

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The Winkler Day Care Centre has provided childcare to generations of families, and this weekend they hope to see as many of them as possible at their 50th anniversary bash.

The daycare is marking the milestone with an evening of fun in Northpoint Trail Park (located at the corner of Northpoint Trail and Platinum Road in northwest Winkler) this Friday, July 18, from 5:30-8:30 p.m.

"We're having a big party," says board chair Amy Friesen. "There'll be bouncy houses, a petting zoo, face painting, yard games, and the splash park."

The Bunker food truck, The Icecycle, and Other Brother Coffee will have food, ice cream, and drinks available for purchase.

"It's entrance by donation to make it a bit of a fundraiser to help some of our projects," Friesen says, stressing all ages are welcome.

They've opted to hold the celebration off the daycare grounds in the hopes it will draw more community members than their annual summer carnival usually does.

"We decided to move it to a more public place to try and get a larger population of people out, and hopefully some past kids, parents," Friesen says.

"And past staff and board members would be really cool to see as well," adds centre executive director Ang Nickel, noting there have been countless Winklerites who have served on the facility's board of directors through the decades, and it would be

great to reminisce with them.

Nickel's own time with the daycare stretches all the way back to the late '80s when she came on board as a summer student in between years at college. She returned later as a permanent staff member, eventually stepping into the executive director role a few years ago.

The Winkler Day Care first opened its doors in May 1975. The need for childcare in the small community was steadily growing as more and more households saw both parents heading off to work each day.

The founding board of directors took what was formerly a residence for participants at Valley Rehab (today known as Gateway Resources) and transformed it into Winkler's very first daycare facility.

In its first handful of years, the centre was caring for about 29 kids, on average; today they have 54 childcare spaces, including 12 for infants and 41 for pre-schoolers.

The building has been added to at least twice and a few other remodels have been tackled to make existing spaces better suit changing needs. They've also done a lot of work to the daycare's sprawling backyard, most recently adding an outdoor classroom.

"There's no other daycare that has a property like this," Nickel says. Most childcare centres are lucky to have yard at all, she points out, never mind one this big, allowing for all sorts of active play. "That backyard is the drawing card for a lot of families because we spend a lot of time outside."

The yard was certainly a plus for



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

From left: Winkler Day Care Centre executive director Ang Nickel with assistant director Tatjana Kreker and board chair Amy Friesen in the spacious backyard, which includes a walking path, outdoor classroom, and multiple play areas.

Friesen, whose kids, age four and two, are always eager for their day care days. Friesen is currently in her second year as board chair.

"I loved the yard, and my sister's children also attend here, so it very much feels like a family-style place," she says. "I just had a really good impression right away, walking through the door, of the staff and how the kids

have so much fun and can run free and just enjoy this as part of their home."

Winkler Day Care spent the bulk of its 50 years as the only childcare facility in Winkler (not including home-based ones), right up until the Northland Childcare Centre opened in 2013.

Continued on page 4



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

Assistant director Tatjana Kreker with the new kitchen cupboards the daycare recently had installed to replace ones that were older than the facility itself, having come with the building originally before it was a childcare centre.

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> **WINKLER DAY CARE, FROM PG. 3**

The community is now home to three such centres, but there's still hundreds of families waiting for spaces to open up.

"We still have a huge wait list," Nickel acknowledges, noting there are over 300 people looking for childcare in the Morden-Winkler area right now.

GENERATIONS OF KIDS

While thousands of Winklerites have ties to the daycare centre—many current parents were former daycare kids themselves—there are also no shortage of former staff members whose time at the centre helped build it into what it is today.

Nickel recalls a chance encounter with one of them, stretching back to the earliest days of the facility.

"We used to go to Salem Home, once

a month we'd go and hang out with grandmas and grandpas, and the first day that I took a group there the lady points to one of the residents and says, 'This is the first director of the Winkler Day Care Centre.'"

It was Margaret Sawatzky, and she was thrilled for the opportunity to interact with children once again.

"I brought my kids in and she knew exactly how to talk to them, how to engage with them," Nickel recalls. "It was cool to see a former director like that."

Sawatzky later had the chance to come visit the daycare, touring the site to see how it had changed from her days there.

"Her eyes were just lighting up," recalls assistant director Tatjana Kreker. "She never thought she would have an opportunity to go through here

again, to see her daycare."

The centre currently has 22 employees on staff—some of whom were former daycare kids way back when.

"It's always interesting if they're

coming back and applying and coming in for an interview and I'm like, 'I know you ... I used to change your diaper,'" laughs Kreker. "I used to tell you maybe one day you'll work here."

Several staff members have been at the daycare for over 20 years, including Kreker, who started out there on a work practicum during her English language studies and never left.

"I love it here," she says.

"I had worked in childcare back in Russia as well, and I wanted to get back into it ... I loved this place right away, the atmosphere, the staff, the kids."

Today her grandchildren are also daycare kids. She loves getting the chance to see a different side of them as they interact with their daycare pals.

ALWAYS IMPROVING

The daycare always has an improvement project on the go. Most recently they replaced decades-old cabinets in their kitchen.

Now they're working on getting a mud kitchen installed in the sandbox, which will give kids a space to get creative with nature.

"Kids love mud. I love mud," notes Kreker.

Less fun but no less important are the plans as well to upgrade the facility's heating and cooling systems, including the subfloor ductwork.

"It'll be better for the air quality in here. It all needs to be upgraded," Nickel says.

They're also raising funds to add a new playstructure to

the grounds, and to figure out some way to expand their childcare spaces, which have been static for many years now.

"We have ideas about that, but we can't write it in stone just yet," Nickel shares.

The community always comes through for the daycare when it comes to these types of projects, which are made possible thanks to grants and donations.

"We love our community," Nickel says, noting they are frequently the grateful recipients of the proceeds of various fundraisers hosted by local groups, not to mention businesses donating materials or services for the various upgrades through the years.

"We also, as a daycare, we like to give back to the community," she says, pointing in example to lemonade stands they help the kids run to raise funds for Salem Home. "We want to be part of the community, where we give and they give. That part is amazing."

"This daycare has seen lots of ups and lots of downs," Nickel reflects, "and we hope to continue on for a long time in the community to provide the best childcare experience for our families."



Storytime in the outdoor classroom.

"We've got work to do"

From Pg. 2

"Together, we will continue to build a community rooted in dignity, respect, and love," Grenier and Reynolds stressed.

In an interview on Monday, Reynolds noted that while incidents of racially-motivated physical violence are thankfully rare in the Pembina Valley, many newcomers do report experiencing distressing incidents of racism.

"This has definitely opened things up for staff and clients in terms of sharing things they've experienced," he said, noting that while many newcomers praise the area for being welcoming, there has also been an increase of late of people expressing anti-immigrant sentiments.

"Sometimes it's indirect, but pointed things. One person here was sharing that some people in the coffeshop were talking about immigra-

tion and immigrants really negatively and it seemed like intentionally loudly so they could hear, looking at them as they were talking. They were uncomfortable enough that they had to leave. They were with their family and kids and they left. Things like that are happening here."

The best thing community members can do to battle this rising tide in racist attitudes is to speak out when they hear it, Reynolds said, pointing in example to Winkler Police Chief Ryan Hunt's comment to local media last week that such incidents are "despicable."

"This is not what the community is about, and for people to hear that strong condemnation from community members and leadership is really important," said Reynolds.

We can't just pretend it isn't happening, he stressed.

"We've got work to do in the community."



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Go on an adventure this summer

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Central Manitoba Tourism (CMT) has launched a new campaign it hopes will get more people exploring all the cool cultural sites and experiences available across the region this summer.

CMT Adventures invites you to scan QR codes at dozens of participating tourism sites from now until Sept. 15 for a chance to win cash: \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second, and \$250 for third.

Each location you visit means a fresh QR code and another entry into the draw, so the more places you visit, the better your chances of winning, explains CMT summer student Julia Prondzinski.

"This is a great way to get people out and exploring central Manitoba, regardless of whether they've lived here their entire life or it's their first year here or they're just visiting," she said. "We wanted a way for people to get out and explore and get rewarded for doing so."

The list of sites with QR codes is growing.

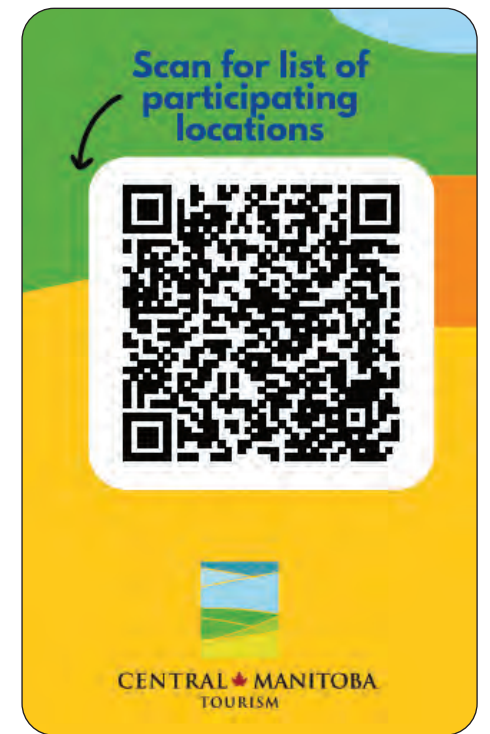
"It's everything from museums to golf courses, hiking trails and parks, and everything in between, including some summer festivals," Prondzinski said.

There were around 40 locations on the list at press time, all across southern Manitoba.

You could stop by Roland's giant pumpkin to earn an entry, or check out the Senkiw swinging bridge in Roseau River, navigate the King Korn Maze near Notre Dame, take a dip at Sunset Beach in Plum Coulee, stop in at the Miami Railway Museum ... the list goes on and on.

"I've lived here my entire life, and I've worked in tourism before, and even I'm still discovering some really unique things that there are to see and discover," Prondzinski said.

For a full list of locations, check out Central Manitoba Tourism's social media pages or scan the URL code at right.



Furever Friends Cat Rescue marking 10 years

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Furever Friends Cat Rescue is marking 10 years of giving abandoned and injured cats in the Pembina Valley a new lease on life.

They're celebrating with an annual summer raffle that's bigger and better than ever, shares Carol Martens, a volunteer with the rescue.

"We have so many amazing prizes this year," she says.

Up for grabs as the grand prize is an 36" Blackstone Omnivore Griddle from Sun Valley Co-op valued at \$699.

Prize pack #2 features a family pass at the RCU Aquatic Centre in Winkler, a one-night stay at the Winkler Day's Inn and Suites, and gift certificates to Meadows Amusements.

Prize pack #3 includes passes to the Oakview Golf Course in Gretna, a gift certificate to the Ukrainian House restaurant, and a jumbo variety pack from Ronnie's Seeds.

There's also an early bird prize pack being drawn on July 28 that includes tickets to the Aug. 9 Winnipeg Gold-eyes game donated by Golden West/CFAM Radio and a gift certificate to Santa Lucia Pizza in Morris.

All these prizes were donated by generous local businesses and supporters, Martens says, and the rescue is so grateful for their help.

The prize draw will take place on Sept. 1.

Tickets are available for \$10 each or three for \$20 from the rescue's booth at the Manitoba Sunflower Festival next weekend, by texting/phoning 204-304-9173, by email to furever_friends@icloud.com, or through the rescue's social media pages.

HUNDREDS OF CATS HELPED

Furever Friends has come a long way over the past decade, Martens shares.

It was founded by Tracy Harder and her husband Stan in 2015 in response to an increase in lost, abandoned and feral cats in the Altona area.

"They're just huge cat people and they saw all these poor cats that were everywhere in town," Martens says. "A lot of them were sick and you could tell they had nowhere to go ... so they made a plan with other people that had the same love for the cats and created the rescue."

Today the group has grown to include six core members and 25 foster homes.

This dedicated team ensures every cat that comes into their care receives medical attention, including being spayed or neutered. They are then socialized by the foster families before being carefully placed with potential adopted families.

Martens estimates they've found homes for upwards of 1,000 cats over the past 10 years, from all over the region.

"We describe [our service area] as the Pembina Valley, because we never know for sure where the need is going to be," she says.

They also work with the Town of Altona on a catch and release program, ensuring feral cats in the community are fixed and healthy. These cats help with rodent control in Altona and are looked after by volunteer caregivers.

All of the rescue's work is made possible only thanks to the generous support of the community, Martens stresses.

"We do fundraisers throughout the

year—bake sales in the spring, fall and winter. We had a Puzzle Palooza earlier this year. And we've had the Mystery Bag fundraiser, and the gift box one around Christmas. And of course the summer raffle," she says. "We try to have things planned throughout the year because we're totally dependent on all these fundraisers to do what we do."

"We are truly grateful for the amazing support we have received from the community."

You can learn more about Furever Friends—including getting involved as a foster or volunteer, making a donation, or viewing the cats currently available for adoption or which need extra care/donations—on their website: fureverfriendsaltona.com.



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EDITORIAL > VIEWPOINTS > LETTERS

The power of hate

Hate does strange things to people. When it takes hold it changes a person, sometimes to a point that they are no longer recognizable to their loved ones and even themselves. We see evidence of its destructive power all over the world, and most recently we saw it close to home.

Last month, three teenagers were charged with various crimes including assault, resisting arrest, possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose, etc. after a man who was out walking with a friend was attacked, had his turban pulled off, and had racial slurs yelled at him.

The 19-year-old is from Alberta while the 18-year-old and 16-year-old are from the Winkler area.

While the entire scenario is awful what makes this crime particularly horrible is that police believe the attack to be racially motivated. Hopefully hate crime charges will be considered.

George Bernard Shaw said, "Hatred is the coward's revenge for being intimidated."

I like this quote because it clearly links hate to fear, and there is no doubt that there is much fear in the

world these days, not just elsewhere but locally too.

While we should be concerned that our communities are harbouring racist hatred and fear we should also be asking ourselves questions about this particular incident.

How do local teenagers develop such a strong fear and hatred of those who appear different than them? A fear so strong that simply seeing a person who is different triggers a violent and hateful attack.

People are not born hateful. Hate is a learned behaviour. To put it another way: hate is a highly contagious viral infection that spreads rapidly if not treated.

Where were these men infected if not locally? Who else in their lives contributed to the state of fear and hate that they have clearly been living in and who else have they infected?

More importantly, what do we, as a community, do about it?

Certainly, there will be people calling for forgiveness and the victims (the witness was also terrorized simply having to watch this event unfold) have that option. In Jewish tradition, forgiveness belongs to the victim alone and is only offered after the offender offers a sincere and believable apology. I like this.

Forgiveness, however powerful, does not erase consequences. Forgiveness does not deal with the disease of hate because forgiveness is reactive.

I like the idea of education to deal with ignorance, fear, and hate but it must be of a particular kind. Simple seminars, public courses, letters of outrage and, dare I say, columns, are of limited value because typically you are preaching to the choir. The people most likely to avail themselves of such options already agree with what is being said. Fear, ignorance, and hate live and thrive in the dark, like cockroaches, with the like minded.

The best kind of education can be offered in schools and pre-schools. Teaching children not to fear difference and to embrace the value of human diversity will go a long way to deal with such attitudes.

We also live in a community that also prides itself on its faith. Faith that professes to love. The leaders of these various communities should be actively and intentionally working together to educate against this kind of fear and hate as well.

This is not a one-time effort either. Education must be ongoing.

We are incredibly fortunate that people from around the world, with different cultures and beliefs have chosen the Pembina Valley to live in, work in and raise a family in. This adds to our strength. Incidents of stupidity like this will drive people away.

Letter policy

The *Voice* welcomes letters from readers on local matters.

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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The Voice is published Thursdays and distributed as a free publication to 21,141 households. Republishing in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Printed in Canada by Prolific Printing. The Voice received financial support from the Government of Canada in 2021.

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

Cripple Creek Music Festival coming up Sunday, July 27

By Lorne Stelmach

The Cripple Creek Music Festival returns for its 44th year with a packed-full day of music on Sunday, July 27.

Cripple Creek brings people out each year for its traditional bluegrass, country, folk and gospel music performed in the shade of the mighty oak and ash trees at the site just south of the Glencross Church.

Lead organizer Art Wiebe believes they have a simple formula for success that has kept the festival going strong since 1982. The traditional style of music is at the heart of the appeal, he says, along with the location.

"I think it's definitely both the music and the site because it's in the shade of the mighty oaks, and it's just fantastic," said Wiebe. "It's toe tapping and just entertaining, soothing music."

The lineup always has some familiar faces as far as performers, but they also strive to mix it up a little bit from year to year.

"We have a waiting list," shared Wiebe. "We have four groups this year who have been here in the past but haven't been here for the last few years."

"We will have a third generation on stage this year doing a complete one-

hour set."

The emphasis is always on local talent from southern Manitoba, and the lineup this year includes Ed Wayne, Orlando & Grace, the Yodeling Farmer's Daughter Juanita Clayton, Rooted in Him, Travelling Kind, Just Passing Thru, 3rd Generation, Joe Wilson and On the Edge.

The day begins with the gospel morning from 10 a.m. to noon followed by more music continuing through the afternoon and evening to 7 p.m.

There will be food available from The Bunker youth ministry as well as snacks from Sunny Day. A shuttle will be available to take people from the overflow parking lot.

Admission is free, but donations are gratefully accepted to support the festival.

Wiebe always hopes they might get some new people coming to enjoy the day.

"We have noticed that the age bracket is getting a little older ... but we have a third generation playing, so there is a younger group of people who are playing and getting involved in it," he said, noting that the fellowship is a big part of the appeal. "You might hear a lot of jamming, different groups and people getting together



VOICE FILE PHOTO

The Cripple Creek Music Festival has a stellar lineup planned for its 44th year next weekend.

and playing. It's a very nice vibe, and it's always good to see ...

"The setting is phenomenal," he said. "It's beautiful, and we are so thankful that Annie Wiebe allows us on a yearly basis to use this site for the festival."

"It's always dependent on the weather of course," he added. "But we've only had three years we've had to cancel. In 1993, we had six inches of rain over the weekend, and it wiped

out a bridge ... and during COVID we had to cancel, so those are the only three times."

Cripple Creek is located about six miles south of Morden on Road 27 West or go seven miles south of Winkler on Highway 32 then six miles west on PR 201 and a half mile north.

You can find more information on the festival at www.facebook.com/CrippleCreekMusicFestivalMB.

Summer reading program off and running at SCRL branches

By Lorne Stelmach

The summer reading program of the South Central Regional Library is well underway, and the initial response shows there is a lot of interest in it.

Winkler branch administrator Jess Martens noted first-day registration had 310 youth sign up compared to 235 opening day a year ago, and the total this year had already reached 470 as of early last week.

"There is a lot of interest, and I think there is a lot of need for the kids to be doing something interesting in the summer," said Martens. "You don't see a lot of other programs like this that are absolutely open to everybody for free ... regardless of their socio-economic status or even the ability to speak English."

The intent of the program is to keep kids reading, as it is otherwise easy for them to slack off over the summer.

"That's exactly the reason why we started the summer reading program ... to avoid the summer slump, as the teachers call it. There's a noticeable amount of reading comprehension loss ... so the program definitely helps with that," Martens said. "And on top of that, it's just fun."

Dubbed Bookland Explorers, the summer reading program is divided into two groups for youth up to age 12 and teens from age 13 and up.

"It's quite similar in terms of the general setup in terms of counting the hours and that kind of thing, but our grand prize for the teen program is that you can win a Nintendo Switch 2," noted Martens.

"For every hour that kids read or are read to by somebody or listen to an audiobook or even time that they spend reading to somebody, they can count that as reading hours," she explained. "They can redeem those hours for tickets for a weekly book draw .. and for every hour they read, they get 10 fun bucks, and they can spend that on grand prize tickets or in our store where we have a lot of small prizes or spend them on grand prize tickets for the big prizes like radio sets and games and things like that."

She noted the program is accessible to all, no matter what their language restrictions may be.

"It doesn't matter if you speak English or not, you can still list the books in your native language and participate that way, so it's great for newcomers as well."

Martens said they were having fun with the theme this year of *Let's Get Wild*.

"If you visit any of our branches, you'll see toucans and snakes and flowers ... we've turned our libraries into big jungles."

It's important to make it enjoyable for the kids, she noted.

"As much as it is that we want to help with the educational aspect of it, we do want it to be enjoyable for the kids. It is summer break, so it's not an assignment. We want to keep it fun," Martens said. "We also have workshops and activities going on all summer, so there's lots for kids to do, and it's not homework by any means."

"It definitely is encouraging to see the interest ... it's fantastic to see kids in the libraries any time of the year, but in summer especially," said Martens. "Despite all the other things they have going on, it's great that the library is still a place that they want to go and they still want to read books, even if we are bribing them a little bit to do so."

Registration continues to the end of July, with programming wrapping up Aug. 16.

"And then each branch will have wind-ups and fun days throughout the summer," Martens said.

Families can keep up to date on all of the events and activities of the branch libraries through the SCRL website and social media.

News or sports tip? E-mail news@winklormordenvoice.ca or call 204-325-6888

Decor Charity Classic coming up August 7

By Lorne Stelmach

The annual Decor Charity Classic golf tournament aims to make a lasting difference in the community by supporting four worthy causes.

It has raised over \$1.6 million since its inception in 2004, and co-chairperson Dave Schellenberg said they are always so grateful their efforts are so well supported year after year.

"It's really close to selling out each year, but we haven't had to turn people away. It's been really nice in that respect," he said, noting though they were already at 146 golfers this past week when "144 would be a full course, but they can go a bit more than that ... this is as early as I can remember that we've kind of filled up, which is a nice problem to have really ... so things have gone really well."

Including the 50 per cent matching amount from Decor Cabinets, the tournament last year raised around \$110,000.

Proceeds each year go to three local charities: Youth for Christ, Pembina Counselling Centre and Pembina Valley Pregnancy Care Centre.

A fourth charity recipient is selected anew each summer. This summer it's Crossroads Christian Communications, an organization with tremendous outreach globally, providing faith-based media content for people of all ages. 100 Huntley Street has been its flagship television program; it is believed to be the

longest running daily television program in Canada.

Crossroads provides messages of faith and inspiration for millions of Canadians and has done so for 60 years. It has also served as a not-for-profit aid agency for over 45 years, having responded in times of natural disaster worldwide, raising funds and partnering with on-site, non-government organizations for emergency relief and long-term rebuilding strategies.

"We are deeply grateful to Decor Cabinets for selecting Crossroads as a beneficiary of this year's charity classic golf tournament," said CEO Kevin Shepherd, noting this "generous support comes at a significant moment as we boldly proclaim Canada strong and free in Christ and unite in prayer for our nation."

"This timely gift will help us share the transforming story of Jesus through inspiring and innovative media to anyone, anywhere, anytime."

The tournament takes place Aug. 7 at the Minnewasta Golf and Country Club in Morden with a shotgun start at 11 a.m.

The entry fee of \$200 includes the green fee and a shared cart as well as other amenities, including snacks and lunch and dinner. To sign-up, head to golf.decorcabinets.com.

Schellenberg said they value having the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of others and value the support of everyone, including the golfers, sponsors, and donors.

"Everybody keeps coming back year after year ...

and when they see that their dollars can go the extra mile

**"THERE'S LOTS OF
SUPPORT FROM OUR
LOCAL COMMUNITY
AND LOTS FROM OUR
SUPPLIERS."**



VOICE FILE PHOTO

by getting matched 50 per cent by Decor, it's pretty compelling if you feel strongly about the charities that are being supported, so I think that's a big draw.

"This year again, we've one or two new sponsors," he added. "So there's lots of support from our local community and lots from our suppliers."

Budding artists at work



PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

The Pembina Hills Arts Council hosted a summer art retreat for kids last Monday and Tuesday at the gallery in Morden. It featured a number of activities such as crochet and bead crafting, origami, and other fun games and outdoor activities. Another summer art retreat is planned for July 29-30.

Measles exposures in Morden-Winkler

By Voice staff

Public health officials are warning of more measles exposure sites in the Morden-Winkler area:

- Menzies Medical Clinic, 130 – 30 Stephen St., Morden on July 3 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Anyone who was in this location at this time is asked to monitor for symptoms until July 25.

- Dynacare (Blood and Medical Test Lab), 130 – 30 Stephen St., Morden on July 3 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Monitor for symptoms until July 25.

- Winkler Medical Clinic (Unit 2, 344 First St.) on Friday, July 4 from 11:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. Monitor for symptoms until July 26.

Initial symptoms may include fever, runny nose, drowsiness, irritability and red eyes. Small white spots

may also develop on the inside of the mouth or throat. Several days after the initial symptoms, a red blotchy rash appears on the face and progresses down the body.

If symptoms occur, contact your health care provider. Call ahead before going to a medical centre so they can take steps to protect others from being exposed to the virus.

Public health is also asking anyone who were in these locations during this time to check their immunization records and ensure they are up to date with measles vaccine (MMR or MMRV).

Further information on measles, exposure sites, and immunization is available at www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/diseases/measles.html or call Health Links-Info Santé toll-free at 1-888-315-9257.

Transitional housing project gets a boost

Genesis House to break ground on 25-unit apartment complex in Winkler next month

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The South Central Committee on Family Violence Inc. (Genesis House) just got a welcome funding boost for its transitional housing project.

The RONA Foundation last week announced the Winkler project as one of the recipients of its 2025 Build from the Heart program, which is presenting \$1.3 million this year to eight non-profits across Canada. Genesis House is receiving \$50,000.

"At the RONA Foundation, we care deeply about improving life in the communities where we take root. Given that access to housing is a major challenge that underscores the vulnerability of many Canadians, we are committed to supporting this cause," says Catherine Laporte, chair of the foundation board and a senior vice-president at the home improvement retailer.

The Build from the Heart initiative was launched in 2022 to provide financial support to non-profit organizations with projects aimed at revitalizing a living environment or facilitating access to housing for victims of domestic violence and their children, low-income families, and people with disabilities or mental health issues.

The Genesis House project certainly fits the bill, and executive director Ang Braun says they're so grateful for this support from the RONA Foundation.

"Thank you, RONA Foundation, for helping make this dream a reality," she said of the 25-

unit apartment complex slated to break ground in Winkler later this summer.

The facility will provide longer-term transitional housing for women and children fleeing violent home situations.

"This is going to be life-changing for so many women," Braun said, stressing it will provide the survivors of domestic violence with a fresh start—not just a safe place to live but also community and programming to support them as they rebuild their lives. "You need an opportunity to heal and to grow and to do that with other people that are going through the same things and understand what is happening. It's going to be a remarkable place."

To put things into perspective, last year just 14 per cent of women who came to stay at the Genesis House shelter successfully found housing when they left it. The year before, that number was just 12 per

cent.

"A large percentage of women aren't able to secure housing while they're with us," Braun said. "We're not kicking them out, but they're just getting exhausted living in a shelter, so they end up going to stay with family or friends."

But that's not a sustainable path, and it leaves many women at risk for returning to their abuser due to a lack of other options. The transitional housing complex will change that.

"There's 59 beds in there, in 25 units, so that's 25 women and 34 kids that will be able to have a different life, a different experience," Braun said. "They will not grow up living in an abu-

"THIS IS GOING TO BE LIFE-CHANGING FOR SO MANY WOMEN."



sive situation."

How long a family will stay in the complex will depend on their needs—for some it may be a few months, others a couple of years.

"They're not going to live out their whole life in this place, but it'll get them on their feet, keep them away from their abuser, and give them the opportunity to make the choices that they want to," Braun said.

The community has stepped up to support this \$16 million project in a big way.

"From the community so far, I would say we've seen at least half a million dollars come in," Braun shared, noting they're also partnering with numerous businesses eager to provide construction services and supplies at cost.

The hope is to have the building up and running in early 2027. Fundraising efforts will continue even as the construction gets underway.

"The project's moving ahead, but we still need to continue with fundraising," Braun said. "There will be all kinds of ways that the community can get involved to support it."

Every apartment in the facility will need to be fully furnished, she noted, as many of the women will be arriving with little more than the clothes on their backs.

"Furniture, dishes, towels—everything will need to be there, so there will be lots of ways that the community can help us with all that as we move forward."

Learn more at genesishouseshelter.ca/transitional-housing/.

Winkler motorcyclist killed in collision with vehicle

By Voice staff

An accident just west of Morden last Wednesday claimed the life of a Winkler resident.

The Morden Police Service along with Morden Fire and Rescue and emergency medical services were called around 6:30 p.m. July 9 to a collision at the intersection of Highway 3 and Buhler Drive.

Police say a vehicle traveling west on the highway had stopped in traffic while waiting to make a left turn onto Buhler Dr. A motorcycle that was also heading west failed to see the vehicle had stopped and collided with the

back of it.

The driver of the motorcycle, a 63-year-old man from Winkler, was transported to Boundary Trails Health Centre. He died from his injuries a short time later.

The driver of the car, a 26-year-old man from Morden, sustained minor injuries and was treated at the scene.

Morden Police remained on the scene into the evening with assistance from the Winkler and Altona police services. At this time, alcohol and drugs are not believed to be factors in the collision.

Police continue to investigate.



your FARM



Watershed technicians unite for field learning in southern Manitoba



By Annaliese Meier

Technicians from Watershed Districts across Manitoba came together in late June for a hands-on, two-day field tour designed to build collaboration, share knowledge, and showcase best practices in watershed management.

Organized by the Manitoba Association of Watersheds (MAW) through its Watershed District Capacity Fund, the event brought together GROW and PWCP coordinators, including participants from the Redboine Watershed District, for site visits in southern Manitoba.

The tour followed up on a more design-focused technical meeting held in March, where attendees discussed mapping and planning strategies. This latest gathering allowed participants to see those concepts in action through on-site demonstrations and

peer-to-peer learning.

Gerrit Maxwell, watershed technician with the Pembina Valley Watershed District, and Rob Nichol, technician with Redboine, led the group through a variety of active project sites. Stops included shelterbelt installations, a tree planter demonstration, and more than eight sites featuring erosion control, low-level crossings, and water retention infrastructure.

"Seeing how these projects play out in real conditions gives us valuable insight," said Nichol. "We can talk through what's working, what might be improved, and how landowner collaboration plays into success."

Such in-person exchanges are essential for professional development, according to organizers, providing a platform to troubleshoot design challenges and refine approaches collectively.

The second day included a demonstration by Lewis Instruments of a Real-Time Kinematic (RTK) Survey Drone, which can collect precise geographic data in real time. The tool enhances technician safety, reduces post-processing workload, and helps streamline planning work in the field.

"Events like this not only keep us current with technology, but also build relationships across districts," said Maxwell. "We're stronger when we share knowledge."

MAW continues to support watershed staff across Manitoba through training opportunities and funding initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery and conservation outcomes.

The Watershed District Capacity Fund is part of MAW's broader mission to protect Manitoba's soil and water resources while helping districts provide top-tier support to landowners.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Technicians from watershed districts across Manitoba take part in a two-day field tour in late June, organized by the Manitoba Association of Watersheds, to share knowledge and explore best practices in watershed management.



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Your FARM



Food currency program connects Manitoba families with local farmers

By E. Antonio

A growing Manitoba program is helping hundreds of low-income families access fresh, locally produced food—while also supporting small-scale farmers and boosting attendance at community markets.

Now in its sixth year, the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program provides eligible households with a \$30 weekly voucher to spend at participating farmers' markets across southern Manitoba. From produce and meat to honey and baked goods, the program allows families to shop for their own groceries while strengthening local food systems.

Kayla Wiebe, co-owner of Border Hills Honey, has been a vendor with the program for five years through the Morden and Winkler farmers' markets. She sees the value firsthand.

"All of the program participants are very happy to buy honey with coupons," said Wiebe, who runs the prairie-based business with her partner Josh. "With food prices going up, we definitely have an extra product that not many people can purchase."

Wiebe said the initiative benefits more than just the families using vouchers.

"A lot of people I talk to say that they usually didn't go to the market due to income, however this makes them feel included in the community," she said. "We are so thankful for this initiative. It doesn't just help the community, but it also helps us farmers stay afloat."

The program began as a pilot in 2020 in Morden, Carman and Winnipeg, supporting 152 households. It now includes 28 partner organizations and more than 750 households shopping at 35 different farmers' markets.

"The community response has been overwhelmingly positive in both rural and urban areas," said Kristie Schertzer, executive director of Direct Farm Manitoba, the non-profit behind the program. "We hear from seniors who are grateful to access fresh veggies for canning, newcomers who are able to choose produce and protein options that they are familiar with, and families who make the farmers' market shop into an outing with their kids."

One of the organizations helping connect families with the program is Morden's Many Hands Resource Centre. Victoria Nash with Many Hands said applications are accepted each May, either through self-referral or community recommendation.

"Through sponsorship from Morden and Area Foundation and Direct Farms, we were able to provide packages to 110 households this summer," Nash said.

To qualify, participants must meet the federal low-income threshold and provide proof of income. This year, Nash said, demand was high and all 2025 vouchers have already been claimed.

"This program is great for everybody involved," she added. "It increases the attendance numbers at the farmers' market, the money goes directly to vendors, and folks who are living with a lower income have access to fresh food and produce."

Schertzer said the program is growing steadily, but expansion is limited by funding. Direct Farm Manitoba is currently requesting a two-year extension of its provincial funding through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership to continue meeting rising demand.

"The support of Manitoba Agriculture has been invaluable," Schertzer



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Kayla Wiebe with Border Hills Honey is a vendor at the Winkler and Morden farmers' markets who participates in the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program.

said. "It is a great relationship as we work directly with farmers' market farmers."

Farmers or market organizers interested in participating can visit www.directfarmmanitoba.ca to learn more or join the waitlist.

"With over 95 per cent of all vouchers being redeemed, it's clear that this program is needed to help fill in the gaps," Schertzer said. "It complements food banks and other pro-

grams, but it also gives families the dignity of choice and the chance to connect with the people growing their food."

"Local food systems need farmers, and they need them to keep farming," she added. "This program provides direct support to local producers, while benefitting households facing food insecurity and building community—we think that is a definite win-win."

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What a weekend!



"Disney Goes Western" was the theme of this year's Hot Spot Festival in Gretna July 11-12. Clockwise from left: The foam party is always a popular event; kiddie carnival games; Maggie Falk and Olivia Neufeld at the gelly ball station; the Saturday morning parade; getting up close with a bovine friend at the petting zoo. The weekend also included line dancing, community meals, fireworks, and musical entertainment from Ed Wayne & The Outlaws and Faces for Radio.



PHOTOS BY
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Elks pig roast raises over \$13K for SCCR

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The Altona Elks' second annual pig roast was a roaring success, allowing the service club to present South Central Cancer Resource with a sizeable cheque last week.

The June 21 fundraising dinner featured food from The Hogman, music by The Pylons, and a silent auction chock-full of prizes.

Upwards of 180 people came out to enjoy the evening, and their support means the Elks were able to hand over a donation of \$9,284 to SCCR. Another \$4,450 came in through direct donations to SCCR the night of the event.

In accepting the cheque, SCCR outreach coordinator Andrea Smith said they are deeply grateful for the Elks for their generous support of families

facing cancer.

"You guys are amazing," she told the group, extending those kudos to everyone who participated to make the dinner such a success.

The money will be used to support things like SCCR's transportation program, which provides rides and financial assistance to cancer patients navigating frequent trips to Winnipeg for treatments.

"In 2024 alone, SCCR spent just over \$175,000 transporting cancer clients and their families," Smith shared.

But that is by no means the only way the agency helps people navigating a cancer diagnosis.

"Our wig and head covering room is available to clients at no cost," Smith continued. "And we provide semi-annual skin screen clinics, we assist with the cost and accessibility



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

Altona Elks Colleen Mullen, Michelle Sawatzky, Lloyd Schroeder, and Guy Mullen, The Pylons band member Ray Schroeder, and The Hogman Marlin Fehr presented SCCR outreach coordinator Andrea Smith with the proceeds of last month's pig roast, totalling \$9,284.

of radon testing, help breast cancer patients with the cost of lymphedema and garments—these are just some of the ways that we can help."

Support from organizations like the Elks is absolutely vital to SCCR,

Smith stressed, noting they receive no governmental funding—everything they do, they do because of community donations.

Continued on page 13

getinformed

Brains abuzz at Morris Biz Camp

By Siobhan Maas

From cement mushrooms and rhubarb leaves to upcycled book pages and cutlery, poured candles to dog toys, and modeling clay creatures to origami bookmarks, the 13 youth participating in Community Future Triple R's Biz Camp had their brains buzzing last week as they learned and navigated their entrepreneurial spirit.

The weeklong day camp focused on business and entrepreneurial skills for youth aged nine to 13. Following a curriculum focused on product development, financials, and marketing, the youth toured several local stores, including Morris Bigway and Home Hardware, lending a hands on approach to business and innovation.

"We always get fantastic feedback from the businesses we visit and community members we pass on the street," shared Shelley Johnston, camp facilitator and general manager at Morris Triple R. "The campers learn what an entrepreneur is, the ups and downs of owning your own business. We cover revenue, expenses, and profit of a business, and also about first impressions and customer service."

The learning didn't stop in the classroom. A scavenger hunt led the camp youth around town, with most of the businesses handing out clues to help

them on their adventure.

"We also took advantage of the pool to cool off," Johnston noted.

By the end of the week, the young entrepreneurs put learned tactics to work: enticing the customer, interacting with potential clients, and ensuring a sale at the Biz Camp Craft Market in conjunction with a free hotdog lunch courtesy of Bigway.

"It's good to support and encourage kids to pursue an entrepreneurial spirit," said Kieran, a local resident and shopper who stopped at the market and purchased a product from each budding entrepreneur.

The Town of Morris Recreation Department helped deliver the program for the first time ("A new partnership, which has worked out very well," they said) alongside camp student facilitator Leah Klaassen, 16, whose father owns his own business.

Klaassen finds value in the program she herself participated in a few years ago.

"The participants learn the qualities and benefits of a business owner," she said. "The program also makes it possible for young people to learn about money."

"We learned about...patience," shared one participant during the market. Another enjoyed "spending time making the product, and the free

**"THE PARTICIPANTS
LEARN THE QUALITIES
AND BENEFITS OF A
BUSINESS OWNER."**



PHOTOS BY
SIOBHAN MAAS/VOICE

Kids got the chance to sell their wares after spending the week learning about the business world at the Community Futures Triple R's Biz Camp in Morris.

time. We didn't need to work in a book the entire time."

A similar camp is being offered in Altona at the Rhineland Pioneer Center July 21-25, with Market Day taking place at the Altona Mall on the July 25. To register your child, head to altona.ca.



> ELKS DONATION, FROM PG. 12

"Their commitment helps us continue offering the services and support our clients rely on."

For their part, the Elks are certainly happy to help.

Member Guy Mullen said you could feel the support radiating from everyone who attended that night.

"In the air was love and kindness and fun," he said. "And it was absolutely fabulous."

"So many people and businesses donated prizes to be raffled off—everyone was eager to help cancer patients in our area," Mullen said. "And that's the beauty of it—the money stays in our area to help local people."

Mullen stressed this event is a joint effort

between the Elks, The Pylons, and "Hogman" Marlin Fehr, who came up with the idea for a fundraising supper in support of cancer services a few years ago.

"We were talking about this just because of everybody's past experiences with cancer—everyone has a friend or family member who's been affected," Fehr noted.

They're already looking at how to make next year's supper bigger and better.

"We're thinking we'll have to go to a larger venue," Mullen said.

"A huge thank-you to everyone that supported us—we hope to see them all next year."

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IN MORRIS MB



60 years of spirit at the Manitoba Stampede this weekend

By Siobhan Maas

The Stampede grounds in Morris are heating up as the Valley Agricultural Society prepares to host the 60th annual Manitoba Stampede & Exhibition July 18-20.

Last year's Stampede drew nearly 38,000 spectators, exhibitors, and competitors to town, and with the event growing annually, impressive turnout is also expected this weekend.

"2025 marks six decades of Manitoba's only professional rodeo with over 300 rodeo competitors entered in events this year," said society general manager Malissa Dreger Lewis of the three days of grandstand performances beginning with pony chuckwagon races and chariot racing on Friday afternoon.

In 2024, both Saturday grandstand performances were sold out by mid-afternoon. Pre-purchasing tickets online before coming to the grounds is encouraged, although no refunds are provided if inclement weather should arise.

With visitors and competitors from places as far away as Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, and across North America, the weekend event is an international celebration for small-town Manitoba.

"We are grateful to the loyal patrons who return year after year and welcome those who are experiencing the Manitoba Stampede & Exhibition for the first time," Dreger Lewis said. "There is a strong sense of community involvement that goes into bringing a world-class show to southern Manitoba."

While the ticketed grandstand events are always popular, there is plenty of free family-friendly exhibition programming happening as well.

Manitoba Mounted Shooters, Manitoba Team Penning Association, several Gymkanas that include 40 participants and 12 peewee riders, the Manitoba Stock Dog Association finals, and the Southeast Manitoba Draft Horse Association's farm chore demonstration are all on the schedule.

"The farm chore show is an educational event that showcases how heavy horses used to deliver milk or oats. They'll back a trailer into a stall, and go through a course to simulate maneuvering through narrow spaces," shared Matt Hoffman, long time VAS board member and fair director. "All fair events are free to come and watch."

Hoffman grew up in Morris and honours the commitment of the community as part of the reason the Stampede has thrived for 60 years.

"There aren't many pro rodeos that last this long. The Stampede has a long history. We're talking generations of volunteers that come together, that are the heart of this community," he said as he spoke of the founding of the VAS in 1895. "We've been preparing the grounds this month, something people have done in Morris for 130 years. It's pretty cool."

"There is something for everyone in the family at the Stampede," assured Dreger Lewis of the weekend.

Events begin Thursday evening with the Morris Fire Department hosting their annual fundraising Kick-Off Steak Dinner from 6-8:30 p.m. at the Scratching River Saloon.

The Morris & District Chamber of Commerce welcomes families to their Kick-Off at the grounds from 6-8 p.m. with free cotton candy and hot dogs, bouncers, face painting and numerous interactive games followed by line dancing instruction with choreographer Curtis Dooma at the main stage from 8-9 p.m.

Continued on page 4



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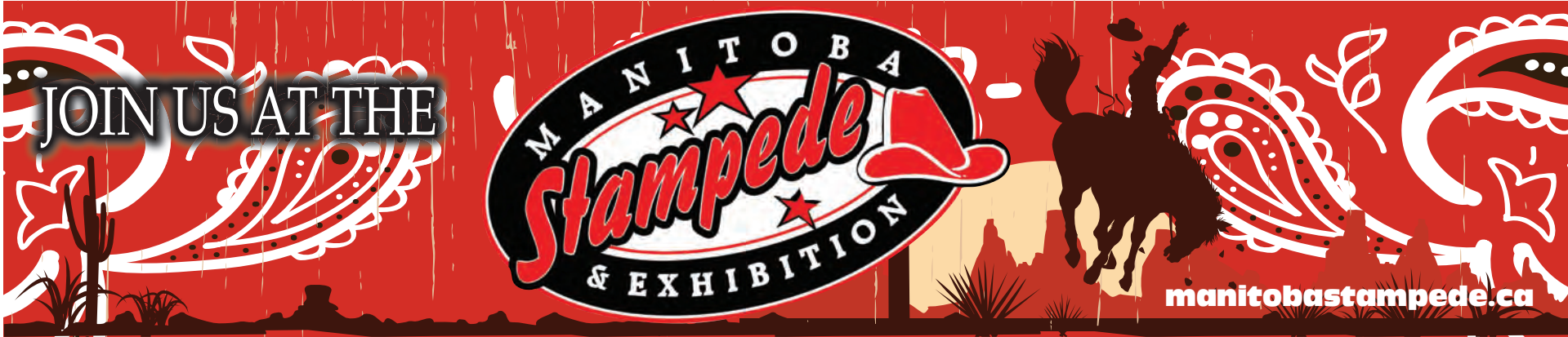
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	EVENT	LOCATION	EVENT	LOCATION	EVENT	LOCATION
7:30 AM	PANCAKE BREAKFAST	ACCESS CREDIT UNION				
8:00 AM			STOCK DOG TRIALS Brought to you by OSTLUND FALLS	PRECISION LAND SOLUTIONS ARENA	STOCK DOG TRIALS Brought to you by OSTLUND FALLS	PRECISION LAND SOLUTIONS ARENA
9:00 AM			TEAM PENNING	ACCUIPE ARENA	TEAM PENNING	
10:00 AM	PETTING ZOO Brought to you by ACCESS CREDIT UNION	PETTING ZOO BARN	MANITOBA STAMPEDE & EXHIBITION PARADE	LUCINDA STREET, MORRIS, MB	PETTING ZOO Brought to you by ACCESS CREDIT UNION	PETTING ZOO BARN
	GYMKHANA	PRECISION LAND SOLUTIONS ARENA	PETTING ZOO Brought to you by ACCESS CREDIT UNION	PETTING ZOO BARN	PONY RIDES	HEAVY HORSE BARN
	PONY RIDES	HEAVY HORSE BARN	PONY RIDES	HEAVY HORSE BARN	CHURCH SERVICE	MAIN GRANDSTANDS
			INDOOR CONCESSIONS	MORRIS MULTIPLEX		
11:00 AM	BEER GARDENS	SCRATCHING RIVER SALOON	BEER GARDENS	SCRATCHING RIVER SALOON	BEER GARDENS	SCRATCHING RIVER SALOON
	OUTDOOR CONCESSIONS		PRAIRIE EXOTICS EXHIBIT	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING	PRAIRIE EXOTICS EXHIBIT	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING
	PRAIRIE EXOTICS EXHIBIT	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING	SCHOOL WORK & DISPLAYS	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING	SCHOOL WORK & DISPLAYS	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING
	SCHOOL WORK & DISPLAYS	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING	OUTDOOR CONCESSIONS		INDOOR CONCESSIONS	MORRIS MULTIPLEX
					OUTDOOR CONCESSIONS	
NOON	MR. CIRCUS - Children's Entertainment	MAIN STAGE	MR. CIRCUS - Children's Entertainment	MAIN STAGE	MR. CIRCUS - Children's Entertainment	MAIN STAGE
	TEAM SORTING	ACCUIPE ARENA	MIDWAY OPENS	MIDWAY	MIDWAY OPENS	MIDWAY
1:00 PM	MATT ZIMMERMAN	MAIN STAGE	MATT ZIMMERMAN	MAIN STAGE	MATT ZIMMERMAN	MAIN STAGE
	REPTILE SHOW	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING	REPTILE SHOW	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING	REPTILE SHOW	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING
	TEAM PENNING					
	INDOOR CONCESSIONS	MORRIS MULTIPLEX				
2:00 PM	PONY CHUCKWAGON & CHARIOT RACING	MAIN GRANDSTANDS	MANITOBA'S ONLY PROFESSIONAL RODEO	MAIN GRANDSTANDS	MANITOBA'S ONLY PROFESSIONAL RODEO	MAIN GRANDSTANDS
					PONY CHUCKWAGON & CHARIOT RACING	
	MIDWAY OPENS	MIDWAY				
	FARM CHORE SHOW	PRECISION LAND SOLUTIONS ARENA				
3:00 PM			FARM CHORE SHOW	ACCUIPE ARENA		
4:30 PM	POWWOW DEMONSTRATION	FIRST NATION PAVILION	POWWOW DEMONSTRATION	FIRST NATION PAVILION		
5:00 PM	MR. CIRCUS - Children's Entertainment	MAIN STAGE	MR. CIRCUS - Children's Entertainment	MAIN STAGE		
	MB MOUNTED SHOOTERS Brought to you by ALTONA FARM SERVICE	ACCUIPE ARENA	MB MOUNTED SHOOTERS Brought to you by ALTONA FARM SERVICE	ACCUIPE ARENA		
6:00 PM	MATT ZIMMERMAN	MAIN STAGE	MATT ZIMMERMAN	MAIN STAGE		
	REPTILE SHOW	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING	REPTILE SHOW	SOUTH ORANGE BUILDING		
7:00 PM	MANITOBA'S ONLY PROFESSIONAL RODEO	MAIN GRANDSTANDS	PONY CHUCKWAGON & CHARIOT RACING	MAIN GRANDSTANDS		
9:15 PM	NELSON LITTLE	MAIN STAGE	NELSON LITTLE	MAIN STAGE		
10:15 PM	PRAIRIE LINE	MAIN STAGE	THE SEAN TAYLOR BAND	MAIN STAGE		



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A pancake breakfast hosted by Access Credit Union begins at 7:30 a.m. on Friday morning at the Morris branch parking lot, and a Saturday morning parade starts at 10 a.m. along Lucinda Street.

A petting zoo, pony rides, and reptile exhibit are all located in the south barns of the grounds.

Live music begins at midday daily and includes performances from country music artists Matt Zimmerman, Nelson Little, Prairie Line, and The Sean Taylor Band.

Discounted midway tickets are available for pre-purchase at Rempel Insurance Brokers and Morris Bigway until Thursday. Regular price tickets can be purchased at the midway during the weekend.

The popular Gathering of Nations powwow takes place on Friday and Saturday afternoon at the First Nations Pavilion located at the south end of the Grounds.

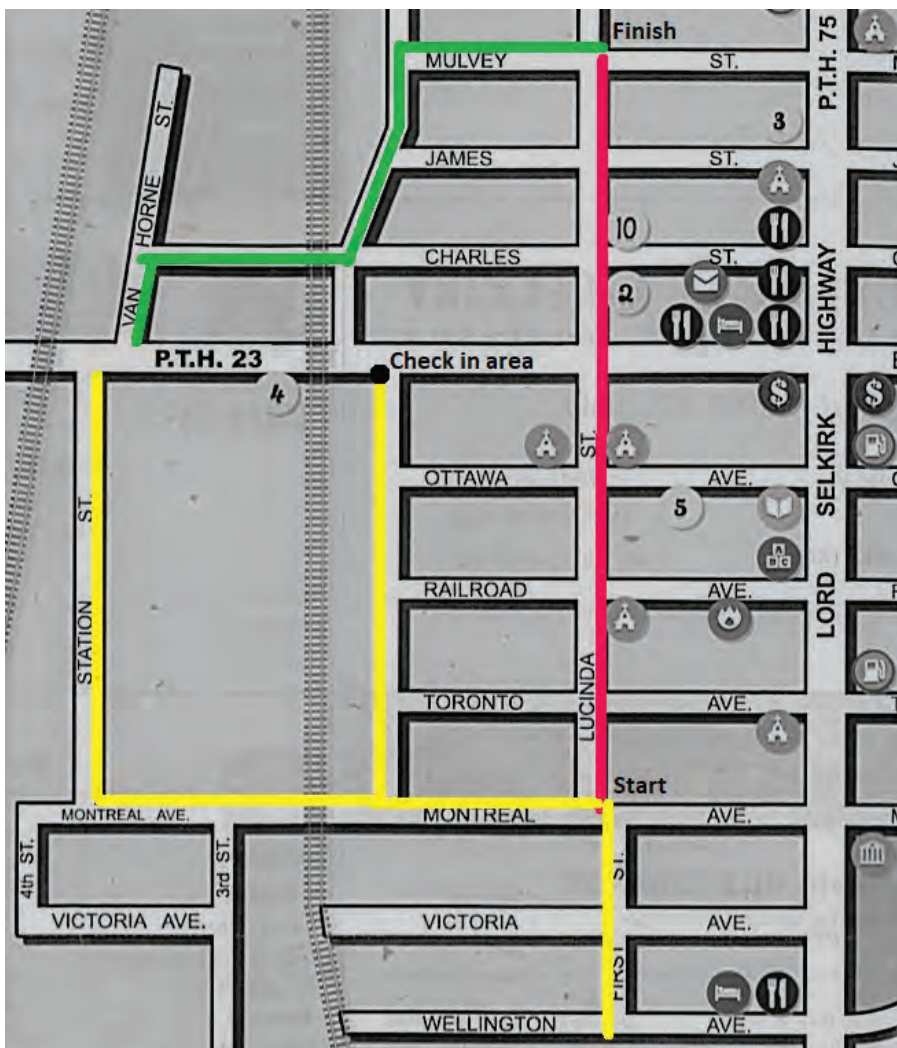
Grandstand events take place on Friday and Saturday at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday's rodeo begins at 2 p.m.

"The patrons, volunteers and competitors make this weekend possible," stressed Dreger Lewis. "Their continued support inspires the Valley Agricultural Society to keep growing, improving and proudly hosting this signature event in the Town of Morris and for the Province of Manitoba. We run rain or shine."



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- Parade Route
- Parade Participants Exit Route



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sports & recreation



Local teams bring home the hardware

By Voice staff

Local teams had a strong showing at the baseball provincials held across Manitoba last weekend.

At the 13U Tier 1 event in Seine River, Winkler and Morden teams battled it out in the gold medal match, with Winkler coming out ahead 5-1 to bring home the trophy.

At the 13U Tier 3 provincials in Rivers, Morden made it to the semi-finals against the home team, narrowly falling 7-6. Rivers went on to win gold.

At the 15U Tier 1 provincials in Altona, Winkler came home with a silver medal after losing 14-9 to Steinbach in the final.

And at the 18U Tier 1 event in Morden, Altona clinched gold by besting

ABOVE PHOTOS
SUPPLIED

Above, left: Winkler won the U13 Tier 1 gold medal last weekend. Above, right: Altona took the U18 Tier 1 title in Morden. Right: Regional rivals Altona and Morden squared off at the U18 event. The Bisons won it 7-3 and later beat the Morden Yellow team again in the final 8-5.



PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

the Morden Mud Hens Yellow team 8-5 in the final.

At the Morden event, Morden Mud

Hens Maroon player Tyler Fehr won the home run derby champion title with six home runs.

Whips, Morden at top of Border Baseball standings

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The Morden Mud Hens wrapped up their regular season in the Border Baseball League on a high note July 8, downing the visiting Winkler Whips 6-2.

It closed out the season for both teams, giving Winkler a 9-5 record and first place in the East Division standings. Morden was at 7-6-1 in second place followed by the Altona Bisons at 6-6-2 in third and the Carman Cardinals at 5-8-1 in fourth place.

In the West Division, the Cartwright Twins topped the standings at 12-2 followed by Baldur (9-5), Pilot Mound

(7-7), Clearwater (4-10), and Holland (2-12).

Playoff action Thursday night saw Morden best Altona 8-4. The series was to continue Monday in Altona and Tuesday night in Morden.

The Whips, meanwhile, stumbled in their series opener against Carman, falling 6-4. They then dropped game two Friday night 8-2. Game three was Tuesday in Winkler.

Elsewhere in the league, the Pilot Mound Pilots were leading their series against the Baldur Regals 2-0 while the Cartwright Twins were up 1-0 over Clearwater at press time.



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

Morden beat Winkler 6-2 in the last game of the regular season July 8.

U11 Altona Bisons win provincial gold

By Voice staff

The U11 Altona Bisons—playing as South Central—clinched gold at the Tier 3 provincial championship in Hamiota July 4-6.

The boys dominated that weekend, downing Ozunko 6-2, the Hamiota Red Sox 5-1, the Lundar Brewers 9-8, and Killarney 13-2 to finish first in their pool.

They then eked out a 7-6 win against Rock Lake in the semi-finals to earn a seat at the gold medal match against Blumenort, which they won 1-0.

The shutout effort included five in-

nings of perfect pitching from Ivan Braun and one from Bowen Siemens, as well as notable catches from Colin, Madden, and Bennett.

The win ends what was an up and down season on a high point, shares coach Michael Luptak.

"To complete a successful season we had essential contributions in persistence, attitude, as well as hitting, fielding and base-running from Chel-sea Neufeld, Roan Friesen, Bennett Friesen, and Zoey Foord," he shared.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The U11 Tier 3 provincial champs: coaches Andrew Braun, Mike Luptak, Mark Braun with players Colin Hildebrandt, Jace Fast, and Ivan Braun (front row); Kolton Heinrichs, Madden Lamotte, Riley Wall, Kyle Penner, and Bennett Luptak (middle row); and Bowen Siemens (behind banner). Missing is manager Aimee Braun, coach Terrence Braun, and Jackie Fast.

End of the line for Bisons, Orioles facing Wolves

By Lorne Stelmach

The Pembina Valley Orioles' playoff hopes were still alive going into this week while the Altona Bisons saw their season come to an end.

The third-place Orioles were taking on the sixth-place Winnipeg South Wolves, and they fell 12-10 in game one Friday before rebounding to win game two 6-5 Sunday. The series will be decided with game three Wednesday night in Winkler.

Meanwhile, the last-place Altona Bisons took on the second-place Elmwood Giants, and the Bisons fell 11-1 Friday and then 9-4 Sunday.

The Orioles went into their series after having dropped their final regular season game 11-5 to the first-place Carillon Sultans, while the Bisons finally got one in the win column by closing things out with a 5-4 victory over the fifth place St. Boniface Legionnaires.

In game one, the Orioles faced a seven-run deficit in the seventh inning but almost managed to make it up before just falling short in scoring five runs on five hits in the bottom of the seventh. Owen Goertzen was two for two at the plate, and Ethan Klassen, Jared Hildebrand, and Kieran Madill

each drove in two runs.

Goertzen then drove in four runs on two hits to lead Pembina Valley to victory in game two. It included a three run home run in the third inning as well as a double in the first inning. Hits were 7-6 in favour of Winnipeg South.

Five runs in the bottom of the third inning got things going for Elmwood in game one against Altona, and hits were 8-1 in favour of the Giants, who had pitcher Colson Smith give up only one hit and one run over five innings while striking out 10.

The Bisons only trailed 6-4 through

six innings in game two but then gave up three more runs in the top of the seventh to fall to defeat.

Finlay Dobbelaere had a strong game in going three for four at the plate for Altona, while Reece Fehr gave up six hits and five runs over four innings on the mound.

Winkler Storm wins prov'l softball gold

The Winkler Storm clinched gold at the U13 A Female Softball Provincial Championships July 6 in Winnipeg, capping off a flawless round robin showing with victories over Portage (8-1), Virden (14-7), and Morden Gold (13-6) en route to the final against Hamiota, which they won 7-3. Meanwhile, taking home the bronze medal at the event was Morden Maroon, who beat their Gold counterparts 11-4 in the third-place match.

WINKLER MINOR BALL PHOTO



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Winkler's Capri Froese making a splash

By Lorne Stelmach

A Winkler girl is earning attention for her success as a competitive swimmer.

The latest challenge for Capri Froese was the 2025 ManSask summer long course provincial championships this past weekend at the PanAm Pool in Winnipeg.

It was one of the largest swim meets hosted in Winnipeg in years with around 460 athletes from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia competing in timed races based on age groups before ending the meet on Sunday with a provincial relay where it was a province-versus-province showdown.

Froese came out of the event with three medals including a gold in the 50m backstroke, a silver in the 13-14 year old team 200m relay, and a bronze in the 100m butterfly. As well, in the 12 and under 200m provincial team relay, Team Manitoba placed second.

"I'm hoping to go to the Olympics," the 12-year-old said of her long term goals in the pool.

She swims with the Winkler Barracudas through the summer months and with the University of Manitoba Bisons in the winter.

In her first year with the 'Cudas, she was rookie of the year and then MVP in her second year with the most points, which led her into the Manitoba Summer Games last year, which took her into winter swim.

Froese took to swimming at a young age.

"I've always loved it," she said. "I really like being with my team because everyone there is very supportive, and when I'm just racing and in the water, I feel very free."

There is obviously a lot of practice and training time that

goes into it to make her successful.

"We train every day," shared Froese, noting how they would leave at 6 a.m. for practice in Winnipeg from 8-9 a.m., but there was a time when she was up at 4 a.m. because practice was from 6-7 a.m.

"I don't mind it," she said. "It's lot of practice ... and there's also working out at home, doing weights."

Her favourite event is the 200 metre individual medley which involves doing the butterfly stroke followed by the backstroke, breaststroke, and then freestyle

"It does feel good," Froese reflected of her success.

"We are proud of her every time I see her get into the water ... how amazing she is," said Kezia, her mother.

"That's the reason I'm willing to put in the time and the effort," added her dad, Travis. "She enjoys it ... and that helps me and motivates me to put in my time and effort so that she can succeed. We don't have to force her to do it ... we're just there to support her."

Over the next few seasons, Froese hopes to keep taking it to the next level and perhaps then could ultimately earn a scholarship.

To qualify for ManSask, swimmers must meet their AA level qualification times, something many have been preparing for all season with coaches tailoring the training and swimming programs leading up to the meet.

The ManSask competition is the final Swim Manitoba



SUPPLIED PHOTO

event this season in Winnipeg, although some swimmers will continue training leading up to the Canada Summer Games. For those on Team Manitoba headed to St. John's in August, the meet serves as a launchpad, being their last major competition before the Canada Games.

Central Energy squads gear up for provincials

By Annaliese Meier

As the 2025 Softball Manitoba provincial championships approach, Central Energy's four female teams are rounding into form with strong showings across their respective divisions.

Central Energy U17 closed out regular season play in first place and head into provincials this weekend in Stonewall as a top contender. The squad wrapped up their schedule with a commanding 14-0 win over Westman Magic and a 17-8 victory in a doubleheader on Sunday.

Mya Richard went 3-for-3 in the first game, while Kara Buhler powered the offence in the second, smashing two home runs and driving in four. Taylor Wall and Eve English each had four hits in the 17-run effort, while Molly Cowan pitched the win.

The weekend followed a split against Interlake Phillies, where Central took a 9-1 win behind Cowan's four-RBI game before falling 11-5 in a late-inning loss.

Central Energy U19 currently sit second in their standings and will look to ride their momentum into the playoff rounds. Full results were not available at press time, but the team remains firmly in medal contention.

The U17 and U19 teams will be in Stonewall this weekend to compete in their respective provincial championships.

U15 preparing for Winnipeg provincials

Central Energy U15 sit third in the standings with games still to play before provincials, which are set for July 24-27 in Winnipeg. The team continues to refine its lineup and build momentum in the final weeks of league play.

U13 finishes fourth, off to Friedensfeld

Central Energy U13 finished fourth in regular season play and will travel to Friedensfeld for provincials this weekend.

The team recently split a doubleheader against Smitty's Terminators. They won 8-2 behind solid pitching from



PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

Central Energy's U17 AAA squad split their Saturday doubleheader with the Interlake Phillies in Morden, cruising to a 9-1 win in game one before falling 11-5 in the rematch.

Brady W and Emma S, and strong baserunning with nine steals on the day. In the rematch, they suffered a tough 8-7 walk-off loss after giving up a 7-0 lead. Reese F drove in four runs in the loss with a grand slam in the first inning.

With several teams finishing in strong form and others peaking at the right time, Central Energy will be well-represented as provincial titles are decided across the province in the coming weeks.



Golden Glove winner

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Winklerite Brielle Thiessen of the Morden Mudhens was awarded the Golden Glove at the 2025 U17 A Female Softball Manitoba Provincial Championships in Steinbach. She batted .545 across four games with six hits, six runs scored, and six RBIs. She added a triple and reached base in seven of her 12 plate appearances, posting a 1.311 on-base percentage plus slugging percentage. Morden narrowly missed the playoffs despite finishing 2-1 in Pool A. Their only loss came to Hamiota, and a run differential tiebreaker left them third in their pool.

Ghosts of the Sea headlines GIFF with a story of family, shipwrecks and the search for truth

Tangvald's emotional documentary retraces the mysterious deaths of her father and brother at sea

By E. Antonio

Blending personal memoir and maritime mystery, *Ghosts of the Sea* headlines the Gimli International Film Festival with a powerful story of family, shipwrecks and the search for truth.

Written, directed and researched by Virginia Tangvald—the daughter and sister of the late sailors featured in the film—*Ghosts of the Sea* screens July 23 and 26 as part of this year's festival lineup.

The documentary follows Tangvald's journey as she searches for answers about the mysterious death of her brother, Thomas, who died in a 2014 shipwreck, much like her father, Peter, did in 1991.

Featuring a variety of real-life characters who crossed paths with both Thomas and Peter, *Ghosts of the Sea*

provides viewers with a candid look into Tangvald's quest. "I don't want to be lost the way you are lost," she states—a line that encapsulates the film's central theme.

She travels across the globe—Canada, France, French Guiana and Andorra among the stops—trying to understand the reasons behind Thomas's "unnautical" trek, as described by his godmother.

The documentary uses actual newspaper articles, photographs, nautical logs and a television interview with Thomas to add authenticity and emotional depth.

The cinematography heightens the emotional weight of the narrative. B-roll footage, lighting and a carefully written script support the cast's integrity. One notable artistic choice



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Virginia Tangvald steers through open waters in a scene from *Ghosts of the Sea*, her personal documentary about the deaths of her father and brother at sea. The film screens July 23 and 26 at the Gimli International Film Festival.

by Tangvald is the use of subtitles for francophone characters instead of dubbing, allowing viewers to hear the raw emotion in their original voices.

Ghosts of the Sea is ideal for anyone who enjoys solving puzzles. Stirring emotions of suspense, anger and sadness, the film invites viewers to draw their own conclusions through subtle foreshadowing, effectively casting them in the role of investigator alongside Tangvald. The thought-provoking themes remain engaging throughout the 97-minute runtime.

Although not forewarned, viewers should be advised that the film contains brief nudity, including several images of a woman's bare breasts.

Ghosts of the Sea plays at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, July 23 in the Asper Theatre at the Unitarian Church, and at 4 p.m. on Saturday, July 26 in the Lady of the Lake Theatre. For tickets and a full list of GIFF programming, visit www.gimlifilm.com.

GIFF 2025 AT A GLANCE

July 23–27

Gimli, Manitoba

Screenings at venues including:

- Asper Theatre, Unitarian Church
- Lady of the Lake Theatre
- Johnson Hall
- Gimli Theatre

Tickets available online at gimlifilm.com or at the GIFF box office

Featured Films:

A few of the 2025 lineup highlights:
• *Ghosts of the Sea* – July 23 at 9:30 a.m. (Asper Theatre)

July 26 at 4 p.m. (Lady of the Lake Theatre)

• *Odd Fish* – LGBTQ2SIA+ story set in Iceland

• *Snow Leopard Sisters* – Indigenous-led environmental documentary

• *Becoming Air* – short film documentary

• *Best in Show* – Canadian comedy throwback screening



GIFF celebrates 25 years with packed lineup of films, beach screenings and special events

By Annaliese Meier

The Gimli International Film Festival is celebrating its 25th anniversary this summer with a full slate of film screenings, special events and its signature beachfront cinema experience.

Running July 23 to 27, the festival will showcase more than 100 films, including international features, documentaries, short films and regional premieres. Programming will span themes such as social justice, climate action, Indigenous storytelling and LGBTQ2SIA+ voices.

Among the most anticipated titles is *Agatha's Almanac*, a Western Canada premiere that follows a 90-year-old woman's efforts to save her family farm in southern Manitoba. Other

feature highlights include *The Teacher*, a Palestinian drama set in the West Bank, and *U Are the Universe*, a Ukrainian-French sci-fi about a space-truck driver navigating distant worlds.

Festivalgoers can also expect animated fare like *Endless Cookie*, which tells the story of mixed-heritage siblings on a journey from Toronto to Shamattawa, and *How to Live*, a documentary spotlighting Nairobi's queer ballroom scene. Rounding out the lineup are *Tight Lines*, a story of female fishing guides in Iceland, and *When We Became Folk Fest*, a new film documenting the roots of the Winnipeg Folk Festival.

The ever-popular RBC Sunset Screenings will return each evening with free films projected on a giant screen at Gimli Beach. This year's beachside lineup includes *Best in Show* (2000), *Space Jam* (1996), *Stop Making Sense* (1984, newly restored), *Almost Famous* (2000) and *The Thing* (1982).

In addition to film screenings, the festival will host the RBC Emerging Filmmaker Pitch Competition on July 26, where five finalists will present their ideas for a chance to win \$15,000 in production funding. Other events include the 48-Hour Film Challenge, a new Global Industry Summit, and a 25th anniversary awards gala.

Sunday morning is the family friendly screenings with the All-You-Can-Eat Cereal Cartoon Party for \$20.

Short film packages will highlight works from across the globe, with dedicated programs for circumpolar cinema, environmental storytelling and Manitoba-made films.

A special shuttle service between Winnipeg and Gimli will run daily during the festival to help attendees make the trip to the lakeside community.

Full program details and screening schedules are available at gimlifilm.com.

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

Fun By The
Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

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

Sudoku Answer

	D	E	P	S			S	E	E	D
S	E	N	O	L	V		S	E	R	E
E	T	I	B	V	T	S		S	O	G
	E	I	D		G	N	I	T	V	I
S	A	V	A		V	E	N	I	T	
B	V	T	S		S	O	P		V	E
	S	E	E	T	M	E	R	B	E	H
	S	A	V	R	S		U	O	N	
	S	E	P		O	S	T	V	B	U
D	O	S		S	E	O	T	V		G
E	A	I	T	V	V	P		R	E	I
E	R	U	S	N	E	C		G	E	T
D	E	R	I	V	P		S	E	R	A
S	B	M	S				S	A	P	S

Crossword Answer



CROSSWORD

CLUES ACROSS

1. Resorts
5. One point south of southwest
9. Musical performances
11. Matched
13. Four-footed animal part
15. Express severe disapproval of
16. Type of leaf
17. Preparatory
19. Walk heavily
21. Succulent plants
22. Rectangle of grass
23. Lump in yarn
25. Too
26. Foot (Latin)
27. Afflicts
29. Smoothed
31. Mind (Greek)
33. Tampa ballclub
34. Semitic language
36. Sheltered sides
38. Ocean
39. Electronic point of sale
41. Thrust a knife into
43. 12th month (abbr.)
44. Ringworm
46. Father of Aoris (Greek myth.)
48. Fighting back
52. Cease to exist
53. Insects in adult stage
54. Freestanding sculpture
56. Caps
57. Repents
58. Brown and Wallace are two
59. Moved quickly

CLUES DOWN

1. Goes bad

	1	2	3	4			5	6	7	8	
9					10			11			12
13					14		15				
16				17			18				
19			20		21					22	
	23			24		25				26	
		27			28		29		30		
			31			32		33			
		34					35		36		37
	38				39		40		41		42
43					44			45		46	47
48			49	50					51		52
53							54			55	
56								57			
	58									59	

2. Yard structure
3. They ____
4. Marine invertebrate
5. European river
6. Office supplies firm
7. Physically abused
8. Service stations in Australia
9. Kills
10. Liquid body substances
11. Particular to a given individual
12. Brave or noble act
14. Sicilian city
15. Conqueror
18. Elected officials
20. Type of "pig"
24. Drop of viscous substance

26. Monetary unit of Spain
28. Guarantees
30. Coloring materials
32. Reddish browns
34. Square measure
35. Will not
37. Canned fish
38. Appeared
40. Six (Spanish)
42. Took off
43. Negligible amount
45. Posts in a Greek temple
47. Witnesses
49. Phil ___, former CIA
50. Places to park
51. Guns
55. Dance to pop music

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We will meet again because God gave us a choice...
So for now, I will wait...
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-Forever and Always, Sherry



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OBITUARY



Henry Friesen

February 12, 1948 – July 9, 2025

It is with sad hearts that we announce the passing of our dear father and friend Henry Friesen. He passed away on July 9, 2025 with his wife by his side after enduring a long battle with Parkinsons.

Henry leaves behind his loving wife Dell of 52 years, his two precious daughters, Kerri and Courtney and their families. Two brothers, Will (Irmgard), George (Leah), and one sister, Susan (Ed), and one sister-in-law Anne (Murray) and many nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the staff at Boundary Trails Hospital for the compassionate care they provided to Dad during his final days. We are also deeply grateful for the support of our family and friends during this difficult time – it has

meant so much to us.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to, Parkinson's Canada, Boundary Trails Health Centre Foundation, or Katie Cares.

Your memory will live forever Engraved within our hearts

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The Carman-Dufferin
STANDARD

Daggerss named to national accelerator program

By Lorne Stelmach

A radio-charting producer, songwriter, and musical artist with roots in Altona is earning attention for her work.

Known as Daggerss, Laura Smith was one of seven talented producer-songwriters selected for Music Publishers of Canada 2025 Women in the Studio National Accelerator program, which supports the professional growth of music producers from across Canada.

Now in its seventh year, the accelerator program targets mid-career producers who are already producing for others and aims to equip them with skills and connections vital for them to take the next step in their music industry career.

This year's program runs virtually from June through October and will include an in-person residency week in Toronto this month. Throughout the program, participants will engage in a range of workshops covering topics including technical and songwriting skills, branding and financial literacy and will provide opportunities for creative collaborations and networking with key music industry professionals.

"It feels great to be part of the movement of changing things in the studio," said Smith, who welcomes the opportunity to be part of helping advance others in the industry.

"Since I started producing, I've just been attracting more female, non-binary or gender-expansive artists," she said.

"I think for a long time, even for myself, I just had limited options of people to work with ... so it's kind of fun to work with someone that you can see yourself in," Smith suggested. "I feel really honoured to be able to help elevate the voices of people who have been a little less represented ... and also to mentor other up and coming producers."

Daggerss is known for her glittery, emotionally

rich sound, built on lush synths and infectious melodies from her Sprkl Studio.

She has toured, recorded and written songs internationally and boasts multiple sync placements on major film/tv networks that include Being Human (NBC), Motive (CTV) and Mysticons (Nickelodeon).

In 2024, Daggerss was part of the SHE-Q incubator and song camp at the National Association of Music Merchants Show, Women In Music Canada's export program to Sweden, the S.A.C. pro songworks songwriting camp and Manitoba Music's LA export mission, all while writing and producing countless songs for artists from around the world.

Smith was a co-founder and leading member of indie pop duo Rococode and is currently an organizer for the Good + Plenty Producers Club, advocating for women, 2spirit, non-binary and gender-expansive individuals within the music and music production industry.

She grew up with music including playing piano and singing in choirs, then she met her partner Andrew Braun, who was also from Altona, in Vancouver when they were both studying jazz, and they started a band and toured and recorded for about eight years.

"Then I took a break from music because it's a crazy industry, and I started teaching piano, but I've come back to it now," she said.

"I think with the Women in the Studio program, a big part of the intention is to give a voice to more women because there's been such a disparity," she suggested, citing one estimate that perhaps no more than six per cent of the music people listen to is produced or recorded by women.

And perhaps it can be extra challenging coming from a rural area, but she sees that as changing with today's technology.

"After COVID, people are very willing to work remotely, and I've actually worked with a few artists



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Altona's Lauren Smith, who performs as Daggerss, has been named to the Women in the Studio National Accelerator program.

who have only worked remotely from all over the world," she noted. "So it's kind of a cool time for music creation, although it's nice to be in the room with people."

As for her own music, she aims to just be true to herself and make music that is authentic to her.

"Just trying to keep creating music for the long term is my goal ... I just want to make good music with cool people."

Increasing connections, joy across RHA

By Lorne Stelmach

The regional health authority once again aimed to inspire kindness and connection this past spring.

For the second year, Southern Health-Santé Sud promoted the Love My Community Challenge to coincide with Mental Health Week in May.

While last year's initiative was directed at schools, this year it was expanded to hopefully inspire organizations, businesses and community groups throughout region to get involved in it.

"Our hope was simply to increase connections and create joy in communities," said healthy living facilitator Chantal Chevalier.

"Our hope was that schools and organizations could inspire each other in the community to take

action and participate," she said. "Basically, we wanted to spread the message that giving back to the community and doing things for others can benefit your own mental health."

Originally created by students at Roseau Valley School, Love My Community day began as a grassroots effort to spread kindness, create joy and strengthen connections across generations. The initiative encourages people to engage in small, meaningful actions that support both personal and community mental well-being.

Inspired by that vision, the healthy living team worked to extend the movement region-wide, inviting all schools and classrooms to take part by completing a community-focused project.

These projects could be anything from neighbor-

hood walks and cleanup efforts to intergenerational events, collaborative art nights or senior outreach activities.

"We thought this year why not expand it ... the more that can participate the better effect this would have or the more reach we would have," said Chevalier, in sharing some examples last week of what was all done in communities across their service area. The campaign included barbecues, book clubs, a mini powwow and lots of intergenerational activities like kids playing games with seniors in care homes and community clean-ups.

"Different groups were engaged this year, so it was great to see," she said. "We'd love to see the initiative kind of become a yearly challenge and keep growing."

The **Voice**

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