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The *Altona Rhineland • Morris Voice*

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LOCALLY OWNED HISTORY BOOK FOR THE COMMUNITY

Lauren Stone
MLA for Midland



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Christmas bake-a-thon

SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Community Exchange played host to a baking blitz last week that saw Susie Fisher, Tara Funke, Rebecca Wiens, Deserez Krentz, Virginia Richert, Margarita Campos-Rosa, and Brigitte Martin whip up some of the dainties that will be served at the Altona Community Christmas Dinner taking place at the Rhineland Pioneer Centre Dec. 25 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend. Admission is free, though donations will be accepted. There are rides available if you need one—call 204-304-1339 for details.

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Morden Cheer distributes 321 care hampers

By Lorne Stelmach

The Morden Christmas Cheer Board packed and distributed 321 hampers last week.

It was down from 384 hampers in 2024—an unfortunate result of the non-profit having to scale things back after being in a deficit from the year before when they had more need but less funds to support the effort.

"The numbers are a little down because donations were down last year and this year," said board member Durwin Buchy, who was involved with the application process.

"We've included an income scale this year, which affected some of the people who were applying," he explained. "So everything was down ... everything this year is 25 per cent less across the board."

Despite that reality, it was still encouraging to see the support they were able to get from the community.

"We've had a lot of food donations this year, more than normal, and a lot of toy donations compared to last year," Buchy shared.

"I think the public has really stepped up with donations this year since it

was published that we were in some financial difficulties," said Dianne Mestdagh, a board member who was also involved in the application process. "That's wonderful to see. We are so thankful."

A number of years ago, the cheer board switched to gift cards for some food items, but they do still collect non-perishables and divide them among the hampers. They also collect new unwrapped toys and books.

Otherwise, the hampers include gift cards from local businesses like Gardenland Co-op, Giant Tiger, and Pharmasave.

"The ones who applied will be getting a good hamper of food and toys, and most children will be receiving a gift bag of school supplies and art supplies as well as a toy," said Buchy, who noted they also had some extra toys set aside that recipients could come in and pick up.

Buchy said it is always encouraging to see the support from the community, including the army of volunteers who show up to help out each year. That group again included about a dozen members of the Morden Thunder hockey team, who volun-



PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

Thanks to the generosity of the community, Morden Cheer was able to help families in need put food on the table and presents under the tree this Christmas.

teered their time on delivery day last Wednesday.

Buchy added it is also heartening to see and hear the appreciation from the recipients.

"There's a lot of people who are recent newcomers to Morden ... and they're just needing help with the high cost of everything."

"And they are so very grateful when we say that their application was ap-

proved. They really are thankful for what we do, and that is what keeps us coming back to do this year after year," said Mestdagh.

Although the hampers have been delivered, people can continue to donate to support the effort.

"We pay a lot of our bills after Christmas," Buchy said.

You can donate online at mordenchristmascheer.com.



Morris Area Foundation hands out nearly \$45K in grants

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Christmas came a little early for 18 community projects and non-profits across the region thanks to the Morris Area Foundation (MAF).

At its fourth annual awards celebration on Dec. 9, the agency distributed a total of \$44,950 in grants for the year—a new record.

"The awards celebration is a time to focus on all the great organizations in our area that develop projects, submit applications that improve life for everyone in our area," said chair Curtis Evenson, noting supporting these projects is "the reason we have a community foundation."

Evenson explained the granting committee is looking for organizations that will have an impact on a wide range of people of all ages living in Morris and the RM of Morris, including the communities of Rosenort, Lowe Farm, Sperling, and Aubigny.

"We want projects that are good to go ahead right away if we can afford to make that big a difference to them," he said. "We have a pretty big area, so we love it when we get applications from around the RM because we do get donations from all around the RM."

The foundation has come a very long way since its founding a decade ago. In its first year it gave out \$1,300. Since then, they've gifted over \$270,000 to a variety of projects and programs.

"People have really caught on that it's a very big value to the town and the RM," Evenson said, thanking everyone who has supported the agency through the years. "Consistent giving is really what makes our foundation."

Donations to the community foundation are invested by way of an endowment fund. A percentage of the

"[THIS IS] THE REASON WE HAVE A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Eighteen community groups and projects received a total of \$44,950 from the Morris Area Foundation at its annual awards gala earlier this month.

interest earned is what allows MAF to issue grants. That means your original donation gives back to the community in perpetuity.

"We actually don't give away the money that you give us," Evenson explained. "It's there forever."

This year's grant total owes a great deal to MAF's past success with the annual Endow Manitoba Giving Challenge as well as a gift of \$23,000 from the former Thomas Sill Foundation.

Evenson noted the 2025 Giving Challenge in November was another huge success for the agency and will impact its giving ability in the years ahead. That initiative saw \$64,000 come in from local donors, which was stretched to \$72,000 thanks to additional donations from The Winnipeg Foundation, the Province of Manitoba, Morris BigWay Foods, and Rempel Insurance Brokers.

This year's MAF grant recipients include:

- Lowe Farm Friendship Center, \$1,000 for kitchen renovations.
- Morris School, \$2,000 to help the music program purchase a bassoon.

Continued on page 7

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EDITORIAL > VIEWPOINTS > LETTERS

Room at the inn

Recently my wife and I were out getting some drive-thru and were shuffled off to the waiting zone. This is fine, we are happy to hang out for a bit, chat, etc. until the food arrives.

The food arrived in the hands of a woman who also delivered the biggest, most joyful smile I had yet to receive at take out.

"This is the very first time I have ever seen snow," she said beaming breathlessly. "I'm from India and I just moved here."

She could not have picked a better snow for a first-time experience. It was a perfect postcard. Big, giant, fluffy flakes falling so densely you could barely see. But not too cold, no wind. Just a beautiful snow globe kind of experience.

"Welcome here!"

As we left, we were encouraged and affected.

I love Canada. I love the life it has given me and my family. Sometimes I can lose sight of what I have. What we all have.

Then, in an unexpected moment, a pair of fresh eyes burst into your life to remind you of how amazing this place is.

Canada is the second largest nation on the planet by landmass. We are fourth in the world according to the estimated value of natural resources at \$33 trillion behind Russia, the Unit-

ed States, and Saudi Arabia. We are 10th in the world by Gross Domestic Product (GDP). We are 38th in the world by population.

I guess what I am saying is, not only is there room in the inn, but there's also resources to meet the need.

Simplistically, I often break things into binary categories. In this instance I would say that when it comes to sharing people often fall into one of two groups: those with a scarcity mindset (no) and those with a mindset of abundance (yes).

"I can't share, I might need what I have for myself in the future...go build your own pile." or "you're welcome to share in what I have...I believe we can work together to build more."

I would like to think I fall into the latter category. I like the idea that there is a newcomer out there passionately in love with snow (for now) because they have never experienced its magic before.

I think, that under the right management, Canada has more than enough resources and wherewithal to welcome more newcomers from all over the world to share in this same experience.

In many ways Canada is one of several warm, well-stocked inns along

the road. Various newcomers pass down this road knocking from door to door (Germany, the United States, England, France, Norway, etc.) and depending on the day they are either welcomed or turned away.

I would like to think we are the inn that welcomes people rather than sending them to the stables because this is not a matter of "can't" so much as it's a matter of "won't" when we turn people away.

It's a struggle right now, to be sure. Housing infrastructure has not kept up with need and so the first to be turned away are the newcomers. Typically, in times of economic downturn newcomers, the different, etc. are scapegoated as the source of the problem.

Eventually, when we realize that that was a small part of the actual infrastructure problem, we might get to working on real solutions instead of blaming others.

In the meantime, as we ponder the holiday season we are in the midst of, rest happily in the knowledge there is a young woman in the region experiencing something magical and new about the world thanks to Canada saying yes to her query about whether there was room at the inn for her.



By Peter
Cantelon

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.

Send your letters to us by e-mail at news@winklermordenvoice.ca.

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

Wrapping elves

The Pembina Valley Humane Society shared some Christmas spirit last week as volunteers were on hand at the 500 Stephen to wrap presents in exchange for donations. The first-time effort brought in an estimated \$130, but they were optimistic that it could do even better next year. Lending a hand were volunteer Alana Hall, special events volunteer Laurie Magotiaux, fundraising committee member Joe Suderman, and humane society foster and volunteer Hudson Schoonbaert.

PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE



Contest earns local Habitat \$10 an entry

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Local Gr. 4-6 students have the chance to earn some much-needed funds for the Winkler-Morden chapter of Habitat for Humanity this winter.

Habitat for Humanity Canada has teamed up with a host of generous sponsors—including BMO, Sagen, Metrie, Stantec, BrokerLink Insurance, and Travelers—for the annual Meaning of Home contest.

Kids are invited to submit an entry between 50-300 words answering the simple question: "What does home mean to you?"

The winning answer will receive a \$30,000 grant for their community's Habitat chapter plus an iPad for themselves and a pizza party for their class.

The runner-up will receive \$10,000 for their home chapter as well as an iPad and class pizza party.

On top of that, every single submission results in a \$10 donation towards the entrant's local Habitat for Humanity.

"We haven't had anyone win locally yet—although I do have high hopes that there will be someone—but it is a great fundraiser for us," said Christina Falk, chapter support manager for Habitat for Humanity Manitoba and a member of the Winkler-Morden chapter.

"We often make between \$700 and \$10,000 or more," she shared. "It's awesome because it's young children that are actually making a contribution to our work, just by doing some writing."

"That money goes directly towards the next house being built," Falk said. "So it's giving Gr. 4-6 kids a chance to directly affect the building of the next home in Morden-Winkler, which is pretty cool."

There are a number of school classes whose teachers have led the charge in getting entries submitted (the contest has a teacher's portal to make it easier for educators to upload their students' work), but there are also many families who answer the call for entries each year.

Falk is available to stop by classrooms to share with students about the affordable housing work of Habitat for Humanity and the impact it has had on six families in our area in recent years (with a seventh just announced earlier this month for a home to be built in 2026).

Since its inception in 2007, the Meaning of Home contest has raised over \$3 million for Habitat projects across the country. Over 137,000 students have sent in entries.

The contest opens on Jan. 5 and runs until Feb. 20. Winners will be announced in May. More details can be found online at www.meaningofhome.ca.

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Help put “Another Brick in LeWall”

By Ashleigh Viveiros

A former Pembina Valley Hawk now playing junior hockey with the Everett Silvertips in Washington has launched a unique campaign to raise funds for mental health.

Raiden LeGall, a Morden native who goaltended for the U18 Hawks from 2021-2023, has teamed up with his goaltending coach, Starbuck-based Tim Morison, on the “Another Brick in LeWall for Mental Health Awareness” merchandise campaign featuring a custom Lego mini-figure version of LeGall in his Silvertips uniform.

They’re selling T-shirts, hoodies, and stickers with the design, with proceeds being split between Camp Erin in Washington, which provides grief support for youth who have experienced the loss of a loved one, and



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Above: Tim Morison and his wife Nikki wearing the Another Brick in LeWall gear on sale in support of mental health. Above, right: Raiden LeGall with Morison and his son Mavryk and the Grinch version of the logo that started it all. Right: The logo features a mini-fig version of LeGall in his Silvertips gear.

Eden Health Care Services right here in Manitoba for its mental health programming.

In just a few weeks, they’ve already raised over \$11,000, with sales coming in from across both Washington and Manitoba as word spreads about the campaign.

“Neither of us expected it to go this big,” LeGall said. “It’s been pretty cool to see.”

Mental health is something that affects the wellbeing of everybody—and you never really know what someone might be going through at any given time, LeGall observed.

“Talking about what’s going on and not hiding it is so important,” he said. “Keeping it to yourself will only ever make it worse.”

“If we can help just one person by talking about this, that’s all we set out to do.”

The topic of mental health is personal as well for Morison, who shared a bit of the



back story behind this initiative.

“My wife and I, we went through a stillborn in 2022. For me, I’d never gone through any sort of depression or anything like it before, and then obviously when it comes to Christmastime, you feel it the most, you’re just kind of dwelling on things.”

Last year, Morison designed a logo featuring a LEGO version of The Grinch as a hockey player—a play on the fact fans were playfully calling LeGall “LeGrinch.”

Continued on page 7



*Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year*

*The Winkler Morden
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Cookie proceeds supports Morden Christmas Cheer

The Morden Christmas Cheer Board fundraising effort received a big boost last Friday with its share of the money raised by the Morden Tim Hortons through its recent holiday smile cookie campaign. A total of \$10,115 was raised, with that being split equally with Tim Hortons Foundation camps.

PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

> BRICK IN LEWALL, FROM PG. 6

"It was a teddy bear toss game where when the home team scores, everybody throws teddy bears on the ice and they donate them to different causes," Morison explained. "Raiden had a shutout game, so they couldn't throw the bears until the end of the game ... then on social media they started calling him Le Grinch."

Morison took the idea and ran with it, selling LeGrinch merchandise to raise funds for mental health. The whole thing came together rather quickly but still managed to sell a dozen or so shirts and raise a modest amount for the cause.

"It was very spur of the moment," Morison said. "But I'd always wanted to do something, just because I went through so much, battled through it,

and now I feel like I'm the strongest I've ever been. And I've helped Raiden with his own mental health when it comes to playing hockey, so we have this bond together."

The duo started thinking how they might go even bigger with it this year, and the "Another Brick in LeWall" campaign was born, playing off LeGall's nickname as a goalie and featuring partnerships with the Silvertips Booster Club and the Lego store Bricks and Minifigs South Everett, who got the green light from Lego on the new logo design.

The success of the project has floored them both.

"I thought we're just going to sell a couple T-shirts," Morison said. "We're a couple hundred dollars short of \$12,000 right now. It's amazing."

"It was just two guys sitting on a golf course going, 'How do we make a difference?'" he added. "It honestly blew up more than we ever thought it would."

While they're thrilled to be raising so much money for two very worthy causes, Morison echoes LeGall in stressing they also hope this will get people thinking about mental health and how it's okay to seek help with whatever you might be going through.

"My goal is just for people to talk," he said, noting the

wall design is representative of how every single person—every brick—holds up the others. "It's about building a foundation, a strong foundation ... one brick at a time, one person at a time, you can make a difference and make something stronger."

Eden Foundation marketing and events manager Tyson Deceuninck said they're thrilled that LeGall and Morison wanted to support the work of Eden in this way.

"It was an incredible surprise. This is a guy who's born and raised in Morden, he's playing out of Washington now, and he's thinking of how he can help his hometown," he said. "We can't be more thankful that he's thinking of people back home who also need support. We're so happy with what they're doing with this."

Eden's half of the funds raised will go to support their subsidized counselling program, Recovery of Hope, which ensures help is accessible to everyone that needs it. Some of the funds will also go towards the agency's housing and employment support programs and to meet patient needs at the Winkler psychiatric hospital not covered by government funding.

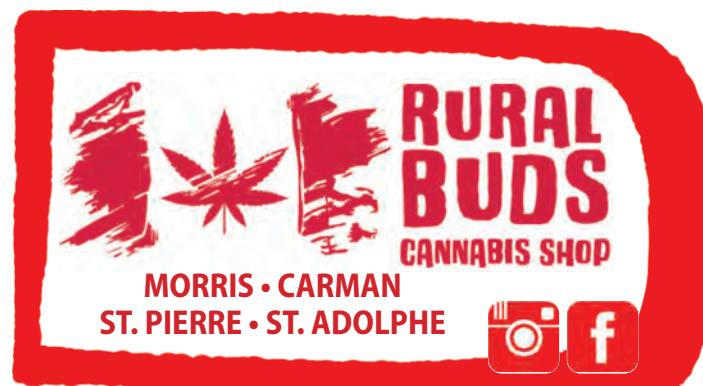
You can purchase your Another Brick in LeWall gear online at https://my.cheddarup.com/c/another-brick-in-lewall-for-mental-health-awareness/items?utm_source=ig&utm_medium=social&utm_content=link_in_bio

> MORRIS AREA FOUNDATION, FROM PG. 3

- Blue Sky Opportunities Inc., \$2,000 for workstation chairs
- Valley Agricultural Society, \$5,000 to repair and extend the deck.
- Morris Area Recreation, \$2,000 towards an automatic door opener at the Davidson Memorial Pool.
- Morris School, \$1,200 for a volleyball referee stand.
- Katie Cares, \$1,000 for its Beanie baby program.
- Valley Regional Library, \$450 for mobile library awareness and an outreach banner.
- Rosenort School Parent Advisory Council, \$2,500 towards an accessible playground swing set.
- Lowe Farm School, \$4,000 for library furniture.
- Lowe Farm School Parent Teacher Association, \$5,000 towards multi-sport court resurfacing and expansion.
- Small Town Kids Daycare Inc., \$2,800 for a storage shed.
- Rosenort School, \$2,000 to help

the R360 broadcasting program purchase a laptop to operate editing software.

- Sperling Community Centre District, \$3,000 for new adjustable basketball hoops.
- Morris Early Learning Center, \$2,500 for playground landscaping.
- Morris Wellness Center, \$4,000 for gym equipment improvements.
- Morris Multiplex, \$1,500 for accessible seating around the ice surface.
- Morris & District Centennial Museum, \$3,000 to upgrade and convert fluorescent lights to LED lighting.





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get informed

Redboine Watershed District advances erosion control, water projects with local farmers

By Haley Cvar

The Redboine Watershed District says 2025 has been one of its most productive years yet, as staff worked alongside farmers and landowners to improve water retention, reduce erosion, and strengthen the health of local landscapes.

Project Manager Jennifer Hunnie said the district continues to receive applications on a weekly basis, keeping its list of initiatives expanding.

"We have a wide range of upcoming projects, including water retention systems, stream crossings, erosion control, riparian restoration, grassed waterways, and more," Hunnie said. "We continue to receive new applications on a weekly basis, so our project list is always growing."

While there is no single focus area, the district's work generally centres on long-term land and water management. Projects typically address core issues such as landscape stabilization, improved water quality, and reducing flooding and erosion pressures.

"There isn't one single priority area, as each project has its own unique needs," Hunnie said. "That said, most of our work addresses core land and water management issues. This often means stabilizing landscapes, improving water quality, and supporting practices that reduce flooding and erosion while improving long-term resilience across the watershed."



In the Morris Norquay Sub-District, Alan Richardson installed a gated culvert with help from the RBWD to regulate wetland water levels.

Hunnie emphasized that producers hesitant to get involved should explore the benefits of participating. Funding opportunities are available for a wide variety of projects, and district staff are happy to visit farms, discuss goals, and identify options that could benefit both the operation and the watershed.

"There's very little risk and significant potential reward in applying," she said. "Even if you're unsure whether your idea qualifies, we encourage you to reach out."

Some of the benefits of completed projects are already visible. In the Rural Municipality of Dufferin, the dis-



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Ian Hamilton installs a new retention structure on his pasture, built by the RBWD to manage rapid spring runoff from a reclaimed shale pit.

trict partnered with farmer Charles Fouasse after severe erosion affected his field. Crews reshaped and seeded a grassed run to safely carry overflow into a vegetated outlet.

"By putting these systems in place, we're able to slow down the flow of water, settle out sediment and give the soil a chance to stabilize," said Angie Smith, administrator of the district. "It's a win both for the landowner and for the watershed as a whole."

Another project focused on runoff management on Ian Hamilton's pasture, where a reclaimed shale pit released water too quickly in the spring. The district built a small retention structure that now holds and slowly releases water, easing pressure on a nearby municipal road while also providing livestock with a summer water source.

Smith said the work demonstrates how watershed management can serve multiple purposes.

"In Hamilton's case, the retention structure not only protects infrastructure but also improves groundwater recharge, enhances soil moisture, and helps his cattle operation," she said.

In the Morris Norquay Sub-District, farmer Alan Richardson installed a gated culvert to regulate wetland

water levels, while Gerald Wildfang began a two-stage project to manage seasonal water accumulation with rock armouring and wetland adjustments.

The district has also introduced windbreak panels for cattle producers, helping wintering herds on pasture while reducing congestion in farmyards.

Hunnie highlighted that the district not only responds to applications but also proactively monitors the watershed. When possible, staff identify areas where projects could make a significant difference, ensuring the work has both immediate and long-term benefits.

Smith said the scope of projects reflects the district's priorities heading into fall.

"Our focus is on building resilience — whether that's reducing flooding, slowing erosion, or enhancing water resources," she said. "Every project is about finding practical solutions that work for both farmers and the environment."

The Redboine Watershed District expects more initiatives to roll out in the coming months as it continues to work with landowners across southern Manitoba.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

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What's *Your* Christmas Story?

We got so many entries this year we couldn't fit them all into just one edition! Here are a few more of our favourites:

THE MYSTERIOUS TRACKS

Once there was a little girl named Roxy. She had straight red hair, and bright blue eyes.

Roxy always wears the same clothes every day. She wears a pink hoodie, black pants, purple socks, and white shoes/boots with a red shirt under the hoodie.

When she went outside, she saw big cat tracks in the snow, so she went inside and grabbed a water bottle and some cooked salmon, put it in her backpack, and left the house.

She followed them until they led to a dark cave. She got out a flashlight, turned it on and then ... RAAAAR!!! A fierce white and lavender snow leopard!

Roxy jumped back and fell on some soft, green moss. She took her backpack and got out some salmon and gave it to the snow leopard.

Roxy started to approach the fierce beast. She pet the snow leopard on the head. It growled at her, then it purred up against Roxy.

As she turned to walk out of the cave she heard a little "meow." She quickly turned around and saw a tiny kitten sitting on a piece of moss in the corner.

She took off her backpack and realized she had a little bit of cooked salmon left, so she gave it to the little kitten. After that she gave it a name. She called him Spark.

After Roxy named him she hugged Spark goodbye. Spark purred.

As Roxy walked away, tears ran down her face.

—Olivia Oestreicher, Gr. 6, Winkler

THE BEST CHRISTMAS EVER

One Christmas Eve, late in the evening, Santa was busy getting all the gifts delivered because everyone went to bed early. Except me. I was still awake.

I was watching the stars when I saw Santa's bag of presents fall out of his sleigh. Santa didn't notice, though. He just drove away. After he left, I tiptoed outside so I wouldn't wake anybody up.

When I came to the bag, I bent down to pick it up and it moved away from me. I jumped back a little and it came closer to me. Then I quickly grabbed it and looked inside and found a little puppy. I took it out and then heard something behind me. I jumped around and guess who was there? Santa.

I was so startled I didn't know what to do, so I just stood there and did not move.

Santa broke the silence and said, "I see you found my bag."

At first, I didn't know what to do and then I said, "Um yes, I saw it fall out of your sleigh

and came out to see it."

And Santa said, "I don't blame you I would have done the same thing."

I was surprised. "You would have done that too?" I said.

"Yes, I would have," Santa said. "Hey, how about you come with me to deliver the rest of the gifts?"

I thought about that for a little. "Sure, but will I make it back before everyone wakes up?"

"Yes, if we leave right away." Santa replied.

And then I thought of something: am I on the naughty list? Then I asked Santa, "Am I on the naughty list because I looked in your bag?"

"Not at all," Santa said back.

"How come?" I questioned him.

"Well," Santa started. "I think it's actually good that you found my bag otherwise it would have taken me a while to find it."

"What?" I said, all confused.

"Well," Santa replied, "when I noticed my bag was gone and I came to look for it and saw you there I just knew it had to be there, so I came down and found it."

"Wow, I never knew I was that much help!"

"Well, I guess you really were, but if we want to finish in time let's go."

And with that we were off. Then when we got back to my house Santa pulled from his bag the puppy and gave it to me.

Then he flew away and said, "Ho ho ho! Merry Christmas and to all a good night!"

"Merry Christmas." I said back and went inside and eagerly waited for Christmas morning.

—Adalynn Unrau, Gr. 5, Plum Coulee

WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO ME

Christmas is my favourite time of year. On Christmas as a family, we love to help my mom make puppy chow. Puppy chow is a square treat with powder on it. It is very good.

Every Christmas we go to my grandpa and grandma's house and open presents there. My grandpa dresses as Santa and gives out the presents.

The last thing we do as a family is that we go to church at 9:00 and then open presents when we get back.

Next let me talk to you about our family traditions. First, we watch movies like *The Grinch*. We also set up the Christmas tree together. We play board games and card games; it is so much fun! We go skating on cold days sometimes. We always listen to Christmas music too—it's just so much fun when you listen to music!

Snow is my second favorite part about Christmas! We love to build little burrows in the snow

for little creatures. We also like snowball fights, sometimes make ice rinks in the snow with water. Cool how we get our own backdoor rink!

We build snowmen and then we act like the leader of snow, and then we have snowball fights and hide behind our snowmen.

When it is snowing, we go outside and try catching the snowflakes in our mouth. It is hard to do but it is fun!

Sometimes my dad goes outside and takes out his snowblower and starts blowing snow at us. We drink hot chocolate when we get inside.

When we are going outside, we need to dress warmly so we wear cozy boots, snow jackets, ski pants, and to layers of mittens.

The last thing I want to talk about is gifts. We get home from church and watch our mom and dad open their presents first. And then we take our stockings and we start with Gus, and then Lily, and then me. We open our stockings and look at everything and then we take our presents and open them in the same order. And then after everything has been opened, we clean up.

And that is what Christmas means to me.

—Cataleya Warms, Gr. 6, Emerado Centennial School

A SNOW GLOBE ADVENTURE

Julie walks around the snow globe and then she sees ... tons of gingerbread houses and gingerbread people.

Then she sees all the gingerbread people looking at her. Suddenly gingerbread police started chasing her.

Julie ran into the snowy forest. When she was walking in the forest Julie saw a pack of ginger wolves. The wolves started charging at her. Julie ran as fast as she could.

Suddenly, a peppermint bear came out of a cave and started attacking the pack of wolves.

Julie continued running until she saw another snow globe. Julie shook the snow globe and it transported back to her house.

—Ayden Young, Gr. 4, Morden

Continued on page 10

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MB

What's Your Christmas Story?

From Pg. 9

WHAT DOES CHRISTMAS MEAN TO ME?

What does Christmas mean to me? Does it mean singing along to Christmas music, holiday baking, getting presents, hot chocolate, decorating with holly, or licking candy canes?

Well, don't get me wrong, I like all those things, but what Christmas means to me is Jesus' birth. It is an amazing story about a man and woman travelling to a place called Bethlehem, no inns having room for them to stay, having to stay in a stable with animals, and a very special baby being born. A baby that would grow to be a man and be nailed to a cross and for our many sins that we commit every day. Isn't that amazing!

One of my favorite Christmas memories is reading the Christmas story in Matthew 1:18-25 and 12:1-23 (read it and you will know why!)

It also means going to the Christmas program at our church, going to our family's Christmas gatherings, playing Christmas carols on our piano, and watching Christmas movies. But Jesus' birth stands out the most to me!

Merry Christmas and a happy new year!

—Peyton Harder,
Gr. 6, Reinland

THE MISSING SACK ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT

One Christmas night Santa was delivering presents from house to house when ... he crashed into a mountain!

And the sack fell into the yard and it rang the doorbell and the kid said, "I will get it."

The kid saw the sack of the presents and the kid said, "I must bring the presents to Santa, but secretly." So he set off with all of his winter gear on the night after Christmas.

The journey took until next Christmas and the little boy stopped at a couple of restaurants. He packed some energy bars and then, as fast as you can say "Santa lives at the North Pole" one hundred times fast, almost one year has passed and he passed a lot of dangers and he finally got



there and he told Santa all of his dangers.

And then he was having Christmas cookies with Santa Claus and they gave Christmas to everyone.

—Felix Wiebe, Gr. 3, Winkler

CHRISTMAS MAGIC

Julie loved Christmas more than any other time of the year. She loves wearing her bright blue Christmas sweater. She loved the lights, the smell of cookies, and Christmas carols.

Then one snowy evening, she was looking in her grandma's attic when she found a dusty and old snow globe. Inside it there was people singing and dancing.

Then she felt a quick rush of cold air surround her. When she opened her eyes, she wasn't in the attic; she was in the same place that was in the snow globe.

Everything looked amazing. The sky was sparkling and the air smelled like peppermint and marshmallows. Carollers went past singing. There were stalls of free hot chocolate and candy.

Everyone said hi to her as if they had known her for years. "Merry Christmas," they all said.

Presents filled up under the huge Christmas tree, wrapped in amazing sparkling wrapping paper. She laughed, having fun. It was perfect.

But as night came, she remembered her family back at her house. Her grandma baking cookies, her mom sitting at the fire, and her brother.

She tried enjoying the place, but the more she thought about it the more she felt empty inside. She realized she had to somehow get home. She didn't have a phone to watch YouTube or contact her parents.

Julie looked around the village to find something or someone. At the end of the town on a hill she found a tall guy in a Christmas sweater and a toque, and he was just sitting at the top of a huge hill that was towering over Julie. His face was red as he looked cold.

She began to climb the huge hill it took her a bit to get her way to the top, but she did it.

She asked the tall man, "Sir do you know how to get out of this place?"

"Did you get here by a snow globe" he asked. She said yes. Then the tall man asked, "Do you want me to help you get home?"

"Yes!" Julie said.

The tall man led her to his huge workshop in the middle of town. In the workshop there was metal, glass jars, and potions.

"Were do you live" he asked.

"Winkler, Manitoba," she said.

"Okay!" the man said.

And after the longest 30 minutes of her life, it was done. She first thanked the man for all he had done for her then she said, "goodbye and thank you" right before vigorously shaking the snow globe.

Everything around her swirled around. Then she woke up in her bed.

It turns out the real Christmas gift is friends

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

and family.

—Desmond Cwir, Gr. 6, Winkler

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

On Christmas Eve, my two older brothers and I run giggling into the living room, eyes fixed on the Christmas tree.

Pyjama-clad, we roll out our sleeping bags under the large tree, its tip just brushing the ceiling. Crawling in, everyone calls "Good night!" to each other.

I wriggle to get comfortable and nestle deeper into my cozy, warm sleeping bag. Closing my eyes, I drift off into a land where trampolines are giant, fluffy, powdery marshmallows, slides are sweet, succulent pieces of pie, and you can jump off marshmallows into pools of hot chocolate and climb back up cinnamon stick ladders.

Drawn from sleep, I glance at the clock and discover it is a little after 1 a.m.

Settling down again and gazing up at the bright and cheery Christmas tree, covered with shiny blue balls and icicles, I am blown away on clouds of thoughts. Landing on one, I think of opening presents at the Hildebrand gathering next weekend. If it's anything like previous years, it will be chaotic but fun, with everyone trying to get the others to all pay attention to them and colourful wrapping paper littering the floor.

The Wieler Christmas gathering last Sunday was more organized, everybody waiting their turn to open one more present from their pile.

I sigh contentedly, curled up and relaxed in my snug sleeping bag, and close my eyes to float once again into Dreamland.

Waking, I thrust myself on my elbows and perceive my brothers stirring. It is now six o'clock. We slither out of our sleeping bags and sprint to our parent's bedroom. Jumping on the bed and tickling them until they retreat out of bed, my brothers and I hustle them into the spacious living room, then stand on chairs, stretching to reach our homemade stockings. We empty them of their contents and hurriedly evaluate the fantastic things inside.

Next we turn to our presents and eagerly wait our turn to open another present in our stack.

With much joy and Christmas spirit, we play with our delightful gifts, sporadically rolling with laughter when one of us does something comical.

It is a dandy Christmas, filled with laughs, love, and running around the country house in cotton pyjamas. Sipping hot chocolate, which was just like my dream, filled with marshmallows and a cinnamon stick, I shut my eyes and think about the wonderful things that happen on Christmas Day.

—Vivian Wieler,
Gr. 5, Stanley

Continued on page 11

sports & recreation

“There’s lots more potential for us.”

Flyers looking to make gains in back half of the season

By Ashleigh Viveiros

They’re not necessarily where they’d hoped to be at this point in the season, but Winkler Flyers head coach and general manager Matthew Melo is feeling pretty good about the back end of the campaign after the holidays.

At press time Dec. 17, the Flyers were 14-13-1-2, which gave them 31 points and the fifth-place spot in the MJHL’s MGEU East Division standings.

That put them well behind the top three teams—the Niverville Night-hawks in first place with 53 points, the Steinbach Pistons in second with 47, and the Portage Terriers in third, also with 47—and just one point short of the Selkirk Steelers in fourth place.

They still had two more games to go before the holiday break—playing Steinbach Dec. 19 and the Winnipeg Blues Dec. 20.

Looking back on the first half of the 58-game schedule, Melo says it has been challenging at times as the junior team works to rebuild after losing many key players from last season.

“But I think we’re still feeling pretty confident as a group that we can make the playoffs,” he said. “And that if we get in, that we can win a series, that



FILE PHOTO

The Winkler Flyers were chasing the Selkirk Steelers in the standings at press time just before the holidays. Winkler was in fifth place and Selkirk was in fourth—with just one point separating them. The two teams have squared off twice so far this season, back in October. The Steelers got a 3-2 edge both games. Last week’s rematch between the two was cancelled due to poor road conditions.

we can gain a little bit of traction and really make some noise.”

The 2024-2025 season saw the Flyers fall short of defending their championship title from the year before, getting knocked out by the Northern Manitoba Blizzard in four straight games in the semi-finals. They had finished the regular season at the top of both the division and overall league standings.

But last spring also saw them lose eight graduating players, leaving some big holes to fill in both their offensive and defensive lines.

“We had a ton of turnover, and it took some time to shape the group,” Melo said, noting, however, that they’ve had some good runs this fall, either racking up several straight wins or suffering very close defeats.

“Up until our latest losing streak, we had gone 10 straight games getting a point,” he said. “I think we’re still growing as a group. There’s times where it seems like we’re a little bit immature in our game and then there’s other times where we feel that

we’re building something pretty cool here.

“For us, it’s about finding a way to even out some of those stretches where we’re not so high ... I think that is for us just continuing to grow in maturity.”

Win or lose, Melo is proud of his players for really stepping up and giving it their all.

“When you’re a younger group, that’s where it takes some time to learn and you go through some of these challenging stretches where you need guys to figure out who’s going to step up. You need everybody to play a little more to what they have to offer to their strengths, to their potential.

“It’s guys embracing leadership and embracing their individual roles and what they need to bring for the entire group to have success.”

The East Division has proven to be a competitive one, with Niverville, Steinbach, and Portage having a lock on the top three spots by a wide margin.

But the Flyers are still very much in it, Melo said.

“I would say those top three teams have kind of separated themselves from the rest of the league, but up until this weekend, we had basically played Niverville to one-goal games in our first three meetings with them. And we’ve played Portage tight as well—we lost in a shootout to them twice.

“So I do think we’re right there and it’s a matter of minimizing the lows,” Melo said. “I think there’s lots more potential for us ... we can play with anybody in this league when we’re playing at our very best. So it’s just as a group learning how to be more consistent in playing to that identity, playing to the way that we know we need to play to have success.”

The Flyers are back in action with back-to-back games against the Winnipeg Monarchs Jan. 3 and Jan. 4 in Winnipeg followed by a game in Selkirk Jan. 6.

Female Hawks heading into new year with optimism

By Lorne Stelmach

It hasn't been a banner season so far for the female U18 Pembina Valley Hawks, but coach Matt Victor remains optimistic.

He feels the team has made good progress and that there is good potential for them to make a real push in the new year when play resumes.

"I'm quite happy with the progress that we have seen from the start to now," Victor said. "I feel like the group has followed the process and believed in it, and we're making big strides in our game."

"Ultimately, we're striving for February and March where the real season starts, and I feel like we're on an upswing, and we're quite excited for it."

Before a pair of games just before the holiday break, the Hawks had been in seventh place at 6-8-0-1 for 13 points, but at that point they were just one

point back of the Winnipeg Avros and Central Plains and three behind Yellowhead.

Victor is encouraged especially by the fact the team has been very competitive and had close games with the top teams in the league.

"The level of parity we're seeing in the league, it's really anyone's chance," he said. "From third place to seventh, it's a matter of a few points here and there. The top two teams are kind of separating themselves, and that's something we really expected going into the season."

"Recently, we played the Winnipeg Ice and played a great game. It was a tight 2-1 game with them," he noted. "The nice thing I see with that, and going back to our group, is that we can play with these teams, and we can beat these teams ... if we play to our identity and our tactics and our systems ... we keep pushing that with them."

"We haven't gotten some outcomes. We've kind of given some games away, but I think that happens with any team where you play well enough to win but you don't get the outcome," he said. "It's about the process. It's about the belief and really buying in, and I think our group is doing that now."

Looking ahead, he sees that they will have a tough stretch early in the new year with some tough teams, but he remains hopeful.

"Regardless of the outcome, I think it just keeps building us up. It helps, playing these top teams, in really nailing down the details that we need to be successful, and I think it's going to help us moving forward."

"There's always opportunity ... everybody makes the playoffs, so it's how far can you bring your group, bring in the trust and the belief that we can do it and potentially hitting our stride."

Victor highlighted positives that have stood out as well as what the team needs to work on moving ahead.

"I feel like over our last seven or eight games, our team has really played to our identity," he said. "The identity we kind of brought forward with our group is the compete, the grit and just never quit."

"With that never quit attitude, they've proven it to themselves that they can do it," he said. "I think the big thing here for us is to find that consistency. It's there, but to continue with that consistency. So that's something I really want to push for the rest of the way."

"I feel like we really need to work on our game away from the puck. I think that's going to be a big thing that we need to work on," he concluded. "It's about being in the right places, making things hard when we don't have the puck so that we can create turnovers."

Male U18 Hawks poised to push in second half of campaign

By Lorne Stelmach

It has been an up and down season so far for the male U18 Pembina Valley Hawks, but coach Jeff Andrews feels the team is well positioned to make a push in the second half in the new year.

Prior to three key games just before the holiday break, the Hawks had been in seventh place at 15-9-0-1 for 31 points, which had them five and six points behind Eastman and Southwest and just one point ahead of Parkland at press time last week.

"We're happy with where we are," said Andrews, who noted though having a little bit of a sour taste when the Hawks dropped a game against the Winnipeg Thrashers despite having had the lead before losing it in the

third period.

"We also kind of got bit by the injury bug there and lost some important guys, and as a result, we just couldn't hold the lead down the stretch."

"Overall though, I'm happy with our performance so far," said Andrews, who suggested they have been competitive overall aside from three games against the Winnipeg Bruins where they "kind of laid an egg" and allowed 21 goals.

"At the end of the day, the overall results thus far have been pretty positive, I would say. We're right in a place we want to be to take a real hard run at it in the second half."

Andrews highlighted what he has liked so far and where he sees the team needing to make improvements.

"For me, the real bright spot is our ability in playing five-on-five and playing hard and being a hard team to play against."

"Another bright spot would be our power play, which was sitting at first place in the league, so that's really important and something that we have prided ourselves in being good at," Andrews said. "To see those results I think is really encouraging."

"I think the biggest thing to work on would be our penalty kill. It's not where it needs to be, and we have tried a variety of different things and continue to work on that aspect of our game. It's something we need to be better at," he said. "We've just decided we're going to try to simplify and see if that yields results."

"I think another area we need to improve is our discipline, like not taking penalties. If we are going to take penalties, they need to be from preventing scoring chances and things like that."

Andrews believes the team has the potential to move up in the standings and progress further.

"Everybody ahead of us in those next three spots are all in striking distance ... so we've kind of eyeballed getting in the top four as being a big goal for our hockey team."

"We've got lots of work to do ... although I am optimistic, I don't want to be too optimistic in the sense that we still have some work to do, and we still have some things we need to take care of."

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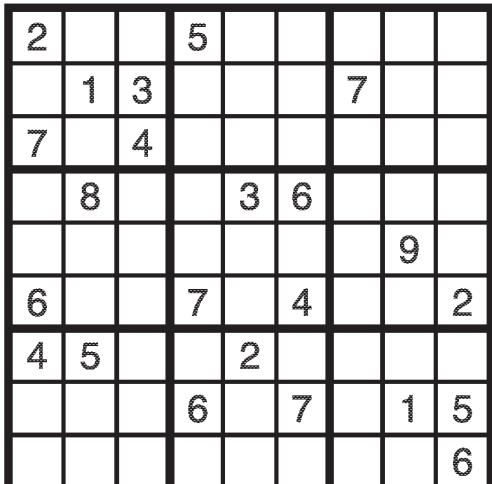
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4	5	6	8	2	1	9	3	7
1	4	7	2	8	5	6	9	3
9	8	2	1	3	6	5	7	4
7	6	4	9	1	2	3	5	8
5	1	3	4	6	8	7	2	9
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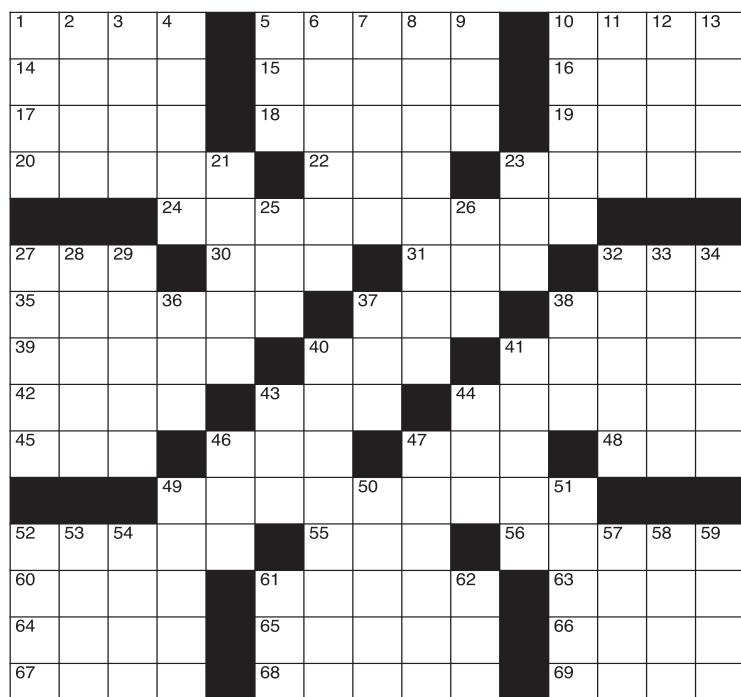
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Light cavalry
5. Coconut palms
10. Rounded knob
14. Central Japan city
15. Sandwiches
16. Shape produced by a curve
17. Ancient region in modern-day Syria
18. French modernist painter
19. Grandmother
20. Mammary gland of cattle
22. Rocky peak
23. Secret plan
24. Songs to one's lover
27. More (Spanish)
30. Father
31. Chinese principle underlying the universe
32. Ballplayer's accessory
35. Together
37. A person's brother or sister
38. Evil spirit
39. Monetary units
40. Partner to cheese
41. About Sun
42. Group of like-minded people
43. After B
44. Seaside room
45. Recipe measurement
46. Partly digested food
47. Flat-faced dog
48. People of southern Africa
49. Salts
52. Beard lichens
55. Sanders is one
56. Fencing sword
60. Ethnic group of Albania
61. Metric weight unit
63. Italian seaport
64. Longtime late night host
65. Extremely angry
66. Miami mascot
67. Mid-month day
68. Marked for omission
69. Body part



CLUES DOWN

1. Two-toed sloth

2. Fat from a pig's abdomen
3. Romanian city
4. Specifies
5. Rounded, glaciated valley
6. Spoke
7. Collection of sacred books
8. Extravagantly theatrical
9. Very fast airplane
10. Forearm bones
11. Ancient kingdom
12. Legitimate: ___ fide
13. Semitransparent gemstone
21. Counsels
23. Head honcho
25. Cool!
26. Touch lightly
27. Extract money via taxation
28. Dyes
29. Cloying sweetness
32. Sodas
33. Coastal village in Guam
34. Chemical ring
36. The bill in a restaurant
37. Car mechanics group
38. One-time presidential candidate Dole
40. Health care for the aged
41. Wise persons
43. Passage with access at one end
44. Make a wound
46. America's spies
47. Roof of the mouth
49. Plants of the lily family
50. Pinkish-red color
51. Vaccine developer
52. Mottled citrus fruit
53. A place to store garden tools
54. Rare goose native to Hawaii
57. Popular Hollywood pig
58. Musician Clapton
59. A move exposing one to danger
61. Historic Spanish soldier
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For more information call 204 745 2028 or to submit your resume with 3 references and keyboard speed to Lori Wiebe mbrown@pkflawyers.com

This position is at the Carman location and is open until filled. However, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

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get inspired

> MEAL IDEAS



Recipe courtesy of the American Heart Association with support from Eggland's Best

Servings: 5

Nonstick cooking spray
 1 medium sweet potato, peeled
 1 teaspoon canola or corn oil
 1 medium yellow onion, diced
 6 slices uncured, nitrate-free turkey bacon, thinly sliced
 10 ounces frozen chopped spinach, thawed
 3/4 teaspoon dried dillweed, crumbled
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
 4 large egg whites
 2 large eggs
 1/4 cup fat-free milk
 1 1/2 tablespoons fat-free feta cheese
 Preheat oven to 400 F. Lightly spray 9-inch pie pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In medium bowl, using box grater, grate sweet potato. Measure out 2

Turkey Bacon and Spinach Quiche with Sweet Potato Crust

cups. Gently press sweet potato on bottom and up sides of pan, forming crust. Sweet potato will be loose but will hold together once cooked.

Bake 20 minutes, or until crust is cooked. Remove from oven. Let stand to cool. Reduce oven temperature to 350 F.

In medium skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat, swirling to coat bottom. Cook onion 6 minutes, or until almost translucent, stirring frequently. Add turkey bacon. Cook 3-4 minutes, or until onion and bacon begin to brown, stirring frequently. Add spinach, dillweed, salt and pepper. Cook 1-2 minutes, or until water from spinach is released. Remove from heat. Transfer mixture into sweet potato crust.

In medium bowl, whisk egg whites, eggs and milk. Pour over mixture in crust. Sprinkle feta over top.

Bake 35-40 minutes, or until knife inserted into center comes out clean. Transfer to cooling rack. Let cool 10 minutes before cutting into wedges.



Recipe courtesy of the American Heart Association with support from Eggland's Best

Servings: 4

Nonstick cooking spray
 1 1/2 cups finely chopped fresh or frozen broccoli florets, thawed if frozen
 1/4 cup water
 8 extra-large egg whites
 1/2 cup fat-free milk
 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
 1/4 cup shredded fat-free cheddar cheese

2 whole-wheat, low-sodium English muffins

Lightly spray large skillet with nonstick cooking spray. Heat over medium-high heat. Cook broccoli and water 4-5 minutes, or until broccoli is tender. Remove from heat. Transfer broccoli to dish. Using paper towels, wipe skillet

Broccoli and Cheese Egg White Scramble on Whole-Wheat English Muffins

clean.

In large bowl, whisk egg whites, milk and pepper until combined.

Lightly spray skillet with cooking spray. Heat over medium-high heat. Pour in egg white mixture. Cook 2-3 minutes, or until almost firm, stirring constantly with spatula. Stir in broccoli and cheddar cheese. Remove from heat.

Just before serving, split and toast English muffins. Transfer to plates. Spoon egg mixture onto muffins.

Egg "Muffin" Cups with Turkey Sausage and Mushrooms

Recipe courtesy of the American Heart Association with support from Eggland's Best

Servings: 6

Nonstick cooking spray
 1/2 tablespoon canola or corn oil
 1 yellow onion, finely chopped
 1 package (8 ounces) sliced white

Ask the Money Lady

Dear Money Lady, I know it's not tax season, but have you got any tips on how to reduce the amount of taxes I pay every year?

Carol

Unfortunately, the more money you make the more tax you pay, thanks to the marginal tax rate system in Canada. Many people make financial decisions based on their gross income; however, from a planning perspective, it's not good enough to know how much money you make, but rather to know how much money you keep. Making a dollar today doesn't mean you can count on spending that dollar tomorrow.

We all have two layers of taxation in Canada: federal and provincial. The one thing that is guaranteed with taxation, is that it is progressive. So, over time it continues to go up. Just to give you an example: when RRSPs first came out in 1957, the highest marginal tax rate in Ontario was 11.5 per cent, now it is 53.5 per cent. Knowing your marginal tax rate is one part of understanding your net income; however, there are specific strategies that you can utilize to help minimize the taxes you pay. The three best ways are to Deduct, Defer and Divide. Let's talk about each method.

1. Deduct: This would be a deduction or claim to reduce your taxable income. The best way to do this is to have a home-based business, be an independent contractor, or be a self-employed entrepreneur to write off expenses against your gross taxable income. Look for ways to lower your income through various expenses or income-splitting.

2. Defer: Deferring tax means you move the obligation to pay current taxes into your future years. The advantages to deferring taxation works on the premise that it is better to pay the taxation in the future; perhaps when your income is much lower, than to pay it today, when your income is in a higher marginal tax

mushrooms

1 package (6.4 ounces) frozen, cooked, nitrate-free turkey sausage links, thawed

7 large eggs

1/4 cup fat-free milk

1/4 teaspoon pepper

1 cup shredded fat-free cheddar cheese

Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly spray 12-cup muffin pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In medium nonstick pan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Cook onions



bracket. This can be done through registered pension plans (RPP + PRPP), registered retirement savings plans (RRSP + RRIF), registered education savings plans (RESP), and registered disability savings plans (RDSP).

3. Divide: Income splitting is the best way to divide your income and lower taxation. Now I know that many of you who are single will say that this is not relevant – and you're right. Dividing income can only be done with your partner (so you will need to have one to do this last taxation step). Here are some of the ways you can split income.

- * Spousal RRSPs
- * Sharing CPP benefits
- * Paying wages to family members through a business
- * Using trusts
- * Using partnerships or corporations to earn business income

Tax planning is easier than you think. Try to utilize a TFSA (tax free savings account) as much as possible. If you were 18 or older as of January 1, 2009 when TFSAs first started you can contribute up to \$102,000 in the cumulated contribution room since inception.

Good Luck and Best Wishes,
 Money Lady

Written by Christine Ibbotson, Author, Finance Writer and Syndicated Money Coach on BNN Bloomberg. Christine is also part of the everyday lineup on CTV Your Morning in every province. No AI. Follow Christine on Instagram @askthemoneylady, or on Facebook (Christine Ibbotson).

and mushrooms 10 minutes, or until soft, stirring occasionally.

Warm turkey sausage according to package directions. Chop turkey into bite-size pieces. Stir into onion mixture until well blended. Spoon into muffin cups.

In small bowl, whisk eggs, milk and pepper. Pour egg mixture into muffin cups. Top with cheddar cheese.

Bake 25 minutes, or until eggs are set. Remove from oven. Let cool slightly. To easily remove muffins from pan, run knife around edges of each muffin.