

April 2018

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Feature

Mountain Valley Doula
helping parents
prepare for birth

Bringing the
Creston Valley together!



**FABULOUS
FIBRE**

Kootenay Fibre Arts Festival
returning for third year

HISTORY

PCSS Blue Stars found
success in 1970s

OUTDOORS

Education programs
returning to CVWMA

TOWN

Grant approved for new
community park

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From the Editor



BRIAN LAWRENCE

Well, this is it: Spring must be here, because the sunny days seem to be slightly outnumbering the rainy/snowy ones. And that means...

It's time for the third annual Kootenay Fibre Arts Festival! As you'll discover when you read the feature, it sounds like a fun event, with fibre artists from a wide range of disciplines showing their talent and encouraging newcomers to develop their

ON THE COVER

Mel Joy (left) and Carmen Ditzler, two of the organizers of the Kootenay Fibre Arts Festival, holding a piece of felted artwork created at the 2017 festival. (Brian Lawrence photo)

own. It's hard not to get excited about it; the enthusiasm of organizers Carmen Ditzler and Mel Joy is pretty infectious.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Creston Museum manager Tammy Bradford spoke with former Prince Charles Secondary School coach Bob Ferguson, who filled her in on the PCSS Blue Stars' five-year journey to a stellar 1978 season. For the girls volleyball team, which started out as a definite underdog, it is quite the success story!

Creston Mayor Ron Toyota provides some good news for the town: Federal Gas Tax Fund grants of nearly \$6 million have been approved. One grant will help cover the creation of the Creston Community Park, utilizing the empty space between the Creston and District Community Complex and 20th Avenue North. With a new skate park, trails, seating areas and more, it is sure to give us reason

to brag about our rec centre being the best in the Kootenays.

Another exciting grant-related story is that of the nearly \$300,000 the Columbia Basin Trust gave to the Kootenay-Columbia Discovery Centre Society (KCDCS), which will take over the operation of the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area's former interpretation centre (closed in October). I know that the KCDCS has been working incredibly hard to make this happen, and I'm pleased to see the group's hard work is paying off.

And there is so much more in this much issue: Lower Kootenay Band Chief Jason Louie reflects on healing divisions, the chamber of commerce is leading a drive for used computers, Focus on Youth is back for its 32nd year, and I chatted with doula Tara Mehrer about her profession.

Until next time, enjoy! ■

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OPEN BURNING

April is here and now is
the time to obtain a permit

Please keep in mind that there are regulations set out in the Town of Creston Fire Services Bylaw no. 1774 when burning outdoors.

These regulations have been adopted to enhance the health and safety of our community and for the consideration of our neighbours when burning outdoors.

Violations can result in large fines and permits for open air burning may not be issued for a property where violations of the open burning regulations have occurred or to a person who has not adhered to those regulations.

Below are some of the requirements to be aware of:

- Open air (outdoor) burning is only permitted during the months of April and October and only where authorized by a permit issued by the Fire Chief under the Town's bylaw.
- A permit is not required for cooking fires contained within a barbecue or fire pit having a surface area not greater than .5 meter (half meter) in diameter and less than .5 meter (half meter) high, using natural gas, propane, charcoal or clean dry seasoned firewood with a screen covered fire area.
- The permit holder must post the permit on the site for which the permit was issued and keep it available for inspection at the request of a Member.
- No person shall burn during times for which the Ministry of Forests, the Ministry of Environment or other authority having jurisdiction to do so has issued a ban on open burning.
- No person shall use burning barrels.
- No person shall burn prohibited materials.
- No person shall burn material brought from another location or property except clean dry seasoned firewood as permitted by this bylaw.

- No person shall set, start or kindle open air burning or allow open air burning to continue to burn during winds strong enough to carry sparks to other combustibles.
- No person shall set, start or kindle open air burning except during daylight hours or as otherwise permitted by this bylaw.
- No person shall burn during periods of air stagnation.
- No person shall burn unless the ventilation index is favorable, as provided by the Ministry of Environment.
- No burning shall exceed a 4 hour duration unless otherwise permitted by this bylaw.
- All fires must be contained within a firebreak (bare ground) equal in size to the height of the pile.
- Fires shall be extinguished immediately if smoke or ash is a nuisance to neighbours.
- Burning shall be in open areas, no closer than 4.5 metres (15 feet) from combustibles, such as standalone trees, coniferous shrubs, fences and buildings and shall be 15 metres (50') from standing timber / tree line.
- Permission of the Owner, for permits under this bylaw, must be obtained in writing if the burning takes place on the Owner's property by another person, particularly if the property is rented or leased property.

There are 3 categories of permit, which are;

- Residential Leaves, foliage, weeds (permit fee is \$10.00)
- Freestanding grass and underbrush (permit fee is \$40.00)
- Large piles (permit fee is \$75.00)

For more information on open burning or to obtain a permit, please call or visit the Town of Creston Municipal Hall or Creston Fire Department during regular business hours.



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SUBMITTED

ALL ABOUT FIBRE!

Kootenay Fibre Arts Festival Returning for Third Year

BY BRIAN LAWRENCE
I Love Creston Editor

Fibre in your hands isn't simply colourful. It isn't simply pleasant to the touch. But it is simply... there. And that's all that really matters.

"A lot of our work in 2018 is intangible," says Carmen Ditzler. "When we have something tangible, it fulfills something in us."

That's one of the reasons she organized the first Kootenay Fibre Arts Festival in 2016, and why it's now back for a third year, running April 28 at Wynndel Hall, with the theme "Simply Blue". She was also

interested in bringing the Kootenay region's many fibre artists together in one place.

"This festival is for building community and shaking the trees to see how many fibre artists fall out," she says. "People's eyes aren't glazing over. It's like-minded people finding people who are interested. ... We have a lot of extremely talented people in the valley and it's nice to get them together."

The festival, sponsored by the Creston Valley Arts Council, is for more than just avid fibre artists, though. In addition to enjoying a

gallery and fashion show, newcomers to the world of fibre will have the opportunity to buy carnival-style tickets, allowing them to visit stations where they may attempt skills such as needle felting, wet felting, tatting, free-form crocheting and more.

"There is a facilitator at every station to show you what the possibilities are," says Ditzler. "I like seeing people's eyes light up when they get it. Their head just explodes."

Those who want to really get their hands dirty — or blue, in this case — can preregister for Indigo Jam, a workshop with weaver and dyer Gale



ANDREA REVOY

Karl Lansing's sasquatch sculpture at the Columbia Brewery wore a snazzy new outfit after "yam bombing" during last year's Kootenay Fibre Arts Festival.

Anderson-Palm from Rimbey, Alta., who will lead participants as they tie, clamp, stitch, resist and dye a metre of organic cotton.

"One of the things Gale always says is, 'Happiness is blue hands,'" says Ditzler.

Anderson-Palm's grandmother introduced her to sewing and embroidering at an early age, and she later explored weaving. She studied indigo at Alberta's Olds

College, and travelled to Japan in 1988, studying the techniques of ikat and shibori at the Kawashima Textile School in Kyoto. She has since taught and studied in Nepal, Tibet, India, Peru, Mexico, France, Bhutan and Morocco.

The indigo artist will be the festival's first-ever guest artist, a sign that the festival is growing, and the reason Ditzler brought in others to help out, including Fly in the Fibre owner Mel

Joy, whose business has become a fibre artist hub — which helps feed her own passion.

"I took a class and then just kind of fell into the rabbit hole," she says. "Once I started learning about fibre, especially natural fibre, there's a lot you can do with it."

She's particularly fond of knitting, appreciating the feel and colour.

"It's definitely the working with your hands," she says. "And every project is challenging. It doesn't matter if you've done the pattern before, it's always different."

And if the design isn't turning out the way it should, it can be changed.

"It's art that's fixable," says Joy. "You can rip it back — you have the choice to rip it back."

As many grandmothers do, Ditzler's tried to teach her and a cousin to knit when they were kids. They just wanted to play outside, though, so Ditzler waited until she was living in northern Alberta years later to teach herself. She later joined the Sheep Creek Weavers and Fibre Artists Guild and discovered just how far textiles could take her.

"It's just a rabbit hole, and then it explodes underneath," she says.

Her favourite fibre art is wet felting, in which layers of wool are combined to create a flat piece of felt fabric, using hands, water and soap.

"The possibilities of what you can do with it are endless," she says.

That has helped fibre art to make a comeback. Spinning and weaving, Ditzler says, were popular in the 1970s, while knitting, usually with artificial fibre, was just something grandmothers did. But the ability to share ideas and techniques through the Internet created a renaissance for knitting and dyeing.

“A lot of our work is intangible and unsatisfying,” says Ditzler. “People like working with their hands. People like colour. You can justify what you do because it’s practical.”

It’s also accessible, requiring little equipment, a great deal of which can be found in the vendor area. Last year, supplies included local fibres from Skimmerhorn Alpacas and Spectrum Farms.

“It’s not a finished goods event,” says Ditzler. “You can go and get stuff to knit or weave or felt or dye.”

Of course, there will be some finished goods to see, with a gallery set up to display artists’ work.

“It can be the first thing you made,” says Ditzler. “It’s not there to be a competitive; it’s there to be supportive.”

It’s also a chance to commiserate on the challenges of the creative process.

“We call certain mistakes ‘design features’,” says Ditzler.

The festival will also have an art challenge and a hat challenge; Fly in the Fibre will host a class in April to help contestants prepare for the latter.

Add it all together and the festival is a place where fibre artists, whether veterans or newcomers, can enjoy a chance to socialize, learn and play.

“People that came had a great time,” says Ditzler. “They get interested in doing something they’ve never done before. ... People show up that work on their own and find that other people like the thing they like.”

“It’s a safe environment without your mom or grandma or teacher looking over your shoulder,” adds Joy. “It brings out the artist in people who didn’t know they were artists, which is kind of neat.” ■

Admission to the Kootenay Fibre Arts Festival is free, and guests can pre-register for lunch. Learn more at www.flyinthefibre.ca/pages/kootenay-fibre-fest.



CARMEN DITZLER
Heather McSwan demonstrates spinning during the 2017 Kootenay Fibre Arts Festival.



From the Mayor's Desk

BY RON TOYOTA
Mayor - Town of Creston

Two Grant Approvals for Creston Valley

On March 9, the Town of Creston received official notice that its Federal Gas Tax Fund grant application was approved for \$2.8 million. These funds will be used for our permanent biosolids handling system at the waste water treatment plant. While the project may not be glamorous, 100 per cent funding is greatly appreciated for the entire project.

The technical explanation is that our biosolids are byproducts of the waste water treatment plant process. The town has an effective short-term solids removal solution; however, the establishment of a permanent structure and waste collection/laydown area that is in conformance with current Ministry of Environment regulations will greatly reduce potential contamination of the environment. Upon completion of this project, the town will be able to process biosolids throughout the year without changing the current waste water treatment processes.

The Union of BC Municipalities administers the Federal Gas Tax Fund in B.C. in partnership with the Government of Canada and the

Province of British Columbia. This round of announcements saw 112 communities receive \$193,000,000 for infrastructure- and recreation-related improvements.

Now the other really exciting grant is the Creston Community Park located at the Creston and District Community Complex, which received \$3.1 million from the Federal Gas Tax Fund. This project was designed and submitted to replace the skateboard park, which closed in 2015.

Columbia Basin Trust provided \$150,000 in 2017 toward this project and now with the 100 per cent funding approval, the project could start in April 2018 and be completed by August 2019.

In November 2016, conceptual plans and details were outlined by consultants Jim Barnum and Mark van der Zalm for a Creston Community Park that would feature 10,000 square feet of innovative functional space for skateboarders, BMX riders and scooter riders. The area will also include an accessible walkway and seating area for spectators, and

VAN DER ZALM + ASSOCIATES

An artist's rendering of the proposed Creston Community Park.

a picnic/civic space with seating for social and community gatherings. Other features will include a revitalized playground, horseshoe pits and beach volleyball courts; the addition of pickleball courts and a multipurpose basketball court; upgrades to lighting, landscaping, parking areas, trailheads and pathways; and enhancements to accessibility between the indoor and outdoor amenities of the complex.

A letter written to our town council in May 2015 from Messrs. Kyle, Travis, Andre and Jacob to build a new skate park started this process and they could be enjoying their idea in 2019. Congrats, guys!

I am very pleased to have been involved with this project. The successful award of both grants is due to the creative and dedicated involvement of our Town of Creston staff and our Creston Valley Regional District of Central Kootenay staff. Thank you! ■

Reach Creston Mayor Ron Toyota at 250-428-2214 ext. 227 or ron.toyota@creston.ca.



Message from the Chief

BY JASON LOUIE
Chief - Lower Kootenay Band

Workshops Helping to Heal Divisions

Ki'suk kyukyit (greetings).

The Lower Kootenay Band is a member band of the Ktunaxa Nation. In comparison to other First Nations in Canada, we are one of the smaller communities. There have been many factors that have led to a breakdown of family, community and traditions. The residential school system and the reserve system were destructive in so many ways. These government-imposed systems took away identity and humanity.

As time progressed, divisions were formed in the community. Family feuds arose, dividing the closest of relatives for generations. Unfortunately, these divisions still exist today. The closest of blood relations can pass by each other on the street and there is not an acknowledgement of one another. Sometimes the animosity is due to bearing a certain last name or for reasons that are unknown. The division could have first transpired many generations ago.

To take a proactive approach to this situation, the Lower Kootenay Band began a series of healing workshops for the Lower Kootenay community.

We invited facilitators to help guide us through this healing journey. We had two separate workshops, one for the males and a group for the female participants. J.R. LaRose, who is a former CFL safety, facilitated the men's group. He is an ambassador for indigenous communities and aims to end the violence that can occur in First Nations territories. For the ladies, Anna Hanson facilitated the women's group. She is a consultant and counsellor who works with effective trauma therapy interventions.

On day two of the workshops, we brought both the men's group and women's group together as one. Due to privacy and confidentiality I will not say what was said but can say that the outcome was the beginning of something beautiful. We had individuals who sat in the same space who may not have spoken for years now having a commitment to creating a healthy future for our younger generations.

Our second speaker in our workshop series was Kasey Nicholson, a motivational speaker and comedian who presented on grief and loss, mental health awareness, anxiety and self-

esteem, among other topics. To end on a lighter note, Kasey had a comedy show that was open to the general public at the Prince Charles Theatre. Laughter truly is medicine.

These workshops are just the beginning of a very long journey to community wellness. Some members of the community chose not to attend and that is their decision. Should they change their minds, we will make room for everyone who wants to walk down a different path. What has been happening for so many generations is not healthy and we must begin to teach our children and future generations kindness.

We will continue to move forward with those who are ready to move forward. As an elected leadership, we are creating a sustainable economy through our business ventures but we must have unity. We must have a true sense of team with a strong identity. Our culture and history never did include hatred or exclusion of our citizens. This can at times be a game of inches. Some days we will take strides forward, while other days we will move at a snail's pace. Regardless, we are going to move forward, not backward. I am striving to be a good elder one day and we all need to begin that journey now.

With that, I once again thank you for reading and wish you all well. ■

Reach Jason Louie at 250-428-4428 ext. 235, mjasonlouie@gmail.com or online at www.lowerkootenay.com.

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BY TAMMY
BRADFORD

Manager - Creston
& District Museum
& Archives

Rise of the PCSS Blue Stars

The PCSS Blue Stars will represent the East Kootenays in the Provincial Single A Basketball Championships to be held in Chase March 1-4."

That was the first sentence of a rather ordinary *Creston Valley Advance* newspaper article — a short summary of the game, a few stats about the high scorers, an inspiring comment from the team's coach. There is nothing to indicate that the 1978 senior girls' basketball team was about to make history.

It was a story five years in the making.

I had a fascinating conversation with coach Bob Ferguson and learned that the Blue Stars' stellar 1978 season had begun in 1973-1974. Due to the ineligibility of a dozen of his senior players from the previous year, Bob found himself having to build a basketball team from scratch. He recruited an outstanding member of the junior team (Twyla Moser, one of the best athletes this area has ever produced), invited any other girl who wanted to play whether she had any experience or not, and went looking among the school's younger students.

"At that time," he says, "there was a very active elementary program, where teams played other East Kootenay schools. It was a system that helped develop players very young. I used to go watch games with players as young as Grade 4 or 5, so I'd have some idea what I was going to have in a few years."



A Creston Valley Advance photo showing Nancy Budda (34) and Cecile Ignatius (23) reaching for a rebound in a tournament held in Creston in late January 1978.

History

He found some excellent Grade 8 players — their names figure regularly among the all-stars and MVPs in the various tournaments they played, and three (Karen Moman, Colleen Bredy and Laurie Biccum) were named to the provincial all-star teams in 1977 and 1978.

Karen, Colleen and Laurie were very talented players, and Twyla was phenomenal, but the youthful and inexperienced team was not expected to accomplish very much. And it did take a couple of years to build the team up; in 1975, the season was described as “fairly successful” and Creston finished second behind Cranbrook in the East Kootenay tournament.

Everything changed in 1976, when the Blue Stars burst onto the provincial basketball scene.

Ranked 16th out of 16 teams in the championships, they shocked and surprised everyone by holding their own against the teams ranked No. 1 and 3 in the province. Creston only lost those first two games in the dying seconds, a feat nobody had expected them to achieve. The early losses pushed them into the consolation round, where they won every game and finished the tournament in eighth place, but they were probably the third- or fourth-best team in the tournament.

“That tournament is why we won the bid to host the 1977 provincial championships in Creston,” says Bob. “The organizers wanted a team likely to win to host it so they could fill the stands for the finals.”

And fill the stands they did. The old high school gymnasium’s built-in bleachers could hold 1,000 people, and they were packed. But Creston lost a semifinal game to Lake Cowichan. There were a number of factors contributing to the loss. Bob, very busy



COURTESY BOB FERGUSON

The 1978 Blue Stars with the various trophies and awards they won that year. (From left) Back: coach Bob Foreman, assistant coach Bob Ferguson; middle: forward Kari Larsen, centre Juanita Harty, forward Michelle Laub; front: guard forward Adele Lansing, guards Colleen Bredy and Laurie Biccum, forward Karen Moman. Missing: forward Nancy Budda, guard Donna Douville, forward Cecile Ignatius, Lia Raaymakers, manager Debbie McLeo.

with his duties as tournament chair, arrived late to find that the referee had started the game without him. Even worse was a problem with the uniforms. Each team was supposed to have two uniforms — one dark and one light — but Lake Cowichan only had one. Creston’s opposite uniform had been used in the previous game and was being washed — so the Creston girls were forced to wear singlets.

“Girls don’t play basketball in singlets,” says Bob. “They were very uncomfortable, and I was furious.”

Still, a third-place finish was an impressive accomplishment, especially

for a team that hadn’t even registered on the provincial scale only a couple of years before.

Seven of the 1977 players graduated that year, greatly changing the makeup of the team. On paper, the 1978 season wasn’t expected to be as successful as the year before.

But, says Bob, “We played against all the top teams, every tournament we could get into,” playing 32 games in a season running from December to early March. High schools were divided into two tiers depending on their size, and Creston was in the second tier. All of the team’s games before Christmas

History

“It was nice to have the trophy in our hands, but to come back to Creston, and know how proud they were of us — that was just incredible.”

— Karen Moman Kriese

were against top-tier schools “to see how good we were,” says Bob.

They were very good. In January 1978, the Western Canadian Central Memorial tournament in Calgary invited the top-ranked AA schools in B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan, but for some reason the B.C. schools declined — so Bob was asked to bring his senior girls team. That meant Creston, a single-A school, was playing the best teams from schools with 1,500 or 2,000 students. They placed second.

“That’s when I knew,” says Bob. The Blue Stars were well on their way to the provincial championships. They rolled

through the East Kootenays — handing nemesis Cranbrook their first home defeat from an East Kootenay team in 10 years — and headed up to Chase.

They handily won the first round-robin game against Prince George, but the second was against the pre-tournament favourite, Little Flower Academy. Creston got a come-from-behind victory, and then there was another tough battle against Armstrong in the quarterfinals. Creston won that game 49-47, then defeated Hope in the semifinals.

The final game was a rematch of Creston and Little Flower Academy. The newspaper recounted, “With only 10 seconds to go, Creston led 54-52, but drew a foul. LFA sunk both foul shots to tie the game and send it into overtime.


“Adele Lansing sunk a basket [in overtime], giving Creston the lead, but with only seven seconds to go, LFA had a good scoring chance. Creston blocked the shot and the rebound was picked up by Colleen Bredy who dribbled the ball into the corner and held it until the whistle went.”

“Michelle Laub and Juanita Harty took on a heavy-duty role in that tournament,” says Bob. “The three who had been with me since Grade 8 — Colleen, Karen and Laurie — and Adele Lansing, they never panicked, never got upset. I did! I had an assistant coach, Bob Foreman, for the first time ever, to keep me from getting too emotional. He calmed me down, so I didn’t upset the girls.”

The Blue Stars came back to Creston provincial champions. It was the first time any East Kootenay team had won that honour.

“It was nice to have the trophy in our hands,” recalls team member Karen Moman Kriese, “but to come back to Creston, and know how proud they were of us — that was just incredible.” ■


To learn more, contact the Creston Museum at 250-428-9262 or crestonmuseum@telus.net, or visit www.crestonmuseum.ca.






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Got the Blues?

BY MEL JOY
Fly in the Fibre

Indigo is the legendary source of colourfast blues, and its ability to produce a wide range of shades has made it the most successful dye plant ever known. Indigo can give clear blues that range from the tint of a pale sky to a deep navy that is almost black. We know it as the blue colour of denim, now dyed using synthetic indigo, which was first created in 1880 by Adolph von Bayer.

Natural indigo is obtained from indigo bearing plants, the most significant one being *Indigofera tinctoria*. The plant produces a colourless glucose based-substance called indicant, which is a precursor to indigo dye. When the plant matter is fermented, an enzyme is produced that, together with oxygen, facilitates the transformation of indican to indigotin (the dyeing component of indigo).

Indigotin (indigo powder) is insoluble in water. To use it for dyeing, it must be chemically reduced to a water soluble form known as indigo white. When fiber is added to an indigo vat (which



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Fabric soaking in a vat of indigo dye.

is an amber or yellowish-green colour) and then removed, a molecular combination occurs. The indigo white oxidizes back to the insoluble blue form, where it remains in relative permanence in the cloth.

Indigo dyeing is often used in combination with resist dyeing such as shibori or itajime or pole wrapping, all names for techniques of folding, pleating, clamping, stitching or tying to create repeating patterns. Where the dye solution can't reach remains white and the rest oxidizes to blue. Seeing the yellowish green cloth turn a magnificent shade of blue as it is

exposed to oxygen in the air or in plain water is magical. It's a simple process with humble materials that take a lifetime to explore. ■

To learn more about this process, join the Kootenay Fibre Arts Festival's Indigo Jam on April 28; learn more at www.flyinthefibre.ca.

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Spring Concert a Celebration of Earth

BLOSSOM VALLEY SINGERS

The Blossom Valley Singers are back and ready to say goodbye to the snow, and hello to spring! The annual concert and tea will be held April 14 and 15 at the Creston and District Community Complex, with table service of tea and cakes during the intermission, catered by the Trinity United Church.

The Blossom Valley Singers have been hard at work preparing a truly uplifting celebration of our planet, and

this year's concert, *The Whole Earth Sings*, will focus on the return of spring and the celebration of Earth Day.

The audience will be enthralled with tales of the natural and supernatural elements that make up our world: songs of the creatures that we share this planet with, and the true interconnectedness of all living things that share the land, sea and sky, the beauty of the Earth, the magic of a place over the rainbow, and the joy of recognizing what a wonderful world

we truly live in. Concertgoers will feel connected to the ground with the beat of the djembe in "Gently Walk the Earth", feel the breeze on their cheeks with "Colours of the Wind", and feel the storm rise with "Emerald Stream".

The concert will be directed by Anita Stushnoff and supported by the "King of the Ivory Keys", Monte Anderson, featuring Megan Bibby on fiddle and Doug Stapleton on mandolin. ■

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Ag Aware

BY RANDY MEYER
Creston Valley Agriculture Society

Spring is in the Creston Valley. So much to now do! Clean up the yard after the winter storms and get into your gardens. It's time to dig in the dirt again. As the days warm, the great variety of fruit trees in the valley will soon be in blossom once again, heralding the start of another crop.

Other farms will begin field work, tilling the ground in preparation for seeding a number of crops. Calving should be wrapping up by now for most of the beef farms. The grass is greening up and summer pasture time will come soon. So much is happening all around us as the land comes alive after the winter rest.

As the outdoor work takes up more time now, the winter "meeting season" should be winding down, as well. Many agriculture industry meetings and planning sessions occur. One meeting in March was the provincial Agriculture Ministry review of the Agriculture Land Commission. The local meeting was held in Cranbrook. A few of us local farmers attended this meeting to provide our input and perspective on Creston Valley agriculture. We felt our attendance was important as it allowed us to

inform the provincial panel that our area agriculture is much more diverse and different than what is happening in the East Kootenay. I'm fairly sure they got the message! We had a very good meeting.

Shortly after that meeting, the local Fields Forward group had its third anniversary forum at the Creston and District Community Complex. The forum was well attended, with great discussions on various ideas and plans to help encourage and promote agriculture initiatives in our valley.

It is very evident that growing the crops and producing the food are what most of us farmers do best. Marketing and distribution of our products are the weak links in the chain. A number of ideas and possible solutions to these issues were discussed. There are consumers out there; we just need to come up with more efficient and cost-effective solutions to get the products to them.

Along with that is the continuing need for public education and awareness of our local agriculture. There are still too many people who don't know what food products are available in our area. This is very frustrating!

Did you know that approximately 63,000 jobs in B.C. are connected to agriculture production, distribution and processing?

Did you know that approximately 63,000 jobs in B.C. are connected to agriculture production, distribution and processing? As well, many billions of dollars in economic activity are related to agriculture. Many of these "food dollars" support our community year after year. As you enjoy the spring season, take notice of all of the agriculture activity going on around our valley and be Ag Aware. ■



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Doula Helping Parents Prepare for Birth

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRIAN LAWRENCE
I Love Creston Editor

For most Canadians, births are private events, with few other than the parents and medical staff present.

But that wasn't the case with the first birth Tara Mehrer witnessed. From ages 16-19, she lived with her parents — her dad a teacher and mom a nurse — and sister in Haiti, where a birth was a sort of community event.

"My mom was the white nurse next door, and they said, 'Want to come over and help?'" she recalls. "It takes a village to raise a child, and the support of a neighbourhood to birth a child."

That had an impact on Mehrer, who now provides support to expecting parents through Mountain Valley Doula, a profession that grew out of being with her sister during labour.

"The first time I was in with someone was with my sister," says Mehrer, who grew up in the Kootenays. "I was doing

whatever I thought needed doing, just encouraging her, offering ice chips or a cool cloth for her forehead. And her doctor said, 'You need to be a doula.'"

The role of a doula, derived from the Greek word for "servant-woman", is to help expecting mothers develop a birth plan, teach relaxation, visualization and breathing skills useful for labour, and offer education on birth options. During labour, a doula helps create a secure, comfortable environment for mothers.

"I'm the emotional, mental and physical support," says Mehrer. "I don't advocate for options, but I do support them in whatever way they need to be supported. ... It's seeing women given a voice, empowering them to make their own choices in labour and delivery. I like seeing their confidence build up."

That philosophy made giving her business a name a simple task.

"Mountains are strong and grounded," she says. "In the valleys,

there's nourishment and support for the mountains."

She recently began providing postpartum care, which may include assistance with breastfeeding, as well as light housework and meals preparation, essentially "mothering the mom".

"All of a sudden, this crying, eating, pooping thing takes over your life," she says.

It took two years of training for Mehrer to become certified through Doulas of North America, and she's now been one for 13 years. She continued her education through organizations such as the Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association and the International Childbirth Education Association, and expanded her services six years ago by teaching prenatal classes, both to groups and individuals.

Unlike midwives, doulas are not classified as medical professionals and therefore can't provide medical advice.

But they may, if a client wishes, work closely with doctors and other specialists.

"I'm not there to oppose them or get in the way, I'm there to work with them," says Mehrer. "It's like a birth team."

One of a doula's goals is to provide clients with information regarding birthing options; the clients are then able to make informed decisions. The more parents learn, the more confident they become.

"You see the deer-in-the-headlights look at the first class, and then at the last class, they go, 'We can do this,' " says Mehrer.

And they can do it with Mehrer by their side, a steady presence while nurses may come and go during shift changes.

"The doula is constant and always there," she says.

During labour, she reinforces the lessons couples learned in classes, such as rhythm, ritual and relaxation, which may include everything from rocking to singing to walking — it's different for everyone.

"Each woman copes with the pain in labour differently," says Mehrer. "The pain in labour is something that your own body creates."

Mehrer uses an acronym for pain in one of her classes: The pain in labour has a **Purpose**, it is **Anticipated**, it is **Intermittent** and it is **Normal**.

"You can't control the contraction, but you can control how you respond to it."

However a mother does that, Mehrer has seen firsthand how labour creates a special bond after the baby is born.

"If we learn to work with our bodies and allow that process to happen our bodies can build up endorphins, which are a natural morphine, and oxytocin, the love hormone. It can feel like a rush of love when a woman sees her baby for the first time."

Through it all, Mehrer remains naturally composed, a state that developed during her years in Haiti, which included the 1986 uprising that overthrew then-president Jean-Claude Duvalier. Life in Haiti also made it easier to learn from her clients, each of whom is able to bring their own ideas and traditions into the birthing process.

"I think the experience of living in Haiti has made me more of an open-minded person," says Mehrer. "I'm very interested in language and other cultures."

And she's always excited to see the joy on the faces of first-time parents.

"It's not just a baby being born — it's a mom and dad coming to life, as well," says Mehrer. ■

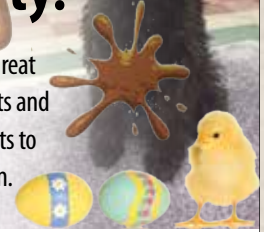
Learn more about Mountain Valley Doula on Facebook @mountainvalleydoula.



Doula Tara Mehrer working with clients as they prepare for their baby's birth.

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Energize Your Life with a Cleanse

VITAL HEALTH

A “spring cleanse” is a breath of fresh air for your body after a long winter. With a natural tendency for rest and eating denser foods, our metabolism slows down and we go into this pattern of winter hibernation. Even if you are healthy and have exercised to keep trim over the winter months, most people still feel at an energy low. Winter illnesses like colds, bronchitis and flu leave our body with accumulated toxins. Even wearing heavy clothing through the colder months hinders normal breathing and perspiration of our skin.

Every day we are overwhelmed with toxins that affect every system in the body, and we need to assist the body in eliminating these toxins to ensure good overall health. Most people don't realize the number of toxins they come into contact with every day. Even someone who eats organic foods, drinks the best water and breathes the cleanest air can still suffer the effects of toxicity.

Detoxification is the body's natural process of elimination or neutralization of toxic materials from cells, organs and the bloodstream. The body processes these toxins through the liver, kidneys, urine, feces, exhalation and perspiration. Cleansing is the action of helping your body to perform detoxification more thoroughly.

Everyone has their own level of

tolerance when it comes to toxins.

However, once you reach that tolerance, a number of different symptoms can begin to appear and this can eventually lead to chronic and degenerative diseases.

Indications that the body needs help with the detoxification process and may need a spring cleanse are headaches, joint pain, back pain, allergy symptoms, insomnia, mood changes, shallow breathing, poor digestion, bloating, low energy, constipation, acne, sinus congestion, food sensitivities and weight gain, even though you aren't eating more food.

If you have any of these symptoms, or are just concerned about the toxins you may have been exposed to over the years, it's time to start cleansing. One of the best ways to cleanse and detoxify the body is through a herbal cleanse program. A good cleansing program uses a combination of herbs and nutrients that support all of the body's seven channels of elimination (liver, lungs, colon, kidneys, blood, skin and lymphatic system).

One of the most important things you can do is to cleanse and detoxify regularly. It is recommended to cleanse two or three times per year to help ensure good health, reduce the risk of disease, and to maintain and increase energy levels. Regardless of your current state of health, if you are a sensitive cleanser, whether you have cleansed in the past or

if it's your first cleanse, you can choose the cleanse that is right for you.

Other important cleanses to focus on are parasites (bacteria) and yeast organisms like *Candida*. We all have these microscopic microbials to some degree and ridding the body of these organisms is extremely important before they become abundant and manifest into chronic conditions or other disorders.

While cleansing and detoxification have a very positive impact on your overall health, their main function is to remove “bad” substances from the body. The other part of the equation to optimal health is putting “good” nutrients back into the body. This consists of certain elements that we need daily, such as fibre, essential oils, probiotics and enzymes to ensure that our body has what it takes to be healthy.

Some of the positive health benefits that are experienced after a cleansing program are improved digestion, increased mental clarity, increased energy levels, better weight management, improved elimination, reduced inflammation and pain, clear skin, stabilized blood pressure and cholesterol, decreased risk of chronic health conditions and improved overall health and well-being.

Knowledge and health go hand and hand. See the difference that cleansing and detoxification can make in your life. ■



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Free forms create premium, personal lenses that give you wider vision zones

while significantly reducing the "swim and sway" effect sometimes felt with conventional progressive lenses.

Wearers are impressed. Distortion is reduced by 40 per cent and presbyopic patients (those with difficulty focusing on nearby objects) can enjoy sharper and more effortless vision.

Wearers expect a lot from their

glasses, such as using the same pair for both driving and reading. Free form lenses offer 30 per cent wider midrange vision.

As well, a new vision zone below the reading area offers better vision of obstacles on the ground and better perception of the environment.

See LENSES, page 20

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Focus on Youth Running for 32nd Year

FOCUS ON YOUTH

Once again, another winter has passed and spring is here. As sure as daffodils and tulips are blooming, young animals are being born and young birds are chirping in their nests, we hear the sound of voices raised in song, young people memorizing lines for their class's next epic production, instruments tuning up and toes eagerly tapping, all in preparation for the 32nd annual Focus on Youth festival being held April 30-May 4.

The residents of the Creston Valley have the unique experience to share in the celebration of the fine arts as performed or displayed by the valley's own talented youth. Students have been busy preparing another fine week of concerts and a weeklong art show for the enjoyment of everyone.

"Many retired teachers willing to step up to take on leadership roles and an extremely supportive community for the arts help keep this festival going," says Margaret Lavender in explaining the longevity of this festival. "Both school and

private teachers recognize the value of this unique opportunity in a professional venue with the support of peers as well as family and the community."

The concerts will be front and centre on the Prince Charles Theatre stage where the students, many for the first time, will have a total theatre experience with lighting, sound and other technical advantages provided by new equipment purchased for the theatre, along with a live audience.

As usual, this year's Focus on Youth runs in a series of concerts. The number of concerts is determined by the number of individuals and group/class performances that need to be scheduled. Each daytime concert is approximately 40 minutes long while evening concerts may be up to an hour.

The Creston Valley Arts Council, in conjunction with Focus on Youth, is presenting its annual art show titled *Artists In Our Neighbourhood* in the Creston Room at the Creston and District Community Complex. The art exhibit will

highlight some well known Creston artists as well as lesser known artists. A special exhibit of past Creston artists Margaret Moore, Robert Stark and Virginia Naeve will be featured.

The exhibit will include a variety of visual arts, such as woodworking, clay, multimedia, video, painting, sculpture, fibre arts and photography; the list is endless. Schools from across the valley are represented by class projects as well as individual pieces.

A mini concert on April 30, the opening night of the festival, will be held at the art show and is titled Family and Friends. The organizers of this concert are inviting siblings, parents and children, as well as groups of friends who enjoy entertaining together and are willing to volunteer their services, to contact Brenda Brucker at 250-428-3358 or blbrucker@shaw.ca.

As a spring treat to yourself, take in at least one concert and the art display to show support for our talented young people, as well as their teachers and mentors. ■

LENSES, from page 19

Walking down the stairs, for example, is now easier. That means an ideal prescription, even for hard-to-fit patients.

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distortion, use thin, light and durable plastic materials, and are available with coatings that repel glare, dust and smudges.

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prescription, technology and individual needs are blended for optimum vision in lightweight lenses. ■

Creston Optometric Eye Centre is a member of Eye Recommend, Canada's Vision Care Professionals.



SUBMITTED

(Above and page 22) Members of the Creston Valley Quad Squad adventuring in the Creston Valley.

Getting Closer to the Great Outdoors

CRESTON VALLEY QUAD SQUAD

Ever wish you could really be a part of the beautiful countryside that surrounds our gorgeous Creston Valley? Well, over the years, quads (all-terrain vehicles, or ATVs), have made this a real possibility, with a huge array of models suited to different purposes.

The durability and safety aspects of modern ATVs are excellent, as technology has given these small four-wheel drive vehicles many of the same

advantages as a modern SUV, with fully automatic, (variable sheave) drive trains, disc brakes and power steering, along with a full complement of lighting, electric start and necessary instrumentation. Built to travel on woodland trails, with excellent handling and adequate power, you can now put on a helmet and fasten your seatbelt in two-, four- or six-seat side-by-side vehicles — or if you simply want to ride alone, a single-seat quad is the way to go!

It is never a wise idea to venture off alone into the “outback”, although there are exceptions that make it safer, such as well frequented trails, cellphones and survival gear (an axe or chainsaw, winch, shovel, extra fuel). The Creston Valley Quad Squad would by far prefer enthusiasts to always go with one or more others on ATVs, in the event of a problem.

The Quad Squad is a group of enthusiastic folks of various ages with a common goal of getting out

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and enjoying trail riding. The squad is a member of the provinciewide organization of the Quad Riders Association of British Columbia (ATV BC), which is the regulatory body of the many ATV clubs around the province, and which provides the club's operational guidance and advice, as well as many other advantages, such as interclub events, newsletters, grant monies, insurance and more.

One of the key aspects of ATV BC is safety, as past unregulated events have been burdened by troubles. This aspect of quadding is no longer an issue, as when a "ride" is in progress, lights are on, with proper spacing and speed, to ensure everyone is safe and accounted for at any of the several stops, whether they be for picture taking, socializing or lunch.

The quad squad schedules regular rides to various areas nearby, with most pre-ride staging points within 45

kilometres of town, and periodically further away locations with camping or potluck meals. On several occasions a ride is combined with members turning out for trail clearing and maintenance, with the nice part being that every member has a say in the running of the club and club functions. ■

Club meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month. To learn more, contact president Larry Wolf at ridewithwolfs@telus.net or visit www.crestonquads.com.

Steps for creating a FireSmart® property

Zone 1 Home -10 meters



Remove debris such as leaves, twigs and needles from around the house and under decks.

Keep lawns mowed and irrigated.

Enclose decks with non-combustible materials to discourage the collection of debris and embers.

Keep firewood piles and other items stacked at least 10 meters from the house, especially during wildfire season.



Ensure a clean, fire-resistant roof and clean eaves.

Enclose soffits and vents to ensure embers cannot enter.

Ensure trees and shrubs are pruned, branches do not contact the home and they are not connected to the surrounding forest - minimum 3 meters between it and the forest.

Don't forget to consider any buildings or fences within 10 meters of the home and take steps to FireSmart them as well.



**CRESTON
COMMUNITY FOREST**
Creston Valley Forest Corporation



Zone 2 10-30 meters



Remove accumulations of branches, needles, dry grass and other debris from the ground.

Remove vegetation and small trees that may act as a "ladder", carrying fire into the treetops.

Space trees 3 meters apart and prune branches within 2 meters of the ground. Deciduous trees (having leaves) are an exception; they help to hinder fire spread, so their removal is discouraged.

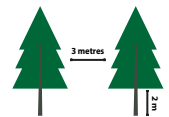


Zone 3 30-100 meters



Remove vegetation and small trees that may act as a "ladder", carrying fire into the treetops.

Space trees 3 meters apart and prune branches within 2 meters of the ground. Deciduous trees (having leaves) are an exception; they help to hinder fire spread, so their removal is discouraged.



LEARN MORE:

BC Wildfire Service: www.bcwildfire.ca

FireSmart Canada: www.firesmartcanada.ca

Community Forest: www.crestoncommunityforest.com

Education Programs Resuming to Wildlife Area

COLUMBIA BASIN TRUST

Environmental education and awareness programs at the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA) are going to continue under new management.

Since 1974, these programs were provided by the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Authority, but this ended with the permanent closure of the interpretive centre in October 2017. Now the programs will continue thanks to the collaborative efforts of the authority and the Kootenay-Columbia Discovery Centre Society (KCDCS), with funding from Columbia Basin Trust.

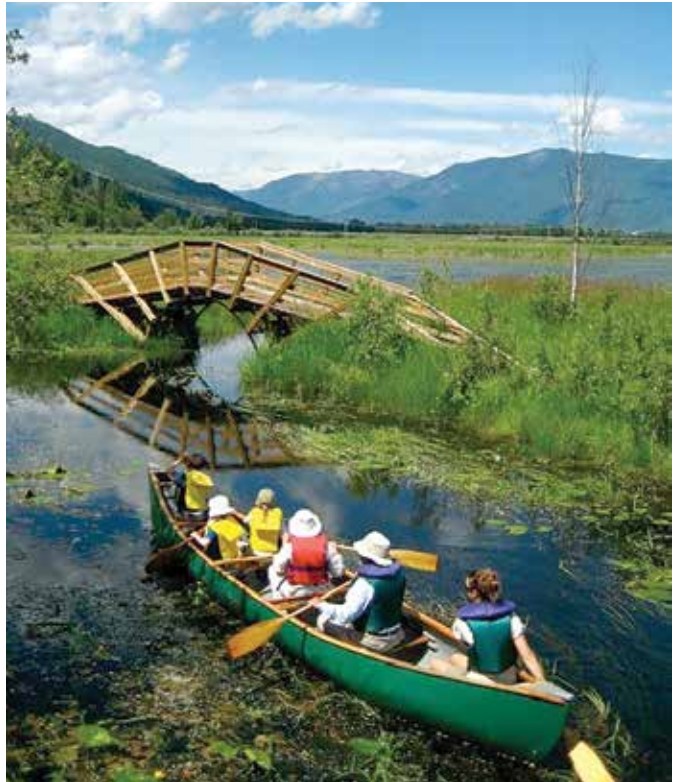
The informative and fun programs engaged with thousands of visitors each year, teaching them about wetland ecosystems and wildlife. Now, with \$295,000 in support from CBT over five years, this valuable service will continue to welcome students, residents and tourists of all ages.

"The community showed great support for these programs, and residents moved quickly to make sure they wouldn't lose this educational, economic and cultural resource," says CBT special initiative director Kindy Gosal. "We're pleased to help this community act on such a widely held priority and give the society a sense of financial stability while it works toward its future."

KCDCS will use \$95,000 this year to cover transition costs, install a portable classroom, office and washrooms, and deliver a variety of programming for adults and children, such as canoe tours, family fun days and special events. For the subsequent four years, CBT will provide \$50,000 per year to continue to support the programs.

"The Wetland Education and Awareness Program creates an understanding and appreciation for the natural world so participants can make informed decisions and actions related to the environment," says KCDCS chair Jim Posynick. "It also gives volunteers, community members and other organizations opportunities to help promote wetland conservation, stewardship and research. Having a safe, functional and appealing temporary home and the funding to think long-term will provide us with the foundation we need while making plans for a permanent location." ■

Columbia Basin Trust supports the ideas and efforts of the people in the Columbia Basin. To learn more about CBT programs and initiatives, and how it helps deliver social, economic and environmental benefits to the basin, visit ourtrust.org or call 1-800-505-8998.



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Programming at the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area includes environmental education on wetland ecosystems and wildlife.

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FREE WEEKEND ADMISSION by donating used computer to our new COMPUTER PROGRAM

See our article in this issue for details.

A partnership with Gleaners, Valley Community Services, Kootenay Employment Services and Swift Internet

Partnership Making Computers Accessible

CRESTON VALLEY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

A partnership spearheaded by the Creston Valley Chamber of Commerce will make computers accessible to low-income families and individuals.

"We recognize there are people in the valley for whom, because of financial circumstances, a new computer is out of reach," says chamber manager Vern Gorham. "We want to help where we can."

The drive to collect used computers will be annual and part of the chamber's Spring Trade Show, this year April 27 and 28, where anyone donating a used computer will earn free weekend admission.

To provide the service, the chamber is teaming up with the Creston Valley Gleaners Society, Valley Community Services and Kootenay Employment Services, who will identify appropriate clients.

"If someone is a client of KES or VCS, they will have enough information to assess the need," says Gorham. "And the food bank will put an application in each bag."

Those deemed eligible will be sent to the chamber of commerce, where

they will receive a coupon to pick up a computer at Swift Internet. Owner Kitt Santano has volunteered time to refurbish the computers, starting with a complete wipe of the hard drive.

"We make sure that the information is gone," he says.

Santano encouraged the chamber of commerce to get involved after hearing of a similar program in Cranbrook, where the chamber of commerce has partnered with Kootenay Computer and the Salvation Army to give computers — and accessories, such as monitors, keyboards and mice — to those in need.

In the Creston Valley, he has seen a need among the senior population.

"They just don't have the money through their pension," he says. "We often get asked for older computers, and it's hard sometimes."

The chamber program is about more than simply giving families and individuals access to technology. It may also help them to become thriving members of Creston's business community.

"In today's day and age, computers and the Internet are pretty vital," says Gorham. "Not only will this help individuals in day-to-day living, it may help them get a small business up and running." ■

Over 50 Slo-Pitch Players Wanted

*Calling all men & women
who are over 50 years of age
& want to play ball.*

The C.V. Slo-Pitch Association, consists of players of all ages, including a designated 50-plus Division. Last year, the members of the 50-plus Coffin Dodgers teams, said they preferred to play against other players with similar skill sets and ability and we were able to come up with a total of 5 teams in the spring and 4 teams in the Fall league.

The division is open to anyone over the age of 50. Couples or individuals can sign up. If couples are signing up together, only one needs to be over 50 years old.

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To sign up or learn more about this please contact:

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BRIAN LAWRENCE

New cushions on a neutral couch match a colour of a favourite chair and fireplace stone.

Local Shopping Makes Room Planning Easier

WENDY REEVES SEIFERT
Over the Valley

Room planning can be a fun experience!

First, determine the feature that you want to work around, such as a view window or, in the case of the above picture, the fireplace. Next it is wise to do a floor plan to scale, which will help you decide what type and size of pieces look best in the room. If you are

not too confident doing this, a designer will come up with a lot of ideas at a reasonable price.

In the photo, the clients had brought a favourite chair, in the foreground. After doing a floor plan, we chose a taupe sectional (neutral) and ordered the cushions in a tangerine colour, which was pulled from the clients' multicoloured chair, and is also present in the stone fireplace. All of the furniture and

appliances were purchased locally at Vance BrandSource Home Furnishings.

Buying local has many advantages: convenience, saving time and money, local service and warranty work, and, most important, supporting your community. The more we deal within our community the more affluent the town will become, and we will reap the rewards in jobs, wages and property values.

In this day of buying online I still want to see the product, and in the case of furniture it is a must to be able to sit on it to determine comfort. There are many treasures to be found in some of our smaller stores in town. With spring here it is a good time to check out what is new in town, and don't forget to drop in and see me in the upcoming Spring Trade Show. ■



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National VOLUNTEER Week

April 15-21

Three Reasons Being a Volunteer Matters

This year, April 15 marks the start of National Volunteer Week. We all know that fitting volunteering into our schedules is easier said than done, but it truly is a rewarding way of being an engaged citizen. Check out this list of just some of the ways volunteering matters in your community and throughout the world:

Support good causes. This is perhaps the most obvious benefit of volunteering, but it should not be understated. The world is full of serious problems, and people dedicated to service can make real

change. Many times, non-profits rely on volunteers because they can then use funding to directly help the cause.

Build community. In this modern age, our communities can extend beyond the people we live near. While volunteering can strengthen bonds in a neighbourhood, it can also create global networks of people with shared concerns. For example, if you volunteer with an organization like Beautiful World Canada, you will become connected to people in both Canada and Africa who are concerned with the state of women's education.

Inspire others. Dedicated volunteers are role models to the people around them. The selfless nature of doing charitable works inspires others to give back. We have all received help in our lives, so it's important to share the love.

—www.newscanada.com

THANK YOU!

VOLUNTEERS

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United Way helping seniors
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*To all our volunteers
Thank you!
You Make A Difference!*

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world;
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

—Margaret Mead



For more information
phone 250-428-5547 or
on line at www.valley.services

TAPS

Therapeutic Activation
Program for Seniors

*"Supporting seniors to connect,
participate and enjoy life"*

National VOLUNTEER Week

April 15-21

Tap into the Benefits of Volunteering

All year, volunteers enrich their communities, help their neighbours and make positive changes. Every April, we take time during National Volunteer Week to recognize the enormous impact of volunteers in their communities.

Some studies estimate that the hard work of volunteers delivers billions of dollars in benefits to towns and cities across Canada. At the same time, volunteers themselves benefit. It can be a great way to gain work experience, develop a skill set, stay healthy and meet new people.

Volunteering comes in many forms and it can be difficult to know how to start. Here are five quick tips on how to

choose the right opportunities for you:

- Think about the causes you care about. One idea is to think back on the work or experiences you've had that have been the most meaningful. This kind of reflection may be a helpful way to decide which causes have the closest connection to you.

- Where do you want to make a difference? Are you looking to give back to your immediate community, or are you more globally minded? These two can often go hand in hand when you connect with local volunteers with an eye on global developments.

- Consider how much time you have to give. Research shows that people

who volunteer feel as though they have more free time. Nonetheless, it is important to think about how much time you can spare and it is worth reviewing your weekly schedule before making a commitment.

- How can you contribute most effectively? It is always a good idea to volunteer your time doing something that you are skilled at or have some experience with. That doesn't necessarily mean doing the same work you have done in your career. It could also be a skill you developed through a hobby or pastime. You want volunteering to be fun, as well as fruitful.

- Connect with an organization. With so many different ways to give of yourself, donating your time to a grassroots organization can add some structure and inspiration. Organizations like Amnesty International, for example, offer opportunities and resources ranging from letter-writing, event organizing and many other forms of volunteer work.

Learn more at www.amnesty.ca/get-involved.

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THANK YOU!

TO ALL THE *DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS* WHO WORK TIRELESSLY TO MAKE THE CRESTON VALLEY THE BEST IT CAN BE.

RON TOYOTA
MAYOR, TOWN OF CRESTON

CRESTON VALLEY
TOWN OF CRESTON



Thank you to our community volunteers who make our world a better place.

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awesome volunteers!

THE CRESTON MUSEUM



YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A sincere thank you to the countless volunteers throughout the Creston Valley, especially those hard-working people in Area B who help make our community stronger.



Tanya Wall
Regional Director, Area B

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR MANY VOLUNTEERS

- Creston PAWS
- West Creston Fire and Hall Societies
- Creston and District Historical and Museum Society
- Citizens on Patrol
- TAPS
- Creston Valley Gleaners Society
- Cresteramics Society
- Therapeutic Riding Program
- Creston Valley Hospice Society
- Creston and District Society for Community Living
- And Many More



Larry Binks
Regional Director,
Area C

FINANCE



Save for Retirement While Eliminating Debt

With recent statistics showing that Canadians are carrying more debt than ever before, many of us face a tough choice — pay down debt now or save for retirement? But according to personal finance experts, it's possible to have the best of both worlds.

"Taking a proactive approach to your finances can allow you to both save for retirement and pay down your debt," explains Wade Stayzer, vice-president of sales and service at Meridian, Ontario's largest credit union. "By determining your financial goals and working with a trusted financial advisor to build a plan to achieve them, you'll find that the payoff is well worth the effort."

Here are his top tips on how to save for your retirement while tackling debt.

Get a personalized financial plan. Working with a trusted financial advisor to create a personalized financial plan

is like driving with a GPS system — you'll reach your end goal faster and with less stress. Make sure you are honest with your advisor and give them the full picture. Check in with them at least once a year to re-evaluate your plan and make any necessary course corrections to keep you on track.

Be strategic. Pay off the debt with the highest interest rate first, while paying the minimum on the rest of your debts. Once that first debt is paid off, concentrate your efforts and funds on paying the next debt with the highest interest rate.

Invest automatically. Saving for the future is easy if you put your savings on autopilot.

Many financial institutions offer pre-authorized contribution plans, which automatically transfer funds from your chequing account into your savings investments at regular intervals. These plans are great for contributing to RSPs or TFSAs, and if you coordinate the withdrawals to align with your payday, the money won't even be missed. ■

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Z122RKW-42 Zero-turn mower features: 22hp Kawasaki V-twin gas, 2 lever hydro-gear transmission, 42" 2 blade pro mower deck, 1.5" to 4.5" dial-a-cut mower height, 0 to 10.5 km/h speed



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