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Branching Out

Blossom Valley Singers continue
Christmas tradition

Mayor's Desk

Holiday Train inspires
food bank challenge

History

The day the Globetrotters
came to town

First Nations

Reminiscing about
Christmas on the rez

Inside...

Holiday Greetings

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The Magazine

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Letters to the Editor

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Photo courtesy of Larry Mendoza

feature story

5 Songs of the season

What would Christmas in the Creston Valley be without the Blossom Valley Singers' annual December concert?

Front cover photo courtesy of Larry Mendoza

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Guest From the editor

Margaret Lavender isn't afraid of heights, but that doesn't mean her turns atop the Singing Christmas Tree were devoid of white-knuckle moments.

"I do remember being encouraged not to move with the music because it does start to (sway)," says the veteran member of the Blossom Valley Singers. "You can move your head but you can't move your body because when everybody starts getting going it was not so comfortable."

"It does feel a little bit like a skyscraper, (being) on scaffolding or something," chimes in Erwin Buchholz, the BVS president.

The pair were reminiscing about the Singing Christmas Tree in advance of this year's presentation of *A Winter Wonderland*, an offshoot of the Singing in the Christmas Trees concert put on the past two years. When Trinity United Church closed its sanctuary for financial reasons the Singing Christmas Tree – too tall for any other performance venue in the valley – had to be retired. It was last performed in 2010 but will long be fondly remembered by anyone who witnessed it.

Standing 18 feet tall and sitting 16 feet wide, the steel-framed, plywood-floored, pyramid-shaped structure was built in 1992 by the Prince Charles Secondary School technology education class taught by Glen Mohr.

The tree accommodated up to 40 choir members who filed up a set of camouflaged stairs on the right side and into ever-narrowing rows from which they performed an annual December concert for nearly two decades.

It took a day to assemble the tree pieces, another day to decorate it with cedar boughs, bows and lights, and a full day to tear it down, recalls Buchholz, noting that the frame held up well.

"Do the math," he says. "Forty times 150 pounds equals a conservative estimate of 6,000 pounds, or three tons."

"We had to load the tree from the bottom to the top for obvious reasons. You needed the ballast."

The procession took time, which was filled with musical accompaniment.

"You were constantly apologizing to the person in the next row down because you were bumping them on the head with your music folder," Lavender says. "It was usually sopranos up near the top. I was at the very top many times."

"The older we got, the greyer the heads, the tougher it was (to decide): 'Who's going to the top of the tree?'"

Not everyone's experience singing at altitude was as positive as Lavender's.

"I had one student who was very young. When we came into a practice I said, 'We've got to practice in the tree,' and (he said), 'I want to go to the top of the tree, Mrs. Lavender.' I said, 'OK. You go.' So he went up to the very top and just froze and the tears started coming. I had to go up and get him."

"When he came down he said, 'Do you want to know why I was so scared? I looked up and then I looked down and I realized how close I was to the roof.' He was only about seven at the time."

An older youth encountered an unwelcome surprise of a different sort on another occasion.

"There were wasps that liked to winter in the building, up above. Of course they're quite dozy, but when you have the heat on, they perk up," Lavender says. "I had a student choir in there and all of a sudden I realized something was going on. People were laughing and (the boy at the top) was going cross-eyed and waving his head around. He was under attack. Somehow he dealt with it. I don't know how."

That tree, designed with the help of then-choir member Tony Frei, was actually the second one employed by the BVS, the original 12-foot version having been built out of wood in 1989 under the direction of John Hopcraft.

"(It) was much smaller and somewhat rickety and they felt they should maybe retire that one," Buchholz says.

So much did the Singing Christmas Tree come to define the Blossom Valley Singers that when they changed formats in 2011 they took care not to depart entirely from their storied past.

"That's why we went from the Singing Christmas Tree to Singing in the Christmas Trees, and our posters reflected that," Lavender says. "Maybe we can sort of drop that image (now)."

In fact they have, at least in name, with *A Winter Wonderland* set to be performed at the Prince Charles Theatre on Dec. 13 and 15, although the singers will still be surrounded by trees on the stage.

No matter what you call it, the Blossom Valley Singers' show is not one to be missed, and represents a Christmas tradition of which the Creston Valley can be proud. Learn more about the choral group in this month's *I Love Creston* cover story, and to all our readers, have a very merry Christmas. ■

Mailbag

(Letters and emails to the editor are printed as written with the exception of profanity, slander or defamation)

The Editor, I Love Creston

With this year's Remembrance Week having just passed, Branch 29 of the Royal Canadian Legion wish to thank the residents of the Creston Valley and the East Shore for their support and attendance at our Cenotaph services on November 11. We also appreciate your very generous contributions to our poppy campaign.

The success of these annual events require many hard working volunteers, the continuing support of our businesses, service organizations, churches, and you, the public, who contribute so generously to honour our veterans on their special day.

This year our poppy campaign and cenotaph service were very successful. We are indeed fortunate to have our local flying club honour the event with their flyover and the 'lost man' formation. We thank everyone who attended the service to pay their respects to our veterans, those whose names are on our Honour Roll, those who served, and those personnel still serving their country. Your respect and remembrance are much appreciated.

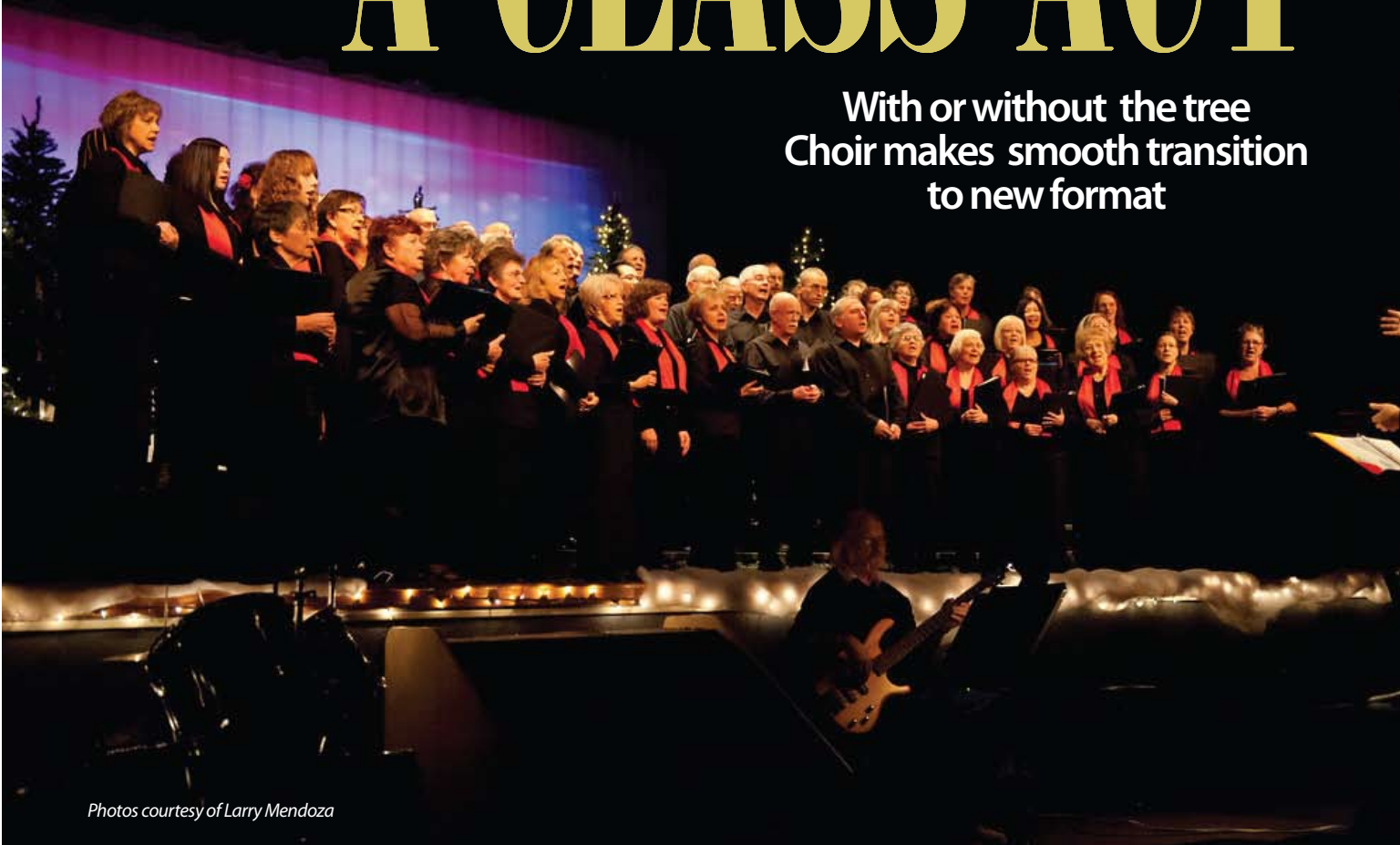
We hope to see you in the coming year at other Legion events and activities. You don't have to have a military connection to become a Legion member. Membership is a good opportunity to become involved in your community.

*On Behalf Of, R.C.L. Branch 29,
Ian Currie, Poppy Chairman*

Blossom Valley Singers

A CLASS ACT

With or without the tree
Choir makes smooth transition
to new format



Photos courtesy of Larry Mendoza

Oh Christmas tree, oh Christmas tree, your theme, it ever binds me.

The Blossom Valley Singers sang that refrain for two decades in which their annual December concert – the Singing Christmas Tree – became a much-anticipated holiday staple that largely defined the Creston choral group.

That changed suddenly in 2011 when circumstances beyond their control “felled” the singing tree and forced the BVS in a different direction.

“It would be interesting to know what the reaction of our clientele might have been when they heard, ‘No

Christmas tree,’ ” says BVS president Erwin Buchholz. “Was it the end of the world or was it, ‘Oh well, let’s just see what they do at PCSS?’ ”

Messing with tradition, especially one connected to Christmas, can be treading on thin ice. But as it turned out, a move from Trinity United Church to Prince Charles Theatre and a fresh format – Singing in the Christmas Trees – proved to be a win-win scenario for the vocalists and their faithful followers.

“We were sort of outgrowing the Christmas tree or getting tired of the Christmas tree, however you want to think of it,” says Margaret Lavender, a mainstay for 25 years. “We realize it was a fun Christmas tradition but

we knew as the choir that it becomes more problematic because you can only put so many people in the tree.”

“At 40 we were sandwiched together like a deck of cards,” Buchholz says, noting that overflow singers stood in front of or beside the tree in peak years. “There was another concern and that is the liability question. There’s an awful lot of weight in that tree.”

“At 40 we were sandwiched together like a deck of cards”

The last Singing Christmas Tree was performed in 2010, after which the Trinity congregation decommissioned the only venue in town large enough to accommodate the 18-foot-high steel frame.

“For me there were mixed feelings,” says Lavender, a retired school teacher, “because I’ve always enjoyed the tree and had student choirs singing in the tree, and it was always exciting for them, but I realize it was probably time for a change. The United Church sanctuary closing was a little bit of a bonus for us in that we didn’t need to make the decision. It was made for us.”

Any fears of a backlash were alleviated by ticket sales the following year. Although the BVS went from three Christmas shows at Trinity to two at PCSS, the response at the latter, larger facility was encouraging.

“They say that people vote with their feet,” Buchholz says. “We’ve had sold-out performances at Prince Charles Theatre. That might be an indication that (the singing tree) had its day.”

Not taking anything for granted, choir member Roxy Schmalz devised a clever means of smoothing the transition to a new format by giving a nod to the old.

Thus, Singing in the Christmas Trees was born on the Prince Charles Theatre stage, which is decked with anywhere from 15 to 20 mostly artificial trees on pedestals interspersed among the singers (whose numbers were so great last year, 75, that an extra set of risers had to be purchased).

“Roxy had the vision of how it should look,” Lavender says, “what the lights needed to be and all the extra little bits that she put together.”

“She has done marvellous things,” Buchholz adds. “She recreated kind of a winter wonderland” which, coincidentally, is the theme of the 2013 concerts Dec. 13 and 15. “She’s working on a wonderful set this year. She’s thinking ‘silvery snowscape.’ It’s a really wonderful visual effect.”

As has long been the custom, BVS will share the spotlight with selected local groups, in this case the women’s ensemble Key of She and the Creston Children’s Choir, directed by longtime BVS accompanist and now director Anita Stushnoff. Cellist Sophia Smith will also perform as part of a number written for the instrument, Carol of the Magi.

Like Lavender, who was listed as the BVS “vocal coach” as far back as 1988 (their third year) and became





a regular, full-time member a decade later, Stushnoff has been a key contributor to the group. She was the accompanist many years between 1992 and 2010 when Monte Anderson, another iconic Creston Valley musician and instructor, served as the choir director. The pair swapped roles in 2011. “Monte said he was ready

A second season begins early in the new year, building toward a pair of annual spring tea concerts held at various churches. The Christmas program is most popular among BVS members but around two-thirds of them return for the April shows, which can feature anything from show tunes to golden oldies to folk songs.

The singers perform condensed versions of both concerts for seniors at Crestview Village and Swan Valley Lodge, and occasionally appear at Relay for Life and compete in regional music festivals. They’re not above being a little more spontaneous, either.

“We’ve done flash mobs at Christmastime,” Lavender says. “We thought we would try to replicate the flash mob of Handel’s Messiah that we see on YouTube so we

“It’s a community choir. It’s not auditioned, if you feel you’d like to sing and to try it, you’re welcome”

to pass on the baton and Anita was willing, so we were lucky,” Lavender says, “and he was happy to accompany.”

The group, whose numbers typically run close to 50, start preparing the dozen or more pieces for the Christmas program in early September with the first weekly, two-hour practices.

“It seems to be quite intensive,” Buchholz says. “They really put us through the ropes.”

Nonetheless, anyone can join regardless of experience and, although there are “more grey hairs than not,” according to Lavender, there’s no age restriction at either end of the spectrum.

“It’s a community choir. It’s not auditioned,” she says. “If you feel you’d like to sing and to try it, you’re welcome.

“Some read music really well and some people don’t. Anita makes rehearsal CDs to help people learn the music between (practices). Some come along and do whatever they can do on Tuesday night and some really work hard at it (at home). But it all comes together in the end.”

“People discover that, ‘Hey, I can do this,’ ” Buchholz says.

did that at (Home Building Centre) and Overwaitea one time. We came out of the woodwork and sang the Hallelujah chorus.”

The singers also pride themselves in being good citizens. The risers they bought are used by PCSS students throughout the year and, in 2011, the BVS collaborated with PCSS and the Creston and District Credit Union to buy a high-quality electronic piano for concerts and high school music students.



“Part of the ethos of Blossom Valley Singers is for the enjoyment of singing and choral music,” Buchholz says, “but also to encourage young people. We have the children’s choir that joins us for one or two numbers, or three. And then we have the Prince Charles choir sometimes, (with) Brooke Douma.

“We want them to know we’re still the Blossom Valley Singers whether or not we sing in a tree”

“We’ve earmarked \$500 for the Lillian Griffith Memorial Scholarship given to one graduating student who wishes to pursue a career in music.”

Griffith died suddenly in her 60s in 1996, mere days after performing in her last Singing Christmas Tree.

“We also give bursaries for summer music camps,” Buchholz says. “We actually contribute to the community.”

A dedicated core of directors features almost one-quarter of the membership.

“The strength is partly in the executive,” he says. “There are a lot of people who put in a lot of hours and, cooperatively, many hands make light work. (There’s) a lot of experience on that executive.”

“(And) we have a director and accompanist who are very committed,” adds Lavender, whose own considerable commitment included volunteering to sing from atop the tree numerous times.

The Singing Christmas Tree certainly looked and sounded impressive from the audience but presented practical challenges that won’t be missed by the singers themselves.

“It was hard to perform in the Christmas tree because you can’t hear everyone,” Buchholz says. “The logistics of having a band or an orchestra plus the children’s choir (moving) on and off, that was really difficult.”

The experience was also unique and immensely rewarding.

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“(After) this long procession where you load up the tree and then the introductions,

Monte would take the baton and I’d look out there and I had a sense that it was actually a very special moment,” Buchholz says. “You see the audience around and you really want to do your best. We were all very keen to do our best and be very focused. I think it worked out really good.”

Yes, at times the group seemed indistinguishable from the tree.

“One year we neglected to put ‘Singing Christmas Tree’ in the poster,” Lavender recalls. “We just said ‘Blossom Valley Singers’ (because) we had another theme, and some people didn’t come because they thought that wasn’t it yet. Our identity was the Singing Christmas Tree for the Christmas (concert).”

One could go so far as to say they’ve “branched out” in recent years, in case the public hasn’t noticed.

“We want them to know we’re still the Blossom Valley Singers whether or not we sing in a tree,” Buchholz says, “because I think that the history of the Blossom Valley Singers and some of the talent and some of the quality that we’ve had in terms of its leadership really developed it into a fine choir.” ■



Singing Christmas Tree 2009



From the Mayor's desk

Story by: Ron Toyota, Mayor of the Town of Creston

Holiday Train proceeds destined for Gleaners, hampers

The CP Holiday Train is arriving! We will once again be treated to a special CP Holiday Train musical performance on Tuesday, Dec. 11, at 10 a.m., when another cheque will be presented to the Creston Valley Gleaners food bank.

This year's entertainment will feature Melanie Doane and Matt Dusk.

In December 2011 the train stopped in Creston near Millennium Park and provided pre-Christmas entertainment for all age groups. A cheque for \$1,500 and many food items were presented to the Gleaners for their local food bank program.

Here is my mayor's challenge for 2013: let's raise \$5,000-plus and present the funds to the Gleaners and the Creston Ministerial Association's Christmas hamper program. This is perfect timing for the distribution of 400-plus hampers on Dec. 17.

I will personally be giving \$500 to this worthy cause and it is my challenge to every employed or successfully retired person that they contribute what they can. A tax receipt will be available for those able to give \$20 or more.

Last year, the ministerial association raised \$25,000 from local organizations and groups for its hamper program. I would like to see anyone in the Creston Valley who did not participate with their respective businesses, place of employment or volunteer groups to open their hearts and, where possible, their wallets to those less fortunate at this special time of year. This is the season for giving.

Please bring or mail your donation to Town Hall at 138 – 10th Avenue North (Box 1339, V0B1G0). Thank you.

Merry Christmas and season's greetings to all. ■

Ron Toyota can be reached by phone at 250-428-2214, e-mail at Ron.Toyota@creston.ca or on the Web at www.creston.ca.

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Creston Valley Business Buzz



David Fleming, owner of Head and Toes Shop

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David has lived in Yahk and Creston for about 24 years. He is a graduate of Mr. Barber School of barbering and the LCN pedicure course, both in Edmonton, Alberta.

David loves the Creston Valley and hopes to share his many talents with the people of his home town.

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Message from the chief

Story by: Jason Louie, Chief, Lower Kootenay Band

Christmas traditions shone light on the reserve

As the holiday season fast approaches I reflect on childhood memories of Christmas and how it seems like just a short time ago.

So much has changed that what I have come to understand in today's world is that we must be politically correct in referencing Christmas as the "holiday season." A Christmas tree is no longer a Christmas tree but a holiday tree.

Like most Creston Valley residents while growing up, a Christmas tree was a Christmas tree and Christmas

was Christmas. We had friends and acquaintances who did not celebrate the holidays due to their faith and there was a mutual respect for everyone's religious views.

Times were difficult on the Lower Kootenay Band. Alcoholism was rampant in the community but all citizens made the best of a bad situation.

list could be endless.

The community Christmas dinner was, for a brief moment, an escape from a harsh reality. The building was full of laughter and so many good memories.

I recall at the age of 16 a rite of passage took place. For our young readers I must explain that Santa was not available that year so he

"A Christmas tree is no longer a Christmas tree but a holiday tree"

Despite the political disputes and family dynamics, an effort was always put forward to celebrate Christmas as a community.

Preparations in the old band hall began early in the day with the mothers and aunties preparing turkey, potatoes and all the side dishes. The children would have a Christmas performance, singing carols and some years a play. Santa would always make an appearance, with gifts for all the children.

What was so meaningful about the dinner and gifts was that for many families in the community this dinner and gift-giving may have been the only thing they received that holiday season.

As children, we all witnessed things that we shouldn't have: domestic violence; alcoholism; family feuds; suicide; and, police brutality. The

needed a substitute. My good friend was appointed to stand in as Santa and I was to be his helper.

The plan was for me to meet Santa outside and help him bring in the gifts. The children singing, "Here comes Santa Claus . . ." was our cue to enter through the back door.

The song began, I looked to my good friend and he stood motionless. "We are supposed to go in now," I said. My good friend lifted his beard and began to vomit. When he was finished he said he was really nervous.

We went inside. The children were singing. I looked at Santa and his eyes were watery. At the gift-giving some of the children whispered, "I think Santa was crying."

It's a humorous memory that my good friend and I often reminisce about this time of year.

With time the holiday season has evolved into a commercial nightmare. Malls are packed with people spending money they don't necessarily have.

I recall a holiday shopping trip to a city that shall remain nameless when my partner parked our vehicle and out of nowhere a woman claimed it was her parking spot and became verbally abusive. One helpful piece of advice this woman should have been given is, "Do not challenge an aboriginal woman."

I love the person my partner has become, but once a rez girl always a rez girl. All it took was one look and there was no longer a dispute over the parking spot.

We now have just one child who still resides at home with us. I see how traditions have been formed when my daughter asks when we will put up the tree and states, "Dad is going to watch It's a Wonderful Life about 10 times and watch hockey."

All families have their traditions and I see that if you have your loved ones and your health, you truly have everything. Some memories of the holidays are ones I wish to forget, while other memories are ones I will cherish forever.

Christmas or the holiday season or non-participation is a personal choice. This year, as every year, I shall remember my grandmother, who left this world on Christmas Day. Her emphasis was always on the meal and family. If I can have a nice hearty meal with loved ones then I feel fulfilled.

Rather than displaying the behaviour of the lady at the mall I will strive to be a better human being and not be selfish or focus on material things.

I always remember where I came from, when sleep was what was for dinner. The priority is ensuring that Lower Kootenay has a community dinner.

With that I thank you once again for reading and wish you all the best this Christmas. May the new year bring much joy and happiness to you all. Taxa.

Jason Louie can be reached by phone at 428-4428, ext. 235, e-mail at mjasonlouie@gmail.com or on the Web at www.lowerkootenay.com

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Intimate venues deliver musical magic

Story by: Marc Archambault, CMMS chair

I'm not the most experienced live music-goer around but I've had a few different musical encounters and I can say that some are better than others.

One thing I've taken particular notice of is the difference between seeing a well-known band in a large venue, especially a band I know well, as compared to experiencing new music in a small venue.

Not long ago I had the opportunity to see a band I've loved since childhood perform in a large theatre. Seeing this band live was literally on my bucket list and, while it was great to sing along with the songs that are so much a part of me that I know every lyric note for note, it wasn't . . . magical. The venue was too big and impersonal.

The band was midway through a tour and playing like it was just another gig. It was OK, but was it worth driving six hours there and

back, paying high ticket prices and the cost of a hotel? Honestly, no, not really.

That's part of the reason I never understood why some people thought live music was so great. For a long time my only real experience of live music was going to see a band I knew well at a large venue. Was it any wonder I preferred to listen

my teenaged daughter by my side. Even before the show started I was smiling.

This isn't a noisy pub or giant arena. This is a comfortable living room for the community and, despite the number of faces unknown to me in attendance, it really felt like a community. People of all ages, from the elderly to children and everyone

"Music is a powerful cultural force. It is one of the spices that gives life its flavour, and we have it here in the Creston area in abundance"

to recorded music and skip the live stuff?

Contrast that to last night. I was sitting on the couch in the front row (no extra charge) at my favourite local venue, the Snoring Sasquatch (a Creston Music and Media Society business member), with

in-between, were gathered together and enjoying each others' company as they waited for the show to start.

I had never heard the opening act before and wasn't sure what to expect. That is part of what makes these shows so special.

J.J. Shippet approached the mike. He was simply a man and his guitar on a stage until he opened his mouth and sang, and then, there it was again, sending a thrill along my spine and warmth to my core: the magic of discovering new music live in an intimate venue.



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I had a similar experience at the Starbelly Jam music festival in Crawford Bay (part of the area represented by the CMMS) this past summer. It was my first time at this amazing, family-friendly festival and I was volunteering with security.

While attending to the entrance to the backstage area I couldn't help but dance like a fool at my post as the Boom Booms fed off the energy of the enthusiastic crowd and amplified it in a feedback loop of positivity. I was drenched in sweat and certain I probably looked more than a little bit silly, but I could not stop smiling and revelling in the joy of the experience.

I've had many experiences like this since moving to Creston and it's one of the reasons I choose to call Creston my home. There is something special about the energy

that happens when an audience and an artist connect like this.

When the music is new to me and delivered with passion in its best incarnation, each verse and chorus is like unwrapping a new gift.

The difference between discovering new music on the radio and discovering it live is akin to the difference between eating a can of peaches from the supermarket alone in your apartment as compared to plucking a ripe peach off the tree in the middle of a sun-drenched orchard with your friends and laughing as the sweet juice drips from your chin.

This is one of the reasons I am so passionate about my role as chairman of the Creston Music and Media Society. I simply love music. (Don't worry, media people, I'll write nice stuff about you too in

other blog posts.)

Music is a powerful cultural force. It is one of the spices that gives life its flavour, and we have it here in the Creston area in abundance. I want to share that love of music with others and help more people experience it the way I do.

I want to help artists connect to their audiences and be able to do work they love and that has a positive impact on the community, bringing people together to bond in a way that only shared experience can do. ■

For more information visit the CMMS Web site at <http://www.crestonmusicandmediasociety.ca>.

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Pharmacist Corner

Article submitted by: Srinivas Chalagalla B.pharm., Ph.D.

Managing diabetes through healthy choices

Diabetes affects how the body processes sugar found in food. Insulin is the hormone responsible for using sugar as an energy source in the body.

People who have diabetes either can't produce enough insulin or can't use it properly (i.e. insulin resistance). As a result, sugar accumulates in the blood.

Types of diabetes

Most people with diabetes (90 per cent) have type 2 diabetes.

Although sometimes referred to as adult-onset diabetes, it can develop at any age.

People with type 1 diabetes, also known as juvenile diabetes, can't make enough insulin and so are dependent on taking insulin by injection.

A third type of diabetes, gestational diabetes, can develop during pregnancy when a woman's insulin needs increase. In most cases, pregnant women with this kind of diabetes can control their blood sugar level by modifying their diet and the condition resolves itself soon after giving birth.

Symptoms

Most people who develop diabetes are over 40 years of age and overweight. Frequently other members of their family also have diabetes. The condition develops gradually.

People with diabetes might:

- be more thirsty and need to urinate more;
- be more tired and irritable than usual;
- lose weight, even though they might be more hungry;
- have frequent infections (skin, bladder or vaginal infections, etc.);
- develop blurred vision; or,
- experience a tingling sensation in their hands and feet or feel like they've lost some sensitivity there.

Some diabetics are unaware they have the disease because their symptoms are mild and easily overlooked. Thus it can take a long time before a diagnosis is made.

Over time, diabetes causes hardening of the blood vessels and injury to the heart, kidneys and eyes.

Diabetes is the primary cause of blindness in North America. It is also a factor in many cases of heart disease – all of this because diabetics have too much sugar in their blood.

Diagnosis

Diabetes is diagnosed by measuring the blood sugar level at a time when it would normally be at its lowest point: in the morning (upon waking).

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In addition, blood sugar level measured at any time of the day, without regard to the interval since the last meal, is a good indicator for diabetes.

Management

If you are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, the goal is to bring your blood sugar level within the healthy range and keep it there as much as possible. To do this, you'll need to:

- make wise food choices (if you are overweight you must lose weight as well);
- exercise regularly (at least five days a week for a minimum of half an hour); and,
- control your blood pressure and cholesterol.

Your doctor may also decide to put you on diabetes medicine to help with your blood sugar level. Medications include oral diabetes medications (i.e. sulfonylureas, biguanides, acarbose and thiazolidinediones) and insulin injections.

If you are prescribed medications to help control your diabetes, talk to your pharmacist, who will advise you of any

side effects. Your pharmacist can also suggest the best blood glucose meter for you to use for testing your blood sugar level at home.

It is also quite possible that your doctor would ask for a glycosylated hemoglobin dosage. This blood test provides information about the control of your diabetes over the previous three months. The target value for diabetic patients is between six and seven per cent.

Living with type 2 diabetes

If you have, or someone you love has, diabetes, you need to learn as much as you can about the disease and how to manage it on a daily basis. Exercise and eating a well-balanced diet should be at the top of your list. If medications have been prescribed, make sure they are taken as ordered. In addition:

- stay informed: Ask your doctor or pharmacist about local diabetes education programs; see a nutritionist for a personalized meeting.
- take care of your feet: Because diabetes

causes poor circulation and nerve damage, feet aren't as sensitive as they should be. Keep feet clean and dry and treat any blisters, cuts or sores immediately.

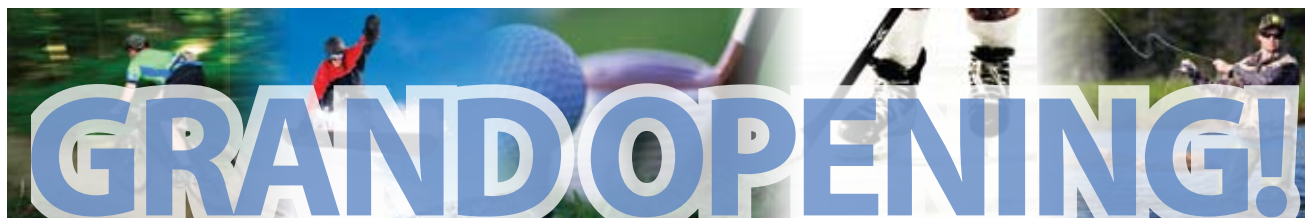
- have regular eye checkups: Because diabetes can lead to retinopathy (a disease of the retinas), and even blindness, visit an ophthalmologist at least once a year.
- look after your skin: Because diabetes involves high blood sugar and poor circulation, skin doesn't heal as well and is subject to frequent infections. Be sure to wash with mild soap, use sunscreen and cleanse and bandage all skin abrasions carefully. ■

For more information or if you have any questions, talk to local Shoppers Drug Mart pharmacists Srinivas Chalagalla or Karl Mottl by phone at 250-428-9334 or email at Asdm2284@shoppersdrugmart.ca.

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Wage subsidies help employers help employees

Story by: Kootenay Employment Services

One of the many ways that Kootenay Employment Services can be of service to the community is by linking workers with employers through its wage subsidy program.

A wage subsidy is a monthly payment to an employer who hires an eligible employee. KES has both provincially and federally funded wage subsidy programs.

Wage subsidies are designed to help offset the cost to employers of hiring new employees and training them for the jobs.

Through the Employment Program of B.C., KES can offer wage subsidies to clients who are on Employment Insurance or who have been on EI in the past three to five years.

Wage subsidies generally run for up to six months and provide 50 per cent of an employee's wages. Workers with special needs such as disabilities can be eligible for

longer subsidy periods at a higher percentage.

KES is always open to visiting local employers who might be interested in the wage subsidy program to explain the program in greater detail. An awareness campaign is planned in order to get the word out and to show local employers how a wage subsidy can help them when hiring new employees. Employers from Yahk to Riondel are eligible to apply.

Another wage subsidy program called Working Solutions is designed for unemployed people who do not have a recent attachment to EI and who have a self-identified disability. "Self-identified disability" means that a person has either a physical, mental, learning or emotional issue that is proving to be a barrier to finding employment. The disability does not have to be officially documented by a medical professional.

Wage subsidies in this program can provide, on average, 60 per cent of a new employee's wages. Subsidy periods vary depending on each situation but are generally six months in duration.

Employers throughout the East and West Kootenays are eligible to apply.

Both wage subsidy programs offer employers a great incentive to train new employees who might not have all the skills needed to walk into a job on the first day without additional training. Wage subsidies give employers time to train new employees and teach them skills specific to their workplace. ■

If you are an employer or employee who might be able to take advantage of any of these wage subsidy programs, or if you know of someone who might be interested, call KES at 250-428-5655 or drop by the office at 119 - 11th Avenue North in Creston.

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Globetrotters just what the doctor ordered

Story by: Tammy Hardwick
 Manager - Creston & District Museum & Archives

A lot of local medical history seems to have happened in the month of December. For example, Creston's first hospital got its charter as a public hospital in December 1930 and its founder, Dr. Joseph Olivier, died in December 1943.

A new 30-bed hospital was opened in December 1953. X-ray staff at the present-day Creston Valley Hospital moved into their new department in December 1970.

And, on Dec. 31, 1938, the annual Hospital Benefit Fund hosted an event that was hailed as "the greatest sporting attraction 1938 could offer."

By 1938, Creston was on its second hospital. Dr. Olivier's facility, the one that had been established in 1930, only had 11 beds. While the local population was very glad to finally have a hospital in town, it was clear right from the outset that 11 beds was simply not enough. So the second hospital was built in 1933, this one boasting 22 beds.

Today, provincial governments are pretty much entirely responsible for building and operating hospitals but that wasn't always the case. Those first two hospitals, and indeed the one that came in 1953, were built through local donations and fundraising.

There were some government dollars available for construction and equipment, and government covered part of the costs of operating them, but the rest came from fees charged to patients and other contributions from the community.

Given the economic conditions of the 1930s, and judging from annual reports for the hospital auxiliary, there were quite a few patients who could not pay their hospital bills, making those community donations even more important.



Creston hospital 1933

Enter the annual Hospital Benefit Fund.

The fund existed solely to raise money to support the hospital's operations. The money went toward medical equipment, wages for the nursing staff and doctors' fees. It also helped cover the costs of food for the patients to supplement local donations of fruit, vegetables and other farm products.

Like any fundraising organization in the community today, the fund must have struggled to come up with creative ways of raising money. They weren't planning an event merely for the sake of having an event; they were under considerable pressure to plan an event that would generate the cash needed to keep the hospital open.

In 1938, that unique and creative event was a basketball game between a carefully-chosen team of top local players (the Creston Reps) and the Harlem Globetrotters.

I don't mean the Harlem Clowns or the Harlem Wizards or any of the other basketball teams that have imitated the Globetrotters over the years. I mean the one-and-only, original-and-best, genuine-article Harlem Globetrotters.

By 1938, the Globetrotters had been in existence for 11 seasons and,

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although they had gained quite a bit of popularity (and an impressive record of 1,456 wins out of 1,583 games played), they were not yet the world-famous, big-name act they are today.

In 1938 they were a group of highly-talented African-American basketball players from Chicago who toured towns of all sizes across North America to make a living.

As the Creston Review declared when promoting the game, "This colored basketball team has travelled many miles during the past season. From all reports they present a fine floor show and all they ask is that the home teams give them good opposition so that they may run through their comic acts."

The Review concluded by hoping "that as many persons as possible attend this game as the proceeds

from this event will be turned over to a worthy cause."

It appears that everyone's hopes were fulfilled. The Review reported a capacity house and "an exhibition of ball-handling that was nothing short of miraculous."

The evening opened with "a close and hard-fought game" between the Creston Motors team and the Valley Girls all-star team, which the girls won 15-14. Then the "Trotters took to the floor against the Valley Rep players, who "gave everything they had to give the Harlemites opposition." In fact, in the fourth quarter, the entire Creston team – all 15 players – came out onto the floor against the five players from Chicago.

The Globetrotters won decisively, 46-22, but that didn't seem to matter. In fact, the Review didn't

even announce the score; it simply stated the names of the players and the number of points each had scored.

Ironically, among all the details about players and scores and referees and thank-you speeches and the intermission entertainment by the Canadian Legion band, the one thing the Review does not tell us is: how much money was actually raised for the Hospital Benefit Fund.

For more information contact the Creston and District Museum and Archives by phone at 250-428-9262, e-mail at mail@creston.museum.bc.ca or the Web site www.creston.museum.bc.ca.

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Tracking one droplet on its ultimate journey

Story by: Andrea Chapman
Acting Director of Communications and Education

What is as old as time, travels all over the world and changes forms depending on the temperature? Give up?

Well, my hints may not be the best, yet they describe something we can't live without and is not a super hero like you may be thinking. That thing is water.

Water is the essence of life and essential in our valley of agriculture, wetlands, lakes and rivers. One mere droplet can embark on a magnificent journey from the beginning to the end of its cycle as it effortlessly travels by gravity, then utterly defies it.

The beginning of this adventure starts high in the sky where millions of like

particles mingle together, waiting for that moment when a lowering of temperature and change in pressure forces those particles to draw closer together. The particles create the droplet that will become heavy enough to fall to Earth and start an entirely new leg of the journey.

The next leg can be largely affected by where the droplet lands. The particular droplet we are following falls in the Selkirk Mountains just above the Corn Creek Marsh unit of the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA).

Because it fell with many like droplets it enters the soil easily, then moves underground, following the path of least resistance. The flow increases as the droplet fuses with others.

Slowly but surely, gravity pulls this link of droplets toward the valley bottom as the stream attracts other particles to join. Particles of dirt, bacteria and plant matter move with the stream and find themselves



entering the wetlands.

In the wetlands, as they are aptly named, this droplet among loads of droplets, bogged down with foreign particles, meets millions more droplets. Seeing that the flow slowed, some of those foreign particles release, simply floating to the marsh bottom.

For others, plants help to suck in the pollutants, fixing them to the root nodules or drawing them up into the plant tissues themselves.

Our clean little droplet happens to experience many different ins and outs (quite literally) before slinking over to the culvert opening at the

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Old Kootenay Channel, passing many a family of river otters and mallard ducks that are planning to stay the winter along the way.

At this point, time slows to a halt. Our droplet cools. The particles within it move slower and slower until the movement seemingly stops. The journey stops until springtime as the droplet morphs unto its solid form and sits frozen under the surface.

In the spring, the little droplet starts to move again as the temperature warms. Later on, millions of added droplets fuse to the marsh unit during the spring thaw and the patient little prospect I have been following moves even closer to that culvert gate.

The gate is eventually opened as water levels get too high for the structures at the CVWMA and the clean little droplet is released into

the river to join the bigger water network.

Many more scenarios unfold for the droplet as the summer progresses, and soon the temperatures soar to a level that allows the particles more ease of movement. Eventually our subject gets its chance to defy gravity and evaporates back to the sky.

Who knows where the little droplet's journey will take it next, although it is good to know that the small portion of its existence in the

CVWMA allowed it to clean up and re-enter the atmosphere possibly in better shaped than it started. ■

For more information about programs and special events at the CVWMA, check out the Web site www.crestonwildlife.ca. If you have any questions, call 250-402-6908 or e-mail askus@crestonwildlif.ca.

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Quad Squad promotes backcountry stewardship

Story by: Creston Valley Quad Squad

Leading the way for organized, safe and responsible stewardship among all-terrain vehicle riders, the Creston Valley Quad Squad has been participating in local activities and events as well as neighbouring clubs' poker rides and rallies.

The squad, formed in 2002 to fill a need for organized ATV recreation and stewardship in the Creston Valley, is a member of the Quad Riders ATV Association of B.C.

Various groups of people have taken the helm over the years, steering the

club to ever-ascending heights.

With the support of the directors, current club president Mike Arlt has proven himself to be capable and highly organized. As the club's webmaster (www.crestonquads.com), Arlt spends much time updating information and photos for online display. He has overseen the activities of the club for two-and-a-half years, with approximately 60 members of all ages.

The club hosts an organized group ride to a different location every month so members can feast their

eyes on fantastic scenery. As the season progresses they can ride to higher elevations.

Being at the top of a mountain and looking down at beautiful lakes and valleys far below affords a peace of mind that is not available anywhere else.

Having a potluck meal at Boundary Lake or near a small pond high atop the Iron Range makes the delectable food taste heavenly. It is absolutely amazing to see the extravagant dishes that people bring up there, not to mention the burgers that are prepared on site.

In addition to organized rides, impromptu rides and activities occur from April until October and sometimes even November.

A qualified safety instructor in the group provides education about safe ATV operation, including loading, unloading and securing machines for transport. The course is offered at a reduced rate for club members and, once completed, enables a 10-per-cent reduction in liability insurance.

The club likes to give back to the community and most recently purchased some pet oxygen masks and donated them to local fire departments. The masks come in three different sizes and can be used to rescue dogs, cats and other pets from burning buildings.

Volunteers have been slashing the Rose Pass of pesky alders for the past



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two years. This year a large number of people was able to reach the summit and go down the other side (St. Mary's) for a short distance.

Trails such as this one exist at other locations and are considered multi-use trails open to everyone, whether on a quad or snowmobile, or on foot or horseback.

In the past, trails around Boundary Lake have also been opened up for the enjoyment of the public. Individual members have been doing their own trail-clearing and litter cleanup to help everyone enjoy the outdoors during spring, summer, fall and winter.

Another highlight is the annual quad camp-out when they sleep in tents for four days, prepare their own food camp-style and explore the area on quads and short hikes. Several areas in the Kootenays have been explored in this manner in the past few years.

Taking part in the annual Blossom Festival, this fall's 50th anniversary of Kootenay Pass and other community events helps the club be a part of the Creston Valley.

An important activity of the CVQS is the stewardship of the Ripple Ridge Cabin, a popular winter destination for skiers and snowshoers which is a non-motorized area during the winter months.

The cabin can be booked for overnight stays through the club Web site. Members volunteer their time to clean and maintain the cabin so others can enjoy it. Supplying firewood for the winter is a big job.

The club strives to keep riding areas open for the riding pleasure of the public and its members, all of which takes a lot of time and effort. ■



Anyone who likes quadding as much as they do is invited to join the club. Check out the Web site www.crestonquads.com.

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Ag Aware

Story by: The Creston Valley Agriculture Society

Farmers turn attention to off-season issues

For most of the local agricultural producers, December is the time to finally slow down from the hectic pace of the production part of the year.

Field work is done, fruit and vegetable crops are finished, most of the hay crop has been shipped out to buyers and beef calves have gone off to market. The chore routine has begun for those feeding animals over winter.

Some farmers also now engage in more meetings. It seems like there is always something up for discussion.

Commodity groups such as dairymen and beef growers are long-established in the valley. The Creston Valley Food Action Coalition and Farmers Market are newer groups that also represent a variety of local producers.

“Field work is done, fruit and vegetable crops are finished, most of the hay crop has been shipped out to buyers and beef calves have gone off to market”

Recently there was a panel discussion about water uses and future supplies. Another early December meeting will be about genetically modified crops, commonly called GMOs. Whatever your opinions, get informed and get involved.

The Creston Valley Beef Growers are a relatively small group of producers actively involved in beef production and promotion. They have just taken on the challenge of hosting the 2014 B.C. Cattlemen's Association annual general meeting and convention. The provincial executive and delegates from around the province will gather here May 22-24.

The possibility of upwards of 200 or more cattle producers visiting our valley will be a boon to local restaurants, motels and other service providers. It will be an opportunity

to show off our wonderful valley at a beautiful time of year.

The convention will be a major undertaking for the local group so anyone wanting to participate or help out, please contact any of our local beef producers.

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Another issue that has generated a lot of discussion at meetings lately is the review of the Agricultural Land Reserve. Established in 1973, the ALR covers about five per cent of the land in B.C. and is supposed to protect it as farm land. There is constant pressure to remove land from the ALR and develop it for housing or industrial uses.

It is still the opinion of most people in the province that our farmland should remain protected but there are many who would rather see it broken up and be allowed to cash in on higher-valued uses.

Recent media reports of the provincial government's desire to dissolve the ALR have fuelled a new surge of discussions. Public submissions are invited as the province weighs its options. Decisions will be made sometime in 2014.

Involve yourself in discussions and submit your opinions. Contact Nelson-Creston MLA Michelle Mungall as well as the minister of agriculture and premier. East Kootenay MLA Bill Bennett is also involved in this review process.

As most of us enjoy the slower season, remember those local agricultural producers who continue to work throughout the winter weather to produce healthy foods for all of us.

From those of us involved in the Creston Valley Agriculture Society, which brings you this column, we wish you happy holidays and all the best in the new year.

As always, be involved, be informed and be Ag Aware. ■

For more information about the Creston Valley Agriculture Society contact Randy Meyer at 250-428-7013 or Kris Vanderweyde at 250-428-2920.

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Story by:
Annette Agabob

Receive the gifts of caring, consciousness and celebration this Christmas

We are embarking upon a month where there is plenty of celebration. December is widely celebrated as Christmas and traditions abound.

We decorate our homes and streets and listen to Christmas music, and our hearts open to an energy of connection, hope and joy-filled activities.

Within this tradition are numerous other traditions, each with its own flair or flavour, depending upon our upbringing.

For me, I love Christmas. My mom loved to celebrate Christmas. She would make French tortierre pies

and turkey, and we always decorated a tree and went to midnight mass.

After mass we opened our presents, ate and danced as long as we could stay awake. There was so much joy and fun in celebrating with family and friends.

Over the years things change. We have less family here and therefore smaller family gatherings. Change is the one constant, they say.

There is also another side to this month. There are times we don't feel like celebrating, when we've lost a loved one we miss at this time of year, or we may feel downhearted for other reasons.

I still miss my mom at Christmas. She carried a spark for the entire family, even during years of challenges or changes, and it's OK to feel all the emotions coming up for you at this time.

Remember that "feeling" is healing. Also know there are people around you who care, and there are tools and modalities that can help move the sad and suffering energy into a more calm and connected way of being.

I heard a description of the word "consciousness" that goes like this: consciousness includes everything and judges nothing.

How often do you judge yourself as being wrong for having feelings

other than happiness and joy? We seem to have judged anger and sadness as wrong, and only joy and happiness are considered "right." What if we stopped judging and received the moment as it is, then allow it to pass?

I'd like to invite you to remember that all of your feelings are OK, and if you feel stuck in an old emotion that won't "let go," there are ways to move that energy – to put that energy into motion – so it can finally move through you with more grace and ease than you could ever imagine.

Be courageous and ask for assistance. Listen for your own knowing and guidance, and take inspired action to follow your own heart into more love, joy and peace.

These are amazing times we are living in, and adding a new perspective to an old situation can be refreshing and bring renewed energy to you and your life.

My wish for you is to enjoy each moment as it comes, then let it go and move into the next moment. Be more open and free in receiving more caring, more consciousness and more celebration this Christmas. After all, we're all in this together.

I invite you to allow the celebration energy you see surrounding you to infuse you with light and love, and I wish you all a merry Christmas and the best new year yet. ■

The Conscious Cowgirl can be reached by phone at 250-866-5737, e-mail at annette@theconsciouscowgirl.com, the Web site www.theconsciouscowgirl.com or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/theconsciouscowgirl.

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Introduction to naturopathy

Story by:
Dr. Chris Ford
BMSc, ND

A naturopathic doctor is a primary health care provider much like your family medical doctor but with a different perspective on health and a diverse scope of treatment.

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practitioners for the betterment of each patient.

In our practice we are able to assess, diagnose and treat any condition and we always refer out when it is beyond our scope of practice. What we see most commonly includes hormonal imbalances, gastrointestinal concerns, chronic pain and fatigue, hypothyroid, diabetes and heart conditions.

Naturopathic visits are covered by most extended health care plans. Check with your provider to find out more details. ■

Dr. Chris Ford of Kimberley practices in Creston once a week at Vital Health.

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Nowhere T-Cats' Formosa would rather be than Creston

Story by: Creston Valley Thunder Cats

(Second in a series of stories on 20-year-old players with the Creston Valley Thunder Cats.)

Meet Brandon Formosa, Assistant captain of the Creston Valley Thunder Cats of the Kootenay International Junior Hockey League.

He's wearing jersey No. 16 for his final junior season, having worn No. 8 during his first stint in a Cats uniform.

In 2008, at the age of 14, Formosa played for Team B.C. in Japan to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Olympic Winter Games held in Nagano.

Following that he played in the B.C. Winter Games in Cranbrook, winning gold with the Fraser Valley zone. A final accomplishment during his second bantam season was getting drafted by the Prince Albert Raiders of the major junior Western Hockey League.

Formosa started his junior career with the junior A Powell River Kings of the B.C. Hockey League at age 16. During the 2009-10 season he played 51 regular season and 18 playoff games for the Kings, collecting eight points in total.

In Powell River he played with former Thunder Cats player Alex McDougal (2007-08 and 2010-11) and was coached by Shane Lukinchuk, a Thunder Cats assistant coach/head coach from 2003-2007.

In 2010-11 he was sent down to junior B for more development, ending up with the KIJHL's Sicamous Eagles at the recommendation of the former Chilliwack Bruins of the WHL. He didn't see eye-to-eye with the coaching staff there and decided Sicamous wasn't offering what he was looking for in a team.

Joe Martin, coach of the T-Cats at the



Brandon Formosa, assistant captain of the Creston Valley Thunder Cats

time, made a deal with Sicamous to bring "Mosa" to Creston in early December 2010, one of the best deals he made here. Formosa fast became a fan favourite as his hockey skills allowed him to bury the puck most games.

While playing for Creston he has recorded, on average, a stellar 1.5 points per game. He returned to Creston for the 2011-12 season before making his way to junior A with the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's Winkler Flyers for 2012-13, along with current linemate Jesse Collins.

It wasn't long before he sought a trade that moved him to junior A Melfort with the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League's Mustangs, where he met up with another former Thunder Cat, Brandon Paronne, and wound up scoring 38 points in 59 games.

"Hockey's a small world," Formosa

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says of all the Creston connections he met over the years.

For 2013-14 he had a choice to make and spent much of the summer weighing his options: continue with junior A in Saskatchewan; come back to Creston and play junior B; or, see what else was out there.

One of Formosa's goals is to earn a scholarship for post-secondary education. He has seen others in the KIJHL earn scholarships to good schools and felt that in Creston he would have a good opportunity to do the same by playing with a winning team.

He'd never met head coach Josh Hepditch or assistant Leigh Walker, only chatting with Hepditch on the phone.

"Creston has become my second home while playing junior," Formosa says. "It's where I've had the most fun playing so I decided to come back here."

He feels blessed to have had gorgeous scenery everywhere he's played. Powell River was on the ocean. In Saskatchewan he got to see the northern lights. Creston has the mountains.

"The Johnny," as Formosa

affectionately calls the John Bucyk Arena, is one of his favourite places in Creston. "It's an amazing facility," he says.

Formosa has made many memories in Creston and hopes to make more as he considers the Thunder Cats to be a contender.

"We set a goal at the start of the year and we are working hard to achieve it," he says.

Formosa encourages all fans to attend all the games and cheer on the team but reminds everyone to bring a stuffed toy to the Dec. 13 game for the Thunder Cats' annual Teddy Bear Toss. When the Cats score their first goal in that game against the Golden Rockets he wants to see the ice covered in teddy bears.

All bears collected will be donated to the Creston Ministerial Association for its Christmas hamper program.

Check for game updates and schedules at www.crestonvalleythundercats.com.

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