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Photo by: Jeff Banman

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'Singer' strikes a chord

Banker turned promoter inspires community with reality show knockoff.

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Guest From the editor

This is a special issue of I Love Creston, and not just because it marks the end of another (let's face it, pretty tame) Creston winter and the onset of spring, and all the outdoor, warmer-weather activities that entails.

Within these pages are announced the finalists for Overwaitea's Creston's Best Singer 2011 as voted by you, the concert-going public, during auditions at the Prince Charles Theatre on February 23.

Organizer Vern Gorham and a few helpers stayed up into the wee hours that night poring over close to 300 scorecards – each with 26 scores on it – in order to meet the deadline for the magazine's March edition. That's nearly 8,000 numbers, in case you're keeping track at home.

The method stems from Gorham's modification of the inaugural Creston's Best Singer 2010 in November, a one-night affair at which a panel of judges kept the sellout crowd in suspense for about half an hour while doing the math to come up with three finalists out of 30 singers.

"On American Idol it is ultimately the people who decide the winner of the show each year by their votes," Gorham says. "If I had access to the technology my contest would be the same. I would want the overall voice of the people to decide who is the winner."

Whereas low-tech pencil and paper and hours of number-crunching determined the 20 singers who will compete for the 2011 title, "I want the winner announced at the conclusion of the big show, thus there will be actual judges on March 11, probably five like last time.

"I thought they did an excellent job last time but I never factored in how long it would take to total the scores. My mistake."

Gorham had no difficulty filling the bill to see who will succeed 2010 champion Jordan Janzen. And he started helping them prepare in mid-January with weekly practices that eventually ramped up to twice-weekly sessions at Canyon-Lister Elementary School, with which Gorham swapped an older PA system in exchange for the space. He hopes the experience will turn out to be "a thrill of a lifetime" for contestants.

"Anyone who loves to sing, deep inside, wants to share that singing with others and sing on the big stage in front of their favourite band," he opines, speaking for himself as well. "I give the singers that opportunity. It's as if they are singing the lead for Bon Jovi (in my case at the last contest) or they are Lee Ann Womack or they are Celine Dion, for a moment."

The practices were designed to help the singers hone their song selections down to meet a time restriction, and also to assist with overcoming any stage fright – from which Gorham suffered when he

was a teen playing bass guitar for a high school band and running for student council president in Fairview, Alberta.

"From my limited experience it would seem to me that the biggest obstacle to someone singing well, if they are not tone deaf, is nervousness," he says. "Now, when they go sing in front of the big crowd and all you can see are the lights – you can't really even see the crowd when you are on stage at the auditorium – then all the practice time will hopefully help the singer to be calm."

Gorham certainly worked the jitters out of his routine over the past three decades, though he stopped short of committing to a reprise of the solo act he brought down the house with in November. "Probably," he says, when asked if he'll perform again on the 11th. "Depends on time lines. If I do perform it will be during the time the judges are finalizing the top-three contestants in the big show. I hope so. I had so much fun last time."

Ditto for the audience. For more about Gorham and his plans for Creston's Best Singer, turn the pages to find a feature story written by Brian Bell. ■



Photo by: Jeff Banman



Creston's **Got** Talent!

Story by: Brian Bell

Front cover photo by: Jeff Banman

Photo by: Jeff Banman

Vern Gorham comes off as pretty hip for a banker. Though the man looks ZZ Top-sharp dressed in a suit and tie, he's not the buttoned-down type one might expect from a number cruncher.

Then again, maybe the stereotype isn't valid in the first place.

"You would be surprised how silly bankers can be," says Gorham, who worked in the financial industry in southern Alberta from 1997 until 2005, when he moved to Creston with his wife Tiffany and their five children. "They have to have a professional face in public, but go to a bankers' Christmas party where they loosen up and you probably would never look at your banker the same way."

For many, their first exposure to Gorham was during Creston's Best Singer 2010 in November, when the currently under-employed (and some might say over-ambitious) financial planner-turned-promoter charmed an overflow crowd at Prince Charles Theatre with his wit, self-deprecating humour and musical flair while emceeing a contest won by high school student Jordan

Janzen. It was such a hit that Gorham did a quick turnaround in bringing Overwaitea's Creston's Best Singer 2011 to the stage, beginning with auditions voted on by the public February 23 and concluding with the finals March 11.

Creston's Best Singer is a multi-faceted, for-profit event (patterned after the reality show Britain's Got Talent) that blends Gorham's need for an income with his desire to promote family values, community spirit, benevolence and positive outlets for young people. Gorham spent an average of nearly 20 hours a week on preparations in the two months leading up to auditions –60 at its peak. The return won't be much on an hourly basis, but he counted the costs and found the potential spin-offs – to himself and the town – worth the investment of time and money.

"The first contest was so rewarding on so many levels that I just had to do it again," he says. "The core of my contest is to provide a night for the community where they can buy their ticket at an affordable price, forget about life for awhile and be entertained by the wonderful talent I am seeing in this great little valley we are privileged to call home."

"I came up in a very messed up home, and part of what kept me going through the really difficult times was music, even if it was just singing to myself. I know life is hard, and if I can give some young person a reason to practise their piano or take those singing lessons, then maybe they won't feel the need to use drugs because they will have something positive filling the void."

Part of Gorham's commitment entailed weekly practices of three or four hours' duration for contestants needing a confidence boost, peer feedback or help creating a soundtrack to fit within the three-minute time limit. As a DJ-for-hire with more than 100,000 tunes on his karaoke machine, Gorham is well-equipped to do the latter.

"It also gives some of the singers who are quite nervous

"I view it more as a people's choice award"

the opportunity to sing in front of others and work out the nerves in a very supportive setting," he says, noting that at least

half the 26 entrants could not be considered seasoned performers. "For most, if not all, of my singers, it is a huge thrill to sing in front of others but really scary at the same time.

"Those who are at the practices actually give critiques to singers who are asking which song sounds best for them, in the spirit of good sportsmanship. I have stressed the importance of this (being) a positive experience for all who enter. The singers have bought into this and the practices have become a really fun part of the contest."

Audience members at the audition were asked to fill out a scorecard to determine the 20 finalists, whose names are revealed exclusively this month through I Love Creston.

The main event on the 11th features out-of-town judges (to eliminate any perception of bias) and a running tally of scores (to eliminate a lengthy delay that was the only significant flaw of the 2010 contest).

"Within five minutes of the 20 performers singing I will have my top three singers," Gorham says. "Those top three will then sing a second song. It will be scored and a winner will be announced. The new process will tighten up the time line so that people aren't waiting around very long.

"One other really exciting thing about this year's contests is that we will have singers who are part of a band competing. Instead of them singing to a karaoke track they will sing with their band backing up the singers."

Gorham contracted out the production of a high-quality DVD of the finals that will be for sale as well as posting on YouTube.

He gave some thought to collaborating with the Creston Valley Music Teachers' Association but didn't share its priority of accredited judging.

"I don't want my contest to be about who had perfect pitch or whatever other criteria accredited judges look for," he says. "Even though this contest is about finding the 'best singer,' I view it more as a people's choice award. I want it to be about which song does the judge enjoy the most. It's very subjective based on the likes and dislikes of each judge, but all judging in this type of venue, whether it is figure skating, gymnastics or singing, is open for debate."

Much like Gorham's own artistic qualifications, to hear him speak, although spectators cried for an encore after his impersonation of Jon Bon Jovi in November which he calls the most enjoyable singing experience of his life.

Gorham, 43, credits his mother for his love of music, Vi Russell having sung in a country band and performed a solo lounge act over a 30-year span in Alberta. And a brother drummed for a band called Rockin' Horse that earned a Canadian music award nomination in the 1980s.

Gorham himself played bass guitar in a high school band that performed



Jesse Moreton, Linda Jackson and Shae Deans.

Photos by: Jeff Banman

publicly only once. He can't read music but plays a few instruments by ear.

"Even though I am a very average singer I still enjoy it," he says, "whether it's on a nice night outside around a campfire or in a gym belting out numbers to my karaoke system."

"As far as putting a show together, I'm just imitating what I've seen others do and put a local spin on it. I don't know if I have ever had an original thought. If I did, it's probably pretty lonely. But I have a fairly organized and logical mindset (and) I can recognize greatness in others, (which is) what this is all about."

Gorham (who would have been paralysed with stage fright as a youth) has no qualms about getting up in front of an audience now, having "had many opportunities to public speak in my church. Combine

that with the fact I'm not afraid to go out there and act kind of silly, in a non-offensive way, and you have the makings for an enjoyable

bit of time together. At least I hope that my audience members see it the same way."

That audience may soon incorporate residents of neighbouring Kootenay centres if expansion plans unfold. Nelson is a likely target for the next "best singer" event, and maybe Cranbrook and Trail after that.

"I really want to move this show to a point that the best two or three singers from each community sing in a regional contest," he says.

Eventually Gorham foresees giving all proceeds to local charities if other personal income streams materialize. In the meantime, he partnered with the Creston Valley Gleaners Society to promote food bank donations. Ticket-holders for the two 2011 Creston shows were asked to bring one non-perishable food item for the cause.

"When I thought of how well the first contest went last year, I wondered how I could use the show to help those who might be struggling," Gorham explains. "Part of who I am is a desire to help others. I am also married to a woman who would give her last loaf of bread to help someone

else even if she had to go without. That rubs off after awhile."

Gorham also gives kudos to the sponsors he recruited in 2010 (most of whom wanted back in the second time around) and photographer Jeff Banman, as well as several volunteers who helped tally scorecards. Overwaitea signed on as the signature sponsor of what Gorham calls the "big show" on the 11th.

It's a multi-faceted event indeed, but one that Gorham is striving to keep connected to what comes across as a genuine underlying aim of goodwill.

"It is my hope that everyone who leaves my contest, whether it is a singer, audience member, judge or me, will leave feeling like their burdens have been lifted even a bit, and they can go on and take on the challenges of tomorrow," he says. "I know that may sound corny but I am totally sincere."

"I do want to make a difference while I'm here on Earth. If I put on a really good contest and accomplish these goals, then I have made a tiny positive difference." ■

Many thanks to Jeff Banman for providing the photos. For more information about Jeff's Photos 'n Motion visit www.jeffsphotosnmotion.com, email: jeffbanman@yahoo.ca or phone: 250.402.6482



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Joloh Hockley, John Lindhorst and Lizzie Moore.

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Creston's Best Singer Top 20 Finalists



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From the Mayor's Desk

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

Commitment to open communication

On January 28 I was honoured by being asked to serve as the master of ceremonies for the Lower Kootenay Band council's inauguration ceremony held at the Prince Charles Auditorium.

The procession for the ceremony included: our local RCMP in red serge; cadet bagpipers; incoming Chief Jason Louie; new councillors Ann Jimmie and Arlene Basil; and, me. Councillors Sandra Luke and Mary Basil were also in attendance.

Additionally, our regional directors (Garry Jackman, John Kettle and Larry Binks) provided greetings

and good wishes to the new Lower Kootenay Band council.

After being sworn in by Const. Eldene Stanley, Chief Louie commented: "Today is a good day. Today we have made history. We, the Lower Kootenay Band council, have chosen to hold this inauguration ceremony in the Town of Creston because it must be a priority to being on a journey on the path to reconciliation with our neighbours of the Creston Valley."

This is a powerful statement, representing the genuine path that the councils for the Town of Creston

and Lower Kootenay Band initiated on December 1, 2009, when we signed our joint Memorandum of Understanding and Friendship.

I look forward to the ongoing building of the relationship between the Town of Creston, Regional District of Central Kootenay and Lower Kootenay Band through our commitment to open communication and dialogue, participation in our regularly scheduled Community to Community Forum meetings and joint involvement in future events.

I would also like to acknowledge that it has been an honour to have worked with retiring chief Chris Luke Sr. for the past two years. His influence will surely be felt in all our future endeavours. ■

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

Creston Valley Business Buzz



*Brittney
Boehmer
owner of
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happiest occasions in people's lives. Weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and baby showers are just a few of the many events Brit's Cakes caters to.

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Brit's Cakes makes creative custom order cakes for every occasion. Five years ago Brittney started making cakes after taking a few classes. She started playing around with different sugar mediums, enjoying the challenges of creating edible pieces of art that can bring to life most anyone's ideas. Brittney loves making cakes for some of the

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Zen Words Zen Centre

Story by: Trish Bartlett

It is a nondescript building renovated out of a two-storey, single-car garage. Its unfinished exterior disguises its true nature. Sliding glass doors open to a beautifully crafted wooden interior furnished only with pillows.

Near the ceiling are windows allowing in the light and at the end, opposite the doors, is an altar on which sits a statue of Buddha. This is Creston's most recent spiritual addition, a Zen-Buddhist temple, a Zendo, the realized dream of Kuya Minogue, Creston's resident Soto Zen teacher.

"When people study Buddhism they study themselves," Kuya says,

succinctly paraphrasing Dōgen Zenji, who wrote: "To study the way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things of the universe. To be enlightened by all

"When people study Buddhism they study themselves"

things of the universe is to cast off the body and mind of the self as well as those of others. Even the traces of enlightenment are wiped out, and life with traceless enlightenment goes on forever and ever."

Dogen is the founder of Soto Zen-Buddhism, the practices under which Kuya trained. It originated in Japan in the 13th century. Historically, Soto Zen was known as "Farmer Zen," frequently a derogatory term because most of its followers were peasants as opposed to the Rinzai school known as "Samurai Zen" due to its predominance of samurai.

The method of enlightenment emphasized through Soto is that of zazen, a form of meditation which is sometimes referred to as "just sitting" or "silent illumination."

"We have no mantra," she says. "We try to centre our thoughts on self. Sometimes they wander but then we have to drag them back. It can be hard at first."

As a teacher, Kuya is also trained to help her students deal with things revealed during zazen. The creation of the Creston Zendo has made it easier for more people to "just sit." A half-hour of sitting is often followed by a service consisting of chanting the Soto sutras, or scriptures.

"The Zendo provides a place for people to come, to sit and to chant. It is a restful place," says Kuya, who has scheduled sitting times Tuesdays



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through Saturdays but welcomes students any time. Weekend teaching retreats can also be scheduled for small groups as desired.

Kuya also wants to make the building available for community events, including meetings and performances. It will not undermine the primary purpose of the space since all space is sacred in Buddhism.

This proposed use of the Zendo also fits into the underlying key to the Soto Zen school, the oneness of practice and enlightenment. In other words, one does not become enlightened through meditation alone but also through service to others. This is known as bhodi-darma; practice and enlightenment are one and the same.



To help achieve her own enlightenment, Kuya volunteers with a community organization and encourages her students to do something similar. This way the meditation is worked out in practice and the practice enhances the meditation.

“We come from nothing and go to nothing,” she says. “We need to be concerned with the life in-between. We strive to end suffering for all sentient creatures.”

The Zendo is just a natural development of the Zen writing

practice Kuya first began when she arrived in Creston. She offers workshops and online courses.

“The primary tool of a writer is the writing mind,” she says. “In Zen writing practice we alternate between sitting meditation, mindful walking and writing meditation. By

“We strive to end suffering for all sentient creatures”

combining Zen practice with writing we can reach deep into our creative minds and then write from the source.”

Along with the Zendo and Zen writing practice, Kuya has dreams of developing Maitri House, a place to revitalize those who help others and a place to treat those who help with loving kindness, which is the meaning of the word maitri.

Kuya is also a student at the Red Jade Martial Arts School and was pleasantly surprised to discover

Neil Ripski’s tradition also has its origins in Soto Zen. The two plan to join their schools in the near future.

“We will become brother and sister schools,” Kuya says. “I will be his student and he will be mine.”

Together, they hope to further the aims of Soto Zen within the Creston Valley.

“I do not know how it is possible to save all sentient beings from suffering,” she says, “but we have to do our best.” ■

For more information, go to the Zen Words Zen Centre at www.zenwords.ca.

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Remember that when you spend money on having the right sign custom-designed for your business, you're not just investing in a sign. You are sending an important message to your customers. Their first impression comes from the exterior of your business. A well-designed, well-placed and attractive sign will draw them in, rather than turn them away. It will increase business, earning you more money. It's that simple.

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Spring, Fresh Air and the Good Luck of the Shamrock!

Story by: Holly Pender-Love

House plants are a wonderful addition to your home. If yours are looking a little sad after a winter of warm furnace air, you may wish to replace them when you realize how beneficial they are.

Did you know that many plain greenhouse plants purify the air in your home? Some remove formaldehyde, benzene and other toxic chemicals found in the home. If you suffer congestion, the addition of fresh, green

plants may allow you to breathe more easily.

"Sick building syndrome" is the result of a high concentration of toxins in buildings which are newly constructed or tightly sealed and lack air circulation. Major building pollutants are benzene, formaldehyde and trichloroethylene.

Dr. B.C. Wolerton, a NASA researcher, recommends the use of house plants as indoor air-fresheners. Dr. Wolerton examined 19 species, but the high degree of air purification obtained with

house plants would suggest that all plants can assist with cleaning the air of toxins. Each plant is estimated to purify an area of 100 square feet. A range of plants is recommended to increase the scope of purification.

Formaldehyde is found in foam insulation, plywood and particle board, carpeting, furniture, paper products and cleaning agents. Benzene is found in tobacco smoke, petroleum products, synthetic fibres, plastics, inks and dyes, rubber products and detergents. Trichloroethylene is found in dry-cleaning fluid, inks and dyes, adhesives, lacquers and paints.

The following plants have ranked high as air-fresheners: aloe vera, Boston fern, dragon tree, English ivy, mum, palm, peace lily, philodendron, spider plant and weeping fig.

Aloe vera (*aloe barbadensis*) – Tests indicate that aloe vera is one of the most efficient air purifiers for the removal of formaldehyde. The jelly from the aloe plant is known to have many uses in healing, the most common being to slather on a burn, hence its prominence in many kitchens. Unfortunately, the green exterior of aloe may be an irritant to sensitive individuals, so aloein, one of the active ingredients, is removed from most commercially available aloe products.

Boston fern (*nephrolepis exaltata bostoniensis*) – It's recommended that a couple of Boston ferns be placed in the room where you have recently added carpet or furniture for the removal of xylene and formaldehyde fumes. It also acts as a humidifier, restoring moisture to the air in exchange for the air pollutants.

Dragon tree (*dracaena marginata*) – This plant has long, thin leaves with red edges and grows to a height of three to four metres. It is most tolerant of dry soil, hence often seen in office settings. The NASA Clean Air Study found that this plant helps remove formaldehyde and is among the best to remove xylene and trichloroethylene.

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English ivy (*hedera helix*) – English ivy absorbs and neutralizes benzene, the colourless toxin emitted by some paper and office equipment products. Easy care when soil is kept moist, but best to place in hanging baskets as the leaves can be poisonous to pets.

Mum (*chrysanthemum*) – Mums have been a popular flowering plant in the Orient for centuries and now are listed in the NASA top 10 for air purification. One of the few flowering plants, in addition to gerbera daisy, listed as suitable for air purification in the home. The mum is easy to raise and seems to be inexpensively available a couple of times each year.

Palm (areca palm, lady palm, and bamboo palm) – The palms were listed at the top by NASA for their ability to purify the air. These plants are very good at humidifying and cleaning the air of your home and require little attention, a fine characteristic for a house plant.

Peace lily (*spathiphyllum* sp.) – Readily available, the peace lily likes moderate lighting and lots of water. It is at the top of the list for breaking down benzene and trichloroethylene in your home. Studies have shown a 60-per-cent reduction of mould spores in the air from the flowers of this plant in a short period of time. Why does mine rarely blossom?

Philodendron (various: *p. cordatum*, *p. scandens*, *p. selloum*, etc.) – At high concentrations, philodendron removes the most formaldehyde from the air. Several sites mention the calcium oxalate in all parts of this plant, so keep it high and out of reach.

Spider plant (*chlorophytum comosum*) – Spider plants are said to remove 90 per cent of indoor air toxins in two days. Personally, I grow spider plants for my cats to eat. They seem to like to nibble on something so we have an understanding that this is their plant. When it gets in sad shape I buy a new one or put the current one in isolation while it recovers. Spider plants are easy to care for, requiring water only after having dried out between waterings.

Weeping fig (*ficus benjamin* or *ficus alii*) – Although the *ficus benjamin* is the most common weeping fig available, the other type, *ficus alii*, is less sensitive to drafts and being moved. Sometimes you will find this plant braided, with two or three in one pot. Mature, it is a tree about six feet tall and is happy with indirect light. Research indicates that the weeping fig helps to absorb formaldehyde as well as incompletely combusted sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide.

And what about the shamrock? The shamrock celebrated on March 17 has

religious significance and is a symbol of St. Patrick and the Emerald Isle. In Ireland it is a white clover. Difficult to grow indoors, the plant we use in North America is oxalis or wood sorrel.

There are many varieties but the two most common are the Irish shamrock (*oxalis acetosella*) and the good luck plant (*oxalis deppei*). Both have green leaves and small white or red blossoms. The good luck plant has white streaks running along the leaf vein. The leaves fold up at night or on overcast days in both varieties.

The oxalis can be moved to the garden if you wish. The plant will enter dormancy by indicating a dieback of the leaves. You can move it to a dark, cool place for two or three months. New foliage will begin to emerge at the end of the dormant period, indicating that it is time to move the plant to a sunny window and to water and fertilize again. A yellowing plant tells you it is getting too much water. If it wilts, you are not giving it enough.

The shamrock makes no outrageous claims to purify the air but it will give you a lift to your walk, a smile on your face and the ability to sing off key and loudly on the 17th of March. ■

Holly Pender-Love is involved in the Xeriscape/WaterWise program at the College of the Rockies community greenhouse, funded by Columbia Basin Trust.



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Response to the program has been overwhelming over the years and in January 2005 an online version of the Practical Herbalist Program was developed. The online course has allowed students from all over Canada, the United States and even South America to expand their knowledge of herbs and has seen some embark on careers in this field. The online version has since been further extended to include a version specifically designed for healthcare professionals looking to broaden their knowledge of herbal medicine.

The Practical Herbalist program was developed and is instructed by Rachel Beck BA, CHT, DiHom, a

clinical herbalist and homeopath with an extensive background in natural medicine. She is a consultant to the health food industry, co-owner of a company producing herbal-based products, writes on natural health for magazines and newspapers, and teaches natural health courses.

We are extremely proud of our courses and the students who have taken our programs. Many of our graduates have gone on to open their own herbal consulting service or apothecary, produce their own herbal products, work in health stores or as sales representatives for companies producing herbal products. Others are growing herbs to either sell in plant form or to sell to suppliers. Some have gone on

to take further training in College of the Rockies related fields such as massage therapy, midwifery and aromatherapy and have combined these with our training to further expand their career opportunities. Others have simply used their new found knowledge to care for their family and friends. Whatever our grads choose to pursue we know that they do so having received some of the best training available in Canada.

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My Side of the World

Story by: Kristen Cook

Young love and vintage guitars

My parents were rockers, once upon a time. I can open wrinkled '70s photo albums and find grainy yellow photos – my dad with long, full-blond hair; my mom in her boyfriend's plaid shirts. Their young love and vintage guitars.

Before I took my first breath I was attending band practice, kicking hard and frequently as they cranked their amps and powered out hits that would never make it. They were always recorded on then-modern equipment bought with construction and waitress wages. I was a cassette-era baby, missing the brief eight-track days and the single copy of The Steve Miller Band that played repeatedly in my dad's hippie van.

The first recording of my life was my first time home. My mom looks young, tired, happy, confused. I am red, wrinkled and cranky. My dad reflectively plays his acoustic guitar on our old eggplant-coloured couch. His little sister makes snide comments

about how she's surprised he didn't bring his guitar into the delivery room.

This is the world I entered: KEZE on the radio, piano stencils on the wall. They changed as they got older, my parents did. They started listening to Wes King and Kim Hill through speakers they'd wired up around the house, but they'd already left a mark.

I remembered Janis Joplin being tossed out the window during a fight on the highway. I remembered asking why Elton John thought rolling like thunder under the covers should be called the blues. I got questioned for singing Forever in Blue Jeans and That Smell.

I didn't know the names, but I knew that Billy Joel was a piano man and that my dad had played my mom down the aisle singing that if the sun refused to shine, he'd still be loving her.

They instilled an appreciation, a craving. My mom put me in piano lessons and, even though I stuck it out, it wasn't for me. While my home-schooled friends strove to reach Grade 8 theory, I saved for albums by DCTalk and Audio Adrenaline to play on the boom box my sister and I got for Christmas.

I was the first person I knew with a Discman and, later, an MP3 player. Regardless, I still keep a box of vinyls I sometimes play for the crackly memories.

I would often fall asleep or wake up to the sound of acoustic guitar. In my late teens I was still realizing songs I grew up with were originals by my dad. The endangered demo cassette

eventually made its way onto CD and we all got our copies signed that Christmas.

I've started to move on in the cycle. I still listen to the old hits I was raised with. My brothers make sure I listen to new artists they discover through YouTube. And I do lots of discovering on my own. But I have an entire play list titled "mellow." It's full of strong, female vocals and smoky piano tunes. I listen to indie, pop and international. There's not much outside of country or heavy metal that I won't give a chance.

My little brother takes his cue from us now, not remembering when my parents were cool, starting the whole process over again. He develops his own taste for Linkin Park and

"I still keep a box of vinyls I sometimes play for the crackly memories"

Manafest, cranking rap and playing pool with his gangly buddies in a room with piano stencils on the wall. My mom calls his music "screamo" (it's not) and listens to Jennifer Knapp and Norah Jones.

My dad sits on a beige-coloured couch, in the background, and plays guitar, continuing an unvaried sound thread of my life. When I come home it's always there, his fingers stirring the strings, creating the sound of security regardless of what he's playing. ■



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- Make sure the light bulbs in all your fixtures are the correct wattage.
- Review your fire escape plan with your family.
- Consider installing a lightning protection system on your home.
- Protect all your electrical appliances from power surges and lightning.
- Have a professional air conditioning contractor inspect and maintain your system as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Check for damage to your roof.
- Run through a severe-weather drill with your family.
- Repair all cracked, broken or uneven driveways and walks to help

provide a level walking surface.

- Protect your home from sewer or drain back-up losses.
- Check all the fascia and trim for deterioration.
- Check your water heater.
- Check the shutoff valve at each plumbing fixture to make sure they function.
- Clean clothes dryer exhaust duct, damper, and space under the dryer.
- Replace all extension cords that have become brittle, worn or damaged.
- Inspect and clean dust from the covers of your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. ■

Pruning in Spring

www.devangreenhouses.ca

Most pruning should be done in February, except with early flowering shrubs which can be trimmed back after they finish blooming. Cut off broken or damaged limbs and branches from your trees and shrubs. Cut seed heads off your bulbs but leave the foliage alone until it turns brown. Lightly prune groups B & C (large flowering types) Clematis if

they start to get too big. Cut down deciduous grasses like Miscanthus and Ribbon grass. However, take care with cutting back evergreen grasses as they can take years to grow back - try combing out the dead leaves instead by hand or with a rake. It is also time for pruning Hydrangeas: lightly prune above a healthy set of buds after the threat of frost is over. ■

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1. Weatherstrip your front door.

This simple DIY fix will cut down on unnecessary drafts and air leaks around the frames of your exterior doors. Buy a cheap roll of felt, rubber or vinyl weatherstripping and you can install it yourself in a matter of minutes.

2. Install a programmable thermostat.

These handy gadgets allow you to set the temperature and forget about it while cutting down on your energy costs. The concept is simple: regulate the temperature when you're asleep and when you're not at home. You'll stay comfortable without conditioning an unoccupied home.

3. Buy a faucet aerator. There's no need to send all that extra water down the drain. If your faucet flow is rated higher than 2.5 gallons per minute, screw in an aerator. This little device mixes air into the the stream of water, cutting down on waste and splashing.

4. Slow your showerhead's flow.

Another way to cut back on your water use is to reduce the flow from your showerhead. Again, aim for less than 2.5 gallons per minute, but you can purchase heads that go as low as one gallon per minute. Imagine the savings!

5. Change your furnace filter. Over time, it can get clogged with dust and other particles, forcing your furnace to work that much harder. Some people say you should change your filter every month during the heating season, while others feel that every three months is adequate. Check yours often and follow the manufacturer's recommendations.


6. Conduct a DIY home energy audit. Although professional energy audits can run you several hundreds of dollars, you can conduct your own for practically free. An audit pinpoints the major energy-losing culprits in your home and helps you budget for future renovations.

7. Caulk your windows. Set aside a couple of hours one weekend and load up your caulk gun. Seal around your windows and any other penetrations in the exterior of your house, such as wires and pipes. There's no need to heat the outdoors, too.

8. Add a ceiling fan. Although fans can cost a lot more than \$50, it's definitely possible to buy a basic model on the cheap. Install a ceiling fan in your bedroom or living room and use it instead of or in addition to your air conditioner.

9. Insulate your pipes. Look at the pipes under your bathroom sink and those extending from your hot water heater. Naked pipes release a lot of heat, functioning almost like radiators. Invest in some cheap pipe sleeves, which you can attach yourself in no time.

10. Dim the lights. Overhead lighting can be a little harsh, and installing a dimmer on your fixture allows you to create mood lighting while cutting down on your electricity bill. So, add a little ambience and simultaneously save the environment. ■



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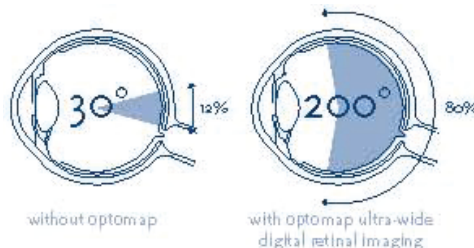
We all want to protect our eyesight and overall health for ourselves and our family - that is why annual eye exams are important. Regular eye care and exams can protect and prevent many eye diseases, if detected early. Today, a whole range of eye problems can be treated successfully without total vision loss. In addition, many vision problems begin at an early age, so it's important for children to receive proper eye care from the time they are infants.

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This can lead to early detection of common diseases, such as glaucoma, diabetes, macular degeneration, and even cancer. The exam is quick, painless, and may not require dilation drops.

How does your eye doctor normally examine the retina?

Examining the retina is challenging. Your eye doctor looks through your pupil to examine a layer of tissue that covers the back and inside walls of your eye. Traditional viewing methods can be effective, but difficult to perform. They are also carried out manually without any digital record.



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most of the retina at once allows your eye doctor more time to review your images and educate you about your eye health. Numerous clinical studies have demonstrated the power of optomap as a diagnostic tool.

Do all eye doctors have an optomap ultra-wide digital retinal imaging system?

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How often should I have an optomap?

Your doctor will advise based on your individual circumstances but it is generally recommended that you have an optomap every time you have an eye exam. This will ensure you have a digital record of your retinal health on file which can be compared for changes over time.

Should my children have an optomap too?

Many vision problems begin at an early age, so it's important for children to receive proper eye care from the time they are infants. ■

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Nature's Pruner

Story by: Carla Ahern, Director of Communications, Stewardship and Education
Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area

First off, a huge thank you to everyone who phoned, e-mailed and provided photos of their encounters with the northern pygmy owl in our area (*I Love Creston*, February 2011). It was great to see the interest and enthusiasm that people have for wildlife, our fine-feathered friends in particular.

Many of you had great stories of encounters with the pygmy owl as well as other species of birds, coyotes and moose. One of the many benefits of living in a rural community is having a close proximity to nature, allowing us some amazing wildlife encounters and sightings. And a lot of the time we get this experience by just looking out our living room windows.

We had a moose and her offspring visit our yard quite a few times in February. The mother moose would venture close to the house, shaking the mountain ash, dogwood and other shrubbery with her long teeth and big lips, each exhale producing a shot of steam from her mouth. I looked at it as a free pruning job.

We grabbed the camera and went out onto the deck – cautiously and quietly – to get a good shot. She looked up at us as our feet crunched on the crusty snow, acknowledged our presence and then continued on her shrub-eating ways. They are absolutely stunning creatures – huge in stature and not lacking in grace given such gangly legs.



My husband took a photo of the track she left behind. He laid his toque on the ground next to it and it was at least that size – as big as his head. You could see the way that she dragged her feet across the snow as she ambled on.

Her offspring stayed a fair distance away in the neighbouring woods, bedded down, watching mom . . . smart to keep a safe distance from those strange two-legged beasts.

Each day brings the potential of a new wildlife sighting. And it is not just about seeing the animal and checking it off the list, but rather about observing its behaviour and interaction with the natural world. I can usually learn a lot about patience and dedication when watching wildlife.

Please feel free to share your wildlife sightings, photos or videos on our

Facebook page. You can upload them directly onto our page (Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area). It is a great place to share the wonders of our magnificent valley. ■

Carla Ahern is the director of communications, stewardship and education at the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area. Carla loves to canoe, garden, cook, sew, sit in hot springs and go for long walks in the wetland. She can be reached at 250-402-6905 or cahern@crestonwildlife.ca.

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A Local Legend – Fact or Fiction?

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

It is a well-established “fact” that William-Adolph Baillie-Grohman came up with the idea of reclaiming the Creston flats while hunting with future U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt.

It’s a good story: the English adventurer and the American politician camped out on top of one of the local mountains, surveying the expanse of the Creston flats below them and discussing their agricultural and economic potential, while waiting for an unsuspecting animal to wander within range.

The trouble is, I can’t find a single shred of evidence to prove it actually happened.

Oh, I have found many references to it: this story shows up in everything from books to Web sites and wine labels. The details vary a little bit – in some accounts the men were hunting grizzlies, in others they were after mountain goats, and nobody seems quite sure which mountain they were on top of – but all of these references have two things in common. One, they are all quite definite that this

event took place; and, two, none of them identifies where they got the story from.

And that is the big question: where did this story come from? The earliest account I have been able to find is a brief paragraph in the May 10, 1951, special edition of the Creston Review which states: “To the best of this column’s knowledge, and from records which signify this happened, the first idea of dyking came after a grizzly hunt by Baillie-Grohman and United States president Teddy Roosevelt who were camped above Arrow Creek. After

“Roosevelt was well-known as a hunter”

breakfast on the fall morning and the mist had lifted Mr. Grohman’s views were supported by President Roosevelt. Thus the idea of dyking the Reclamation Farm came into being.”

You’ll notice that even this article does not specify which records “signify this happened.”

I found a few books and articles by Roosevelt online, but none of them seem to mention Baillie-Grohman.



A young Teddy Roosevelt.

There is also not a single statement anywhere in Baillie-Grohman’s own writings to confirm the story.

In his book, *Fifteen Years Sport and Life in the Kootenay*, as well as in several other articles, Baillie-Grohman describes in great detail his hunting adventures in the Kootenays in the early 1880s, as well as his efforts to reclaim the flats at Creston from the annual floods of the Kootenay River. Nowhere – absolutely nowhere – does he even hint that he met Roosevelt here, that he and Roosevelt hunted together anywhere or that he ever discussed the idea of reclamation with Roosevelt.

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I suspect this is one of those occasions where several historical facts got muddled together, and the result is a fable with just enough truth in it to make it plausible. Here are the facts:

Roosevelt and Baillie-Grohman were friends. They often corresponded on hunting and other matters. Roosevelt at one point visited Baillie-Grohman's family home in Schloss-Matzen, Austria, and Roosevelt wrote the forward of a book that Baillie-Grohman translated and edited.

Roosevelt was well-known as a hunter. He had a ranch in North Dakota from which he went on several hunting expeditions seeking many of the same animals that

"Baillie-Grohman first visited the Creston Valley in 1882"

Baillie-Grohman hunted. He definitely did travel through the Kootenays, in the late 1880s or early 1890s, where he visited with, among other people, J.C. Rykert at the customs post south of Creston. He was definitely here hunting; on that trip he shot the trophy elk whose taxidermied head is on display at the Legion in Bonners Ferry, Idaho.

Baillie-Grohman first visited the Creston Valley in 1882, hunting mountain goats. At the time, with cross-country railways not yet complete on either side of the border, he had a four-week journey from the Atlantic coast, partly by rail and partly by whatever means of transportation was available, then on horseback overland from the end of the railway to Bonners Ferry. He had First Nations guides on this journey but the only non-native person he describes was Richard Fry at Bonners Ferry.

In 1883, Baillie-Grohman met up with some friends while travelling

and talked to them about his plans for reclaiming and developing the Creston flats. He invited one of them – Meysey Clive – to join him in an expedition to the Kootenays in July of that year. Clive waited as planned at Sandpoint, Idaho, but Baillie-Grohman never showed up. In *Gentleman Immigrants* (1981), P.A. Duane gives one account of the Roosevelt/Baillie-Grohman legend: The two men met up while travelling across the country, then walked from the end of the rails at Lake Pend Oreille into the Kootenays to hunt mountain goat, noting in passing the rich agricultural potential of the Creston Valley. And really, it's not too much of a stretch. Just combine the circumstances of Baillie-Grohman's 1882 and 1883 journeys, mix in his obsession with developing the region and talking about it to everyone he met, add the fact of Roosevelt's hunting in this



A very gentleman-like Baillie-Grohman.

area, substitute Roosevelt for Meysey Clive – and there you have it.

For my part, though, I still think there's more fiction than fact in this local legend. ■

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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Gleaners Too Expansion

Submitted

Two years ago the Gleaners was bursting at the seams in its present location. A decision was made to expand in order to accommodate the growth it was experiencing. It moved into the new space across the road that you know as Gleaners Too.

Due to the hard work of the Gleaners and Gleaners Too volunteers (28,000 hours in 2010), the support of our local customers and generosity of all those who donate the items that are essential to our success, it became obvious that Gleaners Too was stretching its seams.

To alleviate this problem and allow for future growth, a decision was made to expand the existing building. The expansion will be about 1,000 square

feet on the north end of the existing building.

As you will have noticed, the excavation has already started. Unfortunately, Mother Nature refused to co-operate and we experienced an early freeze. Construction will commence once the weather warms up and the frost is out of the ground.

Once construction is complete you will see some changes inside and out. On the inside the existing receiving and sorting area will be moved to the end of the new structure in a separate room. The furniture will be moved from its present location to the new addition.

As a result, we will be better able to utilize the display area. The small appliances, electronics, lighting and

plumbing areas can be displayed more efficiently.

The new space will be used to display furniture such as sofas, chairs and mattresses as well as other large items. We will also have a sporting goods section to display the seasonal items as they come in.

On the outside, the existing storage shed along Canyon Street will be removed and everything that was normally displayed there will be moved inside. The existing space will be used to expand parking. The end result will be an improved shopping experience with everything under one roof, out of the elements.

We would like to thank you for your patience during the construction period, as it's business as usual. ■

For more information about the Creston Valley Gleaners Society call 250-428-4166 for the main store and 250-428-4106 for Gleaners Too

GRANT APPLICATIONS INVITED

The Creston-Kootenay Foundation invites applications for grants from not-for-profit organizations based between Yahk and Riondel

The Foundation's fields of interest are: arts & culture, education, the environment, social welfare, the aged, youth and heritage.

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or call Nicole Nilsson at 250-428-4960 for more information

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS IS MARCH 31

Spay/Neuter Animal Programs make a Difference

Story by: Stephanie Sweet

Last September, the Spay/Neuter Animal Program (SNAP) volunteers were fund-raising at the Creston Valley Fall Fair by hosting an information booth. A sweet little girl and her mother came to the booth inquiring about help with spaying the little girl's cat, Misty. The little girl was concerned about Misty having babies again. Misty had had a litter the year before and it had been hard to find homes for the kitties.

This is a typical scenario – more kittens and puppies than homes for them. Many, of course, do find homes but more are abandoned only to suffer starvation, disease and distress. Unfortunately, a large number of these animals breed successfully. What to do?

Since November 2008, SNAP has offered a low-cost spay/neuter program for cats and dogs available to all in the Creston Valley, be it your own beloved pet or an unwanted, abandoned stray.

Hurray! To date, SNAP has helped spay/neuter more than 380 cats and dogs in the Creston Valley and the goal for 2011 is 500.

SNAP is a non-profit society dependent on various types of funding. Because of our dedicated volunteers, the support of local veterinarian Dr. Rob McLeod and his staff, and the generosity of the people and businesses in our valley, we continue to be successful. Thanks to you all for supporting SNAP. Making a difference . . . it's a SNAP. ■

For more information contact SNAP at 250-428-2811



Understanding Osteoarthritis

Story by Jesse Moreton,
BSc DC

Everyone's heard of arthritis and chances are you'll develop it at some stage in life, but do you really understand what it is?

For starters, the term osteoarthritis (OA) can be misleading. Osteo- and arthro- translate to bone and joint, respectively, and that's OK, but the suffix -itis means inflammation. Inflammation doesn't always occur and when it does it's usually mild. However, that's not to say it still doesn't cause feelings of stiffness and pain.

Osteoarthritis can be better described as degeneration of the articular cartilage in weight-bearing joints. Cartilage is what covers the bones inside a joint capsule and provides a near frictionless surface. Healthy cartilage attracts and holds water, which acts as a joint cushion and shock absorber.

Cartilage is made up of collagen, large molecules called chondroitin sulfate and 70 to 80 per cent water. It may be helpful to think of the collagen as the building blocks, with chondroitin sulfate as the mortar that holds everything together.

What happens in osteoarthritis is degeneration of this healthy cartilage. This leads to friction when the joint moves (think of an engine without oil and grease) and reduced cushioning and shock absorption. This is what our body interprets as pain and stiffness.

The main question then becomes: how does degeneration occur? There is some truth to the oft-quoted wear-and-tear theory but there are two other explanations worth discussing: glucosamine production; and, weight control.

Glucosamine production – As we age, the body produces less glucosamine and chondroitin. Glucosamine is a precursor in the production of chondroitin which, as discussed above, is an important component of healthy joints.

A simple solution is to take glucosamine as a supplement to help restore chondroitin levels. Studies have shown that supplementing with glucosamine sulfate can decrease pain and stiffness, slow cartilage erosion and increase hyaluronic acid. (Hyaluronic acid serves to reduce friction by increasing the viscosity of joint fluid).

If you do try taking glucosamine sulfate, and I recommend you do, make sure it's that specific form and not chondroitin. These molecules are comparatively huge and cannot be absorbed effectively through your intestinal tract. I would also recommend consulting first with your health care provider about dosages and contraindications.

Weight control – This is the “easier said than done” solution. Osteoarthritis is typically worse in the weight-bearing joints and it's a matter of simple mechanics: the more weight you're carrying, the more pressure through a joint, and the more compression of the cartilage. As the cartilage is compressed it becomes squeezed like a sponge and loses its water and cushioning effect.

The wear-and-tear affect is accelerated and symptoms appear earlier and are usually worse. Simple aerobic activity like walking every day or reducing serving size at meals can help you control weight. Remember to start out slow and be consistent.

We still don't understand osteoarthritis completely. It's multi-factorial and complex but we can work with what we know. Hopefully adopting these two strategies will help you better manage osteoarthritis. ■

For more information call Moreton Chiropractic at 250-428-3535 or visit the Web site moretonchiropractic.blogspot.com

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Happy Wanderer

Story by:
Shifu Neil Ripski,
Red Jade Martial Arts

Xiao Yao is a term meaning happy wanderer. It refers to a wandering Taoist sage, perhaps an immortal who has freed himself/herself from the clutches of the world and as such has become one with the Tao, going with the ebb and flow of the world.

The Taoist philosophy has always spoken about the method of free and happy wandering without attachments. The more modern methods of Taoism have borrowed from animistic practices and the Buddhist religious practices to create Taoist temples, organizations and hierarchies of deities that require worship. But the wandering Taoist culture has survived even into the modern day and most live a hermetic life deep in the mountains where they can experience Tao directly in its raw form.

Xiao Yao is a concept of going with the flow around you. My shifu likened it to being aboard a rowboat at sea. You must become one with the water and its flow because to fight it would be to succumb to the unstoppable force.

Going with the flow is one of the most important concepts of ancient Taoism and it has a representative physical form in drunken kung fu. The Chinese martial arts tend to favour an approach

to combat that follows this theory in some form or another.

Turning the taiji pole when comparatively receiving force from an opponent is a taiji staple. Understanding that the nature of the universe is change and training to flow with the rapid changes of combat is the high art of bagua. Drunken boxing looks at this idea directly to form an underlying current throughout the style that the practitioner can use to receive, adapt and overcome an opponent's attacks with little effort.

The use of this theory in physical application requires training in correct stepping (the lotus stepping system – a reference again to ancient Chinese

“Xiao Yao is a concept of going with the flow around you”

culture and Buddhist ideals), body manipulation in spherical movement by bending the torso forward and backward, left and right, circling, turning, swaying, rocking the hips and so on, as well as a deep understanding of the two spiral forces created in the Chinese martial arts of ni and shun (positive and negative spirals).

It is with this understanding that the drunken player works to adapt to and take advantage of movement created by the interaction of the two combatants. The drunken boxer rarely moves to control everything that is going on or force anything to happen. In the storm that is combat he is a happy wanderer going with the flow and taking advantage of what the Tao presents through non-interference.

This is not to say that the drunkard will simply not block attacks or respond in kind but that he/she will be willing to go with the flow of the combat in basically any direction and take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Take the example of being thrown by a judoka (judo player) rather than fighting against the flow. (This is assuming that the throw is already in place and starting to be executed.) The drunkard using this theory (there are other methods not mentioned in this article) will begin to go where the judoka is wanting him to, perhaps even accelerating the throw himself to get there.

It is during this acceleration that the happy wanderer has taken control of his life and is choosing to flow with the Tao. The opportunity may arise that allows him to grab the opponent's head as he is thrown, or perhaps grab the groin, throat, a joint in the opponent's arm and so on. As the throw is completed the judoka could be badly hurt by the accelerated momentum and force created by the throw being redirected into a strike, lock, break or tearing technique.

The drunkard will indeed be thrown and hit the floor, not interfering with the opponent's plan, but taking advantage of anything that might come along in the meantime.

This is no different than the travelling Taoist who has studied herbology and edible plants finding food and medicine during his travels. By wandering happily and accepting what the Tao brings to him he is fed, healthful and mindful of the experience.

Chinese culture is of great concern to those of us who are studying the traditional martial arts as it teaches us how those who created these methods thought about culture, movement, philosophy and life. Their martial arts mirror these things in many ways and those of us who choose to look into this tend to get more out of their study.

As a drunken boxer you should try to learn to go with the flow of things and take opportunity when it arises. Win by accident, or so it seems. ■

Neil Ripski teaches kung fu and tai chi at Red Jade Martial Arts in Creston. He can be reached at 250-866-5263 or www.redjademartialarts.com.

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Love and the Heart... Why I Love Creston!

Story by: Annette Agabob
Owner – Annette's Health Action



Even though we have moved into the month of March I felt inspired to continue with the February theme of heart health, which includes the emotions of love and gratitude.

It is well-known that love and gratitude are good for your health, and the more we appreciate and feel grateful for what we have, the more things will come to us, the more we will have to be grateful for and the more love we will feel in our hearts.

Before the wonderful magazine called I Love Creston was born, I used to say: "I wish the Advance had a spot for people to write in about why they love Creston."

Since gratitude is good for your health, and loving anything is good for your health, I decided to take this opportunity to write about why I love Creston in hopes of inspiring you to join in the fun, and indulge in the wonderful feeling of being grateful for this beautiful community we live in.

So here goes:

I love Creston for the flats and that the land is still available for agriculture. My mentor, Dr. Bernard Jensen, used to teach, live on the hillsides and grow food in the valleys, and that is what we are doing here . . . and I love that.

I love Creston for the stores being closed at night so that everyone has time for family and fun.

I love Creston for the Prairie farmers who moved here and share their wisdom and stories with us, and for those who were born and raised in Creston – farmers and real locals.

I love Creston for the wildlife centre and all the birds, bugs and frogs that live there.

I love Creston for the deer, elk, foxes, coyotes, cougars, caribou and other amazing wildlife we are privileged to live with.

I love Creston for its mom-and-pop shops and restaurants, neighbours serving us everything from buffalo soup to home-made bread and pasta, as well as multi-purpose stores with stationery, toys and specialty clothing.

I love Creston for the food – peaches, apples, grapes, carrots, beets, and turnips . . . you name it, we grow it. Hurrah!

I love Creston for the fantastic fruit stands with local farmers creating a living by doing what they love.

I love Creston for the trucks hauling hay, the horse community, the goats, cows and chickens.

I love Creston for our kids being able to climb a haystack and throw down the bales to be loaded into the horse trailer (thanks Burt).

I love Creston for the waving to eight out of 10 people you drive by and how everyone has their own special wave.

I love Creston for its theatre to watch movies.

I love Creston for the doctors and nurses who delivered my babies, and then seeing them cheering at the soccer field or playing violin at a Christmas concert.

I love Creston for its artists and musicians, uplifting for our eyes and our ears.

I love Creston for all the healthy choices available at our local health food stores.

I love Creston for the snow to play in, the lake to swim in, the creeks to fish in and the river to float in.

I love Creston for the huge old trees, the plentiful, beautiful dandelions, chickweed, burdock and red clover (just to name a few of my favourite things – herbs).

I love Creston for the people I have met, and for walking down main street in your cowboy boots after riding your horse or cleaning your barn.

I love Creston for the grain elevators, being able to drive up and buy old-fashioned chicken or horse feed from a local farmer, and the smell of freshly made feed. (Yes, the Prairie girl in me appreciates this the most.)

I love Creston for the new pool, and especially the steam room and red walls.

I love Creston for the mountains, the back-country roads and the "suburbs": Wynndel, Canyon, Lister, West Creston, Lakeview/Arrowcreek, Kitchener and Erickson, and all of the uniqueness each community brings to the Creston Valley.

I think I have run out of space, and I know I missed many more people, places and things to love in Creston, so I would love to hear what you love about Creston.

If you want to continue the good feeling of love and gratitude, join in and post your comments about how you love Creston on my blog: <http://annetteshealthaction.com/blog>.

Let's keep the momentum going. Most of all, I love Creston for my perception of what is a small town with a really big heart. ■

Annette Agabob has been serving the Creston Valley as an iridologist, chartered herbalist and whole food nutritionist since 1997. For information on Annette's Health Action or products phone 250-866-5737, e-mail info@annetteshealthaction.com or visit www.annetteshealthaction.com.

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**For First Time
Home Buyers**

Story by: Candace Woodall, sales representative

Century 21, Veitch Realty

I have dealt with a lot of first-time home buyers since I started working. I have learned that there are important topics and aspects of the buying experience that home buyers need to be aware of and understand.

I have taken the time to briefly explain some of these topics to people who are thinking of buying their first home. My goal is to have you ask yourself questions, be completely honest with yourself, have a game plan and be prepared for this exciting purchase. Your Realtor can provide you with more detailed information on some of the topics below.

How Much Can You Afford?

The first step when looking into the process of buying your first home is deciding how much you can afford. We all know what we want but the question is, can we honestly afford exactly what we want or do we have to start somewhere lower in order to one day get exactly what we want?

Think about your utility bills, your groceries, your fun money, personal payments for cars, utility vehicles, credit cards, etc. Now add your mortgage payment and property tax into that. Depending on your neighbourhood, property tax differs greatly and can make a huge difference in your monthly payment. Subtract all of that from your monthly income. What do you have left?

Be completely honest with yourself when deciding how much you can afford a month for a mortgage payment. You don't want to strap yourself down with such a high mortgage that you can't afford to do anything fun. It causes stress and, in reality, stress isn't good for any of us.

Where and What Neighbourhood?

If you are relocating, decide what town. Do the research. What does the town have to offer? What are the housing prices like? Decide what neighbourhood. Prices differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. If you are relocating to the city you want to be thorough in researching areas such as crime rate and schools. Maybe you have a certain subdivision you would prefer to live in. Can you afford to live in that subdivision? What are your interests? Do you like rural areas? Do you want to live where there are lots of people and more traffic, or do you want your privacy with less traffic? How far do you want to live from town? You need to ask yourself these questions when deciding where you would like to buy your first home.

Sometimes where you would like to live is not affordable at this time, but have it be a goal. One day you will get there. Decide where is a good place to start, where you can make a little money in order to be able to move up. Many first-time home buyers start with something they can renovate and sell later to make a profit. Some find what they want right away and end up renovating it to their taste. Everyone is different, everyone has different goals and everyone starts somewhere different.

What Kind of Property?

Decide what you want to purchase – a condo, residential house, acreage, small lot, or do you want to build? How big? How many bedrooms and bathrooms? Is privacy important? What about a view? There is so much to choose from when deciding what kind of place you want to buy. Some people are specific with what they

want. Others know they want a three-bedroom, two-bathroom home, and during the process of looking they find more things that are important to them. To have an idea of what you want helps us narrow down the houses in your area, price range and type much easier than going through hundreds of listings.

Making an Offer, Negotiating, Accepting an Offer and Removing Conditions

When you have decided all the above and you find the place you would like to purchase, you start by making an offer with your Realtor, who then takes it to the selling Realtor. Chances are they will come back with a counter-offer. Your Realtor has the job of handling the negotiating process and presenting your offer in the best possible way. It is our job to explain the process to you, keep you completely involved and make sure you understand everything that is happening.

We are good at negotiating because our emotions don't get in the way. We know what to do and how to do it. Remember, we work for you. When and if we have an accepted offer on the place you would like to purchase, we then insert into the contract any conditions we feel are necessary to protect our buyers. When these conditions are satisfied we remove them. All subjects must be removed by the subject removal date for the contract to be binding for both parties, although in some cases an extension on one or more of the clauses can be done so as to have a longer period to remove the condition. This sometimes happens with financing, when the bank needs something the buyers cannot find. This brings me to my next topic, being prepared.

Be Prepared With the Necessary Paperwork

What I mean by this is make sure you have all the necessary information for your bank. It makes the condition

removal process go much faster if we are not all waiting on documents. Every financial institution might want different types of documents. Here are some basic documents they might want: pay stubs; income tax; NOA; and, letter of employment. For buyers who are self-employed, financial institutions sometimes want the last three years of financial information. For you to be 100-per-cent sure what you will need, talk to your financial institution. Ultimately the best way to be prepared is to get pre-approved by your financial institution.

"There are many outside costs to buying a home"

Borrowing Money

You need to decide how you will be borrowing the money. Will you go through your bank, use a mortgage broker or do you have a private lender backing you? The difference between a bank and a mortgage broker is a bank deals with one lending institution to give you the best rate, while the mortgage broker deals with many lending institutions to get you the best rate. Do you have your down payment? I believe right now it is five per cent down, and there is a new program with a no-down-payment option. You would have to talk to your financial institution for more details.

Outside Costs

There are many outside costs (closing costs) to buying a home, other than your actual purchase cost. Not all of these costs are applicable to everyone. Here is a list of the ones I know of: down payment; deposit; inspection fees; appraisal fees; surveying; title insurance; provincial property tax; fire/liability insurance; HST; sales tax; and, lawyer or notary fees and expenses. I recently had a situation where buyers had to de-register the mobile they purchased, and that was an unexpected cost. Make sure you are prepared to pay the extra expenses.

Possession/Completion/Adjustment Dates

The completion date is when the sale is a done deal and the title has been transferred. The possession date is when the sellers have to be out of the home so the buyers can take possession and move in. The adjustment date is when the utilities and any taxes, etc., are transferred and the buyer is responsible for them as of that date. When your Realtor and their office receive confirmation that the title has been transferred you are given the keys to your new home.

Talk to your Realtor. We are hired by you to assist with your buying needs. We are here to answer all of your questions pertaining to your transaction. Buying a home is one of the most important purchases a person will ever make. That is why our job is so important. Our job is to make this transaction go as smoothly as possible. ■

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Location: CDCC

Contact: Vern Ronmark

Phone: 250-428-9183

Email: vern428@telus.net

March 4

World Day of Prayer

David Falconer will do a presentation on Chile at this time. Refreshments will be served after the service.

Location: Redeemer Lutheran Church
3pm

Contact: Betty Marzke

Phone: 250-428-7984

Email: nphillips@kootenaywireless.com

March 7, 14 & 21

Collage: Playtime for Adults!

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Location: Painted Turtle Gallery

Contact: Win Dinn

Phone: 250-428-5141

Email: windinn@shaw.ca

www.ptgallery.ca

March 11

Creston's Best Singer Big Show!!

20 singers compete for the title of title of Creston's Best Singer.

Location: PCSS Auditorium

Contact: Vern Gorham

Phone: 250-428-0305

Email: verngorham@telus.net

www.kootenaysbestsinger.com

March 12

Open Performance Poetry Slam

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Contact: Linda Steward

Phone: 250-428-2664

March 15

Flights of Imagination with Dick Cannings

Dick Cannings, one of Canada's most renowned naturalists, will be giving a presentation and promote his latest book "Flights of Imagination".

Location: Rotacrest Hall

7pm

Contact: Tanna Patterson

Phone: 250-428-5246

Email: ecobaseball@shaw.ca

March 17

"The Stolen Sweets"

Presented by Creston Concert.

Location: PCSS Auditorium

7:30pm

Contact: Black Bear Books

Phone: 250 428-2711

Email: info@crestonconcertsociety.ca

www.crestonconcertsociety.ca

March 18 to 20

Agri-tourism / Value-Added Conference

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Location: College of the Rockies

Contact: College of the Rockies

Phone: 250-428-5332 ext 4102

Email: kdouville@cotr.bc.ca

www.cotr.bc.ca/creston

March 19 & 26

Beginner Mosaics

This class introduces you to the colourful, creative art form of mosaics!

Location: Painted Turtle Gallery

9am to noon

Contact: Win Dinn

Phone: 250-428-5141

Email: windinn@shaw.ca

www.ptgallery.ca

March 19 & 26

Intermediate Mosaics

This class will help you hone the skills you learned in the beginner class.

Location: Painted Turtle Gallery

1:30 to 4:30pm

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Phone: 250-428-5141

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Phone: 250-428-5141

Email: windinn@shaw.ca

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MASSEY FERGUSON®

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**SPECIAL WITH
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\$19,249.00**
Reg. list \$ 22,979.00
While quantities last



MASSEY FERGUSON®

This 25hp diesel powered unit will make short work of all those renovating, landscaping, backyard needs, like building a retaining wall, installing drainage, planting trees, removing stumps or digging a small landscape pond. Quick disconnect the loader/backhoe and add a mower to mow your lawn or pasture.

GC2610TLB, 25hp diesel powered unit- Features

- 25hp 3cyl diesel • 2 range hydrostatic transmission • power steering • independent mid & rear pto • 4WD • DL100 front end loader 678lb cap. • CB05 curved boom backhoe 6'6" digging depth.



0%
Financing
72 Months*
in lieu of cash discount

**SPECIAL WITH
CASH DISCOUNT**
\$28,599.00**
Reg. list \$ 34,020.00
While quantities last



MASSEY FERGUSON®

47HP tractor that will get the job done and still be easy on the pocket.

MF 1648 equipped with:

- 4cyl diesel • 4wd, 8x8 Synchro shuttle transmission • quick attach DL130 loader w/ skidsteer type Q/A 72" bucket (2527lb lift cap.) • 3483lb lift cap. three point hitch w/ telescopic ends for easy implement connect • 38hp 540rpm independent pto • ballasted tires • block heater



0%
Financing
72 Months*
in lieu of cash discount

**SPECIAL WITH
CASH DISCOUNT**
\$18,599.00**
Reg. list \$ 24,703.00
While quantities last



MASSEY FERGUSON®

MF 1500 series tractor equipped with 3 range hydrostatic transmission that offers ease of operation in applications that require frequent forward and reverse direction changes and speed variations. 2 pedal design allows for uncluttered platform deck, and standard cruise control & auto throttle advance makes things so much easier to use.

MF1528HL equipped with:

- 28.4 hp diesel • 3 range hydrostatic trans. • quick attach MF L90 loader w/ 60" bucket (1020lb lift cap.) • 2425lb lift cap. 3point hitch • 22.5hp live 540 pto and live 2000 rpm mid pto for optional mower or front implement operation • industrial tire pkg.

** Cash price includes all discounts in lieu of financing offer.
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