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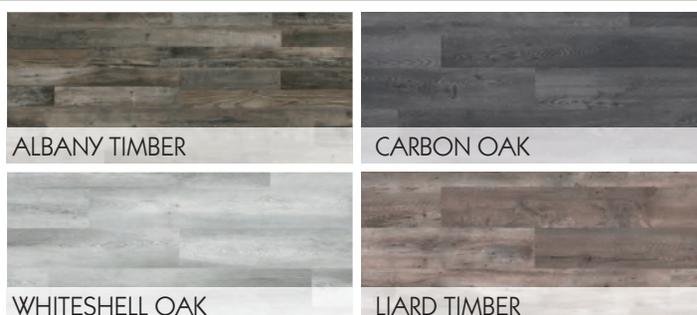
Olive Sielski, pictured with Santa in 2019, will be celebrating her 90th birthday in a few weeks. See story on pg. 4.

EXPRESS PHOTO BY CAROL SIELSKI

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Local woman advocating for addiction awareness

By Evan Matthews

A Komarno woman said losing her brother to a disease most people will not often talk about isn't an acceptable reality, and she's working to change it.

Jody Lee Wasserman lost her brother, Josh Zeller, 21 months ago to his battle with addiction. Even now, she said it's still a daily struggle for her filled with sadness and anger.

"My brother died on a waitlist. They told him they knew he was struggling with addiction and could not quit on his own," said Wasserman.

"But I refuse to let his death go unnoticed. I refuse to let his life not matter. I refuse to let others in his same situation have to go through the same (thing) and lose the struggle, too."

Josh's story

Zeller's struggle with addiction isn't as synonymous with hard times and a lack of will power, Wasserman said, as is often believed.

While she acknowledged mental health issues were a factor, Josh's struggle with the addiction began after he had been diagnosed with a physical medical condition.

"He injured his back, and he was given a prescription for painkillers.

From there, it just snowballed because, in my opinion, he had a horrible doctor who continuously prescribed him the medication for years," said Wasserman, emphasizing the starting point for Josh's 10-year battle.

"There may have been some things in his life that made it easy to continue taking that prescription. It makes you numb and makes it easy to forget about things."

In the last year of his life, Zeller had found a doctor he liked and who had diagnosed him with a couple mental health disorders, Wasserman said. Whether the mental health disorders were always there or a result of his battle with addiction, or both, she's unsure.

"But the back injury was the turning point. That's when it became a problem," she said.

Toward the end of Josh's life, but also at various other points, Wasserman said her brother wanted to and was working on getting clean, desperately.

In his final attempt to seek out rehabilitation, he ended up on a waitlist, something Wasserman said was not uncommon in her brother's attempts to seek help. He was told he'd have to wait six weeks before receiving any treatment.

Reading between the lines, Wasserman said it was clear the health-care system knew Zeller would continue to use in the meantime.

He died of an overdose four days after being put on the waitlist.

"It's a frustrating system to navigate. Even a week prior to his death he was admitted to an emergency room for an overdose and discharged with no (plan or help)," said Wasserman.

"We all tried to get him the care he needed. It wasn't easy. Ever since then, I try to talk about addiction as much as I can so that people don't feel scared to ask for help."

"LET'S STOP TRYING TO PULL PEOPLE OUT OF THE RIVER AND HEAD UPSTREAM TO FIND OUT THEY ARE FALLING IN."



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

Jody Lee Wasserman of Komarno holds a portrait of her late brother, Josh Zeller. In each of the 21 months since his passing, Wasserman said she advocates in her brother's memory.

"People judge addicts so often; they think it's a choice. The more people we can have speaking and being honest about their own journeys, the sooner we can save lives," she said.

National Addictions Awareness Week

From Nov. 22 through 28, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction ran National Addictions Awareness Week. The 2020 theme was "Change Begins with Me!"

In her own situation, Wasserman said she identifies with the theme.

"Change begins with me because I will not stop talking about Josh. I will not stop talking about what a great

brother he was. I will not stop talking about how he was so much more than his disease," said Wasserman.

"I will not stop talking about how the health-care system failed him. I will not stop talking about how his life mattered. I will not stop talking about how he deserved better."

"I will not stop talking," she said.

In talking about addiction comes education, Wasserman said, and the sooner young people are educated regarding mental health and addiction, the sooner they have the ability to get help if they need it themselves.

Stigma, fear and shame are main reasons why people do not ask for help, according to Wasserman. She added that stigma in combination with a prominent drug crisis and a failing health-care system is a perfect storm in regards to losing loved ones.

"Let's stop trying to pull people out of the river and head upstream to find out they are falling in," said Wasserman.

"Talk about mental health and substance use disorder. You never know who is listening and who might need that support and ask for help. ... We can end the stigma surrounding it."

People can find social media posts relating to National Addictions Awareness Week by searching the hashtags #ChangeBeginsWithMe and #NationalAddictionsAwarenessWeek.

Arborg & District Christmas Cheer Board

Once again the Arborg & District Christmas Cheer Board is preparing Christmas hampers. To request a Christmas hamper, please contact Sue at 204-641-1217. The deadline for requests is Monday, December 14th and the Christmas hampers will be available for pick up or delivery on Monday, December 21st.

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Interlake-Eastern RHA declares COVID outbreak at Lakeshore General Hospital

By Patricia Barrett with files from Lana Meier

With public safety in mind, the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority declared a COVID-19 outbreak at the Lakeshore General Hospital in Ashern.

The IERHA's medical officer of health declared the outbreak on Friday, Nov. 27 in a COVID-19 update that was shared with municipal leaders and media and posted the following morning on the health authority's website.

The IERHA's notification of the outbreak came three days before provincial public health alerted the general public on Monday afternoon. The outbreak is not listed on the provincial government's alert webpage, Possible Public Exposures to COVID-19, for the Interlake-Eastern region as of late Monday afternoon.

IERHA spokesperson Lauralou Cicierski said Monday afternoon the health authority is unable to obtain the numbers of infected people and identify whether patients, staff or both were infected because of data delays, but the information should be available this week.

Patients requiring admission to the hospital, a 14-bed acute care facility, are being sent to other facilities such as the Eriksdale hospital, and patients are being discharged "as their conditions warrant," she said.

But Lakeshore's emergency department is open.

"The emergency department remains open and if people need admittance, they are being transported to other facilities," said Cicierski.

When asked about the three-day delay in provincial reporting, a health

department spokesperson said late Monday afternoon that the "public declaration of an outbreak in the media bulletin and online may take time depending on notification timelines. However, the site, patients and family members would be notified by the site as soon as possible, and measures would quickly be put in place to protect the residents."

As to the number of people infected at Lakeshore, another health department spokesperson said that information will take a few days to obtain because of the time it takes to complete and verify data entry.

According to the IERHA's Nov. 27 update, screeners at the hospital's entrance won't be allowing entry to anyone unless they require care.

In addition to the ER, the primary care clinic is open, but it asks that patients call 204-768-3821 before arriving.

"Most appointments are being conducted over the phone or virtually but if the doctor deems it appropriate, you will be seen in person," states the update.

As of Monday, the Ashern-Eriksdale health district had 68 positive cases of COVID, 27 recovered and six deaths. Positive case counts have dropped since Nov. 23 when 79 positive cases were reported, along with 14 recovered and four deaths.

The IERHA as whole has had 1,123 people infected by the virus and 15 deaths. The region has logged double-digit new positive cases for nearly the entire month of November.

As of Monday, 312 Manitobans have died from the deadly virus and 16,825 have been infected. The number of people in hospital is 342 with 43 pa-



EXPRESS PHOTO BY LANA MEIER

The IERHA's medical officer of health declared a COVID-19 outbreak at the Lakeshore General Hospital in Ashern on Friday, Nov. 27.

tients requiring treatment in intensive care.

Although killing mostly older Manitobans who lived in personal care homes, the virus has also killed a boy under the age of 10 and people in their 30s and 40s.

The province is still designated code red (critical) under the provincial pandemic response system. The community spread of COVID is uncontained and the health-care system is labouring under significant stress.

Lakeshore General's supply of personal protective equipment is "adequate," states the IERHA's update, but the health authority is monitoring it. Also being monitored is staffing, which "remains appropriate for the level of patient care required" at this time.

The health authority is taking care to prevent the spread of the disease by offering telephone or virtual consulta-

tions, but dialysis and diagnostic services are still available at the hospital.

Telehealth appointments in the hospital, however, are being rescheduled or moved to Eriksdale if possible.

Although the Ashern Personal Care Home is not currently experiencing a COVID outbreak (as of Monday), residents are being regularly monitored for signs of respiratory illness and visiting has been restricted, states the update.

COVID testing in Eriksdale continues to be offered. Even if people are experiencing mild symptoms, they're encouraged to get tested. No appointment is needed.

The testing site in Eriksdale is located at the Wellness Centre, 35 Railway Ave. The site is open Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (closed from noon to 12:30 p.m.).

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They hooked up at the Foley Post Office; Gimli resident prepares to celebrate 90 years of memories

By Patricia Barrett

A Gimli resident will be celebrating her 90th birthday in a few weeks and is sharing some cherished memories of her days in the Foley and Winnipeg Beach areas where she used to live.

As Olive Sielski prepares to mark her birthday on Dec. 16 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, her daughter Carol Sielski spoke with the *Express* on her behalf.

Carol and her three siblings (Bev, Shirley and Bruce) had a big celebration mapped out, with a lunch menu and a venue already scoped out, but had to postpone it because of COVID, said Carol. But they'll be celebrating her mom's long life either from afar (for the siblings who live out of province) or from over six feet across the room with hand sanitizer and a mask.

"I'm going to go out on her birthday and spend the day with her," said Carol. "I know phone calls and birthday cards will be appreciated. It will be nice to have that special memory of turning 90."

Carol said her mom is hardy, enjoying independent living at her apartment in Gimli's Vesturland neighbourhood, where she's lived for 20 years.

Olive was born in 1930 on a farm in Foley, a community in the municipality of Gimli. Foley runs along Road 104N, about two and a half miles west of Highway 8. What remains of the community today are farms, a commemorative plaque to the Foley School District, a cemetery and a Ukrainian Catholic church.

It may have seemed simpler back then than it is today, but there was a lot of physical effort and good old-fashioned hard work required to get on in life, said Carol.

Olive went to Foley School, which existed from 1901 to 1967 before it became part of the Evergreen School Division. There were no school buses in those days. It was Shanks's Pony for the kids. For Olive, that meant an almost three-mile walk to school every morning and another three back.

After school there were chores. Even though Olive was the youngest of three girls, she still had to pitch in on the farm. And after her sisters Mary

and Rose moved to Winnipeg, Olive took over their chores.

"She would have to go grab a goose and kill it because that would be supper," said Carol. "That's what you had to do. You just learned how to kill and prepare birds."

When Olive finished school, she got an idyllic-sounding summer job at the Lakeside Café in Winnipeg Beach. Because the resort community was a considerable distance from Foley with no transportation available, Olive was billeted by the café with other young women workers.

"Mom said she would walk to Winnipeg Beach, which was about nine miles from Foley. She and the other girls who worked at the Lakeside Café actually slept upstairs above the restaurant," said Carol. "They had no running water. They had to peel the potatoes for French fries, take out the slop-pails and get water. I think there were five or six of them. They made \$5 a week."

Five dollars a week was a pittance, and Olive's regular day off was a misnomer because she had to walk nine miles back to the farm, do chores, then walk another nine back to Winnipeg Beach that same day in order to be ready for her shift bright and early the next morning, said Carol.

"It tells me something about my mom's character and the work ethic she was raised with. In those days you worked. There was no lollygagging. They didn't have TV and probably didn't have a radio. I saw that work ethic very early on in my life," said Carol.

Not only did Olive have a good work ethic, but she was also — and still is — "super organized." And she doesn't practise the fine art of procrastination.

"I remember as a kid I'd like to wake up slowly, have breakfast then go make my bed," said Carol. "Well, before I could turn around, my mom would have my bed made. She's still like that. When I go there for lunch, she'll get the dishes done right away. And everything has a place in her apartment; she knows what's in every drawer. Her mind is so sharp."

Details of that long-ago fateful day when her parents "hooked up" at the



PHOTO OF FOLEY SCHOOL BY H. D. CUMMING, ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA
Olive Sielski grew up on a farm in Foley in the RM of Gimli and attended Foley School (pictured here).

Foley Post Office are a little fuzzy, but Carol likes to think it was a "Hallmark kind of moment."

Maybe her dad had been leaning against the counter, chatting amiably to the clerk about soil conditions when the bell above the door tinkled and in walked her mom, the woman destined to become the love of his life, bringing with her the scent of freshly mown hay and wildflowers. Maybe their eyes locked over the letter she was about to post.

After they got married, Carol's parents moved to Winnipeg and lived in a rented room in the North End from 1948 to 1949. City life was seemingly no more convenient than rural life as they had to share a bathroom with other tenants in the building. But at least they had streetcars to get around town.

"My dad was 12 years older than Mom when they hooked up, and they ended up moving to Winnipeg. They lived above a storefront at the corner of Selkirk and Arlington. The building is still there today," said Carol. "My oldest sister was born in Winnipeg and my mom had a couple of different jobs. Then they came back to the Interlake, moving to Winnipeg Beach."

They rounded out their family with three more kids. Carol's second sister just happened to be born (in Gimli) on the same day on which her eldest sister was born. Carol and her brother were born at the Gimli hospital.

Her parents' social life in the beach was robust, with a network of friends

and relatives they could get together with and share experiences, hold celebrations and support each other through trying times.

"My mom and dad had a really healthy social network of friends. My mom would get together with her gal pals in Winnipeg Beach and they'd have a chicken-killing party," said Carol. "They would go to my aunt Rose's, kill a number of chickens, pluck them and prepare them. It was very community-oriented and everyone laughed and had a good time. That kind of foundation is very important in life."

If not for COVID for much of this year, Olive would be spending time with friends and family. Nevertheless, she has a "network of buddies on the telephone" and is "always in the know."

She also has a lot of interests, such as reading, completing word search puzzles and watching TV shows such as *Wheel of Fortune* and the *Price is Right*, said Carol. She's likes to celebrate her Ukrainian heritage.

"Mom loves listening to Ukrainian music, especially at Christmas," she said.

Olive also keeps up with world and local news so that she knows what's going on, and keeps tabs on the news from B.C. where two of her daughters live.

"I'm very blessed that my mom is living in her own place and she's healthy physically, emotionally and mentally," said Carol. "She's still sharp as a tack. She's very cool."

>40% Humidity drops Covids?

"If the relative humidity of indoor air is below 40%, the particles emitted by infected people absorb less water, remain lighter, fly further through the room and are more likely to be inhaled by healthy people. Dry air also makes the mucous membranes in our noses dry and more permeable to viruses."

<https://aaqr.org/>

COVID-19 contagion lower in world's humid areas. So, I wrote Health Ministers/Officers: "Via licensing, require all public places be > 50% RH. Suggest water on low simmer to humidify until condensation on windows, and isolate forced air heat to basements to reduce aerosols circulation in homes."

Discussion: www.GrantRigby.ca

Peguis RCMP respond to fatal collision

Staff

Peguis RCMP responded to a call of a single-vehicle collision on West Road in Peguis First Nation on Nov. 24 at approximately 2:20 p.m.

Initial investigation shows the male driver was travelling southbound when he attempted to move to the side to make room for a vehicle com-

ing the opposite direction.

The driver lost control of the vehicle, which went into the ditch and hit a driveway approach. A 33-year-old female passenger from Fisher River Cree Nation was ejected from the vehicle and was pronounced deceased on scene.

A 33-year-old male passenger from

Peguis First Nation received minor injuries.

The 32-year-old driver from Gods Lake Narrows is charged with impaired driving causing death. He received minor injuries.

The investigation continues with the assistance of a RCMP forensic collision reconstructionist.

COVID-19 outbreak declared at Lakeshore General Hospital

Staff

Public health officials advise 11 additional deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported on Nov. 30 including:

- a male in his 30s from the Winnipeg health region;
- a female in her 40s from the Winnipeg health region;
- a female in her 70s from the Winnipeg health region, linked to the outbreak at Health Science Centre unit GA3;
- a female in her 80s from the Prairie Mountain Health region, linked to the outbreak at Fairview Personal Care Home;
- a male in his 80s from the Prairie Mountain Health region, linked to the outbreak at Fairview Personal Care Home;
- a male in his 80s from the Southern Health-Santé Sud region, linked to the outbreak at Villa Youville Personal Care Home;
- a male in his 80s from the Winnipeg health region, linked to the outbreak at Charleswood Care Centre;
- a male in his 80s from the Winnipeg health region, linked to the outbreak at Golden Links Lodge;
- a female in her 90s from the Winnipeg health region, linked to the outbreak at St. Norbert Personal Care Home;
- a female in her 90s from the Winnipeg health region; and
- a male in his 90s from the Southern Health-Santé Sud region, linked to the outbreak at the Bridgepark Manor assisted living facility.

The five-day COVID-19 test positivity rate, as of Monday, is 13.4 per cent provincially and 13.7 per cent in Winnipeg. As of 9:30 a.m. Monday, 343 new cases of the virus have been identified. However, one case was removed due to a data correction making the total 342 and the total number of lab-confirmed cases in Manitoba to 16,825.

Monday's COVID-19 data shows:

- 23 cases in the Interlake-Eastern health region;
- 46 cases in the Northern health region;
- 14 cases in the Prairie Mountain Health region;
- 53 cases in the Southern Health-Santé Sud health region; and
- 207 cases in the Winnipeg health region.

The data also shows:

- 9,260 active cases and 7,253 individuals who have recovered from COVID-19;
- there are 342 people in hospital with 43 people in intensive care due to COVID-19; and
- the number of deaths due to COVID-19 is 312.

Laboratory testing numbers show 2,611 tests were completed yesterday, bringing the total number of lab tests completed since early February to 355,081. Case investigations continue and if a public health risk is identified, the public will be notified.

The Interlake-Eastern total case breakdown by district as of Monday, is as follows: A total of 1,123 cases, up

by 154 from last Monday: 536 active cases, 572 recovered, 28 currently in the hospital with five of those in ICU and 15 deaths.

Arborg/Riverton 15 active cases, 29 recovered; Beausejour 17 active cases, 21 recovered; Eriksdale/Ashern 68 active cases, 27 recovered and 6 deaths; Fisher/Peguis 96 active cases and 174 recovered, 2 deaths; Gimli 13 active cases, 4 recovered; Northern Remote 55 active cases, 46 recovered and 1 death; Pinawa/Lac du Bonnet 17 active cases, 14 recovered; Powerview/Pine Falls 15 active case and 13 recovered; Selkirk 32 active cases and 17 recovered and 1 death; Springfield 47 active cases and 53 recovered and 1 death; St. Clements 20 active cases and 21 recovered; St. Laurent 3 active cases and 7 recovered; Stonewall/Teulon 45 active cases, 67 recovered and 3 deaths; Unknown District 38 active cases and 34 recovered; Whiteshell 8 active cases, 2 recovered and Winnipeg Beach/St. Andrews 47 active cases and 46 recovered and 1 death.

Public health officials advise COVID-19 outbreaks have been declared at the Lakeshore General Hospital in Ashern and West Park Manor Personal Care Home in Winnipeg. The sites have been moved to Critical (red) on the #RestartMB Pandemic Response System.

The outbreaks declared at Women's Correctional Centre in Headingley and the Keeyask Generating Station near Thompson have been declared over.

Possible exposure locations are listed online by region at the province's #RestartMB Pandemic Response System webpage. For up-to-date information on possible public exposures to COVID-19 in regions, visit www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/updates/flights.html#event and click on your region.

The chief provincial public health officer urges Manitobans to only leave their homes for essential purposes. When leaving the house to obtain essentials, be sure to physically distance, wear a mask in indoor public places and avoid crowded spaces. Do not leave the home if you are sick, or when any member of your family is sick. Further, do not socialize with anyone from outside your household.

Public health officials are also advising that if anyone has symptoms of COVID-19 or has a household member with symptoms, the entire household needs to self-isolate pending COVID-19 test results. For information on self-isolation, visit <https://manitoba.ca/covid19/fundamentals/self-isolation.html>.

The online assessment tool can be found at <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/> and COVID-19 symptoms can be found at <https://manitoba.ca/covid19/fundamentals/symptoms.html>.

For up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Manitoba, visit www.manitoba.ca/COVID19.

Gimli RCMP with assistance from police service dog Earl, find injured driver

Submitted by RCMP

Gimli RCMP responded to a two-vehicle collision on Highway 7, just north of Provincial Road 231, in the RM of Armstrong on Nov. 22 at approximately 9:25 p.m.



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

RCMP officers along with police services dog Earl located a male, who was semi-conscious and badly injured after he fled on foot following a car accident on Hwy. 7, north of Provincial Road 231 on Nov. 22.

A vehicle going north, crossed the centre line and side-swiped a southbound vehicle on Highway 7. Both vehicles went into the ditch. The driver of the northbound vehicle, who appeared to be injured, then left the scene on foot.

RCMP officers along with police services dog Earl responded. Earl and his handler tracked through open fields and wooded areas for approximately one kilometre until they located the male, who was semi-conscious and badly injured.

The RM of Armstrong Fire Department assisted by transporting the male via an all terrain vehicle to awaiting emergency medical personnel.

The injured male, a 22-year-old male from Winnipeg, was taken to hospital with serious injuries.

The other driver, a 25-year-old male from Winnipeg, was not injured.

Gimli RCMP continue to investigate.

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COVID creates challenges for Cupid, too

By Evan Matthews

Though still some time away, we're almost a year into the global pandemic; a full nine months.

Media conversations have centred around numbers, spread, outbreaks, masks, other preventative measures and economic impacts. The conversation has largely been about the economic impacts, as well as the epidemiological and scientific perspectives.

Just now, as we've recently arrived in our country's second full lockdown, are we starting to discuss things like the long-term mental health and wellness impacts of this pandemic.

This could be in large part due to the lack of understanding early on. In the first half year of an unprecedented situation, how was anyone to know what these social impacts could be?

More reports are beginning to surface of our senior citizens struggling in places like personal care homes. With limited or prohibited visitation, some of these people are completely alone, minus the care homes' staff.

This column won't go down the rabbit hole of how and why so many of our health-care facilities are severely understaffed and under resourced. The provincial government's handling of its portfolios has been well documented.

But one conversation — and one demographic — seemingly falling through the cracks in this discussion is young people who are getting set to start a life of their own.

There are obvious challenges facing

recent high school graduates, challenges never experienced by another generation.

Just a year ago, many would have registered for post-secondary and started the most challenging and rewarding journey of their lives; for others, a plethora of jobs were at their fingertips.

But many post-secondary classes are now online and lack the in-person connection and hands-on learning techniques so many have become accustomed to. In our current economic climate, gone are the readily available labouring or "blue collar" jobs, for now.

But forgetting about the "next step" in one's professional life, there are also many young people getting serious about searching for that special someone; the person they want to start and share a life with.

But put yourself in the shoes of a 20-year-old single person looking for a mate.

You meet someone you find attractive and have chemistry with, and you want to take them out and get to know them.

Should you go for a walk? Maybe out for a drink? Perhaps to a movie? Nope, nope and nope, unless you meet outdoors for the walk. You'd be in violation of the public health orders, of course, if you met indoors or picked her up.

Well, maybe you can get creative and load up the car with food for a picnic and equipment to go cross-country

skiing, self-distancing. But don't get pulled over because you don't live in the same household. You would have to meet them at a predetermined destination.

Is anyone aware of a young person who can afford the \$1,296 penalty?

Factor in online dating and often now two single people will meet and hit it off online but have their relationship fizzle due to the inability to meet.

It's hard to meet someone right now..

As the messaging has remained consistent for the better part of nine months, we all have to do our part. We all have a role to play. But the challenges we're facing as a society are not simply economic and epidemiological.

As our society continues to change with this pandemic, our society should also be cognizant of the social and mental health challenges people from all age ranges and demographics are soon to be experiencing, if not already.

This pandemic is creating challenges for everyone; to only acknowledge certain economic and epidemiological issues is to dismiss the challenges others face on a day-to-day basis.

Last week, this column discussed empathy and compassion, so a fitting conclusion to this week's column would be a gentle reminder, once again, that every person in every demographic is in need of kindness and compassion right now.

> Got something you want to get off your chest? How about an act of kindness to share?

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Province to top-off caregivers' wages with new subsidy

By Lorne Stelmach

Caregivers in care homes and other critical settings are getting bonus pay from the province over the holiday season.

The payments coming through the new \$35-million caregiver wage support program will benefit thousands of front-line workers who provide direct care and help protect vulnerable Manitobans in personal care homes, shelters, child welfare and other sectors.

Health, Seniors and Active Living Minister and Morden-Winkler MLA Cameron Friesen said the payments are recognition of the vital roles of these workers and the additional

stress and burdens they are facing as a result of the pandemic.

"The pandemic creates challenges for all Manitobans, and those are very real challenges that everyone is grappling with," he said last week. "It's an impact that is very real for front-line workers who are providing care."

Friesen said this program is aimed "to address those support workers who are making more modest amounts and would provide an additional support for them."

"We're depending on them to provide care for Manitobans. ... We're relying heavily on our front-line workers."

Eligible employees will receive an

hourly \$5 top-up to their wages based on the number of hours worked between Nov. 1, 2020, and Jan. 10, 2021. To qualify, workers must earn a regular wage of \$25 per hour or less.

Two intake periods will close Dec. 14, 2020, and Jan. 18, 2021, and the program benefit will be paid directly to workers by the province in the week after each intake period closes.

It was estimated the program will be available to more than 20,000 Manitobans currently working full-time or part-time. Recipients will include health-care aides, housekeeping staff, direct service workers and recreation workers who provide direct care at personal care homes or in disability

services, child welfare services, homeless and family violence prevention shelters or long-term care.

"It is designed in order to support those workers in a way that does not interfere with other targeted programs," Friesen said, noting they need to be actively working. If, for example, someone needs to be off work to isolate, there are other support programs in place for such an instance. "Those individuals are being compensated if they are home due to COVID-19."

The province has partnered with the federal government in cost-sharing the program, with the Government of Canada providing \$17 million while Manitoba is contributing \$18 million.

letter to the editor

Letters to the Editor:
letters@expressweeklynews.ca

COVID lockdown was useless and destructive

Dear Editor,

To date the Canadian government has spent about \$300 billion to pay for the lockdown. The provincial governments have added their own \$100 billion to the fray. With tight lockdowns all over Canada, these astronomical numbers will continue to rise.

As we have repeatedly been told, lockdowns were implemented solely on the premise that our hospitals would be swamped otherwise. Let us examine this claim.

The cost to build a 120-bed general hospital, complete with an ER is about \$210 million (<https://www.fixr.com/costs/build-hospital>).

If instead of closing businesses and paying people to sit at home, we had used half of this \$400 billion to build hospitals, we could have built 952 new hospitals. That equates to 17 new hospitals in every city with a population more than 100k. And it would have provided Canada with an extra 114,240 hospital beds.

If we had used the remaining \$200 billion to pay for the cleaning staff, secretaries, nurses and doctors needed to work in these new hospitals, we could have hired two million people and paid them an average income of \$100,000 per year. Two million people working in 952 hospitals means there would be 2,100 staff per hospital. Assuming a 40-hour work week, that would be 4.2 hospital staff on duty 24/7 for every new bed.

We could have started this mas-

sive project back in February and finished most of the hospitals by now. Likewise, we could have used the summer to train most of the new staff that would be needed to work the hospitals.

Had we done this, unemployment would have been zero, the economy would have been booming, and people would feel great for having done something useful for the cause. As a bonus, we would have 952 extra hospitals for any future emergency.

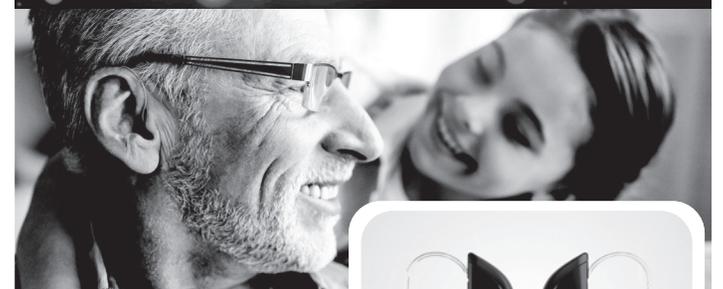
All of this, of course, would have been massive overkill. Most, if not all, of the two million staff would have stood idle, waiting for the flood of patients. Notwithstanding the fact that previous to 2020 our hospitals were already nearly swamped, how many hospitals in Canada have actually been swamped by COVID patients? Furthermore, if the governments had been as concerned about swamped hospitals as they claim, why didn't they take steps to transform our hockey rinks and community centres into hospitals? And why weren't they offering and promoting crash courses all summer for would-be medical assistants? After all, it is no secret that the average Canadian was fully expecting a second COVID wave this fall. There is a strange and condemning silence here. It forces one to ask: Is the government really that worried about hospitals being swamped?

So instead of building new hospitals and paying good salaries to people, or instead of turning community cen-

tres into overflow hospitals, we locked down our country, incurred a \$400-billion debt, and gained nothing. Actually, we lost much. The economy has tanked. Depression and stress and poverty and suicide and drugs and abuse have skyrocketed. Worst of all, we have accomplished absolutely nothing in the fight against COVID, as the daily numbers testify. Lockdown is a useless and destructive option. It should never have been tried. It should now be abandoned immediately.

- Thomas Verduyn
Roland

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THE EXPRESS
WEEKLY NEWS

Think twice before driving impaired: MPI, MADD

Staff

Manitoba Public Insurance is urging Manitobans to think twice before getting behind the wheel impaired this holiday season.

Impaired driving was a leading contributing factor in at least 18 road deaths in Manitoba from Jan. 1 to Oct. 31, the agency announced last week.

While that number is below the five-year average of 25 and pandemic restrictions continue to keep Manitobans off the roads more than ever before, MPI remains committed to raising awareness about the devastating consequences of impaired driving.

To that end, they've launched their annual Friends for Life Speaker Series. The series features real-life stories delivered by individuals who have been personally impacted by a decision made behind the wheel of a car.

"MPI has long been committed to providing education and programming about the risks and dangers associated with dangerous driving decisions," said spokesperson Satvir Jatan. "The importance of reaching thousands of youth to create awareness about the consequences of impaired and other risky driving decisions hasn't changed in the face of the pandemic. That's why for 2020 we've moved to a virtual format so that we don't miss out on the opportunity to reach Manitoba students."

MPI is also continuing its annual support of the MADD Canada School Program for middle and high school students, much of which is also being offered online this year.

"Our mission is to stop impaired driving and to support victims of this violent crime" said Dawn Regan, MADD Canada's chief operating officer.

ficier.

MPI has also donated a salvage vehicle to the Winnipeg Chapter of MADD Canada. The vehicle, which has highly visible anti-drinking and driving messaging, will be on display in high traffic areas.

2020 fatality counts are high

As of the end of October, 73 people have been killed on Manitoba public roadways, MPI reports.

If this trend continues, 2020 will be second worst year for road deaths in Manitoba over the last five years, beating out 2016's 107 deaths.

In addition to the 18 impaired driving deaths, the province has also seen 16 deaths attributed to distracted driving and at least 13 deaths owing



MPI PHOTOS

MPI had teamed up with MADD to get this vehicle out into high-traffic areas for awareness.

to drivers and passengers not wearing their seatbelts.

Speed, weather conditions and other factors contributed to the remaining deaths on Manitoba public roadways.

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AMM hosts first ever virtual convention

By Evan Matthews

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities hosted the first virtual convention in the organizations' history, as it welcomed in Kam Blight as its new president.

Reeve of the RM of Portage for the last 10 years, Blight said he's passionate about municipal politics, so having the opportunity to represent and advocate for all of Manitoba's 137 municipalities is something he's greatly looking forward to.

"I feel at the municipal level, we can accomplish so much. We are truly grounded and in tune with our residents. We have the opportunity to make the biggest difference in (people's lives)," said Blight, who took over as president on Monday Nov. 23.

"I want to help be a voice for all our municipalities, and I get to work alongside two great vice-presidents, an amazing board of directors and excellent staff.

"I'm excited to take on the challenge," he said.

RM of Brokenhead Reeve Brad Saluk and RM of Ritchot Reeve Chris Ewen were elected as vice-presidents. The new AMM executive team will serve for a two-year term.

Blight takes over for former president Ralph Groening, who has served on the AMM board of directors for 14 years, including the last two as AMM president.

With at least another two years of working together before the next election, Blight added thanks to the past president and said having Groening's expertise available is greatly appreciated.

The first order of business for Blight is the review of the Province of Manitoba's Bill 37, he said.

"We're going to continue our dialogue with Minister Squires," said Blight.

Bill 37 is the result of the 2019 review of planning, zoning and permitting in Manitoba, according to the province, with the goal of the proposed legislation being to streamline planning and approval processes to ensure timely and transparent decisions on private-sector capital investment opportunities.

"It's definitely something we're going to be focusing in on right away, as well as COVID-19 assistance for our members," he said, adding that down the line, rural crime reduction is likely to be a priority of his as well.

Arborg Mayor Peter Dueck welcomed Blight in and added the virtual convention went well, so well in fact that perhaps virtual conventions could save time and resource in the future as well.

Dueck said while municipalities were obligated to meet virtually this year, in the future they may choose it.

"For the first virtual convention, it went considerably better than one might expect," said Dueck.

He expressed thanks to Data On The Spot (DOTS), who hosted the online election for AMM president.

"I want to express gratitude to outgoing president Groening for his work and congratulate incoming president Blight. I also want to thank Premier Pallister for making his ministers available for these meetings," he said.

Interlake involvement at convention

Interlake municipalities were involved in sponsoring or co-sponsoring five resolutions at the virtual convention.

The City of Selkirk co-sponsored a resolution reaffirming local authority over land-use planning, as well as a resolution increasing planning region



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED
RM of Portage Reeve Kam Blight takes over as the AMM president for the next two years.

accountability, both of which relate to provincial Bill 37.

Selkirk also co-sponsored a resolution maintaining public services in local communities.

The RM of Armstrong sponsored a resolution relating to Crown land, while the RM of Fisher sponsored a resolution relating to municipal cotaging initiative(s).

PHOTO CALENDAR



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January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 <small>New Year's Day</small>	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
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STAY SAFE

Armstrong pays respects to former reeve with donation to CancerCare

By Patricia Barrett

The RM of Armstrong paid its respects to a former long-serving reeve and councillor who recently passed away.

Council donated \$200 to CancerCare Manitoba in memory of Leslie Marchak, who died from cancer on Sept. 23.

Marchak grew up in Inwood and Narcisse. Over the course of his life, he worked a number of different jobs, including in construction and for the former Town of Gimli (now amalgamated with the RM of Gimli). He also farmed. He served on Armstrong council for 16 years.

"Leslie Marchak has been a dedicated and long-time serving council member for the RM of Armstrong. He served as councillor from 1992 to 1998 and from 2011 to 2014, and as reeve from 2006 to 2010," said Armstrong Reeve Susan Smerchanski by email last week. "It is always important to acknowledge our elected officials for their hard work and contributions and to pay our respects to their memory."

Other Armstrong council news from November:

- To help protect the integrity of groundwater, council is working with the East Interlake Watershed District (EIWD) and a Malonton-area landowner to have four open wells sealed.

The EIWD offers an abandoned well sealing program with rebates of up to 100 per cent of the cost (up to \$1,000) to landowners. Sealing wells eliminates possible health hazards to both humans and animals. Overland flooding can compromise wells.

"The excessive amount of water has a very detrimental effect for the landowner and the municipality," said Reeve Smerchanski. "With issues of flooding on the property and impact on the municipal drainage system, it's important to work together to resolve the situation."

- BellMTS will be erecting a telecommunications tower and accessory structure on private land at NE 1/4 27-17-1 near Inwood. Council noted in meeting minutes from Nov. 10 that the company's consultation with the RM has been satisfactorily completed and does not require further public consultation. Council approves the proposal "provided it is constructed substantially in accordance with the plans submitted" to the RM.

- Council acknowledged the "hard work" undertaken by the MPC Park committee to address safety concerns at Meleb Park. All the "immediate" safety issues have been addressed.

"Council agrees some items will re-

quire more time and warm weather to complete so an extension is given till June 30, 2021, to address the items of painting and structural repairs to posts and signs," states the minutes from the meeting.

Play structures still have to be brought up to current standards, and council and the MPC Park committee will work with the RM's insurance provider to meet them.

- Council authorized CAO Corlie Larsen to purchase a smart TV for council chambers. The amount was not to exceed \$1,000.

Smart TVs can perform a range of tasks, including connecting to the Internet, streaming movies, controlling lights and checking security cameras. It will be used for business purposes by council.

"A smart TV has been purchased to enhance communications and sharing of information with our residents and ratepayers at our regular council meeting," said Reeve Smerchanski, "as well as council, public and staff presentations and training, including EMO [Emergency Measures Organization]."

Smerchanski said technology is very important in the workplace, as well as at home, and the RM is moving forward with adopting it. Council already uses iPads for meeting management.

"With COVID-19 we have adapted to teleconferencing and Zoom meetings," she said. "Televisions are being used for business and educational purposes, including sharing information, agendas and minutes at meetings, as well as for public and staff presentations and training, webinars and in emergency situations."

- Council passed final reading of Bylaw No. 6/2020 to establish a code of conduct for council members. The province required each municipality to create and adopt a code of conduct this year after previous province-wide incidences of councillor misconduct, bullying and in-fighting. Councils for Teulon and St. Andrews, for instance, experienced upsets.

- Council approved leaseholder Ivan Johnson's request to pay out the remainder of his lease on RM-owned land and purchase the property at SE 4-21-2W.

Johnson had entered into a five-year lease (until 2022) with the RM, paying three of the five years. Council agreed to have the property transferred to Johnson if he pays the full balance by Dec. 31, 2020.

- Council agreed to send a letter to Manitoba Infrastructure requesting a

clean-out of the north ditch along PR 229, south of 1-18-1E from Road 5E to culverts crossing the provincial road. The work is necessary to prevent water from pooling on agricultural land. The province is responsible for maintaining ditches along its provincial roads.

- Council approved a ditch clean-out at Johnston Dairies at SW 20-21-2E. The work will be completed on behalf of the RM by Phil Yoder and Sons for the quoted amount of \$6,000 plus GST.

- Council appointed Coun. Paul Humeny to serve as deputy reeve for one year.

"Every year council makes an appointment for the deputy reeve position," said Reeve Smerchanski. "We are very pleased that Paul Humeny has accepted his nomination. He was unanimously elected as deputy reeve for the term."

- Council released its 2020-2021 council appointments (Reeve Susan Smerchanski, councillors Ralph Hazelton, Paul Humeny, Ted Sumka, Adam Krochenski and Allen Evanchyshin) to standing committees as follows:

Roads Committee of the Whole (chair Reeve Smerchanski, vice-chair Coun. Krochenski); Drainage Committee of the Whole (chair Reeve Smerchanski, vice-chair Coun. Evanchyshin); Waste Management Committee of the Whole (chair Reeve Smerchanski, vice-chair Coun. Humeny); Protective Services Committee of the Whole (chair Reeve Smerchanski); By-Law Committee of the Whole (chair Reeve Smerchanski); Heath and Safety Committee (Reeve Smerchanski and Coun. Humeny); Emergency Management Committee of the Whole (chair Reeve Smerchanski); Finance Committee of the Whole (chair Reeve Smerchanski).

- Council released its 2020-2021 councillor appointments to community committees/organizations as follows:

Community Futures East Interlake (Reeve Smerchanski); Interlake Pioneer Trail (Coun. Hazelton); Interlake Weed Control Board (Coun. Krochenski and Coun. Sumka); Interlake Veterinary Services Board (Coun. Krochenski); Fisher-Armstrong Planning District (Reeve Smerchanski, Coun. Hazelton and Coun. Humeny); Interlake Tourism Association (Reeve Smerchanski, Coun. Humeny, alternate); Manitoba Association of Regional Recyclers (MARR) (Reeve Smerchanski and Coun. Evanchyshin, alternate); East Interlake Watershed District, Icelandic River/Lower Interlake Sub-Committee (Coun. Evanchyshin, citizen member Garry Wasylowski); Netley/Wavey/Parks



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Former Armstrong reeve and councillor Leslie Marchak passed away in September. Armstrong Reeve Susan Smerchanski and council made a donation to CancerCare in his memory.

Creeks Sub-Committee (Reeve Smerchanski, citizen member Victor Dziedzic); West Interlake Watershed Conservation District Swan Creek Sub-District (Reeve Smerchanski, citizen member Sam Hofer); Shoal Lakes Sub-District (Coun. Hazelton, citizen member Lee Wirgau); Teulon Health Care Sustainability Committee (Reeve Smerchanski); Former LGD Ad Hoc Group (Coun. Krochenski).

- Reeve Smerchanski addressed the impact COVID-19 continues to have on residents' lives, urging people to help each other, tap their support systems to stay strong or reach out to council should they become unduly affected by virus's challenges and uncertainties.

"COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of our daily lives. We are living in unprecedented times with an uncertain future and facing ever-changing demands and challenges at home, at work, in our communities, in our province, our country and globally," said Smerchanski, according to meeting minutes. "You are not alone. Please reach out for support and to help others. We are all in this together and council is just a phone call away. Take care. Be Kind. Be Safe."



Fisher Branch residents 'Turn the Lights On'

By Evan Matthews

A woman in Fisher Branch isn't letting COVID crush her Christmas spirit.

Karen Abas has pitched a concept she's calling "Turn the Lights On," in which all residents will turn on their Christmas lights and decorations at 6 p.m. on Dec. 1 and take in the beauty collectively.

"I put the concept out there on Facebook, mostly because I just like to stay busy and do things, but it seemed to be received well. I believe in this community so much," said Abas.

"Everyone seems to be in a bit of a slump, and I thought this would be a great way to kick off the season and spread some of the Christmas spirit. We

have to come together."

If residents have neighbours who don't have decorations or maybe need some help getting things set up, the concept is to cultivate community and ensure everyone can participate, Abas said.

Of course, Abas said it wouldn't be 2020 without the gentle reminder of social distancing, mask wearing and proper hygiene as proactive and preventative COVID-19 transmission measures.

"It's going to be magical. ... All these families who are cooped up in their house can load up their household in the car and drive around the community," said Abas.

"People who aren't in town but want to participate,



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

RM of Fisher public works staff crafted and placed a wreath outside the RM building.

if they want to send their addresses to me, I'm going to make a little map. ... There will be so many beautiful properties lit up."

The RM of Fisher has expressed its full support for the initiative.

In a statement to the *Express*, the RM of Fisher said Tannis Yuzwa approached the RM with Abas' idea in order to put some lights up on the RM building, as well as crafting a wreath from a bale ring. The Pyziak family provided the bale ring.

"The RM of Fisher is happy to participate in the event," said CAO Kelly Marykuca. "During these difficult times, it will be nice to see some smiles to help bring out the Christmas magic."

Public works staff crafted the wreath for the RM building.

Local Urban District Committee Member Tannis Chudy is lending out Christmas wreaths and lights to people in the town of Fisher Branch.

Anyone interested in participating is encouraged to call Abas at 204-372-8402.



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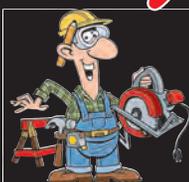
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Those with good sense are slow to anger, and it is their glory to overlook an offence.

Proverbs 19:11 NRSV



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EIWD launches compensatory Enhancement Protection Program

By Patricia Barrett

The Eastern Interlake Watershed District (EIWD) is preparing for submissions to the Enhancement Protection Program (EPP), which puts in place environmental safeguards throughout the district's catchment area and provides compensation on an annual basis.

EIWD manager Armand Belanger said the district is hoping to identify EPP projects it can carry out next year in collaboration with both landowners and leaseholders.

"The district would like to start talking to them now to be able to hit the ground running come spring of 2021," said Belanger by email last week.

The EIWD works with local governments and the province to carry out land and water conservation projects throughout the watershed district, which encompasses the municipalities of Arborg, Armstrong, Bifrost-Riverton, Dunnottar, Fisher, Gimli, Grahamdale, Rockwood, Rosser, St. Andrews, Selkirk, Stonewall, Teulon, West St. Paul, Winnipeg Beach and Woodlands.

The EIWD's major projects include wetland enhancement, well sealing, water retention, soil and riparian (riverside) enhancements, buffer strips, the restoration of native grasses, shrubs and trees and the fencing of farm animals to protect water sources.

Under the provincially funded EPP, which the watershed district is overseeing, participants are eligible for "protection payments," which are paid out from another program, Growing Outcomes in Watersheds (GROW).

To participate in the EPP, a landowner can contact the EIWD to discuss possible projects and get help completing an application or expression of interest. The program is competitive, meaning applications will be graded, so to speak, on the basis of greatest environmental benefit.

The application is evaluated by a watershed sub-district and a GROW committee. If accepted, EIWD staff will create a custom management plan for the landowner/lessee and work with them to complete the project. Projects will typically last for 10 years and are inspected and evaluated regularly with reports submitted to an executive board.

"The expression of interest [application] is the simple part," said Belanger. "It could entail calling the EIWD office or sending in a one-page form saying they have a project idea. From there the EIWD will work with the landowner to make a full proposal to the sub-district and GROW committee. The proposal will outline the details of the project."

The EIWD may cover some EPP project costs, such as engineering, licensing and contractor costs for wetland and water storage projects.

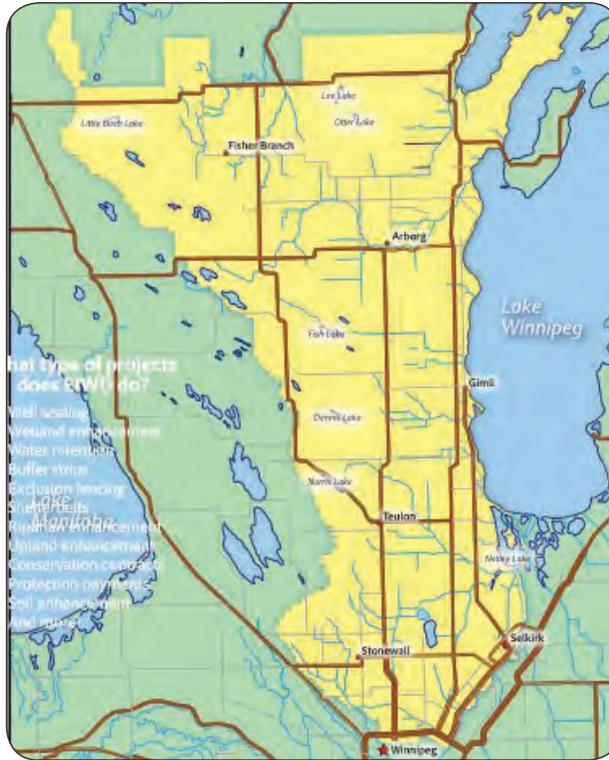
The EIWD's primary environmental priorities include improving surface water quality and quantity, improving drinking water quality, reducing nutrients (phosphorus, nitrogen etc.), protecting fish, wildlife and riparian habitats, enhancing biodiversity (variety of plant and animal life), improving soil quality and increasing carbon sequestration. These benefits can be achieved by altering land and water management practices or by limiting the use of a site.

Landowners/leaseholders can benefit in many ways from the EPP, including an overall improvement in the general condition of a property, improved herd health and increased knowledge of farming and business planning.

Although the EIWD outlined seven major project types in its EPP reference guide, landowners/lessees aren't necessarily limited to them.

"If a landowner has a project idea that they think will improve soil, water or wildlife habitat, we want to hear about it and find out what it would take to get completed," said Belanger.

Despite the presence of COVID-19 for much of 2020, EIWD staff didn't lay down their tools.



MAP COURTESY OF EIWD

The EIWD encompasses 16 Interlake municipalities, from Grahamdale and Bifrost-Riverton in the north to Rosser and West St. Paul in the south.

"Even through this terrible pandemic, we were able to complete several great projects," said Belanger.

Among them were enhancing a large wetland and water storage project near Poplarfield in the RM of Fisher, seeding native grasses and flowers in over 15 miles of drains in the RM of Bifrost-Riverton, establishing eco-buffers and planting trees in Riverton, Arborg and West St. Paul, creating interpretive signage in Gimli to help people reconnect with nature, restoring native prairie grass in Stonewall with a volunteer youth group, surveying waterways, and sealing

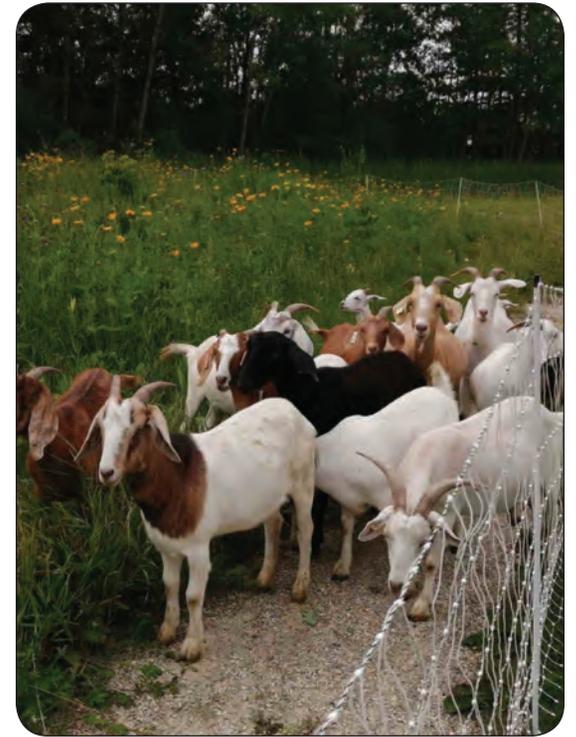


PHOTO COURTESY OF EIWD

Rather than use deadly pesticides to manage plant growth at Gimli High School's wetland and tallgrass prairie, the EIWD teamed with a local farmer and his goats.

over 28 abandoned wells (to protect ground and surface water quality).

"But if I had to pick a favourite, it would be getting goats in to help maintain our wetland and tallgrass prairie project at Gimli High School," said Belanger, referring to a herd of goats a Gimli-area farmer brought to the school in July for a spot of environmentally friendly mob grazing.

For more information about the Enhancement Protection Program, call the East Interlake Watershed District at 204-642-7578.




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Construction of multi-sport complex at Gimli High School hinges on municipal funding

By Patricia Barrett

Although over \$77,000 has been raised so far for a proposed outdoor multi-sport complex at Gimli High School, the project will be axed unless another large chunk of money is secured by early next year.

The proposal will see the disused tennis courts behind the school converted into courts that can be used for a number of recreational sports, including pickle ball, basketball, ball hockey and tennis.

The Evergreen School Division (ESD), which has already pledged \$30,000 to the redevelopment project and would be responsible for the maintenance of the space should it be built, asked the municipality of Gimli to be a funding partner. The courts would be open to the general public and tourists, as well as students.

In a letter to council dated Nov. 16, the division asked council to contribute \$84,900.

"We recognize that this is an unusual request. However, given the community interest for this project resulting from a shortage of accessible local playing spaces, we are hopeful for your support," wrote ESD board of trustees chair Penny Helgason.

The proposed project has been in the works for about three years after a group of community members and parents urged the division to convert

the rundown tennis courts into several courts. Volunteers had even taken it upon themselves to clean up the courts and chop down trees to try to improve the look of the site.

The division approved the project and committed its funding in March 2018. The parent advisory committee (PAC) at Gimli High School had then been tasked with fundraising.

PAC has raised \$47,101 to date but has decided to step back primarily because of the difficulties trying to fundraise during a pandemic with no certain end in sight, and partly because of the "tight timeline" it's working under to raise a significant sum of money.

"It is more challenging to do fundraising at this time and there are many initiatives vying for the same dollars," Helgason told the *Express* by phone last Friday. "To a certain extent, there is a sense of fatigue in general with COVID and particularly around fundraising."

In its letter, the division says time is a crucial factor in whether the reconstruction goes ahead. In order to keep the grant funding that's already been pledged, the project has to be completed in the summer of 2021. The RM would have to provide funding by March 1 to see it proceed.

If the municipality can't commit the funding by that time, the division will



EXPRESS FILE PHOTO BY PATRICIA BARRETT

The disused tennis courts behind Gimli High School (pictured in 2018). Nearly \$85,000 is required by next March to reconstruct the area into several courts for ball hockey, pickle ball, tennis and basketball.

be "forced to return the grant funds collected to date, and make the difficult decision to re-sod the space," states the letter.

In the meantime, Helgason said the division will consider "unconditional" public donations.

Gimli Mayor Lynn Greenberg said by telephone last Friday that while council has yet to make a decision on the division's request, the multi-sport complex is a "worthwhile project" for the community.

"We're going to meet with the division to discuss it and get more de-

tails," he said.

Council will begin discussing the budget in January, he added, but right now money is "tight" because of COVID's impact on municipal revenues.

"The budgeting process is coming up this January," said Mayor Greenberg. "We've lost a lot of revenue because of COVID. It's not going to be easy to do a lot of stuff now. Our recreation centre is shut down, for example. There was a lot of revenue we used to get from that and we've still got the expenses. Expenses don't stop."

Cottagers association asks for input on future of Winnipeg Beach Community Centre

By Patricia Barrett

The Winnipeg Beach Cottage Owners Association has asked town council to work with them before making a decision on the future the community centre, which might be converted to a multi-sport facility without ice.

Guy Mercier appeared at council's Nov. 25 meeting on behalf of the association to ask council to consider ideas for making the facility financially viable.

"In starting this process and talking to some people, the main issue that's come up is that we think the business model for the Winnipeg Beach Community Centre is just not successful in the long term for a number of reasons," said Mercier, who in addition to the association spoke on behalf of some permanent residents and business owners.

He suggested the overall management of the community centre needs to be changed, citing current staff that "don't believe in keeping the ice," facility rentals that don't make much money for the town and lack of a staff person dedicated exclusively to creating and running programs.

Currently one person oversees both programming and the operation of the facility, he said, but each job requires a "very different skill set."

"[The ice] is the largest and most important [source of] revenue for the community centre and there's roadblocks being put up all the time to getting more people on the ice, which is a huge concern to us," said Mercier.

The town's proposal to turn the community centre into a multi-sport facility is set out in a draft document titled Future Use Proposal 2020, which is posted on the municipality's website.

The 16,150-square-foot ice surface should be decommissioned, it argues, because of revenue losses; last season saw a loss of almost \$12,000. The space could be turned into a walking track with pickleball, badminton, tennis, basketball and volleyball courts, mini-soccer fields at the north and south ends of the rink or a full-sized soccer field. Other indoor sports that could be offered include frisbee, flag football, dodge ball and broom ball.

The community centre has been closed since Nov. 12 after the provincial government announced code red

restrictions under the COVID-19 pandemic response system.

Despite almost a year of COVID and the facility's closure, Mercier said there has been an uptick in ice sport interest.

"The rec hockey people said they're actually up to 100 people, up from 60, and they've asked for additional ice time to rent," said Mercier. "And the men's hockey program ... is hoping to start up again. When I was at the stick and puck, there were actually over 20 people there, and at the free skate there were 10-12 people."

There has also been interest in getting figure skating and speed skating, he said. But the main interest is to keep the community's rink.

"We had our little group look at what a vibrant community club would be, and the big thing is a hockey rink," said Mercier. "A lot of communities across Manitoba would love to have what we have here. The rink is functioning and it doesn't need a lot of huge upgrades and it can operate on a daily basis."

Although the town rents out the facility for programs other than ice

sports, Mercier said that seems to make little money.

"The programs run as of right now seem to make money for others, but not the community club," he said. "If you rent it for \$20 an hour and you're having 20-30 people in Zumba, that person [class instructor] is making a lot of money but the community club isn't."

Mercier said he's hoping to form a group called the Winnipeg Beach Community Centre Board that will be composed of elected members plus a committee that can work with the town to help run the centre. There are a lot of talented people in town with board and fundraising experience that could volunteer and who have a "sincere desire to be involved."

Deputy Mayor Pat Green said the interest in the community centre came after the proposal to revamp it.

"Up until last summer, frankly, no one's been that interested. ... We haven't had any group come to us and say we want to [do this]. We have asked for volunteers," said Green. "In

Wedding and event industry lobbying province

By Evan Matthews

Hundreds of wedding and event industry professionals are lobbying the province, as they allege their industry has been halted entirely, with no relief available.

Chantelle Dione, a Stony Mountain-based photographer specializing in weddings, portraits, boudoir, headshots, personal branding, events, and soul sessions, has joined forces with hundreds of other industry professionals to lobby the provincial government.

"We have a couple social media groups — one called Manitoba Wedding Network (A Wedding Vendor Networking Group) — and we all check in with one another, work with one another on events, etc.," said Dione.

She added that most industry professionals she's in contact with have not received a paycheque relating to their field in over a year due to postponements and cancellations.

In her own situation, Dione said she had to find a part-time job to make ends meet for her family.

"I know there are many Interlake vendors affected by this situation, barely making it above the poverty line. The issue arose when discussing the most recent provincial grant announcement," she said, estimating she has lost about \$50,000 of income due to COVID-19.

On Nov. 16, the Province of Mani-

toba announced \$5,000 available to all Manitoba businesses and organizations required to close under the current public health orders. The \$5,000 is available through what the province is calling the Manitoba Bridge Grant.

Those eligible include small- and medium-sized businesses and organizations required by the province to fully close their premises to the public because of Manitoba COVID-19 public health orders in effect as of Nov. 12.

The list includes non-essential retailers, restaurants, bars, beverage rooms, brewpubs, microbreweries, distilleries, recreation and sport facilities, museums and galleries, theatres and concert halls, not-for-profit organizations, faith-based organizations and registered charities.

However, the list does not include wedding photographers, videographers, florists, makeup artists, caterers, DJs or event planners, according to Dione.

Many of the industry's wedding and event related vendors do not have a "brick-and-mortar" location, she said, but despite that, businesses with commercial leases have also been denied from the Manitoba Bridge Grant.

"Let's be realistic. We don't always need a physical location to run a business nowadays, but the list also doesn't include hundreds of entrepreneurs who work from — and are taxed on — a portion of our homes," said Dione.

"Over the course of this pandemic, we have been fighting. The wedding and event industry has been completely left out of negotiations regarding gathering sizes, government assistance and business shutdowns," she said. "Unlike the food and beverage industries, the wedding and event industry has never been consulted regarding the rulings, nor safe work protocols."

She added that the Manitoba Bridge Grant is just the most recent example of the government overlooking the industry.

Dione said not only is there no government aid available to her, and not only has she lost 2020 revenue due to cancellations, but many of Dione's clients who had already paid decided to simply rescheduled to 2021, which equates to less revenue and fewer dates available in 2021, she said.

"It just keeps coming," said Dione.

When the federal government originally rolled out CERB, Dione said most people in the wedding and event industry went job hunting instead of applying.

Reliable paycheques were generally deemed the safer option, despite bringing in less income than what CERB offered.

While the group of wedding industry professionals reach out to their local MLAs, Dione said she'll be spearheading the effort in the Interlake. MLAs Ralph Eichler (Lakeside) and



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Chantelle Dione is one of a few hundred wedding and event industry professionals lobbying the provincial government for financial relief, as the industry is at a standstill.

Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli) will soon be receiving letters, she said.

The hope, is the government will acknowledge the issue and offer support, Dione said.

For anyone checking social media, the group of industry professionals have assigned hashtag — #MyBusinessIsNotAHobby — to the issue.

Fisher Branch RCMP traffic stop leads to drug seizure

Staff

Fisher Branch RCMP conducted a traffic stop on Fisher River Cree Nation on Nov. 20 at approximately 9:55 p.m.

A search of the vehicle led to the seizure of approximately 125 grams of cocaine, bear spray and drug paraphernalia. The driver, a 32-year-old male from Fisher River Cree Nation,

was arrested and will be facing charges of possession for the purpose of trafficking and possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose.

He was also fined for failing to comply with a provincial emergency order, under the Public Health Act, for not self-isolating as directed.

He is scheduled to appear in court on March 2, 2021.



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

A 32-year-old male from Fisher River was arrested and is facing charges of possession for the purpose of trafficking and possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose on Nov. 20.

> COTTAGERS, FROM PG. 14

the last four or five years, we've painted, we've done the windows ... we've done everything we can. It's been difficult."

Mercier said more engagement with the community would result in a more successful community centre, and his group wants "open dialogue" with council over the next month or

so to see whether some of the issues can be resolved.

"With code red in place, we have the time to have that discussion," said Mercier. "We would truly like to be an active partner, coming up with a viable solution for the community centre."

WHL Cup cancelled for 2020

Staff

Hockey Manitoba, BC Hockey, Hockey Alberta and the Saskatchewan Hockey Association, in conjunction with the Western Hockey League and Hockey Canada, have made the decision to cancel the 2020 WHL Cup.

"With the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made with the health and safety of all coaches, staff, and participants as the top priority," read a

statement.

The WHL Cup features U16 provincial teams representing B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The round-robin tournament is the first step in the Hockey Canada Program of Excellence and assists Hockey Canada in evaluating top prospects in this age group for future high-performance programs.

The WHL and western branches remain optimistic the 2021 WHL Cup may be held in the fall of 2021.

sports & recreation

INSIDE > OUTSIDE > UPSIDE DOWN

Leach honours his late friend Sasakamoose

By Brian Bowman

With the passing of Fred Sasakamoose, one of the first Indigenous hockey players in the NHL, Riverton's Reggie Leach took time to honour his friend.

Sasakamoose passed away from complications due to COVID-19 on Nov. 24. He was 86.

"I am saddened by the loss of my good friend Freddie Sasakamoose," said Leach on his Facebook page. "I was 16 when I learned that he was the first First Nation NHL player. In recent years, I enjoyed spending time with him as we exchanged hockey stories and he shared about his experience in residential school. He inspired many with his life story."

Leach said Sasakamoose, who played 11 NHL games with the Chicago Blackhawks, was always in great spirits.

"Despite the hardships, he always had a smile and a kind word for everyone. To give back, he visited many First Nation communities and hosted a tournament to showcase the talents of up and coming Indigenous hockey players. His family meant the world to him as he always spoke with love about them. Dawn and I send our love and prayers to them. I will miss him."

The Black Hawks also sent out their condolences.

"Today we lost a luminary in the hockey world with the passing of Fred Sasakamoose," the Blackhawks said in a statement. "Fred inspired many across the sport and throughout North America after becoming one of the first Indigenous-born athletes to play in the National Hockey League when he played 11 games with the Blackhawks during the 1953-54 season."



EXPRESS PHOTO FROM FACEBOOK

Riverton's Reggie Leach, right, paid tribute to his late friend Fred Sasakamoose, who passed away on Nov. 24 due to COVID-19.

Manitoba Scotties, Viterra to be held in Selkirk in February

Staff

The Selkirk Recreation Complex has been very quiet in recent weeks.

But CurlManitoba intends to make it extremely busy in early February.

It was announced Monday that the provincial men's and women's curling championships will be played in Selkirk from Feb. 2 to 7.

The field for the Viterra Men's Championship has been cut in half to 16 teams while the Scotties is now

down to eight teams.

Regional qualifiers for the two events will take place in mid-January. The plans hinge on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic in the province and the approval of Manitoba Health.

The Viterra Championship will remain a double-knockout event while the Scotties will be a round robin.

Curl Manitoba is also adopting the new pandemic curling rules for provincials that were introduced at the

start of the season. Teams can only use one sweeper and skips can't sweep opposing rocks in the house.

Six of the men's berths and four of the women's berths have already been secured.

Teams that have qualified for the Viterra Championship include Jason Gunnlaugson, Mike McEwen, Braden Calvert, Ryan Wiebe, Jordan McDon-

ald and Tanner Horgan.

Manitoba Scotties teams that have already qualified feature Jennifer Jones, Tracy Fleury, Darcy Robertson, and Mackenzie Zacharias.

Kerri Einarson, the reigning women's national champion, has already earned an automatic berth into next year's Canadian championship.

SEMHL, KJHL postpone start of seasons

Staff

Hockey fans in a pair of leagues will have to wait longer to watch their favourite team this season.

With the Province of Manitoba currently in code red, Southeastern Manitoba Hockey League officials and team management met virtually on Nov. 23 and agreed to delay the start of the 2020-21 season until at least 2021.

A follow up meeting in late December will determine a possible start date, discussion on number of regular-season games to play, and playoff format.

Meanwhile, the Keystone Junior Hockey League officially announced

it has pushed back its season start date even further.

"The KJHL has adjusted the projected start date of the season to Jan. 1, 2021," the league wrote in a statement. "Public health protocols will determine the actual start date and we will update the public by no later than Dec. 15, 2020."

"Thank you all for your patience as we cannot wait to start the season!"

Back on Oct. 27, the KJHL announced that it would be pushing its proposed start date for the 2020-21 season back to December. The league later announced the decision to further delay the season to January.

2021 Manitoba Open curling bonspiel postponed

Staff

Curl Manitoba announced the postponement of the 2021 Manitoba Open — the world's largest and longest running bonspiel — last week due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"This decision was not done lightly but was necessary in the interest of safety and health of all volunteers, athletes, spectators and clubs," read a statement.

CurlManitoba said it is working with the Winnipeg Curling Clubs

Association to ensure that the Manitoba Open will continue to be a mainstay program and event for the curling community in Manitoba.

There is, however, still a small glimmer of hope that the 2021 Manitoba Open could go on at a later date as the event has not yet been cancelled.

The 133rd edition of the event, formerly called the MCA Bonspiel, was scheduled to run from Jan. 14-18 at various curling clubs in Winnipeg.

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Career Opportunity



Interlake Co-op is presently recruiting for a GROCERY SUPERVISOR - Full Time at Our Food Store located in Arborg, MB

Reporting directly to the Grocery Manager, the successful candidate will be responsible for assisting the grocery manager in all aspects of our grocery department including but not limited to; financial results, marketing, inventory control, merchandising, administrative duties, guest relations, along with talent development and performance management of our grocery team.

Qualifications/Competencies:

- High standards in marketing and merchandising
- Desire to work in a team setting, and networking skills.
- Exemplary guest service
- Strong leadership, and interpersonal skills.
- Knowledgeable in Microsoft Office (excel/word),
- Administration responsibilities including cashups, lotteries, till operations
- Excellent supervisory, planning and organizational skills.
- Strong work ethic with a positive and ambitious attitude.
- Possess sound leadership and decision making abilities.
- Ability to operate a forklift (training will be available)
- Previous leadership experience
- Must be available to work a variety of shifts including days, evenings and weekends.

We offer career advancement opportunities, competitive compensation, benefits package, company contributed pension plan and learning/development opportunities.

If you would like to work in a business who strives to make a positive difference in our members' lives, please complete an application form at our Administration Office/Website or send a cover letter and resume to:

Attention: Jessica McCutcheon - Grocery Manager 204-376-5271
Email: grocery@interlakecoop.com
Or mail to: Interlake Co-op, Box 40, Arborg MB, R0C 0A0
www.interlakeco-op.crs

WE THANK ALL CANDIDATES FOR THEIR INTEREST, HOWEVER, ONLY THOSE SELECTED TO CONTINUE IN THE SELECTION PROCESS WILL BE CONTACTED.

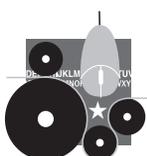
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OBITUARY



Anthony "Tony" Chudyk

It is with profound sadness and aching hearts we announce the passing of Tony on Tuesday, November 24, 2020. Peacefully after a brief and courageous battle with cancer Tony passed away at the Percy E. Moore Hospital.

He will be lovingly remembered by his wife Elsie; son Brad (Dana); daughter-in-law Candy; granddaughters Natasha (Matt), Nikki (Brandon), grandson Clint and two precious great-grandchildren Bennett and Naomie Saunders; also his sisters-in-law Evelyn Quesnel, Marcia Martinson and Myrna Korbutiak as well as several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his son Derek (January 23, 2020); his brothers John and Ben; sister Josie; his father and mother Teofil and Rozalia; his brothers-in-law Walter Korbutiak, Ben Korbutiak, Clarence Quesnel, Darryl Martinson and Adolf Yanicki.

Tony was born in Zbaraz, Manitoba. He left home at age 15 to seek his fame and fortune. He held many jobs. He then returned to his home on the Zbaraz homestead, where he farmed for a number of years. He then took a course in barbering and began his career in barbering but he still kept on farming. He always said he had three great loves – his family, barbering and farming in that order. He was well known for his sense of humour. As a barber he had a captive audience where he rarely failed at coming back with a humorous reply as answer to almost any comment or inquiry to his client's question. He was a barber for 60 years, still cutting hair at age 91. Tony and Elsie went on many trips together – Hawaii (3 times), Europe, Disneyland and Disney World, most of the United States and nine provinces, except Newfoundland which he was eagerly planning to visit next.

Through thick and thin
Through good times and bad
Through happy times and sad
We were a team
We held hands
Friends to the end.

Our family would like to thank Dr. Bruin and all of the staff at the palliative care unit at Percy E. Moore Hospital.

In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the CancerCare Manitoba Foundation.

In honouring Tony's wishes cremation has taken place and a celebration of life will be at a later date.

"Niech Spocqywaja W Pokoju"

Fisher Funeral Home Inc.
In care of arrangements.
204-372-6803 or 204-372-6271

OBITUARY



Devin Lee Oliver

November 21, 1976 – November 22, 2020

With profound sadness we announce the passing of Devin Lee Oliver. He was born in Kelowna, B.C.

Resided in Arborg, Manitoba for the last 19 years. A member of the Knights of Columbus Council 6233 for 25 years. Devin was a loving and devoted husband, father, son, brother and a friend to all whose lives he touched.

He was a rare combination of someone who had a love of life and a firm understanding of what was important - the simplicity of living a life with those he loved. Most importantly, Devin had a deep love for his family and cherished the time they would spend together playing games, singing Karaoke, enjoying family dinners, golf, hockey, baseball and bowling. He was an avid gardener and poetry writer. He always maintained respect, helped others and

volunteered at various fundraisers and community functions. Malanka (Ukrainian Celebration) was a highlight of his life as he was very proud to watch his daughter dance and he also took part in the dancing as well.

He had a very giving heart and a helping hand. He would always say "Do what's right and do what's good. Be kind and help others as the world can always use one more kind person."

Predeceased by son (Brooks 2007), grandparents Pauline (1998) and Stanley Gurski (2007), Grandmother Mary Doherty (2018), Grandfather Robert "George" Oliver (1983), Uncle Don Jamieson (2015) and Aunt Wilma Enyedy (1993).

He leaves behind his wife Lynette, daughter Briana, mother Linda and father Barry, brother Ryan (wife Lisa) Godchildren Adam and Sara Oliver, Cameron Greggains and Briel Beblow. Also surviving are his aunts and uncles Lynette and Larry Duncan, Thelma Jamieson, Sandra Gleason, Sylvia and Methody Lozinzski, Elsie and Wayne Swan and Uncle Jim Enyedy. Plus many cousins whom he loved and touched deeply, creating memories that will always be cherished.

Messages of condolences may be placed by visiting Devin's memorial page at: www.interlakecremation.ca

A private Celebration of Life service for Devin will be held at a later date.

OBITUARY



Kenneth Lawrence (Ken) Foster

February 3, 1941 – November 27, 2020

Ken (Poppa) passed away on November 27, 2020 at the Holy Family Nursing Home in Winnipeg with his family at his side, after a short battle with COVID-19. Dad (Poppa) was born on the family farm in Clarkleigh, MB to Bill and Clara Foster. His family later moved to Lundar, MB where he met and married the love of his life, Sharon Taylor in 1963 and together they raised their family.

Dad started his trucking career while working for his family gravel contracting business - Foster Trucking. During the winter months, he filled his time by working for Sigfusson's, hauling on the winter roads. Dad went on to create K Foster Trucking, hauling all over Manitoba.

In his younger years, Dad was an avid hockey player and loved to curl. He was a member of the Lundar Chapter of the BPOE (Elks). He was a strong supporter of their community work – operation of the Lundar Community Hall and the Annual Goose Shoot. He enjoyed spending time with his father restoring classic cars. He always looked forward to shining up the cars for the annual Lundar parade where received many awards. Dad took pride in being part of one of Lundar's boy bands – the 1940's Playboys. Dad enjoyed playing guitar and all the time spent jamming with his family and friends. He looked forward to the Friday night fish fries in Daddy Bill's shop, spending time at the beach and Sunday pancakes at Amma and Daddy Bill's. Dad and Mom's home was always an "open door" home. Together, they took pride in having friends and family gather at their home. Mom always filled the table with food and Dad was first to pull up his chair!

Dad is survived by son, Brad; daughters, Shaunna (Richard), Kimberley, Kendra (Steve), Sharona (Kevin) and son-in-law Aldo.

He is also survived by grandchildren, Tyler (Angela), Tracey (Ricky), Ricky, Nicco (Keshia), Holly (Tyson), Ben, Gabrielle, Stefano, Taylor, Jordan (Samantha), Shayne, Tessa, Iris, Nevaeh, Zane, Devontey, Alexis and Jayden; and great-grandchildren Mattea, Alex, Abel, Nova-Rae and Brooklyn. He is also survived by brother Lorne (Lue); and sisters Lorraine (Bob) Morsette, and Bev (Wayne) Page; along with many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his wife Sharon, daughter Charmaine Foster Lisi, granddaughter Samara; his father Bill, his mother Clara, sister Kristine and his brother Albert.

Cremation has taken place and due to COVID-19, a private burial service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the K9 Advocates Manitoba, 107 Allenby Cres., Winnipeg, MB R2C 3J3 or a charity of one's choice.

To the Holy Family Nursing Home, we thank you so much for the wonderful care you provided to our dad. A special thank you to Cecile and Jayson from Holy Family, your dedication to our dad will never be forgotten. A special thank you to Roni and Lex for being with Dad when the rest of us couldn't.

Arrangements by:
ARNASON FUNERAL HOME
Ashern - Lundar
1.204.768.2072
1.866.323.3593

OBITUARY



Paul Illchuk

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Paul Illchuk on November 24th, 2020 at Concordia Hospital in Winnipeg. Paul will be sadly missed by his beloved wife Anne Illchuk of 67 years, family and friends.

Due to COVID restrictions cremation had taken place and private family funeral service was held.

To view the full obituary please visit www.chapellawn.ca

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