

Businesses cater to theatre crowd

Number of stores grow as Stirling Theatre attracts many to village

By Steph Crosier

The top of the half-glass door brushes past a group of six bells, letting everyone in the boutique know someone else has joined the conversation. Once you're through the door, you're no longer a stranger in this boutique.

It's "how are you, what were you looking for?" and "I love your shirt! I saw you wearing it outside, it's so different."

Sitting in a large arm-chair next to an electric-fire, Tammy Latchford, owner of Bella Ever After, is a bundle of energy. When she decided to open her own all-local-product women's store just under a year ago, she found that Stirling was perfect.

After doing research about the community, and looking into the popularity of the theatre, the Tweed native knew that this was a perfect location for her shop.

Bella Ever After is just one of a number shops, boutiques, and cafés that have popped up to cater the Stirling Festival Theatre crowd.

Before the theatre, Stirling was a farming community, said Elisha Maguire, economic development officer for Stirling-Rawdon Township, over a latte at West Wings, another town boutique with books, lattes, clothing, and knick-knacks.

In 1993, when the township was deciding to tear down the building, a group of residents got together, called themselves

the Stirling Performing Arts committee, and saved the theatre. Today, the theatre has shows every month. During the summer, shows come to town for up to three weeks. In November, the panto comes to town for five straight weeks through to New Year's Eve.

A panto is a winter musical comedy style that is often based on a children's story. In Stirling, the troupe performs both a children's version, and a more popular naughty adult version. This year, the show is Alice in Wonderland.

Latchford opened her store Dec. 13, 2011 right in the middle of the theatre's panto season. At first it wasn't that bad, but suddenly her number of patrons skyrocketed.

"On a Saturday afternoon I had 30-40 people in the store consistently throughout the day," said Latchford. "It was one of my best days since I've opened."

This economic boost during the Christmas season is felt all over the small Stirling village, said Maguire.

"November and December are a huge time," said Maguire. "We completed a business survey in 2011, and we had businesses identify what patterns in days and months that were the busiest, and across the board, it's November and December that were the best months for retail."

Maguire said the numbers could lead back to the holiday season but the panto supports that by bringing customers to the village.

David Vanderlip, managing director of the Stirling Festival Theatre for three months, said last year the shows drew 45,000 people to the village.

"They say that for every dollar spent here, it's \$3.50-\$9 into the community," said Vanderlip.

Using the Ontario Ministry of Tour-



Photo by Steph Crosier

Tammy Latchford, owner of Bella Ever After, opened her shop just under a year ago. When the shows run at the theatre, a customer can bring in their show ticket and receive 10 per cent off.

ism & Culture's TREIM model, Maguire said the economic impact of just 40,000 patrons visiting the theatre in all of Hastings County for 2012 has the potential to be over \$5,500,000, and a gross domestic product of over \$2,350,000.

Vanderlip said that other than the township owning the theatre's building, they aren't very involved with the community, but he is happy that the shops in the village have tailored themselves to complement the theatre's patrons.

Scheona West, owner and operator of West Wings, said during the panto season, they stay open later.

"This is the most important time of year in terms of traffic," said West. "We just sell a lot of drinks, but we find that people tend to return another day for merchandise."

Jim Ringas has owned and operated Jim's Pizzeria for 30 years. He was there for the first year the theatre opened and has watched as the crowds have gotten larger.

"When I first came, 90 per cent of the store fronts were empty," said Ringas. "Every year it gets bigger and every year it gets better. It's put Stirling on the map."

Ringas said that while the panto is in town his business increases 15 per cent, and the busy theatre days makes up to 20 per cent of his yearly net income.

West and Latchford agree they receive the most customers in their stores when the theatre does bus trips.

"The bus usually drops them off an hour or two early to visit the village," said West. "So it really gives them time to come into the shops and look around."

Latchford said she hopes that the theatre will organize more for the shorter shows. She recalls last summer when a talented singer came to the theatre but they had to cancel shows due to lack of ticket sales.

"It was just heartbreaking because he was such a talented guy," said Latchford. "I don't know if there needs to be better marketing or what, but with bus trips at least we can guarantee the seats will be filled."

Latchford said she will always support the theatre and the town as much as possible. Whether it's filling half her window with posters, or voting for Hockleyville, she wants to see her community blossom.

"My dream for Stirling, on a small scale, would be the next Bloomfield. On a large scale I think it could be the next Niagara-On-The-Lake."

Author...

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Henderson, a long-time friend and office mate, was one of the first to get the chance to read *All Is Clam* before it was published.

"I remember Hilary gave me the final product to read before anyone had seen it, I'm pretty sure, and the prologue was so

good it seriously was one of the best I ever read in my entire life," said Henderson.

MacLeod dedicated the novel to all of her students she has had the pleasure of teaching over the years.

"If you ever had the chance to meet her, let's just say if you can say the word that's not in the dictionary, that's Hilary," said Henderson.

She remembers lying in bed making up stories at age five.

"She's just the most creative, imagina-

tive, passionate person and would do anything for a student," said Henderson.

All three of the books she has written have a shore theme. MacLeod has always wanted to be a writer but she just had a hard time finding out what she wanted to write about.

"The thing since I taught for so long, I had time in the summer to be on a deserted island, this place was very special to me and I found out what I wanted to write about," said MacLeod.

Just recently it was announced the last independent bookstore is being shut down in Belleville. It has existed for 32 years.

"We all try to support them, however the fact of the matter is the big chain stores have got books at a better price and get the books from the publishers and they pass them on to us," she added.

"It's too bad, if you're a writer you love books and you love book stores and I

think it's a very hard fight because I think Belleville has a downtown to support it," She added.

All Is Clam was published in August.

"I thought it was a wonderful book, very impressive and I know a lot of people aren't going to get the chance to read the book but it's your loss if you don't," said Henderson.

MacLeod is working on a new book titled *Something Fishy*.

Recreation centre to get a facelift

Tyendinaga township proposes tearing down and rebuilding

By Sarah Armour

Tyendinaga's recreation complex is looking to give its 20-year-old canteen a makeover.

The present complex is located on the corner of McFarlane and Melrose roads.

It's home to a 200-seat capacity multi-purpose building, four soccer pitches, a softball field, a hardball field, two beach volleyball courts and a children's playground.

The canteen itself consists of a small server, two bathrooms and a utility closet. After years of use, the building is rundown and outdated, said Steve Mercer, clerk of Tyendinaga Township.

The township is proposing to tear down the current canteen and rebuild a brand new building. They are looking into a

partnership with Trenval Business development cooperation for a 50/50 split on the cost of the new building, which they are estimating will cost between \$90,000-\$100,000.

Mercer said they hope to finalize the plans for the new building as of February and begin building next fall.

The recreation complex is open seasonally for the summer months and hosts different sports such as soccer and volleyball, but Mercer says it is baseball that is mainly played at the complex.

"We can't begin any construction until the season is done," said Mercer.

A pattern of infrastructure within the town has been noticed, but is the outcome of time and wear and tear, said recreation coordinator of Tyendinaga Township, Mandi Buma.

"Every few years roads and buildings need to be updated as technology changes and things become worn and aged," said Buma.

She said the canteen is just the next project on the list.

Drinking...

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Most students pre-drink to cut down on cost

There are still ways to enjoy the barley ale or whatever drink you prefer, while being able to keep your mind, body and liver intact.

While the study told of the potential horrors of pre-drinking, there are ways to perfect the practice so that it isn't all bad.

The study says that people would routinely have between four and five drinks per night at the bar. If they drank beforehand, their total number of drinks in the night climbed by almost double.

Goederham doesn't agree with the assessment. He said that while there is a risk of drinking too much if you pre-drink, there are benefits to be had.

"By the time I'm at the bar, I'm already at a healthy buzz level and I don't feel the need to drink as much as I would if I didn't pre-drink," he said.

Goederham usually has between five and six pre-drinks before going out. It's a part of his evening that he has no problems with.

"I don't see an issue with it. Most students are going to pre-drink because it's going to cut down on their bill because most students are on a tight budget, they're going to spend, if they can, only about \$20-\$40 on drinks at the bar, as opposed to if they don't pre-drink, then they have a better chance of spending \$100-\$150 depending on how much they are willing to spend and drink," he said.

Goederham said pre-partying saves wear and tear on his body.

"If I'm having that, my amount at the bar is cut in half, so I'll only have about two-three drinks as opposed to not pre-drinking I'll have about six-10 drinks," he said.

Having dealt with drunks for 32 years, Deans has certainly seen her fair share of circumstances. She offers her own words of advice to those planning a big night out.

"If you're going to have some drinks, have dinner or certainly have some food with it," she said. "If you've already had dinner and you want to do the pre-drinking certainly pull out some snacks. Things that are good for you but things that are going to hold a balance between the alcohol and your poor system."

Travelling offers chance to change some lives

Fundraising event to raise funds for human rights centre

By Shelby Wye

The idea of travel often corresponds with images of iconic buildings, white beaches and pure relaxation. Emily Smith van Beek thinks otherwise.

Travelling represents the opportunity to change lives and help others. Smith van Beek has seen the Eiffel tower and Jamaica's tropics, but it's the idea of helping towns under pressure that really gives her satisfaction.

"It's absolutely a waste of money to visit these countries stricken by poverty and devastation just for the tourist spots and your relaxation," said Smith van Beek.

She wants people to enjoy their vacations, but remember that the reason to travel is to take in new culture.

"Visiting the tourist spots is not the same as seeing the native culture," said Smith van Beek.

Smith van Beek is a student at Loyalist College, taking part in the International Support Workers program. The program annually visits a location of a different culture. This year it's Chiapas, Mexico.

"I've been excited for this trip since I was accepted into the program," said Smith van Beek.

The students will immerse themselves with native families and participate in their day-to-day work and their lifestyle. They have many opportunities in this town to participate in a variety of organizations.

Before they leave, Smith van Beek and those in her program have some work to do in Belleville first. They are hosting an event night to raise funds for the human



Photo by Shelby Wye

Emily Smith van Beek perches in the International Support Worker's office, a place in the school where she 'lives most of her life'. She is one of the seven students going to Chiapas, Mexico this January to live with a native family.

rights centre in Chiapas, called FRAYBA. The night consists of guest speakers who will touch on local issues of migrant workers and food security, and how these issues affect Belleville.

The event takes place on Nov. 30 in Loyalist's Alumni Hall. Smith van Beek encourages students to take part and learn more about social issues in their own town. It's also for students to be

aware of what the ISW program does and how fun it is to be part of the program.

The program is a one-year postgraduate. Smith van Beek completed a BA in political sciences, with a minor in film studies before coming to Loyalist.

Smith van Beek plans to apply her former education everywhere she can while she takes this trip. Her interest in political science brought her to this program in the

first place, and her minor in film studies is what inspires her to host her blog.

Smith van Beek blogs regularly, and is going to continue to do so while she lives in Chiapas. She will be updating her fans with blogs of her experiences on napemily.tumblr.com.

The class of seven will be visiting Chiapas, Mexico, under the guidance of their professor Kate Rodgers. They leave Jan. 24.