

Making a living on minimum wage

Single mother has tough time raising daughter on low wages

By Anica James

Funds are tight these days, regardless of which career path you're on.

Amanda Hughes has been bartending at The Duke on Front Street since August 2013. Born and raised in Belleville, the 31-year-old knows how tough it is to raise a child as a single parent while working part-time on less than minimum wage.

"I wasn't planning on having a kid at 16," Hughes said, drying a pint glass with an old dishrag. "But I did, and now I am paying for it."

Before she began bartending at The Duke, Hughes served at The Cabaret Nightclub for almost eight years.

"I was still making below minimum wage, but the tips were better," said Hughes, discussing her previous job experience at the local strip-club.

"I used to walk out of there some nights with over \$400 in tips, but it was hard work, harder than it is here at The Duke. At least here, a lot of the men leave me alone because almost everyone is a regular. I wouldn't come here if I didn't have to work here, but it's a job so it's different for me. I'm just trying to make a living, just trying to survive."

Ontario Liberal leader Kathleen Wynne announced on Jan. 30 that the provincial minimum wage would rise to \$11, effective as of June 1. The 75-cent-an-hour increase—the first of its kind since 2010—is great news for some, but for many others they will still be just scraping by, living at or around the poverty line.

"Right now, I make \$8.90 an hour, plus tips," said Hughes. "But the tips change every week. Some weeks I can make over \$300, and other weeks I'm lucky if I get \$100. And if I didn't have tips, I would be making less than \$900 a month. That's not enough to live off of."

Hughes and her daughter live in a two-bedroom apartment that costs \$675 a month, plus \$200-300 a month for bills. On top of that, Hughes spends close to \$200 a month on car expenses, and at least \$100 a week on groceries, but the groceries



Photo by Anica James

Amanda Hughes, 31, bartends part-time at The Duke in Belleville, making \$8.90 an hour, which is \$1.35 less than the general provincial minimum wage. A single mother of a 15-year-old, Hughes relies on tips and an Ontario Works stipend in order to make ends meet each month.

ies normally cost more if her daughter wants to have friends over.

"Most of my tip money goes to Cali," Hughes said about her daughter. "She's 15, so she isn't old enough to work yet to pay for the things that she wants, so I have to work extra hard so that way she can have a semi-normal lifestyle."

Although she has been bartending for the past 10 years, Hughes said that her real passion is baking, but that she won't be able to focus on that until her daughter is finished high school.

"I bake cakes and cupcakes on the side for birthdays and events, but I don't do it that often because I don't always have the energy," Hughes said about her under-the-table baking business. "I bring in \$150-200 a month from that, but even then it's just extra cash that is put towards bills and living expenses."

Even with the money that she does make each month, Hughes still has to rely on Ontario Works and other means of income to break even, or close to.

"I only work part-time here," Hughes

said about The Duke. "I work 23 hours a week over three shifts, so I pay out more than I put in. It's tough, but I manage. I wouldn't survive if my boyfriend or mom didn't help out."

Currently, liquor servers earn \$1.35 less than the general minimum wage of \$10.25. Even with the increase beginning in June, bartenders will only see a 65-cent-an-hour raise, which will still put them at \$1.45 less than the general minimum wage. On top of that, all tips that bartenders receive are supposed to

be claimed for income tax. If the tip is left in cash, the Canada Revenue Agency normally does not hear about it, but if the tip is left on a debit or credit card bill and there is a paper trail, not reporting can be risky.

"If minimum wage went up to a reasonable amount so that way I could work a better job and be happier than I would continue with this," Hughes said. "But until then, I have to rely on whatever tips people will give me, and here, most people don't have the money to tip anymore."



Instagram winner

This week's winner of our weekly Instagram contest is Taylor Hermiston @taylorhermiston. Send your submissions to #pioneerpics.

Tuberculosis testing to be done at Loyalist after positive test for disease this fall

By Victoria Thoms

One student at Loyalist College developed tuberculosis disease in late October, bringing the disease to the attention of staff and students across campus.

After the health centre advertised free TB skin testing along with a list of symptoms, the awareness of TB at Loyalist increased.

"Honestly, this is the first time I've ever heard about it being an issue," said Stephanie Stokes, a child & youth worker student. "I took the TB test last year, so I don't think that I would really need it again. I would like to know how the student contracted it. That would be a big interest to me."

"The Quinte Health Unit's website has a fact sheet about tuberculosis, with lots of information," said Shawna Hoskin, a public health nurse for the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit. "That will help you with understanding the causes of TB."

Students were informed at the end of October by email that a student at the school was diagnosed with tuberculosis disease. The student was away from school shortly after, meaning there was a low chance of staff and students contracting it.

"The student that had TB was away for two weeks. After someone has tuberculosis, they are put on medication for approximately six months," said Hoskin.

After the original case at Loyalist occurred, many students had forgotten about the email, or never read it to begin with. An email from Loyalist President Maureen Piercy was sent out at the beginning of February, indicating that the health centre would be offering multiple time slots to get the testing done.

Students began talking about the symptoms, and what it meant for the college.

"I'm sure a lot of people in our school have different types of diseases, so it doesn't really affect me. All I have to do is stay clean, wash my hands. I've got my testing done already," said Steven Bailey from the police foundations program.

The World Health Organization estimate that two billion people worldwide have latent TB, meaning they are simply carriers.

"That is what the TB skin test is really diagnosing. It's not diagnosing active TB. It's finding latent tuberculosis infection," said Hoskin.

"There's always sickness going around, so it's not really a worry to me. I don't go to the doctors very often," said Mac Matson, a police foundations student.

The symptoms of tuberculosis disease usually take around eight weeks to show up, according to the World Health Organization.

"That's why we're doing the clinics now, instead of in October. It takes at least eight weeks for the bacteria to be able to show up through the TB skin test. So that's why we're doing the clinics at this time. Otherwise, we wouldn't have been able to really alleviate any concerns if we did them earlier."

TB skin testing will be available free of charge by public health nurses at the Loyalist health centre on Tuesday, Feb. 25 with the follow-up reading on Thursday, Feb. 27 and again Monday, March 3 with the follow-up reading on Wednesday, March 5.

"We're doing two more, just so everybody has a better opportunity of getting there," said Hoskin.



Photo by Matt Desouza

Hotel in the making

Bruce Knutson and Rick Selman are just a couple of the many people working on the new TownePlace Suites by Marriott hotel being built on Bell Boulevard. The new hotel will employ at least 30 people, and will have 100 rooms. Belleville will be the third city in Canada to have a TownePlace Suites by Marriott hotel.

What's next for the Memorial?

By Zac Shunock

Many cities across Ontario are taking part in downtown revitalization efforts. Belleville's downtown is no exception. The centre of attention however, surrounds the question of what's next for the historically rich Memorial Arena in downtown Belleville.

In 1929, the Memorial Arena opened its doors for the first time. At that time, it was referred to as the Hume Arena in memory of soldiers of the First and Second World Wars.

The Memorial was home to the Belleville McFarlands, a team that won the World Hockey Championship in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1959.

According to an Intelligencer article, city council has been told that it would cost around \$7.6 million to renovate the Memorial to current arena code.

Although many continue to ask what is going to happen with the Memorial, the real question lies in what the community wants to see happen.

The decision of what is to happen with the Memorial is not left up to one committee or individual but rather the community at large.

Recreation, Culture and Community Services director Mark Fluhner says, "It's entirely up to council and this community to decide what direction it

wants to go."

There have been many proposals, rumours and ideas put in front of city council involving the Memorial's fate, but no rash decisions will be made with this project.

The Memorial closed in 2010 after mechanical difficulties resulted in unmanageable ice conditions. Justin Somerville, an arena maintenance worker for the City of Belleville, worked at the Memorial in its last operating season.

"It's unfortunate that the Memorial is sitting empty, taking up valuable space when the city is trying to revamp downtown," says Somerville.

"There have been a lot of ideas, like having an outdoor rink replacing the Memorial," he added.

The history of the Memorial and the McFarland team is an important milestone in the city's past. Not only is the McFarland team a key part in the history of the Memorial, but it was also the home to many individuals both young and old who may have laced up their first pair of skates in one of the dressing rooms.

Although the future of the Memorial remains unclear, what is certain is that whatever decision is made will be in great consideration to the community and history of the Memorial.