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Photo by Kaitlin Abeele

Eric Coulas of Barry's Bay, Ont., races across Crowe Lake on Saturday at the fourth annual Marmora Fire Fighters Association Snowmobile Drag Race. Coulas finished last in both his races, but still enjoyed the day on the lake with his wife and friends. "My pit crew, they do a good job for me. And I let them down," said Coulas. "Sometimes it's a race, and sometimes it's a drag."

Gusty weekend on Crowe Lake

Annual snowmobile races have less than ideal conditions for racers and spectators

By Kaitlin Abeele

Gushing winds matched the speeds of the snowmobiles as they charged across Crowe Lake at the fourth annual Marmora Fire Fighters Association Snowmobile Drag Races.

Wind gusts up to 74 km/h and melting ice and snow created less than ideal conditions for the races on Feb. 22. Organizers had to drain large pools

of water along the track and weigh down the starting lights after the stand was blown over before the race.

Racers and spectators treaded carefully across the lake, slipping and sliding along the ice as the wind pushed back with every step.

"It's actually affecting some of the sleds. It wants to pull them," said Stephen Brownson, an organizer for the event.

Many spectators were deterred by the weather, wondering if the event would still take place after rain and warmer weather started to thin the ice.

"We have a good turnout of racers. Last year we had a few more spectators, but with the rain, people are a little down," said Brownson.

Mike Gaebel, a resident of Marmora, Ont., chose to brave the elements.

"I've been coming for a few years now, but it wasn't as wet," said Gaebel. "But you've got to put up with the weather, it's here. Despite the cold, you just get warm for it and enjoy."

Eric Coulas, of Barry's Bay, Ont. competed in two of 36 races held throughout the day.

"I'm legal in the 0-500, then I'm jumping a class to the 500-600. And I don't want to go any higher because you see how stuff goes quick here, I can never keep up," said Coulas.

His pit crew worked quickly to refuel the sled in the five minutes between each of his runs. Each race uses almost a full tank of high octane racing fuel,

which means the sport can become quite expensive.

Coulas became interested in racing as a young man, riding motorcycles on ice rings. But it became too dangerous, and he switched to drag races on snowmobiles.

"I'm too old to go around in circles," said Coulas with a laugh. His wife chimed in, "You'd get too dizzy now."

Coulas finished last in both of his races, and felt disappointment at letting down his pit crew. Regardless, he still enjoyed the day on the lake with his wife and friends, munching on a cold cheeseburger and sipping a beer after his final race.

"Sometimes it's a race and sometimes it's a drag," said Coulas.

Local documentary filmmakers share their best at kickoff

By Mitch Ward

Local documentary filmmakers were given the chance to build some hype about their latest features yesterday evening.

Downtown DocFest, Belleville's now annual documentary festival, kicked off by holding Trailerfest, an evening pre-

viewing trailers for documentaries from the upcoming film festival, that runs from Feb. 28 to March 2.

Organizers gave local filmmakers the most attention at the event, giving them the opportunity to introduce their trailers to the assembled audience upstairs at the Belleville public library.

The festival's lineup includes 16 locally-made films, out of a total of 52 documentaries to be screened, with a mix of shorts and feature length pieces.

Belleville residents Adam and Andrew Gray introduced the trailer for their first feature length film, *Fly Colt Fly: The Legend of the Barefoot Bandit*, a chronicle of

the exploits of Colton Harris-Moore, an American teenager who was a high profile fugitive for almost three years.

Andrew Gray summed up why they chose to do a film about Harris-Moore "In a nutshell, just because it's cool. He's a really interesting character. People were really excited to talk about him. It was just

a good story we wanted to share."

The brothers have made 10 shorter documentaries so far, mostly for television, but their first feature was three years in the making.

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Photo by Justin Chin

A CN freight train passes through Belleville earlier this week. According to the Transportation Safety Board, an average of 1,128 railway accidents have happened per year between 2007 and 2011, with an average of 686 derailments per year. Of these, 105 derailments on average involve dangerous goods.

Emergency disaster plan in the works

Recent reports of multiple train derailments spark need for planning

By Justin Chin

The county's emergency services co-ordinator says he plans to approach rail companies and other parties in the near future to prepare for a possible derailment in Hastings County.

With the recent reports of multiple train derailments across the country, it has sparked John O'Donnell, the community emergency management coordinator and acting chief of Hastings County's Emergency Medical Service, to revisit the Hastings County's emergency response plan with the Hastings-Quinte emer-

gency services committee and the county council.

"We are ready," said O'Donnell.

"In light of all these train derailments and disasters that have occurred in Canada in the last few months, maybe we should be a little proactive and look at if there's something we can do working with all the partners," O'Donnell said.

According to the Transportation Safety Board, an average of 1,128 railway accidents happened per year between 2007 and 2011, with an average of 686 derailments per year. Of these, 105 derailments on average involved dangerous goods.

A dozen trains pass by Belleville and Hastings County every day, some tracks running along the backyards of homes, and a derailment would be disastrous for the community.

There is an emergency plan in place

and "we will deal with it, (if an accident were to happen tomorrow)," said O'Donnell.

Paramedics, police and firefighters will work together and solve the problem, he said.

The last train derailment with which the county dealt occurred on Feb. 21, 2003 in Tyendinaga Township, where a petroleum gas tank exploded and caused 300 residents to be evacuated, with 19 people injured. The fire burned for three days.

"You can't predict everything that would happen but we are trained to deal with emergencies. We have been dealing with multi-casualties incidents on Highway 401 (in the) last couple of weeks," said O'Donnell.

"If the emergencies come up, we will deal with them. That's why we have an

emergency plan in place."

Currently, there are 13 staffed ambulances that are continuously on the road and serving Hastings and Prince Edward Counties.

A deployment plan will be in effect and will call upon neighbouring counties, such as Lennox and Addington County or Northumberland, for more resources if required to help address the situation effectively. Additional help from Napanee can arrive within 20 minutes depending on where the resources are.

According to the deployment plan, lower-priority calls, such as nursing home to hospital transport, will be put on hold until the calls are completed.

"I don't think there's anything missing (from the current plan), but we live and learn," said O'Donnell. "The plans have been in place for many years."

The plan is revisited annually and

small adjustments are made after those evaluations. O'Donnell said he did not recall the last time a big adjustment was made to the plan.

"We haven't seen tornado warnings 20 years ago, but we are seeing tornado warnings a lot more," he said. "Maybe these have to take a lot more precedence on our plan. It's a work in progress all the time."

"We are pretty well prepared, but when you have these Lac-Mégantic pop up, you start to think, 'That could be Quinte West or the City of Belleville,'" said O'Donnell. "Let's get everybody together and provide information and make sure we can protect our citizens the best we can."

The Lac-Mégantic derailment took 47 lives on July 6, 2013 when a freight train carrying crude oil derailed and exploded.

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