



Photo by Bradley Ruszkowski

Ross Livingston checks the lights in Centennial Park in Trenton on the day before the Santa Clause parade last Saturday.

# Yes, there is a Santa Claus

By Bradley Ruszkowski

For anyone who ever questioned if Santa was really real, I assure you he is. I have met him.

He lives in Trenton, Ont. and by day, he goes by the name Ross Livingston.

How do I know he is real some may ask? There are many defining characteristics. For one, "Santa Ross" has a huge affinity for toys. In fact, an entire room of his mother's war-time house is dedicated to his rare collection of die-cast NASCAR replicas.

He really does like to fly with the same ancient methods from times past. This may be why he lives so near CFB Trenton. His eyes light up as he recounts photographing parachutes dropping from the

rear end of military aircraft like presents being sent to chimneys.

He really will put a lump of coal in your stocking, if you've been misbehaving. It's coal he saved from his last job at the processing facility that he was working when the greatest honour of representing Christmas was naturally bestowed upon him.

They said, "Ross, we need you to be our new Santa!"

"So, like any Canadian 89-year-old mother is inclined to do, "We got him a suit from the Sears catalogue," said Santa's mom. "You love doing it and you're good at it, and really what else would you do!"

Christmas is his time to shine. At Halloween, he and his mother hand out apples and juice boxes, clearly not understanding the routine.

Ross shook when he laughed "like a bowl full of jelly" as he recounted stories of how he and his mom went all over town in mid-October to purchase every single can of white aerosol hair dye to save it, clearly sabotaging the festivities.

He knows whose dogs prefer Timbits over doggie treats, and of course, Ross knows who's been naughty. He would have kicked them out of the park while working security!

His cheeks really are red and rosy, if not from the altitude of international flights, a little bit of blush never hurt the complexion.

He definitely rides a sleigh pulled by eight tiny reindeer, but a lesser-known fact is that there is also an 18 wheeler involved to keep low and in view of the

spectators, of course.

Ask any of the thousands of children who light up when that white big rig pulled down Quinte West's main drag if Santa is real.

The excitement was as real as it gets as Ross appears magically into view of downtown as the sleigh soars high above the Trenton River over the bridge, past the illuminated Centennial Park, capturing the imaginations of all, even those being slightly hardened with age.

Eyes of all onlookers twinkled like the thousands of lights Ross personally set up, of course with the help of some of the slightly-smaller-in-stature helpers (some call them elves). Ross and his helpers worked tirelessly for weeks in advance, perfecting and shaping the twinkling display in his secret workshop to ready

characters of the nativity, a menorah, Thomas the Tank Engine, and gingerbread man and women alike, under the red trails of an electric north star mingled with reflections of the real stars in the nearby river's ripples.

All the children in Trenton know that Santa is real. They saw him. They heard him from miles away wish a merry Christmas to all. They pulled on the glistening white beard and know that it is really real.

As for the allegations that he is not real, or even the rumours that he may retire any time soon, Ross says, "As long as I have someone to do my makeup for me, I'll keep doing it."

I guess even a guy as big and famous as Santa still needs his mom's help now and then.

Try disputing the realness in that.

## Hospice...

Continued from Page 1

The hospice's staff and 130 trained

volunteers provide physical, emotional and spiritual support to individuals who are facing life-threatening illnesses as well as bereavement support to families who have lost a loved one.

They travel to homes throughout

the community to lend their support and help ease the strain felt by the patient's family. There are over 400 clients who rely on the services provided by the hospice.

The hospice provides care in the community free of charge. Many of

those who used Hospice Quinte's services in the past go on to become volunteers themselves. Last year its volunteers logged over 13,000 hours of service. Their Memory Tree campaign has raised \$40,000 since its inception.

## Meter fees go to feed hungry

By Carla Antonio

Residents of the Hastings and Prince Edward counties might actually be happy to pay parking fees this holiday season.

The month of December hosts the annual Feed the Meter campaign. For the entire month, parking will be free throughout downtown Belleville, Picton and Trenton. Any money collected by the parking meters will be donated to help decrease hunger in local schools. The campaign is co-ordinated by Food for Learning, an organization that aids the Hastings and Prince Edward County District School Board in the administration, organization and finances of student nutrition programs.

"The benefits of participating in a student nutrition program are immeasurable," said Maribeth deSnoo, executive director of The Hastings and Prince Edward Learning Foundation in a recent press release regarding the event.

"Many students depend on our programs for their daily nutrition. Feed the Meter allows us to continue to provide quality food choices for all students."

It has become evident that for various reasons, students often don't meet their nutritional requirements, which hinders their learning potential in the classroom. Whether it's because of poverty, long commutes to school, early morning practices or simply a lack of appetite in the morning, student nutrition programs in public and separate schools reduce malnourishment by offering healthy breakfast, snack and lunch programs to students.

"The Hastings and Prince Edward Counties have the second highest rate of food insecurity in the province of Ontario," said deSnoo.

"Food for Learning programs are necessary for the students in our area. We know that children learn better when they are properly nourished."

In the breakfast programs, volunteers prepare and serve breakfast to students before classes begin. Schools that offer a healthy snack program will often have a bin of accessible nutritious snacks. Lunch programs ensure that students who did not bring lunch or have forgotten it are fed, so that they may keep their energy levels up and continue to perform successfully throughout the day.

The target for this year's Feed the Meter campaign is to raise \$30,000 to top the \$28,657 raised last year through donations and sponsorships.

Volunteers kicked off the event last Saturday by putting campaign posters on the meters. A community breakfast and campaign launch event was planned for 7:30 a.m. today at the Greek Hall on Harder Drive.

## Belleville high school hosts historical event at AA Football National Capital Bowl

*La Salle Black Knights win championship against Sydenham High School*

By James Paddle-Grant

Last Wednesday, Belleville hosted the high school AA Football National Capital Bowl.

The games took place at Mary Anne Sills Field at noon and 2 p.m., with the senior game proceeding after the juniors.

Contesting for the junior match on this day were the La Salle Golden Knights and the Fenelon Falls Falcons.

La Salle came out for both halves of the game strong, as they got the first three touchdowns in the first quarter.

Fenelon Falls retaliated with three touchdowns, but it wasn't enough as the La Salle Black Knights recorded three more touchdowns as well as a touch back to boost them past the Falcons with a final score of 44-21.

Afterwards came the senior National Capital Bowl game, between the Sydenham High School Golden Eagles, and the Crestwood Secondary School Mustangs.

A series of mistakes made by the Mustangs allowed Sydenham to make three quick touchdowns in the first quarter. But later in the second quarter, Crestwood managed to bring themselves back into the game trailing to the Golden Eagles with a score of 24-21 at the half.

Sydenham woke up in the second half as they scored two touchdowns and two touchbacks pushing them out of reach from the Mustangs. Crestwood later recorded a final touchdown but it was not enough as



Photo by James Paddle-Grant

Sydenham Golden Eagles' Defensive Back, Thomas Withey (right) blocks a Crestwood Mustangs throw in the fourth quarter of the National Capitol Bowl. Sydenham finished the game on top 40-27.

the Golden Hawks outscored them 40-27.

Both victors in Wednesday's match were from the KASSAA, the Kingston Area Secondary Schools Athletic Association, division. Wednesday's Capital Bowl was also marked as historical since it was La Salle Secondary School's first-ever national champion-

ship with the junior victory.

With only seconds left on the scoreboard in the junior championship, the La Salle Black Knights dumped their Gatorade drinking fountain over their Head Coach Karl Hammer, congratulating him on the victory.

"For a small school with 638 stu-

dents, we've done extremely well in the football game against big teams, and we're on a good track," stated Hammer.

Soaked, and with his face filled with excitement and joy, Hammer concluded by saying, "We're National Capital Bowl champions for the first time ever and it feels great."