



Photo by Alyssa Lloyd

Corner Gas writer, producer, and front-man, Brent Butt, brings the crowd to tears at the Empire Theatre Wednesday. Butt, a lifelong comedian, says if he could choose any career to follow for the rest of his life it would be stand-up.

Comedian the ‘Butt’ of many jokes

By Alyssa Lloyd

“I think it had something to do with a bit of authenticity,” Brent Butt explains about why he thinks Canadians were so drawn to Corner Gas.

“When we were making Corner Gas, we didn’t think anybody was going to watch. We kind of thought we were tricking the network into giving us money for a TV show no one was going to watch,” Butt jokes.

“We just ended up concentrating on do-

ing a show that we liked and we thought was good, and I think people responded to that. I think they could tell they weren’t being sold a bill of goods,” Butt says, humbly describing the approach they took to create Corner Gas and why people may have enjoyed it so much.

Asked how hard it is to let go of the Corner Gas cast and crew who were practically family, Butt says, “It was difficult. It was something very special that we had, and you don’t know if you’re ever going to have anything like that again.

“But I really believe it was the right de-

cision. If we kept going, the show would have started to falter, and it was too special to me to let it wither on the vine and die, get old and sick.

“At a certain point, you have to step away and let something be what it was, but it was very difficult.”

On the road again for a standup tour, Butt recalls days gone past and some of the highlights along the way.

“I had wanted to do standup since I was 12. That’s when I made the decision I wanted to do this, or at least try to. When I was in high school, I wrote some origi-

nal material and performed standup for the first time and the response was better than I could have ever hoped. It gave me all the encouragement I needed to think ‘Well, maybe I can do this for a living,’ and that was a huge pivotal show for me.”

Although Butt has been a writer, producer, actor, director and performer in many of his projects, if he had to choose one, he would choose performing stand-up on stage for a live audience.

“I think I’m a performer first, either on camera or on stage. If I could only do one of those two things, I know that standup

comedy is the only thing I could never walk away from. Everything else is fantastic and I feel blessed that I get to do it, but, if I could only do one thing, I know that I would be miserable if I was in a position where I couldn’t do standup comedy anymore.”

He pauses before adding: “I’d probably go mad.”

Butt is currently travelling Canada performing standup in a lot of the small towns where he got his start.

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No overnight place to go for Belleville’s homeless

By Maggie Naylor

The news of the homeless deaths in Toronto has confronted Canada’s response to our homeless population, and what we are doing to stop these events from continuing.

Lack of effort may come to the mind of an individual but I can assure you that is not the case.

The nearest official homeless shelter to Belleville is in Kingston about an hour drive away, and fifteen and a half hour walk.

In total, Kingston has 86 beds to offer the homeless, 111 if you include housing for domestically abused women and their children.

Belleville on the other hand, thanks to the Canadian Mental Health Association has 33 beds available with only 18 beds designated for adults.

This is not a case of lack of need. The Red Cross, in charge of disaster management in the area (including personal disasters: homelessness) can tell you that.

The Red Cross Hastings County Branch takes one third of the calls for level one disasters (homelessness) in all of Ontario. Considering Ontario takes up more of Canada’s population than any other province, it’s safe to assume it has one of the highest call volumes in all of Canada.

So why aren’t we the community with the same problem on our streets?

“Our service and the service of the Salvation Army and other partner agencies work very closely with the



Photo by Maggie Naylor

Doreen and Phenix Hewitt stand in the lunchline in the Salvation Army building on Thursday Jan. 15, 2015. Salvation Army is one of the many organization set in Belleville to help those who need it and opens their building to many people for lunch at 11:30 everyday but Wednesday.

police and the hospital, so we try to make sure people don’t fall through the cracks,” says David Allester lead volunteer for the Red Cross.

Considering the police are constant-

ly patrolling the community, it only makes sense they would find people in tough situations and call up the Red Cross, sometimes driving them to the location of their accommodations. No

one wants to see here what happened in Toronto. “We understand that that could be a reality, we’re trying as best we can to put steps and safeguards in place so that will not happen in our

community,” says Marlene Gray, Belleville’s Police Inspector.

A lot of the time the public doesn’t understand what makes people homeless, and why certain people need homes if even just temporarily.

Communication from the Red Cross and the hospital is necessary because sometimes people come in, like a caller this Christmas Eve who was from out of town, needed to get cancer treatments at the Belleville General Hospital for near a week, and couldn’t afford accommodations. They didn’t know anyone in the town to house them so they called the Red Cross rather than sleeping outside.

“It’s really hard to generalize and a lot of people do. They have this particular stereotype in their mind and it probably relates to you know, a panhandler on the corner you saw or something and its much more complex than that,” says Allester

Many times it’s a family that can’t pay their rent and are in the process of finding somewhere new.

“The sad part is,” says Sandy Sidsworth, Executive Director for the CMHA, “as broad as you try to make that safety net, it doesn’t always reach out to people, and then we hear the stories in Toronto and it’s horrifying.

It’s not always about money. Sometimes it’s about community will, and when you have a community willing to work together how can you support it at [a federal] level to make sure things happen? That’s my wish in a perfect world.”

Spiritual healer shares his skills

By Andrew Lahodynskyj

The smell of sage, sweet grass, tobacco and cedar fills the bear's den of Blue-Star Bear, or Vaughan Rightmyer in English. The room is full of native artifacts – a bear pelt on the wall, feathers, stones and other little trinkets cover an alter-like table. Rightmyer is conducting a traditional healing ceremony. He is a shaman, which is a spiritual healer.

“The bear's den is a place where people get a chance to rest and be re-awaken,” said Rightmyer.

Ever since he was a very young boy, Rightmyer knew that being a shaman was his calling in life.

“Grandmother Willow asked me at the age of four, ‘would you like to be a shaman?’ he recounted. “I told her yes, and that I wanted to help mankind.”

Becoming a shaman helped Rightmyer to learn and following his native traditions. He was taught to live the life that he wanted, and never to hide his identity.

He learned the art of healing through his grandmother. She taught him about plants, medicine and how to help people. She also gave him another important message. “Listen to your dreams, because they are your teachers.”

There is something very peaceful and calming about a traditional healing ritual. It starts with a smudging of sage, sweet grass, tobacco and cedar, the four sacred medicines.

“When they smudge they go to their heart, ‘May I have a good heart,’ to their mouth, ‘May I speak good words,’ to their ears, ‘May I hear good things,’ to their eyes, ‘May I see well,’ and may I have a good mind and may my body be pure,” explained Rightmyer.

He doesn't always know exactly what is wrong with a client.

“Sometimes they don't know what's wrong, and sometimes I don't know the answer, until the stones go on that person's seven spots of their body,” he said. “That tells me which part of their body needs help.”

“When they come in and lay down, they have to open themselves to the universe. If they don't, it's not going to work. They have to believe in them-



Photo by Andrew Lahodynskyj

Vaughan Rightmyer visits one of his many prayer spots in Zwick's Park in Belleville, Ont. As a native shaman, or spiritual healer, he brings his clients to this location to relax and strengthen bonds with mother earth. This is also the location where he put his daughter's and grandmother's ashes.

selves, because it's them doing all the work. So when you are laying those stones and you re-awaken them, ... they send out heat and they send out unconditional love.”

Rightmyer then starts singing an ancient chant to begin the healing process. He beats away on a leather hide drum that he built himself. The sounds and smells are hypnotic.

He said he hopes to one day be able to build his family a log cabin in the

woods where they can live off the land.

“I would feel more grounded and peaceful,” he said, referring to his dream life. He plans on growing a garden, raising some goats, creating clothing for he and his partner and even making toys for his son. He hopes that this lifestyle will make his connection with mother earth stronger, and make him feel more comfortable.

Trying to live a traditional lifestyle in a modern world has been difficult,

but Rightmyer said he has found a way to balance the best of both worlds.

“Just finding people to have as a support system, that's what keeps me balanced.” He said he believes that if he didn't have this support system, he would have lost all of his traditional values and knowledge. Becoming a shaman has taught him many lessons, but the most important is to love yourself and to live life to the fullest.

“Don't let people stop you from

making your dreams come true. Just be yourself and enjoy every moment,” he said.

Or, like his friends from the west coast usually say to him, “It's a good day to die. Doesn't mean you have to die, it means everyday is a good day no matter what. You live life to the fullest, you be yourself.”

For a video on the shaman, go to: <http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=47396>

Joyfull Noise group shares its love for singing

By Kayleen Preston

Be there or be square for an evening full of laughter, dance and song Tuesday evenings at Belleville's Core centre.

Women of all ages come together to sing songs mainly from the '50s and '60s, and occasionally from the '70s. It does not matter if you have sang professionally before. All that matters is that you like to sing.

Joyfull Noise has groups in Belleville, Kingston, Cobourg and Toronto. The Belleville and Cobourg groups began in September 2013, while Kingston and Toronto have only started up recently.

“The neat thing about our group is that all of our choirs learn the same repertoire. So, for instance, if we have

a gig here in Belleville, it's open to the Cobourg women to come and sing with us too. And we do that quite often,” explained Anne Reid who is the manager of the Belleville club.

The Belleville group is composed of approximately 55 women, and anywhere from 20-55 women show up each week. The members who are unable to attend one evening can still practise using a music track on the computer they have been given. Local musicians Tim Campbell and Brittany Brant with Cheryl Thrasher, who is the main director as well as the director for the Belleville group, produce the tracks. Reid described their partnership as “magic”.

The group uses the tracks to create four-part harmonies to recreate the well-

known songs.

The Belleville group has mastered approximately 20 songs to perform at events including, *Happy Together* by The Turtles, *Twist and Shout* by the Beatles, and *California Dreaming* by the Mamas and the Papas. Recently they've begun to learn *Build me up Buttercup* by The Foundations.

“A lot of our concerts have been for charity events,” says Shaena Dearman, director of the Kingston group, who was filling in for Thrasher who was ill on Tuesday evening. “We also go and travel to the local nursing homes and senior residents to entertain them. In the evenings, we'll take some of our practices there. We always have a year-end concert as well, where we pick some benefit we want to

support, and bring our friends and family, and anyone who wants to come listen to us, to put on a performance for them.”

The women enjoy boogying to the music as their enthusiasm radiates through them and to anyone who is listening. Some people are moved by their music so much that they become emotional.

“We've had people come up to us after performances and start to cry because it brought back a memory of when they were 16 and sitting with their sweetheart. So you never know what you evoke with music,” Reid reminisced.

“I just think music is wonderful for all kinds of reasons, and that being one of them. It's something happy that we do, and boy, we need that now in this world.”

Comedian...

Continued from Page 1

“When I first started standup, I moved to Toronto, and spent almost five years touring all over Ontario, playing all these nice big theatres now. I still think of all those old pubs where they used to have comedy nights, you know, chicken wings and comedy.”

Asked what is next for him, Butt replies, “My production company, Sparrow Media, is transitioning right now. It's kind of an exciting time. Traditionally, we've just done stuff that I've written and now we're opening the doors to working with other creative people to produce -- we're trying to get in on the development of a few TV shows and a new movie.

“There's a lot of talented funny people but getting a TV show actually produced and on the air or getting a movie in theatres is a very difficult proposition. You need to have a certain amount of infrastructure and a bankable company. Having been in the business now for awhile, with this success, that's what my company has, I can be that place now that people come to.”

Butt has been the source of countless Canadians' entertainment throughout the year, whether it's been on stage or in front of the camera.

Asked what he does for his own entertainment, Butt says he enjoys comedy and detective movies.

“Good standup to me is really something magic. It can be god-awful and horrible as well, but when it's really good, it's something of magic to me.

“I also love old detective movies. That's one of the reasons I made No Clue. I'm a big fan of the detective genre, so I wanted to make a movie with a bit of homage to the old films.”

Butt has put his light hearted, whimsical touch on everything comedic he touches. Asked why he chose this approach to comedy, he comfortably talked about being happy and authentic.

“My goal has always been to entertain. I think it comes back to that authenticity thing, what is real, I mean, for me.

“I'm a pretty easy going guy. It would be false for me to try and act, you know, edgy, dark, and try to be hip, when it's just not who I am. I'm not a cynical person.

“I feel that, of all the situations you could have landed in on earth, I landed in a pretty fantastic situation and scenario and I count my lucky stars. I'm a pretty happy guy, and as a result if comedy should be authentic, that's the place that I have to come from, and it's a place I'm happy to come from.”

Grandmother shares her love

Older women provide support to new mothers who are overwhelmed

By Elaine Bombay

This grandmother's heart is big enough for everyone.

Since 2010, Joanne Wheatley has been a volunteer with Grandmother's Heart.

As a volunteer grandmother, Wheatley visits new moms once a week for six weeks. She sometimes helps with some light housekeeping or by reading to older children in the home. Other times, she takes the new mom out shopping or to appointments. Or she might just hold the baby so that mom can take an uninterrupted shower.

“I've always had a heart for young moms. Even as a teenager, I had a friend who was a single mom and who was ostracized at the time by the community. I just really felt to keep the friendship up. I guess that's how it started,” she said.

That was when her concern for young women in crisis pregnancies started. Wheatley said a crisis pregnancy is when the woman feels that her pregnancy threatens her in some way and that abortion may be her only option.

In 1988, Wheatley served on the steering committee to start what is now known as the Belleville Pregnancy and Family Care Centre, located on Dundas Street East. The BPFCC is a Christian agency that serves pregnant women and new parents in a variety of ways, such as free pregnancy tests, prenatal decisions, parenting classes—including one just for dads—and post-abortion care.

The centre also provides practical help with clothing and equipment. Additionally, the centre offers a program



Photo by Elaine Bombay

Joanne Wheatley, a volunteer with Grandmother's Heart, poses for a photo in her home in Foxboro. Wheatley has been supporting new mothers through the Belleville Pregnancy and Family Care Centre for over 25 years.

for all women, even those without children, that helps them develop a healthy understanding of themselves in areas such as personality, boundaries, and relationships.

“We did a lot of research in the community to see if it was needed. There was a high rate of abortion in Ontario. One in three pregnancies was ending in abortion. We wanted to provide an alternative,” said Wheatley.

The centre opened in 1990. Wheatley served as director from 1992 until 2010.

After stepping down as director, Wheatley wanted to stay involved, so she volunteered with Grandmother's

Heart.

Any new mother can sign up for a grandmother. Wheatley said that a lot of their clients are women with more than one child who are feeling a little overwhelmed.

Besides the practical help with dishes and laundry, Grandmother's Heart is mostly about friendship. It's about offering a listening ear and a loving heart to someone who is feeling isolated and overwhelmed.

Heather Tapp, director of BPFCC, said that those who have requested visits are those who may have no mentor or family support at a crucial time in

their lives. They really appreciate having someone visit and support them, she added.

Currently, there are three volunteer grandmothers. Tapp said that the program is under-utilized and she would love to see it grow.

The program officially offers one, two-hour visit a week for six weeks, although Wheatley will continue to visit unofficially if asked.

“Some move away and then you don't see them anymore, but there are one or two that I have an ongoing friendship with over the years. We get together,” said Wheatley.



Photo by Mary Barber

Antonina Durham displays a homemade costume in the likeness of a Russian nesting doll, or Matryoshka, to be used in the celebration. Antonina says that Russia has “an old folk tradition.”

Festival celebrates Russian heritage

By Mary Barber

Russian spirits were high at the Bayview mall on Saturday, Jan. 10. Celebrants gathered outside the Heartbeat thrift store, where the owner Antonina V. Durham was preparing for folk festivities.

Iolka, the Russian New Year, is celebrated on Jan. 13, six days after the Orthodox Christmas season begins. In Russia, traditions remain prominent and deep-rooted in the peoples' history, and the New Year's celebration is no exception.

Antonina, a Siberian immigrant and founder of the Canadian Russian Culture Society, hosted the 15th anniversary of Taste of Russia. Antonina's initiative is to support a bridge between different cultures and inspire communication between Russian-speaking people.

“When I came here, people were afraid of me,” Antonina said. “People were com-

ing just to look at me because there were so few visible Russians here in Belleville during this time.”

According to a 2011 census by Statistics Canada, the Russian population of Belleville is a small one, with only 205 people with a Russian background. But if the celebration is any indication, their community is vibrant and steeped in traditional values.

Antonina says that Russia and Canada share many similarities, especially in the sense that Canadian cultures differ from province to province. The same goes for Russia throughout its republics. Both countries are also ethnically diverse.

“For those coming here, language is key for our purpose of meeting - language is culture,” said Antonina. “It's a different experience moving to a different country than it is to visit one. Many things are attached to culture and they are not always visible.”

In 2001, Antonina began the Canadian Russian Culture Society to abridge the two cultures in Belleville. The local society, which Antonina refers to as her ‘project’ is a platform for cultural connectivity.

“When we come together we feel connected. We can understand that the other people here share cultural references; like poetry, music or humour,” she said. “Cultural nostalgia can be tormenting. Some people have nostalgia towards old times but nostalgia towards your roots can be a depression.”

One of the purposes of Taste of Russia is to shed light on misconceptions about Russian people. Many generations were terrified of the Soviet Union as an aggressive power.

“It's funny to me because I had no such upbringing in my generation towards western culture,” says Antonina. “Russia has an old folk tradition.”

These old folk traditions carried over

into Saturday's events, bringing people's spirits up, and giving people the opportunity to have fun and to communicate with others. Fifteen Russian-speaking people came, which Antonina said is a big number considering the small group of Russian people in Belleville.

Puppeteer Mike DeRushie, who had previously performed in Antonina's Russian-styled Pinocchio, said multiculturalism in Belleville has grown a lot since he was a child. But, “there aren't quite as many celebrations of different cultures I find around Belleville,” DeRushie said. “And if there are, I find them quite low-key.”

The event saw many colourful characters and costumes, including Russian nesting dolls and Grandfather Frost, or *Dedushka Moroz*.

Antonina and Grandfather Frost enthusiastically lead the celebrants around the New Year tree while proudly singing Russian folk songs. In one particularly

animated number, the spirited celebrants performed “the bear dance,” where everyone's dancing evoked imagery of Russian bears festively dancing through the woods.

The bear has remained a widespread icon of Russia for nearly 500 years, symbolic of the Russian people's ability to face challenges with ferocity and sheer determination. In more joyful times, such as the New Year, the Russian bear has been a symbol of seasonal festivity and comradeship.

“When I came here in 1998 to the University of Toronto, I picked up a newspaper that included something about the political state of Russia,” Antonina said. “It was such a stupid, primitive image of a big fat muscly woman making an aggressive expression; that was supposed to be symbolic of Russia's population.”

Antonina said she hopes to dispel any negative imagery and stereotypes against Russian Culture for the future.



Photo by Graeme Murphy

Rev. Vicki Fulcher sits comfortably in the spiritual meditations room in Belleville General Hospital. Rev. Vicki Fulcher has been a working chaplain specializing in palliative care at the hospital for the past several years.

Minister offers a compassionate ear

By Graeme Murphy

Being an excellent listener and good samaritan is something that comes naturally to Rev. Vicki Fulcher. Her guiding presence reverberates through many people who walk with her on her spiritual path. Fulcher is a guiding calm.

Fulcher has been a chaplain, or spiritual care worker at Belleville General Hospital since 2005 and clergy of Bridge Street Church in Belleville since 2008. A prominent member of Belleville's spiritual community, Fulcher has a unique background that affirms her place as a

shepherd among sheep.

Having been a congregational member of the United Church of Canada since she was a young child, Fulcher said she recognized her calling at a very young age. After she received her masters in theology from Queen's University, the church allowed an ordination directly into chaplaincy, which isn't a common occurrence. Fulcher's specialty in palliative care requires a delicate work formula of patience, wisdom, and grace.

“There is a connection with the word chaplaincy. Among other placements, it has to do with hospitals and it's all

about working with people and, more importantly, accompanying them. I have learned that chaplaincy is really sacred accompaniment and that makes sense to me.”

Such is the ceaseless mantra that absorbs Rev. Fulcher. Her inviting presence and demeanour alone deliver an essence of hope through times of bleak adversity. These are but a fraction of the abilities given to a very spiritually driven woman. Fulcher is a pragmatic listener and a devoted healer.

To hear Rev. Fulcher's story, go to: <http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=47377>

Regulations change for medical marijuana

By Thomas Surian

In March 2014, the Canadian government changed the regulations surrounding medical cannabis that allowed only large licensed producers to grow for medical users.

This annulled the long-standing laws that allowed individuals to grow their own cannabis, leading to an uproar among the medical cannabis community.

Users have concerns regarding cost, quality and availability of the cannabis grown by the large-scale producers.

According to Health Canada, the Marijuana for Medical Purposes Regulations (MMPR) legislation creates conditions for a commercial industry that is responsible for its production and distribution. The regulations provide access to quality-controlled dried marijuana for medical purposes, produced under secure and sanitary conditions to those Canadians who need it, while strengthening the safety of Canadian communities. Lawyer John Conroy, a longtime medical cannabis advocate, filed a lawsuit against the government, accusing Health Canada of violating the rights of medical Cannabis users and growers.

As a result, the federal court granted an injunction on March 21 of last year. This allowed all licenced growers prior to the new regulations to continue to grow, until the courts make a final decision, expected to take place next month.

Ross Middleton lives in the Belleville area and has been a licensed user and grower for nine years.

“If it wasn't for the injunction, I wouldn't have the writ to grow my own,” he says. “It's only because of the supreme courts that everything is on hold until we have a trial.”

There are 38,000 of us that are covered by the injunction, and all of us are still

allowed to grow and still allowed to possess, but only until the trial is over, pending the outcome of the trial. I'm pretty hopeful, and all indications are that they are going to say yes.”

Middleton uses medical marijuana to treat chronic pain caused by Peripheral Neuropathy with which he was diagnosed. He and his wife Deb own a small hydroponics store in Belleville. They sell equipment and supplies for indoor gardening. Approximately 60 per cent of the business comes from licensed cannabis growers. They are passionate about spreading knowledge and educating people about growing their own medicine.

“It works for me and for having neuropathic pain for years and trying every drug that medical establishments had to offer and none of them work,” Middleton says. “It's the only thing I have left, and it works for me, it takes my mind away from the constant agony. That's what it does for me. Then who is to deny me that when nothing else will work?”

The federal courts are expected to come to a decision in the upcoming months -- whether they will continue to allow people to grow their own cannabis, or would they go ahead with the MMPR.

“It's been 100 years of probation and it has not worked. None of it has worked. It's time to change it, to keep doing the same thing over and over... and expect a different result. If you ask any psychiatrist, they will tell you that that is the definition of insanity,” says Middleton.

“I don't see how they're going to convict a sick person for trying to treat their disease when nothing else has worked. How is that going to stick in court?”

Middleton is confident that the upcoming decision will be in his favour.

Footbridge to college being proposed

By Andrew Meade

If you build it will they come is the question Loyalist College sustainability coordinator Becky MacWhirter has about the proposed pathway and footbridge across Potter's Creek.

Retired journalism professor and part-time instructor Joe Callahan, along with a number of volunteers around campus, have been working on a proposal to construct a footbridge and pathway over Potter's Creek, connecting the campus to Avonlough Road and the Bridge Street extension.

"It was quite a few years ago that I pitched the idea to Maureen Piercy but I'd had the idea for a while before that", Callahan explains. "I have ridden a bike to the college from the city of Belleville a few times and it was not a safe experience. It was a bit too risky riding up the Moira Street West extension so I thought it doesn't make sense for people to ride their bikes out here."

Callahan proposed that a pathway connecting the college to less heavily trafficked residential streets east of the Loyalist campus would allow a safer and more accessible pedestrian and bicycle route to the school. He and a group of volunteers pitched the idea to college president Maureen Piercy approximately five years ago.

After meetings with the city planning department, Quinte Conservation and the college, an agreement in principle was reached to construct a bridge and pathway connecting the campus with Avonlough Road and the Bridge Street West extension.

The project is now on the brink of moving forward but is held up with funding and student support. The estimate from Whitby, Ont. firm AECOM to engineer and construct the project is \$110,000 to \$120,000.

Although the pathway and bridge directly affects the school, MacWhirter points out that the initiative is not necessarily just a Loyalist College one.



Photo by Andrew Meade

A bridge over Potter's Creek and pathway connecting the east end of Loyalist College with Avonlough Road and proposed bicycle lanes along Bridge Street is planned to cross the creek here.

"This is more of a grassroots effort and I think that is still going to be the strategy going forward. It's not necessarily a Loyalist College fundraising initiative but more of a grassroots and volunteer one."

The college is not completely removed from the initiative, though. It is reaching out to identify what student support exists.

"There is a subcommittee that is meeting regularly but the project is in limbo until we get a better understanding of student support. I think the time of year

doesn't have walking and biking on people's minds but I think you will see interest and efforts ramp up around spring," says MacWhirter.

"In terms of the sustainability committee, this is something that they're really interested in, but it's not a sustainability committee initiative."

The next step in the process of starting the project is to see what footing it has with the student population and if an agreement on fundraising contributions could be reached.

"We're really just starting. The first thing we're doing is to contract student government. Our first meeting is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 26," says Callahan.

"It might be a little preliminary to say what part the student government will have in this project. I think it's exploratory right now. I guess the first meeting would be to see if there is support for this and what they have heard from students about demand for this," MacWhirter explains.

plains.

"The bridge and path are only the first part," Callahan adds.

"For me, the path is a safety issue. It came from finding a safe route to the college and it is much safer than riding along the roads here."

Callahan says he is hoping for contributions from the student government, as there are other elements necessary to complete it. He notes that a lighted trail to and from campus is needed to make sure it is safe for users.

Battle continues between naturalists and power company

By Amanda Paulhus

It's been an ongoing tug of war over Ostrander Point between Prince Edward County Field Naturalists and Gilead Power Corporation.

After the Ministry of Natural Resources made Crown land available for supporting renewable energy projects, Gilead Power responded with the proposal for a wind farm located on Ostrander Point. As it stands this wind farm would include nine turbines, five and a half kilometres of road and a transformer station. In December 2012, Gilead Power was issued the Renewable Energy Approval (REA) by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

The Prince Edward County Field Naturalists (PECFN) were quick to act and, teamed with The Alliance to Protect Prince Edward County (APECC), appealed to the Environmental Review Tribunal during January 2013. They argued that the construction of the proposed wind farm would cause serious and irreversible harm to species in the area, including the Blanding's turtle which is considered a threatened species under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007*. It wasn't until July that they would receive a response but their patience paid off as the Tribunal decided to revoke the REA for Gilead Power's project.

Gilead Power responded with their own appeal to the Divisional Court of Ontario, and in January 2014 the Tribunal's decision was overturned. This meant that the Ostrander Point wind project was once again approved.

Following this decision, the PECFN once again appealed this time requesting a stay of construction, which

would put a temporary halt to wind farm construction. Because of the turtle and many species of bird's breeding and migratory habits, construction is not permitted in the area from May 1 to Oct. 16, no matter what the ruling of this new appeal is. In the end, they were successful as the Ontario Court of Appeal granted their request in April, so no construction could be commenced.

Most recently both sides have met again in court on Dec. 8 and 9. A ruling has not yet been released.

Cheryl Anderson, past president of the PECFN, has been an adamant voice in defense for the Blanding's turtle and Ostrander Point's other various wildlife.

"Everything we do impacts all the other creatures we live with and on whose contributions we depend on," she said. She believes strongly that Ostrander Point should be left undeveloped because of the importance of the plants, animals and natural environment that exists there.

"Ostrander Point is also the home and breeding ground of 11 other species at risk. It is the take off and landing place for thousand of migratory birds, bats and butterflies," Anderson stated. These 11 species are mainly birds and were part of the PECFN's original appeal, along with the other migratory species. Anderson and the other PECFN have gained support from a variety of organizations including Ontario Nature, Nature Canada, Suzuki Foundation and some international support, such as BirdLife International.

"It's hard for us to understand how we can get all of this support, all of these people. Maybe the PECFN are just a bunch of little old ladies but all these big organizations that have also agreed with us and yet the government continues to insist that we should go through," Anderson said. "The importance to all of the creatures of the natural world to maintaining biodiversity seems

to have not been recognized by our governing bodies."

"I do think that their [PECFN] concerns are warranted but the compensation put in place will create an overall benefit for the turtles," Mike Lord, president of Gilead Power Corporation said. He added that Gilead Power conducted four years of various studies about the environmental features of the area. They found two endangered species, the Blanding's turtle and the whip-poor-will, a species of birds.

Following policy that requires for every one acre purchased for construction five acres must be purchased for conservation, Gilead Power has acquired approximately 100-acres of land that they will preserve for birds and species such as the Blanding's turtle and the Whip-poor-will. This area is directly north from the potential wind farm site.

Lord is also confident that the turtles will make a quick and full recovery following the construction of the wind farm. He referred to the site's history when Ostrander Point was a frequently utilized bombing range for the Royal Canadian Air Force through the years 1952 to 1957. "The site was bombed to oblivion and the turtles still came back."

Lord also addressed the PECFN's main concern about the five and a half kilometre stretch of road being a hazard to the turtles by stating that gates will be constructed to lower the amount of traffic through the area and therefore lower the risk of impacting the turtles.

If the project is approved, Lord hopes to see the Ostrander Point wind farm up and running by spring 2016.

Currently, both sides wait for the final ruling from the Ontario Court of Appeal that will decide the fate of Ostrander Point.

Hospice Quinte challenges dieters

Dump the Plump includes weigh-ins and financial motivation

By Thomas Surian

As the holiday season comes to close, many people vow to fulfill their New Year's resolution to lose weight.

Hospice Quinte's Dump the Plump is here once again to help. This marks the 18th year for the event, which focuses on helping people lose weight and live a healthier lifestyle.

Participants pay \$25 to enter, with proceeds going to help support Hospice Quinte. A small portion will be set aside to be awarded to the biggest loser at the final weigh-in.

"It goes from January to June, once a month every second Tuesday; five weigh-ins total," says Rachel Pearsall, public relations and fund development manager at Hospice Quinte.

The first weigh-in took place at the Hospice Quinte on Dundas Street East on Tuesday. Participants arrived throughout the day to sign up and weigh-in. They received some words of encouragement from the volunteers.

"This year, we have a little something different. If you don't lose weight one weigh-in or if you plateau, you have to give another donation back to hospice. So a little bit of incentive keeps (you) going and being successful," says Pearsall.

This is Pearsall's first year working with Hospice Quinte.

"This is the first time that I've worked for Dump the Plump. It's very popular and people love it. People tend to come back every January to do it again and then again, which is really nice."

"I just need to lose weight," says Conny Yrjola, who has participated in the event for the last few years.

"I want to feel flexible and healthy about myself and my body and to have more energy. I have a business and my business name is Glamour Junky. I don't feel glamorous like this."

Hospice Quinte relies on events like this to generate the majority their funding. Thirty per cent of the funds comes from the government, with the rest being raised at community events like Dump The Plump and their upcoming Mardi Gras Ball in April. They have team of around 100 volunteers that assist with these other events.

Pat Lytle has been helping with Dump the Plump for 11 years. She started volunteering after she retired from a career in nursing.

"I missed working and one of the other volunteers caught up with me and said you'd be really good at this... so I took the volunteer course and once I did that, there was no turning back. I really enjoyed it."

Uncertain economy as oil prices continue to dip

By Moush Sara John

The energy story that has dominated global headlines for the past few months has been the steady decline in the price of oil, and the speculation around it.

Although the oil industry has always been subject to vacillation with its history of crests and troughs, the price of oil has mostly been steady over the past five years and has not seen such a drastic dip since 2009. The price has fallen by more than 40 percent since June 2014, when it was \$115 a barrel, and now it is below \$70.

"I'm watching the screen. Every dollar knocked off a barrel of oil shakes the market like a mortar shell," says Peter Tertzakian, chief energy economist and managing director at ARC Financial Corporation, an energy-focused private equity firm.

"This is war. World war. It's a price war between the corporate foot soldiers of major oil producing nations."

According to *The Economist*, as energy experts and financial analysts try to figure out a satisfying answer as to why the price of oil is dropping so fast, they all agree at one level that it is pegged to the demand and supply. However, it has also been attributed to a failed agreement at the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) meeting in Vienna in November 2014, when the members were unable to agree on production curbs. This has hugely impacted oil-exporting countries such as Russia, Nigeria, Iran, and Venezuela.

"Oil prices have halved in three short months and the early casualties are starting to come in. Severe budget cuts, wounded bank accounts, bankruptcies, shell-shocked bankers," says Tertzakian.

"At a national level, some producing nations like Venezuela are already limping. The fog of this price war has just set in and it's hard for stakeholders in this business to see much beyond a lot of pain."

According to *The New York Times*, with the U.S. increasing its domestic production over the past few years, the need for imports is much less, which directly creates surplus oil in the market. This results in its primary suppliers -- Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Algeria -- looking elsewhere and targeting the Asian markets, and lowering prices to stay ahead of the competition.

In another study by *The Economist*, the decline in oil prices is a combination of various factors. There are two major oil-producing nations, Iraq and Libya, both in a tumultuous political situation, yet showing no signs of slowing down their output, producing nearly four million barrels per day combined. In spite of this abnormally high supply, the demand is as low because of weakening economies of Europe and developing nations, and the paradigm shift from oil to high-efficiency fuels.

According to *Business Insider*, in an interview conducted by the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) with Saudi Arabian oil minister Ali al-Naimi talked about how he had convinced OPEC members that curbing production was not in their best interests.

"As a policy for OPEC, and I convinced OPEC of this, even Mr al-Badri (the OPEC secretary general) is now convinced, it is not in the interest of OPEC producers to cut their production, whatever the price is. Whether it goes down to \$20, \$40, \$50, \$60, it is irrelevant."



Photo by Moush Sara John

As the fuel prices are in sharp decline, commuters are having a field day refuelling. The price of oil is the lowest it has been in five years.

Ali al-Naimi goes on to state in the interview that if OPEC members curbed production even slightly, their competitors would mainly benefit.

"Is it reasonable for a highly efficient producer to reduce output, while the producer of poor efficiency continues to produce? If I reduce, what happens to my market share? The price will go up and the Russians, the Brazilians, U.S. shale oil producers will take my share."

According to Peter Tertzakian, even though it is impossible to say how low the oil price will dip, as of now there is

no respite.

"Producers have a tendency to produce even more when price first falls, because they try to offset revenue loss by boosting output. Data from October and November of last year shows this pattern of behavior in Russia, Iraq, Libya, the U.S. and even Canada to name a few competitors."

"All of which means we should expect more production and potentially lower prices for a few months yet -- at least until market death begins to cull the fray."

Family sells flowers for over 120 years

By Dillan Cools

My great great grandfather was S.S. Potter, everyone called him S.S.," said Anne MacKinnon, fifth generation owner and operator of Barber's Flowers, the best smelling shop in downtown Belleville.

MacKinnon's great great grandfather Samuel Stanley Potter started a farming and canning business in Prince Edward County over 120 years ago where they grew fresh fruits, vegetables and of course, flowers.

Potter would bring his flowers to Belleville on a horse and wagon to sell it at the Farmers' Market behind City Hall, before renting a storefront on Pinnacle Street and eventually purchasing a store on McAnnany Street.

"He had all daughters so he asked his oldest grandson (Stanley Barber) to help him with the business which was my grandfather and once the kids were raised, one of his daughters (Lottie Mae) came and helped in the business," said MacKinnon, speaking to the businesses temporarily skipped generation.

After starting with his grandfather, Stanley Barber continued to run the business with his two sons, Willet and Robert (Stanley) Barber. Willet had two children and Robert had three, including Anne MacKinnon who was born in 1968, the youngest of all.

MacKinnon grew up on the same family farm that her great great grandfather had started the original business on a century before. She lived in a house that her parents built after their marriage in 1960, located across from her uncle's family home and cluster of greenhouses.

"We had a big furnace in the middle that heated all the greenhouses in the winter and big piles of coal in the back that I tobogganed down, even though you weren't supposed to," said MacKinnon.

MacKinnon's first taste of the family business was working in the greenhouses as a kid, and later as a teenager, she pitched in at the store during its busiest times.

A rise in coal prices during the '70s and '80s and the introduction of more cost effective methods of importing flowers lead the family to minimize the greenhouses share of the operation.

"The beginning of Grade 12, you're sort of at that age and stage when you're trying to sort out what you want to do with your life," said MacKinnon.

"I thought I would like to do something so I could stay in the Belleville area to be close to family, thought it would be a good community to raise my own family someday...and thought 'Well, this business seemed to do well for my family,'" added MacKinnon.

MacKinnon took the next step and enrolled in a two-year retail floriculture program at Humber College in Toronto that taught the business side of running a

flower shop on top of the usual studies of arrangement and design.

MacKinnon had been returning home to help out during the Christmas holidays and after graduating in 1989, began working full time at the shop.

"Every day is totally different. It all depends what customer walks through the door or what time of year it is. I feel really lucky that there is always something new," said MacKinnon, who still works full time at the shop.

Having just finished up a successful Christmas season, MacKinnon will have her hands full again in no time as Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day and the wedding season are just around the corner.

"You do it yearly but it changes and there are different trends so it's not just the same old, same old," said MacKinnon.

Rapid technological advancements are also affecting the floral industry as scientific studies offer insights into how to make flowers last longer.

This is important for MacKinnon who, in addition to receiving Ontario grown flowers, is receiving thirsty, dry-packed flowers from such faraway places as Holland, Colombia and Ecuador.

"We even get stuff from Australia and Israel...they really come from all over... but I don't think we've ever had anything from Russia," joked MacKinnon.

MacKinnon must have the up-to-date know-how to properly revive, rehydrate and treat these flowers after such long trips.

"We go through a lot of steps to make the product the best it can be for our customers, so that the flowers look good and last as long as possible for the customer," said MacKinnon.

With such a long history in the Belleville area, it's no surprise that Barber's Flowers sees its fair share of familiar faces.

"This man came in every week to get a red rose, and he was an older man, and after he'd done this for a year, he showed us his wife's obituary and we realized that she had passed away," said MacKinnon.

"We asked him if he was taking the rose to her cemetery and he said no, he was putting it next to her picture and he's still doing it. It's been over a year, he comes in every Friday. We know he's coming," added MacKinnon.

It's no secret that downtown Belleville could use some more investment, some more movement and a serious facelift, but MacKinnon is thinking deeper than this.

"The infrastructure underneath is ancient. We could be in deep trouble...The whole east side drains to some huge pipe that runs under Front Street and it's from the 1800s or something. We're really living on borrowed time," added MacKinnon.

"I don't know if I'm trying to keep the business going for another generation or sell it for my retirement," said MacKinnon, the mother of two teenagers.



Photo by Dillan Cools
Anne MacKinnon owner of Barber's Flowers, organizes gerbera daisies from a recent shipment at the Front Street store in downtown Belleville.

MacKinnon's 17-year-old son has not expressed an interest in running the business but there is a chance for her 14-year-

old daughter who is still three years younger than MacKinnon was when she decided to pursue floriculture. "We'll see what happens."

As long as the pipes don't explode, Barber's Flowers will be open for business for some time, as MacKinnon shows no signs of slowing down.

Business a legacy of three generations

By Moush Sara John

Cold from wind chill numb my face and back of my hands as relentless as the blue azure skies that stretch above me and beyond as I make my way to Stephen Licence Ltd.

Most shop windows in downtown Belleville display a fancy selection of goods available, but I am pleasantly surprised as my attention is taken up by the curious display of the miniature train model that runs through snowy slopes, past a small village.

Stephen Licence set up shop in Belleville in 1918, but little did he know that his establishment would be flourishing in the midst of a struggling downtown even after so many years.

In 1952, when Licence died, it was under the ownership of another longtime employee for five years and when he was retiring, Gerry Bongard, Licence's son-in-law thought, "It would be a nice gesture to bring it back into the family fold. It didn't precisely come to the family, it came to the Bongard family.

"We kept the name Stephen Licence. At different times, family members often questioned this and wondered why we didn't change it to Bongard -- because of Carole, my wife. And out of respect for the long-time establishment. From 1918-1952, he had established a pretty good business operation."

Under the ownership of the Bongards, the almost century-old establishment has grown into a robust business with a huge selection of bicycles, sporting goods, and hobbies, and although the store has moved its address on Front Street through the years, it still remains a landmark in downtown Belleville.

Well-stocked -- besides different makes of bicycles -- are a range of Canadian winter icons -- skates, hockey sticks, snowshoes, toques, mitts.

"Sometimes I can recognize the children and grandchildren of customers I have served in the past. But teenagers and the younger people are not into most of the things these days, because they're all on ipads," Bongard says.

"A gentleman was just in and he went to look at the paint. And I said, 'Oh, you've run out of paint, you'd had to come in early. He said, 'Yeah my wife bought me a model for Christmas.'" And now he is enjoying it because he's back doing something he liked when



Photo by Moush Sara John
Gerry Bongard, owner of Stephen Licence Bicycles and Hobbies, at his business in downtown Belleville.

he was younger. So that's where the market is.

"We used to be strong craft workers, but not anymore. There are very few people doing craft work now. It's a whole different world but there are enough people there to keep us going.

"Technology has affected us. We've lost a good share, a good amount of what would have been our customers. The young are caught up in a technology that is generally not healthy and not safe. And they might wisen up someday but it might be too late."

When Bongard bought the business in 1957, he knew very little about the business and has learned much of what he knows on the job. He says, "It wasn't easy. You make mistakes for sure. We still make mistakes, it's part of the game.

"Well there's always the risk of buying too much. Buying something you shouldn't have bought. We had two stores at one time. And that proved to be a bad decision. The second store was shut down

in the 1990s. It was there for 20 years.

"If something doesn't work, you get rid of it. We had radio-controlled products and it wasn't doing well, so we just abandoned it and found products that do work."

On any given Saturday and even through the week, there are likely three generations of Bongards tending the shop with other longterm employees, most of whom have been with them through the decades.

Gerry's son, Kevin Bongard says how he got interested in the business. "It has been 35 years. It's the first and only job I had. I was about 15. I can still recall as a kid I'd get dropped off on Saturday afternoons by my mother, and I'd be amidst all the peers that were here -- friends, my dad, my brother, my cousins, and other folks that worked with us here. It was just like the family gathering place. And now my son, John is here on Saturdays.

"This store had maybe 19 people work-

ing here back then. When I say I got dropped off by my mother, it was more like day care. I'd have little odd jobs. It was like a big extended family."

Gerry Bongard has another love -- singing. He tells me about how he has been a chorister in the same church choir since he was nine years old and still is, "My hobby is retailing, but it is also singing. I think"

And looking back does he think he has fulfilled his dreams? Gerry says, "I'm doing something that I would've always wanted to do but in a different way. My program has been to help people.

"I'd dreamed of being a doctor, which all young people think about way back then. But it's basically to be of service to people. So I look at this particular program as a service to people's enjoyment and we make it the very best we can to see that they're happy. And if they ever come to get me someday, I will either be selling or singing!"

Planning for the big day

By Gabrielle Smith

Summer may feel like it's eons away, but for couples planning a wedding in summer 2015, there's no time like the present to begin planning the big day.

The Unveiled Bridal Show is a boutique-style bridal event being hosted in the former Brick Furniture building on Pinnacle Street this Sunday afternoon. From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for \$10 in advance or \$12 at the door, brides are invited to explore the vendors who will be advertising their services of everything from dresses to DJs, bakers to photographers.

In addition to the vendors, there will be free mocktails and refreshments, mini Lily's Bridal fashion shows, and various giveaways, leading up to the grand prize giveaway of \$1,000 cash.

Liz Cesareo, owner of All Dressed In White Bridal Boutique, says the event comes at a perfect time, since January is the height of planning for this upcoming wedding season.

"If I were having a wedding in summer 2015, now would be the time I would be shopping for my dress, if I don't already have it. I would also be looking into cakes, limos, photographers, et cetera. Those things get booked up very quickly."

With all of the elements that go into a modern wedding, it's easy to see why so many people become overwhelmed when planning the day. Having such a variety of wedding-related professionals under one roof is a way of making the process more manageable.

To see more on the bridal business, go to: <http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=47325>

Safety on the ice

By Alyssa Lloyd

It gets dark early, the days seem so short yet tend to drag on, there are so many things you could be doing if it was just a touch warmer out, but only a few things to be done in this cold. But is it cold enough?

Their words of caution, whenever ice is involved is, "no ice is safe ice."

For a look at the work being done by Belleville Firefighters training on the ice, go to:

<http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=47340>



Photo by Andrew Lahodinsky

Aaron Crossen is the owner of Need A Hero? Comics on North Front Street. He opened the shop four years ago because he was tired of having to either order online or drive to Toronto to buy comic books. Crossen said that he was a huge fan of the X-Men cartoons in the '90s, but didn't get into comic books until he was in college. "That's when I fell into the rabbit hole." Some of his favourite comics are Batman, Deadpool and Spiderman.



(Above) Mike Malachowski is pictured in his antique store, Funk & Gruven A-Z on Bridge Street. Malachowski opened the shop 17 years ago to pursue his love of antiques and crafts and arts.

Photo by Franki Ikeman

(Right) Tammy Yeotes is the owner of Yuppy Puppys, a dog groomers business in Belleville. Yeotes began her own business three years ago. She had been laid off from her two previous jobs and decided she would rather be her own boss.

Photo by Amanda Paulhus



(Above) John Irvine has been running his small barber parlour for 32 years. One of his passions is to paint barber's poles. "Nowadays there are no barbers left. They don't teach this profession anymore. They prefer hairdressing," he whispered.

Photo by Giovanni Capriotti

(Right) Bill Chesher is the owner of Chesher's Outdoors. "It all started because I wanted to help people," Chesher is a well-known figure in the outdoors community. He co-hosts two television shows, Into the Wild and Canadian Whitetail.

Photo by Alyssa Lloyd



Small business owners prefer their independence



Photo by Amanda Cheung

Marina Boretski, owner of Boretski Gallery in downtown Belleville, poses with articles of vintage clothing. Boretski collects and sells antiques and vintage clothing and accessories. Her love for these items started in her teenage years and has continued as her business passes its decade mark.



(Above) "It's been a crazy few months with the holidays and winter coming on. It is nice to be able to try and get caught up but there is always something else that needs to get done," says Ed Kraus, owner of Ideal Bike in downtown Belleville.

Photo by Andrew Meade

(Below) Antonina V. Durham was one of the two vendors to brave the cold at the Farmer's Market in Belleville. Durham, originally from Russia, has been operating Hear-beat, a thrift store located in Belleville's Bayview Mall for 15 years. Durham's favourite part of being a business owner is her freedom and her ability to be creative.

Photo by Carla Antonio



On the street

David Fransky asked people at Loyalist College the following question:

Do you drink too much coffee?



Amanda Thompson, first-year registered nursing, “Depends on the week. Depends on if I am working a lot or stressed out then yes, but if not, then no. That is one of the things that I am trying to cut back on right now.”



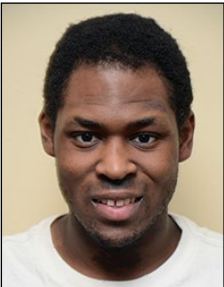
Taylor Leeder, third-year television and new media production, “I think at times I can but right now I am on a tea binge because I was super sick over the holidays and coffee kind of upsets my stomach.”



Jasmine Papoutsis, third-year television and new media production, “I don’t personally. I am not a big coffee drinker so I usually have like a couple of cups a week.”



Kaitlyn Stethem, first-year pre-health, “Yeah, probably. I have it when I get up. I have it sometimes at school and I have it when I get home from school.”



Paul Andrews, first-year fitness and health, “Not really. I only have it once in a while. I only have mediums and to me, that is enough.” and to me, that is enough.”



Dave Lightowlers, first-year architect technician, “Yes. I drink three pots a day. Bad habit.”

Editorial

Everyone has a right to shelter

The idea of fellow human beings dying because of a lack of shelter during the Canadian winter is appalling. This defies the basic physiological necessity of every human being.

According to the Homeless Hub, 35,000 Canadians are homeless on any given night. In the plummeting low temperatures of Canada’s winter, the bitter cold is no joke. Two homeless men were found dead in Toronto last week, within a span of 24 hours.

There should be places individuals can go to stay warm and sleep. Having warming centres that open only until the evening, just as the cold peaks, is not enough. Individuals have no place to go once the warming centres have closed. There is no place where they can sleep so that their safety and humanity is not threatened.

During the recent cold snap, local officials mentioned two warming centre options, the Belleville Public Library, which is only open Mondays to Saturdays and only until 8 p.m. or 5 p.m., and the Quinte Sports and Wellness Centre, which opens every day until midnight.

Belleville does not have shelters where individuals can go to shield themselves from the harsh cold overnight. There are services that may provide up to 72 hours emergency relief, but that’s only three days out of Canada’s long winter months.

If people are in need, they need to contact agencies, which may then send them to shelters in areas like Kingston or Peterborough.

When it’s the middle of the night and past office hours, posting ‘after hours’ numbers around the city is not enough. Making a call can even be inaccessible to some individuals.

There needs to be a place available and easily accessed for the people who need it. There needs to a place that has open doors where people can walk in any time of the night knowing they’ll be kept warm throughout. It’s time for action. We don’t need more people to die before an overnight space is made.

Amanda Cheung

Medical marijuana system changes not working

With the latest changes to the medicinal marijuana system in Canada, the government has simply made an unnecessary mess for its users.

The decision, put into effect in April 2014, was to have medicinal marijuana available only if prescribed by a doctor with the product coming from one of Health Canada’s large, licenced growing facilities. Prior to this, patients eligible for medicinal marijuana were able to obtain a license to grow their own, many claiming that the effects of the drug having given them a better quality of life than they’ve had in years.

According to Health Canada, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the principal active ingredient in cannabis, targets cannabinoid receptors that are found throughout the body and are especially numerous in the brain and nervous system. These receptors are involved in the regulation of many bodily functions.

Sufferers with such illnesses as multiple sclerosis claim using marijuana eases their pains without the harsh side effects of stronger substances, such as morphine.

A federal court injunction issued in March helped the situation by exempting some of those who previously held licences. However, anyone new to the game must play by the new rules, and those with licences are being denied renewals.

Users who were growing their own for as little as 87 cents per gram will now have to spend anywhere from \$4 to \$12, a fee many simply can’t afford.

However, the price of the drug is the least of their concerns, as many patients are worried that they will not be approved for a prescription from their doctors, the now sole gatekeepers to the life-altering medication.

Users are worried that the majority of doctors are reluctant to prescribe marijuana as they claim there is a lack of scientific evidence of its effects. According to CBC Canada, the College of Family Physicians of Canada’s CEO Dr. Francine Lemire said the lack of research into cannabis has left many family doctors unsure about which patients could benefit from medical-grade weed and what dose should be prescribed.

“We have little scientific data to guide us,” the college’s Dr. Sharon Circone said. “We have extremely little guidance from Health Canada. This was sprung on us.”

An understandable point, yet it is unfair to put suffering patients through an obstacle course when harmful and highly addictive substances, such as painkillers, are given out like candy.

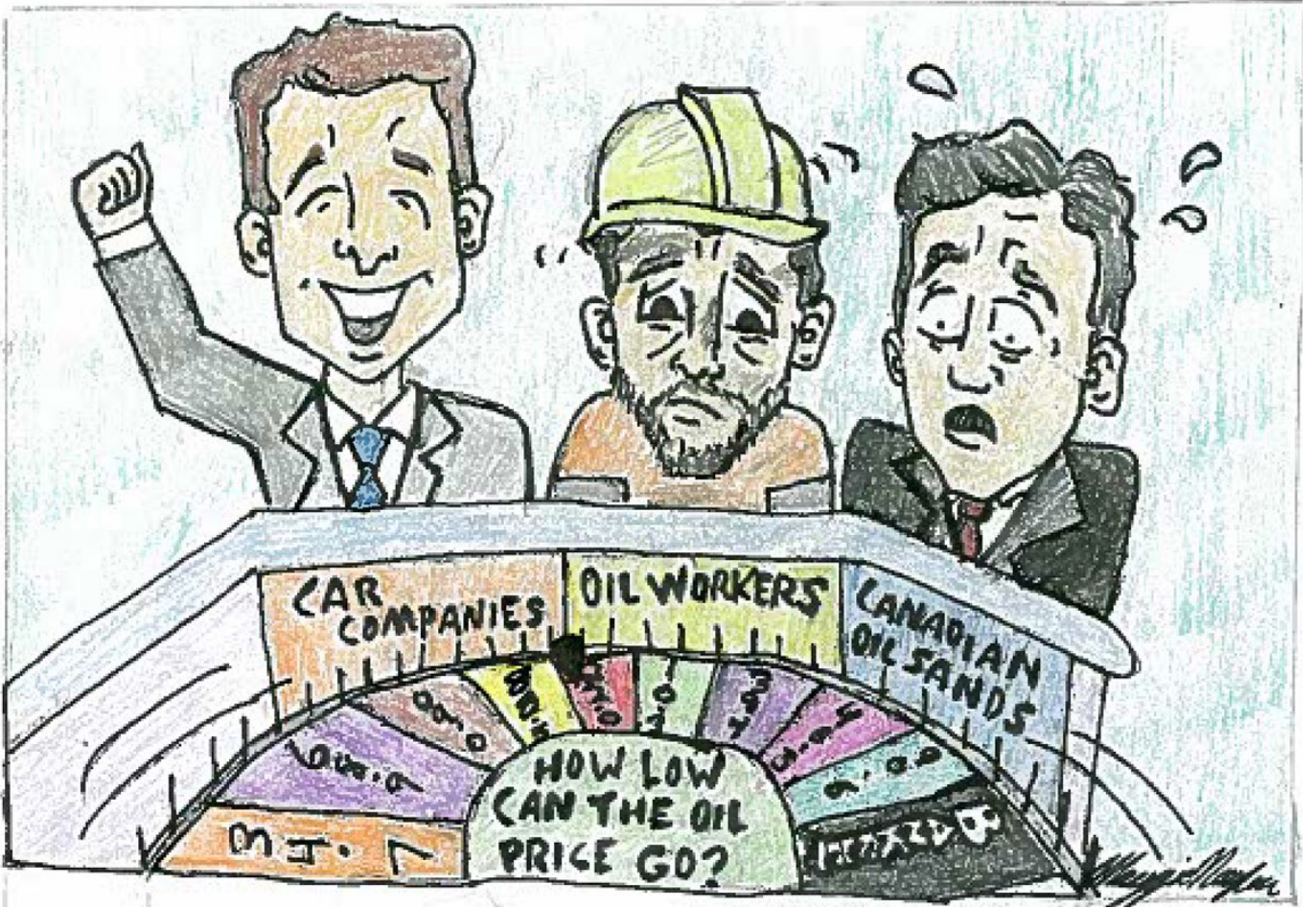
The government argues the former system allows for corruption as growers could be selling their crops in a black market, which should be of minimal concern when compared to the problems caused by the new system.

With the amount of time, energy and money that goes into the fight against illegal growing and distribution of marijuana, it makes much more sense to put this towards the war on harder more harmful substances, such as crystal meth or heroin.

It all seems quite unnecessary, especially with our neighbours south of the border having now legalized marijuana in five states, legalization being a major issue surrounding Canadian politics for many years. Many believe it is bound to happen; it is just a matter of time.

Perhaps there is no better time than the present.

Carla Antonio



Opinion

Suicide brings out important reminder of the importance of society’s acceptance

By Gabrielle Smith

Leelah Alcorn, a 17-year-old transgender teen from South Lebanon, Ohio, died by suicide at the end of December.

Her death has been an emotional and controversial topic in the LGBTQ community. In addition to mourning the loss of the teen, the community has used the information Alcorn disclosed in her suicide note to put the heat on conservative Christian parenting.

In her note, Alcorn paints a picture of her parents as closed-minded and abusive. When she came out to them as transgender, they pulled her out of school and extracurricular activities, restricted her Internet access, and enrolled her in Christian talk-

therapy in hopes that her gender identity could be prayed away.

Carla Alcorn, Leelah’s mother, continues to use male pronouns and Leelah’s given name, when speaking about her. “We don’t support that religiously,” she has said repeatedly.

Taking a more supportive approach, Deacon Ray Dever of Tampa, Florida has taken to the New Ways Ministry blog to speak about his family’s journey to accepting his transgender daughter. He speaks about the “increasingly inaccurate vision of what a Catholic family looks like, in spite of the growing diversity of the families that comprise the people of God.” He encourages Christians to take note of Pope Francis’s recent “How am I to judge?” statement.

Personally, I can’t speak on Christian-

ity or church communities, as I have only ever been an outside observer. However, my understanding is that those who believe in God believe he loves all of his children. I don’t understand why LGBTQ people would be an exception to that.

I can understand that having a queer or transgender child could be a challenging adjustment to make as a parent, especially if gender issues were not something you had been previously educated on, or if your community is not necessarily one of tolerance or acceptance.

However, for parents in this position, I think it’s important to educate yourself for the sake of your child. Consider the consequences and evaluate the damage an unsupportive home life can do. Is it worse to have a transgender child or no child at all?

Humans overlooking profound knowledge of geese

Their trips to the south when the weather gets cold something we should emulate

By Dillan Cools

The recent arrival of true winter weather marks the sixth annual spike in my appreciation for the often-misunderstood Canada goose.

I find it hard to understand why so many people simply dismiss these majestic birds as pests, rather than learn from their noble ways.

Each year, I consider myself lucky (by human standards) to be given a few stress-free weeks to hang out back home with the most important people in my life.

This being said, as I found my way back to school in Belleville where I’ll spend the long, cold and lonely winter, the geese down the street are preparing for the trip of a lifetime.

These geese have got it so figured out that each fall they get together as family, as friends and as a community, to take a ridiculously long vacation in a warm place of their choosing.

I give credit to the humans who have tried to emulate this grand idea but sadly their attempts can only fall short, as they don’t have the numbers, time, money or skill to experience it in true form.

Humans have pushed walking to its maximum potential and now, because of their faux-active lifestyles, require the assistance of expensive vehicles when dealing with any terrain.

On the other hand, every goose possesses a wide range of mastered abilities such as flight and floatation, making these vacations a breeze.

When in the south, a vacationing human may spend all of their loonies to rent a boat, while the crafty goose will simply transform into a boat.

A great Canadian inventor and artist named Bill Lishman, well-known for his work with ultralight aircraft, found inspiration in the prowess of geese and their millennium-old history of vacation. His current ideas in the aviation world are ground-breaking, as he is designing an ultralight to deliver humanitarian aid.

The sometimes arrogant goose, fully aware of its superiority, can be found defecating along our waterfront and leaving feces on the decks of our exorbitant boats.

But even their worst traits can be seen as a gift to someone with an overactive metabolism who frequently finds himself searching for a washroom.

After all, here I am writing about geese when surely any goose would scoff at the idea of writing about me. And of course, without hands, a goose could not write anything anyway, but it is important to remember that geese do not need hands when they are looking down on you from a thousand feet up.

The Pioneer

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The Pioneer welcomes your letters and comments. Please send material to the editor at the address below before Wednesday. We reserve the right to edit submissions for content and length. All letters must be signed and include a daytime phone number. For advertising information, rates and placement, please contact Sandi Hibbard-Ramsay, at the college, 613-969-1913, ext. 2591; by cell at 613-848-5665; or at home, 613-965-6222. Pioneer newsroom, 1N9, Loyalist College, Box 4200, Belleville, ON K8N 5B9 • 613-969-1913, ext. 2828. E-mail: pioneer@loyalist.on.ca


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The Pioneer is currently produced by photojournalism students for Loyalist College and the surrounding area. In the spirit of the pioneers who settled our community and who were rooted in tradition, these pioneers always had an eye on the future. Our students strive to serve the public interest, seek the truth and uphold the highest standards of our profession.