



Photo by Gabrielle Smith

Karen Koehler and her four dogs compete in the four-mile, four-dog mixed breed race at the Marmora SnoFest on Saturday. Koehler competed in multiple events at SnoFest and finished first in this race. For more photos, see page 4.

Marmora goes to the dogs

By Micah Bond

Despite almost being cancelled because of warm weather, it was a bitterly cold day for Marmora's 37th-annual SnoFest.

The event featured dogsled races, chainsaw carving, juggling and other winter activities.

"We were very fortunate to pull it off because we got our weather at the very last minute," said co-ordinator Leigh Nash.

"We got enough snow on Thursday so we were down to the wire."

Nash said there was a good turnout for the event but it was

still lower than other years. Many sled teams coming from out of town weren't there because they weren't sure if races would run until last minute. She said at least 200 people came to watch and compete.

Eric Rochon won the six dog-six mile with a time of 22:47 and Karen Koehler won the four dog-four mile with a time of 14:19.

This is the first year in which admission was free. Organizers have been trying to get local groups and businesses involved this year.

...See SnoFest, page 4

Cold night out raises awareness for homelessness

By Jeremy McKay

Quinte area residents braved cold temperatures in efforts to fundraise and create awareness for homelessness on Friday night.

The sleep out was considered a success. It raised a total of \$10,600, meeting its \$10,000 fundraising goal.

This is the eighth year that Sleep Out So Others Can Sleep In event took over Belleville's Market Square from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. on Jan. 31.

The first hour saw 72 people construct a tent city made of cardboard boxes and tarps.

Speeches started at 8 p.m. to kick off the event. Various local politicians and organizers took the stage.

"When we talk about homelessness, we're not talking about statistics, we're not talking about facts and figures on a spreadsheet, we're not talking about someone's column and a ledger, we're talking about people," said Bill Glitsky, master of ceremonies in a speech that summed up the event.

"It creates an awareness that this isn't fun, this isn't camping. It's really hard work when you're homeless and looking for a place to lay your head at night," said Sandie Sidsworth, executive director of Canadian Mental Health Association, Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Branch.

Sidsworth said that the CMHA transitional houses see roughly six to 15 people seeking shelter a day. In 2014, they had to turn away 603 people.

Sidsworth expressed her concerns of not meeting the \$10,000 fundraising goal in the beginning of the sleepout. A total of \$8,500 was collected in donations before the event and another \$2,100 in late pledges totalling \$10,600.

Local business Sweet Escape cafe opened its doors all night for the event as a warming station. "We'd like to help provide a safe environment where if you're struggling, you have a place to go. So it was a pretty natural thing for us," said Juliet Dewal co-owner of Sweet Escape cafe.

Sweet Escape actively takes part in the community by helping people with mental health issues and the homeless through its own community fund.

"We saw on Facebook that there was an issue with Memorial Arena, so we volunteered to stay open for the night," said Dewal. Roughly 30 people used the cafe's warming station throughout the night.

The \$10,600 raised will go to replace mattresses, cribs, high chairs, and focus on housing maintenance in the three CMHA transitional houses in the Quinte area. For more information about CMHA, see the website at hastings-cmha.org or visit their office at 41 Octavia St.

Movie nights continue at Quinte Film Alternative

Members benefit with award-winning films on alternate Wednesdays

By Michele Weisz

The Quinte Film Alternative kicks off the second half of its 20th season on Feb. 4, giving you a chance to escape the gloomy, winter weather and lose yourself in a great film.

Beginning with the highly acclaimed film *Pride*, the QFA's Great Movie Wednesdays! presents award-winning films at the Empire Theatre. Single tickets can be purchased at the box office.

The QFA's aim is to bring terrific movies at affordable prices to the Quinte community. Membership is the driving force behind the organization, allowing it to remain independent. "Our loyal and long-standing members are at the core of QFA's success," said long time and founding board member Lynn Braun.

The QFA is a not-for-profit organization run entirely by a dedicated volunteer committee of board members who share a passion for excellence in film.

"The group of volunteers that have dedicated themselves to the community is a true sign of commitment. Volun-

teers such as these make our city great," said Taso A. Christopher, the mayor of Belleville.

Board members attend various film festivals, such as the Toronto International Film Festival and Cinefest Sudbury, to choose which films to bring home to Quinte.

The QFA's Great Movie Wednesdays! has become something of an institution in Belleville. "The Quinte Film Alternative has been exposing our community to the arts by offering first class film," said Christopher.

It was created in 1996, by a handful of devoted film buffs who wanted the local community to have the opportunity to see great, intelligent, limited-release films that they otherwise might not see.

"Their patrons are movie lovers like me. I joined QFA for the great programming; I stayed for the great people," said Randy Stewart, director of advertising and promotion for the QFA.

With the help of the Quinte Arts Council and Film Circuit (an outreach initiative of the Toronto International Film Festival), the QFA founding board members' vision of bringing quality films to the people of Quinte was realized.

...See QFA, page 2

Belleville team does well at regional swim meet

BYST pool shark member becomes first-ever senior national qualifier

By Daniel Luk

The Templeman Menninga Centre pool in Belleville was packed with cheering parents and athletes for the Eastern Ontario Short Course regional swim meet from Jan. 30 to Feb. 1.

Sitting in the viewing area of the centre, you could feel the heat given off from the intensity of the meet. With around 550 swimmers attending and just under 100 heats, the weekend was a fast-paced burst of energy with less than a minute in between each set of swimmers.

With promising swimmers like Melissa Dingle, the event went pretty well for the BYST pool sharks. Overall, BYST ranking seventh out of the 20 teams entered and collecting over 15 medals including two plaques for athletes Rasik Jiwa, 14, and Lauren Taylor, 14, for achieving the most points.

"Melissa Dingle is the first-ever se-



Photo by Daniel Luk

Melissa Dingle, 15, from Belleville, takes part in the preliminary rounds at the regional youth swim meet. Dingle went on to placing first in girls 15 and over, 50-m backstroke and also qualified for senior nationals at a time of 29:34.

nior national qualifiers, which means she will be competing with the best of the best swimmers in Canada regardless of age and even possibly at the

Pan Am Games and she's pretty much booked her ticket for trials next year," said Brandon Oates confidently.

"It's a great event, lots of fun and

a ton of kids swimming their hearts out," said parent Mitch Charness.

With the event full of hardworking swimmers, the event went off

smoothly, bringing in around 1,500 people. Oates mentioned the event wouldn't have been possible without the help of the many parents/friend volunteers.

He added that although fundraising was needed for the event, it was put to good use. Seeing as the feedback from the other clubs was nothing but praise. He said the reason for this is because swim club run a quality league that holds itself to a high standard, that also wouldn't have been achievable without the help from the city.

Along with providing hundreds of athletes with a sporting arena, the meet also brings revenue to the city. Spanning over three days, parents and visiting athletes need hotels, food and potentially shopping.

"It brings a lot of money and revenue to the city of Belleville. You think about the amount of people staying here and then they have to eat and shop," said volunteer, Pam Coens.

Oates said the event was wonderful but a bit chaotic at times because it was three days of straight competition. The meet helped the city's revenue, provided an excellent service to the athletes and was a successful second year of hosting the event.