



Photo by Thomas Surian

Rebecca Hardy shows Kerstin Boyd a new hula-hoop trick at the Hastings Civic Centre. Hardy, who began hula hooping over five years ago, runs a weekly hula hoop class for beginners.

Hula hoops offer chance for fun

By Thomas Surian

On a crisp February afternoon, in a community centre on a hill overlooking the Trent River, three women gather in the basement to practise an unusual sport. The small town Hastings, Ont. is not the kind of place you would expect someone to be teaching a hula hooping class, especially in the middle of winter.

Rebecca Hardy has been hula hooping for over five years. She started when she

came across a hula hoop making workshop in Peterborough. “We stopped and made some hula hoops. From then on, I became addicted,” said Hardy. Hardy began teaching lessons after she attended a Loyalist College course off campus at the Campbellford Community Resource Centre, where she was asked to teach a beginner hula hoop course. She wanted to find a place to hula hoop inside. Her friend found her a space at the Hastings Civic Centre.

“I wanted to find a place where I could hula hoop inside... it just turned into a class, so for me, just playing turned into, me playing with other people,” said Hardy. “I started hula hooping with Rebecca,” said Lezly-Ann Crosmaz-Brown, a student and friend of Hardy. “She was very inspiring, and we’re always looking for something to do together.” Crosmaz-Brown attends the class often because she doesn’t hula hoop much

when she’s on her own. “So when I know I’m going to see Rebecca, I make sure I bring my hula hoops.” “There are so many different things you can do with a hula hoop. Most people think it’s just around your waist. Clearly, that’s not the case. You can do so much more,” said Hardy. As the women dance and twirl around the room, they launch their hoops into the air, catching them, then spinning them around their heads at a dizzying rate.

“It’s just the freedom and the feeling you get, when you have the right song on, and you’re in the right mood you get into a groove. It’s exciting!” said Crosmaz-Brown. “Some people like to play video games to practise their hand-eye co-ordination. For me, it’s hula hooping. It’s just another way of expression,” said Crosmaz-Brown. For a multi-media view of this unusual sport, go to: <http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=49714>

Black History Month raises awareness

Younger generation should be especially aware of the historical struggles

By Moush Sara John

February’s Black History Month is significant for everyone, but young people especially should be paying attention, says a Toronto woman of Trinidadian descent. “Black History Month is for the younger generation, to educate them about the struggles and to help them know their history. But it leans into American black history mostly,” says Cherry Ann Mendez, a noted Toronto-based dramatic soprano from Trinidad. Each year, the City of Toronto and other communities in Ontario schedule events and exhibits to

celebrate, recognize, and explore the heritage, traditions, and culture of African-Canadians for February. According to the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) in the 1950s, the Canadian Negro Women’s Association brought the celebration to Toronto, Ont. By 1978, OBHS successfully petitioned the City of Toronto to have the monthly celebration formally recognized, and this celebration is currently proclaimed across Canada. Dorothy Abbott, who is part of OBHS and also on the board of the Emancipation Festival in Owen Sound says Black History month is an important celebration. “I am a fifth generation Canadian. My ancestors came up on the Underground Railroad. And ultimately settled in Owen Sound, Ont., which is the northern most stop. It is important to know where you came from. And the Black History Month creates an awareness of the culture and history.” According to records of the Owen Sound Black History, the Underground Railroad was a “network

of assistance” to people who had escaped from slavery. It was the most dramatic protest against slavery in the history of the United States and Canada. It has been estimated about 100,000 slaves escaped via the Underground Railroad. “The black history month has evolved quite a bit,” Abbott says. “I know that the school boards for example, have shown a fair amount of interest in participation, in getting speakers out to school, and getting official black history month posters. The OBHS produces one, and now the Government of Canada produces one.” Speaking of why it is so significant to her and her family, Abbott says, “Just knowing where you came from is life affirming. Getting to know your roots. I think it’s important for kids today to have some idea. Get your pride.” “We are Canadians and we are proud of it. But we all came from some place. And you should know where you came from and know the background, know the roots. I think it’s a very important part of

evolving.” When Abbott’s mother passed away in 2001, she decided to start a genealogy project that would date back to the 1870s. Abbott went through boxes and albums of family pictures taken through the years and decided to make a family tree quilt. “As I was going through the pictures, I realized I needed to make them come alive for me. I was very close to my mother, and grandmother. Initially it was a vague idea. But I knew that I wanted my grandmother to be the tree trunk, because I wanted it to be a family tree,” says Abbott. “There are five generations on it. And the oldest generation dates back to 1850s. But some of the people whose pictures I don’t have on there have been traced back to 1791. And that would be my great grandfather who was a slave on a plantation in Tennessee. He was born in 1791.” The quilt takes up a wall in the Abbott family’s living room, where five generations have been preserved for posterity.

Volunteer helps pets get lots to eat

Food bank for animals helps those who can’t afford to feed their pets

By Andrew Lahodynskyj

Sheri Koekman has a strong desire to help those in need. On her time off from her full-time job as a personal support worker, she runs the Tweed and Surrounding Area Pet Food Bank that she opened a couple of weeks ago. Koekman said she sees many people in need at her job, and that was part of the inspiration to start this venture. “In small towns like this, we have a high volume of seniors, low-income families, working families... all kinds of people that can’t afford much,” she said. “They are deciding ‘are we going to get more food for us, or are we going to get food for the dog.’ That’s really sad, it really bothers me. It hurts a little bit.” Currently, she has food for cats and dogs. Over the past three weeks, 320 cups of dog food and roughly 210 cups of cat food have been handed out. Most of this food has come from donations, the humane society, or food that Koekman has purchased by herself.



Photo by Frank Ikeman

Sheri Koekman is pictured at the storage unit she runs her pet food bank out of in Tweed, Ont. Wednesday. Koekman has been running the pet food bank for about a month and says things are going well. She opens from noon to 3 p.m. every Wednesday at 127 River St. W.

“They (the humane society) had a lot of food donations come in that they wouldn’t be able to use, so they filled up my trunk. It was really great. I was so excited,” Koekman said. “People have been dropping off food, which is really great. I am always shocked when somebody shows up with a bag of food.” A seven-day supply of food is handed out to those in need from her storage facility at 127 River St. in Tweed, which is open on Wednesdays from noon to 3 p.m. Koekman said she hopes to eventually expand her hours as well as her location, but this can only happen with more donations. “It’s growing very quickly, and donations are getting smaller and smaller. I am a small fish in a big pond here.” “I would love to once a week go to Belleville and open,” she said. “I can’t do it yet, but that’s what I want. There are a lot of people in Belleville who need help, but I just can’t help them yet.” More information and ways to donate to the cause can be found on the Tweed and Surrounding Area Pet Food Bank. It can be found on their Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Tweed-and-Surrounding-Area-Pet-Food-Bank/296936853840045>