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NEWS » DEVELOPMENT

Development frustrates area residents

Infill evolving into anger and threatens neighbourhood's character and diversity



Nicola Dakers and Mark Parsons are being inundated by new development on their block in Alberta Avenue and they are not happy about it for a number of reasons. » REBECCA LIPPIATT

KAREN MYKIETKA

While property owners and community leagues have the opportunity to have a voice in the development process, they often feel no one is listening. Sometimes, the requirements for community consultation are ignored. Bylaws are varied without sensitivity to local situations. When construction begins, nearby residents are subjected to inconvenience, damage, and neighbourhood degradation. Throughout, developers and city departments are often unresponsive to concerns.

A local development committee comprised of interested residents from a number of our neighbourhoods meets monthly to review development applications and permits and discuss issues. Judy Allan, Avenue Initiative Revitalization coordinator, helps facilitate the group.

What the members have in common is that they love their neighbourhood. They choose to live here because they love the art, culture and history of the area as well as the diverse, unique and affordable houses.

"No one is against the idea of infill but how it is happening," explains Mark Parsons, a committee member and resident affected by new development on his block. "Developers should be good neighbours, build ethically, follow bylaws with little or no variances and

capture the uniqueness and diversity of our neighbourhood."

Many members are disappointed with what they believe are developers' lack of respect for the neighbourhood and for adjacent property owners. They feel the community's voice is ignored and that the development process favours developers. They are frustrated with a city that continually allows large variances to bylaws and does not enforce regulations.

Parking variances

In April 2014, the committee saw a development application for a three-storey mixed use building on 94 St and 118 Ave which would include 14 apartments. They were immediately concerned that a variance from 16 to 6 parking spaces was granted in an area already short on parking. Nor did the developer do the required community consultation.

Cris Basualdo recognized the name of the applicant and shared with the committee. "The applicant, Jenny Huynh, is known as a landlord whose many problem properties have had development compliance issues, health orders and EPS visits."

The community league appealed the development to the Subdivision Development Appeal Board (SDAB) but lost.

Denise Leclair runs a belly

dance studio half a block from Ms. Huynh's planned development. She is chair of the Alberta Avenue Business Association.

"In a development of this size, with this number of residents, there are reasonable concerns about the limited parking. With no community support, why was such a large variance granted? It raises a lot of questions."

Oversized developments

It's not just commercial developments that are being granted large variances. Many semidetached (duplex) developments are approved even though they are too large for the 33-foot lots in the neighbourhood.

Nicola Dakers, who bought a historic house in Alberta Avenue in 2008, says, "We are going to have three identical large vinyl sided boxes on our block. We are losing the diversity of the neighbourhood." She adds, "A lot of these duplexes are shoddily built, and they are not affordable. They cost more than existing single family homes."

Dakers was just involved in appealing one of these developments on her block. The permit was on notice giving residents two weeks to appeal; however, the foundation was already in place. The city issued a stop work order. SDAB denied the appeal and allowed another front/back duplex on a 367 square metre lot. The mini-

mum lot size is supposed to be 442 square metres.

The same developer built right next door to her and her partner Mark Parsons.

"They damaged our fence, stole our power, ignored the noise bylaws. I was verbally abused by a worker. We had to pull a title to get the developer's name after he damaged our fence," says Parsons. "Workers were parking in the alley up against people's garages. A number of people couldn't get their vehicles out to go to work."

He goes on to say, "We have called the city numerous times because their grade is a foot and half higher. They say they will get back to us and don't or just say get a lawyer."

"It's like we don't matter," says Dakers.

Chris Wagner from Parkdale is also familiar with the issues and trials of fighting developments such as these duplexes.

"In Parkdale we've gone to the SDAB to oppose these stacked duplexes probably five or six times in the last few years. We have never been successful in stopping one of these from being built. It seems as though the city is very fixated upon increasing density in our areas and is willing to grant significant variances to achieve that end goal."

When asked what the issue is with these types of developments, Wagner responded:

"I personally do not oppose

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NEWS » DEVELOPMENT

these stacked row houses in principle. I think if they are done well, they can be good for the neighborhoods...what I am hearing though, is that there is a contingent of builders out there putting out sub-standard product that does not complement the aesthetics of the surrounding area."

Life next to a construction site

During construction of a fourplex across her alley, Colyn O'Reilly had contractors backing onto, parking on or blocking her property; they even dropped building supplies on her driveway right up against her garage door. She had to physically move supplies off her property herself.

The alley was so rutted with mud, the water flowing down the alley was redirected into her garage and backyard which then flooded. "They are subcontractors and don't have any care for the neighbourhood they go into or any manners whatsoever."

She continues, "They do what they want, when they want. They think they can intimidate you." But she stood her ground with contractors.

O'Reilly says she called the developer Montorio Homes once and left a message but got no response.

Sandra Schremp, marketing coordinator at Montorio Homes, was surprised to hear these complaints.

"We always endeavor to respond to any complaint we

get," says Schremp. She said they have no record of any call or complaint from O'Reilly. "It's not our practice to ignore residents or infringe on their property. We try to operate within parameters of all bylaws and follow good building practices. Reception would have made the site supervisor aware of any complaint."

Damage and delays

A little house sandwiched between two older two storey homes was torn down this spring by a developer with plans to build an up/down duplex.

Patsy & Serge Thomas to the north were upset by it. "We only had a few days' notice that our shared fence was on their property and going to be removed," says Patsy. The Thomas family needs their yard fenced for their dog.

Peter Mykietka, the neighbour on the south says, "When the hole was dug back in May, they dug right up to my fence (property line). Then the rain came and washed away some dirt back into the hole and down came a huge portion of my fence."

"I do understand the concern of the neighbours," said Gaurav Singhmar, the developer. He explained the delay in construction was due to timing, weather, and that Mykietka's downspout, which extended into the pit, was difficult to access and concentrated rain into one spot. It also rained

right after the foundation was poured before the weeping tile could be installed.

"I don't like to alienate my neighbours," said Singhmar in regards to Mykietka's fence, and offered to put the fence back up at his expense in good faith, likely next spring.

"I am extremely frustrated over this whole situation, but relieved that some backfilling happened the night before the snow fell in November so my foundation wouldn't be exposed all winter," says Mykietka.

Process and enforcement issues

Call 311 because a neighbour or developer has caused damage to your property and you will be told it's a private matter between you two. Need contact information so you can reach the developer? The city won't give it to you.

Margherita Gosselin called 311 about construction starting on the corner of 122 Ave and 97 St after she was unable to find any permit listed at maps.edmonton.ca. The first response she got was that there was no record of any development permit.

When the building crew started digging and pouring piles right up against the back alley, she called again. This time she was told there was a permit but it was confidential. By law, permits are public information. She checked with all the neighbours within 60 metres; they

say they did not receive notification of the development. They have numerous concerns about the construction but Gosselin is having difficulty getting the city to hear their concerns.

Eila Ollinheimo was thrilled when SDAB refused the permit for the house next door to convert to an apartment house. It had been under investigation for illegal suites. She's told they are now in compliance. "There are at least the same number of people living in there as before when it had those illegal suites. The only difference is that the upstairs now has no separate kitchen."

In Westwood, league president Kim Ellis has worked on many similar development issues. She's starting to feel the time she sacrifices from her family to serve her community is a waste of time. Whether it is a developer or the city coming to her or her community for "consultation", it seems the only purpose is to check off a box. "They don't seem to give a damn what we think or say."

While it sometimes looks like residents just oppose all new developments, they do have valid concerns that are not being addressed, in fact often grossly ignored.

"We are chasing our tails just trying to be informed," says Ellis. "We are volunteers; there is only so much we can do."

Residents and leagues support many developments and have given support letters to

developers who have great projects and take the time to consult the community. Just recently talks between a developer and Westwood for rezoning from RF1 to RF3 led to a compromise. The league agreed to support five skinny houses rather than the fourplex and two duplexes the developer originally planned.

However from the stories shared with this writer, and there are many more stories, it seems safe to say that there are problems with the city's current development process and enforcement as well as developers' communication practices.

Watch for more articles on development in upcoming issues.

PERMIT INFO

Find development applications and all kinds of useful information at map.edmonton.ca. Note: Sometimes issued permits do not show up on the site.

Area Development Group Meets 2nd Monday 6:30-8:30 pm. More info call Judy 780-496-1913

Share your development story or thoughts on infill www.ratcreek.org



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NEWS » BYLAWS

'Tis the season to shovel

Keep sidewalks safe this winter

TALEA MEDYNSKI

While shovelling feels never-ending during winter, it's best not to procrastinate. Not only is a slippery sidewalk hazardous, putting off the task could mean homeowners find a notice or fine in the mail.

"Clear snow as soon as possible," advised Mandi Friesen, a municipal enforcement officer. "It's easier to clean as [snow] is falling or soon after."

Properly clearing a sidewalk means removing snow and ice to the cement. While you can apply sand for grip, "sand is only a temporary measure until the snow and ice can be removed." Free sand is available at participating community leagues.

City residents can lodge a complaint about an untended sidewalk.

"A lot of people complain if it's been happening for a long time. You want to complain sooner rather than later." In general, it's time to report sidewalk conditions "if you see the snow is accumulating quite a bit, if the sidewalk is slippery, or if there is compact snow."

Currently, 48 hours must pass after a snowfall before anyone can make a complaint.

"We're looking at changing that. It's in the works," said Friesen.

Lodge a complaint by calling 311, using the 311 app, or emailing 311@edmonton.ca. Provide your contact information as well as the house address, description of conditions, and photo if available. Complete

addresses for sidewalks at intersections must also be given.

Bylaw enforcement isn't only complaint-driven.

"We do receive complaints, but we do actively check out properties," said Friesen. She explained that when officers investigate complaints, they also look at other properties along the block.

In general, the city gives 48 hours as a courtesy to get sidewalks cleared. If the property owner is a repeat offender, the city could issue a fine without first giving a notice.

Bylaw officers will issue a notice if a sidewalk needs to be cleared. The homeowner has seven days to clean the sidewalk. If the sidewalk isn't cleared, an officer will apply a \$100 fine and send out a contractor to clear the sidewalk.

Neighbours can become a Snow Angel to help those unable to shovel. According to the City of Edmonton website, the awareness and volunteer recognition program "encourages Edmontonians to help a neighbour in need by shovelling their snow. It also acknowledges those volunteers as a City of Edmonton Snow Angel."

Another option is SnowBusters, an affordable, community-driven snow removal program through SAGE (Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton).

According to Carlina MacInnis, the home services coordinator for SAGE, SnowBusters "enables community leagues and non-profit organizations to raise funds



Keeping your sidewalk clear of snow prevents injuries and possible fines. >> FREERANGESTOCK

SNOW ANGELS
(awareness and volunteer recognition program)
Edmonton.ca/snowangels

SNOWBUSTERS
Interested groups approach SAGE. Cost of snow removal depends on assessment. Seniors sign a five-month contract.
PH: 780.701.9007 or 780.701.9011 www.mysage.ca

COMMUNITY SANDBOX LOCATIONS
Alberta Avenue (9210 118 Ave) Parkdale-Cromdale (11335 85 St)
Delton (12325 88 St) Spruce Avenue (10240 115 Ave)
Eastwood (8504 118 Ave) Westwood (12139 105 St)
Elmwood Park (12505 75 St)
Call 311 if sand runs out.

by providing affordable snow removal to seniors."

In other words, community leagues or non-profit organizations create the groups. No groups are currently available in the RCP area. Interested non-profit organizations and community leagues can contact SAGE, which will facilitate the process.

NEWS » COMMUNITY

Be neighbourly with a grant

Invest in your community

SHELAIN SPARROW

Neighbourliness is back. Conversations about healthy neighbourhoods as a driver of societal and individual wellness are happening worldwide in sectors ranging from urban planning and design, international development, environmental sustainability, healthcare and even economic security.

After focusing on going global as the key to prosperity, we seem to see that the scale of relations perhaps most important to unlocking sustainable healthy human living is the neighbourhood.

Northlands has been part of the neighbourhood and has been having that conversation and playing a role for years. As a non-profit organization, Northlands is mandated to benefit the community. One of the ways it does that is through the Northlands Neighbors Grant Fund.

While money is not necessarily the keystone to great community activity, it can certainly help. Sebastian Barrera, Parkdale-Cromdale Community League board member, said the \$4,000 matching grant they received this summer for the Phoenix Festival allowed them to pay artists, provide a free meal to volunteers, and include fun activities they wouldn't have been able to provide without a budget.

Northlands initiated the grant three years ago to help seed and fund new projects of community leagues in its surrounding areas. The grant priorities are projects, events or programs that support children and youth, safer community, and vibrant, connected community.

Darryl Szafranski, director of community relations at Northlands, said, "The grant is Northlands' recognition that it is a significant organization in

its surrounding area."

Northlands saw an opportunity to collaborate with community leagues to fund community programs and activities. As a result, \$25,000 is available annually to the nine neighboring community leagues from Northlands to fund projects. A project endorsed by an eligible community league may receive up to \$4,000 in matching funds. Volunteer hours are recognized towards the match.

This year, the grant supported events including the Highlandia Festival (Highlands Community League),

DECSA's Community Pancake Breakfast, Alberta Avenue Abundant Communities Initiative, Bellevue Community League Day, and the Phoenix Festival family activities.

"Having a budget opens up possibilities," said Barrera. "While we are able to do great things without money, it is nice to pay artists and lighten the



Parkdale-Cromdale Community League used the grant for the Phoenix Festival. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

load of volunteers who give a lot."

The Phoenix Festival was a family-oriented community event in July that included an outdoor sleepover, community meal, youth art, face painting, music, and more. The time of dedicated volunteers was used as a match to the funds that Northlands contributed.

Barrera said the process was easy and straightforward. It

involved conversation with his league and with Northlands and then it was a matter of filling out the application details.

Individuals or organizations with projects that would benefit the community should talk to their league about it. The community league needs to be involved with its endorsement to apply. Contact your community league for information.

WHAT'S ON » HOLIDAY

Make Christmas memories

Yule Ave offers free family fun

TALEA MEDYNSKI

It's early November. I'm chatting with Frank Zotter, a local actor and the creator of Yule Ave, a free family-friendly event held from Dec. 19 to 21.

For those unfamiliar with the event, Yule Ave is about charity and creating Christmas memories rather than buying gifts. A good example is the Giving Tree, where people can donate winter clothing like mittens, scarves, or sweaters. To Zotter, charity, values, and togetherness is the point of the holidays, not shopping.

"I get angry at how the commercialism takes over," said Zotter. "The commercials start and try to tell us what to eat and what to buy."

Zotter has produced Yule Ave for the past three years, but he hasn't tired of it. He is upbeat about this year's event, which will feature some favourites like Unsilent Night, the Giving Tree, and some new features like Santa's Village and Tree Hugger, a family-friendly play.

The weekend starts with the 45-minute Unsilent Night parade at 5:30 pm outside of Alberta Avenue Community League. Participants can walk with lanterns throughout the neighbourhood and play music.

Unsilent Night, created

by New York composer Phil Kline in 1992, can be considered electronic carolling. Kline wrote four compositions for participants to play outside in December. Participants can download one of the four available tracks and play it during the parade. Unsilent Night has spread to other cities over the years; it's free and anyone can produce the event.

"It's a moving soundscape," said Zotter. "The Unsilent Night parade is special. It really puts you in the spirit."

Leanne Maitland, a local musician, is organizing this year's Unsilent Night. To participate, simply download one of the tracks at unsilentnight.com, bring a musical device with good speakers, and show up.

After the parade, there will be a free, catered supper at the hall, followed by the Yule Ave: A Blast concert, ending with the lighting of the Giving Tree at 8:30 pm.

During the weekend, families can meet Santa and try their hand at snow carving. Santa's Village, located beside the league (east side, by the parking lot), is a snow village and an expansion of last year's Snowspiration. A snow carver will create some sculptures, like Santa's throne, and families can

carve their own holiday-themed creations. Zotter explained the snow carver will give a few tips and "then the kids and parents can go to town with it."

"We have Santa coming by on a horse and carriage to Santa's Village in the afternoon," said Zotter. Santa will sit on his throne in the village on Saturday from noon to 3 pm and ride his horse and wagon on Sunday from noon to 3 pm.

And for those who like a good story, check out Tree Hugger, a popular Fringe play about the friendship between a home-schooled girl and a Christmas tree that comes to life. Treehugger will play at the Stollery Gallery on Dec. 20.

Create some memories this year at Yule Ave. After all, to Zotter, "It's a very, very rewarding thing. It kind of feels like I'm rebelling against Christmas, like I'm making it authentic again."



Celebrate charity, values, and togetherness at Yule Ave. >> SUPPLIED

YULE AVE
 Dec 19-21
 Alberta Avenue Community League (9210 118 Ave)
 Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts (9225 118 Ave)
 Bleeding Heart Art Space (9132 118 Ave)
www.yuleave.ca

Unsilent Night
www.unsilentnight.com

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WHAT'S ON » ART

Bleeding hearts built a bridge

Reflect on art and spirituality in 118 Ave's new art space

MARI SASANO

At one point, musician and designer Dave Von Bieker felt so conflicted about being an artist as well as a Christian that he took all of his CDs and broke them.

"There was a time when art was taken out of the church and burned. It was seen as something that takes you away from God. To some extent, that's what I grew up in. There was a time in my own life when I felt like I had to choose my faith or my art."

Eventually, he reconciled his art and faith. He replaced his records and since then has sought to create a space for people to connect art to spirituality. For around five years, he has been experimenting with various forms under the banner of Bleeding Heart Art.

"We want to create a place where it's safe to believe something, and to doubt some things. It's kind of a third space in that way. It's not a church, but it's not a totally irreligious space either. You kind of come in knowing that these are the things that are being wrestled with in here."

The first incarnation was an event called Bridge Songs, which originally ran at the Urban Bridge Church. When

he moved into the Parkdale neighbourhood, he knew he needed eventually to find a home for his project on 118 Avenue.

"I wanted to see a way that I could bring those two parts of myself together and for me art is intensely spiritual practice. A lot of artists I've met, it's the same for them. They don't necessarily think that churches or organized religion is a very good breeding ground for creativity, or maybe didn't feel welcome or comfortable there."

Urban Bridge Church began to fund artists like filmmaker Jaime Clements and musician Mat Halton. They held events like Listen First, a community conversation event with First Nations artists and elders.

"We started to see a lot of potential. Art is a great way to have conversations about things we might not be comfortable. Art can break down barriers. We want to explore the potential of that."

He ran potluck art salons—Artlucks—in his living room, and was looking for a bigger space when he found the Elm Cafe catering space at 91 Street and 118 Avenue.

They will be holding Artlucks at the Bleeding Heart about every six weeks and organizing an installation event called Blue

Christmas in December.

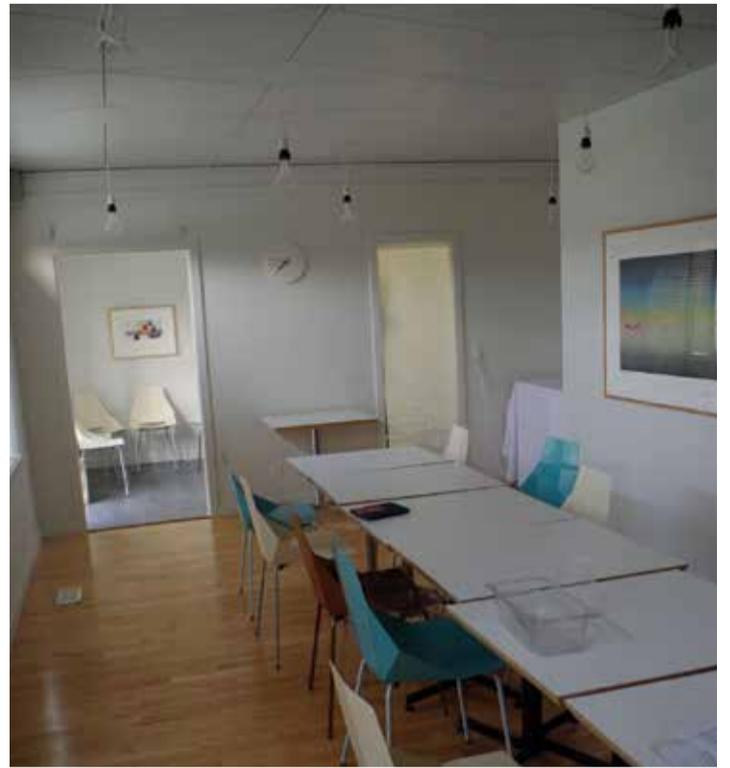
"The idea is that Christmas is like this super-happy time for everybody, but there are lots of people who have a really hard time with Christmas. It can be really sad, but we don't really allow space for that, so we want to create an installation which will be a sacred space where people can take the time to mourn or grieve or process."

A Christmas tree will be set up, decorated by glass teardrops made by local glass-blower Keith Walker. Participants can create artwork that expresses their grief, wrap them, and leave them under the tree.

Bleeding Heart will also set up a workspace for artists without a studio with the goal of creating community and fostering creative expression. Though his own spiritual basis is in Protestant Christianity, the principle is to welcome anyone seeking answers to the big questions.

"I'll just be happy if people are having conversations about important things. Why are we here? What is this all about? How do we treat our neighbours? What's the right thing to do? Those ancient questions."

"God is literally the creator. It's weird to me to separate those two things. I see this space as a bridge, and because it's a



A sneak peek at the new Bleeding Hearts Art space. >> DAVE VON BIEKER

BLEEDING HEART ART SPACE
9132 118 Ave.

BLUE CHRISTMAS
Dec. 6-21

bridge, you're never on either shore. You have one leg on each side of the river."

To learn more, email [dave@](mailto:dave@bleedingheartartspace.com)

bleedingheartartspace.com, sign up for an email newsletter, or visit bleedingheartartspace.com.

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EDITORIAL

The gift of compassion

Show compassion while still setting boundaries

KAREN MYKIETKA

The Christmas season is about giving. More people look outside their own world at this time of year and think about others in need.

It is good to be compassionate. According to Dictionary.com, compassion is “a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.”

I would argue that people are less compassionate in our culture of self-absorption and busyness. Social experiments have shown the greatest determinant of whether a person stops to help someone in need is how much of a hurry they are in. We first have to notice them, then take time from what we are doing and deal with the discomfort and emotions the situation evokes.

A local woman posted on Facebook recently about being awoken at 5 am on a cold morning by someone knocking loudly on her door. A stranger told her he found a woman face down in the ravine, moved her on top of his coat, then ran for help.

She didn't let him in, but she called the police and brought him a blanket. She found out later that he had knocked on many doors and no one answered, even though her neighbours said their dogs barked and they heard knocking.

Healthy boundaries (protecting and taking care of ourselves) are part of compassion. We don't have to burn ourselves out, get taken advantage of, or put ourselves at risk in order to

be compassionate.

Brené Brown, author of *Daring Greatly*, found that the most compassionate people held the clearest boundaries.

Be honest and direct with people. If boundaries aren't respected, you don't have to engage. And remember, you cannot take other people's choices personally.

Sometimes the most compassionate thing to do is not give someone what they want, but what they need. At a church I used to attend, pastors were often approached by people asking for money to buy groceries,

“Healthy boundaries (protecting and taking care of ourselves) are part of compassion. We don't have to burn ourselves out, get taken advantage of, or put ourselves at risk in order to be compassionate.”

ies, help pay the rent, or buy a bus pass.

The pastors had compassion and gave some assistance. However, when the same people continually came back, they set boundaries. They required the person to sit down with a leader, review their finances, and budget. Hopefully providing some financial literacy skills would last beyond the moment.

Many charities are seeking donations and volunteers. It's good to give and support their

work. But it is also worthwhile to think more deeply about how we express compassion.

Helping people in need used to be much more personal. Neighbours helped each other when they were in need. We all have times when we are in need and times when we are able to give.

Giving anonymously through charities is quicker, easier, and less uncomfortable. But once in a while, try going out of your comfort zone. It doesn't have to be difficult.

Maybe there are neighbours who could use those clothes your kids have outgrown or the toys they no longer need.

Bring groceries or a meal to a struggling family in the neighbourhood instead of just donating food to the Food Bank.

Bring the panhandler on the street a coffee or a meal, or if you are more adventurous, offer to take them into the nearest restaurant and have a conversation with them.

Whenever possible, give respect and dignity rather than just charity. Many struggling people, including the homeless, try to make an honest dollar. Give them your bottles to return or say yes when someone asks to shovel your sidewalk or mow your lawn.

When someone is always in the position of need, it can be hard on his or her self-esteem. Trading services shows people they have something valuable to contribute. They can give as well as receive.

Go forth this season giving and receiving with respect, compassion and boundaries.

Letter to the Editor

Negligent landlords, neglected animals

NINA LEONTOWICZ

There are 75 houses on 86 Street between 122 and 124 Avenue, with approximately 30 being property rentals. People move in and out of these properties yearly. While transient moving is reality, the bigger issue for me is the negligence landlords have towards rentals. Not landlords so much, but slumlords. Landlords are responsible—slumlords are not.

Often there is a huge mess left behind when the renter moves, such as garbage, furniture, and broken glass. Community messes are also left behind; long-term residents don't trust easily anymore. Elders feel unsafe. The sense of neighbourhood is broken. However, the biggest mess left behind is the societal mess.

“Slumlords don't care about their continuing contribution to drug use, theft, middle of the night freak-outs, ambulances, overdoses, or fires.”

Slumlords don't care about their continuing contribution to drug use, theft, middle of the night freak-outs, ambulances, overdoses, or fires. More often than not, slumlords don't care about animals brought into their rentals. These animals usually get dumped in the street, haphazardly passed to other people, euthanized, or die prematurely for other reasons. To add to all the other messes slumlords leave behind, participating in animal neglect is the most horrific.

While out for an early morning walk with my dog, another dog bolted towards us. We both froze. However, it became clear the dog was playful and wanted to visit. A man was walking briskly behind the dog. He asked me if I wanted a puppy. I declined. He explained that when he showed up to do some renovations on a house, this

young black lab greeted him. The renters left him behind. The contractor didn't have time to advertise the puppy and he couldn't take it home. I'm not sure what happened to that dog.

A tenant had an outside cat and soon momma cat got pregnant and had kittens. My dog and I found momma cat dead in the local park. The kittens roam the neighbourhood foraging in the garbage, only to have kittens of their own soon. Another renter neglected to get her dog spayed or even tie her up, so the dog got pregnant. When the puppies were born, people came to the renter's place, putting the minuscule puppies (no more than five weeks old) in their pocket, exchanging “goods”, then leaving. It was heartbreaking.

In the last three years, my

dog and I have seen such powerful and sorrowful animal situations; maimed animals eking out an existence, animals left outside with minimal shelter in the cold, mangy and sick cats. We've bumped into many stray dogs. Some have come home with us. Animal Control is a constant in this area.

How can people be held responsible? What can I do?

In Delton, the rule is the slumlord rents, the tenant pays. No questions asked. The slumlord doesn't intervene and the tenants don't complain about the house's condition. It's a symbiotic relationship.

Slumlords are a curse. They leave damaging consequences on neighbourhoods, community, and society, and for me, animal mistreatment is the most horrific one.

RAT CREEK PRESS ASSOCIATION 9210 118 AVENUE, EDMONTON, AB T5G 0N2 | T: 780.479.6285

ABOUT US

The *Rat Creek Press* is a non-profit community newspaper in north central Edmonton serving the communities of Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood.

COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATION, CAPACITY

The *Rat Creek Press* goals are to help connect residents with what is happening in the community, provide a forum where information and ideas can be exchanged, and help individuals learn new skills, acquire experience and develop leadership.

PUBLISHER

Karen Mykietka

info@ratcreek.org

EDITORS

Talea Medynski

editor@ratcreek.org

LITERARY EDITOR

Rusti L. Leahy

lit@ratcreek.org

PHOTO EDITOR

Rebecca Lippiatt

photo@ratcreek.org

DESIGNER

Lorraine Shulba

design@ratcreek.org

ADVERTISING

position open

ads@ratcreek.org

PROOFREADING

Cath Jackel

CONTRIBUTORS

Talea Medynski, Rusti L. Leahy, Shelaine Sparrow, Priscilla Clark, Franki Harrogate, Chantal Figeat, April Au, Henri Yauck, Rebecca Lippiatt, Karen Sheridan, Marlene Salmonson, and Rob Bernshaw.

DISTRIBUTION

John Larsen, Margaret Larsen, Arlene Kemble, Cantelon Family, and Karen Mykietka.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Rat Creek Press* is a forum for all people. We encourage comments that further discussion on a given article or subject, provide constructive criticism, or offer an idea for community activity. Letters should be no longer than 250 words and must include the full name, location and contact information of the author. Op-Ed columns should be 400-700 words and observe formal rules of spelling and grammar. The RCP reserves the right to edit all material and to remove any electronic comment at any time.

All columns, letters or cartoons submitted are attributed to the author and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the *Rat Creek Press*. Send submissions to the *Rat Creek Press* Editor via email at editor@ratcreek.org, or 9210-118 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5G 0N2. Mail may also be dropped at the address above.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Space is available to non-profit groups for event and program listings as well as volunteer opportunities on a first-come first-serve basis and will be printed as space permits.



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FOOD » COMMUNITY MEALS

PrayerWorks Common, more than food

Long-running program a place of community and friendship

LINDA WILKINSON

As the weather gets colder, the demand grows for hot meals at PrayerWorks Common, a ministry of St. Faith's and St. Stephen the Martyr Anglican parishes. The free community meal program is a godsend to those on limited incomes and provides a place of peace and rest.

"It is a sanctuary for a time from a world that is incredibly challenging to live in for a lot of people," said Rev. Arthur Dyck, deacon and community liaison for the parishes of St. Faith's and St. Stephen the Martyr. "The street can be a dangerous place. They can sit down in a warm place for a time, especially on Thursdays, and relax, read the paper and visit with other people."

Between September and May, meals are served on Thursdays between 10 am and 2 pm, the first three Fridays of every month from 5:00 to 6:30 pm and Saturdays from 8:30 to 9:30 am. As many as 250 meals per week are served during the coldest months of the year.

Mary Elias is one of the regular attendees. Although she doesn't live in the Alberta Avenue area, she believes it's worth the bus ride each week to attend. The community meal program not only helps her financially, but also gives her a

weekly social outing.

"Mostly I come out to meet other people and talk to them," said Elias. "I get to know a few people and enjoy helping out by cleaning up."

Elias is not alone. Many people come regularly to meet a social need.

"The community that comes into PrayerWorks Common is tight-knit: almost everyone knows everyone else," explained Dyck. "They find their friends there. A place is offered where they can have a cup of coffee together and visit with their friends."

The program has been running since 1999 when Connie Kroschewsky and members of the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine started an early dismissal program for children. The program, which included nutritious snacks, eventually offered community suppers for families in the area. Over the years, the program has grown with community needs.

"Looking at the community that gathers at PrayerWorks Common each week, approximately 50 per cent of the people that we serve are dealing with disabilities of some sort," said Dyck. "Many of them are receiving AISH or CPP of some sort. About 25 per cent of the people are struggling with addictions and, as a result of that, or because of that, are

inadequately housed. We have seen an increase in the numbers of people who could be classified as 'working poor'."

It's a major undertaking for the two churches, but with Edmonton's Food Bank providing the majority of the food and dedicated volunteers from St. Faith's, St. Stephen the Martyr, St. George's, St. Augustine's, Good Shepherd and Holy Trinity Riverbend parishes, they keep up with the demand.

"We are also developing synergies with other churches and organizations in the community. The Avenue Church is now supporting one meal a month with resources and volunteers," said Dyck. "The Norwood Neighbourhood Association continues to support PrayerWorks Common by providing resources for some of our physical needs."

In addition, this fall chef Michelle Lamontagne from The King's University has volunteered to prepare the soup each Thursday.

"I am constantly amazed at what happens at PrayerWorks Common. The meals are easy to see, but behind the meals there is a history, a vision, and the work and support of many volunteers that make a direct impact on Alberta Avenue," said Dyck.

PRAYERWORKS COMMON

St. Faith and St. Stephen the Martyr (11725 93 St.)
Thursdays from 10 am-2 pm; First, second, and third Fridays from 5-6:30 pm; Saturdays from 8:30-9:30 am.

All are welcome to attend.

Call Rev. Arthur Dyck at 780.477.5931 or email prayerworks@stfaithsanglican.com.



Mary Elias enjoys a hot meal and friendship at weekly community meals. >> LINDA WILKINSON

Community mosque blooming under caring hands

Islam focuses on the positive instead of the negative

PRISCILLA CLARK

New life is slowly being breathed into the long derelict building at 102 Street and 118 Avenue. This former movie theatre turned bingo hall, turned neighbourhood eyesore has been saved from years of neglect and disrepair. It is the home of mosque Masjid Quba.

The once graffiti-scarred façade is now graced by a series of glass doors embellished with delicate flourishes of iron scrollwork. A soft light emanates from within, and slender columns topped by soaring arches are revealed through its windows.

Masjid Quba was founded in 1989. It grew from a handful of families meeting without an official place of worship to a downtown location near Grant MacEwan University.

"As time passed, and our congregation grew, the need grew for a larger space," said mosque director Syed Hussain. "We purchased the building two years ago, and it had to be completely rehabilitated."

Renovation progress has been slow and ongoing.

"Most of the work has been done on a volunteer basis by members of our religious community. We are a non-profit

organization, and all is funded by our congregation," he explained.

Masjid Quba is named after one of the first mosques ever constructed in Saudi Arabia.

"Islam is very grassroots," Hussain said. "There are no clergy, only lay people. There are no priests. The religious leader called an imam is a religious scholar of the highest level. He has memorized the Quran, and can recite it in a beautiful voice."

When asked about the size of their congregation, Hussain answered, "This is a space to connect with God. We are not here to keep track of you."

Prayers take place five times a day, and the major service of the week is on Friday afternoon. Some members attend only on Fridays, while others attend only late afternoon prayers during the week. Prayers typically last five to seven minutes.

"Most of our energy has been to get our mosque completed. When this is done, we will have more time to devote our energies to community service such as food banks, clothing drives, counselling services, newcomer outreach programs, and helping the needy find employment." These free services will be extended to Muslim and non-



The Masjid Quba mosque is being renovated. >> PRISCILLA CLARK

Muslim alike. "Every single human being is your brother and sister," Hussain explained. "We are all God's creatures, and are all part of the same thing. It is society and culture that have created divisions."

When asked if the mosque

has felt the support of the Alberta Avenue community, he responded, "We haven't had any issues. Fear and ignorance can lead people to do things, but people's opinions change with time."

In the words of mosque

community outreach director Hussain Quraishi, who has made it his mission to lend aid to the less fortunate in our community: "Islam is focusing on the positive. We are lighting a candle in the dark instead of cursing the darkness."

GIVING with IMPACT

RCP contributor collaboration

'Tis the season to shop and spend a lot of money unnecessarily in order to give gifts that people don't really need or want.

Here are some stories and suggestions from our RCP contributors about non-traditional holiday giving, something more effective and meaningful than buying someone an item on their Christmas want list.

Merry Christmas from the Rat Creek Press!

If I'm giving to a very busy or elderly person, I give the gift of my labour. I write down everyday chores, such as cutting grass, getting groceries, or washing a floor. Then I put the paper in a decorated envelope. People can redeem the gifts as they wish and I work it into my schedule.

- Chantal Figeat

For my sons' birthdays, they receive a photobook of themselves through the year and an item of clothing from me. At Christmas, they receive pyjamas, which last for years. Every couple of years I will splurge on something large we can do as a family. I rarely give toys.

- Rebecca Lippiatt

Volunteering at a soup kitchen.

- Mark Parsons

I buy a new game for the family to play or get passes to do an activity or event together.

- Karen Mykietka

This year I've decided if I can't give people something they absolutely love, I should give them something created with love. My gifts are pots of cherry jelly and knitted scarves I've made. It took me months to complete them. When I look at the lengths of colourful knitted yarn, I feel a certain satisfaction and a sense of pride that never came with giving store-bought gifts.

- Jennifer Ostopovich

The adults in my family decided a few years ago that there was nothing we really wanted or needed (unless it's a kitchen reno—then we'll talk). Gifts only for kids. They're the ones who enjoy it the most, and I tend to give books (bonus points if they are Canadian, Albertan, or Edmontonian authors). Books don't make noise and they're easy to put away, which is important to those of us with small houses!

- Mari Sasano

For me, my husband always completes a home improvement project.

- Linda Wilkinson

My mom and stepdad have a good income and everything they could ever want. I started donating money in their names at Christmas for things like a school in a developing nation to buy supplies, a women's shelter to provide emergency beds, or the Humane Society as we are BIG cat lovers in my family.

- Nicola Dakers

When I was growing up in a household of five kids, academic parents, and little money, we drew names. This way, each of us received one gift. Also, each of us was responsible for making our gifts. The results were personalized, and were born of love and creative expression. The focus of Christmas was familial closeness, not consumerism.

- Priscilla Clark



EDITORIAL » LITERARY

What we give

The meaning of unseen, unwrapped gifts

RUSTI L LEHAY

The holiday season descending upon us is fraught with stress for many. If you want to turn away from consumerism or if you have little to spare, try page nine of this month's paper to find ideas about giving with impact.

When your budget asks you to focus on bills, turn your focus to creating new traditions that cost little more than time. Put last month's birthday candles into everyone's potato at supper. Make wishes. Give everyone a turn to talk about their wishes and really listen. True listening is a huge gift any of us can give.

Give handwritten letters of support to people for

their current aspirations. Smile at breastfeeding mothers and remember that for many, this is the first nourishment we receive.

Nourishing words, heartfelt smiles, attentive listening, and sharing sustenance are the unseen, unwrapped gifts. May you all have a generous season of the simple things that make you smile and warm you inside out.

ADOPTIVE BREASTMILK KC HAWRYLYSHEN

SHE said it was creepy...
I didn't care.
I just wanted to keep it, I didn't want her to take it away
Deep in my soul I felt a fear, a longing
I wanted something, more than anything, before or since
In that moment, Please don't take it my heart screamed.
Was I breaking a law by having it with me?
Would she take it, just because she could?
Please don't take it.
Thankfully... she didn't take it.
She didn't care, she was looking for something else.
We didn't have it.
We got in our car and drove on.
Relief flooded my body. I looked back over my shoulder
reassured myself that it was still there.
We got home
It was the first thing I removed and stowed safely away.
I finally breathed a sigh of relief.
And then... we waited, while I continued to add to it.
And we waited.
A plea for help came. I knew that I could help them.
But, could I part with it...?
It was so precious to us.
But I knew that it was renewable, however precious it was.
I hesitantly offered, explaining, expecting a refusal of my gift.
Because SHE had said it was creepy.
The acceptance was grateful and immediate.
They came by with bags ready to receive my gift.
They left with hugs.
I went to look... the space was empty.
Suddenly, I felt lost without it. I called and asked for a photo.
I needed to remember the work that I had done.
They quickly sent one and, I remembered.

And started again. I added to it. And we waited.
I filled and gifted, I filled and gifted that precious stash.
Until we got the call.
Then, I filled.
We drove again, through the day, through the night
We drove.
We told everyone that we had this precious gift.
The response was favourable
Until...
SHE said that it was creepy.
Was I breaking a law by having it with me...?
Would she say no, just because she could...?
I cared. A lot.
I just wanted to keep it, I didn't want her to take it away
Deep in my soul I felt a fear, a longing
I wanted something, more than anything, before or since
In that moment, I kept my voice steady, I calmed him beside me.
I knew the questions to ask.
She went away.
And then HE came.
For the moment, I almost forgot.
But soon it would become "the most important thing"
I got the call.
I had asked the right questions.
I got the right answer.
And... two hours later.
In the quiet of our room.
He settled into my arms, turned his sweet face into me and...
I was able to give him the gift, the most precious gift.
SHE said it was creepy.
It didn't matter.
This did.

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St. Faith: 780.477.5931

Sunday Worship:

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BUSINESS » THE LEMONADE STAND

Can you shrink your way to success?

Cutting costs is a sure way to lose money

HENRI YAUCK

"A cost cutter buys grapes and makes raisins. An entrepreneur buys grapes and makes wine. You will never see a person go to a party or celebration carrying a box of raisins."

- R. H. Williams

Not long ago, a multimillionaire Wall Street speculator said, "American business people have a peculiar blind spot to the all-at-once backlash that comes from watering the soup."

The same applies here in Edmonton.

Some businesses expect to see incremental declines when they are incrementally abusive to their customer or market. But that's not the way it works. When customers stop buying soup, they all stop buying at once. When the toleration level is exceeded, it is exceeded at the same level for all customers. They all vanish at the same time.

Don't laugh, this happened

to McDonald's. The story was first recorded in the Chicago Tribune. These are the opening lines:

"Fred Turner did not need to look at financial statements to know McDonald's was in trouble. He could taste it."

"The man who worked alongside founder Ray Kroc to turn McDonald's Corp. into a global colossus noticed when penny pinchers at corporate headquarters changed recipes to cut costs. So when McDonald's cheapened the famed 'special sauce' on its flagship Big Mac sandwich, Turner knew."

The customers knew too and left all at once.

The central belief of cost cutters is that profits rise when costs are lowered. On paper, this argument is insurmountable because the cost cutter's forecast doesn't project a decline in business. Nor does it indicate the decline will be immediate, nor does it show the magnitude of the decline.

An experienced accountant

with entrepreneurial capacity will agree it is usually easier to increase revenues than to cut costs. Don't ever think you can shrink your way to profits.

Historically, the way to increased profits has always followed increased sales through good marketing of value-based products and/or services.

Christmas is now upon us. This being the end of 2014, it's time to spread a little holiday cheer and reflect on the months gone by.

What can you, as an entrepreneur, do to increase your revenues and so increase your profits as you move into a new year?

What products, what services will provide more value to your market, in a better way, what you have to offer? Here lies the best gift of all for your market, your family, and your employees.

Cheers and have a Merry Christmas!

-Henri Yauck

BUSINESS » SHOP LOCAL

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REBECCA LIPPIATT

Jim Nguyen was already a journeyman mechanic when he immigrated to Canada, but he wanted more education and enrolled at NAIT. For two years, he was named top student of the year. After NAIT, he started working with his brother, and Downtown Auto has been at the intersection of 95 Street and 118 Avenue since 1999.

Nguyen brings the same dedication he had to his education to his business. Of his eight shop employees, five are certified technicians. Usually a shop will have one or two technicians.

Employees are committed to customers and no unnecessary work is suggested. While Downtown Auto offers a winter maintenance package (\$49), Nguyen suggests fluids and filters be changed according to the factory recommended schedule, not on a time basis. Downtown Auto also does body work at their west end location.

Customers enter the shop by walking past the edge of the service bay, giving them a chance to see mechanics at work and talk with them. Nguyen ensures his customers feel valued. He prides himself that his employees produce consistent work and put in their best effort.

It is also important to him that his rates are reasonable. An oil change is \$39 and tire alignments (using 3D technology) are \$98. Inspections are \$98 for insurance, \$140 for out-of-province, and \$350 for salvage.

Custom home design

Old business gets new owner

HOME PLANNING

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PH: 780.479.4317

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REBECCA LIPPIATT

A long-established business will soon have a new owner. Bryce Stabel will be the third owner of Home Planning Centre, created in 1956. After working with Debbie Titus (who took over from the original owner in 1980) for three

years, Stabel will be taking over the business this year and brings his skills as an architectural technologist to the business.

His focus will be small infill housing, primarily single-family homes, laneway/garden homes, and duplexes and fourplexes. Having recently attended a seminar on net-zero housing, Bryce plans to incorporate those principles into his designs. The beauty of designing infill housing allows for more creativity. Depending on zoning, accommodation fits with the mature overlay in the community.

Clients can choose from existing home designs, which will be tailored to a specific location, or choose a custom home design. Prices range from \$400 for stock plan of a house under 1,200 square feet to 86 cents per square foot for a custom house. The final drawing (including blueprints and 3D rendering) provides all the information required to obtain a building permit, including the floor plan, interior and exterior elevation, electrical and plumbing.



Bryce Stabel is taking over Home Planning Centre from Debbie Titus. » REBECCA LIPPIATT



Jim Nguyen with his staff at Downtown Auto. » REBECCA LIPPIATT

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TRAVEL » EXPERIENCE

A tourist in my own town

In Europe, I discovered the garden in my own backyard.

DAVE VON BIEKER

Warning: I'm about to take over 500 words to say what Marcel Proust said in 16:

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

It is early October. I'm at the abandoned Tempelhof airport in Berlin. Specifically, I'm standing in a community garden where beds take any form and shape their makers imagine. Flowers burst from old shoes. Patios hide between towering sunflowers. Vines climb rickety arches. This upcycled wonderland redeems discarded materials. Kids play on a wooden airplane. Grown-ups share drinks and conversation on pallet benches. Creativity breathes loud in this garden. It is beautiful.

It's kind of like playing a chain-link fence as a drum. Reminds me of lounging in a backyard oasis beneath an

Alberta Avenue lamp that has become a tree for Kaleido. If the garden were in Edmonton, it'd be right here on the Ave.

In so many ways, my trip to Munich, Berlin, and Paris made me appreciate this community.

Munich is a tidy spread of monochrome brown rooftops visible from the tower of St. Peter's. She is proud and serious. Except for all those lederhosen. Oktoberfest has more yodelling, giant beers, and pretzels than any Bavarian capital could carry. But of course, I'm no stranger to festivals.

Berlin is the bohemian Goofus to Munich's Gallant. Outside the tourist core, every conceivable surface bears graffiti tattoos. Broken-down buildings become bars, nightclubs, or galleries. An abandoned rail yard is a sprawling urban park where a climbing wall ascends a concrete silo. Punk rockers smoke beneath mohawks behind a gritty bar. An artist sprays his newest creation to the beat of a

tailgate party. A massive mural on the East-Side Hotel proclaims that Berlin is poor, but sexy.

Perhaps that's why the food is so good. And cheap. I devour the best burger of my life in Berlin.

Paris is the pretty girl you want to be around, but once you're alone, find out you don't have much in common. She is pretentious, confusing, maddening and somewhat cold, but oh, to be seen with Paris! You just can't take your eyes off her, every building dolled up in curled concrete and wrought iron. Champagne tastes best on the Eiffel Tower lawn, gawking up at her sparkling night lights (a date, I fear, I can never top). There is no end to culture and couture in Paris. And baguettes. People do carry baguettes.

Yet it is Alberta Avenue I have come to love—for who she is and who she is becoming.

Walking our tree-lined streets, people smile at me. Like

in Munich. Stay-at-home dads walk with kids on weekdays. Adult couples ride bikes together. People take transit. It's all so European.

We have no shortage of bohemian artistic energy. Our Kaleido Festival is one loud party. We are so mighty little—just one neighbourhood in one city bringing crazy, beautiful events to life.

I'm not saying Alberta Avenue is a world-class tourist destination (though come festival time, an argument could be made). I'm more interested in the sacred small than the big noise. I'm talking about a good place to live life together. We can visit Europe or New York or Portland or Mexico, but we live here. And here is a beautiful place. Here we get to grow and shine and make things together. You and me, from Edmonton. Not tourists, but neighbours.

It's good to be home.



Sometimes it takes travelling across an ocean to discover what you already have.

>> DAVE VON BIEKER

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AWARENESS » RACISM

Searching within

The importance of recognizing humanity, not race

RUSTI L LEHAY

Born caucasian, I possess privileges and respect I have not earned. Aside from minor incidents of gender bias, I will skate through life free of blatant prejudice.

A recent troubling incident propelled me to search within. My great-niece and her toddler nephew are a visible minority. At the playground, a caucasian father (and stranger to my family) removed my nephew from the monkey bars to make way for his own son. This happened again during the same visit. The babysitter was stunned. It would never occur to me to touch someone else's child. Were the other children's needs more immediate, their children more worthy?

My great-niece hesitated to call it racism, but others with similar experiences agree it may have been racially motivated. She berates for herself for not being there and not knowing how she might have responded.

I think her momma bear instincts would have risen up. Even if she might not have identified it as racism, I think she would have validated her son's rights to not be touched, initi-

ated the conversation that playgrounds are places for children to learn to take turns, to share, and to co-operate.

We both felt uncomfortable during her struggle to process the experience. She spoke to me about how she has caught herself wanting to cross the street to avoid walking into a group of men with darker skin. I have caught myself in the same temptation as a woman walking alone.

Having a mixed-race child in the family is a wake-up call to lingering tendencies to judge or fear others based on appearances. My great-niece no longer crosses the street, even if a group of kids are wearing their pants down at their knees with ball cap brims raked sideways.

This community provides an ideal environment to ferret out bias. Am I racist when I walk the streets in my neighbourhood and catch myself wondering if I should cross the street when I encounter those different from me?

I have also pondered the power of a smile. There is a cheesy acronym for S.M.I.L.E. (Start My Internal Love Engine). One night, I took a different route to the store and met some dark-skinned men on a lonely side

street. I smiled from the deepest part of myself. That smile initiated a conversation. Nobody stopped. It was a moment, a connection. It was about weather. We were simply humans on our own trajectories.

In the late 1990s, a woman I regularly exercised with stormed into the change room snarling racial epithets about that "animal" who dared to use "her" exercise bike. She swore she could never use it again because it was filthy and damaged. I was shocked into silence and didn't know how to respond.

I was not raised with racism. My father died when I was seven. One family supported my mother in raising her five children. They were a beautiful dark-skinned couple with kind and warm hearts. He gave me his arm to lean on when I walked down the aisle at my wedding. I am not racist; however, our society's images, media, and history permeates our culture with fear. We must all undo that fear.

If we look upon others with respect and love, we will likely be gifted with that in return. It is time to look deep into our hearts. Start your internal love engine and recognize the humanity in each person you meet.



Rusti Lehay ponders racism after an issue at the playground. >> ALAN HAWRYLYSHEN

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HISTORY » COMMUNITY

Delton Apartment block deserves a closer look

Building harks back to early development of Alberta Avenue

CHANTAL FIGEAT

I've seldom passed this two-story block on 118 Avenue and 82 Street without feeling curious. It turns out my historical sleuth instinct was correct. Delton Apartment is a relic of the early commercial development along Alberta Avenue.

The building began life as Henderson Block, first appearing in Henderson's City Directory in 1915. It was originally strictly residential, containing seven apartments. This real estate venture was owned by Northern Trusts Company of Winnipeg, and operated by H.M.E. Evans and Company in Edmonton.

It was an odd time to erect a rental building. The Edmonton wild real estate boom, which peaked in 1912, had gone bust by then. The First World War had begun, contributing to the recession, and many were unemployed. People were leaving to find their fortune elsewhere.

The Roaring Twenties were a prosperous time, and the building was right on a streetcar line. Even so, investors had difficulty attracting tenants. In an age

where automobiles were for the rich only, Henderson Block was seen as a long distance from downtown. Also, the apartments were not equipped with gas stoves, widespread by the '20s.

In an apartment with limited floor space, a heavy cast iron wood or coal-burning range was a serious drawback. Such ranges produced excess heat, were bulky, and needed an exhaust. Modern gas ranges were compact and didn't need a chimney. This made them a more suitable choice for a small apartment kitchen.

Unable to get a good return on their investment, Northern Trusts sold Henderson Block in 1929. The new owners, Jessie Lorimer and W. S. Souter, continued to rent the building.

Although it has undergone changes over the years, the old building retains its character. Many original details remain. It is clad in brick, and has a protruding brick dripstone just below the flat roof. The wooden windows are still there, as is the stringcourse (horizontal band of stone) running between the first and second floors.



Delton Apartment retains its 1915 character. >> CHANTAL FIGEAT



PETER GOLDRING
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East



Christmas: The Celebration of Christ's Birth Good Will Towards All Men

Christmas and the December festive period are upon us again. For many, it will be a time to celebrate with family and friends, in the warm, safe environment of home and hearth. It is a time to reflect on the good fortune and sense of life's satisfaction and gratitude that comes from spending special times with family and friends. For many Edmontonians, it is also a time to care in particular for those who are not so fortunate, such as those who do not have family or home, or who struggle financially, on a day-to-day basis.

It is for these reasons that Edmontonians particularly reach out to help the less fortunate, through donations of cash, goods or time. There are many Christmas dinners held for the community to gather to celebrate with those who are less fortunate; dinners where all items and services are donated.

The needs continue to grow. I volunteer my time to serve at events and encourage you to do so as well. Helping others is an important way to appreciate the needs of Edmontonians and to treasure one's own blessings.

Also important as we gather to reflect and celebrate, let us remind all, including the retailers, that this is Christmas, the season of Christ's birth. The significance of asserting this is so important to our Canadian heritage and majority belief. Christmas trees, not holiday trees. Merry Christmas, not Happy Holidays. Christmas lights, not holiday lights.

While I do honour and respect others' religious seasonal events and holy days, mine is Christmas, the season of Christ and the celebration of his birth.

What do you think?

I Wish You and Your Family a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

For the communities of Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue and Westwood.

Events

NASHVILLE SONGWRITERS ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

Monday, Dec. 8 from 6:30 pm to 10 pm at the Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave).

JINGLE JAMMIN' CHRISTMAS CAROLING

On Friday, Dec. 12, get into the spirit of Christmas and come join us for some chili and caroling on the Ave! Chili at 6 pm and caroling at 7 pm at the Carrot (9351 118 Ave).

BRAZILIAN PERFORMANCE

Come to Parkdale-Cromdale Community Hall (11335 85 St) to see free capoeira performances every Saturday from 1-2 pm! Capoeira is a mix of Brazilian martial arts, music, and dance. Various classes are offered throughout the week at the hall. More info: www.capoeiraacademy.ca

THE CARROT STAGE

9351 118 Ave, 780.471.1580 thecarrot.ca
Fridays: Live music starts at 7:30 pm. Check website for lineup. \$5 cover, all ages welcome.
Saturdays: Open mic 7-9:30 pm. Share original music, poetry or comedy. Free admission for all ages. \$1.25 minimum food charge.



FREE family fun at Parkdale-Cromdale 11335 85st. All ages welcome!

Programs/Classes

FREE COMMUNITY ART NIGHT

For adults. Tuesdays from 6:30-8:30 pm at The Nina (9225 118 Ave). Sponsored by Alberta Jubilee Auditoria Society.

FREE FAMILY ART NIGHT

A variety of art activities for school age children accompanied by adults. Wednesdays from 6:30-8 pm at The Nina (9225 118 Ave).

FAMILY ART WORKSHOPS

Dive into the wonderful world of art with FREE all age workshops every Thursday from 6:30 pm to 8 pm at Parkdale-Cromdale Community Hall (11335 85 St). Inspired by famous artists and your creative imagination, kids and parents alike, will explore a variety of materials and techniques in drawing, painting and sculpture.

SPIRIT ART

An opportunity to explore your spirit through art. 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month from 10 am to noon at St. Faith/St. Stephen (11725 93 St).

FREE MUSIC LESSONS BY CREART

Every Saturday, free group lessons are offered to members at Parkdale-Cromdale Community Hall (11335 85 St). Singing

lessons from 9 to 10 am and guitar lessons from 10 am to 12 pm. Play and meet others. More info: call 780.878.8265 or createdmonton@hotmail.com.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS AT SPRUCEWOOD LIBRARY

11555 95 ST, 780-496-7099
Family Storytime Stories, songs and games for the whole family. Sundays 2:30 pm.
Baby Laptime (up to 12 months) Stories, songs, books, rhymes, finger play. Mondays, 10:30 am.
Sing, Sign, Laugh & Learn (for caregivers and children up to age 3) Enhance communication and development through repetition, visuals and movement. Tuesdays, 10:30 am.

TODDLER TUMBLE BABY BOUNCE

(facilitated by Bent Arrow Parent Link Association) All young parents or grandparents may bring pre-school aged children for gym play time on kid-friendly equipment followed by our Little Peoples Lunch. Tuesdays from 11:30 am-12:45 pm at Crystal Kids (8718 118 Ave).

FREE PARENT & TOT ENGLISH CLASS

ECALA English for Community Integration. Bring along your babies/toddlers and learn basic English skills for everyday situations. Fridays from 9-11 am at Parkdale-Cromdale Community Hall (11335 85 St). More info: contact Sarah at 780.887.6825 or email sarahdelano@hotmail.com.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS AT HIGHLANDS LIBRARY

6516 118 AVE, 780-496-7099
Family Storytime Stories, songs and games for the whole family. Saturdays at 11am.
Baby Laptime (up to 12 months) Stories, songs, books, rhymes, finger play. Thursdays at 10:30 am.

Sing, Sign, Laugh & Learn (for caregivers and children up to age 3) Enhance communication and development through repetition, visuals and movement. Wednesdays at 11 am.

ADULT READING & WRITING

A new program using mainly Aboriginal materials. Thursdays, 9:30 am to noon at St. Faith/St. Stephen (11725 93 St).



TECH HELP @ EPL

Have a tech question like computer basics, email, iPads, eBooks and more. Learn how to access and play with EPL's fabulous eCollection, including eBooks, eReaders, audiobooks, databases and the library catalogue. You're welcome to bring your own tablet, laptop or phone. Tuesdays, 10:30-11:30 am at Highlands Library (6516 118 Ave) or one-on-one at Sprucewood Library (call 780-496-7099 to register).

PERSONAL SAFETY & SELF-DEFENSE WORKSHOP

This free workshop is open to all adults. Instructor Margaret Ushko will teach you how to avoid being a target as well as basic self-defense skills. Refreshments provided. Wednesday, Dec. 17 from 1:30 - 3:30 pm at Parkdale Cromdale Community League (11335 85 St.). For information, call Helen at 780.454.4886 or hmfadyen101@gmail.com.

COLLECTIVE KITCHEN

Cook with friends, try new recipes, help your food budget at PrayerWorks Collective Kitchen. Second Wednesday of each month, 5:30-8:00 pm, St. Faith / St. Stephen Anglican Church, 11725-93 Street. Cost is \$3 for one serving of each of 4 different meals. For info, please call Trish at 780-464-5444.



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SAA MEETINGS & FELLOWSHIP

Big Book Study sponsored by Sex Addicts Anonymous. Everybody welcome. For meeting info call 587-921-1397, text 780-394-3709, email recovery4wolf@gmail.com.

ALATEEN MEETINGS

Help for young people whose parent, relative or friend is a problem drinker. Saturdays at 10 am at 11107 129 St (backdoor, downstairs). More info: call 1-888-322-6902 or Google alateen.edmonton.al-anon.org and Alcoholics Anonymous meet at the same time, in the same building. Help and hope for the whole family.

JUST FOR TODAY AFG

Are you troubled by someone's drinking? Al-Anon meeting, Mondays at 10 am at St. Stephen Anglican Church (11725 93 St). Entrance is at back door by handicap access. For more information, phone: 1-888-322-6902.

Social Activities

PRAYERWORKS COMMON

Hot complimentary meals & warm friendship at St. Faith/St. Stephen (11725 93 St). Every Thursday lunch 10 am-2 pm. 1st, 2nd & 3rd Friday supper 5-6:30 pm with MusicJam on the third Friday. Every 2nd and 4th Saturday breakfast 8:30-9:30 am.

FAMILY MUSIC POTLUCK NIGHT

Join us on the last Saturday of every month from 7 to 11 pm at Parkdale-Cromdale Community Hall (11335 85 St) for our family friendly arts party and potluck. Enjoy live professional and emerging musicians or take part in the open mic. More info: call 780.878.8265.

BABES IN ARMS

A casual parent group every Friday from 10 am to noon at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave).

TWEEN LOUNGE

For ages 8-13. Play video games, make a DIY project, meet friends, hang out. Thursdays from 3:30-5 pm at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St) or Highlands Library (6516 118 Ave).

TEEN GAMING

For ages 12-17. Come to the library to play some great games! Thursdays from 6:30-8:30 pm. Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St). More info: 780.496.7099.

NFB FILM CLUB

Saturday, Dec. 20 - 1:30 pm at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St).

ENGLISH CONVERSATION CIRCLE

Drop in and join others who also want to practice their English. Mondays from 6-7:30 pm at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St) or Fridays 10:30 am to noon at Highlands Library (6516 118 Ave).

FULL CIRCLE

Full Circle, a welcoming group for men and women of a distinguished age (55 years +), meets on Wednesdays at 6:45 pm at Parkdale-Cromdale Community Hall (11335 85 St). It is a safe and comfortable place to share your life experiences and ideas, and to learn new skills and knowledge while getting to know other local residents. More info: contact Helen at 780.454.4886.

NORWOOD LEGION SENIORS GROUP

Play darts, shuffleboard and pool. After, socialize over coffee and desserts. Tuesdays at 10:30 am. Cribbage Wednesdays at 1 pm. At Norwood Legion (11150 82 St).

PARKDALE-CROMDALE SENIORS GROUP

Seniors bingo takes place every Monday from 10:30 am to 1 pm at Parkdale-Cromdale Community Hall (11335 85 St). Coffee and snack provided.

SENIORS BREAKFAST & SOCIAL

All seniors 55+ are welcome to join us for breakfast, then stay for a visit, play some cards or billiards and if you like, you can watch a movie! Wednesdays from 11:30 am-12:45 pm at Crystal Kids Youth Centre (8715 118 Ave).

Sports & Rec

FREE COMMUNITY ACCESS AT COMMONWEALTH REC CENTRE

Use any of the amenities at the rec centre on Saturdays from 5-7 pm with your community league membership.

FREE SPORTS EQUIPMENT

All kinds of sports equipment to kids in need, including hockey, skates, bicycles, soccer, softball, rollerblades, racquets, snow sliders and more. More info at 780.477.1166 or www.sportscentral.org. Also accept donations of gently used sports gear.

FREE QIGONG CLASS

YiXue Lotus practice (Lotus Qigong) for a calm, stable heart and overall well-being. Weekly class. No fee. Call Astrid 780.477.0683.

Notices

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The Electronic Recycling Association will refurbish used computers and IT equipment and donate to non-profit organizations. Go to www.era.ca for more info.



Volunteer

VOLUNTEER AT THE CARROT

Daytime and evening shifts at the Carrot need volunteers. More: carrotassist@gmail.com

HELP AT NORWOOD CENTRE

Gain experience for employment or education, meet new people, learn new skills, have fun and give back to your community. Click the volunteer tab at norwoodcentre.com to view position descriptions or phone 780.471.3737.

BEFRIEND A SENIOR

Provide much needed companionship to an isolated senior by assisting them with grocery shopping, sharing life stories, playing cards completing crafts, going for walks or driving them to and from medical appointments. More info: Carole at 780.342.4421.

DRIVE A SENIOR

Be a volunteer driver who spends 3-4 hours once a month to drive an elderly senior to medical appointments, banking and/or shopping. Gas reimbursed. Call 780.732.1221.

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Wed. December 17th

1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

with Instructor, Margaret Ushko

Parkdale Cromdale Community League 11335 85 St. Edmonton

Hosted by Full Circle, a community group for resident 55 years plus

Information: Helen: (780) 454-4886 hmfadyen101@gmail.com



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Brian

Connect with Brian!

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THANK YOU FOR AN AMAZING YEAR!

Your support has helped to make 2014 very special for everyone at Northlands, as well as our volunteers and the communities we're proud to be a part of. We look forward to all of the great things 2015 has in store for us and encourage you to learn more about our community efforts by visiting northlands.com.




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