

# Rat Creek Press

Alberta Avenue • Delton • Eastwood • Elmwood Park • Parkdale-Cromdale • Spruce Avenue • Westwood



BY THE COMMUNITY - FOR THE COMMUNITY

FEBRUARY 2022

## Stadium LRT Station nearly done

Developments include heated shelters and public washrooms



Construction on the Stadium LRT Station has a way to go before completion this spring.  
| Constance Brissenden

### - CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN -

Forty years after it opened, the redeveloped Stadium LRT Station will soon be a star player on the LRT's Capital Line.

This spring, 12 years of planning and three years of construction will pay off with completion of the Stadium Station building. Landscaping and paving will follow this summer.

Before the design stage even started, public engagement sessions asked transit users how to improve their experiences using Stadium LRT Station. "The major themes we heard during public engagement were safety, accessibility, and comfort and convenience," says Kevin Pringle, portfolio construction manager, LRT expansion and renewal.

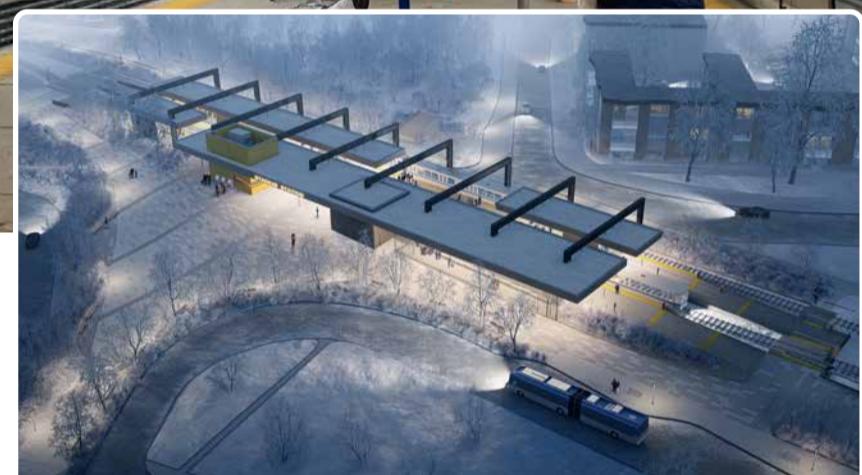
Before the redevelopment, transit users entered an underground concourse, then took stairs, the escalator, or the elevator up to platform level. It was a spooky walk, to say the least.

Improvements such as removing the

underground concourse and adding new lighting promote a safer environment. Transit users can enter the two above-ground platforms by ramps at the end of each platform, making the station more accessible from north and south ends. Track crossings will alert transit users to oncoming trains. There will also be connections to the multi-use trails on both sides of the tracks.

Frequent transit user David Pare takes the LRT between 20 and 30 times a month to commute to work downtown. After 26 years in the area, he sees the benefit of the redevelopment. "The new design will enhance the image of the community as the area undergoes gentrification. The Stadium area has had an unpleasant stereotype for some time and the gentrification of the area will only improve and perhaps eliminate that perception," he says.

The station will have a new, west platform to better handle the crowds from Commonwealth Stadium events. Barrier-free accessibility is a huge plus.



While the construction isn't complete yet, this is one rendering of the future Stadium LRT Station. | Supplied by City of Edmonton

Says Pare, "The barrier-free access will not only provide increased accessibility for those with disabilities, but also reduce, if not eliminate, choke points for those using the LRT after a large Stadium event. The new design makes the station a lot safer as it is open and barrier free."

Comfort and convenience are high on the list of attributes. Heated shelters will be open on each platform, as well as at the Stadium Transit Centre where buses pick up passengers. Shivering on the open platform will be a thing of the past.

Pare is looking forward to the heated shelters, "especially now that the new station is more open to the elements."

And there are more plusses. New public washrooms and new bike parking will be featured.

Work in 2022 will include completion of the heated shelters, construction of the plaza between the station and Commonwealth Stadium, and the addition of landscaping. The station will be enhanced by planting 159 new trees to replace 69 trees that have been removed.

"We look forward to delivering a more comfortable, safe, and accessible station for Edmontonians," says Pringle.

*Constance's writing and editing career spans more than 40 years. She lives in Parkdale-Cromdale.*



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# New group forges connections

Seniors fill in the blanks with weekly get-together

## - CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN -

How many seniors does it take to fight off boredom, loneliness, and inactivity?

Answer: As many as show up.

On a Tuesday before Christmas, I joined a group of seniors to spend an afternoon together. We gathered in the cozy lounge at Alberta Avenue Community Hall, with plenty of comfortable seating and a coffee maker at the ready.

The focus that day was on learning to play pickleball. But first, a tasty lunch was waiting for us. What a treat! How wonderful it was to feel spoiled. The pandemic has cut so many lifelines. Kindness and generosity go a long way now.

As our small group tucked into fragrant tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwiches, perfect for a cold and snowy December day, we shared more than food. We shared life experiences, and our thoughts, hopes, and dreams for the new year.

Last April, Alberta Avenue Community League surveyed seniors to create a program suited to their needs. The result, says Karen Mykietka, facility and office manager, was that the over-55 crowd wanted more connections. "They don't have as much support as they would like," Mykietka adds. A weekly seniors' gathering was one solution.

Frances Bernard has lived in the area for over two years. In her new home and with COVID-19 ongoing, her social circle shrank. She was also grieving the loss of her sister and uncle. Although busy renovating her home, Bernard felt a gap in her life. She yearned for social

activities and new acquaintances.

Sitting around the lounge coffee table, Bernard shares her journey. "My brother told me about the community league," she recalls while enjoying a plate of vegetables. "I was feeling the isolation

and thought I'd try it out." She is now a regular at many of the community league's events, volunteering, mingling, and meeting new people of all ages.

Bill Storey, 91 years old, has lived in Edmonton for the past 40 years. He

plays the guitar and enjoys it. "Alberta Avenue bought some musical equipment when enough people said they wanted to play," he shares.

Lively conversation bounces around topics such as African safaris, barbecue tips, walking the West Coast Trail, and US President Joe Biden's new dog.

After lunch, Wayne Graham leads a group of eight into the gym. Graham started coming on Tuesdays to play pickleball. He's a good teacher.

If you've ever played table tennis, badminton, or tennis, then pickleball will be familiar. The paddle ball sport is a favorite of seniors everywhere, played with two or four players over a net.

"Pickleball first tweaked my interest [when] watching people play outdoors on Vancouver Island," says Graham. "I've never been able to play it outdoors, but this gym is available."

The league bought four paddles and four bright orange polymer pickleballs. The seniors may not be highly competitive, but they do enjoy running back and forth, whacking the pickleball, and improving their hand-to-eye coordination.

After a good volley, I was puffing a little, a sure sign that the exercise was having a good effect.

The Tuesday seniors' gathering is from 1-4 p.m. A variety of activities are enjoyed. You are guaranteed good cheer and the warmth of good company. Proof of vaccination is required.

*Constance's writing and editing career spans more than 40 years. She lives in Parkdale-Cromdale.*



Sage Pavelich, age seven, joins in at Tuesday's seniors' gathering to practice pickleball. With seniors (left to right) Derek Quittenton, Margaret Larsen, and coordinator Wayne Graham. | Constance Brissenden

## DON'T MISS THESE ONLINE ARTICLES

### Reduced fee child-care available soon

Community members are questioning the implementation | Published Dec. 30

### Climate change has a ripple effect

The floods in British Columbia affected people in Alberta | Published Jan. 10

### Locals are soaking up Fête vibes

Check out Deep Freeze in Borden Park and Alberta Ave | Published Jan. 17

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#### ABOUT US

We are a non-profit community newspaper serving Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood. Published on Treaty 6 Territory. The opinions expressed in the paper are those of the people named as authors of the articles and do not necessarily reflect those of the board or staff.

#### GOALS

Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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#### CONTRIBUTORS

Our writers vary from trained journalists to community residents with varying backgrounds. We strive to be a place where individuals can learn new skills and acquire experience—whether in writing, editing, photography, or illustration. We welcome letters, unsolicited submissions, and story ideas.

#### COPYRIGHT

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#### CIRCULATION

Serving 12,500 community members.

#### DELIVERY

The paper is delivered by Canada Post to all houses, apartments, and businesses in the seven neighbourhoods listed above including those with no unaddressed mail notices. For the most part, delivery begins on the last Wednesday of the month.

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 Parkdale Cromdale Community League

# Hockey pilot officially started

Youth are now practicing in local league rinks



Left: At Eastwood, one volunteer helps tutor a participant. Right: At Delton's rink, kids with a range of skills skated. | Kate Wilson

## - TALEA MEDYNSKI -

After months of planning and invaluable help from league volunteers and local organizations, the youth hockey pilot officially started in early January.

"We were technically supposed to start before Christmas, but it got too busy," says Gaetan Benoit, volunteer coordinator for Eastwood. He described the conditions on the first day of practice as "the perfect winter evening for outdoor hockey. Conditions were just ideal."

On that first session at Eastwood's rink, 15 kids attended, although 25-28 registered.

"We'll probably get numbers up as the season progresses," says Benoit. He says the delay in starting the pilot was likely why there were fewer kids than expected.

While Delton and Eastwood have the younger kids, Spruce Ave will be hosting the older youth.

At the time of the interview, the program was at the orientation and initiation phase. Some kids already know how to skate, while others don't. These first few sessions are focused on teaching basic skills.

"In the first one-hour session, they're not all going to know how to skate. We're partners with Free Play for Kids, and they had some trained mentors and tutors there," says Benoit. "There were lots of volunteers tying skates and making hot chocolate."

After four to five sessions on the ice, organizers hope to get the kids playing shinny hockey sessions.

Janet Henderson, the vice president of Delton Community League, attended the first day of practice at Delton's rink.

"There were a lot less kids than we expected, which was OK because it took time to fit helmets and skates," Henderson says. "It was a learning experience the first day. I enjoyed seeing the kids out there."

The instructors and volunteers started participants with the basics, and Henderson says she thinks more instructors are still needed. She says details still need to be worked out and it's been a bit of a learning curve.

"We want to keep the kids busy," Henderson says.

Henderson says organizers are trying to keep the pilot program going as long as possible.

"I think it's a good thing to do. The outdoor rinks aren't as used as they used to be."

Henderson says it took "lots of people, funding, and volunteers" to get the pilot program started. Hockey Edmonton spearheaded the pilot program, Sports Central offered equipment, and Free Play for Kids offered coaches. The Edmonton

Oilers Community Foundation was also involved, and of course the leagues.

"This is what it takes to do something for the kids," she says.

For more information, contact rink coordinators: facilitiesdirector@eastwoodhub.org, vp@deltoncommunity.com, and Verna.Stainthorp@shaw.ca.

## SCHEDULE

**Delton** - 6 to 8 years old.  
Mon, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

**Eastwood** - 7 to 12 years old. Tues, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

**Delton** - 9 to 12 years old.  
Wed, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

**Spruce Ave** - 9 to 16 years old. Thurs, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Talea is the Rat Creek Press editor. She loves sharing the stories of our diverse neighbourhoods.

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# Many businesses are struggling

## What local businesses are doing to stay afloat

### - SHAREE ALUKO -

As we continue to navigate through the waves of the pandemic, it's clear local businesses are affected in different ways.

According to Charity Durowaa, the owner of Kasoa Tropical Food Market, business is calmer than when the pandemic began. She admits it hasn't been as difficult for her business compared to other sectors because regardless of the circumstances in the economy, food is a necessity.

Kasoa Tropical Food Market has been open since March 7, 2006. The decision to start this business was based on the need to fill an existing gap.

"When I came to Edmonton, I realized that there was not a lot of African and Caribbean goods," says Durowaa.

**"I follow the [health protocols] and do things like I normally did [before the pandemic]. People had to buy food for the family, so business has not changed much."**

**Charity Durowaa,  
owner of Kasoa  
Tropical Food Market**

The idea to offer Caribbean and African food is proving to be a good one. At the beginning of the pandemic, sales increased rather than decreased.

"Business was doing well because people didn't know what would happen, which led to stocking up on groceries. We are able to keep the business because we followed the protocol, but now people have gotten accustomed to the pandemic so business has become normal."

"I follow the [health protocols] and do things like I normally did [before the pandemic]. People had to buy food for the family, so business has not



Charity Durowaa, the owner of Kasoa Tropical Food Market, says her business has been doing well compared to other businesses. | Sharee Aluko

changed much," says Durowaa.

Laura Truong, co-owner of T&D Vietnamese Noodle House, says her business has been facing challenges. "We have been open since 2015. I'm passionate about all things service. I love the restaurant industry and helping people," says Truong.

To manoeuvre through the difficult times, the owners have demonstrated creativity.

"I had a mini pop-up art show I held in front of the restaurant, due to COVID. It was a success! I sold most of my paintings and decided to start my website online www.deliverthestars.com to share my passion for art. Secondly, I built my own gym above the restaurant and started focusing and building my personal training clients. I am limited on time and will train my clients before or after the restaurant opens. Now, going into another year of COVID, I had to diversify another time. I may be leasing the space in the front to another company and will only be focusing on take out and delivery with SkipTheDishes and Uber Eats," says Truong.

Truong adds, "I had to let all the staff go, including kitchen staff. My mother and I are the only workers at the moment and that has helped us to

sustain. This past year has been more of a struggle. I will be decreasing my hours of operation in the near future to 4-8 p.m. I'm undecided when that will take effect as I'm currently looking to find another full-time position."

Shortly after this interview, Truong says they have decided to close permanently.

Christy Morin, general manager of The Carrot Coffeehouse, says they also diversified.

"We are able to continue on and have our doors open, but it is a real challenge. The Carrot Coffeehouse is a great place to have a cup of coffee. We also have a retail store that has local artisan wares and a monthly art gallery. Curbside pick up for coffee is also available and live performances on Saturday nights," states Morin.

"I think over Christmas, people in the community were looking for a way to support our local artisans and we are grateful. We only take 20 per cent of the fees and the rest goes to the artisans. Business has been down 700 per cent since COVID-19; we are basically trying to keep alive everyday, encouraging curbside, and doing all our food in house to keep costs down."

**Christy Morin, general manager  
of The Carrot Coffeehouse**

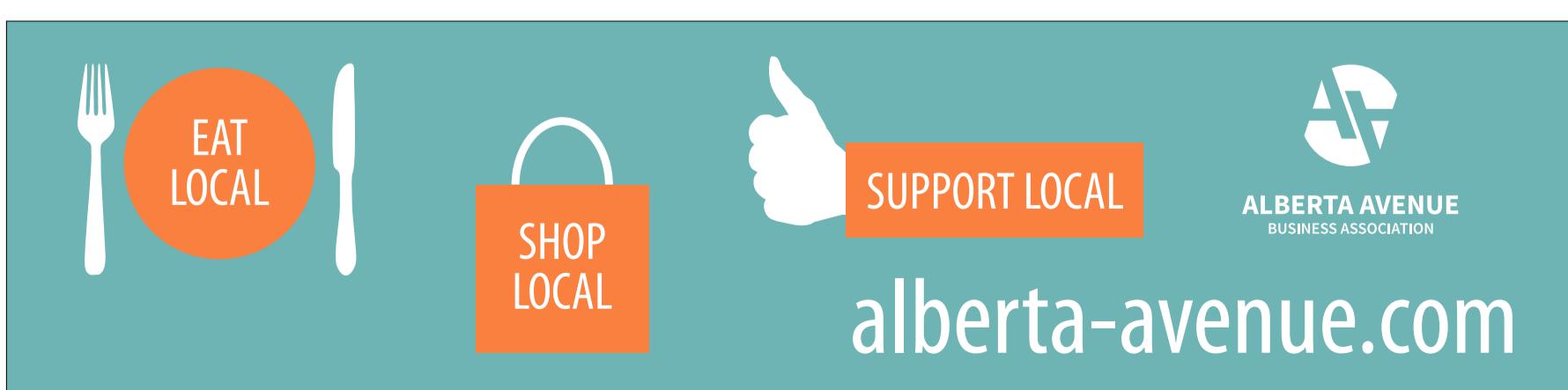
the rest goes to the artisans. Business has been down 700 per cent since COVID-19; we are basically trying to keep alive everyday, encouraging curbside, and doing all our food in house to keep costs down."

As the pandemic continues, local businesses' resilience, creativity, and flexibility is being tested beyond what could have ever been imagined.

Sharee has a Masters in Business Administration and is passionate about sharing information.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
FAMILY SKATE 10:00am to 4:45pm	Family Skate 4:00pm to 7:00pm  7:15pm to 9:00pm SHINNY	Family Skate 4:00pm to 7:00pm  7:15pm to 9:00pm SHINNY	Family Skate 4:00pm to 7:00pm  7:15pm to 9:00pm SHINNY	Family Skate 4:00pm to 6:00pm  START TO PLAY FREE Skate Lessons 6:00 - 9:00 pm	Family Skate 4:00pm to 7:00pm Fire Pit 5:00pm-8:00pm  7:15pm to 9:00pm SHINNY	9:00 am to 9:00 pm  ALL DAY FAMILY SKATE
	5:00pm to 9:00pm SHINNY					Skate Party Saturdays! 6 pm-9 pm Feb. 5th - Canadiana Feb. 12th - 80's Rock Feb. 19th - Beatles Night
<b>PARKDALE-CROMDALE ICE RINK SCHEDULE</b>						



# Piloting a new support team

**Creating connections between vulnerable citizens, businesses**

- MARILYN GRAY -  
REACH EDMONTON

The social and economic challenges facing Edmonton's core neighbourhoods are both complex and interconnected. A new approach to providing an on-street presence in Business Improvement Areas (BIA) is being piloted that aims to address the relationship between vulnerable Edmontonians and struggling business owners who share the same neighbourhood.

YEGAmbassadors, a collaborative partnership between the North Edge Business Association, the City of Edmonton, The Mustard Seed and REACH Edmonton, now features a two-person Community Safety Ambassador Team. This team aims to create more positive connections between businesses and vulnerable neighbours through relationship building, information sharing, and increasing connections to business supports or social services, depending on the needs.

Starting in the fall of 2020 through to the spring of 2021, the #YEGAmbassador partners, the Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA), and Boyle Street Community Services came together to prototype a street-engaged Community Safety Ambassador model. The aim was to learn what was needed for businesses and the community to address the increased vulnerability everyone is experiencing due to COVID-19.

Key lessons that came out of this were that the model could not be traditional outreach work, but required a balanced approach to engage with business community members and social agencies.

Businesses need consistent, uninterrupted, coordinated help to manage issues in the neighbourhood that create fear for staff and customers. For example, loitering, excessive litter, theft, and crisis situations.

Establishing these relationships requires time and continuity.

Stronger coordination and connection to City services, community organizations, program initiatives, and enforcement may lead to more appropriate response to business needs.

The Community Safety Ambassadors, Kaleigh Greidanus and Raelene Goulet, are supporting businesses to develop capacity and engagement with their local community. They are proud of their new roles, and feel honoured to support both vulnerable Edmontonians and vulnerable businesses

who often share spaces in the same neighbourhoods.

Prior to joining YEGAmbassadors, Greidanus was working at the Mustard Seed's drop-in centre downtown.

"Having worked in the downtown core and built relationships with people in the community, I have been able to learn more about how complex and diverse the needs of this community are. Everyone has such unique experiences, and therefore everyone needs different levels of support. I've tried to translate that mentality towards supporting the businesses as well. Each business faces its own unique set of challenges and for that

solve their challenges and found that their main challenge has been communication and being able to have positive interactions with people facing homelessness," says Sami Ayyaz, a veteran YEGAmbassador and now supervisor.

Some challenges businesses face on a daily basis include: loitering, excessive litter, people sleeping around businesses, theft, and crisis situations that cause disturbances.

The team found that care packages are a good way to de-escalate the situation.

"People may just be agitated because they're cold, hungry, or can't get somewhere," says Ayyaz.

training on how to use the overdose-reversal medication.

The new team members are eager to get to work on addressing the complex needs of these two overlapping communities who are struggling in especially difficult times.

"We've connected with a lot of businesses who feel they haven't had a voice," says Goulet. "We're in a unique situation where we are listening to these specific concerns, and I think that's been the missing piece for a lot of people."

The team is already deeply committed to creating connections between these two groups who need more support.



Left: The Community Safety Ambassadors, Kaleigh Greidanus (L) and Raelene Goulet (R) are working with vulnerable Edmontonians and struggling business owners. Right: The ambassadors in action. | Supplied by REACH Edmonton

reason the support they need from us will vary."

Before joining the team, Goulet was the co-lead for a street team for The Mustard Seed on the south side of the city, working with community members experiencing homelessness in the Strathcona area.

"The North Edge and Chinatown do have a lot of businesses I believe would self-identify as marginalized, so we're working to support them as well as encouraging them to be socially active in the community," says Goulet.

While the team is still quite new, they've already started some innovative projects aimed at connecting business owners and community members in a positive way.

One way Goulet and Greidanus work to support these two groups is by providing care packages for businesses to hand out to individuals in crisis.

"We started out thinking as we're here to support small businesses in helping them

The packages include things like bus tickets, water, granola bars, mittens, and hats.

"It's just a way to get a conversation going," he says. "They can offer them something and possibly even create a positive relationship between the business owner and the vulnerable person. We've already distributed about 10 care packages to businesses who were interested and the reception has been really good."

The team is also exploring new training approaches that could be offered to businesses to help them navigate these complex situations, build relationships, and enhance people's sense of safety.

"A lot of these businesses are hanging on by a thread, and unexpected expenses caused by vandalism or theft could impact on their livelihood," says Ayyaz.

The team is also engaging with businesses to connect those interested with nasal naloxone kits, in partnership with Alberta Health Services and George Spady, as well as

"The pandemic is really impacting marginalized communities," says Greidanus. "It's so important that these folks can share their stories and feel loved and heard. There are a lot of businesses that are already socially active and engaging with the vulnerable community, so we get to build off their great work and inspire other businesses to do the same."

Community Safety YEGAmbassadors is a collaborative partnership between the North Edge Business Association, the City of Edmonton, The Mustard Seed, and REACH Edmonton.

*The REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities was established in 2010. Its ambition is to, in one generation (25 years), significantly increase community safety in our region; increase Edmontonians' perception of safety and inclusion; and engage the people of Edmonton and the region in developing a culture of safety and crime prevention.*



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# Up the creek without a paddle

**Don't let this be the beginning of the end**

- KAREN MYKETKA -

It's not a Happy New Year for me. I've spent the last few months looking at budgets, trying to forecast income in uncertain times, and having sustainability discussions with two community organizations: the *Rat Creek Press* and Alberta Avenue Community League. It's not looking good. On the bright side, both organizations are currently solvent and able to continue operations. But, the crisis is coming, and it is coming fast.

Most not-for-profit organizations piece their funding together from three income sources: grants, gaming (casino & bingos), and user or service fees such as memberships, sales, or rentals. All of these income streams have taken a hit over the last two years. It has always been difficult to get grants for operating costs; grants tend to focus on projects, programs, or capital improvements. Casino funds make up half of the *RCP* budget. We will run out of casino funds this summer. Due to the pandemic, casino events are running almost two years behind, so we may not have more casino funds until the end of 2023.

Alberta Avenue Community League (AACL) will be out of casino funds by the end of 2022, and their rental revenue has dropped by two-thirds. They have one of the largest, most expensive facilities to operate. They never closed or stopped running programs during the pandemic. The projected 2022 deficit is large and will likely deplete their remaining cash reserves. They are undertaking fundraising so that they can sustain normal operations in 2023. It may be a challenge.

Some community organizations are already having issues paying the monthly utility bills and finding enough funds to continue normal operations. Alberta Avenue Business Association (AABA)

and all seven community leagues partnered with *Rat Creek Press* in 2020, each giving an annual donation to the newspaper. In 2021, Westwood and Delton were no longer able to financially sustain the partnership, and Eastwood and AABA had to scale back their donations.

In 2022, there will likely be more scaling back of *RCP* partnership donations. With few events and programs taking place and businesses closed or struggling, advertising sales have also been dismal.

Another integral community organization, Arts on the Ave, constantly pivoted to continue programs and events, re-imagined and re-worked their large signature festivals still employing dozens and dozens of artists, all to continue free or low-cost offerings to our com-

munity. Many days they struggle to make \$100 at their volunteer-powered Carrot Coffeehouse. They wade through COVID regulations, unpredictable and extreme weather conditions, and staffing and volunteer challenges to produce vibrant festivals open to all. Their ability to continue operating in this manner is also being challenged.

I hope this new year is better for many of you because your support is needed. If you value having local independent businesses to eat or shop at, if you value festivals like Deep Freeze & Kaleido, if you value community centres, ice rinks, and community gardens, if you value community programs and events, then you need to do everything you can to support them.

All of these local, non-profit organizations (including the *RCP*) are connected. We are integral pieces that make your communities thrive. Your league needs you to buy a membership, all organizations need donations, businesses need you to shop and eat and bring your

family and friends. You can also offer your time, skills and gifts, especially with fundraising activities. Work casinos and bingos when they come up. Offer to play music or give a free service for a community event. Donate to a silent auction.

This plea for support is the same for *RCP*. This community paper has been around for over 20 years. We're a unique, independent newspaper. There's very few independent newspapers around anymore. In 2022, the *RCP* needs your financial support. I hear all the time that people read and value the paper. This is an opportunity to show it.

**RCP distributes to 12,000 households. If five per cent of households (600) purchased a membership (\$36), that would raise one quarter of the annual budget.**

For the last 17 years, I have been working in some capacity or other to ensure a copy of the *Rat Creek Press* made it to mailboxes in the community. There's a high probability that the print version of the *RCP* newspaper won't make it to the end of 2022. There is also no guarantee that *RCP* will have enough funds to produce an online-only publication in 2023. *RCP* distributes to 12,000 households. If five per cent of households (600) purchased a membership (\$36), that would raise one quarter of the annual budget.

The future is never written in stone; we create the future day by day. The community has the power to help keep the *RCP*, the community leagues, and the local businesses afloat. Will you do your part?

*A busy woman of many jobs, Karen spends too much time in front of a computer. In the past 20 years, she has lived in Eastwood, Alberta Avenue and now Parkdale, meeting awesome people everywhere she goes.*



Now is the time to support non-profit organizations like the Rat Creek Press | Unsplash

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# Starting with mind and motivation

## Taking the first steps to health and wellness

### - KAREN MYKETKA -

Like many of you, I've been making resolutions to exercise, lose weight, eat better, or get healthier for many, many years. Some years I'm more successful than others, but one thing that has been consistent is my lack of consistency. I've realized that I, like many others, do not start in the right place. We need to start with mind and motivation. Beating ourselves up with negative self thoughts isn't going to help anything; in fact, it will sabotage you every time. Use what you enjoy, want, or need to motivate you down a healthier path.

The same New Year's resolutions are on our list every year because we weren't "successful" in accomplishing them. Maybe our goals are unrealistic or our plan to achieve

them needs work. We often make things too complicated and jump into things too fast. Successful change starts with establishing new habits that move us in the direction we would like to go. It will take a lot of small changes in the beginning to get ourselves turned around and moving in the right direction but usually once we are going, the momentum helps keep us going.

I love to exercise and it's still hard for me to create a habit of daily exercise. We often blame lack of time for our failure to do something, but

that is rarely the real reason. Most of us are wasting tons of time on our phones or watching TV. For me, it was more about giving myself permission to spend time doing something for myself when I still had so much stuff on my to do list. I'm sure many of you know the familiar pattern of, "I'll exercise once I finish x, y, z." But then you never finish those things or you don't have the energy to even figure out where to get started on something new.

I actually started my exercise plan in September by taking a little time every morning to read a book. I did this to start establishing a habit of taking some time for myself early in the day. Although I'm quite knowledgeable and experienced with exercise, I'm also a researcher and planner. I was delaying and procrastinating starting regular exercise because I wanted to come up with a plan. Finally, near the end of October, I just decided to start small with familiar exercises. I started doing five to 10 minutes on my exercise equipment or doing some stretches.

If you don't enjoy exercise, then it's going to be even harder. You need to sneak exercise into something you need,

want, or enjoy. Maybe you need to save money, so you decide to walk instead of driving and paying for parking. You want to visit with your friends more, so you do it while going for a walk. If you enjoy watching a show, reading a book, or listening to music, then give yourself those perks when doing some stretches or exercise.

We all sit too much and move too little. The most important part of exercise is that we spend time everyday moving our bodies in some way. Anything more than you are doing now is a step in the right direction. Tools like tracking your steps (which you can do on most smartphones) can help motivate you and monitor your progress.

Don't make exercise about losing weight because moving our bodies is important regardless of our weight. Go for a walk and listen to some TedTalks or podcasts on the benefits of movement and exercise. Exercise improves your mood, mental functioning, energy, sleep, digestion, immune system, skin, strength, flexibility, balance, and posture. It reduces stress, anxiety and depression, chronic diseases, blood pressure, and risk of cancer. Exercise is a magic pill.

If you are seeking vitality, health and longevity, then you also want to work on adding these things to your life: real, whole foods; time restricted eating or intermittent fasting; adequate amounts of mineral water; sufficient, quality sleep; sunlight; fresh air and deep breathing; and time in nature.

*A busy woman of many jobs, Karen spends too much time in front of a computer. In the past 20 years, she has lived in Eastwood, Alberta Avenue and now Parkdale, meeting awesome people everywhere she goes.*



Consistency and doing an activity you truly enjoy are important when it comes to exercise. | Pixabay

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