

Rat Creek Press

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BY THE COMMUNITY - FOR THE COMMUNITY

OCTOBER 2022

Community service at its best

Resource Connect brings community and agencies together



This year's Resource Connect has 81 agencies attending the event. | Supplied

MARILYN GRAY REACH EDMONTON

When it comes to accessing services around the city, it can be tough to know where to start.

Resource Connect is an event that aims to bring Edmontonians and service providers together. On Oct. 28 from 10 am to 4 pm, people will have the opportunity to discover this unique event where both citizens and agencies can find each other in one place.

In partnership with Edmonton Public Library (EPL), the event is a chance for community members and service providers to connect in a mutually beneficial way.

“By coming together, we hope to build a stronger community service, become more aware of each other, and explore possibilities for increased alignment and support,” says Kelly Holland, community engagement manager at REACH Edmonton.

The event started at Stanley Milner Library in 2017, and then moved to a few different community venues while the library was closed for major renovations.

“EPL has been involved since the very first one,” says Holland. “It has gone around the community and this year it comes back to the initial venue at the newly renovated library. We are so excited to be back after the pandemic put these kinds of events on hold. We’re looking forward to holding it every second year going forward.”

The event will feature a farmers market-style setup with space for 81 agencies to connect with the community.

“We are able to accept 81 agencies as exhibitors in order for people to be able to social distance and be comfortable,” says Holland.

The event is not just open to community groups and agencies as exhibitors; educational institutions have also been

invited to come and chat about possible internships or practicums.

“We’ve also invited Edmonton Youth Justice to come to explore different places to serve community service hours,” says Holland. “It’s a great platform for people to come and look for volunteer opportunities, job opportunities. We’re asking all the exhibitors to bring job postings, volunteer sign ups, and any other opportunities they have available.”

Of the 81 agencies attending, 10 will be giving 20-minute presentations in the library theatre about the work that they do.

“We want the benefits of this event to flow in both directions,” she says. “It’s a service for everyone.”

The event needs volunteers to help set up, tear down, and do other work to make the event a success.

To sign up to volunteer, visit: tinyurl.com/2s3ra8mu.

To apply to be an exhibitor, click here: tinyurl.com/2adwtuwm.

Resource Connect will be held in the basement level of the Stanley A. Milner Library on Friday, Oct. 28 from 10 am to 4 pm.

For more information, visit: resourceconnectyeg.ca.

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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Students filmed a variety show

Spark! Youth Camp participants went with the flow this summer

DEVYN ENS

Campers returned this summer for the ninth year of the Spark! Youth Camp, hosted by Alberta Avenue Community League from July 18 to 22.

Thirty kids between the ages of eight to 14 participated, learning skills on the performance and storytelling side or the technical and design side of theatre production.

This summer's production was lead instructor Katie Cutting's first year at the program's helm. Cutting helped overhaul the camp from a theatre program with an in-person performance at the end of the camp, to a program centred around producing a film performance.

"The performance kids, they write and star in their own story. Throughout the course of the week, they write it and by the end of the week, we've filmed it and then it's up to me to edit it to their specs," Cutting explains.

"Then on the other side, the tech side where I spend most of my time, myself and the tech instructor take the kids through building sets, props, learning how to use cameras, all of the stuff that they need to be able to make a short film."

This year's camp started off similar to last year's camp. Campers arrived on the first day, ready to dive into the world of filmmaking. Cutting and the two assistant facilitators, David Rae and Amy Dass, had prepped three different ideas to pitch to the kids.

"On Monday, the performance stu-

dents sat down in their groups and then they all kind of wrote a scenario for the different options that we presented. And they all came back using the exact same one," Cutting says.

She continues: "They wanted to use a fancy Victorian castle and some very high society stories. So from that point, the tech side, we started working on a set right away."

While the tech and design campers worked on making their Victorian

fantasy come to life, the performance campers created their characters and worked on their scripts. By the end of the Tuesday session, things were falling into place perfectly.

And then, says Cutting, disaster struck.

"What makes this very interesting is that I got COVID," she explains. "And I tested positive Wednesday morning, just as we're coming right into the peak of all of these things that we've got to do."

With Cutting on the sidelines, Rae

and Dass, along with the program teacher assistants, flipped the camp on its head and started afresh with a new concept.

"What we ended up with was a variety show, set in the castle that we'd already started to design. And it's very much like an 'Alfred Hitchcock Presents' kind of thing," says Cutting.

With Cutting on the sidelines, Rae and Dass, along with the program teacher assistants, flipped the camp on its head and started afresh with a new concept.

"Between each segment, we go back to a house. So the host introduces the first segment, and we go off and we have an adventure. And then we come back and forth and back and forth throughout the story."

Despite the hiccups along the way, the campers completed their film and premiered it at the league on Sept. 11.

"It was all performed by and written by our own campers, with just the lightest touch of adult interference to try and make it happen better for them," says Cutting.

Devyn is a reformed Calgarian who now calls Edmonton home. She spent a previous life in community journalism, and currently spends her days filing lawsuits and volunteering to help rescue cats.



This year's camp was a variety show. | Supplied

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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.

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Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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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.

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Telling tales at Myth Country Fair

Local festival will let people hear stories from around the world

ALOUISE DITTRICK

On a cool autumn evening in times past, people gathered around a fire to share stories of ancient creatures, heroes, and epic journeys. Such tales are the focus of Myth Country Fair, an all ages event that is part of the Thousand Faces Festival taking place on Oct. 14 and 15 on Alberta Avenue.

This is the 10th anniversary of the Thousand Faces Festival, which has been split into two different parts this year. The first, Myth Country Fair, will happen at and around the Alberta Avenue Community Centre on the evenings of Oct. 14 and 15. The second, CanNatyam, will focus on telling stories through South Asian classical dance. It takes place from Nov. 4 to 6 at La Cité Francophone.



Sebastian Barrera and Lady Vanessa Cardona performing at a previous year's Thousand Faces Festival. | Mathieu Simpson

The doors for Myth Country Fair will open at 6:30 pm each evening, with events starting around 7 pm. The evening will feature stories from Ukraine, Tanzania, China, and other countries.

Mark Henderson, artistic director for the festival, spoke enthusiastically about Myth Country Fair.

"[Myth Country Fair] is going to circle around the themes of harvest, and themes of going into the darkness to come out the other side to the light. We're going to explore things like what it means to be a friend... We're going to explore things like the journey of the soul."

The doors for Myth Country Fair will open at 6:30 pm each evening, with events starting around 7 pm. The evening will feature stories from Ukraine, Tanzania, China, and other countries. There will also be activities, like an interactive flamenco workshop led by Sebastian Barrera. Each night will include a buffet with

dishes from local Alberta Avenue restaurants.

There isn't a preset schedule of events for Myth Country Fair. Instead, people are encouraged to embrace the fair-like atmosphere and go to whatever area piques their curiosity.

"It's an opportunity for people from the Ave to come together and meet and mingle, and experience these different cultures," says Henderson.

Admission to Myth Country Fair is free, but festival organizers suggest a \$25 donation. People can donate at the door or on the festival's website. Henderson says organizers wanted to make admission free, as they don't want anyone facing financial hardship to stay away from the festival.

There isn't a preset schedule of events for Myth Country Fair. People are encouraged to embrace the fair-like atmosphere and go to whatever area piques their curiosity.

Although the festival had an in-person event last year, there was a capacity limit of 50 people. This year, the festival is fully open to the public. While people can go online to register in advance, it isn't required. Attendees can show up at 6:30 pm to get admitted into the festival.

Although some things have changed for the Thousand Faces Festival, many have stayed the same. Henderson says, "You're going to hear stories that you never heard before, but that resonate with things you have felt before. That speaks to who you are, to who you want to be."

The stories we share reveal important aspects of culture and community. They tell us about our fears, our regrets, our hopes, and our desires. People have been sharing stories with each other as far back as 30,000

years, perhaps longer. Myth Country Fair isn't just a festival supporting the Alberta Avenue community, it's also continuing one of the oldest traditions of humanity.

Alouise is a professional writer and graduate of MacEwan University. She writes about travel and the performing arts at takemetotheworld.com.

THOUSAND FACES FESTIVAL
Myth Country Fair, Oct. 14-15: Alberta Avenue Community Centre (9210 118 Ave)
CanNatyam, Nov. 4-6: La Cité Francophone (8627 91 St)
Admission is free, but a donation of \$25 is suggested.
thousandfaces.ca

AACL MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

The '22-'23 Alberta Avenue Community League memberships are now available.

Details:

AlbertaAve.org/Membership
 780-477-2773

Prices:*

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- Free skating outdoor community rinks
- Edmonton Tool Library annual membership
- Voting rights at our AGM



ALBERTA AVENUE
 COMMUNITY LEAGUE

Connected to the community

Rahul Sharma enjoys helping people



Rahul Sharma spends his spare time volunteering in the community. | Mya Colwell

MYA COLWELL

Rahul Sharma gives back to his community through volunteer work.

In 2019, he was on the Eastwood league board as the communications director, and he recently started volunteering at the league again. Sharma has also been involved with the Bethel Place Food Pantry since December 2020.

Sharma decided to volunteer “just to give back to the community,” he says. “It gives me something to do, and it’s also boosted my confidence.”

“You get to be part of the community... pulse,” says Sharma. “The community is a living thing. And we’re all part of it.”

He says it’s the people that make the community in Eastwood special. They’re all just “regular folks” and there’s no snootiness that goes on in the neighbourhood.

The Bethel Place Food Pantry is a space where community members can

access free food if they are in need and being able to volunteer there has been especially rewarding, says Sharma.

“Anybody, it doesn’t matter who you are, can run into hard times,” says Sharma. “It just takes a few bad decisions, or not even bad decisions. Sometimes things happen [that are] out of your control. So, sometimes you get hit by an unexpected expense... and you need to rely on a food bank, [for example].”

“I’ve had hard times in life too, so I understand,” adds Sharma.

Ultimately volunteering comes down to one thing for Sharma: “If you can give somebody a hand, why not do it?” he says.

It’s “people helping people” that’s so important, says Rahul.

Mya is a student working toward a career in journalism and communications. Writing is one of her passions, besides baking and playing trombone.

Helping Spruce Avenue blossom

Verna Stainthorp is knowledgeable and dedicated

MYA COLWELL

Verna Stainthorp has lived in Spruce Avenue since 1967, and since then, she has become a strong presence in the community and on Spruce Avenue Community League’s board.

Stainthorp got involved with the community league in the early ‘70s. She stepped away from the league for a time when her fourth child was born in 1985, and became involved again in 1994, officially joining the board as treasurer.

“At that time, the league had gone through a couple of embezzlements and... basically the league was nonexistent,” says Stainthorp. “A couple of the ladies in the neighbourhood got it going again and asked if I would become re-involved as the treasurer. I wanted to do this and see the league active again.”

Stainthorp has occupied the treasurer position ever since, while also filling in for various other vacant positions.

“It was a position that nobody else ever wanted,” she says with a laugh. “But I didn’t mind... I enjoy being in that position.” At one point, Stainthorp was the treasurer for three organizations at the same time — Spruce Avenue School’s parent council, Spruce Ave Community League, and her son’s hockey organization — a considerable volunteer commitment. “It was just the way it was,” says Stainthorp simply.

Volunteering was never something

that Stainthorp thought twice about. It was how she was brought up, to give back and help others.

“I grew up on a farm and they were very involved with the church, and my mom with the Ladies’ Aid,” says Stainthorp. “[Volunteering] just sort of came naturally to me, to want to be involved, to help each other out, and make a community strong.”

Verna Stainthorp got involved with the community league in the early ‘70s. She stepped away from the league for a time when her fourth child was born in 1985, and became involved again in 1994.

Her goals while on Spruce Avenue’s board have been about involving the community and encouraging development. “I’ve always embraced ongoing development and also [prioritized] ensuring that whatever infrastructure we have or that we develop continues to be main-

tained,” says Stainthorp. “My goal is to provide something that’s going to be sustainable.”

Stainthorp has stayed on at the league through the rebuilding of the league’s finances and countless other projects. She was involved in Spruce Ave’s building extension in 1999; in establishing casinos and bingos as a source of income for both the league and the community school; and updating the rink to include dressing rooms, players’ benches, and new lights. She was also involved in retrofitting the community hall to be wheelchair accessible; redeveloping the playground and spray park; helping convert 115 Avenue from 102 Street to 103 Street back to parkland; and much, much more.



Verna Stainthorp loves her community in Spruce Avenue. | Mya Colwell

Stainthorp has volunteered countless hours for the league over the years, and her love for the community and the league is evident. “You know, I wouldn’t live anywhere else. I really wouldn’t,” she says.

“In the early ‘80s, we had definitely outgrown our home, you know [with] three girls and a very tiny house... so we looked in different areas, and always came back [to Spruce Avenue],” adds Stainthorp. “And I’m so glad, so happy we did.”

She says what makes the community so unique is knowing the neighbours; meeting community members at league events; strolling through the community

and seeing the mature trees; accessing the LRT and Kingsway Mall easily; and quickly travelling downtown.

Stainthorp has worked tirelessly in the community to contribute to its vibrancy and success, and it shows.

“[Spruce Avenue] has just really blossomed,” says Stainthorp. “There are so many benefits of living in the neighbourhood that I just wouldn’t live anywhere else.”

Mya is a student working toward a career in journalism and communications. Writing is one of her passions, besides baking and playing trombone.

Janis Irwin, MLA
Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood

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A beekeeper tends to her charges

Amelia Altmiks shares how she keeps bees healthy and happy

RUSTI L LEHAY

When Alberta Avenue's beekeeper, Amelia Altmiks, describes her role as "basically a bee landlord," you may want to rethink an initial reaction of landlords being stung by bad tenants. Out of millions of *tenants*, she has only been stung four times in six years, whereas many landlords learn a bad human tenant's sting is far more painful to their bottom line.

As their landlord, Altmiks "helps bees do what they need to do and stay in the hive." At the end of the season, she minimizes their space so they have less honey to guard, as wasps will invade the hive to eat the bees and the efforts of their hard work. In the middle of summer, which is the growing and pollen season, the population of the hive grows and they need more space for their honey.

Amelia Altmiks describes her role as "basically a bee landlord". She helps bees do what they need to do and stay in the hive.

Beekeeping in Alberta is "quite a bit of work due to shorter pollen seasons of pollen flow in northern Canada. We only have four or five months." Altmiks inspects the hives once a week in peak season, about



Amelia Altmiks has shared some of her knowledge at workshops, like this one in March of 2020. | Supplied



Amelia Altmiks tending to bees. | Supplied

an hour per box, as things change fast, and once every 10-12 days during spring and fall. "I check to make sure there are no disease or pest issues."

Over winter, Altmiks prepares for spring by building and sanding extra boxes, as well as dusting off snow when she visits the hives. "We will try to get them in the new greenhouse [in the community garden] if it is ready in time."

Climate change is a major challenge for their health. "The drastic changes from freezing temps of -30 C to unseasonably warm thaws above zero can be difficult for the bees." Altmiks then uses emergency blankets and fuzzy insulation in the top boxes. "Honeybees are not native to North America. As climate and weather fluctuations continue, we will have to do different things like bring them indoors."

Bees stay alive throughout winter, although the

queen produces fewer eggs. The cycles of birth and death mean the hive's autumn occupants are different from the ones emerging in the spring. Altmiks also monitors two-way airflow. "Last year, the smoke and really hot temperatures meant the plants produced less pollen." Smoke from forest fires can mean the bees are going into winter more stressed than if the summer had been smoke-free.

Beekeepers occasionally need to use smoke to keep bees in the hive, and with smoke pollution, bees don't want to leave although they still need food. Altmiks adds, "I smoke them all the time to move them around during hive inspections. This prevents me from squishing a bunch of bees when I place the bee boxes back together. They will move out of the way when I smoke them. This has nothing to do with smoke pollution."

When bees aren't doing well, Altmiks feeds them sugar water, "which is like fast food to them. They will eat it only if they need it." Now that you know more about *The Secret Life of Bees* (Altmiks' favourite movie about the miraculous wee creatures), readers might consider joining her league of bee heroes by planting plenty of early and continuously blooming plants, and late fall blooming species like squash to extend the pollen supply throughout Alberta's short season. In order to set up a hive in the city, you must have urban beekeeping certification. Backyard hives began when the City of Edmonton approved backyard hens and the bee pilot in 2015 through an urban agriculture initiative.

Passionate about her role, the health of the bees under her care is primary for Altmiks. "We started the community's hive in 2020. This is the first year we harvested." She assessed their health status before taking honey.

League board members sold the harvested honey at the recent 100th anniversary celebration. They even offered honey whiskey samples and saved some for future pub nights. Not to worry, though. If you become a beekeeper, your tenants will pay you back in honey and never throw wild parties. Just watch out for the marauding wasps that can destroy the neighbourhood.

Altmiks inspects the hives once a week in peak season, about an hour per box, as things change fast, and once every 10-12 days during spring and fall.

Rusti has been writing professionally since 1999. Her favourite word activities are coaching writers and offering online writing stay-treats.

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Practice the art of canning

Naomi Pahl, a seasoned canner, shares how to can and preserve food

MYA COLWELL

This fall, learn ways to preserve the abundance of summer's harvest through canning.

Canning is a form of preserving, explains Naomi Pahl, who has been canning for 14 years. She learned the skill from her aunts, one of whom is a Red Seal chef, and has amassed plenty of tips and tricks over the years.

There are several kinds of canning, including pressure canning, water bath canning, and atmospheric steam canning.

Pahl uses water bath canning, which is perfect for foods high in pectin and acid: jams, chutneys, relishes, pickles, and salsas, for example.

"[Water bath canning] is going to be really easy, as far as learning how to cook it and prepare it, and it's a great way to enter the world of preserving," says Pahl.

Source your produce for canning from just about anywhere: from foraging in your local ravine or shopping at a farmers market or grocery store to harvesting the food grown in your very own garden.

"Sometimes you go to the grocery store and they have something on sale because they just have too much of it," says Pahl. "That's a great opportunity to take produce home for a cheap amount and be able to preserve it for your family."

"If you can't eat it right away, a great way to store it is to can it," adds Pahl.

And, canning is a much cheaper alternative to buying grocery jams and chutneys, especially if you already have a large source of produce — an apple tree or a cherry tree, for example.

"It's so much cheaper and tastes so much better," says Pahl. "There's just no comparison in taste with [grocery-bought items] anyhow."

Convinced yet? Here's how to get started.

What you'll need:

- A canning pot
- A jar lifter
- Jars
- Screw bands
- Lids
- A funnel (optional but helpful)



Make sure you have the proper supplies before you begin canning. | Supplied

CANNING STEPS >>



Preserved food lasts for about a year. | Supplied

These are the bare minimum canning tools, explains Pahl. You can purchase specific canning tools if you'd like, but it isn't necessary.

Jars and screw bands can be reused in future canning projects, but the lids must always be new and they must be the correct size for the jar. If the lid is too large or too small, the jars won't seal properly and the food can spoil.

Before you dive right in, Pahl suggests doing a little bit of research because there are requirements to ensure that the food you're canning remains safe for consumption.

Pahl suggests checking out: atcoblueflamekitchen.com/en-ca/how-to/preserving.html for detailed canning instructions and recipes that have been collected by Alberta food professionals. It also includes the processing times needed for canning, according to your geographical elevation. Food will need to be processed longer if your geographical elevation is higher. Another good site is nchfp.uga.edu.

She also cautions against using old-fashioned, non-scientific canning techniques. "I love that my great-grandparents and my grandparents and so many of our ancestors have been preserving food," says Pahl, "but it's important that we don't risk our lives or other people's lives using non-scientific methods of canning."

"Be proud of your ancestors and their preserving knowledge, but maybe don't use that specific preserving knowledge. Especially because we have so many great scientific methods that have been updated continuously that keep us safe from things like botulism."

Mya is a student working toward a career in journalism and communications. Writing is one of her passions, besides baking and playing trombone.

Step 1: Make your jam/chutney/pickles/etc.

Find a recipe you like and get started!

Step 2: Set up your water bath

Fill your canning pot full of water and set it up to boil. Ensure the pot is deep enough that it covers the jars by at least an inch. It will likely take a while to boil, so be patient!

Step 3: Sterilize everything

"[Canning] really works best if everything is kept hot, including your jars and your utensils and your food," explains Pahl, "because that means it's going to be sterilized." Having everything hot also ensures that the jars seal properly.

Avoid having any utensils or food cool down by working efficiently and by having another pair of helping hands.

"You can do it on your own, but I would say if you're starting out, have a friend," she notes. "It works a little bit more efficiently."

Pahl boils the lids of her jars in a small pot. Utensils should also be sterilized in hot water. Pahl suggests boiling the canning jars in your water bath, so you can reuse water and waste less. ATCO Blue Flame Kitchen says to boil your canning jars for 15 to 20 minutes, depending on your elevation.

Tip: Keep a kettle boiling to easily top up the water in the water bath with hot water, rather than adding cold water. This will keep the temperature consistent, and you won't have to wait for your water to boil a second time.

Step 4: Fill your jars

Next, spoon your hot food into the hot jars. Leave about an inch of headspace at the top of the jar.

When your jars are filled, wipe the edges of the jar with a cloth dipped in boiling water. Then, place the boiled (and still hot) lid on top. Gently tighten the screw bands until it's finger tight — tight enough to stay on, but loose enough that a child could open it.

Step 5: Put your jars in the water bath

After you've filled your jars, place them into a boiling pot of water. Make sure that the pot is deep enough to cover the jars by at least an inch. Don't fill the pot completely full. There should be enough water to cover the jars with an inch of water. Process them in the boiling water according to the recipe and your elevation.

Step 6: Wait for the lids to seal

After the correct processing time, take the jars out of the water bath to cool. Do not touch or manually compress the lids. Wait for the lids to seal on their own. You can often hear an audible pop when they do.

Step 7: Store the canned goods

Once the jars are completely cooled, label the contents and store them in a dark, cool place. Preserves keep for about a year. Any jars that haven't sealed should go in the fridge and be consumed immediately.

Welcome Fall !!

Have you obtained your membership with us yet? If not please email epcl.info@shaw.ca !!



Check out our facebook page !!!
@ElmwoodParkCL



Delton's youth soccer teams

A behind-the-scenes look at two community soccer teams

MYA COLWELL

Salar Melli coaches Delton's U15 and U17 boys' community soccer teams, bringing kids together through sports.

The Delton youth soccer teams play in the Edmonton Minor Soccer Association (EMSA). Melli's teams have two practices a week, and there is usually one game every week as well. In October, the teams transition to indoor soccer so that the practices and games can continue even during the winter.

Soccer was always a passion of Melli's, and when the pandemic hit, forcing him to close his restaurant, he decided to give coaching a chance. "I wanted to do something I liked, and I played soccer for a long time," says Melli. "I was always interested in [the] strategy part of it, and so I decided maybe coaching would be interesting for me. And I got into it, and it's been awesome. I enjoy doing it."

Melli has been coaching for two years. He started coaching players at the U13 level and has followed them as they aged.

As a coach, he encourages the kids to play their best, work harder, and continue growing. He introduces training exercises, talks to the kids about their performance and possible ways to improve it, and goes over the individual responsibilities of each player. And it's a team effort. Players ask questions, suggest training ideas as well, and find creative solutions

to problems they're experiencing on the field.

But it's building relationships that's Melli's favourite part about coach-

ing. "The community aspect is definitely very rewarding," he says. "Also, I feel like in the bigger picture with the kinds of communities we're working with, it's important [that] kids are more [involved] in sports. They stay out of trouble more. It's a good purpose to have."



The Delton Cheetahs U15 team poses together for a team picture. | Supplied

"We're here to have fun and enjoy our time and get better at playing soccer. And if we win some games along the way, that's fantastic. And if we lose, we learn our lessons and move on from it."

Salar Melli, Delton's U15 and U17 boys' coach

Last season, the U15 team won a gold medal in a Beaumont tournament and a silver medal in the Edmonton City Championship.

Melli says that mutual trust played a big part in their success. "For me as a coach, it's been always [about] letting the kids really take ownership of their

own journey in a way and just being there to support," he says. "I introduce new concepts every now and then [and] try to work with them to grasp the concept. But ultimately, they really want to win games and they really enjoy playing together. And I think it's just creating an environment where everyone is happy to be in... and it all takes root from there."

A great part about community soccer teams is that the atmosphere is very supportive and more focused on fun, compared to club teams, which are more competitive and serious. Kids in the community can sign up for a team, there are no try-outs, and kids with a variety of skill levels interact on the same team. Fees for community soccer are also

lower than club

teams fees. "We have a variety of levels of players," says Melli. "Some players, it's their first year signing up.

They haven't ever touched a soccer ball. And some players [play at a]... very high level and I'm kind of bringing all of those players together... for mutual understanding."

Dedication and discipline are some qualities that make a great soccer team, explains Melli. It's important to show up to training every week, he says, since that builds harmony among teammates. "The camaraderie on the team is important," adds Melli. "Then you see a team that's united not only on the pitch but off pitch."

While having fun is the primary goal, Melli's team is also driven to succeed. He says there is still room for improvement. For example, the team could try to make Provincials this

season. "There [are] still new motivations out there for them to go for this season," he says.

But ultimately, it's the relationships formed between players and the fun players have together that matters most. "We're here to have fun and enjoy our time and get better at play-

The atmosphere is very supportive and focused on fun. Kids in the community can sign up for a team, there are no try-outs, and kids with a variety of skill levels interact on the same team. Fees for community soccer are also lower than club teams fees.

ing soccer. And if we win some games along the way, that's fantastic. And if we lose, we learn our lessons and move on from it," says Melli.

Mya is a student working toward a career in journalism and communications. Writing is one of her passions, besides baking and playing trombone.



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