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Storming the drug castle

JESSICA KIMMERLY

“The Castle” on 96th Street, just off 118th Avenue, was declared “unfit for human habitation” by Capital Health on November 16th, 2007.

The fortified drug house was years in the making, and was finally shut down because of cooperation, creative police work and a lot of community involvement. “[The beat officers] were doing successful investigations into the house, but they just weren’t able to shut it down,” says Constable Ryan Lawley of the Derelict Housing Unit.

Such is the case for many drug houses. Closing the Castle remained a distant reality until the Community Action Project (CAP) became involved.

In September, Brad Goertz, the Lead Organizer of CAP, noticed the Castle as a problem house. Goertz lives on 96th street in the same neighbourhood and saw that his neighbours were fearful and upset. It is natural for residents to be frightened when they live around a drug house, and often respond by keeping a safe distance, not getting involved. It feels too risky to come forward when

you fear your neighbours.

CAP has the solution by offering a way to get involved while remaining anonymous. It’s like “trading” drug houses. Members of CAP will represent you to fight against your neighbourhood drug house, and you represent residents with complaints from a different community.

Goertz began by organizing members of the community. CAP created pressure by threatening to hold a media event about the Castle, which would mobilize the media and put public pressure on the landlord.

Naturally, the landlord was against it. So instead, he worked with Constable Lawley to end the illegal activities on his property. The house earned its street name “the Castle” because of its unmistakable resemblance to an actual castle. The entire structure is concrete.

Lawley explains that the building’s location also complicated the situation, because “it’s a neighbourhood that has challenges with antisocial disorder activities . . . that house just allowed the issues to compound.”

Leslie Grzesiak, owner of the Castle, had to abandon his

house after it became overrun by the transients who occupied it. “Unfortunately, I let a few lunatics in there and the house is basically destroyed inside,” says Grzesiak. “We will try to get the house back to the state it was in before,” he continues.

“It was a gorgeous house.” The closing of the Castle has been a great success for the community and police, thanks to the personal investment and creativity of those involved. “Creative police work is needed because sometimes you get too narrow of a focus, like if you’re always relying on criminal elements or bylaw elements or health or safety . . . but when you layer them, you get all these different agencies involved and everyone has invested interest in it, and everybody’s working together and that’s where you get that finality to it,” says Lawley.

Despite the success in shutting down a major drug house, there are still those who remain cynical, saying the criminal activities will just move to another house, or possibly even recommence at the Castle.

Goertz has the answer to that, saying “it’s like a garden—just because the weeds are going to come back doesn’t mean you stop weeding.”

For Goertz and others in his neighbourhood, it is worth the effort it takes to close down a drug house to prevent the problem from growing out of control and choking out the positive aspects of the commu-



CAP MEMBERS BRAD GOERTZ (LEFT) AND GEOFF HUGHES (RIGHT) WORKED WITH THE OWNER AND AUTHORITIES TO CLEAN UP A DRUG HOUSE KNOWN AS “THE CASTLE”



COMMUNITY WORKS TO CLOSE NOTORIOUS DRUG HOUSE AT THE CORNER OF 119TH AVE. AND 96TH ST.

nity. He refers to areas that are oppressed by drugs and criminal activities as “micro-cultures” that can suck the energy and life out of a community.

Goertz did not want his neighbourhood to become such a gloomy place, especially since the Castle is only one block away from St. Patrick’s Elementary School. Currently, nobody has a clear vision of what will become of the Castle. Lawley hopes the house will be renovated. The cleanup is expensive, as workers are already filling up their third giant garbage bin in front of the property.

There is some talk in the community of possibly trying

to buy the house and transforming it into a transitional women’s shelter or an arts habitation building with studios, but nothing is decided.

Hopefully, the process of redeeming the Castle will continue going strong. For anyone who would like to see another drug house shut down just as the Castle was, Lawley advises taking action.

“Contribute, speak up, do everything you can to show you disapprove.” You can act by contacting the police and your neighbourhood representatives. Lawley sums it up best, saying, “I have far greater success where the community is involved with me.”

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What do you love about this community?

Our next issue will feature what makes this community so great. Tell us about your favourite things – people, places, activities and experiences that make this a special place to live.

Join us for coffee and share your thoughts at our next editorial meeting:

Wednesday, February 20
7:00pm at the Carrot Coffeehouse
(9351 118 Ave)

Too busy to be bored



EDITORIAL

WITH JESSICA KIMMERLY

When was the last time you were bored? Bored enough that you actually stood (or sat) completely still and realized there was nothing around you exciting enough to bother with? It might have happened if you forgot to make restaurant reservations one Friday night, if there were no interesting projects at work, or if you haven't been able to find a stimulating television channel since the burning Yule log left the airwaves in January. Some would have you believe boredom is a nightmare worse than losing your cell phone. But I would like to give boredom a

chance.

I confess to slipping into the habits of the "hurry-monkey," as a Dutch friend of mine once described the do-it-all-do-it-fast attitude. Those who know me best can offer many stories of what a tortured soul I resembled once a school semester ended or when I reached an unscheduled day or two. Yet, the latest evidence of my alliance with the hurry-monkey is my annoyance with having to wait for others. The result is what I like to call "Hurry-Monkey Sickness"—an irrepensible need to complain about how slow and inefficient the rest of the world is.

Another symptom of hurry-monkey sickness can be found by asking someone, "How are you?" Instead of a dismissive grunt of "Good" or "I'm fine," you will hear a proud sigh of "Busy."

Some will argue that being

busy is much better than being unproductive or idle. And there is truth in that. There is a good reason why there is a negative stigma around the guy who never leaves his parents' basement and survives off cheesy puffs and beer. I'm sure if hurry-monkey has a twin, his (or her) name would be "lazy-monkey." However, being bored is not the same as being lazy, and I would like to argue

that boredom has benefits.

I conducted an unofficial survey on the benefits of boredom. My

favourite response was, "Being bored for a while can inspire you to try new things." For example, you could write in to your local community newspaper, or volunteer somewhere new. (Hint—*Rat Creek Press* is looking for volunteer writers.)

Another subject of my poll said that boredom is "stress-free." I cannot claim to be an expert on the topic of stress

reduction, but I have noticed it is a topic writers can count on to catch the interest of readers. How much money the government doles out for employee stress leave, how much homework increases stress for teenagers, how much we stress about money and teenagers. Maybe if we get bored enough, we'll forget how stressed out we are.

The third person I questioned said that when you're bored, "you come up with new revelations." This is certainly true in the case of this editorial, as I would never have decided to write about boredom had I not been glazing over in my own fit of ennui.

So don't find something to keep you busy simply to avoid being bored. I know it's not fashionable to be anything less than mind-numbingly busy, but my brief stint as an unofficial pollster proves there are benefits in boredom. After all, nobody really likes that nasty hurry-monkey.

Come see me at *The Carrot* (9351 118 Ave) on Tuesdays between 11am and 1pm.

**'Hurry-Monkey Sickness'—
an irrepensible need to
complain about how slow
and inefficient the rest of
the world is.'**

Delivery of the RCP

KAREN MYKIETKA
MANAGING EDITOR

We had a few emails and calls last month about delivery and non-delivery and late delivery of the paper. Here's the scoop on RCP delivery:

The RCP is delivered to over 11,500 homes and apartments between

111th Avenue and the Yellowhead from NAIT to Northlands by Canada Post.

Community newspapers are exempt from Canada Post's no unaddressed mail, so it is delivered to you even if you have a "no junk mail" notice. If you don't want the paper, throw it into your recycle box once a month.

If you DO want the paper and are not getting it, then let us know. We will forward the information to our Canada Post representative. You could also talk to your mail carrier or leave them a note.

The paper is posted online at www.ratcreek.org a few days before delivery along with the expected delivery dates.

Extra copies of the paper are available at Sprucewood Library, The

Carrot Coffeehouse, and numerous other businesses along the Avenue.

We did our best to ensure the January issue would be delivered before the Jan 12 Deep Freeze festival, unfortunately, many papers did not get delivered until after the weekend. Numerous factors out of our control caused the delay and we are sorry to all who read our cover story too late to attend the festival.

**RCP welcomes
Dagmar Lofts
as our new ad rep.**

Contact her at
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AABA welcomes new executive director

JESSICA KIMMERLY

The Alberta Avenue Business Association is pleased to announce the appointment of Joe Holtz as their new Executive Director. He replaces Peter Rausch, who after three years at the helm, has accepted a position in private industry.



JOE HOLTZ

Mr. Rausch will stay involved with AABA as an honorary board member to aid in the transition.

Joe has resided in Edmonton off and on since the early seventies. He recalls Alberta Avenue being quite vibrant back then. Today, he can see the true potential in our area from a very active arts community, the undertaking of the first phase of construction as part of the avenue initiative streetscape design, a renewed interest in the area by businesses, property owners and developers, to the untiring and dedicated support of the community by the EPS.

Although his first two weeks as Executive Director have been a whirlwind of new faces and information, Mr. Holtz remains down-to-earth. "Peter has put a good foun-

ation in place. I will be carrying on where he left off," he says. However, at the same time, he will be open to any new suggestions as to how the Alberta Avenue Business Association can further enhance its role in the community.

He brings a mix of transferable skills to his new position including a thirty year background in banking, including commercial credit in granting loans to small and medium sized independent businesses as well as a background in property management, administration and marketing. He says one of his early goals will be to bring business lending institutions and independent businesses on the avenue closer together.

A strong believer in facts, process and structure, and not one to rely on hearsay, Mr. Holtz will be using his first weeks at AABA by getting personally acquainted with businesses on the Avenue. Joe comes across as a professional and approachable individual. "Welcome to the Ave!"



OWNER AND CHEF ABDULKADIR MAIE HOLDS A DELICIOUS DISH OF STEWED GOAT

Bananas for Banaadiri

The Daring Diner

WITH ANGIE KLEIN

On a cold winter evening there is nothing more enticing than the smell of great food coming from the kitchen. That is the comforting blanket that wraps itself around you as you walk in through the door of Banaadiri African Bistro. So delicious was their food, we ate there twice last month. (Quality control and all that...we had to be sure.)

The chef offers up a varied menu of traditional Somalian recipes, including a stewed goat that is fall-off-the-bone tender and spiced to perfection. I have yet to be sure exactly what we ordered either time, even though we looked at the menu. We simply told the waiter that we would like some goat, vegetables and rice. I wish we'd had a camera with us, because what arrived was a vision to behold. The basmati had grains of saffron infused rice mixed in delicately to create the prettiest rice I've ever seen, served on a huge platter. On one serving dish was the stewed goat I mentioned before, and the mixed vegetable medley of okra, red and green pepper, green beans, carrots, and spinach glistening on the other. All of this was served up with a full pitcher of mango juice!

We ate our fill and took home enough for one more meal for a mere \$20.

As we left we were welcomed

back any time... and meant it.

Jeff and I found our selves back at Banaadiri's only a week and a half later. It was after 9:00 pm and the waiter had only a limited menu available. I am in love with their rice, so we ordered it again even though our waiter Amid suggested we try it with the pasta the next time. We tried one chicken dish that was made of thinly sliced breasts, marinated in warm golden spices, and served with sliced onions and peppers. Yummy.

We were going to try the fried mussels, but they were out, so we had the stewed goat again. It was as delicious as before.

The vegetable dish was not as good as the previous visit but I chalked that up to a tired chef, and a busy evening. Again our meal came with a full sized jug of juice. We saw an interesting flat bread being served at the next table, and were told it was mufu bread. We will have to try that some time soon. This time our waiter Zach told us the bill was \$25. Once again we had plenty to take home.

All in all the service is fast and friendly, the ambiance is warm and welcoming, and the food is delicious. That's why I am bananas for Banaadiri and I think you will be too.

Until next time, happy eating.

Banaadiri African Bistro

11743 95 Street
(780) 474-6655
Open 10a.m. to 10p.m.
Closed Mondays

Investing in Borden Park

View plans at open house on Feb 19

BRAIN FNLEY
PRESIDENT, BELLEVUE
COMMUNITY LEAGUE

Community is all about shared experiences and spaces. Borden Park, while a city wide park that serves all Edmonton, is very special to those of us who live, work and play in the Bellevue community. As a resident or a park visitor that should make the upcoming Borden Park Public Open House an event to include on your 2008 calendar.

The Borden Park Revitalization Plan that began in July 2005 as a walk around the park is moving into its final phase. The trees have all been hugged, the surveys are complete, and a new soccer field is taking shape. Under the direction of Community Recreation Coordinators, Darrell Nordell and Corinne Bishop, the Borden Park Revitalization Steering Committee (repre-

sentatives from the city, the community, and park partners/users) met in November and reviewed the latest site plan presented by Martina Gardiner, Landscape Architect for the City of Edmonton.

The site plan was developed taking information from the past, looking at present uses, and then envisioning the future needs of park visitors. That meant learning what people liked and didn't like about Borden Park. For the most part it became clear that Borden Park was already considered a community centerpiece, and that "revitalize" didn't necessarily mean changes but rather reinvesting. The task also included coordinating with various city departments and programs, many also in a development phase, to insure there was a continuity of purpose and plan.

The result is the site plan that will be presented Tuesday February 19th. It is not so

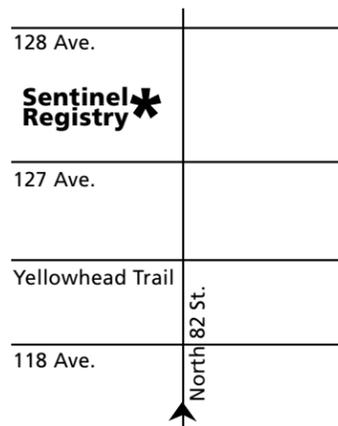
much about change as it is about opportunity and responsibility. If improvements are to be made in the future they will only happen if we have the groundwork done now. This is not about what we can do today, it is about how we can be in a position to provide for funding Borden Park as we go forward. This is about having a blueprint that keeps Borden Park a community centerpiece.

Now it's your turn. Come view the proposed design and share your thoughts prior to the project's final approval. The Public Open House will be held on Tuesday, February 19th at the Bellevue Community League (7308-112 Avenue) from 7 - 9 p.m. Project staff and members of the Steering Committee will be available to answer questions and discuss the project.

You can contact the East Service Area at 496-1901 if you have comments or questions.

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No Regrets

Stephanie Le

Would you ever stop doing something you have done for years? Like the discontinuance of piano lessons after a decade of hard training, my decision caused many others to call it shameful, unnecessary waste. I chose to drop my Mandarin course after eleven years of achievement. Although I did not leap out of bed one morning and make a snap decision to stop, I do not regret what I laid out for myself. In the beginning, I had registered for the course, joking about how much I wished to end my Mandarin classes. Of course, stupid jokes always come true. When I went to register and receive my timetable, the course did not fit my schedule and I had a spare. This seemed like the perfect solution to my problem: no more Mandarin classes and a spare so I could go home early. Then again, nothing is perfect. My mom did not allow me to have a spare. "School is important! What were you thinking? Do you know how important Mandarin is?" As usual, I said "Yes, mom." I had to see the counselor to make some "crucial" changes to my schedule. The only other course (I liked) that could fit into my spare was French 10. If I wanted to reinsert Mandarin into my timetable somewhere, it would jumble my whole schedule. That would mean starting new classes one week into school, which I really did not want. I told my mom that if the counselor added Mandarin, it would create yet another spare and everything would be messed up. But the truth is I never asked the counselor to add Mandarin back. In a way I felt wicked, but also a sense of freedom in fighting for what I wanted. Oh well, having your mom live in ignorant bliss is not such a bad thing, right? I questioned and re-questioned myself about the decision I made that day. Isn't it silly to give up a language you have used for eleven years for one you take for only one year? For all the times I asked myself, the answer was and is still no. So what if I am silly? Mandarin was only ever a tedious, boring subject to me (kinda like English). Still, I have enough knowledge to speak, write and read the language fluently. French is something new and exciting and after all, it is our other national language. I am an individual and this is a personal matter so my opinion trumps all others in this case. I may sound naive but I do believe I am done with Mandarin. Well, maybe except to help my sister do her Mandarin homework...

Frosted Sparkles

Michelle Earl

Falling from the sky, flakes of white
White blankets the ground
Ground left brown from the frost
Frost greying the trees, falling leaves

Leaves that were coloured, but now...
Now fridity takes over, leaving the landscape bleak
Bleak and uniform in color
Coloured white with frosted sparkles.

Sparkles glistening in the sunlight of a beautiful day
Day in wintertime
Wintertime chilly and slippery
Slippery, yet beautiful.

The Journal of Sgt. Tabby - Cat Hero

Nick V. Grade 6, Virginia Park School

Sgt. Tabby here. This is my journal from the war I had with the "Commie-Mutt" (the dog who lives up the stairs) hand-written by me. We were having a contest of who is really man's best friend, but it got a lil' out of hand. Now it is war.

Day 1: I prepare for war packing only necessities: cat kibble, a small army-camo cloth I found (for a makeshift tent) and my pink food dish for a helmet.

Day 2: I set out from my litter box, crawling quickly and quietly towards the great claw sharpener also known as my scratching post. From there I'll make a makeshift base that will keep me safe.

Day 3: I've finished setting up my temporary base. I take out my bag of cat kibble to munch on.

Day 4: I order the cute little hamster to be a scout and to find the Commie-Mutt. "An-da, what-sa in it for me?" said the little Italian accented hamster, rubbing his index and thumb together. "Not being my next 7 course meal." I said convincingly.

Day 5: The little Italian hamster scurries off only to come back two minutes later squealing like a car alarm. "AAHHH! HEY YOU-SA BETTER RUN!!!" he screamed at the top of his lungs. He wasn't lying. The Commie-Mutt crashed out from the stairs like a massive bulldozer. There he was, slobber dripping and his eye locked on me like missile aimers.

BATTLE

SHING! I summoned my claws like I had unsheathed a sword. The dog unveiled a massive whip for a tail. He swung it at me, I dodged, pounced on him and grabbed his cherry red collar. He howled as I ripped out his grimy chocolate brown hair from his neck. BASH! He slammed me into the drywall, but I continued to tear, rip and grab hair from his body. Finally he surrendered by falling over and whimpering. I was just about as beat up as the Commie-Mutt; some of my light brown hair was ripped out and I had a shiner under my left, shimmering brown eye.

The day after the battle: I decided I didn't want to be man's best friend after all, so I let the dog be man's best friend again. After that, the dog and I were friends.

avenue initiative revitalization



Thanks to everyone who came out to our first annual Deep Freeze: Byzantine Winter Adventure. Over 1000 people attended this successful event that was created through a partnership: Sculptors' Association of Alberta, Avenue Initiative Programs Workgroup, and Arts on the Ave. Thanks volunteers for making the day such a great success!

CREATE A SAFE COMMUNITY...BE A PART OF THE BLOCK CAPTAIN PROJECT

Safe Streets Working Group is implementing an exciting initiative to have a Block Captain on each street. The goal is to connect neighbours and report problems on their block.

The first training is planned for Thursday February 28th.

If you are interested call Judy at 496-1913.



Bravery Sharon E. Riley

On the banks of the river
A drum tolls of peace
Telling a story.
There are many rivers
And they are not all peaceful.
Most times it is best
To paddle one's own canoe,
But when the rapids get rough
And you lose your paddle,
And your moccasins get holes,
It is wonderful to have someone
To help you paddle or to share their shoes
Even if they don't fit perfectly,
Or their moccasins even if they too have a hole
So you don't have to go
More than a mile alone—unless you wish.
The drum continues
Telling its story.
A story of peace, a story of love
And the river has a branch,
And the time is now.
The Wampum must come.
The Pipe of Peace
Tells a story with its signals,
And the drum tolls its piece,
Telling a story of sorrow,
And makes no smoke or fire
Telling a story.
The river fills with despair and floods.
New branches begin,
And the soliloquy of the drum tolls on.
Telling of a time
A time for hope,
A time for peace,
A time for love.



Fortuity on Alberta Avenue

Alicia C. D.

"Guided by his or her sense of beauty, an individual transforms a fortuitous occurrence into a motif, which then assumes a permanent place in the composition of the individual's life."

-Milan Kundera

Today started like many others. Poured a cup of coffee and stared into the dark-liquid- promise-of-consciousness while my toddler buzzed around the living room. It snowed during the night. Looks like more snow ahead.

Good day for a stroll. Maybe check out that arts coffee house on 118th avenue.

Those were my thoughts for the first two hours of the morning. The rest of the day would fall into place now that I had made that one decision.

Finally out the door, both baby and I bundled and warm, I head north towards the avenue. The snow fell in cottony clumps all around us.

This really is a beautiful neighbourhood. Sometimes it takes the cold to bring out the warmth of the community. I was feeling wistful.

A car pulls up beside me. A smiling face, a familiar face. My friend H. and her wee one. "Where you heading?" I ask. "Bissell Centre. See if they have any wintery stuff," she responds. "You bet they do," I say, having just purchased a snowsuit and snow boots for the babe for a mere ten bucks the day before. We make plans to meet at this Carrot place. She pulls away and I continue on. That was nice, running into her like that. Fortuitous. Kundera's words have stuck with me for some time now.

I'm really becoming aware of the mysterious ways of this life, the significance of the details. I want to drift like a snowflake, allow my direction to change as if blown by a sudden gust of wind. I want to notice the songs playing in the background, to take a new street from time to time to see where it leads, to see the beauty in the mundane. Living in this neighbourhood

has heightened my ability to look through the seemingly unpleasant to find the loveliness within.

I've walked through the door of the Carrot. A round table of inviting faces looks up and smiles. I spot some couches and a little table the perfect height for miss can't-sit-still. This is how coffee shops used to be, before the "S" invasion. Relaxed with a good vibe. I like it. For some reason I tell the first lady I see that I have a degree in English and Creative

Writing and that I don't know when I'll ever use it. Then

we chat about a few things and I find out that she is fluent in sign language, something I am currently studying. To again quote Kundera, "The birds of fortuity had begun alighting on my shoulders."

I sit down and have a quick game of baby chess with my daughter. Another

young mother walks through the door. I only look up because I am waiting for my friend, H. She smiles and I tell her that she can sit down on the couch, as there are three and I'm only using one. She sits and we talk about baby things for a bit. Sweden comes up in our dialogue. I have an obsession about Sweden and all things Swedish. I've always wanted to live there. And here, at this table, at this café, I meet a fellow Swedophile. This is too much. Finally my friend arrives and the next couple of hours pass in comfort and joy, until the babies have had enough and are no longer interested in dominoes or playing cards. It is time to go.

As we are bundling up, the lady I previously mentioned my degree to approaches me and directs me to the round table. Apparently, this is the Rat Creek Press crew arranging the next month's issue. "You need writers?" I ask. "Yes we do," they respond and we get to talking about writing, the community, babies, and lattes. A fortuitous occurrence becomes a motif for life. Oh, and I end up using my degree after all!



avenue initiative revitalization



Join a Working Group.

Groups meet on a monthly basis to implement the Avenue Initiative. To get involved call Judy at 496-1913 or email judy.allan@edmonton.ca

1) Streetscape-- 1st Tuesday of the month

Working on details of the streetscape that is scheduled to begin in spring '08.

2) Development and Revitalization-- 1st Wednesday of the month

Responsible for planning and zoning issues.

3) Beautification & Cleanliness-- 2nd Wednesday of the month

Works on special events, community clean ups and beautification projects.

4) Safe Streets-- 3rd Thursday of the month

Works with EPS, Bylaw & Safe Housing to create a safe community.

www.avenueinitiative.ca



We want to hear from you!



LAW AND ORDER

WITH CST. MIKE RUSSELL

The Edmonton Police Service (EPS) is committed to serving the members of every community we work in. This commitment changed for the better as of May 1st, 2007. With the new deployment model in each area of the city, we are now able to effect more change in each community. Change in this manner is good, but what does Community Policing really mean?

Community policing is a term that is often used to describe the efforts of

the Police to work with the members of the community to effect change in their own back yards. This term is often thrown around as a catch phrase, but the meaning is not lost on us. The efforts of the community to come together in District One are apparent to all who work within our area.

We are constantly amazed at how many people volunteer at various events to make this area a more pleasant place to live and visit. I personally speak to a handful of community members on a weekly basis and hear many stories of problems that the community has overcome.

I enjoy having these updates and knowing that this flow of information is coming and going from the Police to the

We are constantly amazed at how many people volunteer at various events to make this area a more pleasant place to live and visit.

Community (and vice versa). I know there are a lot more people in our community who have a lot more to share with me. In order to hear what ALL members of the community have to say, we're asking you.

In the coming months you will see a survey dropped at your house. This is a simple six question survey asking YOU what you feel are the issues in your area. This is something new that District One households will have (all 11 500 households!). The survey will be delivered by our dedicated team of volunteers and will take approximately

11 days to deliver.

Once we receive all of the responses, we have two Grant MacEwan Investigator students who are

volunteering their time to compile the survey, list all the concerns and tell us where the concerns are situated (per Community). This type of citizen input has never been done on this scale. We want to hear from EVERY one of the households in our area and get to know what concerns are from the other households we don't normally hear from.

This is your chance to tell us what your concerns are.

Choosing laminate flooring

HOMEGROWN RENOS

WITH JIM MAXWELL

When I first moved into my house three years ago, it needed a lot of work. As many of you know and live in a similar situation, you pick a project or room, try to finish it, and then start another. Some projects are more complicated, because of technical, financial, or perhaps most difficult—design—setbacks.

One thing I had to do when I moved in was replace the flooring. I suspected, but did not know, that my house was like others in the neighbourhood and had hardwood under the current flooring. Therefore I replaced the tile with laminate wood flooring.

Kitchen flooring has certain requirements. It must be water resistant for cleanup, dishwashers and leaks from refrigerators. Flooring should also look good.

I went with laminate wood flooring. It is referred to as a floating floor as it is not nailed to the floor. A thin blue foam sheet separates the laminate from the floor and makes it more soundproof. The foam also allows for some flexing since most floors are not perfectly level. With regular hardwood flooring (which I now have uncovered in my living room) you have to refinish

it and cover it with a few coats of protectant. Not the easiest thing to do or the best thing to breathe. The protective covering on laminate flooring is baked on in multiple coats at the factory with materials that are unavailable to the homeowner.

Each piece of laminate flooring is about four feet long by eight inches wide. The flooring is put down about an eighth of an inch from the walls. A molding attached to wall covers this gap. The gap allows the floor to expand and contract. The only sawing needed is to help the pieces fit around corners or at walls. The pieces have wax-covered ridges, and snap together like a jigsaw puzzle. (The wax prevents water from penetrating between the pieces and getting to the sub-floor.) If you make a mistake, simply unsnap the piece and put in another. The salesman told me that when I moved, I could take the floor with me.

Now that I know I have hardwood beneath, I think I will pick up my laminate flooring for use somewhere else, and get down to the original hardwood flooring, which is part of the charm in living in an older home. How will I do this? I will just unsnap the pieces and put them in a box.

Laminate flooring comes in a variety of styles: wood, ceramic, linoleum. It is easy to install, easy to correct mistakes, and is comparable in price to other floor covering options.



PETER GOLDRING
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East

Time For a New Consulate

It is time for the establishment of a Ukrainian Consulate in Edmonton. While Ukraine has honorary consuls in Winnipeg and Vancouver, a consulate in Edmonton could better serve the hundreds of thousands of people of Ukrainian descent in the western provinces. After Ukraine and Russia, Canada has the third largest Ukrainian population in the world. At present full consular services for Ukrainians are available only through the embassy in Ottawa or the consulate in Toronto.

Edmonton with its large Ukrainian population would seem to be a logical choice for a Ukrainian consulate. His Excellency Ihor Ostash, the Ukrainian Ambassador, indicated in a visit to Edmonton in March he would support the establishment of such a consulate. Support for the idea has also come from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Edmonton branch, and Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach.

A consulate would help protect the interests of Ukraine in Western Canada and facilitate tourist traffic both to and from Ukraine. It would also further the development of commercial, economic, cultural and scientific relations between Ukraine and Canada.

The ties between the two countries are strong and historic, from the wave of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada in the early part of the 20th century, to the appointment of a Ukrainian descendent (Ray Hnatyshyn) as Governor General, to the fact Canada was the first Western nation to recognize Ukraine's sovereignty in 1991.

With more than 125,000 residents of Ukrainian descent, the Edmonton area has more citizens of Ukrainian extraction than Winnipeg, about twice as many Calgary and about the same number as Vancouver, Regina and Saskatoon combined. Therefore it seems to me establishing a Ukrainian consulate in Edmonton would be the logical next step in the growing relationship between the two countries.

What do you think?

495-3261

www.petergoldring.ca

EDMONTON

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE Borden Park Site Plan

Tuesday, February 19
7p.m. – 9 p.m.
Bellevue Hall
7308-112 Avenue

We want to hear from you!



The City of Edmonton invites you to find out more about the Borden Park Revitalization Plan. Taking information from the past, present and envisioning the future, the Borden Park Revitalization Plan creates a park that all park users will enjoy.

Come view the proposed design and share your thoughts prior to the project's final approval. Project staff will be available to answer questions.

Everyone is welcome.

For more information, please call
East Service Area **496-1901**



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SEND US YOUR EVENTS & NOTICES - IT'S FREE!

Email editor@ratcreek.org or call 479-6285. Events & notices printed in the paper as deemed appropriate by the editorial team and as space permits.

ART & MUSIC

ARTIST TRADING CARDS

Saturday, Feb 2 & March 1 from 12pm to 3pm at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave). Artist Trading Cards are miniature works of art created on 2.5 X 3.5 inch card stock or mat board. They are originals, small editions, and, most importantly, self-produced. Anybody can produce them. The idea is that you trade them with other people who produce cards at the sessions. The workshop will include samples, ideas on how to get started and some materials (but please feel free to bring some of your own to keep costs down.) To register call Becky 435-3499.

KID'S ART WORKSHOP

Saturday, Feb 9 from 1pm to 3pm at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave). For children age 8 and up. To register call Lorraine at 919-9627 or Joy at 471-1699. Cost: \$2.

KIDS/YOUTH ART "LANTERN" WORKSHOP

Wednesday, Feb 13 from 7pm to 9pm. Ages 8 to 18. Make lanterns for the kids art market. Please register at The Carrot 471-1580.

KID'S ARTS MARKET & OPEN STAGE

Saturday, Feb 16 from 12pm to 4pm at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave). Art and music by children ages 8 - 18. Want to display or play, contact Karen Porkka 481-9015 or karenporkka@yahoo.ca.

ARTISAN MARKET

Saturdays, 11am-4pm at The Carrot Arts Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave) All creations are made in Edmonton by local artists and artisans. Jewellery, woodwork, textiles and more! If you are interested in selling your wares at the market, please contact Lorraine at 919-9627.

PIN HOLE PHOTOGRAPHY - SOCIAL ART EXPERIENCE

Saturday, March 8 from 12:30pm to 3:30pm at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave) with professional photographer Wenda Salomons. Go to <http://photo.net/pin-hole/pinhole> for more info. Limited space. To register call Becky at 435-3499. Funding provide through Avenue Initiative Matching Grant.

PIANO LESSONS IN YOUR HOME

All levels; children and adult students welcome. Please call Connie Collingwood ARCT at 490-1922. Must live within the Rat Creek Press boundaries.

FREE PIANO, GUITAR AND BAND

For children and adults. Beginners welcome. Please call to register. Edmonton Urban Native Ministry Reverend Kim at 477-1769 or email hoosik@hotmail.com

MUSIC LESSONS

Professional musician and qualified music teacher, with degrees in Music and Education. Sax, flute, clarinet, piano, keyboards, guitar, bass, theory. All styles. Neil: 477-9232.

PIANO LESSONS

Lessons from my home for beginners 6 to 9 years old. John Thompson series only. Have references, very reasonable. Call Sharon Riley at 479-4054.

DROP-IN GROUPS & PROGRAMS

KNITTING

Thursdays, 7pm to 9pm at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave). Drop-in with your knitting, have a coffee and visit.

BABES IN ARMS

Fridays, 10am-noon at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave). Come and connect with other parents in the community. Call 471-1580 for more info.

NORWOOD CHILD & FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

9516 114 Ave, Ph: 471-3737 Must register for all programs unless stated drop-in.

Rhymes that Bind Drop-in Wed,

11:45-12:30 from Jan 16 to Mar 19. Songs & rhymes for children between newborn and age 3 and their caregivers. Lunch is provided.

Planet Norwood After school program

Learning, fun and a safe environment for ages 5-13. Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri 3:30-6:00pm and Thu 12:00-6:00pm.

Youth Night Fridays, 6:00-8:00pm for kids ages 9-13.

EDMONTON URBAN NATIVE MINISTRY

Drop In from Tuesdays to Fridays, 10am - 4pm at St Andrews church (8715 118 Ave). Coffee and snacks are available.

SALVATION ARMY

Edmonton Crossroads Community Church (EC3)
11661 95 St, Ph 474-4324
Tue, Wed, Thur from noon to 4pm
Fri from 7:30-10:30pm

ST. FAITH'S

Community Collective Kitchen meets at St. Faith's Church on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. There is currently space. If you are interested, please call 477-5931.

CRYSTAL KIDS YOUTH CENTRE

8718 118 Ave, Ph 479-5283 Seniors

program: Wed, 11:30am-12:45pm. Moms and Tots program: Tues and Thur, 11:30am-12:45pm. Youth program (ages 6-17): Mon, Tue, Wed 3-8pm, Thur 2:30- 8pm, Fri 3-10pm, and Sat 1-5pm.

ENTERTAINMENT

THE CARROT COFFEEHOUSE

9351 - 118 Avenue Fridays: Live music, 7:30pm-9:30pm
\$5 cover charge
Feb 1 Ron Taylor
Feb 8 Barry Westerlund
Feb 15 Mike Sadava & Ken Brown
Feb 22 Marty & Lil Siltanen
Feb 29 Cora McLachlan;
Saturdays: Open mic 7:30pm-10:00pm
Music, spoken word, comedy

TALES AT THE CARROT!

Tuesday, Feb 12 at 7:30pm at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave) a 1.5 hour concert (with a break) called Ugly Beauty: The Girl, the Goat and the Whoop-ass Wooden Spoon by Kevin MacKenzie. Cost: \$10 - pay at the door. (This is a joint venture of two great volunteer arts groups.) Kevin is a professional Canadian storyteller from Regina, SK. He's left a trail of stories at festivals, conferences, libraries, schools, prisons, colleges, retreats and other events across Canada, in Brazil, Great Britain, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico and the U.S.A. Kevin will be joined by two Edmonton Storytellers from TALES.

EASTWOOD FAMILY DAY

Sunday, Feb 17 from 12pm to 4pm at the hall (86 St & 118 Ave). Games, food and skating.

SPRUCE AVE FAMILY DAY

Monday, Feb 18 from 1pm to 4pm at the hall (10240 115 Ave). Horse drawn sleigh rides, skating, and winter activities for the whole family.

SILVER SKATE FESTIVAL

Sat & Sun, Feb 16 & 17 at Hawrelak Park. Attendees can watch ice dance and theatrical performances, participate in recreational winter activities for all ages provided by Active Edmonton, participate in fun skate races, watch the snow sculptors at work and walk through the snow gallery, take in the beauty of the park on a sleigh ride, and try delicious Dutch treats. There are special children's activities, and a warm up area inside the Pavillion.

FAMILY DAY AT THE LEG

Monday, Feb 18 from 12pm to 4pm. Free guided tours every 10 minutes, Traveling Magician, ice sculptures, skating, and kids' carnival of magic, exhibits & hot chocolate (in pedway).

COMMUNITY BOOK CLUB

Are you interested in meeting your neighbours, discussing a good book

and have a great cup of coffee (or tea)? Call Kimberley at 474-8302.

SPORTS & REC

SPRUCE AVE RINK

10240 115 Ave, 471-1932
Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri
6:30-7:30 Public
7:30-9:00 Shiny
Sat 2pm to 8pm
Sun 1:30pm to 4:30pm
Wed Closed
Public skating free with a membership. Spruce Avenue residents memberships will be available at the rink. Residents from other communities will need to get memberships from their respective community leagues. Rink will be closed when temp reaches a wind chill factor of -20 celsius or when temp rises to +5 celsius.

COMMUNITY RINKS

Call for skating times.
Delton 477-3326
Eastwood 477-2354
Parkdale 471-4410

FREE PUBLIC SKATING

Oliver (10335 119 St) Tuesdays, 6:15-7:15pm
Russ Barnes (6725 121 Ave) Saturdays, 5-6pm
Westwood (10240 97 St) Sundays, 3:15-4:15pm

SPRUCE AVE FREE SWIM

Free swim for Spruce Ave community league members at Grant MacEwan pool, Sundays, 1-4pm. Show your current community league membership to get in.

ALBERTA AVE FREE SWIM

Free swim for Alberta Ave community league members at Eastglen pool, Sundays, 12-2pm. Show your current community league membership to get in.

VOLUNTEER

MAKE TAX TIME PAY

Volunteers are urgently needed to help families complete the applications forms. Vibrant Communities Edmonton's campaign - "Make Tax Time Pay" assists families earning low-income by helping them complete their income taxes for free and then assisting them with completing applications for benefits they could be eligible to receive. Training is provided, hours are flexible and the campaign runs from March 1 to April 30. To volunteer, please contact Emily at 428-1866. For more information about Make Tax Time Pay visit www.vibrantemontion.ca

LITERACY TUTORS

Volunteer literacy tutors needed for Sprucewood Library! We are Frontier College, a national literacy organization

dedicated to increasing literacy in Canadian communities. Spend one hour a week on Saturday mornings helping kids ages 3-6 years with basic literacy skills. The results are seen in YOUR community... at Sprucewood Library. Full training included. For more information, contact Jennifer at 429-5728.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Gardening Day (May), Large item pick up (May & Sept), Graffiti Removal, Avenue goes to the Dogs (June), EastwoodFest (August) and Arts Alive (September) will be needing numerous volunteers to make them a success again this year. You can be involved in the planning or give a few hours on the event day. Contact Karen at 479-4812/info@ratcreek.org or Judy Allan at 496-1913/judy.allan@edmonton.ca.

THE CARROT COFFEEHOUSE

Learn how to make lattes and other coffees, then hang out at a cool coffee shop for 3 or 4 hours and visit with the interesting people who stop in. Stop in at 9351 118 Ave, call 471-1580 or visit www.thecarrot.ca.

SPRUCE AVENUE COMMUNITY RE-DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Volunteers are needed! Please contact Laurie Cote at 474-5354 for more details.

WANT TO WRITE?

The Rat Creek Press is always looking for volunteer writers. Contact us at editor@ratcreek.org or 479-6285 or stop in at our monthly editorial meeting at The Carrot and share your ideas. Next meeting: Wed, Feb 20 at 7pm.

NOTICES

RCP EDITORIAL MEETING

We meet monthly to plan our upcoming issue. Stop in and share your thoughts and ideas or share something you've written or would like to write. Contact us if you'd like to be on our editorial email list: editor@ratcreek.org or 479-6285. Next meeting: Wed, Feb 20 at 7pm at The Carrot.

COMMUNITY GARGAGE SALE

The Spruce Avenue Community League will be holding its 13th annual Community Garage Sale May 1, 2 and 3. It's not too early to start thinking about spring clean-up and if you have items that you would like to sell but do not want the hassle of holding your own garage sale you may want to consider renting a table at a cost of \$10.00 for the 3 day event. A bottle drive will also be held on that week-end with proceeds going to the park re-development. Call Verna at 479-8019 for more details.



SPRUCEWOOD BRANCH

11555 - 95 Street Call 496-7099 to register
Go to www.epl.ca for more program details

CHILDREN

Sing, Sign, Laugh and Learn

10 a.m. Tuesdays, Jan 8 to Feb 26 Drop-In for children birth to three and a grown up who loves them. Come and spend an hour cuddling, reading, signing, playing, laughing and learning. Brothers and sisters are welcome to attend. Parents will learn strategies to engage their child and enhance their communication and development.

Firefly Early Literacy Program

10:30 a.m. Saturdays, Jan 19 to Apr 19
This Frontier College program is designed for parents and tots ages 3-6. Help your child develop literacy skills. Children will be paired for one-on-one instruction with a tutor for the first half hour to work on letter learning, distinguishing between sounds, and other skills. In the last half hour, parents will come together to work as a group with their child and tutor on a literacy-related craft, song, or other activity. For more info call Jennifer at 429-5728

Family Storytime

10:30 a.m. Saturday, Feb 23. Stories, songs, activities and fun for everyone. Join our storytellers and make your visit to the library a family fun time.

Very Valentine's

2 p.m. Saturday, Feb 9.
For ages: 6 - 12 years. Valentine's Day means pink hearts, flowers and chocolates, and cards and letters. But why? Come and learn more about Valentine's Day, hear a story, and do a craft.

Franny K Stein Part Deux

2 p.m. Saturday, February 16, 2008
Ages: 6 - 12 years
Participation limit: 20
Egads! Franny K Stein and her faithful companion, Igor, are once again taking over the Library. Warning: only true mad scientists need to register.

TEEN

Teen Advisory Group

6:30 p.m. Friday, Feb 1, 15 & 29.
For ages: 12 - 17 years. Make your voice heard! Join our Teen Advisory Group and you can suggest programs that the library should offer for teens and what books, music and movies we should order. Have fun, meet other teens, and gain valuable volunteer experience.

Anime-ted Library

4 p.m. Thursday, Jan 17, Feb 14, Mar 13, Apr 17, & May 15.
For ages: 12 - 17 years. Get together with friends and fellow

anime-holics to watch Japanese animation and to discuss manga. The club meets once a month and light refreshments will be served.

Terrific Teen Tuesdays

4 p.m. Tuesdays, Jan 22 to Mar 25.
For ages: 8 - 14 years. Munchies provided. Chill out Tuesday afternoons and catch some awesome action in "the room" for you to choose from like 'Food on the Fly' cooking, Hip hop dance, Ductivity Duct tape art, and much, much more.

ADULTS

Stories from the Heart of the City

- with Linda Goyette
1:30 p.m. Thursdays, January 17 to March 13
Drop-in, Free of Charge
Celebrating EPL's Year of the Older Adult - All are Welcome!
Do you live in Boyle-McCauley or Norwood or along the Avenue of Nations? Did you move here from somewhere else, or did you grow up here? Come and tell your story, and hear stories about interesting people who lived here over the years. Writer in Residence Linda Goyette will host this session for story-lovers of all ages.

"Get Gardening Workshop Series"

Limber up your green thumb!

Information about starting a community garden, master composting, and more!



Light snacks and refreshments will be provided; Children are welcome to participate with parents.

Tuesday Feb 26 from 6-9 pm

Organic and herb gardening
Container gardening
Seed starting

Saturday March 1st from 1-3 pm

Ecoscaping/ responsible water use
Composting/ vermicomposting
Insects (the good and the bad) and disease

at

St Faith's Church, 11725 - 93 Street

\$2/ day; come for one day or both days



Register by February 25. Contact:
Dianne Gillespie at 471-2724 or dianneg@ualberta.ca
Healthy Alberta Communities
www.healthyalbertacommunities.com

Deep Freeze Festival

Over 1000 people attended on January 12



photos courtesy of www.dragonflyphotography.ca

THE KIDS TAKE OVER THE CARROT!

KID'S ARTS MARKET & OPEN MUSIC STAGE-Family Day Weekend!

Saturday, Feb 16 from 12pm to 4pm.

Art sale and music by children ages 8 – 18. Want to display or play, contact Karen Porkka 481-9015 or karenporkka@yahoo.ca



Please drop by! 9351-118ave
780-471-1580 www.thecarrot.ca

Call Me 1st



Thinking of Selling?
Thinking of Buying?
Call **Roxanne Litwyn**

439-7000

Your neighbourhood Realtor
Serving Central Edmonton Since 1990

FREE MARKET EVALUATION

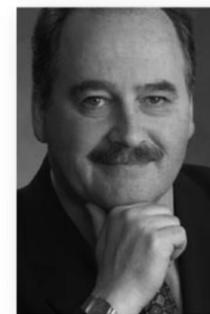
List of homes for sale
(some restrictions apply)



www.roxannehomes.com

Not intended to solicit properties already listed for sale.

Hello Highlands-Norwood!



Thank you
for your continued support.

Please contact my office
if you have any questions
or concerns.

6519 - 112 Avenue.
Your MLA, Brian Mason.
Edmonton Highlands-Norwood
www.NDPopposition.ab.ca
ph: 780.414.0682



the RCP connect awards

Recognizing contributions that support the growth of a strong, vibrant and well-connected community

The Rat Creek Press Association seeks nominations in each of the following award categories:

Building Community

An individual, organization or business that:

- Creates networks for individuals and groups to connect within the community
- Supports local businesses
- Promotes what is happening in the community

Encouraging Communication

An individual, organization or business that:

- Acts as an advocate for the community and all its citizens
- Shares information with residents and non-residents of the community
- Provides opportunities to exchange ideas for the betterment of the community

Increasing Capacity

An individual, organization or business that:

- Helps individuals learn new skills or acquire experience
- Encourages participation in the community from residents and non-residents
- Fosters leadership development

Award recipients will be announced at a special event in April.

Deadline for nominations: March 15, 2008

Download details at www.ratcreek.org
or contact the Rat Creek Press at
info@ratcreek.org or 479-6285.