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FEBRUARY 2014

NEWS » FAMILY DAY

Unplug the electronics for a day

This Family Day, February 17, reconnect with family, friends, and community



Families enjoying the cultural activities at Silver Skate Festival last year. It could be your family this year! Unplug the electronics and take the free shuttle to Hawrelak Park. » MARC J. CHALIFOUX



TALEA MEDYNSKI

Most of us spend our days connected to technology in one way or another. With Family Day coming up, maybe you intend to stay indoors watching television, playing video games or catching up on social media sites.

Or, you could participate in Family Day Unplugged and take a step back from technology for a day.

This event is a friendly competition between participating municipalities to see who spends the most time away from technology spending time with family, friends, and community instead.

There are some sobering statistics. According to Participation, children and youth should be exercising at least 90 minutes per day. In 2009, only 12 per cent of children and youth met that standard.

The screensmart.ca website states that by the time a high school student graduates, time spent watching screens will far

surpass time spent in class, participating in sports, or interacting with parents

The Family Day Unplugged challenge began in 2011, with Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta (FCSSAA) initiating the event. A year later, the City of Edmonton joined FCSSAA to challenge residents.

Ten communities participated in the first year. Last year, 22 municipalities alone within the Edmonton region participated as well as others outside the Edmonton region.

Local leagues want to ensure neighbourhood families have access to affordable (a.k.a free!) family day activities. However, many community leaders and volunteers have just spent numerous hours working the Deep Freeze Festival and Snowball Festival.

"Instead of taxing already overworked volunteers to bring family day activities to the Avenue, we decided to bring the Avenue to a fantastic Family Day activity,"

says Karen Mykietka, president of the Alberta Avenue Community League.

"Silver Skate Festival is a great event with all sorts of recreation, art and culture and I bet many people have never been to it. Well, we're making it easy. We've chartered a free shuttle bus to get you there. Just show your league membership card."

Take advantage of all the opportunities for free family fun around the city or if you choose to same home try to stay away from the electronics. Play a game, read a book, sit and have some real conversation.

FAMILY DAY OFF THE AVE

ALBERTA AVENUE HALL
Silver Skate Festival in Hawrelak Park on Monday, Feb. 17 from 1-5 pm. Enjoy lots of free family activities: skating, curling, sleigh rides, ice slide, folk trails and snow sculptures. Round trip ETS shuttle service between Alberta Ave Hall and Hawrelak Park (see ad on page 2).

MORE FAMILY DAY EVENTS

DELTON COMMUNITY LEAGUE
Free Family Day activities on Sunday, Feb. 16 from noon-3pm. There will be sleigh rides, hot chocolate and hot dogs.

FAMILY DAY AT CITY HALL
Monday, Feb. 17 from noon-4 pm. Enjoy games and activities, balloon artists, music, roving performers and much more! Or go skating on the City Hall ice rink.

EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
All branches open 1-5 pm. Check for special activities.

WINTER FÊTE AT ALBERTA LEGISLATURE GROUNDS
Monday, Feb. 17 from noon-4 pm. INDOOR: scavenger hunt, puppet shows, face painting, craft activities, prize draws. OUTDOOR: autograph sessions with local sports celebrities, wagon rides, snowman-making competitions, skating on south rink.

GETTING THERE:
Up to four children (12 and under) with an adult can ride ETS all day for only \$9 with the family day pass.

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Perspectives

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NEWS » LAW CHANGE

Supreme Court strikes down prostitution laws

Ruling causes a mix of reactions

TALEA MEDYNSKI

Prostitution is legal. However, keeping and being in a brothel, publicly soliciting sex, and living off the profits of another's prostitution is illegal. But that's all changed.

On December 20, 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled the provisions of the laws were unconstitutional because they violated a prostitute's constitutional right to life, liberty, and security. The Supreme Court delayed their ruling, leaving Parliament this year to consider revisiting the laws.

Terri-Jean Bedford, Valerie Scott, and Amy Lebovitch are the plaintiffs. All three women have experience in the sex trade. Their argument was the current laws place them in danger, prevent them from taking steps to ensure their safety, and deny them their constitutional right.

The ruling has garnered a mix of reactions.

Valerie Scott, legal co-ordinator of SPOC (Sex Professionals of Canada), is celebrating.

"We're pleased with it, it's the best possible outcome," said Scott.

Jacqui Linder, founder and executive director of the Chrysalis Anti-Human Trafficking Network, said there are pros and cons.

"It's an opportunity to look at both sides of legislation and think about an elegant solution for sex workers who aren't voluntarily in the field. Downside – sometimes we really do catch the bad guys [with current laws]," said Linder.

She explained there's overlap between old prostitution laws and new human trafficking laws. Human trafficking convictions are often pled down to prostitution charges. Clearer laws would close that loophole.

JoAnn McCartney, a former Edmonton Police Service vice cop turned sex worker counselor, disagrees with the ruling.

"I worry what's going to happen. The void is going to leave a lot of people vulnerable," said McCartney.

Kate Quinn, executive director of CEASE, shares McCartney's concerns.

"The Supreme Court of

Canada did not appear to hear the voices of the majority of vulnerable persons...who are exploited, trafficked, assaulted, murdered and left to live with the consequences of PTSD and physical health conditions," wrote Quinn in a statement.

Long-term neighborhood advocate Cris Basualdo said she is concerned about the impact the ruling will have on communities.

"My bigger concern is street prostitution...I've heard little about safety and quality of life for communities. I feel that issue has been ignored," said Basualdo.

Does the ruling leave law enforcement in a quandary?

"If the law is still in place, we'll continue to enforce it," said police Chief Rod Knecht.

McCartney is sceptical; it often takes more than a year to get an investigation to court.

"If I was charged, I'd adjourn until the new laws were in effect," said McCartney.

Parliament's decision whether to redraft the laws is vital as well as how to redraft the laws.

"What we would be looking for are laws that focus on the profiteers, the predators, and the sex consumers. We would support the vision of a made-in-Canada Nordic model," said Quinn.

Quinn said the priority of the next several months should be public education and engagement. She suggested talking to all levels of government.

"I would like Canadians to talk about it and to actively approach this with eyes wide open," said Quinn.

Linder said that new laws are necessary, explaining Parliament should address the different populations: voluntary professional sex workers; exploited prostitutes who may sell sex to survive; and human trafficking victims.

"We need a clear set of laws that defines who is who," Linder said. "I would prefer a made-in-Canada, middle road [solution]. I would like to see sex workers licensed."

Linder said benefits would include providing a supportive network and training in safe practices. Psychological assess-



On December 20, 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada declared the laws prohibiting brothels, soliciting sex, and living off the avails of prostitution as unconstitutional. >> PEREGRINE981 VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

ment would be key.

"It takes a certain profile to do this safely," Linder said.

Linder suggests making it illegal to buy sex from non-licensed workers. Law enforcement could target those who prey on the most vulnerable sex workers.

Scott said Parliament shouldn't revisit the laws and that rewriting the laws could be equally dangerous. Instead, she suggests regulating prostitution through bylaws on a municipal level and consulting sex workers in a meaningful way when making those decisions.

Scott said licensing is unnecessary, but if that were the case, the yearly fee should be under \$200 because the average income for a Canadian sex worker is \$40,000 a year. Higher licensing rates would lead to only the wealthy or organized crime being able to purchase licenses, said Scott.

Currently the City of Edmonton licences escorts, escort agencies, body rub centres, and body rub practitioners.

Garry Dziwenka, director of licensing for the City of Edmonton, said it's simply too early to say what the city might

license.

"The city will have to take the new laws and review them," said Dziwenka.

Linder emphasizes the complexity of the issue.

"Nobody's going to walk away from this deal with everything," said Linder.

The *Rat Creek Press* encourages community debate. We'd love to hear your opinions about this ruling. Feel free write a letter and send it to info@ratcreek.com, or leave your thoughts on our Facebook page (*Rat Creek Press*) or on our Twitter account (@RatCreekPress).

STREETER: The Supreme Court has struck down the current laws surrounding prostitution as unconstitutional. What do you think they should be replaced with, if anything?

Gene Miller, 56 – Importer/exporter

"That's a huge question. In Edmonton, they license and manage escorts. They're portable – they go to where the business is. Licensing keeps them off the streets and allows them to do their business. Anything that keeps them safe, the neighbourhood stable, I'm in favour of."

Dave Z, 52 – Oil and gas industry employee

"Get them off the street and provide treatment centres."

Candace Farrar, 20 – Student

"There needs to be some way to protect women. I don't think there's any way to make a law that everybody in communities across Canada is going to agree on."

Sean Bliss, 34 – Real estate industry

"I don't know enough to have an opinion. As long as there are laws to protect those in the industry, I think that's a positive thing."

Marie, 36 – 118 Avenue resident

"I think we should be looking at the people who use and abuse the prostitutes, not punish the men or women who are trying to make a living or choose to employ themselves in this way."

Chelsea Boos, 28 – Graphic designer

"The laws should be replaced with nothing. I think striking down the laws is a good thing and it should be regulated in a way that protects prostitutes."

FAMILY DAY OFF THE AVE



The Avenue leagues* will sponsor an ETS shuttle to Silver Skate Festival in Hawrelak Park on Monday, Feb. 17 between 1-5 pm. Round trip service between 118 Ave and Hawrelak Park – just show your community league membership card for a free ride. Family memberships are \$20 and will be available at the Park & Ride located at the Alberta Avenue league lot on 93 Street (1pm; 2pm; 3pm; 4pm). The shuttle will depart from the ETS bus loop in Hawrelak Park at 1:30, 2:30, 3:30, 4:30 and 5:30pm.

More info about the Silver Skate Festival visit www.silverskatefestival.org

*Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue, Westwood.

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NEWS » FINANCIAL LITERACY

The scoop on payday lenders

High interest rates and questionable practices mean borrowers should know what they're getting into

DYLAN THOMPSON

At age 21, I worked a short time as a painter's apprentice. The work was all right and so was the pay. However, since I worked for an individual, I was paid in personal cheques, which I received every second Friday at 4 pm.

If I rushed, I could get to my bank to deposit the money. But banks being banks, they wanted to hold it for up to five business days. That's far too long when the fridge is empty and the rent is due.

I went to a payday loan store instead. They took their fees (about \$30 for a \$1,000 cheque) and handed me cash on the spot. I'm not sure what I would have done if that option didn't exist.

Payday lenders. You've seen them around. They're usually in places with a lot of low-income and immigrant housing. Many people, especially those of little means for whom mainstream banks are not an option, at one point use these "fringe" financial services. Around the Alberta Avenue area, there are a few options within walking distance: Money Mart, The Cash Store, and not one, but two Insta-loans stores.

Many of these same options exist online as well. This past spring, international payday lenders have begun to move into the Canadian market. Wonga, a British company, spent large sums of cash to secure prime airtime during one of the most lucrative periods in Canadian advertising: the 2013 NHL playoffs. But with the Canadian payday lending market being valued at over \$2 billion as of 2009, the profits

are quite likely worth it.

Despite, or perhaps because the industry continues to boom, concerns exist over a business model that some consider to be exploitative.

Kevin (whose name I changed because he requested anonymity) is a local man who has used multiple payday lenders for nearly a decade since turning 19. He has a love-hate relationship with them.

"I knew what I was paying going into it," said Kevin. "I didn't really think. I just wanted money any way I could get it. All they want to do is get you to loan more and more money, more and more often."

The Canadian Payday Loan Association (CPLA) represents the majority of licensed payday lenders in Canada. On their website, they say they represent the best interests of Canadians: "The CPLA is not your typical industry association. We're calling for regulation, not fighting it."

The CPLA, alongside consumer advocates, played a part in passing the Alberta Fair Trading Act of 2009.

Up until 2008, payday lenders were an unregulated industry. They were subject to the Criminal Code of Canada's usury laws, which criminalized charging an annualized interest rate in excess of 60 per cent. But many lenders skirted this with additional fees alongside the interest rate.

In response, the federal government passed a law exempting lenders from the usury law so long as they were in a province that had passed some sort of regulation. So far, every province but Quebec has done so.

Under the Alberta Fair Trading Act of 2009, the cost of a payday loan was capped at \$23 per \$100 borrowed. This is true regardless of the loan period. So borrowing for a few weeks, you would end up paying an annualized interest rate of 500 per cent. However, if you borrowed for a few days your annualized interest rate

Freya Kodar, discovered two distinct viewpoints within the proceedings. The "market demand" side saw payday loans as a necessary service for informed consumers. The "exploitative" side saw paydays loans as being predatory upon economically vulnerable sections of citizens.

Kodar found that the regulatory process favoured the "market demand" conceptualization despite there being evidence to the contrary.

"At all stages of the regulatory process there was evidence supporting the conception of the payday loan borrower as particularly vulnerable, with few choices and at risk of exploitation," wrote Kodar. "The regulatory schemes that emerged could have responded to both perspectives by more fully responding to the evidence presented, and concerns raised, about vulnerable, repeat borrowers."

Naturally, payday loan companies subscribe to the "market demand" viewpoint. They say they provide a necessary service and without their services, many Canadians would be without options for quick money.

Commercials for payday lenders portray it as a service for those needing one-time quick money. However, a survey on the CPLA's website showed "Payday loan users are most likely to have taken 3 to 5 (33%) or 6 to 10 (25%) loans in the past year. A quarter (23%) have taken just one or two, and 15 percent have taken more than 10."

This means over 80 per cent of payday loan customers borrow more than three times

per year.

Kevin takes issue with some payday lender practices. He says that after a period of staying away, they have called him to remind him they are "there when he needs them." He said they even called his employer.

"I said to them, 'what's the point of this place if you're calling people I know to let them know I need a payday loan?' 'It's John from DollarsDirect. I'm doing an employment verification. Like they would for a mortgage. Does this person actually have a job? I'm considering lending him 200 bucks for three days. But I really need to verify everything about him first,'" said Kevin.

While there are alternatives to the payday loan process, none has gained any permanent foothold in Canada. One option is peer-to-peer (P2P) lending, which has a much lower interest rate than payday loans. Under this model, borrowers choose a loan amount and post it to an online marketplace. Lenders browse the marketplace and choose loans they want to fund. Borrowers do need a minimum 640 credit score to participate. Many payday loan customers would be exempt.

Unfortunately, in Canada, only accredited investors can participate in "securities" which include any investment made with the intention of making a profit. One Canadian P2P lending service, CommunityLend, recently had to discontinue operations due to these regulatory hurdles.

For better or worse, payday lending remains the best and only option for those who cannot access traditional banking services.

"I knew what I was paying going into it," said Kevin. "I didn't really think. I just wanted money any way I could get it. All they want to do is get you to loan more money, more often."

would be in the thousands.

Payday lenders must display signage breaking down the math of the loan. The act also prohibited payday lenders from providing rollover loans when customers take out a larger loan to pay off an existing one.

Dalhousie University conducted a study of the regulatory process for payday lending in Canada. The study's author,

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WHAT'S ON » SPORTS

Intense action and thrilling rivalries

For ten years, Monster Pro Wrestling has drawn crowds down to the Alberta Avenue Community League



Cpl. Jack Hammer forces an arm-and-shoulder lever stretch upon the Sin City Strangler while referee Hawkes checks on the Strangler's will to continue. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Young rookie Rudy O'Ra (in green) executes a clothesline on veteran Steve Rivers (in the stars-and-stripes). >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

REBECCA LIPPIATT

Heavy metal pumps from speakers, a spotlight hovers over a ring, and wrestlers emerge from behind a black curtain to the cheers of the crowd.

Tattooed men and women dressed in bright orange leggings enter the ring. They're draped in flags, sporting coloured masks, and have names like Massive Damage, Cpl. Jack Hammer, and Mascara Diablo.

Sound like something you'd see on television?

In fact, Monster Pro Wrestling takes place the first Saturday of every month at Alberta Avenue Community League.

Entertaining and cathartic, the sport has all the elements of a Greek drama. It is comprised

of archetypes. Good versus evil. Heroes and villains. The underdog fighting a consistent winner. The comedian and the guy who plays it straight. Players and the crowd form alliances, and drama unfold month after month.

The crowd is as varied as the wrestlers are. They alternately cheer and boo when their heroes or villains enter the stage. Children wear masks, emulating their heroes and reach out their hands to offer encouragement as the wrestlers greet the crowd before the fight.

Toddlers watch wide-eyed from their parent's laps.

When Bobby Sharp threatens Kat Von Heez, a grey-haired grandmother stands up to him and yells, "You leave that nice girl alone!"

Athleticism reigns here. There is brute strength when the powerhouses square off. They leap across the mat at each other, clothes lining their opponents. The blue mat thunders when a wrestler throws down a 215-pound man. Flying kicks co-ordinated between tag teams require agility, strength, and a lot of practise.

Monster Pro Wrestling has been at the Alberta Avenue Community League for 10 years.

Tickets are usually sold out, even on a -30 C night. Tickets are \$15 in advance, or \$20 at the door.

For show times and updates go to www.monsterprowrestling.com, or follow them on Facebook or Twitter.



Tag team champion partners Irishman (in green) and Crazy Kore (in black) and opponent Sonic Insania (in the blue mask) reel after a high-flying splash down to the floor. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Kato (in dark trunks) deftly ducks a bullrush from former partner Meniac M.D. (in black and orange). >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Provincial champion Chris Perish (in the black tights) attacks Scott Justice (in the blue tights) while Perish's manager H (ringside in the silver suit and scarf) approves. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

UPDATE » FESTIVAL

A hut in which to thaw

Participants brought their best to this year's competition

DYLAN THOMPSON

It was a beautiful day for a competition on Saturday, Jan. 11. The sun was bright and the temperature was just a touch below freezing.

Amidst the sound of a megaphone announcer calling out the Deep Freeze races and the bustle of a record-setting crowd was the site of the Thaw Hut competition.

Neither the excitement of ice carving nor the aggressions of street hockey are for these champions of construction. Nay, the Thaw Hut competition is a somber calling. It is as much a battle against oneself as it is a battle against the elements and each other.

The huts themselves were as divergent in appearance as the personalities behind their creation.

Nathan Plum, alongside teammates Chris Killingsworth and David Hennessey, were participating in the competition for the first time. They built the cheapest hut they could, using free or inexpensive materials, including wooden pallets from Home Depot and cardboard from Future Shop.

"We wanted to use primarily discarded materials from local businesses," said Plum. "The total cost was less than five dollars."

Killingsworth describes the process of conceptualizing their hut.

"We started out with the

idea of building something out of cardboard because we knew it was a good insulator and also pretty accessible," said Killingsworth. "We thought it would be interesting. It evolved from there. We didn't have much in mind as far as a structure but the A-frame ended up working out."

The idea worked quite well. The inside completely blocked the wind and kept visitors comfortably warm. The swinging cardboard door also provided privacy for those thawing inside.

Across the lot was competition veteran and Deep Freeze volunteer, John Larsen. He was standing atop a six-foot ladder to secure a suitably imposing animal skull to his hut. At nearly 10 feet, his hut was the tallest one there.

Larsen drew inspiration from the theme of this year's Deep Freeze festival, "The Vikings are coming." He modeled his hut after a Nordic longhouse. It was roomy enough for either a medium-sized family or one very comfortable journalist. The interior smelled rustic and there was a wood fireplace. It was downright luxurious. Style aside, Larsen kept his focus on the one true goal of the thaw hut craftsmen.

"It's about keeping warm in the cold climate," said Larsen, looking with pride on his work. "It's actually going to keep you warm. We have a heater in here. It should work out really nicely."

The most unusual structure at the competition was a circle of trees arranged close around a hay bale. Standing inside smelled wonderful! It was like being deep in an Albertan forest.

Another hut had a simple plastic sheet as a door. Its creators were another set of first-timers, Madison Killingsworth and Kelsey Erest. They smiled wide as they held the sheet open for children to climb inside. An adult had to bend over and nearly crawl to get through the door but the inside was tall enough for the average person to stand fully. It smelled like freshly cut particleboard. Swirls of white glue decorated the interior.

"It is made of OSB (oriented strand board) and two-by-fours with plastic wrap around the outside," said Erest. "There are carpet pieces on the bottom and a chair to sit in."

Killingsworth described her motivation to become involved with the competition: "We thought it would be something fun to do with our friends and to be involved in the community."

Tiffany Shaw-Collinge, an architect and artist, built the winning structure. It resembled a space-aged tent with a shiny metallic interior.

Children and their keepers clambered inside each of the structures in turn to test the veracity of their claims. A flurry of text messages decided the winner.



Chris Killingsworth, David Hennessey and Nathan Plum strike a pose in front of and inside their hut. >> DYLAN THOMPSON



John Larsen puts the final touch on his thaw hut: a skull. >> DYLAN THOMPSON



Kaelyn Saunders squats on a hay bale inside the best-smelling thaw hut. >> DYLAN THOMPSON



A small girl bursts out of the thaw hut built by Kelsey Erest and Madison Killingsworth. >> DYLAN THOMPSON



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EDITORIAL

Black History Month

Just whose black history is it we're celebrating?

MIMI WILLIAMS

It's been almost twenty years since the House of Commons passed a motion establishing February as Black History Month in Canada. The number of black people living in our country has grown significantly, as has the diversity of the ethnic origin of black people.

As long as I can remember, any official commemoration of black history has been heavily slanted towards the experiences of those blacks whose ancestors came from the United States.

In one way, this makes sense because many of the first black Canadians were fleeing slavery south of the border. However, the story of the Underground Railroad speaks of a history that the vast majority of black people who live here can't relate to at all.

Twenty years ago, most black immigrants coming to Canada came from Caribbean countries – Jamaica and Haiti, mainly. In recent years, more and more are from African countries. So the question that has nagged at me since 1995, when the House of Commons first proclaimed Black History Month and still nags at me is this: just whose black history is it we are talking about?

Those of us who work, play, and live near Alberta Avenue do not have to venture far to discover just how many rich and diverse shades of black can be found in Canada today. A tour of businesses along 118 Avenue will unearth owners hailing from Nigeria, Somalia, Ghana, Libya and Jamaica – and that's only a few of the ethnicities you will find.

We have rightfully afforded a lot of the credit for the revitalization of 118 Avenue to the many contributions made by arts-focused initiatives. Yet, we often forget to give kudos to the numerous small business owners (of a variety of black and brown shades) who have invested in our community. These entrepreneurs continue to help transform our Avenue from a place many Edmontonians avoided to one slowly but surely becoming a destination known to be family-friendly, walkable, and with a wonderful multicultural character.

Let's celebrate Black History Month by not only continuing to recognize the important contributions made by those

black Americans who came north in the late 1800s, but also recognizing more recent, more local and more directly relevant history.

The ongoing revitalization of the neighbourhoods along Alberta Avenue depends in a large way upon the success of our local businesses. I'm always encouraging people to come eat at one of the many fine restaurants. In honour of Black History month, why not take some time to talk to the proprietor and ask them where they're from. You might make a new friend and that person will most certainly give you a glimpse into one of the dozens of black histories over which we as Canadians have cause to celebrate.



UFCW Canada is proud to acknowledge and discover the history of Black Canadians . >> WWW.UFCW.CA

IN MEMORIAM

Karen Virag

A bright light will be sorely missed



Karen Virag, professional editor and dedicated community member.

>> SUPPLIED

ARTS ON THE AVE

It is with profound sadness and a sense of deep loss that we say goodbye to Karen Virag, who died peacefully on January 11 after a brief illness. Karen was involved with Arts on the Ave for seven years, and served on the Board of Directors for six years. In that time, Karen made countless contributions, both great and small, to our organization and our community. Her energy, enthusiasm, and smile will be deeply missed by all of us at Arts on the Ave and by all who knew her.

Karen is survived by her mother, Jean Virag of Tillsonburg, Ontario; her brother, Steve Virag, of Edmonton; other family members in Ontario, Belgium and Hungary; and her cat, Stanley. Karen is sadly missed by her friends from across Canada and other countries. She was predeceased by her father, Steven Virag, in 1996.

Born and raised in southwestern Ontario's "tobacco country," Karen attended the University of Toronto, where she obtained a general studies BA (English, Latin, French) in 1981. Shortly thereafter, she followed her heart to Edmonton. Karen was a glamorous woman who had many passions and was known for her kindness, generosity, wit, imagination and brilliance. She travelled widely, loved languages and was fluent in many. A superb writer and editor, she earned an MA in comparative literature from

the University of Alberta in 1996. Karen cherished the power of the written word. She began her writing career as a freelancer and technical writer and became a published author across different genres. For 16 years, Karen was the supervising editor of publications for the Alberta Teachers' Association. She was half of CBC Radio's Grammar Gals, a contributor to CBC Radio's Ideas program, a book reviewer for the *Edmonton Journal* and a writer for *The Tomato*. Karen was an ardent supporter of the arts, serving as a board member for Arts on the Ave, the Editors Association of Canada and the Cultural Human Resources Council of Canada. Karen was one-of-a-kind – she enriched the lives of many people.

Special thanks to Karen's caring friends, who assisted her at home and in hospital; to Dr. Jane Kachope; and to the excellent staff of 9Y Unit at Edmonton General Hospital.

Karen was cremated, and her ashes will be returned to Ontario. A Catholic Memorial Mass was held at St. Joseph's Basilica on January 24. In honour of Karen, mourners were asked to dress in their best black and to wear colourful scarves.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Victoria College, University of Toronto; to The Nature Conservancy of Canada; or to the Wirth Institute at the University of Alberta, with the memo "in memory of Karen Virag".

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ABOUT US

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

COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATION, CAPACITY

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

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EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Rat Creek Press* is a forum for all people. We encourage comments that further discussion on a given article or subject, provide constructive criticism, or offer an idea for community activity.

Letters should be no longer than 250 words and must include the full name, location and contact information of the author. **Op-Ed columns** should be 400-700 words and observe formal rules of spelling and grammar. The RCP reserves the right to edit all material and to remove any electronic comment at any time.

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

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

BLACK HISTORY MONTH, FEBRUARY 2014

For a listing of events throughout the month of February in
Edmonton visit www.blackhistorymonthcanada.ca

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 02 >> FEBRUARY 2014

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CULTURAL » COMMUNITY

Local Somali a community champion

Mayran Kallah is proof that people helping people leads to healthy, happy communities

SHELAIN SPARROW

Walk down 118 Avenue and you'll meet community members from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. They fill our streets with art, culture, and international offerings, African in particular.

Mayran Kallah is a friend deeply involved with the Somali community. She is an Alberta Avenue enthusiast, a certified Somali interpreter, and the host of Newcomer TV – a series of informative online vignettes about daily life in Canada.

Kallah emigrated from Somalia in 1993. She has devoted her life to supporting newcomers in their transition to a new and healthy life in Canada.

Over coffee at the Carrot, she talks passionately about the many people who helped her when she arrived at age 15, with two children and no English.

"I was helped, nurtured and taught how to go to the stores. No one spoke Somali; we used sign language," said Kallah.

She passes that nurturing and support on through her jobs as interpreter and television host. Kallah says the media project intends to act as a bridge.

"There are many resources and organizations that support newcomers but we want to soften that experience; we want to bridge them."

She adds, "I was helped, I am living proof that people helping people [is] very successful."

Kallah's phone rings often during our conversation – evidence of her committed role in the community, and, as she jokes, her 7,000 children.

"We have to...show the newcomers how life is here because everything is different, and [it's not good] to not know."

She explains it is important to have a sense of humour and make connections. "For example, I [remember] saying to a bank teller, I did not know the word for deposit, so I said – 'I want my money to sleep in the bank' and that was it, she laughed – we became friends. I never forgot the word deposit and she never forgot me."

We each laugh at our cross-cultural follies and ignorance.

"People communicate and they laugh...we just have to start with a little step. That is how I learned the language – saying hello to people I didn't even know and they would say hello back, and that started

relationships."

I admit to Kallah it can be intimidating to approach people that don't speak the language, or who are of a culture one with which one has little experience, like some of the Muslim African cultures. We laugh at my Canadian tendency to avoid offending others. That is the beauty of Alberta Avenue. This cross-pollination of people and cultures offers a rich opportunity.

Kallah sympathizes. "I know...118 is full of African people...[they] all speak different languages but look the same...even within there can be that discrimination..." said Kallah.

Kallah stays positive. "But again it is a choice...I would like to make it very positive, to make it as perfect as possible."

What does perfect look like? "Perfect is everyone talking to each other, getting to know each other, or just dancing to a tune we hear," said Kallah.

You can see Kallah on Newcomer TV at newcomertv.ca or often eating chicken Alfredo at Imaan Restaurant (formerly Hakuna Matata) on 118 Avenue.

Be sure to say hello.



Mayran Kallah at Imaan Restaurant, one of her favourite Alberta Avenue restaurants. >>SHELAIN SPARROW



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If you could write a letter to your city, what would you say?

Bridge Songs 2014
June 14
11725 93rd street

Dear Edmonton,

Bridge Songs is an annual fusion of live music, spoken word and art across mediums exploring a central theme. This year's theme: Dear Edmonton, explores the artist's relationship to their city. Accompanied by an album of original songs, it will take place June 14, 2014, in the creative context of Edmonton's Alberta Avenue.

We are seeking visual art in all forms for the gallery, songs for the album and performance, and written work, short films and performance pieces for our evening show.

*Song submissions are due February 14.
All other submissions are due March 14.*

A full Call for Submissions can be found online at www.bridgesongs.ca



Kick Start Your Business with High Visibility First of the Month Ads

What would you say about your business and products to an audience of 12,500+ interested people? People that are waiting to hear your story and how your product or service can make their life better? Does your business or product solve a problem or answer a need many of our readers have? For less than a cent per reader you can let them know about what you have, with a HC3 ad. *The same size as this ad.*

Here's a Special offer:

Help our readers by letting them know about your business or product, and we will give you one HC3 ad FREE (\$295 value) when you contract for six.

In addition you will receive our valuable 2014 LEMONADE STAND STRATEGY PROMOTIONAL CALENDAR. It's jam packed with promotional, marketing and business building ideas. If you were to hire a marketing consultant to put together a calendar like this, it would cost you at least several thousand dollars. We did it for you. There are only a limited number of HC3 ad spaces available. Call 780.479.6285 today!

Families of the Avenue; families of

Our community is a mosaic of families and there is a comfort and stability created when ancestors settled here generations ago, we share the common bond of wanting

~ Rebecca



Jesus Gonzales Jr. manages the family-owned Paraiso Tropical, a successful Latin American food business on 118 Avenue. He is pictured here with his staff. Jesus' parents are on holiday in El Salvador, which they originally fled during the 1980s civil war. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Marc Piquette, Becky Pickard and their children Zéa and Riel have both become teachers, and Becky is an artist as well. You can find Becky's art at the community center.



Wanda Horinek-Bradbury's connection to Alberta Avenue dates back many years. Her father owned a hair salon at the same location since 1947 before opening Polar Bear Health and Water in the 1970s. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Lena Alook and her granddaughter Faith live in Delton. Lena moved to the community from Wabasca 10 years ago and now lives in Delton with several of her grandchildren. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Lisa Stein moved to the community from her home in Wabasca. She is a graduate of the University of Alberta.



Stuart Ballah grew up in Norwood and now lives in his grandmother's house with Ritchie Velthuis. Both are professional artists. Art flows out of their home and into their yard, which people always nominate for the Front Yards in Bloom award. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Kim and Sage Ellis have lived in the community since 2008. Kim is the president of the community association.



Enjoy Family Day at Silver Skate Festival in Hawrelak Park. FEB 14-23

all sorts come here to make a home

... we form connections and find shared values. Whether we are recent immigrants or our
... ng to nurture our families in a place that has a strong and healthy foundation.

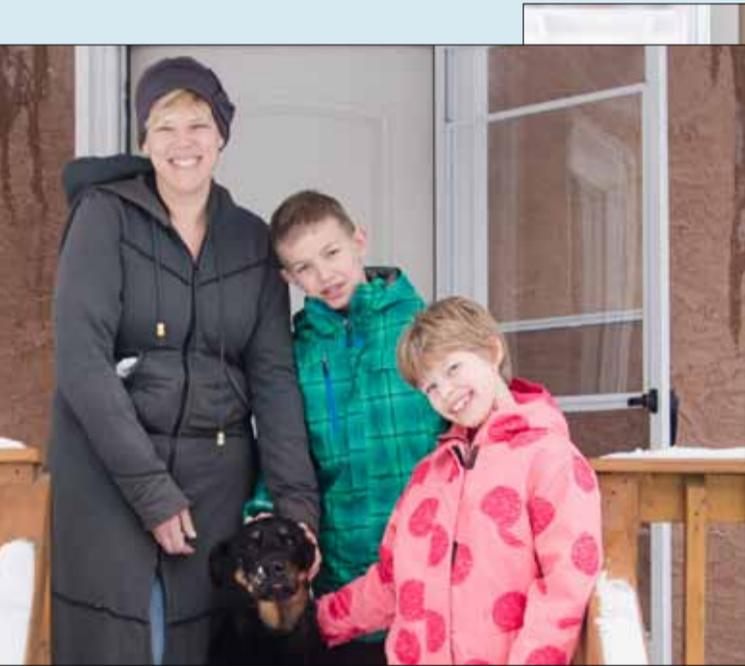
... ca Lippiatt



... lived in the Alberta Avenue neighbourhood for seven years. Both are
... y's work at various venues on the Avenue. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Jimmy Nguyen, Hein Ngo and Anhsong Nguyen have owned and operated Pho King on Alberta Avenue for four years. One of the "boat people", Anhsong worked double shifts to support his family at home, eventually allowing them to immigrate. His four children were born and educated in Canada and Jimmy, his youngest son, plans to take over Pho King. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



... moved to Alberta Avenue in August after an apartment fire forced her out
... Lisa loves the quirky character of the neighbourhood and she's looking
... exploring it with her children Mira and Magnus. Lisa is a professor at the
... f Alberta and studies plastic-producing bacteria. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Maggie Glasgow and Darren Pleavin are parents to Seren, one of the newest members of our community. Baby Seren was born on January 10, 2014, and her big brother is Isaac. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



... ed in Westwood since 1999. They are raising their children Zoe and Lily in the
... dent of Westwood Community League. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT



Mohamed Ahmed, Seada Seid and their children Amel, Bilal, and Hamid live and work on Alberta Avenue at the Family Inerja Bakery. Emigrating first from Ethiopia to Toronto and then to Edmonton, they live and work together, providing Ethiopian food and spices to the community.

>> REBECCA LIPPIATT

ETS shuttle for participating leagues. More information at albertaave.org

EDITORIAL » LITERARY

Gathering words...

RUSTIL L. LEHAY

There is something about January that slows more than molasses. The area of the brain that provides the ability to choose words operates like sludge. In that first magical-new-slate week of January, the notion of leaping tall buildings seems possible. Snagging one word from every person who ever entered or resided there while you sail over with open hands. The muse promises to string together a beautiful, compelling editorial.

Then the second week reality hits like slamming into concrete. 2014 is one more year that teases stunning potential.

Listen. You CAN decide what to do with each month, week and day. It simply requires work. Reality is good. After all, you have to know where the ground is and the height of

your goals in order to launch. You have to have writing implements and paper. Or even without...

Ukrainian poet Irina Ratushinskaya, while imprisoned, wrote 250 new works on soap until memorized and then washed away. Having basics in place does not make it any easier. It is only one part of a beginning. It comes down to applying the seat of your pants to the seat of your chair.

So once you have unearthed yourself from the wrapping paper, enjoyed a thoughtful walk on the delightful squeaky snow, explored all those good and wonderful parts of the hood, perform yoga for meditative communing with the muse, there are no more excuses. Head over to your chair. Sit and write. One word at a time. Then send it to lit@ratcreek.org.

IT WASN'T

WOLFGANG CARSTENS

until i covered myself
in wrapping paper

that i understood
the true meaning
of Christmas.

CRUNCH & SQUEAK

DANI ZYP

Walking on the snow with you
Sparkles our delight
Crunch, squeak
Times we hardly speak

of.



Magnetic words. >> RUSTIL L. LEHAY

Ravens and gold

CATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN

I lie on my canary yellow mat and gaze at the ceiling of the yoga studio. We're on the top floor of the only high-rise in our small city. Large windows reveal the park, the stream of cars. Thermals from the heating system create a playground for ravens that soar to the roof then ride down on the hot waves for fun.

I'm not here for fun. Through this private yoga class I'm preparing for serious surgery. My teacher's voice guides, comforts, reassures

me as I lie in savasana. I feel my body sink deep into the mat, into the floor and down through twelve floors to the earth, to its core.

Then I am in the sky, in a golden nest of wellness. Tears flow into my ears and tickle. Fear wells up, washes away. I lie motionless, an egg in the nest, bathed in golden light. The bell chimes. I stretch, then rise slowly through layers of stillness to movement.

Outside, a flock of ravens swoops, dips like phantoms. But my challenges and chances are real. I head out, moving forward, one step at a time.

GOOD IN THE HOOD

MARLENE SALMONSON - BARD OF THE AVENUE

What's good in the hood?
Can be misunderstood.
This element of good!
Is a problem if we could.
Show the vision that we would—
For a fraction as it stood...
Before the world.

BY THE DOOR

MARCO MELFI

in frayed gray slippers
he shuffles around the house
with superstitions
he leaves by the door
when going out to the porch
to grab the paper

SOME EXTRA COOL READS (FICTION AND NON-FICTION) TO MAKE WINTER DISAPPEAR!

- Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness*, Susannah Cahalan
- Until the End of Time*, Danielle Steele
- Life after Life*, Kate Atkinson
- Bombshell: Explosive Medical Secrets that will Redefine Aging*, Suzanne Somers
- Guilt*, Jonathan Kellerman
- The King's Deception*, Steve Berry
- Red Sparrow*, Jason Matthews
- Love is You & Me*, Monica Sheehan
- be happy! A little book for a happy you*, Monica Sheehan
- Monkey Mind: A Memoir of Anxiety*, Daniel Smith
- red hill*, Jamie McGuire
- Reconstructing Amelia*, Kimberly McCreight
- the untethered soul: the journey beyond yourself*, Michael A. Singer

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WE BELIEVE IN 118
Working together towards a safer community



2014 NORTH CENTRAL OUTDOOR SOCCER REGISTRATION

Outdoor Soccer registration for those living in the following communities: Delton, Elmwood, Eastwood, Westwood, Alberta Avenue, Spruce Avenue, and Parkdale/Cromdale.

REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT SESSIONS:
Located at the Delton Community League (123 Ave and 88 St)

Saturday, February 15 from 10am-noon
Sunday, February 16 from noon-2pm
Wednesday, March 19 from 6:30pm-8:30pm
Saturday, March 22 from 10am-noon

Please note that teams may fill quickly-so register EARLY to ensure that your child has a spot on a DELTON team. Kidsport application forms also available.

PLEASE BRING: cheque or cash for payment, cheque for volunteer deposits (2 bingo shifts per soccer registrant to a maximum of 3 shifts per family), and a cheque for uniform deposit.

Community League Memberships will be available to purchase. Interested in Coaching or Refereeing? Please attend the registration or contact Laura at 780-982-5823 or 88delton@gmail.com.

For fees and playing dates www.deltoncommunity.com

BUSINESS » THE LEMONADE STAND

Lemonade Stand Strategy

What a hair conditioner bottle has to do with advertising

HENRI YAUCK

You'd think the Lemonade Stand Strategy of business success couldn't possibly have much in common with a hair conditioner bottle, right? Well, consider this scenario.

You're washing your hair during a shower, and you go to condition your hair. But when you squeeze the bottle of hair conditioner, nothing comes out. That's because the bottle is all but empty. Sound familiar?

This differs very little from the business development strategy of most small businesses. They plug away daily, and one day they decide that maybe they should run some ads. Nothing happens. They give their potential market a quick squeeze...nothing comes out. Then they remark, "See, advertising doesn't really work, at least not in my business."

This approach is not much different from that hair conditioner bottle. You've had that conditioner a long while. Something always came out, but now it's empty.

Same thing goes for your marketplace. You've been there for what seems like a long

while and you've always had a little bit of business. However, people you thought were your loyal customers are not coming back as often. Some have moved away. The bottle's getting empty.



With the hair conditioner bottle, you just turned it upside down and the next time you were in the shower, a little squeeze and out came that little dab of conditioner. All it took was a little time and gravity did the rest. No real effort on your part.

The successful business in your market area is successful for the same reason, be it a box store, a chain, or a franchise.

They all have a Lemonade Stand Strategy. They have a system in place, they follow the system, and time does the rest. If you look carefully, it's usually not something very brilliant. If you look a little harder, it's not too difficult to see it involves promotional advertising of some sort spaced out over time.

Look again, you discover it involves a promotional calendar of some sort, ads of some sort spaced out over time, and an offer in each ad.

Doesn't that sound a lot like the Lemonade Stand Strategy stuff in this article?

Well, maybe it might be worthwhile to go back over this stuff, build that compelling offer, write an attention-getting headline. Put together that advertising, at least six months series of ads, and get some customers into your business on a consistent basis.

If you have a business on 118 Avenue or near by, then you may want to seriously consider the Rat Creek Press' offer of a FREE HC3 ad if you contract for six ads. This is a high dollar value of \$295. Check the ad on page 7 of this issue of the Rat Creek Press for more details.

BUSINESS » SHOP LOCAL

Revive your phone

Abdo Salmna can give your phone a second chance



Abdo Salmna at his Alberta Avenue shop. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

FIX MY PHONE

9729 118 AVENUE
 OWNER: ABDO SALMNA
 HOURS: MON-FRI 11 AM-7PM,
 SAT 12PM-6PM
 WWW.FIXMYPHONE.CA

REBECCA LIPPIATT

Your phone dies. It shattered on the sidewalk, the charger broke off or your child dropped it in the toilet. Half

your life is stored in there - what to do? Take it to Fix My Phone.

Abdo Salmna can fix your phone in as little as an hour or up to three days, depending on what he needs to fix. Salmna specializes in water damage, but can also repair broken screens and fix connection and charging issues. He can also unlock your phone, meaning move from one cell service

provider to another. Repairs range from \$15-\$350.

Trained in Lebanon and possessing an electronics diploma, Salmna taught electronic repair before moving to Canada in 2007. Over the last four years, he has built up his business. He now has two locations. One is by the 118 Avenue traffic circle and the second location is on the north side.

BUSINESS » SHOP LOCAL

Barbecue House

Enter hungry and leave happy



Vincent Yeung prepares a takeout order. >> ROB BERNSHAW

THE BARBECUE HOUSE

9711 118 AVENUE
 OWNER: VINCENT YEUNG
 HOURS: MON-SAT 10 AM-7 PM

ROB BERNSHAW

Tucked away in a small strip mall just off 97 Street on 118 Avenue, The Barbecue House has been providing superb Chinese barbecue since 1980.

In a way, the business has been in Tony Yeung's family for a long time. Yeung's family took over the business from a family friend in 1991. This year his son, Vincent, took over.

The Yeung family and their long-time staff provide delicious and affordable food along with quality customer service to everyone walking through their doors.

Strictly a take-out outlet, The Barbecue House carries a variety of food for the lone customer, families, or groups. Better yet, there is no monosodium glutamate (MSG) in their food.

Try what they specialize in: barbecued meat in pork, duck, or chicken. Have a craving for pork? They have boneless pork, ham sausage, pork ribs, and side pork. They even carry a whole pig!

Indulge in a variety of dishes by checking out the combination orders like rice and chow mein or pork and poultry in a variety of sizes. Or, try one of the side orders like boneless dry garlic ribs and won ton soup.

If you have a large group, a party tray may be a good option, with three pounds of meat, boneless ribs, egg rolls, fried rice, chow mein, and a vegetable stir fry.

Water, juice, pop and mango pudding are available to complement any order.

Prices range from \$2 to \$26 dollars for a basic order.

Keep in mind The Barbecue House accepts only cash, but there is a cash machine available.



A display case shows off the tasty variety of food offered. >> ROB BERNSHAW

HEALTH » FITNESS

The fading scent of fresh resolve

Are New Years' resolutions foolish and superstitious or are they invigorating and inspiring?

DAVE VON BIEKER

On the first Sunday evening in January, I'm looking down at the electronic scale at the Commonwealth Recreation Centre, and I'm smiling. I've been trying to gain weight, stuffing myself with protein-packed almonds and Greek-yogurt-infused smoothies. I've been trying to build muscle. Tonight I'm not the only one with a goal.

From the packed parking lot to the crowded running track, you can smell the fresh resolve. There are long waits for machines and few open lockers. The gym is crowded with unfamiliar faces, less fit and focused than the usual evening crew. These are New Year's resolutions. This is January at the gym.

There is comfort in knowing that come mid-February I'll be able to find a parking space again. Please don't take me for a cynic. A cynical person would think that at least half of these people would disappear in a month. I don't think that. I know that. It happens every year.

I remember one lunch in January where the salad line at the downtown Sunterra Market wound out the door. For the first time in memory, the Sunterra line was longer than

the McDonalds' line across the way. But order was soon restored.

I imagine everyone's resolve in that salad line melting in french fry grease. One by one,

“ Perhaps what I need is not freedom from trying, but freedom from shame when I fail. Maybe I need just a drop of grace. Or maybe I need a waterfall.”

they look around, swallow their shame and cross the hall like a picket line.

My resolve is melting, too. I should have gotten up at 6:30, poured a cup of coffee, lit a candle and sat at the kitchen table to write this article.

Instead, I pressed snooze. Then I pressed it again, for 45 minutes. I am a champion snoozer.

This daily discipline of getting up to write is perhaps as close as I'll come to a resolution this year, and it's already broken. My resolve is fragile.

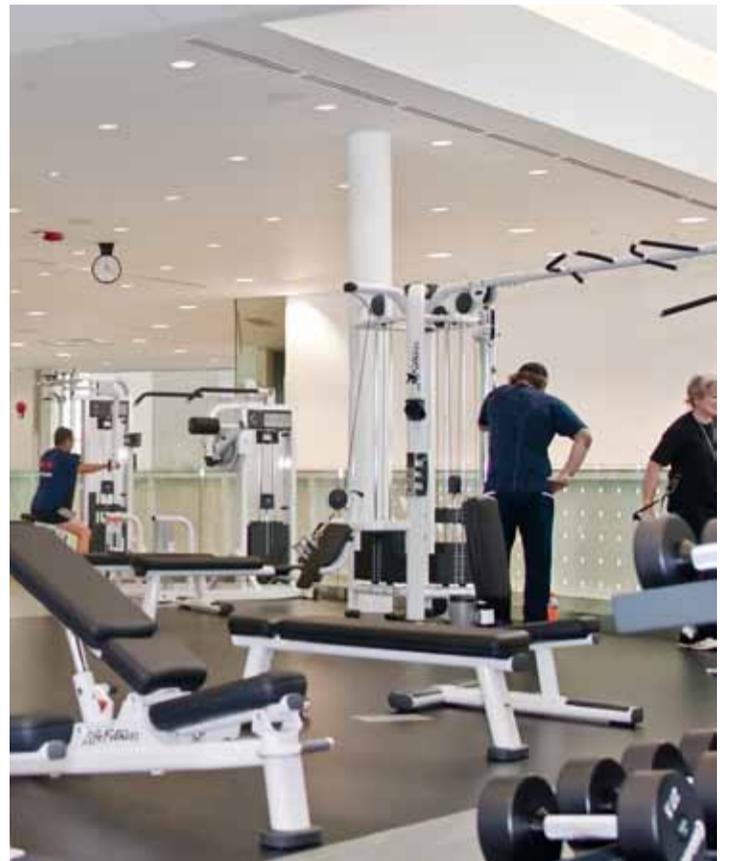
Perhaps you've forgotten your 2014 resolutions by now, or perhaps you gave up resolutions long ago. Resolutions may be foolish, even superstitious things, but I want a life that grows. I want that scent of fresh resolve to linger. It's invigorating.

Perhaps what I need is not freedom from trying, but freedom from shame when I fail. Maybe I need just a drop of grace. Or maybe I need a waterfall.

I need to remember that electronic scale.

I began a journey two years ago, weighing as little as 115 pounds. Since junior high, I'd seemed to grow holographically, gaining height but not weight. I finally decided to give weight gain an honest shot. I wanted to see if I could have some muscles after all. Even just one or two.

I thought of those classic ads showing a skinny nerd on the beach getting sand kicked in his face by a muscle-bound jock. I didn't want to be that skinny nerd. I didn't want to be



Dedicated fitness enthusiasts working out at the Commonwealth Recreation Centre's gym. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

the jock either. I just wanted to be some guy, outside the frame, soaking in the sun.

When the Commonwealth gym opened in 2012, I made my resolution. I have not gone every week. I have not eaten what I've intended. I've gained pounds only to lose them

again. Progress has taken more time and more failure than I'd planned, but somehow I've persisted through all of my self-doubt.

Somehow, I've come to this place, where I can look down at the scale, read 135.2 pounds, and smile.



Mauricio and Ruby Valladares operate Accounting and Computer Services on 118 Avenue. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

BUSINESS » SHOP LOCAL

More than just numbers

ACCOUNTING AND COMPUTER SERVICES

#1, 8810 118 AVENUE

OWNERS: MAURICIO AND RUBY VALLADARES

HOURS: MON-FRI 10 AM-5:30 PM, SAT 10 AM-2 PM

REBECCA LIPPIATT

Small business owners often have great business ideas. They provide wonderful services to their clients, but may be lost when it comes to bookkeeping, accounting and the complexities of income tax and GST forms.

The Valladares family provide

that support. The family operates Accounting and Computer Services, located on 118 Avenue. The business has been a fixture in the neighbourhood for the past 24 years.

Mauricio and Ruby Valladares, along with their sons Jorge and Jose, provide accounting, tax, bookkeeping, and business support to small businesses. They help customers establish invoicing systems and record keeping and give daily business practise advice. For businesses with employees, they also help with setting up payroll and WCB.

During tax season, they recommend making an appointment. Off-season, a 20 minute to half hour session to establish the needs of a business is free. Services for sole proprietorships start at \$600, and for incorporated businesses start at \$2,000.

The Valladares evolved their business. They no longer provide computer services (the business name will change soon), but they will be renting out office space. The Valladares own the building on 118 Avenue, and in the spring will have two small, 350 square foot offices for rent.

Who has your best interest at heart?

We do.

Linda Kon, Branch Manager
Alberta Avenue, 8804 118 Avenue
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HEALTH » STATE OF MIND

I just wanna be happy

Life will never be perfect, but you can still find happiness



Everyone's biggest wish is to be happy. Take the time to find it. >> REBECCA LIPPIATT

KAREN MYKIETKA

I struggle for happiness regularly, more than the people in my life know. Most of us do a good job of hiding our unhappiness. We often keep ourselves busy or distracted so that we won't have the chance to think or feel and realize we're unhappy with the way things are.

Despite my bouts of melancholy (I'm in one as I write this, otherwise the article might have been written differently), overall I'm a fairly positive person. I know people who are generally grumpy and negative, angry and upset with life. I accept life for what it is and don't get too bent out of shape about things I have no control over.

Apparently, there is happiness scientists who have discovered about half of our happiness is predetermined by genetics. We all seem to have a predisposition to a particular

level of happiness. Interesting. Maybe that's the difference between an optimist and a pessimist.

Even if genetics or personality account for much of our mood, what we do and what we think still have a significant impact on our level of happiness.

In a 2004 *Time* magazine poll on "major sources of happiness", all the top answers had to do with relationships. Researchers have studied why, despite rising income in the U.S., happiness has flatlined. They found that declining social networks was the key factor related to a decrease in self-reported happiness.

Connected people live longer and report being happier.

"Remember that being unhappy can kill you faster than a disease can. So do something that makes you truly happy today!" – Marc Savard, Comedy Hypnotist

10 things to do to make you happier:

1. Exercise more often
2. Get proper sleep
3. Shorten your commute
4. Nourish your relationships
5. Spend time outdoors
6. Help others
7. Smile
8. Plan a vacation (even if you don't go)
9. Meditate
10. Practice gratitude

True happiness comes from within. Other people can't make you happy. Happiness doesn't depend on what you have; it's more about your attitude and thoughts.

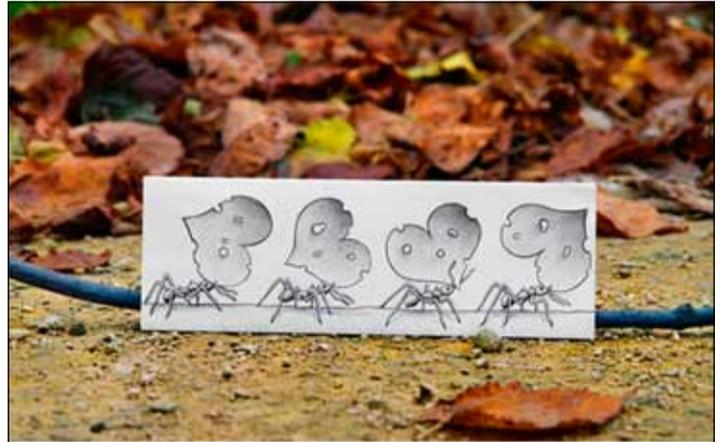
Happiness increases with positive social relationships, enjoyable work, and a sense that life has meaning. Based on Dr. Mercola's "10 Simple things you can do today that will make you happier" on www.mercola.com.

Councillor Tony Caterina

Ward 7 - Communities to be proud of



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Parkdale-Cromdale Community League
 Annual General Meeting and board elections.
 Light refreshments provided.

Thursday, April 24, 2014, 6-9 pm at 11335 85 Street



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PLAY BALL!



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 WATCH FOR REGISTRATION DATES IN YOUR HOME COMMUNITY

If your community league is not holding registration then register at

NEZ CENTRAL REGISTRATION

NORTHEAST ZONE SPORTS COUNCIL OFFICE

7515 Borden Park Road (Behind the tennis courts in Borden Park)

Sunday, March 9 from 12:00 to 3:00 pm

Saturday, March 15 from 12:00 am to 3:00 pm

Wednesday, March 19 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Wednesday, March 26 from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Wednesday, March 26 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

WWW.NEZSPORTS.COM

REGISTRATION INFORMATION, FEES AND PROGRAM INFORMATION

For Baseball: Dave Ball at 780.475.5609 or balldr@shaw.ca

For Softball: Janet Henderson at 780.477.2696 or j.hender@shaw.ca




BRIAN MASON, MLA



Seasons Greetings and the best wishes throughout the coming year

Connect with Brian

Office: 6519 112 Ave
Edmonton.HighlandsNorwood@assembly.ab.ca
 Phone: 780.414.0682
 Fax: 780.414.0684

CELEBRATE » BLACK HISTORY

Explore the depths of black history

February is Black History Month and it is the time to celebrate black culture

CHANTAL FIGEAT

Many blacks in Edmonton are descendants of Africans who were enslaved and shipped to the Americas through the Atlantic slave trade. Many entered Canada via the Caribbean. This historic dispersal of peoples from Africa resulted in the African diaspora made up of several communities throughout the world.

In this predominantly Caucasian society, blacks can feel different from their white peers in thought, language, dress, and socialization. Lack of understanding about black culture leads to feelings of inferiority and being singled out. Frustration results from educating whites about African-Canadian issues.

The arts have historically been a means of expressing issues, events, and challenges affecting the black community over time. Through art, writing, music, dance, theatre, and film, blacks have been able to explore their unique culture and identity. As a "cultural reservoir," art is an important ingredient in

shaping identity.

A sense of identity helps build confidence and a successful life. People can challenge stereotypes and heal to build upon and recreate a vibrant culture. The arts also educate people about black history and transmit knowledge between generations.

The African diaspora continues. Here in the Alberta Avenue neighborhood we are witnessing modern chapters in the story. Since the early 1990s, Canada has welcomed a large number of East African refugees due to ongoing civil unrest in their countries.

As you go along Alberta Avenue, there several Somali and some Ethiopian businesses. Many of these shops are the result of Edmonton Somali community members moving to the area. Somalis have a strong collective mentality and a nomadic tradition that makes it natural to follow group norms.

Abdi Salad operates the M&A convenience store at 97 Street and 118 Avenue.

"People ask, why did I move to Canada? In a word, it's peace," said Salad.

Much of Somalia has been devastated by 20 years of war and famine. Salad belongs to a Muslim community deeply appreciative of Canadian freedom of religion. This feeling is born from years of living under an atheistic Marxist regime.

The expatriate Somali community on Alberta Avenue provides goods, services, and social networking, helping to ease the transition to Canadian culture. Not only are there stark differences in culture and weather, Somalis face strong stereotyping by being both black and Muslim.

Strong culture shock may be expressed in unhealthy ways leading to negative impressions of the Somali community. There are important social and economic links to family members facing hardships back home.

Black History Month is an effort to recognize the historical effects that the African diaspora has had on black people and provides valuable outreach to the greater community. Reach out to your neighbours, and meet new friend.



The African drumming group Adje plays the Carrot in 2012. >> SUPPLIED

There are many events celebrating African history and culture planned for February at the Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse (9351 118 Avenue).

Some events include:

- "Rhythms of the Earth"
- Spoken word
- Visual and literary arts
- Music and gallery

More details will be posted beginning of February. Check www.artsontheave.org or www.thecarrot.ca for scheduling.

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THE WORK OF COWARDS

News reports last month told of Spozhmai, a 10-year-old Afghan girl who had been strapped into a suicide vest by her Taliban commander brother and ordered to blow herself up at a police checkpoint, but then had second thoughts about following through.

While they denied involvement, the Taliban has a history of recruiting children as young as eight to commit such acts – which truly speaks to their subhuman barbarity. To the Taliban babies and children are mere cannon fodder.

The use of children as instruments of revenge is despicable, the work of those too cowardly to fight their own battles. In Canada we have the much documented case of Omar Khadr, who is serving time in Edmonton after years of detention at the US-run prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. According to Article 38 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Khadr and others can be recruited at the age of 15, and indeed may volunteer even younger. Omar Khadr killed an American soldier and subsequently pleaded guilty when charged of the crime.

Certainly there is no doubt as to his being old enough to understand the right or wrong of his actions. If 10-year-old Spozhmai was able to choose not to blow herself up in a suicide attack at the behest of her brother and other family members, then should not Omar Khadr, who was almost 16 at the time of his 2002 arrest, have been able to make the same moral choice and not throw the grenade that killed American soldier Christopher Speer?

Those who strapped the explosives to Spozhmai and sent her out to kill have no morality. The same is true for those family members who trained Omar Khadr to kill. Spozhmai made the right choice. Omar Khadr could have too, but did not.

What do you think?

780-495-3261 www.petergoldring.ca

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Sponsored by the Norwood Neighbourhood Association whose vision is to support good projects and activities that benefit the neighbourhood.

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

EVENTS

FAMILY DAY UNPLUGGED! TAKE THE ETS SHUTTLE TO HAWRELAK PARK

Visit Silver Skate Festival on Monday, Feb. 17 between 1-5 pm. More info: www.silverskatefestival.org. The avenue area leagues will charter an ETS bus for round trip service between 118 Ave and Hawrelak Park – just show your membership card for a free ride. Park & Ride from Alberta Avenue lot on 93 St. Family memberships are \$20 and available at the Park & Ride.

NOTICES

COP TALK WITH CST. LUCAS

Wednesday, Feb. 12 from 12-3 pm at El Rancho Restaurant (8710 118 Ave).

BRAZILIAN PERFORMANCE

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

NORWOOD CHILD AND FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE AGM

Join us on Wednesday, Feb. 26 at 6 pm in the Norwood Gym (9516 114 Ave) for our Annual General Meeting and session on *The Importance of Play*. Appetizers and refreshments served. Childcare provided. To attend or for more information please call 780.471.3737.

THE CARROT STAGE

9351 118 Avenue, 780.471.1580 www.thecarrot.ca
Fridays: Live music starts at 7:30 pm. Check website for line-up. \$5 cover, all ages welcome.
Saturdays: Open mic 7 pm-9:30 pm. Great time to share your newest tune, poem or comedy act! Free for all ages. \$1.25 minimum charge.

RECYCLE YOUR COMPUTER ITEMS

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

PROGRAMS/CLASSES

LEARN TO KNIT

Smitten for Mittens, Tuesdays, 7 pm at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave).

ENGLISH CONVERSATION CIRCLE

Drop in and join others who also want to practise their English. Mondays, 2:30 pm at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St). No class Feb. 18. More info: 780.424.3545.

IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH

ECALA English For Community Integration: Free Parent-Tot English classes. Bring along your babies/toddlers and learn basic English skills for everyday situations. Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-11 am starting January 7 at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League (11335 85 St). More info: Sarah at 780.887.6825.

FREE ART NIGHTS AT THE NINA

Community Art Nights, Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 pm. Family Art Nights, Wednesdays, 6:30-8 pm. The Nina (9225 118 Ave). www.thenina.ca.

FREE MUSIC LESSONS BY CREART!

Running every Saturday at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League (11335 85 St) free group lessons will be offered to members. The teacher is part of the community and loves to share his knowledge! Singing lessons run from 9-10 am and guitar lessons from 10 am-12 pm. Play and meet others. More info: 780.471.4410.

SING, SIGN, LAUGH AND LEARN

For children up to age three accompanied by a grown-up. Tuesdays from 10:30-11:15 am at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St). More info: 780.496.7099.

JUST FOR TODAY AFG

Are you troubled by someone's drinking? Al-Anon meeting, Mondays at 10 am at St. Stephen Anglican Church (11725 93 St). Entrance is at back door by ramp:handicap access. For more information, phone: 1.888.322.6902.

ALATEEN MEETINGS

Help for young people whose parent, relative or friend is a problem drinker. Saturdays at 10 am at 11107 129 St

(backdoor, downstairs). More info: call 1.866.322.6902 or Google alateen edmonton. Al-Anon and Alcoholics Anonymous meet at the same time, in the same building. Help and hope for the whole family.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

CRIB NIGHT

Drop-in crib night at Delton Community League (123 Ave & 88 St) on Saturday, Feb. 1 at 6:45 pm, \$10 each.

BOOK CLUB

Come join us for lively discussions on all types of fiction and non-fiction. Hear about the books other people are reading and discuss books we'll read as a group. We'll feature a different title or author each month. Tuesday, Feb. 11, 1:30 pm at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St).

NFB FILM CLUB

Saturday, Feb. 22, 1:30 pm at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St).

FAMILY MUSIC POTLUCK NIGHT

Join us on Friday, Feb. 28 from 7-11 pm at the Parkdale-Cromdale Community League (11335 85 St) for our monthly family friendly arts party and potluck. Enjoy live professional and emerging musicians or take part in the open mic. Have fun, meet friends and neighbours while building a strong community around the arts.

CRUD DINNER CLUB

Everyone welcome. To stay informed about upcoming dinners, join CRUD on Facebook.

PRAYERWORKS COMMON

Hot complimentary meals and warm friendship at St. Faith/St. Stephen (11725 93 St). Every Thursday lunch 10 am-2 pm. Every Friday supper 5-8 pm with MusicJam on the third Friday. Saturday breakfast 8:30-9:30 am.

BROWNCOATS KNITTING GROUP

Wednesday, Feb. 26, 6:30-9:30 pm at The Carrot (9351 118 Ave).

FAMILY STORYTIME

Share stories, songs and games for the whole family. Sundays from 2:30-3 pm

at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St). More info: 780.496.7099.

TWEEN LOUNGE

Play video games, make a DIY project, meet friends or just hang out. For ages 7-13. Thursdays from 3:30-5 pm. Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St). More info: 780.496.7099.

TEEN GAMING

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

WOMEN'S AFTERNOON OUT GROUP

For women to get out, socialize and work on crafts such as knitting, crocheting, card making, and more (or bring your own project). Cost is \$1 drop-in fee for materials. We have a potluck snack. Mondays from 1:30-4 pm in the Sprucewood Library Programming room. More info: Michelle 780.232.5822 or heartsalive@hotmail.com

NORWOOD LEGION SENIORS GROUP

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

PARKDALE-CROMDALE SENIORS GROUP

Seniors bingo takes place every Monday from 10 am-2 pm at the Community League (11335 85 St). Coffee and snack provided.

SENIORS LUNCH

Wednesdays from 11:30 am-12:45 pm at Crystal Kids Youth Centre (8715 118 Ave).

BABES IN ARMS

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

L'I'L SPROUTS PLAYGROUP

A place where parents can meet and children can play. Parkdale-Cromdale Community League is looking for a responsible parent to lead this fun l'il playgroup. If you are interested in helping out please call 780.471.4410.

SPORTS/REC

OUTDOOR SOCCER REGISTRATION

Saturday, Feb. 15 from 10:00-12:00 pm and Sunday, Feb. 16 from 12:00-2:00 pm at Delton Community League (123 Ave & 88 St). See ad on page 10.

NEZ SOFTBALL AND BASEBALL

Registration begins in March, see ad on page 13 for details. Or visit www.nezsports.com.

FREE SPORTS EQUIPMENT

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

FREE COMMUNITY ACCESS AT COMMONWEALTH REC CENTRE

Enjoy the fitness centre at Commonwealth for free on Saturdays from 5-7 pm with your community league membership.

FREE QIGONG CLASS

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

VOLUNTEER

CASINO VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

On March 6 and 7 for the Alberta Avenue Community League. Email: info@albertaave.org

VOLUNTEER AT THE CARROT

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

DRIVE A SENIOR

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

Listings for free events and programs as well as volunteer opportunities. Email your listings to: info@ratcreek.org.

CHURCH SERVICES

ANGLICAN PARISHES ON ALBERTA AVE ST. FAITH AND ST. STEPHEN

Two Traditions – One Faith. 11725 93 Street

St. Stephen: 780.422.3240

Sunday Worship:
8:30 am - Low Mass
9:00 am - Morning Prayer
9:30 am - High Mass
7:00 pm - Evensong

St. Faith: 780.477.5931

Sunday Worship:
11:00 am - Sunday Worship
1st Sunday - Worship in the Common
2nd Sunday - Traditional Anglican
3rd Sunday - Aboriginal Form
4th Sunday - Traditional Anglican

CHRISTIAN LIFE CENTER

Our Vision is to be a growing community of believers who are woven together by the love of God for support, fellowship and prayer.

10123 Princess Eliz. Avenue
780.471.2250 www.clifec.ca

Service Times:

9:40 am - Pre-service Prayer
10:30 am - Worship Service
10:45 am - Kzamm Kids
Child care provided for ages 0 to 12 yrs.

AVENUE VINEYARD CHURCH

A friendly, informal, non-judgmental and safe place to grow spiritually. Traditional Christian values in a non-traditional way.

8718 118 Avenue (Crystal Kids building)
www.avenuevineyard.com
Sundays at 10:30 am

BETHEL GOSPEL CHAPEL

A Bible-based, multi-ethnic fellowship. 11461 95 Street 780.477.3341

Sunday Meetings:

9:30 am - Lord's Supper
11:00 am - Family Bible Hour
Saturdays - Free English Conversation Café for immigrants

CARISMA CHURCH

Our vision is to EMBRACE a relationship with Jesus and share it with others. Come and experience a multicultural worship service in an informal, friendly environment.

8401 114 Avenue 780.477.1235
www.carismachurch.org

Sundays at 10:00am

Kids Ministries for ages 2 to 12yrs. Come as you are. All welcome!

ST. ALPHONSUS CATHOLIC CHURCH

11828 85th Street 780.474.5434

Service Times:

7:30 am - Mass, Tuesday to Friday
4:00 pm - Mass, Saturday Vigil of Sunday
11:00 am - Mass, Sunday Main Celebration
4:00 pm - Mass, Sunday, Eritrean Catholic Community

English Classes & Collective Kitchen

(seasonal - call for info)
St. Vincent de Paul Food Help Hotline: 780.471.5577

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Please join us for our diverse services. We offer regular Sunday worship services in German and English languages.

10759 96 Street (Corner of 108 Ave)
780.422.0059 www.stjohnsluth.ca

Service Times:

9:30 am - German Service
11:00 am - English Service
11:00 am - Sunday School for Children

Holy Communion: Every first Sunday of the month in the German Service
Holy Communion: Every third Sunday of the month in the English Service

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Would you like to get involved in the community?
 Be a part of the revitalization of 118th Avenue and the surrounding communities!

Development Group
 This is a new committee that will work towards ensuring that there is good development in the area.
 Meets every 2nd Monday of the Month 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Crime Council
 The Crime Council works to:
 Empower community members to work together or by themselves on creating their own safe community
 Problem solves and addresses crime and disorder issues in the community. Shares community information with EPS and Bylaw
 Meets every 3rd Thursday of Month 6:30 - 8:30 pm

To sign up or get more information email:
 judy.allan@edmonton.ca or call 780-496-1913
 avenueinitiative.ca

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