

Rat Creek Press

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



BY THE COMMUNITY - FOR THE COMMUNITY

JUNE 2022

Eats on 118 launches on June 18

Get ready for a summer of good food on 118 Avenue



Get ready for a summer of tasty food starting June 18. | Supplied

- CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN -

The glories of food on 118 Avenue will be at our fingertips this summer, thanks to Eats on 118 and the Alberta Avenue Business Association (AABA). It's an exciting prospect for foodies: food-related events at affordable prices. Sixty restaurants or food-related businesses give diners plenty of room for choice.

The event launches on June 18 with an exciting partnership with the Edmonton Elks and AABA. Eat and imbibe at Mona Lisa Pub's tailgate party (with food from a second restaurant as well), then hop on the waiting bus to be whisked away to the opening game at Commonwealth Stadium. Take the bus back for an afterparty bash, all for \$118.

Game day leads into Alberta Avenue Dining Week from June 21 to 26, a self-guided tour of local restaurants and food-related businesses. Participating businesses are encouraged to offer deals and specials.

It will be a busy foodie summer, with eight curated dining events planned from July to September. It's also the sixth year promoting 118 Avenue restaurants and food-related businesses.

Last year boasted four tours on four different days, all sold out. This year, making

up for lost time is on the agenda, with a flurry of fun events.

"Food is one thing that ties us all together," says Jay Ball, executive director of AABA. Alberta Avenue will join the ranks of other food-loving areas in the city, like Whyte Avenue and the Brewery District. "We will have an online presence. No matter where you live, you'll be able to click on Alberta Avenue Dining Pass and find a directory, menus, promotions, and maps to see our amazing restaurants." The purpose is to elevate the exposure of 118 Avenue food-related venues to the entire city.

Two outstanding neighbourhood businesses are co-sponsors for this summer's line-up. Norwood Dental Centre's



owners, Dr. William Chin and Amanda Nielsen, are well known for their community involvement.

In addition, Sam Ireland, of Sam Ireland ReMax River City, is on board. Ireland, who has his own Facebook foodie page with almost 2,000 followers, is a huge fan of 118 Avenue. "I love the restaurants, with every corner of the world represented." He mentions an array of cuisines, including Moroccan, Eritrean, Asian, Jamaican, Costa Rican, West Indian, and many more.

The community-minded realtor began his Facebook food page after the COVID-19 lockdown kicked in. "I want to keep our neighbourhood businesses alive, and not dependant on food delivery options

which cost them money. I live in Blatchford and can order and pick up [food] within a 10-minute drive. That saves time and money all around. It allows our local proprietors to keep 100 per cent of their sales." Visit Ireland's Facebook page by searching "YEG and Area Foodies Supporting Local".

Battista Vecchio of Battista's Calzone will be involved again this year. "We are proudly Italian, and love sharing our food with new customers," he says. His restaurant reflects the high level of quality on 118 Avenue. "We use the best Italian brand ingredients for hand-crafted calzones with our own dough and sauces."

Tickets are available online beginning of June through alberta-avenue.com. Alberta Avenue Dining Pass will also be released in early June.

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

Top: Battista's Calzone will be participating in the event again this year.

Middle: Try different food from a variety of businesses in the area.

Bottom: The event is an opportunity for businesses in the area to showcase their food to Edmontonians.

| Photos supplied



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Rink to get facelift and new name

Canada revitalization grant approved for several community leagues

- KATE WILSON -

The community-led youth hockey program that was launched last winter will be getting a boost next season, with a major upgrade to the Eastwood rink.

The Prairies Economic Development Canada awarded Eastwood Community League \$72,650 to do interior and exterior work on their rink building.

"I feel we were very lucky, because we were a shovel ready project," says Donna Yateman, acting president of Eastwood Community League, on being approved for the funding.

She says support from local politicians also worked in their favour.

"I'm so appreciative of our local politicians, who wrote letters of support for this upgrade," says Yateman, adding that the investment will not only help build the outdoor youth hockey league, but will also help stimulate the local economy.

One outcome of the hockey league is to pass along income to instructors and referees, many of whom are young Albertans just entering the recreation job market.

"This will definitely help bring vibrancy back to our neighbourhood after two years of downturn," says Yateman.

The monies are from the Canada Community Revitalization Fund, a two-year federal investment to help non-profits, municipalities, and Indigenous communities improve their infrastructure so they can rebound from the effects of the pandemic.

Eastwood Community League is one of 27 fund recipients in Edmonton, which includes Alberta Avenue and several other community leagues.

The Eastwood rink building, fondly known as the rink shack, will also be getting a new name.

"We're naming the rink facility in living commemoration of Gaetan Benoit, who's been so instrumental in reviving activities and the profile of our rink," says Yateman. "Although hesitant at first to make the commitment, he quickly became our facility director, with a strong focus on

the rink and making it as great as it could be."

With Benoit's recent decline in health from a malignant brain tumour, the conversation around naming the rink in his name took on new urgency.

"We want to celebrate his contributions, his commitment to community, and his compassion for all skaters, notably the children, and his love of hockey," says Yateman.

Dale Clarke, who spearheaded the youth hockey league in partnership with Delton, Eastwood, and Spruce Avenue community leagues, volunteered alongside Benoit last year.

"He was the catalyst behind recruiting help from schools in the neighbourhood . . . and he organized for CBC to come out and do a report on the program," says Clarke of Benoit's contribution. "Donna reached out to whom she thought would jump in and give it 110 plus per cent, which hands down was Gaetan."

Benoit was thrilled to learn of the federal grant for the "much needed overhaul of our beleaguered rink building."

"The renovations couldn't come at a better time, as over the past few years our many community initiatives have brought more people together at our rink," he says, noting he's particularly proud of last winter's youth outdoor hockey pilot.

Yateman says Benoit has demonstrated his belief in community by giving his limited, precious time to strengthen involvement and generate excitement in new programs.

"He has shown compassion for neighbourhood children of all creeds and races, genders and abilities, and he's shown his love of hockey and belief in community rinks by being a constant presence at our rink."

Construction on Eastwood's rink building upgrade is anticipated to begin this summer.

Kate took up the reporter's pad and pen while living in northern Alberta. The writing bug stuck, and the next 20 years were spent covering everything from local politics to community happenings. She lives in Eastwood.



The Eastwood rink shack will be getting kitchen and bathroom upgrades, new windows, repair of cracks in the masonry and floor, and an overall interior facelift. | Kate Wilson



"I was pleasantly surprised and even shocked by the amount of fruits and vegetables that were in the box for \$30!" - Happy Gud Box customer

thegudbox.ca/spruceavenue



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ABOUT US

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

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Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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

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

DON'T MISS THESE ONLINE ARTICLES

Hundreds marched in solidarity

Red Dress Day honours missing and murdered Indigenous people
Published May 11

Finding a new life for your bike

Downtown bike swap takes place on May 14
Published May 12

Small towns offer adventures

You don't have to travel far to enjoy the summer
Published May 16

Channeling a love for arts and hockey

Local resident contributes a legacy for the Eastwood community
Published May 22

Rink to get new facelift and name

Canada revitalization grant approved for several community leagues
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Channeling a love for arts and hockey

Local resident contributes a legacy for the Eastwood community



Left: Gaetan Benoit has lived in the Eastwood neighbourhood for the past six years. | Supplied
Right: Gaetan Benoit and his partner, Katrine Deniset. | Supplied

- KATE WILSON -

Gaetan Benoit moved to Eastwood six years ago. In that time, along with his partner Katrine Deniset, he has contributed significantly to arts in the neighbourhood, including taking an active role with Deep Freeze Fête.

As a volunteer with the Eastwood rink, he also recognizes the importance of sports and community connections.

“Growing up on outdoor rinks in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, I was a huge fan of the pure simple, beautiful fun of outdoor hockey,” says Benoit.

So when he and Deniset found themselves in the neighbourhood looking for a place to live, he realized the house across from Eastwood rink was the one. “Imagining the kids and teenagers out there playing and possibly joining them ended up convincing me that this was the house for me,” he recalls.

About a year later, at the Eastwood Community League AGM, Benoit was asked how he wanted to help. He recalls “the answer was easy.”

“I wanted to give some love to our rink, which I felt was underutilized.

I wanted to get more people using the beautiful space. Next thing I knew, I was signed up as facilities director.”

A former journalist and teacher, Benoit’s work with *CBC* led to producing *Oniva!*, a highly successful program for western Canadian francophone youth.

The devastating news of a brain tumour about two years ago spurred his love of the arts, particularly music, into making the most of the time he had left. In an interview with *generationsnouvelles.net*, he said that after

Now in the end stages of his battle with brain cancer, Benoit says he’s been humbled at the commitment and selfless dedication of “our Eastwood team”.

his diagnosis, he decided to make a list of projects.

“The music was on top,” he told the host.

As a ‘fransaskois’ from north central Saskatchewan, Benoit’s love of his francophone heritage shines through so much of his work. He recently recorded an album, featuring the single *Viejo Mundo*, and in 2020 made a video about the challenge of living with brain disease.

The video, contributed for Brain Tumour Awareness week, sees the “P’tite cuisse fransaskoise” facing Brain Eater on the wrestling mat.

Now in the end stages of his battle with brain cancer, Benoit says he’s been humbled at the commitment and selfless dedication of “our Eastwood team”.

“What an honour and a profound learning experience it’s been.”

See Gaetan’s video at braintumour.ca/stories/wrestling-with-the-brain-eater-gaetans-video/.

Kate took up the reporter’s pad and pen while living in northern Alberta. The writing bug stuck, and the next 20 years were spent covering everything from local politics to community happenings. She lives in Eastwood.

A two-generation neighbourhood hub

Veteran Appliance Service is an invaluable resource for many

- CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN -

Everyone seems to know Wayne Coffin. They may also have known his dad, Bud Coffin. The Coffins have operated Veteran Appliance Service, a neighbourhood business, since the 1960s.

The first Veteran Appliance Service store was on 82 Street and 118 Avenue, owned by Roy Schumacher. The original partners moved from this location to 95 Street and 107A Avenue. Bud Coffin was a neighbour and he soon became a family friend and Schumacher’s business partner.

In the early 1960s, Schumacher decided to make a career change; this was when Bud decided to build the new store on 95 Street and 110 Avenue.

Edmonton was immersed in the post-Second World War years when Bud Coffin built and opened Veteran Appliance Service at 95 Street and 110 Avenue. Veterans were entering a prosperous era, and needed televisions, fridges, and stoves. Bud Coffin was there to sell them.

By chance, I met Molly Strandquist at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League. When I mention that I am writing about Veteran Appliance Service, her face lights up. The 85-year-old recalls the early days of her marriage to Dale, living in a basement apartment near Bud Coffin’s store.

“We asked him if we could buy a television and pay a bit every month,” Strandquist remembers back to when she was in her 20s. “He said yes, no hesitation. We were so happy to have our first television. He was so good to us. He was a nice person, a great man.” The Strandquists would sometimes get off the bus after work to visit the friendly proprietor.

Bud Coffin ran his store until 1975 when he retired. By 1986, son Wayne Coffin purchased a property at the corner of 85 Street and 115

Avenue. The property had been a former gas station. Wayne opened a new Veteran Appliance Service, carrying on the family tradition.

In December, Wayne Coffin slipped on ice outside his home. He is now recovering. In the meantime, sales go on at Veteran Appliance Service. Wayne’s family is managing the shop with the help of many friends and extended family members.

“Wayne has a thing for history,” wife Carrie Coffin shares. “He really treasures old stuff.”

Looking around the combined repair shop and store, it’s obvious that Wayne appreciates the past. Crowding each other are old license plates, televisions, coffee pots, lawn mowers, snow blowers, weed whackers, vacuum cleaners, sewing machines, lamps, a key cutter and keys, and a tangle of so much more. Wayne can fix them all.

Charles (Chuck) Plaquin, a photographer, is a longtime customer and friend. “I’ve lived around here my whole life,” he says. “I enjoy talking to Wayne about the history of the area.” Memories of Northlands Exposition (Klondike Days in the 1960s) and Royal American Shows (which ran the midway rides and attractions) are favourite topics.

As we chat, Rob King arrives at Veteran Appliance Service. “It’s the first time I’ve been in here,” he says, “after driving by for 30 years.” King ended up buying two lawn mowers.

Even after more than 60 years, the little shop on the corner is still attracting customers.

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

An iconic sign in the Parkdale-Cromdale neighbourhood. | Constance Brissenden



An urban village is springing up

Stadium Yards brings new life to the community



Felice Cafe wait staff with co-owner Tim Brouwer. | Constance Brissenden

- CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN -

In the summer of 2019, work began on Stadium Yards, a 720-unit residential development off 106A Avenue at 84 Street. Stadium LRT is two blocks away; downtown office buildings are visible on the horizon.

This area made it the perfect location for community planner Brookfield Residential, working with Rohit Group of Companies on vertical development. The target renter is a city worker who appreciates the six-minute ride into downtown. Downsizing seniors also enjoy the location.

With two buildings now complete and renting, it seems like Stadium Yards sprung up overnight.

Serena Archambault, Stadium Yard community ambassador, knows our area well. The University of Alberta sociology graduate was employed on summer contracts for both Alberta Avenue Community League and *Rat Creek Press*.

Over coffee in Felice Cafe, Archambault observes that Rohit Group of Companies wants to create a unique vibe. “The two

buildings now open are really the start of an urban village,” she says.

Archambault is the first point of contact for new residents, creating a stronger sense of connection to the community at large. Her role was recommended to the Rohit Group by Abundant Community Edmonton, an initiative that is currently working with community leagues to foster engagement and leadership.

Archambault adds, “I help to facilitate communication between residents and property management. I give voice to resident concerns or issues. Community ambassador involves advocacy for residents and their needs, while balancing this out with being good neighbours.”

Live at Stadium Yards and you can attend breakfast clubs, paint nights, dog walking groups, a virtual fitness class, and other fun activities organized by Archambault.

Stadium Yards is a much-needed development that adds shine to our area. A studio starts around \$1,200 a month; a two-bedroom is \$1,625 to \$1,735. A park-

ing spot in the underground lot is extra. Heat and water are included, and every apartment comes with air conditioning.

Dauk Commons West, now 96 per cent occupied, has a sixth-floor gym with a spectacular view, plus a barbecue area overlooking Commonwealth Stadium. A Garth Brooks concert viewpoint, perhaps?

Dauk Commons East, with an occupancy rate of around 70 per cent, has a social lounge on the sixth floor plus a barbecue patio overlooking the river valley.

Free coffee and tea welcome you in the main floor lobbies (complete with television). Televisions are also located in the patios on the sixth floor and in the five meeting rooms. A soundproof music room is available to residents.

Security is extensive, with cameras on all floors facing the elevators. The building's entrance doors lock at 7 pm; visitors must telephone the resident for entry. This is becoming common in the neighbourhood as a security feature.

Two special amenities must be mentioned. If you buy online, your package

can be delivered to a secure package locker. Do you have an electric vehicle? Stadium Yards offers charging stations in the secure underground parking area at no extra cost.

Rohit promised a coffee shop and a restaurant in the complex. COVID-19 killed plans for a high-end hamburger restaurant, at least for the time being.

As for the coffee shop, Felice Cafe opened on April 25, serving tasty strong coffee and snacks. Felice Cafe also sells local, handmade gift items including jewelry, pottery, and paintings.

The word felice, explains co-owner Tim Brouwer, is a musical term meaning “happy.” He and owner Michelle Brouwer love music and travel around Canada catching their favourite performers.

Rohit has fulfilled many of its promises made back in 2019. With another two buildings in the pre-building stage, the urban village will be completed by 2025.

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

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Call 211 and press "3" if someone is having a medical or mental health (non-emergency) crisis

To report crime online go to edmontonpolice.ca/reportacrimeonline

Crimes like theft from a vehicle or damage to property can be reported online

Call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 if you have a tip and want to remain anonymous

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To report a problem property: Call 311 or use the City of Edmonton website and search "Report a Problem Property." Both are confidential when filing a report

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Challenges of rising inflation

How rising costs are affecting members of the community

- MYA COLWELL -

In January 2022, inflation reached its highest level since September 1991, surpassing five per cent according to Statistics Canada. The jump in food, transportation, and housing costs have left community members struggling.

Compared to March 2021, the cost of food has increased by 7.7 per cent, the cost of energy rose more than 27 per cent, and transportation costs rose by more than 11 per cent in just one year.

These unprecedented increases have hit low- or single-income households particularly hard.

"The budgets that are already stretched to the maximum run out before the days of the month do," says Kelly Bickford, manager of community and school based programs at e4c, a non-profit that works to support vulnerable people and eliminate poverty.

Bickford says there has been a drastic increase in the number of people asking for help with utility payments at e4c, and e4c's school nutrition program has similarly seen an increase in children using the program.

"Those are the [expenses] that you can flex on," adds Bickford — food and utility costs. "You can't not pay your rent."

People shouldn't have to choose between paying their rent or paying for groceries, or between eating or feeding their children, but it still happens. "These are the tough choices that people are facing... that people don't really get a glimpse into," says Bickford, "and I don't think any of us would ever wish that on someone."

At Edmonton's Food Bank, Tamisan Bencz-Knight, manager of strategic relationships and partnerships, says that the organization is seeing similar

surges in people accessing their services. In March 2022 alone, they helped over 32,000 people.

"I've been around since 1980, and [the numbers] have never been that high in our entire existence, even when interest rates went through the roof in the '80s," says Bencz-Knight.

Bencz-Knight notes that inflation is affecting the Food Bank's bottom line too, since they are paying more for food and transportation. In 2021 alone, Bencz-Knight says they travelled over 180,000 kilometres in the city picking up and delivering food, which will rack up considerable costs with the price of gas this year.

But although inflation is rising and prices continue to increase, income isn't rising to match. Wages only increased by an average of 2.4 per cent while inflation rose over five per cent, according to a January 2022 Labour Force Survey. This means that wages aren't increasing fast enough to keep up with purchasing costs.

This has led community members to get creative to stretch

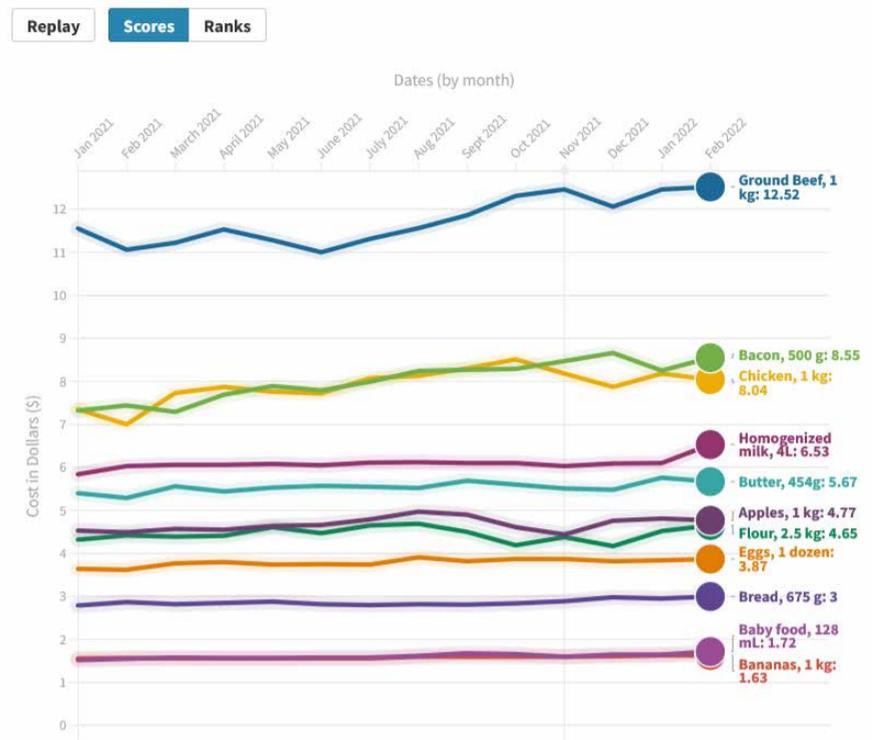
their dollar. Rachael Robertson uses apps like Flipp and Flashfood to save money, and she purchases her meat at Flashfood. "Whatever is 50 per cent off is what we eat that week, and sometimes it's bizarre like duck legs," says Robertson.

Melanie Greenfield, another community resident, shops for non-perishable items in bulk when they're on sale, which helps cut costs considerably. "I also grow a food garden and can [preserve] what I am able to, cook in bulk and freeze [or] can some, and try to use everything I own until it falls apart or can't be fixed."

Greenfield adds that bartering can be a great way to cut costs. Greenfield painted and installed shelves for her massage thera-

Cost of grocery items: Jan 2021 – Feb 2022

Data from Statistics Canada



This infographic demonstrates how the cost of food has been affected by inflation. | Mya Colwell

Compared to March 2021, the cost of food has increased by 7.7 per cent, the cost of energy rose more than 27 per cent, and transportation costs rose by more than 11 per cent in just one year.

pist in exchange for five free massage sessions. "I think we're going to see a lot more of that sort of thing coming back now," says Greenfield.

Jacque Richardson says she has been making more meals from scratch at home. "We have an Instant Pot and can make amazing yogurt for a fraction of the price of store bought," she says. Richardson says that she only buys meat when it's cheap and has started cooking more vegetarian meals.

The challenges of inflation aren't easily solved, and they can lead to food insecurity, mental health crises, and increased poverty.

But organizations like Edmonton's Food Bank and e4c provide valuable

supports to the community. The variety of programs that e4c offers, including Empower U, You Can Benefit, and Make Tax Time Pay, are all there to help.

"[Inflation] is outside of our control," says Bencz-Knight. "We're all little small fish in the big sea trying to just do the best we can to support each other."

But even so, continues Bencz-Knight, "Edmontonians will step up and support us if we need them."

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

ELMWOOD PARK COMMUNITY LEAGUE

CRIBBAGE TOURNAMENT

June 25, 2022

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Where will the road take us?

Message from the Publisher

- KAREN MYKIETKA -

A community newspaper is an important element in building a vibrant community. It provides information, a forum where ideas can be shared, and celebrates successes. While we want to ensure all residents in the *Rat Creek Press* neighbourhoods have access to this fantastic resource, it takes a lot of people power and money to get this newspaper to your door. Keeping operations in the black is a challenge.

We are grateful to the many people who have stepped up to support us through donations. However, it is still quite likely that in the fall we will have to reduce expenses. Significant savings could be made by stopping delivery of the paper to apartment buildings. Having good information is important in decision making. Please take a couple of minutes to complete our reader survey (bit.ly/RCPreader). You will be entered into a draw for \$100 cash!

We publish regular articles online between print issues. Some articles only run online. I encourage you to follow us on Facebook and subscribe to eNews (bit.ly/2Rt4ELU) so that you don't miss out on great stories.

We also have many opportunities (timecounts.org/rat-creek-press)



Significant savings could be made by stopping delivery of the paper to apartment buildings.

where you can help out. Choose a one-off volunteer commitment like working a bingo (June 26) or casino (Dec 11-12), submit a photo for our online Snips & Snaps or 2023 calendar, share a slice of life or opinion article, or become a regular contributor.

We hope you find time to read and enjoy the many great stories we share, whether in print or online.

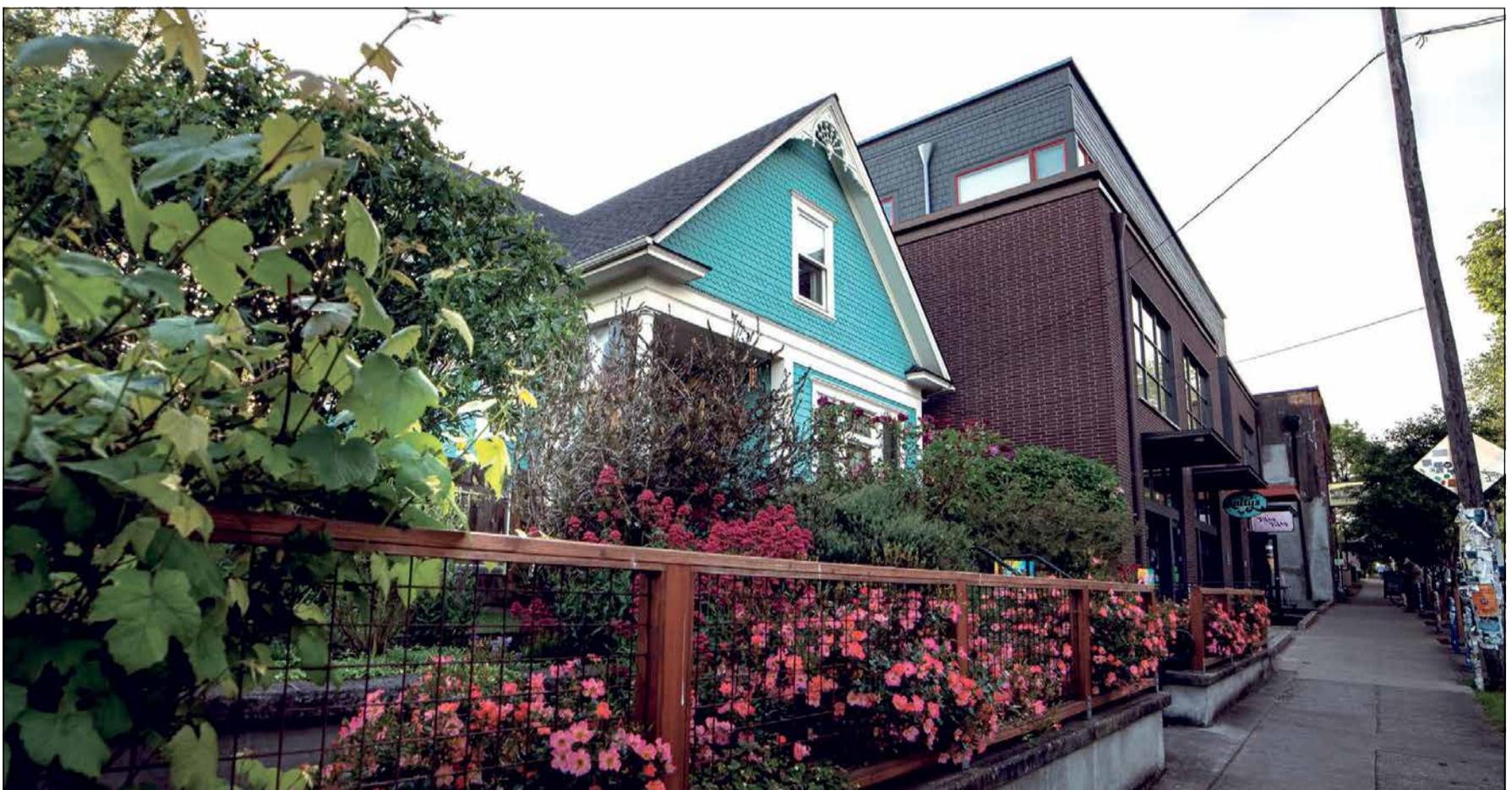
For the last 20 years, Karen poured her heart and soul into building community in the Alberta Avenue District. Now she is starting a new season in her life and exploring where that might take her.

RCP READER SURVEY

It's important for us to know about our readers so we can make the best operating and editorial decisions. Please take 2 minutes to complete our survey and you will be entered into a draw for \$100 cash!

Online, paper or phone surveys available!

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SEEKING PHOTO SUBMISSIONS

Help us celebrate our community with a 2023 Print Calendar! We need great neighbourhood photos from all seasons. Your name and photo could be featured for one of the months.

Photos must be at least 1500 by 1500 pixels
Please email submissions to info@ratcreek.org

Hello, it's nice to meet you

Telling your community stories this summer



Mya Colwell will be working with the RCP for her internship. | Supplied

- MYA COLWELL -

Hi, everyone! My name is Mya and I'm an intern at *Rat Creek Press* this year. I'm a third-year Professional Communications student at MacEwan University, minoring in journalism. I've always loved writing, and I've been jotting down terrible poetry and half-baked stories for as long as I can remember. I'm excited to be able to tell your stories.

I was lucky enough to write for *RCP* last summer as a community journalist, and this year I get to do a few more things. I'll be writing articles, attending events, and working on newsletters and social media posts as well as any other communications tasks. I will also be available to help the seven community leagues in the area with articles and advertising.

Another interesting project I'll be working on this year is researching the history of the neighbourhoods and the leagues in the *RCP* area and writing their stories. But most of all, I'm excited to be out in the community getting to know everyone this spring and summer!

When I'm not typing away on my laptop, I enjoy baking, playing trombone or piano, and watching feel-good sitcoms.

Feel free to contact me with any news tips or story ideas you might have at mya@ratcreek.org.

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



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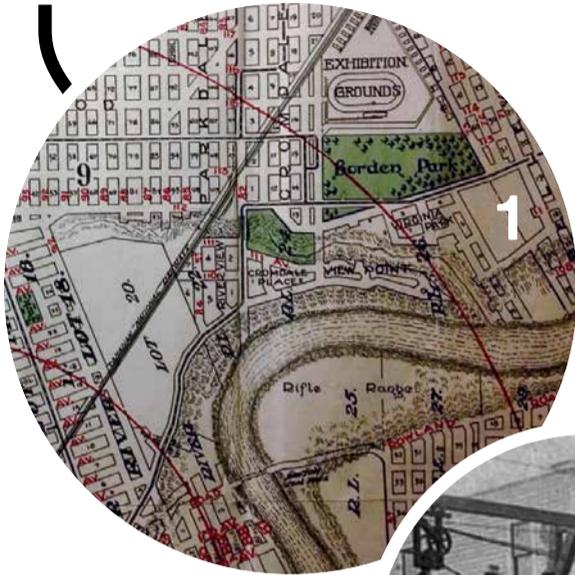
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Active adventures: Walk, run or bike!

As the weather continues to get warmer, many of us will walk, run, or bike in our communities. Luckily, there are plenty of places to see and things to do. Choose the type of adventure that suits you and head out to get active and explore.



We are always interested in local history. If you have some to share, email us at editor@ratcreek.org.

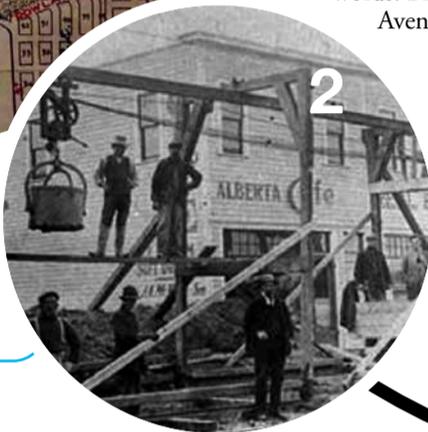
HISTORY

Our neighbourhoods are some of the oldest in Edmonton, and you'll see the evidence in the historic character homes along our tree-lined streets. If history interests you, here are three different neighbourhoods to explore and learn more about: Alberta Avenue, Spruce Avenue, and Cromdale.

If uncovering stories of the past interests you, visit the *Rat Creek Press*' history project website TheAveWeHad.org. The website includes the **Norwood Historical Walking Tour**. Explore the interactive map or download the brochure and audio clips of residents telling stories in their own words. Brochures are also available from Alberta Avenue Community League.

In May, **Spruce Avenue Community League** hosted its eighth Jane's Walk.

The walk includes the history of the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood as well as its historical houses. Every year Wesley Andreas, the league's director of the history project, tries to add something new. You can find the walk info at sites.google.com/view/spruceavejaneswalk/, which includes a 1.2 km walking route with nine points of interest. Around



Cromdale means "crooked valley"

50 house histories are also mapped. If you prefer paper, the website has three documents you can download.

Cromdale is a small neighbourhood shaped like a C due to the Kinnaird (Rat Creek) Ravine running through the middle of it. The neighbourhood encompasses the Save-On shopping area, the East Edmonton Health Centre, houses opposite along 112 Ave S, the apartments south of the LRT, and Viewpoint (the houses south of the ravine between 111 Avenue and Jasper Avenue). It's a beautiful area to explore due to its parks, nature, and the many interesting historic houses. Here's a **Cromdale Historical Walking Tour** circa 1978 bit.ly/CromdaleWalk. Credit: Gord Uhlich post - Historic Edmonton and Northern Alberta Facebook group.



If you don't know how this newspaper got its name, find out on the **Rat Creek Press About** page.



NATURE

There's plenty to explore, from the beautiful Kinnaird Ravine to Borden Park and the adjacent Edmonton Urban Farm. Many people in our area are avid gardeners, so you'll find no shortage of vegetables and flowers to appreciate during the summer months.

Do you need to escape the city but don't have the time or means to go anywhere? If you haven't yet explored **Kinnaird Ravine and Kinnaird Park**, then you are truly missing out. Map and more information: encf.org/walks/kinnaird-ravine-park/.

Head to **Sheriff Robertson Park** just off 82 Street and 111 Avenue. Park on the street (ensure there are no Stadium parking restrictions in effect). Walk across the park/playground area to the trees to the path down into the ravine. Discover nature and art along the way. Beautiful murals are mounted along the trail at the beginning of the walk. Parkdale-Cromdale Community League hosts annual nature walks through Kinnaird Ravine. This summer, they plan to do a berry picking ravine walk



to learn about how different cultural groups have used and continue to use the berries.

Prefer wide open sunny spaces with great views? Head to the east end of 111 Avenue or Jasper Avenue in Viewpoint to access **Kinnaird Park**. The beautiful old brick house at 7696 Jasper Ave stands at the entrance to a lovely ridge overlooking the river. There are a number of benches to sit in the sun. You can be adventurous and take one of the dirt trails down the bank to the walking trails below in Dawson Park.

The **Edmonton Urban Farm** is the perfect day trip where food meets education. Learn more about where your food comes from and how to grow it yourself. The farm plays an important role in increasing food security and teaching community members about farming within city limits: exploredmonton.com/industry/edmonton-urban-farm.

Borden Park is a staple in Highlands. With over 100 years of picnics, strolls, and Frisbee games to its name, the park is a great place to spend an afternoon in nature. Sculptures and other artworks are scattered throughout the park, and a natural swimming pool makes it easy to cool off in the summer heat: edmonton.ca/activities_parks_recreation/parks_rivervalley/borden-park.



Bike routes

Not only are *RCP* neighbourhoods walkable, they are also set up for easy bike access. The bike lanes just off 118 Avenue make for a scenic and safe ride, and the shared walking and biking trails that run past the Coliseum are perfect for a longer bike ride. There are also plenty of lower traffic roadways in *RCP* neighbourhoods great for city biking. Visit the City of Edmonton's Route Map for more options: edmonton.ca/transportation/cycling_walking/bike-maps-and-routes

City of Edmonton walking maps

Walk Edmonton created 10 sample walking routes in Alberta Avenue, ranging from 1.4 to 5 km in length. The routes loop through residential areas, through Sheriff Robertson Park and the Kinnaird Ravine, and past sports fields and playgrounds. The longest route loops around Eastwood: edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/assets/Avenue_Community_Walking_Map.pdf?cb=1652115705



ART

The RCP neighbourhoods are home to plenty of art both outdoors and indoors. Arts on the Ave (AOTA), a local arts organization, has initiated a lot of the art. AOTA also established **The Carrot Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave)**, a not-for-profit coffeehouse run entirely by volunteers. It serves as a community hub in Alberta Ave, dedicated to supporting the arts and community development. Stop in for a cup of coffee and tasty baked treats, and stay for the music, the art, and the community.

Two blocks east you'll find **Stollery Gallery at The Nina (9225 118 Ave)** displaying art from artists that are under-represented in mainstream art venues. The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts itself is an art collective composed of artists with developmental disabilities. Currently, there are over 200 members.

On the east wall of The Nina/Arts Hub 118 building is Toni Latour's neon sign and work of public art, *let's heal the divide* proclaiming its appeal for unity. Right in front of the sign are Cosimo Cavallaro's sculptures, called *Love Your Bean*. These whimsical sculptures are on loan from the Vancouver Biennale, and Cavallaro's goal with the sculptures is to break boundaries between objects and humans. Stroll down 118 Avenue to explore other public art.

Instagrammable walls in our district

Coloured walls outside The Carrot Coffeehouse at 9351 118 Ave.

"Relfy" colourful wall at 91 Street and 118 Avenue (grassy space) - Northern Pacific.

"We Believe in 118" wall at 91 Street and 118 Avenue - AJA Louden.

Avenue Theatre murals at 9030 118 Ave - AJA Louden (these murals can change/rotate).

Crystal Kids mural wall at 8718 118 Ave - Pedro Rodriguez De Los Santos.

Professor Marvel wall at 8416 118 Ave - Justin Moose.

Purple wall at 11745 84 St - Battista's Calzone Company.

"Keep Edmonton Weird" (106A Ave & 85 St), designed by the team at Stadium Yards, is adjacent to the Stadium LRT station and across the tracks from the Commonwealth Rec Centre and Stadium.

Commonwealth Rec Centre afghan mural wall at 11000 Stadium Road.

A number of beautiful murals line the walls in RCP neighbourhoods. AJA Louden's "Sure Shot" and an appearance from his cheeky pineapple, Piney P, adorn **Avenue Theatre** in a display of Afro-futurism. **Eastwood Community League's** floral mural gives the appearance of spring all year round.

For more local art, visit **Whiskeyjack Art House (11051 97 St)**, an Indigenous owned and operated arts boutique. Their mission is to support Indigenous artisans and cultural experiences, and they also sell Indigenous sourced products such as tea, soaps, and jam.

Combine art and nature when you visit **The KinnArt Ravine Mural Project in Kinnaird Ravine** created-monton.com/mural-project-2021. This 62 mural outdoor community art installation was first developed in 2015 and continues to be renewed annually.

If you are interested in great photo opportunities, visit the various **instagrammable walls** in our district that Linda Hoang identifies on her website linda-hoang.com/guide-top-instagrammable-walls-edmonton/.



DESTINATIONS

Do you need a destination for motivation? Then choose your walking, running, or cycling route to stop or end at one of these places for a beverage, snack, or exploration.

Looking for a cold refreshing beverage? Try a mango shake \$6 or juice \$3 from **Mama Asha Cafe (11745 95 St)** or make it even healthier with the green glow or green shake. They also have assorted cookies and cakes, waffles for brunch, and delicious Somali plates.

Located in Stadium Yards is **Felice Cafe (10930 84 St)**, a brand new spot for coffee and treats. At Felice Cafe, their mission is "to empower our community by supporting local." Coffee is sourced from local roasters, chefs and artisans are neighbourhood locals, and even the entertainment is locally sourced.

Cool off on a hot day or after working up a sweat with some ice cream. Stop by a neighbourhood convenience store such as **Delton Grocery on 122 Avenue** or **Corner 91 on 115 Avenue** on your route to grab an ice cream treat. You can find soft ice cream cones on 118 Avenue at **Popular Bakery on 93 St**.

Want something a little more gourmet? A 10-minute bike ride or 30-minute walk east from Parkdale-Cromdale Community League down 112 Avenue will bring you to **Kind Ice Cream (6507 112 Ave)** and a variety of flavours of small batch handcrafted ice cream. Popular flavours include maple bourbon pecan and cold brew coffee.

There's nothing quite like an afternoon spent thrift shopping. Explore the racks and shelves at **Value Village on 118 Avenue and 103 Street** or **Bissell Thrift Shoppe on 118 Avenue and 88 Street**. Or, check out local art and other local goods at The Carrot Coffeehouse. There are also numerous ethnic shops along 118 Avenue with all kinds of colourful and interesting wares — go explore!

If you want a place to relax and have a drink, check out **Mona Lisa Pub (9606 118 Ave)**. The recently renovated pub has a comfortable, cozy interior and a large patio set back from 118 Avenue. Stop in for a drink and wings and a warm sense of community; it's the perfect place to unwind after a long day. If karaoke is your jam, there's that too. Or sit back and watch a game, if there is one on.

1. A glimpse into what our area looked like in 1924. | Supplied
2. 118 Avenue and 93 Street in 1914. | Edmonton Archives
3. The Avenue Theatre often rotates different murals. | Mya Colwell
4. Explore the murals in the area. | Mya Colwell
5. The KinnArt Ravine Mural Project has 62 murals. | Mya Colwell
6. Stop into The Carrot Coffeehouse for coffee, treats, and entertainment. | Mya Colwell
7. Felice Cafe is a brand new place in Stadium Yards. | Mya Colwell
8. Don't miss stopping by for a delicious green onion cake. | Mya Colwell
9. The Alberta Avenue area now has designated bike paths. | Rusti Leahy
10. Kinnaird Ravine is definitely worth checking out. | Kevin Cantelon
11. Learn where your food comes from at Edmonton Urban Farm. | Karen Mykietka



School councils lighten the load

Looking back at our accomplishments from this past year

- CARISSA HALTON -

Thinking back on the first day of school in 2021, I'll never forget the bent form of vice principal David Hamblin. In the soccer field behind Delton Elementary School, his tall back was curved low as he spray painted hundreds of lines on the grass for students to safely queue up before heading single file into their classrooms.

Many of us parents in that field, saying goodbye to our masked children, felt relief they would learn in the classroom again. But we also felt worry, fear, trepidation: How often would they be sent home to learn? Were our kids and staff safe? Could our kids pass the virus to our parents? How behind were they in reading and math?

Participating in the school council has helped me feel better about these uncertainties. Every month, principal Christine Simmons informed us of new protocols, shared successes, and kept us aware of PD days. We were invited to ask questions and these conversations relieved many of my worries.

Because Delton Elementary School is part of our larger community, we wanted to share what our council worked on this year.

Funding supports

We continued our Covid Emergency fund, which provides gift cards to families with urgent financial needs. The school's Roots and Wings worker delivers the gift cards and can connect the family to ongoing supports. This critical and timely support to families experiencing stressors from the pandemic has improved school attendance.

To fund this, we had a variety of fundraisers including selling deal deck cards in October, tea in December, and an ongoing, online bottle drive through Skip the Depot. Follow us on



These students are participating in indoor recess/enrichment activities. | Supplied

Facebook to participate.

Thanks to casino funds obtained during pre-pandemic times, we continue to purchase school "extras" (are Chromebooks really "extras" in 2022?) intended to bring additional enrichment opportunities to the classroom. This year, we've purchased 30 Chromebooks, recess equipment, and literacy and numeracy tools to help kids catch up after pandemic interruptions. Further, we're sponsoring the school garden club, so veggies and flowers can brighten the outdoor classroom spaces.

Advocacy

It has been difficult for many parents not to be inside the school because of pandemic regulations.

However, our advocacy to the City of Edmonton regarding the streetscape redevelopment around the school has made connecting outside a lot safer. A new bus lane on 89 Street and sidewalk on 90 Street were added last summer, increasing safety for our kids during pick up and drop off. We had less luck with our advocacy to the Minister of Education for a reset on the new curriculum.

Partnerships and community

Despite the pandemic, our families and kids had fun this year. We were grateful for the free youth hockey program our community leagues ran. Over 100 Delton students participated. Some learned to skate; others developed skills.

We also introduced The Gud Box, bringing fresh, seasonal, affordable produce to our school families and community. Every two weeks, pre-ordered fruits and veggies are delivered to the school and families pick them up from our volunteers. While partly a fundraiser (\$5 from every \$30 box goes to our council), it's helped us connect to families practically and a little differently than in the past. Order yours (now with home delivery) at thegudbox.ca/products/the-delton-school-gud-box.

Thanks to all the teachers, school staff, parents, guardians, grandparents, and community members who helped make 2021-2022 a success.

Next year

Looking ahead, we are concerned about space. While a new Delton Elementary School has been a top priority for Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB), the provincial government has shut out EPSB from its capital budgets for two years running. The fact is that our school is bursting at the seams. The library's been cut in half to make space for classrooms, and the daycare has been displaced while we anticipate welcoming more kids from the growing Blatchford development. A new school would ensure our building is accessible for all and continues to engage the many school partnerships, while creating space for more students. This will be a focus of our advocacy work going forward.

We are also working hard to secure funds so we can support Delton School's first artist-in-residence in 2023. If you want to be part of this, or any of the other work we do, join us for our AGM in September. Details will be available at the school or on our Facebook page.

Carissa Halton is chair of Delton Elementary's School Council. She has three kids.

Councillor

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Teaching kids urban safety tips

Ways to increase safety in a sometimes unsafe world

- REBECCA LIPPIATT -

Parents in the inner city do not have the luxury of pretending that the world is always safe.

An Alberta Avenue neighbourhood mother, Martina Crory, asked parents what they do to teach their child safety, both in general and in our neighbourhood. She jokes that she is finding her child's "descent into independence" scary.

Kathryn Rambow, a local social worker says, "We celebrate and love living in this neighbourhood, but the pressures have increased." She says there are 1,000 more homeless people living on the street since the pandemic began. "It is not that they are bad people, but they are people having an awful time," Rambow says. A significant number have severe mental health issues and can have drug-induced psychosis. Rambow says it is "near to futile to try to access resources and the systems we have in place are absolutely inadequate." This situation presents a climate ripe for exploitation by people selling drugs to vulnerable people.

Several years ago, Rambow's son Conall MacLellan received a new puffy red vest for Christmas. On the first day he wore the vest, he was aggressively harassed by an older man who emerged from a known drug house. The man followed him, hissing, "What's your problem?" MacLellan ran to a neighbour's house, which he knew was a safe place and where the family was often home. The father chased off the stalker and walked MacLellan home in a different direction. When the family reported the incident, the police told them that older children should not wear red in the neighbourhood, as they may be mistaken for Redd Alert gang members.

Alexa Lameris, a community member, says, "Awareness is probably the most helpful tool. The mentally ill and/or

intoxicated are most often triggered with engagement."

McLellan has watched his parents, both social workers, interact with people in need over the years. He uses the skills he has learned as he walks to school, and knows to diffuse a situation by not making eye contact. Lameris says, "Watching to make sure not to get attacked but completely ignoring others is the best policy."

Avoiding going down alleys or taking shortcuts was not helpful to Aimee Guilbault's 12-year-old son, Nesta Bailey. Bailey attends school on the south side and takes the bus and LRT. This spring, Bailey was riding the train when a 6'4" man confronted him. Bailey ignored the man and got off at his stop. The man followed Bailey, and as Bailey ascended the stairs, the man punched him once, then twice, in the back of the

head. Bailey crouched down, covering his head for protection, and held onto the railing. A second man scared off the attacker, who was caught a few minutes later attacking a second person.

As they were completing the police report, Guilbault reassured her son that this was not a normal event, and will hopefully not happen again. Her children now follow her safety advice more closely. "Be aware who is around you. Take different routes home. Stay with your friends. Know whose houses are safe." Guilbault has coached her children on this for years

as they walk the neighbourhood together, telling them, "This friend lives here. She will let you in if you knock on her door." Bailey's twin now takes the bus and train with his brother. Guilbault laughs: "I always say 'I love you guys. Be safe out there. It's a crazy world.' Now my kids

believe me."

Some teens are affiliated with gangs. "I tell my kids, you have to watch out for the high school kids with brand new hats with tags hanging off them, or expensive shoes or new phones," says Guilbault. Gangs recruit older children, who then help befriend and recruit younger children. Gangs use children under 12 to run drugs, weapons, and messages because if they are caught, they will serve little to no time. If you watch a school ground after school lets out, you can see these interactions taking place in the back fields, out of sight of any parental supervision. Talk with children about appropriate friendships. Most of the time, friendships are with people your own age. Anyone offering you money, candy, or a new bike in exchange for friendship is not your friend.

Teach children about bodily autonomy by respecting them as a caregiver. When children learn that no one should touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, this autonomy "teaches children to stand up for themselves in an abuse situation", according to Dr. Laura Markham in her article, "Safety Rules Every Family Needs" in *Aha! Parenting*.

Finally, local resident Victoria Stevens says, "[Ensure] your kids feel comfortable coming to talk to you about anything, even if they know it was wrong or they are worried about getting in trouble. It's so important to keep a very open line of communication with kids."

This article has some great safety tips: ahaparenting.com/read/top-safety-tips-kids.

Rebecca has attended free concerts as a bouncer, juggled plates as a waitress, completed a degree in microbiology, laboured in the oilfield cleaning storage tanks, and worked as an editor. In her current incarnation, she is a full-time photographer and is a mother to two boys and stepmother to two girls.

McLellan uses the skills he has learned as he walks to school, and knows to diffuse a situation by not making eye contact.



The world can be a scary place, so teach your children ways to be safer. | Rebecca Lippiatt



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Resident builds recumbent bikes

The bikes improve quality of life for Alberta Ave resident

- KATE WILSON -

After Don Reykdal's back surgery, learning about the benefits of a recumbent bicycle was a life changer.

Riding conventional upright bicycles was "really hard on me, with a lot

of pain," recalls the long-time Alberta Avenue resident. "So I did some research and saw a picture that was on the Internet of a recumbent bike," he explains. "I saw the wide seat and thought, that's got to be real comfortable. I want to have a bike like that." But back in the early 2000s, it was a minimum of \$2,000 for this type of bike. "I thought, I can build one of those. That's what started me on my adventure to build one."



Left: Don Reykdal's original recumbent bike that he built. | Supplied
Middle: Don showing the crutch and a handlebar he salvaged, which he's using on his fourth recumbent bike. | Kate Wilson
Right: The yellow recumbent bike that Don Reykdal built, photo taken in 2009. | Supplied

of pain," recalls the long-time Alberta Avenue resident.

"So I did some research and saw a picture that was on the Internet of a recumbent bike," he explains. "I saw the wide seat and thought, that's got to be real comfortable. I want to have a bike like that."

But back in the early 2000s, it was a minimum of \$2,000 for this type of bike. "I thought, I can build one of those. That's what started me on my adventure to build one."

Recumbent bicycles recline the rider into the seat instead of the usual upright position of standard bikes.

The benefits are due to this reclined

position, rather than sitting on a narrow bicycle saddle and hunching over the handlebar. The weight and pressure is taken off where it typically hurts while riding a bike, reducing loss of blood flow and nerve numbness, and is instead more evenly distributed across the body.

Lower back and pelvis issues are often remedied, and there's more power since the legs are moving at an angle rather than up and down. "Because the upper body is at a 35 degree angle, there's more torque with your legs, and you can brace against the back of the seat," explains Reykdal, who is a retired heavy equipment mechanic.

"I did a lot of welding when I was younger, and I put my first prototype together by welding, mostly the seat."

That first effort "wouldn't win any prizes for aesthetics," he says. "But it was functional, I used it a lot. It was a very comfortable ride."

Now working on his fourth recumbent bike, Reykdal gets components from recycled bicycles and other sources. This time

around, he'll be using aluminum crutches, as they're strong, lightweight, and have pre-set holes for adjustments. He's also found that using a wooden beam eliminates

Now working on his fourth recumbent bike, Reykdal gets components from recycled bicycles and other sources.

the need for welding. Plus he likes the idea of recycling and re-using.

The benefits are not only the exercise, but also the social aspect. As he rode around the neighbourhood with his first few prototypes, he found it was an ice breaker for conversation.

"Some people would approach me to

talk to me, I had cars stopping. I never had so much fun," says Reykdal.

After open heart surgery in 2016, he's found his recumbent designs have improved his health situation.

"I've been a diabetic for 25 years," he says. "I need to get exercise, and walk-

ing is much harder on me than riding a recumbent bike. I can go a lot farther, do a lot more."

When his fourth bike is ready, he plans to get out for more exercise and enjoy the simple pleasures of getting about in the neighbourhood, especially now that new bike routes have been added to some streets.

If the weather cooperates, the bike should be ready by the end of June.

Kate took up the reporter's pad and pen while living in northern Alberta. The writing bug stuck, and the next 20 years were spent covering everything from local politics to community happenings. She lives in Eastwood.



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How I ended up living on the Avenue

People end up here for a wide variety of reasons

- DEREK QUITTENTON -

“So, how did we all get here?”

We were a broad mix of folks having our weekly lunch when the question was asked. The answers were surprising. Many different reasons brought us together; some good, some funny, and some sad.

I got here because my 12-year marriage was dying and it was time to go. We both wanted a change. We parted gently, kindly, and fairly. My ex-wife and I are still friends but we have moved on.

I needed a place to stay. I called a friend who I knew had a couple of apartments for rent in the Alberta Avenue area. The timing was perfect and I was now a resident of Alberta Avenue. All good. Except I knew absolutely no one. Not a soul.

So, I volunteered for the Kaleido Festival. I wanted to meet a couple of guys there who could join me at a local sports bar and watch the Oilers play hockey on the big screen. Maybe even have a couple of beers during the game.

It did not work out.

I met a woman instead. I wasn't looking for romance, but she simply commanded my attention. She was tall, good looking, well taken care of, moved with confidence, was well known, and obviously well liked. She saw me too and thought I was homeless. Granted, I had not shaved or cut my hair for five months. I was sporting my best “I am not shaving for anybody” look. I had a full-face beard, glorious enough to bring tears to Santa Claus' eyes. She was rightly concerned about me. Oh, I was scruffy alright but I was clean. I was dressed in expensive clothes, freshly laundered. There was something about me that caught her eye also.

A friend of this interesting lady also noticed me. She pointed out a couple of things

about me and said to her friend, “He is not homeless. He is going to be your new boyfriend.” Where do women get this idea?

Volunteering for the Kaleido Festival saved my life, keeping me well and stable through the COVID years. I met enough similar minded people to survive with some kind of social life intact.

“So, how did we all get here?” We were a broad mix of folks having our weekly lunch when the question was asked. The answers were surprising.

tures are marvelous, beautiful work that bring joy to all in the depths of winter.

Others at the table shared their stories. One lady and her husband were fans of the horses.

They chose to live within walking distance of the Northlands horse racing track. They could walk to the track, to Borden Park, grocery stores,

children in their own house with their own backyard to play in. Easy access to schools was also a big plus for young families.

Another highlight is the monthly Coffee with Cops at The Carrot Coffeehouse. I have had several very interesting chats with the cops over there. The police say they get some of their best tips at these chats. I learned that if a small break in or theft is not reported, then as far as the police know, it did not happen. I was told to report everything. Enough reports will bring more patrols. Interesting.

We also have several community gardens all around the neighbourhood. For a nominal fee, you get a decent sized plot of earth to grow your own vegetables. During harvest, there is a lot of swapping going on. I'll trade you a few tomatoes for one of your squash. Lots of good companionship and neighbourly friendship. Try it, you'll like it!

There is so much happening around here and lots of it is good. Come on out, join in, and see the good that is all around here.

Then there's community leagues. This is a big area and there are many well-attended and well-used community leagues. There are lots of activities, group events, and fun community gatherings. Most of them are free or very inexpensive. There is so much happening around here and lots of it is good. Come on out, join in, and see the good that is all around here.

Derek, a former financial planner, retired, sold his practice, bought a big honking touring motorcycle, and hit the road! Several years and 160,000 km later, all in Canada and a snippet in Alaska, he has seen this land. You want to learn about the grandeur of this land, just ask him!



Derek Quittenton on his Spyder motorcycle at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League, his favorite pub night locale on the third Saturday of every month. | Constance Brissenden

The timing was perfect and I was now a resident of Alberta Avenue. Except I knew absolutely no one. So, I volunteered for the Kaleido Festival.

In winter, we have the Deep Freeze Fête. Now, this is an event. I loved it when we were able to close part of 118 Avenue and turn it into a Deep Freezer Race track. What a hoot! The ice sculp-

and other trails or walks around the neighbourhood.

Walkability was a common theme at this lunch. Several of us said we could walk to church, to buy groceries, to visit friends, and around the neighbourhood. Yes, it is getting a little rough around the edges, but all in all it is a good neighbourhood.

Affordability was also mentioned. A few women wanted to raise their

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Coffee with Cops hits the road

Residents speak with emergency services at Eastwood Community League

- MYA COLWELL -

On May 11, Coffee with Cops travelled to Eastwood Community League.

The event, which has been a mainstay at The Carrot Coffeehouse for 14 years, is an opportunity for community members in the area to connect with their local beat officers and other organizations, including Edmonton Fire Rescue Services, Alberta Health Services, Capital City Clean Up, and more.

On Thursdays, the beat officers stop by the Alberta Avenue Community Drop-In Night, sometimes just to chat with community leaders and attendees, other times to do a presentation or question and answer.

In the past, Coffee with Cops has also met at a few different Edmonton locations, including vacant lots and the Spruce Avenue Community League skating rink.

Christy Morin, executive director of Arts on the Ave (AOTA), says the event started as a mutually symbiotic relationship between AOTA and Edmonton Police Service (EPS), especially since several police constables lived in the Alberta Ave neighbourhood.

"[The event is an opportunity] for us as residents to be able to feel empowered, understand how things work, be educated into crime prevention, and [learn] how to

keep your home and back alley safe," continues Morin.

A relationship between residents and police is necessary on both sides; police use crucial information provided by residents to improve safety in the area, and residents can build strong relationships with their beat teams, even going so far to exchange phone numbers and addresses so that their beat teams can check up on them.

At Eastwood Community League, residents got a chance to hear from police and fire services about how to protect their property from arson and other criminal activity this spring. Police also provided an overview of SCAN (alberta.ca/report-suspicious-property.aspx), which is a tool residents can use to report problem properties, talked briefly about derelict properties, and addressed issues that come with living in a former drug house.

After the presentation and question and answer session, residents got a chance to talk to their beat officers and inform them of any concerns they have in their neighbourhood.

The event is an opportunity for community members in the area to connect with their local beat officers and other organizations, including Edmonton Fire Rescue Services, Alberta Health Services, Capital City Clean Up, and more.

Valerie Parr has been attending Coffee with Cops since the event started and has lived in the community for 20 years. She says, "I'm here because I love my community.... I'm seeing some changes that are not really positive, and I want to be as proactive as I can to see if we can, as a community, change."

Coffee with Cops goes a long way to build community, says Parr, especially since it helps neighbours get to know each other. "That's the important thing, that you know your neighbours... so when you see them on the street, you'll acknowledge them and [feel] a sense of strength."

"You've got to have a feeling that you can reach out and talk to others about [your concerns] rather than be isolated in your home and fearful," continues Parr.

Staff Sgt. Brad Jones also attended the event on Wednesday with EPS. He says the main goal of the event is "reaching out to the community and getting that interaction between the public and the police."

Another crucial element is "letting the people that live in the area know their beat

officers and know that they can go to them for assistance." Having more communication between police and residents can only be beneficial, continues Jones.

"Many folks in our community have a traumatic history with law enforcement, and may fear or resent our beat cops as a result," says Ali Hammington, president of Alberta Avenue Community League.

"Having police attend our community drop-ins resulted in confusion at first. I was repeatedly asked, 'Why are they here? Are they looking for someone?' I always responded with, 'Because they're OUR cops, and they work with us to keep our community safe.' Now, beat cops and community members are on a first-name basis. The officers bring balls and Frisbees, engage with kids at the park, and everyone feels safe sharing their observations and concerns. I truly believe that the relationships between police and neighbours is making our community safer for everyone."

Follow community Facebook pages or subscribe to eNewsletters for regular updates on Coffee with Cops.

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



Residents can discuss any neighbourhood concerns they have with their local beat officers. | Mya Colwell

Speak Spanish at weekly classes

Learn Spanish for free at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League

- MYA COLWELL -

Calling all language learners! Sarah DeLano has started teaching free weekly Spanish classes at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League.

The classes run on Thursdays from about 7 to 8 pm, and there is a \$15 meal available at 6 pm before the class.

At the first class, participants ate potato tacos served with beans and salad and drank Jarritos, a Mexican fruit-flavoured pop.

DeLano completed some of her university education in Mexico, lived in Spain for a while, and currently teaches Spanish at MacEwan University and the University of Alberta.

Since community members had expressed interest in taking a Spanish class, and DeLano's daughter is starting to learn Spanish in school, it was the perfect opportunity to start a Spanish class at the league and teach the community as well as her daughter.

The first class started with the basics. Participants learned how to introduce themselves in Spanish, how to spell their names and pronounce Spanish letters, and how to say different greetings and farewells in Spanish.

There were also plenty of games and interactive elements. Participants got to

play Spanish Bananagrams and piece together phrases in the right order to form a conversation. And there were even prizes!

"Because it's a community class, we're going to try to have fun with it," says DeLano.



Left: Spanish teacher Sarah DeLano poses with Maiara Barrera (left) and Sakura Jorgensen (right) at the Parkdale-Cromdale Spanish class. **Right:** Spanish Bananagrams was one way that DeLano engaged participants in Spanish. | Mya Colwell

A small group participated in the first class, which DeLano says is ideal. "It's kind of a luxury to have a small group when you're teaching language classes," says DeLano. It made it easy to have an

interactive and stress-free class that participants enjoyed.

"[The class] was unbelievable, fantastic," says Constance Roshko. "It exceeded my expectations." Roshko continues, "I love to travel and I've been to South America, but



I need practise [my Spanish]. This [class] has been great. It's very relaxed."

"I loved that it was the food and the whole community," says Kiley Fithen.

"I'm actually coming here to just keep my brain in that mode of new words,

things I don't know," adds Fithen. Fithen's work has asked her to learn French, and DeLano's class is the perfect way to keep her mind sharp for language learning.

"I loved it, I really did," adds Carrie Ganie, a Delton resident. "[DeLano] is really engaging. Good energy from her, and the food was good too and not expensive."

"I loved the fact that they offered a language," continues Ganie. "Not very many of the community leagues do that. So, I had to jump when I saw it!"

Kevin Wong, league president, adds, "I think it's so much fun. You don't feel pressure. It's a very friendly environment, nobody's afraid to make mistakes [and] I think that's key."

Next week, DeLano plans on teaching the class numbers and basic conversational phrases.

Participants are asked to purchase a Parkdale-Cromdale League membership if they don't already have one.

Visit parkdalecromdale.org/ for more information.

Hasta luego!

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

Put your best foot forward

Free youth dance lessons at Alberta Ave Community League



Heidi Hoover poses beside her rhinestone dance signs in Alberta Avenue Community League's gym. | Mya Colwell

- MYA COLWELL -

"Five, six, seven, eight!" starts Heidi Hoover as she patiently leads me through the first eight beats of her choreographed dance.

The gym at Alberta Avenue Community League echoes with Doja Cat and my tentative footfalls, and I'm having a blast.

I warn Hoover that I am a terrible dancer, but she laughs and says, "That's what everybody says to me and I'm just like, 'Okay, back it up.' Not one single person is a terrible dancer, but society tells us [otherwise]."

This year, Hoover started her dance company, On The 8 Choreography & Lessons, and she began teaching free dance classes to youth at the league in mid-April. It didn't feel right for Hoover

to charge students a fee, and she simply enjoys passing on her love of dance.

When she joined Alberta Ave Community League in January 2022, she asked herself how she could contribute to the league. Her love for dancing inspired her to start teaching others. "Nothing has ever come close to how I feel when I'm dancing, and I know I'm not alone," says Hoover.

Hoover is a freestyle dancer who has been dancing since she was two years old, and she spent many years in dance lessons. "But mostly," Hoover says, "I've just danced every day of my life in front of the mirror."

The dances that she choreographs and teaches combine several different types of dance, including jazz, hip hop, and contemporary styles. Hoover also recently

added in some African dance elements as well.

"Eight count by eight count, the genre can change, so it's really fun in terms of teaching you how to move in a lot of different ways," says Hoover. This means that the first eight beats of the dance can feature hip

hop moves, the next eight can be in a jazz dance style, the next eight beats can be contemporary dance, and so on.

Youth of all skill levels are welcome, and the class is perfect if kids just want to

Youth of all skill levels are welcome, and the class is perfect if kids just want to run around for an hour, or if they want to learn something new. Youth ages 3 to 17 are welcome to attend the class.

run around for an hour, or if they want to learn something new. Youth ages 3 to 17 are welcome to attend the class.

"The most important thing is just that they are having fun while they're here," says Hoover.

There is usually a large age range in the youth who attend the class, and Hoover asks the older kids to help the younger ones if they notice anyone is struggling.

Hoover also keeps her dance classes very interactive. In the last 15 minutes of class, she encourages the students to participate in collaborative choreography. She asks her students to suggest moves they'd like to include in the dance and they work together to add more choreography to the end of the dance. For example, if her students want to twirl, she adds in lots of twirls.

The collaborative choreography makes sure everyone feels included and it also encourages creativity through dance. Hoover also uses her students' input to build on the choreographed dance every week with their favourite moves.

And Hoover's favourite part about teaching dance? "It's definitely discovering the different strengths that kids have," says Hoover. Getting to know each of the kids and understanding their goals is very rewarding, she adds.

Right now, Hoover plans to continue the classes until the end of June. If there is enough interest, she would be glad to continue teaching throughout the summer.

Hoover's free youth dance class runs every Thursday from 7:15 to about 8 pm at Alberta Avenue Community League. Get out your dancing shoes and check out her classes for a fun evening!

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

Tuesday yoga at Parkdale-Cromdale

Free yoga classes are offered every week

- MYA COLWELL -

Practising yoga on Tuesdays at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League is a bit magical. Lanterns and fairy lights strung overhead create warm, cozy lighting and a relaxing atmosphere.

The classes are free with a league membership, go from 7 to 8 pm, and have been running since the beginning of May.

Jesse Gros-Louis leads the yoga classes every week. Gros-Louis works at Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre pool, where he met Sebastian Barrera who is involved in CreArt at the league.

Barrera asked if there was anything Gros-Louis would be interested in contributing to the community, in addition to his community-led work at the pool, and yoga was an area where Gros-Louis had experience and interest.

His yoga classes are primarily hatha, a type of yoga which involves breathing, poses, and meditation.

"I feel as far as being very open and wanting to have as many people start yoga as possible, [hatha] is the best place to start with the basics and not [get] too much all at once," says Gros-Louis.

Creating a welcoming environment for everyone is why he doesn't use much flow yoga, which can be more daunting, especially to beginners.



Parkdale-Cromdale offers free yoga classes on Tuesdays from 7 to 8 pm. | Mya Colwell

"If you start with flow yoga you're just like... 'I don't know what I'm doing. I can't keep up,'" says Gros-Louis.

It is also important to work on flexibility before jumping into something more complex, like flow yoga. Once you tackle the basics of flexibility and gain more knowledge of poses, Gros-Louis says it's easier to move into more complex types of yoga.

The class was slow paced and easy to follow, even for a yoga novice like myself. Gros-Louis patiently took participants through poses and provided options to make a pose less strenuous or more difficult, depending on comfort level.

There was absolutely no pressure, and it was a welcoming environment to learn and keep active.

"The best part about teaching is just [that] I'm part of the community. Everyone is a part of the community. I like [people] supporting each other," adds Gros-Louis. "It's fantastic."

Gros-Louis asks that participants bring their own yoga mat to class.

For more information about the weekly yoga classes, visit parkdalecromdale.org/events-1.

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