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Bringing police presence to city schools

Student Resource Officer helps youth and the community



Constable Price (near middle) is the School Resource Officer (SRO) for Spruce Avenue School. | Rebecca Lippiatt

STEPHEN STRAND

Constable Price is often found patrolling the streets and back alleyways surrounding Spruce Avenue Junior High School and Rosslyn Junior High School, keeping an eye out for mischief that could find its way to the school yard.

Since September, Price has been the School Resource Officer (SRO) for both schools. She is part of the initiative program that began in September to bring SROs to junior high schools.

Since 1979, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) has been in partnership with the Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic school boards, creating the School Resource Officers Unit. The unit provides a positive police presence in junior and senior high schools throughout Edmonton by providing counselling, mentoring, and in

some cases, coaching sports teams.

“My role, first and foremost, is to keep the students and staff safe. Then my secondary role is to provide early engagement with the youth. To steer them in the right direction and provide mentoring,” said Price.

Both Price and Joanne Harle, the Spruce Avenue School principal, said they want to see more awareness. As Harle explained, “It is better to work with the youth now than it is to deal with them once an incident has occurred.” Their goal is to help youth and the community overcome issues that arise. They see the school as the hub of the community.

Because Price patrols the streets and alleyways surrounding the school, the concern of possible crime being displaced from the school to down the road or from the alleyway to the school yard is not there.

If an incident occurs at the school or in the surrounding areas, Price can help. “If it’s something that’s at home, I will assist in any way that I can, and point them in the right direction. If it’s a police matter, I will get them in contact with the proper police that deal with that situation,” said Price.

When information is presented to the SRO, the officer will write a report and bring in the necessary police departments. Then, once their investigation is complete, the school will conduct their own investigation to see if any necessary actions are required on their part.

Information or safety concerns from parents can be directed to the school and then to the SRO. If students have information or safety concerns, Price’s door is always open.

A large part of Price’s workload is being a counsellor. “We have a

whole bunch of skill sets that we bring to the table,” she said. “I think it’s really important to build really strong relationships with the kids. So, the idea is, ‘I don’t want to let Constable Price down.’”

Having an SRO helps because, “we can divert always having to go straight to the criminal justice side of things,” said Price. It also gives them a chance to become creative.

“I have a kid I am dealing with who is involved with some thefts. He brought all of the property back. So, he and I are doing a pay-off program. He will get to do some community service type things around the school on lunch hours. That way he is not looking at criminal charges.”

Stephen works in broadcasting and writes for fun. He can be seen walking with a bag covered in pins and filled with books and notepads.

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Ditch the meeting for a party with the RCP

Do you get excited about a business meeting with Robert's Rules of Order, reports, financial statements, nominations and votes?

We don't, so at the Rat Creek Press, we don't do one. What gets us excited is spending time with other community members—getting to know each other over a meal and sharing thoughts, ideas, and opportunities.

We've turned our required annual general meeting into an annual event with food, fun, and friends—an annual gathering of minds! There is still “business” to be done, but it is a painless 10 minutes over dessert and coffee.

We think we have a great community newspaper, and many of you have shared how much you love

and appreciate it. There is always room for improvement and growth, but we can only do what we can with what we have. The more we have, in funds or people resources, the more we can do!



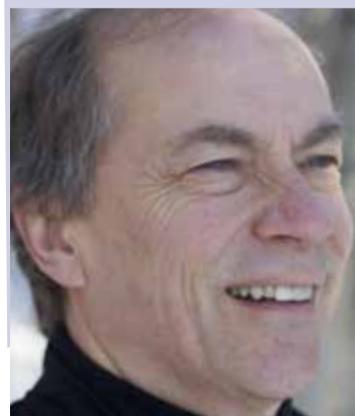
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Alberta Avenue Community League
9210 118 Ave



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For this year's Annual Gathering of Minds, we hope to bring together people who love RCP and want to get involved. We've got opportunities for new board members, writers, and folks who might want to volunteer in other ways, too! We've got opportunities for a variety of roles, skill levels, and time commitments.

We'll kick things off at 6:30 pm with a family-style meal catered by Creative Quality Catering and end the evening with dessert and coffee. In between there'll be fun activities to get to know your neighbours, and we'll discuss ideas and opportunities for the year ahead. We hope this year will be a great one for RCP, but we need your help to make it happen!

Free but limited tickets available (due to catering and room capacity). Last year's AGM had a great turnout of about 50 people, so we want to ensure we can provide food and space for all who attend this year. RSVP for your seat on our Eventbrite page <https://goo.gl/jMTs5j>

If you reserve a ticket and then cannot make it, please contact us and cancel.

“To achieve greatness, start where you are, use what you have, do what you can.” - George Bernard Shaw

RAT CREEK PRESS

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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. The opinions expressed in the paper are those of the people named as authors of the articles and do not necessarily reflect those of the board or staff.

GOALS

Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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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.

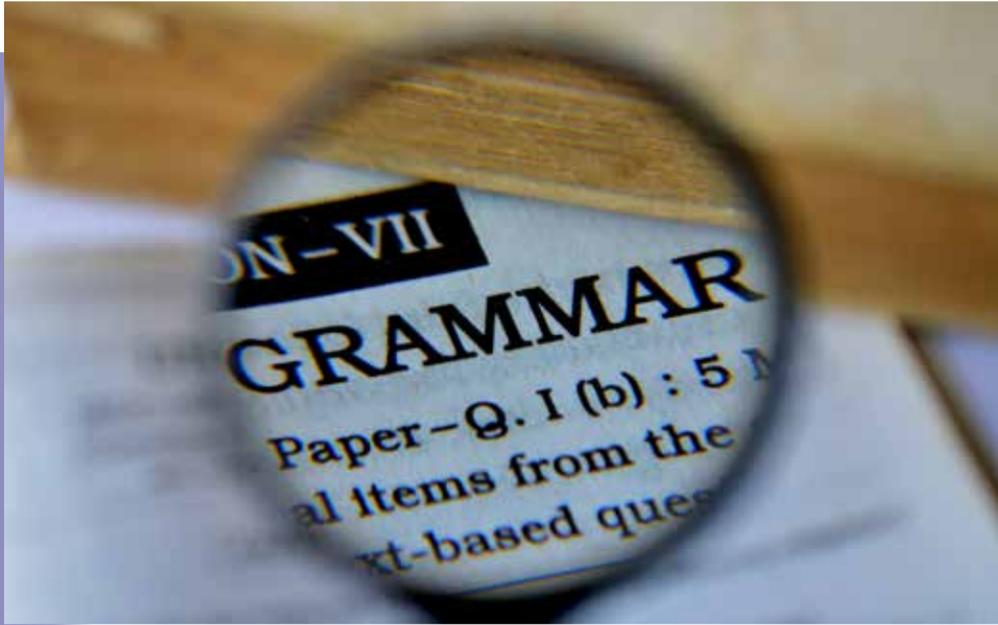
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WHY?

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OTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS - Got something you are passionate about and want to share? Do you know an interesting person in the neighbourhood? Pitch us a story! Write an article once or write often. Join our contributor list.

ADVERTISING - Do you love reading the RCP? Can you tell local businesses about the value of getting their message in the local paper? Help advertisers create good offers that bring in new customers.

PROOFREADING - Are you a grammar guru? Do you know or are you willing to learn CP Style? Do you have an eye for detail? We're seeking people to read our articles before they go to press to catch any errors missed during editing.

WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA - Are you good with computers and all that techy stuff? Got any website skills or want to develop some? We need help getting all our wonderful content onto our website and online calendar and then sharing it on social media.

DELIVERY ASSISTANT - Help us get the papers where they are needed. Most of the papers are delivered via Canada Post, but a few bundles need to be picked up in St. Albert. Some of these papers are mailed out and the rest are distributed to delivery volunteers, local businesses, and city hall.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PHOTOGRAPHERS - Do you spend time in your neighbourhood? Do you have a device to take photos with: a phone, a tablet, a digital camera? If you can snap pictures of interesting things in your neighbourhood and then upload them online, you can be a neighbourhood photographer! #RCPsnaps

RCP AMBASSADORS - Do you keep in tune with what is happening in the community? Are you willing to attend local meetings and events and be the eyes, ears and voice of the RCP?

NEWSPAPER BOX PAINTERS - Do you have a garage with work space and a few hours to give? We have three newspaper boxes that need a light sanding and paint job to get them ready for RCP decals.

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CASINO COORDINATOR - Can you organize people? Do you have connections in the community? Want to develop networking skills? We need someone to organize our next casino which will be sometime in June-August 2017.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS - Keen to know what is happening in your community? Do you like attending local events? Want to develop your professional mingler skills?

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR - Are you friendly and outgoing? Do you like meeting and getting to know new people? Would you like to develop administration and management skills?

INITIATIVES OR PROJECT LEADS - Want to skip board business and just do the fun stuff? Can you organize one event in the next year? We have some awesome ideas, and we're sure you do, too!



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Holiday market brings a season of connection

Just One World offers ethically-sourced gifts to shoppers

SIERRA BILTON

Christmas shoppers hunting for ethically-sourced gifts have plenty of choice at Just One World, held Nov. 12-13.

Previously known as Just Christmas, organizers changed the name to more accurately reflect the ethical and global market. The location has also changed. Alberta Avenue Community League hosted the event for the past 10 years, but now the Ital-Canadian Seniors Association is hosting the volunteer-run market.

Just One World organizer Kristi Anderson said the market

creates a space for advocacy organizations to raise awareness surrounding the importance of ethical goods. Anderson explained the vendors are not-for-profits and charities that collaborate with communities in various countries to support social welfare and justice.

“They often will have a relationship with the artisans and are generally directly traded,” she said.

Anderson said close to 30 vendors are expected this year to sell ethically-traded goods and wares from around the globe including, “a group from Tibet that brings in gorgeous hand-knotted wool carpets and amaz-

ing tapestries from another in South America.”

She added, “We have all kinds of household goods like tablecloths, napkins, aprons, textiles with fabulous patterns and personal items, like jewellery, clothing, sweaters and mittens.”

Beyond the cultural holiday curios, shoppers can also buy food. Given their new location in the Ital-Canadian Seniors Association building, shoppers can expect to choose from authentic minestrone, cinnamon buns and coffee.

Various local groups will be playing music throughout. De Menor A Mayor, a Latin group,

will be there as well as some choirs and singer/songwriters.

Entry is by donation and parking is free. For transit users, the Stadium LRT station is only a block away.

“It’s such a fun, festive gathering. I love the feeling of togetherness and working on a common goal—everyone is always excited to see the new items!”

Sierra is a communications student specializing in journalism at MacEwan University. She has a particular love of the art and culture found nestled in Edmonton’s Alberta Avenue communities and beyond.

LOCAL CRAFT SALES

Just One World
Sat, Nov. 12, 10am-4 pm
Sun, Nov. 13, 10 am - 3 pm
Ital-Canadian Seniors Association
9111 110 Ave

Edmonton Potters’ Sale
Sat, Nov. 19, 10 am - 3 pm
Alberta Avenue
9210 118 Ave

Carrot Christmas Arts Bazaar
Fri, Dec. 9, 7-9 pm
Sat, Dec. 10, 10 am - 4 pm
The Carrot Coffeehouse
9351 118 Ave



Find out more about Just One World and its vendors at justoneworldmarket.com | Sarah Cashmore

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redsparrowgallery.com



Vendors will sell ethically-traded goods. | Sarah Cashmore

Embracing agriculture with Northlands' events

Celebrating another year of hosting Canadian Finals Rodeo

MARI SASANO

The middle of the city is probably the last place you'd look for 2,000 head of cattle. But once a year for the past 43 years, November in Edmonton meant hundreds of farmyard livestock making their way to Farmfair and the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) at Northlands. This year, your chance to connect with your inner cowboy or cowgirl comes Nov. 9-13.

The top athletes in rodeo compete in nine events: bareback, steer wrestling, team roping, saddle bronc, tie-down roping, ladies barrel racing and bull riding. During rodeo week, they will crown Miss Rodeo Canada, and end every day with live country music as part of its Roadhouse Concert Series.

Parallel to this is Farmfair, which caters to the industries the rodeo originated from.

"The purpose of Farmfair is to provide an agriculture showcase to highlight the beef and equine industries, and to expand the market presence of the agricultural industry," said Suzanne Bielert, event manager for Northlands.

"We have attendees focused on those industries to expand their knowledge, as well as the urban demographic and people who like to go to the Ram Country Marketplace trade show for their Christmas shopping. And of course, people who are there for the CFR," she said.

The event harkens back to our agricultural heritage, providing an international forum for the latest and best in ranch-

ing. But city folk would find plenty to be interested in.

For \$5 admission (the CFR and some other events have additional ticket prices), you can wander through eight different halls, four of which is devoted to livestock. It's a way to get up close to some large and small hoofed beasts.

According to Bielert, "There are around 2,000 head of cattle and a Horse Wellness Expo that has about 50 horses a day, most of them being sold. There's also a small livestock area, the cute little animals like sheep and goats."

Competitions run throughout that awards prizes to the top purebred cows, who are shampoed, styled and blow-dried as much as any show dog.

"It's a great opportunity for city people to see animals and

ties that into where their food comes from, how it's processed, the gate-to-plate approach. There are demonstrations, like the food lab that shows you how to make cheese and cook a flank steak."

Sunday is family day, with child-friendly activities with the small livestock, music, face painting and the exciting stock dog (sheep-herding) and heavy horse competitions.

And new this year, Farmfair is debuting the Heritage Ranch Rodeo, where teams from 16 working ranches compete in events based on some of the practical skills needed on the farm, like sorting and branding cattle.

Although it was expected 2016 would be the last year that Edmonton hosted CFR, on Oct. 19, Northlands and the

Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) confirmed that CFR will remain in Edmonton for at least another two years.

"Northlands has a rich history with rodeo," said Tim Reid, president and CEO for Northlands.

Reid said the combined economic impact of CFR and Farmfair to Edmonton is \$50 million.

Jeff Robson with the CPRA said, "This partnership allows us the opportunity to build a bigger, better CFR and surrounding events for the city."

See schedules at farmfairinternational.com and cfr.ca.

Mari is a writer and civil servant.



Edmonton will be hosting CFR for at least another two years. | Photo by Dale MacMillan, courtesy of Northlands



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EDITORIAL

Fixing Edmonton's affordable housing problem

The slow progress to creating better housing strategies

MIMI WILLIAMS

Through boom and bust, calls for action on affordable housing have prevailed for at least a generation. Despite countless announcements and interventions from various levels of governments over the past decade, the situation continues to get worse rather than better.

At the end of September, Mayor Don Iveson joined other big city mayors in Toronto to ask the federal government for a major infusion of money for affordable housing. Iveson has joined his counterparts across Canada in referring to the affordable housing situation as a "crisis".

While the Liberals have earmarked \$20 billion for social infrastructure over the next decade, it remains unclear how much of that will go to housing initiatives. Given that fund is also intended to address pressing needs like child care spaces and cultural and recreational facilities, the mayors demanded a commitment from Ottawa that \$12.6 billion of it be for affordable housing.

If history is any indication, the mayors would be well-advised not to hold their collective breaths. After all, just over 25 years ago then-Mayor Jan Reimer stood with a similar group of mayors to warn the federal government a crisis

was looming if a commitment to affordable housing was not moved to the top of the political agenda. Needless to say, it wasn't and here we are today.

Based on rental information from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and population data from Statistics Canada, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calculated the problem is acute in our province. According to them, as of 2011, Alberta was home to 10 per cent of Canadian households, but had just 7 per cent of all subsidized housing units available.

To be fair, there have been some attempts made to address the issue in the past decade. Former Premier Ed Stelmach, who had made affordable housing a key issue in his leadership campaign in 2006, announced the following year that \$196 million would be given to municipalities for projects to meet the target of 11,200 new affordable housing units over five years. Edmonton's share was \$43 million. In September 2011, Stelmach announced Alberta had surpassed its creation of new units by several hundred.

In January 2009, Edmonton launched a 10-year plan to end homelessness in the city. At the time, then-Mayor Stephen Mandel said the plan included a goal to build 8,000 housing

units in Edmonton by 2019. According to city staff, approximately 5, 239 affordable housing units have been built to date. Of those units, the city's Cornerstones and Cornerstones II programs funded 2,150 units. Homeward Trust funded 2,338 units for chronically-homeless individuals and 201 units for "formerly chronically-homeless" individuals. Lastly, the Government of Alberta funded 550 affordable housing units.

According to the city's website, there remains a gap of approximately 7,000 emergency, transitional, and long-term housing units and approximately 20,000 affordable housing units. Last year, city council passed a policy formalizing a practice used sporadically since 2006: developers make 5 per cent of the units in new residential developments available to the city to purchase to become affordable housing. Progress has been slow. According to last year's housing and homelessness report, just 23 affordable housing units have come on stream in this fashion.

The problem may not be with the approach itself, but rather because it isn't applied universally. Inclusionary zoning is a practice used in many jurisdictions in the United States and, to a lesser degree, here in Canada. The idea is zoning regulations are set that require

a certain percentage of new residential developments be set aside for affordable housing. Toronto has had a policy in place for some time and has found creating a permanent stock of affordable housing in every new development not only increases supply, but also reduces the stigma often attached to tenants. Proposed changes to the Municipal Government Act would enable cities to pass bylaws to make inclusionary zoning mandatory.

The privately-developed Norwood Village on 95 Street voluntarily relied on this model, with half of its units offered for 15 per cent below market rates. The property manager tells me it has found great success. Hopefully, the same thing occurs at Parkdale II, announced this summer by the province and the Capital Region Housing Corporation (CRHC). The 70-unit building will include both subsidized units as well as housing at a mix of rents for tenants who can afford market rates.

Homeward Trust is planning a mixed-use development on the Station Pointe lands near Fort Road and 66 Street which will include supportive living units, affordable family townhouses to buy or rent, and apartment units rented at market rates.

Similarly, the Capital Region Housing Authority has unveiled

plans for the redevelopment of the 80 social housing units in Londonderry that were deemed unfit for human habitation. The proposal is to build a total of 240 units at an even mix of supportive living, affordable and market rate units. While the project awaits provincial approval, the agency's CEO is hopeful construction will begin in the spring of 2018.

With both the provincial and federal governments working on housing strategies promised by the end of the year and the city wrapping up consultations on the Municipal Government Act and the long-awaited city charter, council is being handed an opportunity to finally set out a plan that works. Let's hope that it's one that sees affordable housing dispersed across Edmonton in every new privately-built development and enables non-profit agencies like Homeward Trust and the CRHC continue to offer innovative solutions to this decades-old problem.

Mimi is a writer who first moved to the Alberta Avenue area over 20 years ago. She has participated in a number of revitalization initiatives and continues to promote the Ave as one of the best areas to live, work and play in Edmonton.

CORRECTION

The article, "City Reviews Mature Neighbourhood Overlay" printed on page two of our October 2016 issue erroneously stated that the "revised MNO will likely broaden the permissible uses of residential properties throughout the city and reduce the types of discretionary uses of these properties."

The revised MNO will not change the current list of permitted or discretionary uses in any zone. Full details can be found at edmonton.ca/matureneighbourhoodoverlay.

LETTER

Re: Army recruits photo in August issue

In the photo where the men walk down Alberta Avenue supporting the war effort, the two ladies rolling up the awning in front of Smith Bakery are Selina Smith, Francis Smith's wife, and Ruth Smith, his daughter. His daughter Ethel Smith and niece Edna Ore were also working in the bake shop.

Information provided by Francis Smith's granddaughters Barbara and Frances.

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Gallery curates creativity and conversation

Bleeding Heart Art Space blends art and faith

KATE WILSON

Light streams through the windows of Bleeding Heart Art Space on 118 Avenue. Its bright interior fulfills the founders' intent that there be a community gathering place for the arts, and by extension, for social dialogue.

"One thing that art does really well is give a voice to people who may not have a voice, and to issues that may not have a voice," said Dave Von Bieker, Bleeding Heart's artistic director.

He's curated shows at the small but welcoming gallery for two years in a volunteer capacity. St. Faith Anglican Church, which oversees its operation, recently hired him to continue that role. Since 2014, the gallery has been a venue for Edmonton art, poetry readings, small concerts and more

recently, for freelancers seeking studio space.

"The church should be a common space where people can express what their spirit has to say," explained Rev. Canon Travis Enright from St. Faith's parish. "It should allow them a voice and the freedom to express that voice."

The idea for an art space started with Urban Bridge, an Edmonton church to which Von Bieker belonged. The congregation wanted to explore connections between the arts and faith-based communities.

Since that church closed its doors, Bleeding Heart has been taken up by St. Faith, located nearby on 93 Street. As arts chaplain, Von Bieker manages venues at both the parish and the gallery.

St. Faith's wood-walled sanctuary can seat well over 200 people, making it one of the largest concert spaces in the

Alberta Avenue area. Across the street, the gallery offers a community space, an art space and a sacred space. A recent installation by Brandon Atkinson, a Cree artist from Alberta Avenue, generated comments expressing the spiritual and sacred feeling his works evoke.

"Community is inherently a sacred act. When we're at our best, community, art and the sacred happen all at once," said Von Bieker, noting that while the spiritual element isn't an explicit goal at the gallery, it happens organically. "It is something we're intentional about. There's an implied spiritual role."

Bleeding Heart is one of three ministries at St. Faith, along with poverty reduction and reconciliation with First Nations people. Last year, the gallery was involved with the REDress Project, a nationally shown installation by a

Winnipeg Métis artist.

"It's part of our call to Alberta Avenue," said Enright. "There has to be opportunities for people to find a way to express life, breathe and hope. The Bleeding Heart Space is a demonstration of that, how to be a reconciliation voice."

Gallery programming emphasizes group showings, guest curators and emerging artists, as well as social justice and liturgical themes. Open Walls Two, showcasing local art and artists, runs through to the end of November. In December, Carly Greene, an Edmonton sculptor, will be exploring the idea of shelter. Summer projects are also in the works to include the healing power of stories and a retreat for faith-based artists.

Bleeding Heart's funding has been largely through private donations, and Von Bieker is exploring government grants.

Rent and artist fees are their biggest expense, and hours are limited by volunteer availability.

"We're always looking for volunteers to host shows or help with special events," said Von Bieker.

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 Alberta Avenue with her daughter.

BLEEDING HEART ART SPACE

Open Saturdays
11 am-3 pm
9132 118 Avenue

bleedingheartart.space



Dave Von Bieker, left, and Rev. Travis Enright stand with artwork from a recent installation at Bleeding Heart Art Space on 118 Avenue. The art is the work of Brandon Atkinson, a Cree artist living in Alberta Avenue. | Kate Wilson

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Finances a matter of family and community

Money Mentors helps people get a handle on debt

KATE WILSON

People are often put off by the topic of money management. The Norwood Wesleyan Church helped parishioners get past their reluctance with a workshop.

Sound finances empowers people and communities, explained Phillip Telfer, Wesleyan pastor.

“Realizing money is a tool and using it well to help you and those around you. It means using your money to love people,” Telfer said.

Telfer presents a series of sermons on finances once a year, and this fall he added guest speaker Linda Mak. She introduced workshop attendees to Money Mentors, a service that educates Albertans in money management.

The oil industry is down and wages are down, said Mak, coordinator with Money Mentors Stakeholder Relations Team.

“People are not getting a call back to work. But the debts remain the same.”

Fortunately, the Alberta government has set up a resource providing free money coaching, financial literacy courses for adults, and a debt repayment program.

“We’re lucky to be in

Alberta,” said Mak. “Our services can save a couple from splitting up because they cannot make it [financially].”

Money Mentors is the sole provider in Alberta of a five per cent interest debt repayment

help set up a new repayment, coach you along the way,” said Mak.

The afternoon’s theme was making financial literacy your mindset.

“We have developed the

to set a role model for young ones.”

She doesn’t use the word budgeting because it hinders wise spending.

“I use the word plan. It is a spending plan, like planning a

“Be in the driver’s seat to stop impulse buying,” said Mak.

Christmas spending is another pitfall. Last December, per capita spending in Canada was \$1,500 per person.

“What about give a gift of giving? For example, I’ll do the dishes or do the shovelling for a month,” said Mak, noting that children often fall into the same patterns as parents.

“Why is this so?” she asked.

An audience member astutely answered. “Because whatever you’re fighting against is exactly the road you’re taking.”

Despite a small attendance, her final message was that participants have a role in financial literacy.

“Your partnership in all this is to spread the word. Those who attend will tell others,” she said.

An audience member followed through.

“My daughter is going to get this information,” she said.

Visit moneymentors.ca for more information.



Money Mentors helps Albertans with money management. | Pixabay

program for people in financial crisis.

“For high-risk debt, there are options and alternatives. We

tools for you, that’s not difficult. What about your mindset? Tune into a good mindset,” said Mak. “It’s the only way

party or planning a shower.”

Participants got an impulse buying ‘emergency card’ for their wallet.

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 Alberta Avenue with her daughter.

Finding the way out of the debt cycle

New payday loan regulations aim to protect customers

AMANDA SOKAL

You can’t watch television anymore without seeing multiple commercials for payday loan companies. They are as bright and jingly as fast food commercials. To hear the commercial personality speak, a payday loan is just another tool in your financial toolkit.

Here on Alberta Avenue alone, there are more than a dozen of these companies, some strictly dealing with short-term credit, while others have a pawn shop as an added service. If coming into a store is not appealing or easy, a loan can be as far away as the click of a mouse.

The industry has been the subject of much legal scrutiny and debate, and just this past August Bill 15, the Act to End Predatory Lending, passed. This bill would reduce the amount of fees for a payday loan from \$23 per \$100 borrowed to \$15, the lowest in Canada. As well, under this legislation, customers would have 42 days to pay off their loan before interest starts compounding rather than 30 days, and customers can pay in installments instead of paying in full. Customers would also no longer be allowed to take out a loan if there is an outstanding loan already on the books. All of this was designed to help consumers get out of the debt cycle.

According to Equifax, the

average Edmontonian has a little over \$26,000 in debt. Then take into account those who get short-term loans often don’t have the option of traditional banking due to poor credit or usually struggle with low-income.

I worked in the industry, and many times when dealing with customers who were going to default on their loans because of other expenses, we were told to advise them to pay their loan first and then borrow more for the other expenses. You want to keep your customers coming back again and again. Every business does, that’s the nature of commercial enterprise. No business can survive without repeat patronage.

One customer would tell me she had loans out at two different companies. She would pay the first company, then borrow her maximum to come to us to pay her loan and re-borrow to have money for the next two weeks. She did this for years.

The average customer will borrow between \$300-\$500 per payday, with the maximum loan allowed being \$1,500. Even with the new lower fee rates, that still comes out to \$90-\$150 every month, just in loan fees.

To be fair, if used correctly, payday loans can serve a purpose. If an unexpected expense comes up and credit cards or borrowing from friends and family is not an option, then a

payday loan might be the only solution available.

But in order to keep yourself out of the debt cycle, the vitally important thing to remember is to not re-borrow. To understand that the next two weeks or so until payday will be financially tight, but that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. In this way you can access the needed funds and still remain financially independent.

Amanda is a budding entrepreneur, a practicing Wiccan, a burgeoning gardener and an herbalist who is working to obtain a degree as a naturopathic practitioner.



The average Edmontonian has approximately \$26,000 in debt. | Karen Mykietka



Legislation concerning short-term credit companies came into effect this August. | Karen Mykietka



House Sharing...

Finding shelter: one house, many possibilities

Sharing a home has both financial and social advantages

KAREN MYKIETKA

Everyone needs a home. Affordable homes are hard to come by for many, regardless of the economy. In boom times, both the rental market and buying market are hot and prices are out of reach for many. In economic downturns, a person's income may be down or less secure which also limits housing choices.

In decades past, home sharing was fairly commonplace. Extended family often lived together or families took in boarders. Likely half the urban population in the nineteenth century spent some time in boarding houses during their life. Boarding houses were safe, affordable places to stay either short-term or long-term.

The growing middle class with higher incomes moved away from shared living arrangements. Higher incomes meant people could buy more space and privacy, creating the single family suburban home.

Rooming houses became the place for people with no other options.

Over the last half century, many variations on low-cost, shared housing existed: boarding houses, rooming houses, lodging houses, residential hotels. Unfortunately, this type of housing went from respectable in the 1940s to neglected in the 1960s to unsafe in the 1970-80s.

The proliferation of federal, provincial and municipal laws and regulations made operating existing rooming houses difficult and building new ones unaffordable. Regulations also added barriers to providing in-home boarding. This form of housing slowly disappeared from the urban landscape.

Shared living in boarding or rooming houses provided more than just low-cost housing. They were temporary accommodation for people when away from home; a place for immigrants to transition into a new community; a transitory step between living in a home

with family and living independently; and a place for those who didn't want to live alone.

The benefits of house sharing have led to a resurgence, with arrangements unique as the people who create them. This special feature shares the stories of people in our north central neighbourhoods who are sharing homes or living spaces in some form.

Home ownership means a significant down payment, qualifying for a mortgage, and having enough income to cover utilities, insurance and maintenance or renovations. Many people cannot afford that on their own so they are getting creative. Becky McClelland and four friends decided to pool their resources, co-purchasing a house together and renovating it into suites. The Ritz/Milne family decided to co-purchase a property and build a custom-designed home to accommodate their needs.

Some homeowners are supplementing their income by hosting people in their home.

Constance Brissenden has opened her home to an international student from Rwanda. Having someone new in your space is an adjustment; someone from a totally different culture has added challenges. An increasingly popular trend is short-term hosting via sites like Airbnb. Writer Talea Medynski spoke to local hosts who found hosting guests less risky than taking on a roommate, with the bonus of fostering long-term friendships with some guests.

Others take home sharing even farther by co-living—living together intentionally in a shared space—be it a house they rent or a house one of them owns. Writer Aydan Dunnigan-Vickruck visited three houses where the housemates are doing more than just sharing a home. They are being intentional about developing friendships and supporting one another along with living together as a family would, sharing household chores and cooking or eating together when they can.

On the other side of the equation is Ken Mcleod, a local resident and landlord who renovates houses and provides social housing to needy individuals. He rents different types of housing, including room and board in a men's lodge and a number of small affordable suites in large houses. He is very hands-on and involved with all his properties and tenants, doing his best to be a good neighbour in the community.

Many people struggle with unmanageable debt. Rusti Leahy shares her story of how she took charge of her life, made hard choices and ultimately created a life that gave her the freedom to travel. Now she's looking at unique ways to meet her housing needs without getting back into debt.

Everyone requires housing solutions that work for their life circumstances in an increasingly unaffordable society. A house presents many possibilities to those who are willing to be creative.





Randy & Dorothy Ritz and Debra Milne, Randy's sister, pooled their money to design and build an infill home in Alberta Avenue. | Rebecca Lippiatt

Co-built home is founded on family ties

Alberta Avenue brings three art enthusiasts together

KATE WILSON

The clapping of horse hooves down a snowy Edmonton street. Is this the sound of yesterday? Not for residents of Alberta Avenue. At their home three years ago, the Ritz family was delighted to see this winter pageant go past their front door.

"It was during the Deep Freeze Festival, we were at home. All of a sudden a horse and wagon was coming right down the street," said Randy Ritz, who co-owns his infill home with his wife Dorothy and his Debra Milne.

The festive display validated their reason for building there. Seven years ago, the couple wanted to move closer to the Alberta Avenue arts scene. At the time, Milne, who owned a house in the neighbourhood, was poised to buy a condo. He suggested they collaborate.

"Living in the house was too much work. I was going to move to a condo," recalled Milne. "But Randy said, let's build something together."

The siblings were born and

raised in Edmonton. Milne lived in Calgary for about 20 years when she decided to move back to be closer to family. Their mother lives in Edmonton, as does one of the Ritz's sons.

"We've been a close family," said Milne. "We're the only two siblings. The support is always there from Randy."

So the agreement to build a house together, with the concession that Milne wouldn't have to do chores like shoveling sidewalks, was an easy thumbs up. Two conditions prompted her to sign on: relieving the workload required to own a home and family connections.

"Debra could move in downstairs and I could support her with shoveling the walk, ensure she'd have a garage, things like that," explained Randy.

All three lived in a rented duplex while their new home took shape, based on Randy's idea for a chalet style design. An immediate impression as you walk in the front entry is the pair of two storey windows, opening the entire living space and allowing light to reach the kitchen.

"I wanted to include a high front window, get the loft feel," recalled Randy. "It was reminiscent of a summer cottage."

Milne drew up the plans, getting architect and city approvals.

"I drew it up, designed the entire layout. Every nook and cranny is being used," she explained.

Collaboration among the three co-owners made financial sense.

"We couldn't build a house on our own. With Debra's financial input, we could go ahead and build a house that fits our needs," said Randy.

They economized on construction, using the same materials for the entire house and buying appliances and lighting en masse. The basement suite replicates the upstairs, and they agreed on the same cupboards and blinds. They also pool resources on things such as window cleaning, and have hired a cleaning person for the entire home.

"Financially—absolutely, it makes a difference," Randy said.

Other benefits include secu-

rity and vehicle access. There's someone to watch the house and collect mail while others are away, and if someone's car won't start, there's another one to borrow.

As for location, that was a given.

"We were captured by the idea of being with the arts, being involved with Arts on the Ave," said Randy.

Dorothy agreed.

"We said, if we're going to be part of the arts community, let's move there. The festivals were going. We were involved with Kaleido. It had the potential to be life giving."

All three are involved with the arts. Milne, an artist, has volunteered with Kaleido and at The Carrot Coffeehouse. Randy, theatre instructor at Concordia University of Edmonton and a musician, is past president of the Arts on the Ave board.

Dorothy, who has also volunteered with Kaleido, recalled its early years.

"I remember setting out pumpkins. It was really cold," she grinned. "We were sitting on bales of hay around the fire."

But all agree that an eye-opener with their living arrangement has been the enduring family connections.

"It was two years of working together," recalled Randy. "Deciding, where do we want to live? Finding the lot, finding the right builder. The finances were a bonus," he said. "But it's the joy of doing it collectively."

The three homeowners share meals every so often, making it an occasion. The basement suite, with nine foot ceilings to allow for high windows and ample natural light, also means lots of stairs, which makes it hard for Randy and Debra's elderly mother. So the big gatherings, such as Christmas, are on the main floor.

"We all get along so well," said Milne. "Myself, I dread the day when we're going to downsize, to be apart."

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 Alberta Avenue with her daughter.





A leap of faith pays off for five friends

Co-purchasing a home was a shrewd financial decision

SIERRA BILTON

A five-way, co-purchased home in Spruce Avenue marks a rare and potentially profitable venture for a group of women.

In 2008, Becky McClelland and her four friends decided to buy a house together because they didn't want to waste money on rent. The house was \$562,000 when the five of them signed the deed, along with the 20-year mortgage.

"The conversation started in 2005," McClelland said. "We were all getting into our late 20s and thinking we should probably be investing in property as many people our age do. None of us was married and so we didn't have two sources of income. We decided to try to pool our incomes as single women that way."

One of the original five had sold her condominium, which is what contributed largely to the down payment for the house, and almost everyone borrowed money from family. Beyond signing the mortgage, finding a house able to accommodate five separate people and

respective partners was another challenge in itself, even with a realtor.

"We were quite specific in the format of the house; we wanted separate suites for each of the groupings of different people," McClelland said. "We were originally looking for a house that had four suites because there were four groups of us wanting a place to live. We found one house that had like seven or eight or nine rooms, but they weren't separated into suites so it wasn't really what we wanted."

Finally, with luck, they found a 4,000-square-foot house in the Spruce Avenue area. Some tweaks were needed to create four separate suites, but that wasn't all. Like many old homes, the co-purchase, built in 1955, required hefty updates on top of renovations. Some of the repairs McClelland and her friends ran into along the way included a new roof and weeping tile.

The house now has one suite on the top floor, one on the main floor and two in the basement. Two of the original

buyers still live there and three suites have renters. McClelland and her roommates agreed that any rent charged would go towards paying down the mortgage.

As time went on, McClelland and her friends discovered more benefits to the arrangement than simply financial.

For McClelland, one of the benefits was sharing resources like vehicles. "Sarah, my direct roommate, mostly furnished the house and owns a car—and I drive it more than she does!" She added, "We actually just celebrated our 10 years as roommates."

McClelland said her favourite part of living in a co-purchased home is the sense of community she finds there. "We still have weekly meals together, even with people that have come and gone." McClelland was surprised to find they often maintained relationships with past renters. "Now our Sunday dinners are only at the house once a month. We go to past renters' places for dinner a lot now, too."

McClelland emphasized the

arrangement is only for those "in it for the long-haul." She and her roommates ended up buying out one of the original five purchasers after she got married and moved out. "She hadn't put much money into the house in terms of repairs and maintenance after the original purchase, so we were lucky and only ended up buying her out about \$5,000 worth."

One of the aspects McClelland attributes to her successful situation is a legal document one of her roommates drew up at the beginning. "Originally, Sarah [an original buyer] was in law school doing an articling with a real estate lawyer, so that person was willing to help her make a united shareholders agreement. So we have a legal document outlining how we make decisions, how we pay bills."

McClelland said honest communication helps keep the intimate living situation healthy. "We look out for each other and note who has the time and space in their lives to do certain tasks."

Since selling their condo one

and a half years ago, Heather Ritz and her husband have rented one of the two basement suites because they "wanted to do housing differently." Ritz said that after living in the co-purchased home, the financial and social benefits inspired her.

"Personally, I would love to do a house share model, it makes a lot of sense. If we were to buy a house, we would only buy a house in co-ownership," she said. "It's good to see a working model, to see people that are doing it well."

Both McClelland and Ritz have found a solution to the typical burdens of owning a house and both agree there are many benefits to co-owning, but only if communication and details are worked out in advance.

Sierra is a communications student specializing in journalism at MacEwan University. She has a particular love of the art and culture found nestled in Edmonton's Alberta Avenue communities and beyond.



Becky McClelland co-purchased a home with friends; now, three of the four suites are rented. | Rebecca Lippiatt





Writer Constance Brissenden is renting a room to student Nadine Uwimana. | Rebecca Lippiatt

The ins and outs of renting to a student

Renting a spare room to a student can pay off

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

The buzzer to my condo rang. I opened the door to Concordia student Nadine Uwimana, who was looking for a place to live. A new stage of my life had begun.

In early August, I had a spare bedroom and I knew it was time to find a student roommate. I'd done this for 15 years when I lived in Vancouver. This would be my first attempt here in Edmonton.

Having a roommate, preferably a student, has many advantages. The rental income is a plus. If I'm out of town, there's someone to pick up my mail. Then there is the intangible advantage of having another person to share an occasional meal, or like last night, a cup of hot chocolate.

I live a 25-minute walk to Concordia University of Edmonton, so the institution was the obvious place to start searching. The "how to" was surprisingly easy. Gone are the days when a hand-printed note on a bulletin board was the way to go. When I called Concordia's student services, I

was told I could list my room on their website. I read other postings, and created mine accordingly. A few clicks on the keyboard, and I was ready to go.

A few days after posting my ad, the phone rang. "My name is Nadine," she said. "Are you still looking for someone to rent a room at your place?"

Uwimana dropped by a few days later. A human resources student, she wanted a place that was safe and secure.

As a recently-arrived Rwandan immigrant, finding a place to live in Edmonton was challenging. Uwimana recalls, "I don't know Canada that well. In Rwanda, you don't rent a room but a whole house. It was a strange feeling."

Uwimana thought she would live in residence, but rent was high. A student advisor at Concordia helped her to access the university's housing website. I was the first person she contacted.

After a short visit, Uwimana said she would like to move in. I showed her around, plus wrote three pages of do's and don'ts about my place, such as how to run the washer and

dryer, the heating system, garbage bins, and guidelines for bathroom use. A few weeks later, she was settled in and started school.

If you want to find a student renter, be prepared to allow some adjustment time. As a first-time renter, Uwimana was frightened one evening when I didn't come home until after midnight. She thought I had been kidnapped. I learned later that this reflected her troubled past in Rwanda. Now I leave a note to say when I'll be back. It's a small action that I'm willing to make.

If you're considering renting to a student, Concordia University of Edmonton is an obvious choice in the Rat Creek Press area. NAIT and MacEwan University are also relatively close. The University of Alberta is on the LRT line, easily accessible by way of Coliseum and Stadium LRT stations.

Unlike Concordia, many schools don't offer a direct way to search for a student with online listings.

MacEwan University, for example, focuses on its campus housing. Students who don't

live on campus find another place to live.

Neither NAIT nor the University of Alberta offer a housing registry. Instead, they direct students to www.rentingspaces.ca, an online rental listing service. Students can post a free listing if they are looking for a roommate. If you are an owner or a renter looking for a roommate, the fee is \$25 plus GST per month. Once your month is up, an email from www.rentingspaces.ca will arrive, asking if you want to continue.

How easy is it to find a roommate? And what are the best times of the year to look for one?

Juliana du Pree, president and owner of Whitematter Developments, which coordinates www.rentingspaces.ca, said the faltering economy is having an effect. "The rental market is soft; we see a lot of students staying at home. The market is taking a hit right now. Some institutions of higher learning are down in admissions." Lister Hall at the University of Alberta still had rooms available in October, she added, which is unusual.

If you want to find a renter, the peak months are July and August. "It peters off fast after that. Get your listings in early in the summer before the big drop by mid-September," du Pree said. A little pickup for the January semester might happen, but Christmas and exams get in the way.

Another possibility are short-term NAIT students taking apprentice and trades programs for six- to eight-week cycles and training and upgrading for professionals for short-time periods. These more mature students want a furnished place to sleep. "Turnover is frequent but they can be really good roommate fillers," said du Pree.

Once you place your ad with www.rentingspaces.ca, students will contact you directly. If computers make you uncomfortable, call the service at 780.432.6610.

Check the online version of this article at ratcreek.org for a list of rental resources.

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





Opening your home to travellers

That spare bed in your house can bring in extra revenue

TALEA MEDYNSKI

This July, my best friend and I went to Vancouver for a few days to celebrate her birthday. Instead of staying in a hotel, we decided to try Airbnb, the “online marketplace” where people can list and book accommodations.

The price of our accommodations was less than that of a hotel and centrally located. The basement suite was immaculate and our hosts were wonderful. All in all? An experience I’d definitely repeat.

Airbnb is worldwide, with 300 accommodations in Edmonton alone. More than ever, travellers have choices; they can rent a whole house or a bedroom, and search for places that fit their budget. But Airbnb isn’t only a good choice for travellers; it’s also a popular option for people who want to rent out a room or a house.

Local residents, who preferred to remain anonymous, said they love being hosts. It didn’t hurt that they had a great experience with their first guest, a writer who brought his “traipsemobile” (RV) to sleep in but used the home’s bath-

room and office.

“We thought we could make a few extra dollars,” she said, explaining roommates sometimes end up being a nightmare. There’s also the appeal of meeting new people and providing affordable housing. Of course some travellers check in and out without much interaction, but there are travellers with whom they form a strong bond and remain friends afterwards.

Airbnb is a fairly simple online system to use. After registering, travellers can search by arrival and departure dates, accommodation type (room, house, etc), and price range. After that, choose possible locations and contact the host for details and booking.

Hosts can list and manage their accommodation quite easily. The website takes hosts through a step-by-step process of listing a space. Although listing a place is free, Airbnb charges hosts 3 per cent for every reservation. Guests pay before they arrive, and Airbnb handles the transactions, transferring money to the host 24 hours after check-in. There are also perks, such as liability

insurance for third-party claims and coverage from accidental damage. The website also advertises the listing, with an option called Smart Pricing adjusting prices depending on supply and demand.

“Posted prices aren’t always set in stone,” she said and explained interested guests can contact her for minor price adjustments. Another bonus for the host is the ability to block off days if he or she doesn’t want people at the property.

Hosts can set up the listing to include a damage deposit in case anything is damaged during a guest’s stay. It’s also easy to track income and past reservations.

Airbnb has some security as well. When I was creating my profile so I could search for places in Vancouver, I had to provide a picture of myself, a video introducing myself, and a picture of my drivers license for identification. While this information seemed excessive at the time, I discovered it was to provide hosts with an extra layer of security.

The hosts have had good experiences with a few exceptions. One woman in her 20s

or early 30s showed up with a “sketchy” man in his 50s. The guest hadn’t informed them she would be bringing another guest. They did ask the woman to leave, but helped her cancel the reservation without being charged. Another couple cancelled their reservation as soon as they arrived—and took the key with them. They returned the next day with the key, and later explained they cancelled because they had mistakenly thought there was a shower.

“We’ve never had any items go missing,” she said, explaining the damage deposit likely makes people think twice before damaging anything. So far, they haven’t had to keep a damage deposit.

Of course, there’s work involved in making sure the room or property is ready for new guests.

“The hardest part is getting a room ready when someone is checking out and someone else is checking in,” she said. Part of preparing for new guests is providing clean sheets and ensuring the room or house is clean.

What is provided to guests depends on the host. Some hosts may provide a kitchen

and laundry room, and guests can negotiate with hosts for pick up at the airport and act as a guide to providing information about the neighbourhood, nearest grocery stores, or other amenities.

They have also been guests, once staying in a 300 year-old building.

“We’ve had mostly good experiences.” They did once sleep in a bed with dirty sheets. However, after going through dispute resolution and giving feedback, the host refunded them some money.

They have also used Airbnb’s referral system to book accommodations. Just recently, they booked a place in Jasper for free using credit which people earn by referring friends to use Airbnb for travel or when a friend lists accommodations.

For these hosts, Airbnb works.

“We’ve made some lifelong friends through Airbnb,” she said.

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



Our north central neighbourhoods have many Airbnb listings—average cost for a private room around \$42-45/night or a whole house from \$77 -179/night | Valeriosophie (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons



All you need is a comfortable, clean bedroom to start hosting guests and earning extra income. | Brian Johnson & Dane Kantner [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)], via Flickr





In the second home, Eric lives in a household where everyone works on spending time together. | Aydan Dunnigan-Vickruck

Sharing homes and developing community

Communal living can turn strangers into friends

AYDAN DUNNIGAN-VICKRUCK

Living is an expensive endeavour, with rent or a mortgage eating up far more than the 30 per cent of our income we were always told to budget.

So what better way to save money than by sharing rent? Group living was always a dream of mine growing up. That was back in the day of free-love and hippiedom. We were exuding idealism and enthusiasm, but had very little insight into how to make the concept work.

I was thrilled to hear communal living or co-living seems to be alive and well in the three homes I visited.

House #1

My first interview began with a rather awkward introduction at the front step of a home in Parkdale. I explained I was there in response to an ad they posted for a roommate.

A confused pause.

“Oh, that. I should have taken that down before now. We are actually full at the moment.”

I explained I was there to interview them, and Courtney and Daniel promptly invited me to dinner. Now that’s the kind of welcome I can warm up to.

I joined them in the cozy living room. Daniel apologized for the hammer, assorted tools, and computer on the coffee table. “Heh, this is what communal living looks like.

Everyone has their own idea of neat.”

The roommates are all under 30 years old, but have varied backgrounds and come from different provinces. If there’s a common denominator amongst them, it’s “to be open minded and enjoy being with others. It’s not just about renting a room,” said Daniel.

Courtney moved to Edmonton from Halifax, and she explained co-living was a good way to share expenses and “have a ready-made extension of family. I love the close interaction, sharing, warmth. It sure beats coming home to an empty space,” she said. “It always take some adjusting to new residents, getting to know people and establish relationships. The less turnover the better.”

The house is home to six people at the moment. With the \$1,850 rent divided and the grocery bill shared, it’s definitely affordable. But many other factors must be taken into account, such as cleaning, cooking, and outdoor maintenance.

“We didn’t want a chore chart. We try to create a system that isn’t a system. We are not fans of rigidity, more about figuring things out as we go along, keeping it organic,” said Daniel.

Although they don’t have a formal system, they discuss concerns when necessary.

Upcoming household projects include developing an aquaponics growing system, a

cricket farm for the fish, and perhaps chickens and bees.

“It may end up more a communal farm than a communal house,” said Daniel.

I reluctantly turn my back on the invitation to dinner as I pack up to leave for dinner at home. This was always my idea of group living: an open door policy, a warm meal, and a soft couch.

House #2

Eric meets me at the door of a home in Parkdale. He proudly tours me through the finished basement, which initially was just a mud hole. The house was purchased by Eric’s father at his and his brother’s request, gutted and then refitted for group living. Now there are six residents with two-and-a-half bathrooms and lots of space.

He explained there isn’t one common thread that drew the roommates together.

“Maybe just students just out of school wanting cheap rent. Most of us have an arts background, several are musicians. Otherwise, you just need to enjoy others’ company,” Eric said.

But the roommates don’t simply share the house; they work on developing friendships.

“We try to be intentional about spending time together,” Eric said.

That time might include simply visiting, engaging in intense discussions or playing board games.

“We have learned to be com-

fortable with each other and don’t tiptoe around each other. But if someone feels stepped on, they say so. This intimacy is really the rich part of this experience. Sometimes all six of us are in the living room doing completely different things but comfortable with the quiet. That is absolutely my favourite thing,” Eric explained.

While everyone makes an effort to interact with one another, there are different personalities, work schedules, and so on. But they’re an affectionate and respectful bunch.

“We value mental health and take care to be very affirming. This house is a safe zone. We allow expressing emotions. It is safe to cry and be vulnerable,” explained Eric.

I am impressed with the warmth and emotional depth Eric is describing. This house is breaking new ground.

House #3

Lenn, Hussein, and Tao joined me around the table for tea. Four of them rent and share two units in a fourplex in Eastwood.

All four of them settled into the community recently.

Explained Lenn: “We wanted to live in a way that was beneficial to the community as well as be supportive to each other.”

“We want there to be a difference between just renting and sharing lives. It is important to have a connection with roommates, to share common interests,” added Hussein.

The importance of being

a boon to the community is reflected in their professional lives. Lenn connects neighbourhoods, while Hussein works with at-risk youth, and both are involved in community work for their church.

But Lenn emphasized there isn’t “a specific mandate with identified values. We want this to be more organic, to let it be known that our doors are open and welcoming. Have a house warming, invite the neighbours. Boardgame night. Friends over for tea.”

Like any household, everyone has a job.

“We have a chore list and a shopping list for groceries and we make an effort to eat together, but there is a lot of flexibility and fluidity,” said Lenn.

This house is newly formed and they all acknowledge that the community life is still mostly in the vision stage. I recognize threads of faith tradition pulling this together, although it is not expressed overtly.

There you have it. These three homes embrace communal living in three very different but equally positive ways. While co-living is not for everyone, these close-knit households have found ways to brighten one another’s lives beyond saving money on rent.

Aydan is a social worker, blogger, tango dancer, outdoor enthusiast and co-parent with Patricia to 8 children and 16 grandchildren. He’s also a resident of the ‘hood and loving it.





Quality housing for tenants with few choices

Property developer offers affordable alternatives

KATE WILSON

At a recent forum on problem housing, a McCauley resident recalled how she'd come home to her rental unit to find a notice that it was being closed. She was being evicted, through no fault of her own.

It's a familiar story for Ken Mcleod, a local housing developer. He's converted several large houses into suites to fill a need for those with little choice.

"That's the premise," explained Mcleod. "People on fixed or supportive income only have so much to work with. I provide housing alternatives so we can make it a little more affordable for people."

The suites, most within walking distance to shops and LRT stations, are located between Chinatown and 118 Avenue. Because they're built inside houses, they appeal to his clients' leanings.

"People want that—a homey feel with a yard, an exterior entrance," said Mcleod.

His most recent project is a three-storey house on 115 Avenue with four suites and a finished front yard. Work is being completed in the backyard. Another renovation involved an engineer to add

head height for a basement suite, and another house has a new boiler system.

"It has new electrical, plumbing and heating, windows, insulation, and drywall. The newer boiler system, which has heat lines running under the floors, gives every suite complete control over their own heat, compared to the original furnace that was controlled by one person for the whole house," said Mcleod.

He's had to gut many houses completely to get the quality he wants—self-contained units with a bathroom and kitchen.

What gives his company, Mcleod Properties, an edge is not only the quality but a solution-based alternative, mostly to men either in transition or on assistance. A common example is a single working male who is either looking for work or between jobs. While his background is architectural technician, he said he sees his work as a form of ministry.

"I'm sitting on the edge of the desert and I provide a house for people coming out of the desert," he said. "We're trying to provide an environment that is safe and secure and quiet and feels like a home for people."

Mcleod started by buying rental houses. Then 15 years

ago, he began a men's home to help them transition into a private space. It started as a kind of recovery house, offering men with addiction problems a place to stay.

"I was the guy who could help them out because I was in the rental business anyway," he recalled.

It has since become lodging for men who can't work for medical reasons. They get a room and meals, but also rules—men only and there's no smoking, drugs or alcohol.

It fills a need, said Mcleod.

"I have people come to me who are on assistance, saying they're being turned down for accommodation."

His company's clients are not exclusively male or single, and he gets calls from agencies who need reliable, affordable housing. In co-operation with one agency, he's provided accommodation for two single mothers.

Another organization, Homeward Trust, works with housing agencies, property managers and landlords under their Housing First program toward the goal of eliminating homelessness in Edmonton. They work with self-contained units only, so reliable landlords are essential.

"Landlords who are developing relationships with us and being part of the team have been critical to the success of Housing First program," said Susan McGee, Homeward Trust CEO. "If they're not committed to reaching out to the agency and working with them, we can't work with them."

When it comes to city-wide neighbourhood development, it's important to have a planned approach. And with affordable housing, the aim is inclusion.

"It's important to have a variety of residents—students, young families, single people," explained McGee. "It's great to hear when a landlord is able to create affordable housing. It creates diversity."

She's aware there are some concerns with low income housing and said there's an increasing demand for secondary suites to add to Edmonton's housing stock. But it needs to be done with health and safety in mind.

"If housing isn't well managed and healthy, it doesn't contribute to somebody's stability," she said.

Mcleod Properties helps tenants with things like furniture or pointing them toward social agencies. At times, support is in

the form of work.

"As much as possible I'll try to provide a little work for some individuals, whether it's cutting lawns, painting fences, or shoveling snow," said Mcleod.

Operating rental properties means adhering to regulations and being hands-on helps.

"No community wants poorly-run rental units ... as a landlord I realize that and try to be on good terms with folks in the neighbourhood, and try to keep the properties looking presentable."

Two years ago, he bought and renovated an apartment building near Chinatown because there was a need in that area.

"It's what I like doing. It gives you a chance not only to have a job, but you're actually helping people."

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 Alberta Avenue with her daughter.



Ken Mcleod is a local housing developer who provides affordable housing options. | Rebecca Lippiatt





Rusti Leahy in her 300-square-foot Park Model trailer she bought for a dollar. | Supplied

Changing what you choose to call home

Out-of-the-box thinking can help you tackle debt

RUSTI LEHAY

My life choices have affected my housing situation, just as my housing situation has affected my life choices.

In 2009, I was using credit cards and balance transfers to make house payments. This situation was not manageable, and I was forced to consider other living arrangements. So I rented out my 1,350-square-foot home in Stony Plain, and bought a 300-square-foot, 1969 Park Model trailer with single-pane glass windows for one dollar.

After creating a trailer pad, running a power line, and moving a storage shed, the site for my new home on my sister's acreage was ready. I got one 500-gallon propane tank, four new trailer tires, a small propane furnace, and a trailer mover—all for \$2,200. The move cut my monthly expenses from \$3,400 to \$575. Anything I earned over that went straight to the \$47,000 in credit card payments. This debt was accumulated from trying to hang onto a house too big for me after making the foolish decision to buy it based on what I thought was eternal love.

I later discovered the guy who sold me my furnace must have

thought my 300-square-foot was a dwelling with modern insulation, argon windows and protection from the elements. He swore 700 BTU was powerful enough to keep me warm. I lived there for two and half years, often waking up to minus five degree winter mornings in my bedroom. Snow blew in the cracks of my front door by the furnace and did not melt.

I just considered it long-term winter camping. I grew adept at typing with gloves on. I baked goodies in my propane oven to heat up my living room/office space. I traipsed across the acreage to my sister's cabin for bathroom amenities, if an outhouse composting toilet qualifies as a bathroom. Desperate times call for desperate measures, right?

A Kijiji ad presented my next living opportunity. I became a resident manager of a 18 suite walk-up apartment just off 118 Avenue which quickly became my "hood". The rent was "free" in exchange for shoveling walks, mowing grass, renting suites, dealing with service people, and other managerial duties. This stint also lasted two and a half years and was the best home I had found in my almost 40 years in Edmonton.

In a little less than five years, I was out of debt. This afforded me the opportunity to travel. I

knew if I bought or planned my home right away, the adventurer in me would just settle down and dream of travel and blame my sedentary life on the circumstances and commitments I would continue to create. At 55, how much longer would I want to carry a backpack and bounce about? It was really about forcing myself to avoid later regrets.

Last spring, I packed up my precious books and kitchen toys, creating a "blankie" box for each room, offloading extraneous possessions. Blankie boxes contained the items I wanted first for each room of my future home. Then everything went into storage as I began my "homeless" period of travelling to London and staying with my niece and her family as a home base.

During my time overseas, I took unknown airlines at odd times from out-of-the-way airports to visit Weeze, Germany and Rome, Italy; an all-night bus to Edinburgh, Scotland; a family car trip to Lille, France and Bruges, Belgium; a high-speed train to Paris; and numerous walking explorations of London. I also did a couchsurfing group trip to Stonehenge for solstice.

When I returned to Canada, my niece living north of Stony

Plain offered me a space in her house. Dreams of bike riding across Ireland still pull at me. I fear if I create my home, my own reclusive aspects will pin me down. Time enough for sitting still with books and writing in my later decades.

The end of November marks 18 months of hanging my hat in a variety of ways: couch surfing, staying with a niece and helping out with her kids, bunking in with my sister, house sitting for family and friends, with some traveling mixed in between. For a reclusive homebody with a few sprinkles of adventurous spirit dust left, I am nearing my limit of living out of borrowed closets with just a few opened blankie boxes. I have only managed this long due to my sister's unconditional love. I know I am the difficult "roomie." Thankfully she also disappears in her own energy bubble, leaving me feel like I am alone despite the fact we are sharing her mere 300-square-foot renovated ATCO cabin.

I will likely be without my own home for close to another year. I have two more trips planned. In the wee hours of Halloween morning, I am off to work on an organic farm near Bogotá, Colombia for a month. After a couple months back with family over the holi-

days, I will be off to Florida for part of February and March.

My spring and summer plan is to make a home for myself. A home without a mortgage. A home that will be all mine. I plan to build a tiny home. Really tiny. I mean teensy. Two of them, though. I envision two side-by-side 108-square-foot cabins with lofts sharing a deck and an awning. One with a kitchen, sitting area, and an office loft. The other my work-out area with a sleeping loft. My goal is to eventually have a 320-square-foot tiny home on wheels with two lofts. The small ones will become guest/artist retreat cabins.

Country and family hold my heart now. But I am part city and part country. I would like to supplement my country tiny home with a place in my old hood. I am looking to joint-venture on a home with Airbnb potential near the Avenue in the future. Anyone want to join me in my adventures?

A member of the Professional Writers Association of Canada since 2003, Rusti has been writing professionally since 1999. Her favourite word activity is immersion editing with memoir writers.



Helping pregnant women tackle addictions

Study participants use breathalyzers to track sobriety

SIERRA BILTON

The Institute of Health Economics and the University of Alberta are running a study from the summer of 2016 to 2018 that aims to find new ways of preventing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

In Alberta, 46,000 people currently live with FASD and approximately 700 to 1,900 babies are born with the disorder each year.

Jasmine Brown, a research coordinator with the study, said it is likely these numbers are even higher because FASD is difficult to diagnose early. "FASD is a spectrum disorder, so there are many alcohol disorders that fall within the spectrum. A lot of diagnoses can't happen until the child is school age."

Brown said the goal of the study is to see how a breathalyzer can help women with alcohol dependency stay sober during pregnancy. The hope is by self-monitoring blood alcohol concentration, pregnant women will be motivated to reduce drinking.

Study participants use the device three times a day: in the morning, before bed, and a trigger time chosen by each woman.

Drinking alcohol affects a developing fetus from day one. Unfortunately, women may not know they are pregnant for a number of weeks.

"Statistically, it's about 50 per cent of women that don't know they're pregnant until about four to six weeks in," Brown explained. "The first weeks are pivotal because the neural tube [precursor to nervous system] is developing."

Brown said the "culture of drinking is popular in Canada", compounding the problem.

Women with addiction issues often need help and support to stay sober during pregnancy. "Often these addictions stem from their environments," Brown added, and explained the women may have little control over these violent or high-stress environments.

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) offers Pregnancy Pathways, a program connecting women with dependency issues to services and supportive housing. David Berger, program founder, said he finds a real difference can happen when mother and child stay together, especially in families where sep-



Around 700 to 1,900 babies are born with FASD each year. | Lorraine Shulba

aration is often the case.

"Another reason the breathalyzer technology becomes useful is to document their sobriety to

prove to loved ones that they've changed," Brown said.

Women struggling with addictions can face doubts

about sobriety from loved ones. The researchers hope to address this by documenting the participants' sobriety throughout the study.

"We've heard from some of the women that it gives them a sense of pride," Brown said. "Seeing the zero is like a gold star. The hope is that it will help to create a lifestyle change to keep them from drinking after their pregnancy as well."

The study is Alberta-wide and open to women 18 years and older, up to six months pregnant, and already using Alberta Health addiction support services. Enrolment began this summer.

Sierra is a communications student specializing in journalism at MacEwan University. She has a particular love of the art and culture found nestled in Edmonton's Alberta Avenue communities and beyond.

MORE INFORMATION

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780.288.7682

Jasmine Brown, Institute of Health Economics

jbrown@ihe.ca

Giving your budget some breathing room

Calculating the financial cost of daily addictions

STEPHEN STRAND

The effects of addictions are not isolated. Whether it is an addiction to cigarettes, coffee, or alcohol, the financial impact alone can be detrimental.

According to an MNP Debt survey, "fifty-eight percent of Albertans say they are now living within \$200 a month of being unable to pay their bills and debt payments each month."

So, while many Albertans are struggling financially, cutting extras like alcohol, cigarettes, and store-bought coffee would free up way more cash. Let's take a look at some examples to see exactly how much money.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2015 Alberta's beer sales increased by 4.6 per cent, with the yearly per capita spending on alcohol in Alberta sitting at \$605. Decent tickets to see an Edmonton Oilers game are around \$136 per seat. You can treat four friends to tickets to an Oilers game (and have change left over) with what you would save from giving up drinking for one year.

In Alberta, the cost of a carton

of cigarettes is currently \$98.19, or \$10 per pack. For a pack of 20 cigarettes, that is 50 cents per cigarette. If you are a pack-a-day smoker, that's a total of

If you quit smoking a pack a day for four months, you have saved more than enough to take a date to see the Golden Gate Bridge.

\$1.85 for a tall, brewed coffee to \$4.95 for a venti skinny peppermint mocha, with prices up to \$5.25 for select seasonal drinks like a venti pumpkin

coffee at home for far less, you can still enjoy a coffee in the morning and instead put that saved money towards something else more important, like paying off credit cards or putting money into a savings account. The \$37 coffee habit may not seem like much per month, but it adds up to \$444 in a year. That's \$444 less accumulating interest on a credit card.

The average debt carried by a single person in Edmonton, according to Equifax, is \$26,691. That number doesn't include mortgage debt. If each 50 cent cigarette, \$1.85 coffee, or the \$605 spent yearly on alcohol was instead spent paying down debt, the \$200 buffer that fifty-eight per cent of Albertans have between them and not being able to pay their bills will widen. Your debt will go down, but your health will skyrocket, too.

Stephen works in broadcasting and writes for fun. He can be seen walking with a bag covered in pins and filled with books and notepads.



While over half of Albertans are struggling financially, there are many ways to cut costs. | Pauline Ismael

\$300 per month or \$3,600 per year. Return flights from Edmonton to San Francisco, according to the West Jet website, are \$492.78 per person.

Starbucks has catapulted its way into our lives with its convenient locations, consistent products, recognizable logo, and sugary lattes. Prices range from

spice latte.

Even simply buying only one tall cup of Joe on your way to work would cost you \$37 in a month. By making your own

Helping people navigate the justice system

Organization gives legal advice to those with low-income

TALEA MEDYNSKI

Those living with low-income and in need of legal advice can seek help at Edmonton Community Legal Centre (ECLC).

"There are all kinds of factors that make it difficult to hire a lawyer or navigate the justice system," said Debbie Klein, executive director of ECLC.

The organization doesn't handle criminal law, but addresses all others, especially family law and civil law. Employment and landlord-tenant concerns are fairly prevalent. ECLC has been operating for 15 years and meshes well with similar organizations like Legal Aid and Legal Student Services.

Klein couldn't disclose the income threshold they use to

accept clients, in part because they review those numbers periodically. "We look at markers like minimum wage, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), and Low Income Cut Off (LICO)," she said, but added, "Regardless of your income level, you can call us. We will steer you in the right direction."

Staff members take calls from people who can't afford or aren't eligible to hire a lawyer and either refer the caller to an appropriate resource or schedule an appointment with one of the lawyers who volunteer there, who will then provide free legal advice. In most cases, this advice involves explaining the next step rather than representing an individual.

A non-profit organization,

ECLC depends mostly on volunteers and non-government funding to operate. They have 300 volunteers, some of whom are lawyers and law students, and 17 staff members. Ten of its 17 staff members follow up with clients and four lawyers represent people. They also have an immigration consultant on staff.

While the organization assists people in varying degrees, due to funding they can only represent 10-15 per cent of clients. Even then, ECLC doesn't promise to represent a client until the end. "We open files for cases that have merit and when the client is unlikely to have the capacity to pursue on their own," said Klein. For example, if someone is being evicted unjustly, ECLC might be able to at least delay

the eviction until the client can find another place to live.

This year, there's been a 44 per cent increase in calls. Klein credits the jump to the downturn in the economy.

"They're calling about being sued, evicted," Klein said, and explained these callers "tend to be more in a panic than people who struggle with [financial distress] all the time. They're not used to not paying their bills."

The organization also provides free public legal education on a weekly basis. Currently held at Stanley Milner Library, the weekly sessions focus on a variety of law topics such family law and civil law.

"Part of our mandate is educating people about legal rights and responsibilities. We encourage people to attend

those sessions even if they have an appointment," said Klein, explaining people can get information at the session and then ask the lawyer more specific questions during an appointment.

Funding is a constant issue, especially with the increased demand. "We're always in need of more lawyers to volunteer," Klein said. "What we're able to do is limited by people available to do it."

For more information, go to www.eclc.ca or call 780.702.1725.

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

your eastwood news

This page sponsored by Eastwood Community League

Connect with Eastwood!

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BOARD MEETINGS

Eastwood Community League holds its board meetings on the first Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. Anyone may attend, but only members are allowed to participate in discussions and vote. This is the best opportunity to become involved, to discover the community's events and issues up for discussion, and to meet other like-minded people.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is on Nov. 2, starting at 6:30 p.m. The board will elect two executive positions (president and prothonotary) and appoint directors for various initiatives and groups. The community is growing and is working in good partnership with several organizations, so save the date and come out for your opportunity to shape our dynamic and regenerating community! Appetizers, coffee and tea will be provided.

COMMUNITY LEAGUE MEMBERSHIP

New memberships for the 2016-17 season are available for purchase, either online through Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL's) website (efcl.org), or from any Eastwood Community League director. Call or email for membership requests.

For community members with children, you should be thinking of soccer registration for next year, as well as the North Edmonton Gymnastics Club's courses, on discount for community league members. Contact the league for more information.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

SUPPORT FOR THE MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE INQUIRY

The league is happy to support local spokespeople for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People in our area with a few important activities. In February, there will be a weekend of information, performances, meetings, food, and a rally to help garner greater awareness of this important issue for many people in our community. To help fund this event, Eastwood is holding a bottle run throughout November. Please contact Elana Papin at 780-566-0930 or ewcl@shaw.ca to organize either a pick up or drop off of bottles and cans for the bottle depot.

DANCE AND SONG

Eastwood now has free dance lessons for young children on Sunday afternoons from 1 pm to 3 pm. These lessons are a great way to introduce children to classical forms of dance. Contact the commu-

nity league for more information and to book your child into a class.

Eastwood also hosts a youth choir and an adult choir with our partner ETown Vocal Music Society. Rehearsals are Wednesdays for the youth choir (free to all youth), and Thursday evenings for adults (yearly membership fee). To find out more information, contact Caleb or Misha Nelson at ewcl@shaw.ca.

SKATING RINK

This year, the rink will be open daily in the evenings for public skating. Any member of any community league is welcome to skate, so please bring your membership card or skate tag with you when you arrive. For anyone who would like to play hockey, there are times reserved for games of shinny. Contact the league for more information.

Volunteer & Notices

NOTICE LEAGUE MEMBERS

No community swim/gym time at Commonwealth Rec Centre on Dec 24 or 31.

DO YOU LOVE COFFEE?

Be part of a great team by volunteering as a barista at The Carrot! If you'd love to learn coffee art and the ins & outs of being a barista, or just want to get involved in the community, please contact volunteer@thecarrot.ca.

LOVE THE WINTER?

We are seeking volunteers for Deep Freeze: A Byzantine Winter Festival, taking place January 14 & 15, 2017 on Alberta Avenue. Watch the website for volunteer dinners & events!
www.deepfreeze.org

WANTED...

Musicians, dancers, artists, artisans, thespians, sculptors, and more! Submissions are open for Deep Freeze: A Byzantine Winter Festival. Go to deepfreeze.org or call 780-471-1580 to join in the fun!

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your community league!

Collective Kitchen

Team up with our resident **Red Seal Chef Luisa**, culinary arts instructor at NAIT, to cook *amazing* meals for your family!
\$3 per person for 4 meals.
Last Sunday of each month, 1-4pm.
Register: pccl.info@gmail.com

Parkdale Cromdale Community League
11335 85 Street NW, Edmonton



alberta avenue COMMUNITY LEAGUE

Membership Rates

Family \$20
Single \$10
Senior Free

See full benefits list and buy on website

We don't want cost to be a barrier. If you would like a membership but cannot spare the cash, just let us know.

PROGRAMS

Zumba Fitness
Mondays 8-9 pm
Contact us to register for free

Rec Centre Access
Sundays 1-3 pm
At Commonwealth Rec
For Alberta Ave Members

Ice Rink
If weather permits, our snow bank rink will be ready for xmas break.
HELP needed with ice making, snow removal, opening/closing, supervision, programming.

www.albertaave.org | www.fb.com/albertaavenue
9210 118 Ave | 780.477.2773 | info@albertaave.org

Why get a membership?

- Free access at Commonwealth Rec Saturdays 5-7 pm
- Access to sports, programs, ice rink
- Rental discounts
- Family \$15, Single \$7, Seniors \$7, Volunteers Free

Call 780-479-8019

10240 115 Avenue
780.471.1932
spruceaveleague@shaw.ca
spruceavenuecommunity.com

WESTWOOD COMMUNITY LEAGUE 12139 105 ST
admin@westwoodcl.ca 780.474.1979

PURCHASE YOUR 2016-17 MEMBERSHIPS NOW!
Free access to Commonwealth Rec Centre on Saturdays 5-7 pm and hall rental discounts.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING
Tuesday, December 13 at 7 pm
Approval of new bylaws presented at the October AGM

ELMWOOD PARK COMMUNITY LEAGUE
12505 75 St | epcl@shawbiz.ca | elmwoodparkcommunity.org

Family Winter Party
Saturday, Nov 26 from 3-6 pm
At the hall

Enjoy some outdoor games and create a special holiday craft.
Free snacks & hot drinks.

League memberships will be available.

DELTON COMMUNITY LEAGUE

FAMILY FUN BOWL
Saturday, Nov 12 at 6:45 pm
Plaza Bowl 10418 118 Ave
13+ yrs \$20; 12 & under \$10

12325 85 Street 780.477.3326
www.deltoncommunity.com

Alberta Avenue keeps an eye on the future

Community league benefits from resident optimism

KATE WILSON

When Alberta Avenue Community League holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM), several dozen people attend. Its programs consistently attract volunteers and members.

That and the league's location are a blessing, said Brendan Van Alstine, league president.

"One of the things that perhaps makes our league unique is the level of engagement we have," he said. "Our hall is generally busy year-round, so even if events aren't league-run, a lot of people are likely familiar with us because they've been to an event like Kaleido or Deep Freeze or the Tibetan Bazaar."

Flash back to 1912. What is now Alberta Avenue was an area along 118 Avenue in North Edmonton Village. Growth was ramping up, with factories and meat packing, and in 1912 the village amalgamated with Edmonton. As with other outlying districts, Alberta Avenue residents needed a voice with city fathers for recreation facilities and civic improvements. They were aware of the community league initiative and promptly jumped on board. The Alberta Avenue Community League (AACL) was inaugurated in 1922—the same year as Rosedale, —Ritchie and Oliver—making it one of the earliest leagues in Edmonton.

The early working class and immigrant population lent Alberta Avenue a diverse and energetic character. That holds true to this day.

Board members are committed, which speaks to the spirit of the people living in the community, said Nicola Dakers,

league secretary.

"The board has a good cross section of ages and experiences, so there is healthy debate and a range of perspectives when dealing with issues," Dakers said. "We see the beauty in the old houses and grand trees, and we choose to be opti-

Avenue was falling on rough times. The community hall, built in 1931 at 93 Street, no longer filled the bill, and the league spearheaded a move for a new facility. With funds secured from government and private donations, the new community hall was opened in February

Today, AACL is building on city-wide efforts such as Abundant Communities and has resources for block parties and community events. The community garden has been growing, with the addition of a pergola and more plots this past summer. League memberships also come with free visits to outdoor city pools and Sunday access to the Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre.

"Some of the more popular things ... are supporting block parties, the urban pole walking group, the Spark! Youth Camp and the community garden," said Van Alstine.

The board is also considering adult education and computer literacy programs, while maintaining its regular hall rentals and event hosting.

Though there are challenges, such as the recent economic downturn, the city's 118 Avenue revitalization and the growing ethnic and cultural diversity bring advantages.

"We are constantly growing and adapting, and we hope that we can make the right connections so that we can do a better job representing the diversity of our community," said Dakers.

Van Alstine agrees.

"We're always trying to keep an eye on what interests there are in the community," Van Alstine said.

Alberta Avenue Community League
9210 118 Avenue www.albertaave.org



From left to right: John Rhebergen, Gerard Forget, Adam Millie, Valerie Parr, and Brendan Van Alstine are all board members of Alberta Avenue Community League. | Kate Wilson

mistic and strive for the best despite the challenges we face."

By the end of the 1970s, Alberta

of 1982. Jack Hodson, a league member, was honoured and Hodson Hall in the community centre still bears his name.

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 Alberta Avenue with her daughter.

Norwood Boulevard - An 'Aspiring' Main Street



What

Our second public event for the Norwood Boulevard Corridor Study is happening!

When

Wednesday November 30, 2016 - 6:00pm - 8:30pm.

Where

Ital Canadian Seniors Association,
9111 110 Ave NW Edmonton

Why

To begin work on recreating Norwood Boulevard by:

- Listening to some new ideas for change;
- Receiving feedback from you, the citizens of Edmonton, on these ideas; and
- Discussing other ideas you may have to recreate this 'aspiring' main street.

Come and share in the excitement of recreating this great Edmonton street!



Modern meaning in Remembrance Day

Why we should look beyond the traditional to remain relevant

CHANTAL FIGEAT

Growing up as a post-war baby boomer, I've often thought the Second World War cast a shadow over my childhood and youth. My father lived through occupied France between the ages of eight and 13. My close friend's father was a veteran who had marched north up the Italian peninsula with the Canadian Army. My grandmother would speak sadly of her older brother, who was lost when his plane went down while serving in the air force. War left a strong impression on these people which took a long time to process, not only touching them but also those close to them.

Remembrance Day would usually happen on a dark and chilly day. I would dutifully file

into my school auditorium for the ceremony and be moved by the reading of In Flanders Fields. Watching TV was limited. The Remembrance Day broadcasts could trigger bad memories in my father and upset him.

Exposure to relatives and friends who had experienced those wars firsthand left an impact which made war more immediate than it is today.

"The traditional service was created to comfort those who grieve, but today very few of us experience grief because of war (at least those of us in North America)," said Rev. Mark Chiang of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on Alberta Avenue.

As time passes, Remembrance Day in its traditional form carries less meaning for most of us.

"I think that it's helpful for our elderly members who have a living memory of the wars, but a traditional service like that is really on its last legs," said Chiang.

If Remembrance Day has less meaning for a baby boomer such as myself, then what about the younger generations?

In order to remain relevant, the scope of Remembrance Day needs to be expanded. War impacts not just veterans, but also civilians on the home front and those who become refugees. The traditional red poppy symbolizes the war graves in northern France, but Canada has also been involved in the Korean, Afghani, and Iraq wars. Perhaps a new symbol would be more appropriate?

The use of children in war is not new. For example, chil-

dren were commonly used in the Second World War resistance as spies, porters, and messengers. Today, engaging children in active combat is more common. The lightweight M-16 rifle has made this possible. Children are easy targets for war recruitment as they can be easily influenced. Some are forced, while others join to escape their difficult circumstances.

The Alberta Avenue district is home to a community of Somali refugees. Many of these refugees have witnessed child soldiers recruited by Marxist rebels during the collapse of the Somali government in the 80s. Humanitarian efforts for war refugees and the prevention of child soldiers would have more relevance to this community than the traditional

Remembrance Day ceremony.

Chiang recognized the need for humanitarian efforts when he commented that "[Remembrance Day] will eventually become a purely secular activity, promoted by our Armed Forces. ... the church of the future can focus on preaching peace, grieving and lamenting that war still happens anywhere on our planet, and advocating on behalf of disempowered refugees and victims of war."

Chantal has worked in publications production for the government and has taught overseas in South Korea. She loves the ethnic diversity and history in Alberta Avenue and enjoys sharing it with the community.



A new symbol may be needed to represent Remembrance Day. | Pixabay



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What it means to start over in a new country

Learning a complicated language takes time and exposure

AMANDA SOKAL

Imagine moving to a new country. The stress of finding a new home, a new job, a new school for your kids, and new friends. Now imagine not being able to speak your new country's language.

For many immigrants, this is a reality. My family had a similar experience. After the Second World War, my grandparents emigrated from Poland with their three children. They didn't speak any English. Their children learned English in school. My grandfather was a lumberjack and learned enough English from the other men that he could do his job, but my grandmother never learned English and was reliant on my mother, uncle and aunt for everything from grocery shopping to conversing with neighbours.

In those days, there were no ESL classes or speaking groups. Children learned in schools and taught their parents. That in itself posed challenges, as my uncle regaled me with stories of his classmates

purposely teaching him obscenities when he would ask for the word for something, and my mother trying to tell the doctor that she fell and hurt her "soldier" (her shoulder). If you didn't have anyone to translate for you, then you were at the mercy of neighbours and church groups. Comfort and belonging could be found within your own ethnic community, but that is a double-edged sword. On the one side, there is a group of people who share the same culture, language, norms and traditions. It's safe and comfortable. On the other hand, it can be isolating, keeping you from interacting with the larger population.

Now newcomers are eligible for taxpayer-funded Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes held at schools and colleges. LINC classes are available to permanent residents, although ESL classes are also available for those aren't permanent residents. Funding may be available to help cover living expenses while immigrants are improving their English skills. This is

a prerequisite to applying for Canadian citizenship.

No matter what, learning a new language isn't easy. Vivi and Anne-Marie had different challenges with language barriers upon first arriving in Canada. Anne-Marie had a basic understanding of English and her reading comprehension was higher than her spoken English. On the other hand, Vivi understood no English at all.

Anne-Marie said English was so hard to learn because many different words sound so similar to each other. It's worth noting the majority of immigrants can speak three or more languages. Vivi could speak six! Anne-Marie stated phone calls were difficult for her if the caller was English-speaking because everyone spoke too quickly. Vivi explained grocery shopping was tough, especially when he was looking for a specific item and did not have the English word for it.

Vivi said it took him about 45 days of ESL classes to learn a basic under-

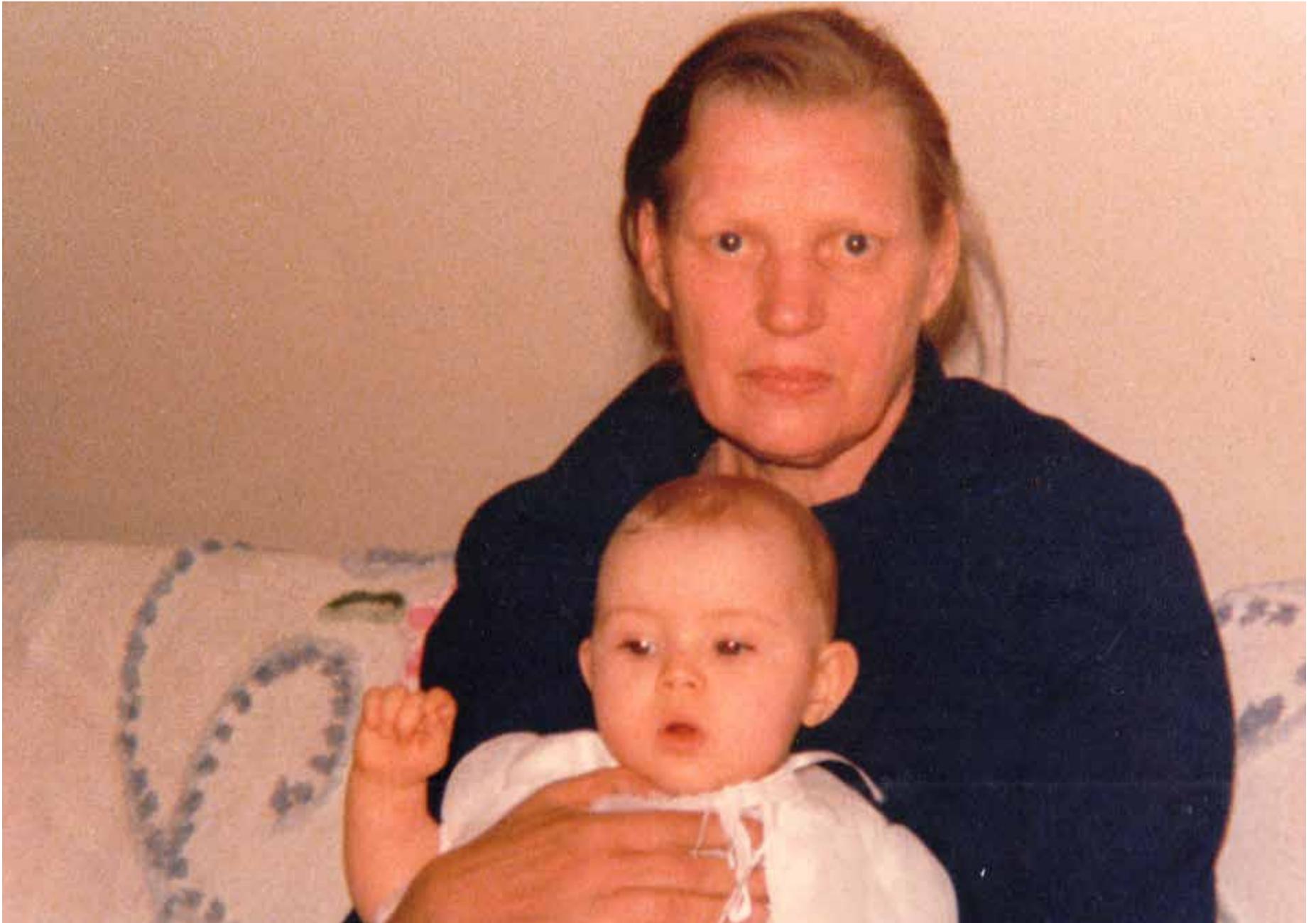
standing of English. Both agreed ESL or LINC classes were helpful, but opportunities to learn and practice can be found everywhere, from watching English television programs and listening to English radio to visiting the library and simply speaking to people.

Starting over is always frightening and difficult, but resources are available to ease some of the difficulties.

Amanda is a budding entrepreneur, a practicing Wiccan, a burgeoning gardener and an herbalist who is working to obtain a degree as a naturopathic practitioner.

RESOURCES

Service Canada: servicecanada.gc.ca
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN): emcn.ab.ca
Metro Continuing Education: metrocontinuingeducation.ca
Norquest College: norquest.ca
Alberta Works Learners Grant: humanservices.alberta.ca



Learning a new language isn't easy, but there are resources available. | Supplied

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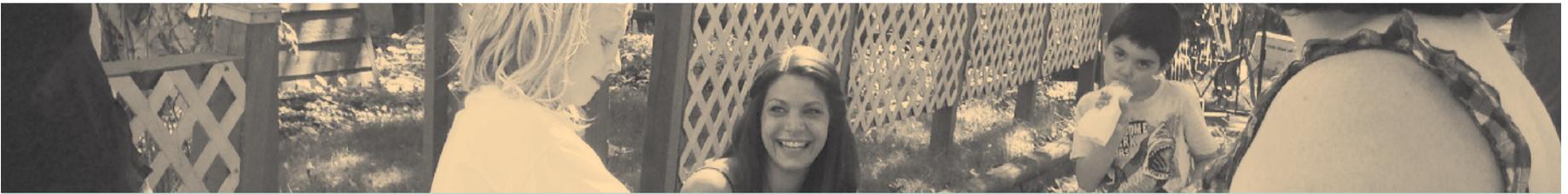
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WHAT'S ON IN NOVEMBER

Brought to you in partnership with NorwoodNeighbourhoodAssociation.ca

COFFEE WITH COPS

Nov. 1 from 10-11:30 am | The Carrot (9351 118 Ave). Chat about neighbourhood concerns with Cst. Challenger.



OPEN WALLS 2

Until Nov. 19 | bleedingheartart.space (9132 118 Ave). Space open for any artist to show one work of art. Submissions accepted throughout the show as long as there is hanging space left.



DELTON FAMILY FUN BOWL

Saturday, Nov. 12 at 6:45 pm | Plaza Bowl (10418 118 Ave). 13+ yrs \$20; 12 & under \$10.



JUST ONE WORLD

Nov. 12, 10 am-4 pm & Nov. 13, 10 am-3 pm. | Ital-Canadian Seniors (9111 110 Ave). Previously called Just Christmas.



EDMONTON POTTERS' SALE

Nov. 19 from 10 am-3 pm. | Alberta Avenue.

ENTERTAINMENT PRO WRESTLING

First Saturday of the month. | Alberta Avenue. Tickets: \$20. More: monsterprowrestling.com

5 PIN BOWLING

Every day, 10 am-10 pm. | Plaza Bowl.

KARAOKE

Wednesday to Saturday, 9 pm-2 am. | Mona Lisa's Pub.

LIVE MUSIC

Fridays, 7:30-9:30 pm. Cover: \$5, children free. | The Carrot.

OPEN MIC

Saturdays, 6:30 pm. | The Carrot.

SAVE THE DATE

CARROT CHRISTMAS ARTS BAZAAR
Dec. 9, 7-9 pm Dec. 10, 10 am - 4 pm The Carrot Coffeehouse

JINGLE JAMMIN'

CHRISTMAS CAROLING
Dec. 16, 6 pm
The Carrot Coffeehouse

PARKDALE XMAS PARTY

Dec. 17
Paint Nite photo
By Mcgrailsean (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0] (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>), via Wikimedia Commons

PAINT-N-PUB NIGHT

Purchase a table and support Arts on the Ave's fall fundraiser at The Nina on Nov. 19 at 7 pm. Great holiday party alternative for co-workers or friends! Party for a cause!

More: artsadmin@artsontheave.org.



FREE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Go to ratcreek.org for more information

ESL & LANGUAGE

PRACTICE ENGLISH
Conversation circle, Mondays 7-8 pm at Sprucewood Library. Fridays, 10:30 am - noon at Highlands Library.

CREE LANGUAGE
Conversation circle by Canadian Native Friendship Centre. Mondays 6-8 pm at Highlands Library.

ECALA ENGLISH
For community integration Mondays and Thursdays from 11:15 am to 1:15 pm at Parkdale-Cromdale. More: Sarah 780.887.6825 or sarahdelano@hotmail.com.

BOOK CLUB
For literacy learners, Fridays 10 am to noon at Parkdale-Cromdale.

GLOBAL VOICES CHOIR
An informal way to practice English. No experience with singing or English is required. Lunch is provided. Thursdays noon - 1 pm at Mennonite Centre. More: Digna 780.424.7709.

CONVERSATION CAFE
Practice speaking English and learn about Western Canadian culture. Childcare provided. Saturdays 10-11:30 am from mid-September to end of May at Bethel Gospel.

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)
More: Edmonton Mennonite Centre 780.423.9522 or info@emcn.ab.ca

FOOD & SUPPORT

PRAYERWORKS COMMON
Hot complimentary meals & warm friendship at St. Faith/St. Stephen. Thursday drop-in 10 am - 2 pm. Friday community supper, 5 pm. Saturday breakfasts 8:30-9:30 am. More: 780.477.5931.

COLLECTIVE KITCHEN
Cook with friends, try new recipes, help your food budget at St. Faith/St. Stephen. Cost: \$3. Second Tuesday: 1-3:30 pm. Trish 780.464.5444. Third Wednesday, 5:30-8 pm. Amanda: 587.930.8238.

PARENTS & PRE-SCHOOLERS

COW BUS
Edmonton Literacy Classroom on wheels every Friday from 8:30-10 am at Parkdale hall.

GROWING TOGETHER
A free drop-in group for pregnant women and women with babies up to 3 months of age. Free resources including milk coupons and prenatal vitamins. Tuesdays 1:30-3 pm at Norwood Centre. More: 780.471.3737.

STAY AND PLAY
Free indoor play space and unstructured group for parents and children. Snack included. Mondays 10 am - noon at Norwood Centre.

MULTICULTURAL RHYMES THAT BIND
Pre-literacy program for families with babies & children pre-kinder age. Mondays 9:30-11:30 am at Parkdale-Cromdale. More: Sarah 780.887.6825.

BABES IN ARMS
A wonderful casual parent group Fridays 10 am - noon at The Carrot.

SING, SIGN, LAUGH & LEARN
Mondays and Tuesdays 10:30 am at Sprucewood Library. More: 780.496.7099. Wednesdays 10:30 am at Highlands Library. More: 780.496.1806.

CHILDREN

LEGO AT THE LIBRARY
Design and build a lego creation. Ages 6-12. Third Saturday of the month 2-3 pm at Highlands Library.

GIRL GUIDES
Girl Guides meeting Mondays from September to June at St. Andrew's. More: 39thedmontonguiding@gmail.com or 1.800.565.8111 (answered locally).

YOUTH

EVIL GENIUS CLUB
Robot battles, Arduino hacks, DIY music, art, Minecraft, photography, 3-D design and printing are just the beginning for this club of maniacal makers. Fridays, 4-5 pm at Highlands Library.

TWEEN LOUNGE
Play video games, make a DIY project, or just hang out. Thursdays, 3:30-5 pm at Sprucewood Library and 3:30-4:30 pm at Highlands Library.

TEEN LOUNGE
Play video games, make a DIY project, or just hang out. Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 pm at Sprucewood Library.

ADULTS

ADULT COLORING
Coloring and creativity. Books, felts and pencil crayons provided or bring your own. Third Wednesday of month, 2-3 pm at Highlands Library.

AVENUE BOOK CLUB
Meets the last Wednesday of each month 7 pm at The Carrot. More: Lorraine 780.934.3209.

COMMUNITY ART NIGHT
Free art workshop for adults. Tuesdays 6:30-8:30 pm at The Nina.

NASHVILLE SONGWRITERS ASSOC INTERNATIONAL (NSAI)
Second Monday of the month 6:30-10 pm at The Carrot. RSVP: Colleen_col_kside@hotmail.com

SENIORS

NORWOOD LEGION SENIORS GROUP
Darts and pool, Tuesdays at 10 am; Cribbage, Wednesdays at 1 pm at Norwood Legion.

PARKDALE SENIORS SOCIAL
Bingo, snacks and conversation. Mondays 10:30 am - 1 pm at Parkdale. More: PCCL.info@gmail.com.

SENIORS BREAKFAST & SOCIAL (55+)
Join us for breakfast, visit, play cards, or billiards. Wednesdays 11:30 am - 12:45 pm at Crystal Kids.

FAMILIES

BOARD GAMES NIGHT
Plenty of games to choose from or bring your own. Last Tuesday of the month 7 pm at The Carrot.

FAMILY ART NIGHT
A variety of free art activities for school age children accompanied by adults. Thursdays, 6:30-8 pm at The Nina.

MUSIC LESSONS BY CREART
Free group music lessons Saturdays at Parkdale-Cromdale from 10 am to 12 pm. More: creartedmonton@gmail.com or 587.336.5480.

FREE REC CENTRE ACCESS
Free access to Commonwealth Recreation Centre on Saturdays from 5-7 pm for members of Elmwood Park, Spruce Avenue & Westwood and on Sundays from 1-3 pm for members of Alberta Avenue, Delton, Parkdale/Cromdale. Eastwood does not participate.

LOCATIONS

Community Leagues - see page 12
St. Faith/St. Stephen Church 11725 93 St
Highlands Library 6516 118 Ave
Sprucewood Library 11555 95 St
Norwood Family Centre 9516 114 Ave
Carrot Coffeehouse 9351 118 Ave
The Nina 9225 118 Ave
Norwood Legion 11150 82 St
Crystal Kids 8715 118 Ave
St. Andrew's Church 8715 118 Ave
Bethel Gospel 11461 95 St
Mennonite Centre 11713 82 St

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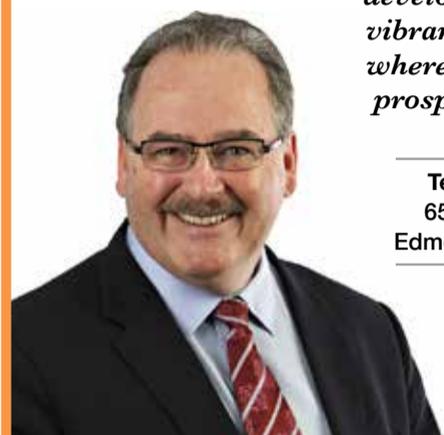


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