

Plain & Valley

Covering Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba

January 2025 • Volume 18 Number 1



Some scenes from the last Winter Wonderland at Moosomin Regional Park, including sleigh rides, enjoying a hot dog, dog sleds, and sledding.



Winter Wonderland February 2 Winter event set for Moosomin Regional Park

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
A popular winter event is back at Moosomin & District Regional Park, embracing the winter season and inviting people to check out the park for some frosty fun.

Winter Wonderland is slated for Sunday, Feb. 2, and has activities for everyone including a fishing derby, sleigh rides, dog sleds, and refreshments.

"A lot of people think it's a place to go in the summer, and it's nice to showcase

what it can offer in the wintertime," said Moosomin & District Regional Park committee member Karen Hebert.

There are a few changes this year, including the spot at the park where the event takes place and tickets will be sold.

"We're changing the location," Hebert confirmed, adding that the new place to meet will be at the marina.

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The Moosomin Kids after school program.



Kids having fun at Wapella's after school kids program.

Nicole Taylor photos

Local community groups receive share of \$2.9M CIF grants

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The latest round of Community Initiative Fund allocations have been announced, with a total of 58 communities receiving a share of just over \$2.9 million. Locally, two Moosomin groups benefitted from the funding, the Moosomin Family Resource Centre with \$30,000 and Play-Fair Daycare, who received \$10,000. The Town of Wapella also received \$7,836, and the Southeast Regional Library in Redvers was given \$600.

"For several, especially smaller organizations and smaller communities, they rely a lot on our funding, just because they don't always have access to other sources like you might in a larger city," said Tracey Mann, Executive Director with CIF. "We do really try and get as many dollars as we can out to those rural communities because we know it is more challenging for them."

There are two community grants per year, plus a summer grant also available through the CIF. This recent round of funds was distributed in December. Through the Community Grant Program, CIF was able to approve 165 grants in December, 2024, focussed on the wellbeing of children, youth, families, and communities. Fostering healthy lifestyles, resources to nurture supportive environments, and promoting positive mental health are a few things considered for the grants.

"I would say a lot of communities are certainly aware of the Community Initiative Fund and the grants that we offer," said Mann. "We provide approximately 500 to 550 grants per year, so lots of organizations are certainly aware of us."

Another factor that might bolster the CIF's popularity is a recent increase to maximum funding dollars.

"We've just actually increased the Community Grant Program maximum to

\$35,000 so that will come into effect for the April 1 deadline," said Mann. "We've also increased the Summer Grant Program from \$6,000 to \$7,500. We know organizations are struggling out there, and if we have the capacity to be able to provide a few extra dollars, then hopefully that helps out."

The CIF was created in 1996 through the Saskatchewan Lotteries and Gaming Corporation Act and is managed by a government-appointed board of volunteers. The special purpose fund receives a portion of net profits from Casino's Regina and Moose Jaw.

Grants keep MFRC going strong

Sheryl Willms-Bromm is the Program Co-ordinator at MFRC, and says it's pretty exciting to be a recipient and have such a strong relationship with the CIF.

"I apply for both annual grants every

year, so they're both maxed out at \$30,000 and I've been really fortunate that I've gotten both," she said. "They're a huge supporter of the centre, which is wonderful! It covers programming costs, but a big chunk is our overhead and staff wages from those grants. We're non-profit, so everything is fundraising, donations or grants."

This round of funding will be devoted to three programs the MFRC offers, beginning with Alphabet Soup, which promotes early literacy and language. The popular after-school craft sessions will also benefit, which Willms-Bromm says are a real hit with kids.

"We're about a year in with that program, and it's really popular," she said.

Finally, the Diverse Learners program—which is for children with special needs—will also benefit.

Continued on page 8

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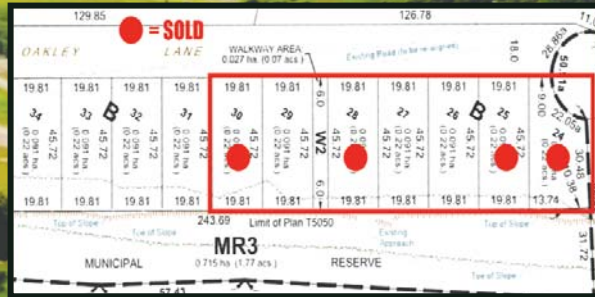
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Scenes from the last Winter Wonderland at Moosomin Regional Park, including: hockey on the lake, above left, and skating, above right, chopping wood, below left and roasting hot dogs, below right.

Winter Wonderland February 2 Winter event set for Moosomin Regional Park

Continued from front

"Normally, we had it at the south end of the park, but we couldn't accommodate the parking there, so we're having it just north of where the park store is, where the Marina is, and we're going to clear out a larger area for parking there."

Based on the popularity of the event in the past, organizers are looking to the new location as a place that can accommodate further growth.

"The last one we had was around 300 people, so we're hoping for a few more," Hebert said. "That's why we had to change the location, because we couldn't accommodate the parking on the road. We needed a larger area for the parking."

The cash-only event is also an affordable way for the whole family to enjoy the park as kids five years old and under are free. Eagle Ridge Dog Sleds will be offering rides from 10 am to 4 pm for \$20 per ride; sleigh rides will be held from 1-4 pm for \$10 each; and the fishing derby runs from 11 am to 2 pm. The cost is \$20 per hole or two holes for \$30. Hot dogs and hot chocolate are also available for \$5 each.

"The last one that we did, we had to show some people how to roast a hot dog over an



open fire," Hebert recalls. "They've never had that experience before!"

Money raised from the event goes back into the park to cover expenses, but it also serves as a showcase to people from outside the region as to what the Moosomin & District Regional Park has to offer.

"There are lots of people that come to this in the winter time that I've never seen at the park in the summertime," Hebert said.





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Kevin Weedmark captured this photo of frosty trees and the water tower in Moosomin recently.

Moosomin leads growth in region

Saskatchewan Health Covered Population numbers for 2024 show continued growth in southeast Saskatchewan, with the community of Moosomin leading the way in growth across the region.

The number of active Saskatchewan health cards in the Moosomin Region is

17,500 in 2024, up 701 or 4.17 per cent from the total of 16,799 in 2012, according to Saskatchewan Health.

Moosomin has showed the most growth in health card numbers over that period, growing from 2,961 to 3,324, an increase of 363 people or 12.25 per cent.

The other larger communities in the region all showed some growth as well, according to the Saskatchewan Health numbers.

Esterhazy grew by 80 or 2.65 per cent from 3,013 to 3,093 since 2012, Redvers grew by 34 or 2.51 per cent, from 1,354 to

1,388, and Kipling grew by 84 or 6.56 per cent, from 1,279 to 1,363.

Moosomin Mayor Murray Gray said he is not surprised to see the latest Covered Population numbers from Saskatchewan Health.

Continued on Page 9

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STARS thanked with donation at wedding

After they saved her life in 2014, Jillian Easton invites STARS to her wedding and makes donation on behalf of her family and guests

BY KARA KINNA

Ten years after they saved her life and airlifted her to the Regina General Hospital, Rocanville bride Jillian Easton made a point of inviting STARS air ambulance to her wedding on August 17, 2024 and making a donation to them and publicly thanking them for saving her life.

"On June 25, 2014 I was involved in a very serious motor vehicle accident and I was flown by STARS from Moosomin to Regina," says Jillian.

Jillian was hit by a semi on the Trans-Canada Highway at Moosomin, and says her injuries were so severe that her doctors did not know if she would recover.

"If it wasn't for STARS, I would not have had the medical attention I needed and the quick service and getting me from point A to point B, and if it was not for them I would not be here today," she says.

"My doctors, they said that anybody that has come through those doors in that type of accident and those injuries—they have never seen anybody either come out alive or have a complete recovery."

Jillian was in a coma when STARS picked her up and has no memory of the flight, but says she knew she wanted to do something to thank STARS for saving her life.

"When I was going through our wedding planning process, I wanted our wedding to be ours, and I wanted it to be unique and be about us, so I was a bit of a bridezilla," she says. "I knew not many of our guests knew that I was in a very serious motor vehicle accident. And so I always wanted to give back to STARS and to just say thank you for saving my life, I wouldn't be here without you."

The wedding took place at St. John's Lutheran Church in New Finland, Sask, and the reception took place at the Nutrien Rocanville Community Hall in Rocanville.

"I am a STARS VIP, so we've done a few photoshoots for STARS and promotions and advertisements, but I just didn't think that was enough and so I wanted to include them in our wedding because it was a huge part of my life and I wanted to donate," says Jillian. "So we did our party favors. Instead of traditional wedding favors, we made a \$1,200 donation to STARS on behalf of all our guests."

"I donated under \$1,000 not long after the accident in 2014 to STARS. I knew that I wanted to donate over \$1,000 to get my/our name on a STARS 'big cheque' that hangs at the STARS base in Regina. That also in-



Jillian Easton and her family making a donation to STARS at her wedding. From left are bride Jillian Easton holding her son Kruz Kuzek with her son Juke Lewis in front, groom Eric Kuzek, and at far right Darren Entner with STARS.

spired me to work towards contributing a larger donation to STARS with our wedding party favours, instead of having traditional ones."

Jillian said it felt good to be able to give back to STARS at her wedding.

"It felt incredible. It felt like a little lump sum because they saved my life and I wouldn't be here without them, but it felt huge that we were able to do that."

Continued on Page 13

Snowplow safety

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Local community groups receive share of \$2.9M CIF grants

Continued from page 3

"It's not a designated program, it's a program that parents call in for and if they want to book time, because it can be really overwhelming here with sounds and stuff," explained Willms-Bromm. "So I have a shelf designated with specific sensory toys that come out for those."

The MFRC is a place bustling with activity once again with attendance making a sharp climb since the pandemic.

"Covid shut us down, obviously, but ever since we've reopened, we cycle through parents," Willms-Bromm said. "They start with our baby program, move to our toddler programs, and then their kids age out or can't come, so then they come to our after-school programs, and then by that time, we have more new babies! There's days where my Time for Baby program, I have upwards of 25 kids with parents, and then some days are really slow. It just depends on the day."

Playfair Daycare receives \$10,000

For the Playfair Daycare, \$10,000 will go a long way for art supplies, wages, food, and materials.

"It's from December, so it's already started," said Terri Lowe of the funding dollars. "And then it goes until the end of the school year, so it will go until June '25 I do believe."

This was the first time the group applied for funding through CIF, and Lowe says they plan to submit future applications for other programs Playfair Daycare offers.

"We do have a program after school for the school age kids," she said, noting that there are around 20 that participate in the program.

"It's kind of nice, too, because they're all different ages or different classes, so this way, they're interacting with each other when normally they may not," Lowe explained.

Boost to Wapella's after school program

In Wapella, the Town will devote the \$7,836 they received to the after-school program that runs from 3:30-5:30 on weekday afternoons.

"We've transformed the old Town Hall upstairs, which used to be the dance hall, into what we call The Loft," explained Town of Wapella Administrator Daphne



Above and below: Children and parents at the Moosomin Family Resource Centre for a Happy New Year party on Friday. The MFRC was one of the recipients of a CIF grant.

Brady.

The Loft is furnished with games, books, ample seating, and snacks.

"With this program, we're able to buy all kinds of craft supplies," Brady said, noting that some of the science-themed activities proved quite popular. "The kids love making little geode stones and then breaking them apart after."

The time together also strengthens community bonds between those young people who attend The Loft.

"Lots of times, we see kids making friendship bracelets for each other, playing a game in the corner together, and just everybody getting along and playing games and having fun," Brady observed.

The funding also covers wages for the program co-ordinator at The Loft, plus extra materials for Tuesday night yoga sessions and upcoming paint nights.

"Our first one is in January, and that goes to pay for her wages and supplies, too," Brady said. "We used to just do it for the kids—the after school program used to just be for the kids—but this year, we opened it up and tried to include more—more ages, more abilities, more everything, so that everybody gets out during the winter."



Seniors' sessions in Redvers

Building on a popular program from last year, the Southeast Regional Library in Redvers will once again offer information sessions for seniors.

"I began it last year, we did a 12-week session where every week there was a different theme for seniors in the community to come to," explained Branch Librarian, Katy Soroka. "This year, I'm doing the same, but it will be once a month instead, and I worked with the seniors in the community to find what worked best for them."

On the last Thursday of each month, a different topic will be featured at the library, with the majority of the \$600 fund-

ing being used to provide free transit to the library with the handivan. Other associated costs include possible facilitator fees, and general supplies such as printed handouts.

"Last year, the RCMP came and talked about scams," Soroka said. "I would like to reach out to them to see if they'd be interested in doing that again. I have the Redvers EMS coming this month to talk about safety at home."

Other topics include nutrition, chair yoga, and legal advice.

"Lots of questions had come up in the past about making wills and estates, retirement and financial planning," Soroka said.



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Plain and Valley is delivered to post office boxes across Southeast Saskatchewan and southwest Manitoba.

Canada Post Customer Number 2116693.

Canada Post Contract Number 40011909.

Canada Post employees: As a community newspaper, Plain and Valley can be delivered into all post office boxes, not just those that have opted to receive flyers in the Consumers' Choice program.

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Southeast Teddy Bears Anonymous online auction raises \$7,000

BY ASHLEY BOCHKE

Linda Machniak and Donna Stanhope organized Southeast Saskatchewan's first ever Teddy Bears Anonymous chapter and held an online auction that raised \$7,000 for teddy bears to help children in hospitals and in ambulances across the province.

Machniak says she has always supported-ed Teddy Bears Anonymous and helped deliver teddy bears to the Southeast Integrated Care Centre in Moosomin.

"I have always wanted to volunteer with Teddy Bears Anonymous, and a year and a half ago I helped bring out three cases of teddy bears to Moosomin Hospital when I was in Regina and I just wanted to help more," she says. "So, I asked Donna to help and we decided to do an online auction to help."

Stanhope says she got involved because of her love for children.

"I just really love kids and I think it is so scary for them to have to go into the hospital and this is just a way for them to feel comfort."

The Teddy Bears

Machniak says the bears are factory sealed to be delivered to the children in hospitals.

"These bears come sealed from the factory so they're sterile and the kids can take them right into surgery with them, and they can't take anything else in. The teddy bears are in the ambulances and hospitals. Teddy Bears Anonymous is a registered provincial children's charity, and there is a connection to the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon.

"The bears are also in police cars in the cities because when the police go to domestic violence calls the little kids are traumatized so the police can give them these little bears, and some of the firetrucks have them in the cities as well. That is part of the reason why I wanted to get involved because we get the bears out here in our hospitals and ambulances like Esterhazy, Yorkton, and Moosomin, but the cities supply them all and I thought it would be nice if we gave back for our area."

Stanhope adds, "We just wanted to give recognition to this charity too because there are lots of people who still don't know about it."

"The \$7,000 we raised will supply 1,400 teddy bears. It is \$5 a bear," Machniak explained.

Annual fundraiser in Southeast Saskatchewan

Machniak says she hopes to do a similar fundraiser next year. "We are hoping to do it again next year, but maybe organized as something different rather than an online auction with all handmade or homemade items and I think next year will be something different. I have an idea."

Overwhelmed by local support

Stanhope says she is thankful for the local support from surrounding communities.

"It was really overwhelming to see the amount of people in the area donate their items for the online auction.

"We didn't even realize the amount of talent in our area with homemade items. We had all kinds of paintings and prints, quilts, wood carvings, food, and dreamcatchers from a little 10-year-old girl from Wapella.

Continued on page 17



Donna Stanhope and Linda Machniak with the \$7,000 raised from the Southeast Rural Teddy Bears Anonymous online auction.

Moosomin leads growth in region

Continued from Page 6

"Moosomin has been growing steadily and the projections are that we're going to continue to grow steadily," he said. "With what we have for infrastructure we can grow at this pace and handle it. It's great to see. It's what we're working toward with economic development.

"The job market is good here, and that attracts people, and that attracts the growth. For us to have a campaign on now to add housing units to complement the jobs, we're in a good spot."

He said Moosomin has put a focus on growth for the last few years.

"Forming the economic development joint funding agreement, working together, the collaboration with the RM and the CBA, I think is unique and creating a lot of successes. And I think when you can add services, businesses and jobs, you can add population. And I think paying attention to that has certainly paid off, and I think that has probably been the biggest difference if you look at us in comparison to some other communities.

"I think we continue to do what we are doing and working together and I think the sky is the limit. I think we are doing things the way you need to do them if you want to grow, and if we continue on that path there's no reason we won't continue to grow at the pace we are."

Gray says that growth creates some challenges for the town, but those challenges are not insurmountable.

"Housing is one," he says. "You definitely have pressure on your rec facilities, on your hospital, and on things you don't even think of like not enough post office boxes in your post office.

"So the growth creates some challenges, but we can adapt and add what we need to add."

He says he's not surprised by the area's growth.

"I'm not surprised that it's continuing to grow. I'm always surprised at the gap in this number in comparison to what they count in the census and I don't understand why that gap is there. But no I'm not surprised by it. It's good to see when you are working hard on trying to grow your community. If that number was going down I think it would be disappointing, but I'm certainly not shocked to see that we have an increase in population again which is good to see."

Gray points out that thanks to the federal housing accelerator fund, Moosomin has more housing units in production right now.

"There are 33 housing units that are going to come online in the next six months, so we are getting close on adding those first initial doors under that program," he says.

"I think that will help with people who want to move to town. I think it's going to take a little bit of heat off of how tough it is to find a place to live. I'm sure there are people who have looked at moving here and got a job at the potash mine or IJACK or got a job

in one of the industries in the area that didn't move here because they couldn't find somewhere to live. So I think that's going to help with that for sure."

He says he would not be surprised to see more growth or higher growth in the years ahead.

"It actually might see even a larger bump than we've had," he says. "If you look at adding 22 people a year, that's certainly sustainable and maybe we can even add 30 or 40 next year.

"It's good news. I like to have good news. Good news is a lot more fun to deal with than bad news."

Saskatchewan's population has topped 1,246,000 for the first time according to the latest quarterly population estimates released by Statistics Canada.

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Charity founder happy with online auction

Teddy Bears Anonymous founder and president Luke Lawrence says Southeast Rural Teddy Bears Anonymous support is overwhelming

BY ASHLEY BOCEK

Luke Lawrence, the founder and President of Teddy Bears Anonymous, says he is overwhelmed by the support for the Southeast Rural Teddy Bears Anonymous online auction.

Linda Machniak and Donna Stanhope of Rocanville organized Southeast Rural Saskatchewan's first ever Teddy Bears Anonymous fundraiser to support the provincial charity.

Lawrence explains his personal reason for founding Teddy Bears Anonymous.

"My daughter passed away to a hereditary form of gastric cancer in 2007. My wife predeceased her, passing away from the same form of cancer. That is what Teddy Bears Anonymous is founded on. The charity is in memory of my daughter, Erin Lawrence."

Lawrence says the charity has grown over the years.

"It has grown into a provincial charity. We are pretty well all over the place. On our website it lists we have 22 hospitals and 15 EMS services participating in Saskatchewan in the Teddy Bear children's program right now."

Teddy Bears symbolize hope for hospitalized children

Lawrence explains the teddy bears' purpose is to help sick children in the hospital.

"Sick children are always a sensitive thing for most people because you can't protect them from diseases. Our bears are exactly that. They're in hospitals and EMS, so our bears are SHA approved. It is a special application and it is dear to our hearts. They are cello sealed and sterile, we order them directly from the factory so the children can keep them in surgery with them."

"We're really targeting the EMS right now. We pretty well have the hospitals blanketed. We have Saskatoon and Regina as our two hubs in the province, but we would like to get more bears out to the rural EMS because children are transported to pediatrics and it is nice to give them a bear sometimes because it is quite a journey."

17 years of Teddy Bears Anonymous

Lawrence says the charity continues to grow each year.

"We are into our 17th year because it is now 2025 and 205,000 kids have received our bears so far. That number keeps getting bigger."

"Every time we order a bear from the factory we can increase that number



Erin Lawrence
Daughter of Luke Lawrence, the founder and president of Teddy Bears Anonymous

by 15,000-20,000 and we ordered two shipments of bears last year because the demand was skyrocketing. There was the pandemic, the flu, there is a big demand for what we do."

He says their goal is to have teddy bears accessible for all EMS services.

"We haven't even got all the EMS on the program, I believe there are 250 in the province, there is a lot and we only have a fraction of them so our goal is to reach out to as many of them as we can."

"Right now, the money for them is being funded provincially from companies, personal donations, we don't get a lot of out-of-province donations so we keep the money where it comes from—in the province."

Overwhelmed by support

Lawrence says he is surprised by the amount of support for the first Southeast Rural Teddy Bears Anonymous online auction.

"It is overwhelming. We were shocked with the numbers from the Southeast Saskatchewan Teddy Bears Anonymous this year."

"Teddy Bears Anonymous has a personal connection to the Rocanville area and the Southeast Integrated Care Centre in Moosomin—it was the first rural hospital on the Teddy Bears sick children program and the third hospital in the province to come online, so it's special."

"I was told by a parent, 'To many it is just a bear, but to a sick child it is so much more than that. It is a hand to hold in the middle of the night while you're being rolled into surgery, a warm hug when you fall asleep in an OR, it is a soft touch when you wake up feeling anything but yourself, it is a friend that never lets you down it shows up, it is hope, it is love, it is so much more than a bear' and that is true, and that is

one of the parents that sent us that quote. It sums it up. "It is a scary thing for children because mom and dad can't go into surgery, but these teddy bears will go anywhere in the hospital whether it be diagnostic testing, pediatrics, children's ward, and emergency services. We try to blanket all areas, diagnostic testing, MRI, and CT. It is a scary thing for kids for sure."

Lawrence says he is thankful for the donations toward the Southeast Rural Teddy Bears Anonymous charity.

Continued on Page 11



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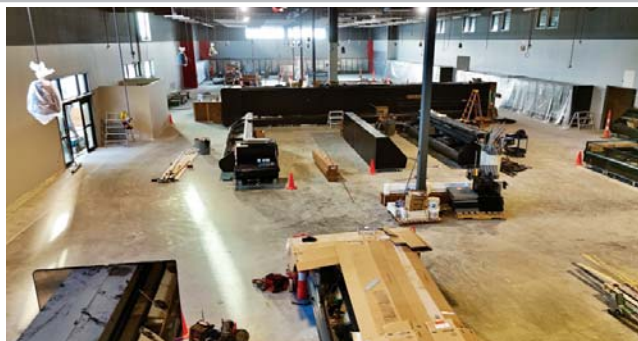
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The Borderland Co-op food store under construction a year ago, at left and currently, at right. The store is slated to open in the spring, in mid-April at the earliest.

Co-op food store in Moosomin on track for spring opening

BY NICOLE TAYLOR

Borderland Co-op's new Moosomin Food Store is under budget at this point and is on track for an opening in the spring of 2025.

Borderland Co-op has been working on the new

30,000-square-foot grocery store in Moosomin since November of 2023.

The new store will be double the size of the current store.

Continued on Page 16

Charity founder happy with online auction

Continued from Page 10

"I just want to thank Linda and Donna for organizing the Southeast Teddy Bears Anonymous.

"It is the first time they have done the Southeast Rural Teddy Bears Anonymous online auction and the community support was overwhelming.

"I want to reach out to everybody and say, thank you, for that. They raised \$7,000 and that is huge and very successful and every \$5 of that purchases one factory cello sealed and sterile teddy bear for a sick child in Saskatchewan."

See related story on page 9:
Southeast Teddy Bears Anonymous raises \$7,000

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STARS thanked with donation at wedding

After they saved her life in 2014, Jillian Easton invites STARS to her wedding and makes donation on behalf of her family and guests

Continued from Page 7

"We had a STARS crew member come to our wedding. He had a big cheque there with the donation on it, and my maid of honor introduced the crew member and told my story about how STARS saved my life, and I remember when she was doing the speech, the whole floor was silent. You could hear a pin drop, and you could see jaws drop."

She says many people don't understand how crucial the STARS air ambulance service is.

"It's something I never thought I'd use and it's something you just never know, it could be your neighbor, it could be your parents, it could be your best friend, but you just never know when you are going to need it, and they are always there."

"We were in the STARS calendar one year and have done photoshoots for them and advertisements. I've met my flight crew and when my oldest son was younger, we'd go to the STARS base all the time and do a tour. I always liked to show the kids the helicopter that saved me."

"That doesn't happen every day that a surviving patient can come back."

A special night for STARS

Darren Entner is a Clinical Operations Manager with STARS, and the one who was invited to Jillian's wedding.

"We transported Jillian many, many years ago. I actually had the opportunity to take care of her dad as well when he had his medical issues as well when he was in Regina, so I've known the Easton family for quite some time," he says.

"I was incredibly honored that she would even think of us. We've crossed paths with the Easton family many times since that initial meeting with her and her family. And we've crossed paths in many different venues. And when she reached out and asked if we would be able to come to her wedding, I actually had to switch a shift so I could go, but I was very honored that they would think of us, and to not only be willing to donate some of their funds from their wedding, but also just to invite us as well. It was just an honor to be there."

"Each one of our patients that we fly, we call the VIPs, or very important patients. And there are some that become more than just the patient that we flew. And we always encourage patients to come back and meet their crew who flew them and see the aircraft, because often when we fly them, the people aren't aware that

they had been in a helicopter. And sometimes that's very nice for us in the health care profession as well. Sometimes it provides closure, or feedback to see how they've done. It's very nice for us to see those patients and I feel that the patients get a lot out of it as well."

"We meet people most times on their worst days, so then to be able to put some of the pieces together and see what happened is nice, and we can explain to them not only how the aircraft works and how we would get to their certain incident. That can actually help the patient a lot and provide them with some closure."

"It's incredibly rewarding, it's one of the best parts of our job, to see the fruits of our labor, the work that we put in on a day to day basis with our education and constant training. And to provide those patients with their best chance on their worst day and then see somebody who was incredibly sick or had potential to not do so well, and then we can go out and bring that experience, training and high level of care to a patient in all parts of Saskatchewan, not just in the major centres—it's pretty rewarding to have them come back with their families."

"Jillian is an excellent example of that. Now you see her with her two sons and getting married. And I remember her as a young girl coming in and being so thankful to see us and now she has a wonderful family."

"It was a pretty neat full circle moment. Because I distinctly remember the first time we met Jillian and her family. We have an annual Saskatchewan versus Manitoba hockey game and the first time we met them, we met them in Moosomin. We were driving through and stopped for supper and I think either she saw that we had some STARS gear and her mom or dad came over and asked if we were from STARS and we were able to explain that we were there and flew her, and that was the start of our relationship and we've had a great one ever since."

Entner says he does not recall anyone with STARS ever being invited to a wedding of STARS patient before.

"In my 12 years of being here, I think that is the first one that I've personally attended. It was cool to be invited and cool to be there. It was a great night. It was nice, I got to sit with the Easton family. I honestly felt like it was just a very special, special night for a lot of people, and me being one of them. It was great to be there and feel very honored how well they spoke about us. It was a great, great night."



Bride Jillian Easton and groom Eric Kuzek presenting the cheque to Darren Entner with STARS.



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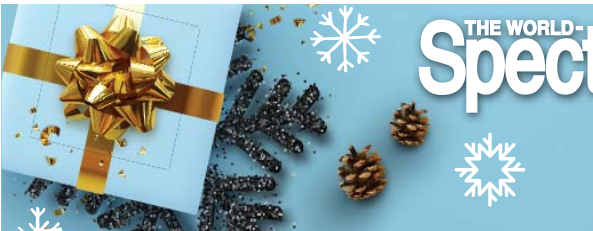
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Co-op food store in Moosomin on track for spring opening

Continued from Page 11

Once the new store opens the current grocery store will be demolished and the parking lot will be expanded.

Borderland General Manager Jason Schenn says mid-April would be the earliest the new store will open. "We will close down business in the old store one day and open up for business up in the new store the next day," he said. "We will have a whole transition team moving product into this building. There will be a constant stream for a week or so until we empty the old store and then we will auction off the equipment and start demolition."

Schenn says the new grocery store will employ more people from the surrounding area.

"We are going to have around 60 employees in the new building. The management are now working for us and on site, so they're getting up to speed with things. Then, operations will just continue there until they can start getting in here and setting up their spaces."

Schenn says he is excited to be part of such a large project.

"I am very excited," he said. "This is by far the biggest project we have taken on since I have been with Borderland. It is one of those generational projects that we hope is going to last a long time. This one is hopefully going to have a lot of positive

impact on our branch locations as well."

He said many local contractors are working on the project.

"Tag's is working on mechanical, they are coming out of Esterhazy, Tom's Electric is doing the electrical, Wall-Eye is doing all of our interiors, GeeBee out of Kipling are doing the ground work which is local to us as they're part of Borderland's area, CCR is our general contractor. As much as we can keep local, we do."

The interior work is ongoing, but there is a delay due to the pending arrival of the main distribution power panel, which was originally supposed to arrive in December.

"Everything in this project is planned and connected, so when something is delayed, it affects everything else. The rest of the equipment and materials all have arrivals dates, it's just the main panel we are waiting on," said Schenn.

"We'll just have to see if the delay disrupts anything else along the way."

"If the guys run out of things to do between now and when the panel arrives, all the stuff that has to get done gets pushed back."

Schenn said Thursday that he is proud the project is under budget at this point.

"It looks like we could come in up to \$1 million under budget, and that's something I'm very proud of," he said.

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Southeast Teddy Bears Anonymous online auction raises \$7,000

Continued from Page 9

It was amazing. We didn't realize it was going to grow as big as it did. We had 166 items in our online auction. Our community is just amazing. People are just so generous."

Lots of work

Stanhope says the group will be looking for more help for next year. "If anybody wants to help next year, contact Linda! We would love the help," she said.

Machniak adds, "For two people it was an incredible amount of work. We had a little bit of outside help with helping set up the auction online because we had never done anything like that before."

Creating awareness

Machniak says their goal was to create awareness of the Teddy Bears Anonymous charity across Southeast Saskatchewan. "A lot of people don't know about Teddy

Bears Anonymous and that was part of the reason why I wanted to do this was to bring awareness to the Southeast rural area about the charity.

Stanhope explains the provincial charity celebrates 16 years this year.

"Also, Luke Lawrence, the organizer of all of Teddy Bears Anonymous, told us Moosomin hospital was the first rural hospital that had teddy bears. It also has been a provincial charity for the past 17 years."

Machniak adds, "When we started this a few months ago, the province had already gifted over 200,000 teddy bears to kids. That is a lot and it's just amazing."

Stanhope says they are surprised and overwhelmed by the amount of support from the area. "We definitely didn't think we would raise \$7,000 either on our first fundraiser for Southeast Saskatchewan. We didn't have an idea. It went really well and we are so thankful."



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Reflecting on 2024 and looking forward to 2025

As we start on a new year, I am filled with gratitude for the people of our riding, and optimism for the future of our Moosomin-Montmartre constituency and the province of Saskatchewan.

A Year of Change and Progress

In October 2024, I had the honor of being elected as your representative in the Legislative Assembly. This opportunity allows me to serve the community that has been my home for decades—a community where I raised my family, built my career, built my business, and where Kara and I have built our lives.

Looking back, I'm amazed at what has happened in my life in the past year, and particularly in the last few months.

Six months ago, I had never considered entering politics. It was only after Moosomin MLA Steven Bonk decided to leave provincial politics and run federally, and after many people suggested I would be a good MLA that I decided to let my name stand.

August was spent running for the Saskatchewan Party nomination. The whole process was a lot of fun, and I met a lot of new people. At the beginning I was just heading into towns where I knew no one, walking into businesses, knocking on doors, sitting down at coffee row and introducing myself, and it was a great experience. The amount of work involved was eye-opening, as we sold memberships from one corner of the riding to the other and motivated our supporters to get to the nomination meeting and vote. All that hard work paid off as I was nominated as the Saskatchewan Party candidate on September 10.

The next day I was in Regina at SaskParty headquarters for election training as we had a few short weeks to prepare for the provincial election called in early October. We were in full election mode right away. We were fortunate to have a strong group of volunteers across the riding help with the election campaign. Again, I had a blast! We held campaign rallies, attended a provincial rally with a strong showing from Moosomin-Montmartre, attended events in communities across the riding, and spent every day meeting people by door knocking or just going business to business in each town. We hosted a big get-together to watch the results roll in on Election Night, October 28, and again all the hard work paid off and I became the MLA for Moosomin-Montmartre.

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate every single person who worked on the nomination race and in the



election campaign. It was absolutely amazing to see the support.

And since being elected, it has been a whirlwind. I have represented the province at multiple events in Regina and Saskatoon, and I have been at events in communities across the constituency.

I have been honored to welcome many guests to the Saskatchewan Legislature in November and December. I hosted a large group of supporters for my swearing-in as MLA and another group for the Throne Speech. I was honored to introduce the Grades 7 and 8 classes from Chief Kahkewistahaw Community School in the Legislature. I was honored to introduce Victor Santos Cardoza in the Legislature and present a member statement about his family's struggle to stay in Canada and his accomplishment as the youngest person ever elected to Moosomin town council, and I was thrilled to introduce former longtime SARM president Sinc Harrison in the Legislative Assembly. After I gave my Member Statement, Sinc received a standing ovation from members on both sides of the Assembly.

My days are very busy when I am in Regina. I am honored to serve as Deputy Government Whip (which includes a lot of responsibilities and makes the days fly by when we are in session) and to serve on the Cabinet Committee on the Economy, the Standing Committee on the Economy, the House Services Committee, the Board of Internal Economy, and the Caucus Management Committee.

But the most enjoyable part of my new role as MLA is meeting people around the riding and around the province. I have been honored to meet political leaders from around the province and all sorts of interesting people

from every industry and walk of life, the entire boards of the Southeast Cornerstone and Prairie Valley School Divisions, and so many more. I have been to events from one end of the riding to the other, I have ridden on a train across our riding, I have been at a gala in Saskatoon to help settle young Afghan women in that city—I have been to so many events in Regina it makes my head spin thinking about all of them.

And every day I'm working for my constituents. Charlene Easton is doing an amazing job running the constituency office, and we are both working hard for you!

Keeping Saskatchewan Affordable

The Saskatchewan Affordability Act and ongoing annual indexation are two ways the Government of Saskatchewan is taking action to ensure the province remains the most affordable place in Canada.

Every year our government adjusts the provincial income tax brackets and basic tax credits to protect Saskatchewan citizens from the rising cost of inflation, which is also known as indexation. This provides safeguards against the inflationary pressures that would otherwise push taxpayers into higher tax brackets and reduce the actual value of tax credits. Given the current affordability concerns, it is important we take these steps to help make life more affordable for the people of Saskatchewan.

The level of indexation in 2025 will be 2.7 per cent, which matches the annual average national inflation rate from October 2023 to September 2024. In 2025, Saskatchewan residents will see \$40.5 million in annual tax savings from indexation.

A family of four will not pay any Saskatchewan income tax on the first \$63,200 of their income, which is the highest tax-free threshold for a family of four anywhere in Canada.

Indexation was also incorporated into The Saskatchewan Affordability Act, which was recently passed in the Legislative Assembly. The commitments in The Saskatchewan Affordability Act are in addition to the more than \$2 billion in affordability measures already included in the provincial budget.

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns. You can reach my constituency office at 306-435-4005, email office@kevinweedmark.ca or stop in at the office at 622 Main Street, Moosomin.

Year in Review

Ag Minister Daryl Harrison says Premier's visit a highlight in Cannington

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A year in review with Saskatchewan's new Minister of Agriculture needs to begin with a look at what 2024 was like in agriculture.

"We had an average to slightly above that average crop, so that was good," Cannington MLA and Minister of Agriculture Daryl Harrison reported, adding that cattle winter feed stocks and water supplies are good. "It's been a pretty decent year in the Cannington area. It's better than some areas, so I think everybody's very thankful for what they received, for precipitation, and their crops.

"Of course, like most producers—myself included—I always want a few more bales off that quarter and a few more cents for the calves when I send them to market," he continued, with a laugh. "But overall, I'm very pleased about the prices I received here this fall—better than it has been the past years, and with all these winter precipitation events coming through it shows us that the patterns are there. We'll look forward to a good rainfall in the spring and get our crops off to a good start in 2025."

In late August, Harrison had the opportunity to tour Premier Scott Moe around Cannington, making for a busy day.

"We stopped and saw the new RM office at Tecumseh in the town of Stoughton, E. Bourassa in Carlyle—they're celebrating 100 years in business, which is a huge milestone," Harrison said.

The duo also visited the Southeast Butcher Block in Alameda, where Harrison later had the chance to attend the business' grand opening.

"It's just a great facility, and a huge congratulations to them and all the work they put into getting that built," he said.

"In Oxbow, we had a quick lunch with the local municipal and town councils there, and then we shot up to Redvers to the new Kubota building," Harrison explained. "The dealership there has been around for a few years, but they constructed a new building so it's a top shelf facility."

"We stopped in Wawota and ended up meeting with some local officials and some administration there, and then did the same at Kipling to round out the day," he continued. "So it was great day. It's great to get the premier down in the southeast and show him what we're all about!"

There are a couple things that Harrison is really looking forward to in his riding.

"In Cannington, there's a few more drilling rig derricks sticking up, so the oil and gas industry is looking pretty



Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister and Cannington MLA Daryl Harrison at Redvers Ag in August with Premier Scott Moe, and the Dangstorp family, the owners of the new Redvers Ag Kubota dealership in Redvers.

strong," he said.

"From what I'm told from workers and contractors, they're really looking forward—and I can't emphasize that enough in light of yesterday's events in Ottawa—really looking forward to a new government in Ottawa.

They feel that there's a lot of investment dollars that aren't coming into the oil and gas industry because of the actions of Prime Minister Trudeau and his Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault and of course, supported by the NDP."

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Weaker demand for large farm equipment to pressure sales and prices in 2025: FCC report

After a strong start to the year for large equipment sales, a slowdown is anticipated in the farm equipment market. With falling commodity prices, high operating costs and lower profits, farms are placing a greater emphasis on their price per acre equipment costs according to Farm Credit Canada's (FCC) 2025 outlook for the Canadian farm equipment market.

"Farmers are looking for cost saving measures including delaying purchases and planning to further reduce equipment costs," said Leigh Anderson, FCC senior economist. "But as demand slows and prices adjust, there may be opportunities for producers who are looking to invest in new farm equipment."

The year began with a surge in demand for large farm equipment, particularly combines and 4WD tractors. New combine sales in the first half of 2024 saw a five-year high, and 4WD tractor sales trailed only slightly behind 2021 sales. A slowdown in sales in the United States allowed manufacturers to send more pre-orders to Canada earlier. Usually, the Canadian combine market sees the most sales in the second half of the year.

This burst of activity is not expected to last through the remainder of the year and into 2025. However, the decline



in new farm equipment sales is expected to be less severe than in 2024, and sales of 4WD tractors should stay above the five-year average.

The early arrival of new equipment has led to an increase in trade-ins, injecting a considerable volume of used equipment into the market, particularly used combines. It's estimated total used combine sales have dropped by 18 per cent compared to the same period last year. Smaller used horsepower tractor sales are down 40 per cent, and sales of used seeding and planting equipment have declined by 23 per cent year over year. Lower sales of used seeding and planting equipment mark a slowdown compared to the previous year.

In the United States, farm equipment manufacturers have reduced production to align with lower demand. In Canada, manufacturing sales have fallen 8.7 per cent compared to last year, and new orders are down 9.2 per cent, suggesting sales will continue to decrease.

"The trends to monitor as we go into 2025 are equipment prices, farm revenue, interest rates and the Canadian dollar," said Anderson. "Lower interest rates combined with strong revenues in select sectors could make it a great time to invest in new equipment as it's more affordable per acre. But a lower Canadian dollar could increase imported equipment prices."



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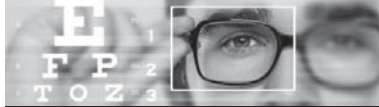
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THE WORLD-Spectator

Sask lentils a hot item in United Arab Emirates

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The United Arab Emirates continues to be a hot market for Saskatchewan lentils, according to numbers released regarding grain exports to that market. From January to October of 2024, the province exported \$322 million worth of agri-food products to the UAE, marking a 19 per cent increase over the year previous.

"Any time we get the opportunity to grow a market, the better off it is for our producers here in the province, because we rely heavily on exports and having an increase like that is just invaluable," said provincial Agriculture Minister Daryl Harrison. "We have to not only appreciate that, but we have to work on maintaining and growing that. The long and the short of it is, we produce the food the world needs. It's a growing population, and we're here to feed them."

More than half of those exports to the UAE were lentils, which saw a 31 per cent increase over the same time as 2023. Over that 10-month span this year, the province exported \$174 million in lentils alone, making them the top agri-food export to the UAE this year. Other top exports included canola (\$56 million) and non-durum wheat (\$33 million).

"I think producers are going to examine their crop rotations, and there's lots of variables," Harrison said when asked if the jump in the pulse crop might have growers considering a change in what they seed come spring. "It's no different this coming growing season than others, they'll factor in the cost of each crop, the potential market and all that. From a provincial government standpoint, our trade offices around the world are just paying off hugely. We have to not only sustain the markets we have and grow them, but we have to find new markets as well."

One target in the province's 2030 Growth Plan was to hit \$20 billion in agri-food exports, which has been surpassed. Last year not only marked the fourth year in a row where Saskatchewan hit record agri-food exports, but total shipments came to \$20.2 billion.

"It's quality and quantity of crop, and reliability," Harrison said. "We have to make sure we can get our product to our buyers when they need it."

Producers a few decades ago likely wouldn't even have consider such a market, let alone imagine such export numbers.

"You think back 50 years ago and it was a completely different world," Harrison said. "We were the bread basket and that's kind of what we grew. We grew wheat and we grew feed for livestock. The transformation when you look back on it, it's hard to believe, but it's growing by leaps and bounds. I can't be more proud of our producers here in the province."

Another local voice couldn't agree more. "Saskatchewan's network of International Trade and Investment offices, including our UAE office, are essential for Saskatchewan producers to expand access into new global markets," Trade and Export Development Minister Warren Kaeding said. "It is more important than ever to diversify and grow our export markets. Our province's producers provide the food and energy security the world needs. I look forward to continuing to build on our relationship with the UAE and further increase bilateral trade, bringing new investment and creating more jobs for Saskatchewan people."

Combined exports for 2022 and 2023 totalled \$102 billion, up over 52 per cent from the previous two-year timeframe, and the top export numbers in the history of Saskatchewan.

LAND FOR SALE BY TENDER

Sealed, written tenders for the property described below will be received by:

Meighen Haddad LLP
129 Souris Street
P.O. Box 397
Melita Manitoba
ROM 1L0
Attention: Karen Beauchamp

PROPERTY:

S ½ 7-3-28 WPM excluding mines and minerals (SW ¼ - approximately 164.18 acres) (SE ¼ approximately 160 acres)

Subject to surface lease agreement and pipeline caveat to remain on title. Surface lease has been reclaimed

1 - 2700 bushel bin, 5 strand barbed wire fence around the entire half section, 1 dug out, 290 acres under cultivation

Bids must be for the entire half section.

CONDITIONS OF TENDER:

- Interested parties must rely on their own inspection and knowledge of the property and not on the above or any other particulars or representations made by or on behalf of the Seller.
- Tenders must be received on or before 5:00 p.m. on **February 14, 2025** in an envelope marked "TENDER".
- Each tender must be accompanied by a **\$5,000.00** deposit cheque payable to Meighen Haddad LLP. Deposits accompanying unaccepted bids will be refunded.
- Highest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SALE

- The bidder whose tender is accepted will be required to complete an agreement covering terms and conditions of sale.
- The closing date of the sale shall be **March 25, 2025** on which date the Vendors shall provide a registerable Transfer of title to the Purchaser and the Purchaser shall pay the balance of the accepted tender. If the balance of the accepted tender is not paid within the set time limit or acceptable arrangements for payment have not been made, the deposit paid may be forfeited as liquidated damages and not as a penalty.
- All mines and minerals will be reserved from any Transfer.
- Land is in the Torren's Title system.
- Successful bidders will be responsible for real property taxes commencing **January 1, 2025**.

For further information contact
204-634-2425 or 306-482-7218

Meighen Haddad LLP

LAW FIRM

LAND FOR SALE BY TENDER

Sealed, written tenders for the property described below will be received by:

Meighen Haddad LLP
129 Souris Street
P.O. Box 397
Melita Manitoba
ROM 1L0
Attention: Karen Beauchamp

PROPERTY:

Parcel 1: All that Portion of NE 1/4 2-2-26 WPM which lies North of Rly Plan 16 BLTO B0 Div excluding mines and minerals (approximately 114 acres)

Parcel 2: SE 1/4 11-2-26 WPM excluding mines and minerals (approximately 160 acres)

Surface leases in the process of reclamation but no equipment exists on the land and the lease sites are all workable. Tenderor will be entitled to any future payments, if any. Caveats will continue on title until reclamation is completed and pursuit of the removal of the Caveats to be the responsibility of the Tenderor. Both parcels are subject to an Underground Powerline Agreement.

Bids may be submitted for the entire package or an individual quarter section. Bidders for multiple parcels should break down the amount offered for each parcel.

CONDITIONS OF TENDER:

- Interested parties must rely on their own inspection and knowledge of the property and not on the above or any other particulars or representations made by or on behalf of the Seller.
- Tenders must be received on or before 5:00 p.m. on **February 21, 2025** in an envelope marked "TENDER".
- Each tender must be accompanied by a **\$5,000.00** deposit cheque payable to Meighen Haddad LLP. Deposits accompanying unaccepted bids will be refunded.
- Highest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SALE

- The bidder whose tender is accepted will be required to complete an agreement covering terms and conditions of sale.
- The closing date of the sale shall be **April 1, 2025** on which date the Vendors shall provide a registerable Transfer of title to the Purchaser and the Purchaser shall pay the balance of the accepted tender. If the balance of the accepted tender is not paid within the set time limit or acceptable arrangements for payment have not been made, the deposit paid may be forfeited as liquidated damages and not as a penalty.
- All mines and minerals will be reserved from any Transfer.
- Land is in the Torren's Title system.
- Successful bidders will be responsible for real property taxes commencing **January 1, 2025**.

For further information contact
204-673-2538

Meighen Haddad LLP

LAW FIRM

LAND FOR SALE BY TENDER

Sealed, written tenders for the property described below will be received by:

Meighen Haddad LLP
129 Souris Street
P.O. Box 397
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Attention: Karen Beauchamp

PROPERTY:

Parcel 1:
SW 1/4 23-1-28 WPM EXC ALL MINES AND MINERALS
Including two steel bins to be empty by July 15, 2025

Parcel 2:
NW 1/4 14-1-28 WPM EXC ALL MINES AND MINERALS RESERVED IN THE ORIGINAL GRANT FROM THE CROWN

Parcel 3:
LEGAL SUBDIVISIONS 15 AND 16 AND THE NORTH 1/2 OF NORTH 1/2 OF LEGAL SUBDIVISIONS 9 AND 10 OF SECTION 15-1-28 WPM EXC ALL MINES AND MINERALS

Parcel 4:
E 1/2 OF SECTION 22-1-28 WPM EXC ALL MINES AND MINERALS
Including 43 x 80 steel Quonset, 40 x 60 steel shed, house built in 1964, all to be empty by closing.

One surface lease to be assigned to successful Tenderor. Half section sold together and not as individual quarters.

Tenders can be for individual parcels or more than one parcel.
If tendering on more than one parcel, please indicate the amount offered for each parcel.

CONDITIONS OF TENDER:

- Interested parties must rely on their own inspection and knowledge of the property and not on the above or any other particulars or representations made by or on behalf of the Seller.
- Tenders must be received on or before 5:00 p.m. on **January 24, 2025** in an envelope marked "TENDER".
- Each tender must be accompanied by a **\$2,500.00** deposit cheque payable to Meighen Haddad LLP. Deposits accompanying unaccepted bids will be refunded.
- Highest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SALE

- The bidder whose tender is accepted will be required to complete an agreement covering terms and conditions of sale.
- The closing date of the sale shall be **April 30, 2025** on which date the Vendors shall provide a registerable Transfer of title to the Purchaser and the Purchaser shall pay the balance of the accepted tender. If the balance of the accepted tender is not paid within the set time limit or acceptable arrangements for payment have not been made, the deposit paid may be forfeited as liquidated damages and not as a penalty.
- All mines and minerals will be reserved from any Transfer.
- Land is in the Torren's Title system.
- Successful bidders will be responsible for real property taxes commencing **January 1, 2025**.

For further information contact Carey Murray at 204-264-0342

Meighen Haddad LLP

LAW FIRM

SGI Traffic Safety Fund grants benefit local municipalities Redvers approved for \$63,000 traffic project

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The latest round of Traffic Safety Fund grants have been approved and disbursed to 79 communities across the province with around \$1.6 million going towards 82 projects. Locally, 10 municipalities were approved for a total of \$165,377 under the twice annual grant.

Local municipalities that received grants include Redvers, Kipling, Wawota, Whitewood, Spy Hill, the RM of Antler, the RM of Rocanville.

"There are hundreds of municipalities in Saskatchewan, and every community has specific needs," Minister Responsible for SGI Jeremy Harrison said. "These grants are extremely beneficial because they fund safety improvements directly identified by each community."

The majority of projects funded (around 75 per cent) targeted speeders, ranging from the installation of speed bumps, the addition of speed trackers, and speed display signs in many communities. Funds granted ranged from \$197 to the maximum \$100,000, with the Town of Redvers receiving the highest amount of funding dollars locally for a \$63,542 School Zone Project applied for last September. The project centres on the installation of four sets of flashing crosswalks on Broadway Street to not only allow pedestrians—especially students—a safe crossing, but also make traffic aware of those crossing.

"With the school zone near Highway 13, traffic enters at high speeds from the intersections," noted Town of Redvers Assistant CAO Jena Cowan in her application. "There are long stretches of roadway without stop or yield signs, and traffic gains speed in these areas despite it being a posted school zone of 30 km/hr."

To mitigate those speeders choosing to ignore the posted speed limit, Cowan also proposed installing rubber speed bumps in the problem areas around the school.

"Many families with young children feel nervous to send their children to school on foot, based on the heavy high school student traffic, as well as other residents on their way to work in the morning," Cowan noted, adding that those parents would rather drive their children to and from school instead. "Installing crosswalks to increase visibility, and speed bumps to slow down traffic will give parents the peace of mind they should have residing in a small community such as ours."

Broadway Street is also a route that larger vehicles utilize, adding to the safety concerns for younger pedestrians.

"We have a lot of semis going down Main Street to deliver to our businesses at all times of the day," Cowan said. "So we thought about our main intersections on Broadway Street for the students walking to school to be able to cross safely."

The speed bumps are also removable, allowing them to be utilized in other areas if needed. Current plans are to remove the speed bumps during the summer months when students are not in school.

"We've got some other options for some, more high-density residential areas," Cowan said. "A lot of our kids like to play street hockey, so in those areas that we see that trend, we could maybe in the summer months move them over there."

She was quite grateful for the Traffic Safety Fund grants, which allow projects to happen in municipalities that might not otherwise see those funding dollars.

"Projects like this are very easy to push off because something bigger came up, so we're lucky that this funding is available, because without it, this wouldn't be happening this year," she said. "When it comes to traffic safety, budget is such a poor excuse—especially if something happens."

As for future projects around the school area, Cowan would like to focus on upgrading the sidewalk in order to improve accessibility.

"That's what a lot of our projects have been as well lately, is to make sure that they are accessible, especially because we have wheelchair users in our school," Cowan explained.

RM of Antler receives \$16,052

In the RM of Antler, their project is Advanced Warning Light Beacons for Fire Truck Safety, which received \$16,052 in funding.

"It's a flashing beacon system put along Number 8 Highway to alert people to stop or give way to the fire truck when it's trying to leave the fire hall," explained RM

of Antler Administrator Jocelyne Toms-Delmaire.

The initial application sought two such signs, but the RM was approved for one.

"We find at times that they're stuck at the stop sign, trying to get out on the highway, and people keep going on by and ignoring the fire trucks," said Toms-Delmaire, adding that the visibility of the flashing beacon—which can only be activated during a fire call—will allow crews to arrive on-scene even faster.

Kipling receives \$7,953

The Town of Kipling's Speed Management Initiative

funding grew from a resident concern regarding speeding motorists on Fourth Street brought forward to Town Council. While the original plan was to install speed bumps, council decided to move forward with applying for signage instead.

"We received a grant of \$7,953, and it is the third time we have received a grant from the SGI provincial traffic safety fund," Mayor Pat Jackson explained. "This time, what we are doing is we are getting four portable speed signs."

Continued on Page 24



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SGL Traffic Safety Fund grants benefit local municipalities

Continued from Page 23

The portability of the signage was an attractive option as it can be moved and used in various areas easily, especially since the lights are solar-powered.

"The idea, of course, with solar is we don't have to string cables out and cords out to have them actually work," Mayor Jackson said.

Spy Hill receives \$7,500

The Village of Spy Hill was the recipient of \$7,500 for their Speed Management project, focused on slowing down speeders on the 600 Grid with a flashing speed awareness sign. Village Councillor Allan Perrin noted the frequency of high-speed traffic led to their municipality meeting with the Esterhazy RCMP and applying for the traffic safety grant.

"It's not just the children that we're concerned with, there's people of all ages—children, older, people, younger, all types, go walking down that street," Perrin said, adding it's not uncommon to see vehicles travel in excess of 100 km/hr through Spy Hill, despite a posted 40 km/hr speed limit.

Without a funding source like the traffic safety grant, Perrin says such a project simply wouldn't happen.

"Our income is tax based, and smaller communities such as Spy Hill, I think we're all in the same position that every dollar is spent almost before we get it," he said. "So as far as we taking this on without the help of SGL, no, it wouldn't have happened."

RM of Rocanville receives \$8,944

The RM of Rocanville received \$8,944 for their Speed Signs for Safety project. Signage will be installed just north of Rocanville in an area noted as a concern for speeding traffic entering the RM.

Reeve Melissa Ruhland noted that the idea evolved from a community meeting held in early 2024.

"One of the questions from a ratepayer that had come out was about speeding on that section of highway," she said. "So the RM took that forward, we wrote a letter and applied for the grant."

The portion of roadway in question is a 60 km/hr zone with vehicle traffic routinely travelling in excess of that posted speed limit.

"There's lots of foot traffic, lots of walkers use that stretch and there's quite a few houses along there as well," Ruhland said. "We're just hoping that will make it a bit safer, and help increase awareness of what the speed actually is."

The new project is also another way to strengthen the working relationship between both municipalities.

"We try to work with the town as much as we can," said Ruhland. "This is something that we can do that is good not only for the RM, but it's good for the town because it will directly impact the community there."

This is the second time the RM of Rocanville has secured funding for a traffic safety initiative as a previous signage project took place near Ste-Marthe-Rocanville.

"We similarly had put some speed signs outside of Ste. Marthe on each side of the hamlet there itself as well," Ruhland said. "With the all the traffic that goes to the mine and those houses are really close by the road, I think it's been a very welcome addition."

Whitewood receives \$11,552

The Town of Whitewood received \$11,552 for their Lalonde Street Speed Awareness project. The radar signage on Lalonde Street marks the third time Whitewood has received a grant from the traffic safety fund.

Wawota receives \$10,198

The town of Wawota received \$10,198 for their Speed Management project, something Mayor Kevin Kay says will assist in keeping the community safe.

"Signage is a big deal here," he said. "It's about keeping people aware of what's going on, recognizing that traffic is starting to pick up as population grows here in Wawota, and just wanting to keep our citizens safe."

Kay also agreed that the traffic fund is quite helpful for communities to implement additional safety measures without affecting the current budget.

"It'll help us significantly," he said.

Montmartre receives \$9,186

The Village of Montmartre received \$9,186 for their Speed Awareness and Management project, something Administrator Dale Brenner anticipates will curb speeding from traffic entering the community.

"I'm glad we got it," he said of the grant. "It's always good to try and make people aware of their speeds."

The new solar-powered signage will be a welcome addition to traffic mitigation efforts currently in place.

"We already have ones going through town on Highway 48, these are access roads coming into the municipality where there's a lot of traffic," Brenner explained. "You're coming in from a road that has a higher speed limit posting to where, all of a sudden, you're supposed to be down to 40 km/hr, and just making them aware to get speeds down."

Oxbow receives \$9,032

The Town of Oxbow was the lucky recipient of two portable speed awareness sign and trailer projects, each funded at \$9,032.

"They approved two trailers and then signs on those trailers, basically," explained Oxbow's Community Development Officer, Treena Mohrbutter. "I think it's going to be

great, because we have had concerns on certain roads, and then that way, we could move it around and see if it makes a difference."

Grenfell receives \$12,386

In Grenfell, the \$12,386 in funds the town received means the Keeping Pedestrians Safe project will become a reality.

"Half of our population in Grenfell is on the other side of the railway tracks going through," explained Mayor Mark Steinger. "It's going to make it a lot safer for the kids when they're going to school and the people crossing there. It's quite wonderful."

Funding for the flashing signage at the rail crossing through the provincial grant allowed the town to move forward with the project in a more expedient manner.

"If we had to pay for it, I don't know where down the

road we could do it," said Mayor Steinger. "This speeds it up and makes it a lot safer."

The Provincial Traffic Safety Fund grants use proceeds from photo speed enforcement, with some \$13.1 million distributed to 870 projects since 2019. Applications considered target traffic issues including speeding, impaired driving, distracted driving, occupant protection, intersection safety, aggressive driving, vulnerable road users, or medically-at-risk drivers.

Those applications are reviewed by a committee comprised of members from the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Prince Albert Grand Council, the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Highways, and SGL.

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15 years of the Kids in Ghana

After 15 years Diana Austin says the Kids in Ghana project has met most of its goals

BY ASHLEY BOCHEK

Dr. Diana Austin of Moosomin has spent the past 15 years helping children in Ghana, providing financial support through her Kids in Ghana project.

The program was set up to help provide a safe home and education to four young children who were forced out of fostering services in Ghana in 2009.

The interview with Diana follows:

Tell me a bit about yourself and how you first made a connection with Ghana.

I grew up in Moosomin and after high school, I went to Ghana on a six-month volunteer exchange program. I didn't really have any connection to Ghana before hand, but I wanted to go and volunteer. My aunt and family had been involved in a project when I was younger that had exposed me to this kind of stuff so right after high school I went to Ghana for six months in 2004, and I volunteered at Ashan. It was a good experience, but the hard part about it is that you come for six months as a volunteer and get a lot more out of the project you are working on. As a volunteer I think the experience in a way is more impactful. I wanted to translate that into a longer term thing, and then made the commitment once I was done my undergrad degree that I would come back. Then in 2009, after university I went back to Ghana for six months.

During that time the government had made some changes in requiring all children's homes and orphanages in the country to reduce the number of children in care. It was mostly the older ones who were going to be sent away. The way the system works is, for some children, both of their parents are deceased and they need care, but sometimes it is more of a foster program so their parents have time to get things together and create more stable situations to take them back when they have no family or friends to go to, but there were four kids, Antwi, Emmanuel, Victoria, and Agyenim, who didn't have safe and good homes to return to.

I had brought some money for a project to build a babies ward, but while I was there I realized it didn't seem as far ahead as I thought it was so I pulled back from that project. We decided that we had enough money then to support these four children for a year and we called it '4 Kids in Ghana.' Now, it has been 15 years we've been supporting those kids.

How did the Kids in Ghana program change over the years?

When I went, I was on a referral. I had been accepted into Med School, but I was in Ghana and then I wanted to finish the project I was doing before coming home. All of this was falling into place near the end of my trip, so initially we had to figure out a place for them to stay and there was a nearby village—you can walk to it—which is where Ashan Children's Home was. The Ashan Children's Home was on the outskirts of Kumasi and Kumasi is the second biggest city in Ghana.

In a nearby village there was a group of Americans who had a program and had a group of kids they were fostering and providing with a safe place to live, and education. I had contacted them to see if it was possible that they might be able to take on these four children. I had said I would provide financially for them, but just so they had a guardianship that was there in their country and they said 'Yes, that is fine.' It went okay, there was a different philosophy at their fostering place than ours, but overall the biggest thing was they had a safe place to stay.

A year into it, the day care was relocating to the coast and I didn't want to move the kids because even though they were no longer at Ashan, they were still close to the area they grew up in and knew. Relocating would take them away from a lifeline of connections and the cook that had worked with them, she was staying, her name was Vida. She offered to stay and look after the kids.

We initially had them renting a house and then that fell through and there was a period that was quite sketchy and



Agyenim visiting at Moosomin Lake

they were staying in this abandoned house while we were trying to sort something else out. Then, we ended up buying a house for them there. That was a big relief once we had that stabilized. For 22 years, Vida was their guardian and then they had a house over the years we have renovated.

Antwi was the oldest. He started high school when the project started and then after that he got a scholarship to a private school in Accra to study Human Resources and the others continued to finish their education. In 2010 Victoria had her son, Oliver, which was unplanned, and she took a little bit of a break from her studies, but then because we decided to support her through it, we renamed the project to the 'Kids in Ghana Project.'

Then, when Antwi was finished his Human Resource diploma he did the National Service which is a mandatory year after you finish post-secondary in Ghana. Then, he had wanted to come to Canada, to the University of Regina, and he was accepted, but then he was rejected twice for his visa application.

We initially had charitable status for Kids in Ghana through St. Mary's Parish, that is how we raised money to start the program, but in 2011 Canada changed the way the donations could be made and to whom, but a lot of people who had initially started supporting the program continued throughout even when they weren't getting that kind of thank you back. Around the same time, we were trying to get Antwi to go to Regina, we were also trying to reapply to the CRA to see if we could get charitable status for our program, so we eventually learned that since the program was supporting individuals, CRA doesn't accept that to be charitable status—you can't support individuals.

So we lost our charitable status.

Emmanuel, the second oldest, finished high school and went on to study at the University of Ghana where he did Education and Social Work and then he did his National Service. Victoria took a nursing diploma after high school, similar to a LPN program, and then after that she upgraded her math so she could apply to university. So she did a Bachelor of Science in Family Studies and she just completed that in August. Now, she is doing her National Service.

Then, the youngest sibling Agyenim completed his secondary education and did some different labour jobs. As they all finished their schooling and National Service, we then had a period of time to realize at what point was the support helpful or a hindrance because we kind of saw that need to support yourself is a big drive forward, so we began to realize that we needed to pull back a bit.

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Martin & Thevenot Family



A few photos of the Kids in Ghana who have been helped by Diana Austin and local supporters.



15 years of the Kids in Ghana

After 15 years Diana Austin says the Kids in Ghana project has met most of its goals

Continued from Page 25

When Antwi and Emmanuel finished their National Service, it was time for them to go out and look for work. We helped support Emmanuel after, since he was kind of on his own for a bit and wanted to get his drivers license—helping with smaller projects, but they were no longer getting any allowance or money for food like they were getting when they were in school. Now that Victoria is going to be done, and there is still Oliver left, we will continue to support Oliver, but I think I have got to the point where they are growing up now and realizing the time was ready for them to continue on their own.

We're also in the process of seeing if we can get Victoria here with a visa to help with child care through a child-caregiver program. I think in a way they would all love to come to Canada because even with education in Ghana, life is still very hard there. It is very hard to get ahead, but at the same time we can't bring them all here, so we need to have a plan. We are hopeful that maybe it will work for Victoria and then if she comes she may be eventually be able to bring Oliver over as well.

What have you learned through this process?

I have learned a lot. It was interesting because when we were going through the whole CRA thing it seemed a little unfair—you should be able to support individuals because in a way sometimes you can be a large scale charitable organization, the effect is so diluted over so many people, does it actually make a huge difference?

We definitely in these five individuals have absolutely changed the trajectory of their life, but it also puts a lot of pressure on the individuals. I have definitely made fumbles along the way and I sometimes think they had to do a lot on their own, when they were with Vida and transitioning and then there was so much stuff that wasn't ideal or how I would have liked to have laid it out because it wasn't really a thought-out plan. It was really just a reaction and response to what was happening.

I have learned a lot about how people here do care about other individuals. People cared and were invested and that helped them transition rather than giving to them something that doesn't have a name. Kevin and the World-Spectator have been amazing at always helping support and getting the word out. It has been very heartwarming to see the response from the community.

In retrospect, how does it make you feel looking back and seeing what you did and how far the project has come?

It is interesting. After I shared my last newsletter I heard from a lot of people—I wasn't even sure if they read the newsletter, but they sent an email congratulating us on all the work we have done and it feels good.

It would be nice if life was easier for them all now, but then again they are in better situations than they would be. I just know they still have a lot of struggles ahead and the hard part is the more you work within development work you realize the problems are really big and providing education for a limited time doesn't change that bigger picture.

I think sometimes I feel discouraged by that and wonder, 'Have we accomplished anything?' and then I look at it from more of an optimistic point of view and realize they now are in positions they wouldn't have been otherwise, and it is nice to see it at a point now where I can step back a little bit and let them go for it and stand on their own two feet.

You said you are working on getting Victoria over to Canada, is that what is next for the program or is there more you still wish to see with the kids?

It hasn't really changed dramatically aside from stopping asking people for ongoing support, but we haven't been providing financial support to Antwi and Emmanuel for a while. Now, we are trying to help Agyenim get some travel experience and life experience, we have helped him come here twice the last few summers to help him with that experience he can use when he is on his own.

We're hoping Victoria can get a visa to come and then we are going to continue to support Oliver. We aren't necessarily ending the project, but it will have a different way of operating.

It will be interesting if I do share any updates next year,

I am not sure, but the transition into not having a program, I am not entirely sure what it will look like, but we will be pulling back a little bit with those expectations for them, as well as our expectations for our donors and sponsors who have been part of the program.

How different are you as a person because of this program?

I am such a different person from when I started. I was a lot more naive, I had rose-coloured glasses, and I don't think I necessarily believed I could change the world, but

I think I have this optimism of 'if there is a will, there is a way,' and you have to respond.

I was potentially less pragmatic in my youth.

The irony is a lot of times people would think this will make me a better person, but perhaps maybe what it actually made me is a bit more realistic and pragmatic—I see now development work comes with a lot of work and challenges to keep going.

I now realize everything that is entailed with projects like The Kids in Ghana Project.

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