

CALGARY Street TALK

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APRIL 2007 VOL. 11 NO. 4

A SPARE CHANGE NEWSPAPER



TWO-PART HARMONY . . .

Calgary Street Talk photo by PAUL DROHAN

Damon, left, and Myles helped mark International Women's Day on March 8 by participating in a drumming circle in the Family Resource Centre at CUPS Community Health Centre. Coverage begins on page 3.

Vendor Code of Conduct

Calgary Street Talk vendors are proud of their newspaper and the people who sell it. They each sign a Code of Conduct that stresses the importance of a high standard in customer service because they realize that the conduct of one affects all the others. On occasion, certain persons obtain copies of *Calgary Street Talk* and sell them without authorization; this can be accompanied by undesirable behaviour. The authorized vendors and the publishers are anxious to eliminate such incidents. If you witness or experience any unacceptable behaviour, please report it directly to the offices of *Calgary Street Talk* at 221-8780.

Vendors Needed

Calgary Street Talk has openings for new vendors. If you are looking for a way to earn money while learning new skills, this is the job for you. We require our vendors to be genuinely interested in working and trying to improve their circumstances. We currently have a number of excellent locations available. For more information, please contact *Calgary Street Talk* at 221-8780.

Top Sellers

#07 Andie Wolf Leg took top honours for the month of March. **#381 Wade Ackerman** was the second top seller for the month followed by **#397 Lois Olson** in third. Thanks to support from a generous reader we are able to award a total of \$75 in Safeway gift certificates to our three top sellers in March.

Vendor Incentive Program

Vendor **#347 Barry M.** receives the Vendor Incentive Award for March and receives a \$25 food gift certificate.

We are dependent on supporters to donate to our Vendor Incentive Program. We like to award at least one \$25 food gift certificate to deserving vendors each month to recognize initiative, improved sales or to acknowledge participating in the Calgary Street Talk program.

For information about the Vendor Incentive Program please call 221-8674.

VENDOR BIRTHDAYS in April:

#09 Dennis E. April 20
#509 Barb R. April 25

Stampeder's McNeil will be busy in May



Jay McNeil with his wife, Tara, and son, Cuyler.

The Calgary Stampeder preseason training camp is usually a grueling and demanding time however Jay McNeil may find it less hectic than his schedule leading into camp which starts June 3.

May is going to be a busy month for the Stampeder offensive lineman who is the club's player representative to CUPS Community Health Centre.

On May 5, McNeil is hosting a barbecue for some CUPS families at McMahon Stadium. In addition to the barbecue McNeil and some of his teammates will take the CUPS families on a tour of the Stampeder dressing room and training facilities and lead a skills demonstration on the playing field.

On May 17, McNeil will receive the President's Ring Award which is voted on by Stampeder players at the end of each season and recognizes exceptional motivational and leadership skills on and off the field.

McNeil becomes only the third player

to win the award in back-to-back years since the award was first presented 39 years ago.

Winning it the first time was a "tremendous experience" and it is "even more overwhelming" to repeat, McNeil said. McNeil has won other awards but he said the President's Award is the most satisfying honour because that selection is made by his teammates. "These are the guys you have the utmost respect for both on and off the field and those who you build life-long friendships with."

On May 23, McNeil is co-host of the 15th annual CUPS/Stampeders Kickoff Breakfast sponsored by Apache Canada at the Hyatt Regency Calgary.

The Stampeders first partnered with CUPS in 1992 to put on this fundraising breakfast along with a game day sponsorship program. This year that relationship will have earned CUPS more than a half million dollars. ■

Street Talk Distribution

Here is a list of authorized active *Street Talk* vendors, each of whom works his or her own hours. The best time to find one is during the morning, lunch and afternoon rush.

Vendor #1: "Saint"- Pete
17th Avenue & 7th Street SW

#2: Bob Bland
6th Avenue & 2nd Street SW

#4: Mike Abhar
4th Avenue & 1st Street SW (A.M.)
Eau Claire Market (lunch & early P.M.)
6th Avenue & 4th Street SW (late P.M.)

#7: Andie 23 Ave. & 4 St. SW

#8: Leonard V.
Safeway, 12th Avenue & 8th Street SW

#9: Dennis Fryklund Kensington

#19: Norm "The Mayor" Mansell
City Hall, 8th Avenue & Macleod Trail SE

#21: Jim M. Bankers Hall

#60: Caroline M. 8th Ave. & 1st Street SW

#68: Rob Champion
Plaza Theatre, Kensington

#130: Vince Montana
Globe and Uptown Theatres

#187: Bruce S.
(underpass) 8 St. & 9 Ave. underpass PM
4 St. & 9 Ave. underpass AM

#217: Carolyn Miller

#221: Brian Jones
7th Avenue & Macleod Trail SE

#242: Eugene M.
7th Avenue & 4th Street SW

#251: Ed Gorman 18th Ave. & 4th St. SW

#253: Darrell S.

#273: Ray R.
Safeway at 410 - 10th Street NW

#347: Barry M. 9th Ave. - Gulf Canada Sq.

#381: Wade A.
9th Avenue & 1st Street SW

#383: Gordon E. 12th Ave. & 14th St. SW

#397: Lois O. 6th Ave. & 4th Street SW

#398: Glen O. 5th Ave. & 3rd Street SW

#404: Steve Sondergaard
7th Avenue & 2nd Street SW

#431: Bill M. 8th Ave. & 7th Street SW

#442: Steven G. 7th Ave. & 8th St. SW

#466: Phil J. Safeway at Northgate Mall NE

#476: Michael & Dudley
7th Ave. & 1 St. SW

#480: Lori H. 7th Ave. & 4th St. SW

#506: Shelley C. 7th Ave. & 7th St. SW

#509: Barbara Randle
Kensington Safeway

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A SPARE CHANGE NEWSPAPER

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Calgary Street Talk welcomes your comments, questions, suggestions and article ideas. Please write or telephone. Letters to the editor are assumed to be for publication, must be signed, must include phone number, and may be edited for length.

Worth noting . . .

Jon Bateman reaches a milestone with his column on Page 4 in this issue. It is his 50th.

There is a lot to be said about Jon and his contributions to Calgary Street Talk. His columns are always pertinent and relevant. Jon has provided many opportunities for readers to better understand the various challenges that face many people in our community. In Jon's words he "cares about the cause" and he expresses that concern with great sensitivity, understanding and respect. Before Jon started his *Where I Stand* column he had written features stories for Calgary Street Talk. He and his column are an important part of this newspaper. ■

EDITORIAL :

Healthy rhythms unite drummers

By **PAUL DROHAN**
Editor, Calgary Street Talk

There's more to beating a drum than just hitting it. There's more to a bunch of drumbeats than just noise.

If you had been in the hallway upstairs at CUPS Community Health Centre one day early last month you would have seen a bunch of people – about 50 or so and mostly women and children – beating various kinds of drums and making a lot of noise. And you probably would have understood the almost magical benefits of beating a drum in a group.

The drums were beat that day to mark International Women's Day on March 8.

It was a healthy, healing and bonding experience for the drummers.

The event started with some food and then an explanation about the day and then the fun began with the beating of the drums.

A year ago Hayley Merkeley, the Women's Advocate at CUPS, participated in a drum circle to mark International Women's Day. She thought it would worth repeating the experience at CUPS and she was right judging by the response of the participants

Merkeley talked to the drummers about the "tremendous progress" women have made in their bid to achieve equality in recent decades but also pointed out that much more needs to be done.

Access to education and proper health care has increased; participation in the paid labour force has grown; and legislation that promises equal opportunities for women and respect for their human rights has been adopted in many countries, she said.

However so much more needs to be done, she said.

"Nowhere in the world can women claim to have the same rights and opportunities as men. Internationally, more women are becoming poorer and, following the rise of religious fundamentalism, ever more oppressed. With globalization have come huge increases in female trafficking and prostitution."

She said that reality today for many women looks like this:

POVERTY: The majority of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor are women.

ILLITERACY: Three-quarters of the world's 960 million illiterates are women

EARN LESS: On average, women receive between 30 and 40 per cent less pay than men earn for the same work.

VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE: Rape and domestic violence are listed as significant

causes of disability and death among women of reproductive age world-wide.

Over 150 countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW) legally committing themselves to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, she said.

Until the rights and full potential of women are achieved, lasting solutions to the world's most serious social, economic and political problems are unlikely to be solved. . . . It is a day to celebrate the gains women have made and to focus on the changes that are still needed, Merkeley said.

It was "fitting" that such a "diverse group" come together in the Family Resource Centre on International Women's Day, she said.

"Drumming is such an almost primal thing. It doesn't matter what your nationality is or what language you speak, you are simply there, making noise and experiencing togetherness. Anyone can drum. You don't have to come with great knowledge or skills. You just have to show up and be willing to do it," she said.

While it was entertaining for everyone, each person had a different take on the day, she said. "Most enjoyed the community aspect of it when everyone was drumming together in synch. The children really just enjoyed the drums themselves and the opportunity to make noise and have fun."

The actual event didn't meet her expectations but that was okay, she said. "I had expectations of it being something like at the Women's Centre a year ago where everyone was in synch and we had these beautiful drum sequences. That wasn't the case but it exceeded my expectations in terms of entertainment value and how much everyone enjoyed it," Merkeley said.

"It was a celebration of women's successes so far. We took time to appreciate ourselves and what we do as women as mothers, as employees, all the roles that women play

A very interesting day . . . kids enjoyed it. . . I enjoyed playing drums and kids."

A drum circle always works effectively with people but in different ways, said Ann Becker of Lethbridge. She is associated with Circles of Rhythm, a Calgary based organization that does drum circles and team building for corporations and other groups.

"Participants are all connected through the drum sound and rhythm because of our pulse. As people we are drawn to drumming and the beat of the drum and when we

■ see ... *HEALTHY RHYTHMS* on page 7

Having no home means more than being without a roof over your head and a place to sleep. Homelessness can also mean a loss of status and identity. That's why the availability and usability of technology is an important aspect in retaining a grasp on your personal history and your life. Calgary boasts the youngest and most technologically connected population in the entire country. Seventy seven per cent of all adults in the city had available Internet access in 2006, a statistic that leads the nation.

Many of Calgary's homeless are surprisingly well educated and diverse. In fact, many are employed in lower paying jobs that help them to obtain some small measure of income, but not enough to afford a damage deposit and first month's rent. A recent poll at the Calgary Drop-In Centre confirmed that over 40 per cent of the clients they serve work more than 32 hours per week in a job. Finding work isn't difficult but making enough money to afford Calgary's skyrocketing rental prices amid an affordable housing crisis is where the real shortfall lies. What many of the working homeless often can afford is the ability to obtain food, some very basic necessities and for some, the useful assistance of technology such as laptops, cell phones and Wi-Fi cards (wireless internet) to help them maintain at least a virtual address in the world, but it's not enough to keep them housed.

One great advantage about living in Calgary is that access to wireless communication devices and the ability to charge your cell phone is available nearly everywhere. There are wireless routers all over the city, and many are freely available to use. For example, the public library offers free access and even most every outside parking lot downtown has 'plug-ins': electric outlets where you can plug in a car's block heater and apparently even a laptop to recharge your cell phone while surfing the web.

For as little as a couple of hundred dollars, a person can purchase a working laptop and then thirty dollars per month, along with the purchase of a \$25 Wi-Fi card gives them a permanently assigned phone number with the capability to send and retain phone and text messages while surfing the web. It's not completely cheap but it's a budget that is not out of range for someone who is working and homeless. Having a phone and an email inbox like the kind you can get on web-based email services like Hotmail and G-mail gives users massive storage capabilities to preserve important documents like their resume, health and financial information and other personal documents. It doesn't give access to all your



From Where I Stand

By JON BATEMAN
For Calgary Street Talk

most pertinent data and it by no means gives the homeless everything they need when it comes to storing information, but it is a convenient way in which a transient person can remain connected.

Technology also gives the homeless some ability to combat job discrimination from employers when they can be reached easily by phone or email. Employers are wary of hiring someone who lists a shelter address as their home. Also, having no fixed address often presents problems with the distribution of pay and benefits, but with electronic pay statements to transfer straight to your account, online banking and the benefit of email and a usable phone, employers are more likely to hire workers that are more transient. Additionally, the people they employ can better manage their resources online or via telephone.

The biggest challenge to capitalizing on the benefits of technology for the homeless is simply a lack of overall awareness about resources. Knowing the essential strategies to manage online affairs and the educational technical knowledge to setup and access information from a laptop, your cell phone and on the web is also important. Once a person has established a working mobile phone number, the next step is to get on the Internet, to update and save the latest contact information to important documents and then email it to the new account that has been created or to a trusted friend.

When online, setting up an email account with a free web-based provider like www.hotmail.com is probably the first step that a person should take. After that, consulting with your financial institution and learning to access your banking information online is also important. From there, resources such as the Federal Government job bank (www.jobbank.gc.ca), the classified ads of the Calgary Herald (www.careerclick.com) and the links section at www.calgaryhomeless.com where online resources for all the many different groups affected by homelessness are listed are all great places to find relevant information online. In addition, the Calgary Housing Registry where low-cost and affordable housing options are posted can be found at www.lowcostrent.org.

The resources and technology are out there. For many of the working homeless, it doesn't solve the problem of the extreme lack of affordable housing but it does provide opportunities and helpful resources that can hopefully be of benefit to them as they work to re-establish themselves in a very unaffordable yet tech-savvy city. ■

SURVIVING METH

Mustard Seed helps woman save her life



Ashley Lawrence
... overcame addiction

By **SUSAN FROELICH**
For Calgary Street Talk

Surviving methamphetamines (crystal meth) is not easy, but it is possible. Just ask Ashley Lawrence.

Lawrence was 19 years old and grooming horses at various race tracks in Vancouver to make a living. Young, earning a lot of money, and unafraid of consequences, it didn't take long for her to get caught up in drugs.

"You live on the track and you make all this money and you've got nowhere to spend it and you can only buy so many clothes before things get boring.

So I did the drug thing – lots of it," Lawrence says.

She admits she was aware of the risks associated with taking drugs but easy access and a lot of extra money were catalysts that eclipsed the threats. "I was popping pills. Dexedrine is like a form of Ritalyn, that they give to people with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) but if you don't have ADD then it wakes you up. So I started popping Dexedrine pills to stay awake while I was at work. As soon as you start popping pills you're awake and you start thinking, 'Oh well lets see what else works.'"

The lure of increased energy and a feeling of euphoria from crystal meth quickly wears off, though. Lawrence says, "Meth is so cheap to buy and so easy to find, especially in Vancouver. I mean, it is everywhere. So then you think, 'Oh this is kind of cool,' you're moving and you're upbeat and you are doing all sorts of things. You know that feeling you get when you wake up and you're having a really good day where you are just all and everything? That's what meth feels like when you take it. Fifteen minutes later you feel like someone has sucker punched you but you can't sleep and you can't eat. I dropped, in three weeks, 33 pounds."

Lawrence had been living in both Calgary and Vancouver throughout her teen years. After becoming heavily addicted to Dexedrine and crystal meth she left Vancouver and moved back to Calgary. She says, "For 11 months after I got here (Calgary) I lived outside on the street, at The SEED sometimes, awake for 10 days, two weeks at a time. It was pretty rough."

Sick with pneumonia and looking for a safe place to go, Lawrence frequented The SEED often before she committed to living in its short term housing program, Step Up Housing. She admits a lot of what she needed was unfailing moral support and practical physical care, especially when she was in no condition to care for herself.

"A lot of their (SEED staff) help was just putting up with me. Crystal meth makes you violent. Crack heads look for more crack, meth heads look for people to hurt because they're angry and they've been awake for two weeks and because they are seeing things and they're hallucinating."

Despite Lawrence's erratic behaviour, the staff at The SEED took her in and, she says, "For two weeks they let me sleep on a mat between two doors because I got pneumonia. They wouldn't let me out. They just wouldn't let me outside. They wouldn't let me go anywhere. They said, 'No, stay here inside; sleep and eat soup.'"

Lawrence remembers the last time she took methamphetamines; she was awake for 15 days, taking "hits" every eight to twelve hours. Once she quit, she was clearly very ill. She says, "When I finally started getting better, I was in here (The SEED) all the time. They kept me healthy they kept me eating, they kept me sleeping, they kept me sane. And then when I started getting better, the staff were everywhere saying, 'Are you ok? Do you need anything? Do you need to talk to anybody, and do you need this?' I got pneumonia when I was in Step Up and they left me on a couch in the dark and fed me soup for the longest time. I mean this place ... I would have died without

it. I would have. There is no question.

January 7, 2005 was my last time (using drugs). Done. Cold turkey. I don't know how, I don't know why, I don't know what. Nothing. Three months after I quit I got pregnant. My son now is 13 months old. He is huge. He's healthy, he's happy." And now all I want to do is just volunteer and just be here. This place (the Mustard Seed) has been amazing."

Lawrence herself is now healthy, happy and over two years clean. She claims she is "the biggest success story to come out of The SEED."

Years of drug abuse have not left her completely unscathed, however. Last spring she had 17 teeth removed because crystal meth rotted all of her front teeth.

Lawrence says, "I was in surgery for six hours. I had 90 stitches. From the inside to the out they (her teeth) died. I would try to eat a peanut butter sandwich and my teeth would break. And you're sick – you're sick all the time because you are swallowing poison."

Two years ago Ashley Lawrence was incoherent, violent and without hope. Today she has her own apartment and joint custody of her son. She is grooming and training horses once again and finds it "therapeutic". She is also planning to study book keeping and accounting at Mount Royal College in the fall to expand her job duties. She says, "People ask me now about meth and I say, 'You might as well go drink a bottle of Drano.'"

(Susan Froelich is a staff member of the Mustard Seed Street Ministry and a regular contributor to Calgary Street Talk.)

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Vibrant COMMUNITIES Calgary

BY RAMONA JOHNSTON

Daylight cleaning benefits everyone

Approximately \$120 billion worth of capital works projects are projected to occur in the next decade in Alberta, creating an estimated 400,000 new jobs. Yet despite the fact that Alberta's population growth remains the strongest among the provinces, the Government of Alberta only expects 300,000 new workers to enter the labour market, leaving an estimated shortfall of 100,000 workers. It seems clear that, despite the government's best intentions, Alberta will continue to experience the current labour shortage for some time to come.

The challenge of attracting and retaining workers in a tight labour market has prompted some oil and gas companies to advertise for staff by offering free accommodation, pay increases, bonuses and other incentives. Shell Canada is building an indoor hockey rink for its workers, while Exxon Mobile is planning to build soccer fields and indoor basketball courts. According to Think Resources, during the past six months the annual wage for drilling engineers has increased by 20 percent to \$US 172,000.

Unable to compete with the incentives offered by the oil and gas sector, owners in other industries are exercising more creative strategies to attract and retain workers.

Randy Burke, the President and Chief Executive Officer of Daylight Cleaning Systems, for example, developed a cleaning service system that offers a high worker retention rate, increased worker

satisfaction, environmental savings, enhanced building sanitation, increased building security, and increased client satisfaction.

Randy's cleaning service system also saves businesses money. And his solution seems simple.

Randy developed a system that allows building owners and managers to seamlessly convert traditional evening-only janitorial systems to, what Randy calls, total "Daylight Cleaning." Rather than providing cleaning services in the evening, Daylight Cleaning provides the same service during the regular working day.

In 2003, Agrium Inc. was one of the first major corporations to try Daylight Cleaning in Calgary. The economic savings to the company proved to be phenomenal. In the following year alone, Agrium Inc.'s head office building saved \$38,000 in pure energy costs alone. Agrium Inc. also reversed the 100 percent cleaning staff turnover rate, and tenants applauded the work of the cleaners and the system.

Independent energy consultants explain that the simple act of shutting off most of the lights at night offer electrical consumption reductions; Daylight Cleaning customers reduce their electrical usage by up to 8 percent.

Randy explains that Daylight Cleaning not only provides economic savings, it is also the socially responsible way to clean. Cleaners who work during the day are able to spend their evenings with family,

thereby increasing their quality of life. By cleaning during the day, cleaners are also able to speak with their clients directly, thereby increasing the relationship between both parties, resulting in fewer client complaints.

The 2005 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey suggests that even after three years of work, janitors, caretakers and building superintendents often still earn minimum wage. According to a recent City of Calgary Research Brief on Housing and Homelessness, at our present minimum wage of \$7 per hour, it would take 1.7 people working full-time, year-round, to afford the average market rent for a single bachelor apartment in Calgary.

In contrast, Daylight Cleaners earn an average of \$10 to \$11 per hour, a salary increase that is paid for by the business's utility savings. In addition to creating higher wages for cleaners, Randy also donates 10 percent of the revenue earned from Daylight Cleaning licensing fees to a scholarship fund for children of Daylight Cleaners' workers.

Daylight Cleaning Systems currently oversees more than 12 million square feet of office space across Canada, either on the daytime system, or scheduled for transition. Randy explains that tenants become accustomed to the new schedule in two to three weeks, and that "No building has reverted back to its former night time cleaning model."

Daylight Cleaning has proven to be a

model for socially responsible cleaning, and has demonstrated that corporate social responsibility does not have to compromise business efficiency and profit margins.

The current labour shortage is often viewed negatively; however, it forces businesses to re-examine how they conduct their operations, and, most importantly, to improve upon their traditional employment practices. Daylight Cleaning is an example of one of many socially responsible businesses successfully operating in Alberta.

The profitability of all businesses depends on their ability to attract and retain high quality staff. One way to accomplish this is to improve the conditions of work for low income earners. Daylight Cleaning Systems has shown that even modest shifts towards progressive practices can result in significant positive outcomes for both businesses and workers.

If you would like to learn more about Daylight Cleaning, please visit their website at www.daylightcleaning.com, or telephone its Calgary office at (403) 225-9603. ■

(Ramona Johnston is Director of Vibrant Communities Calgary, a local non-profit poverty-reduction organization. For more information about Vibrant Communities Calgary please visit www.vibrantcalgary.com).

Healthy rhythms unite drummers

■ continued from page 3

come together it can be very powerful. Drumming is a powerful voice that unites everybody. It crosses culture. It is very diverse. Children can participate as well as adults. So we are equal when we participate in the circle. We form a circle is because there is no beginning and no end. We are all together and together we express ourselves."

Becker said the drumming circle at CUPS was a success because everyone participated. The drummers were a diverse group including children who as children often want to march to the beat of their own drummer. "Drumming allows them to do that. In fact, it encourages them to do that. They don't have to be in rhythm with the rest of us. They have their own rhythms. Freedom of expression is what it is all about, Becker said.

Becker said she saw a number of people who were initially reluctant "to let go" but who gradually succumbed to the lure of the drums.

"Initially people are afraid they are going to make a mistake. They are cautious and timid and as the drum circle goes on it is very relaxing. It is meant to be relaxing. It is not meant to be stressful for people. It is meant to be a way that you can express yourself through the drums and that becomes the voice of the drums. I saw people at the start who were wondering what is this all about and as we went on they just automatically joined in."

Vena Ear, one of the participants, said she understood what Becker meant about the power of the drumming circle. "We came together with each other people, with other women and released our stress. It was fun."

Her daughter, Tanisha, who is 13, was still figuring out the experience when she was interviewed. She said she enjoyed the experience but didn't feel as connected to the group as some said they did. "I am not sure what to think of it. It was a bunch of noise that I am not

sure how to describe. I didn't feel connected with group . . . but I enjoyed the fast, slow, quiet moments. I felt relaxed."

Lisa Garrisen, the Family Resource Centre coordinator, said there were two aspects that she liked about the event.

First there was the community aspect. "It really got people together and I liked how energetic people became with it, especially the kids apart from the fact that the kids got to make just as much noise as they wanted to. There was something about doing it all together as community," she said.

"It kind of linked everybody and somehow people who don't normally talk to each other and people who don't normally even hang out together were suddenly connected and playing music together and being part of something bigger than each of them.

"So even though it was just a fun afternoon it was symbolic somehow and I like that because I am a big fan of community building . . . and would like to

do something like this again."

The drumming "really sparked people" especially the kids, she said. "Watching their little faces while they got to make lots of noise and were able to do it without the grownups telling them not to make so much noise. That was neat," Garrisen said.

But highlight was "the community thing" that developed as the drumming went on.

"I think everybody left in a really good mood (and) totally felt better when they left than when they came.

"I don't know whether it was the stress relief or if it was that coming together and being part of something bigger than your troubles. I don't know for sure what it was but everyone left here with a smile on their face and in a good mood. They forgot everything for an hour and just enjoyed themselves. The food definitely helped . . . for some people that was the piece they enjoyed the most." ■



Calgary Street Talk Photo by PAUL DROHAN

Ann Becker of Lethbridge orchestrated a drumming circle at CUPS Family Resource Centre.

See pictures on Pages 8 and 9

Drumming circle attracted diverse group.



Carolyn Magna, left, and Anna Wh...



**ALL
together
NOW...**



Isabelle Kahnpace helps her son Derek with the drum while her niece Brookin sleeps through it all.



Scott McMath and Bern...

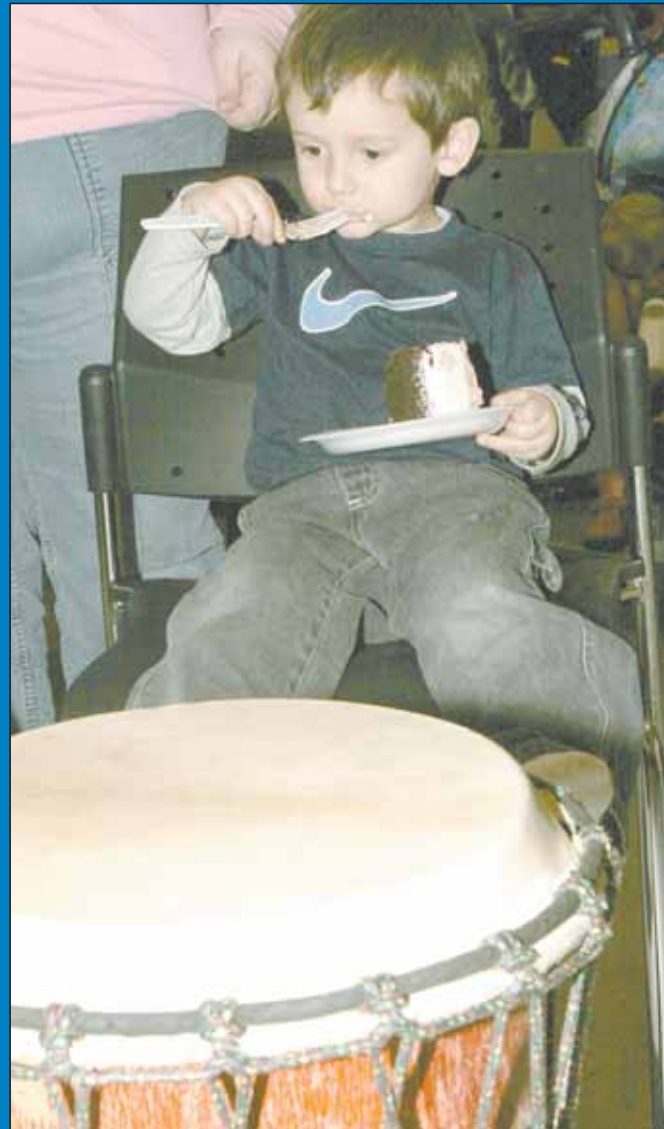
Maley.



Scott McMath.



Jacob Dines enjoyed the food.



About 50 people - two men and the rest mothers and children - gathered together to share in the observance of International Women's Day on March 8 in the Family Resource Centre at CUPS Community Health Centre.

The children, in particular, really enjoyed the opportunity to express themselves through drumming. Freedom of expression is what it is all about, said Ann Becker who facilitated the event. ■

Calgary Street Talk Photos by PAUL DROHAN



ice Magna.



Vena and Dequan Ear.



Conlan Bear.

Unfocused budget ignores the poor

(Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty brought down the Progressive Conservative government's second budget on March 19. According to an editorial published in The Toronto Star on March 20, that budget does help those most in need in Canadian society.)

The budget delivered yesterday (March 19) by Finance Minister Jim Flaherty was to have been the political manifesto designed to propel Prime Minister Stephen Harper into the next election, which pundits had been predicting would be called ... for sometime this spring.

With that in mind, Flaherty offered a something-for-everyone election budget that targeted what he and Harper call the "broad middle" of the Canadian political spectrum, primarily two-parent families with children that are working hard to meet bills and pay the mortgage.

But with the Bloc Québécois announcing it will support the budget, the chances of an election soon dropped sharply. What is left, then, is not a crafty pre-election budget, but a financial document that is unfocused, that is devoid of a national strategy to tackle any of the major social issues facing this country, and that does little to help the poorest of the poor.

Indeed, Flaherty managed to achieve notoriety on only one front – he is now the biggest spending finance minister in Canadian history, with a whopping \$12.7 billion in new spending and \$9.7 billion in numerous tax breaks over the next two years.

For the broad middle class that will decide the next election, Flaherty introduced a host of income tax cuts that, all told, swallow up roughly \$8 billion of the surpluses over two full years. He came up with a \$2 billion increase in equalization payments and \$5 billion in new transfers to the provinces in the name of striking a new federal-provincial fiscal balance.

There's more money for health care, research and development and worker skills and training. And to overcome the Tories' record of inaction on climate change, he allotted \$4.5 billion for new green initiatives, many of which had already been announced by Harper.

But Flaherty failed the poor, who have steadily fallen further behind everyone else, and who need the government's help the most. In a budget that introduced a total of almost \$24 billion in new spending and tax breaks on top of \$15.2 billion in debt reduction, Flaherty could find only \$550 million a year for the poor and their children. One token

measure, a small tax credit, fell far short of what experts say is needed to raise the living standards of the working poor. For a single parent earning \$10,000 a year, the new working income tax benefit delivers less than \$20 a week.

At the same time, a new \$2,000 child tax benefit will save most families \$310 a year for each child under age 18, but will do little for poor parents who pay little or no income tax.

If Flaherty were serious about fighting poverty, he could have made a real difference in improving the lives of the 5.3 million Canadians who live at the margins of this rich country by creating a reasonable earnings supplement for the working poor and by raising by 50 per cent the National Child Benefit Supplement, which is paid to low-income parents.

In addition, he should have reformed Employment Insurance so more low-income Canadians who lose their jobs can collect benefits. Currently, barely one in four workers in the Toronto area who become unemployed are now eligible for benefits. Also, he could have sent an important message to the provinces by raising the federal minimum wage to \$10 an hour.

If he had taken such steps, Flaherty still would have had plenty of money to pay for other worthwhile initiatives con-

tained in his budget.

The money for green transit measures in Canada's large urban centres was certainly welcome, as were funds earmarked for post-secondary education and the millions spent to boost research and development.

And starting to put Ontario and Alberta on an equal footing with the other provinces in terms of per capita federal funding for health care, post-secondary education and welfare at least promises to restore the sense of fairness to all regions that has been missing for far too long.

Overall, though, Flaherty squandered a golden opportunity to make a real difference on an issue that has plagued Canada for decades.

What was needed was a bold, comprehensive multi-year plan to tackle poverty, especially child poverty, which is a national disgrace.

The parochial Bloc Québécois will likely stick with its decision to endorse the budget because of the \$3 billion extra it gives to Quebec. But because this unfocused document will do little to ease poverty or to address seriously any other major problem facing this country, the Liberals and New Democrats are right to announce they will oppose this budget. ■

Spring Garage Sale

Calgary Association of Self Help invites you to experience the spring savings at their semi-annual Community Garage Sale

Calgary Association of Self Help strengthens its focus on helping people with mental illness get well and stay well with fundraising efforts such as their semi-annual Community Garage Sale.

On Friday April 20 from 11 am – 5 pm and on Saturday April 21 from 10 am – 3 pm an enormous collection of household items, sporting goods, furniture and books will be on sale on the 3rd Floor at Calgary Association of Self Help – 1019 7 Ave. SW.

There is free parking at the back of the building; customers traveling by C-train can disembark at the 10th Street Station (downtown) and be at our front doors.

For additional information contact:

Ms. Corinne Wilson
Fund Development Manager
266-8711 ext. 247
cwilson.selfhelp@shaw.ca

Calgary Association of Self Help
Your Community Mental Health Centre
1019 7 Avenue SW
Calgary, Alberta T2P 1A8
www.calgaryselfhelp.com

Please join Calgary Association of Self Help in their efforts to strengthen the health and vitality of our community. For 34 years our dedicated staff and volunteers have been promoting the abilities of Calgarians with chronic and persistent mental illness. Proceeds from the Spring Garage Sale help ensure essential services such as our client-centered rehabilitation, skill development, counselling and recreation programs are available 7 days a week, 364 days a year to the individuals who rely on those programs for their mental wellness.

WE ALL LIVE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS.

Perhaps it's your mom, your son, your best friend, your boss, you or the stranger you pass on the street that has been diagnosed with mental illness.

THE NUMBERS ARE STAGGERING.

One in four will be diagnosed with the illness. That's over 200,000 Calgarians. . . mental illness touches the lives of all of us.

THE AFFECTS CAN BE OVERWHELMING.

Mental health concerns are the number one reason Canadians see their doctor, and over 50% don't seek help because of the stigma attached to mental illness.

Please help us bring peace of mind to as many folks as we can.



Timothy Wild is a social worker interested in the relationship of public policy and social justice.

CALGARY

A classless city

By **TIM WILD**
For Calgary Street Talk

Many of the more progressive advances in Canadian society – such as public pensions, free collective bargaining, unemployment insurance, pay equity, social security and occupational safety – were due largely to the activism of the working class and our political representatives. And Calgary has played a central part in this history of activism. The CCF was founded here in 1932, union members played a significant role in the work of many city councils, and our city was one of the first places in Canada to elect a Labour MP, William Irvine. Calgary was once a proud working class town.

Today, however, very few in our city would consider themselves as being anything other than middle class. More importantly, few Calgarians would admit to thinking that the class struggle is anything more than the unrelenting slog to buy a bigger house, more RRSPs or another car. In a sense, this perceived leveling of society – which in theory is a good thing – has actually served to mask the very real presence of growing social and economic inequality in our city. Just because we think (hope?) we are middle class doesn't make it so!

When considering Calgary's seemingly unquestioned middle class thinking, I was reminded of the work of the influential Italian activist and political thinker

Antonio Gramsci. April 27 marks the 70th anniversary of Gramsci's death, at the age of 46 due to the effects of a long incarceration in Mussolini's prisons. During the course of his imprisonment, Gramsci secretly penned brilliant and provocative insights into the functioning of capitalist society and, more importantly, made suggestions on how to carry out the transformation to a just, humane and inclusive society.

He is perhaps best known for the theory of hegemony. Hegemony, simply put, is the subtle social, cultural and economic dominance of one group over other groups. In most cases, this is achieved in a consensual way, essentially masquerading as "common sense" and serves to create the limits of "normal" and acceptable debate in our day-to-day lives. As noted by the cultural critic Raymond Williams these prevailing ideas "saturate the consciousness of a society" and "constitutes a sense of reality for most people in society . . . beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move." For Gramsci, hegemony showed how the dominant classes obtained the implicit consent of the masses to assure their privileged position and helped explain the durability of capitalist society, despite the obvious injustice and inequality of the system.

But what does this abstract idea have to do with Calgary today? Quite a lot actually. Essentially, hegemony ensures that the interests

of the dominant group are seen as being in the best interests of us all. It aligns our values with those of the dominant classes, and leads to a belief that our interests are the same as theirs. This then has an impact on the provision of public programs and concepts of citizenship.

As noted, the most perverse example of hegemonic thinking, and the one that is perhaps the greatest obstacle to authentic social change in Canada, is the belief that we are all middle class, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recently released a report showing that the divide between Canada's rich and poor is growing. In 2004, the average earnings of the richest 10 per cent of families was 82 times that earned by the poorest 10 per cent; in 1976 the ratio was 31. The fact that both these groups were likely to self-identify as middle class is evidence of hegemonic thinking in Canada and Calgary.

If the middle class monolith was just an abstract idea – that would be fine. However, hegemony has an impact on the broader consciousness and social awareness of society that, subsequently, leads to the creation of policies and programmes. It affects our construction of the identities of the marginalized in society, underscores general beliefs as to who "they" are and why "they are poor", provides a misguided comfort that those who need sup-

port actually get it, and informs our views regarding, for example, the place of taxation in terms of the funding of service provision. That is why the myth of "we are all middle class" needs to be challenged – it leads to public policies and programmes that are ineffective, unjust and punitive. The current hegemony ensures that many Calgarians continue to be left out of authentic participation in society.

Certainly, from an analytical point of view, hegemony helps in the description of why things are the way they are, and why we as a society can allow racism, child poverty, sexism etc to continue relatively unchecked. More importantly, the concept allows for the consideration – at least – of the creation of counter-hegemony, a movement to create a new social, cultural and political "common sense" based on ideas of justice, humanity and decency. This can be achieved in a number of ways, and a broader discussion of the shortfalls of public policy is a great leap forward.

However, the counter hegemony must begin, I think, by recognizing that we do have an upper class and a working class. We are a class-stratified society; although such thinking is often derided as an incitement to class conflict, the fact is that working class social action produces results and was the main driver for progressive social change until everyone became middle class . . . and, ironically, gave up on our collective journey towards equality! ■



The drive for five

RON MURDOCK...
reporting from the streets
of Calgary

Money doesn't talk, it swears . . . If a life becomes too well planned it leaves little, if any, room for fun and adventure . . . It was interesting to hear what Ralph Klein thought of the closure of the St. Louis Hotel . . . He who smiles is getting paid . . .

What would people say to Alexander Graham Bell now for inventing the telephone? . . . Yet another expression that I ponder is; "it could be worse." To turn things around it could be asked how things could be made better. It's as if people like to settle for mediocrity or a dull compromise. Instead of just complaining, offer solutions . . . I think a good idea for a new business is parachute rentals at Lovers Leap . . .

They who steal bee hives find themselves involved in a sting operation . . . A few years ago I was watching a TV talk show with a friend of mine. A woman wearing sunglasses said she had tried to change her husband and he resisted. Then she wondered why he wasn't the same man she had wed and her marriage was in trouble . . . The expression "until death do us part" has me wondering about three things. Does it have the couple stop to take stock to see what they are getting into? What happens if their love sours for whatever reason? Instead of having everyone developing a bad mindset when things go wrong, why not stay together for "as long as love lasts." . . .

How many times do people live their lives according to the expectations of others instead of listening to their intuition? . . . I remember when McDonalds used to put the number of hamburgers they served on their outside signs. I took note of the number then tried to guesstimate how many of those burgers were eaten or tossed . . . Every time you walk by a bakery, remember to stop and smell the flour . . .

Every time I see a rail car spray painted I consider it a wasted effort by the person responsible. Why don't they put their work on canvas and see if they can get a few bucks for their efforts? . . .

At a recent rally in Calgary I heard one of the speakers say he was embarrassed to have to pick up cans and bottles for extra money. I don't think he had to feel this way. In my mind he was doing something constructive to earn extra money . . . A few years ago I saw some graffiti that read "your tongue is wet". How long did it take for the writer to figure that one out and why did they share that little tidbit with us? . . .

What is with all this money spent on Viagra and boob jobs? If individual men and women aren't attracted to each other in the first place then all of the Viagra and breast enhancement in the world isn't going to work. So why not spend the money on improving one's education or make life better for someone else? . . .

People have various levels of success in their lives but how much of it is anything of significance? . . . If you're thinking of changing jobs or careers, test the waters first and keep your day job before deciding the new one is your life calling . . . I went to church and thought of back country hiking, so I went back country hiking and thought of God . . . When I hear of engine horsepower I ask just how do they get all those horses in there . . . There is a fine line between beneficial giving which helps people and destructive giving which gets people co-dependent. ■

Get real

Reprinted from A Deep Breath of Life by Alan Cohen

In a dream I saw myself as a great and colorful butterfly; now I am not sure if I am Chuang-Tsu dreaming I was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming I am Chuang-Tsu.

~ Chuang-Tsu, Chinese Patriarch

Over the past decade, the word real has come into vogue. Coca-Cola insists that it is the real thing" Our friends tell us to "get real." Before entering into business ventures, we do a "reality check." We can't help avoiding the questions. "What is real?" and "Who is the real me?"

At the completion of nearly every one of my retreat programs, some-one wistfully notes, "Too bad we have to go back to the real world now." I always respond by saying, "This is the real world. The world of loving, honest communication and genuine caring reflects our true identity much more than the world we usually call 'real.'"

What world is real to you? The world that most people consider real is fraught with illusions. Money, fame, power, sex, and material security do not offer true reward and substance; they dissolve as soon as the tiniest light is shed on them. While the "real world" tells us that these commodities are worth living and dying for, those who have them are often desperate for love, relationships, communication, community, and peace of mind.

The real world is the world of kindness, caring, vision, and service. All of these qualities are attributers of our divine nature. As children of God we can be only what God is, and that is everything that is good. We are born of light and we return to the light. To live in light is to live in the real world.

Show me the real world. Let me not forget my nature and my origin.

I live in the real world of love. ■

MIKE'S WISDOM



KATHY HOUSTON ...
the story teller

Whole new ball game

Meeka had moved into a new house in a new town with her mother and father and little brother Newka. She liked her nice new house, especially the tyre swing in the big backyard. But there was a problem. Meeka missed her old friends and was too afraid to even say hi to the children who lived next door. No matter how much her parents encouraged her to be friendly, she just stood beside the big, green fence and cried.

"Could you keep an eye on Newka?" Meeka's mother asked her one warm spring day. "Sure," Meeka said sadly.

The two children from next door were outside playing catch. Suddenly their ball flew over the fence and landed at Meeka's feet.

They raced to the fence and stared over at

Meeka and Newka, then down at their bright red ball.

"Want to come over and play?" Newka blurted out.

Silence.

The older three children just stared at each other, but no one moved. "Well," sang Newka, "Are you coming?" Meeka slowly smiled and nodded. The children next door smiled and nodded too. "We have to ask our mom first," one of them said.

In but a moment, the four children were playing happily together. They had all been afraid of each other, but they soon became good friends. ■

LITERACY

Writing from the heart

By BRONWYN PREFONTAINE
Learning Circle
Coordinator/Instructor
Further Education Society

“We hope that our students will take charge of their educational journey and become life long learners.” – Elaine Cairns and Laureen MacKenzie, co-executive directors, Further Education Society.

After 10 years working in the field of Family Literacy in Calgary, Elaine Cairns and Laureen MacKenzie, of the Further Education Society (FES), saw a need to expand the literacy skill development of their learners beyond LAPS (Literacy and Parenting Skills.) The Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS) program had been in operation for over 10 years as a family literacy program designed to provide literacy and parenting skills to at-risk parents. Though successful, learners were often asking for help beyond the LAPS program and this is what we, at the Further Education Society, endeavour to give them through the Learning Circles.

The Learning Circles were born out of a passion for seeing growth in others and helping people reach their potential. They are a stepping stone meant to build on what they have learned in LAPS and edge them towards a life-long pursuit of learning and self discovery. “To watch adults learn to read again is to watch them recover a lost piece of their childhood – to see something awaken in them that was long forgotten. We have watched these adults recapture a love of learning through reading. . . . We thought, if this is what reading can do, just imagine what writing could do!” said Elaine Cairns and Laureen MacKenzie, Co-Executive Directors, Further Education Society.

~“The purpose of learning is growth, and our minds, unlike our bodies, can continue growing as we continue to live.” ~ Mortimer Adler, American philosopher and author.

For many people who struggle with literacy, somewhere along the way their belief in their ability to learn and express themselves became damaged. Writing comes with many fears – not only for low-literate learners, but even for accomplished writers. For the low-literate learner their fears involve the belief that they are stupid, have nothing of value to say, and that whatever they put on paper will confirm their lack of skills either in printing, spelling or grammar. FES’s desire is to create a safe, healthy environ-



Elaine Cairns and Laureen MacKenzie, co-executive directors of the Further Education Society read to Amy, Noah and Scott.

ment where they can write without fear of the “red pen,” where their work will not be criticized, ridiculed or corrected. Our desire is to give them back the voice that was stolen from them as we truly believe that everyone has something of value to say, everyone has a story to tell, and everyone has a voice that deserves to be heard. The Learning Circles are a place to restore all that was stolen from them – not only their voice, but their belief in their ability to learn and be heard.

“The faster I write the better my output. If I’m going slow I’m in trouble. It means I’m pushing the words instead of being pulled by them.” ~ Raymond Chandler, American author.

The Learning Circles incorporate a variety of well-recognized strategies including language experience, an exploration of easy reading novels, Homespun, a program about expanding children’s resources, and Writing Out Loud, a writing program developed by Deborah Morgan, an Alberta author and Literacy Coordinator. We work with a writing process called free-writing adapted from Morgan’s book which involves writing about anything that comes to mind for five minutes without stopping. We do

not lift our hands from the page, we do not erase, cross-out, or stop and think – we simply write. This is all designed to silence our “inner-editor” who says things like “that’s a dumb thing to write about . . . no one cares about that . . . you’re a terrible speller . . . your handwriting is so bad no one will even be able to read it!” Nothing makes our “inner editor” more angry than our refusal to stop writing, or erase our beautiful work! Eventually our “inner editor” surrenders entirely!

“If I don’t write to empty my mind, I go mad.” ~Lord Byron, 19th Century English poet

Free writing is writing from the heart – through the process of writing, healing takes place. In ways we cannot entirely understand, our fears disappear as the words appear. Not only does the practice of free writing improve our writing skills, it also frees our hearts. Many of our students have lead painful lives, and have shut their hearts off entirely as an attempt to survive, numb themselves or escape the pain that is locked away in there. The thought of opening their hearts and writing about all that is inside is scary in itself; however, the real fear should be in not writing what is in our

hearts. Something happens in the process of putting words on paper. I like to call it “emptying yourself onto the page” all of our worries, concerns, and wounds once put on the page get left there.

“Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery.” – Henry Miller, American writer

Our Learning Circles are merely a first step on the lifelong journey of getting to know ourselves better; they provide an opportunity to explore a part of ourself that has gone unexplored for years or perhaps a lifetime. It gives our students an opportunity to not only tell their story to us, but to themselves. Our hope is that our students will gain confidence, find healing and hope. FES’s Learning Circles will begin soon and will involve personalized and intensive help with both writing and reading. Currently we are working to establish programs in three Calgary locations using Deborah Morgan’s Writing Out Loud Program. We would like to thank StreetTalk for their support of literacy and are looking forward to an ongoing relationship. ■

(For more information on our Learning Circles or LAPS programs please call 410-1501.)

Dear Amey

Dear Amey:

Why are the Dogwood trees called Dogwood? Where did the name come from? Mike

Dear Mike:

I found this note, posted by Dogwood owner from VA on 2005-09-26 10:38:00, at the message boards of the National Gardening Association, online.

"I read that the origin of dogwood is uncertain but probably was originally dagwood. Dagge is a Middle English word for something hanging and pointed.

The word dagger is made from the root dagge. According to my source the wood of a dagwood tree is easily made pointed. I personally find the leaves to be hanging and pointed. A debunked theory of the name's origin is that the tree's bark was used to make a concoction for bathing dogs when treating for mange." With all my research I can not find any facts pertaining to the origin of the name "Dogwood".

By AMEY CARRIER,
Calgary Street Talk

Dear Amey:

I was reading the ingredients on the label of a chocolate flavored syrup that I add to milk to create a chocolate drink and came across an ingredient I didn't know. Can you tell me what vanillin is? Carole

Dear Carole:

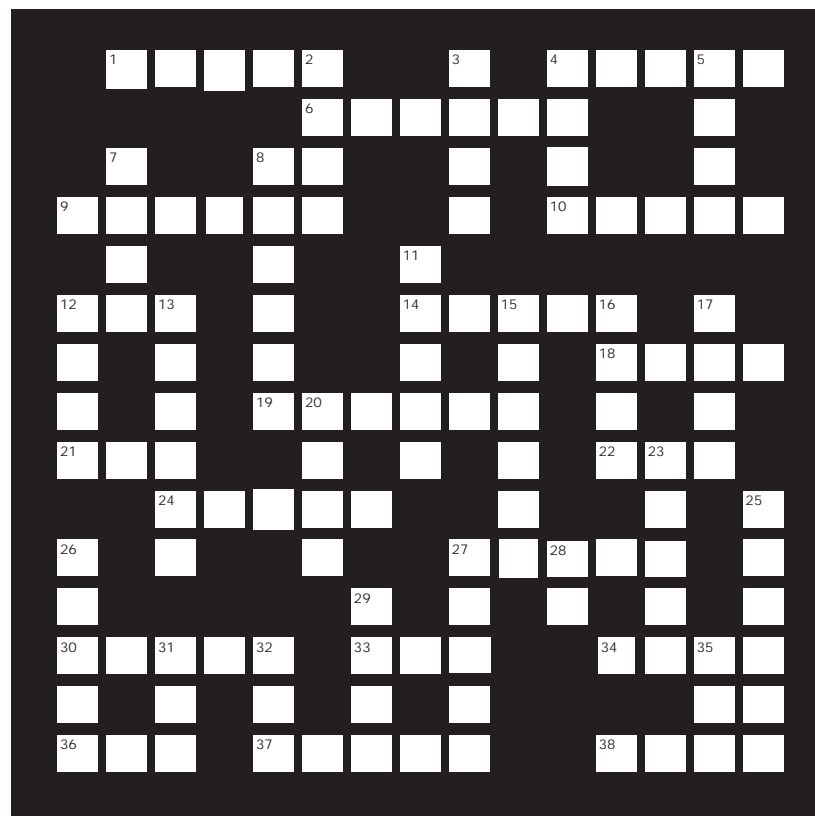
I went looking online and found this explanation:

Vanillin, the crystalline component of Vanilla, was first isolated from vanilla pods by Gobley in 1858. By 1874 it had been obtained from glycosides of pine tree sap, temporarily causing an economic depression in the natural vanilla industry.

I hope this helps make the drink taste goooooood!! ■

QUESTIONS SHOULD BE
EMAILED TO
askamey@shaw.ca

PETE'S SCRABBLE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Kitchen wear
4. Suit part
6. Shoe part
8. Printer's measure
9. Climbing tool
10. Paper fliers
12. Cloistered one
14. Stallone character
18. Not naughty
19. Nonsense
21. Hearth residue
22. Urge
24. Pulsate
27. Campus areas
30. Portion of pie
33. Fidel's friend
34. Wild plum
36. Moray
37. About face
38. Not hard

DOWN

2. Baseball team
3. Watercraft
4. Bonus
5. Humongous book
7. Neutral shade
8. Departed
11. Went by car
12. 1492 vessel
13. Dark times
15. Environment
16. Sole
17. Computer image
20. _____ and board
23. Ford flop
25. Least diluted
26. Glue
27. Mama bee
28. Blurb
29. Hosiery shade
31. Not well
32. Flightless bird
35. Not on

ROB'S CORNER

CRACKING DOWN OR HOW LESS BECOMES MORE: Seems today that most people want the law to come down hard on offenders. Seems to me that about two decades ago the people wanted governments to cut back and it seems they did - on nearly all of their social programs such as affordable housing, social assistance, unemployment, or excuse me, employment insurance and education. Plus over the last 20 years the cost of living has surpassed wage increases for most people. So in the end you have more poor, more homeless, more drug addiction, more crime and more sick people.

ROB'S FIRST SAY OF THE DAY: In most cases it's easier to make promises or to make plans than to carry them out or live up to them.

LESSONS ROB HAS LEARNED: Be the best that you can be. Don't worry about what others think of you. Value the friends that you do have. True friends will look past any of your imperfections and don't care what you own, where you live or how much money you have.

ROB'S SECOND SAY OF THE

By ROB CHAMPION,
Vendor #68

DAY: It is always sad to lose friends and family or, but they will live on in our heart in the form of good memories. That's been the case for me.

TRANSIT TROUBLES: Have you been on Calgary Transit lately during rush hour? It could be compared to riding in a cattle car. A lot of transit systems in Canada are over-stretched and under-funded.

ROB'S THIRD SAY OF THE DAY: If you are looking for love or friendship or both then look inwards to your heart for guidance for the best possible vehicle.

TIME FLIES: Being 20 is great. You are young, of legal age and feel like you are on top of the world. You are ambitious, full of ideas and nothing can stop you. And you don't think much about the future. In your 30s you start to realize that you are approaching middle age and that the twenties actually went by so fast that it seems like a dream. When you are 30-something you tend to want to relive those earlier years but perhaps at a little slower pace because by now you're probably thinking of settling down and perhaps staying with one person.

THE LAST WORD: When love comes a knockin' you should get a rockin' because it doesn't come along every day. ■

Solutions to February's Crossword

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C H E A P E R   Y O L K S
L   B   L   A   R
E   B   F   M A R R I E D
A L D A   C   A   D O
R   O   I D L E   N   N   O Z
L O C A L   Y E T I   E
Y   I   L   U   E   P A N
L   Z E B R A S   O
E   C   H   O   T   T   S   U
S   N   U   N   S   S   T   E   E   P
T   E   E   E   O   S   O   D
U   Q   U   A   D   N   N   O   M   E
N   U   L   E   M   O   T   E   D
M   I   A   S   M   A   O   N   A   D
P   P   O   T   E   N   N   I   S   Y
    
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PETE'S THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

*If it wasn't for
the last minute,
I'd never get
anything done.*

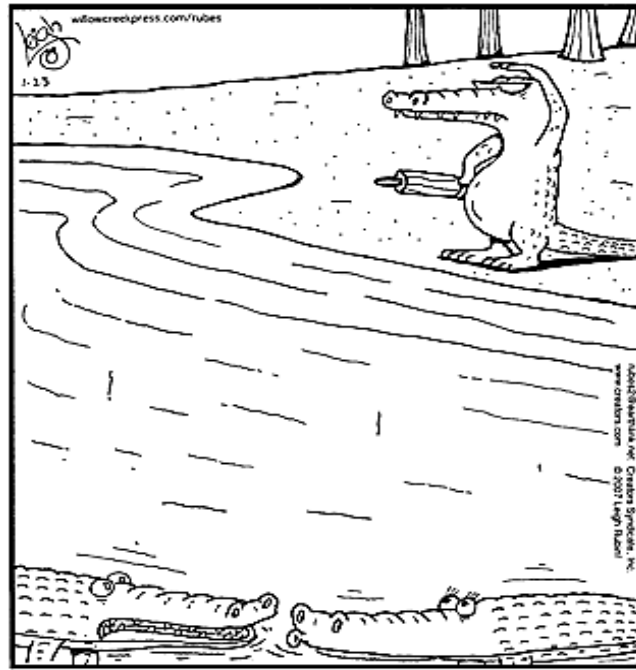


The Easter Bunny learns a painful lesson.

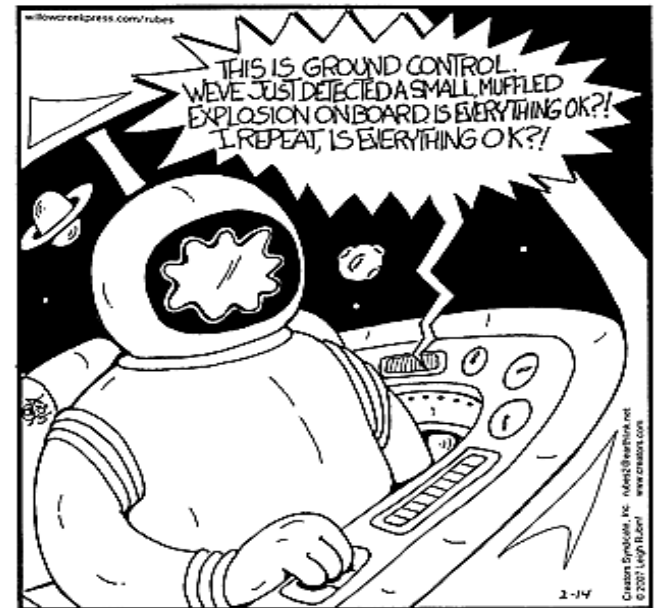
The comic feature Rubes is sponsored by **STONEBRIDGE MERCHANT CAPITAL CORP.**



"Disarming him with humor didn't work, so naturally, I had to switch to Plan B."



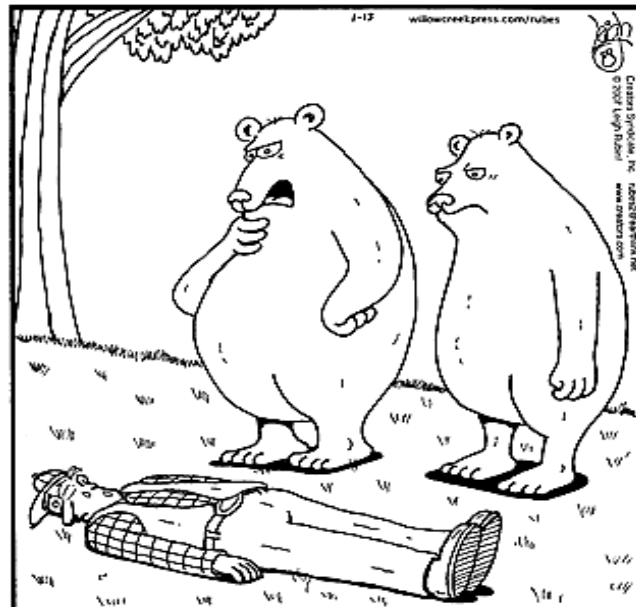
"Holy cow ... It's my wife! Quick, float deceptively like a log!"



Moments later, ground control would receive a puzzling cryptic transmission involving "technical difficulties and bubble gum."



The Jurassic period -- when the first birds appeared



"Now, hold on a minute ... If neither of us so much as laid a paw on him, how could he possibly be dead? I say before we amble off empty-handed, shouldn't we at least check his pulse?"



Little Kenny Wentworth, club founder, president and first member to reach puberty.

ONLY 3 WORDS!!!

(Author Unknown)

There are many things that you can do to strengthen your relationships. Often the most effective thing you can do involves saying just three words. When spoken sincerely, these statements often have the power to develop new friendships, deepen old ones and even bring healing to relationships that have soured.

The following three-word phrases can be tools to help develop every relationship.

1. Let me help

Good friends see a need and then try to fill it. When they see a hurt they do what they can to heal it. Without being asked, they jump in and help out.

2. I understand you

People become closer and enjoy each other more when the other person accepts and understands them. Letting your spouse know - in so many little ways - that you understand them, is one of the most powerful tools for healing your relationship. And this can apply to any relationship.

3. I respect you

Respect is another way of showing love. Respect demonstrates that another person is a true equal. If you talk to your children as if they were adults you will strengthen the bonds and become closer friends. This applies to all interpersonal relationships.

4. I miss you

Perhaps more marriages could be saved and strengthened if couples simply and sincerely said to each other "I miss you." This powerful affirmation tells partners they are wanted, needed, desired and loved. Consider how important you would feel, if you received an unexpected phone call from your spouse in the middle of your workday, just to say "I miss you."

5. Maybe you're right

This phrase is very effective in diffusing an argument. The implication when you say "maybe you're right" is the humility of admitting, "maybe I'm wrong." Let's face it. When you have an argument with someone, all you normally do is solidify the other person's point of view. They, or you, will not likely change their position and you run the risk of seriously damaging the relationship between you. Saying "maybe you're right" can open the door to explore the subject more. You may then have the opportunity to express your view in a way that is understandable to the other person.

6. Please forgive me

Many broken relationships could be restored and healed if people would admit their mistakes and ask for forgiveness. All of us are vulnerable to faults, foibles and failures. A man should never be ashamed to own up that he has been in the wrong, which is saying, in other words, that he is wiser today than he was yesterday.

7. I thank you

Gratitude is an exquisite form of courtesy. People who enjoy the companionship of good, close friends are those who don't take daily courtesies for granted. They are quick to thank their friends for their many expressions of kindness. On the other hand, people whose circle of friends is severely constricted often do not have the attitude of gratitude.

8. Count on me

A friend is one who walks in when others walk out. Loyalty is an essential ingredient for true friendship. It is the emotional glue that bonds people. Those that are rich in their relationships tend to be steady and true friends. When troubles come, a good friend is there indicating "you can count on me."

9. I'll be there

If you have ever had to call a friend in the middle of the night, to take a sick child to hospital, or when your car has broken down some miles from home, you will know how good it feels to hear the phrase "I'll be there." Being there for another person is the greatest gift we can give. When we are truly present for other people, important things happen to them and us. We are renewed in love and friendship. We are restored emotionally and spiritually. Being there is at the very core of civility.

10. Go for it

We are all unique individuals. Don't try to get your friends to conform to your ideals. Support them in pursuing their interests, no matter how far out they seem to you. God has given everyone dreams, dreams that are unique to that person only. Support and encourage your friends to follow their dreams. Tell them to "go for it."

11. I love you

Perhaps the most important three words that you can say. Telling someone that you truly love them satisfies a person's deepest emotional needs. The need to belong, to feel appreciated and to be wanted. Your spouse, your children, your friends and you, all need to hear those three little words: "I love you." Love is a choice. You can love even when the feeling is gone. ■