

Great Village Garden Club News

By Patti Sharpe

The Great Village Garden Club resumed meeting in September after a summer break. Members had an opportunity to get together with their fellow gardeners during the summer months when members of the Lismore Garden Club toured the gardens of Arthur Haskins and Sybil Flemming.

The club appreciates the efforts of Wilfred Miller and Sybil and Pat Flemming who have mowed the grass and looked after the flower beds at the welcome signs at either end of Great Village throughout the summer. The welcome sign near Bowers Farm that was vandalised in June will be replaced with a new one for spring 2014.

On Saturday, September 21 the Parrsboro Garden Club hosted the Central District meeting at Ottawa House in Parrsboro. Approximately 100 members from across the central district attended including nine of our own members. Su Morin of the River Hebert Garden Club entertained us



Great Village Garden Club member Sybil Flemming shared her knowledge of astronomy at the club's September meeting. (Sharpe Photo)

with a presentation about edible flowers. Hand quilted wall hangings created by Helen Graham and Janet Maclaren were very popular door prizes.

In recognition of the ongoing efforts of the members of Faith Baptist Church to beautify and landscape their property our club has decided to provide them with an ornamental tree to be planted on their grounds. Linda Hurst and Sybil Flemming have investigated the trees on offer from Charlie the Tree Guy in Old Barns and have selected a few possible trees that Faith Baptist church can consider for planting in the spring.

We have had two very interesting programs for our September and October meetings. In September, member Sybil Flemming spoke about backyard astronomy and introduced us to a fascinating software program that allows one to chart the night sky in their own backyard by introducing variables such as date and geographic coordinates. Our program for October involved a presentation by Nina Dickie on the art of carving vegetables and fruit. Ms. Dickie is employed at the Masstown Market where she has treated customers to many, varied carvings throughout the summer months. She eagerly shared the tricks of her trade and amazed us with the ease with which she turned melons into pieces of art.

Plans have been finalized for the Christmas Social on November 29. Following the decorating of the community tree in front of St. James United Church, we will move inside for a potluck dinner and social evening. That same evening we will honour long-

time member Art Chisholm with an NSAGC Outstanding Member award in recognition of his years of membership in our club and participation in numerous club activities and events.

Please join us for our first meeting of the new year on Tuesday, January 28 at 7 p.m. at Faith Baptist Church in Great Village.

Truro Dance Academy Presents "Nutcracker"

Dec. 7th and 8th

Rehearsals are in full swing for Truro Dance Academy's performance of The Nutcracker on Dec. 7th and 8th at the Cobequid Educational Center Auditorium.

Instructor Margot Begin-Gillis says this is the 7th year the Academy has performed The Nutcracker and this year's cast of 70 is one of the

largest, including some guest artists.

Truro Dance Academy has been operating since 1997, with classes at the NSCC campus since 2000. There are currently six instructors, teaching 350 students, 7 days a week using two studios. "It is wonderful," says Begin-Gillis, "it just keeps growing. We offer Ballet, Jazz, Contemporary and Modern dance."

Emma Purdy, of Masstown has been enjoying her dance classes for the past 6 years. She takes Ballet, Jazz and Contemporary classes.

CCJSH student Mari Budgey, has been a student for the past ten years and takes Pointe, along with Ballet, Jazz and Contemporary classes.

Tickets for The Nutcracker are available at MacQuarries or through ticketpro.ca.

Londonderry Post Office

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office shut down.

So, we did what we could to get local elected officials on side, and received a lot of support from Tom Taggart and Karen Casey. We were informed via a letter to MLA, Karen Casey from the Honourable Stephen Fletcher, then Minister of State (Transport) that as part of the Canadian Postal Service Charter established in 2009, "the government has maintained indefinitely the moratorium on the closure of rural post offices." He goes on to say that in unforeseen circumstances, like a retirement, Canada Post will ensure that mail delivery continues and will engage with community leaders to find a practical solution that is "satisfactory to the community and its postal needs."

The message sent to Canada Post from Londonderry was loud and clear: we want to keep our post office and anything less is unsatisfactory. This federal tie that binds us all needs to be preserved. Residents in Londonderry already pay more for telephone land lines (monopolized by one company), TV (satellite is the only option), and internet (due to lack of infrastructure, wireless is the only option), and residents should not have to travel out to conduct their post office business.

According to Canada Post spokeswoman, Anick Losier, in a Truro Daily News article on October 31, 2013, Canada Post apparently tried twice to staff the Londonderry Post Master position, and could not find a suitable candidate due to reasons including "did not have a location to provide what would adequately serve as a post office facility."

And this folks, is where the problem lies.

secure premises. Once the premises were confirmed and they passed all the clearances, a letter of offer would be issued at that time.

Since we have not been successful in finding a suitable candidate for the Postmaster position we will maintain delivery in Londonderry through Community Mailboxes (CMBs) and customers are receiving their retail services from the post office in Debert. If the community has suggestions for other locations for the CMBs or retail location we are certainly open for discussion.

John Caines, Media Relations

(Editor's Note: In Amanda Langille's article elsewhere in this issue, she stated local residents had not been able to find out what type of facility was required to re-establish a Post Office in Londonderry. The Shoreline Journal contacted Canada Post and received the above information from Canada Post in Ottawa.)

It should be noted that while Canada Post was "making attempts to find a suitable candidate" they were also moving full speed ahead in their plan to erect group mail boxes on Carrobie Road, which are now being used. The feeling in the room at that initial community meeting a year ago was Canada Post had no intention to ever open a post office in Londonderry again seems to be transcending to today, and some may argue that Canada Post has put the community through this staffing process knowing all along the barriers to finding a location would be enough to not find a location.

An obvious problem is there does not seem to be an official list of set criteria that needs to be met in order for a location to be deemed appropriate as a suitable post office. After several phone calls to Canada Post and others whom Canada Post said should be contacted because they "might know," it appeared as though no one knew for sure exactly what that set criteria was. That is a problem.

There are people who did not apply for the position thinking their location is unsuitable, or public facilities that could be available but were dismissed due to the perceived cost to make them usable as a post office location.

In the job posting for Postmaster, found on the Canada Post website, the requirements of a potential postmaster is to "provide a suitable premise in a central location within the community that is fully accessible to persons with disabilities, and be available for review and approval one month before hire." Sounds sim-

ple, but when community members tried to find out exactly what specs needed to be met no one could tell them. In fact, phone call after phone call was made to Canada Post and each time the representative did not know what exact specifications were required for an adequate post office location. On several occasions misinformation was given. Upon inspection of the Canada Post Corporations Act found online, there is very clear regulations stated for roadside mail boxes, even specs required for postal delivery in an apartment building, but nothing on private residences or public buildings being used as a post office. To date, a formal list from Canada Post as to what exactly is necessary has yet to be found or provided. This is a problem.

Another problem is the perceived cost to provide a location that will meet the unknown criteria, and the feeling is that Canada Post fully knows and understands that few people will invest potentially thousands to provide a location that "meets code", or whatever Canada Post's requirements are. It's somewhat ludicrous to even ask. In the world of government employees being paid in full for travel expenses, per diems, honorariums, etc., does it make sense to actually ask someone to invest their personal finances so they can have a job? That is like asking a Department of Transportation employee to provide a snowplow. If we could get our hands on the criteria, it may become clear that the criteria is actually quite doable, or else other postmasters would not have had the means to

set up post offices in their private residences as is the case in other rural areas all over Canada.

Colchester County thinks these are very real problems, too. In fact, at the County Council meeting on Thursday, November 14, it was approved the County would send a letter to Canada Post requesting clear requirements for a post office location, and also to accept another round of applications for postmaster once this information is made public. The Shoreline Journal has tried to get a copy of Canada Post's requirements but at printing deadline still had not received the information.

At the time this article was submitted, Councilor Tom Taggart and the Area Manager for Canada Post, Adam Lintaman, were setting a date and time to meet.

It's hard to know what Canada Post will do, but if there is the opportunity for another round of applications, please encourage anyone who may be interested to apply. The standard consideration for a postmaster in a rural community as found in the job description on the Canada Post website is to "live in the community although applicants living within a 50km radius of the post office might be considered, if necessary."

Canada Post is like a storm surge, with waves of thick bureaucracy and corporate strategy, it is smashing and crashing down on our rural post offices, and these community pillars are being lost. It's not right. Only time will tell if Canada Post will step up and do the right thing and facilitate a post office re-opening in Londonderry.

Canada Post Replies

Canada Post has made a concerted effort to staff the Postmaster position in Londonderry. We advertised the position from April 29 to May 26, 2013 by sending some 2,600 flyers to residents of Londonderry (attached) and actually expanded the search area to include Economy, Debert, Great Village and Belmont. We were unable to find a successful candidate.

The Postmaster position has basic requirements including security clearance and credit and financial checks that are outlined in the poster and without a successful candidate obviously we can't proceed to look for a location.

The following are the basic requirements for a Postmaster provided facility:

1. Centrally located near town center
2. Meet zoning and local bylaws
3. Meet accessibility requirements
4. Provide secure location for the mail
5. Has sufficient space to accommodate required fit-up
6. Access to a washroom
7. Dedicated parking for the facility
8. Able to provide liability coverage
9. Handicapped accessibility

If we had a successful candidate, they would have 30 days to

Ian McElhinney
is no longer an employee of A-1 Tires Limited.

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