

REES' Pieces

Community Spirit

History has repeated itself in Londonderry. In 1949 a group of local women, known locally as the "Cheerful Stitchers" completed a two year drive to raise money to build a church. In the fall of 2009, many descendants, friends and former residents of the "Cheerful Stitchers" community ended a two month drive by ensuring the community's church finished in the Top 25 of the AVIVA Insurance Community Fund initiative to receive funding to rejuvenate the church into a much needed community centre.

As Maritimers, we always have a strong sense of community spirit and it always seems to come forth in abundance at Christmas time. We've got a global reputation of being the most generous of all Canadians not only of our time, but also forking over money for causes for those less fortunate than ourselves.

However, there is one recent initiative which best demonstrates what people have been saying all along. The Thirsty Church initiative from Londonderry Station is the best example in recent history.

On October 21st, Amanda Langille, and a small group of supporters entered the Londonderry Station Community Church in a national competition organized by AVIVA Insurance. For the next six weeks this project put many lives on hold, as the Thirsty Church started to capture national attention.

AVIVA Insurance set aside \$500,000.00 to be awarded by a panel of judges to community based projects which at the end of public on-line voting succeeded as being the Top 25. The Thirsty Church entry was covered in the Shoreline as the headline story in the December issue. The initial phase of the competition was to reduce hundreds of entries down to 63 for the semi-final round which would accept online voting for a two week period until voting ended at midnight on the night of December 16th.

To the amazement of many, the Thirsty Church gradually gained momentum, and towards the end appeared to be the entire focus of life. When voting ended Thirsty Church did what it needed to do, finishing in the 25th position with 19,030 votes. Not bad for a community of 100 people. Organizers and supporters must now wait until a panel of judges decisions are announced on January 25th.

The Thirsty Church dream is to dig a well, install running water, a wheelchair ramp, and finish the basement complete with modern kitchen facilities in building which was constructed 60 years ago.

Initially, the church was constructed as the result of community spirit of local women who organized, "Cheerful Stitchers" who with their own hands produced enough handcrafts to raise the money to buy the lumber to build a church.

Many of those, who maneuvered the recent initiative into the Top 25, were immediate family descendants of the original creators. Others were former residents of the area, or those who have roots in the immediate area.

In an online comments section of the Thirsty Church entry a total of 1138 comments were posted not only to support the drive, but also to reconnect. To update the church with running water, washrooms, wheelchair ramp and a modern kitchen is estimated to be in the range of \$100,000.00.

The "Thirsty Church" project demonstrates what can happen the entire community comes together. It is not anticipated the AVIVA fund would pay for the entire repairs, but the momentum created by the contest could be perceived as being the catalyst ensuring the repairs will be completed.

Governments and other organizations can take a lesson or two from the Londonderrians, who have amassed a lot of publicity for the province and particularly West Colchester. It just shows what happens when communities are engaged.

Amanda Langille should receive special recognition for conceiving the idea and seeing it through to an exhausting end. Her dedicated volunteers come a close second. However, it is important to mention three public officials who stepped up to the batters box when needed: Karen Casey, MLA; Tom Taggart, councilor, and Colchester Mayor Bob Taylor. These three strategically made moves, which helped push the project into the Top 25.

Congratulations to all Thirsty Church supporters, who await the January 25th decision from the judges.

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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Dear Maurice,

After reading Ruth Thompson's piece on Five Islands letting people know that Five Islands has not completely rolled up its street for the winter months, I could not help but notice every place that was still open for business was mentioned, except for one.

That one has played a very important part of people's everyday life here in the community for the past twenty-

four (24) years. "Ellis' Video" have a large stock of can goods, baking goods, even fishing gear, for a very small store. Their motto should read "if you don't see it ...just ask".

When times are hard for the people of this community they don't hesitate going into Ellis' asking for credit. To most people, it is extended in good faith. Can the other places in Ruth's article say the same thing?

If she is doing free adver-

tising for other businesses in the area, don't you think it would be fair to offer the same courtesy to all, especially the oldest business in the community?

Thank you for your time
Belindia Meekins

Hi Maurice:

I just received my Shoreline with the great coverage of the Remembrance Day events. You did a good job of getting pictures from the

various venues. I was however disappointed that the pictures taken by Judy Bristow-Roberts from Five Islands, were not given photographer's credits as were the others taken by Linda Harrington. I think it is only fair that both photographers be given credits for their excellent pictures.

Thanks, Dorothy Carson

Editors Note: You are correct. It was an oversight on my part. My apology to Judy Roberts and readers.



Trent Fisher was one lucky little guy at the Debert Christmas Concert. He won the door prize and one of two handmade quilts. He is shown here with his mother Kim. (Harrington Photo)



Dawn Porter, Pauline Matthews and Ellen Hamilton (r to l) enjoyed the Chowder Luncheon at the Wesley United Church in Belmont on Dec. 5. Seafood and corn chowder was on the menu, and several craft and bake tables were set up. (Harrington Photo)

Great Village Fire Brigade Elects Executive

By Kathy Simpson-Giles

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!! I hope this finds you all well and that you all survived the holiday season.

In December, the Election of Officers took place and they are as follows: Chief: Dave Lundie, Deputy Chief: Roger Roode, 1st Captain: Larry Kinsman, 2nd Captain: Gregg Kinsman, 3rd Captain: Gordie Shipley, 4th Captain: Dave Slack, Lt. of Fire Police: Robert Layton, 1st Lt.: Joe Slack, 2nd Lt.: Gary Slack and Secretary: Lisa O'Brien.

Last year was a busy one with the Department responding to over 100 calls. We had members training in house and recertified several of our MFR's as well. We

would like to thank them for their dedication as the MFR course is now five days long.

I would also like to thank you, our community for your continuing support. Things like the Auction and Lobster Supper would not be the success they are without you!

As always, we are always looking for new members. If you are interested in joining, stop by any Wednesday night and introduce yourself. Terri-lynn is back as Chair of the Membership Committee and would be more than happy to show you around.

You can still order civic number signs. They make it much easier for us too find you in an emergency. Just give Betty MacNeil a call at 668-2314.

Great Village Historical Society Notes

By Linda Shears

The Great Village Historical Society met on Wednesday, December 2nd at the Legion Hall with 12 members present. We missed the presence of Donald Nelson, our most senior member, who has moved to Truro.

There was discussion of the historical panels for the pergola. The panels have been placed in storage for the winter. Three new panels on the topics of "Lumbering", "The Shad Fishery" and "The Age of Sail" have been researched, written, edited and are being prepared in Halifax. More than 60 re-prints of "The History of Great Village" have been sold to date.

Richard Akerman, who does volunteer work at the

Colchester Historical Society Museum and Archives in Truro, informed us that 2011 will mark the celebration of the arrival of early settlers to the Colchester area 250 years ago. As well, 2011 will mark 100 years since the birth of poet Elizabeth Bishop. The Elizabeth Bishop Society of Nova Scotia is planning several events to honour her birth and celebrate her work.

Our next meeting, on Wednesday, January 6th, 2010, at 1:30 p.m. in the Legion Hall, is scheduled as a work event. Members will be assessing the material which has been collected for the historical update and determining what else is needed.

New members are always welcome.

"We Care" Kitty Helpline holds bakesale

By Susan Dobson

The "We Care" Kitty Help Line Society held a bake sale fundraiser on December 12, 2009, at the Londonderry Community Center. The baked goods were donated from people in our community and Mildred Langille, who is one of our supporters, donated many knitted items for the occasion. In addition, Sarah Murphy, who is one of our younger

supporters, made a lovely Christmas cookie platter which was raffled off. It was won by Billy Joe Johnson. In addition, we would like to offer a special thank you to the women who collected and donated their recyclables and raised a \$100.00. The event was a huge success and just over \$400.00 was raised. The money raised will help us continue to care for the local feral

(or stray) cat population. Costs in operating the shelter have included: heat for the shelter, medicine, food and kitty litter, as well as, many other supplies. We are also pleased to announce that we have found homes for 5 kittens / cats and currently have 3 cats we are working with to help them find "fur" ever homes.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who has sup-

ported the "We Care" Kitty Help Line Society. We appreciate the continued commitment of those who have donated baked goods and knitted craft items, as well as, those who came out to purchase items or made a donation.

If you would like to send a donation or become a volunteer, or if you would just like to drop in to see the shelter please contact Venetia at 668-2913 or Susan and Erin at 668-2417.

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