

## Two Dogs Die in House Fire



Debbie Clarke sadly looks up at where fire destroyed the upstairs of her home and claiming the lives of two of her much loved family pets. (Harrington Photo)

By Linda Harrington

**Masstown:** Shock and disbelief were overwhelming emotions for Debbie Clarke as she returned home less than 24 hours after fire ripped through the upstairs of her two story home on Masstown Road. Thankful no one was seriously injured in the blaze, but grieving for the two dogs she was unable to rescue, Debbie found it difficult to recall the previous night.

"I was asleep on the couch and awoke to the smell of smoke. I jumped up, and immediately heard the smoke detectors going off. This was when I realized the smoke was coming from upstairs," says Debbie.

She had given her cell phone to her son, who was out with friends, so she had to run across the field, in the dark, to a neighbour's and get them to call 911.

"I immediately ran back to my house as fast as I could, trying to rescue my two dogs that were upstairs in their kennels," says an emotional Debbie. She says the house was now filled with smoke and she couldn't see, so she frantically climbed up the stairs on her hands and knees. The flames burned her hands and hair, when she reached the top landing, so she had to back down. Thinking only of saving her dogs, she tried once again, but smoke and flames beat her back and she

fell down the stairs. The fire brigade soon arrived and they prevented her from going back in the burning house.

"I was a wreck after that," she says trembling. "I remember someone carrying out the bodies of my two dogs wrapped in blankets. A neighbour just came by a few minutes ago and helped us bury them."

Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade Deputy Chief John McKay said the brigade was assisted on scene by Debert and Great Village, with Cobequid standing by at the hall. The fire is believed to be electrical in origin but the Fire Marshall would not be doing an investigation.

"It took about an hour to get the fire extinguished and we stayed on scene until about 4AM," says Deputy Chief McKay.

Along with Debbie and son Brandon, her boyfriend, Walter also lives in the house but he was away working at the time of the fire. "I hate to think what might have happened if Brandon had been home and sleeping in his bedroom. It is at the top of the stairs and is now completely burnt," says Debbie.

The family is grateful to the fire brigades and to the Red Cross for their assistance immediately following the fire. "Red Cross has put us up in a hotel until Monday and gave us gift cards to get food and

## Nova Scotians are encouraged to get a flu shot

Each fall flu clinics are held throughout the province. In 2013 forty-two percent of Nova Scotians got the flu shot. Flu symptoms often include a sudden high fever, headache, general aches and pains, fatigue and weakness, a

runny, stuffy nose, sneezing and sore throat. It can lead to more severe illness such as pneumonia or even death.

When the flu clinic campaign was launched on October 21, the Shoreline Journal attempted to find

out when clinics would be held in Cumberland and Colchester County area. We were advised the Collaborative Health Centre in Parrsboro had not established a firm date. We were still awaiting word on similar clinics for Colchester and East Hants areas.

Seasonal flu vaccine is available from most pharmacies, family doctors, family practice nurses, nurse practitioners, clinics offered by Public Health and some workplaces.

"Vaccination is the single most important way to prevent the flu, which can be a very serious illness," said Health and Wellness Minister Leo Glavine. "It's free, safe and effective, and we encourage everyone to get the flu vaccine, but especially people at high risk for complications such as pregnant women."

Other high-risk groups strongly encouraged to get a flu shot are seniors, those six months to five years of

age, Aboriginal people, anyone with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, asthma, and diabetes, and those who live with, or care for, people in high-risk groups.

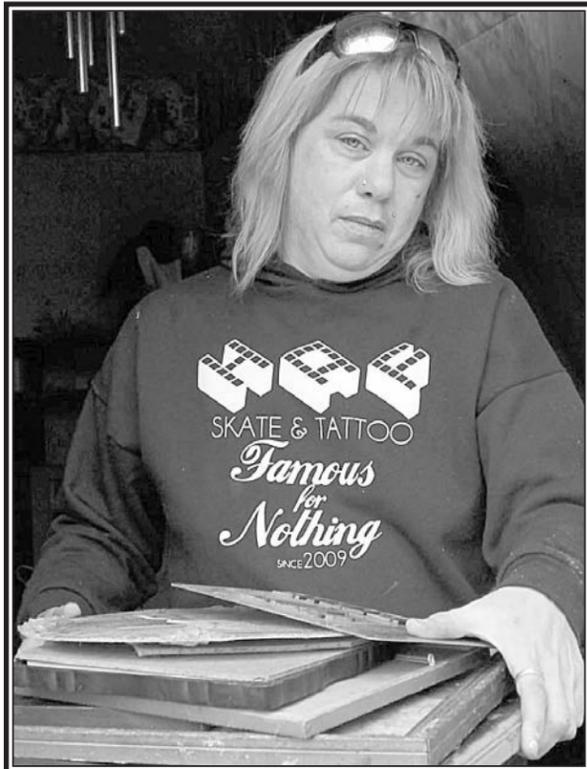
"This year, we want to remind pregnant women to get vaccinated. It is safe and effective at any stage of pregnancy, and protects not only the pregnant woman, but her baby both before and after birth," said Deputy Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Frank Atherton. "Since the earliest a baby can be immunized is at six months, an expectant mother's flu shot is the best way her newborn can be protected."

Proper hygiene, such as hand washing and covering noses and mouths when coughing or sneezing, is important to prevent the spread of influenza and many other infections. People with flu symptoms should stay home and minimize close contact with others.

For more information on the flu, visit [www.gov.ns.ca/flu](http://www.gov.ns.ca/flu)



One can see why this mother is very relieved her son was not home asleep in his bed at the time of the fire. His bedroom was completely destroyed. (Harrington Photo)



Debbie Clarke begins the painful process of salvaging whatever she can from her home, after fire gutted the upstairs on Oct. 24th. (Harrington Photo)

essentials," she says adding "But I really don't know what we will do after that."

The family had no house insurance and although some appliances and furniture are salvageable from the downstairs, there is a lot of water damage throughout the main floor. Debbie says she has no money to repair or rebuild what remains of the structure.

Walter and Debbie have been moving items to a storage shed for the time being, until they can sort out their future plans.

If anyone knows of a 2/3

bedroom house in the area to rent, or if you have anything to donate to the family, you can reach Debbie on her cell phone at 902-305-1156. When asked what she sees as immediate needs, Debbie thought of her son Brandon, who has lost everything that was in his bedroom. Clothing sizes are a men's medium t-shirts, size large sweaters, pants size 32/32 and shoe size of 9.

Fire Prevention Week was in October and this fire is a reminder of the importance of smoke detectors throughout your home.

## Clarke Family Relief Fund

Continued from page 1

volunteers and work closely with a volunteer project manager.

**Volunteer** project manager who will plan work schedule for trades and volunteers.

**Volunteers** to help acquire building materials.

**Volunteer** to organize obtaining refuse containers for demolition project.

**Volunteers** to help with on-site demolition and workers to help with on-site reconstruction, once property has been cleared of debris.

**A volunteer project manager**, who will organize work party of volunteers who will undertake reconstruction.

Volunteers who will provide

refreshments, snacks and noon-time lunches for volunteers during demolition and reconstruction work parties.

The project manager will require assistants, who will assist organizing work schedule for the various trades and volunteers.

Once reconstruction is completed, workers may be required to help clean other portions of the property, which may have suffered smoke and water damage.

Those wishing to help with the Debbie Clarke Family Property Restoration, please contact **Maurice Rees, publisher, 902-647-2968; Cell: 902-890-9850** or E-mail: [maurice@theshorelinejournal.com](mailto:maurice@theshorelinejournal.com) Emails are preferred if possible.

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