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Team Manitoba competes at the world's largest high school rodeo



Manitoba contestants competed at the nationals in Nebraska.

PHOTOS BY JENNINGS PHOTOGRAPHY

By **Charlotte Artshko**
EMPIRE ADVANCE

Twenty athletes proudly represented Team Manitoba at the 2026 National High School Finals Rodeo (NHSFR), held July 19-25 at the Sandhills Global Event Center in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Recognized as the world's largest high school rodeo, the NHSFR welcomed 1,766 contestants from Canada, the United States, Australia, New

Zealand and Mexico. Competitors spent the week vying for more than \$363,000 in prize money while showcasing the dedication and hard work it took to qualify for one of the most prestigious events in youth rodeo.

Representing Team Manitoba were Reid Armstrong of Boissevain, Boden Bond and Hudson Bond of Kenton, Carter Brown, Sadie Brown, Stetson Cutler, Slade Hagan and Madelyn (Maddie) Warkentin of Virden, Andee Cowan and Billie Cowan of Gains-

borough, Sask., Joel Fisk and Zavery Hollingshead of Moosomin, Sask., Jill Goff of Carman, Denver and Spencer Gompf of Oak Lake, Kelsey McGee of Deloraine, Kyrna Moyer of Brandon, Reese Morrison of Glenboro, Jessica Wright of Rapid City and Jett Lockie of Waskada. Several additional Manitoba qualifiers earned the opportunity to compete at the NHSFR but were unable to attend this year's event.

Read results from local riders on page 9...

Inside...



**ELKHORN
WESTERN
WEEKEND**
PG 10 - 11



**WDFD
FIRE HALL
EXPANSION**
P2

Fire hall expansion best way to spend a million bucks

Shovel ceremony marks Virden fire hall go-ahead

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

With the ceremonial sod turning on July 29, the Town of Virden and Wallace District Fire Department marked Virden firehall's expansion and renovation project.

Virden's deputy mayor Mark Savy welcomed the crowd saying, "I remember when I joined the fire department in 2006, they were getting excited, talking about a new hall. Here we are in 2026, just about to put shovels in the ground."

The project is 50 per cent cost shared between Town of Virden and Government of Manitoba through the Growth and Renewals Opportunities Grant.

The Honourable Glen Simard, Minister of Rural and Northern Affairs addressed the sizeable gathering on a scorching hot morning saying, "Being a regional project, because this actually affects neighbouring communities, it was really important to make sure that the public is on board... that this is something that they want and that they're ready for. And when you have a town like Virden with strong leadership, and a good capital plan, and a good public safety plan... it makes something like this easy to endorse."

Simard pointed to recent firefighter demands. "In the past couple of years, we've had a real comprehensive response to fires in Manitoba. The wildfire service relies upon communities like Virden to respond to fires in the north. And having good, well-trained firefighting force is extremely important."

Mayor Tina Williams welcomed the crowd who came to celebrate this "really important milestone for our community and all our surrounding communities."

She said, "This funding will strengthen our emergency services and ensures our firefighters have a space and equipment and facilities to continue protecting us, and to protect themselves as well."

The mayor explained how Virden saved up for the work. "To achieve this



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

Ceremonial shovels mark the green light for Wallace District Fire Department's expansion of the fire hall at its original location of 330, 11th Ave. S. WDFD Firefighters - Shelby Pardy (maternity leave) Evan Pardy, John Davidson, Curtis Smith, Morgan Henry, and Joel Neumier line up behind the ceremonial 'sod' turners, L-R: Devan Decroliere from Roger Branum Construction, Fire Chief Cory Nixon, Deputy Mayor Marc Savy, Minister of Rural and Northern Affairs Glen Simard, Mayor Tina Williams, Town of Virden CAO Neil Smith and Roger Branum from Roger Branum Construction.

goal, the Town of Virden had allocated \$150,000 a year through its annual budget for over eight years, and then when the province came in with its investment... we each contributed \$1.5 million towards this project."

Mayor Williams expressed appreciation for the province's role and said, "I want to thank Minister Simard and his staff, Matt, who are here today with us."

Former CAO, Rhonda Stewart was acknowledged by several speakers for her extra effort on many occasions which included the grant application to the province.

Clayton Canart, reeve of Wallace-Woodworth municipality spoke saying, "It's extremely important for firefighters to have these kinds of assets to provide the life-saving services and protection they provide our citizens. I've been chair of the Fireboard for 10 years now, and I know that they were advocating for (the fire hall upgrade) before that."

He praised the dedication of the volunteer firefighters for local needs and added, "Being on the highway, we see a lot of traffic incidents, so they're providing services to many people from outside of our area. So, thank you for the work that you do, and congratulations on the new facility."

Fire Chief Cory Nixon

expressed what the project means to the fire service.

"This is a very exciting day for the department," said Nixon on behalf of firefighters and the building committee. "The firefighters at Station 1 are ecstatic that after years of preplanning and putting away funds, that this grant has actually pushed the project into reality."

He said it will bring the firehall into conformance with new safety guidelines, "ensuring that everybody operating in the building can remain as cancer-free and safe as possible. It's a big step in fire service right now on cancer prevention."

Firefighters' gear will no longer sit in the exhaust fumes of the trucks.

"The new expansion allows us to take our gear off our apparatus floor."

The new truck bay will be built at the rear of the current hall, which will be renovated to store the gear and firefighting apparatus.

Nixon explained, "With the new space, we're excited to be able to accommodate more training... we will have dedicated training areas to better train our members."

In closing, emcee Savy said the firefighters on the building committee played a key role. Firefighter John Davidson (formerly with Manitoba Hydro) and Chief Nixon (a building inspector) brought valuable knowledge to the decision

making.

Savy also reminisced about the Chamber of Commerce candidate forum held for the former municipal council elec-

tions. "We were asked questions," he said, "And one of the questions was, 'if you were given a million dollars, what would you spend it on?' Well, I think

this is probably the best way to spend that million dollars, so this is the way we're spending it."

Work is due to begin in early August.

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THE DRAW WILL TAKE PLACE ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2026.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THIS SUMMER AND WISH ALL PARTICIPANTS THE BEST OF LUCK.

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Visit our website: www.virdenmainline.com
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News from This week in 1954 in Virden

By Lauren Halowaty
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

This week in 1954, 72 years ago, Virden's water tower was freshly painted a gleaming silver with "VIRDEN" printed across it in bold black. To this day, the tower remains a notable, recognizable, and symbolic part of the community.

Water towers are elevated structures that were built to support a tank high enough to pressurize a drinking water distribution system and maintain emergency storage for fire protection. These towers frequently functioned alongside underground or surface service reservoirs that stored treated water near where it was used. Almost every small town in Manitoba that had or has a water tower utilized it to manage the supply and demand for water usage or to act as a reserve during emergencies.

While the primary use of water towers in some towns has faded over time for various reasons, ranging from being too costly to maintain to just not being used currently, like Virden's, other Manitoba towns with water towers include Selkirk, Winnipeg Beach, St. Boniface in Winnipeg, Falcon Beach, Portage la Prairie, Beausejour, Boissevain, Brandon, Neepawa, Melita, Russell, Stony Mountain, and more. Now, they are viewed more as historic infrastructure.



FILE PHOTO

2026 Rodeo Parade



The parade route in the rodeo paper was slightly off. Above is the correct route for the rodeo parade.

Goldie's Incredible Journey

How the Town of Virden helped reunite a family with their cat

By Beth McConnell
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

A routine overnight stop in Virden turned into an unforgettable four week ordeal for a family of six travelling from Calgary to their new home in Ontario. Their four-year-old cat, Goldie, slipped away into the Manitoba night, and what followed was a story of determination, teamwork, and the kind of small town kindness that leaves a lasting mark.

Rachel Donna Hewitt, her husband, and their four children were on a long relocation journey from Alberta to Ontario. They had stopped in Virden for the night, planning to continue east toward Hamilton, where her husband would soon begin work.

But during a quick stop to clean Goldie's crate, after he had an accident from the long drive, the cat made a dash for freedom.

"He escaped in the evening when I was trying to clean out his crate. He had pooped and we still had quite the drive ahead of us," said Hewitt on the escape.

Goldie disappeared into the Lions Campground, leaving the family scrambling to find him. They stayed extra days, searching and hoping, but with a U-Haul trailer to return and a deadline for her husband's first day of work, they were forced to continue their journey without him.

From Ontario, Rachel searched Facebook for lost pet services, hoping someone local could help. That's when Virden Pet Network and Westman Area Lost Animals (WALA) stepped in.

Volunteers visited the campground daily, set out food, monitored activity, and coordinated updates. Their efforts paid off: Goldie was eventually caught in a live trap.

But Goldie wasn't finished adventuring.

Goldie lived up to his nickname, "Houdini," by escaping again, this time after being safely trapped and awaiting transport. "He escaped a second time after being caught. He escaped the night before what was supposed to be his flight back to Ontario, so that flight was cancelled."

Outsmarting the original trap, Goldie forced rescuers to switch to a different style of live trap. With patience and persistence, they caught him once more. In total, Goldie spent nearly four weeks on his own in Manitoba.

With Goldie finally secured, WALA put out a call for a "companion flight", someone travelling to Hamilton who could escort him home. The request was answered by Sharon Ellerington, a Virden resident who happened to be flying to Hamilton and volunteered to bring Goldie back to his family. Her kindness closed



PHOTO BY RACHEL DONNA HEWITT

Sharon Ellinger (on the right) reuniting Goldie at the airport with the Hewitt Family.

the final chapter of Goldie's Manitoba adventure.

Hewitt expressed deep appreciation for everyone who helped bring Goldie home, "We are so happy to have him back. Thank you, Virden." She also shared how meaningful the community's support was during such a stressful time, "We had stayed extra time to try and find him but ultimately couldn't. Knowing people were still looking for him after we left meant everything."

Goldie's journey is more than a tale of a runaway cat; it's a testament to what happens when a community refuses to give up. From volunteers checking traps to residents sharing posts, to a woman offering to fly a cat across the country, Virden showed exactly what small towns are capable of.

Hewitt summed it up best, "It took a community

to make it happen. As I learned from this experience, Virden sure does have a tight knit community, and everyone is so sweet!"

For Goldie, it meant a safe trip home. For Virden, it was another reminder that neighbours help neighbours, even when those neighbours are just passing through.

VIRDEN LIONS HALL



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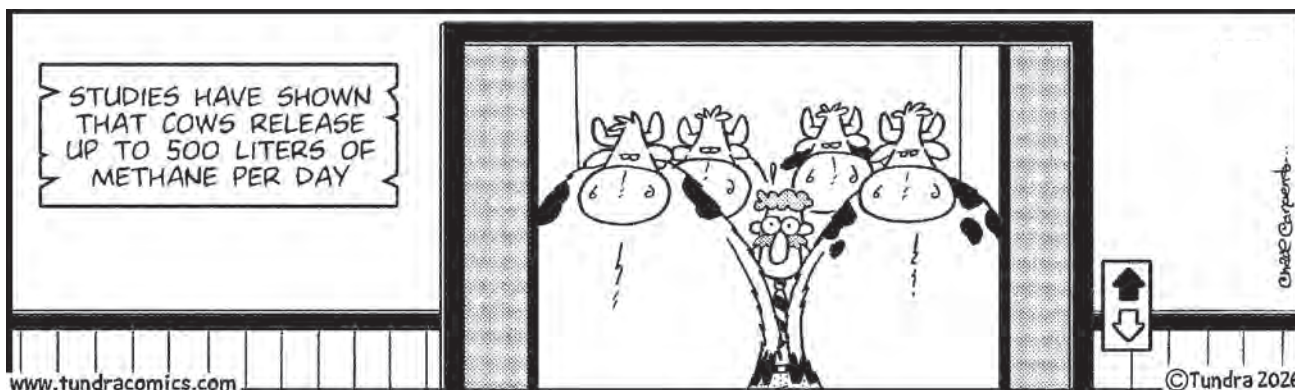
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Tundra

By Chad Carpenter



Challenging climate change

I usually write original material but a friend sent me this piece and I truly believe it deserves close examination. Just like Allister Heath—the Editor of The Sunday Telegraph, who is quoted below, I believe that we have been duped by the climate change people. Not that the climate isn't changing but that we should spend our time, energy and money on adapting because we don't have the ability to change the directions of a climate.

“We’ve lost the war against climate change. Time to scrap net zero
By Allister Heath—The Editor of The Sunday Telegraph

Climate change is real, but Britain can do almost nothing about it. The war against global warming has been lost, with only grievous collateral damage to show for it. We have crippled British industry, hammered consumers and pushed the grid to the brink of black-outs, all with no discernible impact on global emissions and the climate. It's time to accept this sobering reality, cut our losses, cease tilting at (and building) windmills, ditch the despicable con that is net zero, and learn to cope with, and whenever possible, even enjoy, a warmer, drier, more volatile Mediterranean climate, if that is indeed to be our fate.

Hubris has ruined us, a tiny nation accounting for 0.8 per cent of global CO2 emissions from combustible fuels. We were fooled into believing that we could single-handedly lead the way in saving the world, a futile gambit if there ever were one...

Britain's re-embrace of collectivism, of energy rationing, our advanced case of suicidal empathy, have achieved little other than putting us at the mercy of China. The Communist state accounts for 32.1 per cent of emissions, pumps out 262 per cent more CO2 than it did in 2000 and is making the most of net zero in Britain and Europe

RIGHT IN THE CENTRE

KEN WADDELL



to bolster its own industry and its grip over crucial commodities.

All of our efforts at carbon reduction (and those of the European Union) have been offset many times over by the increase in Chinese emissions; Britain could return to the stone age and cut our GDP to zero, and it would still make only a trivial difference. Net zero represents the pinnacle of arrogance, a case study in the illusion of control, a landmark in human vanity and, in Britain's case, exposes a ludicrously exaggerated view of our own importance given the UK's negligible economic and environmental footprint in 2026.

Above all, we need to rid ourselves of the green energy subsidies and grid integration costs that will exceed £40bn a year by 2030-31, according to the Prosperity Institute, as well as the entire apparatus of net zero, from the Climate Change Committee to binding carbon budgets, restrictions on the North Sea and other compulsory targets to cut CO2 or change behaviour...

Yet fuelled by a neo-Victorian moral revivalism, the UK's cross-party elites, having lost an empire and searching for a role as international central planners, convinced themselves that we should lead by example and through self-sacrifice, and bet the house on net zero. Ordinary people are paying the price for this delusion.”

To relate the above to Manitoba and misguided efforts, let me offer a short

and local Manitoba history lesson. In the 1960s, our modern day Watershed Conservation District model was developed. It actually works but a lack of funds and commitment has hampered its effectiveness. It actually began with work at the Rosedale farm north-west of Neepawa. This piece of land had been ravaged by over-cropping and erosion. A massive tree and forage planting effort took place. Then in 1971, the Conservation District program was launched and the first one was the Whitemud Watershed district around Neepawa and Gladstone. I know this to be a fact, because I was there and saw it all come into place. My boss at the time, Ag-Rep Allan Nebbs had tried to compliment the watershed's work by applying to the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (PFRA) for funding water retention dams, about 50 in total. Great idea but PFRA refused to approve any of them. That refusal was a mistake, as I maintain that water retention, flood control, conserving and storing water could all be done at much higher rate than is currently being done.

The point is, as the above Sunday Telegraph column states, we also in Manitoba need to find ways to adapt to a changing climate because we will never control it. When drought periods or even drought years come back, we will be a lot better off if we have prepared for them.

Homebodies

RITA FRIESEN



Well, they never caught that on camera!

There were a number of incidents in my life that truly were noteworthy and they never were captured on camera. The images, I assure you, remain vivid in my mind.

There were witnesses as I glided over the handlebars of the rental bike in Amsterdam! It was the second day of the bike and barge tour. We had covered a fair distance so my legs were tiring. Nearing the canal we shifted from the path, over a slight curb to ride on a cobblestone sidewalk. The front wheel caught the curb, twisted violently to the right and I continued to proceed directly forward. Hands outstretched I sailed onward, skidding to a halt with my face to the stones. My inward prayer in the journey was “not my teeth, not my teeth, dear God, not my teeth!”. (My teeth have been a major investment and while I carry an eyeglass prescription with me on my travels, there is no replacement for my two front teeth.) The tour guides called a halt as they checked on the condition of the bike first! Then checked me. I was able to continue the ride and the tour, I do have pictures of the colourful multitude of bruises! One of the riders that had been following me described by dismount as graceful as though the angels were carrying me. They may have been.

The bike incident was when I was seventy years of age. And as I mentioned there are no pictures of the fall, just of the bruises. When I was much younger, in my teens, the cow headed over to the neighbours. She had gone for male companionship and when I wanted her to come home with me, she was unwilling. I had the rope around her neck, in the corral, and things should have progressed well. They did not. She galloped one way and somehow my right thumb got between the rope and a post, there were opposing forces. To this day the knuckle on my right hand thumb is slightly enlarged, slightly arthritic and definitely a weather forecaster. Would I have wanted a picture of a sweating, frustrated, angry young girl gallumping around a corral? Not really. I am thankful there was no one capturing that moment! The sorry thumb tells the story.

I was in my forties and we had a family camping trip at Camp Moose Lake. My oldest grandson was just past three years of age. Water skiing was important to the family and I was game to try. And try. And then try one more time. The grandson was standing on the dock, watching his beloved grandmother being dragged almost under water, until she/me was smart enough to let go! After several attempts, I gave up. Standing there with my little alli, I was comforted as he turned to me and said ‘bad boat! That’s a bad boat!’. I didn’t have the heart to inform him that it wasn’t the boat, it was all my fault. No photo in an album tells that story, the grandson doesn’t remember but I treasure my knight on a white charger that defended me!

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OLD SAYINGS



Here are a few more sayings that I hope bring back a smile or a chuckle from days gone by and hopefully, at least, puts smile on your face.

“Full steam ahead”, means to proceed with maximum speed, energy and determination to-

ward a goal or task. You would often hear this phrase used by a captain on a ship.

“Hold your horses”, means to wait, slow down or to be patient. It tells a person not to rush or make a quick, bad decision. Motor vehicle

drivers could certainly use some of this advice! Maybe there would not be so many fatal accidents on the highway.

“Keep your shirt on”, means to stay calm, be patient or stop rushing. It is also an informal way to tell someone not to get angry, upset or overly excited about a delay or mistake.

“Costs an arm and a leg”, means something is extremely expensive or costs an unreasonable amount of money. Like going to the grocery store

these days, or the gas pump. It really suggests that the price is so high it feels like you are giving up a vital body part.

“Best things since sliced bread”, means something that is extremely good, useful, innovative or a wonderful new invention or idea. This phrase can also be used in a sarcastic or in a mocking type of way to describe something that is hyped up to be something that is amazing that is actually quite ordinary or even useless.

“Not all that and a bag of chips” means a person or thing is not as great, special or impressive as they think they are. It is often used to describe an arrogant person who is actually quite ordinary.

“Smoke and mirrors”, means an illusion, tricking or a false display used to hide the truth, confuse people or make something look better than it really is. An example of that is the Canadian federal government! See ya next week!



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VIRDEN

CENTRE OF IT ALL

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Facility Bookings: 204-748-2440

Emergency After Hours: 204-851-5540

Check your mailbox!

2026 property tax notices have been sent out.

If you haven't received yours, please contact the Town Office at 204-748-2440.

2026 property taxes are due by October 31, 2026.

Well Water Testing

Assiniboine West Watershed District will be coordinating well water testing.

Drop-off will be at the Virden Town Office on August 10, 2026 from 9:00-11:30 AM.

Testing kits are available for pickup in advance at the Town Office.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event

August 22, 2026, 10 am – 2 pm

Virden Farmer's Market – 505 Sixth Avenue

Employment Opportunity

Sanitation II Position

This is the senior position in the garbage collection division of the Public Works Department.

This position requires an individual that is in good health and capable of carrying out the physical requirements of the job and able to pass a medical examination. A high school diploma or equivalent is required as well as a Class 3 with Air driver's license.

Full job description is available on the Town of Virden website.

Please forward resume with cover letter to:

Faye Pope, Office/HR Manager
Town of Virden
Box 310,
Virden, MB, R0M 2C0
Email: office.manager@virden.ca

REGISTRATION PERIOD

NOW OPEN!

MAYOR & COUNCILLOR

MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Please be advised that a general municipal election will be held on October 28, 2026.

Prospective municipal election candidates must register with the Senior Election Official (SEO) during the registration period before they may begin to accept contributions, incur expenses, fundraise or borrow money for their campaign.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that I will be receiving candidate registrations:

For the office of head of council: Between May 1, 2026 and September 22, 2026

For the office of councillor: Between June 30, 2026 and September 22, 2026

at the Town of Virden office, 236 Wellington Street West, Virden, MB, during the regular hours of business.

To obtain a registration form contact the SEO at the email or telephone number listed below.

Registration forms are available for pickup at the Town of Virden office.

Rhonda Stewart, SEO
Phone: 204-851-0769,
Email: rlstewart64@outlook.com
Dated at Town of Virden,
Virden, MB on April 14, 2025

Upcoming Council Meetings

August 11 & September 1

Council Meetings start at 7:00 PM

HELEN DRYSDALE

OUT OF HELEN'S KITCHEN

Zucchini season is upon us. This easy-to-grow squash is the most versatile vegetable there is! It is low-calorie and low-carb and packed with good-for-you nutrients. Most of the vitamins and minerals are found in the zucchini skin so be sure to keep the skin on. Zucchini is great to fry, sauté, and grill as well as being a great addition to stir fries, pastas, and salads. When it grows to a larger size it is great in chocolate zucchini cake, muffins and quick breads.

Zucchini mushroom soup casserole

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 medium zucchini | 1 large onion, diced |
| 1 Tbsp. oil | 1 can mushroom soup |
| 1/3 cup cheese whiz | 3/4 cup bread crumbs |
| 2 tbsp. butter | 1 tsp. Mrs. Dash |

Wash and slice zucchini. Remove the seeds in the middle. In a large frying pan, sauté zucchini and onion in oil until tender crisp. In a large bowl, combine the mushroom soup and cheese whiz. Stir in the vegetables. Transfer to a greased baking dish. Combine breadcrumbs, butter and Mrs. Dash. Sprinkle over vegetable mixture. Bake, uncovered, at 350* for 30-35 minutes or until bubbly.

Zucchini ginger muffins

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1/2 cup canola oil | 1 cup sugar |
| 2 eggs | 1 tsp. vanilla |
| 2 cups grated zucchini | 2 cups flour |
| 1 tsp. baking soda | 1 tsp. baking powder |
| 1/2 tsp. salt | 1 tsp. ground cinnamon |
| 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger | 1/3 cup candied ginger, diced |
| 1 cup dark chocolate chips or more to taste | |
| Topping: | 3 Tbsp. sugar |
| 1/3 cup dark chocolate chips | |
| 1/2 tsp. cinnamon | |

In a large bowl, whisk together the oil, sugar, eggs, and vanilla until smooth. Stir in the zucchini. In another bowl, stir together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and ginger. Add the flour mix to the first mix and stir until just combined. Don't over mix. Add the candied ginger and chocolate chips. Spoon into paper cups in muffin tins. Sprinkle each muffin with topping. Bake at 350 F for 18 to 22 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean. Let the muffins cool in the pan for 5 minutes. Remove muffins from the tin for further cooling.

Miniota News

Submitted
BY LINDA CLARK

A very Happy 97th Birthday greeting to Margaret Taylor on Aug. 3. Her family joined their mom and grandma for a celebration at The Sherwood. Happy birthday Marg from all your Miniota friends!

Enid Haines had long time school friends Bette Lynn Hart from Kelowna B.C. and Shairl Honey from Edmonton Alta. call in for a visit. They also visited with other Birtle friends and one special visit was with Alice Bolter at Sunnyside who will be 103 years this month. Alice knew each of the girls by name. Enid also reports that her grandson Lee Haines from Peace River Alta. placed second in the provincial swim meet in the 50-metre breaststroke. A great accomplishment for Lee, but also the first provincial medal in swimming brought home to the Peace River Swim Club. Congratulations Lee and

to a proud Grandma Enid! Congratulations to Barry and Dianne Clark on the arrival of a new granddaughter, Isabella Ann, born Aug. 2 to Katrina and Levi Ferguson and big brother Lincoln at Brandon.

Our sympathy to Stephanie and Jamie Brown, Tiffany and Lexi and Terryl Greene and Will Huebner, Claire and Charlea on the death of Stephanie and Terryl's Grandma, Marion Brigden at the Deloraine Hospital on July 30. Marion's home was at Melita.

Isabella News
Happy birthday to Bernice Still! Can't tell a lady's age, but Bernice was the recipient of many guests this past week, including children of the late Nelson and Sylvia Doran who were in the area visiting family and friends.
"May I see this day through sacred eyes, shape this day with helpful hands, end this day with a grateful heart." - Mary Davis

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Nurse Practitioner serves in Oakview Clinic

Manitoba Health needs to step up and cover necessary medically necessary care

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

While Manitoba's healthcare system is overwhelmed, in the RM of Oakview an experienced nurse practitioner is alleviating some of that pressure for the system, and importantly, for the people she helps.

Oakview Clinic in Rapid City is where Nurse Practitioner Michelle Weighell provides comprehensive healthcare, focusing on preventative care, chronic disease management, and wellness promotion for patients of all ages across Manitoba.

When Weighell made the decision to open her own clinic, it was a big step, one that she thought the province would soon support.

Recent changes indicated they would. In an interview she explained that under the original Canada health act, only physicians were recognized as medically necessary care providers, but last January, the federal government included within the definition nurse practitioners, pharmacists and midwives as providing medically necessary care, to be covered by the universal health system.

The provinces were to create funding models to include the additional medical care providers. Saskatchewan has, but Ontario and Manitoba haven't yet.

In a CBC story by Amina Zafar, Mar 31, 2026 headlines read: "Most people across Canada will no longer need to pay nurse practitioners for primary care. Federal directive aims to relieve pressure on family physicians...."

Oakview Clinic Begins

Just over three years ago, Weighell moved back to Rapid City where she was born. Through involvement in the community, she heard discussion about aging population and the struggle to find healthcare. With the federal directive to the provinces to pay for NPs services it seemed timely for Weighell to start her own clinic.

She said, "I left my role, which was almost full-time within Prairie Mountain Health to do this clinic. I know people asked me like, 'why would you do that?'"

Prior to her move to Rapid City, her home was in Rivers. She traveled to Birdtail Sioux First Nation working there as an NP. But she said her career was in jeopardy if she didn't make a change. "I was feeling like I wasn't going to be able to continue much longer."

"Really, it was such a difficult decision to leave (Birdtail) because I know the need is so heavy up there. But, the drive was just - I was exhausted and trying to be home for my son, I just needed to make some changes."

She approached the RM of Oakview about her desire to practice in the community as an NP. However, Manitoba still had no funding for private NP services, so clients would have to pay.

"I really wasn't keen to have to charge people out of pocket, but the council really urged me to move forward with it," she said.

"So, I kept my rates low. There are private NPs in other areas, not just Manitoba, but across Canada, and they do set their rates higher."

To supplement her income, Weighell also picks up shifts at a Brandon Minor Injury and Illness Clinic on 6th Street run by Prairie Mountain Health and she's paid by Manitoba Health.

Her Oakview Clinic started with one day per week and quickly grew.

"I have people traveling two hours to see me, because they can't get a provider in their area. We usually try to keep same day appointments, so anybody's welcome to come, just bring your Health Card."

In a recent report on her practice, 50 per cent of her

new patients have been on 'doctor finder' for over two years, Weighell says adding, "And they have very complex care needs most of them - diabetes, hypertension, mental health issues, cancer. It's been very challenging, but stuff that I dealt with in my prior practice as well."

She even makes house calls to seniors in town. "So then, some of our older folks don't have to try and arrange rides with their family members to get to their physician. And we try to work with their physicians, update them. Some opted to transfer their care to me just because it's so convenient, which is fine... it's a partnership."

Community Support

Community support has been important.

"I am not paying for a building. Rapid City community church provides me an office space right now."

The clinic had to move from its initial home in Rapid City's library basement due to water damage, but a church office was available. (Coincidentally, decades before that building was renovated to become Evangel Worship Centre, it was a medical office for two different doctors over the years.)

Weighell also works in Oak River. "I hope to start again this fall to travel to Oak River once a month or twice a month to serve that community because it's within our RM and the Oakdale Seniors Lodge was providing me space there as well, which was quite lovely." So, a low overhead makes her services more affordable.

"The Lions Club have provided donation towards cryotherapy equipment and supplies." (Cryotherapy is therapeutic use of extreme cold, often liquid nitrogen, to remove skin lesions - warts, precancerous spots and more.)

"The Rapid City Legion Ladies Auxiliary provided a donation which I've used towards women's health (cervical screening) and then the remainder of that fund, I've put into a savings to put towards some more equipment, new exam table that just would be beneficial."

She says local motorcyclists have planned an Iron Butt Challenge fundraiser for Oakview Clinic.

Riders will take a 400-km ride for Aug. 15, leaving Rapid City, touring through the Parkland, the Narrows (between Lake Manitoba and Winnipeg), and circling back to Rapid City where Councillor Gavin Reynolds has planned a smoked pork fundraiser supper.

"I'm so overwhelmed by that support," says Weighell. She says without community supports "we'd be struggling for sure. Those funds will



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Michelle Weighell, Nurse Practitioner.

be going directly towards equipment to benefit our patients." She adds, "I just really love what I do, it's so rewarding, I like being able to be here for my community."

Lobby for Coverage

The sting - while private nurse practitioners like Weighell are filling an important gap in their communities, Manitoba's medical system isn't yet funding this and unless a client has private insurance that will cover the cost, users pay.

Weighell presented the situation at the Western Caucus meeting of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, asking the AMM to lobby on behalf of private NPs.

At the July 14 RM of Wallace-Woodworth council meeting, Couns. Val Caldwell and Mark Humphries reported the discussion at Western Caucus, highlighting the importance of getting Manitoba to comply with the federal decision and create a funding model to cover private NPs.

Weighell is asking people to request Manitoba health to cover private NPs care. "We encourage everyone to send a letter, we have a form letter that was done by the nurse practitioner association. We provide that to anyone that wishes to send it."

Letters need to go to the Manitoba Minister of Health, the Honourable Uzoma Asagwara.

For Oakview Clinic hours and to contact Michelle Weighell, NP, see www.oakviewclinic.ca

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Japan honours former Manitoba Agriculture Deputy Minister with Decoration of the Order of the Rising Sun

Submitted
By MANITOBA 4-H

BRANDON, MB — Former deputy minister of Manitoba Agriculture and 4-H alumna Dori Gingera-Beauchemin has been recognized by Japan for her commitment to fostering exchange and friendship through the York-Benimaru Foundation (YBF) at a Japan consul conferment ceremony today at her family’s farm in Ile des Chênes.

Consul General of Japan Takehiko Wajima conferred a Japanese Imperial Decoration, the Order of the Rising Sun, on Gingera-Beauchemin as 4-H Manitoba welcomed 20 students and 2 chaperones for a two-week stay under the YBF Japan Homestay Program, which she was instrumental in helping to establish 39 years ago while serving as Chief of the Manitoba 4-H Program.

The Japanese Imperial Decoration is presented to foreign nationals who have made significant contributions to relations, defence cooperation, or cultural exchange between their home country and Japan.

Since the YBF Japan Homestay Program began in 1987, it has provided amazing cultural experiences and provided a global perspective on agriculture for hundreds of Manitoba and Japanese youth.

4-H Manitoba Executive Director Shannon Carvey said, “Dori Gingera-Beauchemin has been, and continues to be, an exceptional advocate not only for agriculture in Manitoba but also for 4-H. Her vision in establishing the remarkable

partnership between the York-Benimaru Foundation, Manitoba Agriculture, and 4-H Manitoba has created opportunities that have transformed countless lives. Our 4-H family is eternally grateful for the chance to connect with youth in Japan. The friendships and cultural understanding fostered through this exchange are truly life-changing and create bonds that last a lifetime.”

This is not the first honour Japan has bestowed on Gingera-Beauchemin, who was inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2025.

She received the Japanese Foreign Minister’s Commendation in 2018 in recognition of her contributions to strengthening Manitoba-Japan relations and her leadership of the homestay program over more than three decades.

About 4-H Manitoba

4-H is an international youth and volunteer organization that empowers members to choose projects and work alongside volunteer leaders to develop both project-related and essential life skills. Members gain knowledge, confidence, and leadership abilities that prepare them to thrive, lead, and create positive change in their communities.

In Manitoba, youth can choose from more than 80 hands-on projects, including gardening, food preservation, entrepreneurship, sustainable living, small machines, and fitness. Today, over 1,500 4-H members and 400 dedicated volunteers represent 4-H in Manitoba. 4-H Manitoba values its strong partnership with Manitoba Agriculture, which supports 4-H clubs across the province.

For more information, visit <https://4h.mb.ca>



SUBMITTED PHOTO

4-H alumna Dori Gingera-Beauchemin recognized by Japan.



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2026 National High School Finals Rodeo in Nebraska



PHOTOS BY TEAM MANITOBA FAMILIES AND JENNINGS PHOTOGRAPHY

Manitoba contestants compete on a national level. Representing Team Manitoba were Reid Armstrong of Boissevain, Boden Bond and Hudson Bond of Kenton, Carter Brown, Sadie Brown, Stetson Cutler, Slade Hagan and Madelyn (Maddie) Warkentin of Virden, Andee Cowan and Billie Cowan of Gainsborough, Sask., Joel Fisk and Zavery Hollingshead of Moosomin, Sask., Jill Goff of Carman, Denver and Spencer Gompf of Oak Lake, Kelsey McGee of Deloraine, Kyrna Moyer of Brandon, Reese Morrison of Glenboro, Jessica Wright of Rapid City and Jett Lockie of Waskada.

Continued from page 1...

The following reflect the official results posted by the National High School Rodeo Association (NHSRA).

Barrel Racing

Kelsey McGee recorded runs of 17.890 and 18.048 seconds. Sadie Brown posted times of 18.128 and 23.510 and was also selected to the 2026-27 Varsity Quanta Team during the NHSFR. Hudson Bond finished with runs of 18.207 and 23.322, while Maddie Warkentin completed her two runs in 18.942 and 18.801.

Breakaway Roping

Andee Cowan turned in runs of 2.92 and 5.47 seconds. Kelsey McGee also represented Team Manitoba in the event, recording a 2.96-second run.

Goat Tying

Jessica Wright recorded times of 9.26 and 9.66 seconds. Billie Cowan finished with runs of 10.39 and 18.38, while Andee Cowan added times of 12.92 and 10.85.

Pole Bending

Kelsey McGee completed the course in 22.757 and 21.944 seconds. Reese Morrison recorded runs of 23.610 and 22.355, while Jill Goff represented Team

Manitoba with a run of 23.607.

Reined Cow Horse

Kyrna Moyer represented Team Manitoba in reined cow horse, recording a score of 258.

Team Roping

Four teams represented Team Manitoba in team roping. Boden Bond and Stetson Cutler recorded Team Manitoba's lone qualified run with a time of 11.7 seconds. Carter Brown and Slade Hagan, Reid Armstrong and Zavery Hollingshead, and Spencer and Denver Gompf also competed but finished with no times.

Tie-Down Roping

Boden Bond recorded times of 16.28 and 28.13 seconds. Denver Gompf posted runs of 11.92 and 14.46, while Carter Brown recorded a 9.31-second run. Reid Armstrong also competed and finished with no time.

Bull Riding

Joel Fisk, Zavery Hollingshead and Jett Lockie represented Team Manitoba in bull riding. Although none recorded a qualified ride, each competed on one of the biggest stages in high school rodeo after qualifying through the Manitoba High School Rodeo As-

sociation season.

Beyond the competition, the NHSFR offered contestants and their families a full week of activities. Nebraska's summer heat added another challenge, with temperatures climbing into the 30 C range as contestants and their horses spent long days at the Sandhills Global Event Center.

Away from the arena, competitors explored the expansive NHSFR Trade Show, visited the NHSRA College Fair to learn about post-secondary opportunities, and took part in the annual volleyball tournament.

Another highlight throughout the week was the NHSRA Crisis Fund silent auction. Every state, province and participating country contributed a crisis basket showcasing products and items representing their home region. Filled through donations from businesses, organizations and individuals, the baskets helped raise money for the NHSRA Crisis Fund, which provides financial assistance to rodeo families during times of unexpected hardship.

For Team Manitoba, the week in Lincoln was about more than times and pla-

cing. It was a chance to represent Manitoba at one of the world's most prestigious

youth rodeos, compete alongside top young rodeo athletes from around the

globe, and create memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

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Legacy is built by Community.

"From watching the little buckaroos make their first runs, to the Junior & High School competitors - this arena means something to everyone."

The 12th Annual Elkhorn Western Weekend was a huge success



Chuck wagon races are fast-paced rodeo events featuring four-horse chariot-style wagons.



Lyle Brown was the Sunday's musical entertainment at the Elkhorn beer gardens.



A cornhole tournament is a competitive lawn game event where players score points by tossing bean bags into a hole on a raised wooden board. A group of kids in Elkhorn enjoyed playing the game.

Donation presentation to Kms for Kyler



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Genn Hipwell presented a donation to Kms for Kyler. \$500 of the money came from the sale of t-shirts, hats and hoodies at the Dial & Smile event in early July at Wolverine Supplies. The other \$500 was donated by Wolverine Supplies towards the cause. Genn Hipwell hands cheque to Troughton family, Mac, Cassidy, Oakley and Kyler.



The chariot races were extremely exciting and entertaining.



Ed James has photographed his last rodeo for the newspaper on August 2, 2026.



PHOTOS BY ED JAMES

The Elks Saloon bar was busy all weekend at the Western Weekend serving the crowds.

Elkhorn's 3rd Annual Pop-Up Market



PHOTO BY ED JAMES

Dozens of vendors sold their goods at the pop-up market.

By Ed James
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Elkhorn Western Weekend (EWW) was a great success and event for all ages! Even the weather cooled down a bit for the races. This year was the 12th EWW and every year it gets better, with more things to do and only a few weather wash outs over all the years I've been doing the news coverage. The event announcer kept the large crowd informed with his colourful race commentaries and advice. This year's popular information tip was that the on-site mini donuts food wagon was a great match with beer!

The weekend event started off with the cowboy

prayer and after that it was a weekend of "Wheels of fire"! The bleachers were full of spectators, and a few half ton trucks had backed up to the racetrack rail a few days earlier to get a good viewing spot. The weekend featured six sets of races, for the chariots and the chuck wagon teams on the main track, while over at the small corral there was a barrel racing competition. During all the track events the support crews were busy grooming the tracks after so many races, in fact even the race drivers would stop to pick up rocks on the track as they crossed it on foot.

All the events were held at the Elkhorn Agricultural Society grounds, and it is a great site with all

the amenities that are needed and thanks to long time Agricultural Society member Ed Clayton, his work in looking after the many tree types, add to the agricultural site grounds. At a future date, along the side of the former kitchen, a wall mural will be soon painted by a local artist.

The EWW was not all racing. In between the races, you had a baseball and corn hole tournament, food vendors, children's waterslide and play area, a two-day arts and craft sale and display area, local fire department pancake breakfast, and of course the popular beer garden with musical entertainment.

Over the years at the beer gardens, they have had

various musical entertainment groups, but this year they had three very popular performers. On Friday night they had Travis Barre, from the Reston area, who did a variety of musical styles and artist, with his strong voice. On Saturday, they had the return of the popular Westman group, "Clubbing Fraggles", with their 80's pop and rock show. While Sunday had an old crowd favourite, Lyle Baldwin was back with his country classics on the guitar and fiddle. Between the races there was a tasting booth for "Blackfly" coolers that was popular in the heat. And in the background of most of these events you could hear the thump of the corn hole bag tournament going on.

By Ed James
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Elkhorn Agricultural Society held its third Pop-Up Market at its site in Elkhorn. It was a hot evening, but a light sprinkle of rain made it bearable. It brought out about a dozen vendors, that included Tupperware, baking, garden produce, preserves, arts

and crafts and reps from Virden's RF Now Internet. At each event the on-site canteen facility is offered to area community groups as a fund raiser for their various projects. This event had the Elkview Manor Hospital Auxiliary operating it for their garden pathway project. For this event there was a small public turnout, perhaps because

of the heat! Agricultural Society member, Ed Clayton, when asked about next year, said that a review will be done among the vendors to see if it will continue next year. One of the interesting information sites that night at the market was the Prairie Gateway Tourism display. They represent the Virden, Elkhorn and

Kenton tourist areas and were offering unique T-shirts and hoodies for sale that promoted these areas. The Elkhorn Agricultural Society hope to have two more pop up markets this year. Perhaps in the next two they will have lots of garden-fresh produce for sale, except I'm not sure about zucchinis.

Virden Light Horse Show draws a crowd



PHOTO BY DALE DAVISON

Pee Wee Horsemanship with judge Monica Wickenheiser. From pony mounts to large horses, kids show expertise in the saddle.

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Holiday Monday's Virden Light Horse Show drew a crowd to the two bleachers and a strong lineup of competitors thanks to many sponsors who support the show, now in its fourth year. The show was held in the

Virden Riding Club arena where exceptional natural dirt gives horses good footing. Giant cottonwoods provide shade and shelter.

There's an MGRA sanctioned portion to the show which means another show where competitors can rack up points. The show's timing makes it part of a 'mini

run' of MGRA sanctioned shows so competitors can take in four Western Manitobashows in a row. The run begins with Birtle Fair on Friday, then to Rossburn, Oak Lake and on Monday, to Virden.

Show organizer Colleen Chapman explains, "There's numerous MGRA

sanctioned shows throughout Manitoba where points are collected." At the end of the year high point winners will receive some spectacular prizes—saddles, or other tack.

In fact, in 2025 Virden's event was voted Horse Show of the Year and this year's event was another great

show.

Virden Light Horse Show also selects its own high point winners from three divisions - English, Western and Halter classes.

Competitors came from Moosomin and Whitewood and across Manitoba from Swan River to the Brandon area.

New classes

The show committee included two new classes: a Select division under saddle and in line classes for competitors 50 yrs. and over; and a Ranch Horse Rail class.

The ranch horse class has become popular and this one "actually drew a lot of entries," says Chapman. She described the requirements for a working cow horse type as opposed to Western Pleasure. "You want the horse to move out, where the judge is looking for more forward motion."

The Cantina Food Truck rounded out the experience for spectators and those working hard at the horse show.

Riding Club revisited

The riding ring where the show was held harkens back to Virden's horsemen and horsewomen of several

generations ago.

Chapman says, "So, at one time we had what was called the Virden Riding Club, and we would meet and do clinics there. We always had an annual horse show, and a lot of that was headed up by Audrey Stewart."

Reminiscing she named some of the other founders and early participants from memory, such as Gerry Fowler, Merle Coleman, and Doug Sexsmith.

The club folded some years ago, but those who pioneered Virden's passion for riding left their stamp on the place and horsemanship is never far away.

Chapman tells, "So then we kind of thought, you know what, we're going to bring it back, because it's the nicest arena, it's got the best ground around for running horses in and that's why, in the spring they hold barrel racing futurities there as well."

"You know, it's been just a special location for horse events, and it is beautiful ground there."

Look for more photos of High Point results in next issue of the Empire-Advance.

In my Opinion: Highway 24 is a disgrace

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

A couple of years ago, Big Daddy Tazz visited Hamiota bringing his own brand of humour—it was everybody's brand—keeping the audience in stitches. Highway 24 was fodder for this quick-witted prairie comedian's banter – he had his audience with those jokes. It was kind of embarrassing. Tazz couldn't believe the hole riddled Manitoba road he drove on to Hamiota.

Nothing has changed. The road is, if anything, worse and just lately an appeal to start a petition to repave the road showed up on a local Facebook page. It received about 100 thumbs up and 50 comments in two days.

Does the traffic warrant an investment?

Hwy 24 links Miniota at Hwy 83 to Hamiota where it intersects with Hwy 21, links Oak River to the rest of the world, intersects Hwy 250 to Rivers and carries on through Rapid City before ending at Hwy 10 north of Brandon. It's a Provincial Trunk Highway (PTH).

It's the only PTH to connect Hwy 10 to Hwy 83 between TransCanada Highway 1 to the south and TransCanada Highway 16 to the north. The only one.

PTHs are main routes that connect major cities, towns, and interprovincial routes.

Why is a PTH allowed to be filled with potholes so big they could damage your car or even cause an accident?

It's a concern for ambulance emergency traffic that seeks to take the shortest route from Hamiota to Brandon hospital. The recent closure of Hwy 21 through Sioux Valley points out why Hwy 24 is critical.

Hamiota Mayor Randy Lints and a team of councillors and advocates have worked hard to ensure Hamiota health centre is a hub of health care for the area. Have you ever been sick or injured and travelled in the back of an ambulance over Hwy 24?

Hwy 24 was paved nearly 70 years ago after it was named in 1956. Shortly after that, Canada retired much



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

Evening drive on PTH 24, a large silage truck navigates the pavement full of bumps and broken out edges.

of its rail system. Agricultural equipment and all delivery trucks have grown by weight, exponentially.

Now, 24 is trash. It's a rock and roll ride filled with humps, hollows, uneven pavement edges and potholes after pothole. It's a dangerous road to meet traffic on.

If you know the road, drive below the speed limit, in daylight, the only vehicle on the road, you can swerve around, avoiding the holes. Not drunk. Just navigating Hwy 24 hole-ville.

If there's snow cover, icy conditions, if it's dark, if you're meeting a vehicle – it's a different game.

There's a bigger picture. I'm going to suggest that good leadership in Canada, in our provinces, and municipalities should look around and realize that good roads are related to much more than they seem.

It's kind of like letting trash build up in a restaurant – used napkins and bits of food on the floor, weeds at the front door and servers with smudges of dirt on their faces. Even if the cook is a master chef, the environment

would ruin the reputation of the diner. And a great chef wouldn't stay.

That's what I'd liken Manitoba roads to. And I'm sorry to say that, because this didn't happen overnight. The government in power has inherited a problem along with the power to act.

I believe that just as a shoddy restaurant is bad for business, so are Manitoba's roads bad for our economy, bad for our sense of worth, bad for tourism, and costly for every motorist who runs a vehicle over these roads.

It seems we've gotten used to it – but it's time to wake up. Priorities need to change. And yes, PTH 24 needs an entire re-do. The sealcoat on Hwy 83 between Birtle and Miniota is an example of a great job. It has filled small holes and smoothed existing patches, but Hwy 24 is not 83. It needs more than a facelift. Although Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure staff are doing their best with what they have to work with, it is not enough.

It's time to get this done.

Built from the Ground Up, Virden's Rodeo Legacy

By Lauren Halowaty
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

When the dust swirls and the arena lights shine down as the cowboys wait for the chutes to open, it's easy to look around and think these local traditions just happen on their own. But the truth is, the events that bring Virden together were built from the ground up by locals with a true passion for their community. In Virden, two of the primary figures behind the town's deep-rooted horse culture were Orville Fowler and his cousin, Bud Kenderdine.

Orville's life was deeply woven into the fabric of Manitoba agriculture. He spent his early years moving from Elm Creek to Maryfield, Saskatchewan, where his family ran the general store. From there, the family ventured to Souris, and then to Hargrave to operate another general store. However, once the Fowlers made Virden their home in 1945, they never looked back. Most people who knew Orville knew him through business, whether it was Fowler & Sons Ltd. (trucking), Fowler Chev Olds Ltd., or his time on the Canadian Dealer Council. Yet, no matter how busy things got at the garage, his heart always belonged to the land and the livestock.

For ten years, Orville stepped away from the automotive business to focus on farming and raising Aberdeen Angus cattle, but his true passion were his horses. For over two decades, he was a familiar, welcomed face at local agricultural fairs, where he proudly showed his Hackney horses. He poured everything he had into supporting local sports and agriculture, serving on the Virden Ag Society, the Brandon Winter Fair Board, and as president of the Manitoba Light Horse Association.

Bud Kenderdine's impact on Virden extended far beyond that first rodeo. A prominent leader for local farmers, he eventually stepped up as the President of the Virden Agricultural Society. His leadership proved invaluable when Virden faced a severe crisis in 1961, as a harsh drought swept the region and left local farmers facing massive hardships. At the Virden Fair that summer, Bud stood on the grandstand stage alongside Manitoba's Minister of Agriculture, George Hutton. The minister had to announce emergency measures, including shipping in hay and pump-

ing water to dried-out farms. Hutton spent a significant portion of his speech praising Bud, the Ag Society, and the town. He commended them for rallying together to put on a fantastic fair despite the adversity, showcasing the resilient spirit of Virden to this day.

By the late 1950s, Orville and Bud shared a vision. They wanted to bring a top-tier indoor rodeo to Virden, as the arena was brand new, built only the year prior. They wanted this event to bring neighbors and community members together and showcase the very best in local horsemanship. In October of 1959, that dream came true at the Virden Arena. Pulling off an indoor event of that scale required immense coordination and trust, so partnering with his cousin made perfect sense. Bud was already deeply embedded in the rodeo world and knew exactly who to call, from the rodeo contestants to the stock contractors.

The stakes for the historic event were incredibly high, serving as the absolute last show of the 1959 rodeo season in Canada. Because contestants were desperate for a final crack at the all-important winners' purses and crucial year-end points, the indoor arena drew a spectacular lineup of Canada's top riders to show local audiences exactly what a professional cowboy has to do to make a living. The response from the community was massive; crowds turned out exceedingly well both nights, with just under 2,000 adults and children paying admission to witness the historic spectacle. Each performance opened with a grand entry of the cowboys and the formal introduction of rodeo and Virden Agricultural Society officials.

Among the elite entries in the big-money brackets were reigning 1959 calf roping champion Bud Van Cleave and bareback champion Dick Havens. The competition proved to be fiercely unpredictable. In the Calf Roping event, Van Cleave missed his calf completely, opening the door for Wilf Gerlitz of Youngstown, Alberta, to capture the top spot. Alf Thiessen of Herbert, Saskatchewan, took second place with a swift time of 15.0 seconds flat, followed closely by Lorne Wells of Medicine Hat. Gerlitz proved to be the dominant force of the weekend, also riding away with the victory in the Bull Riding event, ahead of runner-up Bob Duce of

Calgary, Lynn Taylor, and Jim Baisch of Glendive, Montana. In the Bareback Bronc Riding, reigning champ Dick Havens held his ground to take the win, followed by a second and third-place tie between defending champion Leo Brown and Alvin Owens of Brooks, Alberta, while Jim Groves took fourth. The competitive fire was so high that the cowboys even orchestrated extra, self-funded roping side-bets among themselves between the scheduled events.

The battle for the rodeo's ultimate prize, a coveted \$500.00 trophy saddle, came down to an intense Hi-Point competition. Future Hall of Fame legend Leo Brown of Czar, Alberta, ultimately beat Bud Butterfield for the title by racking up crucial points across the major events. The fierce depth of the competition was fully on display in the Saddle Bronc Riding event, where Brown captured the top spot, followed closely by Lynn Taylor of Miles City, Montana, the multi-talented Dale Greenwood, and Angus Fox.

Beyond the fierce athletic competition, the indoor arena featured unique variety acts and musical entertainment that kept the energy electric. Dale Greenwood of Cartwright, North Dakota, was undoubtedly one of the hardest-working people at the rodeo. Operating as a top rider turned clown, Greenwood teamed up with his young son, Dick, to perform acts reminiscent of popular Old West television shows. His continuous comedic dialogue with announcer Herb Christie injected clean fun into the dangerous business in the dirt. Greenwood also assisted the pick-up riders and brought the house down with special stunts: Friday night featured Hells Angels, a Brahma bull hitched to a chariot with Greenwood at the reins, while Saturday's finale ended with him baiting a bull before scrambling high up the arena fence to safety.

The roots of Canadian professional rodeo's governing body stretch back to 1944, when it was originally founded as the Cowboys Insurance Association, a humble group where riders pooled one dollar each for mutual protection. By 1945, the association officially incorporated under the Cowboys Protective Association (CPA) banner, formalizing and protecting the wild sport under the early leadership of its first president, Ken Thom-

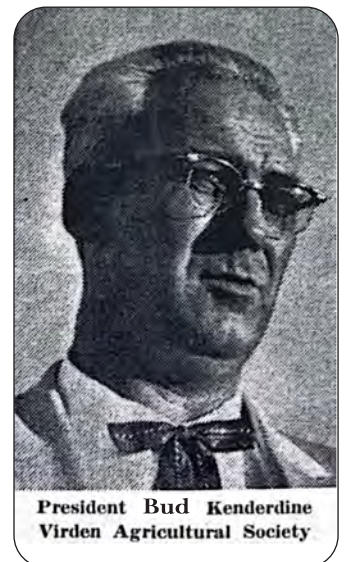
son. It was under this CPA banner, and with the expert guidance of rodeo manager and arena director Jerry Meyers of Moose Jaw, that Virden held its historic 1959 indoor rodeo, a legendary event made possible by Bud's deep ties to the organization. The association continued to mature, incorporating in 1965 as the Canadian Rodeo Cowboys Association (CRCA) where Leo Brown himself would go on to serve on the board of directors for 11 years, before ultimately evolving in 1980 into the modern Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) as we know today. Bringing in such high-profile competitors and reigning national champions was made possible because two cousins simply came together with an idea. With the help of personal connections and a shared passion with a lot of determination, they proved that Virden was the perfect stage for an indoor rodeo.

It turned out to be a monumental milestone, permanently putting Virden on the map as a premier horse, cattle, and agricultural community. Orville's dedication to the



Orville stands proudly next to 'Miss Judy', the first Hackney Horse he ever purchased.

town was forever etched into history when he was inducted into the Virden Indoor Rodeo Horseman Hall of Fame. From now on in Virden, when those lights dim as 'Oh Canada' is sung and the broncs wait just before the chutes open, the echo of October 1959 is still right there surrounding the arena. It stands as a powerful reminder of what can happen when a couple of dedicated cousins look at their hometown and decide to build something that lasts for a lifetime.



President Bud Kenderdine
Virden Agricultural Society

FILE PHOTOS

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SPORTS

SMILES ALL AROUND AS STORM WINS PROVINCIAL TITLE

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The U11 AA Westman Storm softball team ended its season with plenty of smiles. The regional team, which included area athletes and coaches, won the Softball Manitoba U11 AA Female Provincial Championship. The tournament was held July 24-26 in Brandon. The Storm beat the Westman Fury 7-3 in the final.

“The biggest takeaway from the gold medal game was the smiles on the girls’ faces after the final out,” Storm head coach Kevin Reimer said. “It was the reward of their hard work, dedication and great attitudes all year. It made the whole summer worth it.”

The team included Emma Reimer, Emily More, Daphne Hollemen, Ava McAdam, and Jovie Kenderdine, all from Virden; Elkhorn’s Brooklynn Mitchell; and, from Reston, Jovie Bugg, Emma Sterling, and Shae Williams. Jaclyn Sterling and Dwayne Bugg from Reston were among the team’s assistant coaches.

The Storm went 3-0 in pool play. The team then defeated fellow Westman representatives on its way to gold. The Storm beat the Westman Power 7-5. In the semifinal, they got by the Westman Heat 6-5 before beating the Fury. What allowed the Storm to be successful at provincials?

“We had a lot of natural talent on the team and you can’t win without it,” Reimer said. “I do have



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Westman Storm won the U11 AA Female Provincial Championship.

to give credit to the pitching staff, which gave up a low average of 4.33 runs per game. In some tighter games it made a big difference. The girls were told that they all had a job to do no matter the position in the field or the batting order. We got timely production out of everyone in their role and that was fun to watch.”

Earlier in the season, the Storm won the AA Provincial Showcase. It featured the same field of

teams as the provincial tournament.

Reimer appreciated coaching the team this summer.

“The whole group — girls, coaches, parents, grandparents — was a positive bunch that enjoyed being together and supporting each other,” he said. “When everyone is excited about coming to the diamond it makes the job as a coach a lot easier.”

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Tim Hortons

Tim Hortons is thrilled for the return of our Virden Indoor Rodeo and Wild West Daze. As the official Volunteer sponsor, we would like to thank the many volunteers, organizing committee members, sponsors and of course all the rodeo fans who make this event possible.

Tim Hortons franchisee's Greg Crisanti and Rhonda Parly, along with their staff located in their ten westman and area restaurants based over Manitoba and Saskatchewan realize that serving the community means more than just great coffee! That's why your local Tim Hortons right here in Virden is proud to support local initiatives that make a difference in our community.

Initiates such as Tim Hortons Camp Day where your local Tim Hortons owners donate 100% of days the proceeds from Coffee and Iced Coffee sales to Tim Hortons Foundation Camps. This annual event sends underprivileged Children to a life changing experience all due to the support of our community.

Another local initiate that our Virden Tim Hortons is involved with is Timbits Minor Sports Programs. Tim Hortons Virden is a proud supporter of Timbits Soccer, Hockey and baseball in our community. The programs philosophy is not based on winning or losing – but learning the basic skills of a new sport, making new friends and just taking time out to be a Kid.

Tim Hortons has been able to support our Funshine Day Care Centre, Virden Collegiate Institute, Virden's Aud Theatre, Virden Health Centre, The Virden Youth Drop in Centre, Mary Montgomery and Goulter School's and the Virden & Area Community Foundation through the Smile Cookie program. This is a community-oriented fund-raising program that raises funds for local charities across Canada and the United States through the sale of a Special "Smile Cookie"

Thank-you to all the contestants, their families and spectators as we welcome back this tremendous event to our amazing community. Enjoy a safe and amazing rodeo and Wild West Daze!

Greg Crisanti and Family, Franchisee
Tim Hortons Westman and Area

SPORTS

COMPLETE TEAM LEADS STORM TO PROVINCIAL CHAMPIONSHIP

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The U13AA Westman Storm have shown their success is built not on one standout player, but on contributions from all 12 members of the roster.

On the weekend of July 24-26, the team, which includes local players and coaches, won the Softball Manitoba U13 AA Female Provincial Championship. It was the second prestigious title the Storm had won this season.

"Our team was successful this season winning both the U13 AA Showcase and U13 AA Softball Manitoba Provincials because all 12 players contributed—whether it was a timely hit, a big catch in the outfield, strong pitching or catching, or great base running," said head coach Terri Williamson, who is from Reston. "Championships are won when every player is contributing, and we were lucky to have all 12 girls do that."

The Storm included Reston's Andie Williamson, the Virden duo of Samantha Barkley and Kaley Eros, and Melita's Adelyn Bugg, who played for Reston Minor Ball this season. The squad also drew players from Souris, Deloraine and Boissevain.

At the provincial tournament in Brandon, the Storm won all three of its pool-play contests. On the tournament's final day, they defeated the Westman Power 9-6 to advance to the semifinals. In that contest, the Storm was able to get past the Westman Fury 11-10.

"Our ability to battle back won us the semifinals against Fury," Coach Williamson said. "All season, the girls have learned to toss aside an error or bad inning and work hard to get on base, score runs or go play tough defence

to keep us in a game and keep chipping away."

In the provincial final, it was an all-Westman showdown between the Storm and the Heat. The Storm persevered and prevailed 19-12.

"We were playing our third game in a row on Sunday in the gold medal game," Coach Williamson said. "Softball provincials are an endurance test. Our girls were tired but kept reaching for more and battled. That is an accomplishment for any athlete, but especially 12- and 13-year-old athletes."

The final two weeks of the season were jam-packed for the Storm. The U13AA Showcase was originally slated for June 12-14 but, due to rain, it was rescheduled for July 17-19.

"We had two big back-to-back weekends playing 13 games in two weekends between the showcase and provincials," Coach Williamson said.

The head coach appreciated her team's attitude and work ethic this season.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The U13 AA Westman Storm included: back row - Terri Williamson, Laura Hobbs, Samantha Barkley, Rosie Martens, Grace Cole, Katie Perkins, Norah Whetter, Kaley Eros, Jocelyn Campbell; front row - Hallie Dort, Hayden Campbell, Braeley Hobbs, Andie Williamson, Reese Ryckman and Adelyn Bugg.

"They are all competitive and want to do their best," Coach Williamson said. "They work hard in every situation. After a tough inning or play that didn't go their way, they regroup and work hard. Those attitudes will make them successful not only in sports but in life."



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Boston Pizza Virden is once again honoured to be a Diamond Sponsor of the Virden Indoor Rodeo, proudly supporting this premier community event for over 10 years. The Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze brings together families, visitors, competitors, and volunteers while showcasing the incredible spirit of our community. We extend our sincere thanks to the organizing committee, dedicated volunteers, and talented contestants whose hard work and passion continue to make the Virden Indoor Rodeo such a tremendous success. We are proud to be part of this tradition and look forward to supporting it for years to come.



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For Sale

MORTGAGE SALE

The building and land known as 60043 Road 152W, RM of Wallace, Virden, Manitoba, as described in Certificate of Title No. 2310395/2 will be sold by public auction by a Licensed Auctioneer on August 26, 2026 at 9:30 A.M. The auction sale will be held by video or teleconference. There will be no in-person attendees at the auction, in order to participate you must pre-register at least 24 hours prior to the auction by contacting Jo-Anne Degagne at either 204-957-4808 or jdegagne@mltaikins.com.

The Vendor is informed that the property consists of a 923 sq ft, single family 1 ¼ storey built in 1920, with 324 sq ft barn and 1,120 sq ft machine shed located on 40.06 acres of land comprised of 20.06 acres of non-arable cultivated land and an additional 20 acres. The property is not being used as farmland. Realty taxes (excluding any accruing water charges) are paid to December 31, 2025. The property is sold subject to taxes and penalties accruing after that date.

Prior charges: Caveat Nos. 106963/2, R70149/2, 84-1093/2, 1115704/2, Assignment of Caveat No. 1150582/2.

TERMS OF SALE

Deposit of \$22,000.00 by way of certified cheque or bank draft payable to MLT Aikins LLP, or cash (the cash component of the deposit not exceed \$7,500.00) and the balance according to conditions to be announced at the sale.

The property will be sold subject to a Reserve Bid of \$ 126,800.00 plus such other additional and incidental costs which may be incurred by the Vendor from the 7th day of August, 2026 to the date of the auction and which costs will be announced prior to the commencement of the sale.

The auction sale will be conducted pursuant to an Order for Sale issued by the District Registrar. Certain parties may be prohibited from purchasing the property, including but not limited to, parties who by virtue of their employment or relationship to a person involved in the sale would have special knowledge of the circumstances pertaining to the sale. For more information and a list of prohibited purchasers please visit: www.teranetmanitoba.ca

Should the successful bidder have attended by teleconference and/or video conference, the bidder will have 24 hours to execute the Auction Sale Conditions and to provide them together with the deposit to our office as set out below.

Further information may be obtained from:

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RIDERLESS HORSE



PHOTO FROM FACEBOOK

A riderless horse is a single horse, without a rider, and with the riders boots reversed in the stirrups, which sometimes accompanies a funeral procession

REF TO
WRITER

GERRY
NOLAN



The Riderless Horse is a traditional ceremony that dates back to the days when armies relied on four-legged power rather than motorized transportation. The ceremony honours the memory of men and women, as in the case I refer to the rodeo.

Horsemen and women know there is a special bond between horse and rider. This

relationship cannot be duplicated with mechanical equipment. Over the years the horse and rider learn each others movements, body language and moods which strengthen this unbreakable bond. When the rider passes away, the bond is broken, the horse must adjust to life without its familiar partner.

The Riderless Horse

Ceremony is intended to honour all the loved ones who are no longer with us. Reversed boots placed in the stirrups backwards show that the rider has passed away.

The Riderless Horse Ceremony is an honour usually reserved for someone who has worked for the community or for the rodeo itself. They represent the fact that life goes on with new people taking up the fight for a fallen comrade.

If you watched the funeral proceedings for the late President Ronald Reagan or President John F. Kennedy, the horse walked riderless behind the casket that carried the President's body.

A symbol of Virden's rich agricultural past

By Corr Rossouw
VIRDEN PIONEER HOME MUSEUM

Standing proudly beside the rink on the Virden fairgrounds is one of Manitoba's most distinctive historic buildings. This impressive eight-sided, two-storey structure has become a symbol of Virden's rich agricultural past. Officially known as the Virden Agricultural Society Display Building, this remarkable landmark has welcomed generations of visitors and remains one of the community's most treasured heritage buildings.

Constructed in the early twentieth century, the building was designed as the centerpiece of the annual Virden Agricultural Fair. During a time when agriculture was the foundation of life on the Canadian Prairies, local fairs played a vital role in bringing communities together. Farmers, gardeners, homemakers, and craftspeople spent months preparing their finest work to compete for ribbons and recognition.

Inside the display building, visitors admired carefully arranged exhibits of grain, seed, vegetables, fruit, flowers, preserves, baking, quilts, needlework, and countless other handmade creations. The building served as a showcase of the region's agricultural success, hard work, and community pride. Winning an award at the fair was considered a significant achievement, and families looked forward to the event every year.

One of the building's most striking features is its unusual octagonal design. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, octagonal buildings became popular because they allowed more natural light to enter through additional windows, improved air circulation, and created large open spaces ideal for exhibitions. Today, very few octagonal exhibition buildings survive in Manitoba, making Virden's display building an exceptionally rare example of this once-popular architectural style.

The two-storey wood-frame structure was thoughtfully designed to accommodate large crowds and extensive displays. Its spacious interior allowed exhibitors to arrange agricultural products, crafts, and household goods while giving visitors plenty of room to explore the exhibits. The building quickly became the heart of the Virden Fair and a familiar gathering place for people from across southwestern Manitoba.

As the decades passed, agricultural fairs evolved,

and newer facilities were constructed. The octagonal building gradually saw less use and, like many historic wooden structures, began to show the effects of age and exposure to the prairie climate. Fortunately, rather than allowing this important landmark to disappear, members of the community recognized its historical significance and worked to preserve it for future generations.

Restoration efforts have helped stabilize the building and protect its unique architectural character. Plans have also been discussed to adapt the structure as a museum celebrating Virden's role in Manitoba's oil industry, giving the historic building a new purpose while preserving its connection to the community's past.

Today, the Virden Agricultural Society Display Building stands as much more than an old exhibition hall. It is a reminder of the generations of farmers, families, volunteers, and community members who helped shape Virden. It reflects the importance of agriculture in the region's history and serves as a lasting symbol of the pride, determination, and community spirit that built the town.

More than a century after it first opened its doors, the octagonal display building continues to capture the attention of residents and visitors alike. Its rare architecture, fascinating history, and enduring presence make it one of Virden's

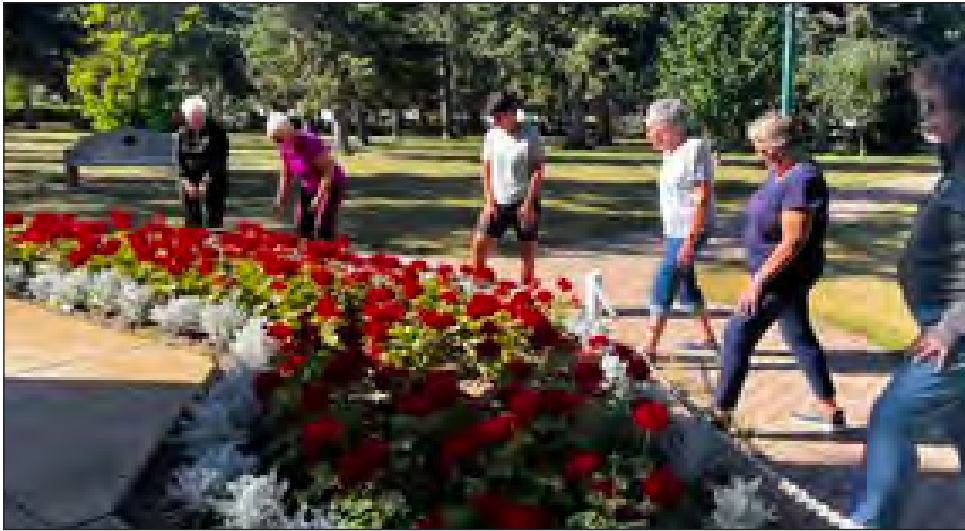


SUBMITTED PHOTO

The two-storey wood-frame structure was thoughtfully designed to accommodate large crowds and extensive displays.

most recognizable landmarks and one of Manitoba's most significant surviving agricultural exhibition buildings. Preserving this remarkable structure ensures that future generations will be able to appreciate not only its unique design but also the stories of the people and traditions that made it an important part of Virden's heritage.

Steppin' Up With Confidence



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

"Steppin' Up With Confidence" exercises in the park on Tuesdays, at 9:30am, in July and August. Exercising gets creative! Using the bandstand the benches, the walking paths and the permanent exercise equipment, we find ways to stretch and strengthen. One creative way to stretch is gardening. A few weeds disappeared from the flowerbeds this morning. If you are interested in becoming a peer leader, Active Aging is doing a "Steppin' Up With Confidence" training in September, hosted by SAIL. Call Krista at 204-748-2323 to register. Or come by the exercises on a Tuesday morning. No need to register.

A story of 124 years family farm



PHOTO BY AMANDA SCOTT, RUSTIC ROAD PHOTOGRAPHY

L to R: Nathan Paradis, Sheryl Paradis, seated Ivan Paradis, Matthew Paradis and Devon Paradis. Seated Evelyn Odell. Laranda and Robert Bailey, Casandra Odell and Lucas Hopkins, seated Donna Odell, Les Odell and Samantha and Jeff Bertram.

Submitted
By DONNA ODELL

On Saturday July 11, 2026, Evelyn Odell, Les and Donna Odell along with their 3 daughters and their spouses, Laranda and Robert Bailey, Casandra Odell and Lucas Hopkins and Samantha and Jeff Bertram, neighbours, and friends celebrated 124 years of NE 15-11-27 being owned by the Odell family. They also celebrated Les and Donna's 40th wedding anniversary.

124 years is a strange number to celebrate. However, the family had tried in 2011 to celebrate 119 years as well as Don and Ev's 50th anniversary and Les and Donna's 25th anniversary. Don Odell, the 3rd Odell to own the land, passed away in February of that year so they cancelled the event.

In order to receive recognition from the Manitoba Government you must prove your ownership with the Land Titles Office. For years we had conflicting numbers from our records and the offices. We decided to just accept what the office had for dates. Why not wait another year and celebrate both 100 years and 125 years? Our neighbours, the Kinnaird family, celebrated their 100 years in 2025 and that got the idea going again. Donna decided not to chance fate any longer and have it now.

We hosted about 80 people with a pulled pork and salad meal catered through The Arlington Hotel in Maryfield. Les and Robert got the farm

equipment old and new cleaned up for display and lined around the yard. Earlier in the day the family that was there had photos taken in their Brookford Farm T-shirts in front of the farm sign located at the end of the lane. Shirts were purchased through Tamara Kreutzer, owner of The Print Shed in Oak Lake, and the farm sign and family lineage signs were designed by Brooks Freeman at NRG Signs in Virden.

Greg Nesbitt MLA for the Riding Mountain Riding was on hand to speak on behalf of the provincial government and to present the certificates as well as the Centennial Farm sign.

The garage was decorated with aerial farm photos over the last 124 years. Family photos and photo albums of farm machinery and the original family who purchased the land in 1902 Amos and Minnie Odell. In 1941 the land went to

their son Jim and his wife Gladys. When Jim had a stroke in 1980, the land went to Don and Ev. And in 1992 after Les and Donna moved to the yard site, the land has been in their name to present.

Les and Donna have been in a corporation called Brookford Farm Ltd since 2013 with Les' mom Evelyn. Our oldest daughter Laranda and her husband Robert Bailey, help them put in the crop and take it off each year since 2014. Several other pieces of their farmland were once owned by other descendants of Amos and Minnie Odell. They include 16-11-27 previously owned by Harvey Odell, Alvin and Mary Odell; it was sold to Les in 1996. The SE 15-11-27 on the south side of the highway was previously owned by Bessie (Odell) and her husband Lorne Carruthers.

Donna Smith's granddaughter of Lorne and Bessie (Odell) Carruthers as well as their grandson Lloyd Carruthers were also on hand for the event.

Les's sister Sheryl and her family, husband Ivan Paradis and three sons Matthew, Nathan and Devon were also in attendance. Missing were Les' niece and 4 nephews from the USA, Josh, Eric, Ashley, Spencer, and Ryan, all of Allen Odell's family.

It was a great afternoon to achieve this status despite the 34-degree heat. In attendance were people who helped on the farm throughout the years, Stephen Scott, Syd Robbins in recent years and Allan Greig (Donna's dad) back in the 1950's. We look forward to next year receiving the sign and certificates for the 125th year and hopefully many more years of family ownership. Amanda Scott of Rustic Road Photography braved the heat to take all our family photos by the yard sign and came back to do the official ceremony photos, her partner Tyson Gompf videoed the speeches.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Virden Pioneer Home Museum

Museum Day & BBQ

Fundraising Event
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BBQ
11:00 am to 1:00 pm

BBQ – burgers, hot dogs, drinks for sale, Kid's Activities, Raffle Draws, Find the Joker Toonie Tours

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Monday	9 AM to 5:30 PM
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SPORTS

GOLD RUSH WRAP UP REGULAR SEASON WITH TWO AT HOME



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Adelle Gervin prepares to pitch for the Virden Senior Ladies Gold Rush while Hanna Cantelo looks on.



SUBMITTED PHOTO
The Virden Senior Ladies Gold Rush's Avery Ramsey studies the action.

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Virden Senior Ladies Gold Rush are aiming to head into the Westman Ladies Fastball League tournament with confidence as they conclude the regular season with a pair of home games.

“Our team has had so much fun this season,” Gold Rush player-organizer Julie Mathieson said. “Every game has been competitive, and it’s been exciting to see everyone contributing. We’re looking forward to finishing the regular season strong.”

At Diamond E in Virden, the Gold Rush hosts Hamiota on Thursday, Aug. 13. The Killarney team visits on Thursday, Aug. 20. Both contests start at 7:30 p.m. The squad encourages fans “to come out and cheer on the team as they wrap up the regular season,” the Gold Rush stated in response to emailed questions.

After the regular season, Virden will compete in the league tournament on Aug. 22 in Moosomin, “where the Gold Rush hope to carry their momentum into the postseason.”

Each Thursday night in July and much of August, the Westman Ladies Fastball League brings together women with a passion for the game. They come from a variety of walks of life. For example, the Gold Rush’s Avery Ramsey is headed into her third year of studying psychology at Brandon University. She hopes to become a school psychologist in the future.

“I enjoy playing for the Gold Rush because of the strong sense of teamwork and dedication,” said Ramsey, a pitcher who also plays second base and in the outfield. “Being surrounded by a group of hardworking women who encourage and support each other makes every game

something to look forward to. Everyone of us is committed to putting in the effort, pushing each other to improve, and working together towards our goals. The friendships, laughs, and love of the game that we share makes every season with the Gold Rush memorable.”

Discussing the Virden team’s start to the season, as of July 30, the team said, “The Gold Rush have been involved in nothing but nail-biters, with each contest decided by just a single run.”

“We like to keep games interesting,” player-organizer Hanna Cantelo said. “We usually rally at the end and pull it off.”

The Gold Rush had “a thrilling one-run victory over Moosomin.” Cantelo said,

“We always have good games against them as we’re both competitive teams. Sometimes we win, sometimes they do.”

Virden then got past Deloraine by a run. The team fell in each of its next two outings, each by a run, to Hamiota and Moosomin.

On July 30, the Gold Rush “bounced back in a big way,” the team said, by beating Deloraine 20-12 on the road. Virden trailed going into the final inning but scored nine runs on the way to a 20-12 victory.

“With close games, exciting finishes, and a team that genuinely enjoys playing together, the Virden Senior Ladies Gold Rush are looking forward to an exciting finish to the 2026 season,” the team stated. “Go Gold Rush!”

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