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JULY 10, 2026 | EMPIRE: VOL 121 NO 47 / ADVANCE: VOL 140 NO 49 | PUBLISHING FRIDAYS

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A Crosswalk to Remember



PHOTO BY LAUREN HALOWATY

Legion members gathered on July 7, to commemorate the new crosswalks with a ribbon cutting ceremony. From left to right are Comrades Andy Nash, Christa Nash, Hank Kyle, Ryan Boychek, Don Nugent, Joanne Milne, Jim Kyle, Legion Member Gord Halowaty and Comrades Herb Warkentin and Kel Smith. (Missing from photo: Wendy Gill, Kevin Procyk, Joan Brown, Linda Smith, and Curtis Smith.)

By Lauren Halowaty

EMPIRE ADVANCE

For most of us the local Legion is a familiar staple. Legions exist to ensure we never forget the sacrifices made by our veterans and to congregate together for special events and holidays. But as time marches on, we unfortunately lose more of that generation, and with them, precious memories and stories begin to dissipate.

The Legion alone is a physical embodiment of a place where we can keep those memories locked in time. But now, this newly painted crosswalk adjacent to Legion Branch #8 in Virden is the perfect, symbolic representation of Canada and the freedom our veterans fought so hard for.

The crosswalk perfectly encapsulates our nation's flag colours, red and white, with a soldier's silhouette standing above the words "Lest We Forget." It is a staunch yet beautiful reminder that commemorating our veterans, their stories, and Canada's history isn't reserved only for November 11th, but for every day. The crosswalk mural, painted by Johnson Commercial & Industrial Services (JCI) out of Brandon, Manitoba, was completed last Friday.

The centennial street art marks 100 years of the Royal Canadian Legion and was made possible by the 100th Anniversary Celebration Committee of Virden. The Royal Canadian Legion was founded in 1925 but was not officially incorporated until July 17, 1926. This street art's ribbon-cutting ceremony happened on Tuesday, July 7,

ahead of the anniversary celebration. Patriotic pancakes will be flipped by local comrades from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Saturday, July 18, at Legion Branch 8 to celebrate a century of legions across Canada. There will also be entertainment, and all are encouraged to attend.

One of the perks of this centenary mark is that all Canadians who are not already Legion members can join the Legion for free on the website www.legion.ca, or they can go right to their local branch and sign up. This allows all Canadians, young and old, to participate in celebrations and support veteran programs. However, if you don't wish to become a member and simply want to be a patron, Legions are much like parks: everyone is welcome, including children. You don't need a membership, nor do you need to know anyone or be affiliated with any Legion members to attend a branch. Most branches have a guest book where you simply sign your name and take a seat, and a Legion member will sign in beside your name.

In Virden alone, staple community events like meat draws and Chase-the-Ace nights happen weekly on Fridays, as well as poker nights usually on Mondays. These are light-hearted festivities where local families, from grandchildren to grandparents, can attend. Having a safe place where good times are woven together with Canadian history, war stories, and the will to keep veterans' memories vibrant is exactly what the Legion should be.

Thank you, Royal Canadian Legion, for giving us the stride of a century.

Inside...



CANADA DAY CELEBRATION

P2, 10, 11



VIRDEN FAT STOCK AND SALE

P12

Virden Canada Day great moments



PHOTOS BY LAUREN HALOWATY

Top: Mid week last week, locals and visitors alike took in the Canada Day festivities. Layla (left) and Tiffany (right) from Moosomin, SK, danced the evening away to the live band, 8 Track Shuffle who covered many oldies from 70's rock to 90's country.

Right: The Parade had so many well decorated floats including Virden Legion Branch #8's float. Seen on it from left to right are Marie and Herb Warkentin, Kel Smith, and Pam Allen who handed out treats with others.



The sun peaked through the clouds just in time to shine down on Mark and Kerry Reinders while they danced to the live music in Victoria Park.



Assiniboine closes in on record height



The PR 259 heading towards Virden sees water very close to the highway.

PHOTO BY JESSICA COULTER



PHOTO BY TERRY JOHNSON

The Assiniboine River at the bridge on PR 259, northeast of Virden. Across the river, see a fresh dike, constructed to protect Town of Virden drinking water wellhead.



PHOTO BY JESSICA COULTER

Dike construction in the Virden Assiniboine River valley along the west side of the flooding river on July7.

By Dale Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Water Survey of Canada gauging station where Hwy 83 crosses the Assiniboine River south of Miniota recorded a height of 1246.46 feet on July 6. The record high level at that station was 1247.44 feet on July 9, 2014. This 2026 flood is predicted to peak on July 11 at close to or above that level. Travelers in the valley have reported that the water is lapping at the bridge and has submerged local valley roads.

For the third time this year the Assiniboine has overflowed its banks, but this time is different. The previous flood saw the water rise about nine feet in nine days from July 10-19. This time the water rose 11 feet in five days from July 1-6 at the Miniota Assiniboine valley bridge.

Farther downstream municipalities are taking precautions.

Wednesday morning, the river is running just inches from the bottom of PR# 259 bridge northeast of Virden. The Town of Virden constructed a dike along the west shore of the Assiniboine on July 7 to protect the wells that supply Virden's raw water. Town staff reports, "We have a backup plan that we're developing to minimize water service disruption."

The valley crossing on road 254 in the RM of Wallace-Woodworth was classified as closed except for 'local traffic only'. And RM of Sifton closed Harrison Bridge Road as of 7:45pm Tuesday, July7.

Manitoba flood bulletin says "water levels are near peak at St. Lazare and are expected to peak in Brandon on or before July 13."

Music in the Park



Top: Thanks to the co-op who sponsored our first music in the park of 2026! They arrived early with free treats to share. Around 175 audience members listened to the sweet sounds of Daelyn Fefchak.

Left: Even the four legged ones enjoyed the show. Thanks to all for coming to support local talent. Concerts happen July and August on Thursday evenings, (excluding August 13 and 27th.)



PHOTOS BY KRISTA PEDERSON

Future farmers display their skills in Virden



Showing off their calves to an appreciative audience.

PHOTO BY NANCY JO MOLLER

By Nancy Jo Moller
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Lenore 4H Beef Club Achievement was held in Virden on July 6 on the Tundra Oil & Gas Place grounds. After a downpour the night before created a muddy show ring, parents and leaders worked quickly to set up a new enclosure on drier ground. Members of the club gathered early to have their animals weighed and then began washing and prepping them for the show.

The start of the day saw all participants gather in the ring to judge four market steers. The focus of this event is to have the club members recognize the key points of a good market steer. The main point being how the weight is distributed over the calf's frame. In other words, 'where's the beef?' A steer with the weight on the loin and hind has a higher portion of top meat cuts that are more valuable to the producer. Heifers were judged next with participants looking for how functionally correct the animals were: straight legs and good feet that makes them structurally sound. Does the heifer have wide hips for an easier birth and a well-defined udder to raise a marketable calf? Is her style and balance eye catching, does she move smoothly, have good proportions and exhibit a calm temperament? There was a lot of discussion between participants as they viewed the animals.

Team grooming class exhibited the team spirit as members were grouped in seven groups, each one having varying ages and

skill levels. The exception was the PeeWee class which had two young girls joining in this learning experience. The members were required to clean, dry and dress (fluff) their animal as they would for a show. Each member lent a helping hand to complete the task. The importance of even having the calves' hooves clean was noted.

Heifers were judged next, sorted into groups by their owners ages. The effort that members had put into their calves including time spent with them was apparent. From a headstrong heifer to one that followed its owner around the ring, their work was reflected in the animals' actions.

Showmanship is the area that shows just how in tune the member is to both their animal and the judge in the ring. Levels of skill shone through, turning the animal at just the right angle for that perfect view, keeping the animal calm during all the surrounding noise and action. Cattle handling sense and techniques are all part of this class with the ease and confidence of some members shining through.

Market steers completed the day. The array of breeds and age of animals made these classes a point of interest. Every member has their opinion on what type makes the best market animal, generally influenced from their own families and experiences. The judges, father daughter team, Wayne and Rayna Bonchuk had an interesting day placing animals and also reviewing members showmanship and judging skills. They truly promote the beef industry in the region.

Greg NESBITT
MLA for Riding Mountain



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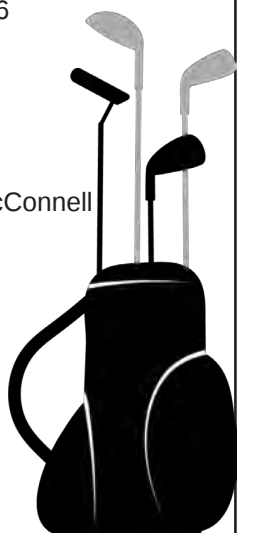
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Thank-you

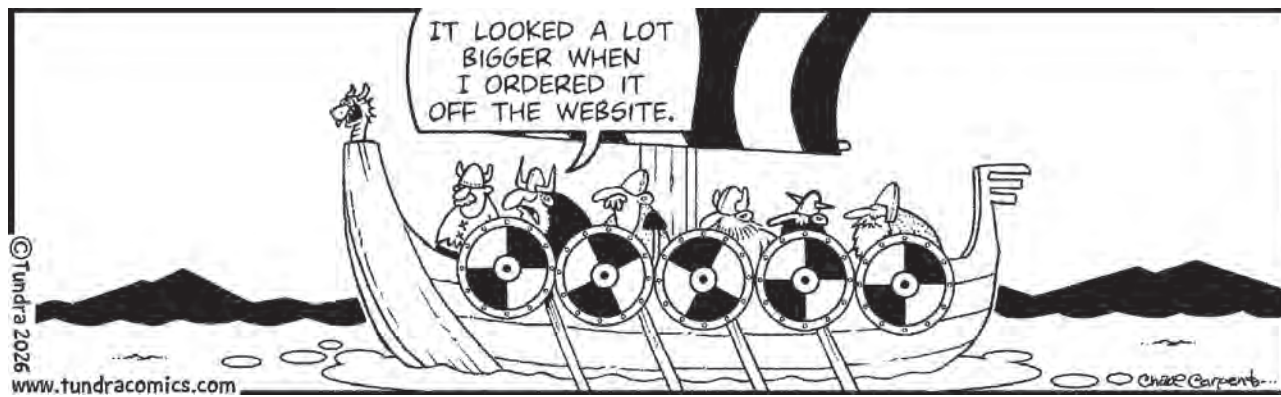
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Tundra

By Chad Carpenter



Big job ahead for municipal candidates

The next general municipal election is Wednesday, October 28, 2026.

All municipalities, towns and cities in Manitoba will go to the polls that day to elect Mayors, Reeves and Councillors. School boards will hold Trustee elections that day as well.

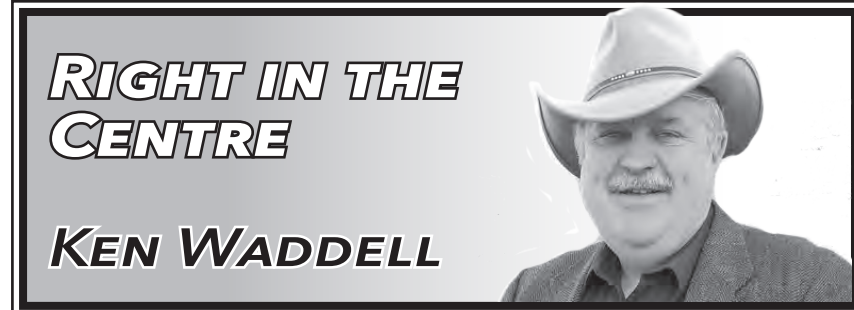
The only exception is that municipal elections will be held in Winnipeg Beach, Dunnottar, and Victoria Beach on Friday, July 24, 2026.

All jurisdictions in this paper's coverage area will face similar election realities.

For some areas, positions will likely go unfilled and appointments will have to be made.

All areas will fall short again in the way of infrastructure funding unless drastic changes come about. One change could be a major increase in taxes. Although it was likely a glib comment, but more than one person has said that taxes would have to double to cover the shortfall in road, street, water and sewer upgrades that are needed or expected. Another change that might keep taxes closer to current levels is if voters lower their expectations. Yet another possibility is for the federal and provincial governments allocate more money towards crumbling infrastructure. That of course means higher taxes.

When it comes to roads, I believe that all jurisdictions could be a lot more diligent in patching and replacement surfaces. For example, there is a simple machine available that cleans out potholes and pavement breaks, applies new material and packs the patch into place. In the hands of an experienced operator, it's a quite efficient machine. With an inexperienced operator, not so much. Experienced or not, there are problems. Potholes and surface breaks, be they from vehicle wear and tear, water line repairs or frost problems, need to be fixed sooner, rather than later. Without a machine



on hand all summer and possibly owned by two or more close by jurisdictions, the work simply gets further and further behind. Councils need to bite the bullet and get the job done.

I have also never seen proper street cleaning after the patching so chunks of pavement and pebbles simply lay around and traffic grinds the debris into the pavement surface aggravating the wear and tear. It amounts to sloppiness and negligence if the truth be known.

I have also heard it said that some municipalities try to maintain too much pavement and I agree with that. A well maintained gravel road can be smoother than a poorly maintained paved road. Some urban areas don't even own a road grader so maintaining any gravel surfaces depend on neighbouring RMs to squeeze the grading jobs into their schedule.

Another problem is municipalities are still feeling the side effects of the government enforced amalgamation from a few years back. The NDP government of the day decided that all municipalities had to have 1,000 people, which in many cases made sense. At the same time, more government regulations keep getting piled on making it more difficult to get qualified CAOs.

Long term planning is needed to run a municipal organization and there seems to be little help from government. In fact, the province is more of a hindrance than a help in many cases. To set up a sub-division to try and al-

leviate the housing shortage, can take years to get approval from a dozen or more government departments. Trust me, I know as I served as mayor of a town in two different terms.

There has to be meetings and studies and more meetings and decisions get severely delayed.

If a town or RM decides to even just lower a speed zone, they should be able to give notice and change the speed signs. That would be too simple and might lower some hours for a government employee. Speed zone changes are almost impossible to achieve.

This column sounds somewhat negative about local politics. I think the readers of this newspaper have the built-in confidence and competence to be a town/municipal councillor who would bring all councillors together and bring all citizens together to get the right things done (and convince taxpayers that higher taxes may be in the common interest of getting the right things done).

It would be better and easier to get candidates if the province would let locals make their own decisions. Simply put, we need more consensus, more local decisions and less nasty complaints from voters. One wise person recently said we need to have a situation where we criticize ideas not people.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this column are the writer's personal views and are not to be taken as being the view of the Banner & Press staff.

Homebodies

RITA FRIESEN



The longing for beauty...

Spending time with my Sister the Younger allows me to be rested in body, mind and spirit. It allows time for introspection and reflection. Not that there are not other times and places that allow me these privileges. Part of it is shared history, part of it is shared values, and a whole lot of it is mutual respect and appreciation for individual talents and abilities. Whereas I am seriously into becoming more minimalist—downsizing!—she welcomes family heirlooms and treasures. These adorn her walls, enhance her rooms and surround one with memories and insights to values from times past.

One of the items that precipitated these musings is a hand embroidered wall hanging—a framed picture. Our mother excelled at handwork; knitting, crocheting, quilting, sewing and embroidery.

Probably a dozen other crafting skills that I took so for granted that I never noted. The picture featured is of a little cabin, surrounded by trees and flowers. Looking closely one can identify any number of skilled stitches that allow you to feel the blossoms and sense the quiet strength of the trees, and the safety the home provides.

Homemakers strove to make their environment beautiful, working with what they had. Often the pillowcases and tea towels were richly decorated. The pillowcases often with a floral pattern and the tea towels with sayings or domestic scenes. Heck, I'm eighty, and somewhere in a box I have not yet sorted is a set of towels that I embroidered. Monday washday, Tuesday ironing... on through the week with cleaning and shopping before resting! The crocheted doilies and antimacassars protecting the arms and backs of stuffed chairs—practical and pretty.

In the time before IKEA and Amazon, rural folks, and probably others, but it's rural that I know, didn't have an over abundance of things.

In the "Little House" series, Ma treasured the china shepherdess, an object of beauty that was so carefully moved and displayed in every home. The first cut glass cream and sugar set, or pitcher, all precursors of the elaborate fine china sets that were so carefully amassed. The walls were not adorned with framed photos of family members. The business calendar was often the sole point of color and decoration in a farm kitchen, and sometimes the one from the year past was left up just for the beauty.

I can't number the farm homes I knew that had a geranium growing in the kitchen window. Often the pot was a coffee or lard can, and in winter the plant was carefully relocated to the center of the table, or nearer the stove to prevent the cold seeping in from the window damaging or killing it. That red blossom, and I thought all geraniums were red!, was the spot of promise in a fairly stark place.

This longing for beauty is natural and ingrained. We who have so much often accumulate on a whim. I remember when my mother proudly hung images of 'Pinky' and 'Blue Boy' on her bedroom wall. I have no idea if they were a gift or if she had saved her egg money, but they were forever treasured.

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Step up to make a difference

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Wednesday, October 28, 2026 is the next opportunity for voters to have their say and vote for the candidates for head of council and for councillors. School Board positions will also go to a vote that day.

Fall may seem a long time off, but the date for registering your campaign was a few weeks ago. It's definitely time to mull over the decision for yourself, or to encourage another to step into the race.

Prospective municipal election candidates must register with the Senior Election Of-

ficial (SEO) during the registration period before they may accept contributions, incur expenses, fundraise or borrow money for their campaign. Putting a sign up, for example, costs money.

If you have an interest in the growth and well-being of your community, this may be your cue to run for council or for your school board.

Over the next few weeks, we hope to feature a few local councillors and board members who will share their thoughts and experiences.

Diana MacDonald lives between Virden and Lenore and is a

councillor for the RM of Wallace-Woodworth. She acknowledged that it can be a challenging role.

"It's a lot of learning. Especially, your first term you're just figuring things out." Now in her second term she says, "I'm more comfortable now. There's lots of reading, lots of meetings."

MacDonald says she's in it to help people. Ratepayers have needs, opinions and questions and she's happy to engage, not just send people to the municipal office for answers. This may mean representing ratepayer concerns to the council.

"As far as the people go, I love that part... any-

body with complaints, you just talk to them and listen to them and help them out the best you can. So those are things that I do enjoy."

Here are some important dates for candidates:

- Opening of registrations and campaign period for head of council - May 1

- Opening of registrations and campaign period for councillor positions - June 30

- Nomination period for both head of council and members of council begins - September 16

- Registration period and nomination period closes for both head of council and members of council - September 22

During the seven-day nomination period, individuals officially declare their intention to run for office by submitting nomination forms signed by supporters.

For anyone interested in municipal council, or a school board position, it's always a good idea to check out a public meeting.

The Town of Virden and RM of Wallace-Woodworth are holding their next regular council meeting Tuesday July 14. The RM meets in the morning and the Town, in the evening.

Most councils list their meeting dates/times and agendas on their website.

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The Town of Virden offers tax prepayment discounts as outlined below to taxpayers wishing to pay an installment or installments on their 2026 property taxes.

Those wishing to prepay may pay an amount or a series of amounts that in total does not exceed the amount of their 2025 property taxes. The discount rate is equivalent to an effective annual interest rate of 3%.

Month of Payment	Discount Rate	Savings on \$1000.00
July	0.75%	\$ 7.50

Tax prepayments made in the months of August, September or October will be accepted at par and can be made via Online Banking, Telephone Banking, E-Transfer, or through our Drop Box located at the main doors of our office at 236 Wellington Street West.

Upcoming Council Meetings

July 14 & August 11

Council Meetings start at 7:00 PM



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

Virден Ladies Golf Tournament



Wellview Golf Course Clubhouse.

FILE PHOTO

Submitted
SANDRA GOOD

Virден Ladies Golf Tournament was held at the Wellview Golf Course on July 5, 2026 with 35 golfers taking part.

Results from the tournament were: First flight: 1. Dianne Liefso, Brenda Ger-rand, Brenda Cameron, Mary Beaumont (72). 2. Sharon Fordyce, Shelley Hoy, Debbie Leblanc, Evelyn Holdal (74). 3. Carol McCaig, Meg Little, Fran Little, Elsie Karnes (74). Second flight 1. Cheryl Foster, Rita Armitage, Sharon McKen-zie, Shawnda Kreiser (80). 2. Tricia Hayward, Fiona White, Tarin Nahachewsky, Michelle Chzyk (80). 3. Leanne Pearn, Shirley Rudneski, Joan Veselovsky, Gloria Penner (81). Skills events: Hole #1-longest putt, Fran Little. Hole #4 - longest drive, Chloe Sheane. Hole #5 - closest to the pin from tee, Sandra Good. Hole #6 - closest to the line, Meg Little.

HELEN DRYSDALE

OUT OF HELEN’S KITCHEN

Ancient Greeks cultivated beets around 300 BC. but used only the leaves, not the root. In 16th and 17th century Europe the roots were eaten as well. When we think of beets most of us think of the root and not the greens. Baby beet leaves are delicious. Over the years beets have been used to cure hangovers, to treat fevers, constipation, aid digestion and make a delicious, sweet dessert wine. Even astronauts have eaten beets in space. In 1975, during the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, which brought together two former spacef-light rivals: the United States and the Soviet Union, astronauts from Apollo 18 were given borscht, (beet soup) by cosmonauts from the USSR’s Soyuz 19.

Beets can be eaten raw and shredded into a salad, boiled, steamed, baked, pickled, or cold as a salad after cooking. They are high in fibre, rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. I am waiting somewhat impatiently for my first planting of beets to be big enough to pick. I thin them for my first few meals and use this recipe to prepare them.

Baby beets and beet greens

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 12-16 baby beets 1-2 inches in diameter | leaves and stems from these beets |
| 2 Tbsp. butter, or more | salt and pepper to taste |
| 2 lemons slices or vinegar | fresh chopped dill |

Beets: Wash the baby beets, and steam or cook in water for about 15 minutes until fork tender. Peel if desired and set aside.

For the greens: Wash the leaves discarding any that are wilted or brown. Remove the stems and cut them into smaller pieces. Heat the butter in a frying pan over medium heat, then add the chopped stems, cook for a few minutes to let them soften a bit before adding the leaves. Add the leaves and continue cooking for 2-3 minutes until the leaves are wilted. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and a squeeze of lemon juice or vinegar. While leaves are cooking reheat beets with butter and a sprinkle of fresh dill. Serve on a platter next to each other.

Beet and potato salad

Here’s a simple, classic potato salad made vivid with beets and fragrant with dill.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 4-5 medium beets | 2 medium carrots |
| 4-5 medium potatoes | 1/2 cup celery, diced |
| 1/2 cup chopped green onion | 1-2 dill pickles, finely diced |
| 2/3 cup mayonnaise | 2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar |
| 2 tsp. Dijon mustard | 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh dill or more if desired |
| 1 Tbsp. sugar, optional | 1/2 tsp. salt |
| 1/2 tsp. pepper | dill or parsley for garnish |

Prepare the vegetables for cooking. Bring a large pot of water to a boil; add beets and cook until tender, about 30 minutes. Bring a separate pot of water to a boil; add potatoes and carrots and cook until tender, about 20 minutes. Cool completely and chop into cubes. While cooling prepare the dressing by whisking ingredients together. In a bowl, gently combine the beets, potatoes, carrots, celery, onions and dill pickles. Add the salad dressing and take care not to combine it so much that it turns to mash. Add more salt and pepper, or even mayonnaise, should it be needed. Transfer to a salad bowl and garnish.

Police Report

Westman RCMP Service Report for June 28 to July 4



PHOTO BY D MEDIA RCMP

Suspect taken in on July 2 by K9 dog, Czar. Following a brief struggle which saw the suspect assault Czar, RCMP apprehended the suspect - who resisted throughout - and took him into custody. Czar was not hurt.

Submitted
BY WESTMAN RCMP

During this week, Westman RCMP received a total of 77 calls for service. Some of these calls for service include 22 traffic offences, 4 False Alarms, 2 Assaults, 4 Wellbeing Checks, 5 Assistance to General Public/Other Agencies, 10 - 911 Calls, 4 Mental Health Acts, 3 Utter Threats and 2 Mischief.

On June 28, during a routine patrol in the RM of Sifton, RCMP conducted a traffic stop with a vehicle to ensure the driver had a valid driver’s license. Upon arrival, the driver was identified and police checks showed the driver was disqualified from driving in Manitoba. Police also observed unstamped tobacco in the vehicle. The driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Drive while disqualified, which carries a fine of \$672 and possesses unstamped tobacco, which carries a fine of \$2542.

On July 2, RCMP responded to a report of Utter threats in the RM of Elkhorn. Members received a call from female victim who reported she and her ex-partner had physically assaulted her and choked her and had threatened to kill her. Members attended the scene and obtained statements from the victim. Members attended the accused’s residence and arrested a 40-year-old male who was charged with Assault, Assault while choking and Utter threats. The ac-cused was released on condition and is scheduled to appear in court later.

On July 2, RCMP received a call of an unwanted male in Sioux Valley Dakota Nations. Complainant advised the accused male was intoxicated and was refusing to leave the residence. Members conducted police checks on the accused and learnt that he was on condition not to be at that

residence. Members arrived on scene and the accused left on foot prior to police arrival. Additional resources including Police Drone and Police Service Dog were called to assist. A K9 track was completed and after a long foot pursuit, the accused was located. When arresting the accused, he resisted arrest and punched police K9 multiple times and was taken into custody. The accused was charged with Fail to comply with Undertaking x2, Assault Police Officer, Resist Ar-rest x5. The accused was remanded into custody.

On July 3, during a routine patrol in the RM of Sifton, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 120km/hr in a 100km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speeding, which carries a fine of \$312.

On July 4, during a routine patrol in the RM of Wallace-Woodworth, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 133km/hr in a 100km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speed-ing, which carries a fine of \$482.

To report a complaint or non-emergency incident to RCMP please call 204-748-2135. For general inquiries or administrative requests including criminal record checks please call the administration line at 204-748-2046 Ext. 3, during regular office hours. If you are reporting an emergency, please call 911. If you witness a crime and wish to remain anonymous, please contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477. Crime Stoppers is entirely confidential and completely anonymous. The tip line is not trace-able, and they do not subscribe to caller ID or call display.

Steady leadership: Stewart reflects on 35 years of service



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Noted in Virten Town Council journal: Council and staff until October of 2002 (back L-R) Norm Baxter, Darcy Cockbill, Jeff McConnell, Roy Potter and Maxine Chacun; (front L-R) CAO Rhonda Stewart, David Reid and Stan Ward.

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Municipal administrators have proved hard to come by and difficult to retain for many rural and northern communities. Some municipalities have seen councils in turmoil for a variety of reasons, but Virden has not faced these problems.

Rhonda Stewart has been a steady hand at the wheel serving as Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for over 27 years until her recent retirement. When a new CAO was hired, Stewart helped with the transition and so, Virden has avoided costly disruptions that come with the changing of the guard at this level of administration.

In the March 13 issue of the Empire-Advance Mayor Tina Williams introduced CAO Neil Smith.

Williams thanked outgoing CAO Stewart for dedicated years of service saying, "Her professionalism, dedication, and institutional knowledge have had a lasting influence on our organization. Through major infrastructure projects and the cultivation of strong relationships with local organizations and regional partners, Rhonda played a key role in shaping the vibrant and resilient community we enjoy today."

Public servants are not always appreciated. They have to understand and help council work within larger government regulations. The CAO is answerable to all of council and in turn sets staff in motion to

carry out council decisions. The job of a CAO is a large role, one that Stewart grew into.

Virden citizen and former councillor for the RM of Archie and then for Town of Virden, Terry Johnson said of Stewart, "When you look at the body of work that's occurred on her watch it's impressive. The capital infrastructure that's been built here, somebody had to put in the time and smarts to get these long-lasting benefits done. If you travel to other like communities we stack up very favorably."

Municipal history

For 35 years, Stewart spent many waking hours in Virden's municipal office.

Town offices were once in with the fire hall, adjacent to the AUD Theatre. When the fire hall and office was torn down during the AUD Theatre restoration, the Town office was moved to Denison's Garage - now Super Thrifty's location on Seventh Ave.

The restored Virden AUD Theatre opened in 1983 and the Town offices of today were opened in 1989.

A graduate of Birtle Collegiate Institute, Stewart received a Diploma in Business Administration from Lakeland College in 1984 and later, a Certificate of Manitoba Municipal Administration in 1996.

She moved to Virden and worked for Meyers Norris Penny for about seven years before answering an advertisement for Town of Virden assistant secretary-

treasurer.

In 1991 she was employed to work alongside secretary-treasurer Robert Eslinger. In the Town office of four, Stewart's co-workers included clerk steno Carol Anne Trowell and Norm Baxter, manager of public works/waterworks.

On Aug. 16, 1999 Stewart was promoted to Chief Administrative Officer for Town of Virden.

Paging through a carefully scrapbooked account kept by Trowell, Stewart reminisces over early days: "Here's Gladys Bray and Stella Tapp. They were just amazing." Mayors and councils are pictured in business suits to handle council business. "Back then, that's pretty much all I did wear. I never thought of wearing dress pants."

By 1987 Bray was a councillor and Tapp was elected in 1990.

"In those days, there were hardly any municipalities that had women...and, you know, they stood their ground," Stewart said, adding "They brought so much to the table."

Exciting developments

The CAO found herself working long hours as Virden infrastructure developments grew.

Stewart says when she began, "we didn't look after the rink (arena). We didn't have that big landfill operation (contaminated soils silos)."

In 2006 a consultant did an organizational review of town management and staff. "And that's when it

was recommended to have a manager of finance...and get rid of the assistant CAO position, which was maybe fine for about three years."

But as large new projects like the arena complex (Tundra Oil & Gas Place), and water and sewage upgrades came along, the work load grew. "We needed that extra position. And looking back, I wish that I had...insisted instead of trying to take on more. Because, you're trying to manage the projects and not getting the policies updated."

When it came to the block-buster sports facility she admits, "I was very nervous. Because, it was a big project. And it was going to be a lot of money."

The project was inching over budget and decisions had to be made on what to include. Should they include the curling rink in the build, and just put up the shell of the banquet hall - to be finished later?

Council decided against that. She recalls Johnson, on council at the time, saying, "Absolutely not, we're finishing the hall," and "Rhonda, if we build it, they will come."

The facility quickly became a key venue.

The first major event was the 2012 Telus Cup regional championship, hosted by the Manitoba Midget 'AAA' Hockey League's Southwest Cougars. And that spring, the Winnipeg Saints franchise was purchased to become the Virden Oil Capitals playing out of Tundra Oil & Gas

Place arena.

Then there were the disaster years. Southwest Manitoba and Virden endured floods during that decade, and a devastating fire.

On Sept. 23, 2017 an overnight blaze destroyed three century-old heritage buildings on Virden's downtown Seventh Ave. Stewart was on holidays when she got an ominous phone call. "We were actually out in B.C... lying in bed, sleeping, and I got a ding on my phone, I woke up, and it was a picture from Morris Kernel (public works foreman), of downtown Virden."

She shudders, "It was horrible."

Should she and husband John abandon holiday plans and fly home?

Fire crews were at work and in her mind, Stewart was going through the implications. On a call to Mayor Jeff McConnell, she recalls telling him, "Somebody needs to get into our (Town) office and turn off the HVAC system... and keep an eye on the roof to make sure our rubber (roof surface) doesn't start on fire." He reassured her and she continued the holiday.

Virden Regional Airport - R.J. (Bob) Andrew Field has been a satisfying piece of infrastructure. She smiles, "I filled out all the grant forms and stuff to build the original airport." Like watching kids

and then grandkids get their wings, the upgrade completed in 2025 marks the second time that Stewart has worked on airport development.

Time for change

As 2025 drew to a close, Stewart's retirement was in view and things were going smoothly - until they weren't.

She had hoped to leave things ship shape. But the town's water supply well gave up - it was a crisis and meant a new well installation in an older aquifer bringing a return of Stewart's old nemesis - trace amounts of arsenic that's plagued Virden's water historically.

However, the Town had hired Assistant CAO Jared Jaffray in 2023 and by March the new CAO, Neil Smith was installed.

Stewart earned her retirement. Her spouse John Davidson was well into retirement, although still an active volunteer firefighter.

"It was time for a new, younger person, with new ideas to sit in the chair," she said, adding, "It was also time for me to retire and start enjoying life more, spending time at the cabin, camping, snowmobiling, spending time with family..."

Retired in Virden, Stewart fulfills the role of Senior Elections Official (SEO) for the Town of Virden's fall 2026 municipal election.



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Wow, did you hear the latest cattle prices



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

Cattle herd grazing during one of our few recent sunny days.

By Nancy Jo Moller
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Wow! You say, look at those cattle prices. Farmers must be rolling the dough. HOLD that thought.

Cattlemen are out working extremely long hours, and this is a rare year for compensation. Who else do you know that labours in all weather conditions sometimes for 20 hours a day or more in the different seasons, facing weather and irrational temperament of cows while calving. They aren't always sweet natured, imagine 1800 pounds of hate coming at you and you are holding their precious calf with no protection. Stress over bank payments, crop failures and disease, do you still think the income they get isn't deserved? Let's look at historical figures and events.

When the 1980's came and prices lowered, interest rates were 20 percent or more - yes, you read right, a farm mortgage was at a rate of 20 per cent per year. Land was averaging \$650 per acre in this region. Nothing could be paid off, and re-mortgaging of any equity was done to hold onto the farm and any equipment you could. Majority of farmers went farther in debt during this time, and a lot had to fold.

Then the 1990's came along and average prices were as follows. A 105

horsepower (hp) John Deere tractor was \$50 to 70K, diesel fuel was 45 – 60 cents per litre, cow/calf pairs were \$800 - \$1,000. Land was \$700 per acre. Farm operating loans and mortgages were landing between 11 and 15 percent and Farm Credit Corporation (FCC) was 10 to 12 percent annually. The year 2000 hit and everyone was optimistic that the market was good. A 105 hp John Deere tractor was \$55 – 90K, cow/calf pairs were \$1300, and diesel fuel was 68 to 75 cents per litre. Land was \$750 per acre. Farm interest rates were roughly 7.90 and 8.30 percent annually.

But when in 2003 Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) hit, cattle prices plummeted by fifty to seventy percent, but expenses didn't change. Cows were \$10 to \$15 per hundred weight, in other words a 1500 lb cow was bringing \$150-\$225. Yes, try making payments on the cows you purchased 3 years ago and keep in mind that a cow eats an average of 10 round hay bales which were \$35 per year each. She was eating more than she was worth, don't even want to think of doing a caesarian to save a calf \$250 minimum and chances are you save cow but not calf.

The year 2010 started an upswing in both income and expenses. A similar 105 hp JD tractor cost \$90 – 130K, fuel was

\$1.01 per litre, cow calf pairs cost \$1500 – 2000. Land was \$1300 per acre. Farm loans and mortgages were averaging 5.5 percent annually.

Then 2020 arrived and the same John Deere tractor was \$90 – 130K, a cow/calf pair was \$1500-1900 showing the market was starting to soften. Diesel was \$1.04 per litre land \$1500 – 6000 per acre, interest rates saw a drop to 3 to 4.5 per cent.

Everyone has realized that land is never duplicated nor reproduced, if you don't purchase when available, you may never have the chance again. So, if you want to increase your farm size, be prepared to mortgage heavily.

2025 and into 2026, unprecedented prices are being received for cattle. The total herd numbers are down in North America. Once again, the same JD tractor is \$200,000 – 300,000 with cow/calf pairs \$4600 – 6100 and fuel \$2.11 per litre Land \$2000 to 6000 per acre. Farm interest rates 4.5 to 6.75 per cent, may sound lower but if to buy the above tractor at \$250,000 interest would be \$13,125 interest at a straight calculation without a principal payment, A tractor can have a 10-year term so principal \$25,000 which would be \$38,125 annually averaging cost per year.

We can see where this is going, cattle prices in the

last 15 years have more than slightly doubled, fuel has more than doubled and tractors have almost tripled in cost and land if available is three to 4 times the cost.

Government regulations have changed and each animal must have a government issued ID tag that can be scanned at livestock markets, vet clinics and slaughterhouses. Recently, a new policy came out that a farmer must computer report each time an animal is moved and identify how it travelled. This means each time it goes to a pasture, is moved from that pasture, taken to the veterinarian, livestock market or slaughterhouse or anywhere else. The paperwork required on each head of cattle means that each farm needs to be computer savvy and have someone updating records continually.

Cattlemen are looking at the market two opposite ways, if you

are near retirement the thought might be to sell before the price drops. But optimistic diehards say, if we can stay in a couple more years of these prices. The mature farmers may have the majority of their assets paid for so can be gaining financial freedom now, but young farmers are struggling with a large pile of debt and can only be hopeful prices continue.

But the southern US is now battling the screw-worm coming into Texas and how long before that affects herds and becomes like BSE and the bottom drops out of the market. Optimistically we can hope that it doesn't affect Canada, but the law of averages usually says different. And most cattlemen have seen the revolving 7 to 10 years of prices with slumps and peaks and have learned to operate with them.

Before you think wow, think of your investment for your job. Do you need

hundreds of thousands of dollars in equipment, buildings, tools, livestock and incidentals to start your business. Do you need an operating loan to pay costs until you sell your calf crop? Do you have income once a year and have to budget that income over the coming year not knowing what prices to expect

Do you work extended hours with no extra pay, do you rely on weather to receive income. Cattlemen are commonly "property poor", they reinvest every extra bit of net income to increase the herd, upgrade machinery, upgrade buildings or buy more land. Generally, it is only at retirement time that a cattleman can have the funds to live in the same lifestyle as professional wage earners.

Cattlemen are a hardy breed and should be appreciated, look around the grocery store and imagine a life without farmers.



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Kenton celebrates new kitchen and playground on Canada Day



PHOTOS BY ANNE DAVISON

Kenton playground features a new play structure and interesting pieces of play furniture, including a saucer swing. On Canada Day, at the playground's grand opening, community volunteers are pictured with Wayne Hunter (L) holding the ribbon, Zak Fordyce has just snipped the ribbon with grandpa, Blair Fordyce watching over the procedure, the ribbon is held on the right by a Valleyview Co-op representative.

By Anne Davison
RIVERS BANNER

Community energy is palpable in the village of Kenton. At the crossroads of Hwy 21 and PR 259 within the RM of Wallace-Woodworth Kenton village and area punches well above its weight when it comes to business and community features.

On Canada Day, a Ribbon cutting celebrated the new fenced playground - kid central - in the Kenton park where a bandstand entertained summer crowds. Within the adjacent Kenton Community Hall, the commercial kitchen grand opening took place.

The well-equipped playground was made possible by fundraising of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch # 118 and Kenton Community Enterprises.

A committee of community volunteers pitched in with Blair Fordyce as project treasurer.

Representing Woodworth Legion, Vaughn Wilson said "The bulk of the work that was done was under the supervision and scrutiny of Blair. He was here every day that we worked on the playground," said Wilson. "There were a lot of grandpas that helped out and pitched in and worked when they could."

Several professional carpenters and agricultural producers contributed time and expertise as well. All donors are listed on the playground fence.

Wilson, as president of Valleyview Co-op board of directors said a co-op contribution helped the project. "We were fortunate enough to get the Community Places grant approved for Kenton." It's named the Co-op Community Playground in recognition of the \$39,000 grant from Federated Co-operative.

"These guys put their heart and soul into it," said Wilson adding, "As you can tell, it didn't blow away in the storm."

The town and immediate area, hit hard by a vicious hail storm in June, was celebrating a comeback on Canada Day with music on the bandstand by several groups including young violinist Kennidy Routledge.

Commercial Kitchen under budget

As supper hour rolled around, another ribbon cutting celebrated the Kenton Community Hall kitchen installation also managed by Kenton Community Enterprises.

Cameron Hunter, emcee, explained how the kitchen renounfolded. The original cost projection was \$150,000-\$160,000. However, the final cost came in at \$147,500. He said, "Some of the savings came from not needing a subfloor and from better pricing offers than the original quote, plus being able to use our local contractors to do the work, keeping us on time and on budget."

He acknowledged con-



Cam Hunter for Kenton Community Enterprises, snips the ribbon for the grand opening of Kenton Community Hall kitchen; (L-R) Trent Cross (marketing specialist for Fusion), holding the ribbon is Tara Knight, (summer student from Hamiota, Fusion Credit Union); RM of Wallace-Woodworth councillor Diana MacDonald holding the ribbon and Wallace-Woodworth reeve Clayton Canart.

tractors Mark Routledge (general construction/carpentry), Jeff Hunter (plumbing) and Lane Routledge (electrical).

Donations came from Virden and Area Foundation, Fusion Credit Union, Richardson's Tundra Oil & Gas (employees in energy/ag inputs), Valleyview Co-op and Woodworth Legion. The RM of Wallace-Woodworth provided \$35,000 toward the upgrade.

Supper was set out smorgasbord style from the new commercial kitchen, to serve hungry patrons from Virden to Hamiota and of course a local crowd. Harding Ag Society put together a wonderful smoked beef and pork supper, using the new commercial kitchen and the help of Renard Meats from Virden, serving 245 guests.

Kenton Canada Day fishing



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

On Canada Day, the fish were biting, even jumping at Kenworth Dam. Aunt Sherry from Kenton and nephew Colton from Arden, Manitoba were reeling in the pickerel from their spot on the dock. The water is high, and clean looking, one blessing from the continuous June rains. "I love fishing here," says Colton. The small fish were released to continue to grow.

Rain, rain, go away! And it did for Elkhorns Canada Day events!



A happy Canada Day face at the morning pancake breakfast that served over 150 people!

By Ed James
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

It was overcast and cool at times, but the day was filled with great Canada Day events for the whole family. The first event was the always popular pancake breakfast. As a precaution the night before, the location was moved to the Elks Hall. The volunteers, cooks and servers were very busy with over 150 people of all ages served.

From 10 to 12 at the Ag grounds, all manner of vehicles gathered for the noon hour parade. The parade started at 12:00 with Kevin Tutthill being the colour commentator on the parade floats from the steps of the former bank building. The parade route was lined with lawn chairs, that had been set up hours in advance. There were over fifty vehicles in the parade, with lots of candy being given out to children waiting with empty bags. The first vehicle in the parade was a military jeep carrying the Canadian flag, Legion and axillary flags and the Ukrainian flag. The final vehicle was the 1912 steam engine tractor with



Members of the Brandon Shriner's Club and their mini cars, took part in the Elkhorn Canada Day parade, that had 50 entries.

its unique whistle. At the antique auto museum grounds, some of the parade vehicles were parked for closer display. At lunch time a BarBQ was available and prepared by the members of the Elkhorn School travel club. The club is hoping to go to Italy and Greece in the future.

Admission to the museum that day included all the display buildings and Canada Day display areas. At one end of the large green grass play area was a kids activity centre. Games could be played and various arts and crafts could be made with no charge and free to take home. At noon, the beer gardens opened with a steady flow of customers all day, who were entertained with live music and some funny bingo games, with 50/50 prize pots.

Elsewhere on the grounds was a unique mini-display of old-time black smith skills. This presentation has been a staple at the Elkhorn museum, for many years, featuring the skills of the late Mr. Barry Bromley. With his passing a friend and Mr. Bromley's grandson have continued the ancient tradition.



PHOTOS BY ED JAMES

Royden Tutthill giving a demonstration of the bush sawmill at the Antique Auto Museum grounds on Canada Day.

Using their blacksmith skills they were making horseshoe nail rings, for anyone who wanted one. Elsewhere on the museum grounds you could see a live demonstration of an antique threshing machine at work and a portable bush sawmill turning large trees into lumber. At the threshing machine there were a number of volunteers throwing sheaves of grain into the machine. As it rattled and banged, from one pipe would come kernels of grain and from another spout came yellow straw blown into a large pile.

At 5:30 there was a delicious cold plate supper prepared by Kliever Katering and afterwards time for visiting at the dinner tables. This year's Canada Day event marked its 159th birthday and given the weather the crowds were smaller. However, from the loud singing of O Canada, the large number of flags and the many happy people who came out for the events and to celebrate Canada's culture and history, I have no fear of my country becoming the 51st U.S. state, the way I see it!

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July 26

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5 Entry T's Aloha Burger T's Dining & Lounge 235 Nelson St W, Virden, MB (204) 748-1141	6 Entry Bacon Jam Cheeseburger Elkhorn Esso 164096 Trans Canada Hwy Service Rd Elkhorn, MB ~ (204) 845-2001	7 Entry Ranchers Deluxe Burger Chicken Chef 175 Wellington St W, Virden, MB (204) 748-3200	8 Entry Maple Memphis Burger Ice Cream Island 272 King St E, Virden, MB (204) 748-2557
9 Entry Prairie Pickle Chicken Burger MJ's Coffee Bar & Bistro 143 Nelson St W, Virden, MB (204) 748-1559			

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Kenton 4-H serves pancake breakfast on Canada Day



PHOTO BY JESSICA COULTER

The 4-H crew members served the hungry crowd, pancakes, fruit, sausage and back bacon.

By Jessica Coulter
RIVERS BANNER

Each year, the Kenton Kraftsmen 4-H crew get up early on Canada Day to make the breakfast to fuel the community so they will be ready to conquer the full day of fun events happening all around the town.

The griddles are set outside the hall door where volunteer parents and 4-H kids work hard to cook up giant fluffy pancakes, and mouthwatering back bacon and sausage. In the newly renovated hall kitchen, more



PHOTO BY DALE DAVISON

Bubbly entertainment in Kenton's park on Canada Day after breakfast.

4-H crew and volunteer parents were keeping the coffee brewing, juice poured and cutting up fresh flavourful watermelon and cantaloupe to go with the meal.

There were members of the team also running around clearing plates and cleaning tables to keep everything neat and tidy the whole morning.

The breakfast saw a huge increase this year in attendance with 250 people coming in to enjoy it. That was an increase from last year when they had only 190 people. The event could not have happened without the help of Wheat City Seeds, Valleyview Co-op and P & H Milling Group.

Kenton Lions Annual Car Rally



Clues along the way.



PHOTOS BY JESSICA COULTER

By Jessica Coulter
RIVERS BANNER

Every Canada Day the Kenton Lions Club comes up with this crazy car rally that takes people all over the countryside, it has been South, North, West and this year was East and South of Kenton. Because of the current conditions of the roads, the club was careful to avoid any 'turkey trails'.

The Rally comes with a questionnaire with 43 questions for everyone to try and answer while out on the drive. Some of these questions include scrambled names stapled to posts along the way as you can see in the photos.

There are also check points where you can check in with various Lions members and have a chance to play pick a playing card from a deck of cards at each location. The goal is to get a decent poker hand by the time you get back to the Kenton Memorial Hall for your last card.

Winner of the car rally quiz was Sheldon Rapley. Poker hand winners were: first Robert Stevenson, second Ainsley Smith and third Jack Roseveare.

The whole journey is a lot of fun and gives everyone a chance to see more of the beautiful landscape we have all around us here in Kenton, Manitoba, Canada on Canada Day. The rolling hills, the green valleys and all the breathtaking creeks and wildlife along the way are worth taking the drive. The Car Rally adds to the adventure and fun of the day!



Open Garden Tours

July 19th
10am to 4pm

Pick up your maps at 313 Scarth Drive to find the gardens participating in the tour.

Free to take part!

Spend a relaxing afternoon visiting a variety of Virden gardens.
Hosted by Virden Garden Club and Vibrant Virden.

For more information, be sure to follow Vibrant Virden on Facebook or look for posters around town.

Virden's Best Gardens Contest

Hosted by Vibrant Virden and the 2026 Miracle-Gro Best Garden Selection by Scotts Canada and in conjunction with Virden Ag & Parts.

Welcome entries for beautiful residential and commercial green spaces

Enter any or all categories:

Fruit & Vegetable



Business/Store Front



General (Flower, ornamental, etc)



Sign up your green space or nominate a fellow community member.

Please include contest participant's name, physical address of the space and a method of contact.

Email any questions and your nominations to: vibrantvirden@gmail.com



2026 Contest Deadlines: July 15

Prizes to be awarded. Winners to be featured in the Virden Empire-Advance. Scotts Canada, Virden Ag & Parts and Communities in Bloom require signed authorization to use photos of the winners on their social media.

The spirit of farm competition was alive and well in Virden



Adult ready to step in if needed but Archie 4-H member showing true grit.



George smiling at her Grand Champion steer Macklin.



Casey George leading her Reserve Champion steer Gary one last time before the sale.



Determination of a future farmer in the sale ring, the look says it all.

PHOTOS BY NANCY MOLLER

By Nancy Jo Moller
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The 2026 Virden & District 4-H Fat Stock Association Interclub Show and Sale was held on July 7 at the Virden Ag Grounds. The day began cloudy but the sun soon shone on the beaming faces of the 4-H members. Beef 4-H clubs from the communities of Archie, Lenore, Oak Lake and Pipestone met to compete in their annual interclub achievement.

Members were divided into age classes for all competitions. This included not only judging and showmanship but also their calf divisions. The competition was intense for some members who competed with heavy concentration while others enjoyed the spirit of competition with smiles. Participants wore their club uniform which consisted of a colored T-shirt, jeans and boots. The judges reflected on the importance of proper wardrobe when showing, avoiding loose fitting clothing and having protection for their feet. No hats were worn that could blow off in the wind and startle calves. Members proudly walked in beside their calves with heads held high.

There were classes for young calves and also for specific breeds of heifers like Angus and Simmental. Heifers were judged on body form, weight distribution, udder shape, length of spine and barrel shape. Breed and Overall Champions were selected. The members have the option to return with their heifer as a continuation project as she reproduces. The members had 79 Market Steers to show ranging in weight from 894 to 1632 pounds. Market steers are judged on size, muscle and fat coverage of their carcasses since their primary purpose is meat production. This large number of Market Steers meant

rotations of eight animals per time in the ring to allow for movement room with one of seven steers. A grand and reserve champion were chosen from each group. They were shown against each other at the end of this section and a Show Grand and Reserve Champions were named. It was unfortunate that three members and their steers were unable to attend since they live in the St. Lazare area that is currently under an extreme flood.

Laney George from the Lenore Beef Club owned the Grand Champion steer named Macklin who weighed in at 1502 pounds. Buyers vied for the chance to buy this steer and he was purchased by Renard Meats for \$7.05 per pound. Casey George also from the Lenore Beef Club owned the Reserve Champion steer of the Show named Gary who weighed 1488 pounds and was purchased for \$6.50 per pound by Crude Energy Services and Foxtail

Hauling. Local companies supporting this event was the common thread of the night.

The club members had a variety of names for their steers from Sirloin, T-Bone, and Horse. One was called Zipper because he was born by caesarian. There was also a variety of male names and cartoon characters. Thought and imagination goes into naming these 4-H projects that are trained and cared for daily during the year.

The degree of showmanship portrayed by some younger members indicated that future farmers are in training. The "Helping Hands" were apparent throughout the day, with borrowed show items and extra muscle available when needed if a calf became startled.

Overall, the day was a success as steers were sold to smiles and tears, and the members packed their show kits in preparation for their return next year.

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SPORTS

JOSEPH'S DOMINANT SEASON EARNS SCHOOL'S TOP AWARD

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Colby Joseph's trophy case grew almost as quickly as the Minot State University men's hockey team's win total last season.

The Elkhorn product capped a dominant campaign by being named the school's Male Athlete of the Year after helping lead the Beavers to another elite season on the ice. The North Dakota school squad posted an undefeated home record, spent much of the season ranked No. 1 in the nation and competed in the American Collegiate Hockey Association Division I National Tournament.

Of being named his school's top male athlete, the son of Dawn and Gord Joseph said, "It meant a lot! I was honestly surprised, but I wouldn't have done it without my teammates and my coach. It wouldn't be possible without the success we had as a group."

It was one of many awards and honours that the forward earned for his strong season. He was named to the All-ACHA Second Team. Joseph was also selected as the Most Valuable Player for both the Midwest Collegiate Hockey conference regular season and tournament. He earned his spot on the MCH All-League First Team. Joseph led the Beavers in scoring and was named their Forward of the Year. What allowed the third-year player to be so successful?

"I think a lot of it was confidence," he said. "Believing in myself as a more veteran player in the league really let me set in and play my game, as well as playing with great players and getting put in good opportunities."

When discussing Joseph, MSU head coach Wyatt Waselenchuk said, "First and foremost, he's a great young man. ... He's a hard-working farm boy from Elkhorn, Manitoba who understands the value of hard work."

Waselenchuk recalled that in Joseph's first campaign

he fought to get into the lineup and said he "grew as a player and a person." Now Joseph is a crucial part of the team. The 6-foot-1, 185-pound athlete led MSU last season with 39 points and 23 goals in 28 games.

"It's no secret, our offence runs through Colby Joseph. He shoots the puck like a pro," said Waselenchuk, who also praised Joseph's high hockey IQ.

In addition to his points production and strong defensive play, the Beavers look to Joseph for leadership. He served as an assistant captain last season, and it was recently announced he will wear the "A" again this coming winter. Waselenchuk said in a media release, "I just cannot say enough about him and his leadership qualities."

When asked how he helps lead the team, Joseph said, "I feel like I can help younger guys get adapted and find their groove, as well as trying to lead by example. I can't sit there and suggest things or say we need to do certain things if I don't do it myself. Being a leader has pushed me personally as a player and leader."

While starring on the ice, Joseph has also been successful in the classroom at Minot State. He has earned a spot on the President's List or the Vice President for Academic Affairs Honor Roll each semester. Joseph is



PHOTO BY ARBAUT PHOTOGRAPHY

Colby Joseph had a lot to celebrate last season at Minot State University.

pursuing a double major in marketing and business management. He also plans to earn a minor in entrepreneurship. To accomplish the double major and a minor, Joseph said he "made sure to load up on credits and plan with my advisor so I can take as much with me in my time at Minot State."

Whether it is his academic ambitions or his on-ice accomplishments, Joseph has been supported in whatever he has done by his parents.

"Without them I simply wouldn't be where I am today school and academically, but also who I am as a person. Their support means everything and having them so close to Minot is something I can't put a price on."

SWBL: ROCKETS MAKE PLAYOFFS, OILERS WIN BIG

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

While the Reston Rockets earned a playoff berth, the Virden Oilers wrapped up their regular season in style.

Virden romped past the Rivers Comets 11-4 on July 5 to complete their South West Baseball League regular season slate. The Rockets finished their regular season with a 7-8-0 record to earn the SWBL North Division's third seed for the postseason. The Reston team is facing the second-seeded Comets (10-5-0) in the first round.

"After not making playoffs last year, it is exciting to be back in," Reston veteran Billy Patmore said. "There is always a different feeling for these games as anything can happen. Rivers has pitched us very well this year and has lots of young talent. We have the ability to get the bats going and with some good pitching on our end it should be a fun series. The diamond is in great shape this year and we hope to play on it for a while yet."

The best-of-three affair started July 7 and game two was July 8 in Reston. Both were played after the Empire-Advance deadline. If necessary, game three will be played in Rivers on July 10.

The Oilers finished the regular season with a 3-12-0 record. In their last three contests, they had a win and two one-run losses. The squad has expressed interest in playing in the Senior A provincial tournament. At press time, they were waiting to see if there would be a playoff with the other SWBL teams who did not make the league postseason.

"It would be a good experience for our young team," Oilers veteran Keifer Johnston said.

Virden Oilers

On July 5, on the road against the Comets, the Oilers racked up 14 hits to generate 11 runs. Tyson Draper hit a home run and drove in four runs. Owen Charles had two runs batted in. Toby Troughton stole two bases. In a complete game performance, Reed McGrath allowed four runs, only one earned, on six hits. He struck out three.

"It was nice to come out with a win," Johnston said. "Our young guys again were big for us. Draper with his first SWBL home run, and McGrath again going seven for us."

The Souris Cardinals got past the Oilers 6-5 on July 2. Virden led 3-1 after two innings and 5-4 through four. The Cardinals scored two runs in the fifth inning to take the lead and hung on for the win.

Brayden Rowan led Virden with three runs batted in, while Elisha Bambridge drove in two. Chase Cochran, Jace Freeman and Rowan pitched for the Oilers.

The Oilers fell 3-1 to the Reston Rockets on June 30. Tanner Lewis drove in Virden's run. McGrath threw all six innings for Virden, struck out five, and allowed six hits.



PHOTO BY MARLA WILSON

Reston Rockets #21 Rory Tycoles bunts the ball into the infield.

Reston Rockets

On June 30 at home, Reston led 1-0 after the fourth inning. After Virden knotted the score at 1-1 in the top of the sixth inning, the Rockets scored two in the bottom of the frame. Rory Tycoles drove in two runs for Reston, while Foxx McColl pushed the other run across the plate. John Patmore started on the mound for the Rockets. He struck out seven and allowed one run on three hits over 5 1/3 innings. Jamie Williamson came on in relief and earned the win. He had two strikeouts and did not allow a hit.

Beyond ‘buy local’: Virden woodworker explains cost of craftsmanship



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

Jonathon Paddison NPW board made with Canada Day in mind.

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

What do tariffs mean for a local woodworker?

Jonathan Paddison, Northern Prairie Woodworks (NPW), turns out handmade cutting boards, gameboards and even butcher blocks from his home shop in Virden.

He’s established a healthy trade into the USA and throughout North America, but strained trade relations have put pressure on his business and Paddison says there’s two sides of the ‘buy local’ conversation that’s often only told from the shopper’s point of view.

Under CUSMA (Canada-US-Mexico Agreement), NPW Canadian made products can cross the border without the big blanket tariffs. However, Paddison says, “The real problem for a shop my size is the paperwork. The U.S. eliminated the small-parcel exemption, so every board I ship to an American

customer now means customs forms and potential brokerage fees on their end.”

He made a decision. “That friction, plus rules that seem to change every few months, is why I’m focused on Canadian customers right now. I’d rather build the business on ground that isn’t moving.”

Supply chain rattled

Paddison works with small quantities of hardwood and some of it must be imported.

“Walnut is the honest part of the story,” says Paddison. “Almost all quality black walnut grows in the U.S., so I’m buying American wood with a weaker Canadian dollar through an unpredictable border. There’s no Manitoba walnut to switch to.

Maple is different — I can and do source Canadian hard maple, so that’s where buy-local actually works in practice, not just as a slogan.”

A made to order chess/checkerboard displays stunning workmanship with alternate-coloured squares in wood from South America.

“This is the actual colours of the wood - canary wood and purpleheart.”

A cribbage board has practical storage for game pieces. “So that’s canary wood as well, so you can see a totally different part of the tree. And it’s the same wood, they’re both heartwoods, just one was closer to a bigger trunk....”

Another dark board of zebra wood with walnut has a dramatic bull’s head inlay.

“These exotics — canary wood, wenge, purpleheart, etc. — grow in South America and Africa, but most of it routes through U.S. distributors before it gets to me. So, the most exotic wood on my rack has crossed two borders and carries the cost of both.”

Why wood?

By day, Paddison works in the finance department of Virden Mainline Motors. After office hours, he turns to another kind of precision. Woodworking is his therapeutic hobby.



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“It’s stress relief,” he smiles. “My meditation, in a way, it just takes me away from the everyday.”

The attraction to wood began in his Winnipeg high school shop class. “It’s beautiful, no two boards are alike,” he says, displaying a finished keepsake. “So, I can do this again with the same woods, and it’ll come out the same color, but [look] completely different.”

But he did not begin with expensive exotic woods. Pointing to a rugged coffee table in his TV room he explains the journey to NPW: “This is a 10-year-old table. I used to just make stuff, and then people noticed it.” He was asked to make this and that.

“So I started with the basics, and 12 years later, I’m a lot higher end.”

He believes that Canadians deserve a beautiful ‘made in Canada’ product rather than low value and mass-produced.

The beauty is in the details.

“I look for neat textures, and colours within the wood, and I arrange the grains so they compliment each other.”

Keepsake or practical cutting board, they all come with care instructions and complimentary board butter, built and finished in Virden and made to last for decades.

Paddison says, “Buy-local is real for my customers and real for some of my materials, but a solo maker on the prairies can’t pretend the supply chain stops at the border. I’d rather say that plainly than sell a story that doesn’t hold up.”

Northern Prairie Woodworks is online at: northernprairiewoodworks.ca

Leo Carlsson contract in the National Hockey League

By Gerry Nolan
RIVERS BANNER

The Philadelphia Flyers have turned the National Hockey League on its

head with the most ridiculous offer sheet that has ever been put forward in NHL history.

Leo Carlsson signed the offer sheet with the Flyers at an average annual value of 18 million dollars a season. Leo currently plays with the Anaheim Ducks. Anaheim has until this Friday to match the offer or lose him to the Flyers. Leo will be the highest paid player in the entire NHL. The contract is comprised of a huge signing bonus meaning it will be virtually buyout proof. Here are the bonuses broken down season by season. This is a 5-year deal that has been offered to Carlsson.

First year, bonus money only 19.95 million. Second season 18.1 million. Third season 17.05 million. Fourth season 15.2 million and in season number five 15 million. These are the yearly signing bonus payments. Now for his yearly salary. First season 850,000. Second season 900,000. Third season 950,000. Fourth season 1 million and season 5 is also 1 million dollars.

Leo Carlsson received this offer from the Philadelphia Flyers after scoring 29 goals and 38 assists for 67 points and was a plus 4. In 3 seasons in the NHL Carlsson has scored 61 goals and 80 assists for 141 points. It is hard to believe that Carlsson will be paid more than Connor McDavid, Nathan McKinnon, Cale Makar and Sidney Crosby.

Great for Leo Carlsson, the question now is who is the next player to surpass this contract and will other teams now follow suit and sign players to ridiculous amounts of money. The NHL salaries are getting as crazy as the other professional leagues. How much will it cost you to go and see an NHL game? The money to pay these players has to come from somewhere and I am thinking it will be the fans who will be paying a steep price to watch our game!

Yogi-isms



Yogi Berra, Hall of Fame back catcher of the New York Yankees, was a great professional baseball player. He played in 2120 games. He had 7555 plate appearances. Yogi hit 358 home runs and batted in 1430 base runners. All this and he was a man of small stature. Yogi Berra won 10 World Series Championships as a player and won 3 more as a coach or manager. This is the all-time Major Baseball League Championships ever won.

There was another side to Yogi. Yogi Berra ‘isms’ are legendary, paradoxical and witty. They are famed for their nonsensical logic that actually makes perfect sense. The most famous of these quotes include, “It ain’t over till it’s over,” Yogi said this in 1961 when the New York Yankees came from behind to win the American League Pennant and played in the World Series against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

“It’s deja vu all over again,” Yogi said this after Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris hit back-to-back home runs.

Baseball is 90 percent mental, the other half physical. A classic take on the pressure of the game. “When you come to a fork in the road, take it,” this was Yogi’s famous and surprisingly practical directions to his home in New Jersey.

You can observe a lot by watching. A simple lesson in paying attention.

Last one, “The future ain’t what it used to be,” Yogi Berra’s philosophical observation on how times have changed.

Yogi Berra was one of my favorite ball players and I just loved his humor! Rest in peace Yogi, and thanks for the memories!

Old Sayings: Dog Days of Summer

By Gerry Nolan
RIVERS BANNER

What are the Dog Days of Summer? We have all heard the phrase, but what does it really mean? Where did it originate? Well, glad you asked!

July 3 officially marks the beginning of the Dog Days of Summer, a period when the northern hemisphere typically experiences its warmest weather. The phrase has nothing to do with our canine companions.

This period stretches from July 3 to August 11, historically coinciding with the helical rising of the star system Sirius known as the “Dog Star”! Sirius is associated with heat, drought, thunderstorms, fever and bad luck. Just look around Manitoba these days to see if it fits the description? The ancient Greeks linked this time to midsummer when Sirius was visible in the morning sky alongside the sun. When they observed this celestial event, they knew it was time for sweltering heat and all that comes with it.

In baseball, the Dog Days of Summer describe the gruelling midsummer stretch from July through August. It marks the hottest, most humid period of the season when baseball players face the mental and physical fatigue after grinding through a long hot summer. It is even tougher for teams that are not in the playoff hunt and sometimes the tempers flare and we see the old bench clearing brawls. The heat is upon us, enjoy it while you can, summer is not that long!

Tenders



REQUEST FOR TENDERS -ARENA CARETAKER

The Municipality of Sifton and the Oak Lake Arena Board are accepting sealed tenders for the caretaker position for the 2026-27 season at the Oak Lake District Arena.

Position Details

Location: Oak Lake District Arena 474 Cameron St W Oak Lake, MB
Term: Tentative starting date October 1, 2026-March 31st, 2027
Hours: Position includes weekday evenings and weekends (if tournament/games are scheduled) but vary throughout the year according to the arena schedule.

Responsibilities/policies are to be met in accordance set by the Oak Lake Arena Board:

- Ice making and ice maintenance throughout the season
- General arena maintenance
- Skate sharpening services
- Shared cleaning duties
- Criminal Record Check required
- Experience and asset

For additional information or to submit a tender, please contact:
Municipality of Sifton office ATTN: Cara Taylor Phone: 204-855-2423 EXT 5 Email: oaklakearena@gmail.com or Mailing Address: Box 100, Oak Lake, MB R0M 1P0

Submission Deadline: Thursday August 20th, 2026 @ 9:00am

****The Oak Lake District Arena Board reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders, in whole or in part, and is under no obligation to accept any tenders submitted. The award will be made at the sole discretion of the Board, based on the best interests of the arena. ****

Notice



FORT LA BOSSE SCHOOL DIVISION NOTICE OF REGISTRATION OF PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATE FOR SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION

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

Prospective school board 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 between June 30, 2026 and September 22, 2026 at the Fort La Bosse School Division Administration Office, 523 9th Avenue South in Virden, MB during the regular hours of business.

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

Kent Reid, SEO
Phone: 204-748-2692
E-mail: kreid@flbsd.mb.ca



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Obituary

IN LOVING MEMORY
ASHLEY HALL
NOVEMBER 8,1984 - MAY 29, 2026



It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Ashley Valentina Rose Hall (Attardo) at Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg, surrounded by her beloved family. She was 41 years old.

Ashley was born in Winnipeg, the youngest child of Marie and Al Attardo who brought with them the warmth and richness of their Italian heritage. Ashley grew up alongside her brother Rino and sister Nadine.

In 2009 Ashley's life changed forever when she met the love of her life, Dean Hall. Their connection was immediate and lasting. Following a memorable trip to Europe, Ashley embraced a new chapter, moving to Virden. She loved the quiet close-knit life the small town offered and made it her home where she built a life with Dean. They shared a deep love of animals, the outdoors and adventure- whether that was quadding, fishing, camping or simply being together in nature. On June 22,2013, they were married and together welcomed three beautiful children, Noah, Aviana, and Taven.

Professionally Ashley spent over sixteen years at Four Season Sales, where she was known for her dedication and warm presence. Motherhood was Ashley's greatest calling. She devoted herself completely to her children, supporting them in every endeavour with boundless love and encouragement. She was the kind of mother every child is lucky to have.

In late February Ashley fell ill and courageously endured many hospitalizations in Virden, Brandon and Winnipeg. In early May, she received an aggressive cancer diagnosis. Though her time was cut far too short, she faced her illness with the same grace and strength she brought to everything in her life, and she passed peacefully with her family by her side.

Ashley had a gift for making every person she met feel seen and loved. She greeted the world with a smile a warm embrace and a kiss on the cheek- she said her goodbyes the same way. Ashley is survived by her husband Dean, her children Noah (12), Aviana (10) and Taven (8), her mother Marie, her brother Rino (Shauna), her sister Nadine (Eddie), in -laws Greg and Faye; sisters-in-laws Sara (Josh), Julie (Jessie) and her 8 nephews and 2 nieces whom she loved like her own, countless friends and close family members. Ashley was predeceased by her father Al Attardo and her grandmother Valentina.

Help Wanted



Grant Jackson
Member of Parliament
Brandon-Souris

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
POSITION TITLE:
CONSTITUENCY ASSISTANT

Organization: MP Grant Jackson/ House of Commons
Location: Brandon, MB
Employment Type: Permanent (37.5 hrs/week), some evenings and weekends
Start Date: August 4, 2026

MP Grant Jackson is seeking a dedicated and client-focused individual to join our team as a Constituency Assistant. In this role, you will provide support and guidance to Canadians by assessing cases and performing administrative and community engagement responsibilities. This position is ideal for someone interested in gaining hands-on experience with the workings of the federal government.

Key Responsibilities

- Conduct interviews with clients by phone or in person, track and complete constituency casework for federal programs and departments, including:
 - Immigration
 - Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)
 - Canada Pension Plan (CPP)/Old Age Security (OAS)
 - Passports
 - Veterans Affairs
 - Other federal departments or agencies as required
- Review applications, supporting documentation, and eligibility requirements.
- Communicate decisions, explain program requirements, and provide guidance to clients.
- Maintain accurate and complete case records in electronic databases.
- Ensure compliance with federal legislation, regulations, privacy requirements, and service standards.
- Decision-making is based on full support for the Member of Parliament.

Essential Qualifications

- Secondary school diploma or an acceptable combination of education, training, and experience.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Outlook), beneficial experience with case management systems or databases.
- Comfortable working independently and managing multiple tasks with accountability.
- Excellent judgment and decision-making.
- Attention to detail.
- Ability to collaborate with integrity and professionalism.

What We Offer

- Competitive salary
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How to Apply
Interested candidates are invited to submit a resume and cover letter outlining how they meet the essential qualifications. Please email these documents to Terry.Winters.564@parl.gc.ca.

We thank all applicants for their interest. Only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.

Obituary

IN LOVING MEMORY
FRIEDA TAYLOR (NÉE ALDER)
MARCH 29, 1924 – JUNE 9, 2026



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the peaceful passing of Frieda Taylor on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, at the Fairview Personal Care Home in Brandon, Manitoba, at the age of 102.

Frieda was born on March 29, 1924, in the RM of Wallace, the daughter of Ernest Alder and Bertha Wegmueller. On September 22, 1949, she married the love of her life, Bruce Taylor, at St. Paul's United Church in Virden, Manitoba. Together they built a life and a home that would welcome family and strangers alike for over six decades, until Bruce's passing on March 26, 2014.

Frieda was a devoted homemaker and tireless volunteer. For many years she gave her time to the United Church Women's Auxiliary, helping organize rummage sales, and to the Lions Club, where she was a familiar face at the Virden Fair food booth. But it was her own home that may best reflect who she was: a gathering place, and often a home away from home, for family, friends, boarders, aging parents, exchange students, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even the family's beloved dogs. Summers were spent at the family cottage at Oak Lake Beach and on the road, travelling to new places and visiting friends and family wherever they went.

In 1995, Frieda and Bruce moved to Brandon to reside at Lions Manor where she continued to volunteer and attend Knox United Church. In 2021, Frieda moved to the Fairview Personal Care Home, where she spent her remaining years.

Frieda was predeceased by her parents, Ernest Alder and Bertha Wegmueller; her husband, Bruce Taylor (2014); her sons, Allan Ross Taylor and Harold Lloyd Taylor; her daughter-in-law, Maxine Morgan (Allan's wife); and her siblings Ed Alder (Margaret), Irwin Alder (Evelyn), Ernest Alder, Hilda Curry (Bert), Alma Cooper (Russ), Harold Code, and John Bird.

She is survived by her grandchildren Sean (Sheri), Bryan, Darcy, and Tammy Lambert; her great-grandchildren Shea, Sharley, Shael, Shalen, James, Isla, Tiffany, Brooklyn, and Kristy; her great-great-granddaughter Haliey; and her daughter-in-law, Val (Lloyd's wife).

Cremation has taken place. A small, invitational graveside service will be held at Rosewood Memorial Gardens at a later date.

Flowers are gratefully declined. Donations in memory of Frieda may be made to the United Church Women's Auxiliary, c/o St. Paul's United Church, 286 Nelson Street West, Virden, MB, R0M 2C0.

Frieda will be remembered for her warmth, her generosity, and the open door she kept for anyone who needed a place to belong. Hers was a life defined by family: the family she was born into, the family she built, and the family she gathered in along the way. Her legacy lives on in the countless lives she touched.

Expressions of sympathy may be made at www.memorieschapel.com.
Arrangements with Memories Chapel, Brandon, 1-204-727-0330.

Notice



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

DEVELOPMENT PLAN – TRANS CANADA WEST PLANNING DISTRICT

Under authority of *The Planning Act*, the Planning District Board will hold a public hearing at the time and location listed below to hear from and receive representations from any persons who wish to make them in respect to the following:

BY-LAW NO. 61, TO ADOPT A DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE TRANS CANADA WEST PLANNING DISTRICT (INCLUDING THE RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF WALLACE-WOODWORTH, AND THE TOWN OF VIRDEN)

DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION:
Monday, July 13th, 2026 at 7:00 pm
Tundra Oil & Gas Place
900 5th Ave.
Virden, MB

FOR INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
Alleesha MacDonald
Secretary-Treasurer
Trans Canada West Planning District
(204) 748-7239

A copy of the proposed materials may be arranged for review through the contact above.

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Tenders



REQUEST FOR TENDERS-P/T ARENA CLEANER/JANITORIAL SERVICES

The Municipality of Sifton and the Oak Lake District Arena Board are accepting sealed tenders for a PT Arena Waiting Room Cleaner for the 2026-2027 season at the Oak Lake District Arena 474 Cameron Street W Oak Lake, MB

Position Details

Term: Tentative starting date of Nov 1, 2026-Mar 31st, 2027
Hours: Position will include some evenings (or mornings), weekdays and weekends, but is dependent on arena schedule, 3-4 days a week.

Responsibilities & Requirements

- Clean and sanitize public areas including lobby, washrooms, and indoor spectator seating areas
- Sweep, mop, and maintain floors throughout the facility
- Empty garbage and recycling containers and ensure waste is disposed of properly
- Replenish washroom and cleaning supplies as needed
- Perform routine cleaning before or after games/tournaments and practices
- Ensure cleaning duties are completed in accordance with health and safety standards
- Operate cleaning equipment and use cleaning products safely and responsibly
- Maintain a professional and respectful working relationship with arena staff, volunteers, and patrons
- Be available for flexible hours, including some evenings (or mornings)/weekends during the arena season in accordance with the arena schedule.

Preferred Qualifications

- Previous cleaning or custodial experience considered an asset
- Ability to work independently and manage time effectively
- Reliable, punctual, and dependable
- Physically capable of lifting supplies and performing cleaning duties before/after hours for an active arena environment

Submission Information

For additional information or to submit a tender, please contact:
Municipality of Sifton ATTN: Cara Taylor Phone: 204-855-2423 EXT 5 Email: oaklakearena@gmail.com or Mailing Address: Box 100 Oak Lake, MB R0M 1P0

Submission Deadline: Thursday August 20th, 2026 @ 9am



REQUEST FOR TENDERS - ARENA CANTEEN COOK/MANAGER

The Municipality of Sifton and the Oak Lake Arena Board are accepting sealed tenders for the seasonal Cook/Manager position for the Oak Lake District Arena Canteen for the 2026-2027 arena season.

Position Details

Location: Oak Lake District Arena
474 Cameron Street W, Oak Lake, MB

Term: Tentative start November 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027

Hours: Primarily evenings and weekends, including all scheduled games, tournaments, and arena events, as required by the arena schedule and agreement. All other hours must be in discussed with arena board and canteen Leasee.

Minimum Tender Amount: \$1,500 (inclusive of hydro costs)

Responsibilities & Requirements

- Preparing and serving a basic canteen menu
- Maintaining cleanliness and adhering to all food safety standards
- Providing friendly and efficient customer service
- Demonstrating punctuality, accountability, and professionalism
- Operating the canteen for all scheduled games, tournaments, and approved arena events throughout the 2026-2027 season
- Maintaining reasonable and consistent operating hours
- Obtaining valid Food Handler Certification prior to the start date

Submission Information

For additional information or to submit a tender, please contact:
Municipality of Sifton Office ATTN: Cara Taylor Phone: 204-855-2423 Ext. 5 Email: oaklakearena@gmail.com or Mailing Address: Box 100, Oak Lake, MB R0M 1P0. *Submission deadline Thursday August 20th, 2026 at 9:00am. Only sealed submissions received prior to the deadline will be considered. *

Help Wanted



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES PUBLIC WORKS STAFF

The R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth is seeking applications for full-time **Public Works Staff** to support the maintenance and upkeep of municipal roads, infrastructure, and equipment.

Description and Qualifications:

- Grade or plow all roads within the designated area in a safe and timely manner
- Operate graders in evenings, early mornings, and occasional weekends as per weather, road conditions, and on short notice when required.
- Operate and maintain the graders including regular servicing and logging of records.
- Complete repairs of culverts, bridges and work with drainage projects as required.
- Complete maintenance jobs such as fencing, signage, stone picking, staking, and brush clearing as required.
- Operator must keep work area clean and safe
- Able to work from any R.M. shop location as needed (Elkhorn, Hargrave or Kenton)
- Must have a valid Class 5 Driver's License – Class 3A License preferred; and Class 1A License an asset
- Must have an experience in the operation of a grader or heavy equipment
- Mechanical aptitude with experience in equipment maintenance
- Be able to receive direction and follow instructions; strong communication skills
- Positive and professional attitude to keep building a strong team.
- Respect, support for others and the goals that are set out from management.
- Perform other duties as required

ALSO HIRING:

- **CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**
- **COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RECREATION MANAGER**

Interested candidates should submit a resume with three professional references by:

E-mail: info@wallace-woodworth.com

Mail/Drop-off: R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth Municipal Office

154023 PR 257 Box 2200 (Corner of 83 Hwy & PR 257) Virden, MB R0M 2C0

We appreciate your interest in this position. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. However, only those applicants chosen for an interview will be contacted.

www.wallace-woodworth.com | 204-748-1239 | info@wallace-woodworth.com

Visit our website
www.empireadvance.ca

Coming Events

SAVOR DELICIOUS COLD PLATE MEALS AT THE HARDING FAIR ON JULY 17, 2026!

HARDING COMMUNITY CENTRE, SERVED FROM
11:30 AM-1:30 PM
AND 4:30-6:30 PM.
ADULTS \$20 CHILDREN \$10.
DON'T MISS OUT—BRING YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS!

In Memory

In Loving Memory of Kenneth James McLaughlan



I hold you close in memory
even though we are apart,
your spirit will live forever
within my broken heart.
My heart still aches in sadness
and secret tears still flow.
For what it meant to lose you
no one will ever know.
Oct. 1946 - July 2017
Love Always, Darlene, Candice,
Mathew, Carly, Kenden & Keaton.

Thank You

Thank-you

The KENTON & AREA LIONS CLUB
would like to thank all who partici-
pated in our Canada Day Car Rally.
The day was a success and a lot
of fun, even in the restricted wet
conditions.

A special thank you also to Robert
Stevenson and Jack Roseveare for
their generous donations back to
the Club from their winnings!

Looking forward to next year!

Announcement



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Help Wanted



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

The Municipality of Two Borders is seeking an experienced, detailed oriented and dynamic Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to lead municipal administration and support Council in delivering effective governance and services to approximately 1,120 residents in southwestern Manitoba.

Reporting directly to Council, the CAO is responsible for the overall administration of the Municipality in accordance with The Municipal Act, including leadership of municipal operations, financial management, human resources, and implementation of Council's strategic direction.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide leadership and direction for all municipal operations and Council implementation
- Advise Council on policy, strategy, operations, and financial matters
- Lead strategic and operational planning initiatives
- Oversee fiscal management, including an annual budget exceeding \$7 million
- Ensure accurate financial reporting and strong internal controls
- Oversee human resources, including staffing, performance, and organizational development
- Lead organizational culture, staff development, and succession planning
- Support policy development, governance, and administrative systems
- Foster effective relationships with Council, staff, residents, and stakeholders

Qualifications:

- Senior leadership experience in municipal or public sector administration
- Strong knowledge of municipal governance, legislation, and financial management
- Strong in Human Resource Management
- Demonstrate ability to lead teams, manage change, and strengthen organizational effectiveness
- Strong communication, interpersonal, and strategic thinking skills
- Preferred knowledge of the ASYST 365 program
- Strong working knowledge of Microsoft 365
- Post-secondary education in Public Administration, Business Administration, or related field (or equivalent experience)
- Certified Manitoba Municipal Administrator (CMMA) designation is considered an asset

The Municipality of Two Borders offers a competitive salary and benefits package, commensurate with experience and qualifications.

To apply please submit a cover letter, resume, salary expectation, and references by
July 31, 2026, at 12:00 PM to Reeve Sandra Clark at Sandrarc@twoborders.ca

We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for consideration will be contacted.

SPORTS

SPORTS NOTES: BALL PROVINCIALS UNDERWAY, HOCKEY OFFSEASON NEWS

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Virden Reimer Gold Rush team placed in the top eight of the Softball Manitoba U11 A provincial championships.

The squad was one of four local teams competing in the championships at the Buhler Recreation Park in Winnipeg on June 26-28. Virden Murray also competed as well as the Reston Rockets and the Elkhorn Angels.

Coach Kevin Reimer said his team “making the top eight was an accomplishment in and of itself. We only had two practices together as a group and straight into games. Just had time to talk about our hitting approach at the plate and baserunning. We needed to throw strikes and swing the bat and I was quite impressed with both.”

Emma Reimer and Emily More handled the pitching for the team. Coach Reimer said, “They did all the pitching for us and did a terrific job. They threw strikes and kept baserunners to a minimum, which kept us in the games. That’s all we could have asked for out of them and they did a great job.”

Virden Reimer players experienced success on other teams this season. Coach Reimer said four finished first at an AA showcase, while five players, including three of the AAA players, finished first in league play. At provincials, the team fell in the quarterfinal contest that would have sent them to the final four.

“The life lessons at the end of a loss can sometimes be more valuable than the game itself,” Coach Reimer said. “We were down 6-0 in the last game, but we talked about perseverance and changing the next inning. We can’t change the previous innings but we can change the next one. We scored six runs that inning to tie it up against their best pitcher... The girls’ spirits were down at 6-0, but they encouraged each other on, which showed the value of teamwork.”

The Virden Murray team posted a 1-1-1 record at the provincial tournament. Head coach Brent Murray said it was the “best three games we played all year.”

Ball Provincials

The Reston Rockets earned the silver medals at the Softball Manitoba U13A Provincial Championship, held in Winnipeg on July 3-5. Virden also had a team competing.

Reston hosted the Baseball Manitoba 11U Tier 1 Provincials on July 3-5. The Rockets earned fifth place with an exciting 8-7 victory over Deloraine in their final game. Brandon beat Altona 5-1 for gold.

Miniota News

Submitted
BY LINDA CLARK

Miniota School held their Closing Ceremonies on Friday, June 26 where they recognized and celebrated the students’ achievements from throughout the year. All students received their promotion certificates and the Grade 7 & 8 students also received Certificates of Merit for any courses where they achieved an average of 80 per cent or higher.

The ceremonies concluded by honouring the Grade 8 graduates—Evan Armitage, Jocelyn Brown, Talia Brown, Adrianna Cousins, Natalie Couvier,

Katie Howard and Riley Lelond. Congratulations to all students and staff on a great year and enjoy a well deserved summer break!

Linda Clark hosted a Clark family gathering for visiting with Arlene Morton, and her daughters Elizabeth and Megan and her daughter, Charlotte, who came from Camrose and Calgary respectively.

Arrow River was the spot to be to celebrate Canada Day on July 1st. The afternoon began with ball games, followed by a delicious cold plate meal in the hall. Following supper the Miniota Discoveries Centre hosted the annual Duck

At the Baseball Manitoba 11U Tier 3 provincial tournament in Portage on July 3-5, Virden finished in fourth. The team got by Brandon 12-11.

Look for more softball and baseball coverage in the Empire-Advance in the coming weeks.

Scharff Headed to Summer Games

Virden’s Cade Scharff is headed to the Special Olympics Canada Summer Games. The son of Chad and Rita Scharff will compete in softball at the Aug. 11-15 event in Medicine Hat. A fundraising campaign is underway to help him join about 1,700 athletes competing in 10 sports.

Davidson Signs with Wolverines

Virden’s Hudson Davidson has signed to play for the Manitoba Junior Hockey League’s Waywayseecappo Wolverines. The 2007-born defenceman starred last season with the Campbell River (B.C.) Storm of the Vancouver Island Junior Hockey League. The son of Karla and Craig Davidson suited up during the 2024-25 season for the Virden Oil Capitals.

Vachon Named Falcons Co-Captain

Oak Lake’s Anita Vachon will be one of the faces of the Southwestern Falcons in the inaugural season of the Manitoba Senior Women’s Hockey League. Vachon and Cass Bonchuk were recently named as captains for the new team. The league will have eight teams across the province.

Auger, Pitz on U16 POE Roster

The Virden duo of Mason Auger, a defenceman, and Easton Pitz, a forward, earned spots on the Hockey Manitoba boys U16 Program of Excellence roster for the summer. The group was slated to take part in a July 6 skills camp. In October, the squad will play exhibition contests against U18 AAA and prep programs. Auger is the son of Shane and Kati Auger, while Pitz’s parents are Barry and Tara Pitz.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The members of the Virden Murray Gold Rush are pictured. Back row left to right: assistant coach Jon Romanik and assistant coach Brittany Pappel, Georgia Romanik, Avaya Hyatt, Emma Irvine, Paige Penner, Amelia Carruthers, Emmalieghe Pirie, Lilly Brydon, Ava Murray, and head coach Brent Murray. Front row, left to right: Lennox Calcut, Maddison Pappel, and Nuala Harkness.



The Virden Reimer Gold Rush made the playoff round at the Softball Manitoba U11 A provincial championships.

Races on a new waterway built by Cory and Rodney Gardham. The day concluded with a wonderful fireworks display. Thank you Arrow River!

Congratulations to Curtis and Tiphany Gardham on the birth of their son, Rave Ryan, on July 1 in Brandon. Rave is also welcomed by his sisters Emery, Renn and Clarke along with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

We send get well wishes to Braydon Bohrn following heart surgery in Winnipeg. Best wishes Braydon for a speedy and full recovery!

As I write this the water continues to rise in many areas, and dikes and sandbags continue to be needed. Our Miniota Valley is flooded for the third time this spring and roads

have been closed to the east and west of Hwy 83. Our thoughts are with our farming families who are affected by the flooding.

Isabella News

Our community extends our sympathy to Michael Knight and Lisa Eastley, Zoey, Tucker and Rhett on the death of Michael’s Grandma Frances Susinski at Morley House at Shoal Lake.

Kris and Jen Wall, Riley and Grayson from Airdrie, Alta., visited with Hazel Wall and Kelvin and Becki Wall and family. Hazel and her family all attended the wedding of Ashley Bell, daughter of Kim and Curtis Bell, and Dylan Slon at Clear Lake on July 4. Congratulations Ashley and Dylan!

Preserving the Past for

the Future Museum held their annual day on Sunday, July 5. The day began with the presentation and unveiling of the Isabella Sports Hall of Fame in the hall, prepared by members of the museum committee, to honour those who participated in hockey, baseball, curling, figure skating and tennis through the years. The display held pictures, names, and memorabilia for all to view.

Glenda Lawn spoke to these years of sports in our community and Kendall Heise gave his memories as well. Diana Brydon and Sarah Doran unveiled the display. As well, the five buildings were open for tours. Some enjoyed a ball game, and the day wound up with a cold plate supper in the

hall. Hats off to Sarah Doran for the homemade ice cream served with the cakes for dessert.

The Museum committee was most appreciative of the many who came from surrounding communities to support this day.

Monday, July 6 is the day we hold for cemetery cleanup. Men, women and children enjoyed a noon hour meal at the hall of leftovers, and then Mike Knight, Randy Still, Murray Sutherland and Trevor Clark headed out for leveling gravesites and trimming trees. Thanks to these men and a special thanks to Murray Sutherland for his particular attention given to our cemetery to keep it so neat and tidy.

Where the Wildflowers Grow is the story of a courageous young woman who takes back her life



PHOTO BY NANCY JO MOLLER

Payton Senger displaying her book about survival and overcoming darkness.

By Nancy Jo Moller
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

April 2024 was a month filled with dark thoughts and overwhelming feel-

ings. With the mindset that freedom was near, Molly left home that night. On her way to nowhere, she noticed a familiar guiding light that led her

back home to safety.

This sounds like the start of a horror movie but "Where the Wildflowers Grow" is the story of how one brave woman survived and continues to thrive in life. 'Molly stands now as a woman shaped by storms she once thought would break her'. This sentence is the beginning of a future that she is carving out for herself in the Westman region.

Molly began to realize that her body, mind and external forces became her survival guide and with conversation with a caring therapist began to rebuild her life and future. She stresses to anyone who will listen that speaking out and finding someone to hear you is the most important part of survival and the first step to freedom.

The writer of this book wants to show by finding a light in herself and expressing herself on paper that she can not only grow but help others who feel that nobody cares, nobody

listens. She feels that even if she only saves one person discussing her trauma has been worthwhile.

Molly signed up for a career in the healthcare field. It was during one of her classes that a buoyant feeling came on after some difficult days and she began to focus on Interpersonal Communications. Through this realization, her major was switched to Psychiatric

Nursing.

As her therapy continued, Molly was taught that there was a safe door and it was always open, seeing the path to it was the challenge. As she recounted her childhood and early adulthood, her counsellor helped Molly overcome some of her struggles. The common thread through her book is that victims should never be afraid to speak

out and find help. They are not to blame for what is projected at them and help may be just around the corner.

Now Molly stands barefoot, grass cool and damp beneath her feet. She lives where wildflowers grow.

She is healing by learning what to eat, exercise and changing thought processes. Questioning not what has or is happening but why.



Pickleball a recognized sport, local youth clinics coming up

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Pickleball is probably Manitoba's and maybe Canada's fastest growing

sport.

Virden Pickleball Club is making great gains in fundraising toward four new outdoor courts and local members have topped the podium at Manitoba Pickleball Games, reaching silver at Manitoba Senior Games. The club even has their own branded t-shirts.

Recently, two Virden club members, Doug Wright and Ginny Fridd shared local details and the enthusiasm pickleball is generating.

Seniors have dominated the sport in local towns and for good reason - physical exercise in a game that is exhilarating, where you can join and play at any level. Games are casual and partners are often picked up in the sessions.

Camaraderie is a bonus as Fridd tells, "The nicest part is, you end up meeting people that you know from another place, but then you also meet new people... there's always that commonality." Smiling, she shares, "I was very shy before I started pickleball, believe it or not."

News from the Global Pickleball Federation announced Pickleball Canada is now a recognized by Sport Canada. "At the end of 2024 Pickleball Canada had a 25 per cent increase in new members from the year before ending with over 88,000 members. Most recently Pickleball Canada, a National Sport Organization (NSO) and member of the Global Pickleball Federation (GPF), is proud to announce that it has officially been granted "Funding Eligible" status as by Sport Canada."

Now, the sport is becoming popular with kids and since becoming recognized by Sport Canada, youth clinics are scheduled across Manitoba this summer.

Wright is thrilled to have three grandsons involved



Kerri Maine (L) and Delsie Wiebe win silver medals at the recent Manitoba Senior Games.

in pickleball.

Mason, Noah and Emmett Popple from Miniota. "We have played pickleball with them in different places," he says.

It's an inexpensive recreation, with paddles available to use.

Fridd says, "Pickleball Manitoba is offering free learn to play sessions for youth from 10 to 17. So, Virden is hosting one of those clinics."

"Yep, registration's free, maximum number of participants, 16, number of hours, 8, total court time, 4



PHOTOS FROM FACEBOOK

Ginny Fridd and Randy Slater top the Manitoba Pickleball tournament as age 60 and over champions.

hours," said Wright.

Youth clinics will also be held in Sifton on July 21, Rivers on Aug. 4, Virden on Aug. 5, Elkhorn on Aug. 6, and Kenton August 7.

Find details on Pickleball Canada website, drill down into Pickleball Manitoba and find a tab called: Roadshow 2026.

Within the past year, the Town of Virden has received a number of hearty donations on behalf of Virden Pickleball Club court construction plans. Stay tuned for more Virden Pickleball news.

Kelsey Gerrand celebrates REMAX office



The REMAX Realty team pictured in front of Kelsey Gerrand’s real estate office at Nelson St. N. on Thursday, June 25 in celebration of the grand opening of Kelsey’s real estate business under the REMAX brand: (Back L-R) Christie and Graham Garden owners of Valleyview Realty; (Front L-R) Kelsey and realtor Terri Cosens.

PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON



feature listings

321 Lakeshore Drive, Oak Lake Beach



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4
2

Experience lakefront living at its finest in this spacious 2,800 square foot home offering the perfect blend of comfort, style, and location. Featuring four bedrooms and two bathrooms, this turnkey property can include furnishings and is ideal for families, entertaining, or simply enjoying peaceful waterfront views year-round.

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\$749,000
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3

Nestled among the oaks and maples, you will find this oasis on the eastern shoreline of Oak Lake Beach. Just a few cottages north of the beach, your entire family can take in lake life with this three bedroom, two bath cottage situated alongside a detached, heated garage that’s complete with a one bedroom, one bath apartment.



Kelsey Gerrand

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By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Kelsey Gerrand has been a real estate agent based out of Virden for 11 years and recently she made a change to become the Associate Virden Broker with REMAX Valleyview Realty. Her Nelson Street office in downtown Virden was the site of her grand opening celebration under REMAX.

She was joined by friends, family, business acquaintances, and community members.

The real estate business is where it’s at for Gerrand. She says, “It’s really fun and fulfilling being able to help clients reach their dreams, that’s the best part of it, and every day is different.”

This celebration is about her brand change. She says, “I am very happy that I made the move.”

Her brokerage role means she can help out the other agents who are registered out of the Virden office. Terri Cosens, is one of those REMAX agents. “As of right now, it is just Terri and I - she is very well-versed,” says Gerrand.

Christie and Graham Garden, Valleyview Realty owners based in Brandon were on hand for the celebration. Valleyview Realty has been serving Brandon and surrounding areas since the mid 80’s.

Valleyview Realty now has offices in Portage La Prairie and Virden as well. Graham is pleased to welcome Gerrand

aboard. He says, “We are so excited that Kelsey joined our team and the office facilitates our already established and busy agent in Terri Cosens.”

The ownership team has been making inroads in the Manitoba real estate business for several decades. Christie Garden followed her family into Valleyview Realty and her husband Graham Garden as Broker, undergirds the local business with 25 years of full-time experience as a REALTOR® and is a REMAX Hall of Fame inductee.

“REMAX is the largest real estate company in the world,” says Graham of the company. It has locations in more than 120 countries and territories.

Fiber art adorns CP Station



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Arts Mosaic features Leslie Moffitt’s work displayed in the CP Station throughout July, ending Aug. 1. The Oak Lake resident has become a well-known fiber artist. Her reception, July 3, was a busy evening where Santi Sanchez was the musical performer and guests joined to enjoy the gallery show. Her fiber art on every wall, Leslie Moffitt, (centre) visits with guests at her artist reception in Virden’s CP Station gallery.



GOT NEWS?

204-748-3931

reporter1@empireadvance.ca

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