

RaggTimes

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The Riverbend T. Ragg-Imes

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Jewellery by Design

Forest of Jewels offers select brands and one-of-a-kind, hand-crafted creations

By Ragg-Times Staff

hen Lawrence Brendel was young, he was fascinated by coins, but not just with coins as a measure of value; he was curious about the metals they were made from, the gold, silver, copper and more. He pursued that interest through apprenticeships as a goldsmith with several jewellers in Edmonton, learning the art and craft of cutting, filing, hammering, turning, spinning, bending and casting gold. In 1990, he joined Forest of Jewels, which at the time was in Heritage Mall and, not long after, he and his wife Janet bought the business.

When Heritage Mall closed in 2001 (the property is now part of the Century Park LRT station), Lawrence moved the business to Riverbend Square, which has made for a welcome home. "It's a very supportive neighbourhood," he says. "We love the community."

Lawrence runs Forest of Jewels with his son, Mason, who is gradually taking over the operation. Mason didn't always have designs on jewellery. He first went to the University of Alberta, where he

earned a degree in Earth sciences ("I got to see all the ugly rocks first and now I get to work with the nice ones," he says.) But he started working at Forest of Jewels during his last year of university and came onboard full time in 2016. He took a computer-assisted design (CAD) course in Toronto and earned his graduate jeweller's diploma from the Canadian Jewellers Association. Now, he's hooked on the beauty and meaning of jewellery. "It's a luxury thing, but it's emotional too," he says, "especially repairing pieces like family heirlooms. It means a lot to people."

The store has a small footprint. In the front are the display cases, featuring one-of-a-kind, uniquely coloured stones and a small selection of brands, including Swarovski crystal, Tissot watches, Keith Jack silver and Anna Zuckerman jewellery. In the back are three goldsmith stations, casting equipment, a laser welder and a



Mason Brendel, left, and his father Lawrence own and operate Forest of Jewels, a staple of Riverbend Square since 2001.

3D printer. "We don't have a high traffic area, so we pick more unique items," says Lawrence. "We're kind of a destination for quality and uniqueness."

Bridal jewellery remains a mainstay, but not your typical, off-the-shelf styles. "If someone wants a unique engagement ring they come

continued on next page...

Brookside Hall Fundraiser

Join us at the Spring Fling for an evening of entertainment

By Sue Trigg

he temperature is rising, leaves are turning green and seasonal allergies are back!

What a great time to put on your party clothes, come out and reconnect with neighbours, new and old, and support the Riverbend Community League.

The RCL is hosting a Spring Fling at the Riverbend Community Centre on Saturday April 29. Proceeds will go towards the restoration and renovation of Brookside Hall, which was vandalised in January (for a second time).

We have an amazing lineup of food, drinks, entertainment and auction items. Hear from the Lillian Osborne Jazz Trio and jazz pianist Michael van Manen. Magician Kent Wong will make an appearance. And dance the evening out to the beats of our own DJ Harman B.

For more information, visit riverbendonline.ca. I look forward to seeing you there!

The Play's the Thing

Riverbend students bring Beauty and the Beast JR to the Maclab Theatre

ive theatre was one of the many casualties of COVID, but a determined teacher at Riverbend Junior High School and his students are revitalising the art form with six performances of Beauty and the Beast JR in April.

"It was interesting getting these kids into the program," says teacher and director Cash Komick. "A lot of them thought, 'Oh, drama games, those are fun,' and then they come in and I have them doing choreography and singing in front of the group. They're turning into amazing little performers."

Eric Yuen will be playing the little broken teacup, Chip, in the performance. "I chose theatre because I thought it would be an interesting opportunity and because I can display some skills that I have," he says. Munaf Iqbal, playing The Beast, admits that he chose theatre because he didn't want to do band or art, but that he's loving

it nonetheless, and Yoma Mike-Ifeta is looking forward to his role as the handsome, swashbuckling Gaston. "I chose it because I like making jokes and talking a lot," he says. "I thought, 'Hey, why not take drama. This will help me in a lot of situations."

The troupe is receiving support from the drama program at Scona High School, which has a costume room that Komick describes as "insanely good." He says all the high schools in the district have been willing to help out. "They

provide us with free tickets to their shows so the kids can see the possibilities," he says. "They provide mentorship. Some high schoolers came and helped the kids with lights and sound."

The performances will be at the new Maclab



One of the three casts that will be performing Beauty and the Beast JR. at the Maclab Theatre in April. This cast is led by Ashley Schimpf (centre) as Belle, Yoma Mike-Ifeta (to her left) as Gaston and Munaf Iqbal (to her right) as The Beast.

Theatre at Lillian Osborne High School, running from April 18 to 20. Three separate classes, making up three different casts, will each put on two shows. Visit fringetheatre.ca for tickets to this classic tale of transformation and tolerance.

Ragg-Times

...continued

here and we work together from the idea stage to a CAD image to a printed model to a finished product," says Lawrence. "They're involved in every step of the creative process."

Diamonds – both natural and lab grown – are featured, but Forest of Jewels also works with a variety of coloured stones, including sapphires, rubies and emeralds. "Almost always someone comes in and leaves happy," says Mason. "That's what's unique about our business." Forest of Jewels is open Monday to Friday, 10 am–5 pm and Saturdays 10 am – 4 pm.

Help Spring the Sprouts!

Staff and volunteers from the farmers' market operate Sprouts, a nutrition program for children. Can you help?

The mission of the Southwest Edmonton Farmers' Market (SWEFM) is to build a gathering place for the residents of southwest Edmonton, creating a vibrant community and thriving local economy. In addition to providing a place to shop for locally-grown and skilfully-crafted food and hand-made goods, it provides a compelling, irresistible and welcoming space, offering quality events and entertainment, and relevant and engaging programming. To accomplish this, and to ensure the success of our vendors, we provide a favourable business environment, reasonable vendor fees, essential marketing services and beneficial promotional support.

Sprouts is a children's nutrition program operated by SWEFM staff and volunteers. The program is free to all children between the ages of four and 12 and its purpose is to encourage young children to lead a healthy lifestyle by introducing them to nutritional food choices and educating them about where their food comes from. The program strives to counteract many of the barriers to healthy eating and living often experienced by children.

Sprouts began in 2013 and is funded solely through sponsorship funding from community-minded businesses and community leagues.

Since its inception, Sprouts has gained momentum, popularity and community buy-in. It began as a program open to 100 children, but served 400 children in its first year as the community saw its value and



made financial contributions to ensure its success. In 2019, over 1,500 children were enrolled in the Sprouts program, and the operational cost for that season was \$16,000.

Owing to COVID, it was necessary to suspend the program for 2020 and 2021. However, we were happy to bring it back in 2022 with almost 950 children registered. The total operational cost of the program this past year was close to \$14,000.

Sponsorship is essential for the continued success of Sprouts. The funds received pay for the administration of the program and the activities. Your donation to the Sprouts program provides each child with a reusable shopping bag and tokens that can be used each week to purchase healthy foods provided by market vendors and a weekly kid-friendly recipe card. TRAC then reimburses these vendors for each token they receive. Fun and exciting activities are planned for the children such as spin the wheel, scavenger hunts, etc.

We are grateful for the sponsorships received as the Sprouts Program would not be possible without it.

Please contact the Sprouts Coordinator at: swefm.sprouts@gmail.com for more information on the sponsorship levels or for answers to any questions.



Riverbendonline.ca

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Sign up for my Ward F Newsletter & Events www.juliekusiek.ca





RCL Board Note



Spring is a Time of Renewal

Perhaps you would like to help renew your community?

From the RCL Board

lants awaken beneath the remaining snow and push up with the vigorous promise of life, and more people are stepping outside to walk around our beautiful neighbourhoods. We look forward to sharing greetings with familiar and new faces and hearing the glee-filled children's voices as they walk and bike to school once more. If you're a new neighbour, welcome to this wonderful community and check out your Riverbend Community League.

RCL celebrated Family Day by offering hot chocolate and cookies at our Family Skate Fest at Brookside Rinks. Board members enjoyed

the opportunity to connect with friends and neighbours lured outside on a beautiful winter day to skate on our rink. Thank you, volunteers, for making skating possible at Brookside and Ronning Park.

Spring is a time of renewal, and your league is celebrating by hosting a Spring Fling to benefit Brookside Hall. This is your opportunity to support the restoration and renewal of your Community Hall! Call your friends, mark your calendars for April 29 and join us for an evening social, loaded with local talent, delicious eats, a silent auction, a 50/50 raffle and guaranteed joy. Tickets are limited and can

be purchased for \$75 by contacting Correna at info@riverbendonline.ca or 780-437-7108. More info can be found at riverbendonline.ca.

Are you skilled at grant writing? Do you have a knack for finding funds to invest in your community? We would sure appreciate your help! Please reach out to volunteer for your league!

Are you a new business in the area? Welcome! Consider advertising in the Ragg-Times and say hello to the 10,000 residents and fellow businesses with each issue!

Thank you for supporting your league by purchasing a membership!



about the people, places or things of Riverbend?

The Ragg-Times is always seeking volunteer writers with great ideas. Email raggtimes@riverbendonline with your idea.







CLASSES

In-person on Mondays and Wednesdays at Riverbend Community League

YOGA

Multilevel hatha yoga with Bev Moore

To register, call 780.437.7108 www.riverbendonline.ca

CLASS DATES:

Mon, April 17 to Mon, June 26 (no class Mon, May 22) Wed, April 19 to Wed, June 28



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT **TENNIS & PICKLEBALL COURTS**

This needs assessment survey focuses on community interest relating to the Riverbend Community Tennis Courts.

In 1978, the Riverbend Community League built tennis courts in Brander Gardens on land leased from the Edmonton Public School Board. Since that time, the League has resurfaced and remediated the courts 5 times with costs escalating for each repair.

In 2018, the Riverbend Community League courts were insufficient as assessments have detailed the need for a complete replacement of the courts due to problems with the base, mature tree roots, and age. Cost estimates for the replacement of the courts and shack have come in at \$450,000.

We need your help deciding on the future of the Riverbend Community Tennis Courts, shack, and how to best use this land for the community.

Please scan the QR code or go to www.riverbendonline.ca and complete this short, anonymous survey!

Thank you for taking the time to answer this needs assessment.



Concerned about the Cost of Living? Climate Action is a Solution

Emissions-reduction initiatives can have multiple benefits, including lower cost and local supply chains

By April Fair, Sustainability Director, Riverbend Community League



Inflation has been a hot topic lately, the causes of which are complex and partly related to effects of the pandemic, including changes to the labour market and ongoing supply chain disruptions.

Another – often overlooked – contributor to the rising cost of living is climate change.

The summer of 2021 brought a record-setting heat wave to western Canada that killed hundreds of

Canadians and thousands of animals. The town of Lytton burned to the ground, and the federal government paid out \$100 million to farmers impacted by the resulting drought. In November of the same year, flooding in B.C. became the most costly weather event in the province's history, costing an estimated \$9 billion to repair the damage, with the federal government contributing over \$5 billion in disaster recovery funding. An estimate from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives puts the combined costs of the 2021 natural disasters in B.C. at up to \$17 billion.

Extreme weather events are becoming increasingly severe and frequent, causing the cost of insurance to increase in response. The Canadian Climate Change Institute reports that, owing to our changing climate, "life will become less affordable for households as economic growth slows, governments are forced to raise taxes to pay for climate disasters, job losses increase and goods become more costly because supply chains are disrupted."

The report also offers hopeful alternatives, stating that proactive adaptation measures and reducing emissions could cut those increased costs by up to 75 per cent.

Spending on something as abstract as climate change mitigation and adaptation can seem difficult, especially when we are all feeling the pinch financially. However, it's helpful to understand that spending on climate initiatives often makes life in the medium-to-short term healthier, cheaper

and more connected. Some emissions-reduction initiatives that have multiple benefits include biking, electric vehicle and transit infrastructure, and local and diverse food supply programs.

It's also tempting – and a common political strategy – to blame the government of the day for rising costs. But if our only response to inflation is to vote out the current government for the party that promises the most tax relief or cost-of-living rebates, we will be bailing out a flood with a spoon. We need to hold our governments accountable for addressing the underlying drivers of climbing costs, and for compelling other countries to do the same by creating and upholding our end of ambitious climate agreements.

I was encouraged that the latest annual study done by the City of Edmonton found that 75 per cent of Edmontonians agree that climate change is a concern, with an equal proportion agreeing that there is a need to act now to address this issue. It's vital that we as concerned citizens urge our elected representatives, at all levels of government, to take meaningful climate action.

At the city level, despite making improvements to its four-year budget in December, Council did not completely fund the minimal climate mitigation and adaptation efforts put forward by City administration, and is projecting a significant shortfall in meeting its carbon budget targets. This falls out of alignment with the Community Energy Transition Strategy to which Council previously committed.

With the provincial election approaching, it's an excellent time to ask candidates how their platforms incorporate climate action that aligns with Canada's emissions targets.

Share your thoughts with your City Councillor Tim Cartmell, your MLA Rakhi Pancholi and your MP, Matt Jeneroux. All signs point to this being a pivotal point in history, a time that requires courage to make difficult decisions and prioritise long-term thinking.

Brookview Community League Brings Community Together with Winter Festival

Winter Festival Even after a minor weather delay to February 4, the Winter Festival was a blast! About 250 kids, parents and friends enjoyed sleigh rides, hot chocolate, toasting marshmallows, milk jug curling and more. Many thanks to all the volunteers who made this wonderful event possible!

Spring Yoga Classes Owing to popular demand, Gentle Yoga with Paige Elniski continues at Brookview Hall! It runs Thursday April 20 – Thursday June 29, 7:00 - 8:15pm. The cost is \$182 for BCL members (please provide proof of membership with registration) and \$198 for non-BCL participants. To register, email lauren.law@brookviewcommunityleague.ca. Please submit your e-transer to president@brookviewcommunityleague.ca.

BCL Community Swim, Sundays 5 – 7 pm Looking for a family activity on Sunday evenings? Come to the Terwillegar Recreation Centre for the BCL Community Swim (and facility access). A current BCL membership card is required.



The Brookview Community League Winter Festival featured sleigh rides, hot chocolate, toasting marshmallows, milk jug curling and more.

BHOA Gazebo Project BCL is a proud supporter of the Brookview Homeowners Association (BHOA) Gazebo project (east of the playground) Be sure to watch for details (progress and completion date) on our website.

Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball is Right Around the Corner! Time to get into shape! Put away your boots, get out those running shoes and watch the website for opening dates. And don't forget, you need to be a BCL member to use the courts.

BCL Website For more Brookview news, check out brookviewcommunityleague.ca.



Oh, The Games We Play

Seniors Connection News for those 55+

By Colleen Crozier

ife's filled with quotes about games. "It was all fun and games until Mom found out." "Life is like a game of chess. I don't understand chess." "I wonder if THAT'S in the game plan!"

The word "game" makes most of us think of something light-hearted, amusing or playful. We view games as something we reserve for when we have taken care of more serious things like work, child-raising and important duties. Many seniors have been raised on, "No playing until the work is done," and take a dim view of anyone who gets it out of order.

Others take the word "game" seriously. Consider what it means to a professional hockey, football, baseball or soccer player. Or to a fan who pays a small fortune for season tickets to his favourite game. Nothing light-hearted, amusing or playful here.

At Southwest Edmonton Seniors Association, we love games. Our members get together regularly to play card games such as Canasta, Bridge, Arizona 10 and Cribbage. They play American mahjong and Scrabble. They welcome new players, even the ones who have never played the games before! The groups keep their activities light-hearted, amusing and playful, just as games should be. The members love to teach and encourage each other. At the door, they never ask, "Did you get all your work done before you came here?"

All of our games are included in our economically-priced Activity Pass. You can play as many as you like, as many times as you like. One other thing: if members would like SWESA to set up other games, we can do that. Just let our Program Coordinator know, and she'll do the

Before the end of April, SWESA will publish its newest program guide. In it, you will find what you need to know about activities planned for May through August this year. You'll find information about fitness classes, Café SWESA, FYI talks, art, music and dance classes,



15-2, 15-4... ready to deal the perfect hand of Cribbage.

excursions and much more. We invite you to look for the program guide on our website, or drop in to our office in the Blue Quill Community Centre to pick one up.

And, of course, there's a whole section on, you guessed it... games!



Blue Quill Community Centre 11304 - 25 Ave NW Phone: 780-860-3603 Email: info@swesa.ca Web: swesa.ca

SWEFM's Almost Back!

The market wants to make this a year to remember, and you can help

Southwest Farmers' Market (SWEFM) opens on May 17 and runs every Terwillegar Community Center. We are going to make this a help make this happen:

Become a vendor We are accepting vendor applications until March 31. You can apply after that, but the main schedule is created in early April, so apply early!

Volunteer on the Steering Committee We have several committee positions volunteer available. People with board or administration experience, financial know-how and community mindedness would be assets to the Steering Committee and the Market. If you are looking for a fun, social opportunity and would like to become involved in this exciting, vital and successful entity, we would love to hear from you.

Become a Market Day **Volunteer** We have shifts from 3:30 - 6 pm and 6 - 8 pm. This is a great opportunity to get fresh air and enjoy our summer, meet people, eat

The 13th season of the good food, and get work experience Edmonton with a well-known community organization.

Buskers, **Artists** and Wednesday until Oct. 4 at the Entertainers If you are a local musician, magician, face painter, henna artist, etc... please reach summer to remember, and you can out to us if you are interested in attending the market as an entertainer!

> Apply as a Community Tent Group Every week, we host a non-profit organization in our Community Tent so they can connect with our attendees about their invaluable work & services.

> Become a Young Vendor We invite young entrepreneurs (13 to 17 years old) to apply. If you have a unique product that you make, bake or grow and would like the opportunity to experience being a vendor at our farmers' market. contact us. There is NO COST to Young Vendors.

> More information can be found at swefm.ca, or email the Market Manager at swefm.manager@ gmail.com. Stay tuned for more announcements by following us on our social media!



TRAC COMMUNITY **RUN/WALK**

10K, 5K, 3K, & 1K Kids Fun Run

Sunday, May 28th, 2023 9:00 AM

Mother Margaret Mary High School

www.vegtrac.ca

Register @ www.runningroom.com

Ragg-Times



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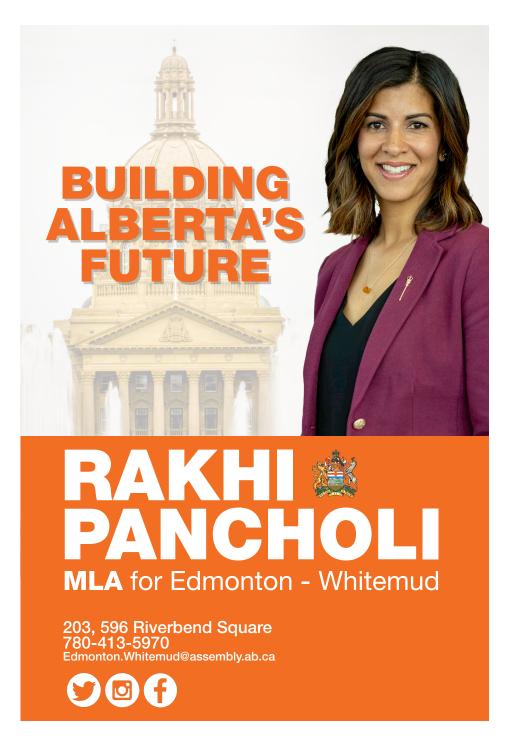
Email pbjchair@gmail.com to register



PBJPlaygroup

For more information: riverbendonline.ca/peanut -butter-jam-playgroup/







A Spring Break at EPL that is Out of This World!

Join us for fun and interactive performances and classes planned from Saturday, March 25th to Saturday, April 1st at the Riverbend Library. Meet the performers: Learn what it means to "write like a rat." Mortimer, a journal-keeping lab rat on the International Space Station, is determined to prove his species is best suited to colonizing Mars. He records the results in his journal, uses a secret code and makes videos for his YouTube channel. Discover how you, too, can write like a rat.

Join us for great classes Explore new worlds of shadow puppets, create a LEGO landscape, even join a dance party at the edge of the universe! Code your very own game, help robots navigate the constellations or build a rocket or a rover fit for a mission to Mars!



No registration is necessary for performances and classes, drop-in capacity is subject to branch regulations. Visit www.epl.ca/springbreak for more details.







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Supporting Public Health Care

Better primary care will take the pressure off of our hospitals and ambulances

By Rakhi Pancholi, MLA, Edmonton-Whitemud



t's been a busy winter of community events, knocking on doors, school visits and meetings with residents, business owners and community leaders. I'm always impressed by how our community comes together

in difficult times, including when Brookside Hall was recently vandalized again. Hats off to the incredible work of Riverbend Community League to respond to that situation and the outpouring of support from the community. I will always support our community leagues, which work so hard to support active living and community connection.

And I value the quality of conversations I have with the people of Edmonton-Whitemud about the issues that concern you.

Many of you have shared with me your growing concern over the state of our public healthcare system. Some of you have lost your family doctor or waited for months to see specialists or you're stuck on long surgical

waiting lists. I've heard about your long waits in emergency rooms because you couldn't get the care you needed outside of a hospital. And we've all heard the stories about 17-hour wait times at the Stollery Children's Hospital and the growing wait times for an ambulance.

Your stories have been difficult to hear. But they're why action to support public healthcare is a top priority for me.

I am proud that my Alberta NDP colleagues and I have introduced a major commitment to rebuild and strengthen family health care in Alberta through the creation of Family Health Teams. Our goal is for one million more Albertans to be able to see their family doctor and a Family Health Team within a day or two, close to home.

Family Health Teams can include multiple family doctors as well as Nurse Practitioners, Registered and Licensed Practical Nurses, mental health therapists, pharmacists, social workers, dietitians, physiotherapists, midwives, speech language therapists and others.

When you walk into a Family Health Clinic you will have immediate access to a range of primary-care professionals who can help you respond to a problem, manage a chronic condition and generally support you in maintaining good physical and mental health.

This means less waiting, less running around to referrals, and less repeating of your story to one new person after another.

Our plan calls for a transition fund to immediately begin hiring 1,500 non-physician team members into existing clinics, while work proceeds to open 10 Family Health Clinics across the province. This goes hand-in-hand with a plan to launch the largest healthcare recruitment campaign Alberta has ever seen. It will help us offer healthcare professionals stable and rewarding workplaces where they can focus more on caring for patients and less on paperwork and administration.

Finally, better primary care will take the pressure off of our hospitals and ambulances.

This is a critical first step to supporting better access to health care for all Albertans. To learn more about this plan, visit AlbertasFuture.ca or reach out to me at Edmonton.whitemud@assembly.ab.ca.













Ragg-Times



We are a welcoming and affirming congregation of the United Church of Canada and invite you to join us through Lent in preparation for Easter.

Join us for Sunday morning in-person worship services at 10:30 a.m. including special children and youth programs. You can also join us for live-streamed services on our YouTube channel from the comfort of your home.

Our Holy Week services:

- Palm Sunday, April 2nd 10:30 a.m. Worship Service
- Good Friday, April 7th 10:30 a.m. Worship Service
- Easter Sunday, April 9th 10:30 a.m. Worship Service

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Your Ward pihêsiwin Councillor

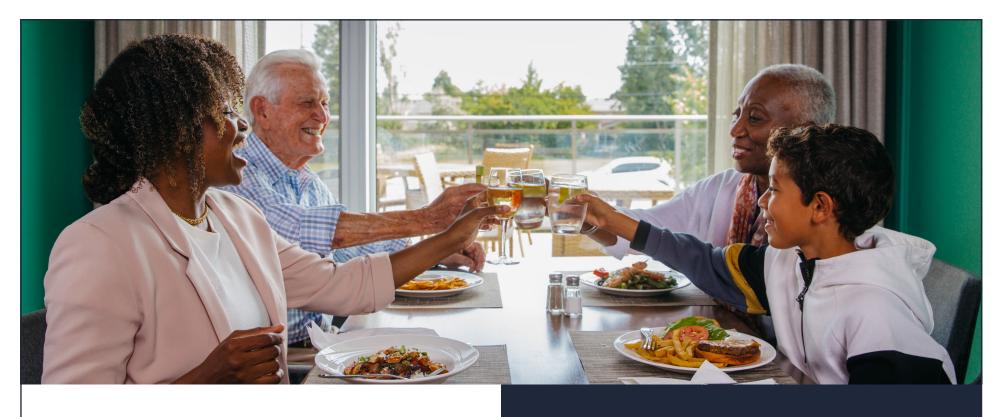
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Green & Gold Springs Back to Life

The little garden that does so much is looking for volunteers!

By Margaret Milner

The volunteer gardeners at the Green & Gold Community Garden, on the University of Alberta South Campus, are making plans for our fifteenth gardening season! The garden is an initiative of the University's School of Public Health and Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences. The garden is totally volunteer-run and we have benefitted from the generosity of many supporters through donations.

The vegetables, herbs and flowers are "spray-free" (no pesticides or artificial fertilizers are used). Anyone is welcome to purchase their vegetables at the garden and all the money raised goes to the Tubahumurize Association, a non-profit organization that provides sociallyand economically-marginalized women in Rwanda with vocational training, counselling, life-skills coaching, health care education, and opportunities for sustainable income-generating activities. Most individuals who benefit from Tubahumurize are genocide survivors and many are widows or orphans, HIV infected, and survivors of physical and sexual violence. To date, the garden has raised over \$450,000 for the Tubahumurize project (includes donations and garden/craft sales).

In recent years, we have been making the transition to alternative gardening methods to grow our vegetables, herbs and flowers. Some of these methods include low-till gardening, creation of permanent beds with pathways between them to avoid compaction, use of cover crops, alternative mulching, composting and weed management techniques, and succession planting. The amendments we have made to our soil in recent years has improved the production and quality of our produce, created habitat for bees, worms and and other beneficial insects, and reduced the human labour required to control unwanted weed production over more traditional gardening methods. This has freed up valuable time for our volunteers to learn about planting, managing crops and focusing on community building activities in the garden.

We are now gearing up for the 2023 gardening season and looking for new volunteers to join us at the garden. Both novice and experienced



gardeners are welcome. If you aren't interested in gardening, but would like to help in other ways (distributing produce, promoting the garden, donating seeds or garden tools), please contact us at gggarden@ualberta.ca or visit our website at greengoldgarden.com.

If you would like to receive garden emails when produce from the garden is available this summer, please send us an e-mail at the above address with a request to be added to the email

Check Out Your Community Theatre!

New facility ready for theatre groups, choirs, school celebrations and more

By Dave Rumbold, on behalf of the South Edmonton Arts & Theatre Society (SEATS)

The Maclab Theatre at Lillian Osborne is up and running and we're looking to spread L the word! The South Edmonton Arts & Theatre Society (SEATS) is your communitybased board and we've been busy sorting out the operational details so neighborhood arts and cultural groups can rent the Maclab Theatre.

We're holding an open house at the Maclab on Friday, April 28, from 5 - 8 pm. Registration is required, please RSVP to maclabtheatre.lohs@ gmail.com. We'll be showcasing this amazing facility with self-guided tours, entertainment and snacks. We'll also be unveiling our signature recognition of key donor Sandy Mactaggart and showcasing the new seating plaques honouring our major donors.

The Maclab Theatre has a dedicated lobby, 279 retractable seats, wheelchair access, a fully equipped control room and full lighting, sound and video capabilities. It features a large stage (32' wide, 22' deep, 13' wings) with an adjacent green room. Most evenings and weekends are available to rent. It's located on the southside of Lillian Osborne High School, with dedicated external access, plenty of adjacent parking and a transit centre nearby. Access is via Leger Road north from the 23 Avenue intersection (address is 2019 Leger Road). Please check out more details at maclabtheatreatlillianosborne.com.

The Maclab stands ready to showcase dance and theatre groups, choirs, school celebrations, community and cultural group concerts and festivals, music recitals and so much more!

Please plan to drop by our open house beginning at 5 pm on Friday, April 28 - and please remember to register first at maclabtheatre. lohs@gmail.com. We look forward to meeting





The Budget and Public Education

The province announced some investments, but far fewer than are needed for Edmonton's growing population By Julie Kusiek, EPSB Trustee, Ward F



he provincial budget was announced on February 28. While details are still to come in the Funding Manual to School Authorities, I'd like to touch on one piece that is of particular impact to families living in Ward F, including Riverbend and Terwillegar.

The province announced design only (not construction) for Edmonton Public School Board's top new school construction priority, a 7-12 school in

Glenridding. The province also announced construction for a K-9 school in the Edgemont neighbourhood, which was our second priority for new school construction. This is good news, although it does not go far enough. With only one new school and one additional school in design, families will continue to feel the strain associated with full classrooms, lottery schools and further travel distances.

The province also announced that two other EPSB schools are in the "School Planning Program" and one is in the "Pre-Planning Program." At the time of writing, it is unclear what funding commitment or timeline is attached to these three schools. While it is encouraging that these schools were acknowledged, the bottom line is that every one of the schools listed in year one of our Capital Plan are needed now.

This year alone, EPSB enrolled 4,400 new students. This is the equivalent of 12 additional elementary schools or four new high schools worth of new students to the Division – in just one year. We expect a similar number of new additional students this coming year. It takes about three years to build a school. At a rate of 12 elementary schools or four high schools per year, it is easy to see that public education is being squeezed. Children are our future and our public dollars need to go to building public

schools for them (run by democratically-elected school boards) when and where they need it.

"This year alone, EPSB enrolled 4,400 new students. This is the equivalent of 12 additional elementary schools."

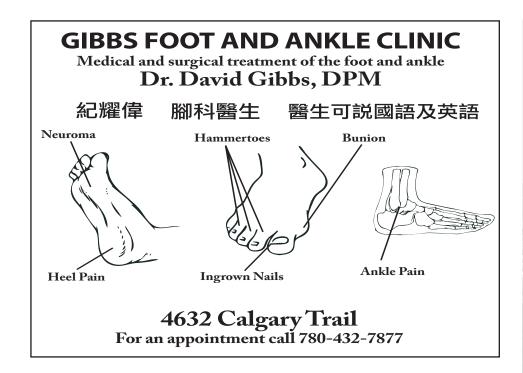
At the end of March, Trustees will debate and then submit a threeyear capital plan to the province. The plan is our prioritized list of needs for new school construction and modernizations. We will also debate the 10-year facilities plan, which takes a longer-term view of neighbourhood demographics, program needs, desired placement of new schools and more

If you'd like to chat with me about advocacy for new school construction, join me at 7:30 pm on Wednesday March 22 for the next Ward F Conversation (Zoom). You can RSVP via my website at juliekusiek.ca.

Speaking of enrollment, don't forget to register your child for school (new students) and pre-enrol (returning students) by April 14. Learn more at epsb.ca, or send me an email at trustee.julie.kusiek@epsb.ca and I can help point you in the right direction. It's an exciting time to be part of our growing school community.

Finally, the Division Feedback Survey opens March 6. You can find the link on School Zone. Please take the time to provide your feedback. As your Trustee, I value your input as our board seeks to serve the community through high-quality public education.

Happy Spring Break, everyone!



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Rock Your Block

Why and how you might want to consider hosting a block party

By Eilish Lemieux, Edmonton-Riverbend Neighbourhood Watch Representative

Tes, there is snow on the ground and a chill in the air as I write this, but I've got summer on my mind! Sunshine, warm nights, cool beverages and maybe a block party? I mean, how great would it be to walk down your street and meet all your neighbours in one place?

There are a lot of good reasons to consider planning a block party in your neighbourhood. For starters, they are fun! You don't have to drive anywhere. You'll be among people with whom you have something in common – you all chose the same neighbourhood, after all. And it's an opportunity to meet up with old friends and make some new ones.

Maybe you'll meet someone who can give you gardening advice. Perhaps you'll meet a long-time resident who teaches you about your community's history. You could make a connection where you become walking buddies or help each other out with shovelling or dogsitting. The possibilities are endless.

Another important thing about block parties? They actually help make your community safer. Getting to know your neighbours means they get to know you, your family members and pets, and perhaps even your schedule. Block parties provide opportunities to share contact information.

Why is this important? People who know each other recognize when something is amiss. A neighbour who knows you may note that's not your car idling outside your house. Or maybe they don't recognize the person taking that package off your doorstep or rifling through your car. Since you made that block party connection, they can check on you or call you. This is particularly important in case of an emergency.

Block parties can also be fun to organize. Just ask Louise Forest. Pre-COVID, the Brander Gardens resident participated in a committee that organized several block parties. "Community and the sense of belonging in that community matters to me, and I wasn't alone in feeling this way," she said. "Our group enjoyed the planning and became good friends doing it. As well, so many others stepped up to be involved and helped make it the wonderful event it was every year."

Forest advises starting the planning early and having fun with it. "We held our block party the same weekend every year, and sent a 'save the date' notice, followed by a reminder, and an invitation." Forest's planning committee made sure to engage the community in the process as well. "We included everyone from young children to older retirees and they got involved in many ways, including organizing activities and contributing food, firepits and a popcorn machine!"



First-time organizer? Give yourself at least a few weeks to plan a block party. Consider having name tags, a few potential ice-breaker activities and posting a map of the houses on the block so that residents can fill in their names where their houses are. Remember that free city permits are necessary, road closures and insurance may be needed and it's crucial to be considerate regarding access, noise, music and lighting.

The City of Edmonton and Edmonton Neighbourhood Watch both offer great how-to guides and other resources, including handouts, freebies, signs and connections to contacts. Check out enwatch.ca/block-party or edmonton. ca (search "block party").

So go ahead, rock your block, and have fun planning your block party!

Build it and They Will Bike

City commits \$100 million to a better network for bicycle commuting

By Blake Johnson

exercise, commuting, air or mental health, Edmontonians love to bicycle. It's not a new fascination, as bicycles have been part of the urban landscape here since the late 1800s. More than a century later, Edmonton has one of the best bicycle trail systems in the world, cherished Ribbon of Green.

While recreational bicycling is well served, the City of Edmonton is embarking on an ambitious fouryear plan to make Edmonton a safer and better urban transportation network for bicycle commuting. City Council recently committed \$100 million to the Edmonton Bicycle Plan. Now, city planners are prioritizing which projects are going to be funded. Most of the funding will go towards creating bicycle-only lanes.

Thirty years ago, bicycle projects needed the "four Es" to be successful: engineering (paths, roads, curbs, bridges, bicycle

Thether for recreation, parking); enforcement (bylaws, tickets for riding without legally required gear or on a no-bicycling path); education (maps, online info, trail wayfinding signage, community education); and enthusiasm (getting the message out in a way that citizens will embrace the change and include more bicycling in their daily lives).

> The current bicycle plan has expanded those four goals to nine: education, encouragement, laws and policies, maintenance, lighting, wayfinding, bike-share, integration with transit and end-oftrip facilities.

> Perhaps the most important of those goals for most Edmontonians will be end-of-trip parking facilities. In Europe and Asia, there are dozens of examples of innovative massparking for bicycle commuters. In Edmonton, there are very few places where you can park your bicycle without fear of theft. Many downtown towers have bicycle parking for their tenants, and some

have lockers and showers. If the City wants people to use the bicycle lanes, then careful thought will have to go into some bicycle parking at downtown City parkades (City Hall, library) and at City facilities. They don't need showers, but safe and secure parking is a must.

Many municipalities looking to bicycle lockers so people can park their bicycles without worrying about theft or vandalism. Vancouver is using such lockers to help integrate bicycle commuters with their light-rail transit. In Edmonton, NAIT is currently the only place with lockers. Edmonton has a bylaw indicating that all new buildings must provide space for bicycle parking.

If the City is going to have success in getting citizens to continue to buy into the bicycle plan, all the departments that touch the bicycle file are going to need to spend the money wisely. The smooth integration of all parts is a must. All cyclists should feel that



Edmonton cycling style circa 1990. The city has one of the best recreational trail systems in the world, but could do a lot more to make it inviting for commuters. Credit Blake

something positive is happening in their community, starting with better safety and ending with a place to park.





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Update from Parliament

Federal budget on its way; investigations launched into foreign interference in elections

By Matt Jeneroux, Member of Parliament for Edmonton Riverbend



ith the current Parliamentary session well underway, I wanted to provide an update on what has been happening in Ottawa and what can be expected as we move into Spring.

Since we returned in late January, my colleagues and I have been busy holding our government to account in matters such as public safety, mental health and provincial healthcare supports, all in the lead up to

Federal Budget 2023.

Budget consultations closed on February 10 and now Members of Parliament continue to debate and weigh in on the final budget, which will be presented later this Spring. Even though the formal consultations have ended, please do not hesitate to provide your thoughts to our office as I always take the opportunity to raise issues pertinent to our community as many times as I can.

In my role as Shadow Minister of Supply Chains, I continue to meet with a variety of stakeholders who have thoughts on how to improve Canada's supply chain network. Industry has faced setbacks over these past eight years under our current government, with the independent Supply Chain Taskforce indicating that "Canada's transportation supply chain is nearing

its breaking point." Furthermore, according to the latest Canadian Survey on Business Conditions Report, almost a quarter of Canadian businesses continue to struggle in getting the goods they need to run operations.

Despite these concerns, I continue to be pleased to hear positive ideas and suggestions from industry stakeholders on finding solutions.

Finally, at the time of writing this, a major concern that my colleagues and I are demanding answers on has been the perceived interference by the Chinese Communist Party in our federal elections. Multiple media reports reveal that CSIS intelligence intercepted Communist Party officials from the People's Republic of China confirming they actively interfered with multiple campaign races in 2021. Furthermore, investigations are already underway into allegations of interference in the 2019 election campaign.

Elections are fundamental to Canada's democratic process, and my colleagues and I will continue to press the government in these coming weeks and months to address this attack on the rights of voters and Canada's democratic institutions.

Of course, as always if you have any comments about what's happening in federal politics, I'd be more than happy to discuss. Please contact my office at Matt.Jeneroux.C1@parl.gc.ca. We would be pleased to assist you on these or any other federal matters.

Terwillegar Drive Expansion Continues

At the same time, Council asks City Administration to find millions in savings

By Tim Cartmell, Councillor, Ward pihêsiwin



appy Spring Everyone! I think we are all looking forward to warmer weather and longer days. Following are a few updates for you.

Terwillegar Drive Work continues on the Terwillegar Drive project, with construction of Phase 1 continuing this spring and construction of Phase 2 starting this year.

While costs for the overall project were split more or less evenly between the City of Edmonton and the province, specific funding arrangements put Phase 2 with the City and Phase 3 with the province. City Council recently approved \$40 million of increased funding for Phase 2, and I am thankful for the support of my Council colleagues on this.

Crews will continue to widen Terwillegar Drive south to Anthony Henday Drive, with most of the work wrapping up this summer. At the north end, work will start on the Whitemud-Terwillegar interchange, the

pedestrian bridge across Whitemud Drive, and replacement of the Rainbow Valley bridges.

There will be in-person engagement opportunities later this spring. Please watch for specific dates and I will see you there!

OP 12 During City budget deliberations last December, Council directed City Administration to identify \$60 million of savings in 2023 and a further \$240 million in the 2024-2026 budgets. This work is referred to as "OP 12", as this was the 12th amending motion to the Operating Budget (we need a better title).

Administration has already started this work, and will continue to report monthly on progress. Part of the early work is defining what is a core service, what services the City is legally required to provide, and what services are not legally required but are pragmatically essential.

If you have any suggestions on City services— what we need less of, what we need more of, how we can be more efficient – I would love to hear them. Please contact my office on this or any other City-related matter at tim.cartmell@edmonton.ca.

Stay Safe!

A working smoke alarm is your first line of defence if there is a fire in your home

By Krista Rivet, Communications Advisor, City of Edmonton

n Sunday, March 12 we all sprung ahead. Did you remember to check your home smoke alarms when you changed your clocks? It's a good habit to get into; check the alarms twice a year, when we spring forward and when we fall back. A working smoke alarm is your first line of defence if there is a fire in your home.

Here are some things to remember:

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area.
- When installing smoke alarms, always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Test smoke alarms every month by pushing and holding the test button.
- Replace smoke alarm batteries at least once a at edmonton.ca (search for "smoke alarms").

year (or each time you change your clocks).

- Test both smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms monthly to ensure they are working properly.
- Replace batteries at least once a year; never remove the batteries or disable alarms.
- Check the "replace by" date, as smoke alarms have a lifespan and need to be replaced when expired. This is usually about 10 years.
- Dust smoke alarms regularly to help them receive the best signal.
- Interconnected alarms are recommended so everyone in the building has the best chance of early detection and escape.

For more information read our stay safe sheet at edmonton.ca (search for "smoke alarms").

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