

ALBERTA Street News

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Kerby Centre's Acting Business Development Director Danielle Murphy seated at her desk at the Kerby Centre.
Photo by John Zapanis

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ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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War boy

By Joanne Benger

John was six when Dad went to war. It was a time of secrets. Careless Talk Costs Lives, Loose Lips Sink Ships, Careless Talk Costs, Hitler is Listening, All he knew was that dad was with the Royal Engineers and carried a Bren gun. Dad would be gone a long time. Then, he's come home on leave and they'd have fun before he left again, loaded down with the cheap coffee that wasn't on ration.

John and his friends played war games and he liked action songs like this: Whistle while you work, Mussolini is a twerp; Hitler's barmy so's his army, Rub em in the dirt. Just whistle while you work, Mussolini bought a shirt, Hitler wore it, Churchill tore it Rub em in the dirt.,

His mum still loved to dance. She's hike up her skirts and dance as they sang, Knees up, Mother Brown." He liked the Hokey Pokey but his favourite was Boopsie Daisy when they bumped bums.

John carried a gas mask everywhere and knew he had to go into a shelter when the sirens went. Bombs whistled and shrapnel fell adding to his shrapnel collection. They had ration books and Mom talked about austerity cooking and Mend and Make Do. All it meant was they no longer got new clothes and they ate a lot of prunes. Grandad had a Victory Garden so they ate lots of vegetables, apples and plums, too. Calm and Carry On was the rule of the day.

The policeman and the fireman had gone off to war so old men came out of retirement to do their jobs and serve the Home Guard. John and his friends liked to help them.

Then the Americans and Canadian soldiers came to England. The boys would ask, Any gum chum, and the soldiers gave them gum and chocolate bars. Kilroy Was Here signs came on every toilet wall. Kilroy did not like the war shortages and he would say things like, Wot no char!. Char was tea.

Finally VE Day came and there was a big street party. Then the Dads came home. John's Dad never talked about the war and never said where he had been or what he had done. He just wanted to get back to work and live they they used to. He never even joined the Legion. When Dad died, John inherited a chest full of medals and a two page summary of where Dad had been – Belgium, Italy, France and Germany. He listed his trips and promotions as he went from Private to Lance Corporal to Corporal and named his foreign medals. He also included a list of friends who had died in battle and that summed up the war hero.

Some Holiday Riddles

By Joanne Benger

Q. What do you call a row of people waiting for a holiday drink? A. A punch line.

Q. Where do Santa and the elves keep their money? A. In snow banks.

Q. What kind of Christmas trees do beavers and otters like? A. Fur (fir) trees.

Q. What is a limousine drivers favourite Christmas tree? A. A show-fir (chauffeur).

Q. Why did the grocer need so many Christmas stockings? A. He was stocking his shelves.

Q. How did Santa Claus compliment the comedian? A. He said "You slay me."

Q. What two crimes was Santa accused of? A. A Christmas stalking and slaying. (Stocking and sleighing.)

Q. How did the judge punish the Christmas stockings? A. They were sentenced to hang.

Q. What do you call a fear of Santa Claus? A. Claustropia.

Q. With what do you cut Christmas trees? A. Cranberry saws (sauce) or hard saws (sauce).

Q. What would you get if you crossed Santa with a cat? A. A cat with Santa Claws.

Q. Why is a broken drum such a good present? A. You can't beat it.

Q. How do Christmas ribbons show respect? A. They take a bow.

Q. Why did the Wise Men arrive twelve days after Christmas? A. They were wisely waiting until all the leftovers were eaten.

Q. Why do calendars only last a year? A. Their days are numbered.

Q. Why did the lady write her New Year's resolutions on china plates? A. So they would be easier to break.

Q. Who is the most popular woman at the end of the year? A. New Year's Eve.

Remembering and Being Thankful

By Joanne Benger

November was named for the novem, nine, because it was the Roman's ninth month. November is Diabetes month, National Epilepsy Month, National Literacy Month and Celebrate Empty Nest Month. It is our third cold brrr month. Remember all the seasons are nice for eating chicken with rice. Traditionally ships didn't sail in the winter months and the saying was, "November take flail, let no ships sail." Fat squirrels in November mean a bad winter is coming.

November 1 is All Saints Day when we celebrate the pure of heart who entered heaven and Nov. 2 is All Souls Day when we remember all the other dear departed. In different countries both days are the Day of the Dead when people reconnect with ancestors and those who have passed on. They believe that if you don't remember them, you, too, will be forgotten when you die.

November 1 is when the MADD campaign begins. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers want to keep us safe during the coming holiday season.

November 3 is Sandwich Day and November 1 National Candy Day. Enjoy. November 5 is National Firewood Day when pioneers made sure they had enough firewood for the coming winter. November 5 is also Sadie Hawkins Day, the one day of the year when girls could ask for a dance or date or even propose in pre-liberation times. November 5 is Guy Fawkes Day that celebrates one of the most famous failures in England, Guy Fawkes. His gunpowder plot was revealed in an anonymous letter and he and his fellow conspirators were tortured, tried and executed. Then parliament decided November 5 should be yearly holiday with bells rung, cannons fired and effigies of Guy Fawkes burned on bonfires. They even search the Houses of Parliament on this day to make sure there are no conspirators or gun powder hidden away.

November 6 Daylight Savings Time ends. We gain an hour of sleep as we go back to Mountain Standard Time.

November 8 is the Birthday of Guru Nanak Dav Ji, a Sikh Remembrance Day when Sikhs remember the birthday of their first Guru, the founder of their religion.

November 8 is Full Moon the Hunting or Indian Summer Moon. November 10 is St. Martin's Day also known as Old November or Hollantine. "Winter is on its way on St. Martin's Day."

November 11 is Remembrance Day. Wear a poppy on the left side over your heart The red poppy is the symbol of remembrance not just of those who died in WW1 but also of all who have given their lives for our freedom in conflicts before and since then. No Stone Left Alone assures that all veterans graves are honoured with a poppy on this date. November 13, the first Sunday after Remembrance Day, is celebrated as Remembrance Sunday in England. November 13 is also World Kindness Day.

November 14 is National Pickle day and National Diabetes Day as well as Young Readers Day. November 15 is National Bundt Pan Day as well as National Philanthropy Day and November 17 is World Peace Day. November 20 is Universal Children's Day. Paula Margaret Powers wrote, 'Touch the child. Hug away the hurt. Wipe away that tear. Let the child always know that you are there to care.'

November 23 is the first day of winter in the Julian calendar. It is also National Adoption Day and St. Clement's Day. He is the patron saint of blacksmiths and on this day chains binding demons in the underworld are checked and strengthened.

November 24 is American Thanksgiving Day which most of us celebrate thanks to TV and the internet. It is followed by Black Friday, when we shop until we drop and stores sell so much they are no longer in the red. Then comes Cyber Monday when we shop on the internet with its fantastic holiday offers. At this point a quarter of all Canadians have overspent and blown their budget. Cyber Monday is followed by Giving Tuesday when thankful people give back by donating to charities and none profits. Happy U.S. Thanksgiving to all.

November 26 is Holodomor a National Memorial Day. Light a candle.

November 27 is the first Sunday of Advent. The season of Advent includes the four Sundays before Christmas. Buy or make an advent calendar and cross off the days.

November 28 is National French Toast Day as well as Red Planet Day. Mars has two moons, its days are 25 earth hours long and its year is 1.9 earth years. The surface temperature ranges from a low of -168 to a high of 27 C.

November 29 is National Cat Day as well as Square Dance Day.



31st Annual CIBC Run for the Cure raises \$597,742 for breast cancer programs services and research

Story and photo by John Zapantis

This October, as in past years, is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, where the Canadian Cancer Society reminds Calgary's public to donate generously in the fight to defeat breast cancer.

This year's campaign, as in the previous 31 years, welcomed the traditional 31st annual CIBC Run for the Cure that took a back seat to two previous virtual running and walking fund raising event's that were held and downsized for the runners and walkers safety during the COVID-19 Pandemic,. This virtual CIBC Run for the Cure was held in both 2020 and 2021.

This year's 31st annual Run for the Cure that helps to raise money for breast cancer and other forms of cancer was hosted and held by the Canadian Cancer Society at South Centre Mall in Calgary. The annual event was held on Sunday October 2nd, at 9 a.m.

The event consisted of a 1 kilometre and 5 kilometre run and walk that was scheduled to start at 9 a.m., with the starter's line in the North end parking lot of South Centre Mall, heading towards 109 Avenue, southeast to Bonaventure Drive Southeast and all the way back to the finish line at South Centre Mall.



Harvey the Hound, a mascot, was out greeting the walkers during the 31st Annual CIBC Run for the Cure.

Prior to the start of the run, female and male breast cancer survivors, dressed in their traditional pink shirts symbolizing that they are breast cancer survivors, along with family, friends and other walk participants, were all gathered in front of a stage listening attentively to an array of keynote speakers, who spoke passionately, as well as other breast cancer survivors, who spoke emotionally, about their personal struggles, while living with breast cancer.

Canadian Cancer Society volunteer and Master of Ceremonies, Arteen Rafiei, gave his opening remarks by first introducing Calgary Stampede Mascot Harry the Horse, who is notable for making public appearances at various public events in Calgary.

Harry, known for his typical humorous gestures, managed to get the audiences laughing while warming them up in good spirits with his Ya Hoo cue cards, just prior to having the first keynote speakers come onto the stage to deliver their greetings and presentations on breast cancer issues.

Prior to the keynote speakers arriving on stage to give their insights and stories on Breast Cancer, Indigenous elder Gerald Sitting Eagle, representing the Siksika First Nations, gave his presentation on the residential school system and the cultural abuse and genocide many Indigenous children suffered and what Truth and Reconciliation means to the oral practices of the Black Foot Confederacy.

The elder also drove the message home morally about the powers of the Creator and how praying to the Creator has inevitably helped to miraculously cure Sitting Eagle's wife's cancerous tumour.

Sitting Eagle ended his presentation with an opening prayer, spoken in his Blackfoot language, while blessing this fundraising event and all participants involved.

Right after the prayer ceremony's completion, the opening remarks on stage followed.

Three keynote speakers gave their opening remarks, each speaking passionately, on an array of Breast Cancer topics, ranging from close loved ones, whose lives were tragically taken, to others giving their statistics on the killer disease to even one survivor, speaking on their journey and struggles in surviving breast cancer.

The speakers included, Canadian Cancer Society Spokes Person, Manager Donor Relations and Stewardship Michell Rubin, CIBC Marketing Vice President for Calgary, Sean Hopkins and Hope Participant and Breast Cancer Survivor Jennifer Dell.

The third keynote speaker, breast cancer survivor Jennifer Dell, was the highlight of the event. She spoke passionately and at times emotionally, about her struggles and

successful recovery from breast cancer.

The recovering breast cancer survivor is a married woman with three children, with an eight year old son and two daughters ages five and three. She was diagnosed with her two positive stage B grade three ductal carcinoma breast cancer on January 2021.

Despite surviving this disease, at times a very painful process, she's experienced many radiation treatments and corrective surgeries that have encouraged a positive outlook about how she feels about the support she has received from her family, friends, medical practice and various members and volunteers at the Tom Baker Cancer Centre and The Canadian Cancer Society.

During one aspect of her heartfelt speech, she poured out her sincere appreciation for the many people who played a key role in helping her road to recovery. Dell said, "I owe a big thank you to my husband and my mom, my mother-in-law, my incredible family and friends and all the healthcare workers at The Tom Baker Cancer Centre. Truly, they are special people. I'm blessed with incredible care. Going through cancer is a very hard battle, a fight worth fighting. For I'm so thankful for them supporting me. I have a huge army cheering me on. It was difficult during COVID-19 in that people had to support us in creative ways."

"Although this journey was incredibly hard, truly the prayers from my husband, family and friends were light in the darkness every step of the way. I'm so thankful. I'm committed to supporting others. I found it very helpful with my personal healing journey to share my story. My mission now is to help advocate for early detection and prevention."

"I became part of the CIBC Run for the Cure last year and was asked to be a spokes person this year. It was difficult last year as the run was held virtually because of COVID. As a group we decided to get together last year and put on our walk. We named ourselves The Breasties We proudly raised over \$20,000 dollars to donate and give back."

"Those ladies made a huge impression on my life. As sad as it was to be friends to connect in our journey, I couldn't imagine my life without them. I've come to realize, we need others love and support, more now than ever. The mental impact of all of this is very hard if you are struggling in any way. Please reach out and tell someone. Both of you have gone through this journey and you are on the other side. You are my hero. As I know how hard this fight is. Thank you for being here today in supporting to continue to raise awareness to and money for breast cancer. I have seen for myself where the

Remaining calm helped me de-escalate a volatile situation

By John Zapantis

I witnessed a man holding a brown, six foot wooden pole, while getting ready to whack a man over the head with it, while that other man was on the cell phone talking to the Calgary Police Service feeling that his life was being threatened.

When any kind of conflict arises near me, it's only my duty as a law abiding citizen to intervene and get between the two disputing men in order to prevent someone from getting hurt badly, or even killed.

That's what I did while witnessing this drama unfold from my window view at a Tim Horton's Restaurant in Calgary's Westbrook area.

When I got up from my restaurant table to assist in the situation, I told a party of three men seated at an adjacent table, who noticed me getting up from my table, that I was going to buy this angry man, holding up that six foot long brown wooden pole, a Tim Hortons coffee, without revealing to them my intent in using this kind gesture as a way of de-escalating this dangerous situation from going forwards.

One of the three men at that adjacent table cautioned me arrogantly and said, "Don't go out there, when the cops arrive they'll beat you up, too."

I immediately replied in a calm tone, "You don't know what I know," as I continued to calmly and slowly walk out the side door of Tim Hortons.

The man on the cell phone talking to the police, could be heard saying loudly, "He's really close into my face."

The enraged man holding the brown six foot long wooden pole in a threatening position like he was ready to slam it over the other man's head, angrily said, "I'm not even close enough to your face, quit lying."

I then timed it so that I could get my words in. I said, "Hey buddy, come inside with me. I'll buy you a coffee. What size coffee do you

drink and what do you take in your coffee?"

He immediately changed from night to day by quickly putting down that threatening pole, bringing it down to his side and calmed down and said, "One medium coffee, three creams and six sugars."

We both went back inside the restaurant. I then told the guy to remain calm. Then I suggested that he wait for me at a table and that I'd bring him his coffee.

The three guys that were seated right behind me, one of whom had warned me not to go outside earlier, were now joined by that guy outside, who had the run in with the guy that I was now treating to a coffee.

When it was my turn to be served, I grabbed my coffee and brought it quickly to that man awaiting me at the table.

While I sat to join him, you could hear all of the guys at the adjacent table intimidating the guy sitting with me, using overtones about how crazy his behaviour was, as I said in a quiet tone, "Don't react to anything that their saying about you. They want you to lose it."

I then told him as an assurance, "Don't worry. Stay put. When the cops arrive, I'll vouch for you."

I told him I was staying at the Mustard SEED homeless shelter in Calgary's Southeast industrial area. I assured him that I could understand his situation and that we were in the same boat together.

He then took a quick sip of his coffee, thanking me for my concerns and got up quickly, leaving the restaurant, obviously making his escape to stay steps a head of the police, who were notified earlier of this incident.

When I looked over my shoulder and out that window, he must have made a running dash in a different direction, because at that point he was nowhere to be seen.

I was happy and relieved by this positive outcome. No one got hurt. This was especially for the homeless man, who had probably intentionally left his shopping cart behind, so that he could easily elude capture from the police that were called to rush to the scene.

I can say under these circumstances that I got the personal satisfaction of seeing the disappointed looks on the faces of those men who saw him get away.

As for that man seated among them that warned me earlier about this so called threatening homeless man and him telling me that if I got involved the police out there would beat me up to, I noticed a baffled look in his eyes. I had made him realize that there are still good people out there that care about those forgotten homeless and I'm one of them!

money for research is going to advanced treatments. It's also so important to have support in such a journey as this."

Other keynote speakers, who gave a very brief greeting to the audience included, Calgary Stampede Princess, Jenna Peters. Right after the opening remarks were completed, member of the fitness club called Fit 2 Crush, came unto the stage, introducing themselves while volunteering to conduct a physical warm-up accompanied by the Latino band Aquatina, who provided background music in helping to physically warm up the run and walk participants, just before they set off for their 1 kilometre and 5 kilometre run and walk, scheduled for 9 a.m.

When the warm-up was completed, runners and walkers lined up at the starter's line. The runners were first to leave out the starter's gate, followed by walkers, who all joined along for their 1 kilometre and 5 kilometre run and walk, from the parking lot of South Centre Mall, towards 109 Avenue Southeast all the way to Bonaventure Drive Southeast and then back towards the finish line at South Centre Mall.

The event was again a huge success, thanks to its many runners and walkers, who also raised pledges along with its many local business sponsors, title sponsors The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) and main sponsor and host, The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) and

donors, who all amassed as one alliance along with that pink army of breast cancer survivors.

This army of compassionate souls is determined to keep the spirits alive and one day hopefully find a cure to defeat this enemy called breast cancer.

Altogether, 2,454 participants, who either ran or walked the talk, helped in raising \$597,742 dollars. Money in pledges raised will go to the Canadian Cancer Society's programs, services and research in helping to one day find a complete cure for breast cancer and other forms of cancer.

Freedom

By Timothy Wild

Even though I don't like their brand (and have never selected them as an electoral consumer), I must admit that the Liberal Party of Canada is a formidable enterprise. They have been able to corner the political market by appearing to be progressive and inclusive while in opposition and during election campaigns, and then acting in a decidedly more conservative manner in office (in so doing, often going against their very own campaign promises). Additionally, building upon the resilient, dangerous, and oddly exclusionary myth that "we are all middle class", the Liberals have developed and implemented policies that are certainly not in the political and economic interests of the working class.

However, the Liberals do occasionally come up with solid public policy. Typically, the big Liberal social programs have been motivated more by the party's minority parliamentary position and its continued appetite for power rather than a genuine desire for transformative policy. Nevertheless, public pensions and, more lately, childcare, and dental support for lower-income families have undoubtedly increased the wellbeing of Canadians on the margins. Also, perhaps more by accident than design, the CERB was a much-needed initiative that maintained a measure of aggregate demand during the Pandemic. The Liberals can get things right sometimes. But, they remain, at root, a hopelessly conservative party and are genetically unable to promote the social democracy so necessary for authentic participation, connectivity, and inclusion. Still, they are playing by the rules of the political market.

And that is why I was so unnerved by the presence of a couple of vehicles parked close to my home. A truck and a sub-compact car were both adorned with Canadian flags and "F*CK Trudeau" decals. The truck also had a manifesto pasted to its tailgate with questionable opinions regarding constitutional freedom and the Charter of Rights. I presume they were vocalizing positions like those of the truck convoys that held up border traffic in southern Alberta and created a public annoyance for ordinary folk in Ottawa.

When the convoys were in the inertia of full force, I must admit that I was intimidated by the raw power of the protestors and held my opinions closer to me than usual due to a very real fear of physical violence. So much for the "freedom" these people were advocating for!

My experience of their concept of freedom was vitriol, power, and intimidation. It seemed to be advocacy for the freedom of the powerful at the expense of weaker folks.

Then, to compound this, upon winning the leadership of the United Conservative Party, longtime political performance artist, Danielle Smith, indicated that she would fight the actions of the Federal Government that were having an impact on the freedom and prosperity of Albertans. These include issues such as pensions, policing, and the energy sector. I will not get into her inexplicable and risible comments about the horrors faced by the unvaccinated, nor will I consider the ecology and economics of pipelines, but all of this has got me thinking about "freedom" and what it means in practical terms.

Basically, I think we are losing a collective sense of what the word means and, more importantly, what it suggests for social living. I believe that this word is flung around too gratuitously, which is dangerous given the importance of actual practice. I wonder if a simple and undefined notion of "freedom" is missing the point? Are we talking about the same thing? Is Putin's regional use of the concept to promote his thirst for recreating the ancient Kingdom of Holy Rus the same as Indigenous Peoples asking for freedom to access clean water? Is the quest for freedom a zero-sum game, or is it a positively evolving construct that is also guided by notions of equity, natural justice, and social well-being?

The protestors seem to view freedom as simply the absence of a negative countervailing force. What that force is I am not actually sure: Science? Democracy? Community? Whereas I believe freedom needs to be implemented in a more positive sense and ensure that supports are given to help people enjoy and further the social, economic, cultural, and political rights and freedoms of citizenship. It also must be implemented, maintained, and enhanced with some measure of democratic oversight. (As an aside, this is why proportional representation is so needed). Without this oversight, freedom will be simply an arena wherein the strong dominate the weaker members of society. Not really freedom for many of us; more of a Mad Max world where people like me end up tied to the front of a semi-truck, with my glasses broken. As noted by Thomas Hobbes, without limits on individual freedom, life will be nasty, brutish, and short for most of us.

That is not to say that attention to freedom is unimportant. It is central to social wellbeing. However, as mentioned, these freedoms must be balanced between "freedom from" and "freedom to". For example,

I know that we have Landlord and Tenant legislation that provides for the "rights" of renters in cases of unlawful eviction. However, people need the financial wherewithal to be able to go to the courts to secure those rights. Many low-income people do not have that access. Similarly, although there is legislation related to constructive dismissal and unjust termination, not everyone can get a lawyer to enforce those rights. These so-called legal rights then are largely empty when it comes to the day-to-day experience of the working class. Do these rights essentially ensure freedom? I think not.

Ultimately, this points to the fundamental difference between a liberal democracy and a social democracy. I would argue that a liberal democracy provides a framework of legality while a social democracy promotes a means of participation. If people are to be truly free, they need supports to attain and animate that freedom; a freedom that is rooted in participation in all forms. Certainly, they need to be free from state brutality and victimization, but they also need to be free from want, ignorance and disease. These freedoms, as articulated by Lord Beveridge, were the foundation of the post-War British Welfare State which, in my opinion, was the most progressive and inclusive political ordering of society. These positive freedoms were also subsequently reflected in the visionary work of Leonard Marsh, and other Fabians, that lead to a more caring polity in Canada. The state acted to ensure individual freedom through a measure of collective provision.

Freedom should be the result of an ongoing discussion to balance rights and responsibilities in a social setting. How do we ensure that both the individual and the common good are animated? That is the stuff of politics! But it is the politics of belonging that is aggregated and articulated in the workplace, schools, and community hubs in addition to the more limited space of periodic electoral campaigns. I believe we have had our Hayekian fun; but now we need to return to the true freedom associated with the social democratic welfare state, warts and all. Freedom is simply too important to leave to the strong or to the vagaries of the unfettered market. the social democratic welfare state, warts and all. Freedom is simply too important to leave to the strong or to the vagaries of the unfettered market.

The Consumer Christmas

By Joanne Benger

It's the break your budget holiday
Take it now or put it on lay-away.
Spend, spend, and over spend.
Buy it on line and send, send.
Cash, cash and cash is the key
To give with generosity.
.Charge and charge some more
Buy everything in the store.
Don't be a Scrooge or miser,
Or even a drab economzer.
We can't buy too much stuff.
No one stops at just enough.
Help the poor folk be caring,
Love all strangers by sharing.
Share good cheer and good will,
Tapping at the checkout till.
This year end spending bout
Leaves credit all massed out.
All savings have been spent,
Our nest eggs up and went.
Budgets gone, checks bounced.
Merry Xmas, they announced.
Merry Xmas to you and you.
Don't forget the payments due.
With all obligations met
It's just four years of debt.

Post Pandemic Christmas

By Joanne Benger

Look out, wallet. My pandemic pent up savings are about to be spent. I can't blame the pandemic. I can't stay home this year. It's time to emerge and socialize again even if I don't quite feel ready. I am not sure how well I'll do but I hope to have a normal Christmas without using up all my savings. There might be more supply chain shortages and greater inflation ahead so I must be frugal without becoming a Scrooge.

When it comes to decorating my house, I am among the lucky ones. I have a lot of Christmas decorations cluttering up the basement because I have rarely gotten rid of the old when I bought the new. I call my Christmas tree a memory tree because it is covered in decorations collected throughout my life. I even have a few balls from my childhood tree. Some would consider me a hoarder, but I believe the modern terms that describe my tree are traditional, green and ecological. Unfortunately the entire holiday cannot be stored in the basement and recycled.

There's the new Christmas outfit so I can make a grand entrance. There are the pandemic bulges to camouflage so I'll appear svelte and slim again. Yet it must have enough stretch to handle my post dinner figure so I can make a dignified exit. It should look like it came from an expensive shoppe even if I get it at the consignment store.

There is the exotic dish to bring to the pot luck. It has to simply shriek, "I am expensive and it took hours to prepare me even if I have bought it ready made on special. I'll remove it from the plastic and place it on a lovely serving bowl, then add some interesting garnishes.

There are the gift bags to buy. The ideal gift costs a dollar and looks like you spent a hundred dollars. I still haven't found it but a girl can hope. Fortunately we have a lot of liquidators these days and they sell the most amazing things.

Yes, my goal this year is a cheap and cheerful Christmas shared with those I love. I want to enjoy very moment. I want to enter 2023 with no regrets.

Are you Being Watched?

By Reality Sets In

After many years of research and listening to George Noory and Art Bell on Coast-to-Coast radio station, I would like readers to draw their own conclusions in an article that I have written up. In 1998 microchip implants were first used by British scientist Kevin Warwick. After implanting himself with the microchip, doors were opened, lights were turned on. Two years later, his implant was removed and held in the science museum in London.

There was a lot of controversy surrounding microchip implants. In 2017 in a laboratory the chips caused cancer in small mice. The stock price for the chips plummeted. In his book Invisible Crime, Michael Fitzburgh Bell, tells a shocking tale of how he was abducted, tortured, and surgically implanted by a criminal organization. He led a successful life as a culinary chef; he fought an uphill battle with doctors, lawyers, police, CIA, and FBI agents. His every move was being tracked. He claimed they

could even read his mind. Michael calls what was done to him "party of mind control operation MK-Ultra World War 2 Voice to skull technology". This technology is used on victims without their consent or knowledge. Michael's implant was developed by a scientist named Sharp.

Recently, within the past two years, microchip implants have come to the forefront of the news and people are getting them done in Sweden. The microchip implants are linked up to people's cell phones; people can see their vaccination passport, bus ID, and certain financial records. Critics of the microchip implant argue that the microchip implants violate people's privacy and could possibly be used to track them when they don't want to be found, and intellectual property, and could cause cancer.

I would like you to draw your own conclusions on the use of microchip implants, and if you feel you're being watched, you probably are.

Becoming Sober

By Vivian Risby

I got to Detox on September 7 and came to Henwood on September 11. The first day I had nothing to do. Opened my big suitcase,, then my knee popped and now I have to use a walker. I have people I hang out with now. I am sober enough. I am still going to be selling papers at the Farmers' Market. I now have to lose a lot of people who I have been drinking with and be free from booze. This

song called Save Me by Jelly Roll, my sister told me about that song. After that I phoned to get help. I was nervous to leave my beer. How I love the sober life and my friends at the market will see the real me. I came in sober. Now I leave here a junky and a cripple. Why? Getting too much pain medication because of my knee and ankle swelling. I am strong. I quit my pain med. I need to start going to AA. Plus I need a sponsor. I am going to wish for myself with. I don't care because I am number one. I hope people don't judge me. It means a lot me. I miss the

market, to see everybody. I will see you all and be sober now.

We had a crazy day. I was downstairs watching a movie, when the fire alarm went off. Two of my fiends said it was only a fire drill. I said we have to go out and meet at the Muster Point. Some people had a smudge in the gym. We had to stay outside until the fire trucks cleared out the smoke. When I went to the hospital I had to wait eight hours. I got back to Henwood so tired.

We all can quit drinking if we want to be sober. Or die.



From L-R: Jerry Roczowski (President, Alberta Bottle Depot Association), Dave Virk (Manager, Strathcona Bottle Depot), Marlin Schmidt (MLA for Edmonton – Gold Bar), Rahim Jaffer (former MP for Edmonton – Strathcona), and Greg Morrison (Depot customer) at the Strathcona Bottle Depot's Applaud a Depot event,

August 26, 2022.

Applaud a Depot is Back!

By Stephanie Mudryk

On August 26, a group of staff, family, local dignitaries, and their valued customers gathered at the Strathcona Bottle Depot to re-ignite the Applaud a Depot Program after being paused due to Covid since early 2020.

The staff and customers are proud of the commitment made by the Depot to the Strathcona Community, City of Edmonton, and Depot Industry as a whole. There is a strong emphasis and drive in this Depot to support community programs. Organizations the Depot has supported have included the Canadian Mental Health Association, Cans for Kids, Ronald McDonald House Charities Alberta, and the Canadian Health and Therapy Society, and many others.

The recognition was originally made by the Depot's loyal customer of over 25 years, Greg, who submitted an Applaud, saying: "I have been using the Strathcona Bottle Depot for years... My son loves to 'work' in the back and help the staff sort. They let him, and he loves it."

In addition to the many Applauds submitted by customers, the Strathcona Bottle Depot has also been nominated for the Trevor Nickel Service Excellence Award for the past two years. Depots are nominated by the public and recognized for their efforts in providing outstanding customer experience, communication and openness, accessibility, and value for time.

Gold Bar's MLA Marlin Schmidt congratulated the Depot's staff on receiving the Applaud a Depot recognition. Depot owner and manager, Dave Virk, shared many kind words and appreciation during the lunch event.

Power of Attorney ended

By Linda Dumont

72 year old Grace was happy living in a seniors apartment complex where she could do her own cooking and entertain friends. Then she got sick and was hospitalized for three months. While she was ill, her daughter got power of attorney and took over her mother's life. She packed up the apartment and had her moved into a nursing home where she had single room and ate in a dining area at the end of the hall. Grace had to be accompanied by someone to leave the building. At first she was still so depressed she thought her life was over, but as she recovered, she wanted to do things again. Then she discovered that the home was charging \$2200 a month! Her savings were rapidly dwindling. She told her

daughter she wanted to move but her daughter refused to give permission. Grace was stuck. She could do nothing without her daughter's approval.

But she went ahead and found a cheaper place to live, sharing a house with two friends for \$500 a month. She then went to see her family doctor and he did an evaluation of her ability to manage her own life. He even called one of her friends to discuss whether she was capable of handling her own affairs. As a result the power of attorney was dropped. Grace is now free.

The only downside is that her daughter was so angry that she has dropped all contact with Grace. She told her not to call or text again.

RECIPE

Easy Cheesecake

Whip together one package of Philadelphia cream cheese and a half container of cool whip with 1/3 cup of sugar and a teaspoon of lemon juice.

Put in a graham cracker crust. Top with cherry pie filling or a make a blueberry topping.

Blueberry topping

Two cups blueberries, 1/2 cup sugar, one package Certo.

Combine berries and sugar and cook over medium heat until the mixture comes to a boil. Reduce heat and add Certo.

Refrigerate, then serve.

Winding Down the Year

By Joanne Benger

December is here. The year is winding down in style with our festive egg nog season. To the Anglo Saxons it was the Month Before Yule but the more modern Irish called it Christmas Month. It is named discern, ten because it was the Roman's tenth month. Weather wise, you can see how 2023 will fare if you note the weather on each of the twelve days of Christmas, beginning at Christmas and ending at Epiphany. The first day of Christmas foretells January weather and so on. December is surprisingly National Women's Volleyball Month.

December 1 is World Aids Day as well as Eat a Red Apple Day. When eating that apple be sure to clean it first. Otherwise the Devil will appear as superstition says.

December 2 is Fritters Day and if it snows today it will snow for forty days.

December 4 is National Cookie Day so begin your Christmas baking. Remember it is unlucky to count cookies as you remove them from the pan.

December 5 is International Volunteers Day and St. Nicholas Eve.

December 6 is National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Be kind to women like St. Nicholas was. When four poor sisters couldn't get married because they had no dowry, he threw three gold coins down their chimney.

December 7 is Full Moon which is known as the Long Night or Dropping Horns Moon. It is also Pearl Harbour Remembrance Day when we think of all the sad Christmases that year, 1941.

December 8 is Buddhist Bodhi Day, Rohatso.

December 8 is also National Brownie Day and the day they burn the devil in Guatemala to chase away evil spirits for the coming year.

December 9, the second Friday in December, is Ugly Sweater Day. Some people will continue to dress Christmassy until the season is over.

December 10 is Human Rights Day. Spread peace and good will to all. December 12 is Poinsettia Day. It was named after Joel R. Poinsett (1779 to 1851) of South Carolina. December 13 is Cocoa Day as well as Little Yule, St. Lucy's Day.

December 14 is Monkey Day. Monkey is slang for \$500 as well as mortgage, the monkey with the long tail. December 15 is Cat Herder's Day and December 16 is Barbie Backlash Day. Hug an ugly doll today.

December 17 is Wright Brothers Day. Make and fly a paper airplane in their honour.

December 18 is the first day of the Jewish Hanukkah, which lasts for eight days. Light a menorah candle.

December 19 is St. Nicholas Day on the old calendar. Ukrainian children get their gifts today.

December 20 is the Odinst Midwinter Festival. Dreams tonight will tell you what to expect in the new year. It is also St. Thomas Eve when single girls cut an apple in half to see their future. If there are an even number of seeds they will marry soon. An odd number indicates marriage in the future, but if they should accidentally cut a seed there is no husband ever.

December 21 is the Winter Solstice, our shortest day of the

year. For Aboriginals this solstice is New Years Day and they celebrate with a sun dance.

December 25 is Christmas Day, the birthday of Jesus when children wake up to presents from Santa. Christmas is a time of generosity and gentleness when we share all we have. There is a spirit of peace and good will and everyone says Merry Christmas.

December 26 is Boxing Day, the last day of Hanukkah, and the first day of Kwanzaa.

December 28 is Holy Innocents or Bairns Day.. the unluckiest day of the year. Do not begin anything new today.

December 19 is Tic-Tc-Toe Day and December 30 is Bacon Day. If you bacon curls while being fried in the pan, a new love is sure to turn up.

December 31 is New Years Eve. At Hindu and Shintu temples 108 peals of bells are rung to drive away evil before the new year begins. It is the Scottish Hogmanay and they promise a lucky year ahead if your first visitor of 2023, your first footer, is a dark man with gifts of coal, bread, salt and money. To start 2023 right be sure to wear something new and remember that what you do on New Years Day is what you will be doing throughout the new year. And I wish a Happy New year to one and all. May all your dreams some true in 2023.

Mary's Twelve Days of Christmas

By Joanne Benger

On the first day of Christmas I bought one frozen turkey on special.

On the second day of Christmas I attended two concerts.

On the third day of Christmas I donated to three charities.

On the fourth day of Christmas I found four presents to regift.

On the fifth day of Christmas I sang five carols.

On the sixth day of Christmas I baked six frozen cookies.

On the seventh day of Christmas I said Merry Christmas seven times.

On the eighth day of Christmas I send eight Christmas greetings.

On the ninth day of Christmas I charged nine bags of stocking stuffers.

On the tenth day of Christmas I charged ten presents.

On the eleventh day of Christmas I charged eleven bottles of wine.

On the twelfth day of Christmas my credit was maxed out.

Mary's New Years Resolutions

I resolve to send thank you's for all my presents even those I hate.

I resolve to apologize for the things I said when the big thing fell on my foot.

I resolve to get physio for my injured foot and join the gym and Weight Watchers.

I resolve to pay for the things I broke when I knocked the Christmas tree over.

I resolve to pay off my credit card debt before next Christmas.

A Bottle of Blueberry Wine

Fiction by Sharon Austin

Nora smiled as she looked at the big yellow star that she had drawn around the sixteenth of November. Only two more days and her son Raymond and his wife Carman would be coming for a visit. He had some business to attend to but he had promised to take her out to supper on Saturday at six o'clock. The last time she had seen him was at his father's funeral five years before. He had come by himself for five days and it had been comforting to spend time with him at such a sad occasion. Together they had reminisced over all the good times and the wonderful memories they shared.

She and Harold had celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary at the church only two months before his passing. Harold had looked so small and frail in his wheelchair but the big happy smile on his face belied his pain. Before the party, Harold had presented her with a small box wrapped in gold paper. She had unwrapped a black velvet box and inside was a string of the most beautiful pearls she had ever seen. The pearls glowed softly like moonlight on still dark water. How happy she had been that night even knowing in her heart that Harold would soon be gone. She had hoped that Raymond would try to visit more often but he lived more than two thousand miles away and had a very busy demanding lifestyle.

"Oh Sparky," Nora said happily as she hugged her little black dog. "I am so excited! I am going to wear my lovely blue dress and my pearls. Maybe we will go to that nice seafood restaurant and I'll have a bowl of chowder and apple pie for dessert." She had taken to talking to Sparky like he was a person as there was never anyone else around. Sparky was very receptive to her moods and he began to dance around her feet in shared joy. During the pandemic, Nora had stopped going to church, choosing instead to listen to her favourite preacher on television. Now, she only went out every two weeks when she took the taxi to the mall to get groceries.

Today, she was making a special trip to the city market to buy a gift for Raymond and Carman. She knew just what she would get Raymond; a bottle of that fine locally made blueberry wine that he had

loved so much. When he had come home for the funeral, Raymond had bought a bottle of Moonlight Blueberry Wine and found it very satisfying. He even bought extra bottles to take back home. Carman, on the other hand, was a different story. She was from a very rich, large Italian family and she had never wanted for anything. Carman spent more on a pair of fancy designer shoes than most folks paid for a month's rent!

Still, she was a pleasant girl who gushed and fawned over her the few times they were together. At the supper Carman would hug her tightly, kiss her cheek, and tell her how beautiful she looked. Then she would say something like, "This is so wonderful, we really must do this more often. You must come and stay with us for a month or two next summer and we will go shopping and out to the spa. We will have such fun!" Of course, they both knew she did not really mean any of it; it was just flowery empty words floating in the wind. Carman, who was very pretty and plump, did enjoy her sweets. She would buy her a small box of fancy chocolates.

At the market Nora found the blueberry wine but it had almost doubled in price. She would have to cut back on other things but she really wanted to give Raymond a special gift after so long. At the chocolate store Nora picked six of the fanciest chocolates and had them gift wrapped in a tiny gold box. She had just enough money left for dog food for Sparky and a few groceries for herself plus the taxi fare home. Still, Nora was very pleased with her shopping as she placed the gifts on the table where she could admire them until Saturday.

On Saturday Nora was up very early to get ready for the big day. She lay her royal blue dress out on the bed and set her only black dress shoes on the floor. Later, with her hair freshly washed and styled Nora attempted to read the newspaper but she was just too excited. Sparky ran and jumped about the yard with extra vigour as she took him out for his daily walk. Every day Nora and Sparky would greet the mailman with a few friendly words. Today, she told him how happy she was that her son was coming for a visit.

"That's wonderful!" the mailman smiled at her as he dug in his pocket for Sparky's treat. Then, he was off on his rounds thinking it was nice to see the sweet old lady so happy.

At six o'clock Nora was dressed and

waiting at the table, the two gift bags carefully placed in a shopping bag. She had only eaten a light lunch of a bowl of soup and some crackers so she would be hungry for supper. Sparky was fed and sleeping in his blue dog bed by the heater.

At six-thirty Nora decided to have one last cup of tea before Raymond arrived. It felt good to busy her hands with the kettle and the tea instead of just sitting waiting. At seven o'clock, the last of her tea was cold in the cup and Nora had begun to worry. Perhaps Raymond and Carman were in an accident and no one knew to call her, or maybe one of them had fallen ill. At seven-thirty the phone rang; a loud jarring sound in the stillness almost jolting her out of her chair. Relief flooded through her as she heard Raymond's voice.

"Hello Mom," he said. "I'm sorry but we won't be able to make it tonight. Some things come up, a business meeting that I can't get out of, you know what that's like." Behind him she could hear loud music, laughter, and the clink of glasses and she knew he was lying. Disappointment made her slump in her chair but she willed her voice to be cheerful. "That's all right, Raymond. You do what you have to do and we can go tomorrow instead."

"Actually Mom, we are leaving tomorrow morning but next year I promise I'll take you out for two suppers and we'll even buy you a new outfit. I love you mom but I must go now," Raymond said hurriedly.

"I love you son," Nora said to the dial tone as tears slid down her wrinkled cheeks. Sparky came and rubbed himself against her legs knowing she was sad. At length she dried her tears feeling silly.

"I haven't lived 78 years without knowing life is full of disappointments," Nora said to Sparky. "Now you and I are going to have a little party together anyway." Getting two crystal glasses from the china cabinet, Nora opened the bottle of blueberry wine and poured them each a tiny bit. She and Harold had never been drinkers; the only wine they ever tasted was for a toast at someone's wedding. This was a special occasion and she would drink a toast to her son.

Nora affixed Sparky's blue bow tie to his collar and sat him up at the table. He looked so cute that she just had to take his picture as he gazed adoringly at her. Lifting the blueberry wine, Nora took a sip drinking to Raymond's health and happiness. Then she opened the chocolates.

Suddenly, a searing pain ripped through her chest and she crashed onto the floor. The bottle of blueberry wine fell beside her and the wine pooled around her with liquid grace turning the bodice of her blue dress a deep purple. Sparky began to howl, a low haunting sound in the stillness.

Three days later, Raymond got the call. He was at work when they told him his mother had passed away from an apparent heart attack. He was told that she had been drinking and the house reeked of wine. Raymond was stunned; his mother never drank a drop in her life. Arriving at his childhood home, Raymond saw a man sitting on the porch waiting for him.

"Hello," he said, "I'm James the mailman. I was the one who called for a wellness check when I didn't see Nora for two days. I should have called sooner as she never goes anywhere. Do you have Sparky?" he questioned.

"Who is Sparky?" Raymond said

chagrined. He suddenly realized this stranger knew more about his mother than he did.

Together the men went into the house to find the forlorn little dog wearing a blue bow tie resting in his bed. His food and water bowls were both empty. Hearing the mailman's familiar voice Sparky ran to him, his tail wagging. They soon decided that the mailman would take the dog home as Raymond did not want him.

The house still smelled of wine as Raymond sat down at the table. "Why had his mother started drinking," he wondered. "Had she become depressed, or perhaps she was in pain. She always sounded so cheerful when he told her of his grand plans and all the things he had bought. He could have asked her about her life; he should have helped her. He would have given her money if she had ever asked for help.

"Could have, should have, would have; the words swirled around in his head;

three useless phrases that only served to bring remorse.

Then he saw the gift bag sitting on the table. He read the tag: To Raymond, I know how you like this blueberry wine. Love Mom.

Tears pored from his eyes; the wine had been a gift for him and he had chosen to go clubbing with Carman's friends.

"It was Carman's fault!" he told himself but he knew it was not true. Turning over the lid of the gold box Raymond saw it was a gift for Carman.

His poor sweet mother who had so little had bought them such lovely gifts. Picking up her phone, he saw that the last call had been from him at seven thirty. The last picture she had taken was of the little black dog wearing a blue bow tie and staring at a crystal glass of dark wine. Raymond buried his head in his arms and wept. Sparky had been a better son than he had been. Regret was a bitter pill to swallow.

Mysteries Of The Universe

by Layla Green

There are a thousand questions that swirl in one's mind. Why do some people come to this world and stay for only a few moments or die in the womb while others live past one hundred? Why are some given everything on this earth; intelligence, beauty, health, prosperity, and a healthy happy family while others like myself were given hell on earth?

I have fourteen serious health conditions and there is not a moment in the day that my body is not in unbearable pain. In the last year I have begun to take horrendous seizures. The seizures are violent and terrifying because I am awake during the entire event.

It is important that we never blame the victim of life's tragedies. Having a good or bad life has absolutely nothing to do with whether the person is good or evil. I have seen people who deserve to be in hell who are living a life of pleasure and joy while they destroy other's lives. I have also seen sweet kind souls who are suffering terribly. I find it strange that God will often give people the same circumstances repeatedly. I know a mother who had three sons who lost them all. One son was killed in a traffic accident, the second dropped dead on the baseball field of an unknown heart condition, and the third succumbed to cancer.

My fourteen health conditions have given me tremendous empathy, sympathy, and understanding for those who suffer as I do. However, would I not have been able to learn this valuable lesson after just one or two health conditions? My friend has taken care of invalids her whole life and she was rewarded by becoming very ill herself.

I once spoke to a minister and his wife about my lot in life. I told them I felt like the dog under God's banquet table. The children he loves are seated there eating a sumptuous meal while I beg for a scrap of bread or a bone. I told her that I have so many questions that I need God to answer.

She piously said; "There will be no questions in heaven."

I looked at her with her perfect family, riches and good health and I thought, "Maybe not for you but I have a million questions."

I have prayed for over three thousand hours; first for God's healing and then that I could die and go to my heavenly home. I have met with God's silence. I long for the day we meet face to face so I can understand why some are chosen to live a life of pain and sorrow while others are given everything anyone could ever dream of. It breaks my heart that people like myself will never have experienced the joys this world has to offer. I wonder if our rewards in heaven can ever begin to make up for all that we have lost in this world.



**Pet portraits by
Linda Dumont**

**To have a portrait
painted contact
Linda at 780-975-3903
Prices vary according to
size.**

Yes Virginia, St. Nicholas is Santa Claus

By Joanne Benger

St. Nicholas also known as Santa Clause has been with us since the fourth century. Over the ages this popular and versatile saint has been reinvented, modified and fused with other mythological types and yet he has remained essentially the same.

St. Nicholas was the Bishop of Myra, a place that is now known as the town of Denure in southwest Turkey. We know that he existed because St. Nicholas is listed as attending the First Council of Nicea in 325 where he "buffeted Arius in the jaw". He was a fine and generous man who inherited great wealth and took great pleasure in helping poor people and children in secret. That is why to this day Santa Claus come quietly unseen in the dead of the night.

St. Nicholas is famous for two miracles. He had restored life to three murdered boys and to a girl who was burned to death. The three boys were on their way to school and stopped at the inn for the night. The greedy inn keeper killed them to make bacon for future guests. He had cut them up and was pickling them in a salting tub when St. Nicholas came along and returned the boys to life. The girl had been burnt to ashes in a fire but St. Nicholas brought her back to life.

He was even more famous for providing dowries for three poor sisters. Without dowries they could not marry and would have to be prostitutes. For three nights in a row, St. Nicholas threw a bag of gold through their window so the girls might find husbands. A variation of this story has St. Nicholas throwing gold coins down the chimney. The coins fell into stockings that the sisters had been drying by the hearth and that is why Santa Claus fills stockings with treats to this day.

St. Nicholas came to Europe because the Catholic church was spreading west and had decided that Christianity would be more readily accepted if they simply replaced pagan holidays with Christian ones. That is why the fourth century Pope Julius 1 decided that Christ's birthday should be on December 25, the time of the winter solstice and Yule celebrations.

Jesus and St. Nicholas were readily accepted. With Roman converts St. Nicholas replaced the sea god Neptune but in northern Europe he merged with the Viking gods. Soon St. Nicholas was making his rounds on Odin's coal black horse Sleipner, who had eight legs and went like the wind. Children placed a treat for Sleipner in a wooden shoe placed in a corner and in the night the grain, carrots, hay or straw were replaced with gifts. Odin also rode the skies with reindeer and in time reindeer replaced Sleipner and stockings replaced shoes.

Norwegians accepted St. Nicholas because they already had niessen, little elves who lived with their animals and once a year on Julaften – Christmas eve, they would either reward farmers who had been kind to their animals or punish cruel farmers by leaving for another farm. In Denmark, gifts would arrive by magic on Christmas eve as farmers did their evening chores, and gifts were opened and enjoyed right away.

The idea of rewarding good children and punishing bad ones was soon linked with St. Nicholas. In some areas Belsnickle would follow St. Nicholas as he made his rounds and it was Belsnickle's job to whip bad children. In Holland, Sinter Klaus was attended by the evil Black Peters, and everyone knew Black Pete kept a list of bad girls and boys who would get a lump of coal in their stockings. In Austria, St. Nicholas gives presents to good children and bad ones were threatened by devils and monsters known as Krampus. In Germany, St. Nicholas filled the shoes of good children with Christmas gifts but bad children got nothing. Instead Grampus, the black devil with rattling chains and a pitch fork, came to threaten and scare them.

Soon it was a part of the St. Nicholas eve celebrations to have

someone dressed in the red robes of a bishop giving gifts to good children as Santa Claus does today and the style was simply updated.

About 1840 England adopted and adapted German Christmas customs. Children would write letters to Father Christmas telling him what gifts they wanted. The letter would be placed in the fireplace and lit so the wishes could go up the chimney. On Christmas morning the requested gifts would be found packed into a pillow case at the foot of the bed.

Laplanders tell us that Santa Claus simply enters and exits like a native born Laplander. In winter many Lapps seal themselves in their tents by piling snow around. Once they were sealed in for the winter the only way they could enter or leave their tent was through the smoke hole. They would travel to see each other using reindeer sleighs, and visit using the smoke hole as a door.

Eventually St. Nicholas morphed into the jolly Coca Cola Santa created by Haddon Sandbloom in the 1930s and Thomas Nast in the 1860s. Both based their Santa on the description given by Clement Moore in his 1823 poem A Visit From Saint Nicholas, better known as The Night Before Christmas. This poem not only gave us the fat, jolly Santa dressed in fur trimmed red but it also gave us reindeer with names who landed on rooftops with a sleigh that had a sack full of toys. It became the most popular children's poem of all times and people round the world happily shared this new up-dated image of St. Nicholas.



The crowd on an LRT platform turned their backs but I stepped in

By John Zapantis

There's an old adage that at times rings true, 'Nobody cares.' But I'd like to always like to think that they are still out there when someone needs some form of support, whether it be some emotionally, or even when someone's life is being threatened by some cold calculating coward.

I'm originally from what was at one time known as 'The City of Champions' Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, better known as the Oil Capital of Alberta.

Growing up in a Greek family, we, in that culture, were always taught to look after family interests first, when stepping out into the real world and to try and show compassion to others and in times of need to throw in some moral support to total strangers in need of help. It could involve the helpful amenities of a helping hand, or even a dangerous situation like the one I witnessed, while standing at the Calgary LRT platform waiting for the arrival of my train ride back to the Mustard SEED shelter, where I currently reside as a homeless resident.

When turning around from where my train commonly pushed up. I noticed two young men in about their late twenties in some sort of heated confrontation.

I heard the one man, a young Native man, saying, "Well, you bumped into me." The other young man was a long haired blonde hippy looking type. The blonde haired individual had no shirt on, just black jeans and runners. He was looking the Native man straight in the eyes and they were standing

about two feet apart.

They both had that demonic look in their eyes, that kind of look a drug addict has after they've done the drug Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid.

These two were obviously the inner-city marginalized, rough looking types that you commonly see in your travels downtown and about on many of Calgary's LRT platforms. While the face to face encounter was in heated progress between the two, you could hear the blonde guy saying, something about wanting to stick the Native man.

That Native man,, feeling threatened by this uttered threat, started to back away quickly. I then noticed everyone on the LRT platform not giving the least concern about at least trying to shout the man away from that endangered Native fellow, whose expression told you that there was fear written all over his face as he felt his life was about to flash before his eyes.

So, as concerned as I was about his safety and not wanting to witness a possible casualty before my very eyes, I shouted out to the blonde guy, who was now chasing the Native man with a knife in his hand. I said, as I shouted out loud a warning to this blonde man, "Hey, don't do it, or you'll end up in jail for the rest of your life."

My warning to this man, who had given chase, immediately stopped him in his tracks, momentarily as he was coming to his senses. The Native man made a quick left turn into a nearby sidewalk entrance of a downtown city park, adjacent from the LRT platform located at the corner of 7th street Southwest along 7th Avenue

Saved by the bell, as the blonde man also made a quick exit, running away from the scene of this crime, knowing that he'd be alluding capture in case someone called the policing authorities, to come to the Native

man's rescue

I was appalled by the crowd's noncommittal, because of their perception or fear, of two inner-city looking types, who were in a conflict. That gave them the so-called valid excuse not to help in averting a dangerous situation that could have jeopardized the Native man's life.

I then yelled out, after feeling relieved and angered, "I don't know about you people, but I'm from the City of Champions and we're not cowards, we care about our brothers!"

Race also could have played a role in this volatile situation. The crowd was of mixed races, from what I could tell, but as in the norm and often noted at times, I've heard from others from time to time, 'There's the racist in everybody.' But that's no excuse for turning your backs on a Native man, whose life could have been jeopardized by some knife wielding wacko.

Oh, by the way the slogan, The City of Champions was first introduced as a popular Edmonton slogan in honouring the Championship Edmonton Oilers hockey dynasty, as former Edmonton Mayor Laurence Decore also gave its citizens, the honorary title by honouring the the many citizens, who threw in their selfless and generous support in assisting the many victimized by that Black Friday tornado that tragically took 27 lives back on July 31st, 1987.

Being racist and ignoring someone whose just walking by you is one thing that shouldn't really worry anyone, but turning your backs on an individual, whose life is being jeopardized, is a crime in its self. I'm glad I stepped in and helped prevent a tragedy from getting totally out of hand, where everyone could have been held accountable and thank God, I have no regrets about my involvement in this one. And that's no crime!

The grey

By Angelique Branston

It seeped out from the sinkhole
Finally free from aeons of captivity.
Attaching and spreading itself on any living thing.
Paralysis in its touch.
It causes coldness and uncaring.
It's mission to dominate and control.
In the blink of an eye It completely covers its host.
Sometimes there is a moment of resistance.
Then the struggle is over.
The spirit is made to slumber, the body now a shell.
A semblance, a monument to the hosts whole life

All the memories, all the mannerisms still there
But the emotions, the essence of the host is gone.
It swells over the hosts family,friends,co workers
The grey
For those that can see the other side
It is the grey.
You have but one moment to resist.
It is to not give in.
To hang on to the knowledge that despite This evil that plagues the land.
That there is good.
To not look the other way when one sees another suffering and in need.
To continue to care for others as you would for yourself.
It forces the grey to retreat to its initial host

It is time to make a conscious effort
To not just resist the grey
But to make it retreat.
For the spirit does not need to stay in sleep.
The tonic is Love.
The choice will soon be yours to make.
To become a member of the grey army
Or a soldier of light.
For inaction
To try and stay on the side lines
Is inadvertently choosing leaving yourself open
But one contact
One touch
From someone already taken over
And you too may become
One of the Grey.

Raising funds is the engine that drives programs and services at the Kerby Centre

Story and photo by John Zapanitis

Where would seniors go if they didn't have a senior's non-profit organization like the Kerby Centre for Seniors Plus, who are notable for providing an array of helpful senior's programs and services to improve the quality of life for Calgary's senior citizens.

The senior's centre was established 50 years ago and continues to provide an array of programs and services to its senior members.

Some of the many programs and services include free legal consultation provided by Legal Aid Alberta, free tax clinics are offered for the months of March and April throughout the year, free information sessions for assisting your benefits and pension needs that would include Canada Pension Plan (CPP) Old

Age Security (OAS) Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and Alberta Seniors Benefits (ASB).

In addition to the more essential programs and services that are offered to seniors at the centre, here is a list of some of the many leisurely activities offered at the centre that include a popular story telling workshop for seniors called Telling Your Story, hosted by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC Calgary). The CBC writing workshop is held at the Kerby Centre.

Registration is required for Tuesday October 4th, 11th, 18th and the 25th, from 11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in room 313. The workshop is hosted by Elise Stolte of CBC.

Seniors who are concerned about their physical well being can participate at the Kerby Centre's workout room.

Some other sporting activities that physically benefit seniors include pickle ball, which was previously held on September 22nd and 26th at 2:30 p.m.

Badminton and ping pong were also weekend activities that were held on September 23rd at 1:30 p.m. in the Kerby Centre's gymnasium.

Men and women love to meet at dances. A seniors' dance was held on September 28th at 1:00 p.m. at the Kerby Centre's cafe.

The Kerby Senior's Expo 2022, an informative senior's open house, was held on October 15th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event was basically an extension of the Kerby's information department, where housing providers including an assortment of service providers, provided array of informative services, available to seniors inquiring on the benefits of these helpful senior's services.

Funding is also integral to the operations of the Kerby Centre's programs and services for seniors 55 plus.

Without the essential funding, the centre wouldn't make that immense difference for the thousands of Calgary seniors it has generously assisted during its 50 years in operation.

Acting Business Development Director Danielle Murphy plays an important role in helping to raise funding for the centre's programs and services.

She knows what essentially needs to be done in achieving that level of success, while influencing the many corporate donors in funding the centre's many programs and services that helps to

improve the quality of life for the centre's many senior members.

Murphy originally came to work at the centre in February of 2021 and later worked her way up to Acting Business Development Director by June of 2022.

To qualify for the opening, she brought an extensive list of related work experience to the table that included her previous employment with Mayfair Diagnostics, where she worked in marketing.

In a recent interview with ASN, Murphy elaborated on her experience that determined her eligibility in qualifying for her new position with the Kerby Centre. Murphy said, "They did want someone with marketing and fund raising experience, kind of someone whose done it all. I have about 10 years experience in non-profit. So that was kind of how I put my foot through the door."

Murphy's success with her former employer, Mayfair Diagnostics, speaks for her perfect track record that had the Kerby Centre convinced that she was the right person for the job.

Murphy said, "We did everything from working with physicians, advertisements, trade shows, just everything, the whole look and feel. We did a re-brand with them, so just getting the word out there."

Murphy's position with the centre has been an exciting and successful venture. She's helped to direct the centre's funding drive in the right direction. Murphy said, "When I first started, I was just a part of the fundraising team, helping to build a fund development campaign, writing grants, working with corporate Calgary and anything and everything to raise money for the Kerby Centre. We get donations and cash to put things on. That was all the money raised for the event that goes towards our programs."

She elaborates further on the more important programs that receive generous funding from its kind donors, Murphy said, "Kerby's been around for 50 years. We are supporting seniors to live well in their community. We do that well in their community. We do that through our Connections Food Security Program and our Elder Abuse Shelter."

"So our connection program, includes our new Wellness Connections Centre. Our Wellness Connection Centre is about mental well being. We do peer support. We do a grieving group. We do music therapy. We do art therapy. We make sure we do the one connections plan, should they need help with their taxes. We can refer them. We can help them with



Kerby Centre's Acting Business Development Director Danielle Murphy standing inside the Kerby Centre's Cafe.

Alberta government claims to action on homelessness are smoke and mirrors

ECOHH

On a sunny Saturday at the beginning of October the Alberta government issued a news release trumpeting it was taking action on homelessness with \$63 million in new funding.

The Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) says this declaration is a dangerous effort to distract attention from a life-and-death crisis.

"The fact is that this year's Alberta budget started out with cutting funding for addressing homelessness from \$163 million last year to only \$138 for this year. And it was \$195 million the year before that. So putting in \$31.5 million more for this year does nothing except get us back to the amount available last year," explains ECOHH president Nadine Chalifoux.

The \$63 million announced is for two years.

"Unprecedented numbers of people are suffering in homelessness in Alberta-- probably nearly 3000 on an average day in Edmonton alone-- and over 6400 households

are on wait lists for community housing and 4702 households are on the wait list for the Rental Assistance Benefit, hoping to avoid falling into homelessness. The government should be ashamed to advance this tiny bit of additional funding, especially during a period when billions of bonus dollars are flooding the treasury thanks to global oil prices," Chalifoux charges.

ECOHH has tracked the steadily rising number of people dying from homelessness over the years. The cumulative effect of over 20 years of inadequate response to the housing crisis is leading to more serious consequences for people trapped in homelessness over longer periods. In 2021, 222 people were identified as dying.

"The government's document should be called a 'Homelessness Inaction Plan' in view of how little it really offers to make a positive difference. Almost none of this money will reduce homelessness. It will only provide shelter and some services to people who are homeless," Chalifoux says.

Only adding a small amount of needed funding at the beginning of October, with cold weather beginning at any time, is not evidence of planning but of crisis response. The time needed to find and prepare facilities and staff creates significant challenges for organizations involved. The magnitude of the need for more shelter and services has been clear over the year and did not need to wait until into the autumn.

ECOHH asserts that without a major financial investment in building and maintaining non-market housing and properly funding the support services needed for some people it will be impossible to make progress to end homelessness. Housing is the way to end homelessness.

"Canada has legislated that people have a human right to adequate housing. The Alberta failure to even seriously tackle homelessness is a blatant denial of that fact," Chalifoux concludes.

About ECOHH

The Edmonton Coalition Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) was created in 1986. Membership consists of social profit organizations and businesses, as well as individuals. Its mandate includes education and advocacy on housing security, including homelessness and affordable housing.

ECOHH led the development of the public art sculpture honouring the importance of housing, located in Homeless Memorial Plaza, north of City Hall on 103A Avenue and has presented an annual memorial service for people who have died because of housing challenges in their lives, since 2006.

ECOHH's key messages are:

- Decent affordable housing is essential for all people.
- Good homes for all create strong healthy communities.
- Housing is more than four walls and a roof- it's homes, support, and community.
- Lack of decent affordable housing has negative consequences for everyone.
- In Alberta we have the resources, knowledge, and skills to make sure everyone has a decent place to call home in a strong healthy community.

accessing food. We can refer them to other programs."

The Kerby Centre's food line is a great provider for seniors on low incomes, who couldn't possibly make ends meet, if it weren't for the generous donors who pour food donations into the centre. Murphy said, "We actually don't purchase any food ourselves. We get it all. We call it rescue. We work with other agencies, who are just going to throw out the food. Cobs Bread donates bread every week. Then there's the Left Over Society. We get some funding. We also get some funding from Second Harvest.

"A lot of fundraising dollars go to our food security programs, which includes our Community Kitchen, our free food markets and our free pantry upstairs. We run Meals On Wheels in Medicine Hat."

The demand for feeding seniors went right through the roof, when COVID-19 first came onto the scene, as Murphy explains, "What resulted from that high demand, it started basically on April 2020. We started getting food for our seniors. We didn't do much for food security before COVID-19.

"That's when Cobs Bread came on board. We started to work with whomever helped us, with the initiative like

ATCO Blue Flame donated food. They have a community garden. They made a bunch of soup for us. They donated the soup to seniors immediately."

Danielle's work experience has paid off remarkably and she certainly loves this job and knows why getting up early in the morning comes easy, Murphy said, "I love to work with Corporate Calgary. I definitely feel a pull towards non-profit, because of the people, because I'm helping. It's the boost I need to get up in the morning and away from the kids. I find it quite motivating."

She truly is committed in helping to shape the reputation and efficiency of this great fund raising initiative in helping to fund programs and services at the Kerby Centre. She wouldn't trade this job for anything in the world.

When she was asked by ASN, how long she plans on sticking round, Murphy's reply is simple, with loud laughter that follows, "For as long as they'll have me."

Pay now. Pay later. (Or maybe don't pay at all.)

By Allan Sheppard

My last contribution to these pages was another rant against a policy of Premier Jason Kenney's United Conservative government. My target was the government's decision, which seems to me driven by ideology more than pragmatism or wisdom, to limit its response to the challenges of alcohol and substance addictions in Alberta. Kenney et al chose firmly and spoke stridently against preventive approaches, particularly harm reduction. They directed money and influence toward treatment and rejected all options for anyone not in treatment.

That approach assumes (or hopes) Albertans with substance use disorders will accept treatment only if and when they reach a bottom where life as becomes intolerable. It's the Alcoholics Anonymous approach. It works for some, but not all, who chosen try it. Kenney's government was willing to help the some, but not the others, arguably the many. I did not argue that the government should not invest in recovery programs and facilities. It should have committed much more than the \$50 million over three years that it budgeted. And it should have taken a more holistic approach to the challenges faced not only by substance users but by the communities that they are part of.

In my experience with relatives and close friends, the hardest part of recovering from substance use disorders is getting into treatment, not the challenges of withdrawal or the burdens of confronting psychological, social, and emotional roots of one's disorder, harsh though those may be. The system does not have enough placements available to accept everyone who seeks admission. Candidates for treatment must have been clean and sober for seven days to qualify for admission. I have watched too many people fail to navigate those critical seven days between discharge from a medical detox program and admission to treatment. It has seemed at times that governments (not just the UCP) have used that seven-day period as a de facto triage protocol to reduce demand to the level of supply they are willing to support. A recent example: Six patients were released from the detox unit at the Alberta Hospital on the same day in October. Three went directly into treatment; the others were discharged "back to the street," in the words of a member of that group.

Discharge to a treatment program is not a guarantee of success; discharge to the street is no guarantee of failure. But observation and experience suggest that the prognosis is much, much better for the group that goes to treatment than for the one that does not.

How does the system decide which three get treatment and which do not? Is there a kind of triage at play? If so, what are the protocols? And what do those discharged back to the streets have to do to qualify for treatment the next time they pass through detox? What are they to do in the meantime? What are the criteria for selection?

What reasons do they and those close to them have to hope for a better outcome next time and a better future? We have no reasonable, realistic answers to such questions.

Should we conclude that the evidence suggests the system only has resources to meet fifty per cent of the demand? Probably not, on such anecdotal data; the shortfall could be less than that. Or more. But it is reasonable to conclude that the system lacks the capacity to meet existing demand for treatment, in spite of the Kenney UCP governments all-in prioritization of treatment as its preferred approach. Surely this one-size-fits-all approach is flawed and built to fail. Surely a balanced, inclusive, holistic strategy emphasizing prevention and recovery equally would be a better way to go. Surely this is not, as some proponents on either side of the debate would have it, an either/or choice between prevention and treatment but a both/and recognition of the merits of each—and a generous and pragmatic commitment to achieve the benefits each can offer.

Harm reduction is not, as many Albertans (including, I assume, members of Kenney's UCP government) believe, just a matter of needle exchanges and supervised consumption, intended to minimize risk and harm to users. It is also about minimizing risk and potential harm to communities in which users are embedded. Those communities are compromised in many ways by their behaviour, much of it antisocial, some of it threatening, all of it harmful to social and commercial activity in their vicinity.

The principles of harm reduction posted online by the National Harm Reduction Coalition (and detailed by me in my last contribution) make it clear that harm reduction must also aim at reducing harms experienced by neighbourhoods, communities, and institutions due to the collateral impacts of people experiencing substance use disorders. Anyone who used Edmonton's downtown LRT stations during the recent brutally cold winter experienced the collateral damage that can occur when the only strategy attempted by authorities is neglect. The harm to the community's social fabric was real. The effects still continue. With another winter on the horizon.

We must stop looking for simple, easy solutions to complex problems. That kind of thinking got us into the mess we face from substance use disorders. It will not get us out of it. Creative, courageous thinking will produce many possible tactics, some of which will work, others of which might not. But we must look for them. And try them.

One precedent has been set by the Edmonton Public Library in its downtown Milner branch. Like all public libraries, the Milner is inclusive and open to all, a policy which makes it attractive to marginalized, often homeless or shelter-based, citizens. Some of them suffer from substance use disorders or other mental health issues. They sometimes pose behavioural or other antisocial challenges.

Rather than trying to keep such users out of its space, the library chose to manage them and their impact on the library, users, and staff. Everyone is welcome, but the library sets behavioural limits that are enforced by regular and highly visible security patrols. Outbursts are rare. When they

occur, guilty parties are courteously escorted from the building.

A small staff of outreach workers works with marginalized clients to help them connect with resources and agencies to meet their specific needs, including the library itself. Staff do not offer needle exchanges or supervise consumption, but they recognize the reality of substance use by providing for safe disposal of needles in washrooms. The library's approach is not a magic-bullet solution, but it is one workable option. And it is effective enough that my three grandchildren love going to the library, and I am comfortable taking them there.

That is not true of LRT stations. My grandchildren resist going to certain areas and I do not feel comfortable taking them there. There are security personnel, but they are often not visible and seem reluctant, probably instructed, not to engage, only to monitor and call for support when necessary. It's a fair question whether ETS has the means, resources, or legal right to manage behaviour on its premises as the library does. The library's program is supported with money from the Robert Tegner Trust. Similar charitable support for the ETS might not be a realistic option. But surely creative problem-defining and -solving and funding could produce other proactive solutions that yield the same result. The strategy of deliberate neglect that was in play last winter cannot—must not—be repeated.

We can argue that the cost of treatment is much more than the cost of prevention, but those comparisons are not easy. It's easier to point to the amounts spent on treatment facilities and programs and count the number of people treated, than to point to personal and collateral harms prevented that, by definition, do not exist and cannot be counted (except with statistics, which experience with Covid-19 clearly demonstrates many of us do not trust).

Choosing between prevention and treatment can be, for governments, a pay-me-now/pay-me-later proposition. It can seem easier and safer to opt for pay-me-later, when another government, or another leader, will have to cover the bill. Which leads to a final point: On October 1, Just days before turning the UCP over to a new leader, Premier Kenney's government announced a plan to spend \$124 million over two years on addiction and mental health in Edmonton and Calgary. Sticking to his government's narrow focus on recovery, Kenney stressed that the money would be for treatment only, not prevention.

Fair enough. Given Kenney's preference for a politics of competing fixed opinions, money for treatment centres, which is needed. Is probably the best we could hope for.

But the cynic in me worries that the announcement was Premier Kenney's last-ditch attempt to saddle his then presumptive usurpor, Danielle Smith, with lose/lose conundrum: honour Kenney's pledge and alienate the UCP's rural base, or reject it and alienate voters in Edmonton and Calgary, who are fed up with government ineffectiveness on addictions and desperate for the provincial government to do something—anything—to stop the collateral damage.

Will she? Or won't she? Interesting times.