

ALBERTA Street News

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About 25 tents providing shelter for
homeless people line both sides of 105A
Avenue at 96th street.

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ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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Outbreak of disease among inner city homeless

By Linda Dumont

There are clusters of tents and makeshift shelters scattered on boulevards and empty lots throughout the inner city. Even in the coldest weather many people are still living outside sometimes clustering together in groups for warmth. One man even saved up money to buy a generator.

Now to add to the misery there is an outbreak of shigella a bacterial disease like food poisoning, spreading among the inner city homeless. The first reported case was on August 22, 2022. By the end of November there were 176 cases and 115 of them required hospitalization. The disease is spread through contact and unsanitary living conditions. Symptoms include a high fever, diarrhea, often bloody, severe intestinal cramping and dehydration.

The City of Edmonton has taken measures to curb the spread of shigella. Washrooms at the Boyle Street Community Services and at the Mustard Seed on 106A and 96 Street are open 24/7. In addition there are a number of portable washrooms in the inner city.

As of Homeward Trust's By Name List more than 2600 Edmontonians are homeless. This places them at risk to infection injury and exposure. There are only 620 emergency shelter beds and more than 300 short term/long term supportive beds for the homeless.

Being on the outside

By Angelique Branston:

I've always been a little different, the one who says something very bluntly or misses the joke. The one who speaks out of turn, too loudly or takes the metaphor someone used literally (which in turn makes me sound racist...which I am not). When I was a teenager I was diagnosed with complex post traumatic stress disorder. Which did fit... my biological male parent was very abusive in many different ways. There was a part of my diagnosis that was missing though. I realized this as I was travelling and the culture shock and throngs of people were too much. And I had a melt down. The way I walked in big circles prompted an observer to suggest that I was Autistic. The idea was absurd to me at first.

But the more I did research the more it fit..

It is sadly very common for females ranging from 19 to 76 years old that are just recently being diagnosed, who either went completely under the radar or misdiagnosed (often times with PTSD borderline personality disorder, or bi polar disorder). The reason for this is when the research on autism was done it was on male subjects only. It was thought at first that only the male gender could even be autistic. To this day there are many doctors that still do not think that a female can be autistic. So it is little wonder that it was missed with me. I was just diagnosed this year with significant autism.

Autism is a neurological developmental disorder. There is approximately one percent of the population that is Autistic. It is also a spectrum, and each person with autism presents differently. There is no look, or facial feature, or intelligence level that one can look at and say, yes this is autism. It is a disability that mainly affects social interactions, at least this is the most visible sign of an autistic person as well as restrictive repetitive movements, and special interests. One trait that is common with females with the disability is the ability to mask, which is to say to cover up one's deficits and to present an acceptable version of yourself.

For myself I did not even realize that I was masking. It was an unconscious thing that I did, an example of this is when I wanted to go to grade one. I had been held back because I did not play with the other children. When we were given assignments I happily went off by myself and started building my paper mache turtle. I hummed loudly and happily. The others went off into groups of two or three. I learned to act more like the other children to talk about the silly things that they wanted to talk about and to play games with the children outside rather than staying inside and talking to the teacher. I found her much easier to talk to than the children my age. It is the me that is acceptable to be seen and known.

There is the cost to masking. For each person it is different. For me it means when I get home from going out, anywhere I need to have time alone. I sometimes have meltdowns which is to either yell or cry, or both. Knowing that this is because of masking as well as sensory overload, I now can find healthier ways of releasing my overwhelming trapped emotions in a positive way. The first step is to accept yourself and your deficits.

It is a relief in a lot of ways, to know why I feel the way that I do. That my struggles are real and valid. I am autistic, not an alien from another planet. I am still learning what this means for me. It is a journey of self discovery but now at least I understand why I am different from others.

THE VIEWS PRESENTED ARE THOSE OF THE CONTRIBUTORS.

Expect Sudden and Unlooked for Events

By Joanne Benge

Welcome to 2023, which Numerologists call a 7 year because $2+0+2+3 = 7$. It is a good time to travel or make changes and you can expect the unexpected as sudden and unlooked for events change the course of your life. Many of these events will prove helpful and create unexpected opportunities in the future. Seven is always a prosperous year for those involved in professional work, the occult and aviation.

The year begins with January, named for the Roman god Janus, who had two faces, one looking forward into the future and the other focused on the past. Janus was the sunrises and sunsets, doors and beginning. January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month, Spinal Health Awareness Month, Hot Tea Month and Oatmeal Month so eat your porridge, drink your tea and don't strain your back shovelling snow. Yes, we want snow and cold for a summerish January means a winterish spring.

January 1 is New Years Day. As the unknown poet wrote, "God bless thy year, Thy coming in, thy going out, Thy rest, travelling about, The rough, the smooth, the bright the drear. God bless the year."

January 2 record the weather. "As the weather is on the second of January so it will be in September."

January 3 is the Kalends. "If January Kalends be sunny, Twill be wintry weather till the Kalends of May." Pray for clouds today.

January 4 is Drinking Straw Day and January 5 is Spaghetti Day and National Trivia Day.

January 5 is Twelfth Night, National Whipped Cream Day and Bird Day when we end the bird count at Christmas.

January 6 is Full Moon, the Wolf Moon as well as Epiphany celebrated in different ways in different places. We take our Christmas decorations down. In Ireland it is Nollig Bam Bam when women have the day off and husbands take over household chores. In Ethiopian replicas of the Ark of the Covenant are paraded through the streets.

January 7 is Mahyna the Buddhist New Year. It is also the Orthodox Christmas Day, known as Ukrainian Christmas in this area. Happy New Year and Merry Christmas.

January 8 is National Manwatcher's Day followed on January 11 by National Girl Hug Boy Day, which is also National Hot Toddy Day. Let your romantic side out but do be careful. January 12 is Pharmacist Day.

January 14 is orthodox New Year. Happy new Year again. It is also Organize Your Home

Day and Dress Up Your Pet day. January 5 is Makar Sankranti, a Hindu holiday.

January 16 is World Religion Day as well as United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People day. Accept those of other races and religions as they are and pray they can accept you as you are.

January 17 is a year since actress, animal lover and activist Betty White died. Do something nice for an animal shelter in her memory.

January 18 is Winnie the Pooh Day, January 19 is Popcorn Day, January 20 is Cheese Day and January 21 is Squirrel Appreciation Day. Let your inner child out.

January 20 is the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh celebrated by the Sikhs with special services at their temples.

January 22 is the lunar new year celebrated by Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist People. We enter the Chinese Year of the Hare. Happy New Year again. It is also St. Vincent Day and a bright and clear today promises prosperous weather the rest of 2023.

January 23 is Handwriting Day followed by January 24 Boy Scout Day for the first Boy Scout troop was organized by Robert Baden-Powell in England January 24, 1908. "A scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly courteous and obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent."

January 25 is Broken Hearts Day and Robert Burns birthday. Become Scottish for the day and eat bannock for bannock is a gaelic word brought into this country by Scottish settlers. It is also St. Paul's Day. "If St. Paul's Day be fair and clear it betide a happy year."

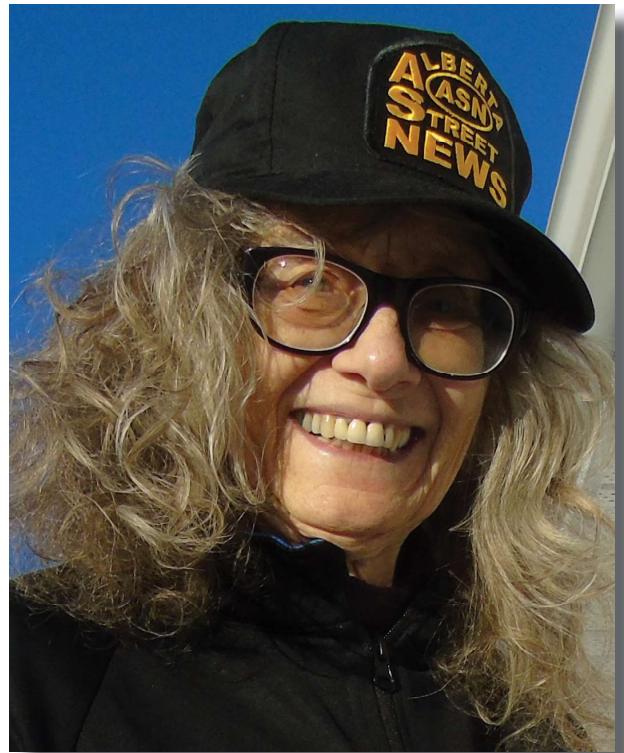
January 28 is Bell Let's Talk Day when we talk about mental health to break the stigma.

January 29 is National Puzzle Day. January 30 is Fun at Work Day and Inane Answering Message Day and January 31 is Child Labour day as well as February Eve. Farewell January.

Scottish Trivia for Robert Burns' Birthday

By Joanne Benger

1. We call Robbie Burns the ploughman poet. The Scottish Arts Council has described him as 'surely the greatest song writer the world has ever known.'
2. Balmoral is the name of the royal castle and estate in Grampian on the River Dee. It is where Queen Elizabeth 11 died on September 8 2022.
3. Jockey is a Scottish word. Jock is a popular nickname for a Scotsman and Jackie is what



they call a little Jock or a little man. When a girl gets a boyfriend Scots say "Ilka Jeannie has her Jackie."

4. A capercaillie is a popular game bird is Scotland the largest member of the grouse family.
5. Tossing a caber is a Scottish sport in which a pine trunk called a caber is tossed.
6. Scotland is the birthplace of golf but its name comes from the Dutch word kolf meaning club a term still used to describe a golf club.
7. A sporran is the fur covered pouch worn on the front of a kilt.
8. Kilts were invented by the Irish but their name comes from the Danish kite on which means tucked up.
9. In Scotland tartan is a word used to describe a cross checked fabric and plaid is a garment five feet by three feet wrapped around the wearer.
10. Up until the late 1700's when they were replaced by horses oxen pulled the ploughs. Popular names for oxen were Cromack (crooked horns) Humly hornless) Garie (striped) Brandie ((brown) with a white stripe across the back) and Hakey (white faced).
11. Family means a lot and there is a joke that a Scotsman proposed asking "Do you want to be buried with my mother?"
12. Scottish humour may be dry and intellectual and often makes a social, religious or political comment. Reportedly a tombstone reads Here lies Martin Elrod. Have mercy on my soul good God. As I would on thine if I were God and thou wert Martin Elmrod."
13. In Scotland February 2 is celebrated as Candlemas, a quarter day.
14. Traditionally Scotland is known for its tartan, haggis, heather, bagpipes and highland dancing.

The art of begging and how I was influenced in earning spare change

By John Zapantis

The common beggar off the street is usually simple in his approach to asking for change. Like when you often here that common plea, "Can you spare some change?"

These poor souls often consist of the substance abuse types, be it their habit of choice, alcohol or drugs, what matters is that this kind of beggars will literally spend anywhere from an hour or probably all day in some cases if they feel they have to essentially reach that quota for simply a bottle of cheap wine, or even a few joints and their day's work is done.

But you'd never want to stigmatize them by assuming that they're lazy bums and that they should get jobs, because the rebuke for such an un-warranted comment like that would have you answer from the challenge of a street smart and well-read beggar, who would take you up on that challenge by showing you how wrong you are about that one. I know just from speaking from my own shoes. I was one of them at one time.

Today, thanks to my inherent education and a great cultural upbringing, the skills I developed along the way, while learning how to be creatively self-sufficient in my approach to being a creative entity I am both a self-taught businessman and self-taught writer. While begging on those former streets in Ottawa, Sidney Nova Scotia and at one time back in 1993 in Calgary, I was one of the more unique beggars with a routine that in most cases consistently worked in my favor.

That officially took off back in the early nineties, after my X- girlfriend and I had a big difference of opinion about what was right and what was wrong, a long term battle with her excessive alcohol abuse that led to our 14 evictions in our four years together. This led to my putting my foot down finally and leaving her to put it all behind me, hopping on a Greyhound bus and ending up in Calgary's old drop-in Centre back in the early ninety's that summer.

The thought of begging on Calgary streets entered my mind, while thinking what a great way in avoiding the troubled rowdy crowds that often frequented the outside premises of

that little old shanty facility, just before this old one was torn down and a bigger version looking like a hotel was re-built in its place. It was an assurance that I could enforce my own rules and regulations, when approaching the odd passerby that empowered me to have no limits when it came to that creative universe.

All I'd have to do is reach a certain quota, like a generous round and challenging limit of at least thirty dollars and that would buy me through the doors of Mac's convenience store where I could romance my favourite hobby, the Calgary Sun, and a reading hour or two at Macdonald's while munching on a Big Mac and drinking a coffee I would be entertained and informed by the news of the day, a practical and great way of safe guarding my environment and killing time for at least for a few hours until lunch time back at the Drop-in.

The creative thoughts that ran through my mind as I started to get better at making more change, while learning from rejection the first few times as a test for trial and error, desperately had me thinking creatively out of the box. Instead of saying the simple and typical beggar's chant "Can you spare some change" to the more innovative self taught introductory, "Excuse me ma'am, recently arrived to town, currently looking for employment, can you spare some change so that I can get out of the rain and into a dryer place like a Macdonald's, for a few bucks so that I can get that coffee and hamburger and away from this rain."

Usually I'd have them laughing, because they couldn't really determine whether I was making the presentation up or that I was actually going through what I was claiming in my plea to get that change. Nine out of ten times that money was handed to me without an argument and even sometimes with an unexpected compliment like in the case of this lady who I had approached in my travels to Sidney Nova Scotia, who claimed that I had such a gift of the gab that she couldn't determine herself whether what I was saying to her in my approach to asking for change was actually the situation that I was experiencing at that moment. She suggested, as a compliment, that I pursue a career as a life insurance salesman, and all I could do was simply reply saying I've been told that before, and have lived up to that offer many a time, as the lady and I laughed at my reply, while she handed me that change.

One great way of raising the stakes, when making some spare change, is when hitting on people with their backs turned to you, when they are plugging coins into a parking meter as I found out a number of times. The first time up while trying this method, while begging in Sydney Nova Scotia in the downtown core, I noticed a young woman in the zone plugging away at the parking meter next to her parked car, with her back was turned on me. What came to mind at that time was that she was so pre-occupied with quickly plugging away, shooting those coins down that meter

that I'd visualized in my head that with that abundance of money all going down one after the other, she obviously had some dollar bills tucked in her purse. I came quickly up to her from behind and said out loud "Excuse me ma'am. but I couldn't help but notice you at the parking meter."

She went into a little shock and did a jump. Turning around quickly she went into her purse and pulled out a ten dollar bill and handed it quickly to me with no questions asked. It was then obvious to me that she couldn't determine whether she was about to be robbed or just accosted by a beggar who had just scared the Hell out of her.

That method worked well as I later laughed to myself walking away quickly after thanking her for her generous support. The poor lady looked like she'd just seen a ghost, because when I looked over my shoulder as I quickly walked away from her, you could see that she was in disbelief of what had just happened after being caught off guard.

One day a man in Ottawa, as I was now drifting to make my way slowly towards him was just getting out of his car and ready to put some change in the parking meter I quickly walked up from behind him as he was plugging away and said to him "Excuse me sir I'm pissed off about every F-ing thing in the book. I have no time to listen I'm in a hurry,"- and before you knew it he reached into his pocket and quickly handed me a twenty dollar bill, hoping for his safety, while I was having the notion that I was slowly making some weird transition from innocent beggar to methodical street thug. I quickly moved on and thanked him for his generous donation, but later that day started feeling a little guilty about my obvious aggressiveness in having that over the top donation quickly handed to me and with no questions asked, come my way!

On one rainy day, and the rain was really coming down hard in downtown Ottawa, I was on Rue street, where I had approached an old. frail man wearing a dress hat from the forties and black trench coat standing on the street corner staring me down. I came up to him, this time a little angered inside and smart ass like, and said to him, "Hello young man. Can you spare some change, so I can get out of this rain, I see you your comfy under that umbrella you're holding but what about me I'm soaking wet out here?"

His frown disappeared as he quickly smiled and said, angered and loud, "Go F- yourself!",

End of that story and I moved on, without an argument!

Then, as a few weeks had gone by, on one occasion I was walking across the bridge in Ottawa, where you get that panoramic view of the old historical House of Commons and the river that acts as a border between Ottawa Ontario and the town across that river to the other side of that bridge, the little French town of Hull, in the province of Quebec.

town of Hull, in the province of Quebec. I noticed this young couple in about their early twenties walking towards me holding hands. They were within a good twenty feet of me. I then confidently hit on them for a handout saying, "Excuse me you two, just arrived to Ottawa, recently separated from my x. I need a few bucks because I'm hungry."

All I got for a simple reply was a mockingly pointed finger from this tall man, who was now laughing at me with his girlfriend, thinking there was nothing to me but a real push over. So I figured a little bit of an aggressor's attitude and a scare in putting these words to him would give me the personal satisfaction of evening the score in lowering his ego in front of his girlfriend.

I then demanded loudly on my bluff call, "Give me some F-ing change, or I'll throw you both off this bridge."

His girl friend, without any hesitation, screamed out loud and said, repeatedly to her boyfriend, "Give him the change, give him the change, give him the change."

The boyfriend quickly dug into his left pocket and started pulling out loads of coins that showed in his hand. Now happy that I had achieved my goal in lowering his ego in front of his girlfriend by successfully pulling that bluff call, I said to the two, "Keep your money and shove up it up your bank. I don't need your money."

I was thinking at that moment that if I continued to walk towards the other end of that bridge without warning them about not calling the cops, the cops would obviously be on my ass end and they'd probably as witnesses combined have me charged for uttering a threat. That's when it dawned on me that I should advise them to keep walking to the other side and not follow me. So I demanded out loud, "You two keep walking to the other side of that bridge and I'll keep walking to the opposite side of that bridge and we will just call it even, but don't try following me once my backs turned."

The two slowly nodded in agreement as their facial expressions had

I'm celebrating 11 years as an ASN Media Relations Coordinator

By John Zapantis

I would have never imagined, some 11 years ago that when ASN Founder/Publisher/Editor Linda Dumont asked me to come to an Alberta Street News Name Launch, that I'd be sitting right here at the Red Deer Public Library, writing my account of how I became the Alberta Street News Media Relations Coordinator. I am celebrating my 11 years of success in organizing the paper's annual events, expanding into other Alberta cities and towns and all the resources that I've managed to get in helping to promote our provincial street newspaper the Alberta Street News.

It all started with a simple conversation while dropping off my memory card at ASN Editor Linda Dumont's house, so that I could download the pictures I had taken for a previous story that I had written and sent to her from my computer for publication.

Also, from that time onwards, just as of March of this year, so many things have happened in my life. Like the turbulent experienced with a female relative and the indifference we've shared regarding my falling out with her while, looking after both my parents in their pre-nineties who've experienced cognitive decline.

now a sign of seriousness to it.

I ended up hurrying off that bridge, picking up the pace and when I got to the other end of it, Hi-Way 401 was a few hundred feet from that bridge going to Montreal and within about no longer than 5 minutes I'd estimate, I was picked up by a Frenchman driving a 6 door Black limousine, who agreed to drive me to Montreal after telling me that that's where he was from.

When we arrived about an hour later to that city, the driver caught me off guard and handed me a \$5.00 dollar bill and said, "Try to find employment, there's lots of opportunities in Montreal and take care."

I thanked him for the ride, the donation and his kind advice and was let out right on St. Catherine's Street West in front of the old Montreal Forum that was once home to the Montreal Canadian hockey team, just before it was torn down and years later replaced by a newer hockey arena.

Thinking about what happened on that bridge in Ottawa after I was let out and dropped off. I had serious doubts about trying to beg again. After becoming an aggressor on that bridge while going from a smooth talking and friendly beggar, then on that bridge elevating to an aggressive one that scared the living Hell out of those two poor souls, I'd realized that the possibilities of a beggar making the slow and gradual transition from beggar to thief, could evidently become possible with anyone experiencing this type of degrading lifestyle. I looked into that mirror of life and prevented that image of me in that mirror from becoming that possibility down that road. I vowed then and there while looking around downtown Montreal, that I wasn't about to become anyone's public embarrassment. I moved along the sidewalks of downtown Montreal and never begged again, while planning to move back to Edmonton where I could find a decent job and never ever have to beg for spare change again!

That indifference with my female relative led to my having to leave my parent's home and forced me to look for accommodation living in three homeless shelters in Calgary and then recently moving to Red Deer now. I'll be staying at another shelter until a renter whom I notified recently about a vacancy in Edmonton, calls me at the end of December to confirm if I qualify for the vacant suite, while reviewing other interested applicants.

So for now as I write this celebration piece back to when I was dropping off a memory card at ASN Editor Linda Dumont's home so that she could download the pictures that would accompany my story that was previously sent to her.

That day Linda asked me if I wanted to come to the Alberta Street News name launch. I then replied, "What's a name launch?" She immediately replied, "We're changing our name, from Edmonton Street News to Alberta Street News, so we can give the former Calgary Street Talk vendors, who recently lost their paper, because of discontinued funding, their own name, Alberta Street News. They were selling Edmonton Street News in Calgary for a while and it looks strange having Calgary vendors selling an Edmonton Street News street newspaper in Calgary."

I typically jumped to the pumps and replied, "Not only will I help you celebrate this historical milestone of ours, I'll send out letters to the major media and other community papers, informing them about our paper's purpose and success."

After Linda agreed to my volunteering to send letters to various members of the media,

I had sent 16 emails out to different media outlets and within a few weeks, nine television stations and community newsprint publications replied to my letters of invitation.

And on January 3rd, 2012 on the day of the Alberta Street News Name Launch, I happened to witness the spectacle and the results of my letters to the major and community media that finally paid off. When I walked up to Linda's red brick house in Edmonton's inner-city, there to greet me at the front of her house, parked on both sides of the street, were major media television vehicles, CTV, CBC, Global tv, City tv and Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN).

I still to this day can't exactly explain the feeling going through me, but I'll just say the experience took me completely off guard, to see every member of the major visual media parked on both sides of the street in front of Linda's house.

I then knocked on Linda's front door and was allowed inside to view this media gathering inside Linda's kitchen. There, waiting for their turn to interview ASN Editor Linda Dumont, were members of the major five television media, with their television camera's pointed straight at our editor in her kitchen, ready for Linda's presentation on the paper's purpose and success and why the name launch was taking place.

Too add to the excitement, the editor of the Alberta Sweet Grass Newspaper interviewed me, asking me questions about my affiliation with our paper and also interviewed

Continued on page 6

A Living Wage is part of the response

By Timothy Wild

I recently wrote an Op-Ed piece for the Calgary Herald about the need for greater attention to the economic conditions of workers in Alberta. I argued that a comprehensive public policy approach, based on the bedrock of social rights of citizenship, would promote the greater inclusion and participation of authentically meet their core and basic needs, together with promoting opportunities for the development of higher dimensions of both self- and collective actualization.

One reader wrote in the comments section "...where's the money coming from Timmy? The best social assistance is a JOB". Apart from the assumed familiarity of calling me "Timmy" there is some validity to his comment. Implementation of public policy that supports the working class would certainly not be cheap. However, justice doesn't come for free and there is a cost to living in a just, humane, and equitable polity. It is a cost that I am certainly willing to pay. Secondly, a job is, to some extent, a way to secure the economic wherewithal to support a decent quality of life. The fact that income support and replacement programs are set at a lower level than employment income is a twisted indication of this premise. However, it is also clear that a job is not necessarily enough to provide for the wellbeing of all workers and their families.

Therefore, we need to crack open the inane, old fashioned and ideological notion that the cure for poverty is simply to have a job. I don't need to get into the details of contract workers, those surviving in the "gig economy" and employees with "flexible hours" to show the fallacy of that argument. But I will take as an example the experience of people working for minimum wage. For the 200,000 Albertans earning minimum wage, a job does not provide economic security by any stretch of the imagination. And many minimum wage earners are not the putative young person earning the age-based \$13 per hour strictly for spending money. According to Statistics Canada, about 45% of people earning minimum wage have children, and 59% of minimum wage earners are over the age of 25. I suppose one could argue that the minimum wage is better than nothing. However, it is illegal to work for less than the minimum wage. We have this legislation to ensure that there is not a race to the bottom of "will work for food and shelter" as

wages are decreased by increments of nickels and dimes by desperate workers.

Without legislation, I fear that's where the so-called logic of the market would lead us. We must also look at the gap between a minimum wage and a living wage; we will get to the actual amount later. There have been attempts to monetize that gap and link the idea of the job with broader inclusion and participation. The Independent Labour Party, for example, used the concept of a living wage in relation to a combination of actual workplace income, supplemented by social supports in education, housing and healthcare. And Catholic Social Teaching clearly states that "In order to protect this relationship between family and work, an element that must be appreciated and safeguarded is that of a family wage, a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently." More locally,

Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC), the stewards of Calgary's Enough for All poverty reduction strategy, are heavy promoters of the concept and reality of a Living Wage in Calgary.

In November, VCC released their latest calculation of a living wage for Calgary. The calculations used by the organization, in conjunction with the Alberta Living Wage Network, looked at the costs of living in various municipalities in Alberta, and developed a wage based on the weighted aggregate of the income and expenses of three types of households: single individuals, lone parent families and two parent families. These expenses included food, housing, healthcare, and childcare. It also included government supports (such as the Canada Child Benefit) and the payment of taxes. Pulling these dimensions together, VCC reported that the Living Wage for Calgary is \$22.40 per hour for a full-time worker.

I recognize that is not a perfect comparison, but it is important to note that the Living Wage of \$22.40 is \$7.40 an hour greater than the adult minimum wage of \$15 per hour. That is a significant gap. Additionally, that gaping chasm also includes folks who are earning more than the minimum wage but less than a Living Wage. Or to put it simply, not getting a Living Wage.

Anyway, back to the comment mentioned at the beginning of this article. Many Albertans still believe in the notion that hard work is all you need to succeed in this province. Just put in the effort and you too can retire early, lunch at the Winter Club and winter in Antigua. This is a solid part of the rugged individualist culture that remains alive and well in Alberta and seems to be gaining traction with Premier Smith's peculiar version of conservatism and parochialism. This culture then corrals the politics of our province and the place of parties on our

misaligned political spectrum. For example, currently, the NDP Official Opposition is pulled to more of a liberal than social democratic position. That churn of culture and politics then provides the context for the development, implementation, and evaluation of policy.

The problem is that the foundations of this type of politics are not true and the policies are reflective of that mythology; strictly having a job is not necessarily the best form of "social assistance". Hundreds of thousands of Albertans are working hard and remain either mired in the indignity of poverty or perilously close to it. Then, there are those who are unable to work. So, no, any job is not the answer.

By itself, a Living Wage is a blunt policy instrument. Naheed Nenshi made that painfully obvious point when he spoke against the Living Wage campaign prior to his becoming mayor. However, I have never heard anyone arguing for a Living Wage, a strictly income-based response, as the panacea for poverty. Indeed, without other complementary initiatives such as childcare, pharmacare, dental care, income replacement programs, measures to support housing affordability, the Living Wage is problematic from a policy perspective. Instead, it is one element of a comprehensive buffet of public policy options and supports which together ensure true freedom and participation. What we need are full-time jobs, with benefits, and a vibrant social welfare state. We can't afford anything less.

Some Winter Riddles

By Joanne Benger

Q. Why couldn't the snowman fall in love?

A. He had a cold heart.

Q. Why couldn't the hockey player settle differences? A He was always skating (skirting) the issues.

Q. Why is winter the best time to buy lottery tickets? A. There is a WIN in winter.

Q. Why is February such a short month? A. He didn't want to march.

Q. Why couldn't the young groundhog commit himself? A He was a groundup hog so he couldn't go whole hog.

Q. Why did the single girl buy so much dried fruit? A. The raisin is she wanted lots of dates.

Q. How did the snowman relax? A. He chilled out.

Q. What do you call a hog that is ground? A Ground pork.

Q. Why wouldn't the ground hog share his treats? A. He was a big hog.

Q. Where do snowmen keep their money? A. In snow banks.

Knock knock. Who's there? Karen. Karen who? Karen a lot about you Valentine.

Continued from page 4

Calgary ASN writer and vendor Andie Wolf Leg, who also had her picture taken along with ASN editor Linda Dumont and ASN writer and vendor Angelique Branston. It was published in their paper a month later, after the completion of the successful name launch that Linda was instrumental in hosting.

After the completion of the launch, I headed home to catch the results of the launch televised on various Edmonton local television networks.

When I mulled over the results of my work in getting the word out to the media, like some politician who'd knocked on so many doors, while campaigning before an election, to see what the results of my PR work had accomplished. There was our ASN editor Linda Dumont on the 'Big 5' television networks, as I could now see her on CTV, giving her take on the purpose of the ASN Name Launch, the paper's purpose and success. All this in a span of one minute at the flip of a dial, there was Linda doing the same presentation that would follow on CBC, Global tv, City tv and Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN).

But there was also a bit more to come from the results of my work. The Boyle McCauley News and their editor, Paula Kirman, ran an editorial piece on the Alberta Street News Name Launch.

Then a few months later, little did I know, I noticed by accidentally stumbling across the internet, that Calgary sister stations CTV and CBC were tipped off by their stations in Edmonton, when I had sent those letters to the Edmonton side, informing them about the launch.

The results of my work paid off immensely, for a total of nine responses out of 16 letters that I had sent to various media. The next week when I came to Linda's door to discuss the outcome of that successful launch, while coming through the back door of her house, there to greet me was Linda as she pointer her finger at me saying in a loud firm voice, "From now on, you're in charge of Public Relations."

Ever since then it's been nothing but an interesting and satisfying venture in coming up with my own innovative programs in helping to raise the public profile of our paper.

Just to name a few accomplishments. I appeared on a televised version of St Albert Council Minutes and Agendas, where I had made three television appearances on SHAW Cable tv in selling former St. Albert Mayor Nolan Crouse on the idea in allowing our paper the right to have ASN vendors selling the ASN paper in the City of St. Albert.

My television appearances took place at St. Albert City Hall's Council Chambers on July 3rd, 2012, October 26th, 2015 and finally May 16th, 2016, where Mayor Nolan Crouse finally seen the light in valuing our contributions and successes as a provincial street newspaper.

He asked me on my final appearance, if I went down to City Planning to ask about a vending permit for vendors and I acknowledged that I was told it was granted, but to this day I haven't knocked on enough doors to get any of the local businesses to give me the green light in allowing any of our vendors to sell in that city, because

of some of the red tape that still needs to be cut because of the stringent guidelines that have to be followed.

The task of holding the responsibility of ASN Media Relations Coordinator, an occupational title that I had conceived, meaning my relations with the media, while interacting with them through letter submissions, inviting them down to our annual events, has at times included notifying them to attend our various events, that include our Annual ASN Sales-A-Thons, International Street Paper Week and a series of ASN Vendor Recruitments that I organized and hosted in Red Deer Alberta when I has sent a letter to the Baraka Day Shelter in that city, hiring seven vendors from that shelter, who were given free papers and vendor badges and were mentored and instructed by me in the art of selling the Alberta Street Newspaper.

Despite the success of organizing and hosting this regional ASN Recruitment drive where ASN Editor Linda Dumont helped me to co-host this vendor recruitment drive to sell our paper in Red Deer, those vendors that were given free badges and newspapers to sell on the various street corners of downtown Red Deer never re-ordered papers for the following month and as an unfortunate result, the whole anticipated major event for hiring newer ASN vendors in Red Deer was actually a disaster waiting to happen!

But for the odd failure in having my hopes up too high, thank God there were more successes in my innovative occupation than failures. That testament for the record showed in my desire, while applying for a vendor's permit to sell the Alberta Street News in the Town of Morinville about 10 miles North of Edmonton.

In the fall of 2012 I contacted Morinville News Publisher/Editor Stephen Dafoe, requesting an interview by telling him by phone that I was interested in becoming the only ASN vendor in town that was willing to bring the paper to his town folk while also with the good intentions of writing about the town's relevant social issues. That same day I went down to Morinville Town Planning and spoke to its staff, asking for a vendor's permit, which was immediately granted to me.

The interview was agreed on for the following day as I was interviewed by phone from my mother's residence in North Edmonton.

A week later that interview was seen in the Morinville News accompanied by a picture of me holding the Alberta Street News standing by one of the street corners of downtown Morinville.

My progress in getting enough customers a year later encouraged me my idea to serve my regular and newer customers needs more conveniently by getting the Edmonton Journal to donate two vendor boxes to our paper and in return for donated vendor boxes, I told them that everyone involved in that process would be named in a future write up that I eventually did, while keeping my promise in return for their added cooperation.

To add to the purpose of my presentation for those donated boxes, I told the Edmonton Journal, that I'd have the NAIT Painting and Decorat-

ing students re-furbish the boxes painting them a yellow back drop color with black lettering, which would read in black lettering Alberta Street News. Then I mentioned to them that the Italian Bakery in Edmonton would drive the boxes out to in front of Friends and Neighbors Restaurant and the A&W Restaurant both located in downtown Morinville.

The idea was inevitably agreed on and I eventually wrote a three part series on everyone that was involved in the process, but our boxes ended up freezing in minus 20 weather during that winter cold snap in February of 2014 so those ASN vendor boxes were in operation for only six months.

We eventually had to close down our operations, after I had been vending there for one year and then later operating those vendor boxes for an additional six months.

Our operations in Morinville only lasted for a total of one year and a half. The two boxes were finally removed, because of this malfunction, forcing me to finally close down our operations. You can't win them all!

But as I excelled immensely in the PR department, so was my passionate support that started to benefit the ASN writers and vendors the more, which included my creative input in designing the newly revised Alberta Street News logo that I had crested and embroidered by Elite Sports Wear on ball caps that were funded and handed out by me at the ASN 13th Anniversary Celebration hosted by ASN Editor Linda Dumont at ST. Faith's Church in Edmonton, back in November 16th, 2016.

ASN jackets with the newly designed ASN logos on them, accompanied with the names of writers and vendors located on the right chest side of those jackets with their occupational titles embroidered below their names and designed by me were handed out a number of months later by me, commending these ASN members for a job well done.

While back in Calgary, I started wearing a different and just as interesting hat, when it came to newer duties as an ASN Media Relations Coordinator. I was residing at the Mustard SEED shelter and discovered a number of interesting homeless people and one volunteer, who just from hearing them speak, from an intellectual perspective, told me that they were capable of writing poetry, or even short story. The following people that I recognized as potential talents, to whom I'd suggested that they take on the task of writing poetry and short stories for our paper, have been published on occasion in our previous ASN issues for the year 2022 include, Mustard SEED volunteer writer Kelvin Pyke, poets Melissa Hill, Deshaawn Vanconnett and Maria Derman.

But more than anything, my heart goes out to that one individual, who made this all possible for me and took that risk to see how far I could carry my duties as an ASN Media Relations Coordinator, from one small step, to a giant leap and on a satisfying journey, where most men haven't gone before. A sincere thank you to my work colleague and ASN editor and friend Linda Dumont!

When I was a child my mother would tell us interesting stories about people her mother knew back in the 'old country' of the Ukraine. Her short tales were very entertaining and they always taught a valuable lesson. I have taken the liberty of turning my mom's short tale into a story.

Be Careful What You Wish For

By Sharon Austin

Grandma Annie untied the brightly printed headscarf she always wore and sat down at the worn wooden table. She was tired and the cold was making the arthritis in her back ache more than usual. "A whole week of thirty below weather is too much for anyone to bear," she grumbled to herself. There was no way to keep the house warm as the cold seeped in around the doors and through the frost painted windows.

Going to the wood stove she poured herself a cup of the strong coffee that was always warm in the coffee pot. She had spent the morning making a huge roaster of cabbage rolls for the family and the delicious smell filled the kitchen. Now she would sit by the open hot oven and enjoy a short rest as she drank her coffee.

Grandma Annie had only enjoyed one sip when the baby in the back bedroom began to wale. Wearily she heaved herself up and walked to comfort the crying baby and give her the bottle of milk her mother had prepared. As Grandma Annie rocked the little one in the old rocking chair her eyes began to grow heavy as she thought about all the work she had left to do. Her son and daughter in law were out in the barn milking the cows and tending to the stock while she kept the stove stocked with wood, cooked the meal, and tended the baby.

"It's just too much for me now that I'm old," Grandma Annie complained. She remembered the good old days when she was young and strong and

she could work in the fields all day while she tended the children. Then she would come back home and milk the cows and put a big supper on the table. How she longed for the old days when Peter had still been alive and they lived in a little house on a farm. Now she lived on a large farm with her son and daughter-in-law and their three children. The school bus would soon be dropping off the two boys and the house would be full of racket as they scurried about like squirrels.

"Why did the boys always have to be yelling and play-fighting and making a mess?" Grandma Annie thought sourly. "There is just nothing to be happy about anymore," she said to herself.

The winters were too cold and summers were too hot. The spring was always too wet and harvesting her big garden in the fall was too much work. The cabbages had not grown well the past summer and the sauerkraut barrel would soon be empty. The cat had not done his job and a mouse had gotten into the drawer where she kept her crochet doilies. The mouse had eaten through two of the doilies leaving gaping holes that could not be repaired. Every year seemed to be worse than the last and nothing good ever happened. Grandma Annie lay the sleeping baby down and went back to the kitchen to stock the stove and set the table for supper. "Take off your boots and don't make a big mess," she scowled at the two young boys who had burst through the door laughing loudly.

"Mom, can you watch the baby tonight while Mary and I take the boys to the hockey game? Grandma Annie's son asked after supper. The boys were jumping up and down with joy so of course she could not say, "No, I'm too tired." She watched them all bundle into the station wagon and hoped that the baby would stay asleep until they got home. Sitting in the rocking chair in the semi-darkness she began to grumble as she rocked back and forth. "Oh, woe-is-me, woe-is-me," she whined, "There is just no reason to live any more, I'd be better off dead. Oh, woe-is-me, I wish I was dead." She cra-

dled her face in her hands as she rocked back and forth.

Suddenly, there was a loud scrambling scraping noise from under the bed. A huge and terrible white form arose and stretched out its long neck. Two huge white wings that seemed to gleam in the half-light unfolded as the creature screeched in a terrible voice. Grandma Annie leapt from her chair in terror as she backed up against the wall. It was the angel of death come to get her! She had wished she was dead and now here he was to take her.

"No! No!" grandma Anne screamed. "I'm not ready to go! Take her! Take her! she pointed at the baby. The creature began to honk and ran for the half open door. Suddenly Grandma Annie realized it was only a big white goose that had wondered in from the yard when the kitchen door was open.

Grandma Annie was still shaking from the awful fright but at that moment she realized it was time to change her ways. Instead of always whining and complaining she would be grateful for all that she did have. For the first time in years she went to the window and stared out at the vast dark sky alight with stars. "Thank you Lord for all your many blessings," she whispered as she bowed her head.

ASN Vendor Vivian Risby



Vivian Risby has been a vendor for Alberta Street News (formerly Edmonton Street News prior to 2011) since the paper was launched in 2003. Vivian sells papers outside the Strathcona Farmers' Market on Saturdays. She is now faced with having to move, so is in need of money for her moving expenses.

Photo by Linda Dumont

The Month of the Heart

By Joanne Bengner

February gets its name from Fetina, the Roman festival of forgiveness and that's why it is a month of love, forgiveness and acceptance. February is Heart Month, Friendship Month Return Shopping Carts to the Supermarket Month Black History Month, Apple Month Adopt a Rabbit Month and Psychology Month. The Canadian Cancer Society promotes Dry February because some cancers are caused by alcohol.

The first week of February is Eating Disorder Week and has been White Cane Week in Canada since 1948. Accept the facts that most people have the shape they are meant to have and the visually impaired can lead full, rewarding lives. The first three days of February are the unlucky time to get a loan so neither a borrower nor a lender be.

February 1 is Robinson Crusoe Day and February 2 is Groundhog Day. "No shadow! Spring is nigh." And "With my shadow I have cast a forecast - winter will last."

February is World Cancer Day as well as Dump Your Significant Jerk day. Get rid of the unwanted to make room for your new love. February 5 the Jewish Tu B Shevet begins at sundown as the Full Moon or Hunger Moon rises.

February 6 is Laplanders Day as well as St. Dorothea's Day which usually brings snow.

February 7 is Charles Dickens Day, Ballet Day and Rose Day. Give a rose and wear a rose. February 9 is National Pizza Day.

February 10 is White Shirt Day as well as International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

February 13 is Oil and Gas Celebration Day because crude oil was discovered at Leduc. February 3, 1947

February 14 is Valentines Day. "Stormy today, expect a year of fine weather. Fine today expect a year of foul weather.

February 15 is National Flag Day in Canada as well as Buddhist Nirvana Day and on February 17 the Islam Laila tai Mirag begins at sundown. February 8 is the Hindu Maha Shivaratri.

February 18 is Pluto Day for Pluto, the ninth planet, was discovered February 18 1930. It has since been reclassified as a dwarf planet like Ceres, Haumea, Makemake and Eris. February 19 is Chocolate Mint Day. Enjoy.

February 20 is Family Day, and International Day of Social Justice.

The rest of the week February 21 -24 is Red Tape Awareness Week. Alberta has a Minister of Red Tape Reduction and in 2021 the CFB awarded Alberta its first A in Annual Red Tape Report Card and praised it for being the most improved province.

February 21 is Shrove Tuesday also known as Pancake

Day and Mardi Gras It is also National Language Day and Beaver Day for on February 21, 1975 the beaver became the national symbol of Canada.

February 22 is Girl Guides Thinking Day, Ash Wednesday and National Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Canada.

February 24 is Tortilla Chip Day as well as St. Matthais Day. He is the twelfth a disciple who was chosen to take the place of Judas after Judas betrayed Jesus.

February 25 is Pink Shirt Day. Support people who embrace their culture, identities and authentic selves and wear a pink shirt to raise awareness of bullying and to let them know they are not alone.

February 26 Intercalary Days begin in Baha'i. February 27 is the Fair Trades Fortnight begins and will last two weeks ending March 12. February 27 is also International Polar Bear Day.

February 28 is Clean Monday the beginning of the Orthodox Great Lent. February 28 is also Tooth Fairy Day and World Spay Day. And now February is over and let's hope we had more than our share of bad weather for "All the months of the year curse a fair February."

Mary evaluates her potential valentines

By Joanne Bengner

1. A is for Al. He's OK just as a pal.
- B is for Bert. He's a proverbial flirt.
- C is for Chuck. He's married my bad luck.
- D is for Daryl His manners are most feral.
- E is for Ed. He's got a swelled head.
- F is for Fred. He is so lazy he could be dead.
- G is for Greg. He won't even shake a leg.
- H is for Harry. Whew! The debt he can carry.
- I is for Ike. He needs a car not a bike.
- J is for Jerry. He's not the sort to marry.
- K is for Ken. He's boring as a gray wren.
- L is for Lou. He'll never say 'I do'.
- M is for Mike. He should take a hike.
- N is for Neville. The morals of a devil.
- O is for Otto. Staying single is his motto.
- P is for Pete. He doesn't even Tweet.
- Q is for Quinton. He doesn't dig hintin'.
- R is for Rich All brag is his pitch.
- S is for Sylvester. He makes my anger fester.
- T is for Tim. No one is good enough for him.
- U is for Umberto. He's st too cute. O!
- V is for Vance. He's all song and dance.
- W is for Wesley. He's no Elvis Presley.
- X is for Xavier. He's just not my caviar.
- Y is for Yule. He's simply not cool.
- Z is for Zorro. Loving him is my sorrow.

From a homeless resident who has a great idea for employing people at a shelter

By John Zapanitis

An unavoidable set of circumstances that made its origins from a long-term dispute that I was having with a female relative, caused my removal as a care giver while trying to look after my ailing parents that's led to my arrival at the Mustard SEED Street Ministry in Calgary's South East industrial end of that city.

Since my arrival to Calgary, where I previously once lived, when it all went down back in March of this year, I've temporarily resided in a number of homeless shelters that once included the Calgary Drop-In Centre, Salvation Army and the last one the Calgary Mustard SEED, but have moved on to Red Deer Alberta.

I'm not one to waste my time and subject myself to the expectations of the street life, so as a fellow human, I have my preferences of who I choose to talk to on a regular basis, when trying to comprehend the everyday norm of shelter living.

One day you can be best friends with the one's you share that table with, over a game of cards and the next day it could be 'all out war' on someone at that table cramming it down your case about how they hate you for inviting a new friend in meeting this bunch that inevitably leads to your end road with the table who you thought were your bro's, but in the game of 'BS' you finally realize that you were playing

with a full deck all along!

Shelters should only be used for re-establishing yourself and planning to get back on your feet, so that you can eventually move on in finding a place called home and employment for those planning a future.

Younger residents, especially, could make plans for a promising future, by not using a shelter as a hangout, but a reset in even upgrading their educational skills in pursuing a vocation and never giving up on their dreams, in getting their duffs out of the comfort zone.

The shelter should only be used for emergency accommodation while making plans to find permanent accommodations where new residents can depend on the conveniences of a free roof over their head, three meals a day and all the time in the world to plan their next move when it comes to putting yourself back together again.

I'm speaking from my own shoes, when it comes to the plans that I have in trying to not get too comfortable with the shelter's surroundings.

Every morning is always going to be part of my determination to set that example for those, who feel their world's crashing down on them.

Many in this shelter have experienced homelessness pretty well the majority of their lives and I can understand why they lack that motivation in answering to the sound of the authoritative voices that tell them it's 6:30 in the morning and that it's time to wake up.

I'm one of the many fortunate ones, where my life was blessed with great supportive parents that were there emotionally for me, who always believed in my dreams, while encouraging me to set my own path, eventually as a writer.

The literary skills that I've naturally developed through the profession of writing while representing many Edmonton community newspapers, have given me leverage in learning about newer areas of life that I wouldn't have otherwise discovered, had it not been for how I developed creatively throughout my 27 years as a free lance writer.

Now I find there are even newer and greater opportunities in contributing some of my creative know how in hopefully making a difference in the lives of those living in the Mustard SEED Shelter.

The creative idea that I had in mind in hopefully making that big difference, evolved from watching shelter residents of the Mustard SEED volunteering their time and effort in cleaning the men's and women's washroom in exchange for getting their laundry done for free by the shelter's staff.

After staying in this particular shelter for about six months, here's were the incentives are for residents struggling to free themselves from this poverty trap.

Now you may ask, 'How could that be possibly done?'. Well instead of using extra manpower such as having the shelter tenants sweeping and mopping the kitchen floors right after dinner is over, including having a group of shelter residents washing and putting the sleeping mats away and then getting other residents to sweep and mop the men's and women's bathrooms in exchange for getting your laundry done for free, here's where things could change around, for those volunteers. They could prosper from the work they've performed in taking the pressure off of Mustard SEED staff, who feel it, if they had to perform the same duties as the residents do, that makes that method more convenient for staff, especially when they are on overload.

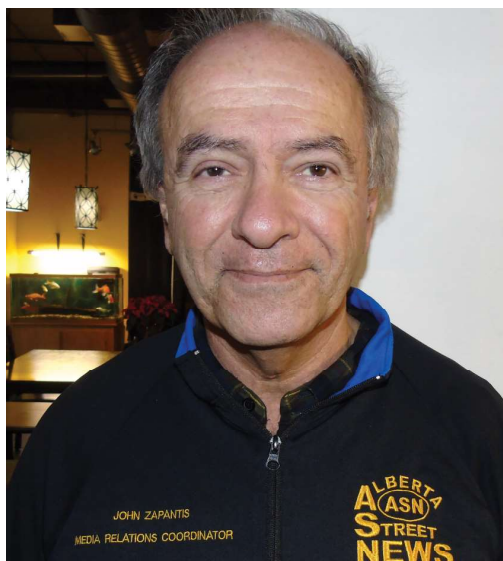
Those same residents, who volunteer in doing an efficient job, should have their working skills assessed by the staff. A new six month work skills janitorial cleaning program could be introduced to benefit homeless residents, who already know what it takes to comprehend what this janitorial program expects from them, because of their prior volunteer efforts at the SEED, while cleaning and mopping the facilities kitchen and bathrooms.

The next essential step would be to hire them on with a janitorial company, who'd agree to give them a substantial hourly wage of \$30 dollars an hour, an eight hour shift and a five day work week.

Then to assure the new residents, who frequently volunteer for this innovative and supportive work assessment program, a group partnership with a property management company would provide six months free rent on a one year lease, for those worker's, who have successfully completed this work assessment program offered at the Mustard SEED.

Half that \$30 hourly wage could be provided by the City of Calgary, who would work out a viable hourly wage agreement with the janitorial firm, each splitting the cost in making this more feasible for the janitorial firm, who would be more encouraged in supporting this innovative idea in not having their company's profits impacted negatively.

By introducing such a supportive program, you'd be assuring the residents that their stay can possibly be a temporary one and that there would be a future waiting for them through the incentive of a wonderful learning opportunity, a stabilized job placement that pays an adequate living wage and a housing program that will offer immediate accommodation that will give tenants every reason to believe that their stay at the Mustard SEED is no longer questionable, but an experience that will assure those who want to turn their lives around. They will have every reason to believe that the future will look brighter once they give themselves a chance to participate in a program that truly believes in their best interests.



Left: John Zapanitis.

The Mermaid Lady In Victoria

Story and photo by Rodney Graham

There's a nice little neighbourhood in Victoria. It's not far from the ritzy downtown tourist area. It's always been known as a progressive, friendly, pleasant area. At one busy corner of the small mall are some benches. At the same level of these benches is a beautiful mural - a Mermaid. Life size, lying down. It glitters when car headlights hit it at night since it has hundreds of glass pieces glued to it.

On my way home from my hike last night I came across a homeless woman. I had seen her in this same place I've described, a neighbourhood not far from where she is now, in the tourist area. I'm guessing because it's a bit safer there than Douglas St., which is also downtown. It's deplorable. Mainly because the police don't protect the homeless - it's the law of the jungle in this town.

She was talking loudly and weeping. Something also not uncommon in this 'beautiful city.' 'I'm abused,' she said, and went on, rambling and crying loudly. I had seen her in that neighbourhood not far away, where the mermaid mural was - which she used to sleep on a bench beside ever night



last summer. She slept each night under the marquee for the strip mall there where there were benches..... I

think it was a fairly safe place for a lone woman, a good looking woman, in here 30's maybe nearing 40. I think she is Indigenous.

I thought of her as the mermaid lady because there was a painting of a mermaid right beside where she slept. One day I noticed a middle aged man scolding her. 'I don't think I'm more important than others,' she said to him. He looked to be well off. Another day I saw three older women sitting near her. I knew they were local busybodies. I thought to myself they were probably not being terribly kind to her either.

She disappeared from there - from that

neighbourhood. Not surprisingly of course... run out of town. Could have been harassment from predators, security, police, and the many trouble making busy bodies. The ones who call businesses, security, and police and falsely accuse poor citizens. The poor always have opposition, persecution. It never ends.

Then I saw her there last night in the tourist area.. What I'm thinking now .. many things actually. But one thing is this: The landscaping around this town is outstanding. Everywhere you go. Beautiful flowers hanging - everywhere - in huge baskets. Boulevards with flowers. They spend so much on it all. But this city is anything but beautiful.

Artists and Poverty

By Paul Stanley Cook, Photo by John Zapantis

I want to say something about the poverty of artists, because sometimes this is a bit different from the garden variety of poverty. Sometimes the ordinary analysis of poverty applies to artists, too. Sometimes it's systemic: exploitation of labour, laws of supply and demand, stigmatization, stereotyping, bourgeoisie prejudice, and so on. However for some artists the analysis is a bit different, a bit unique to their situation. For a start, though I doubt any artist

chooses poverty, for some artists poverty is chosen as the cost for their identity.

The poverty of artists should be understood as a noble poverty, a state of existence resulting from a commitment to high ideals. In this way it is similar to religious poverty chosen by spiritual contemplatives, like the poor saints of whom artists are often close cousins. This may be rooted in concerns that economic dictates will cause an artist to compromise their work for a paycheck. Or, following the ideals of David Henry Thoreau in *Walden Pond*, it may be a concern that material possessions limit an artist's necessary freedoms. It may be a reaction to consumerism. Some examination should be given to simplicity of lifestyles, parallel to Quakers,

or the Amish. There is a similarity to some artist's poverty. Artistic poverty is often the result of a fear that the necessary day job will consume so much time and energy that there is nothing left for creative production. In this way it is quite similar to the choice of singleness over marriage, a choice made by some artists.

I am making no recommendations at this time. I do not wish to suggest any remedies. What I do want is to encourage empathy, the first step in charting a way forward. Those who wish to help this unique class of individuals must first understand what is happening. I hope this points in that direction.

Winter Thoughts from various sources

By Joanne Bengier

1. Nothing sticks in winter like a tongue on a metal pole. Don't lick clotheslines or the TV antenna.
2. Global warming is here so we'll have six months of thawing and ice. Hang on to your hips. Walk like a penguin. Watch for block heater cords strung across sidewalks to trip the unwary.
2. Beware of black ice. It puts cars in ditches and breaks hips. Everything gets cancelled then.
4. You know it's cold when the ice castle is closed due to the cold.
5. The freeze is here. We've got the gulf stream. Well be snowed in for six months. Buy or steal down underwear.

6. Alcohol and gasoline don't freeze at low temperatures but they'll freeze your throat or hands. Don't drink alcohol at outside temperatures or handle either with bare hands.
7. Never eat yellow snow especially in a dog park.
8. When it is too cold for dogs to go outside they have to go inside. Enough said.
9. Some people claim they only smoke to thaw out their lungs.
10. If you don't have a toque or ear muffs put cotton wool in your ears to keep the wax flowing.
11. Go where the snow plough has gone and you won't get stuck.
12. Always carry a battery charger. It will jump start a dead engine like a defibrillator.
13. If you have metal dental work learn how to talk with your mouth closed.
14. Beware. When it is near -40 windows often crack when the

defroster comes on.

15. Good to minus 40 advertising claims usually end up proving untrue. Even bloc heater cords snap.
16. Hand written 'use other door' signs are everywhere. In the cold some doors get stuck shut and others won't shut. Doors do strange things and stores run out of lock de-icer.
17. Keep your house warm with draft excluders and put clear plastic or aluminium foil over windows. Keep drapes closed.
18. The worse the weather the richer you'll become if you are a snow plow operator, a tow truck driver, a furnace guy or a taxi driver.
1. I tell myself this, too, shall end. One day it will be -6 and we'll be wearing shorts and t-shirts again.

Daughters of the Year- Taking Action

For 11 years, Canadians for a Civil Society has presented Daughters Day. A highlight of this celebration has been to honour several Alberta women each year as Daughters of the Year (DoY).

These women are powerful and inspirational examples of women overcoming challenges and making a positive difference for others in a wide range of fields.

To date there have been a total of 75 Daughters of the Year.

Right: The 2022 Daughters of the Year are Cantelle Cluett-Alstad Delmy Garcia, Toni LaRiviere, Mercedes Messinger and Jayanti Negi



Thank you to the Calgary Mustard SEED's Clifford and staff

By John Zapantis

It's been a convenience to have resided at the Mustard SEED located at 7044-44 St Southeast in Calgary.

The homeless residents have the incentives to all the essential amenities that should help us to inevitably bounce back into a normal living environment.

I personally had access to three meals a day that included, breakfast, lunch and supper.

Other amenities provided included a men's and women's washroom consisting of wash basins, urinals, toilets and a showering facilities.

When it's time to call it a night, a

resident's sleeping quarters are available, consisting of sleeping cots for both men and women. Prior to bed time an attendant is available at an amenities room that provides residents with free bath supplies consisting of bath towels, soap, shampoo and additional toiletries that serves as convenient shower in the morning after waking up from a cot, to head out that door in starting your day.

There is a group of persistent hard working Mustard SEED staff members that I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to in recently finding my black jacket that I had forgotten, while leaving it on a chair at a table that I was seated at, one month ago in the SEED's kitchen dinning room, while being distracted by a friendly group of card playing sharks that invited me over for a game of crib.

That forgotten jacket was then discovered by the SEED's staff, who happened to return it safely to the Mustard SEED's front office.

The following morning, I was awakened at my cot, while feeling a light nudging on my left foot, by a low toned friendly voice that followed.

It was that friendly familiar voice of Mustard SEED staff member Clifford, who

then asked me if I lost a Black jacket. I immediately replied, "Yes I did."

He then told me it was waiting for me at the SEED's front office. I immediately went to claim it.

I'd like to sincerely thank Clifford and the SEED's observant staff at the front office for finding and returning my jacket with its valuable possessions inside. Lets also not forget other previous staff members, who sometimes have been known to go about providing other amenities that have served my essential needs.

The following staff that I'm thankfuly acknowledging include: Clifford, Anita, Kevin D., Kevin, Francis, Sarah, Stephanie, Dan, David, Joy, Staff-O, Eden Teofy, Zaki and Rene nd William.

Also not to forget the remaining staff, whose names I may have left out on my check list and additional staff members, who never wanted to be mentioned for this story, I especially thank-you.

These dedicated and hard working staff members are instrumental in helping to advance residents one step further in one day finding a permanent place of accommodation that they can finally call home!

Keeping warm if not stylish

By Joanne Benger

1. The name of the game is warmth. We don't want to get hypothermia or freeze our fingers and toes.
2. We all need a jacket. The warmest are the natural ones – buffalo hides and sheepskins like our ancestor wore, but we have to settle for the less weather resistant man made and washable. The warmest are down filled when dry but they become the coldest when wet. Wool , on the other hand keeps you warm even when wet. Now consider fit. If you wear a loose jacket over a look blouse that is not tucked in the wind will blow up under the jacket right up to your shoulders. Tuck your shirt and sweaters into your pants even if it looks lumpy and look for a jacket that has a tie at the waist or a belt.
3. Now protect your hands. If you are driving you will want driving gloves but if you are waking in the cold you will want mittens so the fingers share body heat. The warmest are leather mitts with removable wool liners that can be dried between uses but waterproof mittens and hot paws gloves work better under some

circumstances. If you have no mittens it is a good idea to carry a spare pair of warm socks for this purpose. Gloves or mitts should be long enough that you have no bare skin exposed at the wrist between jacket sleeve and mitts.

4. A lot of heat escapes from your head so wear a warm toque or hat. I like the Russian style cap with ear flaps that can go up or down with the weather. Toques should be large enough to cover your ears completely and thick enough to keep the wind out. Now add a scarf to make sure your ears and neck are fully covered at all times and there is no bare skin between hat and jacket.

- 5 Now consider keeping your legs warm. Forget skinny jeans or stockings. You need trousers large enough to cover the bulk of long underwear. If you don't have specially made snow pants or ski pants. Fleece pyjama pants, sweats or heavy leggings can double up as warm underwear.
6. Finally we come to your feet. Outdoorsmen often buy boots a size too large so they can wear double socks. Snug boots over nylons will give you cold feet. The warmest boots are made for workers and have removable wool felt liners and slip proof soles. If your soles aren't slip proof you can strap on inexpensive cleats for icy weather. Some boots are water-

proof and some aren't. It is always good to carry two bread bags and extra socks in case your feet get wet. You remove your wet sock and replace them with dry socks. Add the bread bags to keep them dry and tuck your bread bag covered feet into your boots. The bread bags will keep your feet dry as the wet boots insulate them from the cold. Boots should be high enough that you can tuck your trousers in so the cold winds don't go up your legs. Bare ankles can get very cold if you wear capri pants with duckie boots.

Below; Mr. Snowman waves a greeting from Red Deer. Photo by John Zapantis



How Volunteering contributes to a healthy life

by Lavern Charan RN BScN freelance writer.

Having difficulty finding ways to stay active physically, socially and mentally? Join the Edmonton Host Lions Club. There are a host of activities and friendship groups to belong to. This is one of Edmonton's longest running non-profit clubs, providing resources to the less fortunate since 1929. Not interested in joining a gym, here are several ways to stay healthy and active, learning new skills and meeting new friends when you become a part of the EHLC.

- Socializing – meeting new people friends or new acquaintances offers a whole new perspective on life. Being around new and different people allows you to broaden your views on life. Socializing helps minimize depression, keeps away dementia by promoting a healthy brain.

- Reduction of Stress – No more working under pressure, by volunteering you are involved in performing special projects that is created to benefit society. There is a lot of laughter throughout the day, many memo-

ries to be made. The work is very rewarding. “..... doing something that makes a difference in the lives of others”. Lion Terry Kozma, Volunteer

Learning new skills - Lion Janet Robinson commented that “since being a part of the Lions club, I have continued learning and developing new skills”, she went on to say “Since retirement I have been active keeping my computer skills up and my people skills” Janet used to be quite shy and is now pleased with her ability to speak publicly

- Positive Outlook on life - Many people develop their identity through their work and family and by getting up, getting dressed and getting out. It is very easy to stay home after retiring and fade away from society. Our daily contacts have changed, our friend groups have broken, we must now rely on ourselves. As an adult, it is not easy to motivate yourself to meet new people and start new activities. By volunteering your time to help someone less fortunate, provides one with a sense of purpose and pride. You can start at any time, why not now?

- Physical Activity – Volunteering is a good way to stay active. Getting up and out of the house is a good way to get active. Many people who retire, through no fault of their own, finds it difficult to navigate their way through the day. Having a mission to get involve keeps one moving. With age

our muscles begin to decline at a faster rate. Keeping active is good for the health of your muscles, heart, bowels, and mind will love you for it.

Positive self-worth - Another friend shared that she was an introvert, was not very confident due to her shyness. Being a volunteer allowed her to take roles and gave her the ability to become an activist, speaking in large groups of people and challenging herself increased her positive self-worth. EHLC's Director Lion Harry Anderson commented “by volunteering makes a person feel good about themselves, when doing something for someone else that involves a lot of people, association, and groups. It educates you as a citizen” Being active in your community offers so much more benefits. Its great to be a positive change in the world. Since 1929 the EHLC has been a leader in the community and surrounding areas. They have sponsored several other non-profits clubs in Edmonton. Look us up and get involved. The club has something for everyone. We invite you to reach out to Lion Harry at harryand@telus.net

Because of you

By Maria Derman

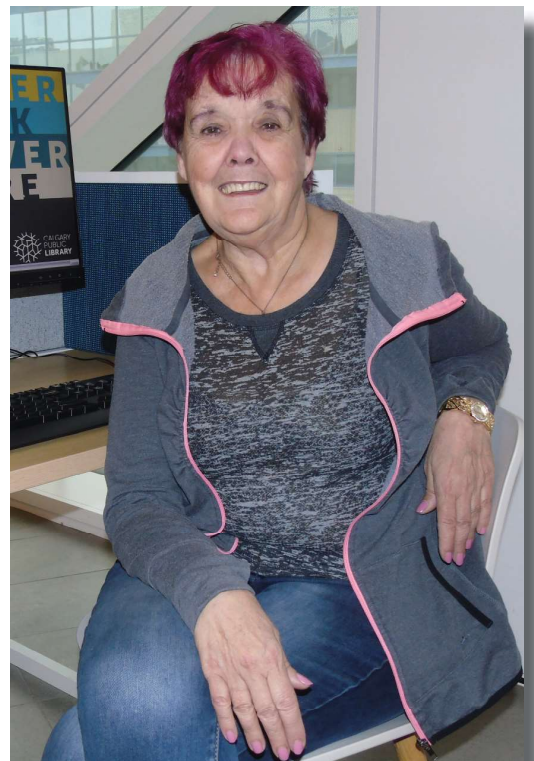
*I awake each day with a smile.
And greet it with a laugh.
The world is a treasure to me.
Because of you.
Every time, I think of something sad.
I replace the thought with you.
My mind is instantly changed.
And my heart is filled with gladness.
Every breath I take is meant for you.
I live this life surrounded in joy.
And I bathe in the promise of your love.
My soul belongs to you.
Each time I see something beautiful.
I want to take it and bring it to you.
My life has so much meaning now.
All because of you.*

Right:: Poet Lisa Derman
Photo by John Zapantis



The City Roast Coffee Restaurant located in Red Deer and its Owner Teresa Reid and staff served this greeting of a latte to ASN's John Zapantis. It was the cafes way of saying to our ASN readers a Happy and prosperous 2023 New Years.

Photo By John Zapantis



Feds funded assisted suicide 'activity book' for children!

By Sharon Austin

Ottawa has gone too far with its assisted suicide regime! The Canadian government has funded a medical assistance in dying (MAID) children's activity book. The Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) children's activity book was first published in July by the group Canadian Virtual Hospice. The book is not intended for children who are themselves seeking death but is "Created for young people who have someone in their life who may have MAID" the group declared in a statement.

The book was written by Ceilidh Eaton Russell, a McMaster University lecturer. The government is trying to promote the normalization of euthanasia by indoctrinating the children. The U.S. magazine National Review slammed the book as introducing Canadian children to the medical killing fields.

The Canadian system of medically assisted death was first legalized in 2016 by a Supreme Court of Canada order and has rapidly become the world's most liberated euthanasia regime. What a terrible thing for Canada to be known for around the world. The Canadian government is saving lots of money that would have been spent on medical care and hospice care for the terminally

ill. That wasn't enough for the greedy government; now they are targeting veterans, the mentally ill, the disabled, and the poor and offering MAID instead of resources and medical assistance to improve a person's quality of life. In at least five documented cases Canadian Armed Forces Veterans were offered MAID by a Veteran's Affairs caseworker after seeking help for chronic conditions including PTSD.

Is that really how our country honours it's veterans! Instead of wasting millions of dollars rolling out something as barbaric as the MAID program the government should be providing needed resources for the veterans, housing for the homeless, help for the disabled, and counselling and proper medication for the mentally ill whether they can afford to pay or not. To offer MAID to the mentally ill is truly wrong! I am sure we all know someone who went through a depression and at that dark time had suicidal thoughts but they recovered and went on to live a happy productive life. To offer MAID to depressed teenagers is crazy! The teenage mind as we all know can over dramatize situations and make them feel at the time of their breakup or being bullied that their life is not worth living. Give them time to heal and grow and it will probably be a whole different story. No government agency or health care provider has the right to suggest that one's life is not worth living and they would be better off dead. Every life does matter and death is not the solution for a countries inability to provide for those who are struggling. Only God knows the appointed time when one's life on earth is through and that is the way it should be. The government has no place standing

greedily beside the bedside of a sick person and counting how many dollars they can save by offering MAID!

In an article published by the Associated Press, Tim Stainton, director of the Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship at the University of British Columbia said the country's permissive euthanasia laws were "probably the biggest threat to disabled persons since Nazi Germany." I foresee a time 50 or so years from now when the federal government of the time will have to issue an apology for the atrocities perpetuated against the disabled, mentally ill, and homeless persons of this time. It is strange how persons at this time can not see this growing evil in our country known as MAID. It is just like the residential school tragedy where people just went along with what the government was doing without question. The federal government is going down a slippery slope and unfortunately we all seem to be sliding down too. Is there no way to stop them!! Is it already too late! Who will they target next to save money? Let us hope it is not everyone over 65 so they can save pension money.

Pope John Paul II said: Euthanasia and assisted suicide are never acceptable acts of mercy. They always gravely exploit the suffering and desperate, extinguishing life in the name of "quality of life" itself. The Vatican reaffirms Euthanasia as an "intrinsically evil act" and released the statement "euthanasia is a grave violation of the Law of God since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person. Everyone who agrees that MAID is another evil in Canadian society will know who not to vote for come next election.

Mary's insights into love and Valentines

By Joanne Bengier

Mary's Valentine message this year – Here's my heart here's my love. Let's go through winter glove in glove

Mary searching for the perfect Valentine. – He should be rich. If he is not rich he should be handsome. If he is not rich or handsome he should be popular. If he is not rich or handsome or popular he should be a good dancer. If he is not rich or handsome or popular or

a good dancer he should be someone else's Valentine.

Mary's all too typical date – To wait is to wait is to wait. Minutes tick on hours go by and he is very late. Patience and concern turn to irritation and then comes the worrying side of it. Maybe he has had an accident. Maybe he is out there bleeding and dying. I turn on the news. No deadly car pile ups are reported.

A car pulls up. I dare not look it could be him. It could be the police with bad news. Part of me hopes it is him at last and he got delayed by something beyond his control Like what? His total lack of consideration shows he values other things more than me. The steps don't

sound familiar do they?

Part of me hopes he is late because of things beyond his control. My perfect and unsullied hero is dead. As they say the good die young. I shall have on my black dress.

Either way it is over. I am still an old maid. Still I could comfort myself with the thought that today's no leaves room for tomorrow's yes.

Mary's soul searching Valentine concerns – How many Valentines can I send to how many men. What if all of them accept me?

Voices of people without housing featured in new film

ECOHH

National Housing Day, November 22, was created in Canada over 20 years ago to draw attention to the crisis of homelessness. Since it began, the crisis has increased substantially.

To mark this year's Housing Day, Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) is presenting a short film featuring the voices of people who have lived with the experience of homelessness. "This is Where We Live" will screen at Garneau Theatre that evening, with a panel discussion following that will include former Edmonton mayor Don Iveson, now a chair of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness.

The film was created by Eric Rice, who has been involved with arts and television for over 35 years. Over several months, Rice met and spent time listening to to eight people with broad and diverse experiences of homelessness. Working with these people, the conversations were turned into a script performed by professional actors, chosen to match the age, gender, and ethnicity of the people.

This approach was used to be able to draw attention to the things people had to

say, without the distractions that might arise from watching ordinary people speaking. Rice feels he was able to gather more substantial comments when the people did not have the anxiety that they would themselves be on screen, so could speak more easily in their conversations with him. Don Bouzek, artistic director of Ground Zero Productions, worked with Rice to create the film.

The film screens at a time when about 3000 people are without housing of their own on an average day in Edmonton and when even emergency shelters do not provide any place at all for at least half of these people. In the past two years a major shelter has been developed to offer 24/7 places to sleep, with other services, but nothing similar is being provided this year.

Nadine Chalifoux, chair of ECOHH, is another of the panelists and has, herself, lived in homelessness in the past. She notes, "ECOHH has been advocating for years with the message that the only way to end homelessness is to build more housing. I hope Eric's film will help more people to understand this reality and add their voices to put pressure on elected leaders to increase the investment in housing."

A teaser for the film can be viewed at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PyWU_yYGycBZ6-OKk3LWUorwALDZCwhb/view?usp=sharing

About ECOHH

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

and affordable housing. ECOHH provided leadership in the formation of the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund in 1999, which now operates as Homeward Trust.

ECOHH presented an annual awareness event, Homefest, for ten years, and 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. ECOHH has presented an annual memorial service for people who have died because of housing challenges in their lives, since 2006.

Eric Rice has been involved in the arts and television for over 35 years, working in community and professional theatre prior to a 22-year career in educational television with ACCESS Network (now CTV Two Alberta) in both production and senior management roles. During that time, he continued to write and produce plays in amateur venues as well as volunteering as a writer and board member for three years for Alberta Street News, a cost-recovery newspaper produced for marginalized vendors in Edmonton and Calgary.

Don Bouzek is the Artistic Director of Ground Zero Productions, which has been producing professional live performances and video for over 30 years, first in Toronto then, since 1997, in Edmonton. Don creates theatre on a variety of social issues. Don has won awards from the Canadian Association of Labour Media for his work with unions, he received an Award of Excellence from the City of Edmonton in 2014, and he is the recipient of an Alberta Centennial Medal for his work in the arts.

It's the Chinese Year of the Hare

By Joanne Bengier

If you were born in 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 187, 1999 or 2011 you are a Hare and this is your year. You are a happy person for you are refined, virtuous and talented but shy as well so you work well with others and do well in business. You are ambitious but many are unaware that you are jumping at every opportunity while keeping your ears open for gossip and secret information. You are compatible with the ram, pig and dog but should avoid the rat and rooster.

The Chinese lunar calendar is the oldest calendar recorded in our history and dates back to 2600 BC. Each year of the calendar

is represented by one of the 12 animals and each of the 12 animals presents a different personality type. The cycle of 12 animals is endlessly repeated in this order: rat, horse, ox, sheep, tiger, monkey, hare, rooster, dragon, dog, snake and pig. After pig a new cycle begins. Last year was the year of the monkey and next year will be the year of the rooster. The animal that rules the year in which you were born is the 'animal that hides in your heart' and is believed to influence your personality.

The Chinese New Year, which is January 22 this year, is celebrated with parades, feasts, and fireworks. The evil spirits are scared of red and loud noises so wearing red and setting off firecrackers will scare bad luck away. Gifts of money in red envelopes ensure good luck in the year ahead.

Some people serve traditional Chinese dishes at this time. Oranges will

bring good luck plenty and a sweet life. Long rice noodles, the longer the better, will give you a long life. Dumplings shaped like ingots of gold will bring money into your life. And should you want a baby boy be sure to add boiled peanuts to the meal.

Even if you are eating Chinese take out, you might want to use chop sticks. It is believed they have been used for over 5000 years. At first branches and big sticks were used to remove food from the cooking fires. Then people discovered that smaller pieces of food cooked faster and they began using smaller sticks which evolved into chop sticks or so the legend goes.

So wear red, make a lot of noise eat your dumplings and noodles with chopsticks and have an orange for dessert. Here's wishing one and all a Happy Chinese New Year and a wonderful year of the hare.