

# ALBERTA Street News

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Burnt trees at Entwistle after the fire.  
Story on pages 4 and 5

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# ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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Burnt trees at Entwistle  
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## Edmonton Homeless Memorial held June 7, 2023

Story and photo by Linda Dumont

June 7 more than 200 people gathered at the Homeless Memorial Plaza just north of City Hall to remember, grieve and honour the 156 people who died in the past year in Edmonton as a result of homelessness. The service included speakers, prayers and blessings, an honour song and music by Farley Magee and Stephanie Burlie. Those in attendance were given carnations to lay on the memorial in remembrance of the people who died. The ceremony concluded with the release of butterflies. Following the service light refreshments of bannock and drinks were served.

The memorial service was presented by Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness. Organizer Susan Watson said, "This has always been a painful event. No one should see their life cut short because they have been without safe, healthy housing. Too often people die much too young when they are in such circumstances. These deaths are unnecessary and should call us to action."

Prior to 2016 identified deaths were about 50 each year. There was a significant increase to more than 100 people in 2016. Numbers have stayed at a high level ever since.

The first memorial service to honour people who had died in Edmonton as a result of homelessness was held in 2006. Over the years of the service, a total of 1411 people have been identified as having died too soon because of not having a safe, healthy place to live.

Homeless people are more susceptible to many health problems. Alberta health services identified more than 1100 people that use homeless shelters in Edmonton and tracked the broad health challenges over a three year period. 80 per cent had drug or alcohol dependence. About half dealt with skin infections or injury and 40 per cent had open wounds. 30 per cent had pneumonia and about half had dealt with drug poisoning. Last fall the homeless in Edmonton's inner city were affected by an outbreak of shigella with 200 cases reported of the infectious disease usually found only in developing countries. Two thirds of those infected required hospitalization. By January, only four cases were reported. From 2019 to 2020 homeless people made 5800 trips to the emergency room with poisonings, falls, and environmental factors like cold and violence as the reason for the visit.

# Hot, Wet July is here

By Joanne Bengner

It is July now, the month in which Julius Caesar was born however it was not named after him until 44 BC, the year he was assassinated. Anglo Saxons called July Hay Month or Mead Month and in Alberta it is sometimes referred to as Gopher Suicide Month because so many of the small animals are on the move and get hit when crossing highways. Drive gopher-alert. July is Baked Beans month and it has proven to be the wettest month of the year in Alberta, averaging 110 mm. of rain. The saying is, "If July be rainy weather, it will rain for four more weeks together." Sara Coleridge wrote, "Hot July brings cooling showers, Apricots and gilly flowers."

July kicks off with July 1st, Canada Day. Wave your maple leaf flag as the parade goes by and dress in red or wear a Canada T-shirt, a flag tattoo, a Canada pin or maple leaf and a Canada baseball cap. Be Canada Proud. Wear your leaf, live by the leaf. Make the Strong and Free Crowd. Enjoy a day of parties, sports, picnics and BBQs and finish up with an evening bonfire and fireworks. Sing O Canada.

July 3 is Full Moon, which the Aborigines call the Thunder Moon or Deer Moon. July 3 is the first day of Dog Days, the hottest days of the year. Dog Days will end on August 15. July 3 is also the Buddhist Asalha Dharma sometimes called Asalha Puja.

July 4 is National BBQ Day, which can end as a celebration of Old Midsummer Eve with people dancing around a bonfire and children scrambling for candy. July 4 is also U.S. Independence day when we think of Washington crossing the Delaware, the Liberty Bell, Monticello, Mount Vernon, the Stars and Stripes, drum and musket and middlemen. Happy birthday U.S.

July 6 is Take your Web-master to lunch Day and July 7 is Strawberry Sundae Day as well as Global Forgiveness Day. "To err is human, to forgive divine." July 8 is Burry Man Day. Wear tight clothes and cover them with as many burrs as you can. Add a hat made of flowers and more burrs. In some areas the burry man collects money for charities and giving money to him is believed to bring good luck.

July 9 is Nunavut Day as well as Sugar Cookie Day. This is followed by July 10, Orangeman's day in Newfoundland. Wear orange.

July 11 is National Cheer Up the Lonely Day. Be the friend someone so desperately needs. July 11 is also World Population Day. In November, 2022 the world population reached eight billion. Of these roughly 37.9 million live in Canada with four million of them in Alberta.

July 12 is Malaia Day as well as Pecan Pie Day.

July 13 is our third Mary Burlie Day in Edmonton. We honour Mary, the Angel of Boyle Street, a humble woman who listened and helped but never judged.

July 14 is International Non-Binary People's Day and July 15 is Be a Dork Day. Celebrate being your true self. July 15 is also St. Swithins's Day. If it rains today it will rain for 40 days.

July 18 is Nelson Mandela Day as well as Ice Cream Day and July 19 is Muharran, the Islamic New year. Happy New Year.

July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong stepped onto the Moon's Sea of Tranquility "One small step for man."

July 23 is Vanilla Ice Cream Day as well as Gorgeous Grandma Day. Share your ice cream with a gorgeous lady of a certain age. July 25 is National Hot Fudge Sundae Day and July 27 is Walk on Stilts Day as well as St. Pantaleone's Day, when we all wear pants in honour of our patron saint of trousers. Well, they do call this the silly season.

July 27 is the Jewish Tisha B'AV and July 28 is the Islamic Ashura. July 29 is International Tiger Day and July 31 is World Ranger Day. July 31 is also Edmonton's Tornado day. Light a candle in memory of those who died in the tornado on July 31, 1987 and pray it never happened again.

## Mary's thoughts about inflation

By Joanne Bengner

1. Thanks to inflation we are fast becoming a nation of the Nouveau Poore. We all need food, clothing and shelter to survive and they all cost more every day. Cut out food and you starve, cut out clothing and you get arrested. Lose your rood and mosquitoes bite you day and night.
2. I hear a lady went out with a purse full of money so she could buy a loaf of bread. The purse was stolen but they left the money behind,
3. I hear another lady bought more than \$200 dollars worth of groceries and they were stolen from her car. She still can't figure out how the robber got into the glove compartment to steal them.
4. I can't afford coffee pods so I am drinking instant coffee. Next I imagine I'll be drinking hot water flavoured with grass clippings.
5. I wonder what poor people are eating. Even bread and water are so expensive. I have begun drinking tap water.
6. I have been stocking up on toilet paper again. It pulled us through the pandemic and I am sure it will pull us through inflation as well.
7. We can't buy second hand food but we can find gently used slightly out of style clothes at yard sales and thrift stores. Viva the retro look. We may look odd but we won't get arrested for public indecency.
8. People are so short of clothes Edmonton has now made it legal for women to go topless in swimming pools. Um, I think I'll pass on that. I am not that poor yet.
9. I still can't understand why there are so many empty store shelves. If no one can afford anything any more, the shelves should be overflowing with items that we can no longer buy thanks to inflation.
- 10 I can't help wondering if we have inflation because they eliminated the penny. The nickel became the new penny, the dime became the new nickel, the quarter became the new dime, the loonie became the new quarter, the toonie became the new loonie, the five dollar bill became the new toonie, the ten dollar bill became the new five and so on.
11. This is the summer of disasters and disaster preparedness is all about buying expensive things we hope we will never need. For heat warnings, by an air conditioner, to combat bad air quality buy an air purifier, to get wildfire alerts, buy a good cell phone. What we need is a cheap simple, well proven disaster remedy that will keep us safe in all situations. Like perhaps "Cover your face with a wet towel and hide under the bed." or "Wear an aluminium pie plate on your head when you go out.
- "12. I just got two scam calls and it cheered me up. It is nice to know there are people poorer than me fighting inflation by trying to make money the only way they can think of.
13. It's a good thing they invented credit cards and debit cards or we would all need larger purses to carry enough money to meet inflated prices. Men's wallets would have gotten so fat they would have needed purses to carry them.
14. If inflation gets much worse I am afraid that the dollar stores will get the way of the five and dimes of yesteryear. We'll be looking for bargains at the five buckarama.





## Entwistle Wildfires

By Joanne Benger, Photo by Linda Dumont

My first ever evacuation was a good experience because everyone went above and beyond the expected. I was totally unprepared when a policeman came to the door on Saturday, April 29 to say Entwistle was being evacuated because there were wild fires on both sides of us. It seemed surreal because the air was clear without even a trace of smoke. I said, "I have no transportation." And the policeman said, "Your neighbour is taking you."

Les and Elaine Bradon dropped me off at the Wildwood Evacuation Centre and continued on to stay with their relatives. Wildwood had drinks, chips and cookies and we were given a 'hygiene comfort kit' with essentials including soap, toothpaste and a washcloth, which I really appreciated. I was registered, booked into the Wildwood Hotel and driven there by a volunteer. Room 37 was basic but clean and the staff gave five star service. Linda Piru from Evansburg was in Room 43 and she drove us to the Evacuation centre for breakfast and updates. For breakfast I got a day's food – three A&W breakfast sandwiches, hash browns, granola bars and fruit plus a jug of coffee to reheat all day long in my hotel microwave. I was there for two nights. May 1 at noon the police came banging on doors. Wildwood was being evacuated. I said, "I have no transportation and the policeman said, "The lady in 43 is taking you." And he

carried my stuff down.

Linda Piru said, "The fire is going west and at the last update we were to be evacuated to Peers, now it is Edson. Next it will be Jasper." She thought we should go to Edmonton instead. That is usually a one hour trip but it took us four hours. We saw road blocks and smelled smoke

and detoured going through Cynthia and Devon. Linda stayed with her son and I stayed the night with my sister. At noon the next day we were told we could go home. We saw no signs of fire along Highway 16 and Entwistle looked the same as ever.

There was a holiday spirit in Entwistle as we greeted friends and strangers alike with, "Welcome back." Everything was back to normal.

I was happily preparing for Saturday's garage sale at the seniors centre when the pounding on the door came at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 4. This time Les and Elaine took me to Wabamum Evacuation Centre on their way to stay with friends. My sister drove out from Edmonton to fetch me and I spent four jam packed days with her. People are so good to evacuees. I felt like a celebrity as I attended seniors chair yoga and meditation classes for free. I went out for Chinese food with the family and I got to baby-sit my niece's grandson. I even went shopping and bought the last air conditioner in the store in preparation for summer.

I said, "I hope I still have a house to put it in." I was told not to worry. There is a tiny widow's house for sale in Thorsby where I went to high school and I could quietly live in it while insurance claims went on. Amazingly, I found this thought very comforting. My future was no longer uncertain and I slept well again.

Parkland County stayed in contact with us evacuees. Sarah Nipshank even phoned once to see if I was doing ok. May 8 we heard rumours that the evacuation was over and phoned her. Sarah said I could return home after 5 p.m. I'd have electricity but the gas was turned off.

The ride back was uneventful aside

from road blocks. At the Entwistle road-block, a friendly sheriff welcomed us home. Entwistle looked the same as usual aside from the fact that long water hoses were attached to fire hydrants and there were lots of traffic cones on the street. Green water containment tanks that held 2,500 gallons were scattered about and there was a huge brown water tower at which Entwistle tanker trucks were filling up with water. Long yellow ribbons that said, POLICE LINE, DO NOT CROSS were tied to all our front doors as a silent reminder that our houses had been looked after while we were gone.

It was only a bit smoky outside but inside the house the smell was overpowering. I opened all the windows to let the smell of burning peat moss out and realized the whole town must have smelled like this during the evacuation.

May 9 I went to the county office to register my return and was given an apple, an orange, an A&W breakfast burger and a \$50 Walmart gift card that had been donated by CN. I really appreciated those welcome home gifts. Shortly after noon, two friendly ATCO men appeared on our street to turn the gas on.

### After the Evacuation

After the evacuation we were not returned home and forgotten. Government at all levels realized it was important that we reintegrate our lives as smoothly as possible. From May 9 to May 20 I participated in the provincial telephone town halls that were held every evening from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. to connect us, keep us informed and answer our questions. People shared concerns about diverse problems including finances, jobs, businesses, livestock, pets, children, health, addictions and student exams. And they were given advice with care and referred to the proper government help.

Those who had been evacuated with nothing but the clothing on their backs were told they could have their drivers' license, I.D. card and birth certificate replaced free of charge at any Alberta registry until June 29. Those who had fled without prescriptions were told all pharmacies were working together and they could have their prescriptions refilled at any drug store in Alberta. The Insurance Bureau of Canada was there to assure us that the wildfire was being treated like any other fire and if insurance policies were lost they would have no problem

in replacing them.

The only government help I have accessed so far since my return is the one time financial aid, which is not taxable and does not have to be paid back. I was very impressed by how flexible the government policies were as they commonly made changes to accommodate all of us.

Initially we were told the payment would only be given to those who had been evacuated for seven consecutive days. Many people, including Yellowhead Mayor Wade Williams, said it should be seven days in total since some of us had been evacuated, allowed to return home and re-evacuated. The Alberta government quickly agreed. We would get the \$1,250 if we were evacuated a total of seven days.

We were told the money would be paid into a verified .ca bank account but we had to tell them that this presented a problem because many rural Albertans don't have e-accounts. We bank in person or by phone and a local man was told he would have to go to Spruce Grove to get a debit card if he wanted his \$1,250. Then the rules were changed a second time to accommodate us. People without e-accounts often aren't computer smart so they informed us the old fashioned way. A notice appeared on the door of the Entwistle post office to tell us that experts were coming to help evacuees claim their credit cards. They would be in Entwistle on Monday, at Evansburg on Tuesday and at Wildwood on Wednesday.

Monday, May 15 I went to the Entwistle Reception Centre and was greeted by Parkland County's Shannon Laackmann, who introduced me to an expert. I showed photo ID and a utility bill with my address and with given my pre-loaded credit card. I realized they didn't overestimate our abilities when I saw that the card was already activated and came with a pin number.

### My Gratitude Journal

1. I am thankful that the police evacuated us so efficiently and kept our homes safe while we were gone.

2. My unending thanks go to the firefighters who worked day and night and eventually saved Entwistle with their firewalls and fire breaks.

3. I feel both thankful and proud of how the local people knew exactly what to do at the Wildwood and Wabamum Evacuation Centers although they had never done it before.

4. I really appreciate the staff at the Wildwood Hotel for making me feel like a valued guest.

5. I am grateful to the anonymous good Samaritan who used a mop to prop open the door at the Wildwood hotel when I accidentally locked myself out.

6. My gratitude goes out to those who so caringly packed the Hygiene/Comfort kits that were given to the evacuation centres.

7. Thanks to A&W for their unending supply of breakfast burgers at the evacuation center. I found them familiar and comforting.

8. I am grateful to all the people who gave me rides as well as those who phoned to see how I was and offered me a place to stay.

9. Thanks to the helicopter pilots who constantly flew over making sure we were safe between evacuations.

10. I am grateful firefighters managed to save Trestle Creek so we still have Alena, the Soup Lady making her delicious soups.

11. I feel blessed to be an Alberta Street News writer. As I shared coffee with John Zapantis and Linda Dumont at Kingsway Garden Mall, I knew the best support system is fellow writers who understand disaster victims.

12. I am thankful to my sister and her family for four wonderful days I spent in Edmonton far from fire and fear.

13. I am grateful for the \$50 gift card from CN given to all evacuees without question and the \$1,250 given to us by the Alberta government after seven days. Evacuation is an unplanned expense.

14. I am very thankful for the kindness shown us by Parkland County at Entwistle Reception Centre after our return as they patiently helped us claim out \$1,250.

15. I am very appreciative of my pre-loaded credit card and I was relieved to learn that like me just under a third of evacuees don't have e-accounts and had to get credit cards.

16. I am grateful to the provincial government for setting up a telephone town hall to keep us posted after our return as we returned to normal life.

17. And finally there are all the thankworthy strangers I met along the way, who listened to my story and said, "Good Luck", two words that said it all. Thank you.

## Some Wild Fire Riddles

By Joanne Bengier

Q. Why did the big wild fire scold the little wild fire? A. It was too small to be smoking.

Q. How did the two wild fires announce their upcoming wedding? A. With fire bans.

Q. Why did the wild fire go out at night? A. It enjoyed a hot night life.

Q. Which of the two potential provincial leaders did Alberta wild fires vote for? A. Racheal Knotley. They like trees with knots.

Q. Why did the boss give so many pink slips this summer? A. It is fire season so he fired them.

Q. Why was the newscaster accused of swearing? A. He kept on saying heck as in hectares burned.

Q. Why couldn't the forest ranger put out the wild fire? A. It was out of his range.

Q. Why did the evacuee croak. A. All that smoke gave him a frog in his throat?

Q. How did the evacuee celebrate Mother's Day? A. With Asthma (his ma).

Q. What did the evacuee do at the Evacuation Centre? A. The Evcu ate.

Q. What is the best highway for evacuees to take? A. EvaQEs should take the QE, too.

# The Summer Cookie Contest

Fiction by Sharon Austin

The soft scent of roses drifted in through the open window and birds sang sweetly from the tall trees that bordered the lot.

"This new house in Appleton Sub-division was a dream come true," Zara thought as she sipped her herbal tea. It was so quiet and peaceful after the noise and crowds of the city where she and Tom had lived for the last twenty years. Now that they both worked at jobs they could do remotely from home, they didn't need to be in the city.

Suddenly, the peace was shattered as her two big dogs, Apollo and Zeus leapt to their feet barking. A moment later the doorbell rang and Zara found three middle-aged women standing at the door. "Hi! We are your new neighbours. I'm Beatrice and this is Bonnie and Bella. We call ourselves the Busy Bees because we're always buzzing about. We are the fun group of Appleton for sure." They all giggled loudly. "We couldn't help noticing that red classic convertible sitting in your driveway. We'd have a ball cruising around town in that beauty with our hair blowing in the wind. Maybe you'd take us for a spin sometime?"

"Oh, no sorry, I couldn't. That's Tom's pride and joy and he only drives it to car shows. It's usually in the garage but we've been so busy with moving in and all. Would you like to come in for a cup of tea?" Zara questioned.

"Don't you have anything stronger," Bonnie joked as they all laughed. As they drank their tea the Busy Bees proceeded to tell Zara all about the people of the neighborhood. "You do not want to have anything to do with Marsha in that run down green house. Her husband's an alcoholic and they are always short of money, Bonnie said sourly.

"That old bachelor in the pink house has a real eye for the ladies," Bella chimed in rolling her eyes.

"You must beware of that old witch that lives in the woods," Beatrice continued. "You probably saw her mailbox with the cats on it and a narrow driveway leading up into the woods on the other road. She is very strange and she has got a ton of cats. My boys went in there just to look

around like teenagers do and she chased them out of her garden with a broom. Then she sends me a note saying my boys were scaring her chickens and trampling on the vegetables. She asked that I not send the boys up to visit unaccompanied. What a weirdo! Guess whose house is getting egged come Hallowe'en." They all burst into shrill laughter.

Zara sipped her tea quietly. There was nothing funny about egging a poor old woman's house. Two wrongs never made a right. These were just the kind of loud aggressive girls she had avoided in high school. It seemed the Busy Bees had never grown up.

Sensing her discomfiture, Bonnie changed the subject. "How are you at baking cookies?"

"I love to bake cookies," Zara said enthusiastically, relieved that the conversation had taken a lighter tone. "Peanut butter cookies are my specialty."

"Great! Then I hope you will enter the cookie contest because someone has got to beat that old Annie Fines who wins every year. You will see her at the market selling wild strawberry jam, baking, and crocheted cats of every color. We never buy anything from her of course."

Zara was glad to see the Busy Bees leave. She did not like gossip and she liked to make up her own mind about people. Some of the nicest people she knew were considered different or lived with challenging circumstances.

Market Day arrived and Zara had her special peanut butter cookies on the passenger seat ready for the contest. She was confident that she would win as she had a new convection oven and a whole internet of recipes at her fingertips.

The first person she met was a sweet-looking senior lady selling wild strawberry jam, garden vegetables, baking and crocheted kittens. She had a hand-painted sign that read: "All proceeds go to Heavenly Paws Cat Rescue."

"So, this sweet little lady was the dreaded witch of the woods and her competition, Annie Fines," Zara thought. Just then a reporter came to interview Annie. "You have won the cookie contest every year for the last fifteen years which is something to be proud of. Should you win again what will you do with your two-hundred-dollar prize? He questioned.

"If I win, I plan to buy some new cat beds for the 23 beautiful cats at Heavenly Paws Cat Rescue.

Remember that these lovely cats can be adopted to good loving homes and I am always looking for volunteers."

Zara's heart was touched. This lovely senior lady and her cats needed the two-hundred-dollar far more than she did. She decided to leave her cookies right where they were.

Finally, it was time for the judges to announce the winners of the cookie contest. Zara was shocked to see her special cookie keeper sitting right on the judges table.

"You forgot your cookies in your car so I put them on the table for you," Beatrice of the Busy Bees whispered hoarsely, "We can't have her win again."

The mayor gave a short speech, then announced the winners. "Once again, Miss Annie Fines wins our cookie contest with her delicious molasses jam-jam thumbprint cookies. It must be that wild strawberry jam that makes them so special. Congratulations Annie and here is your prize. Second prize of a pic-nick basket goes to a newcomer to our fair town, Zara Brown, for her peanut butter cookies.

Annie smiled warmly at Zara as she claimed her prize. The Busy Bees turned their backs and buzzed away, disappointed. Back at home Zara thought how everything had turned out as it should. She was glad that Annie had won and she had already signed up as a volunteer at Heavenly Paws. Life in the country was turning out to be wonderful.

## Gluten Free Peanut Butter Cookies

Ingredients:

One cup white sugar  
One cup smooth peanut butter  
One egg

Combine the ingredients and mix well with an electric mixer.

Shape the cookies into balls.  
Place them on a cookie sheet.  
Flatten down with a fork.

Bake in a preheated 300 degree oven until the edges are crisp - about ten minutes.

# A deer patrol idea for Red Deer and Medicine Hat

By John Zapantis

Would introducing and enforcing a deer patrol in the Alberta cities of Red Deer and Medicine Hat serve a purpose in helping to prevent an abundance of deer from colliding head on with oncoming vehicles, preventing the deaths of both deer and motorists and an assortment of other problems resulting from these head on collisions?

While living homeless in Red Deer for a six month period and having to leave Red Deer, because my six months at the Red Deer Mustard SEED had expired and then moving to Medicine Hat, I've seen my share of deer crossing the many traffic intersections in both Red Deer and Medicine Hat.

Medicine Hat is a much smaller city than Edmonton with a population of over 60,000 and is made up of a twisting and turning river valley wildlife corridor with hilly surroundings, placing it's inner city and downtown core at the bottom of the valley.

While formally staying at the Red Deer Mustard SEED located on 60 street and 54 Avenue, I heard from its many homeless residents stories about deer living at the top of the big hill overlooking the Mustard SEED, which is situated below it in the heart of Red Deer's inner city. Other stories about animal sightings by the homeless included the odd porcupine sighting, skunks and rabbits to name a few. So out of my curiosity in finding out what was out there, I set out on a venturesome trek to see if I could spot some deer for starters and within a week encountered a family of five deer feeding at the top of that hill adjacent from an apartment complex. The sight for my eyes included an antlered father, a mother and three young bucks in the admirable collection.

A month later I happened to be walking from a Red Deer mall at the top of that hill and as I was making a left turn during my evening walk, on my way to head down those stairs that carried you down that hill to get to the Mustard SEED at the

bottom. I jumped a little in my skin, while noticing a tall female deer located a few yards from me, staring straight at me in a nose to nose encounter, while turning that corner as she had her back against a house property fence. I immediately continued to walk on and then noticed a male stag lying down on the grass to my left at a forty five degree angle, staring me down. I assumed that was her spouse watching intently over this female

The male stag was seated down like a lion in the jungle and I immediately realized who was the boss from then on as I continued to show my respect and honor to this wonderful and graceful at peace couple!

Ever since that time, I've gone on to show the ultimate respect for these four legged one of a kind, who have more respect for humans than we do for the deer, who unfortunately at times are on the threatening radar of hunters, when not living in this safe game preserve that I refer to as Red Deer!

Now here's how I got the idea for a deer patrol. One day while out on another long walk, while walking westbound along 60th street, heading off to the Red Deer Mustard SEED for my check in for the evening, I noticed at a traffic cross walk located about 200 feet from where I was walking family of five deer.. I thought it was that family of deer I first encountered on the hill, located about three blocks from where I was currently situated and it probably was because they like to go on long walks away from their usual digs. The whole family of deer stood single file behind each other waiting patiently to cross the road, while cars passed by on both sides. When the coast was clear I signaled to that family to cross to the other side by yelling out to them, "Hey, get going you can all cross the street now."

But the family of five deer all looked over their left shoulders, looking over at me, like they had decided to stay put. I could hear a car coming from behind me at high speed. I turned around quickly, noticing a woman motorist driving towards the intersection. She was about two hundred feet behind me when I decided to use the left hand indicating that she had to stop, then pointed to that family of deer waiting to cross that traffic cross walk intersection. She immediately took notice of my warning, driving slower and gave me the thumbs up of approval, as a way of thanking me for warning her

in time. She slowly drove up to that cross walk intersection, and noticed that family of deer, all in single file, waiting patiently to safely cross to the other side.

Then amazingly, without my help in telling them they could cross the street, the leader of this family herd noticed the traffic had cleared the area and she led her family of deer to safely cross the cross walk to the other side of the street.

It then just dawned on me, what if I wasn't there to warn the approaching traffic about the waiting deer at the corner of that intersection? Would the deer have a more difficult time judging that flow of traffic? From the looks of that situation, it seemed like the deer had better judgement faculties than myself, because they were a very analytical lot that just continued to let the traffic pass by them. Even the lady that was speeding up to that traffic cross walk never seemed to bother the deer. Her roaring muffler seemed to only warn the deer to stay back, so they could move on to the next phase after that woman motorist cleared the area.

There was a tragic incident that took place at the top of the hill along North Red Deer at Gaetz Avenue. I heard the story from a couple, whom I had gotten to know at a nearby eatery. We had known each other, for about a six month period and they shared this unfortunate account of what they witnessed, when a motorist couldn't avoid a deer, and clipped the tail end of the deer with the front end of his vehicle and sent the deer flying head first into a sidewalk along the side of that road.

The couple came to the badly injured deer's assistance. Despite the man's wife making several attempts to lift the deer up, who struggled to stand on all its four legs, it kept falling over. Soon someone called Fish and Wildlife and the deer was later taking away.

That couple speculated that because the deer was badly injured by that speeding motorist, it may have been euthanized, because if this serious injury.

Finally to prove my theory right about, my idea serving its purpose while deer and motorists are directed by a possible deer patrol, the day finally arrived two weeks prior to my leaving Red Deer for Medicine Hat. It was on a sunny Saturday afternoon, when I was walking on the left going south bound on a hill along Gaetz avenue, there to my left, by an

**Continued on page 8**



## Deer Patrol Continued from page 7

embankment coming up that hill and jumping over a guard rail and landing on the sidewalk in front of me was a young female whitetail deer, waiting to cross that street.

No cars were driving in either direction along that street, but soon a vehicle from behind me about to approach within 200 feet of that deer, gave me enough time to get the oncoming motorist to notice us. I waved to him and pointed to the deer of which he took notice. He then stopped his vehicle as the deer noticed the car that had now come to an abrupt stop. I then yelled out to the deer, "Get going." I waved the deer over, like she had understood exactly what I meant and what was actually going on. She indicated this to me, while trotting quickly like a horse over to the other side of that street safely.

The results of my idea were in as far as I was concerned as the motorist cleared the area. I had now served my purpose by warning him and getting the deer safely to the other side of that road.

On May 29th I left the Mustard Seed in Red Deer and headed off by Rider Express to live in the City of Medicine Hat. I live at a shelter, which I'd rather not name as a privacy issue, and since my arrival have seen a family of red deer twice, once during my first week along Kingsway Avenue along the railway yards and then the following week another three red deer under the underpass, walking along the train railroad tracks. Then just recently a single deer was trying to cross the road to my right. I waved and yelled over to the approaching motorist while pointing upwards to the deer up ahead that was now preparing to cross that freeway. He came to an abrupt stop and without any hesitation she immediately crossed quickly to the other side. With these situations, both in Red Deer and Medicine Hat, where I had managed to get the motorists to cooperate in showing the right of way towards these deer, getting them to cross safely to the other side and that tragic incident where that motorist couldn't avoid that head on collision with that poor deer in Red Deer, a deer patrol would essentially serve its purpose in not only protecting the rights of deer, who need to safely cross those deadly streets with the assistance of a deer patrol as an escort that encourages motorists to stop

on the dime when needed. Jobs would be created by the Cities of Red Deer and Medicine Hat that would employ these new guardians of our wildlife environment to work alternate shifts, for the preservation and safety of both humans and animals who would enjoy the benefits of what a Deer Patrol could offer. You be the judge of that one!

## Be Canada Proud

By Joanne Bengner

Canada certainly has bragging rights. It is the second largest country in the world with an area of 9,984,670 square kilometres. Only Russia is larger but Canada has the world's largest coast line of 243,798 kilometres and shares the world's largest boundary with the United States as well as along Hudson Bay, James Bay and the Hudson Strait and Canada has more than half the world's lakes within its borders. This includes Great Slave Lake in the North West Territories, which is one of the deepest lakes in the world at 1401 feet deep.

Canada has an amazing variety of land regions – the Arctic Islands, the Western Mountains Region including the Rockies, the Western Interior Plains, the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence Lowlands, the Appalachian Region and the Canadian Shield. The old saying was, "Canada has everything but jungle and desert." Actually Canada has a mini desert, an area of 15 miles by 80 miles just south of Penticton, B.C. It's annual rainfall is seven and a half inches a year and it is home to cactus and rattlesnakes.

Canada has a population of 37.9 million people. Most Canadians live within 320 kilometres from Canada's southern border with the United States but the population is spread throughout Canada with the town of Alert in Nunavut having bragging rights to being the most northern permanently inhabited place in the world.

Canada's famous coastline includes tens of thousands of islands and more continue to be found and claimed. In 1978 both Denmark and Canada laid claim to a barren Arctic island of 1.3

square kilometres which is situated between Canada and Denmark and is known as Hans Island. On June 14, 2022 what had jokingly been called Canada's Whisky War ended when the two nations reached a peaceful settlement. The tiny uninhabited island was divided roughly in half and Canada continues to be seen as a peaceful nation.

Canadians are often described as humble and polite. Even the name Canada is modest. It comes from the Aboriginal word Kanata or kanada, which means village or group of huts and that is how the great French writer and philosopher Francois Maine Voltaire (1694-1778) saw Canada. When he learned that Canada had been taken from France by Britain he said it was no great loss because Canada was just "a few acres of snow."

In 1678 the Northwest Mounted Police were established to prevent lawlessness in Canada. Their duties included eliminating illegal trade in whiskey, collecting customs duties and calming the growing restlessness among Aboriginal groups. Scarlet uniforms were chosen because the Aboriginals saw the colour red as a symbol of justice and fair dealing and they had respected the British soldiers who came before and wore scarlet uniforms. Most of the early Mounties wore moustaches because at that time it was believed that shaving the upper lip would weaken the eyes. They were mounted policemen and equestrian training for new recruits to the RCMP continued until 1966. Today RCMP continue to enforce federal laws in Canada but horses and scarlet uniforms are only for ceremonial use.

## The Burning of Alberta

Spring skies were greyed,  
The sun a ball of red,  
As hungry flames advanced  
Three thousand nine hundred fled...  
Homes were left deserted  
Evacuees lived in fear  
Would they still have homes  
When given the all clear?  
Where the fire has burned  
Blackened tree trunks stand  
A lasting dark reminder  
Of a fire devastated land.

By Linda Dumont



# August, Enjoy every last drop of summer

By Joanne Bengier

It is August and summer is winding down. Aborigines called this the Green Corn Month or the Flying of Young Ducks Month. Arabs used to call it The Month of the Two Dogs. We have been calling it August in honour of Roman Augustus Caesar since 8 BC. August is Hindu Celebration Month as well as Get Ready for Kindergarten Month and Back to School Month. Our school year was based on rural society so children could help out on the farm from planting to harvesting. During WWII children actually got an extra month of holiday to help with harvesting. The August weather rhyme is "Pale moon doth rain, red moon doth blow, white moon doth neither rain nor snow." Yes, we must enjoy every drop of summer for we can expect the first frost and snow this month. A foggy August foretells much snow in the coming winter.

August 1 is the old Lamas Day derived from Loaf Mass when their first bread was made from the new year's crop and there was a corn ritual harvest festival. August 1 is now celebrated as Emancipation Day for blacks with the three pillars being Recognition, Justice and Restitution. August 1 has also been Swiss Independence Day since their constitution of 1291. Eat that Swiss chocolate.

August 1 is Full Moon, the Green Moon or Sturgeon Moon. There will be a second full moon this month on August 29, a Blue Moon. It occurs once in a blue moon. August 2 is National Ice Cream Day and August 3 is National Watermelon Day. Then comes Gordie Howe Day on August 5. Remember Mr. Hockey as you wear a jersey and watch a game on TV.

August 7 is Holiday Monday, Heritage Day, a civic holiday. Warm weather is a precious commodity in this province so enjoy the outdoors. August 7, 1950 the Canada Special Forces was created in response to the Korean War. Celebrate with a veteran. August 8 is National Underwear Day.

August 9 is International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. Support an Aboriginal group. Wear your orange T-shirt to show support.

August 10 is National S'mores Day. Make some more. Eat some more. August 10 is Duran Duran Appreciation Day as well as play some music as you eat those s'mores. August 10 is World Lion Day and August 12 is World Elephant Day when we remember there are endangered species. August 12 is also Middle Child's Day so celebrate with a sibling.

August 13 is Left Handers Day created by Dean R. Campbell in 1976 to recognize the challenges and accomplishments of south paws. It is genetic and 10 to 13 per cent of our population is left handed. Celine Dion and Justin Bieber are two well known left handers.

August 14, 2003 was the biggest electrical blackout in history when five million people were without power in eastern Canada and the United States.

August 14 is Pakistan's Independence Day followed by August 15 which is Indian independence Day as well as North Korea's liberation Day. August 13 Dog Days end on St. Mary's Day so expect cooler weather. The saying is, "St. Mary's Day sunshine brings good wine."

August 17 is Men's Grooming Day and Love Your Feet Day as well as Thrift Day and Thrift Shop Day. Stretch those dollars and fight inflation. August 18 is National Ice Cream Day. Find cheap ice cream on sale.

August 19, 1942 was the Dieppe Raid so do something nice for a veteran today. August 19 is also World Humanitarian Day and August 4 is Ukrainian independence Day.

August 25 is Banana Split Day as well as Second Hand Wardrobe Day. Dress in pre-owned clothes and eat that sundae. August 26 is Women's Equality Day.

August 27, 551 Confucius was born. He preached genuine human heartedness and said, "True goodness springs from a man's own heart.. All men are born good."

August 30 is the Hindu Rakhi (Raksha Bandhan) as well as Buddhist Ullambana (Hungry Ghost Festival). According to Chinese tradition deceased ancestors spill out to mingle with the living when the doors to the spirit world spring open during the seventh lunar month. Incense is burned and piles of sweets and snacks are left out to appease the hungry, restless ghosts. If the living eat these treats they risk a haunting.

August 31 we remember Princess Diana, the people's princess, the Queen of Hearts, who died in Paris, aged 36, along with her chauffeur and her beloved Dodi, when they were chased by the paparazzi and crashed. RIP Diana and Dodi.

August 31 is also National Trail Mix Day as well as Love Litigating Lawyers Day.

## How dry it was

By Joanne Bengier

1. Alberta's top soil dried up and got blown into Saskatchewan.
2. Unpicked tomatoes became sun dried on the vine.
3. Water evaporated so fast you couldn't fill a bathtub.
4. Firemen's hoses delivered hot air instead of water.
5. Dry cracks appeared everywhere and some were so deep whole towns vanished.
6. Ponds and lakes vanished and became dustbowls. Fishermen dry-fished.
7. Rivers dried up and riverbeds became new hiking trails.
8. Dogs stopped using fire hydrants.
9. Dried up swimming pools became sports arenas as dust wrestling gained popularity.
10. Cows gave powdered milk and chickens gave powdered eggs.
11. China's wet markets became dry markets as all goods became dry goods.
12. Oceans dried up revealing old ship wrecks and viewing them became the new vacation fad.
13. Rain dancers became millionaires before they went into hiding.
14. There were more dust devils than people. Dust bunnies were no longer found just under beds. They were everywhere.
15. Dust clouds rained down more dust.
16. Words dried up in the air and wouldn't be heard until a rain-storm came along and rehydrated them.
17. All wines became dry wines as wet bars became dry bars.
18. Dry runs replaced marathons and became the latest competitive sport.
19. Manufacturers of hair dryers and clothes dryers went bankrupt.
20. At first dryness was rated as a bit dry, dry, dryer, even dryer, even more dry, dryer, driest, more driest, most driest and most driest ever. Then nine new words were invented.
21. Hopeful people wore "Drought Will Out" tee-shirts.

# Two events in one

By John Zapantis

Keeping physically fit and keeping the body moving was this year's theme for the 12th Annual Red Deer PCN Fun Run hosted by the event's title sponsor, the Primary Care Network (PCN). The run and walk event commenced at 9 a.m. on Saturday May 13th at the Canada Square 150 in Red Deer, Alberta.

This year's event differed from previous years, where it was notable for raising pledges for various charities. The event required a registration fee with monies collected from its run and walk participants allocated for the operational costs of the event.

All ages and genders participated in the run/walk from little tots to the middle aged and seniors all the way up to age 94.

The run and walk commenced at 9 a.m. starting off with a 10 km run/walk a 5 km run/walk at 9:30 am, 100 metre's Boogie Babies at 11:00 a.m., 500 metre's Little Surfers at 11:15 a.m., 1 km run/walk at 11:30 am, 3 km run/walk at 12 noon and a 3 km Dog Jog at 1:00 p.m.. The 10 km run/walk route started from Canada 150 square going eastbound along the Red Deer River and all the way back westbound towards the finish line at Canada 150 square.

Prior to the commencement of the annual event, Red Deer PCN Fun Race Director Bre Fitzpatrick elaborated on this year's run/walk event's theme. Fitzpatrick said, "I think the big thing is, we're always about movement, getting people outdoors and getting them moving and having fun. So many connections. There's so many things to have that one day, whether it's through bouncers and playing games day or a run with us, because we're not with Xplore Sports Day. We know there are also elements of that so they're getting connected with a lot of sport organizations to see other ways they can have fun."

Rhonda Davidson, age 49, was getting prepared to run her 5 km route that was about start in five minutes at 9:30 am. She found out about the run through its variety of informative sources over the years, just before she decided to join the run. Rhonda is no stranger to the run and she ran it previously along with her daughter and her niece, who influenced her to join

in on the fun.

On this run, she was especially encouraged to run as a way of celebrating her upcoming 50th birthday that will take place in September of this year. She was determined to have fun while bringing her teen aged daughter and her niece along while running the 5 km course.

In a brief interview with ASN, she gave her views on her support for the run and its participants, Davidson said, "They should just know that anything you do to keep fit and move your body is good. They're already out there. They're already doing great."

Davidson also was mentally and physically prepared for the run. She enrolled for a physical session with a run club in Sylvan Lake for eight weeks, where she paid \$85 dollars to enroll in the club. The physical training really paid off as an early birthday present for the novice runner, who was just out to have some fun in celebrating her milestone by just finishing the whole race course, regardless of where she placed in the race

Davidson said, "I think I started off really strong, stronger than normal. You know, by the end of the race, I suppose it was getting a little bit hotter. I definitely had to dig deep for the last little bit across the finish line."

Despite some hurdles she happened to face, she was more than satisfied with the end result of that race and would do it all over again. Davidson said, "I for sure would do it all over again. It's a lot of fun. You have a couple of moments in the middle of the run, where you think you're crazy and you shouldn't. You're thinking, why are you doing this?, but at the same time when you're done, you catch your breath. You know you look around and you feel really accomplished. You feel really proud of yourself for doing it on the first stretch. There are lots of community members. Some of them aren't really running. They're just there to cheer you on for that last half km. They got signs up. They're just encouraging you. So I think anybody, even if you've never run before, it's just a great experience. It makes you feel like you've done something, a big accomplishment."

While the Fun Run was in progress another event that was partnered with this annual run was the 7th Annual Explore Sports Day adjacent in the Canada 150 square whose event also started at 9 am. The annual event is a notable outdoor

event that promotes and celebrates its various sporting activities hosted by its many individual sports organizations. The purpose of this event was to offer interested youth an opportunity or adults an opportunity for getting involved in any sport of their choice. The sports organizations allowed interested aspiring athletes the option of not feeling obligated to register for a full season.

Some sports organizations and clubs on site presented sports demonstrations for people of all ages, who were interested in observing the judo demonstration hosted by the Red Deer Judo Club. Two members of the club hosted a judo demonstration on a thick rubber matt placed right beside the club's information booth. Those two judo club members were Brown belt Nathan Brehaut and Blue belt Garrett Vanseggen. The demonstration started off with Nathan Brehaut doing a judo flip on club member Garrett Vanseggen.

When the demonstration ended, Nathan Brehaut took some time out for an interview with ASN. Brehaut started judo lessons at age 13. He was influenced by the martial arts, thanks to his Uncle's interest in the sport, who was first introduced to judo while watching a national judo competition that inspired his uncles interests and determination in later pursuing the ancient Japanese martial art and years later, achieving a Brown belt in judo.

His uncle also influenced his mother to join the sport. After his uncle took a break from the sport, he returned years later and is now trying to achieve a Black belt. Brehaut's mother was the one who encouraged him later to take up judo and he has been at it ever since.

Since then, Brehaut has made big strides in the sport. He said, "I'm a Brown belt now. I've gone up to the national level. I'm coaching young kids now. I've been in many competitions all throughout Canada, all the way over to Montreal. I've probably have been in almost fifty competitions."

Brehaut has earned his self-respect and the respect of others, while benefiting from the teachings of judo. He said, "I find judo is a very good sport, teaching you self-discipline and respect for others. It is one of the most respectful sports out there. It has helped me in my day to day life. When things get tough, I just remember the teachings of judo. I can



usually keep calm, cool and collected, because of the sport. In competition you learn to keep cool and concentrate, which is helpful for light stress situations.

Brehaut benefits tremendously from the sport of judo and knows how Xplore Sports Day is going to benefit aspiring sports enthusiasts. Brehaut said, "I think it's a really great event. It brings a whole bunch of sports together. People really look at different sports. They get their views on different ideas of fitness. It's perfect for deciding when your child wants to go and just giving them exposure."

The two events were a big success. Red Deer PCN Fun Run Race Director Bre Fitzpatrick confirmed to ASN that more than 1000 race and walk participants showed up for the PCN Fun Run. She estimates that between the two events, up to 2,000 people showed up that day.

Various prizes were also awarded to runners, who finished in the top three for their categories that included, ages and genders.

The 7th Annual Xplore Sports Day was hosted by the City of Red Deer and organized by its Sports and Recreation Coordinator PJ Swales.

Later that morning Xplore Sports Day presented the Rising Star Sports Awards. The awards are commonly awarded to children 12 and under, who have successfully participated in a sport organization and have courageously made a commitment, while passionately making that effort, or others who've risen above their own adversity in successfully developing the essential skills regardless of how they completed their season.

The two events succeeded in filling that void for runners and sporting enthusiasts, who live for that physical challenge in reaching those mile stones that also benefit the mind, body and soul.

Local Red Deer businesses are commended for sponsoring these two events. The events couldn't have been made possible if it not had been for the support of it many generous local business sponsors and its 250 volunteers, who all kept the two events running smoothly, for two great local causes.



**The 12th Annual Red Deer PCN Fun Run first kicked off with a 10 km run that commenced at 9 a.m. at the Canada 150 Square located in the Capstone Community on Saturday May 13th, in Red Deer, Alberta.  
photo by John Zapantis**



**The Red Deer Judo Club's member, Brown belt Nathan Brehaut age 17, does a judo flip on fellow member Blue belt Garrett Vanseggelen age 15, during the 7th Annual Xplore Sports Day held on Saturday May 13th at the Canada 150 Square located in the Capstone community inn Red Deer, Alberta.  
Photo by John Zapantis**



# Red Deer Transit more efficient and friendlier than Edmonton and Calgary

By John Zapantis, photo by Larry Becker

Riding the buses in Red Deer since I arrived to this city in the last week of November in 2022 has opened my eyes to how unique this transit service is to the City of Red Deer.

This efficient service is significant in terms of its ridership policies. I may add that my experiences riding on Edmonton Transit and Calgary Transit haven't been the best of times with a lot of disappointments that have served as an inconvenience on my part.

Since riding the Red Deer Transit as a senior, I've enjoyed the low cost luxuries of riding a bus at a cost of \$2.25, a seniors fare one way. Then to add to the convenience during my first week of riding the buses, I immediately converted to a bus pass that cost me a registration fee of \$3.00 dollars, followed by a seniors monthly bus pass purchase for only \$62.00 dollars.

Calgary Transit inconveniently subjects its passengers to signing a required form at City Hall, where you're screened for a lower discount on a seniors buss pass depending on what your annual income is but if you want access to an adult or senior monthly bus pass, you can go down in person and purchase those passes for a much higher cost at \$112.00 dollars, without signing a form.

While purchasing a bus ticket in Edmonton would cost you a little less than what you'd pay in Calgary for \$3.60 a ticket and for an adult or senior monthly bus pass you'd only pay \$35.00 dollars, compared to Calgary's astronomically higher price of \$112.00 dollars a month.

Now here's what really opened my eyes to what makes the Red Deer Transit distinctive and a lot more people friendly and efficient than Edmonton Transit and Calgary Transit put together.

I've had quite a number of bad experiences riding on the ETS back where I'm originally from in Edmonton.

The more significant scenarios that I'm about to share with our ASN readership will open your eyes to why I feel Red Deer surpasses the Edmonton Transit System and Calgary Transit by far.

I've tried to wave down the ETS drivers that were known to drive away from a bus stop

25 feet away from me. I was running towards them, while waving them over to stop for me. They noticed me and continued to drive on by both in Calgary and in Edmonton at least a dozen times in my life time in Edmonton and a few times in Calgary, when I lived there for a year at a time in the late 80's and early 90's.

But in the good old smaller City of Red Deer, with a population of 109,489 people, each time I was in a similar situation, they've championed the cause by pulling over for me at least half a dozen times while I've resided here for a duration of six months.

The Red Deer Transit drivers always are courteous and polite in their social interactions with Red Deer's transit riders and never seem to get personal with the riders. Where as in Edmonton, I've had on one occasion experienced a female driver staring me down from her mirror, asking me why I was staring her down and without answering her, subjected me to giving her an answer, when I finally gave in and told her that it was all in her head.

Then she would continue on by replying arrogantly, "Don't get smart." I'd obviously challenged her to the moral debate by demanding that if she persisted in giving me more unwarranted problems that I send a written formalized complaint to ETS management and do my best to have her disciplined. The debate would then end without out her arguing the point further.

One ETS driver around 15 years ago let me have it with a surprise wake-up call on the No 182 Bus going to the Northgate terminal as I boarded it from 92 street and 138th Avenue in Edmonton's Northmount community.

He rudely commented, "How can you look your self in the mirror every day?" I immediately questioned his uncalled for remark? "What do you mean by that and by the way, where do you know me from?"

He just laughed and said, "Take a really good look in the mirror?" I then proceeded to put money into the fare box and continued on walking to the back of that bus and seating myself down. After that uncalled

for incident I wondered if the treatment I was receiving from these rude drivers was the controversial stories I was known for, while writing for the defunct Our Voice Spare Change magazine.

I was quite well known for my short story accounts that were written in that popular street paper back in the early nineties and drivers who recognized me from the paper must have been using me for open season. That's about the only thing I can think of that started to follow me around while being the target of unethical ETS bus drivers over my 27 years as a writer for various newspaper publications after my tenure was complete, while writing for that popular controversial street news paper.

Another interesting experience worth sharing was when I was walking behind a waiting number 9 bus, a few feet away from its tail end when it started to slowly move away from me. I could see the face of the driver looking at me from his rear view mirror, I waved to him to stop, speeding up to him in a run. He continued to slowly drive onwards and I now noticed a small four 4 foot old lady running from behind me trying to catch that runaway bus as well.

I yelled out to this driver and pulled to the right side, and pointed to the old lady so that he'd notice her running from behind me, in order to get him to stop.

This creative method of mine worked, for the driver now came to a complete stop. I told the old lady to move in front of me so that when we both boarded this bus, I'd have some words for this ignorant bus driver.

After she boarded the bus I let the driver have a piece of my mind, "You noticed me in that rear view mirror, while you decided to





leave without me and the only way I could get you to stop was to point that old lady out to you as you looked in that rear view mirror!"

The driver was with out a word, and knew better than to go there and justice was served with my gift of the gab!

Now this is completely foreign to me, when it comes to the various Red Deer Transit drivers that I've seen do this with their passengers, just before any one of these buses gets to the Northbound ride to Sorensen transit station, where the waiting buses are parked, just before the riders, disembark to transfer over to anyone of these buses, prior to those buses leaving for their appointed destinations.

About six blocks in advance of the Sorensen Transit station in downtown Red Deer, when your riding on the number 1 bus, the no 3 the drivers will ask the passengers out loud in sequence, whose taking the number 4, 10, 11, or 16.

Then some passengers will say, I'm taking the 4, another will say I'm taking the 10, 3 or 4 people will say at the same time the number 16.

Once the driver hears that he immediately gets on the radio and informs the awaiting drivers at the Sorensen transit stations that passengers on his bus will be coming in a minute to board those buses that where requested by his passengers.

Now that's state of the art planning, for a city of Red Deer's size something unheard of when it comes to bigger cities like Edmonton with a population of 1,100,000 and Calgary with a population of 1,300,000 as confirmed by populations stats forwarded by the World Population Review.

I'm so impressed with these rare gem unsung heroes that show kindness and consideration behind the drivers wheel and they truly have what it takes to set that moral precedent for Edmonton and Calgary drivers, who by the way, some of those drivers who lack that insight should be sent down to Red Deer for some close observation in seeing how the drivers here treat their customers more like family, than outcasts.

If there was such a program, more people in both Edmonton and Calgary would be riding their buses and their really isn't anything wrong in putting this trail to the test, after all what do both cities have to really loose, if anything!

## A thank you to the Red Deer Public Library

By John Zapantis

The Red Deer Public Library on the fourth floor, where their computer room is located, has served as my temporary office while writing articles for the Alberta Street News.

I came to Red Deer from Calgary on the last week of November last year while continuing to experience homelessness.

My time ran out as a client of the Mustard SEED as of June 1st of this year so I've been living in Medicine Hat and plan to be in that city till August, until I'm quite certain I'll have a place waiting for me that I can finally call home.

But for now I'd like to say that the Red Deer Public Library staff has been more than accommodating in assisting me with all of my needs, from the staff ladies on the main floor helping me to process my free RDPL library card, to the ladies on the 4th floor in the library's computer room teaching me how to operate their copy machines so that I could look over my original stories written for up coming issues of the Alberta Street News, to even making my day while sharing some time with me, while hearing my many stories shared about interesting assignments taken on while writing for our paper.

This city rocks with compassionate and well read people and the staff at this library is what Red Deer as a city feels like when you have a second family waiting for you to hear about your day. It is what all libraries throughout Alberta should be all about.

I'd like to thank those very special people who exemplify that family feeling, like they all do, when they go one on one with their library card holders. They have certainly helped make that big difference, just by observing their empathy for those less fortunate, who just simply need someone to listen to them and not just refer them to the proper book section!

Those staff members on the 4th floor are to be commended along with the rest of the RDPL staff, who never wanted their names mentioned for this story.

A sincere thank you to Janet and Kim and the rest of that incredible staff, who opened my eyes to what it takes in having empathy and a good attitude towards the hundreds of people who walk through those doors of the Red Deer Public Library!

## Worry Free with Freedom Mobile

By John Zapantis

When we start to panic, that's when we start to simply think out of the box. I soon started to realize this when I found out that the Freedom Mobile kiosk that I was looking for in making my monthly phone payment at the Medicine

Hat Mall in Medicine Hat was nowhere to be seen.

That's what I realized earlier, while noticing several rival phone kiosks, including Freedom Mobile's former owner Shaw Cable, who recently broke away from Freedom Mobile and eventually merged with Roger's

So I went over to the Shaw Cable Kiosk and asked one of its employees about the absence from Freedom Mobile that was supposed to occupy the mall site from what I was told, when I looked up this kiosk on the internet, prior to coming to this mall for the first time while first arriving in Medicine Hat as a new resident.

One of the counter representatives told me that Freedom Mobile moved out of the mall and he wouldn't reveal the circumstances behind the move.

I was now worried about what my options were now that this former location was the only place to find Freedom Mobile operating out of in the City of Medicine Hat.

I phoned the Freedom Mobile location in Red Deer's Bower Place Mall, where I'd been making previous phone payments, while last living in Red Deer, from the last week of November 2022 all the way up to May 29th, of 2023.

I realized now that this location had closed down and it was the only Freedom Mobile location that their customers could rely on.

I, at one point, even contemplated taking a Rider Express bus to Calgary to pay my phone bill, where I lived there homeless, from March 9th of 2022 to the last week of November 2022.

That's when I was making consistent monthly phone payments to the Freedom Mobile kiosk at the Chinook Mall in Calgary.

But of course you'd have to be insane to think that purchasing a two way bus ticket from Medicine Hat to Calgary through a Rider Express fare, costing you a \$180 dollar return fare and then adding the expense of adding on that \$43 dollars just to pay your monthly phone bill, would all add up to a total cost of \$223 dollars. All this just to pay a \$43.00 monthly phone bill.

So I did the most logistical thing and phoned the Freedom Mobile Kiosk in Red Deer's Bower Place Mall, where I'd always take my phone payment, when I last lived there in May 28th of this year.

Thanks to my good Freedom Mobile Phone Representative Mr. Christian Flores, who tutored me by phone on how to activate my monthly phone payment online, by first suggesting that I go to google on my computer and type in Freedom Mobile phone payment and then go to Express Payment while clicking that link to activate my payment form, which I did while successfully making my first ever online phone payment.

My worries are now over and instead of going to a mall to make a payment, my payments are now a click away from my laptop and thanks to Freedom Mobile Phone and the freedom from worries!

# Agendas and Mandates

By Timothy Wild

In the run up to the federal elections of 2006, 2008 and 2011, much was made of the so-called “hidden” agenda of the Conservative Party under Stephen Harper. The Liberals, together with other non-aligned liberal democrats, argued that Harper’s campaign platform was just a ruse. Critics suggested his articulation of the electorally conventional motif of “socially liberal, economically conservative” was simply a Trojan Horse designed to beguile unsuspecting voters, and once in office the Conservatives would unleash an unremitting attack on individual, social rights – particularly in terms of contentious and divisive moral issues.

Obviously, this didn’t happen. Harper had a long history as an acolyte of Preston Manning, had been a Reform MP, led the National Citizens Coalition and was clearly open about his ideologically based economic views. He was also not overly vocal about his moral views. There was no “hidden agenda”. The overt agenda was to obtain power to make our country’s wealthy even wealthier. It was designed to implement and institutionalize a right-wing economic agenda. Case closed.

In the recent Alberta provincial election, I would argue that, once again, there was no “hidden agenda”. Premier Smith is quite open in general about her retrograde views of economics and politics. She would like to implement and institutionalize a right-wing economic agenda too. However, the contents of that agenda – while not hidden – are certainly not clear. During the election Smith seemed to waffle on what was in play during the campaign and what wasn’t.

Yet despite this lack of clarity in terms of policy direction, scope and content, when the UCP won the election on May 29, Premier Smith indicated that she had a “strong mandate” from Albertans. I disagree with the validity of this claim on a couple of grounds. First, what did she get a mandate for? Second, in a two-party race, with a low-voter turnout, does Premier Smith actually have a strong mandate or is she simply

the winner of a close election?

Turning to the first point, did Premier Smith get a mandate for her platform, did she get a mandate not to do as the NDP would have done or did she get a mandate for ideas she has mused about both in the distant and recent past when not premier? Much was made of Smith’s not responding to questions about her previous comments on paying for elements of healthcare out of the individual’s pocket. The Premier also made comments about taking Albertans out of the Canada Pension Plan and creating a more expensive, perhaps less solid Alberta pension plan. I don’t think these issues were front and centre during the election campaign. They seemed to be off the table. Therefore, how can Smith claim a mandate for these extras? The UCP clearly won the election. Premier Smith has a majority of seats in the Legislature. But I don’t think she has anything near a strong mandate to introduce legislation that is contrary to the interests of either the common people, our common home or the common good.

There is also a second point that I think needs to be addressed; the low voter turnout. Although the UCP reaped 52.5% of the vote, compared to the NDP’s 44%, the actual voter turnout was a troubling 59.5%. Numerically, this does not seem like the foundation of a strong mandate. Some have suggested that the low turnout in such a highly important and contested election was due to progressive conservatives staying at home. Apparently, these folks could not support Premier Smith’s brand of confrontational and populist conservatism but nor could they bring themselves to vote for the NDP. This might have had an impact. Or, maybe, silence is assent. However, I believe that the electoral system, particularly this one with two generally centrist parties, did not appeal to many of the electorate, both those who voted and those who abstained. Many voters voted against the vision of the “other” party as opposed to being true believers. Perhaps voters did not see an electoral choice that aligned with their views? As mentioned before, I believe that Proportional Representation (PR) would help increase voter turnout as there would be more electoral options and a greater recognition of the equity of votes. I voted for the NDP based on

my assessment that they were “okay” and a far-sight better than the UCP. If the election was held under PR, I would certainly have voted for the third-place Green Party.

It seems to me, then, that although she won the election, Premier Smith does not have a strong mandate to implement an ideologically based right wing agenda. I am sure that she will push for issues left unspoken by the UCP in the election campaign, but to say she has a strong mandate is certainly a stretch. Like Prime Minister Harper, Premier Smith did not have a hidden agenda and has always been open about her views of the scope of government in contrast to the private sector. She was, pre-election, vocal in her beliefs, many of which reflect her Wildrose pro-enance, combative style and her past life as an acolyte to Preston Manning. But given that she did not overtly campaign on these issues or opinions, it will be difficult to argue that the people have given her a “strong mandate” to pursue strong ideological reforms. She does have a mandate. She won the election. But she certainly does not have a mandate for ideological initiatives uttered sotto voce or when she was safely bubbled in the chattering sphere of shock journalism.

However, the framing of mandate or strong mandate will not matter given her majority in the Legislature. Our current electoral system ensures such an oddity. She can build further firewalls to prevent the government in Ottawa from infringing on provincial rights. She can push towards the decidedly retrograde step of privatization of some medical services. She can pursue a made in Alberta pension plan, even though current management of Alberta public sector pensions leaves a lot to be desired. She can maintain the fire sale policies relating to natural resource royalties and corporate taxation. She can overcrowd classrooms and diminish public education. Mandate or not, the UCP will try to implement an overt radical political and economic agenda based on a specious claim of a strong electoral mandate. Preston Manning must be proud.

Ultimately, though, Albertans on the social, cultural and economic margins will pay the price of the punishing agenda associated with Smith’s ideologically based Alberta Exceptionalism.



# First impressions can be misleading

By Angelique Branston

It is easy for one to make a snap judgment - a first impression of whomever we meet or see. This is partly instinct to assess those around oneself and it is important for survival. We need to know whether to cross the street to avoid someone who looks a little sketchy... I have seen personally three people who saw a very inebriated man mumbling to himself and bursts of unintelligible screams. One person walked clearly across the street, the other two were engrossed in a conversation and did not see the man. These two people were master, the other one called emergency. While some snap judgments are very good and makes our lives safer, unfortunately these same snap judgments can be detrimental to ourselves, others and indeed society as a whole. There are many variables, many things that make it so we should at the very least be willing to have a second look and a second re assessment.

Once when I was watching the grocer-

# My First ever Air Conditioner

By Joanne Bengert

The summers of 2021 and 2022 had more than their share of heat alerts and I was among those who suffered through the heat without AC. In 2021 I thought it was just a one of, a freak year and it wouldn't happen again. I hear that more than 200 Albertans died of the heat that summer and more than 600 British Columbians. When 2022 looked like another hot year I decided it was time to get AC but the shelves were bare. I was too late.

I coped the old fashioned way using water, ice and the fridge. I chilled all my cosmetics in the fridge but I never kept my underwear in the fridge like Marilyn Monroe's character in *Some Like it Hot*. I would freeze wet face clothes and use them to wipe my face and hands but never soaked my feet in pails of water with ice cubes like my neighbor did. I would walk around with a wet towel wrapped around my head but I didn't wear wet t-shirts like bikers do. I even tried going to bed soaking wet with wet hair after a shower and sleeping with wet sheets but it was a losing battle. No matter what I did I would have to escape the heat and live like a mole in my basement. I would go down at one or two in the afternoon and remain a prisoner, sleeping on a camp bed until the house cooled off. At 2 or 3 in the morning I usually could go

ies being scanned in, the clerk seemed very grouchy and her voice was clipped. I paid and thanked her, and sat down waiting for my ride. The clerk went to the information desk behind me and made a personal call. I could not help but overhear that she was having problems with her older son. I could have taken it personally and groused at her. (I saw someone else call the manager about it with another person another day). It is much easier to lash out and back. Perhaps one day I will be able to always respond nicely and with compassion, for now it is sporadic, as I am trying to unlearn previous training. Also we are all taught certain prejudices by those around us, our family, friends, school, and television. Not one of us fits into a mould perfectly. Our color of skin and nationality merely shows off to a small extent our ethnic background. It does not show the experiences that we have survived. It is merely the surface.

There are some disabilities that are not perceived at first glance. I have been told by many that I have a volume control problem. I think I am talking normally or excited, and to those around me I am coming across a grouchy and argumentative or I cannot be heard because I am to quiet, or that I am giving the silent treatment, when I have gone temporarily mute.

Another example is that I have a fifteen year old dog. He is very sweet, gentle, and clumsy.

back up and sleep in my own bed.

I tried to keep the house cool in all the ways I could. I closed the drapes and windows by day to keep the heat out and opened them in the evenings to let the cool night air in. I placed a milk jug full of frozen water by the fan so it would blow cold air, I hung wet laundry around the house to cool it off. I spent my time battling the heat but no matter what I did it was a losing battle. The temperature never stopped climbing and I would be forced to go down to the basement.

This year thanks to the evacuation, I was in Edmonton May 2 before the heat wave started and using the internet we located a store that still had air conditioners in stock. I bought the last one. I live in a tiny house that is just under 500 square feet so I decided the portable AC that cooled 400 square feet would do if I kept the porch and bathroom doors closed. I expected to just take it home and plug it in like an air purifier but found that it came with a hose like an overlong Slinky toy. It was called an exhaust hose and its job was to attach the AC to a window by using a window slider. The slider was a metal board-like thing with a hole in it just big enough for the Slinky to crawl through. The directions said it could be cut to fit the window but I never learned how to use a saw.

The slider wouldn't fit any of the proper windows in the walls, but miracle of miracles, it was just the right length for the storm door's window. After half a dozen tries I got it fitted into that window and attached the hose. The

The other day I brought him with me to the market. He loves to visit with the people. He gets pets from some. It makes his day especially when he gets lots of pets, gets to see children and the occasional treat. Now there was someone who talked with me, they spoke kindly to him and bought a paper. Disco was straining his head desperate for a pet from the nice person so when the person turned and started to walk away he went forward and grabbed very deliberately at her pant leg. It is something that I have been trying to teach him that he cannot do that because it is perceived as him possibly attacking someone. It is not seen how he is meaning it. He thought that upon catching this person, they would turn around and pet him as my son, Disco's previous owner, used to do. Instead he terrified the person to whom he was trying to show love and affection. He did the same thing to another person who is very used to dogs and he was met with pets and affection. So we need to be more knowledgeable about whatever it is we decide to judge. Sometimes it is lack of understanding that can twist and cause misunderstandings and hard feelings. Even when we cannot help our first impression, we can give time for the other to explain themselves or the situation.

only problem was the front door was now not usable as a door. Fortunately, I have a back door so I put a big sign on the storm door "Please Use Back Door".

The AC was all set up and I plugged it in and turned it on. Nothing happened. Back to the instruction book. The plug has a red reset button which has to be set to make the AC work. I set it. Nothing happened. Then I realized I had to program the AC with the remote that had been hiding in the box. Eventually through some miracle, the AC began blowing cold air into the room. I set it at 23 because I don't want to freeze. I want to breathe.

The house was cooking off nicely and I was looking forward to a relaxing evening watching TV. I sat on my recliner and turned on the TV. I then realized the AC was so noisy I couldn't hear what was being said and I couldn't relocate either TV or AC because the TV is all hooked up to cable and there is no other window suitable for the AC. Well, I rationalized, they do say reading books is better for the mind than mindlessly collapsing in front of the TV and I've been meaning to cut back on screen time. Sometimes life is a trade-off.

Still it ended up as a good life with AC. I go to bed in the cool and wake up in the cool with lots of energy after a good night's sleep. The AC has a thermostat and clicks on and off just like the furnace so I get to watch lots of TV again. If it clicks on in the middle of a program I just switch the AC off for a while.

# Pre-med student volunteers at the Mustard SEED

By John Zapantis

Showing sensitivity and kindness to the Red Deer Mustard SEED's homeless, who need to be served with the essentials, is what one medical student major, Barbara has developed, during her orientation, while helping out at the local shelter located at 6002 54 Avenue in Red Deer, Alberta. Alberta Street News has agreed not to use Barbara's last name, but her first name and no photo, primarily to safeguard her privacy, as recommended by the Mustard SEED'S volunteer, employee's privacy policy. Barbara, age 20 has done most of her growing up in the United States, but was born in Toronto Ontario.

Her qualifications and skill set while helping out at the Mustard SEED, show her diversity, where she previously, completed her university studies in both a Bachelor of

Science and Psychology degrees. Barbara is the middle child of four children. Some of her influences in life, were instrumental in her passion and determination in helping people, who could benefit from her developed skills in making that big difference. Those significant people include Michelle Obama the wife of former American President Barack Obama, former United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Barbara's mother and her older sister.

In an interview with ASN, she elaborated on the main purpose of why she has decided to pursue the medical field as a doctor. Her decision was influenced by God's calling as she attests, along with her passion for helping people in despair. Barbara said, "I have always wanted to help others. I aspire to be a doctor."

She attributes her concerns for helping people in despair to her late father, who was battling cancer at the time, Barbara said, "My father dying from cancer made me more compassionate and empathetic towards others."

The determined and very persistent medical student will be starting her pre-med program in the fall of 2023. She has benefited immensely while serving the homeless

clients here, while fulfilling a number of duties from handing out blankets to homeless residents, loading bathroom towels into the shelter's basement cupboard, opening up lockers for shelter residents and even hearing the personal stories of the homeless and their tragic losses and rise above adversity, while getting to know the clients one on one.

She has benefited immensely in her orientation to serve the Mustard SEED's shelter clients, Barbara said, "The clients all have a unique story with similar circumstances. I was very open to observing and gaining knowledge needed to maneuver the situation."

This up and coming promise to society, who has touched the hearts of Mustard SEED's homeless, has a simple answer for turning the scenario around, when clients at times are emotionally down and need her emotional support. Barbara said, "I keep a smile on my face, when approaching the clients, when they seem distressed."

Finally to end this story with words of advice to students who aspire to walk in her professional shoes, when making that big difference, Barbara said, "I would advise students to stay focused and aim high."

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## About the Birds and the Bees

By Rodney Graham

Where have all the bugs - and all the birds gone? Before you say something like, 'it's nice without the mosquitoes and spiders,' I have to tell you it's an alarming sign. In 1962 Rachel Carson wrote a book called Silent Spring. It was a warning about our civilization slowly destroying life on earth.

'Avian researchers say habitat loss is a big reason for birds vanishing—but then, a 2015 study said domestic and feral house cats kill over 2.6 billion birds annually. Studies on birds killed from striking windows is also staggering: somewhere around 624 million, while automobile strikes accounted for another 214 million dead birds.' - Source Weekly. But there are other reasons for the destruction. Business, commerce, and


ruthless greed.

When I think of it, as I did today, I remember my father. One time especially, when I travelled through Saskatchewan, I would visit him and my stepmother on their hobby farm where they retired in Saskatchewan. He was quite an outdoorsman and loved nature all his life. One time, before he passed away we took a drive out into the fields and he parked on top of a hill. We talked about a lot of important things - our family history, even talked about activism, and of course, about nature. Then he told me of how the agricultural industry had changed. Now it was becoming an industry of big corporations and how they were doing something incredibly bad. Insecticide.

'They're spraying more and more,' he said, 'The rate they're going there will be no life on earth. They have to stop.' He also mentioned other things - Air travel for one. Do a Google search about the increase in air traffic...

I think the problem is very simple actually. Business and commerce - and greed. No matter how much people complain it will continue to get worse. It's the same with social injustice. The business community will stop at nothing with their war on the poor. And the middle and upper class are in full agreement with them. The homeless are also dying off unnecessarily. Perhaps not like the birds and the bees, but they are dying of things like pneumonia way too often. The average lifespan for the homeless is 56 years old, non homeless is 78.

Although billions of birds and insects are dying unnecessarily, you could say they are more fortunate in a way. They are not tortured. The war on the poor is incessant, brutal, and malicious. The so called good guys won the war long ago - but they insist on revenge. The suffering of these people is unimaginable. And it's totally, completely unnecessary.



**Fundraising Gala celebrating the  
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