



A view of the hampers being assembled by the Salvation Army for local families in need. Despite a shortfall in Adopt A Family participants due to rising costs of living, all who applied for a hamper this Holiday season will receive one, according to the organization.

— Ken Kellar photo

All hamper applications will be fulfilled despite shortfall: Heathcote

More from A1

has increased over years past, where Heathcote said donations are up 50 percent as the public starts to catch on. Heathcote said those and other donation drives have been extremely helpful to their cause this year, which the Salvation Army is thankful for.

“[Other donations] have been staying on par,” he said.

“We’re very happy about Stuff A Cruiser. It came in with some extra numbers this year that we’re very grateful for. We’re still tabulating toys at this stage of the game. We don’t know how many more we need to buy right now. We normally do have to prop up that supply due to the fact of age differences. There are usually age gaps that show up at the last minute that we try and fill.”

While donations continue to come in, and Heathcote said there are usually unexpected donations and drives that come in during the season he can’t

account for, he acknowledged that many in the district are struggling to make ends meet, meaning more and more people are coming to them for help.

“We’ve seen a lot of working people coming asking for help where in years previous, you know, the number was opposite,” he explained.

“There weren’t so many working people coming in saying, ‘hey, I just can’t make ends meet.’ So that is the difference this year. People are biting the bullet and stepping up and asking for help. And we’re more than happy to be their help.”

Heathcote said the Salvation Army still has to purchase some perishable items that get included with the hampers, such as potatoes and carrots, before they go out for Christmas, and with a generous donation from the Beyak Automotive Group, each hamper will once again receive a turkey to go along with their holiday dinner. However, there is still a need for, and time to make, donations to help

support families this Christmas. Heathcote said there are still volunteer opportunities to ring the bells at one of the Salvation Army’s kettles set up around town, and volunteers can contact him at 807-291-0012 or fort.frances@salvationarmy.ca. Outside of volunteering, he urged those who had the means to make a donation to the Kettle Campaign, or directly to the Salvation Army itself.

“The people that have those donor letters sitting on their desk that they’re planning to fill out, I’m encouraging them to pick up a stamp and drop it either in the mailbox or they can drop it off at the Thrift Store all this week, all next week,” Heathcote said.

The Salvation Army’s Christmas Kettle Campaign runs until December 23, 2023.

Plunge into the new year with the Voyageur Lions Club

By Allan Bradbury
Staff Writer
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Assuming Rainy Lake is adequately frozen by New Year’s Day, the Voyageur Lions Club will continue the annual tradition of their polar plunge with fundraisers plunging into the icy waters of Rainy Lake.

Bill Michl is organizing the event for the Voyageur Lions. He says they’re hoping the event grows from last year, which was the first year back after the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Hopefully we’ll have a few more than last year,” Michl said. “We’ve got six groups signed up so far but I don’t know exactly how many are in each group and we’ve had a couple individuals express interest but haven’t picked up pledge forms. I’m assuming we’ll have about 20 people.”

The mild fall, however, has made the event a little difficult to nail down. The need to have several people in a relatively small space to ensure the plunge is done safely means the ice needs to be pretty thick which is not necessarily the case around Rainy Lake so far this year.

“What I’m hoping for now are good ice conditions,” Michl said.

The club is hoping the plunge and other events can help replenish its coffers.

“Our budget is kind of shot because of the pandemic,” Michl said. “So we didn’t have any advertising in the papers or radio. We’re just hoping our social media posts get attention and we’ll be in better shape next year.”

Plungers can raise funds for the lions club which then uses the money to go towards different worthy causes around the



There’s plenty of fun being had in the seconds before hitting the ice cold water in this file photo from the January 2020 Polar Plunge. The chilly fundraising event is once again being held by the Voyageur Lions Club on New Year’s Day 2024.

— File photo

area or they can fundraise for their own charity and split the proceeds 50-50 with the Lions Club.

“Anybody can choose whatever nonprofit or charity as long as it’s a registered one. When they jump we split 50-50 on the proceeds or they can jump for our club too,” Michl said. “But most of them go for another charity and then the organization that raises the most funds, we give them an extra \$300 for their efforts.”

There are also prizes for costumes if the plungers choose to

wear one.

One example of this is Fort Frances Lakers player moms Missy Nelson and Beanie Lowes who will be fundraising for the Lakers for their plunge.

Registration for the plunge starts at 1 p.m. on New Year’s day, Jan. 1 at La Place Rendez Vous. Michl says the hotel restaurant won’t be open, so spectators will need to bundle up.

Anyone interested in taking the polar plunge should contact Bill Michl at 807-276-1334 or bmichl226@gmail.com.

The Northwest Catholic District School Board

NOTICE OF MEETING

Google Meet and In-Person

Fort Frances Board Office & Dryden Board Office

Tuesday, December 19th

@ 6:00 p.m. CDT

Any person who plans to join the Board Meeting is asked to email shammond@tncdsb.on.ca no later than noon the day before the meeting.

Additional assistance is available by calling 807-274-2931 ext.1222, or in writing to 555 Flinders Avenue, Fort Frances, ON P9A 3L2.

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Season's Greetings

THE FORT FRANCES TIMES OFFICES WILL BE CLOSING

at noon Friday, Dec. 22 and we will not be publishing any papers the week of DECEMBER 25 - 29.

Publishing will resume Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024.

PLEASE NOTE: Obituaries will be uploaded to our website as we receive them. Obituaries and death notices can be emailed to obits@fortfrances.com

FORT FRANCES Times

Mark your calendars & get ready to celebrate with a little

SWEET Christmas Spirit

Friday & Saturday December 15 & 16

Each participating business will have a ballot box for a chance to win a **Sweet Christmas Spirit prize of a bottle of delightful wine along with a delectable dessert.**

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The Sweet Christmas Spirit is sponsored by both the FFCC & BIA

Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce

Business Improvement Association B.I.A. FORT FRANCES

By Elisa Nguyen
Local Journalism Initiative
Reporter
enguyen@fortfrances.com

The Boys' Drumming Group has been a source of pride and connection for many students at Robert Moore School, and the Ojibwe language club for elementary school students has also engaged young people in a love for learning language.

"The number is just growing and growing," said the presenter at the RRDSB board meeting on Dec. 5 about the drumming group. "And that's twice a week, it's not like once a month or every now and again. It's twice a week and these kids are just buzzing."

Originally, the drumming group began with only 4 students but has since grown to fill the gym.

"It was a full house in there, which is so great to see. We have kids from all over the school from all the grades. And now with the girls in there too."

Now that the participation numbers have steadily increased, more supervision and helpers may need to be added, noted the presenter.

"You can feel the buzz in the school that we've got a drum group going, so it's exciting," the presenter said.

Towards the end of the 2022-2023 School Year, staff reached out to Jay Morrison to help fix the drum and to begin a drumming group for boys.

It was difficult to find the history and name of the drum, the presenter said. After conversation and consultation with elders, Morrison, and many others, it was decided

that they could give a new name to the drum.

Finding an ideal location for the drum is important as a dry room has caused the drum hide to split in the past.

The first performance and drum reveal was during a powwow that happened last spring, in partnership with the local Indigenous communities.

On Remembrance day, the Robert Moore School drumming group also presented opening songs.

Most recently, only a week before the board meeting, singing and dancing was introduced to the drumming group, adding diversity in how the young students participate in the group.

Some boys participate by dancing around the drum, bringing loads of energy and spirit to the performance.

At the board meeting, several updates from the Ojibwe language club were also presented.

"One of my goals with my program in general was to expand what I'm doing so it's not just advocacy for children care, I also wanted to look at bringing programming into schools that were inclusive of everybody," said Erika Jourdain, education liaison for Weechi-it-te-win Family Services.

One of her biggest priorities was to lead simple and interactive teachings in an environment where kids are more likely to retain information, especially when working with young students from kindergarten to grade 3.

"So that they're retaining the information but also having fun and being exposed to language itself," said Jourdain.



Students at Robert Moore School participate in the drum group that has been running at the school and helping to promote a love and interest of the practice, according to a presentation made to the Rainy River District School Board

on Tuesday, December 5, 2023. The drum group and Ojibwe language club are both helping to promote better understanding of traditional Anishinaabe traditions and culture.

– RRDSB photo

As a parent herself, she felt the importance of language programming in schools. Jourdain stepped up to the plate and facilitated conversations to get the logistics of the program running in schools.

Although she is not a lan-

guage speaker herself, knowing only several words, Jourdain acknowledged her friend Darcy for their help in providing resources and activities in the Ojibwe language program.

"I was extremely excited to be brought on here," said

Darcy. "It's that missing age group that I absolutely adore. I like the early years, and those ages, and it was just a perfect opportunity. And I've never been happier to help and engage in this age group who absolutely just love the

language of love learning."

In the new year, staff will be looking at ways to potentially expand the program, such as having meetings more than once a week, but for now, they look forward to building a consistent routine.



Students in grades seven and eight within the Rainy River District School Board get hands on experience with the skilled trades as part of the Techways Program that encourages them to explore and potential pursue careers in those high-demand fields.

– RRDSB photo

Techways provides early exploration and opportunities in skilled trades sector

By Elisa Nguyen
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The Techways Program has provided elementary school students with an introduction to the skilled trades through hands-on learning over the past 5 years.

The program meets future needs for more people in the skilled trades workforce and prepares students for newly implemented technological education requirements for graduation. It also positions skilled trades and apprenticeship as a first choice pathway alongside other fields people traditionally think of.

"It's been really wonderful to see what Techways has done in the last five years," said Kathryn Pierroz, newly elected chair for the Rainy River District School Board (RRDSB), at the meeting on Dec. 5. "You not only inspire kids in the skilled trades but are creating opportunity."

To give an overview of the program, Techways Coordinator Marlon Douglas, said they serve approximately 400 students. Classes of upwards 20 young learners focus on grades 7 and 8.

"I very much enjoy what I do, because I find the kids seem to enjoy this and bring joy," said Douglas.

Douglas drops in on classrooms and begins by setting up equipment such as saws and building tools. His sessions always begin with a safety talk, something that students may find boring but that Douglas

emphasizes is very important.

"For me personally, I take it very seriously," he said. "I personally try to give a culture in my classroom that if we can do it safely, that we won't participate," Douglas said, adding that no serious injuries requiring medical help have happened over the past 5 years of the program.

In addition to safety, Douglas also believes that learning should be fun. He uses an instructional framework that allows students to learn by being guided through the process, which allows them to develop confidence over time by doing things themselves.

Robroy Donaldson works closely with Douglas on the Techways program. His official title is Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program Recruiter and Experiential Learning Lead at RRDSB.

Adding to Douglas' point, Donaldson said the Techways program is "ahead of the curve" considering the upcoming changes in the skilled trades industry.

"Anyone that pays attention to the Ontario news knows that there is an increased focus on developing a skilled trades workforce, meeting that very real need, but there's other reasons beyond that, why we would want to have people encouraged to consider the skilled trades and apprenticeship as a program."

Techways equips students to be prepared for new technological education requirements that will be implemented next fall.

Currently, many students can

graduate without having taken a tech education course. The grade 8 class that Douglas currently works with will be the first cohort that will require a grade 9 or 10 technological education credit to graduate.

Students' decision making on future careers can be influenced by any adult in their life, including parents or classroom teachers, Donaldson said. The message that the skilled trades can be a fulfilling career is a message that rings true and that both teachers and parents can share with their kids.

Many working in the skilled trades sector have demonstrated fulfillment and happiness in their career, and research has shown that trades people benefit from work-life balance compared to other fields.

"If we aren't inviting our students to at least explore and consider the trades, on par with some of the other pathways that we traditionally consider, we are leaving the door closed," he said.

"We tend to gravitate towards doctor nurse teachers—good things—but we also are learning to appreciate the people that keep our lights on, keep us warm, keep our cars moving, things like that."

Techways works closely with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD). Students are able to work as a trial apprentice and build on their interests to explore and choose a pathway while they still have the support of their family, schools and community.

In grade 8, at Robert Moore

School, one student began his exploration of the skilled trades by working on a bicycle maintenance project. This fall, he is now "working on the big tires" as a trucking coach apprentice at Peterbilt—only one of the many success stories seen by the program.

As part of their promotion activities, Techways has also partnered with Confederation College to host a summer skilled trades camp for the ages 10 to 15, focusing on topics such as culinary, sewing, in-design, welding, and others.

The program allowed stu-

dents to work with a variety of tools to build and innovate. The partnership with Confederation College allows young students to learn from the teachers who may become their instructors one day, and to work in the facilities where they may study in the future.



Fort Frances local Piper Miller commits to play NCAA Division III hockey for Marian University Sabres

By Elisa Nguyen
Local Journalism Initiative
Reporter
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In the following school year, Piper Miller will face one of the biggest changes of her life and see her dreams come one step closer to reality. The former Fort Frances Muskies hockey player is preparing to graduate from her senior year at Pilot Mound Hockey Academy and has committed to play NCAA Division III hockey for Marian University Sabres beginning in Fall 2024.

While playing collegiate level hockey, Miller will also work toward attaining her bachelor's degree in psychology, a career choice rooted in her desire to give back to the sport. "It's gonna be a bigger change than what I'm used to for sure," she said. "But honestly, I think my family has helped me prepare for it as well as my friends... So I think I'll be as prepared as I can be for that and not let anything knock me down. I just gotta keep working."

Miller's relentless dedication to the sport paved the way for her to play in the Forward position for the Sabres in Wisconsin.

Her first introduction to hockey began at the young age of 4 years old. Before her move to Fort Frances in 2013, Miller excelled in Ringette as a young girl. Her minor hockey career took place with the Fort Frances Girls and Women's Hockey Association and then she graduated to the Fort Frances Muskies in Grade 10.

"Witnessing Piper's growth, both on the ice and academically, fills me with immense pride," said Miller's father Craig, who coached the U13 Competitive Leafs team for the Fort Frances Girls and Women's Hockey Association, alongside Ray Allam, when his daughter was part of the division. "Piper consistently poured 100% effort into every practice and game. Piper's enthusiasm for her teammates' success was unwavering, making her a leader on her teams." Miller's mother Nicole, her biggest cheerleader, has also been heavily involved in her minor hockey career as a team manager and hockey board member, and an active girls hockey volunteer.

"She had a few offers and the decision was hers to make, we are just thankful that she has chosen a school and hockey program that is close enough to home so we can continue our travels to watch her play



- Argylle (PG-13) Henry Cavill, Bryce Dallas Howard
- The Chosen: S4:E1 NR Shahar Isaac, Paras Patel
- The Beekeeper (R) Jason Statham, Emmy Raver-Lampman
- Wonka (PG) Timothee Chalamet, Gustave Die
- Migration (PG) Kumail Nanjiani, Elizabeth Banks
- Mean Girls (PG-13) Angourie Rice, Renee Rapp
- Anyone But You (R) Sydney Sweeney, Glen Powell
- American Fiction (R) Jeffrey Wright, Tracee Ellis Ross
- Poor Things (R) Emma Stone, Mark Ruffalo
- Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom (PG-13) Jason Momoa, Patrick Wilson

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“I think I’ll be as prepared as I can be for that and not let anything knock me down. I just gotta keep working.”
- Piper Miller

and we look forward to the next four years,” Nicole said.

For her final two years of high school, Miller moved to Manitoba to attend Pilot Mound Hockey Academy, a facility that contains a hockey arena, curling rink, and recreation areas for training.

Students live in dorms but attend a public school outside of the academy. Miller's favorite part about being in the academy is meeting people from all over the country. "It's such a great experience. We get to learn about each other and get close with people you wouldn't think you'd get to meet in your regular life," she said.

Around 5 seniors on the girls team at Pilot Mound Academy, including herself, have signed with teams in the States to pursue their schooling and hockey at a collegiate level.

Miller considered various careers all related to sports, such as becoming an athletic therapist, but still finds herself most interested in sports psychology. In her experience, many athletes believe the stigma that "mental health isn't a thing."

Sacrifices to play higher level sports often requires young athletes to miss school, sometimes for up to a week, and fall behind in their studies compared to their peers. The pressure to perform well on the ice and keep up with peers is something that not many understand, Miller says, adding that it could lead to negative thought patterns and further issues that impact athletic performance.

formance.

"Mental and physical, they go hand in hand. If you're not doing mentally well, you're most likely going to get physically injured while playing or practicing," she said.

This year, due to several collisions on ice, Miller had a few injuries herself that have impacted her ability to play at her fullest. "That's a completely different mental battle than anyone actually thinks, unless you go through it," she said.

"I want to give back to the sport I grew up in," she said. "There's a lot of athletes like me that didn't get help or didn't have the right mentality growing up."

The realization that there are teammates who may be facing the same thoughts and feelings as yourself was an eye opener for Miller. When doctors may not understand the source of pain and mental burden faced by athletes, the need for specialized psychologists is needed more than ever, she said.

Sometimes, having support outside of the sport is also critical for mental wellbeing, Miller says, noting a friend back home in Fort Frances.

"They're my outlet, they're my escape, they're my support when I don't feel like talking to my teammates here," she said.

Over her hockey career, Miller had many coaches that helped shape her into the player and person she is today including Brad Cousineau, Ray Allam, Mike Bodnarchuk, Les Kaun, Emily Martin, Amy Pen-

ner. Dylan Grinsell and Nicole Clarke.

Her biggest advice to young people figuring out their path in life is to follow what your heart wants, not necessarily what other people expect you to do.

"I played a lot of sports and I had a lot of different loves for a lot of different sports. But I always find myself going back to hockey," she said. "I've just had to stay true to myself and once I did that, everything was a lot more clear and a lot easier to kind of navigate your way through."

"It's just trusting yourself. You can tell when someone truly has a love for a game and when they want to keep playing and when they want to push for that next level. And you can tell when there's someone that's kind of like, 'oh, I don't know how I'm feeling about the sport anymore.' ... You're self-reflecting and then coming to terms with it."

Lastly, to athletes looking to push themselves to the next level, Miller reminds them to take tryouts and practices seriously.

"It's okay to have fun but don't be stupid about it because everybody's watching. It doesn't matter who but everybody's watching it. Everyone has connections... it doesn't take long for something to get back to a coach."



Muskie alumni Piper Miller is progressing in her hockey career, by joining the Marian University Sabres team.
- Submitted photo

IN MEMORY...

A listing of local charitable organizations.

Alzheimers Society of Kenora/RR District

Box 837, Kenora, ON
P9N 4B5 • 800-682-0245
Executive Director
Rossana Tomashowski

Arthritis Society

1093 Barton Street
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5N3

Canadian Cancer Society

1093 Barton Street
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5N3

Canadian Mental Health Association

-Fort Frances Branch
Box 446, 612 Portage Avenue,
Fort Frances, ON P9A 3M8
274-2347

Canadian Mental Health Association

- Older Adults Program
414 Scott St, Fort Frances, ON
P9A 1H2 • 274-9400

Canadian Red Cross

P.O. Box 1023
Dryden, Ontario P8N 3E3

Community Living Fort Frances & District

340 Scott St, Fort Frances, ON
P9A 1G9 • 274-5556 ext 19

Diabetes Canada

101-730 Syndicate Avenue South,
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7E 1E9
Ph. 807-577-4232

Emo & District Hospital Auxiliary

Box 505, Emo, ON P0W 1E0

Fort Frances Community Chest

c/o Joelle Blanc-Paull,
822 Williams Avenue
Fort Frances, Ontario.
P9A 0A5

Fort Frances Curling Club

300 Eighth Street East,
Fort Frances, ON P9A 3M5
274-6667

Fort Frances Girls/Womens Hockey Association

Box 238
Fort Frances, ON P9A 3N1

Fort Frances High School Endowment Fund

522 Second Street
Fort Frances, ON P9A 1N4

Fort Frances Meals on Wheels

720 Thompson St.
Fort Frances, ON
c/o Gabby Hanzuk 274-3764

Fort Frances Minor Hockey

Box 306
Fort Frances, ON P9A 3M7

Fort Frances Museum and Cultural Centre

259 Scott Street
Fort Frances, ON P9A 1G8
807-274-7891

Fort Frances Public Library

601 Reid Ave, Fort Frances, ON
807-274-9879

Fort Frances Sports Hall of Fame

c/o Memorial Sports Centre
740 Scott Street
Fort Frances, Ontario P9A 1H8

Fort Frances Tribal Area Health Services Inc.

Behavioural Health Services
601 King's Hwy.
Fort Frances, ON P9A 2X1
807-274-9839

Fort Frances Volunteer Bureau

c/o Sandra Lange
140 Fourth Street West
Fort Frances, ON P9A 3B8
Telephone: 807-274-9555

Friends of Kids Sports

c/o Gordon Taggart
909 Williams Avenue
Fort Frances, ON P9A 2R7

Gizhewaadiziwin Health Access Centre

Box 686, 1460 Idylwild Drive,
Fort Frances, ON P9A 3M9
274-3131

Heart and Stroke Foundation

2300 Yonge Street, Suite 1300
P.O. Box 2414
Toronto, ON M4P 1E4

Kenora-Rainy River Lung Association

401-18 Winford Drive, Toronto, ON
M3C 0K8 • 468-8466

Kidney Foundation of Canada

Northern Superior Chapter
P.O. Box 20043
Northwood PO
Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7E 6P2

Knights of Columbus

209 Victoria Avenue
Fort Frances, Ontario, P9A 2B8

LaVerendrye Hospital Auxiliary

110 Victoria Avenue
Fort Frances ON P9A 2B7

Rainycrest Auxiliary

550 Osborne Street,
Fort Frances, Ontario P9A 3T2

Rainy River District Victims Services Program

c/o Peggy Loyie
P.O. Box 683, Fort Frances, ON
P9A 3M9 • 807-274-5688

Rainy River District Women's Shelter of Hope

Box 818, Atikokan P0T 1C0
807-597-1447

Riverside Foundation for Health Care

110 Victoria Avenue,
Fort Frances, ON P9A 2B7
Allison Cox 274-4803

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Ronald McDonald House Charities

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Royal Canadian Legion Branch 99, Emo

Box 762,
Emo, ON P0W 1E0

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 29, Fort Frances

Box 819,
Fort Frances, ON P9A 3N1

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 54, Rainy River

Box 272,
Rainy River, ON P0W 1L0

Salvation Army

242 Scott Street,
Fort Frances, ON P9A 1G7
(807)291-0012

Sister Kennedy Centre

401 Nelson St.
Fort Frances, ON P9A 1B3

Tamarack House

Medical Centre, Suite 501,
984 Oliver Rd. Thunder Bay, ON
P7B 7C7 • 684-7799

Thunder Bay Regional Health Science Centre

980 Oliver Road,
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6V4
807-684-6000

The Northwest Catholic District School Board

75 Van Horne Avenue, Suite B
Dryden, ON, P8N 2B2
807-223-4663

The Retired Teachers of Ontario Foundation

18 Spadina Road, Suite 300,
Toronto, Ontario M5R 2S7
Harold Huntley 807-274-6239

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Spray Park
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Fort Frances, Ontario, P9A 3P9

Townshend Theatre

c/o Town of Fort Frances
Civic Centre
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