By Daniel Vazzoler

Centretown is now home to world champion curlers after the Rachel Homan-skipped Team Canada won the 2017 CPT World Women’s Curling Championship in Beijing on March 26.

The team out of the Ottawa Curling Club on O’Connor Street had a perfect record of 13-0 throughout the event, capped off by an 8-3 win over Russia’s Team Sidorova in eight ends in Sunday’s gold medal game.

Members of the winning rink returned to Ottawa the night after the championship on a flight from China, and were greeted by a throng of friends, family and well-wishers.

In the final match of the tournament against Russia, Team Homan blanked the first end before scoring in back-to-back ends to take a 3-0 lead. Team Sidorova scored a single in the fifth, but Homan’s three-point sixth end put the Canadians in a commanding position.

The Russians scored just one in the seventh end before the match ended with Team Canada’s two in the eighth. Homan, along with third Emma Miskew, second Joanne Courtney, lead Lisa Weagle and alternate Cheryl Kreuzizak, were crowned world champions.

“How did ‘world champion’ sound to Homan?”

“It sounds pretty amazing,” the 27-year-old skip said during an interview after the game. “My team worked so hard for this. We’ve been at Worlds now four times (including a 2010 appearance at the World Junior Championship) and to finally bring back the gold for Canada, and stop the drought, we’re pretty excited.”

She added: “We really wanted to bring back gold this time, so that we could make a statement going into the Olympic year — no matter who represents us (in 2018).”

The Ottawa Curling Club has shown the pride they have in Team Homan. At the historic downtown rink, there’s a wall dedicated to the championship banners. “Every time they’re on TV, it’s Team Homan from the Ottawa Curling Club,” and it’s like the best advertising ever, said club president Matthew Kellett.

“We’re hugely, hugely proud of her,” he added. “We’re pretty excited.”

A world championship banner. “It sounds pretty amazing,” the 27-year-old skip said during an interview after the game. “My team worked so hard for this. We’ve been at Worlds now four times (including a 2010 appearance at the World Junior Championship) and to finally bring back the gold for Canada, and stop the drought, we’re pretty excited.”

See Local on page 11

Local farm supplies Ottawa’s top restaurants

By Michael MacKinnon

The five Centretown restaurants that recently made Canada’s 100 Best restaurant list share something else in common — their support for local suppliers.

The list was released at the beginning of March, with five downtown restaurants placing between 46th and 75th place: Fairouz, a Middle East-themed restaurant on Somerset Street West, Elgin Street’s Beakta, “molecular gastronomy” specialist Atelier in Little Italy, Bank Street’s Fauna, which offers a “New Canadian” menu, and the stylish Riviera on Sparks Street.

Juniper Farm grows its crops in a field along Chemin Shoulder, just north of Wakefield, about 30 kilometres north of Ottawa. The farm is owned and cultivated by Alex MacKay-Smith and his wife Juniper. Together, they run a certified organic and “bio-dynamic” farm. A holistic, ecological and ethical approach to farming.

They’ve been running Juniper Farm for the past 11 years. Three years after planting their first crops, Les Fougères, a popular restaurant in nearby Chelsea, approached them with an interest in buying their produce.

“Jasper is going to start something similar,” the 27-year-old skip said during an interview after the game. “My team worked so hard for this. We’ve been at Worlds now four times (including a 2010 appearance at the World Junior Championship) and to finally bring back the gold for Canada, and stop the drought, we’re pretty excited.”

See Local on page 11

Juniper Farm grows 75 different vegetables and multiple varieties of each, allowing restaurants a wide range of choices and the opportunity to cook creatively.

“The big reason why we work with so many restaurants is because I think we realized how much we liked working with the chefs,” said MacKay-Smith. “Much like the top-tier chefs, Alex and Juniper are getting creative with the fruits and vegetables they grow. The couple strives to grow the richest, high-quality food packed with nutrients. Every seed planted, and every vegetable harvested, is treated like a work of art. “Giving it to these chefs is like giving it to a master artist — especially the best chefs in the city,” said MacKay-Smith. “So you get to see your food transformed into a culinary masterpiece in front of your eyes.”

See Fresh in page 2

Somerset House proposes new look

By Olivia Bowden

Ottawa residents are getting their first look at revitalization plans for Somerset House — one decade after the heritage building partially collapsed and was left crumbling.

But concrete plans for the building won’t be known until the city’s built heritage subcommittee meets on April 13 to discuss the proposed changes — depicted in renderings created by Chmiel Architects — that were submitted earlier this month.

This is the first time significant changes to Somerset House have been conceived since damage was done to the building in the fall of 2004 after a worker knocked out some of the structural support.

Many initially feared the building would completely collapse at its location at the southeast corner of Somerset and Bank streets.

“It’s unfortunate what happened in the past, but that’s history,” said David Jeanes, president of Heritage Ottawa. He said he’s hopeful that significant renovations can take place to restore what was once a hub for the neighbourhood.

“The Centretown community has been quite concerned about this building,” he said. “It was a gathering place.”

Prior to the fall of 2004, Somerset House was home to the Duke of Somerset Pub and the Lockmaster Tavern. They closed when re-development plans were brought forward, but that all halted when one of the walls collapsed in 2007, said Jeanes.

“The Centretown community has been quite concerned about this building,” he said. “It was a gathering place.”

Local farm supplies Ottawa’s top restaurants

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“As time went on, we started approaching other chefs, making some new relationships,” said MacKay-Smith. “Soon after that, it just started to escalate quite quickly. Now we’re servicing up to 40 and 50 restaurants in the city.”

That estimate includes all five Ottawa spots on the Canada’s 100 Best list. Juniper Farm grows 75 different vegetables and multiple varieties of each, allowing restaurants a wide range of choices and the opportunity to cook creatively.

“The big reason why we work with so many restaurants is because I think we realized how much we liked working with the chefs,” said MacKay-Smith. “Much like the top-tier chefs, Alex and Juniper are getting creative with the fruits and vegetables they grow. The couple strives to grow the richest, high-quality food packed with nutrients. Every seed planted, and every vegetable harvested, is treated like a work of art. “Giving it to these chefs is like giving it to a master artist — especially the best chefs in the city,” said MacKay-Smith. “So you get to see your food transformed into a culinary masterpiece in front of your eyes.”

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See Local on page 11

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Heritage Ottawa critiques design

Continued from page 1

Tony Shahrasebi’s company, TKS Holdings, ended up paying the city $650,000 in 2012 after the city sued the company for not paying fines issued for failing to fix the building post-collapse. TKS Holdings owns a few properties downtown and some have been restored in the past. TKS Holdings were not available for an interview.

In September of last year, Shahrasebi gave a tour of Somerset House to the Ottawa Citizen. He said he was done some work on his own within the building, telling the paper he had worked on the floors, staircase and had fixed up the brick work.

At the time, he told the Citizen he’s not aiming to demolish the building and has no plans to sell it. He has put between $12 and $14 million into Somerset House, he said.

Jeanes told the CBC on March 17 that he was disappointed at the potential new look for the building, but said in an interview with Centretown News that Heritage Ottawa isn’t officially against the project.

The main issue is that the proposed renovations include a glass wall where some of the building was supposed to be restored to how it originally looked, he said.

The building dates back to 1899 and was originally a dry goods store. The eastern wing was added in the early 1900s.

On April 13, when the sub-committee looks at the proposed renovations, the public will know what the city’s recommendations will be and how the building’s owner will respond, said Jeanes.

“We would like to see the Somerset side façade restored in brick and the new building added as originally proposed,” he said.

In the current proposal of what the building will look like, two bay windows will be restored to the north half of the building.

This is the start of what could be a legitimate restoration process, said Jeanes.

“I think this has been an eyesore and safety hazard for 10 years.”

The city’s report has not yet been made public and sub-committee members cannot comment on the building until later in the process, committee coordinator Rosemary Theriault said in an emailed statement.

Three different angles of the design proposal for the Somerset House redevelopment.

Fresher ingredients find way onto local menus

Continued from page 1

Maintaining an open dialogue with local growers allows the restaurants to tailor their menus to the freshest and most flavourful ingredients, setting them apart from other establishments that resort to canned goods if they can’t get a particular product in season.

Like a violinist hearing the difference between a Stradivarius and a Yamaha violin, top chefs can taste the difference between locally grown tomatoes and a canned product.

“These guys are like, ‘Oh you don’t have it, we’re changing the menu,’” said MacKay-Smith.

The relationship goes beyond a shared respect for high-quality food. “All the chefs at those top restaurants are friends of mine. I mean that’s great, it couldn’t be better,” said MacKay-Smith.

Being so heavily involved in the farming process from seed to harvest really benefits the restaurants, according to Clay Cardillo, hospitality director at Beckta, Play Food & Wine, and Gezellig.

“They’re actively involved with acknowledging what’s trending, and planting it,” he said.

Orders from Juniper Farm arrive weekly. With produce coming in and out of season, a strong working relationship with the farm allows the restaurants to maintain a standard of freshness with their ingredients.

“We get to know them very well, see what food trends are growing, and work together and work towards that,” said Billy Khoo, chef de cuisine at Fauna.

Khoo said he cooks with ingredients that are available from local suppliers, changing the menu depending on the season.

“For local purposes, for farming purposes, we believe in what they’re doing,” said Khoo.

Amy Yee, Centretown News

Sous chef Colin McDermott handles mushrooms in the food storage area of Beckta.
Old bridge may get new life

By Micaela Wylie-Arbc

The historic Prince of Wales Bridge may soon be used as a transit link from Centretown to Gatineau.

City council has given Mayor Jim Watson a mandate to begin formal talks with Gatineau’s mayor about using the bridge to connect Ottawa’s upcoming rail system to our neighbouring city.

The bridge — once an essential interprovincial rail link between Ontario and Quebec, used regularly by trains that brought crushed stone from the Pontiac — would connect the Ottawa core to Gatineau, using the existing Trillium line that runs north to south on the Ottawa side.

It’s been nearly four decades since any type of train used the bridge and its tracks.

The City of Ottawa purchased the bridge in 2006, with the intent of someday sending traffic across it once again.

The bridge and tracks were found to be in good condition when purchased, while the piers and embankments were in need of some concrete attention, adding up to about $2 million in repairs.

Since then, planners have focused on the east-west LRT line, which is currently under major construction throughout various parts of the city.

Last September, the city spent $46,000 on steel gates and chain link fences to prevent people from trespassing on the weathered bridge after it was deemed to have become “structurally unsound” by Transport Canada.

On March 3, Ottawa’s city council approved a project of two of its LRT, which would extend east to west, but not north to Gatineau.

In the run up to approving the light-rail budget a couple weeks ago, Somerset Coun. Catherine McKenney, Rideau-Vanier Coun. Mathieu Fleury, and Kitchissippi Coun. Jeff Leiper approached the mayor’s office with a proposal to help formalize negotiations with the City of Gatineau and achieve an agreement to extend rail service north using the bridge.

“It’s a natural link. It would presumably save riders a fair bit of time if they didn’t have to navigate the congested Ottawa streets,” Leiper said.

Hundreds of Gatineau buses cross the river every morning and evening to get to and from downtown, dealing with heavy vehicular traffic. The bridge extension could potentially alleviate gridlock in Ottawa’s core and make cross-province commutes more convenient.

“I think that those riders would very much appreciate the opportunity to take an LRT,” Leiper said.

Riverkeeper wants to keep chemical out

By Julian Paquin

Ottawa Riverkeeper is pushing the federal government to ban triclosan, an anti-bacterial chemical that is making its way from our drains to our rivers. Triclosan is killing fish and creating a toxic environment in waterways across Canada, environmental advocates say.

The chemical was added to the List of Toxic Substances under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act in December. However, environmental organizations want it to be banned altogether.

Ottawa Riverkeeper is a local organization working to protect the Ottawa River ecosystem. They published a response on Feb. 23 outlining several reasons why the federal government should ban triclosan completely.

Triclosan is an anti-bacterial agent that is used in 1,000 cosmetic and personal care products in Canada, according to a report on chemical substances by Health Canada. It can be found in soaps, toothpastes, mouthwashes, facial cleansers and deodorants.

Health Canada limits the concentration of triclosan to 0.03 per cent in mouthwashes and 0.3 per cent in other products such as toothpaste. But even this limit isn’t enough to prevent harm from accumulations of triclosan in aquatic systems, according to Ottawa Riverkeeper.

The ecology organization said that 42 per cent of triclosan is not filtered out by wastewater management systems because the chemical doesn’t degrade quickly. Triclosan is used in toothpaste as a way to prevent gingivitis.

However, Ottawa Riverkeeper said the chemical’s use in hand-washes has been proven unnecessary, unless it’s being used within a hospital setting where there’s a need for anti-microbial soaps to prevent the spread of serious diseases.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently banned triclosan because manufacturers were unable to demonstrate that it is safe for long-term use.

“One of the main factors as to why the U.S. banned triclosan from hand-washes is that there is no evidence that it’s more efficient that using plain soap and water,” said Karolyn Mitchell, a lawyer from Toronto-based Ecoach, another organization working to ban triclosan in Canada.

For regular households, using soap and water has been proven to be just as effective as using anti-bacterial cleansers without posing a threat to human health or the environment.

“The Liberal government said that they would embrace science-based approaches when it comes to environmental issues, so they should keep their promises,” said Mitchell.

Equipment helps but not enough, critics say

By Darnell Dobson

A new monthly transit pass for low-income residents is too expensive, some community advocates say.

Equipass can be used starting April 1, and will cost $57 per month — roughly half the cost of a regular adult pass.

Former city councillor Alex Cullen, a director-at-large of the Federation of Citizens’ Associations of Ottawa, said community earners should not be forced to choose between basic amenities and public transport.

“Poor people shouldn’t have to choose between food and shelter and talking the bus, and in this city we should be able to help them out,” said Cullen.

Advocacy groups want the price lowered to $41 per month, the same price as the community bus pass given to people on the Ontario Disability Support Plan.

However the city has remained adamant that without funding from the provincial government, it is not possible to lower the price extra 16 advocates want.

Cullen said his group has lobbied alongside the city for funding from the province. He makes reference to the city of Calgary. Its version of the low-income pass is $44 due to funding it has received from the province.

Not all advocacy groups are on board, however. Trevor Haché, secretary and past president of the Healthy Transportation Coalition, said that although it would be nice if the province provided the city with the funds required to lower the price, he believes the city should look at using other investments by the province more wisely.

The city spent billions on building a new transit system that isn’t affordable to some residents, he said.

“We really think that the city needs to be a little bit more progressive with regards to applying their equity and inclusion lens to their decision-making about public transit in fact,” says Haché.

Not all low-income residents will be eligible for an Equipass. For instance, residents on Ontario Works are being advised not to apply for the pass as they already receive a monthly grant required to lower the price, he believes.

The city we should be able to help them,” said Cullen.

“Kitasoo Francis, an Ottawa resident, said she was disappointed when she found out that she was not allowed to apply for an Equipass.

Read full stories at centretownnews.ca
Licensing landlords would benefit city

R. ideau-Vanier Coun. Mathieu Fleury has joined the Ottawa branch of ACORN — an independent organization representing working-class and moderate-income families — in pushing for landlord licences in the Ottawa area.

Last year, Toronto’s city council mulled the idea, eventually setting up on tougher rules for landlords that required property owners to register with the city, have a pest management plan and use licensed contractors for all repairs.

Ottawa needs to follow Toronto’s lead and tighten this city’s rules, and Fleury is right in thinking that his ward is the place to start. Every university student has a landlord horror story, and, as many University of Ottawa and Carleton students call Sandy Hill and surrounding areas home, Rideau-Vanier would serve well for a pilot project.

And while landlord associations in Toronto — and, right on cue, in Ottawa — have spoken against landlord licences, ACORN and Fleury ought to take the initiative even further. The rise of Airbnb means that landlords, especially those in bigger cities, are able to charge irregular prices for days or weekends at a time.

While traditionally Airbnb deals are struck for brief periods while property owners are away, there have been documented cases in Toronto and Vancouver of residential units that are used strictly for tourists.

The proliferation of Airbnb means richer landlords and fewer spaces available for full-time residents of a community. If landlords were required to register with the city, it would not only help to hold them accountable for basement mould endured by regular tenants, but also to prevent quick evictions of residents or a general depletion of the city’s stock of rental units for increased profit.

For now, though, progress on the issue will have to be restricted to leaky taps and inadequate garbage bins and other routine landlord-tenant disputes.

Victor Menasce, president of the Ottawa Real Estate Investors Organization, which represents about 400 landlords in the city, tried to make the case that there is currently a system in place for tenants to make complaints.

He then seemed to admit that it wasn’t a very effective system. “We have laws on the books today. All it takes is a phone call. Dial 3-1-1 to make complaints.”

That sounds a lot like shifting blame — and responsibility — in the wrong direction. Rethinking the rules in Sandy Hill makes sense to Menasce.

We welcome letters to the editor, news tips and comments. Letters to the editor should include a phone number and address. Letters should be addressed to: Centretown News, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, 4115 Richcraft Hall, Ottawa, ON, K1S 5B6.

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Thursday, March 30
Why Vimy Matters: The History of an Idea, lecture by Dr. Tim Cook, Canadian War Museum curator and author on The Biography of the 1917 Battle of Vimy Ridge as an idea — exploring its birth, evolution, near-death and renaissance. Sitting Vimy within the context of Canadian symbols, Cook will discuss commemoration, the choice of Vimy Ridge for an overseas memorial and more. 7:30 p.m., Canadian War Museum, 1 Vimy Place. For more information, please visit: www.warmuseum.ca.

Friday, March 31
Please join the Community Foundation of Ottawa for a fascinating tour of significant trends and conditions affecting our City. Ottawa Insights is the CFO’s on-line, data-driven, community knowledge centre. We will be releasing the suite of 16 indicators on Community and Belonging. The release of this eighth theme represents completion of the foundations of Ottawa Insights. 8:30-10 a.m., Chalmers Room, Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave.

Sunday, April 2
Have you ever wondered about possible career options in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) outside of traditional research and medical jobs? Are you a high school student interested in STEM’s applications in different areas of society including business, entrepreneurship, government and beyond? Want to hear from some of the most renowned and accredited professionals and entrepreneurs in these fields?

Science Expo Ottawa is inviting you to a unique event: STEM outside of STEM. Delegates will get the chance to learn about career paths in STEM outside of the traditional research lens. Admission is free. 1:5 p.m., MAKERSPACE North, Bay 216, 250 City Centre Ave.

Friday, April 14
Listen to one of the most beautiful arias from Bach’s St. Matthew Passion — Thirteen Strings Chamber Orchestra, Dominion-Chalmers United Church, 355 Cooper St. Tickets are available at the door, or online at www.thirteenstrings.ca, at Books on Beechwood, at Compact Music outlets and at Leading Note, or by calling 613-738-7888. Ticket prices: Reserved section: $75.00, Adults: $45.00, Seniors: $40.00, Students: $10.00.

Until February 2018

SEARCHING FOR CONFEDERATION MAQUETTE MAKERS

Could anyone who was involved in Gladan Public School’s creation of a maquette of the 1864 Quebec Conference at the time of the 1967 Centennial celebrations please contact Merrill Bogart: merrill.bogart@sympa-tico.ca.

CENTRETOWN COMMUNITY CALENDAR

~ MAKERSPACE North, Bay 216, 250 City Centre Ave.
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Ontario City Run Club meets at Dundonald Park every Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. The group is for runners of all abilities and it focuses on celebrating accomplishments and motivating other members. For more information about joining Ontario City Run Club, visit: www.6run3.com

Centre 507 is located at 507 Bank St. The centre accepts financial contributions to assist people in Ottawa who need it most. Donations address homelessness, unstable housing, mental illness, addiction, poverty. Volunteers provide haircuts, computer skills, more. For more information: www.centre507.org

Cantonese or Mandarin language lessons for elementary students Saturdays 9:30 a.m. to noon. Provide your child with new language skills this year! $10 fee for Ontario residents. Ongoing enrollment at 391 Booth St. For more information: www.chinghua.ca

Friends of the Central Experimental Farm Protecting and preserving a National Historic Site and treasured public venue in the heart of Ottawa. For more information: email info@friendsofthefarm.ca or visit www.friendsofthefarm.ca

Dalhousie Food Cupboard The Christ Church Cathedral community provides food and other support to the Dalhousie Food Cupboard. The Cupboard serves about 750 people a month. For more information contact Barbara Morris at bmmorris@rogers.com or 613-523-0531.
Junos to spark business boom

by Sarah Togman

Intentional celebrities, music lovers and excitement are not all the 46th annual Juno Awards will be bringing to Canada’s capital on April 2. A huge economic impact, to the tune of $10 million, is expected to have local businesses dancing their way through the Juno weekend.

Live! On Elgin and The Bourbon Room are among the 15 venues hosting more than 100 artists over the course of the weekend. Jon Evenchick, owner of Live! On Elgin, said the exposure from the Junos has been a great opportunity for his young business.

“Holding a festival like Junofest that brings world-class talent into small businesses across the city gives us a huge boost,” he said. “Getting our names in the mouths of these influential, Juno-nominated artists will definitely add some clout to the business.”

The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, which organizes the Junos, is open about its commitment to supporting local businesses in the host cities where the awards are held each year.

“We try diligently to hire locally for the economy, because the host city is providing funding for us to bring the Junos each year,” said Jackie Dean, the chief operating officer of CARAS.

Evenchick said he is impressed with CARAS’ relationship with local venues and their dedication to supporting the city.

“Many of the city’s festivals happen on city-owned, or NCC property,” he said. “But as a fairly new business, we see a huge benefit to having artists of this caliber preforming in the room. We expect to have every seat filled both nights.”

Dean explained that CARAS, along with a third-party organization, publishes an economic impact study of the Junos each year.

“In each of the past 10 years the awards and associated events have brought the host city more than $10 million in spinoff revenues.

“The one thing that we found most useful is the extrapolation of data through the public,” Dean said. “Where people are saying, where people are eating, what events they are attending, all of that.”

This year, the awards broadcast will run two and a half hours, an hour longer than in any other year. There are many related events during the weekend celebrations, some of which are already sold out.

An additional 10,000 music-lovers are expected to be roaming the streets of Ottawa.

“It’s a great thing having that kind of tourism in Ottawa and that kind of boost for a weekend in April is wonderful,” said Ann Meekler, director of sales and marketing for the Lord Elgin Hotel.

Meekler explained that March and April are typically slow times for the hospitality business in Ottawa, but with the influx of people coming to the city for Juno weekend, the Lord Elgin Hotel is one of many in Centretown almost completely sold out.

“It looks great,” said Meekler, addressing occupancy in the hotel for the weekend. “It certainly has been a help for us, absolutely.”

Local nightclub owner Ilon Tyan of The Bourbon Room explained that not only do the extra hours of operation help his own staff, but also the promotion of his business.

“All promotion is a great opportunity, but when you tie it in with something as official and as big as the Junos, of course it’s going to benefit us.”

Evenchick added: “The marketing power that the Junos bring to the city is helping to get the world out that exciting things happen here. Hopefully we see that attitude continue after the festival is over.”

Dean expressed confidence that hosting the Juno Awards in Ottawa — especially during the celebrations already happening around Canada 150 — will bring in more revenue than usual.

“It’s not only the music industry moving into the city for five days,” Dean said, “but the people that have come to the city to participate, and those who are coming to work and help make the events a success.”

The awards, hosted by famed musician Bryan Adams and co-host Russell Peters, will take place at the Canadian Tire Centre on April 2.
Teacher set to launch green grocery store

By Catherine Kelly

Try to imagine a grocery store without rows of canned goods, brightly coloured cereal aisles or plastic bags for your produce. Ligar Collegiate Institute French teacher Valérie Leloup can—and she’ll be opening one in central Ottawa this summer. With zero-waste grocery stores popping up all across Europe recently, the concept for Nu Grocery will certainly be the first of its kind in this city.

The grocery store would provide Ottawa residents with a convenient way to find locally sourced goods that are all either packaging-free or compostable. For Leloup, making the waste-free lifestyle more convenient is key to growing the movement. “The hope is that the store will make a zero-waste lifestyle more accessible and convenient,” she said. “And if it’s more convenient, then people are more likely to change their habits.”

The idea for the store came to Leloup after she read California author Bea Johnson’s Zero Waste Home. The book sparked the zero-waste lifestyle, one that promotes buying locally and in bulk so that shoppers can use their own reusable bags and tupperware containers instead of single-use containers.

Although enthusiastic, Leloup found it hard at first to fully commit to the waste-free lifestyle. To check off even the most basic items from her grocery list, she commutes from her Kanata home to several bulk stores across town. Read full stories at centretownnews.ca

Youth aim to plan green

By Alicia Wachon

Young Canadian leaders are proving that the youth of today have the power to shape the green plans for tomorrow. The IMPACT! Youth Sustainability Leadership program hosted its annual in-person training workshop on March 24 and 25 at The Natural Step Canada, a non-profit organization located on Bank Street in Centretown.

The workshop has been uniting youth across Canada since 2011 under the same goal: maintaining a healthy, green planet for future generations. It also empowers youth aged 19 to 30 by offering opportunities to network and share their innovative ideas for sustainable growth.

Kaitlyn Gee, a 19-year-old Carleton University student, attended the workshop for the first time this year. She said that although she has attended youth networking events in the past, IMPACT! will differ because of the support it gives in the form of mentoring sessions and project development tools such as financial planning.

“I think it’s all about youth engagement, and that’s something that I’m so interested in,” said Gee. “I want to be able to link them with that larger picture.”

Madeleine Malby is a 2014 alumni member of IMPACT!‘s program. She is also the co-founder of Backyard Edibles and with her partner, Matthew Mason-Phillips, their business embraces urban farming in small, under-used areas, such as backyards or front gardens. “When you begin working with the soil and with the land, sustainability just becomes second nature,” she says.

Malby appreciated the mentors who helped her understand the financial numbers and planning needed in starting a business. Kim Kirton, also an alumni member, received funds to found Balance Lifestyle & Co., a company that creates ethical and environmentally friendly clothing. Kirton’s business shut down for economic reasons; however, she said the leadership conference introduced her to the concept of social enterprise, something she said she is still learning about today while working on her next project.

Both Kirton and Malby said they believe leadership programs that cater to youth can produce positive outcomes for sustainable living innovation.
Art and activism collide in exhibit

By Nicole Babb

A new photography exhibition at the SAW Gallery features images and words of Indigenous and environmental activists fighting for the protection of the Peel watershed — a vast region of wilderness in northern Yukon.

In a rare intersection between art and the legal system, it coincided with a recent Supreme Court hearing over the potential industrialization of the watershed.

The exhibition, titled Protecting the Peel Watershed: Voices from Canada’s North, was put together by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Yukon and the Yukon Conservation Society to explore the connection between people and nature.

“The exhibit challenges the idea that wilderness is empty and devoid of human presence and explores the idea that you can have a place where it is silent but people still have very strong ties,” said Joanna Jack, one of the exhibit organizers.

Bobbi Rose Koe, a member of the First Nations Teltitl Gwich’in community, is one of the people featured in the exhibit. A photo of Koe and her grandmother smiling in front of a body of water in the Peel is accompanied by a quote from Koe about the importance of protecting the land: “The watershed makes us who we are, and with it we are one of the richest people in the world.”

Koe got involved in the exhibit because she believes photos are a great way to put a human face on this environmental issue.

“Photographs open the door for others to see who are deeply connected to the land,” she said. “For most of my people, the Peel is where we get our food, our fish and our water.”

The exhibit features 27 photos taken by Yukon photographers Cathie Archbould and Peter Maßaberther.

It includes landscapes of the watershed as well as quotes from many people who value the land — biologists, heritage managers and members of First Nations.

It opened days before the Supreme Court heard a case concerning the interpretation of Yukon’s modern-day treaties, to decide if the watershed, which is home to four First Nations and a vast array of wildlife, will be protected from industrial development.

In 2009, an independent commission recommended the protection of 80 per cent of the Peel region. However, in 2012, the Yukon government recommended development in 71 per cent of the area, prompting years of legal battles between the government, First Nations and environmental groups.

The Supreme Court heard the case on March 22, and a decision is expected later this year.

Archbould is hopeful her photos convey the diversity of those who will be affected by the outcome.

“I hope the photos show a range of people who value the region, whether those people have family connections to the land or whether they only travelled to it once,” she said.

The project took around five months to complete and involved visiting communities in the Peel to conduct interviews and take photographs. Photos and quotes were then carefully paired to best represent the connection between people and the wilderness.

SAW Gallery donated space for the exhibit because the gallery has a mandate to support socially and politically engaged art, said Jason St-Laurent, the gallery’s curator.

“We hope that viewers will see the importance of protecting an ecosystem that may seem so far away, but, as Indigenous people have taught us, everything in the world is interconnected.”

The exhibition closes March 31.

Wrap your head around this: conceptual art lives in Chinatown

By Rupert Nuttle

Four years ago, Danny Hussey started an art gallery in Chinatown — with the express purpose of not showing the work of local artists. Instead, he wanted to bring little-known artists from other parts of the country into Ottawa’s art scene.

Central Art Garage, which Hussey co-owns with his partner Bridget Thompson, is housed in a former mechanic’s shop just off Somerset Street West. What makes it noteworthy in the city’s close-knit gallery circuit is the owners’ taste for “conceptual art.”

Conceptual art dates back to the late 1960s, when artists around the world, influenced by the era’s revolutionary spirit, abandoned their crafts to focus only on ideas. Painters decided they would no longer paint, sculptors decided they would no longer sculpt, poets decided they wouldn’t write, and musicians decided they wouldn’t play instruments.

Instead, they decided they would all just think.

Thinking for its own sake is the key to both creating and interpreting conceptual art. And usually one starts with the thought: “Is this even art?”

Take Central Art Garage’s current exhibition. It’s called A Good Perch for a Stretch, and shows the work of Craig Leonard. Leonard lives in Halifax and teaches at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, a school famous for its conceptual art history.

In the white cinder-block garage, Leonard has arranged the following items: 128 disc-shaped skeet shooting targets in 16 stacks of eight; a large fabric frame that flops around, which visitors can play with; a rectangular pile of the prayers bells. And each prayer-bell soundtrack is a recording of the weird-looking carpeting, one page of sheet music covered in obscure markings; and an ambient soundtrack reminiscent of prayer bells.

Taken on their own, none of these things really look like “art.” How they relate to one another is an even greater mystery.

Hussey explains. Each part of the show is like a “breadcrum,” he says. By following the bread-crumbs from artwork to artwork — and doing a lot of thinking along the way — we’re supposed to arrive at an “’Aha!’ moment.”

The fog will lift, everything becomes clear, and we will finally understand what the artist was thinking.

But standing there in the gallery space, surrounded by those figurative breadcrumbs, I’m not thinking “’Aha!’” I’m thinking, “Who decided this was art?” and, “What does it all mean?”

Hussey gives me more clues. The prayer-bell soundtrack is a recording of the weird-looking sheet music. And the markings on the sheet music were made by digitally scanning the sponginess of the carpeting underpad. And each piece of the underpad has a short text on its underside, which Leonard wrote.

And the text expounds on themes of improvisation and impermanence, which, as Hussey explains, are connected to the floppy frame on the wall. How the sheet targets fit in to all this is still beyond me (it has something to do with Zen philosophy, apparently) but I am getting the sense that all these objects are connected, even if I don’t really know how.

Hussey thinks these exhibits by making picture frames. He works in a woodshop at the back of the gallery.

An artist himself for over two decades, he’s more of a creative collaborator than your typical gallerist. Indeed, without his guidance, I wouldn’t have known what to think of Leonard’s work.

Conceptual art is catching on across the city. Ottawa’s younger galleries — like Studio Sixty Six (in an apartment block in the Glebe) and PDA Projects (on Somerset Street West) — are learning to speak the form’s obscure language.

At the root of this growth are Hussey and Thompson and their Chinatown garage, breaking down the ideas for anyone who might listen.

“It’s all about the conversation,” Hussey says. And somehow that makes sense.
‘Kings’ of rock head to NAC

By Sarah Kazak

Two of the world’s best Elvis Presley tribute artists are coming to the National Arts Centre to celebrate 60 years since the “King of Rock ‘n’ Roll” performed in Ottawa.

Elvis has long since left the building – more precisely, the Ottawa Auditorium, where he performed two sold out shows on April 3, 1957. Today, the site of the old “Aud” is home to the Taggart Family YMCA-YWCA on Argyle Avenue in Centretown.

“16,000 See Elvis In Ottawa Shows,” read an Ottawa Journal headline the day after the concert.

In honour of the event, Elvis tribute artists Ben Portsmouth from Berkshire, England, and Cody Ray Slaughter, from Harrison, Ark., will take the NAC stage on April 4 for a special commemorative concert called “The King is Back.”

“Let’s put it this way, you will never see this show again,” said Aysha Johnson, the concert organizer and the self-proclaimed “biggest Elvis fan north of the border.”

“For one night only, I have not one, but two of the world’s best Elvis Presley tribute artists performing on the same stage,” said Johnson. “It’s common in the United States, but to get two on the same stage up here in Canada is pretty rare.”

Elvis Presley tribute artists are known to some as Elvis impersonators. Both Portsmouth and Slaughter have won the title of Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist, a competition held every year in Memphis, Tenn.

More than 25 preliminary contests for the ultimate showdown are held by various organizers around the world, including the U.S., Canada, England, Australia, and Brazil.

The winners of each contest then compete in Memphis for the title.

The organizers of the world-renowned competition get approval from Elvis Presley Enterprises to look for the performer who best represents the legacy of the King when it comes to vocals, style, stage presence and overall performance. The contests are held to keep Presley’s memory alive.

Johnson, an office worker by day, who occasionally dabbles as an event organizer, said that although she has enjoyed attending numerous Elvis festivals in the U.S., it was time to bring Elvis back to the nation’s capital.

“I got tired of traveling, so I thought why not bring the show to me!”

After mulling over the idea of creating a tribute concert for years, she said she realized that having the show in 2017 was the opportune moment.

“Not only does 2017 mark 60 years since his shows in Ottawa, this year is also the 40th anniversary of his death and to top it all off, it is Canada’s 150th.”

Since the Taggart Family Y now occupies the original concert location, Johnson said she knew of only one other place that would be suitable for the tribute show.

“The anniversary concert needed to be at a prestigious venue and in Ottawa that is the NAC.”

“When someone rents a hall, we obviously have less control (over the nature of the show), but we look at it as a way to add diversity into our programming,” said Xavier Forget, associate producer for NAC Presents. “We are glad Aysha came to us.”

The first part of the show, Elvis ‘56, features Slaughter with an authentic four-piece band to replicate the kinds of songs Elvis performed in the 1950s. “These are all the songs that made him famous and eventually got him here in 1957,” said Johnson.

Although he will not be playing Presley’s original Ottawa setlist, Slaughter will be opening the concert with All Shook Up, the same song the rock legend started with in 1957. “The event will mark Slaughter’s first time in Ottawa and he said he’s looking forward to it. “It is an honour to perform in the same city as Elvis did 60 years ago.”

Read the full story at centretownnews.ca
Syrian children painting for charity

By Valerie Molino

Imagine a bird flying peacefully in the sky, with a flower hanging from its beak. This image comes from the mind of 14-year-old Sara Ali. She is one of many Syrian refugee children who have made paintings for an art exhibit coming to Ottawa City Hall.

The Children for Peace – Heart to Heart art exhibit is the first of its kind organized by the Humans for Peace Institution.

All 40 paintings submitted by Syrian refugee children will be auctioned and the proceeds will go to the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

HPI agreed to organize the event after being approached by Mohammad Ali, an artist and Sara Ali’s father.

Alaa Mustafa, 13, and Sham Alobid, 11, also painted art pieces that will be featured in the exhibition.

Mustafa said she is “excited to help, for the children to feel good.”

She made two paintings for the exhibition. One of her paintings is of a sky with two hands together, almost like praying hands. Alobid said she is excited to see her painting hanging at the exhibit.

Her painting has a door and stairs with two birds — she said the painting is about peace.

“Most of them are about home, about love, about peace, helping the community,” HPI president Mohd Jamal Alsharif said about the paintings.

Alsharif said the idea was born out of speaking with Syrian refugees, like Ali.

“We saw that most of the organizations that included them are concerned about the language, how to live in Ottawa, how to commute, where to do stuff. There was not much, with children, on how to get involved with the community,” he said.

The Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre decided to support the cause.

Almost a year ago, the OCCSC also lent support to Syrian refugees through the Services for Syrian Refugees Program, which was “a response to Canada’s commitment to help refugees settle in Ottawa,” said Hassan Ezdahmad, OCCSC’s program coordinator.

Ezdahmad said that he is very impressed with all of the paintings. “It is something very natural and very meaningful, because it’s really something they are doing from their hearts, by their hands,” he said.

“And most of it reflects big messages of appreciation to Canada and at the same time reflects something Syrian.”

Ezdahmad said if you look at the whole idea “it is from this child who suffered to this child who is suffering.”

Ali, Mustafa and Alobid agree what they are most excited about is to help the children at CHEO.

“They actually want to do more,” said Alsharif. “You can’t believe the inspiration they have, and when you talk to them they said it’s not enough.”

After many months of organizing, the event will start on April 1. The first day will be the VIP launch party, beginning at 6 p.m., where there will be a ceremony featuring a small dance by the children. Entrance is by invitation only.

On April 2, the exhibit will be open to the public.

Once the paintings have all sold, the organizers of the event are planning a trip to the hospital, where the Syrian children will be able to visit the children there and give them some personal gifts.

Syrian refugee children recently made artwork for the Heart to Heart exhibit at Ottawa City Hall.
Bytown Museum honours its founders

By Caroline O’Neill

Artifacts and pictures tell 100 stories about Ottawa’s history at the Bytown Museum as part of a new exhibit celebrating the heritage hub’s centennial.

“They all have great stories to tell,” said Grant Vogl, the museum’s collections and exhibitions manager, of the pieces featured in Bytown Museum: A Century of Community.

Vogl curated 100 of the museum’s photos and artifacts to be featured in the exhibition. Fifty are housed in the community and temporary galleries, while the rest are interspersed throughout permanent exhibitions.

With over a century’s worth of artifacts opening a window to Ottawa’s past, different stories stand out. Two historic photographs will see some familiar pieces in the Century of Community exhibition, such as Lt.-Col. John By’s armchair and Bytown’s first letterbox.

The armchair with upholstered gold and green fabric was one of a set of two belonging to the colonel, who oversaw the construction of the Rideau Canal, which is celebrating its tenth year as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The letterbox comes from the city’s first post office in what is now the Hudson Bay Company on Sparks Street.

“People don’t change, but time does,” said Stéphanie Poujade, the museum’s programming coordinator. She pointed out how seemingly simple artifacts can reflect Ottawa’s past and present. “Centretown is known for its community,” she said, pointing to a tool kit on display. “It’s a lot of tools that we’ll still use today... but they did so much with so little (then).”

Fred Cook, Ottawa’s mayor in 1902-03, gifted his chair to the museum in 1917 — the same year it opened its doors. Chad with carvings from the British Isles and upholstered in leather, it is a popular feature of the exhibition today. The CWHSO first loaned one of the museum’s photos and artifacts to be featured in the exhibition. Fifty are housed in the community and temporary galleries, while the rest are interspersed throughout permanent exhibitions.

The CWHSO began curating permanent exhibitions and organizing events, which featured poets performing in English, French, Spanish and other languages.

Monty Reid, the festival’s director, said VERSeFest is about creating a sense of community through the art form.

“The festival is an opportunity to bring together all of the poetry organizations in Ottawa, and to show off the tremendously rich poetic community that we see in Ottawa,” he said.

The festival also serves to bring in poets from elsewhere, and highlight the different styles that are prominent around the world.

“It’s a pretty cool thing,” Reid said. “It’s a way to put my truth into verse.”

The festival is a celebration of poetry and those who create it, he added. “It is my way to communicate and share the way I view the world, and VERSeFest is a great platform for that.”

Read the full story at centretownnews.ca
Seniors rally for table tennis

By Liam Fox

The clicking of table tennis paddles making contact with their targets fills the room at the Ottawa Table Tennis Club, along with the light-hearted chatter of the players—seniors—who are wielding them.

Serge Boudreau, a table tennis player in his 70s, explained how he got involved.

“I heard an ad on the radio and my eyes just lit up. I knew I had to come out and try it again.” Boudreau said. “It is like learning to re-walk. The challenge has been fun.”

Boudreau played table tennis regularly when the sport’s popularity in North America was strong in the 1970s and ’80s through the Ottawa District Table Tennis Association. Games were held in various public places, such as community centres, at that time.

But until joining the Centre-town club in February, he had not played since 1988.

“Friendship comes first, compe-
tition is second,” Boudreau said.

The club, which opened at the beginning of the year on Louisa Street, is the city’s first full-time table tennis facility. And earlier this month, the club launched its new seniors program inspired by a 2012 documenta-

ry about older table tennis players chasing championship dreams, the program shares the same name as the film: Never 2 Old 4 Gold.

The program is for club mem-
bers over the age of 55 and in-
cludes coaching, practice time and competition.

Steve Lambruschini, co-owner of the Ottawa Table Tennis Club, said the sport is a fantastic way for those of all ages to stay active thanks to its low-impact and non-contact nature.

“As you get older, you are not going to play football, soccer or even tennis. One by one, there are fewer sports that you will be able to do,” Lambruschini said.

Boudreau said he was active in cycling for the better part of the last 30 years before turning back to table tennis.

According to Lambruschini, the club has received funding from the Ontario Table Tennis Association to offer the program. He said a seniors program had always been a part of the club's plan, given the support from the OTTA and the opportunity to provide an athletic outlet to the aging Canadian population.

There are currently six players in the program who are in their 80s.

“This community) has a lot of seniors, so I understand why it is a focus,” Boudreau said.

Robert Hutchings, 86, started playing table tennis in youth clubs in England when he was 12. Hutchings, who has Parkinson’s disease, said that table tennis is the best thing for him to stay ac-
tive and is the main reason for him joining the Never 2 Old 4 Gold program.

“I just want to be involved and get to the point where you have to work hard to beat me,” Hutchings said with a laugh.

There are various health bene-
cfits from playing table tennis, ac-
cording to Lambruschini, making it a sport that is inclusive of all ages. He said the benefits aren’t just physical.

“There are great cognitive prop-
erties as well, with more and more reports coming out of the mental (health) benefits of table tennis. It is really a thinking man’s game,” Lambruschini said.

The current Never 2 Old 4 Gold season began in mid-March and will continue until the beginning of May.

There will be three subsequent seniors-only seasons through the remainder of the year.

Local curlers return from China with world title

The pride in Team Homan is evident in the conversations around the club, Kellett added.

“There’s a sense of pride in a com-
munity that goes beyond curlers, and then curling becomes part of the conversation among those who’ve never been a part of the sport,” said Al Cameron, director of communication for Otta-
wa-based Curling Canada, via email to Centretown News. “And, obviously, for younger athletes, having a local team do well gives them someone to aspire to, and model themselves after.”

The next stage of interna-
tional competition for Team Homan takes place in Decem-
ber right here in Ottawa. The city will host the Roar of the Kings, the Canadian qualifier for the 2018 Winter Olympics.

“I really, really, really hope they win it all and head to the olympics, because I think that would be a crowning achievement,” said Kellett. “She’s already the youngest skip to win three Ca-


We need more of our own madness

March Madness is upon us. The annual NCAA basketball tournament has captured the imagination of fans from around the world filling up brackets and tuning into the spectacle.

One of those top U.S. college teams featured a Centretown connection in Martial Shayok, who grew up playing basketball at the YMCA on Argyle Avenue. Shay-


Viewpoint

Nathan Bragg

The fanfare surrounding the basketball tournament is in stark contrast with what happens at the U Sports Final 8, the Canadian version of March Madness.

David Waldstein of The New York Times recently made some good points about how Canadian schools devote far less money to athletics than NCAA schools, but the lack of attention to the Final 8 is about far more than finances.

U Sports rebranded itself from Canadian Interuniversity Sport in October with the goal of generat-
ing more attention and attracting sponsors, but television viewer-
ship of Canadian university sport is down this year in comparison to the past couple of years.

Another way to drive interest in Canadian university sport is to cover the pre-season games between Canadian schools and their NCAA counterparts.

Waldstein is right that the Final 8 was muted compared to the hoopla south of the border. But the ball is now in U Sports’ court, and there is an opportunity to turn up the volume.

In the meantime, Canadian basketball fans will keep filling out their brackets and immersing themselves in the madness south of the border.
Construction starts on Cup monument

By Rory Gilheany

Construction is officially under way on Ottawa’s long-planned tribute to Lord Stanley of Preston and his famous gift to the sport of hockey.

Canada’s sixth governor general and his iconic namesake trophy were honoured March 18 at a ceremonial groundbreaking for the Lord Stanley’s Gift monument, to be placed at the corner of Sparks and Elgin streets.

The ceremony, which coincided with the Stanley Cup’s 125th anniversary, took place steps away from the site of the former Russell House hotel, where Lord Stanley’s top aide first announced the vice-regal donation of the Dominion Hockey Challenge Cup in 1892.

“My predecessor, Lord Stanley, would be pleased to see us here where it all began,” remarked Gov. Gen. David Johnston to a crowd of dignitaries, city officials and local hockey fans at the groundbreaking event. “The heart of Canada’s capital is a fitting place for this monument.”

In a letter read on his behalf at an Ottawa Hockey Club dinner 125 years ago, Lord Stanley envisioned the creation of a trophy to honour the top amateur hockey team in Canada.

This trophy would eventually become the modern-day Stanley Cup, the biggest prize in the National Hockey League and one of the oldest active trophies in North American competitive sports.

Johnston said he hopes the monument’s historical significance will continue to draw hockey fans to Ottawa once it is completed.

“I think the monument will be a pilgrimage for Canadians to travel from across the country to Elgin and Sparks Street to see the replica of the Stanley Cup for themselves,” he said.

In addition to Lord Stanley, the city also paid homage to the achievements of Paul Kitchen, a well-known Ottawa hockey historian, who was the early driving force behind the campaign for the monument before his death in August 2015.

In 2009, Kitchen founded Lord Stanley’s Memorial Monument Inc., the primary organization behind the monument’s creation.

Almost eight years later, George Hunter, current president of LSM-MI, said it’s rewarding to see the monument finally move into construction.

“It’s fantastic to see it all come together,” said Hunter, who spoke at the event. “It’s thrilling to see the hard work of everyone involved, including Paul, finally pay off.”

The design of the $2.8 million monument — a three-metre-tall bowl with silvered aluminum bands — was chosen last year through a nationwide competition.

The winning proposal was submitted by Montreal-based design team, Covit/Nguyen/NORR.

“Our aim was to memorialize a man, his gift, and the important role that Ottawa has played in the history of hockey in our country,” Hunter said.

“We believe this monument will serve as a mecca for hockey fans to learn the true story of how the iconic trophy came to be.”

The ceremony was part of a four-day celebration of the Stanley Cup throughout the nation’s capital, an event that has long been in the works for the City of Ottawa, according to Mayor Jim Watson.
Core gets new red-light cameras

By Kaitlin Fisher

Six intersections in Centretown will be getting new red-light cameras as part of a city-wide plan to install 20 of the devices.

The new cameras, intended to deter dangerous driving and prevent accidents, will be installed at Arlington Avenue at Kent Street, Bay Street at Slater Street, Catharine Street at Kent, Elgin Street at Slater, Gladstone Avenue at Rochester Street and Lyon Street at Slater Street.

Rob Wilkinson, the coordinator of the Safer Roads Ottawa program, said he is supportive of the city’s decision to increase the number of cameras.

“...there is a problem, generally speaking, with people running red lights and then, obviously, causing collisions, which in some cases lead to fatalities or very, very serious injuries,” Wilkinson said.

“The reality is that the angle collisions that red-light cameras help prevent are some of the most catastrophic...

“Collisions resulting from red-light running tend to be more severe than other collisions because they usually involve at least one vehicle travelling very quickly and colliding with another vehicle at a right angle,” said Phil Landry, director of Traffic Services.

Wilkinson said he is hopeful the installation of the cameras will reduce these kinds of collisions.

“We know, for the most part, that it does cut down on angle collisions because drivers are made aware that they shouldn’t blow through red lights... and if they do, then there’s going to be a consequence,” he said.

Traffic Services reviewed collisions at intersections that occurred between 2012 and 2015 to determine the locations for the cameras.

According to Landry, red-light cameras are being installed at locations with “an average of three or more angle collisions due to red light running per year; and/or, five or more angle collisions due to red light running in one direction during the four-year period.”

Those who run a red light will be hit with a fine of $260 plus a $5 service fee and a $60 victim surcharge. All camera locations will be signed to warn drivers.

According to the City of Ottawa website, studies show that red-light violation rates can decrease by as much as 42 per cent within just a few months of camera installation.

“Having people that are overly cautious drivers isn’t great, like when they’re driving too slow or not keeping up with traffic. Or maybe they’re too concerned about the red-light cameras to notice pedestrians,” Ambault said.

Tool kit to help first-time election candidates

By Mamta Manhas

A new initiative to help first-time political candidates have a better chance in the next local elections is launching in Ottawa.

DemocracyKit, a shared resource package, will provide city council and school board trustee hopefuls with funding plans, on-line skill-building courses, accessible digital tools and more.

The project, started by Toronto-based organization Open Democracy Project, seeks to correct a perceived problem in Canadian politics. According to the organization, incumbents win 92 per cent of elections in three of the largest cities across Canada.

Campaign costs and incumbents’ pre-existing connections in the community make it difficult for new candidates, who may lack these advantages, to compete effectively for school trustee positions or municipal council seats. DemocracyKit wants to change that.

“We want to make it more accessible for people to explore campaigns and prepare for a race,” said Chris Cowperthwaite, co-founder of the initiative.

In 2014, Cowperthwaite worked with 17 municipal campaigns in British Columbia and Ontario. He found that new candidates had difficulty canvassing, understanding campaign laws and raising funds. These difficulties prompted him and his team to create a shareable public campaign full of tools and knowledge about politics.

The project has already launched in Toronto and Calgary.

Catherine Fortin LeFaivre, who ran as a first-time candidate in the Rideau-Vanier ward in 2014, thinks DemocracyKit is a step in the right direction.

She said she faced difficulties raising funds and fighting the stigma around being a woman in politics. The latter issue is one DemocracyKit wants to address, as its website points out that men have made up 72 per cent of councillors elected in Canada’s largest three cities over the past decade.

However, LeFaivre thinks DemocracyKit is just a starting point.

“If we want to see more diversity to represent Ottawa, then we need community leaders and business leaders to support candidates.”

Despite their incumbent status, both Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson and Somerset Coun. Catherine McKenney have come out in support of DemocracyKit.

McKenney said in a statement that she supports DemocracyKit for encouraging more diversity in Ottawa’s municipal politics and giving resources to first-time candidates. She will also be speaking at the launch event on April 5.

DemocracyKit will launch at MediaStyle on 131 Bank St. in Centretown.

Read the full stories at centretownnews.ca

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Critics question push for sanctuary city status

By Megan Harrison

The proposal to make Ottawa a sanctuary city is scheduled for discussion at the city’s community and protective services committee on Mar. 30, but many remain uncertain if the designation would be more than just a symbolic measure.

That’s because no one seems to agree on what exactly Ottawa would look like as a sanctuary city or if the status would actually change anything.

Critics and advocates alike agree that currently sanctuary city status is a largely symbolic gesture. The designation doesn’t hold legal weight, but simply commits a city to adopt policies to confirm all residents have access to municipal services.

As Ottawa receives more undocumented immigrants, there is an increased need for firm policies to ensure they can “access crucial municipal services without fear,” according to Jennifer Ridgley, a sanctuary city advocate and Carleton University professor who studies access to services for people with precarious immigration status.

If Ottawa joins Canada’s other sanctuary cities – including Toronto, Montreal, Hamilton, London and Vancouver – it will be making a commitment to provide services to these undocumented residents without putting them at risk of being deported, she said.

This means when they go to the library, access immunization services or a food bank, or even encounter city police, their immigration status would not be an issue.

Immigrants wouldn’t be detained or reported to federal authorities, including the Canadian Border Services Agency, and they wouldn’t be required to provide proof of their status, unless absolutely required by law, Ridgley said.

But Somerset Coun. Catherine McKenney, who has spearheaded the move to declare Ottawa a sanctuary city, said many city service officials already do not ask for immigration status in normal practice.

But even though officials don’t ask for status, many people with precarious status are still concerned they will be and thus may not seek services when needed.

The sanctuary designation would provide “a guarantee that we won’t ask,” McKenney said.

However, not everyone agrees that such a guarantee is necessary. For some, Ottawa is already a welcoming city, and the designation is unnecessarily symbolic and political.

Read the full story at centretownnews.ca
Cyclists gear up for biking season

By Jake Munro

Advocacy group Citizens for Safe Cycling marked the end of winter over the weekend — perhaps prematurely — with its first event of the cycling season.

The annual “Spring.Bike.Ottawa” was held at the McNabb Community Centre on the heels of an early spring storm that brought more than 20 centimetres of snow.

“A lot of the people in the room haven’t ridden all winter,” said Felicity Borgal, an events coordinator for the group. “We just get people excited for spring, summer and fall riding.”

This year’s event featured a historical look at cycling in the nation’s capital through a host of antique photos, memorabilia, and restored vintage bikes that were available for sale.

Bikes have been a staple of the city’s streets since the 1880s said Dave Allston, an Ottawa historian who recently began researching the city’s biking history.

“We’re taking the past as a springboard to the future of cycling in the city,” Borgal said.

Allston found an article about the formation of the new Ottawa Bicyclers Club in 1882.

An upcoming exhibit at the National Gallery of Canada will showcase four decades of Canadian photography from coast to coast. It’s only fitting that it will be displayed in the heart of Canada’s capital.

Photography in Canada: 1960-2000, a celebration of this country’s diverse photographic history, opens on April 7. It will include more than 100 works by 71 different photographers.

“It was a chance to take advantage of a situation where I could show the work of Canadian photographers at the gallery,” said Andrea Kunard, curator of the exhibit.

It was born out of a series of exhibits that the gallery has done over the years, Kunard said. British and German photography were themes in the past, and now it’s Canada’s time to shine.

Ottawa is the perfect place for an exhibit like this, according to Olivia Johnston, a photography history instructor at the School of the Photographic Arts: Ottawa.

“Ottawa is an important city in the history of photography,” Johnston said, “Malak and Yousuf Karsh famously spent much of their lives here.”

The Karsh brothers were successful photographers throughout the 20th century, and Johnston said the famous portrait photographer Yousuf had a tremendously impact on photographic practice worldwide.

Among the photographers shown are Jin-me Yoon, who is currently a professor at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, and Edward Burtynsky.

Choosing who and what to display was a “painful process” for Kunard.

“I consider it a small exhibition,” she said. “There’s really not enough space to show as many as I would like.”

Those in the Ottawa photography scene are anticipating the opening of the exhibit despite Kunard’s hesitancy.

“I’m sure that the National Gallery’s exhibition, as it covers a really crucial time in photographic history, will be fascinating,” Johnston said.

Photographers, both amateur and professional, see the exhibit as an important way of celebrating the history of Canada.

Read the full stories at centretownnews.ca
War Museum introduces games

By Rachel Dale

Standing in the shadows of war tanks may seem like a dark place to be, but for many families this March Break it was their favourite part of the day.

Interactive games at the Canadian War Museum served as a pleasant surprise for visiting families, which parents say was beneficial to the overall experience at the museum.

For Torontonian Bahram Zahir, the games were a chance to take a break in the middle of his museum tour.

“It was a very nice break — especially when you have small kids,” he said. After touring the first two galleries, Zahir said the games were appreciated. His son agreed.

“My favourite part is mostly playing Xs and Os,” said Zanyar Zahir, 5.

The LeBreton Gallery provided table games such as Battleship, Jenga, and Snakes and Ladders for kids to play. Life-sized versions of tic-tac-toe, Connect Four, and chess had pieces almost as tall as some of the kids moving them around the boards.

Jessica Shaw, a learning specialist at the museum said the museum received positive feedback from families when the activities are available.

“I think it offers a good place for families to take a break when they’re visiting the museum,” Shaw said. “It gives them a chance to sit, re-energize and then they can take on a different space in the museum.”

Read the full story at centretonews.ca

Vimy Ridge exhibit remembers pivotal 1917 battle

By Meaghan Richens

More than a century later, Canadians are still commemorating the Battle of Vimy Ridge, and the sacrifices that were made there.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge took place from April 2-9 in 1917, and was a major victory for Canadians and the Allies.

Some historians equate the battle with the emergence of an independent Canadian nationhood.

The Canadian War Museum will be hosting a lecture on March 30 called Why Vimy Matters: The History of an Idea by award-winning author Tim Cook, a war historian at the LeBreton Flats museum.

As the battle fades from living memory, commemorating it is all the more important, said Melanie Morin-Pelletier, also a museum war historian.

“The Battle of Vimy Ridge was part of a bigger offensive by the Allies in the spring of 1917,” said Morin-Pelletier.

“I believe that one of the reasons why it’s such an integral part of Canadian history is that it came at a difficult time for the Allies.”

The Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge was also historically significant because men from all regions of Canada attacked together.

Morin-Pelletier said that commemorating Vimy is important because it is symbolic of the Canadian contribution to the First World War.

“It shows what we could do by coming together — by working together,” said Morin-Pelletier.

A new exhibition at the museum, called Vimy Beyond the Battle, will run from April 6 to Nov. 12. “Vimy Beyond the Battle uses Vimy as a starting point to explore how and why Canadians commemorate,” Morin-Pelletier said.

“What we’ve discovered by researching stories and artifacts is that commemoration serves multiple purposes for different people.”

“It’s also important to remember that Vimy was one of the costliest battles for Canada in their military history,” with 3,598 dead and over 7,000 wounded.

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11 AM: Worship
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Wednesday, April 12
11 AM: Holy Week Bible Study
11:30 AM – 1:30 PM: Sanctuary open for prayers and meditation

Good Friday, April 14
11 AM: “The Wounded Healer”

Easter Sunday, April 16
11 AM: “The Surprise of Easter”
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• All invited to join in “Hallelujah Chorus”

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