

The *Winkler* *Morden*

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Voice

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Grads on parade

Morden Collegiate's class of 2026 didn't let a little rain stop them from parading through town in their finery Monday night. For more photos, see Pg. 9.

PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

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Pride billboard vandalized

By Lorne Stelmach

The vandalism done to a billboard between Morden and Winkler stating that "Pride belongs in the Pembina Valley" doesn't dissuade the president of Pembina Valley Pride.

Quite to the contrary, Pauline Emerson-Froebe is almost encouraged by it as it demonstrates they are having an impact in the area and especially in Winkler, which hosted its first Pride celebration earlier this month.

"It is disheartening ... I was angry, but I suppose it's just made us more determined," said Emerson-Froebe. "We have made strides in the Pembina Valley and in the Winkler area, and apparently we must be making an impact for somebody to get their attention enough to get a ladder out, climb a pole, and spray paint the sign."

"It was shocking that someone would go through that amount of trouble and effort ... in past years, we've had things like flags stolen and things like that, but to really do this on such a public scale ..." Emerson-Froebe said. "This is the second year we've had a billboard ... we had one last year too, so this isn't necessarily a new thing for us."

Emerson-Froebe stressed they will

not be deterred in their work of supporting and bringing together the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

"We're trying to really take this energy and not just use it as venom. We really want to turn it, and we want to do good and continue with our good. Even though it is very disheartening, and it is really frustrating ... we're sort of silver lining people, so we're trying to find how to move forward with it."

"It's a bit of a confirmation. It's very easy to ignore people. People do it all the time, right? And it'd be very easy to ignore what we're doing, but for some, it's making enough of an impact that they want to make their impact in retaliation," Emerson-Froebe said. "There is a lot of resilience in this community. We're a lot more quiet in the steps that we take than large cities in their Pride movements and everything. We try to be very respectful of the different ideologies going on here, the different religions, and still we respect and understand the communities that we live in because we live here. We're part of it."

Seeing the support Winkler's first Pride rally and march June 13 received was a huge encouragement,



FACEBOOK PHOTO

Vandals climbed up and defaced this Pembina Valley Pride billboard on the highway between Morden and Winkler over the weekend.

Emerson-Froebe noted.

"We had such a great turnout," she said, noting the rainy weather didn't deter the hundreds who took part, nor did the small group of protestors who greeted marchers along a section of the parade route.

"We just want people to feel welcome and not feel like they have to move away ... if they're queer," Emerson-Froebe stressed. "We don't

want brain drain here. There's so much talent here. Let's keep them here."

RCMP have confirmed they are investigating the incident. Anyone with information is asked to contact Pembina Valley RCMP at 204-822-4476, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477, or send a secure tip online at www.manitobacrimestoppers.com.

New aquatic wheelchair, walker at Winkler pool

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The RCU Aquatic Centre in Winkler will be more accessible than ever this summer.

Thanks to a \$3,000 grant from the Winkler Community Foundation, the pool recently purchased a new specialized wheelchair and a walker to make it easier for people with phys-

ical disabilities to get into the water.

"We did previously have a wheelchair, but it was not an aquatic wheelchair," noted Winkler recreation programmer Meg Dias. "So, as you can imagine, chlorinated water and a regular wheelchair was not the best fit."

Continued on page 4

Top 5 Reasons to License Your Dog

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PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

RCU Aquatic Centre programmers Dean Klassen (left) and Cadence Harder with the new aquatic mobility devices now available at the Winkler pool.

“Canada saved my life”

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Regional Connections Immigrant Services marked World Refugee Day Saturday with a celebration in Bethel Heritage Park that brought together newcomers from around the world.

The afternoon featured music, face painting, yard games, food, and stories, with several people stepping up to the mic to speak about their journey to Canada.

Nisha Hayles shared how she came here from Jamaica to start a new life.

“I was given the chance to start again,” she said, noting, however, that her two sons were not able to come with her initially. “For nine long years I lived with the reality of being separated from my children.

“As a mother, there is no greater pain than being separated from your children. But there is also no greater strength than a mother’s determination to create a better future for them. That determination carried me through every challenge, it carried me through the refugee process, through the waiting, through the uncertainty, and through the years of longing.”

Her reunion with her children was a joyful one, and Hayles is grateful to everyone who provided her with the support to make it possible.

“Today, our family is together. We

continue to build new memories, strengthen our bonds, and look towards the future with respect to our hope,” Hayles said.

Also sharing his story was Aqylbek Muratbai, who arrived in Canada seven months ago as a political refugee from Karakalpakstan.

“For me, this isn’t just an international date on the calendar. It’s a very personal day,” he said. “It’s a day to remember people who were forced to leave their homes, their families, their communities and the life they had built simply because they wanted to live in safety and dignity.”

Fleeing political persecution and imprisonment back home, Muratbai found safe haven in Canada.

“Many countries were reducing support, closing programs, or making protection harder to receive,” he recalled. “But Canada gave me a helping hand, and I will never forget that. “Canada didn’t just save my freedom. Canada saved my life.”

Muratbai has been humbled by the kindness he has received since coming to live in the Pembina Valley.

“I can honestly say that I have never in my life received so much support from so many people at the same time,” he said. “Again and again I meet people who are ready to help.

“I have never seen such a close and caring community,” Muratbai continued, listing the many organizations and programs eager to help newcomers find their footing in Canada. “Everywhere I see people helping each other. For me, this is the real strength of Canada.

“Canada gives protection to people escaping persecution, war, violence, hunger, and disasters. But refugees don’t come only with pain and fear, we also come with hope, skills, dreams and a strong desire to contribute. A



refugee is not only a person who lost a home, a refugee is also a person who wants to build a new one. And when a community opens its doors, a new beginning becomes possible.

“That’s what Winkler has given me. That’s what Canada has given me.”

“I can honestly say that I have never in my life received so much support from so many people at the same time,” he said. “Again and again I meet people who are ready to help.

Our mistake

Our June 11th story (Pg. 16) on the local students who won medals at the Skills Canada competition mixed up the boys’ names.

The first section of quotes in the story attributed to Brady Peters should have been



PHOTOS BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

The World Refugee Day celebration in Winkler Saturday included musical performances from groups such as Tuesday and Promise (above), yard games (right), and local refugees like Aqylbek Muratbai (left) sharing their stories of coming to Canada.



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beginning becomes possible. “That’s what Winkler has given me. That’s what Canada has given me.”

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get informed

Morden Area Foundation distributes spring grants

By Lorne Stelmach

The Morden Area Foundation handed out \$56,000 in spring grants last week.

The grant distribution celebration held June 15 at the Morden Legion also officially presented \$17,000 in funding from the Power of the Purse event as well as \$25,500 in Learn & Return health care bursaries. The Power of the Purse funds included \$6,257 to Genesis House for its backyard refresh project, \$5,737 for Morden Caring and Sharing for its school lunch program, and \$5,0006 for École Discovery Trails for its play structure project.

Chairperson Brad Ritchie said it's always a special time for the foundation when they are able to give out money to support organizations and projects in the community.

"It's ultimately what we do, and absolutely it's special, and it reminds us of the power of an endowment

fund and what the foundation is here for," he said, noting the foundation had been able to hand out a total of \$316,000 in its 2025-26 fiscal year.

In terms of choosing which organizations and projects to support, Ritchie noted the grant committee reviews all applications and conducts a short interview with applicants in the later stages of the process.

"We find that to be very valuable to really understand the impact of their project," he said. "And then we see how it fits into our key criteria as well as the overall impact it will have on the entire community."

They also generally like to be supporting a broad range of organizations and projects.

"And we track it over the years to make sure we're staying balanced. But over time, what we've learned through our own due diligence and our community outreach is that needs and opportunities are always changing, and we're doing our very best to



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

The Morden Area Foundation's Sasha Oleksandra presented a \$10,000 grant to the Morden Legion's Deanna Douglas, Bob Frost, and Jason Evert last week. It's one of nine new grants the agency handed out this spring.



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Foundation reps with Learn and Return Bursary recipients.

stay aware of what's needed through diversity in our granting ... as well as our own external research.

"We think we're able to capture more opportunities and be more reflective of the needs of the community by having a two semi-annual granting process rather than just once a year," Ritchie added. "For example, an organization may not know in September what their project is going to look like, and that's why, by having two different granting cycles, we're able to really be more available to opportunities."

Receiving grants last week were:

- Morden Minor Soccer, \$9,200 for its Safe Net, Safe Game project.
- Morden Branch 11 Royal Canadi-

an Legion, \$10,000 for washroom renovations.

- Morden Community Handi-Van, \$3,500 for a van replacement.
- Youth For Christ, \$8,000 towards its recreational backyard space.
- 500 Stephen Community Centre, \$5,500 for its Community Collaborate and Connect Project.
- Habitat for Humanity, \$5,000 towards its Hanover Dr. house build.
- Katie Cares, \$2,000 for new linens.
- Kidsport Manitoba, \$1,500 for youth sport registration support in Morden.
- Pembina Valley Snowkickers, \$10,000 towards the purchase of newer grooming equipment.

> AQUATIC MOBILITY DEVICES, FROM PG. 2

These new devices are made out of durable plastic and should last a good long time.

Wheelchair users will be able to simply roll into the sloped entry to the shallow end, while the walker provides a stabilizing hand for those who need it.

"For our beach entry, it will allow

folks to walk in independently, because we don't have a railing here right now," Dias said. "And it allows people who maybe aren't quite ready to use the wheelchair to get in—there's dignity involved in still allowing them their independence and mobility."

They're also waiting on delivery of

a few floating mobility aids that will allow physically disabled pool patrons to swim without fear of falling forward into the water.

"We've been looking at all kinds of options to get more folks into the water," Dias said, noting the pool, which turns 30 this summer, was built at a time long before a lot of the modern accessibility requirements were put in place. "We're striving to have ac-

cessible and inclusive programming. And when you do that, you see some of the shortfalls that we have in the pool."

The aquatic wheelchair and walker both help to fill in some of those gaps.

If you need to use either device or one of the floatation aids, simply ask at the front desk or flag down a life-guard.

Former student returns to head up NPC culinary arts

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Changes are afoot in the Northlands Parkway Collegiate culinary arts program as it bids farewell to its longtime instructor and welcomes back a former student in his place.

Paul Henderson hangs up his chef's hat at NPC this week after nine years of leading the RRTVA program.

"It's been a fantastic run," he says, reflecting on the changes the course has seen over the past decade.

Under Henderson's leadership, the program added a herb garden so students could work with the freshest materials possible, put a hog roaster built by welding students to good use for countless events, and added molecular gastronomy to the coursework, helping students explore food science to create new sensory treats.

The stars this year aligned in just the right way for Henderson to decide it was time to move on to something new, leaving teaching behind in favour of pursuing his interests in music and furniture building.

A major part of that decision, he shares, was the return of NPC and culinary arts program alumni Chelsea Delorme.

"Chelsea came back as our production chef, and she's a natural," Henderson says. The production chef is responsible for cooking the school's lunchtime offerings so the culinary arts program chef can focus on teaching. Still, the two sides of the kitchen

work closely together.

"After a few weeks I was like, 'You know, I'm not going to be here forever,'" Henderson recalls. He urged Delorme to consider getting her vocational education certification and the rest, as they say, is history.

After graduating from NPC, Delorme went on to study at The Culinary Institute of Canada in P.E.I., earned her Red Sea accreditation, and then managed a few different restaurants before finding her way back to Winkler.

After a few years as NPC's production chef, she stepped into a term position as the baking and pastry program instructor earlier this year, good preparation for moving into Henderson's role this fall.

"That was always my goal was to be the culinary arts teacher," Delorme shares. "But I feel like it came a lot sooner than I expected it."

"I've always loved working with students, and sharing my passion with students," she says, noting one of her goals as a teacher is to build relationships with the kids. "I want to be someone that they can trust and build a connection with."

Her time working with students in the baking section quickly demonstrated that Delorme is a perfect fit for teaching, Henderson says, and so he knows he's leaving the program in good hands.

"We've been working together and she's got all my material going into it,



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

Longtime NPC culinary arts instructor Paul Henderson hands over the keys to the kitchen to incoming top chef Chelsea Delorme, who is taking over the program upon Henderson's retirement.

but then it's her program."

Delorme has no plans to make any big changes.

"The first year will be just understanding, finding everything, organizing everything, and then going from there," she says, noting the program is already seeing a major shift as the pastry arts courses as of this September will no longer be offered as a separate program but rather as part of culinary arts' third level studies.

"We're also hiring an EA support permanent in culinary," Delorme adds, noting that person, also a fellow program alumni, will be a huge help in the operation of the busy teaching kitchen. "As long as everything aligns, everything looks really good

for the fall."

Henderson is looking forward to his next chapter, but there are certainly things he will miss when he leaves NPC behind.

"I'm going to miss the students, for sure," he says. "I was an industry chef and a baker for many years, decades, and then I came to teaching. If I had known that this was the gig, I would have gone into teaching right away. There's been so many good students ... and there's always a community, that seems to be the common thing in these programs."

"From my point of view, to be able to hand it off to the future students with such a great team, it really feels good."

Survey launched for Winkler's new parks and recreation master plan

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The City of Winkler is asking the community for its thoughts on what priorities it should set when it comes to recreation over the next two decades.

A community survey has gone up at playwinkler.ca inviting Winkler area residents to weigh in on what venues and programming they use most and what they'd like to see added or improved.

The responses will be used to help draft the new Parks and Recreation Master Plan, explained rec. programmer Meg Dias.

"The last one would have been the early 2000s, so we're overdue," she said. "This one will help us plan for the next 20 years."

"The community is growing at an

unprecedented rate, which is great, but our infrastructure, our planning has to step up to meet that."

Development of the plan, being overseen by consultants RC Strategies, is currently in phase two, which includes the survey, open houses next month, pop-up consultation events, youth engagement, and discussion sessions with area stakeholders and user groups. The point of this phase is to help ensure the plan is focusing on what matters most to the community.

The scope of the plan is broader than residents may realize, Dias noted.

"I think sometimes when people think about recreation they just think about our facilities, but we'd really like to encourage people to think of it as well as the green spaces and trails and pathways and active transportation," she stressed. "We want to know

what people are using, what they aren't using, what there's a lack of, what we could use more of. We think we have a good handle on it, but there's always stuff that maybe we're not seeing."

The survey will remain up until July 10. It only takes about 10 minutes to complete and can be done anonymously. There's also an option to provide your name to be entered into a draw for a \$125 play pass gift card that can be used at all City of Winkler recreation facilities.

Both Winkler residents and those living in the RM of Stanley or the City of Morden are invited to fill out the survey.

"We do know that we're a regional hub," Dias said, noting the survey does ask for a postal code so they can track, broadly, where responses are

coming in from.

Over 100 people have already filled out the survey, though Dias is hopeful they'll see many more share their thoughts so they can have the widest range of feedback possible.

"We know that some voices we automatically hear because they're in our spaces all the time, she said. "But if they're not, we want to hear from them too. How do we get them into our spaces? What are the barriers?"

"We know the benefit to building community through recreational spaces. The question is how do we do that?" Dias added. "I can't encourage people enough to have their voices be heard with this."

Work on the master plan is expected to take place through the summer in the hopes of having a draft to present to council in fall.

The **Voice**

get heard

EDITORIAL > VIEWPOINTS > LETTERS



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OUR SISTER PUBLICATIONS



Pride belongs in the Pembina Valley

There is something ironic about the hate-motivated defacing of a mural dedicated to defending an historically persecuted minority.

Of course, I am talking about the beautiful billboard between Morden and Winkler that celebrates the 2SLGBTQI+ community and states “Pride belongs in the Pembina Valley” which was defaced recently by one or more ignorant people with nothing better to do.

The irony of course is the defacing of the billboard demonstrates its point: there is a need in our beautiful communities to defend and support our Pride friends and neighbours.

How anyone thinks that the illegal vandalism of a billboard by cowards in the middle of the night will effectively do anything other than energize the Pride movement is beyond me, but then one cannot expect a great deal of intelligence from those that perpetrate such actions.

These are the same low-brow types that like to snipe at the Pride community and its efforts from the safe distance of their living rooms through social media posts. A random mocking face here, a fear-driven threat there. It adds up to one clear message: Pride does in fact belong in the Pembina Valley.



By Peter Cantelon

I think it is important for members of the Pride community to be reminded that such bullying actions, be it vandalism or having to walk through an intimidating gauntlet of silent, judgemental people hiding behind signs that condemn you simply for being for who you are, are the last desperate acts of those who have nothing left to them but hate.

Every time someone mocks you or attacks your community, they are demonstrating their failure to be anything other than pathetically desperate. They are also acknowledging your existence.

Know this: the Pride community has far more allies in Canada than enemies. You are not alone.

To the cowards who continue to vandalize billboards, steal lawn signs, tear down rainbow flags and ribbons, we will never see you demonstrate the courage to publicly gather like the Pride community in a peaceful and loving celebration of who you are because it would mean shedding your anonymity. Your actions shout to the world that you are defined by one thing: fear.

To the leaders in our community: silence is consent. I understand that it is easier to remain quiet for fear of be-

ing attacked by a vocal group of hate. But this is hopefully not the kind of leadership you want to demonstrate. Publicly condemning these shameful incidents sends a powerful message. Remember the words of Nobel Prize winning author Elie Wiesel:

“We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

Remember: it is not the Pride community vandalizing our cities and breaking the law with impunity.

Finally, to those members of the Pride community in the Pembina Valley who are genuinely frightened by these acts and remain understandably quiet about who you are—quiet at school, quiet at home, quiet at work—though you may feel alone you are not.

You are beautiful. You are exactly who you are meant to be. There is nothing sinful, broken, or immoral about you. Anyone who says differently is simply wrong. You have allies. You have peers who will stand with you wherever you are ... right here in the Pembina Valley, where Pride belongs.

Where you belong.

Letter policy

The *Voice* welcomes letters from readers on local and regional issues and concerns.

Please keep your letters short (excessively long letters are less likely to be published), on-topic, and respectful.

The *Voice* reserves the right to edit, condense, or reject any submission.

Please include your full name, address, and phone number for verification purposes. Your name and city will be published with your letter. We do not print anonymous letters.

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Bryson Penner wins 2026 Katie Cares scholarship

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Bryson Penner knows firsthand the impact a Katie Cares care package can have on a kid.

He was just five or six years old when he was the recipient of the charity's kindness.

"I was in the hospital for a while, I had a long stay, and Katie Cares helped me out so much," the soon-to-be Garden Valley Collegiate graduate shares. "They brought in a TV and video games, movies, and I even got a stuffie that I still have today. So it's just great memories. Everyone in that organization helped make my hospital stays so much better."

Last week, Penner was on the receiving end of another gift from Katie Cares: he is this year's recipient of the \$2,000 Kaitlyn Marie Reimer Scholarship.

Ruth Reimer, executive director of Katie Cares and mother to its late namesake, says Penner's application essay where he outlined his experience with the charity and his dreams

for the kind of teacher he hopes to be in the future captured the hearts of the family.

"He wrote, 'Experiencing [Katie Cares'] support inspired me and I want to bring that same comfort and encouragement to the kids in my future classroom, helping them feel safe and cared for, just like I did,'" Reimer shared, noting they are grateful for the opportunity to recognize a student who reflects the values the scholarship represents. The award was created to recognize GVC grads pursuing post-secondary education who demonstrate a commitment to making a difference.

Penner's community involvements include helping make care hampers for families in need at Christmas and volunteering with local hockey programs that teach kids how to skate.

He will begin his post-secondary education at the University of Manitoba this fall.

"I would love to be a high school teacher that would teach gym classes



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Katie Cares' Randy Reimer (left) presents Bryson Penner with the 2026 Kaitlyn Marie Reimer Scholarship.

or health sciences," Penner says. "I'm really into exercise science and stuff like that."

In addition to his studies, Penner will continue his hockey career with the MMJHL's Pembina Valley Twisters.

The scholarship will be a great help

in easing the financial burden that comes with attending university, Penner says.

"I've been working two jobs trying to save up as much as I can, but I know university is a lot of money," he says. "This will help loads ... I'm just so grateful to be able to have it."

105th Darlingford Memorial Service Sunday, July 5

By Voice staff

The 105th Darlingford Memorial Service is coming up.

The annual remembrance of the locals who gave their lives in service to their country takes place at the Darlingford Memorial Park on Sunday, July 5 at 11 a.m.

The Darlingford Memorial is the only free-standing memorial building of its kind in Manitoba with the sole function of commemorating the war dead. The park is maintained by a local committee and community volunteers.

The ceremony, which was first held on July 5, 1921 when the park was officially opened, includes participation from area school children who place flowers on two crosses in honour of those who never made it home from the wars.

This year's guest speaker is Shau-

na Archer. The Lorette resident is the organizer of the No Stone Left Alone (NSLA) Remembrance Program honouring the service and sacrifice of Canada's military through youth education and the act of remembrance throughout Canada and internationally.

Following the service, lunch will be available at the Darlingford Community Hall for \$15 an adult and \$5 for children under 12.

In case of rain, the service will be held in the Darlingford United Church.



VOICE FILE PHOTO

JOIN US FOR JULY CONSIGNMENT SALES 2026

July ONSITE Week 1 Consignment Sale

Viewing: June 29th - July 2nd from 9 AM to 5 PM.
Bidding starts: July 2nd, 2026 at 9:00 AM
Lots start closing on July 9th, 2026 at 10:00 AM.
Pick up days: Friday, July 10th from 9 AM to 5 PM & during regular operating hours Mon-Fri 9 AM to 5 PM

July OFFSITE Consignment Sale

Viewing: July 13th - 16th from 9 AM to 5 PM.
Bidding starts: July 16th, 2026 at 9:00 AM
Lots start closing on July 23rd, 2026 at 10:00 AM.
Pick up days: Friday July 24 & 25 from 9 AM to 5 PM & during regular operating hours Mon-Fri 9 AM to 5 PM

July ONSITE Week 2 Consignment Sale

Viewing: July 13th - 16th from 9 AM to 5 PM.
Bidding starts: July 16th, 2026 at 9:00 AM
Lots start closing on July 23rd, 2026 at 10:00 AM. Pick up days: Friday July 24 & July 25 from 9 AM to 5 PM & during regular operating hours Mon-Fri 9 AM to 5 PM

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Jennifer Paige coming to Winkler Harvest Festival

By Voice staff

The final Winkler Harvest Festival stage performer has been announced. Jennifer Paige of 1998 chart-topper "Crush" fame will open for Tiffany as part of the festival's Saturday night rock lineup, organizers revealed last week.

Paige is also known for singles "Sober" and "Always You" which also cracked the global charts in the '90s.

The Aug. 7-9 festival will also see Jackson Dean, Brandi Vezina, and Brothers Keep perform for country night on the Friday, Tom Pettys Full Moon Fever cover band perform Saturday, and Tim & The Glory Boys, Jake Fretz, and Peter Burton take the



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Jennifer Paige will open for Tiffany at the Winkler Harvest Festival Aug. 8.

stage for Sunday's Christian music night.

The Funnies

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By: Harrison Dell.©

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Morden-Winkler's graduating classes took to the streets for their grad parades this past week. Winkler's parade, featuring grads from both Northlands Parkway Collegiate and Garden Valley Collegiate, was June 18 (photos above, left, and below) while Morden Collegiate's celebration was Monday (photos at right)



Class of 2026 hits the road

PHOTOS BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE



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CANADA'S HEART IS CALLING

Canada Day

Winkler, Morden set to celebrate Canada Day

By Lorne Stelmach

Winkler and Morden both have a variety of family-friendly events and activities planned for Canada Day next week.

In Winkler, the celebrations happen at the Parkland grounds, including food trucks, kids activities, bouncy castles, bubble soccer, and a petting zoo along with Culture Fest and a performance by The Cracked

Eggshell.

The Culture Fest performances and educational booths have become an important part of the annual celebrations.

"It seems to be quite popular," said community events co-ordinator Lucas Dyck. "Now that it's been around here for a while ... it seems to be a be a hit, so that's good.

"I think the newcomers to Canada really embrace our identity here, and I think the Culture Fest portion really helps with that to just kind of showcase all the different cultures that we have here."

It's Dyck's sense that with everything that's been happening with the U.S. and around the world that people are eager to celebrate Canada and what this nation represents.

"Everything that's happening kind of makes you really appreciate what we have here and the freedoms that we have, so I think people are more antsy than ever to celebrate our nation."

In Morden, the July 1 activities take place at Lake Minnewasta, and there will be food trucks, soccer, kids' ac-

Continued on next page

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1-8PM	Petting Zoo
1-8PM	Food Vendors Open
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10:45PM	O Canada
11:00PM	Lakeside Fireworks

morden.ca/canada-day

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CANADA DAY
Winkler, MB
WINKLER FAIRGROUNDS

CultureFest

Food Trucks	12 - 8pm
Culture Fest	12 - 4:15pm
Petting Zoo	1 - 5pm
Kid's Activities	1 - 5pm
Bouncy Castles, Bubble Soccer, Glitter Tattoos	
A Country Princess	1 - 4pm
Dinner Break	6 - 6:30pm
The Cracked Eggshell	6:30 - 8pm

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Continued from previous page

tivities, a scavenger hunt, UV bracelet creation, a sandcastle contest, face painting, and a petting zoo. As well, Dub City will perform at 7:45 p.m.

"Canada Day this year will have many of the same staples that folks are

used to with of course lakeside fireworks at dusk," said Morden events co-ordinator Aiden Friesen.

"We have brought in a petting zoo this year which is new, and I am hoping that will draw more people out earlier on in the day," he noted. "The band this year is a reggae band which

will complement the overall beach feel very nicely.

"Another addition is some new kids' activities that focus on a soccer theme. The World Cup is happening, so we wanted to take advantage of the moment that soccer is having right now and involve that community anyway that we could.

"This event has been designed for everyone to enjoy," said Friesen. "We have kids' activities in the afternoon and an impressive fireworks show and live music that all will enjoy in the evening. There'll be a variety of food and drink options."



VOICE FILE PHOTO

Morden's Canada Day party is at Colert Beach (above) while Winkler's takes over the Parkland fairgrounds.

TOWN OF ALTONA CELEBRATES

CANADA DAY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1 2026

ALTONA CENTENNIAL PARK

- 1:00 PM - 18U AAA SOUTH CENTRAL VS MIDWEST - ACCESS FIELD
- 1:30 - 9:00 PM - FREE SWIMMING AT ALTONA AQUATIC CENTRE
- 4:30 PM - CHALK DRAWING CONTEST
- 4:00 - 8:00 PM - FOOD TRUCKS
CUCINA FILIPINAS & THE BIG DAWG SMOKIE
- 4:00 - 7:00 PM - KIDS ACTIVITIES
INFLATABLES, PETTING ZOO, SCAVENGER HUNT
- 4:00 - 7:00 PM - CANADA DAY PHOTO BOOTH
- 5:00 - 7:00 PM - FREE KIDDIE CARNIVAL
- 6:30 PM - FREE WATERMELON + ROLLKUCHEN
- 7:30 PM - OPENING CEREMONIES
- 7:45 PM - LIVE BAND - 2ND ST BAND
- 8:45 PM - MANITOBA SUNFLOWER QUEEN QUEST INTRODUCTIONS
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July 1st celebrations in Altona and Morris

By Lorne Stelmach

Canada Day events are being held all across southern Manitoba next week, including a variety of activities and festivities in both Altona and Morris.

In Altona, everything will be centred at Centennial Park. The afternoon includes the 18U AAA South Central team taking on Midwest at 1 p.m., free swimming at the pool from 1:30-9 p.m., a chalk drawing contest at 4:30 p.m., food trucks Cucina Filipinas and The Big Dawg Smookie from 4-8 p.m., kid's activities (inflatables, a petting zoo, a scavenger hunt, and a kiddie carnival), a Canada Day photo booth, free watermelon and roll kuchen at 6:30 p.m., live music throughout the evening, Queen Quest participants introductions at 8:45 p.m., and fire works at dusk.

Morris Area Recreation along with the Valley Ag Society, Morris and District Chamber of Commerce, Curl Morris, Morris Youth for Christ, and the Morris Fire Department are also planning a full day of July 1 celebrations.

The day kicks off with a pickleball tournament at 10 a.m. and free public swimming at the pool from 2-6 p.m. Activities at the Morris Stampede Grounds will also run from 2-6 p.m. including bouncy castles, face painting, exotic animals, a game truck, a cornhole tournament, food vendors, and more.

The evening festivities begin at 6 p.m. with line dancing and a fire show by Flame Syndicate. A family movie starts at 7:30 p.m. followed by fireworks to wrap up the evening.

"We're hoping that by offering activities throughout the day and evening, people will stay at the grounds and enjoy a full day of Canada Day celebrations with family and friends," noted Morris rec. facilitator Meagan Dilts. "Canada Day is always a great community event for us. We usually see 300 plus people come out throughout the day, and it's a fun way for residents and visitors to get together and celebrate Canada while enjoying activities for all ages."

Winkler Arts and Culture celebrates year of growth, increased stability

By Ashleigh Viveiros

It was a banner year for Winkler Arts and Culture (WAC).

At the organization's annual meeting, executive director Jered Hildebrand shared that they experienced "a year of significant growth in 2025, with record participation, expanded programming, and continued financial stability."

Attendance at the Park St. gallery grew by 63 per cent to 3,431 people throughout 2025, up from 1,956 the year before.

"While visitor numbers are important, what stands out to me is the depth of engagement," Hildebrand noted. "More than half of those who came through our doors participated directly in programming."

To that end, WAC offered 21 multi-week classes and 73 workshops and other events through the year. This included things like Indigenous Knowledge Sessions, after-school art programs, summer art camps, and more.

"Our mission at Winkler Arts and Culture is to provide a space where artistic and cultural expression can be taught, shared, and celebrated," Hildebrand said, lauding program assistant Katie Bueckert and the volunteer board of directors for their work in making that possible. "Together, we strive to ensure our facility is more than simply a building. We want it to be a place where artistic opportunities are accessible, learning is encouraged, and creativity can grow at every stage of life."

"Beyond the statistics, the feedback we receive continues to reinforce the value of this work. We regularly hear from parents whose children have gained confidence through our programs."

Community partnerships remain a key part of WAC's success, Hildebrand noted, pointing to ongoing support from the City of Winkler as well as connections with many area businesses and organizations who host programming or events at the gallery. "These partnerships help us create a welcoming space where people from all backgrounds can participate, learn, and connect."

Financially, WAC ended the year with a respectable revenue increase, from \$97,423 in 2024 to \$113,599 in 2025, thanks largely to increased rental income, new sponsorship support, and higher art and gift shop sales.

"We reinvested our increased revenue back into our programming as

total expenses increased from \$90,155 to \$110,506, reflecting expanded programming, increased activity levels, rising supply costs, and additional staffing hours," Hildebrand noted.

WAC nonetheless finished the year with a surplus of \$3,093 and increased net assets from \$130,146 to \$133,239.

"What I find particularly encouraging is that participation grew substantially faster than expenses," Hildebrand said. "Programming participation increased by 75 per cent, while expenditures increased by 18 per cent. To me, this demonstrates that the organization is effectively converting community investment into meaningful public benefit."

Looking to the future, WAC looks to continue strengthening its financial position and grow its programming, including expanding cultural opportunities and increasing access to youth and newcomers to the community.

The gallery will also mark 10 years of operation this fall.

"We're going to be doing a couple of things to celebrate," Hildebrand shared, noting they're in the planning stages for a few different community celebrations and fundraisers to mark the anniversary.

MEMBERS' SHOW ON NOW

On now at the gallery is its annual Members' Show, which will be up until July 18. It features work from about a dozen local artists, running the gamut from paintings to photographs to ceramics.

This exhibition is an important part of WAC's work, Hildebrand said.

"If you back to our beginnings, it was the Winkler Art Club that started all of this, so it's definitely in our roots," he said, noting the show gives members who might not be quite ready for a full exhibition of their own to have a venue to share their work.

"We want to make sure we don't lose contact with our local artists," Hildebrand stressed. "It's super important for us to keep those relationships going, create those opportunities for them."

Also coming up at the gallery is its Summer Art Camp, which runs weekdays from July 13 to Aug. 21. There are sessions for kids age 5-8 in the mornings and for ages 9-12 in the afternoons. Each week will feature a variety of art mediums for kids to learn and explore. You can register online at winklerarts.com.

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Local Manitoba 55+ Games medal winners



SUPPLIED PHOTOS
 Hundreds of athletes—including many from right here in the Pembina Valley—took part in the 2026 Manitoba 55+ Games in Morden-Winkler-Stanley June 9-11, competing in a host of sporting events. Here are a few of the local medal winners. Clockwise from above: Morden's Edith Lovatt (centre) won silver in nine-hole golf; in the pickleball 70+ division, Lois Dudgeon and Len Victor (centre couple), from Morden, won gold while Winkler's Dave Goertzen and Winnipegger Coleen Dufresne won silver; Winkler's Paul Patterson and Morden's Neal Rempel won gold in 65+ pickleball; Darren Crane and Larry Falk, both from Morden, clinched gold in their 55+ pickleball division; Carman's The Pretenders won gold in bowling. The photo, from left, features bowling coordinator Mike Baziuk with Bob Wilson, Jacquie Russell (who also won gold in singles), Laurie Wiebe, David Dyck (who won silver in singles), and Randy McFarlane; Morden's Joanne Thompson and Lorraine Holenski won silver in cribbage; and the Manitou Rock Lakers won gold in slo-pitch. Two other medal winners from this area but not shown here were Tammy Thiessen and Marge Enns, who won gold and silver, respectively, in 18-hole golf.



Altona Bisons edge Pembina Valley Orioles 6-4

By Lorne Stelmach

The Altona Bisons picked up their second win of the season last week, while the Pembina Valley Orioles went two for three.

Altona edged Pembina Valley 6-4 June 16, but the Bisons then fell 11-1 to the Elmwood Giants before being defeated 6-5 by St. Boniface in two games that were part of the Manitoba Junior Baseball League showcase day Saturday.

Pembina Valley recovered from the loss to Altona to take down Interlake

9-7 last Thursday before defeating Winnipeg South 4-1 Saturday as part of the showcase.

Four runs in the bottom of the third inning turned the tide in favour of the Bisons against the Orioles, who were out-hit 8-6. Caden Krahn went two for three for Altona with three RBIs, while Jaren Hildebrand went two for four at the plate for Pembina Valley.

Against Elmwood, the Giants took command of the game right off the bat in the first inning in scoring five runs on three hits, and Elmwood was able to collect their 11 runs overall on

just six hits.

Altona kept it close against St. Boniface and even held a slight 10-9 edge in hits overall, but they couldn't quite recover from trailing 4-2 after two innings. Hayden Klassen, Lochlan Rempel, and Logan Lesser each had two hits for the Bisons.

Against Interlake, Chris Peters drove in four runs on just one hit for the Orioles with a home run to left field in the second inning with Pembina Valley scoring six runs on four hits in the bottom half.

The Orioles then out-hit Winnipeg

South 10-6, and Pembina Valley was led by Jaren Hildebrand, who went two for four against the Wolves, while Lane Giesbrecht, Sam Blatz, Harden Friesen, and Karsten Peters each drove in a run.

Pembina Valley sits in fifth place with a .500 record at 8-8, while Altona is in the cellar in seventh place at 2-15.

Altona hosts Pembina Valley for a rematch Wednesday night. The Orioles then are to have a Sunday doubleheader with St. Boniface while Altona has a Sunday doubleheader against Elmwood.



PHOTOS BY RICK HIEBERT/VOICE

The Rick Wiebe Memorial Charity Roping & Barrel Race took place at the Rocking W Ranch June 13-14. The event featured barrel racing, team roping and breakaway roping across various age categories and raised \$13,545 for South Central Cancer Resource in memory of its namesake.

Rick Wiebe Memorial raises \$13K for SCCR



Local track athletes shine at provincials

By Lorne Stelmach

Morden Collegiate was celebrating its recent success that earned the school the overall AAA title at the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba provincial track and field championships.

Morden athletes earned enough points overall to earn first place during a weekend of competition that also saw Jayla Dyck winning gold in the junior variety girls pentathlon event while teammate Kemi Omoleye came in third in the varsity girls discus.

Al Wirth, who is part of the coaching team, said the students worked hard and earned the honours.

"We had two days a week of practices in Morden and then a third day at the new school on the new track, so that really helped develop things because the kids could use their spikes and get used to running on a nicer facility instead of gravel like we have at the collegiate..

"Then we had the zone meet, and we won three out of the four zone banners, which was unbelievable for us, and then we got to provincials," Wirth said, noting they won the junior girls, junior boys, and varsity girls banners at the zone level.

"We had 40 kids go to provincials, so that was pretty impressive too for us. We're normally around the 20 per-

son mark," he noted. "Then at provincials, we were the top AAA school of the province, so we had about 50 points, and I think the second place team was at about 30."

"I'm quite proud of these kids," Wirth said. "That's that's only the second track and field provincial banner that Morden's ever won. The first one was in 2004 ... now 22 years later we win our second one. So this was definitely a team effort.

"I thank everyone for putting in the effort, and even a lot of the Gr. 12 students, even though it's exams and they're busy thinking about graduation and everything, they still came out and did their best to make the team better and to show their leadership

"It's just a team effort. You need everybody. You need those guys that finish eighth," said Wirth. "They're disappointed they didn't win a med-

Altona Bisons have firm hold on East Div. standings

By Voice staff

The Altona Bisons are standing tall atop the Border Baseball League East Division standings after wins against Carman and Morden last week.

The Bisons downed the Cardinals 5-1 Friday night and then ran rough-

al, but, you know, they got us points, and all those points added up, so every piece is valuable I'm very proud of everybody."

Other regional athletes also did well at provincials.

Garden Valley Collegiate's Rylee Bergen came in third in the 200m boys para, while Northlands Parkway Collegiate's Addison Suderman brought home silver in the varsity girls 100m hurdles. W.C. Miller Collegiate's Sage Wiebe came in second in the varsity girls high jump.

Nellie McClung Collegiate's Soren Reid won gold in the varsity boys pentathlon and third in the long jump while teammate Bree Pearce won bronze in the JV girls javelin. The

school took home the A aggregate banner.

Prairie Mountain's Angela Gundrum won gold and set a new meet record with 3,462 points in the varsity girls pentathlon. Gundrum also won gold in the varsity girls high jump and the varsity girls triple jump.

Teammate Alex Van De Velde clinched gold in the junior varsity boys long jump and the JV boys triple jump. The school took home the AA aggregate banner.

Pilot Mound's Avery Crowe ranked second in the 400m JV girls. In the JV girls medley relay, Pilot Mound came in second. The team also placed third in the 4x400m varsity boys relay.

shod over the Mud Hens 10-3 Sunday to bolster their record to 6-1.

Meanwhile, the Winkler Whips beat Carman 9-6 on June 16. They remain in second place in the division on the strength of five wins and two losses. Morden is in third (3-5) and Carman

is in fourth and last place (1-8).

This week, Winkler hosts the Cardinals Tuesday night and Clearwater on Friday, Morden plays in Cartwright Friday while Altona hosts Baldur. Next Monday night, the Whips host Altona.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Morden Collegiate's track team won the AAA title at the provincial meet.

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- A copy of the objection, including the name of the person who submits the objection, will be provided to the licence applicant.
- Each person who submits an objection will be advised in writing of the outcome to the licence application.

Mother and son to represent Canada at multi-sport event

By Lorne Stelmach

A mother and son duo from Morden who have a passion for triathlons have reached a major pinnacle by qualifying to represent Canada at an international event next year.

Heather Francis and her son Levi will get to compete at the multi-sport championship in Edmonton after having competed and qualified through the Olympic cross triathlon at Birds Hill. Younger son Gideon also did well but is not quite old enough to qualify.

"It was definitely our goal to get towards the top placings so we could qualify to go to world multi-sport championships next year, so that was a big part of what we were striv-



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Levi, Gideon, and Heather Francis compete in triathlons together. Levi and Heather have qualified to represent Canada in Edmonton next year.

ing for," Francis said of their mindset heading into the season. "I thought, well, that's a pretty cool thing if I could compete and represent Team Canada and get the official triathlon Canada race outfit and compete on behalf of the country ... that's perhaps a once in a lifetime opportunity."

Francis is no stranger to triathlons, having been an organizer of the Morden Triathlon for a number of years, so this has been a passion for the family for awhile

"The race and the triathlon group in Morden kind of petered off, but we've always been kind of into it since the kids were little, so I figured I need a goal to work towards, and the cross triathlon was introduced at Birds Hill," she said.

"So I asked my boys if they wanted to get back into triathlon too because they also did triathlons when they were little, and they jumped on board, and we all decided to train together and work towards doing the triathlon at Birds Hill, and there's a couple more we have this planned this summer too.

"I really just like challenging myself," Levi said when asked attracts him to it. "I always feel like I can do better, and so this was one of the ways I felt like I could do something to actually challenge my body. And working with my mom and Gideon both really helped me stay motivated."

The fact the whole family is involved in it makes a big difference.

"With them, you have the support right in your house. You have the motivation," Levi said. "You have people pressuring you to get better, work out every day, and if someone's expecting you to get up and go for a bike ride, it's harder to sleep in and go, nah, not today, right?"

"I think triathlon is a really cool sport because it's a challenge in not just one area but three different areas," said Francis. "So that keeps all the muscle

groups challenged, and, honestly, on race day, it's the most exhilarating feeling to go from one to the other and have your spectators cheering you on and to cross the finish line. It's just a really cool feeling.

It's a challenge to be involving a lot of different components.

"For sure, it's the swimming, the biking, the running and even knowing how to change quickly from one sport to the next, your legs need to adjust and you go, oh, okay, now I'm not biking, now I'm running. It's always a bit of a weird feeling in your legs when you switch from one sport to the other," Francis said. "And it's something that you need to constantly kind of train for. You can't just suddenly, okay, I'm gonna do a triathlon.

"Since I hadn't done them for quite a few years, it was definitely something that I had to train for, and it gave me a goal to work towards, and I'm really happy to be doing it. It feels really good.

"I think Levi and I are both really excited to see what an international competition is like and what an international level race course will be like," she added. "Unfortunately, Gideon is still a little bit too young; you have to be 18 to qualify, but it will be really cool to do it together with Levi.

"I guess the men's and women's races might be different, so we could maybe even cheer each other on, but at this one [at Birds Hill], it was really cool to stand at the start line together, and it was the last I saw of him. He's way faster than me now."

"I just really enjoy spending time with my mom, so whether it's training or lining up at the start ... I really appreciate it when we can do stuff together like that together," Levi noted. "It really makes me feel happy doing it with her."

At the moment, they are planning to do the Clear Lake Triathlon this summer and then gear up for Edmonton next year.

United Way scholarship winners announced

By Lorne Stelmach

United Way Pembina Valley recently announced its 2026 youth scholarship winners.

The agency distributes three \$1,000 scholarships annually to a graduate from each Morden and Winkler high school, recognizing students who have demonstrated social awareness and leadership through volunteer service and involvement in the community.

"Our scholarship committee was impressed by all of the scholarship applications. The 2026 graduating class has demonstrated a commitment to learning and to volunteering," said United Way representative Nicole Hiebert. "The scholarship winners have demonstrated their academic ability, leadership, and hours of volunteering throughout their high school years."

Here are this year's recipients:

Nolan Lepp, Garden Valley Collegiate.

Lepp's community involvements include student council, Winkler Bible Camp, Pembina Valley Bible Camp, a GVC food drive, the Holiday Home business, and annual missions trips.

Lepp intends to study at Steinbach Bible College and then the University of Manitoba as he works towards becoming an accountant.

"It means a lot to be recognized by the community," said Lepp. "It is encouraging."

It also means a lot to him to give back to the community.

"When I first got involved with camp, it was just like this is fun. Let's just keep going with the transition here from camper into a cabin leader. And then I realized that I'm actually helping people, and it just goes on from there, and the community that you build with other people that are also helping also really, really boosts

you, drives you forward.

"It's just helping the community that's helped me."

Oluwatomisin Adeniyi, Morden Collegiate

Adeniyi's volunteer involvements include working as an educational assistant at École Morden Middle School, at the Hope Thrift Store, as a basketball referee, as a food server at All Nations Church, student council, and Youth in Philanthropy.

Adeniyi will pursue post-secondary education at the University of Manitoba with plans to become a veterinary doctor or go into animal research.

"It means a lot to me. It's an opportunity that I know most people don't usually get, and I'm very grateful that I got it because I didn't expect to get it," said Adeniyi. "I'm just really thankful."

"What inspires me the most is getting to meet new people and the expe-

rience itself," she added. "With all the volunteering I did, I got to new people, and I got to make new memories, and it was another addition to my life and my story."

Rudra Patel, Northlands Parkway Collegiate

Patel's involvements include coaching U13 boys with the Winkler Amateur Soccer Association (WASA), Youth in Philanthropy, and volunteering as a soccer referee for middle school sports and the WASA.

"Volunteering gave me the opportunity to make a positive impact on younger players both on and off the field," Patel shared in his application. "One of the biggest impacts I feel I had was being a role model for younger players. This experience taught me valuable lessons like leadership and responsibility."

Patel will be studying dentistry at the University of Toronto this fall.