

WHERE YOU LIVE

A quick look at what's shaping and shaking Greater Victoria



Compiled by JEFF BELL

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Young Building to be unveiled

The switch flips Friday at Camosun College in a lighting ceremony marking the completion of the Young Building restoration project.

The ceremony takes place at 4 p.m. at the landmark building on Camosun's Lansdowne campus.

Activities will include a rededication of the 86-year-old structure and a performance by the Camosun Choristers Christmas Choir. The building, which has just undergone an \$8.3-million refit, will be open to the public.

AIDS memorial set up

Local AIDS organizations mark World AIDS Day on Friday by inviting the public to a Room to Remember.

The unique memorial is being set up at 541 Herald St. Members of the public are invited to come by from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. with mementos of loved ones who have died from the effects of HIV/AIDS. People can bring photos or other meaningful items, or create artwork with materials supplied at the site.



The organizers of the third annual charity auction at the Fifth Street bar and grill thank everyone who helped them raise over \$8,000.

Special mention goes to Sam Travers and Iris Zaleschuk.

The money raised goes to the AODA Children's Christmas Party, the St. Patrick's elementary school Instruments for Kids Program and the Blanshard Community Association.

"Thank you again for your participation in this very special event and for your contribution to the community," the auction committee says.

Ferries mark special event

B.C. Ferries is celebrating a milestone in its 40-year history — carrying its half-billionth passenger.

Bruce Watson of Prince Rupert was honoured with the designation after his name was drawn from tickets distributed to passengers on board the Wednesday 11 a.m. sailing of the Spirit of British Columbia from Tsawwassen to Swartz Bay.

Watson won several prizes, including a trip through B.C. Ferries' Discovery Coast Passage. Passengers on board the run were also treated to cake.

The Crown-owned ferry corporation carries 21 million passengers a year on 41 vessels, along 25 routes calling at 46 ports.

—CP



The Royal Jubilee Hospital emergency room has seen huge backlogs in recent days. Ian McKinnon/Times Colonist

Holiday rush arrives early in emergency

By JEFF BELL
Times Colonist staff

The holiday rush is already here, even though Christmas is still more than three weeks away.

But it's not the malls and downtown shops feeling the strain, it's hospital emergency rooms that are dealing with lineups usually seen much closer to Dec. 25.

Cathy McDonald, who took over as the Capital Health Region's manager of emergency services less than three months ago, has seen the situation — especially at Royal Jubilee Hospital — grow progressively worse in the short time she has been here.

"It's virtually unmanageable most days," she said. The time of year is one element that makes a tough situation even more difficult, McDonald said.

"People fall in the rain, for example, and are breaking hips. There are some seasonal variables that are just tipping the edge."

Patients suffering from influenza are becoming a factor, she added.

"They did a great job campaign for flu shots, but it's flu season, for sure."

McDonald sees no signs of the emergency room woes going away in the near future.

"With the holiday season coming, other community-based facilities or outpatient facilities or clinics or offices close (for certain periods). That certainly suggests to us that the demands will get worse."

"The other wrinkle we're running in to is the staff are all getting sick."

But it isn't the flu that's the culprit, it's the long hours and lingering staff shortages that are causing the workers to become tired and run down, she said.

For the most part, spikes in emergency room demand are unpredictable.

About 120 patients come through both the Jubilee and Victoria General Hospital emergency rooms in an average day, McDonald said, and problems arise when the numbers go too far beyond that total or when cases are complex.

The latest crunch in the Jubilee emergency room developed Tuesday night and during the early-morning hours on Wednesday.

"It was cardiac-monitor beds that were the really big problem," McDonald said.

Most of those people with heart troubles were placed in hospital beds during the day on Wednesday.

The biggest backlog McDonald has

seen since she arrived in Victoria is 31 patients.

At its worst, the Wednesday morning backlog saw 27 people in the Jubilee holding area waiting for placement on hospital wards somewhere in the city, said Sheila Inkster, the department's charge nurse.

Things were especially tight about 7 a.m., but began to ease as patients were shifted around. About 10 people were sent to Saanich Peninsula Hospital to ease the strain, Inkster said.

"In the morning it was really grim," she said mid-afternoon Wednesday.

As always, people with the least pressing conditions were subjected to long waits. Inkster said one man in his 70s with back pain and other ailments spent about five hours in the waiting room early Wednesday.

Ideally, the Jubilee emergency department would have at least 10 beds available for patient use at any given time, McDonald said.

"Most days, we have between one and none."

CHR officials have stressed that emergency room problems are a symptom of pressing needs throughout the hospital system. Administrators are consulting with doctors, nurses and others to find ways of streamlining work in various areas to deal with lack of staff, and the ongoing closure of 61 acute-care beds that were taken out of service this summer.

TRANSIT SERVICE

Bus fares addressed at hearing

By MALCOLM CURTIS
Times Colonist staff

Tonight is your chance to comment on proposed bus-fare increases that would see regular tickets and monthly passes rise 14 per cent in the spring.

B.C. Transit is holding a fare hearing at Saanich Municipal Hall, starting at 7 p.m.

The proposed hikes would see the price of a regular one-zone cash fare jump to \$2 from \$1.75, and regular monthly passes climb to \$57 from \$50. Other increases would include a whopping 20 per cent boost in the cost of books of single-zone tickets (10) from \$15 to \$18, and a 17 per cent rise in the cost of the universal pass for UVic and Camosun College students (U-pass) to \$49 a semester from \$42.

User groups have already objected to the fare increases, saying they will drive down ridership, thus defeating the goal of the transit commission to persuade more people to use buses.

"We've heard from many anti-poverty groups — they're not happy," Transit spokesman Chris Foord said Wednesday.

"Let's be blunt about this, putting up fares does not provide an incentive to ride the bus," Foord said. "When you see a transit agency doing so it's because their backs are up against the wall."

The Victoria regional transit commission says the increases are necessary to fund rising costs for the existing service and future planned expansion.

Please see FARES, B2

PROPOSED FARE INCREASES		
ADULT FARES	Current	Proposed
Cash - one zone	\$1.75	\$2.00
Cash - two zone	\$2.50	\$2.75
Tickets (10) - one zone	\$15.00	\$18.00
Tickets (10) - two zone	\$22.50	\$24.75
Day Pass	\$5.50	\$6.25
Monthly Pass	\$50.00	\$57.00
College Pass	\$42.00	\$49.00
ProPass (per month)	\$42.92	\$48.93
DISCOUNT FARES	Current	Proposed
Cash - one zone	\$1.10	\$1.25
Cash - two zone	\$1.75	\$2.00
Tickets (10) - one zone	\$10.00	\$11.25
Tickets (10) - two zone	\$15.00	\$18.00
Day Pass	\$4.00	\$4.50
Monthly Pass	\$32.00	\$36.50

Hiker rescued after night lost on trail

By LOUISE DICKSON
Times Colonist staff

Shakeira Wynde's prayers were answered at 9:40 a.m. Wednesday when a team of search and rescue volunteers found her walking on the Juan de Fuca trail.

"In her own words, she was praying to God that somebody would come by pretty soon and pick her up," said Sooke Search and Rescue manager Cliff Henry. "She was cheerful and quite elated."

The 50-year-old woman left her van in the parking lot at China Beach about 1 p.m. Tuesday. Wynde and her little dog hiked along the steep marine park trail to Mystic Beach for about 90 minutes.

"She went to the far side of the cliffs but realized she couldn't go down the cliffs because it was high tide," said Henry. "She got turned around and disoriented and couldn't find the trailhead."

Wynde called 911 on her cellphone

to notify authorities she needed help. She described the area she was in to the dispatcher. The dispatcher told her to stay put. Communication was lost with Wynde when her cell phone battery died at 2:40 p.m.

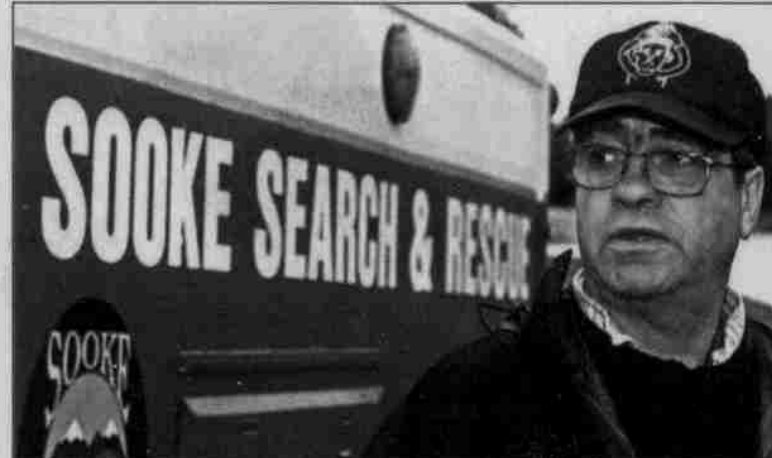
About 4 p.m., a team of search and rescue volunteers from Sooke, Metchosin and Victoria set up a command centre at China Beach.

"We searched until it got dark," said Henry. "One team stayed out until 7 a.m. Another search party went out at 9:15 a.m."

To protect herself from the elements, Wynde got into a hollow and slept against a tree.

"I slept and put the dog inside my jacket and we really kept warm all night and just slept one way, then the other way, and prayed ... I just prayed that somebody would find me," Wynde told the media.

Wynde was found about a 25-minute



Cliff Henry, search master for Sooke Search and Rescue, describes events at rescue of missing woman. John McKay/Times Colonist

walk from the parking lot at China Beach, where a friend was waiting for her. Search and rescue volunteers gave her some juice and brought her into the heated van to warm her up.

"After that she sat and chatted with us. She calmed down a little bit and after a while her adrenaline rush faded out. She was back in safe hands with people she knew."



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