

WHERE YOU LIVE

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

Compiled by
TIMES COLONIST STAFF

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Housing society founder to speak

Richard Carr Gomm, founder of the Abbeyfield Housing Society, an international army of volunteers dedicated to meeting the needs of affordable retirement housing, is coming to Victoria.

Gomm will address health care and senior support service sector workers at the Princess Mary on April 17 at 7 p.m.

The Abbeyfield concept of a family atmosphere in a small-scale retirement home is used in 24 houses in Canada, 20 in B.C.

Calling all paddlers

The Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club is calling all watersport fans to the Gorge Waterway April 13 and 14 for the 2002 Wake Up the Gorge Canoe Race.

All races begin and end at the VCKC, 355 Gorge Rd. West: six-person Outrigger races all Saturday and solo Outrigger and marathon canoe races Sunday. Races will kick off at 9:30 a.m. both days.

The best viewing along the Gorge is between Tillicum and Admirals Road, or across from the clubhouse at Kinsmen Park.

For more information contact Mavis Shankland at 598-6855.

Peacekeepers honoured

Remember Canada's peacekeeping contributions — from Korea in 1950 to present-day Afghanistan — on April 14.

The Royal Canadian Legion Cowichan Branch #53, Duncan, is hosting a special Sunday celebration — lunch, supper, entertainment — honouring Canadian peacekeepers around the world.

For more information call the legion office: 250-746-5013.

Date set for MS run

The Super Cities Walk-Run for Multiple Sclerosis takes place April 14. The three-, six- or 10-kilometre events are being held in 20 communities throughout B.C. and five sites on Vancouver Island — Windsor Park in Oak Bay, Cowichan Sportsplex in Duncan, Pioneer Plaza at the Bastion in Nanaimo, Lagoon Park Walkway & Airpark in the Comox Valley and The Dyke in Port Alberni.

Pledges should be checked in between 8 a.m. and 9:45 with the events to start at 10 a.m. To register for the Oak Bay run-walk call 250-388-6496. Online registration: www.supercitieswalk.com

APPLAUSE

He said he'd do it, and he has. When a tragic car accident on the night of May 30, 1999, left Duncan's Jamie Coleman paralyzed from the chest down, he was devastated. Momentarily.

It was only days before Jamie, son of Duncan Mayor Michael Coleman, rebounded.

He began rigorous physical workouts and pledged, amongst other lofty goals, to return to the University of Victoria to complete his bachelor's degree in political science and history and to eventually study law — a Coleman family tradition.

Coleman, now 23, has just received his acceptance to the UVic's distinguished law school. He will start the three-year program in September.

PROTECTEUR WELCOMES THE PROTECTED



Cmdr. Sandy Bellows, right, commanding officer of HMCS Protecteur, chats to Ian Haddow, Victoria businessman and co-chair of the Friends of Protecteur, on the bridge deck during the supply ship's open house Sunday at Ogden Point. The Protecteur will be sailing for the Arabian Sea May 21 to participate in Operation Apollo, Canada's contribution to the war on terrorism.

Ray Smith/Times Colonist

Next move pondered in search for woman

BY LOUISE DICKSON
Times Colonist staff

After three days combing Mount Work Park, search and rescue officials were talking about expanding their search for a 20-year-old autistic woman.

"We don't know if the search will continue in this area," Linda Hillard, search and rescue manager for Vancouver Island south, said Sunday. "We're working on a game plan tonight. There could be a specialized task force to look at tracking in various areas."

On Sunday, disappointed, frustrated searchers were wondering if Laura Mitchell of North Saanich had left the park on her own.

Mitchell ran away from her female caregiver around noon Friday, while they were walking along Timberland Trail in Mount Work Park. The caregiver spent several hours looking for Mitchell. A formal search began about 5 p.m. Friday and continued throughout the weekend. On Saturday, about 70 professionally trained search and rescue volunteers scoured the trails while the coast guard auxiliary searched the coastline of Saanich Inlet and Finlayson Arm.

On Sunday, the teams began a grid search — where searchers walk in a straight line within eyesight of each other — of the 561-hectare park.

The search is complicated by the fact that Mitchell's autism means she does not respond and would not call out to people calling for her. The search and rescue teams have been told they will probably have to see Mitchell to find her.

Hillard said Mitchell's father began searching at dawn Sunday.

"He's holding up very well," she said. "But he's obviously very distraught."

Hillard said she didn't want to even think about Mitchell spending a third night in the park.

"We want her out of there. Last night was a bad night because it was so rainy. Hypothermia is very high on our list. She would become less mobile, disoriented and would want to curl up in a ball. Today's a nice day. We're hoping the sun and heat will draw her out."

As the hours dragged by, searchers fought to remain optimistic.

"We're worried," said Vickie Weber of Sooke search and rescue. "Is she in the park? Is she out of the park?"

Roy Meikle, director of Peninsula search and rescue, said he was disappointed no evidence had been found.

"If she is still mobile and hasn't hurt herself in the bush, there is a fairly strong possibility she left the area," said Meikle. "We're not into a desperate situation yet, but the sooner we find her the better."

Tired and disappointed, Randy Park returned to the command post at McKenzie Bight parking lot Sunday afternoon to refuel on egg salad sandwiches and pasta.

"It's really rugged. Incredibly rugged. You can lose people in feet. You would think nobody would be up in a place like that, but you have to look everywhere."

Park shook his head. "There's got to be an answer."

THE SCHOOL TRUSTEE'S LOT

It's not a happy one these days, as parents and unions squeal under the effects of provincial government cuts. But the people in the job say it's still worthwhile

BY JEFF RUD
Times Colonist staff

A classified ad for the job might read like this: *Wanted, informed, articulate, civic-minded applicants, willing to work long hours for next to no pay. Must be prepared to fill night shifts and make difficult, unpopular decisions that could alter peoples' lives.*

Being a school trustee isn't all glamour, especially now, when boards across British Columbia are scrambling to make up budget shortfalls caused by the province's new funding formula and declining enrolment.

"It's really a tough job when every year you have to take dollars away and do more with less," said Elaine Leonard, chairwoman of the Greater Victoria school board.

No year is more difficult than this one. Leonard's board is faced with cuts of \$8.8 million from its budget for 2002-03. The Sooke board is staring at \$3.7 million in reductions, the Saanich district \$3.5 million.

After years of smaller cuts, local trustees are now being forced to contemplate massive changes to the way they deliver education. The Greater Victoria district is pondering such things as elim-

inating daytime custodians, chopping the elementary band and strings program and making cuts across the board to special education. Teacher layoffs will be part of any solution.

Trustees are hearing impassioned pleas during public budget sessions about why they shouldn't cut or reduce a wide variety of programs. They know that any cut made will hurt somebody. The problem is, the money has to come from somewhere.

And things won't get easier next year, when the Greater Victoria district may have to chop a further \$6 million.

"It's very frustrating, because the government promised us stable funding," Leonard said. "We're caught in the middle."

Caught in the middle and, in some cases, taking the heat from frustrated parents, teachers and other stakeholders during public budget meetings, which are consuming the majority of trustees' evenings this month. Some trustees estimate that, including all the material they must read to properly prepare, their school board workload can in some weeks range from 30 to 40 hours.

Meanwhile, the annual pay ranges from a low of \$6,796 for a trustee in the Saanich district to Leonard's \$13,000 stipend as Greater Victoria board chairwoman.



Elaine Leonard: "a tough job."

"In most cases, it's a full-time job," said Leonard, a sales clerk at a fabric store. "You don't go into it for the money. You go into it for your dedication to the children."

Please see TRUSTEES, B2

What do you say when a leg falls off?

BY CINDY E. HARNETT
Times Colonist staff

Teen amputees face all the same social pressures as their peers, and more.

During a weekend session of the War Amps 2002 B.C. Child Amputee Seminar at the Harbour Towers, teenagers laughed and shared stories that, with a positive outlook, were funny rather than frightening.

They talked of leaving artificial limbs in desks at school, or having them fly off or be ripped off during sports events.

"You have to have a sense of humour," said Adele Fifield, director at the War Amps national headquarters.

"It's a good opportunity to make the joke, 'can you give me a hand,'" said Kathryn Marlow, 19, of Surrey, in an interview.

"I've left it in a Pizza Hut," said Gregory Stewart, 15, of his prosthetic arm. "I've had to have it mailed back to me."

At seven feet tall, Stewart, an aspiring basketball player, says right now his height is more of an issue than his disability.

That's not to say there are no challenges. There are many.

Teens born without certain limbs and those who lost limbs because of diseases or accidents talked about those difficulties Saturday. Acceptance is a key concern, said Fifield.

With every new class, new team and new school there are the same old questions and uncomfortable silences, said the teens.

Congenital amputees learn from birth that they have to educate others and make them feel comfortable.

Body image, relationships and joining the workforce were some of the issues discussed.

Keith Parker, 16, of Victoria, spoke enthusiastically about the positive response he has received from his new employer at a local grocery store.

Still, as he ventures out further into the world, he said he is surprised by the number of people unaware of the capabilities of amputees.

Parker, who learned to play violin at a young age with his prosthetic arm, said he can sense when people wrongly assume he can't do a certain task. "I just do it quickly before they can say anything," he said.

Because Parker's special myo-electric arm is fitted with sensors, his hand can detect when something, a glass for example, is slipping and he can tighten his grasp.

Improved technology is allowing amputees to do more with increased comfort and ease. Much of it is paid for by donations to War Amps through its key tag and address label service.

Please see AMPUTEES, B2

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