

# The Westend Weekly

## Bringing Communities Together



Box 66, Rainy River, ON P0W 1L0 Ph. 852-3815, FAX 852-1863, e-mail: westendweekly@tbaytel.net - Serving the District for 17 years VOL. 18, NO. 38 Wednesday, December 23, 2009  
If you ever forget to pick up the paper, read it on line at [www.westendweekly.ca](http://www.westendweekly.ca)

### The Legend of Cascarones



Helen Hermanson wacks an egg over Captain Angel's head.

by Marlene Deschamps

Helen Hermanson brought more than Las Posadas to Fort Frances. She also brought Cascarones. The children asked if they were again going to get the gift of an egg. Helen brought close to 6 dozen of the beautifully decorated eggs to pass out and to carry out the ritual of breaking the egg over the head of someone you wanted to have good luck and good fortune in the upcoming year. Captain Angel agreed, even if somewhat reluctantly, to let Helen break an egg over his head. He didn't know quite what to expect and broke out in smiles as the confetti came falling down over him. Helen told me this was a tradition 1000's of years old and how I could find out more on the net so I did just that. The following is the legend of Cascarones.

It is believed that Marco Polo brought the first eggs from Asia and they eventually made it to Spain and Mexico. The colorful confetti shower is said to bring

luck and good fortune to those who have an egg broken over their head. The shells have a small opening in one end and the inside is drained out. They are washed and then dried and the hole is filled with confetti and sealed with tissue paper. They are then brightly painted. The original eggs from China were filled with perfumed powder and the eggs were used as gifts. From Italy the tradition was carried to Spain and then to America. Carlotta, the wife of Maximilian was so fascinated by the eggs that she brought them to Mexico during her husband's rule in the mid 1800's. In Mexico, the people replaced the perfumed powder with confetti and labeled them CAS-CARONES. The tradition faded until the late 60's, early 70's when they regained popularity in South Texas. It has now become a family tradition and churches and schools make and sell them prior to Easter, one of the many festivals, they are used at. The religious line

to Cascarones is that the people believe it represents the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The breaking of the egg symbolizes how Christ has risen from the tombs like a newborn chick opening the shell.

This is a beautiful tradition from another culture that was obviously enjoyed by the many attending Las Posadas. Many were trying to repeat the tradition until it was pointed out that any future breaking of eggs should take place outside so they wouldn't have to clean up so much confetti from the carpet. It should be noted that Captain Angel was a real good sport to participate in this ritual and it was nice to see such a big smile on his face when the confetti fell because he really didn't know what he was getting himself into when this started. A big thank you goes out to Helen whose warmth and creativity has given many a joyous way to celebrate this holy season.

### Grand Opening for Abattoir slated for end of January



by Marlene Deschamps

It's been a long wait for many people who wanted to build an abattoir in the Rainy River District but it has only been a short six months since they got the go ahead and the shovel went into the ground. With the grand opening slated for January 28th, the Board of Directors can all feel a sense of pride and relief. According to Director, Steve Loshaw, they are expecting to be operational in February. Although the building itself will be complet-

ed there is still some equipment that needs to be installed.

Cold Box Builders were the consignor and General Contractor while Select Construction were the site managers. Steve said Select Construction were the ones who made it happen along with some local sub contractors.

Steve noted they will soon start scheduling with area producers for slaughter of area stock. He added this will be a real bonus for the agricultural community and for the local

food initiative. These producers can now sell to area outlets as well as to the general public.

Memberships are still available and this is open to the general public. To find out more about memberships or to sign on you can contact Steve at 486-1252 or any of the Board of Directors members.

When asked how he felt about nearing the completion date, Steve said "I really feel good. We finally got here." He is looking forward to the grand opening on January 28th.



To all our readers, advertisers, friends and associates go our best wishes for a season filled with good news and good times. Your support makes it all worthwhile. Happy Holidays and many thanks!

**The Westend Weekly**  
Bringing Communities Together

Martin, Jacque, Marlene, Bonny and Ann

### Las Posadas held for second year in Fort Frances



by Marlene Deschamps

For the second year, St. John's Anglican Church held Las Posadas. This is a re-enactment of Christmas Eve where Mary and Joseph seek shelter for the night. This new cultural way of celebrating began with the talent and help of Helen Hermanson from International Falls. She is from southern Texas and enjoyed the many festivals and celebrations held in that area. This celebration has been held for 100's of years in Mexico and Texas and has spread throughout the continent and now has spread into Canada. The basement of the church was brightly decorated with lanterns, lights, colored discs and pinatas. The group was led last year by a donkey which is traditional but unfortunately the little fellow is no longer with us. Instead there was a small pony generously brought to the church by Tom and Shirley Morrish. The little pony named Buck was really anxious to get started and grew quite impatient with waiting for Mary, Joseph and the angels to get into costume. Joseph

(Father Wayne) and Mary (Dana Lynn Begin) were finally ready and they all started out led by the many young angels participating. Helen in her bright Mexican garb and carrying a lantern was along for the journey which saw them approach different Scott Street businesses. They were, of course, turned away at each place until they arrived back at the church and the Innkeeper (John McTaggart) said they could rest and stay over in the manger. After everyone entered the basement including several members of the congregation and general public who went with them on their journey, Father Wayne sat with the children and explained the meaning and the miracle of what was happening. Jerry and Jackie Guimond sang the Las Posadas Song which basically states everything written above in song. One of the children asked where the eggs were and Helen said she would bring them out later. Pastor Wayne thanked everyone who had contributed to the food drive and to every-

one involved in Las Posadas, especially Jackie and Jerry for coming in at the last minute to do such a great job on the song. He thanked Tom and Shirley Morrish for bringing Buck in to lead the group on their journey. He also recognized Sarah Gervais for running the kitchen and her team for setting up the food. Everyone then had a chance to enjoy tacos in a bag along with coffee, tea or hot chocolate. After filling up on food, Captain Angel from the Salvation Army arrived to receive the donated food. This is covered in a separate article. At last came the time the children were waiting for- breaking the pinatas. Some did it with eyes wide open and some choose to be blindfolded, but before the candy and treat filled pinata was broken there were many who tried unsuccessfully to do the deed. This celebration is a great way to learn what other cultures do to celebrate and honour the season and a great way to remember just what it is we are celebrating.

#### The Fort Frances Team



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# Hopefully Drivers Examiners Centre will reopen soon

by Marlene Deschamps  
According to the Canadian Press, Ontario's driving examiners could be back on the job in early January after apparently reaching an agreement with their employer on the weekend. An email sent to certain media outlets Saturday and reported on by CTV, said the two sides had negotiated an end to the four month work stoppage. The news release went on to state that the strike has prevented many Ontarians from getting new drivers' licences or renewals since August. It added that the yet to be ratified deal was still confidential. Some 590 DriveTest employees walked

off the job August 21st after talks broke off with their employer, Serco DES Inc. the main sticking points between the two sides included wages, benefits and a proposal to increase the number of part-time employees at the expense of full time jobs. The strike affected 93 full time and part time DriveTest sites, which grant or renew licenses to novice drivers and those over 80. In November and December, non-striking managers opened 12 centres so that commercial drivers could get their licenses for work purposes. The province contracted out driver testing in 2003 to Serco

DES in a 10 year deal. If ratified, full service at the centres would likely resume January 5, 2010. The union had previously rejected an offer in November. This news is great for the number of people who need renewals and a real Christmas present for the many teens who want to get their permits. It will also be helpful for those wanting to travel into the States and their licenses have expired because they couldn't get them renewed. It was mentioned on the radio this a.m. that Serco DES will probably have to hire around 100 people to deal with the backlog.

# Helpful seasonal tips mean less holiday humbug

With the holidays just around the corner, CSA International is reminding everyone to take a moment to think about safety. With endless celebrating, shopping and decorating, people often overlook simple safety precautions. Festive lights, decorations and even gifts meant to be fun and joyful can also be dangerous and unsafe when not used properly or when not up to applicable manufacturing standards. As they try to stretch their budgets, holiday shoppers are sometimes attracted to lower discount-store prices. It's important to not let unsafe, untested, and uncertified counterfeit products end up under the tree.

The following tips from CSA International are designed to provide everyone a happy, healthy holiday season.

- Avoid counterfeits by picking the nice over the naughty
- Avoid electrical products that are missing a certification mark from an accredited certification organization, such as CSA International.
- When products don't include brand identifiers or trademarks, return addresses, or company contact information, they may be fakes.
- A counterfeit product often has packaging with an inferior design or partial illustrations. Look for misspellings and unclear print on products and labels. Check the heaviness and the "look and feel" of

products. Fakes are often light and flimsy.  
-If the price seems too good to be true, it probably is. Be wary of extra low bargains on electronics.

*Keep the festive season bright and safe*

- Inspect holiday light strings each year and discard any with frayed cords, cracked lamp holders or loose connections.
- Never tack or staple lighting strings or extension cords to any surface. Use insulated fasteners such as tape or plastic clips rather than nails or tacks to hold lights in place.
- Never run electrical cords through doorways or under carpets and rugs.
- Always turn off holiday lights when you leave the home or office unattended or when going to bed.

-Do not use open flames or candles on or near flammable materials such as wreaths, trees or paper decorations.  
-Avoid hanging decorations on or near objects like fire sprinklers, fire extinguishers, exit corridors or exit signs which can hinder one's vision or safety.

-Before working with outdoor wiring, turn off the electricity to the supply outlet and unplug the connection.

-Ensure that light strings, cords, spotlights and floodlights are certified and marked for outdoor use.

-When hanging lights outdoors, keep electrical connectors above ground, out of puddles or snow and away from metal gutters.

-Remove lights promptly after the holidays to avoid damage caused by extended exposure to harsh weather conditions.

-Use a certified timer to switch lights on and off.  
*Warm and cozy around the home*

-Do not use your gas fireplace if the glass panel is removed, cracked or broken. Glass panels and frame assemblies should be replaced only by a qualified service professional. When purchasing or installing a gas fireplace, check for the mark of an accredited certification organization, such as the Flame mark from CSA International.

-Install at least one carbon-monoxide (CO) alarm near bedrooms. Use more than one CO alarm if sleeping areas are located on different levels of your home and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installing and maintaining your alarms. When purchasing a CO alarm, check for the mark of an accredited certification organization such as the certification Flame and CSA 6.19-01 reference mark from CSA International.

-Test your smoke alarms monthly. One smoke alarm is not enough; install them on every level of your home and outside all sleeping areas. Only working smoke alarms can give you the precious seconds you may need to escape a fire.

-Do not store combustible materials such as holiday wrapping paper, decorations, gasoline, propane, chemicals, paint, rags and cleaning products near your gas furnace. Look for the familiar CSA International certification Flame mark on your gas-fired furnace or water heater to ensure it has been tested and certified to the applicable standard.

# Nurses call failed talks in Copenhagen an embarrassment

An historic opportunity to reach a much needed agreement on climate change has been squandered due to a lack of political will, nurses say. The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) says the world's top political leaders, including Prime Minister Stephen Harper, will point to the deal reached late Friday as a "first step" but that claim rings hollow for nurses and millions of other Canadians for whom the environment and the impacts of climate change are top-of-mind issues says the association's President Wendy Fucile.

The fact that the agreement isn't binding as evidence of how little was accomplished.

"The scientific data is overwhelming and the lack of leadership and strong action from Canada is deeply disturbing because nurses know how global warming is dangerous for our health and our patients," says Fucile.

Doris Grinspun, RNAO's executive director, says the failure to act is inexcusable given the broad consensus on the evidence and urgent calls to action from the association and others across the country. In the days leading up to the summit, more than 1,000 RNs wrote letters to the Prime Minister imploring

him to assume Canada's traditional proud role as a leader in convincing other nations of the urgency to act.

"It's clear Mr. Harper wasn't listening but we urge him to step up and lead on this issue," she says adding "Canada is a wealthy nation that is playing a negative role in global warming through decades of high per capital emissions."

Grinspun adds RNAO will continue to demand action on climate change. "Nurses care about climate change, nurses have power and nurses vote. Our political leaders must understand that the environment is an urgent priority that we can't afford to ignore."

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# From the house

Submitted by: John Rafferty M.P.

Week of December 18 to December 25, 2009.

Looking forward to the New Year, I will take a brief moment here to highlight a few ways in which you can help spread some holiday cheer in our communities, also highlight three important issues that I intend to work on in throughout the spring session of parliament.

Several regional food drives and charity organizations are experiencing shortfalls this year and many people will be forced to go without again over the holiday season. There are many great charities operating in the region, but several organizations urgently require non-perishable food items to help families in desperate need at this time of year. In Thunder Bay, the Regional Food Distribution Network (622-7440) and Shelter House (623-8182) are accepting donations. In Atikokan, the Native Friendship Centre (597-1213) and the Faith Lutheran Food Bank (597-4225 or 597-4607) are doing the same. And in Fort Frances and Rainy River, the Salvation Army Food Bank (274-3871), and The United Native Friendship Centre (274-8542) would also be very happy to receive your donations. Please contact these organizations directly at the phone numbers listed to find out their drop off times if you would like to make a donation, and also if you or someone you know is in need.

Looking ahead now to the next session of parliament, there will be three main issues that I intend to focus in on. In addition to following up on some issues that arose in the fall session, namely ensuring that the federal government helps to resolve pension shortfall for AbitibiBowater retirees and informing the public about the HST and how it will affect them after July 2010, I also intend to forcefully take on the

issues of fair gas pricing, combating US subsidies in the pulp and paper sector, and working with the rest of the New Democratic caucus on CPP and EI reforms.

The price of gas will continue to be a major focus of my work moving forward and especially so given the 8% price hike that we will be hit with when the Harper-McGuinty HST comes into effect next summer. I have no idea why Greg Rickford, Bill Mauro, and Mike Gravelle would support an 8% hike in our gas prices, especially in Northwestern Ontario, but I feel a responsibility to work on your behalf to lower those prices or at the very least ensure that we are not being gouged by the oil and gas companies because of our geographic location and dependence on their products.

I will also be monitoring the development of, and fighting against, any new US pulp and paper and forestry subsidies. The Black Liquor regime in the US very nearly put an end to Canada's pulp and paper sector, and while I am happy that it is set to expire at the end of 2009 I have been monitoring a new subsidy that appears to be two to three times larger. If those mills across the border begin to receive payouts from that subsidy as I fear, then the federal government must do everything in its power to level the playing field by negotiating an end to or matching those subsidies for mills on our side of the border. I am actively monitoring developments on this issue and preparing to act should the new US subsidy begin this year.

Finally, the New Democrat caucus and I will continue to enact CPP and EI system reforms because too many of us are paying into those funds but getting nothing in return when we need to cash in that investment. The predecessors of the New Democrat Party, the

Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF), were the first major government in North America (Saskatchewan) to introduce the 'radical' idea of creating self funded employment insurance and pension funds so that we have something in the bank when we become too old or sick to work, or in case we find ourselves unable to find employment in tough times like those we are going through today. Our party is proud to have established these systems in Canada and New Democrats can again be counted on to fix them after years of Liberal and Conservative neglect. In short, my NDP colleagues and I will work to make sure that those who have paid into CPP and EI their whole life can access those funds when they need to.

With that, I would like to thank you for your support throughout my first year as your Member of Parliament. It has been a tremendous honour and pleasure to serve you, but I know that there is much more work to be done in the year ahead. I will continue to do my best to reach out and seek your opinions and feedback on many issues and assure you that I will continue to make decisions that are in your interests while I am in Ottawa.

Thank you again, and please have a Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year!

PS - While having fun this festive season, please don't drink and drive. If you are at a party and are unable to drive, then please call family or friends, or if you live in Thunder Bay you may also call 'Operation Red Nose' at 344-NOSE (6673) to get a safe lift home. Please join me in thanking all of the dedicated volunteers at Operation Red Nose for making this service available to our community and for their commitment to ensuring that people 'arrive alive.'

# Santa drops by Fort Frances Library



Evan DeGagne aged 3 was delighted to receive a candy cane from Santa's helper.



Amorin Campbell aged 2 was thrilled to see Santa.

by Marlene Deschamps  
Santa stopped by the Fort Frances Public Library on Wednesday, December 16th to visit with the children enrolled in the "Tales for Two" program. Before Santa arrived, the chil-

dren were treated with cookies and juice. There are 23 children registered in the program that is held Wednesday mornings at 9:30. There was no reluctance displayed by the young ones who got a chance to sit on

Santa's knee and tell the jolly fellow what they wanted for Christmas. Each received a candy cane before the next child hopped up on Santa's knee.

# Ground shaking call for service

On December 15, 2009 at approximately 1:45pm, police began receiving a number of calls from the public indicating they heard a loud explosion and felt their house shake. The

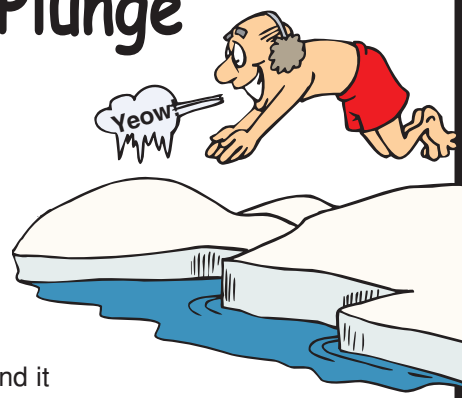
calls were received from residents and business owners within the Nickle Lake area right through to Stanjikoming First Nations.

Police investigation revealed that a mining company had blasted rock in a quarry a short distance up Highway 502. No further blasts are planned.

The Voyageur Lions Club presents...

## 9th Annual Polar Plunge January 1, 2010 Prizes!

Sponsored by: B93, The Westend Weekly, Fort Frances Times, Canadian Tire, Howarths, La Place Rendez-Vous, Diana's Needle Art.



Last year Approximately \$14,000 was raised and it was cold (-22)!! About 59 people plunged and we have 18 plus 5 groups committed so far!

**Take a New Year's Day dip in the lake in the tradition of the hardy inhabitants of the great Northwest.**

**Everyone who takes the plunge gets a polar plunge t-shirt!** We encourage individuals & groups to get pledges & plunge! Proceeds to youth activities throughout the district.

Register and pick up pledge forms at CPI Securities, La Place Rendez-Vous, or call Jim at 274-7829

**See you at La Place Rendez-Vous Dock at 1 pm on January 1st!**

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