

Local artists gain mobile canvas

MAY 1, 2006

CHRISTOPHER SUN
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Art that moves you.

That's the name of a new program that will display the works of local artists on the side of city buses all summer long.

"It literally is moving you," laughed Laurie Petrucci, executive director of the Fort St. John Community Arts Council. "It's a new project that's never been done before."

Starting today, artwork from four local artists will be displayed until July on 17 x 66 cards that would be placed where exterior advertisements are usually put.

Then, four new pieces of art will replace them and be showcased until September. The central theme this year of all the artwork is "here comes the sun."

An added bonus to the artists is they're getting paid for their work.

Petrucci said this project was initiated by BC Transit and the city as part of beautification project, just like the Flower Pot Project. As well local businesses are participating by financially sponsoring the project.

This year's art includes a submission by Margaret Cavers May who painted a picture of her husband and son mowing the grass. Some of her art is displayed throughout the city



Christopher Sun photo

Larry Evans, Mary Braaten, and Sonja Butts show off one of the eight local art works that will be displayed on buses this summer.

such as the mural at CM Finch School and at Kin Park. Summer's fun/sunflowers was painted by Mary Braaten, Dragonflies by Sonja Butts and Thrill seeking Bisons, about a

bison hang-gliding to escape bulls, was painted by Tara Brule.

Other artists who will have their work displayed later in the summer are Audrey Gaddy,

Mike Kroecher, Patrick Dawe and Jesse Dielhl.

The Fort St. John Community Arts Council is an umbrella organization that currently represents 23 arts organizations.

Library planning for growth

CHRISTOPHER SUN
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

The Fort St. John library is currently putting together a 20-year plan, which includes moving to a larger facility ideally near the proposed Enerplex.

"I think that's a great fit," said library chair Andy Ackerman about putting a library in Centennial Park. "In one spot parents can take their children to different activities instead of going all over the place."

A space analysis was done last year and Ackerman said the library is currently 25-37 per cent short of space in their current facility at the North Peace Cultural Centre, which they rent.

"Our children section is very small, there are no board-rooms..., the space for staff is quite small, and we need to make room for more computer stations," Ackerman said, adding that more large print books for seniors are needed and a possible section for foreign language books might be needed in the future. "We need to expand our services to meet their needs."

A needs and cost feasibility study is expected to be completed by this fall, completing the library's 20-year vision plan.

When asked if the library has considered opening a second branch, Ackerman said no, but pointed out that the District of Taylor is looking at opening their own library, and the Fort

St. John library will partner and support them. He also said if a need for a second branch is brought up from the needs and cost analysis study, the board would look into it.

The library encourages input from people throughout the Fort St. John area including Taylor and rural areas such as Area B and C. Last fall, the library conducted an informal survey with patrons.

"People have told us they like our library," Ackerman said about the survey. "They

have identified the need for a larger children's area and ideas on how to increase space in the cultural centre."

Ackerman said staying and perhaps expanding their space at the cultural centre is an option, but would rather wait for the final cost and needs analysis to be completed to com-

ment further on that.

In 2005 there were 13,624 Fort St. John patrons, up from 12,389 in 2004. In 2005 there were 5,723 rural patrons, up from 5,383 in 2004. The library's collection, not including newspapers and magazines was 75,207 in 2005, up from 69,534 in 2004. On average, 547 items are checked out of the library a day.

The library has 15 permanent staff members and about eight volunteers. They have 10 computers with Internet access that are fully utilized and have wireless Internet for those with laptops.

We need to expand our services to meet their needs.

Andy Ackerman—

Fort St. John Library reports successful year at AGM

FORT ST. JOHN - The 55th annual meeting of the Fort St. John Public Library was held on Feb. 22.

The newly-elected board is: Chair Andy Ackerman; vice-chair Brian Cameron; treasurer Marion Jarvis; BC Library Association Representative Brian Cameron; Peace River Associated Libraries Representative Andy Ackerman; FSJ city representative Dan Davies; Trustees Linda Bourcet, Ray Dubeau, Karlene Duncan, Sharon Kirschbaum, Mo Kroeher and Margaret Little.

The board acknowledged the tremendous support they have received from the Friends of the Library, partners and sponsors, community, media, patrons and staff.

Highlights of the past year included:

- the addition of two public internet stations;
- Installation of a new wireless service for the business community and tourists;
- The addition of a new on-line reference databases such as Auto Repair, Novelist, BC Encyclopedia, Canadian Newsstand, Canadian Almanac and Directory for on-line patrons;
- 90 storytimes for pre-schoolers plus special story times at Easter, Halloween and Christmas;
- 30 Reading Buddies;
- Spring Break Scavenger Hunt;
- Volunteer Tea;
- Author visits by Cecilia Frey, Deborah Ellis and Wayne Sawchuk.

• Spring Books at your Library with the local Horticultural Society;

• The continuation of our community Outreach Programs: Tea and Reads for the North Peace Care Centre; Homebound service for shut-ins, Storytimes for local day-cares, Parent-Child Mother Goose Program in Fort St. John and Taylor, and attendance at the North Peace Fall Fair, Canada Day, Taylor Goldpanning, the Canola Festival, and Family Day at the Visitor Info Centre.

The Library's statistics have all increased. Approximately 547 items are processed



The new library board.

every day. There have been over 13,650 internet appointments and over 1500 inter-library loads. The collection (not including magazines and newspapers) has increased from 69,534 items to 75,207 in 2005.



Contributed photo

Performers like these will be on tap at the Peace River North Performing Arts Festival, coming this Spring.

Arts festival coming

FORT ST. JOHN - Time is running out to get your entry in for the Peace River North Performing Arts Festival.

People wishing to participate in the festival must have their entries in by Feb. 3 for the dance division and by March 10 for the instrument and vocal divisions.

The 2005 Performing Arts Festival was made up of 689 entries performed over nine days, followed by a showcase performance featuring some of the best entries from the festival.

Last year the festival selected eight young people to represent the north at the provincial festival, where they were able to compete as well as attend workshops and further develop their skills.

The 2006 Performing Arts Festival will be held March 30-April 8 at the North Peace Cultural Centre in Fort St. John.

Please contact Janice Closson at 785-4476 (evenings) and 785-3731 (days) for more information about this year's festival.

- Contributed

Five local Irish dancers off to Worlds



Contributed photo

Watt School of Irish Dance stars, from right, back: Jo Watt, Stephanie Gladysz, Sarah Elson, Jennifer Potter, Hailey McGuire, Stevie Mazure, Ciara Watt; front: Morgan Gee, Erin Robertson, Patricia Robertson.

FORT ST. JOHN - Five Irish dancers are going to the world championships.

Five dancers from the Watt School of Irish Dance have earned their way to the World Irish Dance Championships in Belfast in April. Eight have qualified for the North American championships in San Diego in June.

Qualifying for the worlds and the North Americans after recent competitions are: Morgan Gee (first in girls under 12), Patricia Robertson (second in girls under 12), Stevie Mazure (first in girls under 13), Hailey McGuire (third in girls under 14) and Stephanie Gladysz (fifth in girls under 15). Qualifying for the North American championships are: Jennifer Potter

(sixth in girls under 18), Sarah Elson (eighth in girls under 16) and Erin Robertson (ninth in girls under 10).

The Watt school has seen many of its dancers do well in Irish dance competitions, winning the North American championships on many occasions and placing second at the Worlds.

Five dancers also have toured with the Lord of the Dance troupe: Emmett McCormack, Ciara Watt, Carmen Timmins, along with Amanda O'Toole and Aisling Watt, who both performed the lead role in the show.

"Although some of the older dancers have moved on, the school now sees the growth of budding young champions hoping to follow in their footsteps," said Watt. - *Contributed*



FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Book sales attract people of all ages and the Friends of the Fort St. John Public Library's annual sale Jan. 21 at the library was no exception. From left, Alex Hollman, 8, Emma Priore 12, and Casey Hollman, 11, are some of those attending the sale, which raised nearly \$1,500 for the library this year. Spokesperson Janice Clossen said at times it was "wall to wall people" at the sale, which also featured free popcorn provided by the International Order of the Foresters.

Bruce Lantz photo

Performing arts festival taking centre stage

MAR 30, 2006
HARDY FRIEDRICH
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

The North Peace Cultural Centre will be overflowing with more than 400 dancers during the Peace River North Festival of Performing Arts Festival, which takes place from March 31 – April 8.

Megan Green, who danced in the competition for 12 years, is coming back to her hometown from a professional dancing career in Vancouver to write for an adjudicator.

“The competition is really good, I love it,” she said. “It brought me tons of scholarships and it’s a great opportunity to perform – it’s really good for the kids that are in it.”

She added that she’s looking forward to seeing the competition from a new perspective.

“I’m excited to be a writer and to see what goes on the other side of the table.”

The festival, which also features musical competitions, will send eight dancers to the provincials. Disciplines include ballet, tap, jazz, con-

temporary, hip hop, international and variety and musical theatre.

Twelve dance studios will be represented at the event, including five local and seven from Dawson Creek, Grande Prairie, Prince George and Quesnel.

“There will be our two local interdisciplinary dance studios, plus our local Irish, Scottish and Ukrainian dancers,” said festival organizer Janice Clossen.

The musical side, which will take place Tuesday to Friday, features string, vocal and piano competitions.

The amount of competitors in the musical categories depends on how many teachers are in the city at a given time, but there will likely be a few provincial qualifiers.

“In a town like Fort St. John the quality of your music programs depend on how many

teachers you have,” said Clossen. “Our string section is smaller this year because a teacher just moved away, but we have a very nice vocal section because we have a wonderful local voice teacher that has a local choir.”

The festival requires hundreds of volunteers to put on, and has grown considerably in size since it started in 1984 when it was one local studio that started out in the dance division.

The best bets for people wanting to take in performances are the evenings of dance over the first weekend, and the honours selection on



The competition is really good. I love it.

– Megan Green

Apr. 8

“We’ve really been building an audience over the years and are starting to get good houses. The dance groups in the evening are always wonderful, and the honours night is a great chance to see the best of the entire festival,” said Clossen.

Dance festival will be bigger and better

MARCH 16, 2006

OLIVER HACHMEISTER

SPECIAL TO THE ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Where do you go when you want to see some of the best arts performances in Fort St. John? Starting March 30th the North Peace Cultural Centre will be the home of the Peace River North Performing Arts Festival.

Each year the Festival offers young people the opportunity to perform in front of professional adjudicators and, if they are good enough, secure a spot at the Provincial competition.

This year will be no different. Young people will be competing in many different disciplines, including dance, piano, strings, woodwind, bands, voice and choir. And it's not just young people from Fort St. John that will be attending the Festival this year. After years of building this "little" festival, it has been recognized as a well organized, well run festival that other communities want to attend.

This year there will be children from Fort Nelson, Dawson Creek, Prince George, and Quesnel competing with Fort St. John children. One of the most exciting changes this year is the inclusion of one of Prince George's premiere dance studios. Having such a high caliber group to compete against will encourage our local dancers to strive that much harder for perfection.

Additionally, it is encouraging to see two new choirs joining the Festival this year from Fort Nelson. With the new additions to the Festival it has become necessary to add extra time to the festival. This year the Festival will be starting Thursday morning instead of Thursday afternoon as it normally does.

It is extremely important for our young performers to do their best at the local festival, as the provincial festival will be held in Prince George this year. With



Submitted photo

Catherine and Tristen performed a lyrical jazz duo at last year's Performing Arts Festival

it being held so close to Fort St. John this year, travel costs won't be a determining factor in whether a child can go to provincials or not.

Be sure to check out your favorite division this year:
Dance – Thursday March 30th – Sunday April 2nd
Voice/Choirs – Monday April 3rd
Strings/Instruments/Bands – Tuesday April 4th
Piano – Wednesday April 5th – Friday April 7th

This nine-day event is finished off with the best of the best at the Honours Concert on Saturday April 8th at the North Peace Cultural Centre. Some of the best and most entertaining performances will be repeated at the Honours Concert. You can get advance tickets for the Honours Concert at the NPCC box office or by calling 785-1992. Be sure not to miss some of the best performances this area has to offer.

Stage North gets honour

FORT ST. JOHN -- Stage North Theatre Society of Fort St. John has been selected as one of only two Theatre BC member clubs for the Jericho Audience Development Project.

The other theatre company selected is the Shuswap Theatre Society from Salmon Arm.

The purpose of the project, known simply as the Jericho Project (JAD), is to document a process for sustainable audience development

for Theatre BC member clubs.

Theatre BC has contracted with JAD to implement, mentor and monitor a series of procedures, software, and management practices that will assist in ensuring long-term increases in box-office and season ticket revenue while maintaining control over advertising and promotional budgets.

JAD is a 2010 ArtsNow funded initiative aimed at supporting programs in the area of cultural development.

The JAD initiative has the potential to yield a long-term audience development legacy of great value to the theatre arts throughout BC.

JAD consultant Richard Strachan came to Fort St. John Feb. 15 to begin implementation of the program and is expected to mentor the club over the next four

months.

Stage North hopes JAD will have an immediate effect and expects positive results for when they host CanWest PlayFest, Canada's pre-eminent theatre festival for community theatre highlighting original works by Canadian playwrights Sept. 13-16.

JAD could not come at a better time for Stage North as they are in the midst of their most ambitious season ever.

Right now the theatre troupe has finished the run of M*A*S*H by Tim Kelly, and is preparing for Glengarry Glen Ross by David Mamet opening in late April.

In between, Spontaneous Combustion, Stage North's improv troupe, will present their popular April Fools Follies dinner theatre show, April 1 at the Quality Inn Northern Grand.

For more information about Stage North Theatre Society and Spontaneous Combustion Improv contact Morris Holmes at 787-1902 and visit www.stagenorth.theatre-bc.org

Tickets for all Stage North productions are available at the North Peace Cultural Centre Box Office 785-1992.

- Contributed



Contributed photo

A recent scene from Stage North's recent production of M*A*S*H



Grace Okada photo

From left: Rosaleen Ward (president TACSOTE), Shelby Montgomery and Teresa Summer (winners of Community Bench Project historical painting call for entries).

Arts, culture focus of week

HUDSON'S HOPE - Hudson's Hope was a hub of activity during Arts and Culture Week at the end of April, with a number of diverse activities and events taking place.

The Hudson's Hope School elementary students enjoyed reading poems over the public announcement system throughout the week while the high school students benefited from a poetry presentation and workshop by local poet Donna Kane that was arranged and sponsored by the Public Library.

The Arts and Cultural Society on the Edge (TACSOTE) held an Alberta for the Foundation of Traveling Arts Exhibition entitled 'Coloured Fields and Letters' at the Pearkes Cultural Centre. As well as being open to the public, all Grade 1-10 students visited this exhibition and voted on their 'People's Choice' award.

TACSOTE also sponsored a Community Bench Project along with local businesses, The Sportsman Inn, Hudson's Hope Gas,

Durango Oilfield Services and the North Peace Credit Union.

The winners of the Call for Entries, for an historically based picture to be painted on a log bench made by local craftsman Beau Finlayson, were presented on April 28 at the Pearkes Cultural Centre.

Students Teresa Summer and Shelby Montgomery were all smiles when they received their \$100 cash prizes for their winning entry.

Throughout the month of April local residents had contributed their favourite lines of poetry to add to the 'Poet-Tree' vine at the Public Library.

Also, members of the Explorer's Club helped host a 'Poetry Out Loud' family evening there on Tuesday, April 25, where they presented their own book of poems. The evening continued with local poets reading their work as well as verses from their favourite poets.

This, organizers hope, will become an annual event.

- Contributed

Garden tour a showcase

By Bruce Lantz

FORT ST. JOHN - Everyone likes the concept of gardening. But not everyone can pull it off. Area residents got to look at those who can during the 2006 Garden Tour in Fort St. John and Cecil Lake July 23.

The Garden Tour, presented by the North Peace Horticultural Society, every year takes participants on a tour of the best gardens, flower beds and yards in the region. You get to travel - aided by a booklet containing addresses and maps - to various homes whose owners have opened their properties up so others can enjoy the results of their painstaking efforts.

One such couple was Cathy and Russ Wilkinson of 112 Avenue. Their garden, only developed for three years, is filled with flowers - perennials and annuals - plus a small vegetable garden, a pond and even a waterfall. They won in their category in last year's Communities in Bloom competition.

"It takes a fair amount of work and a

lot of knowledge," said Cathy Wilkinson, who moved here from Victoria with husband Russ three years ago after falling in love with the area while visiting their children and grandchildren.

"You have to be keen to learn about plants and where they belong. Otherwise you'll plant wrong and they won't flourish and then you'll get discouraged and give up."

And there are challenges, chief among them the weather. "You have no control over it whatsoever," she said.

The Wilkinsons kept a large garden in their native Victoria for 38 years but now they're learning again - about gardening in the north. Here, as she did there, Wilkinson is "pushing the zones" with plants not strictly meant for our Zone 2B climate - those designed more for Zones 3 and 4. She did the same in Victoria, where they even raised bananas and had an 80-foot eucalyptus tree.

And what do gardeners get from all

that work? Better health from home-grown vegetables and the enjoyment of sitting out in the yard in a nice environment, she said.

"We can do artwork out there, and read . . . we like the outdoors and we get peace of mind being out in a lovely space," she said.

The 70-member horticultural society also hosts the Aug. 25-27 Flower Show and Exhibition at the North Peace Cultural Centre.



Bruce Lantz photo

Enjoying the beautiful gardens at the 112 Avenue home of Cathy and Russ Wilkinson, the couple on the right, are, from left: Kelsey Lusk, Erna Leamann and Kathy Jutzeler during the 2006 Garden Tour July 23.



Hardy Friedrich photo

IT WAS MAGIC

Terry Boyle as Al Chemy and the Queen Mum, played by Linda Smith, performed in the Melancholy Wizard presented by the Fort St. John Association for Community Living on Saturday night at the North Peace Cultural Centre. The Fort St. John Players, who are a troupe of actors with developmental disabilities that have been putting on original plays since 2000, performed the medieval romp to a large crowd at the North Peace Cultural Centre.



Contributed photo

Tony Jefferies of the Fort St. John Rotary pipe band is decked out in full uniform. The pipe band plays for various functions throughout the city.



Bruce Lantz photo

Master spinner Gayle Valance of Fernie, centre, instructs a workshop hosted by the North Peace Spinners and Weavers Guild Sept. 23-24 in Fort St. John. A dozen women took advantage of the opportunity to learn about various spinning techniques.



Joel Warm photos

The Peace Country Craftsman Association craft sale drew buyers and sellers both to the Fort St. John Legion.

Above, artist Pat Vossler talks with craft sale shoppers Kathy Scheck, center, and Dorothy Miller.

Right: Nicolet and Morris Kapacila, better known as the Nut Man, selling their products .



Museum offers a wealth of activities

FORT ST. JOHN - Are you looking for something to do? Then come down to visit the North Peace Museum! It is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

A self-tour of the museum takes about 30 minutes and will carry you back to the early years of Fort St. John and area.

Did you know that the museum has a Gift Shop? If not, then you are not aware that we have a wide selection of souvenirs, T-shirts, stuffed animals, gift ware and of course...books! Many people take advantage of this fact and come in to browse the shop.

This is the time of year when the Board of Directors of the North Peace Historical Society and volunteers start planning the annual Old Fashioned Christmas Tea. It is always held on the first Wednesday in December, so remember to mark Dec. 6 on your calendar.

The tea will be held from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. A delightful array of tea goodies will be available for a very nominal charge.

As an added bonus, those attending the tea will be able to tour the Museum free of charge. Plus, paid-up members of the historical society will get 10 per cent off their Gift Shop purchases on Wednesdays during the month of December.

We enjoy having people visit the museum and we are always willing to discuss arranging a tour for a school class or for other groups. So do keep us in mind the next time you have company "from out of town" or you just don't know what to do on your day off! If you are not sure where to find

us, look for the tall derrick on 100 Street. That is our landmark.

- *Contributed*

Community

Seventh annual Chocolate Festival coming up this weekend at NPCC

Paul Frey
Northerner Reportert

Chocolate-lovers of the North Peace should be readying their taste buds for the seventh annual Chocolate Festival taking place at the North Peace Cultural Centre on Saturday.

“All proceeds go toward off-setting costs of the ArtSpace’s summer Kids Arts Camp and the free art camp which is held in July and August . . . at Peace Gallery North,” said Shar Coultry, coordinator of the festival.

The festival is currently looking for people to bake and enter their creations. There are several different categories in which people can enter, such as cakes, cookies, candy, cheesecake, squares and a children’s category. There is also a commercial category as well.

“The more bakers we have, the more successful

(the festival will be). I would never turn anybody down.”

Coultry reminds people entering a treat in the festival that they need to make two batches — one for the judges to taste, and another for the public to sample.

The \$10 entry fee entitles people to sample the yummy creations, plus enter their names for door prizes. There will also be a silent auction for children and free beverages for everyone.

Doors open to the public at 6 p.m. At 7 p.m. Baldry Auction Services will auction off the judged sweets. Coultry said while the evening will be a sweet one, it will also be short, so people should get there as soon as possible to sample what bakers have created. She said the objective is to be as family-friendly as possible.

“It’s so much fun because it’s a family event,” she said. “We thought this was really important for families to get together to

“QuoteUnquote”

“It’s so much fun because it’s a family event.”

- Shar Coultry
Festival coordinator

go out at a very affordable price . . . and they could have fun.”

On the other hand, people can also bring their friends to have a good time sampling and raising money for a good cause.

“You don’t have to be couples, which is a very good point because (people) can come with their best friends,” Coultry said. “Because (in) Fort St. John a lot of their sweethearts or spouses are working in the oilpatch.”

For registration information, phone Coultry at Peace Gallery North at 787-0993.



Kids of all ages enjoyed the 2005 edition of the Chocolate Festival. The fun starts at 6 p.m.

Northerner file photo