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Noel damaged only a few Halifax homes over the weekend. Page 4.



Students at Citadel High must wait to take the stage. Page 11.

HALIFAX COMMONER

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FREE

Help sought for high-risk gamblers

Government prevention programs not enough to stop addicts – prof

By MICHELLE MACLEOD

In a dark, empty tavern, he would pull \$20 bills from his wallet and slip them into the flashy multi-coloured machine.

Going in with \$100 in his pocket, he'd be penniless each time he walked out and any winnings he made were deposited back into the gaudy video lottery terminal, or VLT.

"I was a loser," says actor John Dunsworth, a cast member of *Trailer Park Boys*.

People with self-destructive impulses and addictive personalities can easily become hooked to the sound of winning – handfuls of quarters clinking into silver metal trays and piercing bells that ring after a small win, Dunsworth says.

Dunsworth recently stopped playing VLTs. Seeing others lose their homes, families and lives gave him the motivation to stop.

He has been vocal in pressuring the provincial government to remove VLTs from bars.

"For the government to provide something which will enable someone to ruin themselves is immoral and should be illegal," Dunsworth says.

October is problem gambling prevention month, and the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation operated more than 13 anti-addiction campaigns reaching 35,000 Nova Scotians

directly. Its focus has been on low- to medium-risk gamblers, who Michaela Becker, vice president of prevention programming and public affairs, says is 93 per cent of Nova Scotia's gambling population.

The money the government is using on these campaigns is ineffective at preventing gambling addictions, says Dr. Steven Smith, a psychology professor at Saint Mary's University.

It's no secret that VLTs are designed to make people lose more than they win, he says, but making informed decisions can be difficult for new gamblers who do not realize how addictive the machines are.

Nova Scotia's Department of Health Promotion and Protection is responsible for helping high-risk gamblers fight their addictions, but its advertising can be problematic, says Smith. Problem gamblers have to accept they have a problem, but when you characterize them as loser types, most people will say "that's not me."

People will think they can control gambling, but they can't, he says. There is no skill involved because they're games of chance. It is an illusion of control.

And casinos are designed to fool people. "That's why when 25 cents falls out of a slot machine, it dings – it increases people's perceptions of winning," Smith says.



MICHELLE MACLEOD

Actor John Dunsworth, a reformed gambler, says VLTs should be banned from bars.

PLEASE SEE **GAMBLING** PAGE 2



KICKING THE HABIT

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PAGE EDITOR/LAYOUT: ISABELLE GALLANT

Reformed gambler got hooked on VLTs

GAMBLING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

VLTs are the worst for addictions, because they use a “variable interval reward system,” meaning the small reward players get is enough to make them keep playing.

The Nova Scotia Gaming Commission brought in \$162.3 million in profit from gambling last year. Fifty-five per cent came from VLTs.

Dunsworth has always been drawn to gambling, but says he didn't become addicted until he played a VLT.

“When I was a kid I put nickels into the machines with the little claws that come down and picked up packages of red nickels. You never won, I knew you never won. But infrequent gratification is the strongest stimulant.”

Smith says the theory has been tested on rats. Rats will give up long-term benefits for short-term gains. In some cases, they even starve to death. The same goes for humans, he says.

“People who gamble, they will lose their house, commit suicide or ruin themselves.”

Dunsworth says gambling addictions are “Nova Scotia's deepest, darkest secret.”

Fifteen thousand families have fallen apart because of these

machines and more than 5,000 people have committed suicide in Nova Scotia because of them, he says.

In Nova Scotia, 6.3 per cent of suicides are related to gambling, says an investigation by The Canadian Press.

“For the government to provide something which will enable someone to ruin themselves is immoral and should be illegal.”

- John Dunsworth

Dunsworth says the people he encounters who are addicted to VLTs are not interested in attending treatment – they'll play until they have nothing left.

“There's a fellow I know, a professional downtown, makes over \$100,000 a year, he lost his home in the south end of Halifax, lost his summer home and lost his family. He's still playing the machines.”

In April 2005, Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation tried to reduce VLT addictions by releasing a five-year plan to encourage safer gambling.

The plan involved removing 1,000



A player can lose up to \$500 in one hour on VLTs, says Dunsworth.

MICHELLE MACLEOD

of the 3,234 VLTs in Nova Scotia, shutting off all VLTs at midnight, and slowing the speed of the game so that individuals would spend less money over time.

Smith says these changes will not combat the inherent addictive qualities of VLTs.

“People feel desperate and are unable to walk away.”

Dunsworth agrees. Many people play during their lunch hour and become addicted during the day, he says. It doesn't matter how much they slow down the machines, you can still lose up to \$500 in one hour playing

with a maximum bet.

Keeping VLTs in taverns will be ineffective at curbing addiction, says Dunsworth.

“The only place that VLTs should be is in the casinos.”

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EDITORIAL

Identifying an addiction

Addictions. Although alcohol and drugs are probably the first thing the word brings to mind, there are many other types of addictions.

Overeating, addiction to pornography, problem gambling, excessive shopping, playing too many video games and overwork are some of the other addictions that people tend to overlook.

In this week's Commoner, we are focusing on addictions, something we are often quick to brush off and think of as something that happens to other people – not to ourselves, not to people we know.

But when you take an in-depth look at addictions, you start to see that they are more prevalent than we believe.

The Betty Ford Center's website has a 24-question “Do you have a problem?” checklist for drug and alcohol abuse. Three are:

1. Do you have to keep on drinking or using once you have started?
2. Do you make promises to yourself or others about your drinking or using?
3. Do you drink or use to escape your problems?

If you answered yes to one, the Center says you may have a

problem. If you answered yes to two, you should seek help immediately.

There are numerous theories about what causes addictions. Some argue it is genetics (it runs in the family). The moral model holds that addictions are a weakness.

Regardless of the cause, they are a serious problem in today's society and represent a significant social cost.

The cost of abuse of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs in Canada in 2002 was estimated at almost \$40 billion, says the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

This places a burden on our justice and health-care systems, lowers productivity in the workplace and, most importantly, imposes a burden on people and families.

Too often in society, addictions are viewed as a weakness. It is human nature for people not to admit they have problems or need help.

Although society has made progress in establishing treatment centres and support groups, people need to be made more aware that help is available.

In Nova Scotia, one group leading the fight is Self-Help Connection (<http://www.selfhelpconnection.ca/>).

It is a non-profit organization that receives its funding from the Nova Scotia government. It helps people establish support groups and also refers people to existing groups. Although it primarily deals with mental illness, it is affiliated with groups devoted to overeating, gambling problems, alcoholics anonymous and narcotics anonymous.

Roy Muise works with Self-Help Connection. He says the stigma attached to addiction is what prevents many people from seeking treatment, the fear that “everybody will know I have a problem.”

But the strongest people are the ones who say, “I have a problem.”

This is the first step in Alcoholics Anonymous' 12-step recovery program.

Speak with your family doctor or get in touch with Self-Help Connection or the provincial government's Addiction Services department (<http://www.addictionservices.ns.ca/>).

Addictions are like the elephant in the room. Ignoring it won't make the problem go away.

- RICHARD WOODBURY
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NEWS

Province antes up \$85m for municipalities



PRAS RAJAGOPALAN

Premier Rodney MacDonald announced plans Wednesday to freeze municipal contributions for housing, education and correctional services.

By PRAS RAJAGOPALAN

Nova Scotia's municipalities will have an extra \$85 million to spend over the next seven years under an agreement between the province and the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities.

The province agreed to impose caps on some municipal contributions to social services such as jails, housing and education. Premier Rodney MacDonald said municipalities can use the \$85 million saved by these caps to invest in infrastructure and services.

The agreement is "100 per cent supported by the board of directors of UNSM," said Russell Walker, the president of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities.

The agreement would reduce the tax burden on residents, said the Mayor of Summerside, P.E.I., Basil Stewart, who is a board member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

"There is lots of room to cut taxes," he said, adding that municipalities need to invest in infrastructure.

"The premier's announcement today is very good news for the residents of HRM," said Mayor Peter Kelly. The agreement will "eventually translate into about \$10 million in annual savings from housing and

corrections for the region," he said. Mandatory municipal contributions to correctional services will be frozen at 2007 levels – \$17.4 million and municipal contributions to housing will be frozen at 2005 levels – \$6.5 million. Education funding will be frozen at 2007 levels, MacDonald said.

MacDonald did not specify how the province will make up the \$85 million in lost revenue.

"Don't worry, be happy. I think Nova Scotians have heard that song before," said Stephen MacNeil, leader of the opposition liberals. "They've lived through John Buchanan telling Nova Scotians the same thing and I don't believe they'll be willing to believe this premier."

The agreement also calls for municipalities and the province to create a position of municipal auditor general, MacDonald said. This would mean greater municipal accountability for public funds, he said.

"At first blush, I don't have a huge issue with that," said MacNeil. He said that there was a bigger issue that the province was "more concerned with their capping (of municipal costs) than any other issues faced with municipalities."

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Burning tires hot topic in N.S.

Environment groups suggest recycling as alternative

By CONNOR MACEACHERN

Members of Resource Recovery Fund Board Nova Scotia defended a tire-burning proposal that one MLA called "environmental madness" at a meeting of the province's public accounts committee Wednesday.

The proposal also caught the eye of some environmental groups.

Bill Ring, the board's CEO, and Rick Ramsay, chair, faced two hours of questions from the committee, made up of Liberal, Progressive Conservative and New Democratic Party MLAs.

If the Department of Environment approves the proposal, the Lafarge Canada Inc. cement plant in Brookfield will burn tires for fuel.

The committee questioned the proposal's environmental impact.

"It seemed to me to be environmental madness," said Graham Steele, NDP MLA for Halifax Fairview.

But Ring said burning tires is

the most environmentally friendly option.

"A tire can't be used to make another tire," he said, adding that a tire is like a cake in that it "can't be separated into its constituents."

Keith Colwell, Liberal MLA for Preston, asked for possible alternatives.

Ring maintained burning was the best option.

Fred Blois, of the Citizens Against Burning of Tires group, can think of more environmentally friendly ways to use tires.

He said tires can be cut to be used as mats for cattle, refined as an asphalt aggregate or pieced together to line playing fields.

"It's not lack of uses, their whole study was skewed toward tire-derived fuel."

There shouldn't be a debate over the issue, says Blois.

"It all boils down to one thing. One of the materials created when you burn tires are dioxins, which are

classified as the worst man-made toxins ever."

Chlorine compounds are used in tire sealant. When chlorines are heated, they form dioxins, a type of carcinogen, according to Health Canada.

On its website, RRFB says using tire-derived fuel will decrease greenhouse gases by cutting coal consumption by 20 per cent, but Blois says this is a misrepresentation.

"Lafarge will lower greenhouse gas but the toxicity will increase with the release of these dioxins."

The Sierra Club is also interested in this issue. Atlantic Canada director Gretchen Fitzgerald said the Sierra Club "would favour recycling those tires rather than burning them."

"It would be an opportunity that we're missing if we don't use innovative ways to reuse those tires and just end up putting toxins in the air."

Fitzgerald pointed to this year's Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act as a guideline for a decision on this issue. The

PAGE EDITOR/LAYOUT: GEOFF TOBIN



CONNOR MACEACHERN

The NDP's Graham Steele calls Resource Recovery Fund Board Nova Scotia's plan "environmental madness."

act, which came into place in April, says Nova Scotia will lower pollution emissions and work towards sustainable environmental solutions.

The Department of Environment's decision on the board's proposal will show the government's true colours.

"We have these new environmental goals and the government looks like it's trying green alternatives. Their decision on this issue will show whether government has just a green wash or really has green blood."

"Not that they're Martians," she added.

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Speaking out on crime

By GEOFF TOBIN

Gangs. Guns. Drugs. Urban Terrorism.

Five words, written in red marker, were part of a long list of responses Tuesday to the question of Halifax's challenges in dealing with public security.

But the discussion, held in Dartmouth High School's auditorium and the last of six roundtable discussions, wasn't just about pointing out problems.

Mayor Peter Kelly, along with a small cast of police officials, city councillors and MLAs, joined residents of Dartmouth and surrounding areas to discuss the roots of violence within HRM, and to talk about possible solutions.

"What we didn't want is people coming out just to vent, and not have the opportunity to engage each other," Kelly says.

More than 400 members of the community have attended the six events since they began on Oct. 22. Kelly says the goal was to create an atmosphere where everyone could have a say and get involved.

"We found that this process has worked well to bring individuals to the table, to bring forth their concerns, but also bring forth their ideas."

The issues and ideas raised Tuesday will be part of a report that

will be released in the new year, which will be brought to leaders throughout the community.

Participants were asked to write answers to questions posted around the room.

Paul Dembridge, from North End Dartmouth, wrote down a "lack of respect for private property" as a challenge within the community, but he says that's not the only problem.

"The police do their darndest to catch all these criminals, and what happens? The judges just put them back out on the streets," Dembridge says. "Why should they even bother?"

As for a solution, Dembridge says changes need to start with the court system and the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Groups were given topics to discuss, and asked to come up with the source of problems, and suggestions for how to solve them.

With each group choosing a spokesperson to present their ideas to the room, Coun. Gloria McCluskey (District 5 - Dartmouth Centre) spoke on behalf of her table.

McCluskey says HRM doesn't have the community involvement it should.

"How often do you speak to a strange kid that's passing your house? How often do you speak to them on

the street?" asks McCluskey.

"I grew up in the country, where you knew everybody, and everybody kind of looked out for the other kids, and I think we have to get back to that."

She says when community leaders reach out to hear from youth, they are often only hearing from those who aren't involved in crime or violence.

"We also have to have a society that includes the kids who don't have the advantages that others do."

Brian LeBlanc, 22, lives on Hester Street in Dartmouth. He says we need to find new ways to reach out to disadvantaged youth.

"The best way to reach out to them is with the kind of programming and the kind of activities that they would like," LeBlanc says.

"In the United States, they have these incredible programs that are called 'midnight basketball leagues,' where you get youth and young adults that come in off the streets, and instead of causing trouble late at night, they're playing basketball."

LeBlanc, a fourth-year political science and international development student at Saint Mary's University, says Tuesday's roundtable approach is more constructive and co-operative than a public debate or panel discussion.

"I was sitting at the table, and we



GEOFF TOBIN

Donna Muirhead lists her concerns about violence.

were having conversations, and we were having disagreements ... but at the end of the day we all came to some agreements, and we realized crime is an issue, we need to be tougher on crime itself, but we also have to be tougher on the causes of crime."

Kelly sees more investments in policing, community infrastructure and recreational programs resulting from the roundtable discussions.

"In this year's budget, you'll see council respond to those types of

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Tropical storm Noel strikes home

By GINA SUTHERLAND

Suki Hughes and Sean Sturge were jolted awake at 3 a.m. on Sunday by the sound of a deafening crack.

The winds of Tropical Storm

Noel broke off the large branch of a 100-year-old maple tree in their front yard, slamming it into their roof before it ripped off the chimney and crashed through the front porch.

Their first thought was to check on their children: five-year-old

Molly, whose room was directly under where the tree struck, and three-year-old Liam. The kids were unfazed.

"The plaster on Molly's ceiling was broken off, the shingles were ripped out, and her window was

broken and she just slept," said Hughes.

As did most Haligonians.

Despite weather warnings issued for a week before the storm hit, Noel proved to be much less ferocious than its 2003 predecessor, Hurricane Juan.

By 8 a.m. Sunday, the winds had subsided, the rain had stopped and people strolled the streets surveying the aftermath, though there was little damage to be found.

Strong winds stripped the bricks off an apartment building on Monastery Lane, a roof was lifted off a mobile home in Dartmouth, some large trees were uprooted and broken branches littered the sidewalks.

As for Hughes and Sturge, they estimate the damage to their home, located on the corner of Jubilee Road and Pryor Street, will be around \$50,000. Their insurance will cover repairs, which include rebuilding the roof and chimney and replacing gutters and windows.

"The worst part," says Sturge, "is that the power line was ripped from the house so we have no electricity, and we can't have a fire or use the furnace until the chimney is fixed."

For now they are relying on the generosity of neighbours who have been bringing over food and drinks, inviting them for meals and

supplying extension cords to keep the refrigerator and a basement sump pump running.

A total of 190,000 homes across the province were left without power after the storm, an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 in Halifax alone. More than 150 crews from around the Maritimes and as far away as the United States worked to restore broken lines.

Disruptions also occurred at Halifax International Airport, where all flights were cancelled on Saturday and Sunday.

"It takes time to get back to our regular schedule because we have to first take care of the people who were on all the cancelled flights," said Peter Spurway, vice president of corporate communications for the airport.

Wind gusts of up to 135 kilometres an hour were recorded in Halifax Harbour, and waves reaching 15 metres battered the coastline.

"It was a big, bad old storm, but we had no reports of any serious injuries," said Richard Perry, media relations contact for the provincial Emergency Management Office.

Prior to striking Canada, Noel claimed more than 143 lives and caused flooding and mudslides when it tore through Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Cuba.

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GINA SUTHERLAND

Noel's winds slammed a 100-year old maple tree branch into the roof of Sean Sturge's home.

Veteran honoured in puck drop ceremony

By ERIN DELOREY

Donald Charlton goes to most of the Halifax Mooseheads' hockey games, but last Sunday afternoon he wasn't just at the game – he was at centre ice.

Fellow veterans and a bagpiper led Charlton, nicknamed "Chick," 84, and his escort, 12-year-old Raylene MacDonald, down a red carpet on the ice. He dropped a special puck decorated with poppies and maple leaves in a ceremony honouring Remembrance Day.

Charlton served in the Royal Canadian Air Force from 1942 to 1946. He was a corporal, posted in the air sea rescue and supply squadron at Shearwater.

As a marine engineer on the supply ship MV Eskimo, Charlton spent more than 500 days at sea. His ship supplied remote air force bases, from Nova Scotia to Iceland.

When he left the RCAF, Charlton joined the Moncton Hawks hockey club, in the Maritime Big 4 Senior Hockey League. He also played for the Halifax Crescents and the Glace Bay Miners in four years as a semi-professional player.

Charlton spent his summers playing baseball for the Halifax

Arrows and the Halifax Capitals.

In October 2000, Charlton was inducted into the Nova Scotia Sports Hall of Fame.

Backstage before the game, Charlton said he tries to keep involved.

"Through the week I go into the Veterans' Affairs hospital and I visit guys that I used to know in the service and in hockey and sports."

Some veterans from the hospital were in the stands when Charlton took the ice.

Thomas Bassett, 89, said it was the first hockey game he had seen in person.

"I'm for whoever's winning," he said.

Bassett was a private in the army from 1939 to 1945. He lost an eye in the war.

He hopes young people pay attention to what's going on in the world and get involved.

"A war is not a funny thing to think about, and I very seldom talk about it because I want to forget it if I can, but you can't forget it," he said.

"I was only 19 when I went to war," he said. "I was made a man."

John Campbell, of Quebec, hadn't been to a hockey game since he



ERIN DELOREY

Donald Charlton drops the puck between Phil Mangan and Andrew Bodnarchuk.

moved into the veterans' hospital. He fought from 1939 to 1946 as a captain in the army.

Remembrance Day, Campbell said, brings back a lot of

memories.

"Companionship and involvement, and remembering your friends that didn't come back, that's the hard part," he said. "We got to

know those people better than we did our own families. We were together 24 hours a day, 365 days out of the year."

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Finance firms offer business grads N.S. jobs

By MICHELLE MACLEOD

A series of offshore financial firms are opening offices in Halifax, creating more than 1,200 new jobs and giving university and college students a reason to stay in town after graduation, says Stephen Lund, president of Nova Scotia Business Inc.

"We're truly on the verge of something that is really exciting for this province, and that is becoming one of the world leaders in the financial services sector," says Lund.

More than 200 students paid \$15 each to attend a sold-out panel discussion and networking session NSBI hosted last Friday at the Westin Hotel in Halifax.

Representatives of the insurance, re-insurance and hedge-fund fields spoke about job availabilities in their new Halifax offices. Re-insurance companies back insurance companies and hedge fund companies deal with high-risk, unregulated mutual funds.

Commerce graduates tend to leave Halifax after graduation for other financial hubs, such as New York or Toronto, said David Wheeler, dean of Dalhousie University's Faculty of Management.

"We're extremely proud of our students and they shouldn't have to leave."

Nikolay Shimukovich from Moscow, a first-year masters of business administration student at Saint Mary's University, said he enjoys living in Nova Scotia but fears he will have to return to Russia to find a job after he graduates.

"If I could get a job here, I'd really want to stay," he said. "But there are more opportunities in Russia."

Lund asked the crowd of students last Friday, "Who here knows someone who has left Nova Scotia for a job elsewhere after graduation?" Almost all of the 200 students in the room raised a hand.

NSBI has been trying to reverse this trend through actively recruiting offshore financial firms and advertising the benefits of building an office in Halifax.

J.P. Robicheau, a business development executive with NSBI, said he and another colleague went to Bermuda and "knocked on doors" of financial service firms to find out exactly what they were looking for.

Bermuda was a logical place to start because it is home to many leading offshore hedge fund and re-insurance companies – financial areas that are rapidly expanding, but located in places with a surplus of jobs and a dwindling labour pool.

Once the first company – West-End Capital Management – signed, the rest of the financial services groups followed, said Robicheau.

There were many selling points for offshore companies: both Bermuda and Halifax are in the Atlantic time zone, operational costs are lower in Halifax, and Nova Scotia has a surplus of qualified business graduates, said Robicheau.



MICHELLE MACLEOD

Students Gavin Vieyra and Ryan Sully meet Flagstone Management Services' John Landry.

Lund said the number one resource for companies is people, everything else is secondary.

"The number of universities and colleges in Nova Scotia is hard to beat."

Pat Donnolly of Meridian Fund Services, a Bermuda-based hedge fund company, agreed.

"We're in Halifax solely because of you guys," he told the students.

Gavin Vieyra, a masters of business administration student at Saint Mary's University, said Friday's presentations were reassuring.

"My first preference is to stay in Halifax," he said. "I feel there is a lot of potential here and I'm not really worried about finding a job."

Scott Montreuil, senior manager of Citco Fund Services, grew up in Halifax

and said the job opportunities used to be fairly bleak in comparison to those being offered today.

"You guys should be really, really excited about the opportunities that present themselves now in the city."

More than 14,000 people now have finance jobs in Halifax, but the recent expansions represent a 10-per-cent increase in the sector, said Lund.

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Halifax veteran relives D-day horrors

Vern Westhaver open about wartime trials and tribulations

By RICHARD WOODBURY

Vern Westhaver isn't shy about describing what he saw in the Second World War.

"I think people should know about it," he says.

The 85 year-old Halifax man served four years as a corporal and a wireless operator. He landed on Juno Beach in France on June 6, 1944 - D-Day - considered by many to be the greatest one-day military battle ever. He was 21.

Westhaver, nicknamed "Westie", had spent the previous two years getting ready for that day by doing landing exercises in England.

When D-Day arrived he was ready, even if it was his first real taste of combat.

"I knew what I had to do when I landed that morning. It was about 2

o'clock in the afternoon and the scary part of it, there were all these guys dead in the water. I had to push them out of the way to get in."

The water was filled with blood and was so deep he feared he would drown. Getting on land was only the beginning of the battle.

"Christ, the Germans were shooting point blank at the guys coming on the beach with their machine guns. They couldn't miss us for God's sake. Well, they missed me."

He had to keep moving on the beach at all costs, even "if your buddy got his head blown off."

The gravity of the situation sank in when he was fired at by a German plane.

"Sparks were coming out of the wings. Then it dawned on me, he's firing at us. Then all of a sudden, you could see the sand jumping and I dove in a hole and landed on top of a Canadian soldier and he was dead. That was my first few hours of being in action."

Fifty-four days later, on July 30, he was shot near Caen. He still has the piece of shrapnel that hit him. His division was shelled by the Germans and he and a friend took cover under their truck.

"You could see when the shells hit the ground, there was a poof-poof, and ground and dirt were flying everywhere."

The shrapnel went through his uniform, through his belt, and into his back. His friend took the "sizzling hot" shrapnel out of his back, cursed and dropped it on the ground. Despite being shot, Westhaver picked it up and put it in his pocket.

He was flown to a military hospital in England. It was his first



RICHARD WOODBURY

Every November, Legion volunteers sell poppies to support war veterans.

plane ride. He spent six weeks in the hospital and was sent back to battle.

Westhaver speaks about his harrowing experiences with ease. He thinks this is because he let loose with his buddies when they had free time.

"When we had time off, we drank. I must admit, we probably drank too much. But then we would forget about all these things, our friends getting killed."

They didn't have psychiatrists to talk to and doctors weren't sympathetic.

"The doctors would say, 'Hey, you're a soldier, get the hell back to camp.'"

One veteran who still has difficulty dealing with what he saw is Marcel Pearson, a 75-year-old veteran of the Korean War.

He grew up just outside Liverpool, England while the Second World War

was in full swing.

Bombs, blackouts and going to school with a gas mask around his neck are among his childhood memories.

The harsh living conditions are all he wants to remember about Korea.

"We were living under canvas. Christ, it was 30 below some nights. No tent, no heat, monsoon season. Piss rain for weeks. Nothing but mud."

Pearson remembers big street parties when the Second World War ended.

Westhaver was in Germany when the war ended. He describes it as the greatest day of his life.

"The war was over. I was still alive."

The next day, he went to Brussels and got drunk.

Westhaver feels he fought for a just

cause.

"If we hadn't stopped Hitler, God knows what would have happened."

He joined the military to help out his family and out of a sense of justice.

Coming from a family of 14 children, he was the oldest and was expected to help his parents financially. He sent half of his \$66 monthly salary home to them.

"We'd heard all these stories about how the Germans were killing all the Jewish people and we didn't like it. I think this is the reason a lot of us joined the army. It wasn't fiction, it was true."

Westhaver is proud of having served.

"I don't have anything to brag about. I just did what I was told, but I did it. And I didn't run away."

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RICHARD WOODBURY

Veteran Vern Westhaver.

Community Events: Friday November 9 - Sunday November 18

ONGOING

Stevens Road United Baptist Church presents "State Road 47"

Stevens Road United Baptist church presents its 4th Annual Musical Theatre production, State Road 47, a modern-day look at parables told by Jesus. Opening act is "Let the Children Come," performed by the children of Stevens Road. Tickets are \$10 adults, \$5 students. Group rates available. Performances: Nov. 9 and 10 at 7p.m.; Nov. 16 and 17 at 7p.m. and Nov. 18 at 3p.m. Stevens Road United Baptist

Church, 2 Stevens Rd, Dartmouth. Runs Nov. 9 - Nov. 18.

Atlantic Yoga Conference 2007

This year's theme is based on the second chakra, "The Hara." For more information on the conference and to register, please visit: www.atlanti-yogaconference.com Citadel Halifax Hotel, 1960 Brunswick St., Halifax

Anna Leonoens Gallery Exhibit

"For images of a language that do not lend itself to understanding in a literary sense." Artist presentation Nov. 14 at 1p.m. Anna Le-

onowens Gallery, 1891 Granville St., Halifax. Runs Nov. 13 - Nov. 17. Open Chess Tournament

Registration is Friday Nov. 9, 11-11:30 at Mount Saint Vincent University. Runs Nov. 9 until Nov. 12.

SAT. NOVEMBER 10

Halifax Mooseheads vs Val-d'Or Foreurs

Halifax Metro Centre, 7 p.m. Tickets \$14.50 adults, \$10.75 seniors and students, \$9 youth under 12. Services charges apply. Halifax Metro Centre, 5284 Duke St.

SUN. NOVEMBER 11

Symphony Nova Scotia Brahms Festival: Requiem

Soprano Donna Brown performs one of Brahms's major works, the Requiem. Joining her is Olivier Laquerre, whose rich bass-baritone is drawing international recognition. The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, Dalhousie Arts Centre, 6101 University Ave., Halifax

Korean Remembrance Day Ceremony

The ceremony will be held at

the garden that features a memorial plaque, gazebo, picnic area, and roses of Sharon (the national flower of Korea). 11 a.m. Stratford Way Park.

FRI. NOVEMBER 16

CD Launch - My Heart is Move

Songs of the Earth Charter, with Carolyn McDade and the Atlantic Gaia Singers. Free admission, 7:30 p.m., Bethany United Church, 7171 Clifton Ave., Halifax.

If you would like your event listed in this column, please contact thecommoner@ukings.ns.ca

KICKING THE HABIT

“Gamer widows” find help, support online

Sherry Myrow's website, GamerWidow.com provides support for “gamer widows” and for gamers grappling with video game addiction

By JANE DEACON

Sherry Myrow's husband is alive and the two are still married, but she's a widow.

A gamer widow, that is.

Her husband is one of the men and women – mostly men – who spend more time parked in front of a video game than with their significant other. They leave family members, friends, spouses, boyfriends or girlfriends behind and become consumed with living a digital life in a fantasy world.

“You feel very, very neglected and very alone,” says Myrow, 29, of Toronto. “You feel like a widow. You're married, but your partner is not there. It's like they died. It's like they don't exist anymore.”

Her husband nearly ignored her while spending all of his free time playing the popular *World of Warcraft*.

In June 2005, Myrow, who works as a web developer, was fed up with

Myrow.

On the site, members – who are gamers and their partners alike – can post their problems, discuss issues facing gamer widows or support those recovering from video game addictions. Myrow estimates about 65 per cent of GamerWidow's members are women.

Members share stories of loved ones who failed classes, lost jobs, compromised their health and neglected their friends and families because of their excessive video game use, some playing up to 18 hours a day.

“Before I came across this site, I actually believed I was the only one who felt the way I do... Now I know that I am not abnormal, and there are others out there with the same feelings, and boy am I relieved that I am not some mental case,” writes Tehya, a member who is frustrated by the amount of time her husband spends gaming and worries he is neglecting their eight-month-old daughter.

Twelve members replied to this

“You feel very, very neglected and very alone. You feel like a widow. You're married, but your partner is not there. It's like they died. It's like they don't exist anymore.”

-Sherry Myrow

feeling alone and started GamerWidow.com, an online forum for gamer widows and widowers to share their frustrations, discuss their feelings and find companionship. It is now one of many online resources that provides support for those affected by the overuse of video games.

Myrow quickly discovered she was not alone. By the end of the year, the site had 500 members posting their stories and taking part in discussions.

At the time it was the only online message board for gamer widows. It now has about 1,000 members, with about 300 to 400 members from around the world participating on the site every day.

Numbers on the site spike when new games are released, says

post, providing words of support and advice. Their answers are lengthy, thoughtful and reflective. They ask Tehya to look for support from her family or in her community and remind her that she is not alone.

“When people come on the message board for the first time, they're in so much pain. They're baring their souls. For those of us who have gone through it, we feel that if we can get them through this hump and help them stop feeling this way, it makes the day for us,” says Myrow.

Some widows take up to an hour of their day replying to the posts of new members, she says.

Three months after Tehya's first post, she wrote that her relationship with her husband had improved.

Brent Conrad specializes in



JANE DEACON

Some gamers play for up to eighteen hours a day.

computer, Internet and computer game addictions and offers counseling through Fenwick Psychological Services and Saint Mary's University.

He counsels a variety of people – including married couples, families and elderly people – but sees the highest prevalence of video game addiction in university students, who generally have a lot of unstructured free time, access to the Internet and lack parental supervision.

Online forums are effective for gamer widows who are looking to talk to people but want to remain anonymous, Conrad says. As the only psychologist in the Halifax area who specializes in these types of problems, Conrad says it is difficult for gamer widows and addicts alike to find help.

GamerWidow.com is one of many online resources available for those affected by people unable to control their video game habits. Yahoo.com has forums for widows of specific video games. Its *World of Warcraft* Widows Support Group has more than 3,000 members and its *EverQuest* Widows Group has close to 200 members.

GamingSucks.com takes a humorous look at video game addiction with a comic strip called

Widow's Revenge. The comics are a way for widows to vent by poking fun at gaming addiction. One comic shows a confused gamer who cannot understand why his electricity company will not take gold as a form of payment. The site also provides forums for people to share their stories.

The most common obsessive video games are massively

“Everybody knows somebody who has played these games,” says Adam Perry of The Last Game Store in Halifax. Although his store does not sell MMPORGs, he gets a lot of demand for the accompanying actions figures and comic books.

Earlier this year the American Medical Association debated the overuse of video games and determined

“Before I came across this site, I actually believed I was the only one who felt the way I do.”

-Tehya

multiplayer online role-playing games, or MMPORGs. In these games, players interact with each other online, creating and assuming the role of a fictional character in a fantasy world. This online world continues to exist and evolve even when the player is away from the game.

World of Warcraft is one the most popular MMPORGs and has an estimated two million players in North America and eight million worldwide.

more research is needed before video game addiction can be considered a formal diagnosis.

There are a few treatment centres for video game addiction around the world, including one in Richmond, B.C.

Myrow is clear that she is not anti-game, just anti-game addiction. It is only when a game consumes the user's everyday life that it becomes a problem, she says.

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Workin' 9 to 5 ... or 6 or 7 or 8

By ANGELICA BLENICH

These days it's easy to be a workaholic and not even know it.

"Instead of reading a book or meeting with a friend for coffee on a rainy Saturday afternoon, you're probably more likely to be on the computer at home doing work," says Phil Zinck, an electrical engineer at Stantech Consulting Ltd., a Halifax engineering consulting firm.

Studies show technological advances have forced many to work outside the home. Zinck can relate to this phenomenon.

A couple of months ago Zinck's firm offered him a BlackBerry, which he reluctantly accepted.

"It not so much allows me to do more work, but to work more efficiently."

Zinck admits that since having a BlackBerry, he checks his e-mail a lot more often.

"It is helpful for when I'm away from the office," he says. "But after 6 or 7 p.m., I don't allow myself to check e-mails anymore. Otherwise I would be on it all the time."

A study released in May 2007 by

Statistics Canada. As a result, more employees are working paid or unpaid overtime in a given week, says Statistics Canada.

Zinck believes there is a definite correlation between technology and

"The expectation is that you can never actually do all the work you're given, but that isn't always clearly articulated from managers to employees."

- Don Christie

CAREER SERVICES, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Statistics Canada reported that one out of every three Canadians aged 19 to 64 identifies themselves as a workaholic - a proportion that has not changed in 15 years.

Many of the hours spent working are beginning to take place outside of the home, thanks to the rapid

work. "What used to take 40 hours doesn't anymore because of technology, which makes everything move faster. This means people expect more than they did 20 years ago."

Because technology makes work more efficient and fast paced, people are expected to manage their time better and do a lot more.

Don Christie, marketing and communications officer for the career services centre at Dalhousie University says employers are asking a lot more from employees these days.

"Employers are giving employees too much work with the full knowledge they are giving too much work and the expectation that the employee will manage their own time and prioritize."

"The expectation is that you can never actually do all the work you're given, but that isn't always clearly articulated from managers to employees," says Christie.

"This can cause a lot of stress, particularly to young workers who are nervous to push work off."

Changes in attitudes toward work have shifted from generation to generation, enabling young workers to handle the difficulties and stress of



ANGELICA BLENICH

Phil Zinck can always find time to check for new e-mails and messages on his BlackBerry.



ANGELICA BLENICH

Katie MacNeil, left, Jennifer Coombs and Don Christie work to help students find their dream jobs at the career services centre at Dalhousie University.

work better than those before them.

"The new graduates are used to being in an environment where work is being handed to them day in and day out and when they get into a work environment they need that, they feed off of it," says Jennifer Coombs, a career advisor at the centre.

Yet the different expectations students have about what they want to get out of a career has resulted in a growing number of career changes made by students entering the workplace.

Coombs says new graduates often change careers these days, with the average number of changes likely to occur in a lifetime ranging between five and seven. Coombs believes these changes can lead to healthier relationships between employees and their

place of work.

"Loving your job is very important to graduates," says Coombs. "So if they're bringing work home, then they are at a job that they actually like."

While many students and new graduates may have found a balance between a healthy work life and personal life, many other Canadians have not. According to the Desjardins study, only 27 per cent of Canadians are convinced that work-life balance is possible.

And even though many Canadians may be escaping from the office before the end of the day comes, Zinck doesn't believe this is enough.

"It's not where your body is, but where your head is."

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street LEVEL



Ashley Thornton

Arts Student
SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

"It's mostly been influenced by my social life and I don't have an addictive personality but a lot of people surrounding me have had addictive personalities."



Jack Ross

Retired Contractor

"Addiction? I haven't been addicted to anything that I know of. I'm fortunate."



Ava Ellis

Engineer
I.M.P. AEROSPACE

"My ex was really, really hard into the alcohol and I ended up not marrying him and moving across the country."



Chris McWilliam

Occupational Therapist
CAPITAL HEALTH

"I work with people who experience addiction so I see the impact that it plays socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually and I think it affects various aspects of an individual's life."



Meaghan Pugsley

School Psychology Student
MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

"I'm addicted to procrastinating, which is why I'm walking home as opposed to being at the library right now. I can't really kick it."

Healthy choices tough for students

STIRRING THE POT



ISABELLE GALLANT

People crave things that are bad for them: cigarettes, excessive alcohol, drugs ... and certain foods.

Almost everyone admits that healthy eating is difficult. Even though we know we should eat vegetables and whole grains, it's not that easy.

We all want fries. We all want cheesecake. And most of us also want bacon. But a major cancer prevention report released last week says we should avoid bacon and other processed meats if we want to reduce the risk of developing cancer.

The report is one more good reason to eat well.

The American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund released the report, entitled Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective.

It warns that excess body fat, eating too much red and processed meat and drinking too much alcohol can boost your cancer risk.

Controlling weight is a major factor in preventing cancer,

says Theresa Glanville, a professor in the applied nutrition program at Mount St. Vincent University.

The strong link between cancer and body fat was "the most striking thing to emerge from the report," said Sir Michael Marmot, the chair of the panel that wrote the report. It's healthiest to be as lean as possible within your healthy weight range, he said.

With all the health warnings out there, you'd think people would start paying more attention and change their eating habits.

That's not likely to happen, says Glanville.

So I decided to test out my own habits.

Since I'm living in a university residence, I have to eat in the dining hall. I don't eat meat there, so reducing my intake of red and processed meats was easy. But there were definitely other things to look out for as I searched for ways to get lean.

Breakfast: I eat cereal in my room. When I do go to the dining hall, the tater tots disgust me, and the french-fried waffles make me recoil in horror. I can't deal with that much grease early in the morning.

Lunch: I eat some cheesy pasta. It's tasty, but then I read the nutrition sheet. It has 480 calories per serving and 26 grams of fat. Oops. At least I can find out exactly how much fat I'm putting into my body.

I also have a salad. The lettuce is having one of its "on" days, which is rare. Usually I have to pick through to find pieces that aren't covered in brown spots.

I decide to have half a bagel because I still feel hungry, or maybe I just think I do.

After all, I'm surrounded by all this food, and it's basically free. I mean, yeah, I paid for it, and now I get to eat as much as I want. So why not eat more?

Supper: The offerings are roast pork, chicken nuggets and perogies. As a non-meat eater, these choices frustrate me. All I can eat are fried pieces of dough filled with potato and cheese (that taste nothing like real perogies). Oh, and I can have more potatoes on the side, too.

I decide against the perogies and get mashed potatoes and carrots instead. I know the carrots are a bad idea, but they are calling out to me, "Eat something colourful! We have nutrients!" Too bad they've been cooked for so long that all their nutrients have dissolved, and I'm left with soggy mush.

So how did I do? I probably ate too many starchy foods and I did have some cookies after dinner, but overall, not bad.

The most frustrating thing about eating in a cafeteria is you have little control over what you put into your body. Even if you try to avoid the obvious, you can't always tell what's in your food or where it comes from.

The best way for people to improve their food choices is to shop on the perimeters of the grocery store, says Glanville. That's where all the whole foods are, such as vegetables, meat and dairy, she says.

For now, I'll just try to avoid the ice-cream sundae bar.

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ISABELLE GALLANT

Students take their pick from the salad bar at Prince Hall cafeteria at the University of King's College, which offers alternatives to fried and fatty foods.

How has addiction affected your life?



Peter Graham
Chief Spokesperson
CAPITAL HEALTH

"I certainly know people who had addiction problems with alcohol. I think it's really important to have compassion for those with addiction and to approach it and have empathy for them the way that you would with someone who has a chronic illness."



Kevin Cox
Carpenter
DORA CONSTRUCTION

"(Cigarettes). They're poison. Hard to quit. Health wise I guess, smoking's bad for you."



Jennifer Sangster
Marketing Co-ordinator
DYMATION

"I can't say it has actually. No one in my family has any addictions that are known and I don't have any."



Paul Brousseau
Medical Informatics Specialist
QEII HOSPITAL

"Maybe I eat more than I should"



Chris Alstrup
Unemployed

"Ten years on the street as a cokehead has fucked my life completely ... It affects ... everybody that you know and even people you don't know ... I'm standing here panhandling so I can eat. ... Once you get an addiction like that it seems near impossible to get out of it."

Shopaholics anonymous

FASHION MAVEN



ANGELICA BLENICH

You can see them through the window, sitting perfectly atop a raised platform, the light shining on them in all the right places.

They are marvelous in every way - the only fault they possess is that they are still in the store and not in your closet.

You want to purchase those shoes so badly it hurts, but all you can think about are the three other pairs you bought last, still sitting in your closet with price tags on them.

"I am not a shopaholic," is the phrase you keep repeating to yourself over and over, in hopes it might actually be true.

Even though "Confessions of a Shopaholic" is a favourite among the books sitting on your bookshelf, a part of you believes you would never go that far.

At least you think you wouldn't.

The term shopaholic may sound cute and innocent, but it's a lot more dangerous than advertisers and fashion designers would want you to believe.

Consumerism - or in this case, shopaholism - has become a problem throughout North America.

According to Bankrate, a finance website, one in 20 North Americans, men and women alike, can't control the urge to spend. This unhealthy habit can have severe consequences on finances, marriages, careers and families.

So it's not just a 'healthy' addiction, shopping can be just as dangerous and destructive as any other addiction.

A Statistics Canada study found that in 2005, Canadians ordered almost \$8 billion worth of goods from the Internet. That's only a small fraction of the \$762 billion in personal expenditures Canadian consumers made on goods and services.

But is the act of impulse

shopping more than simply a human weakness? Some psychologists have traced acts of shopaholism to underlying issues, including a lack of self-confidence.

And while many women would like to think they don't belong in this category, the reality is that compulsive shopping is a category dominated by females.

Believe me, nobody understands a passion for fashion more than I do. For me, shopping is more than just a mindless activity, it's a talent; one that has been recognized, crafted and perfected.

But the next time you find yourself staring at a pair of shoes on display in a store, take a step back to think - do I really need them?

And if you decide to go ahead and indulge anyway, it will be our little secret.

How to avoid becoming a shopaholic

Make a budget

Although tedious and boring, making a budget can be just the step you need to avoid over spending and impulse buying. Just make sure your expenditures do not exceed your income, and try to stick to it as much as possible.

Prioritize

Sit down and make a list of things you want and things you need. After comparing the two it should



ANGELICA BLENICH

Compulsive shopping can be as dangerous as any addiction

be easier to eliminate the frivolous things you might be tempted to buy to concentrate on the necessities.

Avoid catalogue and online shopping

Shopping via the Internet or phone tends to lead to many regretful purchases and added shipping and handling costs.

Invest in classic styles

Buy classic styles and you will find you are less likely to make re-

peated trips to the mall. Trendy and current styles, while fun, tend to go out of style quickly, causing you to want to fill your closet with replacement pieces.

Wait for sales

Many stores offer a chance to sign. Try to wait for end of the season sales or other promotions to maximize your savings.

Find an alternative activity

Often people may find they are shopping out of boredom. There are many other cheaper alternatives that can fill in the time that might be used for shopping.

Some include; go for a walk in a park, spend some time catching up with an old friend over coffee or volunteer with a local organization.

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Addictions: Signs you may need help

By ERIK MJANES

The medical definition of addiction has seven criteria. An addiction is any behavior that meets at least three of the seven criteria during the same 12-month period.

1. TOLERANCE.

You can use more and more over time.

2. WITHDRAWAL.

When you stop using, you experience at least one of the following symptoms: irritability, anxiety, shakes, sweats, nausea or vomiting.

3. CONTROL.

Difficulty controlling your use. Sometimes you use more or for a longer time than you'd like.

4. CONSEQUENCES.

You continue to use even though there are negative consequences to your mood, self-esteem, health, job or family.

5. SIGNIFICANCE.

Significant time or emotional energy spent. You spend a significant amount of time or thought obtaining, using, concealing, planning or recovering from your use.

6. NEGLECT.

You have given up or reduced social, recreational, work or household activities because of your use.

7. DESIRE.

You have repeatedly thought about cutting down or controlling your use, or you have made unsuccessful attempts to control your use.

This definition is based on the criteria of American Psychiatric Association and the World Health Organization.

You don't need a fancy definition to tell you if you have an addiction. There is a simple test. If you think you might have a problem, then you probably do.

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EDUCATION

The show must go on

Stage next priority for Citadel high

By NINA PARIS

Halifax's Citadel High has been open for two months, but one teacher says it lacks a key element.

"I feel like, personally, the auditorium is the heart of a school, and we're missing our heart right now," says Sarah Chaisson.

While the new school is big and beautiful, she says, without an auditorium there is no place for the school to come together as a whole, not only for musicals, concerts and plays, but for guest speakers and assemblies as well.

Chaisson teaches Grade 10 drama at the new high school. A thin black wall separates her classroom from the shell that will become the auditorium. The classroom will be turned into the stage.

When construction begins, Chaisson hopes she will be given a new classroom, but says she is not sure if there is enough space in the school.

She may need to find a new space sooner than she thinks.

The school is working toward opening the auditorium by next September, says principal Tam Fawcett.

To do so, the school will need to raise another \$900,000. The total budget for the auditorium is \$2.3 million, which must be raised by the school and the community. The school

plans to sell seats in the auditorium for \$1,000 a piece to raise the rest of the funds.

The finished auditorium is expected to hold about 900 people; the school has more than 1,400 students and upwards of 100 staff members. Even with a completed auditorium, Citadel still won't have a place where the whole school can gather as a community to watch their productions.

When building a new school, the provincial government follows guidelines for what can be included in construction. Auditoriums do not fall into this category, but the government will build the shell for the school to fill.

While many people are finding it frustrating the auditorium was not completed before school began in September, they need to understand where the province is coming from, says Fawcett.

"It's a little more difficult for our community to accept the construction of this school without a completed theatre because we have had two schools come together, both of those schools having had auditoriums and very strong music programs and theatre programs," she says.

"From the provincial perspective I do understand, because a small rural school probably would not have the programming necessarily or



NINA PARIS

Citadel High School principal Tam Fawcett surveys the chaos that will soon become the new auditorium.

that history."

Every year, the now-closed St. Pat's and Queen Elizabeth high schools put on elaborate and well-rehearsed musicals and plays. Fawcett says both schools had beautiful spaces. This tradition is important to the students and the staff, says one Grade 12 student at Citadel.

Marian Sherlock has been in plays and musicals since she was in Grade 10. She attended St. Pat's before it was combined with Queen Elizabeth this fall to create Citadel.

She says the arts are getting the short end of the stick.

"I just feel like if we have this whole brand new, state-of-the-art place, and they are willing to put so

much money, so much effort into it, I feel like the arts program should get the same sort of respect."

Sherlock wants to spend her last high school year performing in her own school, but that won't happen. She says theatre means a lot to her.

"This is an important part of my high school experience and I know for a lot of other people it's a really important part of their experience. I'm not going to get that experience in this school. We'll have to go elsewhere for that."

Coming from the world of drama, Chaisson can understand Sherlock's frustrations. But as a teacher, she also understands the finances.

"When I first heard, I felt kind of

offended that the arts, yet again, get pushed aside. But I understand that it's a major expense."

This year Citadel will put on a musical at the Quinpool Education Centre (formerly St. Pat's) in Halifax.

Chaisson says it will be a new, but strange experience to take the show elsewhere.

"We're lucky enough to live in a city where there are beautiful theatres to rent or to use, but it's different."

Sherlock disagrees.

"It takes away from the school. It takes away from the feeling of unity in the school, that the arts program has to go somewhere else."

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Literacy must remain priority, forum told

By GINA SUTHERLAND

Literacy is the key to lifelong success, said participants in the Premier's Forum on Student Achievement held Saturday.

More than 400 community members, parents, school staff and politicians braved the wet and blustery weather to attend the day-long event at Citadel High. The agenda focused on the opportunities and challenges today's students face and how education can ready them for success in the global workforce.

"The convergence of information technology, globalization and demographic change has made the beginning of the 21st century a pivotal moment of our history," said Premier Rodney MacDonald.

"Students must prepare for a world where they compete and they collaborate with people from around the world as never before."

The way to achieve this, said Dr. Douglas Willms, a professor at the University of New Brunswick, is by focusing on literacy from a young age.

He emphasized the importance of parents reading to their children, and noted that "children who have very talkative mothers learn more words earlier than children with less talkative mothers."

He also said that if children are introduced to a foreign language during the first two months of life, they can distinguish it by nine months of age.

The 2003 International Adult

Literacy and Skills Survey showed Nova Scotians rank within the national average for literacy. The survey measured prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy and problem solving.

The survey ranked participants' scores on a scale of 1 to 5, from lowest to highest. Close to 40 per cent of participants from Nova Scotia fell within level 3 in prose proficiency, compared with the national average of just over 35 per cent.

These results are promising, but Willms says there are many other factors to consider.

"The critical transition is from learning to read to reading to learn," he said, adding that research in the U.S. shows 95 per cent of the kids who have fallen off track by

Grade 3 struggle to read all the way through school.

Increasing reliance on technology isn't helping children's reading abilities either.

"The more kids are engaged with technology, the worse their reading scores," said Willms.

The theme of literacy extended into a panel discussion conducted by Lawton's CEO Rob Sobey, lawyer Cheryl Hodder, early child development specialist Kathleen Guy and author Sheree Fitch.

"If we're going to thrive as a company, we need a talented workforce, and that begins with lifelong learning and investment in the early years," said Hodder, who discussed "Thrive by Five," a Washington state initiative, backed by Bill Gates and Boeing, that

aims to enhance early learning.

Since 2004 the Nova Scotia government has increased spending on its primary to Grade 12 system by \$153 million, or 17 per cent.

Most of that went on the implementation of Learning for Life II, a four-year plan focused on improving learning through reduced class sizes, increased resources and an emphasis on healthy, active living.

But, "still have a lot of work to do," says MacDonald.

"We can be on the right track, but if we stand still, we will be run over by better students from around the world."

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World-class education for N.S. students

IB programs on offer at five Halifax-area high schools



GEOFF TOBIN

Education Minister Karen Casey joins students and staff to celebrate their new "World School" status.

By GEOFF TOBIN

I think therefore IB.

Students and teachers applauded Tuesday morning as Education Minister Karen Casey rolled out Cole Harbour District High's new International Baccalaureate school banner, and declared Cole Harbour an official "IB World School."

The International Baccalaureate Program is offered worldwide and introduces tougher assignments, new ways of learning, and demands better time management than the standard high school curriculum. Schools across Nova Scotia are pushing to offer the program to as many students as possible.

Cole Harbour's principal, Linda d'Entremont, says students in Nova Scotia want these opportunities.

One student who spoke at Wednesday's ceremony knew exactly what she wanted out of the program.

"University recognition," says Carolann Mroz, a Grade 11 student.

"When we want to go to university, we want to be able to say 'Hey, I'm from Cole Harbour District High School, an IB World School,'" Mroz says.

Mroz says the IB program keeps options open for students when they graduate.

Cole Harbour District High School now boasts 49 students in the IB program in grades 11 and 12, and 60 more in the pre-IB program offered in Grade 10.

"Those impressive numbers speak to the extreme amount of work that was accomplished in a short

amount of time. We made it," says d'Entremont.

Cole Harbour is one of five schools in the Halifax Regional School Board that began offering the program this year, bringing the total number of IB schools in Nova Scotia to 12.

The program includes three main components, including a 4,000-word essay and a course called Theory of Knowledge, which provides a philosophical approach to the value of knowledge from a global perspective.

The third component, Creativity, Action and Service, requires students to explore artistic endeavours, participate in physical activity and take part in the community.

"Right now I'm just thinking about how much it will help me in the future," says Melanie Thompson, a Grade 11 student at Prince Andrew High School, another new IB school.

She says the program demands, among other things, that students use university-level sources for their essays, and stay away from unreliable sources like Wikipedia.

"It's a lot of work ... but I'm glad I'm taking it."

Thompson is also involved with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Prince Andrew's Yearbook Committee, and the soccer team.

"So far it seems like really good preparation. If you're interested in going to university or just challenging yourself ... it really develops your personality and the way you are."

While Thompson isn't certain where she'll end up after high school, she plans to go to university, and is interested in nutrition.

"There is an appetite in this province for the IB program," Casey said at Tuesday's ceremony.

"It is astonishing to think that in just one year, the IB program in this province has grown from just two schools with fewer than 50 students, to 12 schools with over 400."

Casey says that students finishing high school face a competitive post-secondary education system, and told students they "deserve a comprehensive and academically rigorous program."

While all IB schools receive a banner like the one Cole Harbour put on permanent display facing Forest Hills Parkway, d'Entremont's school was selected to host the public unveiling of the program.

Donna MacKenzie, principal at Prince Andrew, says that the program keeps its doors open to all students, not just those with the highest grades.

"If you have a student in junior high making 90s, but 90s come really easy to them, and they don't apply themselves, probably the students who are making in the low 80s, or even the high 70s, that really want it ... and are willing to apply themselves, they will be just as successful, if not more successful."

The Halifax Regional School Board is planning to introduce the IB program to a second wave of schools that has not yet been named.

"Our goal," Casey says, "is to soon provide access to at least 90 per cent of our students across the province."

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Autism advocates say funding falls short

Politicians hear from families about the importance of early intervention programs for children

By JENNY MCCARTHY

Vicki Harvey isn't sure how to tell her son Conlin that he can't be an archeologist.

Conlin is autistic. Every day parents of children with autism face the same difficulties. Conlin goes to a regular school with other kids his age, but, like many autistic children, he needs the help of a teaching assistant.

Teachers often aren't taught how to deal with autistic kids, and university professors even less so. So parents like Harvey need to pay hundreds of dollars a week for support if they want their child to obtain a post-secondary education. Even then they are excluded by universities if they do not meet the curriculum goals of all subjects regardless of the significance to the degree which they pursue.

Families of autistic children are frustrated with such problems and are pushing the government to give them some help.

Vicki Harvey is not just a mom – she is also the director of the Autism Society of Nova Scotia. On Tuesday afternoon, she and a panel of other board members and families of autistic children came together in the legislative committees office in downtown Halifax to plead their case, to a group of MLAs, for government's help in funding a future for their kids.

The prevalence of autism has increased at an alarming rate in the past decade. Based on U.S. figures the panelists estimate that the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder in the 1980's was one in 5,000. They estimate that this figure is now one in 150.

The rate of autism has grown faster than efforts to cope with the condition. In Canada, there is still no database with accurate figures. The autism society relies on statistics gathered by its American counterparts.

Harvey says gathering data is crucial for the creation of programs for people with autism so they know where and how to direct their efforts.

The MLAs passed a motion to create a group of health, education and community services in partnership with families affected by autism that would produce an annual report to deal with important issues.

Autism is often labeled "the invisible disability" because an autistic person doesn't look different. This is another reason the autism society is looking for more funding – to educate the public so their children can



STEPHEN VOSS / CONTRIBUTED

Early intervention programs for children with autism can help ease their integration into the public school system.

be treated properly.

Michelle Gardiner, president of the Autism Society of Cape Breton, explains that people often mistake a "meltdown" for a child's temper tantrum. These "meltdowns" can be

anything from screaming to children banging their heads on the wall. Reacting in the wrong way can make the behaviors worse.

PLEASE SEE **AUTISM** NEXT PAGE

Gaelic culture thrives at Citadel High



ISABELLE GALLANT

Teacher Melissa Shaw was impressed by the strong interest in learning Gaelic culture among students such as Piper Bowes, Becky Selig and Cassie MacDonald.

AUTISM CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

Autism comes with different symptoms for different people. It is officially called Autism Spectrum Disorder because of the differences in symptoms and severity. Some people have severe autism in which they will always need support and supervision, while others have milder symptoms and can function with little help. For those in between, the legislative committee was told, they can become functional members of society with the proper training and guidance.

According to the panel, existing programs are not offered to everyone and help is inconsistent. The autistic community says it wants investment from the government to create a more thorough program which will efficiently prepare autistic children to live normal lives as adults.

Currently, Nova Scotia has an Early Intervention Program for kids aged two to six. The children are given intensive training in social skills in order to prepare them for better integration into the school

system. Of the estimated 280 pre-school-aged kids with autism in Nova Scotia, only 60 kids are randomly chosen every year for the program.

Norman Donovan, director of the Annapolis Valley autism support team says his six-year old grandson, who was diagnosed with severe autism at the age of three, was lucky to have been chosen for the program.

Thanks to the help he received he was able to integrate into the public school system at the age of five without a teaching assistant or extra school support.

Justin Matterhorn was not so lucky. He is sensitive to issues surrounding bodily functions. His meltdowns are often caused by seeing people eat. He can only go to school for three hours a day.

Justin's mother has to be especially careful about where Justin goes and what he sees. Her only break from him is the three hours he's at school, which is when she goes to her part time job at

Wal-Mart.

Because their children need so much extra care and constant supervision, many parents are forced to give up work or take on a lower paying more flexible job. Home care is too expensive.

Donovan says the cost for his grandson's program was \$47,000 for two years, of which the Ontario government paid \$26,000. But, he says, it serves to save money in the long run. He says there is an estimated \$2 to \$3 million lifetime cost for an autistic person without such early care.

"What a bargain for the Ontario taxpayer," he says. "I suspect my grandson will be a taxpayer."

Not only that but with the right social skills development, the transition from school to post-secondary education to becoming a contributing part of society could go more smoothly.

Maybe then people like Harvey could send their kids to university to be archeologists.

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PAGE EDITOR/LAYOUT: MICHELLE MACLEOD

By ISABELLE GALLANT

When Melissa Shaw was growing up in Cape Breton, she thought it was strange that her grandparents spoke Gaelic but her father didn't.

"It amazed me that my grandfather's first language was Gaelic and he didn't pass it on to his children," she said.

She later studied Gaelic at Cape Breton University in Sydney and at St. Ann's Gaelic College in St. Ann's.

Now she's doing something to help the younger generation. She's heading the Gaelic Cultural Awareness Project at Citadel High School, where she teaches English.

"A lot of people will just scoff and say it's a dead language," said Shaw. "But so many people are speaking it. And they laugh with it, they cry with it ... it's not dead."

Citadel High is one of six schools across the province granted money for Gaelic education through a new provincial grant program.

The recently formed Office of Gaelic Affairs is awarding \$200,000 through the program. Citadel High got \$23,600.

Shaw began by holding a general meeting to see how many students were interested. She was impressed by how many showed up, and how excited they were.

The students decided that language was the first aspect of Gaelic culture that they wanted to learn. Now about 19 students meet once a week at lunchtime for Gaelic lessons.

Cassie MacDonald, a Grade 11 student, joined the Gaelic group at Citadel High. She's a highland dancer, plays the fiddle and teaches step-dancing.

"When I heard something to do with Celtic, I was really excited so I decided to check it out," she says.

She hopes they can learn about Gaelic culture as well.

"I think it would be really fun if we took a trip down to Cape Breton, just to apply our knowledge and see first-hand the stuff that we're learning," she says.

She may be in luck. The group has plans to go to Cape Breton in the future. They'll also be holding a ceilidh at the school at the end of the month.

But the main goal of the project is to raise interest for a Gaelic studies course next year, says Shaw. The course would count as a Canadian history credit, but will only be offered if enough students are interested.

There's also a Gaelic language course that could be offered in future years, says Shaw.

Fifteen schools across the province offer a Gaelic studies class, and

six offer language instruction at some level, said the minister responsible for Gaelic Affairs, Angus MacDonald. A curriculum for grades 3 to 9 is also being developed.

There are 225,000 Nova Scotians of Scottish descent, said MacIsaac. Based on a survey done by the Nova Scotia Gaelic Council, 10 per cent of those people have an interest in preserving the Gaelic culture and language, he said.

"We're addressing the very strong desire that's out there."

But MacIsaac said if there are no other components of Gaelic preservation in the province, educating only in public schools won't work.

"If the students are taught in isolation to anything else happening, and are not given the opportunity to be able to use the language on an ongoing basis, that would be the worst scenario."

The province needs to continue with adult immersion programs and making the language available to everyone, said MacIsaac.

Lewis MacKinnon, CEO of the Office of Gaelic Affairs, said speaking the language is an important part of relating to the Gaelic culture.

"Gaelic is rich in terms of its song tradition, storytelling, music, dance, customs," he said. "These things are very much part of Nova Scotia and, by acquiring language skills, you access these cultural components."

Students at Citadel High have already had a taste of Gaelic culture. They tried a traditional Halloween dish, *fuairag* (pronounced FOO-uh-

"Gaelic is rich in terms of its song tradition, storytelling, music, dance, and customs."

- Lewis MacKinnon
CEO OF THE OFFICE OF GAELIC AFFAIRS

rack), made of whipped cream and oatmeal.

Piper Bowes, a Grade 10 student at Citadel High, explained that several trinkets were hidden in the dish.

"If you got one, it meant something. I got a thimble and it means my future job will be a seamstress," said Bowes. "And then another person got a ring, and that means he's going to get married soon. It was really interesting."

Cassie MacDonald said she wants to learn Gaelic because it's an important part of Nova Scotia culture, and the ancestors of so many people spoke it.

"We owe it to them to keep their language alive."

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HEALTH

Prenatal screening or genetic weeding?

By PRAS RAJAGOPALAN

Pregnant moms across Canada can find out if their future children will be born with a genetic condition, but those affected by Down syndrome warn the screening process in Canada could lead to systematic termination of fetuses diagnosed with the condition.

Ninety per cent of fetuses diagnosed with Down syndrome are terminated, says the Canadian Down Syndrome Society. Screening for Down syndrome and two other genetic disorders, Edwards syndrome and neural tube defects, are offered to pregnant women across Canada.

Alice Evans, the mother of 17 month-old Alfie, who has Down syndrome, says the screening process is not the unbiased, informative process it should be.

She says the process conveys a feeling that "this sort of a child would be horrible for you and would be horrible for the world."

The process could work, she says, if parents are given information from a wide variety of perspectives. She says there is plenty of information available about abortion and the probability of giving birth to a child with Down

syndrome, but she would like to see health-care workers give parents more information about the specific needs of caring for a child with the condition.

She points out women need to be told that their fetus is being tested for Down syndrome because it is one of the most commonly detected conditions, not because it is better or worse than any other condition.

In Canada, prenatal screening for genetic conditions has been available since the 1960s. Of these disorders, Down syndrome is the most common. In Canada, it occurs in 13 of every 10,000 births, says Health Canada. People with Down syndrome are more prone to heart defects, cognitive deficits and visual and auditory dysfunction.

Susan Sherwin, a philosophy professor at Dalhousie University who specializes in bioethics and feminist theory, questions why most provinces in Canada fund genetic testing. She says it's an unusual public health practice to fund screening, as Down syndrome doesn't pose a threat to public health.

Health Canada endorses genetic testing on the basis of recommendations made by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada,

which in February recommended all women, regardless of age, be offered these tests.

Previously, it only recommended women 35 and older be screened. Women in that age category are much likelier to have a child with a genetic condition.

Andre Lalonde, the Society's executive vice president, said in an interview with the National Post that in order to be fair, all women must be given the choice.

Lynette Reid is a professor of bioethics at Dalhousie University. Judging from discussions with people and parents affected by Down syndrome, there appears to be an assumption that a positive test leads to a decision to terminate the fetus, she says.

At a panel discussion last Thursday at Saint Mary's University, many mothers of children with Down syndrome expressed the same view. While most generally had positive experiences with genetic counsellors, many felt health-care workers, including nurses, did not give them the information they needed. Many said abortion was the option offered to them repeatedly, regardless of whether they asked about it.



CONTRIBUTED

Alice Evans with her two children, Noah and Alfie.

"We're not prepared for the other conversations about what it is really like to raise a child with Down syndrome," says Reid. She would like to see "much more presence and awareness of the lives of people with intellectual disabilities - how they're integrated into societies and how they're part of their families and what level of social services we provide. As taxpayers and voters, that's a conversation we all need to have."

By not tackling the ethical issues that come with screening, this issue could be the start of a slippery slope, she says.

"How serious does the condition have to be before termination is offered?" she asks. "When it comes to

legislation in Canada, we're making a very clear statement that the right to free choice ends at selecting for gender, but that's left everything else open, including Down syndrome."

She says the public has to get more involved in the issue, and that academics and health professionals have to involve those who are affected by Down syndrome when they come up with policies and recommendations.

Evans agrees.

"I'd like to see some guidelines developed with people who've got Down syndrome, with obstetricians, with genetic ethicists," she says.

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Medical schools leave out pain - critics

By ERIK MJANES

Chronic pain advocates are accusing Canadian medical schools of spending less time teaching students about pain management than veterinary schools.

The issue was front and centre last week during National Pain Awareness Week. In Halifax, the occasion was marked with a conference at Dalhousie University titled "Faces of Chronic Pain." The talk drew chronic pain patients, doctors and drug companies to discuss what they call the "silent epidemic" affecting millions of Canadians.

Conference attendees were told in Nova Scotia alone, an estimated 200,000 people suffer from some form of chronic pain. Last year, it was the cause of 25 per cent of all sick days taken in Canada. The cost to the health-care system was almost \$40 billion.

Despite the emotional and financial costs associated with chronic pain and the growing wait lists for treatment, critics say medical and

health science programs in Canada are not making pain management a priority.

The audience at Saturday's forum heard how veterinary students received at least three times more pain management training than medical students.

Helen Tupper gave the opening speech at Saturday's forum. She is a registered nurse and, until recently, president of the Canadian Pain Coalition. She has also lived with chronic pain for 30 years.

She acknowledges progress in some areas, such as the recent announcement of funding for six satellite pain clinics in Nova Scotia. But Tupper was blunt in her criticism of medical schools for ignoring pain management.

"The time spent training doctors (on pain) is woefully small," she said. "The curriculum must be changed."

Tupper's criticisms are supported by a study carried out by the Canadian Pain Society which surveyed students

in medicine, dentistry, nursing, and pharmacy programs to see how many hours of designated training they receive on pain.

The study found veterinary medicine students receive an average of 98 hours of designated pain education while medical schools reported an average of 16 hours, and nursing programs averaged 31 hours.

"This poor level of education in pain just compounds the crisis of under-treated pain in Canada," said Dr. Barry Sessle, president of the Canadian Pain Society. He thinks health science faculties need to do more.

"Only then will they be equipped to meet the needs of Canadians, who quite reasonably expect our health care system to treat them at least as well as our four-legged friends."

Dr. Ellen Thompson agrees. She is an associate professor at the University of Ottawa and an anesthesiologist with a focus on chronic pain management.

"This knowledge must make its way into medical school curricula and into clinical medicine if we're going to make progress."

Pain-specific instruction in the health sciences is sporadic. Medical students at the University of Toronto have a "pain week", while University of Ottawa students get only two lectures during their four years of study.

"We know approximately 15 per cent of patients with whiplash or low back pain injury will go on to develop chronic pain," Thompson says. "If they are appropriately treated early on, the progression to chronic pain can be halted."

When it comes to pain management, nurses are as important, if not more important, than doctors. But many nursing students are leaving four-year programs with very little pain-specific training.

Lucille Wittstock, associate director of undergraduate student affairs at Dalhousie's School of Nursing, acknowledges the lack of pain-specific courses. Still, she thinks nursing

students are learning the necessary skills.

"The topic of pain is a thread throughout all of our courses," she said. "And this year, we started offering our first pain elective."

But are students getting the kind of education chronic pain advocates claim is needed?

"There is only one elective course in our program, and it's only got room for 20 students," says Jamie Haslam, a third-year nursing student at Dalhousie.

In three years of nursing school, Haslam has had one lecture on pain management in a second-year course, and a brief section as part of a pharmacology course.

In a program with 143 students, only 20 can take the pain management elective each year.

"And (those students) all come out of it recommending it to next year's students, telling us to not to miss out," says Haslam.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Love for sale

Paintings made of bicycle horns can be tooted to show affection

By JENNY MCCARTHY

Move over Freud. There's a new man in town who has a much simpler solution for tackling yearning, coldness and lover's spats.

The design was on display Monday night at the Soho Kitchen in downtown Halifax.

It's called the Love Horn.

The Love Horn looks like a miniature painting at first glance. Its bright colours attract the eye to something stuck smack in its centre.

That's the bicycle horn. It's meant to be tooted to demonstrate a longing for affection. And it doesn't just look like a bicycle horn – it is one.

Each Love Horn is different. Some are covered in magazine clippings, reminiscent of grade school collages, some are shiny and glittery and some are pasted onto copies of other artists work, such as

Leonardo Da Vinci's Madonna with the Carnation. It took nearly two years to create—Da Vinci's that is.

Kyle Jackson, the creator of the Love Horn, turns out each of his pieces in about two days. He says he wanted to make 40 or 50 for the show but he started the project a couple of months ago and has only managed to make 24A former student of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Jackson says he

"I like to call it an emotive signalling device. It's all about spreading the love."

— Kyle Jackson

was inspired by Andy Warhol who signed a Campbell's soup can for him when he was 15.

He says he wanted to create this century's cultural fetish with his Love Horn and his dream is to be on Oprah.

"It's a great way to make a living," he says.

"As an artist, the shape is all



Artist Kyle Jackson displayed his "Love Horns" at the Soho Kitchen.

JENNY MCCARTHY

figured out for you. You just have to do the inside."

Jackson is from Toronto and he's been an artist for 22 years. For this event he was successful in attracting many local art lovers, who took the time to carefully inspect each Love Horn.

A corner of the Soho Kitchen was transformed into a true-to-life gallery

with wine sipping, smoked salmon and crackers and serious contemplation by clients who demanded to know which Love Horns were still on the market.

Jackson says at first he feared people would think it was all about sex but he says the horns can be for anyone—even a four-year-old like his own who sometimes needs a hug.

"I like to call it an emotive signalling device," he says. "It's all about spreading the love."

And, apparently emptying the wallet.

Each of the one cubic-foot-squared pieces of love will set you back \$270 to \$325, or roughly the price of 60 bicycle horns.

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Gangster will blow you away

FILM CRITIC



TERRY LONG

American Gangster is a searing, gritty and brilliant crime drama. This is easily one of the best gangster movies made in the past 25 years.

Oscar-winners Denzel Washington and Russell Crowe turn in powerhouse performances in the Ridley Scott-directed crime drama.

Set in the late 1960s and early 1970s, *American Gangster* tells the true story of Frank Lucas, a small-time hustler and minor player in the Harlem underworld, and the driver and body guard for Harlem crime boss Bumpy Johnson. *American Gangster* depicts Lucas' meteoric rise to become one of the most

powerful figures in the New York City underworld.

The film's narrative is divided into three parts that gradually weave together the stories of Lucas and New Jersey Police Detective Richie Roberts, played by Russell Crowe.

The first act begins with the death of Johnson, Lucas' boss and mentor. The film's narrative follows Lucas as he moves to fill the vacuum left by Johnson's sudden death by assassinating some competitors and forcing others out of business.

The focus shifts back and forth between Lucas and Roberts, who seems to be the only honest cop on a corrupt police force.

The second act shows Lucas consolidating his power and Roberts beginning his investigation after his police partner dies from an overdose of Lucas's ultra-pure cocaine, known on the streets as "Blue Magic."

The tangled plot threads finally come together in the third act as Roberts and his hand-picked team of investigators tighten the noose around Lucas and his operation, which by now involves members of

his immediate and extended family.

Scott has chosen to light Crowe and Washington in stark tones of light and shadow. As Lucas becomes more and more powerful, he is frequently shot in deep shadows or is seen only at night.

Likewise, Roberts is often seen only during the day. The two motifs of the film, light and dark converge when Lucas and Roberts finally meet in court and confront each other for the first time.

Washington, however, is particularly captivating as Lucas. He gives his character the ruthlessness of a major drug lord, yet his devotion to his family gives him the veneer of a caring family man and a businessman concerned for his customers.

These factors, combined with the fact that Lucas became a witness for the prosecution and gave a testimony that led to the conviction of three quarters of the New York Drug Enforcement Agency, as well as a large number of New York gang leaders, makes Lucas a strangely admirable figure.

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PAGE EDITOR/LAYOUT: MICHELLE MACLEOD

Varsity

SPORTS AT KING'S

SOCCER Nov. 8 – 11
CCAA National Championships
@ Mount Saint Vincent University

BASKETBALL Nov. 11
Holland College @ King's
Women 1:30 p.m. Men 3:30 p.m.

VOLLEYBALL Nov. 17
King's @ Mount Allison
Women 7 p.m.

BADMINTON Nov. 16 - 17
King's @ Université Sainte-Anne 6:30 p.m.

'Crazy diamonds' shine on with nostalgic performances

Lure of the road brings music vets back to Classic Albums

By RICHARD WOODBURY

For the musicians involved with Classic Albums Live, playing before throngs of screaming fans every night and travelling across North America has become a reality.

It's not a luxury most bands ever get to enjoy.

Some might scoff at them for playing the works of other musicians every night, but keyboardist Lindsay Clark from Calgary sees things differently.

"This is my idea of success, being able to tour and make a living."

Classic Albums Live play classic rock albums start to finish, note for note, cut for cut, just the way it sounds on record.

Nothing is overlooked. Maniacal laughter, power drills and bullhorns were just some of the things used in their Halloween show at Casino Nova Scotia.

The nine-piece band reconstructed Pink Floyd's epic album, *The Wall*, using guitars, keyboards, percussion, drums, a violin and a cello.

Attention to detail has garnered them a following, allowing them to play more than 100 shows a year across North America.

But the same musicians don't always play each show. Depending upon the requirements of a show and the style of musicians needed, Classic Albums Live has around 100 musicians to choose from.

They've performed more than 30 albums in their entirety, including albums by The Rolling Stones, Fleetwood Mac and Led Zeppelin.

Many band members are seasoned musicians, some having played for more than 50 years.

Marty Morin of Toronto, who plays percussion and sings, has been in dozens of bands and has played on even more albums. He's been playing music his whole life.

"Some kids rode bikes, I played music."

He loves meeting and working with other experienced musicians because it forces him to play and sing better, he says.

"We've got guys with doctorates, classically trained musicians."

Morin was diagnosed with throat cancer 15 years ago and recovered with his vocal chords intact.

On stage, he has a booming voice and evokes thoughts of Meat Loaf because of his theatrics, voice and emotion.

Clark has been with the band since the start of the year. A classically trained pianist, she loves the

"I miss being 25, not having any money, any responsibility or stability."

- Craig Martin

FOUNDER,
CLASSIC ALBUMS LIVE

maturity of the band members.

Bands are like marriages as they can be serious relationships that involve a lot of communication and commitment. Like a lot of marriages, they end in break-up.

She says most bands fail because



RICHARD WOODBURY

Marty Morin of Classic Albums Live calms his nerves with a cool pre-show beverage.

of "ego struggles" amongst members.

"What makes a band work is if the band genuinely enjoys each other's company."

That seems to be the case for Classic Albums Live. Backstage before the show, most band members nibbled on a tray of sweets and enjoyed a beer or a glass of wine while they joked and swapped music stories.

Tour manager and bassist Johnny Batuzkin of Toronto says he enjoys watching the crowd's reactions to the music.

He's been with the band for a year and has been playing instruments for 25.

The long drives between concerts are the worst, he says. But he acknowledges he could do a lot worse.

For show producer and founder Craig Martin, years of hearing classic rock "desecrated" by cover bands and tribute bands is what led him to start Classic Albums Live.

Sitting behind the mixing board and hearing the sound come together is his favourite part.

"It's sublime."

Despite the success of Classic

Albums Live, he misses the old days of touring across North America on \$50 a month.

"I miss being 25, not having any money, any responsibility or stability."

For *The Wall* show, the band proved why they are successful. Recreating a Pink Floyd album is no easy feat.

The vocal parts are complex with difficult harmonies. The sound and feel of the Floyd guitar parts is unique. Pink Floyd was not a three-chord garage band.

The near capacity crowd of around 500 gave the band their first standing ovation near the end of the show, after the stunning outro solo of "Comfortably Numb."

It wasn't the last standing ovation either. When the band finished the last song of *The Wall*, "Outside the Wall," the crowd rose to its feet again and roared.

The band returned for a two-song encore and ended the night with "Wish You Were Here," while the crowd was wishing for more.

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RICHARD WOODBURY

Rob Phillips shows off his mean guitar multi-tasking.

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