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Keeping the Public Informed

LAST MONDAY NIGHT, the Central Algoma Rural Healthcare Steering Committee, Bruce Villella of the North East LHIN and MPP Mike Mantha were all on hand at the Legion, to provide an update and answer questions about the healthcare issues facing our area.

Macdonald, Meredith and Aberdeen Additional Township Mayor, (and Steering Committee Co-Chair) Lynn Watson led the evening's proceedings. He began by briefly reviewing the Committee's background, tracing its origin back to early 2008 when several municipalities began meeting to discuss the state of rural healthcare. In December 2008, the Board of Directors of the Matthews Memorial Hospital Association informed the group that a Sault Area Hospital consultant's report had recommended the closure of Matthews Memorial Hospital. This was also conveyed to the public at the January 2009 MMHA Annual Meeting.

This prompted the first public meeting, held at the Desbarats Arena on March 2nd 2009 which drew over 500 outraged citizens. That gathering in turn spawned another 'action' meeting on March 7th at the Legion. At that time, the fight to save our hospital began in earnest, as public officials and private citizens joined together in organizing the fight to save our hospital.

Then, in February 2011 Peter Vaudry, Interim Chair of the North East LHIN, gave us some very exciting news: the



creation of a new "Rural Healthcare Model" starting with amalgamating Matthews Memorial, Thessalon and Blind River hospitals into a 3 party partnership, providing services from a rural point of view. Discussions between the three hospitals began in April 2011.

The Steering Committee in June, put itself "on hold" pending the outcome of these important discussions. The committee met again in December 2011, originally to discuss if their continued existence would be relevant. It didn't take long to determine that their work was still far from over. There has still been no public announcement of last November's report by the provincial Rural and Northern Health Care Panel.

But in our particular "rural and northern" part of the world, things seem to again be sliding downhill. When LHIN Chair Peter Vaudry retired last year, it seems that the 'Rural Healthcare Model' retired with him. As summer slid into fall, then

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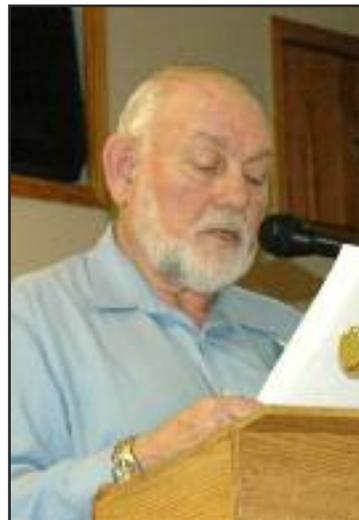
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PUBLIC INFORMED...continued from page 1

winter, it appears that the seed of our new healthcare idea had withered on the vine.

Then came another blow, as Sault Area Hospital administrators once again made further cuts to MMH's services – this time, the decision to cease blood testing for non-hospital patients.



Lynn Watson, Steering Committee Co-chair

Which brings us up to Monday night's Public Information Meeting. Here's where things stand.

On the 'Rural Healthcare Model' topic, Connie Witty reported that the first meeting took place in April 2011, in Thessalon, with 3 representatives from each hospital taking part, along with Elaine Pitcher, Chair of the Sault Area Hospital Board, and Bruce Villella, with Peter Vaudry acting as Facilitator. Representing MMH were MMHA Board members Connie Witty

and Carol Neave, as well as Tom Dalton, a Co-Chair of the Steering Committee.

Agreeing in principal that they did indeed have a common interest in further discussions, the group's first challenge was to define what exactly is meant by the term 'rural', as well as what challenges and opportunities were identified. "One of the biggest statements was that rural ISN'T urban!" she stated. "We don't want to be 'urbanized'; we want a choice!"

The work group also developed a Commitment Statement that would set the tone of everything else to follow: "In a spirit of respect and trust, we will cooperate with the delivery and enhancement of access to health services that meet the needs of the communities we serve." Ms. Witty clarified the statement as referring to all communities collectively, not each individual community.

"The next step was to brief our stakeholders, draw up a communication plan and press release which the Sault Area Hospital ...was prevailed upon, but it was the LHIN that released it; it was their communication. And the next step was to develop a governance model."

"And that is where it ends." she said. "We met a couple more times after that, but we have not been able to get the governance model truly developed politics got in the way; there was an election coming ... we've been a bit stagnant, and it's the Steering Committee's position that it's time to kick start this and find out where are we and what we truly want."

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Later in the proceedings, Carol Neave clarified that one major issue was the apparent lack of representation being offered to the MMH and Thessalon hospitals by the much larger Blind River organization – 1 seat each for MMH and Thessalon on the Blind River Hospital’s Board of Directors. “We were hoping for a seamless transition, except we didn’t want ‘seamless’ to be ‘the same’. We didn’t want to be treated the same way we’ve been treated by Sault Area Hospital.” she said. “By fighting that, we were told ‘Well, it’s going to happen ... it’s going to be fine. Don’t worry about this’. And then everything stopped. “We wanted the three groups to work together so that we could share things and we would all have something more.” she concluded.



Bruce Vilella, NE LHIN

Bruce Vilella reasserted the LHIN’s commitment to the tri-party partnership. He did acknowledge, however, that a number of factors have stopped the process dead in its tracks. “What we’re doing now is looking at this first phase, which is the bringing together of Thessalon, Matthews Memorial and Blind River. We started discussions early in January ... looking at the operational piece to see what the impact would be. And in another two or three months, once we do the analysis and get an idea of what it’s going to really cost ... a decision will be forthcoming then.”

Connie also added that, regardless of what representation arrangement may be finalized in the tri-party discussions, both MMH and Thessalon hospitals will have the security of their own established budgets, after years of being hidden within SAH’s budgets.



Mike Mantha, MPP

MPP Mike Mantha wasted no time wading into the rural health-care issue, and fully supports this initiative. Turning to LHIN official Bruce Vilella, he firmly stated “First and foremost, I hope you take this message back with you, that any

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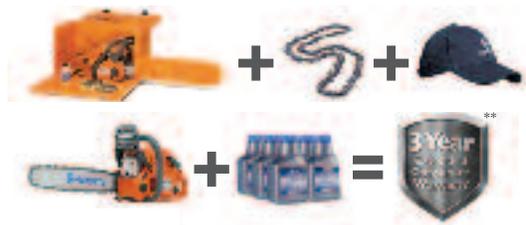
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PUBLIC INFORMED ...continued from page 3

model which is going to be developed for a rural healthcare plan has to include Matthews Memorial Hospital and Thessalon [Hospital]!”

Mr. Mantha went on to report that Louise Paquette, CEO of the North East LHIN, has assured him that, although things have indeed stopped along the way, things will again move forward, as soon as all of the communities and stakeholders are again back up to speed.

He stressed that the new healthcare model is going to serve our communities, yet we must all go into the process with an open mind, expecting that there may be changes, but they’ll be good changes that will bring and maintain the services in our communities. “So change is going to happen.” He warned. “We just want to make sure that YOU have your proper input and have the opportunity to say what YOU believe the changes should be!”

The other major topic of the night was Blood Testing services for non-rostered patients. While registered patients of the Sault Area Hospital can continue to have their blood testing done at MMH and patients of the St. Joseph Island and Thessalon Medical Clinics can have their bloodwork done at their clinic, approximately 15% of our population simply “fall through the cracks” because they have no local doctor or would have difficulty driving to the Soo for tests.

Continued on next page

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PUBLIC INFORMED...continued from page 5

As announced last week, the Central Algoma Rural Health-care Steering Committee, the North East LHIN and LifeLabs have arrived at an interim agreement that will allow continued blood services for those unfortunates. Starting this week, the service will be available (by appointment only) on Wednesday mornings – from 7 to 8 am at Algoma Manor in Thessalon followed by 9 to 10 am at the Dr. Trefry Centre in Richards Landing.

Is one hour a week enough? “We don’t know if it’s enough” said Lynn. “And if we find out, when we start bookings, that this one hour isn’t enough, LifeLabs have already indicated that they’re willing to sit down and look at that. We have to extend this time ... but until we actually get going, one of the biggest stumbling blocks in this whole process has been the numbers... how many people are we actually talking about?”

Lifelabs have agreed to provide weekly updates on the numbers of people using the service and to develop solutions to any problems. It could take two or three months to develop an accurate assessment of the number of people using the service.

Blood drawing services will cost \$100 per week for each location, which will be paid by the Steering Committee, using funds donated earlier by participating townships and private citizens. The balance of the costs, such as delivery to the lab, reports, etc. will be paid by OHIP, as usual with blood services.

Lynn gratefully acknowledged that LifeLabs are not charging for this first month. Once armed with some experience, all parties will review and adjust the services accordingly, including expanding testing times if the numbers prove it warranted. Hopefully, enough people will use the service to justify the Ministry of Health funding the full program.

As usual, our limited space simply doesn’t allow us to report on the Question period, although many excellent points were raised and covered.

The new, interim blood services agreement is just that – an interim agreement, until a long term solution is found. But it’s a darn sight better than NO service! We gratefully commend the Steering Committee, the NE LHIN and Mr. Mantha on taking the initiative to arrive at a creative solution to a potentially serious problem.

And finally, if YOU qualify, be sure to use this service! Call 705 946-5549 to book your appointment. Testing is done on a first come, first served basis. And remember to take your passport to any of Ontario’s health services with you ... your Ontario Health Card!



Letters to the Editor printed in the Island Insight Column reflect the views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Island Clippings.

Re: "Code Blue Freak Out"

<http://www.saultstar.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=3429877>

With regards to this "Code Blue" situation during the rally on Saturday January 7th, I was there and in close proximity to the van and would like to express my opinion of the situation. I sent the following letter to the Sault Star on Monday morning as soon as I saw the article on the front page and as of today they hadn't acknowledged it.

This whole Code Blue issue could make it appear as an attempt to put the rally in a bad light by implying that the people could not be too concerned about the Hospital if they blocked the entrance. It was either a weak effort by the Sault Star at sensationalism or perhaps the driver of the van had some sort of agenda, however I can't offer evidence of those reasons. All I can say is what I saw.

Here's the letter to the Star:

"I live on St Joseph Island and was at the recent rally at Mathews Memorial Hospital on Saturday Jan 7th. Having lived on the Island only a few months, I really don't know any of the parties mentioned in this article. I was a witness to the event that took place regarding the van driver's experience and was standing at the back of the crowd when I heard someone literally screaming "Move" and yelling something about an emergency, horn blowing and a mini van edging forward slowly with a very stressed person driving.

As people saw this, they immediately moved out of the way and a path was cleared to allow the van access. When the van arrived at the hospital entrance the driver got out and spent several minutes outside the hospital front door talking, smiling and shaking hands with a gentleman who I didn't know.

At this time I wondered what had prompted the hysterical actions on the driver's part. After a few minutes a nurse and a lady with a face mask appeared at the hospital entrance and the lady with the mask got into the van which left without effort. There are two entrances to the hospital...the North entrance was totally clear as the crowd was in no way blocking the street or that access, several cars had driven by the crowd. There was no emergency, the gentleman had merely come to pick someone up.

In my opinion, as soon as people became aware of the van's presence they moved. I think this story should have put more

Continued on next page



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emphasis on the reason the rally was taking place and how the issue affects a great number of the people in the area. I'm quite disappointed that after all the people stood in the cold and quietly voiced their concerns that this is the only coverage it was given. A lot of valid points were made but have gone unreported. I must say that since this article was first published, there have been more in depth articles about the rally. In my opinion this incident was a "non event" and it must have been a slow news day for the Star...or an attempt to discredit the good people of the Island and their cause."

Tony Kitchen, Hilton Beach

MMHA Voting Proxies

I returned from the Matthews Memorial Hospital Association annual meeting having felt surprised, dismayed, frustrated, and angry. I think others who attended the meeting may have had similar feelings.

Over a hundred people came to the meeting expecting to help select the members of the association, only to discover that one person had solicited nearly three hundred proxies. I thought a proxy vote was intended to allow a person who couldn't be at the election, often for health reasons, to exercise their right to vote. In this instance I understand that they signed over that right to the unnamed person.

This allowed one person to dictate the outcome of the election, which is apparently legal but it certainly doesn't seem right. The votes of all the people present at the meeting had no meaning as they were out voted by the proxy votes. It is rather alarming that someone would go to these extremes to manipulate the democratic process. Without changes in the present process, we will have no voice or role in the selection of board members. Hopefully change can occur before next year.

Wishing the new board success in their endeavors,

Janet Jerrard

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- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1/4 tsp. salt & pepper
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- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup grape tomatoes halved
- 1 cup finely crushed crackers (Breton, Wheat Thins,
Stoned Wheat etc.)

Preheat oven to 400° F. Lightly butter a 9 inch, deep dish pie plate. In a large bowl, whisk eggs until blended. Whisk in flour, milk, mustard, salt and pepper. Stir in crackers and 3/4 cup cheese. Pour into pie plate. Sprinkle broccoli into filling, pressing to submerge. Arrange tomatoes cut side up on top and sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake for 30 - 40 minutes, should be golden and knife inserted in centre comes out clean. Let stand for 5 minutes before cutting.

Spinach, onions, celery and a dash of Basil can add to the flavor.

Thanks Lavera!



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Computer Repair A+ certified repairman. If you have a computer that needs fixing or a stereo or flat screen that needs installing, call Tony 705 246-2363 or 705 255-7762 (leave message) or email ttiger27@hotmail.com or just stop by 1462 Sailors Encampment Drive, top house.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

YOGA CLASSES have resumed for the winter season! Everyone welcome! No experience or flexibility necessary. Come and try your first class for FREE to see if this style of yoga is for you. "Moderate" classes are Wednesdays from January 18 to March 14 at 1 pm and 7 pm at the Old Town Hall in Richards Landing (back door). "Gentler" classes are available Thursdays at 1 pm in Bruce Station. There will be NO Classes on February 8 and 9. \$15 'Drop In' or 8 sessions for \$100. For more info, call Mary at 705 246-2516. Certified Kripalu Yoga Teacher

February 17th Book Club Meeting at the Hilton Union Public Library. 10 am until noon. Feb Books: *The Best Laid Plans* by Terry Fallis, *Those Who Save Us* by Jenna Blum, Mar Books: *Half-Blood Blues* by Esi Edugyan, *Too Close to the Falls* by Catherine Gildiner Apr Books: *The Sister's*



Brothers by Patrick deWitt, *The Cat's Table* by Michael Ondaatje. Anyone wishing to join us is welcome. Further information contact 246-1957.

The SJI 1812 Bicentennial Committee will meet on Feb, 14th at 10AM at the Jocelyn Township Offices. All are welcome to attend.

Our local Cancer Society meets Tuesday, February 14th. Anyone interested in the work of the society is welcome to join us at Harmony St. Marks Church Hall at 1:30 pm. For info contact president Jean Konka 705 246-2698.

Community Birthday Calendars are in!! Please pick up at Kentvale, Ambeault's, Kent's Corners or St. Joe School. Reminder that the cost is \$10, due upon receipt.

Hand Drum workshop with Traditional Native drum teachings and guided instruction. Being held March 10th/12, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. @ Harmony St. Marks Church. Pot Luck lunch. Fees vary. Contact Sue @ 246-0711 for more info.

Winners of the St. Joseph Island Hunters and Anglers 2012 Toy Draw are: 1st – Bill Moore; 2nd – Dale Gooderham and 3rd – Brenda Kent. Thank you for your continued support

THANK YOU

The family of John McMaster wish to thank all those who celebrated John's 90th birthday on Sunday afternoon, January 29, 2012 at the Trefry Centre. John enjoyed himself so much and was thrilled with the many cards, gifts and flowers. Thank you to the Harmony U.C.W. for a delicious afternoon luncheon. Thank you also to P.S. Workers Donna and Lorrena for their assistance.

A guy goes up to a girl in a bar and says, "Would you like to dance?" The girl snarls, "I don't like this song at all but even if I did I wouldn't want to dance with you" The guy replies, "I'm sorry you must have misunderstood me, I said you look fat in those pants"

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Have you Visited Natalie Lately?

THINGS HAVE CHANGED at the Island Bar & Grill. In addition to a whole new, cozy décor, it's also now our first Bar & Grill AND Barbeque Smokehouse!

Manager Natalie Allard tells us that her new 'smokehouse' lunch and dinner menus will include favourites like pulled pork and chicken, prime rib hamburgers, smoked whitefish, smoked wings and even smoked chicken salad!



The new décor also includes a wall that's reserved for customers' photos and a 'Friends and Memories' corner that, this month honours Alice Trainor, featuring a lovely winter scene acrylic painting.

Natalie also assures us that she has a few fun activities coming up (would you believe Snow Volleyball?) plus the Antique Sled show will be back on March 10th.

The Island Bar & Grill is open Fridays and Saturdays, 9 am to 9 pm and Sundays, 9 am to 8 pm. Check it out!

Advertising in the Island Clippings Works!

The Algoma Chapter of the Ontario Woodlot Association Log Grading Workshop (Cutting for Grade)

**Saturday, February 18th
- 10 am -**

A workshop describing hardwood log grading and how to cut logs to achieve the maximum grade will be held at the Nicolet Hardwoods log yard, located at the corner of Cathcart Street and West Street (next to Essar Steel Co.). As this is an active work site, hardhats are required.

**OWA Members and guests,
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Classified Ads and Announcements

The Island Clippings is pleased to publish personal Classified Advertising and Public Service Announcements of **50 words or less**, free of charge to Island residents, as a community service. Other than personal for sale ads (**please limit three items**) the announcement must be of value to the community. We reserve the right to decide if the ad is of service to the community.

Ads or announcements for non-residents, businesses, or items or services, to be sold for profit, or generate income or events charging an entrance fee as well as items valued at over \$1,000. will incur a nominal charge of \$10. plus HST. We reserve the right to determine if a fee is required. We reserve the right to edit down to 50 words or less.

Ads or announcements will appear in one issue, but may be repeated, to a maximum of three consecutive weeks (space permitting). **Advertiser must resubmit ad each week.** To ensure space for everyone, please limit your content to a **maximum of 50 words.**

Ads can be placed by: **Email to:** islandclippings@gmail.com or by phone 705 246-1635 (**from 9 – 5, Mon-Fri**) or fax 705 246-7060.

Mail to: Island Clippings
RR1, Hilton Beach, ON P0R 1G0
Or simply put it in one of our pick-up boxes conveniently located at Ambeault's, Kent's Corners and the Hilton Beach Post Office.
Sorry, we're not available on Sundays.

Deadline for display ads is 3 pm Mondays.

Deadline for classifieds is noon Tuesday.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON ST. JOE

Friday

Hens & Stitches, Dr. Trefry Centre - 10 am to 12 pm

Island Cast-a-Weights, Calorie Watchers, Hilton Community Hall (rear door, basmt) - 8:30 am

Walking at the Legion - 9 am to noon

Friday Foods at the Legion

AA Meeting, United Church (new addition, side door) - 8 pm

Saturday

Childrens Library - 10 am to 3 pm, Storytime 10:30 am

Hilton Union Public Library - 1 pm to 5 pm - Phone number: 705 255-3520.

Nordic Walking Group - Tranter Park, 10 am

St. Joseph Twp. Public Library - 1 pm to 5 pm

Free pool all day in the Legion lounge

St. Boniface Roman Catholic, Hilton Beach at 4:30 pm.

Jam Session, Legion - 4 pm to 6 pm

Sunday

The Anglican church worships at Holy Trinity, Jocelyn at 11 am.

Free Methodist, 10th Side Rd. Coffee, tea and friendship at 10:30 am. Worship service 11 am.

Island Bible Chapel, Richards Landing.

Lord's Supper 10 am, Family Bible Hour 11:15 am.

Grace United, Hilton Beach. 9:30 am.

Harmony St. Marks United, Richards Landing. 11 am.

Monday

Bridge, Dr. Trefry Centre - 1 pm to 5 pm (Open to all seniors)

60+ Exercise Program, Dr. Trefry Centre - 10:00 am

Euchre, Legion Hall - 8 pm (\$4.00 per person)

Walking at the Legion - 9 am to noon

Carpet Bowling for 50 Plus, Legion - Refreshments Available - 1 pm

St. Joseph Twp, Public Library - 6 pm to 9 pm

Hilton Union Library - 3 pm to 5 pm & 7 pm to 9 pm - Phone number: 705 255-3520.

Tuesday

Child Care Algoma's CAPC Play & Learn Best Start Hub, Free Methodist Church - 9:30 am to 11:30 am

Cribbage (singles), Legion Hall - 7:30 pm (\$4.00 per person)

Quilting - 1-3 pm, Downstairs Hilton Hall except the 3rd week held at the Trefry Centre.

Wednesday

Walking at the Legion - 9 am to noon

Bridge, Dr. Trefry Centre - 1 pm to 5 pm (Open to all seniors)

St. Joseph Twp. Public Library - 9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Food Bank, United Church, Richards Landing (side door) - 1 pm to 3 pm

Children's Library - 9 am to 12 pm, Story time - 10:30 am

Hilton Union Public Library - 1 pm to 5 pm - Phone number: 705 255-3520.

Pool, Legion - 7:30

Native Drum Circle, Harmony St. Mark's Church - 7 pm

Thursday

St. Joseph Twp. Public Library - 1 pm to 5 pm and 7 pm to 9 pm

Dr. Trefry Centre's Day Out Program - 9 am to 4 pm

Children's Library - 9 am - 12 pm, Story time 10:30 am
After school 3:30 to 5pm

St. Joseph Twp. Public Library - 1 pm to 5 pm & 7 pm to 9 pm

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Julie Stevens

Please call 705 542-9215

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