



Photo by Madison Ladouceur

Alexis Routhier stands in her scrubs at the entrance to Loyalist College on Tuesday. Routhier is a first-year practical nursing student.

# Pandemic calls upon future nurses

By Alex Bowman

Watching the news lately has taken a toll on many of us. Seeing cases and death tolls rise and watching friends and family effected by the pandemic has spoken to the hero in a lot of people.

For some people who saw the struggle within hospitals and long-term care homes, they knew they had to step up, and for some students leaving high school, that meant signing up to become a nurse.

"The pandemic has made me want to pursue this career even more because I have seen how burned-out other nurses are and I want to help as much as I can," explained Alexis Routhier, first-year practical nursing student at Loyalist College.

Routhier was diagnosed with Crohn's disease when she was just 13 years old, spending a lot of her time in and out of

the hospital.

"I saw how nurses comforted me and other patients, and I was touched. I looked up to them to help me recover and they supported me and taught me so much," said Routhier.

Looking back on this experience, she realized it will not only allow her to bring a unique perspective to the field, but the time in hospital also inspired her to learn about other illnesses and diseases.

"I realized then, that is what I want to do with my life. I know how it feels to be the patient so I feel I can provide empathy and comfort to my patients," said Routhier.

But Routhier isn't alone in the decision to step up and help out in the health care system.

June MacDonald-Jenkins, associate vice president academic and dean of health, human and justice studies at Loyalist College, says that the province

has seen a spike in students interested in nursing across the province.

"The provincial surge is directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a trend we noted post the SARS epidemic in 2003 as well."

She also explained that she too has heard the sentiments of future students joining to play their part in this pandemic.

"During our recent recruiting telephone campaign, I personally spoke to future students who have applied just because they want to help. They see the exhausted images of nurses and doctors portrayed in the news and it's a genuine calling to be a part of the solution," explained MacDonald-Jenkins.

Routhier explains that this is a positive outcome of the pandemic, and that it may have helped undecided high school graduates decide what path to take.

"I believe this province-wide nursing

student boom is a very positive spin on the pandemic because it may be a calling to some people who previously did not know what they wanted to do with their lives. We always need more nurses and helping hands," says Routhier.

But with this spike in nursing students across the province, it begs the question of whether there will be enough job opportunities after graduation for these future nurses.

MacDonald-Jenkins explains that the Ontario Nursing Association and the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario have both indicated in a report completed in 2018, that there are 4,385 RN vacancies in 62 hospitals alone.

By extrapolating that data from those 62 hospitals and estimating the total vacancies across all 132 hospitals in Ontario, there is an estimated 10,088 RN vacancies in our province.

"We are facing an unprecedented shortage of health care workers both locally and provincially, particularly in nursing," explains MacDonald-Jenkins.

Loyalist College currently has a collaborative nursing program with Brock University, where students complete two years of study at Loyalist College and then complete their degree at Brock for the final two years.

But the college is eager to pursue its own four-year standalone nursing degree program.

"Locally we have noted a widening gap and need for registered nurse positions over the past 10 years. This was one of the many reasons why pursuit of the four-year standalone degree is so important to not only Loyalist College, but to the Quinte region," says MacDonald-Jenkins.

# East-end subdivision development divides community

By Bec Gauvin

A development proposed for Hanley Park's North subdivision in Belleville's east end has been a continuing source of controversy online and in the community.

A recently proposed subdivision has faced strong opposition from residents of the area, but the development is mov-

ing ahead at Belleville city council, with a public meeting early next week.

The proposed plan would create a residential subdivision at the end of Tessa Boulevard, where there is currently forest.

In response to the proposal, a petition was created, swiftly gaining traction to counter this development. Kelly Rumble, who is leading the neigh-

bourhood movement, helped create the petition and a Facebook page under the name 'Save Belleville's Community Green Spaces!!!' (Hanley Park North Subdivision).

"Initially, there was a bunch of smaller groups going around, and last week, we unified those into one voice," says Rumble of the community's efforts to band to-

gether against the development.

"When we all moved here, we were told that that land was protected, and ... [that the] property north of us was protected as well. We assumed that the conservation authority would protect this property and that's not the case. And then the one north of us was just clear-cut overnight for no reason. We thought 'There's no way they

can keep on doing this,' and then during lockdown, they put a sign up to change the zoning of the property."

Last week, residents of the area were given letters notifying them of a city meeting on March 1 concerning this development.

...See Subdivision, page 2

# Immunization clinic coming to Loyalist

By Bec Gauvin

Loyalist College has just confirmed that its Belleville campus will provide a regional immunization centre.

In a release published on the college's website Feb. 23 by president and CEO of Loyalist Ann Marie Vaughan, she said faculty and staff are working with Hastings Prince Edward Public Health (HPEPH) to have the immunization centre open March 1.

"We are thrilled Hastings Prince Edward Public Health has chosen our Loyalist College campus to host a regional immunization centre," says Vaughan. "The team at HPEPH are absolutely wonderful to work with and it has been so rewarding to see our partnership flourish through the pandemic as we work together to protect the health and safety of our communities."

The initial purpose of this clinic will be to vaccinate those with prioritized status according to Phase One of HPEPH's COVID-19 vaccine roll-out plan, including those working at long-term care homes, high-risk health care workers, and individuals over 80 years of age.

"[The clinic] will make an immediate difference in safeguarding high-risk health care workers and essential caregivers and staff at long-term care homes who have bravely put their own health on the line to keep those in their care safe," says Vaughan.

The eventual goal of the roll-out is to conduct larger clinics once vaccines are more readily available and provincial criteria for vaccination widens.

HPEPH will contact those who are eligible to receive the vaccine directly.

The clinic will be run out of the gym and dining hall area.



Photo by Annie Duncan

Set up has begun in the gymnasium at Loyalist for a vaccination clinic to open March 1.



The Tribute Communities Centre, home of the Oshawa Generals, began its reopening on Feb. 20.

Photo by Alex Bowman

## Pandemic slashes hope of hockey draft

By Alex Bowman

For most hockey fans, life seems to be returning to normal with the continuation of the National Hockey League. It might look different from what we are used to, with empty arenas, team bubbles, changing divisions and more back-to-back games, but hockey has still persevered.

But for aspiring hockey players, the effects of the pandemic are devastating and can be seen trickling down to the youngest players just starting out in the game.

For the most competitive teams and players, like those found in the Ontario Hockey League or those wanting to join the league, their opportunity to be drafted has been put on hold.

That's because all drafts, including the OHL and NHL, have been pushed back.

"The OHL draft is still planned to go ahead but has been pushed back for this age group," explains Roger Hunt, vice-president and general manager of the Oshawa Generals.

Part of the widespread Canadian Hockey League, the Oshawa Generals

are a team comprised of players between the ages of 16 and 21 and is the most successful OHL franchise in Canadian Hockey League history.

For those familiar with minor hockey in Ontario, there are many different levels of competitive and non-competitive hockey, from house league all the way up to Junior level, and players competing in the Ontario Hockey League.

These competitive teams are where scouts find the next great hockey players. For the Oshawa Generals, the team has quite a memorable roster with players like Bobby Orr, John Tavares, Eric Lindros and Marc Savard, all getting their start here before heading to the NHL.

With teams not playing and scouts unable to come to these games, not only are the younger players who want to join the OHL and those hoping to be drafted into the NHL from the OHL missing out, but the Oshawa Generals are suffering as a team as well.

"We have never had the opportunity to be together, and we have not been able to play in front of our fans. That's probably the biggest thing, is that we have had

to do everything from a distance. Players can still work on their skill but not the team play," explains Hunt, describing the loss of comradery.

The general manager also explained that they are doing everything they can to give the players the chance to play, hoping for that start-up date to be announced.

"Everybody that is eligible is still intact and we are communicating, and we are hopeful that we are inching closer to that start-up date," says Hunt.

Examining teams further down the hierarchy, there are still the same negative effects.

"Players who were hoping to be scouted this season for advancement have lost their shot. Even if there were games, such as those that took place in Northern Ontario or Nova Scotia, American scouts were unable to enter the country, dashing many a player's hopes of attending U.S. college on a scholarship," says Janice Visca, game day manager and volunteer co-ordinator for the Clarington Eagles.

The Eagles are an amateur Junior C hockey club, and part of the Provincial

Junior Hockey League, for players between the ages of 16 and 21.

The 2020-21 season would have been the team's 52<sup>nd</sup> season competing, but the pandemic cancelled their playoffs in March, and the team lost their chance to win the Cougar Cup and go on to compete for the Eastern Conference Championship.

"The PHJL is unique in Junior hockey in that each team is allowed to retain four over-agers on their roster. Our over-age players were a group that only comes along every few years. The Eagles will lose their top three scorers with the loss of this season," explains Visca.

She added that these over-age players are completely devastated, as this was their last year of competitive sport and they are now dealing with loss and resentment.

"Hockey forms communities, and loss of organized sport has caused players to feel isolated, missing the social aspects of teams," says Visca.

The game day manager has also seen this trickle-down effect, explaining that the Eagles participated in community

work, helping younger players with the progression in the sport.

"Eagles do community work and have a mentorship program for Atom-aged children that they've missed out on," adds Visca.

So not only are competitive teams experiencing a huge loss with the pandemic, but now young children who aspire to continue professionally in the sport are losing out.

But there is still hope that these competitive leagues will reopen soon.

Recently, Lisa MacLeod, the minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture, announced the reopening of the American Hockey League – where players have already been drafted.

According to recent news reports, for those players who haven't had the chance to be drafted into the NHL, it is good news to hear that the minister and the OHL are working together to start up the league again.

The minister said officials could be looking into hub cities, similarly to the NHL and that they are working hard to figure this out before draft season hits.

## Parents stressed over new school restrictions

Enhanced requirements mean stricter screening, testing and isolation

By Cassandra Williamson

The province of Ontario announced Feb. 23 what officials are calling enhanced requirements for screening, testing and isolation for COVID-19.

For many parents with children in school or daycare this means another added stress. Children attending school and daycare must be screened every morning before school for COVID-19. If child or parent answers "yes" to any one of the questions, they must get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible, unless the child has a pre-existing

medical condition, such as asthma.

For parents Marissa Reinhardus and her husband, Nicholas, this is another added stress to what has already been a whirlwind of a school year for the couple. The couple have three children, two of which are school age, and the other just entered daycare at the age of one.

"With these new measures now in effect, if one of us or both of us has to stop working and be with the children for 24 days because we can't isolate ourselves from any of our kids, it's going to put a dent in our lives," Marissa Reinhardus says.

With the new measures in place, people in the child's home are required to isolate until the child receives a negative test result. If testing is recommended, but not completed, the child must isolate for 10 days after the onset of symptoms and household members should isolate for 14 days since those symptoms began.

If parents cannot isolate themselves from the child, they must isolate for 24 days after the start of the child's symptoms. That period spans the child's isolation plus 14 days for the household member.

"My husband is the main bread winner here," says Reinhardus. "I recently just went back to work full-time since having a child. We will end up just scraping by if having to isolate. Something won't get paid. We may not even have food in our fridge," she says. Nicholas is currently employed as a journeyman carpenter.

"I work outside all day long about 50 hours a week and it's easy for me to stay away from my co-workers, so my worry isn't bringing COVID home — it's one of the children picking it up at school," he says.

Currently, the public health mandate is that Grades 1 through to Grade 8 wear a mask to school

every day, and social distancing measures are in place on the playground, while outside and on the bus. While the Hastings Prince Edward District School Board has had only four positive cases within so far, it's still a worry for the parents.

"I work at a daycare," Marissa Reinhardus says. "The cleaning and sanitizing of each toy, table and anything the child touches or could have touched is intensive. We spend an hour after work sanitizing after all the children have left."

The couple worries about how they will get groceries without having to put their loved ones at risk, because services such as Instacart or Door Dash aren't available in their area.

"Our son is only a year old. There is no way we can isolate ourselves from a baby, let alone our other two children. It's ridiculous. There are so many things up in the air for parents who didn't have a choice but to put their kids in school."

## Subdivision...

Continued from Page 1

"People are just livid now because the sign was placed out of view and we get letters just a week before decisions are being made on a major development," says Rumble of the growing frustrations among his fellow neighbours.

The city has subsequently received an influx of calls and emails regarding the situation from concerned residents of the area and supporters across Belleville.

"This is still the initial expression of interest on the part of the property owner that they'd like to see this land developed. It requires rezoning and a site plan, and a number of things are necessary," says Belleville Mayor Mitch Panciuk.

Like most municipalities, Belleville has a forum for community input as part of the process when dealing with similar situations.

"We're asking for people to let us know what they think of it, and we will take that into consideration. It's the very beginning part of it," says Panciuk, about asking for input from the public.

"I share a lot of the concerns that these people have brought forth...there's a lot more work that needs to be done before we can ever consider something like this. I don't feel there is an urgency to get going on it," explains Panciuk, noting that his personal view may not necessarily be reflected in the City's decision.



Photo by Annie Duncan

Papers are posted addressing "Friends of the Forest" outside of the proposed Hanley Park north subdivision.

Lorelai Jones, a planning consultant and representative of Hanley Park Development Inc., advocates for the project, and the developer.

In an email response for comment,

Jones stated, "The lands that are proposed for development are privately owned lands which the owner has paid taxes on for 30 years."

According to Jones, the owner has not

objected to members of the public from walking across the lands, despite them being private.

The portion of land proposed for development is currently designated Resi-

dential in the City's Official Plan and zoned Residential Holding by the City's Zoning By-law, which indicates that the City expected this land to be developed for residential purposes.

The site contains 86.8 acres (35.3 hectares). The proposed development will only be occurring on 32 per cent of the land, Jones stated. She said the owner is proposing to dedicate the remaining 68 per cent, or 59 acres (23.9 ha), of land to the City of Belleville or Quinte Conservation Authority. The lands reserved for public use will be maintained in their natural state and can continue to be used by the public for walking, exploring and socializing, she stated.

The neighbourhood residents, however, say they are not quick to settle for this compromise.

"We're not anti-development, we just value our greenspace. We feel like this property should be set aside, and there are other properties that could be more easily developed. We're very concerned as a community right now," says Rumble. "This model has been repeated south of us, and it's a broken model. They aren't building communities. They're just building subdivisions that have no character."

A zoom meeting will be held March 1 at 5:30 p.m. with city council and planning officials and will be made available to the public with the intent of addressing opinions about the proposal. Those interested in participating in the meeting can visit the City of Belleville's website for more information.



(Left) Bata Maples Sugarbush's owner Frank Haveman and his first employee Brandon Barron walk from maple tree to maple tree connecting the first taps of the season.

(Below) Frank Haveman lightly pounds in a spile to a freshly tapped maple tree, as Brandon Barron watches at Bata Maples Sugarbush.

# Bata Maples Sugarbush first tap

Story and Photos by Calder Sidley

"Well... I like the taste of it," Frank Haveman says slyly, when he is asked what drew him to maple sugaring.

A man of few but intriguing and accurate words, his past as a teacher shines through on a warm Saturday afternoon near Batawa after a long and frozen February. A host to 75 acres, 1,200 maple tree taps, and a species of cow native to the Netherlands that resembles a Canadian flag, he has also welcomed previously foreign travellers looking for an authentic Canadian experience.

Bata Maples Sugarbush has been operating for 11 years, but Haveman, its owner, has been "sugaring" since he was a teenager. Quaintly tucked away overlooking a local ski hill near a town named after a Czech fashion shoe magnate, Bata Maples Sugarbush on Bata Road just outside of Batawa, Ont. started its first day of tapping season on Saturday.

When the temperature starts to rise above 0 degrees Celsius at the end of February, the buds at the tops of maple trees signal to their roots that spring has arrived and it is time to blossom. The excited maple tree (like all of us) eager to get back to its days basking its leaves in the warm sun, sends liquid from its roots, through its trunk, with all the nutrients it needs in the form of maple sap.

Pressure builds in the trunk and when it is punctured with a drill bit (only a half inch so as not to damage the tree), the sap flows to the hole like blood flowing to a fresh wound.

A "tap" or "spile" is placed in the freshly drilled hole to intercept the sap, which leads down a "line". A thin, stretchy, plastic, green tubing (deer often chew the blue ones) that connects all of the trees into parallel rows to the main "line" at the bottom of the hill, results in the sap flowing freely because of gravity.

Tap lines create more efficient sap delivery. Although it is roughly the same hours of labour, it is significantly easier than the bucket collecting method.

"Frank would rather the sap come to him, than him go to the sap," explains the sugarbush's new first employee Brandon Barron. Usually the work at the sugarbush is filled by "homestayers" -- groups of travellers who stay for free, but also work for free in the interest of having a true Canadian experience like sugaring.

Although Haveman could not have the homestayers this year or last because of COVID-19, Barron has been able to make up the difference, and the work with just the two of them has been seemingly more productive.

Over time, lines will collect dirt and bacteria. Bacteria is attracted to the sugar and the wound in the tree like it is attracted to a wound on the flesh. The lines are flushed with isopropyl alcohol at the end of the season and flushed again with water in the fall.

The first tap of the season with sap always has the best flow (similar to how a fresh wound bleeds more) and acts as the final flush to remove any leftover residue. The "spiles", the white spouts hammered into the drill hole to connect the "line", are changed every year for bacteria, and drilled into the tree in an upward angle to help the flow of the sweet sap.

The Ministry of Agriculture oversees the quality control, and can come anytime during production to test the syrup. "They used to buy it. Now they just come and take it for testing," mentions Haveman.

Already tripling the number of taps since the start in 2010, Bata Maples Sugar Bush produces roughly 1,100 - 1,500 litres depending on the season. "I plan on...thinking about it," Haveman says



composedly, responding to a question about whether he plans to expand again.

The season usually starts the last week of February and goes to April, but sometimes only March. Once the temperature stays above 0 degrees, day and night consistently, the season ends.

Syrup flow can be temperamental. A variation of only a few degrees affects viscosity, and even the chill from the wind on a sunny day will signal the buds on top of the tree to stop flow of maple sap.

The systematic process of sugaring is not only formulaic, but also more intuitive than it may appear at first glance. It is not good to tap the same spot (it will damage the tree). Instead, taps are made in a different spot around the circumference of the tree each season. Once the

tapper is at the beginning again, enough years have passed for the tree to heal properly. The quality of sap does not change with the age of the tree, although tapping unhealthy trees is not recommended. A tree too small might get damaged by a tap and it is best to wait until it is matured enough.

Usually, there are more visitors to the sugarbush, which in the past often hosted private and homeschool groups, but this, like the homestayers, has changed due to COVID. Although sales have increased because of the popularity of buying local, Haveman's stock usually lasts until the next tapping season. This year, he sold out in October.

Ontario maple syrup producers operate under a free market system, giving more control to the maple producers

in Ontario over how they can sell their product. In contrast, over the border in Quebec, maple producers are regulated by the "maple syrup cartel", Haveman says.

The Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers is a government-sanctioned business cartel focused on maple syrup production. The province of Quebec is the largest producer of maple syrup, not only in Canada but worldwide. The wide variety of benefits and uses of maple syrup can be found on Frank's website, which includes adding it to tea and coffee for which he keeps an emergency flask in his car, in case he is passing through a Tim Hortons drive-thru.

The systematic process involved in getting maple syrup in hand is worth a few days in the bush.

# Services help seniors stay independent

Business provides much needed support for elderly residents

By Natalie Cummings

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, senior living has just got a whole lot brighter for those in communities nestled along the shores of the Trent River.

Over the past few years, Quinte West and the surrounding areas have become a hub for those who are enjoying the simple days of retirement.

But as we grow older, things we used to do can become more difficult. And simple tasks such as getting to the grocery store can prove a challenge to some of the area's older residents.

In January 2020, a new business popped up in Quinte West, and it was just what the community needed.

Behind Allow Us... Senior Services are the smiling faces of local residents Chrissy Williams-Hunt and Ally Wojewski.

Loyalist College alumni from the developmental service worker program, and friends for over 40 years,



(From left) Chrissy Williams-Hunt and Ally Wojewski are the smiling faces behind Allow Us...Senior Services. Williams-Hunt and Wojewski provide social connection and transportation to services and events for local senior residents of the Quinte West and surrounding area.

Williams-Hunt and Wojewski teamed up to assist seniors in the area meet their needs.

"After lengthy careers as human service workers, we knew we wanted to provide a specialized service to the many seniors who may not have access

to the same services and opportunities as seniors living in larger towns," say Wojewski and Williams-Hunt.

Not only is Allow Us...Senior Services a form of social interaction for the older community members, but the business also provides a means of

transportation to social events, church services, doctor's appointments, and much more.

For many older residents, that means the trip to the grocery store doesn't seem so far away.

Both Wojewski and Williams-Hunt

know firsthand the importance of giving senior citizens in the area the resources and opportunities to aid in solo living as an older person.

"The main goal of our business is to help local seniors remain independent and in their own homes for as long as possible," Williams-Hunt and Wojewski agreed.

During the multiple layers of the COVID-19 Pandemic lockdowns, Wojewski and Williams-Hunt have continued to provide services to seniors in the community.

Adapting their business to fit the circumstances, Allow Us... Senior Services was still able to support seniors to remain safe at home and still provide them with necessary services.

It was a savings grace at a time when senior residents needed it most.

On Jan. 11, Allow Us Senior Services celebrated one year of business.

Despite only being in service for less than three months before the pandemic hit, the community has welcomed the service with open arms, and has taken a load off many seniors and their families.

"The best part of starting Allow Us...Senior Services is we are providing a needed service that promotes independence to the population of seniors in our area," they added.

Photo by Natalie Cummings



Photo by Natalie Cummings

On the end of Maplewood Avenue, in Brighton, sits what is left of the Memory Junction Museum. The museum had an extensive collection of artifacts, including pieces of trains visitors could walk through and enjoy history.

# Memory Junction to remain a piece of Brighton's history

By Natalie Cummings

When residents of the small town of Brighton, Ont., woke up one morning to a loud commotion, many were left scratching their heads at what could be happening at the end of the normally quiet street of Maplewood Avenue.

Little did they know, history itself was being uprooted right before their very eyes.

For at the end of what used to be called Railway Street, the tracks in which next to them sits one of nine remaining railway stations of the Grand Trunk Railway System were being removed.

Originally opening its doors in October of 1857, the Brighton Railway Station served a key role in the small village's economy.

The railway station not only provided a means of transportation for civilians from Montréal to Toronto, but it also allowed Brighton to transport dairy prod-

ucts to far away markets, and canned fruit to oceanside ports.

Over the years of its service, the busy station witnessed Brighton expand into a bustling hub of southern Ontario.

The station welcomed thousands of passengers every summer to nearby Presqu'île, which became a Provincial Park in 1922, and sat as apple fields soon began to stretch across Brighton, replacing forestry as the town's local industry.

Railway traffic through Brighton peaked during the Second World War. However, after the better half of the 1940s, the numbers of passengers began to fall because of the construction of the nearby highway.

In the mid 1960s, the Brighton Railway Station had seen its last passenger, and the station was abandoned.

Operational for more than a century, the station sat boarded up for the '70s and '80s, and it looked like the station would be left to crumble at the hands

**'We must all be grateful for several decades of hard work and dedication by the Bangay family in making Memory Junction Museum into a destination for the rest of the country, and even internationally!'**

Historian Dan Buchanan

of time.

That is, until came the new age of the '90s, and new owners of the Brighton Railway Station.

Ralph and Eugenia Bangay, an older couple in which Ralph was born and

raised in Brighton, purchased the station as a place to house a rapidly growing collection of Brighton and train memorabilia in 1995.

And with that, Memory Junction Railway Museum was born.

The museum was a success among local residents and those who came from across Ontario to see the piece of history that lived to tell the tale nearly 138 years since its opening.

Memory Junction Railway Museum showcased several rare and fascinating artifacts, including a 1906 steam engine with a wooden caboose.

It was in 2017 when Ralph and Eugenia decided to retire that the museum went up for auction and once again, it sat abandoned.

Until now.

In early February, movement at Memory Junction piqued local interest. And word quickly surfaced that the tracks were being removed.

Clarification came when Cole's

Timber Mart, a local family business, stepped forward on social media and revealed they have bought the property with the intent of restoring the station building's exterior.

"We are going to restore the building's exterior while keeping in mind the importance of its history to us and the community," the media post read.

"Rest assured it is in good hands."

Many residents breathed a sigh of relief, including Dan Buchanan, local historian and author who has enjoyed telling the story of the museum over the years.

"We must all be grateful for several decades of hard work and dedication by the Bangay family in making Memory Junction Museum into a destination for the rest of the country, and even internationally," Buchanan says.

Not only does the community smile that the legacy of Ralph and Eugenia Bangay lives on, but a piece of Brighton's history continues to ride the rails.

# Indra grocery brings variety to meet needs of diverse population

*Specialty store opened its doors in middle of pandemic*

By Cassandra Williamson

In late July 2020, amid the rising pandemic, a new specialty grocery store opened up their doors in Belleville's downtown business district.

Vishal Shah, proud new owner of the business, came to Canada from India in 2016, stayed in Toronto to study until 2019, and then came to Belleville. While here, Shah sat in on a meeting at Loyalist College and listened to students share their experiences and voice their concerns within Belleville. Currently at Loyalist College, 38 per cent of the student enrolment is filled by international students.

Shah then noticed there was a need not being fulfilled.

"Students mentioned they missed having a store where they could get a wider variety of spicy snacks and other items. From there, I got the idea to open a grocery store," Shah says.

After conducting some market research, he decided to open the store in Belleville's downtown core.

"I decided to open the store in the downtown core because of the accessibility from Loyalist College, the surroundings and the proximity to residential buildings."

Belleville's city bus station is right in the middle of the downtown area and runs a bus right to Loyalist College, giving the students easy access to hop on a bus and head downtown to the store, he adds.

Shah sources all products straight from India and travels to and from



Photo by Cassandra Williamson

Sumanpreet Kaur has been an employee of Indra Grocery since opening its doors.

India quite frequently, until the new COVID-19 travel restrictions were set in place.

The grocery store also offers fresh hand-made samosa, pani-puri, and pan, which you can pick-up at the

store any weekend.

Sumanpreet Kaur, a current employee of the store, enjoys the Indian sweets the most, from gulab jamun to chocolate appo.

"The store has doubled in size

since opening. We offer a wide variety of Indian food and snacks," Kaur says.

You can also grab frozen meals from the store, different varieties of potato chips, noodles and Indian

baking supplies. You can also place an order over the phone and pick up everything curbside if needed.

Indra Grocery is located at 385 Front St, across from Chilango's.

# Pet therapy



Sudbury resident Christy Bently enjoys a playful moment with her dogs Charlie, Puff, and Jack, who are seven, 12, and three years old respectively. The couch, situated across from the front door, is where the dogs can be found seated in a row most days, waiting to welcome those who enter the house.  
Photos by Bec Gauvin

By Bec Gauvin

There has been and always will be a special bond between pet and owner, that only those with furry (or scaly) friends have had the pleasure of experiencing, and recently, we here at the Pioneer have had the pleasure of documenting. Loyalist College's second-year photojournalists were tasked earlier this year with photographing a pet and owner relationship as best they could; and they delivered.

The importance of animals for emotional wellbeing cannot be understated and is tenfold during such trying times as a global pandemic. Unsurprisingly, the demand for pets has fluctuated during lockdown, with 18 per cent of Canadian pet owners reporting they obtained a new pet since the start of the pandemic, according to a study published in November by Logit Group's Canadian Omnibus.

Whether big or small, canine, feline, or reptile, our pets are our most loyal companions, trusted secret keepers, and most adventurous friends. So from us to you, we hope that even if you don't have your own pet to cuddle up to at home, we might bring you some of that wonderful pet love with these pictures of pets and their owners having a blast.



(Above) Lisa Holmes and her seven-year-old dog Macy, play in their backyard in Bowmanville. Macy is a cockapoo, a cross breed of a cocker spaniel and Poodle and loves playing ball outside with her owner, even when she is shivering in the winter air.  
Photo by Alex Bowman

(Above, right) Steve Baker and his dog Ben have become quite close in the last year. Baker initially got Ben as a foster dog when he was about 18 months old about a year ago.  
Photo by Daniel Geleyn



(Left) Aaron Bassett and his pet snake Lilith. The snake was Bassett's first pet of his own. Often times, he will take the snake out of her enclosure and carry her around with him while cooking or around his neck in the hot summer's in his shop while he is working.  
Photo by Cassandra Williamson



(Right) Chris Armstrong holds his pet chicken Jenna under one arm. Armstrong shares a connection to his pets with his children, wanting to help create healthy bonds not just during COVID, but for their lives.  
Photo by James McAlpine