

Dear OCNA Judges,

This is a little bit unconventional for a letter, as I am the sole reporter and editor, as well as being the owner and publisher, of the Manotick Messenger. I can't really write in the third person about myself, so I will tell you about the items uploaded.

In 2016, what looked like a human jaw was found at a new housing development as a family was building a deck on the property they were building. I went through our files and archives and discovered that a high school student had gone missing in 1994, and his back pack was found less than a kilometre from where the remains were found. I talked to local politicians and the police officer from that time, and I contacted Mike Williscraft, who was the editor of the Manotick Messenger, to interview him about what he remembered about the case.

When I interviewed police about the 1994 boy, they knew nothing about it – the boy's disappearance coincided with the transition between the OPP serving our community and the Ottawa Police serving our community. This case slipped through the cracks. I wanted a fresh angle on the story, so instead of saying that human remains were found, I took the angle that police have not yet determined if the finding is in relation to the 1994 student who went missing.

As the research and reporting continued, the person who grew up on the farm told me the story of how a travelling man died on the property in the 1910s. The rural area doctor lived on the farm, and he buried the man in the same area where the human remains were found. The man even showed up to the public consultation on the new development claiming that if they built in that spot, they would unearth human remains. His concerns were disregarded by City of Ottawa officials.

Forensics eventually determined that the remains belonged to the boy who went missing, offering closure to his family that had been holding out hope that he was still alive. I was contacted by the police and shared all of my information and files with them, and they also collected all of the information about the traveller who died at the doctor's house. The investigation was re-opened as a murder investigation.

The other story was a human interest piece about a local basketball coach dying of cancer, who won a city championship in the last game she would ever coach before her passing. Basketball was something that took her mind off her treatments, and it also provided some incredible life lessons for the girls she coached. This story was a perfect example of how a coach or volunteer can arm a young person with life skills and experiences for their toolboxes as they go through life.

Jeff Morris

Reporter, Editor, Publisher

Manotick Messenger

# The Messenger COMMUNITY



Coach Daphne Marghetis and the Pierre-Savard basketball team celebrate their NCSSAA Tier 2 Senior Girls basketball championship. The school, located in Barrhaven, is the local French language high school serving the Rideau=Osgoode region.

## Basketball championship takes mind off cancer treatments for coach

You will have to excuse Pierre Savard basketball coach Daphne Marghetis if winning the NCSSAA Tier 2 Senior Girls championship doesn't seem like a big victory.

It's not that a championship isn't exciting. It's just that beating Franco Ouest in the final isn't nearly as big as her battle to beat pancreatic cancer.

"It was exciting to win, and basketball certainly took my mind off my cancer treatments," said Marghetis.

While her players know that she is battling cancer, she said she did not make it a rallying point for her team.

"We didn't really discuss it," Marghetis said. "I wanted basketball to be an escape from cancer, not something that would make cancer become a focal point. The girls respected that and they were great."

Like any cancer diagnosis, Marghetis was caught

off guard. Then, the reality of the severity of the cancer and the battles she would face became a reality.

"I initially thought it was a problem with my gall bladder," she said. "That's what the symptoms showed."

Marghetis has been coaching at Pierre-Savard for the past five years. She won championships with undefeated Grade 7 and 8 teams.

"I have coached with the Nepean Blue Devils so I knew a lot of the kids already," she said. "It's a great group of kids, and we had a good year. Their confidence grew as the year went on."

As close as the team was with Marghetis, cancer was something she checked at the door, not something she brought into the gym.

"They know that I am ill but we never talked about it," Marghetis said. "I think for me, the girls helped me and coaching them helped me. I would go there, I

wouldn't be feeling great, and I would forget. I would forget about my discomfort and my problems."

One thing that has made it easier on Marghetis on the situation as that she is not visibly ill. It has allowed Marghetis to focus on basketball and not her illness.

"I don't look sick," she said. "That's one of the things with this kinds of cancer. I don't look like a cancer patient. In my mind, I have always thought I would beat this, but it's quite fatal. We have just gone on preparing and going to games and trying to win them."

While some of the news has not been good along the way, Marghetis has kept positive and she has kept fighting. Winning a championship was important for the girls. For Marghetis, the most important part of the win was that every player got to play.

"It was important to win, but during the season,

I would feel bad that some kids didn't play," she said. "The biggest win was that everybody got a chance to play in the final. I played competitively as a kid and we had some great wins and some horrible losses, but this one was a special win because of the fact that we went undefeated. We had a couple of bumps in the road, but they maintained their composure. It was loud in there. They couldn't hear me, so they had to rely on the things they have learned all year.

The fact that they all got playing time was the most important."

The win over Pierre-Savard was Marghetis' favourite kind of win.

"It was a team win," she said. "We have two girls that score a lot of our points, but Franco Ouest really did a good job defending them. The other girls on the team really picked up and contributed. It was a team win."

With the high school season, Marghetis is focusing on being an assist-

ant coach with the Bantam Blue Devils, and with watching her daughter play. She is receiving treatments every month.

"They're quite powerful," she said. "Most people do it on two separate sessions, not in one day. It hasn't spread, that's the big worry. It's a nightmare, but I just have to keep fighting and fighting. I have some great people supporting me. The Blue Devils have been great, and my brother Aris has been a huge support."

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# The MessengerNEWS

## Police say remains belong to student who went missing in 1994

BY JEFF MORRIS

The remains unearthed at an estate home near Prince of Wales and First Line Road in May belong to a 19-year-old South Carleton High School student who went missing in 1994.

On May 30 1994, South Carleton High School student Shafiq Visram went missing. Visram, who had turned 19 that week, arrived home from school and went back out between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. He was last seen sitting on the bank of Mud Creek. His backpack was found in a nearby ravine.

Now, the emphasis of the investigation switches from whose bones they were to how the young man died.

"It's not a murder investigation, it's a coroner's inquest," said Ottawa Police Detective Krista Hill. The Ottawa Major Crimes Unit is seeking information that can assist investigators in determining the events that led to Visram's disappearance.

The mystery started out as a routine deck installation on a home on Cabrelle Place in Manotick Estates, Phase 6. Tim Carver and Jason Pink were digging in front of the house on Cabrelle Place to install fence posts. When they went to take a break, Pink stepped on something hard. He looked, down, and saw what appeared to be a human jaw bone.

When the police were called in they agreed with the two contractors that the bone was likely human. A forensics expert was called in, and for the next few days, the home's front yard turned into an archaeological dig site. Vertebrae were found, which would help experts determine the age

and origin of the bones.

The vertebrae found contained DNA that solved the mystery of the remains. The land where the homes are being built was farmland for generations.

Manotick Office Pro owner Jim Stewart was the Mayor of Rideau Township during the time of Visram's disappearance.

"When I heard there was a human bone found in Manotick Estates, that's the first thing I thought of," said Stewart. "This boy had been missing for more than 20 years and the case was never solved. It's also not far from where he went missing."

According to the June 8, 1994 Manotick Messenger, Visram had last been seen on Monday, May 30, 1994, returning home from school. His backpack was found in a ravine. He had been seen in the Mud Creek area after school that day. His wallet, his passport, his bank card and his social insurance card were all left behind.

"We're not sure what happened," Manotick OPP Const. Ian McCurdie said at the time. "He is a good student but his marks had slipped a bit. That's all we know."

"Ordinarily, we would not search for a 19-year-old, but from some of the information we had, we decided to look into it."

The Visram family arrived in Manotick from Kenya two years earlier. Shafiq's father has passed away, and most of his family is now living in the Greater Toronto Area. He has a brother living in England.

"What I remember about that case was how the community got together," said Mike Williscraft, who publishes a



Ottawa Police has revealed that these human remains that were recovered in Manotick Estates Phase 6 in May belong to Shafiq Visram, a South Carleton High School student who went missing in 1994. PHOTO COURTESY OF MISTY DWYER

newspaper in Grimsby but was the editor of the Messenger at that time. "It was an interesting time because community policing was just becoming popular, and people wanted to get involved and volunteer to help. There were people from Manotick, Kars, North Gower, Osgoode and Richmond all coming together to look for that boy."

Hundreds of volunteers linked arms and walked through farm fields and through the woods looking for Visram. Police dogs were brought in, and helicopters flew overhead during the search.

"Eventually, the search was called off," recalled Williscraft. "There were no clues. It was like he vanished."

Visram was described by everyone as a good

kid. He lived a clean life. He was not a kid who was into drugs, or any kind of trouble for that matter. Yet his disappearance remains an ongoing mystery in the community.

As the search was called off, South Carleton High School would endure another tragedy less than a week later. Scott Whittle, a student at South Carleton who played in the Osgoode Rideau Minor Hockey Association, was killed in a car accident. The Kars youth volunteered with the ORMHA initiation hockey program.

While Whittle's death turned some of the focus in the community away from Visram, there were other factors at play.

"Right around that time, there were changes in policing in the area," said Williscraft. "The local OPP detachments like

Manotick's were being closed in favour of larger, regional police departments. While the Visram disappearance showed no clues or evidence, a lot of the police officers were preoccupied with what was going to happen to their own careers. Since they turned up nothing, the Visram file eventually became a cold case."

### A second body?

Confusing the situation is that there is believed to be a second body that was buried in the same area.

After the Messenger's original story of the bones being found in May, nearby resident John Nuthers came forward with another theory.

Nuthers, who lived on the farm where the development now stands,

recalled a story that his grandfather would tell him and his siblings about a body that was buried on the property.

The farmland where the development now stands, at one time, belonged to the Scharf brothers.

"My grandfather, Albert Scharf, had about 200 acres, and his brothers each had about the same," he said. "He would tell us this story about a travelling man that came to visit Dr. Potter, who had the farm next door. The man died, but nobody ever knew his name, and back in those days, nobody had any ID."

According to Nuthers, the story dates back about a century, to the 1910s.

**REMAINS**  
continues on page 3



The remains found in May resulted in a full dig in front of a new home on Cabrelle Place. JEFF MORRIS PHOTO

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# The MessengerNEWS

**REMAINS** continues from page 2

"My grandfather was a preacher, and he wasn't the type to make up stories," Nutthers said. "He would talk about how the man came to visit Dr. Potter, and he died of an ailment. The was nothing violent or no foul play. They didn't want to put him in a cemetery, and they had no idea who he was or where he came from. They decided to bury him on the farm. I imagine my grandfather and his brothers probably helped dig the grave."

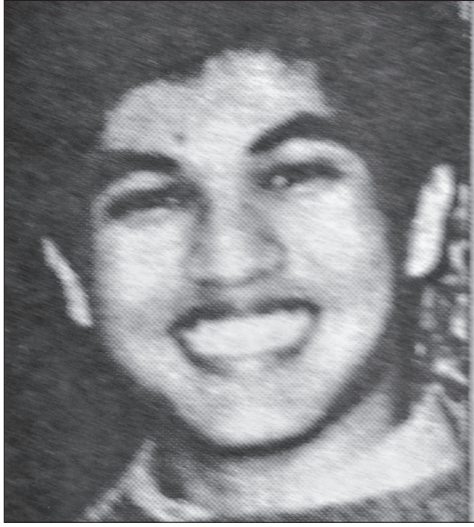
The Scharf brothers never did find out how the man died. There was an influenza outbreak around that time, but there were no other cases in the area. Whatever ailment the traveller had, he said, did not spread to any families in the area.

Nutthers said that when he heard about the bones surfacing in the development, he was sure it was the man from the story his grandfather would tell.

"In the report the CBC did, the one thing that they said that was wrong was that fill was brought into that area," said Nutthers. "That's not the case. In fact, about four or five feet from that exact area were excavated away. That part of the land was a gravel pit. It was land that was no good for growing vegetables or anything like that."

Nutthers said the excavation would have brought the remains closer to the surface.

"Back then, they did everything the right way," he said. "They would have buried him six feet deep, because they wouldn't want a dog digging up the remains and bringing a human skull home or anything like that."



Shafiq Visram was "a good kid" whose grades had recently slipped.

If they scraped about five feet away, and I know they did excavate because I watched them do it, the bones would have been near the ground surface."

Nutthers said that before the development was built, he raised concerns to city officials about the body.

"I came to the public meeting that they have before they do these developments, and I told them that there was a body buried there," Nutthers said. "The representative from the city rolled his eyes, and I was dismissed by the staff. He said that if there actually was a body buried there, the chances of finding it were zero."

## Artists of Stonebridge hosting 7th Annual Art Show and Sale

The Artists of Stonebridge have had a busy year. They are a group of 27 members from the various communities who have displayed their art at various venues such as the Chapman Mills Recreation Center, Minto Recreation Center in Barrhaven and the Vietnamese Restaurant Barrhaven. The group is excited about the continuing support and recognition from the local City Councilors Jan Harder and Michael Qaqish and, the Member of Parliament Chandra Arya for featuring the group's art in their City Hall, Constituency and Parliament Hill offices.

This group of artists believes in "Giving Back" to the community and supporting local charities. In the past they have donated art for silent auctions at the Gala Dinners in support of the Barrhaven Food Cup-

board, and this year, three members have stepped forward with art work to help raise money for the cause. Over the years, through the Artists of Stonebridge's annual Art Show and Sale, over \$3000 has been raised for the Barrhaven Food Cupboard.

On November 12th and 13th weekend, the Artists of Stonebridge are holding their 7th Annual Art Show and Sale, featuring new works from your local favorite artists plus a number of new members who will be sharing their love of art. The Artists Of Stonebridge are very thankful for all the recognition, encouragement and support that they have received over the years from the community by not only purchasing local art but, by the overwhelming enthusiasm from the public while attending the shows. The

much appreciated sponsorship from Kent Brown (broker) Royal LePage Team Realty, Alexanian Carpets & Flooring, Marianne's Boutique, Color by Design, Deb & Dave Royal LePage, Capital City Heating & Cooling and Broadway Bar & Grill, will enable the group to provide another impressive art show.

You are invited to come out on November 12th & 13th between 10am and 5pm, at the Stonebridge Golf Club to meet your local artists, enjoy the stories behind their creations and treat yourselves to beautiful pieces of original art. The much anticipated Art Show will feature a variety of works from landscapes, seascapes, contemporary pieces to modern and abstract art in various mediums. There is plenty of free parking and daily draws for prizes.



## Nifty Knitters

Gayle Stanley, Marjorie Robinson, Karen Ashton (Lifestyle Director), Dorothy Condie, and Dora Nooyen of Orchard View on the Rideau have knitted all hand crafted goods for shipment to "Warm Hands Network" for distribution to Northern Communities. This organization supplies hats, mittens, neckwarmers, socks, blankets and lapghans for elders. GARY COULOMBE PHOTO

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FRIDAY JUNE 23, 2017



Leila Attar poses for a photo at the VIA Rail station in Barrhaven. The former John McCrae and South Carleton High School student used to be addicted to Fentanyl and other serious drugs, but now attends Algonquin College and has strong goals for her future. Starting July 1, Attar, 19, will be travelling across Canada to talk about her dark journey to addiction, and to listen to other people's stories and struggles.  
MIKE CARROCCETTO PHOTO

## The girl who beat Fentanyl

*Leila Attar, 19, survived a September Fentanyl overdose and is now clean. In July, she is travelling across Canada to spread her message of hope to others with addictions.*

By JEFF MORRIS

As the community continues to fight the addictive powers of Fentanyl and other opioids, the unlikely of heroes has emerged.

Former South Carleton High School student Leila

Attar has been clean and sober for six months. The 19-year-old did not go into a special rehabilitation program or clinic. Remarkably, she searched within herself to find the strength to overcome her addiction.

"I overdosed at my apart-

ment in September," she said. "I got to the point where I decided I did not want to be this person anymore. I didn't want to be an addict. I knew I was lucky to be alive, and I wanted to stay alive."

Attar will be going on a

cross-country tour in July, using the Canada 150 VIA Rail Pass to travel from coast to coast to share her story of overcoming her addictions to Fentanyl, opioids and alcohol. She is hoping to spread a message of hope.

**GIRL** continues on page 12

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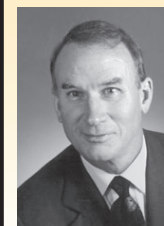
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# The MessengerCOMMUNITY

GIRL continues from page 1

"I want to talk to people who are struggling and give them hope," she said. "Even when I was a child, I always wanted to do something to help people. I never knew what that something would be. Now, I know."

Attar is one of many youths in the area who have struggled with addictions to Fentanyl. Her story is unique in that she was taking the drug un-

knowingly. She thought she was taking other opioids, but her dealer was giving her Fentanyl.

"I knew it was different," she said. "It felt different. He was substituting Percocet for Fentanyl. I didn't find out until after I overdosed. He finally admitted to me what he was doing. It was a low blow."

Attar's venture into drugs is not unlike the same journey that many

youths take, although her path may have been bumpier. It started with marijuana as an escape from stress and mental pain.

"I was dealing with depression and a lot of mental and emotional pain," she said. "Marijuana seemed like a way to numb myself from feeling the way I did. I was about 15 when I started."

Smoking marijuana

was the start of a dangerous slope that Attar went spiralling down. Within a year, she had ventured into other drugs. She was also kicked out of her home by her parents. At the age of 16, she was living on her own and had a fulltime job while also trying to go to school.

"I was hooked on Percocet by the time I was 16, and I kept alternating between Percs and co-

caine," she said. "Then, the bullying problems started at school."

Attar became isolated, and she became a target of bullying from some of her peers. She was depressed, high, and she was also cutting herself.

"(The bullying) started off slowly, but it grew and grew to the point where there would be threats

made against me on social media," she said. "I had to leave (South Carleton). I left school and eventually went to John McCrae in Barrhaven."

During her recovery, Attar has met with schools and school board representatives about what she can do to help other students.

GIRL continues on page 13



"After my rent, the basics like bills and looking after my cat, everything I made went into drugs," Attar said. "I was often starving myself. I made the choice that I would rather get high than eat." MIKE CARROCCETTO PHOTO

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Jonathan McFaul credits his academic success at Ashbury College to staying mentally challenged and physically fit. Jon pursued his interest in business at the Rotman High School Market Simulation, and travelled to Columbia with Round Square, where he worked alongside other international students building local housing. An honour roll student, Jon received the Arvid Paasonen trophy for his dedication and contribution to the school's soccer teams. In September, Jonathan will invest in his future, as he attends Rotman Commerce at the University of Toronto.

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# The Messenger COMMUNITY

**GIRL** continues from page 12

When she started using drugs and when she was going through her darkest moments, she felt that the schools and the messages from the school board were ineffective.

"They send a message out about marijuana and other drugs and how dangerous they are," she said. "We looked around at how many of us were using drugs, and we figured there was nothing wrong with us, so why should we listen to the message they had. We totally blew off what they said about marijuana being a gateway drug."

Once on her own, she began to work in the restaurant industry. There, she found a world where drugs were even more accessible than at school.

"Drugs are all over the place in that industry," she said. "There are customers using, there are staff members using. It's everywhere, and it's easy to find. People are often working until 2 a.m., and there is a lot of partying that goes on. It's not specifically where I worked, it's industry-wide, and I don't think the average person realizes that it exists to the extent that it does."

Attar's drug dealer was a co-worker. She was able to support herself by working, but everything above and beyond the basic necessity went into her drug and alcohol addictions.

"After my rent, the basics like bills and looking after my cat, everything I made went into drugs," she said. "I was often starving myself. I made the choice that I would rather get high than eat."

Attar, by this point, had cut herself off from her old friends. She no longer had a relationship with her parents. Although she was losing her battle with drugs, she knew that she needed help. She just wasn't at the point where she wanted it yet.

"It's a miracle that I am alive," she said. "I had no support around me, and I was in a world where everyone around me wanted to get high. I have a cousin who has been great, and she was always looking out for me."

At one point, Attar had overdosed and called an ambulance. She was treated and sent back home within hours. She had contacted the Royal Ottawa Hospital and was on a waiting list. In

September, she had an overdose of Fentanyl that made her decide to change her life.

"My cousin came to check on me and thought I was dead," she said. "If she hadn't, I don't know if I would be alive today. I never really shared a lot of my problems with her. I didn't want to drag her down into my world."

Attar made the realization that this was not who or what she wanted to be.

"I knew it was going to be difficult, and it was going to be lonely," she said. "When I would wake up at 4 a.m. with the shakes, it was horrible, but I knew that it was something I would have to go through to change my life."

Attar, with nothing more than will power and the help of a therapist, went cold turkey and says she has won her battle.

"I have no interest in using again," she said. "I know what it leads to and how I will end up. I don't want that. I feel great now, and I am not tempted at all. I don't want to feel that way again."

Attar said that in her darkest times, she was looking for something to hold onto to give her hope. She said she found it within herself.

"The one thing that I found to hold onto was ambition," she said. "I wanted a life. I wanted to be something different than what I had become."

Attar said she is eating a clean and healthy diet with a lot of proteins and greens, and that has helped her health a great deal. She is also taking yoga classes, and took online courses from Algonquin College. She will be going to school in the fall and has aspirations of a career in forensics. She has very few people in her life – her cousin and her therapist are her support network.

Before that, though, she will embark on her trip of a lifetime to spread a message of hope for other people struggling with addictions.

"There are a lot of cities where young people are struggling with problems," she said. "Vancouver is a city with an opioid and Fentanyl problem. There are a lot of aboriginal communities across the country where there are problems. I just want to reach out to people and let them know that this can be beaten. Maybe there is someone out there who is searching for a ray

of hope that will make a difference in their life. Maybe my message can be that one thing they can hold onto."

Attar will be blogging about her journey throughout the month of July on her Facebook page.



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