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Local reps advocate for cell gap project

Conference gives municipal councillors a chance to air concerns to provincial government

CHAD INGRAM

Staff Reporter

Politicians from throughout the county made their way to Toronto for the annual Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference, an event where municipal politicians get a chance to partake in lectures, workshops and panel discussions, as well as interact with provincial cabinet ministers and party leaders.

In December, the provincial government announced it was conducting a review of the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, which provides annual funding allotments to municipal governments to help offset operating and capital costs, with an indication that the overall spending envelope for the program would decrease.

It is not clear exactly when municipalities will discover what impact the changes to the program will have for them individually, and Algonquin Highlands Deputy Mayor and Haliburton County Warden Liz Danielsen told the *Echo* those details were not provided at the

see FOOD page 3



Making the grade

Leland Kainellos of the Kita No Senshi Karate Dojo exhales during the grading night on Thursday, Jan. 24 at the A.J. LaRue Arena in Haliburton. By the end, Leland earned two stripes on his belt. The young members, who all received their next belt, ranged in age from five to 15 years. See more photos on page 12. /DARREN LUM Staff

Mural brings memories to life at Highland Wood

JENN WATT

Editor

Residents, visitors and staff at Highland Wood can now take a walk through the countryside, stop to appreciate a gently flowing waterfall or check out the pie cooling in the window of a big, white farmhouse at the end of their corridor.

A new mural underway at the long-term care home in Haliburton is colourful and expansive, bursting with life and filled with intricate details.

Hollyhocks bloom bright red and yellow along a farm fence as cows graze far off in the pasture. A spider spins her web in the barn entrance, perhaps exchanging pleasantries with the horse emerging to enjoy the brilliant blue skies.

The landscape has shifted over the course of the 80 hours Wilberforce artist Luann Coghlan has put into it, taking shape almost on its own.

"I find if you relax and you just let go of control and you just start putting paint on there it seems to come out by itself," said Coghlan, examining her work along with staff from Haliburton Highlands Health Services and a couple of residents.

Emerson Lewis comes out of his room to take a look. He likes to see the bright red car driving off down the road, which reminds him of some antics he got up to

see PROJECT page 2

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Project became 'more than anything we could have expected'

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in a car just like it.

Coghlan has painted a large tree that grows up the wall just outside of Lewis's room, supporting a couple together on a swing. A heart is carved into the trunk, with the initials M.H. + E.L.

Emerson's wife, Marie, died on Jan. 3, just as work on the mural was beginning.

"The morning I started, Marie Lewis had just passed away," Coghlan said, "and so I put their initials on the tree. They'd been married 66 years. She was Marie Hogan, so it's M.H. and Emerson Lewis. I actually said a little prayer."

As people have come to look at the mural, some have asked about the initials, she said, which allows Lewis to talk about his wife.

The idea to paint the mural, replacing the peach-beige coloured walls, came up when volunteer co-ordinator Brigitte Gebauer was talking to Coghlan about offering painting classes. Coghlan offers private instruction. She said before teaching classes, she'd be interested in painting the walls first.

Gebauer was immediately interested and showed her a news story about the Butterfly Home Project in a long-term care home in Peel, which introduced vast changes to make the unit less institutional. Part of that project included painting the halls bright colours.

Coghlan thought a landscape would give residents something to look at, and for some of them looking to go for a walk, it would simulate the act of going outside.

"I know myself if I go for a walk, I want to have a destination to end up at. It makes it more interesting. ... It's nicer to have a destination than to just start out walking," she said.

The mural has become a destination, Michelle Douglas, Highland Wood director of care, said.

"We've had so much positive feedback about it," she said. Residents have started making requests for murals outside their rooms and those with art backgrounds have enjoyed giving their advice and watching the progress.

"We're so thankful to have Luann here and hope she stays for a long time," Douglas said.

Coghlan has been volunteering her time, using paint donated by Algonquin Painting and Cordell Carpet.

Although the images seem to easily flow through Coghlan's paintbrush, she said she has very little formal training and hadn't done much painting until about a year ago.

She said she did some art in high school in Port Colborne and then went to Niagara College in Welland for a year of fine arts. Otherwise, her skills come from being an observer, she said.

"I've been driving for Community Care for 10 years, I drove for the cancer society for four years and seven years for LifeLabs, so I always really paid attention [to the scenery]," she said.

HHHS CEO Carolyn Plummer said she was thrilled with how the mural has come together.

"When we first heard about it, we were excited about what it might mean, but I think it's turned into something so much more than anything we could have expected. And I know the engagement with the residents has been tremendous. The staff have been really pleased

... with the work and with having [Coghlan] in the space here," she said.

Plummer said she'd been reading research earlier in the week about the link between the health-care environment and outcomes for patients and residents.

"There are research studies that demonstrate positive effects of artwork in the space people are receiving care or healing. It does have a healing effect for people," she said.

Gebauer, who had been instrumental in getting the process started, said she has a special connection to the work, since her mother lives at Highland Wood.

"I got very excited at the possibilities. With my mom in here, I'm in here all the time. It's been amazing to see this," she said.

Gebauer said she takes her mother for tours to see it, and notices other residents and their family members do, too. It gives them something to think about and talk to each other about – and it triggers memories.

Coghlan said choosing a farm as her first mural was partially an effort to create a landscape residents, often in their 80s and 90s, would remember.

"I knew everybody probably came from a farm background [and] farms are always charming and familiar with people and homey. That was the beginning of the idea for a farm. I wanted the residents to be able to relate to it," she said.

The mural project is ongoing, with Coghlan already brainstorming concepts for other sections of the home.

Plummer and Gebauer said they are keen to have other artists join in. There is plenty peach-beige wall remaining.

Those interested in donating to beautify Highland Wood, or who would like to volunteer, can contact Brigitte Gebauer at BGebauer@hhhs.ca, or call 705-457-1392 ext. 2927.

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Some of the people who know the mural best come together for a photo at Highland Wood. From left, Luann Coghlan, John Daville, Carolyn Plummer, Brigitte Gebauer and Charleen Daville. /JENN WATT Staff



Emerson Lewis sits in front of the new mural at Highland Wood. The artist, Luann Coghlan, inserted a detail special to Emerson and his wife, Marie, who recently died. On the tree, she placed their initials: M.H. for Marie and E.L. for Emerson.



A detail from the mural.