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COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

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Canada

Vol. 15 - Issue 7 | Wednesday, February 18, 2026

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At least four million in local shopping thanks to a Whitecourt Chamber initiative



From seasonal events to hard-hitting initiatives and business supports, the Whitecourt Chamber is a busy group. Here's a recap of some of their movements last year, including one worth several million dollars. Pictured is Chamber President Terriann Masse (right). See story page 3.



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If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, you need to know that you're not alone. You can also call if you are not in crisis, seeking additional information. The new Canada Suicide Prevention Service (CSPS), by Crisis Services Canada, enables callers anywhere in

Canada to access crisis support by phone, in French or English: toll-free **1-833-456-4566** Available 24/7 Crisis Text Line (Powered by Kids Help Phone) Canada Wide free, 24/7 texting service is accessible immediately to youth anywhere

in Canada by texting TALK to **686868** to reach an English speaking Crisis Responder and TEXTO to **686868** to reach a French-speaking Crisis Responder on any text/SMS enabled cell phone. KidsHelpPhone Ages 20 Years and Under

in Canada **1-800-668-6868** (Online or on the Phone). First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness 24/7 Help Line **1-855-242-3310** Canadian Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line **1-866-925-4419** Trans LifeLine – All Ages **1-877-330-6366**

Putting a face on suicide



Ethan, age 15

Every 40 seconds somewhere around the world someone dies by suicide, that's 99 people every 66 minutes. Every day, that's almost 100 people in the United States alone, and over 2160 worldwide. Putting a Face on Suicide (PAFOS) is a suicide awareness project that creates posters and videos to pay tribute to those we have lost to suicide with dignity and respect. PAFOS humanizes the daunting statistics; lovingly replacing numbers with faces.

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Stand Up Against BULLYING



Your Story Matters

If you or someone you know has been affected by bullying, your voice can make a difference. We are looking to hear your story and raise awareness about the impact of bullying in our community.

By sharing your experience, you can help others understand they are not alone in their struggles, and together, we can take a stand against bullying.

How to Share Your Story:

- Reach out to us at thepresswct@gmail.com
- Your submission can remain 100% anonymous if you prefer.
- Every story shared helps bring us one step closer to ending the cycle of bullying.

We believe in the power of raising awareness. Your story could be the one that helps someone find hope and strength. Let's take a stand together.



My name doesn't really matter, because there are lots of kids like me. I'm 12 years old and I get bullied. I'm writing this because people always say bullying is "just kids being kids," but it doesn't feel that way when it happens to you.

Some days I don't

even want to go to school. My stomach hurts before I leave the house and my heart feels like it's beating too fast. People say things about me in the hallway or laugh when I walk by. Sometimes they whisper, and sometimes they don't even bother. It makes me feel small,

like I don't belong anywhere.

The worst part is when adults say to "just ignore it." I try. I really do. But when it happens every day, it's hard to pretend it doesn't matter. Words stick in your head. They replay at night when you're trying to sleep. They make

you wonder if something is actually wrong with you.

Bullying doesn't always leave bruises, but it leaves marks you can't see.

I wish people knew how important being kind is. One nice comment can change a whole day. Standing up for someone, even just once, can make them

feel less alone. You don't have to be best friends with everyone, but you also don't have to be mean.

If you're bullying someone, you might think it's funny or no big deal. But that person might remember it forever. And if you see bullying happening, please don't just watch. Saying something or

getting help could mean everything to someone like me.

I'm not writing this for attention.

If you're being bullied too, you're not alone. And if you're reading this and thinking about someone you know, maybe today is a good day to be kinder.

-12 year old student



GOT A NEWS TIP?

Call Valerie Winger at **780.706.1858** or email wctpress@gmail.com

The Press

Money Matters

One Canadian Dollar = 0.73 US Dollar
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Dollar Values as of February 18, 2026

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At least four million in local shopping thanks to a Whitecourt Chamber initiative



Last year's night market was a huge success.

| By Serena Lapointe

The Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce is always up to something. Earlier this month, President Terriann Masse and Executive Director Alyssa Calliou presented to Town Council about last year's busy schedule.

The Chamber wrapped 2025 with 231 members, achieving an 86 percent retention rate. They also welcomed twenty new members. "It's great to see new businesses coming in. Some of the grand openings we attended last year were Northern Health Advanced Foot Care, the Meadows, First Choice Petro Canada, Four Families Daycare and Uncle Wieners," explained Masse.

Initiatives last year included 'Shop Local. Buy Canadian.' The goal of the program was to encourage residents to support local, Canadian-made products and to keep dollars circulating in the local economy. "We had twenty-eight businesses across Whitecourt, Woodlands County and Mayerthorpe apply for our 'Shop Local. Buy Canadian' sticker," explained Masse. She said prior to giving a sticker, businesses had

to complete a brief survey describing how many of their products are Canadian.

A couple of the Whitecourt Chamber's ongoing initiatives include Whitecourt Bucks. "If you do not know what Whitecourt Bucks are, it's actual money, and you know that it's being spent in the community because you can't spend it anywhere else. It has been around for quite a few years now. We sold over \$55,000 worth of Whitecourt Bucks in 2025, and there are over 40 participating stores in Whitecourt," said Masse.

Councillor Braden Lanctot asked how much, on average, the initiative pumps into Whitecourt's economy. "It has been down a little bit for the last couple of years. It used to be up closer to eighty thousand a year, but it's getting back up there. I think people are getting more informed about it. A lot of big companies purchase it for their staff," said Calliou.

Around the holidays, the Chamber ramps up local Christmas shopping by kickstarting the "I'm Dreaming of a Whitecourt Christmas" event, where shoppers can collect stamps at participating stores for

the chance to win prizes. "We had thirty-six businesses participate in the promotion, and over 20,000 stamp cards were handed out, resulting in millions of dollars being spent locally over the holiday season," said Masse.

A new initiative last year saw the local Chamber partner with the Alberta Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Red Cross. "We delivered emergency preparedness resources to local businesses. Our board of directors split up three hundred businesses across Whitecourt, Woodlands County and Fox Creek and contacted them with the resource package," explained Masse.

For advocacy efforts, the Whitecourt Chamber attended the Canadian Chamber of Commerce AGM in October as part of a large contingent of Alberta Chamber members, even receiving a shout-out for being such a large group. "We were successful in passing all 14 policy resolutions that were brought forward, ensuring that Alberta's voice was heard," said Masse, which included resolutions to reduce interprovincial trade barriers for trucking and empower small businesses to help

solve Canada's housing crisis.

Advocacy efforts also include addressing crime and safety concerns in Whitecourt. "We have a goal to identify and implement effective solutions this year," said Masse. "We are also advocating for major projects in our area, including the small modular reactor plant and data center."

Event-wise, the Whitecourt Chamber held its fair share. The carnival, aided by exceptional weather, was a tremendous success. The chamber receives a percentage of tickets sold, and the 2025 piece of the pie was unexpected. "We received \$19,000 for hosting compared to the ten thousand dollars we normally get. I thought the check was wrong," chuckled Calliou.

The President's Gala, another popular event, featured 322 nominations for community businesses and staff over fifteen award categories, and nearly 7,500 votes were cast. "We were able to recognize ninety-seven businesses, and we had 181 attendees at the awards night," said Masse.

An exceptionally de-

continued on page 7

A look at the local weather

P.O.P.
High
Low
Wind
24-Hr Rain / Snow



Wed., Feb. 18
Chance of flurries
40%
-12°C
-19°C
E 9 km/h



Thu., Feb. 19
Chance of flurries
40%
-15°C
-21°C
NW 13 km/h
<1cm



Fri., Feb. 20
Chance of flurries
60%
-16°C
-23°C
N 10 km/h
1-3cm



Sat., Feb. 21
Cloudy
40%
-16°C
-23°C
NE 7 km/h
<1cm



Sun., Feb. 22
Cloudy with flurries
30%
-16°C
-23°C
NW 5 km/h

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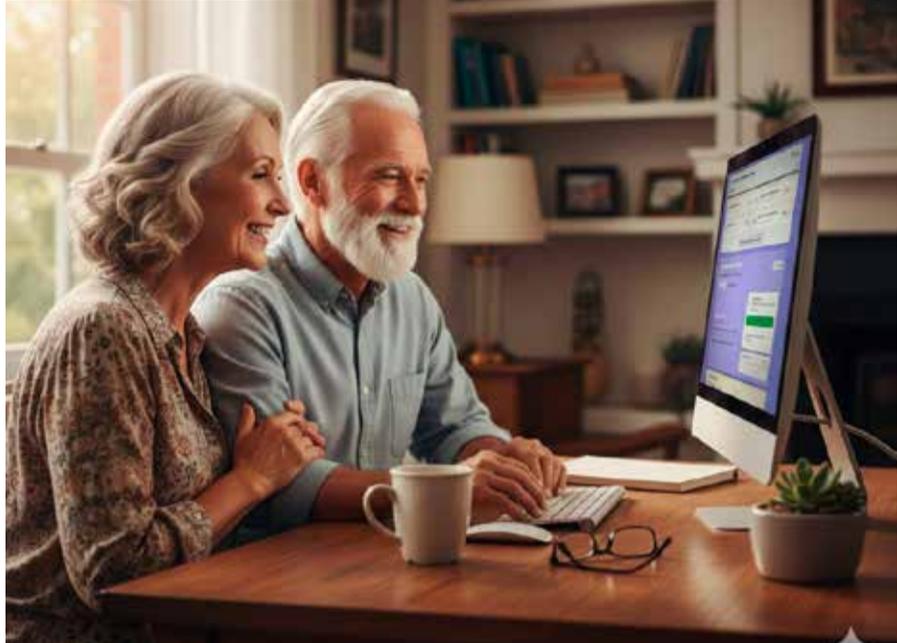
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to find out if you're up to date and what to do if you're not.



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Whitecourt

2026 BUDGET OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, March 5
Allan & Jean Millar Centre
3:00-6:30pm

Drop In Event

- Ask questions of Council and staff
- Learn about government operations and how tax dollars are invested
- Provide input on what's important to you

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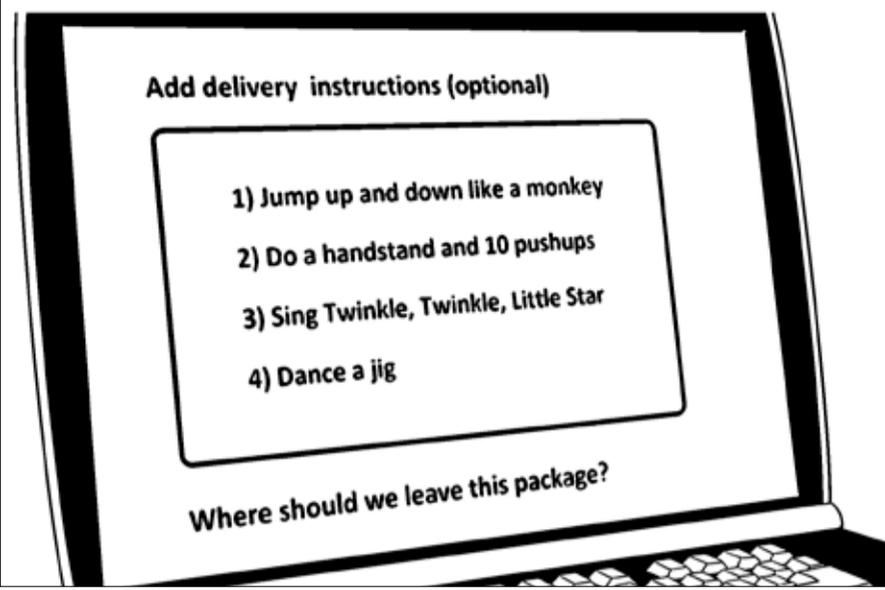
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Family Resource & Crisis Centre
www.whitecourtshester.ca

Recover Out Loud

- Mondays are in person, at the Family Worship Center upstairs, and online (hybrid) at 7:30pm
- Fridays 7:30pm at the Whitecourt Baptist Church in person only.

ZOOM ID: 818 413 483 PASSWORD: gratitude

Whitecourt Alcoholics Anonymous Group

Meetings are three times each week

- Monday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm
- Wednesday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm
- Friday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Located at the United Church Basement on Legion Street (formerly 5201 - 50 Street), Please Leave a Message for Our AA member or Contact Addictions Helpline @1(866)332-2322

CALL Ruth 780-674-7182

Support group on Tuesdays, February 17 to May 5.
Crossroads Community Church, 4719 44 Avenue Mayerthorpe, Pre-registration is required

NEED HELP? CALL ANYTIME! (24-7)

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- Addiction Helpline 1-866-332-2322
- Health Link 811

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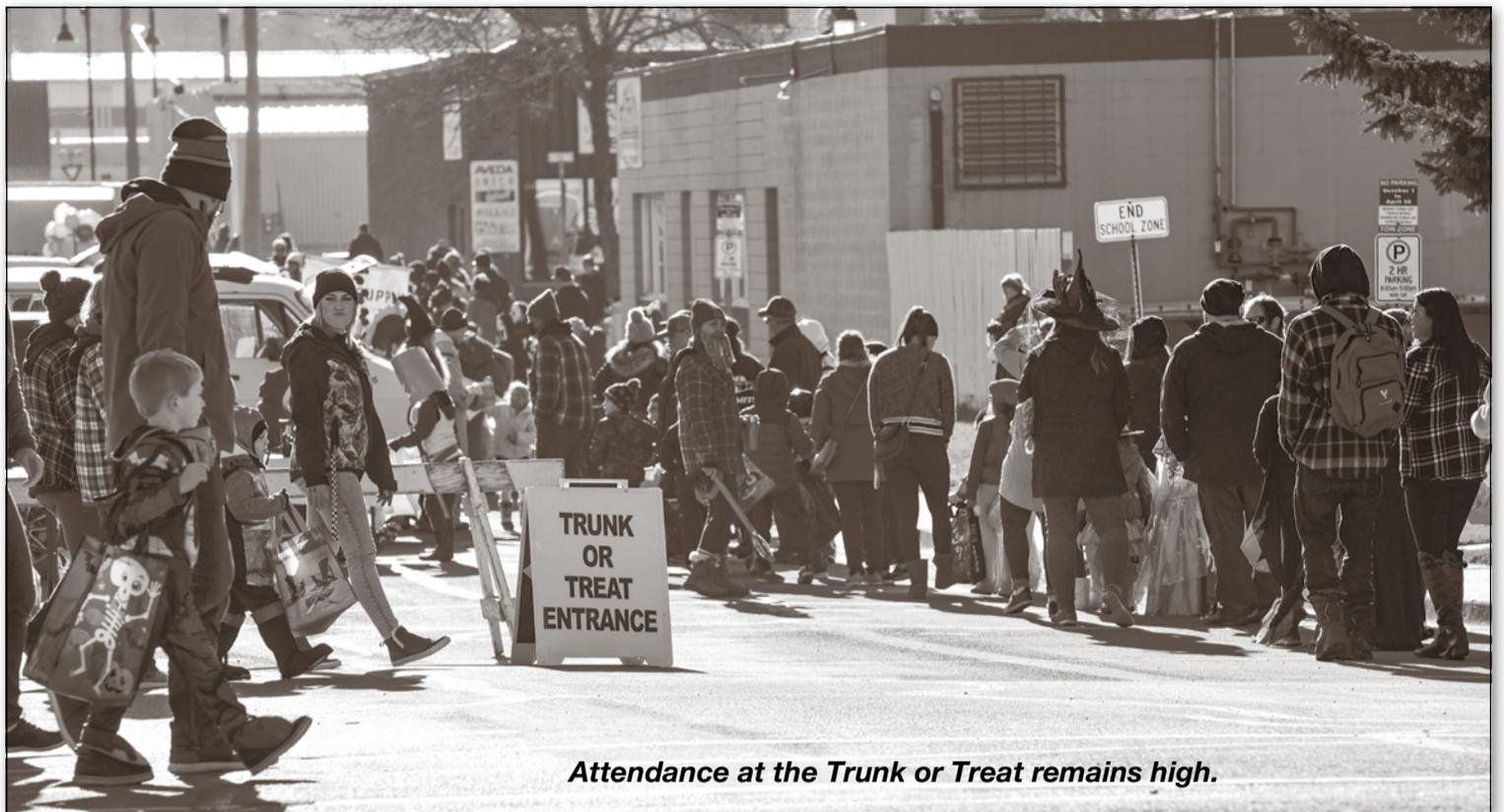
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continued from page 3

licious event held for the first time last year, Rib Fest, ended up being a big hit. So much so that Masse said the organizers have already said they plan to come back. "It drew visitors, supported non-profits and showcased Whitecourt as a vibrant regional destination."

The Trunk or Treat and the Santa Claus Parade continue to impress with droves turning out to enjoy them. "We had thirty-one businesses participate and approximately 2,500 people, kids and their parents, attend the Trunk or Treat. For the Santa Claus Parade, forty businesses took part, and the streets were packed," said Masse.

For this year, Masse said they are changing up the Fresh Community Market. Instead of Saturday markets, they will hold a monthly night market and do some special markets. "Last year was the last of our three-year trial for the Saturday mar-



Attendance at the Trunk or Treat remains high.

ket. While the average attendance remained around six hundred people per Saturday, the number of vendors each week continued to decline. In total, we had sixty-three different vendors throughout the whole season; however, the average number attending each Saturday was only thirteen."

Lastly, the Whitecourt Chamber was selected to host the 2026 Alberta Chamber of Commerce AGM on May 27 and 28. A hundred and fifty guests from across the province are expected to attend. "We appreciate what the Chamber does for the community and the partnership we have," said Mayor Ray

Hilts.

He asked if they have a sense of the economic upside for downtown businesses when events are held in the area. Calliou and Masse said that it depends on the event held. "We do ask around if people have had an uptake during events, but a lot of the time we do them when businesses are closed

because they don't like having their streets shut down sometimes," said Calliou. Last year's night market was different. "We got a lot of feedback from businesses that their stores were nice and busy that night, which was awesome."

When asked about their sense of businesses closing and new

ones opening, Calliou said the majority of businesses they lose as members are doing so because they are closing, but added that it seems like the same number of businesses that they lose, they get back through new businesses opening. "We are trying to figure out how we can collect this data," said Masse.



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PUBLIC NOTICE

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Current opportunities are posted on the Town's website and when required, opportunities are posted on purchasingconnection.ca. Currently, Whitecourt has the following opportunities:

- 2026-01-20: Highway 43 Vitalization Phase I - Closes February 25, 2026 at 2:00pm MST.

For further details on any of these opportunities visit www.whitecourt.ca and search the project title.

NOTICE OF DECISION

The following decisions were made by the Municipal Planning Commission:

Application No. 26-002 - Discretionary Use, Home Occupation – Taxi Service at Unit 403, 4502 52 Avenue - Approved with conditions.

Date of Decision: February 12, 2026

Appeal Closes at 4:00pm: February 12, 2026

An Appeal of the above decision(s) may be made by submitting a written appeal and appeal fee (\$315) to the Office of the Secretary of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, Town of Whitecourt Administration Building, Box 509, Whitecourt, Alberta, T7S 1N6 prior to 4:00pm on the above noted date. Any person(s) affected by the said proposal(s), has the right to appeal prior to the above date.



The U13 girls' black team.



REVZ U15 team.

Melissa Baker Photography



Repeat Boutique photo

Ralcomm Whitecourt has generously donated \$5,000 toward the local CT Scanner Project. Representatives from Repeat Boutique gratefully acknowledge the contribution and thank Ralcomm for its continued community support.

Two REVZ girls' volleyball teams deserve a shoutout after a job well done. The 15U team attended a tournament in Drayton Valley, hosted by the Drayton Valley Royals, on February 7, and came in third place following a hard-fought battle. The following day, on February 8, the girls on the 13U black team travelled up the highway to Onoway to attend their first-ever tournament. Not only did they do a fantastic job, but they too came home with beautiful bronze medals around their necks. Way to go, REVZ!

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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If you enjoy a fast-paced, progressive work environment and you have a passion for serving the local community- then this may be the opportunity for you! We believe that our values of diversity, collaboration, innovation and mutual respect bring out the best in our team, and we are currently looking to fill the following positions:

Job#: 26-018 – Facility Trades II – Permanent, Full-time Position. Closes: March 6, 2026

Please visit www.whitecourt.ca for all employment opportunities and details on how to apply.



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- Ensure your business and/or project meets local bylaws
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- Support smart, sustainable community growth

Woodlands County Planning Department is here to guide you through the process every step of the way! Learn what permits you need, get step-by-step application support, and stay informed on zoning rules and timelines.

Visit <https://woodlands.ab.ca/p/planning-and-development>
Email: planning@woodlands.ab.ca, Phone: 780-778-8400

FCSS GRANT FUNDING

Are you a local organization delivering preventative social programs? We can help.

Woodlands County is now accepting applications for Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) grant funding for initiatives that:

- Strengthen children, families & seniors
- Build life skills & community wellbeing
- Support volunteerism
- Increase awareness of local services



DEADLINE: February 27, 2026 (4:30 p.m.)

Apply online or pick up a form at County offices in Whitecourt or Fort Assiniboine woodlands.ab.ca/p/fcss

Questions? Contact Community Services at 780-778-8400 or communityservices@woodlands.ab.ca

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woodlands.ab.ca/p/careers

Calling County Ambassadors!

Woodlands County is looking for two energetic, media-savvy individuals to represent the County and connect with our communities.

This unique role is ideal for someone who enjoys meeting people, attending events, and telling local stories. The Ambassadors will engage with residents, community groups, and small businesses; gather survey feedback; and capture photos and videos to share across social media platforms.

Preference will be given to applicants with experience or education in **communications, public relations, or graphic design**. Applicants must hold a **valid Alberta Class 5 driver's license** and be available to begin work **May 4, 2026**.

If you're outgoing, creative, and passionate about community, this could be the perfect opportunity to showcase Woodlands County.

For more information and to apply: woodlands.ab.ca/p/careers

More job postings:

- Coordinator, Facilities Maintenance
- Manager, Infrastructure Services
- Seasonal Data Collector, Capital Assets
- Seasonal Labourer(s)

For more information on these postings and to apply: woodlands.ab.ca/p/careers

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SCHOOL NEWS

Kindergarteners skate in unseasonal warmth



Pat Hardy School photos



Pat Hardy Elementary School's Kindergarten students took full advantage of the unusually warm winter weather last week. They laughed and played while gliding across the outdoor rink, bundled in colourful mittens and toques. Teachers supervised as the young skaters practised their wobbly strides, turning the mild February day into a memorable outdoor adventure.

Grade 4 thrills at Eastlink Park



Pat Hardy School photos

Pat Hardy Elementary School's Grade 4 students, staff, and parents had a thrilling day of skiing, snowboarding, and tubing at Whitecourt Eastlink Park on February 4. The group made the most of the fresh snow, sliding down the hills with laughter and cheers. Special thanks went to the Eastlink Park staff for their extra preparations to ready the hills perfectly for the school outing.

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PUZZLES

SEE SOLUTIONS PAGE 15

SUDOKU

				5	4			
			7		2			9
7	8				1	3		
		2	4	1				
				5		9	6	
	4	9						2
								7
1	5							
		6	2	8				

Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

CROSSWORDS

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10		11	12	13
14					15								16	
17					18								19	
20							21						22	
23						24			25			26		
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49	50								51			52	53	54
55					56	57	58	59		60				
61					62					63				
64					65							66		
67					68								69	

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Crossword Clues

CLUES ACROSS

- Cut quickly
- A way to state clearly
- River in NE Scotland
- Expansive
- Lacking social polish
- Amount of time
- Frame
- Automobile
- Toadstools
- High school dances
- Utilize
- Experimented with
- One-sided
- Acquisitive
- Potted plants
- Everyone has one
- Kalahari Desert lake
- Unidentified flying object
- People 65 and over

- Small amount
- Daughter of Acrisius
- Ornamental box
- Government agents
- Uncertain
- A cotton fabric with a satiny finish
- Treeless plains
- One's sense of self-importance
- Consumer advocate
- Type of lounge
- Body part
- Can be persuaded
- Woman (French)
- Ready and willing to be taught
- Arab ruler title
- Unhappy
- Gradually went away

CLUES DOWN

- Brushed
- Small water spirit (Germ.)
- Heroes
- Monetary units
- Some don't want to share theirs
- Free-swimming invertebrate
- Litigates
- Outer
- Parallelograms
- Uneasy feelings
- Cross
- A way to remove
- Pages can be dog-__
- Ukrainian city
- A citizen of Denmark
- Month
- Hindu queens
- Group of chemicals
- Rider of Rohan

- Wet dirt
- Southwestern Russia city
- Observed
- Angry
- Drivers' licenses
- Musical composition
- Auction
- They __
- Women
- Be filled with love for
- Thick-soled sock
- Appears
- Old World lizard
- The leading performer
- Protein
- "Gunga Din" script writer
- Art __, around 1920
- __ Blyton, children's author
- Abnormal breathing
- A place to rest

HOROSCOPE

ARIES

(March 21 - April 20)



You have the cosmic green light to start that major project you've been planning or to take a leap in your career, Aries. Trust your intuition—it's sharper than ever.

TAURUS

(April 21 - May 21)



Abundance is knocking, Taurus. Your hard work is translating into tangible rewards, and you may receive unexpected good news regarding finances or resources.

GEMINI

(May 22 - June 21)



Your mind is sparkling, Gemini, making you the most magnetic person in the room. Use this vibrant energy to connect, share ideas and lead discussions.

CANCER

(June 22 - July 22)



Cancer, a feeling of emotional security empowers you to tackle any professional challenge with grace and confidence. You are totally centered right now, so go for it.

LEO

(July 23 - August 23)



Leo, you are radiating charisma this week and attracting positive attention wherever you go. Use this incredible visibility to network or showcase your talents.

VIRGO

(August 24 - September 22)



You'll find great satisfaction in clean, organized work that earns sincere praise this week, Virgo. Your dedication is about to unlock a significant reward.

LIBRA

(September 23 - October 23)



Relationships are the key to your happiness this week, Libra. Expect delightful interactions, smooth negotiations and the forging of beneficial alliances.

SCORPIO

(October 24 - November 22)



This week is all about your own transformation, Scorpio. You feel a surge of internal power and clarity that allows you to confidently pursue deep, personal goals.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)



Your sense of optimism and love for exploration is fully charged, Sagittarius. Even if you can't take a trip, your mind is open to exciting new philosophies or ideas.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)



Your professional reputation is soaring, Capricorn. Key figures at your job are recognizing your dedication and leadership. Expect exciting opportunities.

AQUARIUS

(January 21 - February 18)



Your network is buzzing with opportunities, Aquarius. Collaborative efforts are highly favored, and you'll find incredible support for your most innovative ideas.

PISCES

(February 19 - March 20)



Pisces, your intuition is a superpower that guides you toward fulfillment and emotional satisfaction this week. Embrace your artistic side and allow your imagination to lead the way.

LIBRARY VISIT

WORD SEARCH

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 I P S S T C L O I I N U G R U I E T K N
 Y A E U Y Y Q B O E T B M N Y N Y S I L
 B H D M E S C E R B K C S D T L P I E Y
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 Y R A R B I L H A B M O S K O E T U A B
 N A I R A R B I L D I B S G T U A A T E

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

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PERIODICALS

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READING
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RESERVE

RETURN
SHELF
STACKS
STUDY
SYSTEM

Let your voice be heard - Budget Open House happening early next month



Residents can talk dollars and cents with council members and administrative staff at next month's Budget Open House. Low turnout at previous events has encouraged a time change this year, and more changes might come next year, depending on this year's turnout.

| By Serena Lapoine

Each year, ahead of the spring finalization of the Town's budget, Town Council members and administrative department heads take part in a public open house. Residents are invited to attend, ask questions, learn about how tax dollars are spent, receive updates on upcoming projects, and bring forward comments or concerns related to municipal matters.

The event is free-flow, with displays allowing residents to read the boards and learn about plans for the upcoming budget and potential plans for future budgets. Boards also detail service levels and planned enhancements, along with accompanying costs.

One of the many boards on display each year takes one dollar of taxation and breaks it down into small chunks, showing how each cent is used, giving taxpayers a greater understanding of how their hard-earned money helps provide community services, up-keep infrastructure, and plan for the future.

Typically held on a weeknight from 4-7 pm at the Allan & Jean Millar Centre, attendance has generally been quite low. Given

the opportunity it provides for engagement, allowing not only room for learning but also for conversation and questions, increasing the foot traffic would be a win-win for the municipality and residents.

Last month, Whitecourt Town Council discussed the event. Judy Barney, Director of Corporate Services, said they would be using the same format as last year, but thanks to a prior request by Town Council, parents of young children could take advantage of a typically paid service for no charge. "To encourage participants, we have free Child Mind services that will help people who may need that while they take in all of the information that we will have available."

She added that there would also be other programs underway at the AJMC at the same time as the Budget Open House, giving older youth something to do while their parents peruse the boards and chat with staff and council. Councillor Braden Lanctot was happy to see the inclusion of Child Mind. "I truly think the Child Mind is an underutilized resource that we have.

So, even if this is a

way to advertise Child Mind, then I think that's a really good thing." He added that it's also great that other programs will be available for youths of different ages.

He said the biggest thing will be making sure that people are aware that the service is being offered that night. "I want to make sure that we advertise it and let it be known that it's available.

That's a huge piece of it. We should make sure we are being very liberal about us having an open house and then saying that it'll have free childcare," said Lanctot.

The group also decided to start it at 3 pm instead. "Maybe we will get some people out that wouldn't have come out otherwise." When asked about the typical attendance over the years, Barney said they once got over 40 visitors, but that it generally hovers closer to twenty.

Councillors Bill McAree and Tara Baker felt that bigger changes might be needed going forward, especially if attendance this year remains low. "I see a big change, being the big change. If it's for them (residents) to engage and it's for us to get more than a small

group, then we need to do something different," said Baker.

Mayor Ray Hilts agreed with his colleagues. "When I was on council before, we had the same conversations about the effectiveness of this strategy. In the absence of a replacement strategy, though, we do it, but I agree, it has been generally ineffective." He added that over the next year, they can discuss creative ways to change things up.

Council discussed potentially having small coffee events, maybe at the library, giving residents more flexibility with time

and location to get their comments in. For this year, though, Mayor Hilts said he liked the idea of holding the event a bit earlier. "I just want to make sure that we do our due diligence as a council in sharing information about what it is we are doing this year, and then we can move on from there."

This year's Budget Open House will take place on Thursday, March 5 from 3:00 pm to 6:30 pm in the fieldhouse at the Allan & Jean Millar Center. Parents with young children can use the Child Mind free of charge to attend the event.



Boards and signs provide easy information.

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Johnston, Edith Rose

(née O'Neill)

February 15, 1923 – January 28, 2026

Edith passed away on January 28, 2026, in the Mayerthorpe Auxiliary Hospital at the age of 102 years.

Edith was predeceased by her husband of 59 years, Jack; parents, Jessie and Charles O'Neill; and five siblings, Donald, Collin, Ishbel, Diana and Norman. She is survived by her children, Karen, Doug, Maxine and Debbie (Ken Kucharchuk); grandchildren, Dustin (Coral), Candace (Mark), Bo, Gaelan (Celia), Ben (Karli) and Lucas (Tasia); and three great-grandchildren, Oscar, Austen and Logan.

Edith was raised on the family farm in Ballantine, Alberta. On the farm, she raised chickens and grew huge gardens. She attended the crafts school in Meadowview. She picked fruit in B.C. and worked at Perrins store in Sangudo. Edith married Jack Johnston on February 15, 1950, in Sangudo and moved to Cosmo, Alberta, where she continued to farm. She worked hard and was a great cook. Her great love of gardening continued; she was known for her many beautiful flowers and huge vegetable garden. A vibrant member of the community, she was involved in the Sangudo Horticultural club, the U.C.W., and the Women's Institute. Additionally, she supported local events and her children's school activities and clubs. In 2004, Edith and Jack moved from the farm to Barrhead. Her kind and gentle spirit will be remembered by all.

The family wishes to extend their gratitude to her caregivers at Klondike Place, Barrhead Home Care, Barrhead Hospital, Dr. W.R. Keir Barrhead Continuing Care Centre and the Mayerthorpe Auxiliary Hospital. They also thank Dr. Dewall and Dr. Naicker for their dedicated care.

A Memorial Service will be announced at a later date.



Photos, memories and condolences may be shared through www.parkmemorial.com



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The Turn Indoor Golf and Lounge photo

Blake Simon (left, in grey) and Noah Simon (right, in green) of Team On-Site Glass proudly hold their trophy after winning The Turn's Cold Weather Classic tournament on February 2nd.



Whitecourt Legion

Notice To all Members:

Annual General Meeting and Installation of Officers
Thursday March 12, 2026 at 1900 hrs (7:00 p.m.)
In the Legion Hall. It is a special evening!
All members are welcome!

Local news printed on local newsprint

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Public Auction Town of Whitecourt

Notice is hereby given that, under the provisions of the Municipal Government Act, the Town of Whitecourt will offer for sale, by public auction, at the Whitecourt Town Office, 5004-52 Avenue, Whitecourt, Alberta, on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., the following lands:

Roll 003186	Lot 6	Block 1	Plan 1324870	Acres 2.24	C. of T. 132369947+1		
Roll 008084	Pt. of Sec. NE	Sec. 26	Twp. 59	Rge. 12	M. W5M	Acres 14.5	C. of T. 062388869

Each parcel will be offered for sale, subject to a reserve bid and to the reservations and conditions contained in the existing certificate of title.

The land is being offered for sale on an "as is, where is" basis, and the Town of Whitecourt makes no representation and gives no warranty whatsoever as to the adequacy of service, soil conditions, zoning, land use districting, building and development conditions, absence or presence of environmental contamination, vacant possession, the developability of the subject land for any intended use by the purchaser, or otherwise.

The Town of Whitecourt may, after the public auction, become the owner of any parcel of land not sold at the public auction.

Terms: Cash or certified cheque, 10% deposit to accompany auction bid, with sale transaction completion in 30 days. GST will apply if applicable.

Redemption may be effected by payment of all arrears of taxes and costs at any time prior to sale. There is no right to pay tax arrears after the property is declared sold.

Dated at Whitecourt, Alberta, February 5, 2026

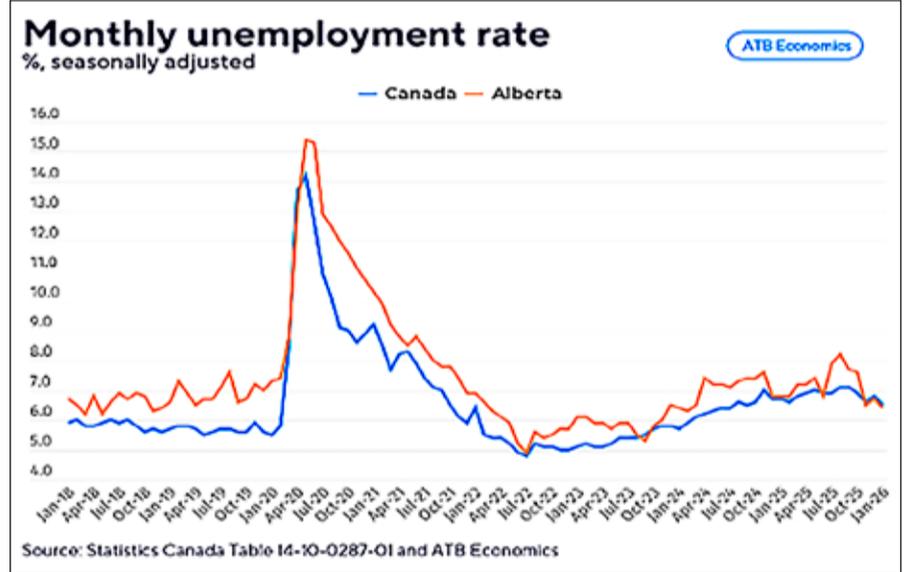
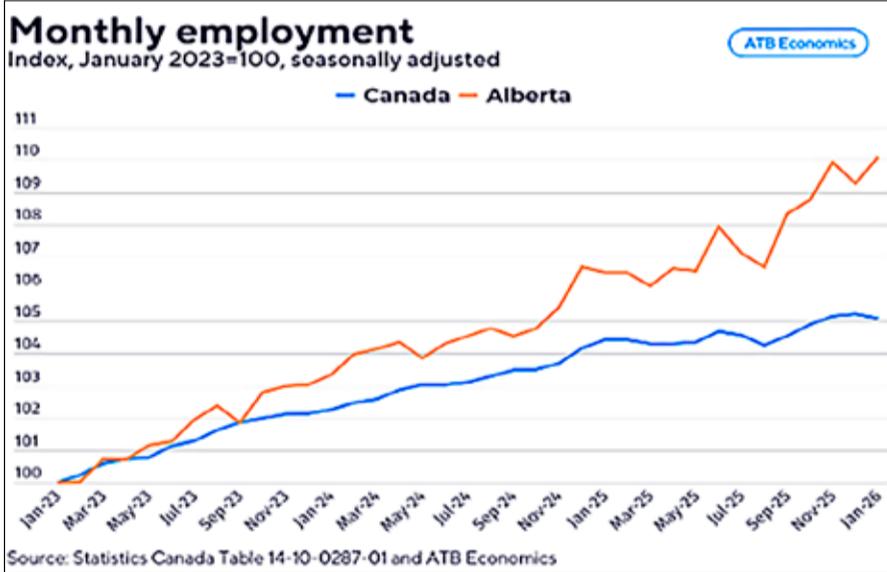
Krista Spivak, Finance Department

Feathered friends



Kim Bennett was out enjoying the groomed trails in the area when she decided to stop for a break at the Whitecourt Trailblazer's Carson Cabin. During a previous visit, a few very friendly birds came to say hello, and she was hoping to see them again. To her delight, the birds returned and gave her a memory she won't soon forget.

Mixed review: Employment rises in Alberta, falls nationally



By Mark Parsons, ATB ECONOMICS

It was a soft, though somewhat mixed, report for the Canadian labour market to start the year. Employment fell 24.8K in January, led by losses in Ontario. But the unemployment rate dipped from 6.8% to 6.5% as fewer people looked for work, and December jobs were revised up ever so slightly (+10.1K vs 8.2K previously).

It's been a roller-coaster ride in the labour market. The autumn months saw a resurgence of job growth following a summer cooldown. Amid the trade war, talk of recession was

replaced with talk of resiliency. But we have warned that Canada was likely overdue for a setback given that forward-looking surveys pointed to soft hiring intentions and the economy itself has slowed (Q4 GDP is tracking slightly negative). January's report is a reminder of that.

A key theme for 2026 will be much slower population growth - this means, fewer jobs that need to be added each month to hold the jobless rate steady (all things equal).

Alberta's labour market - The year of rebalancing

Alberta posted a solid gain of 20.3K, entirely

due to full-time jobs. It was enough to pull down the unemployment rate from 6.7% to 6.4% - its lowest since February 2024. Alberta leads all provinces in year-over-year employment growth at 3.4% vs. 0.6% nationally.

Digging into the details, over half the monthly gain in January came from the goods-producing industries, led by construction and manufacturing. Finance, insurance and real estate led the charge for the service sector.

Over the last two years, the Alberta economy has churned out jobs, but struggled to keep pace with the

people looking. The result: elevated unemployment. That theme has changed as of late, with unemployment off its post-pandemic peak of 8.2% in August 2025. That is, jobs have more than kept up with job seekers. This will be easier to do in 2026, as population growth slows considerably.

Does today's report change our view of the Alberta labour market? It was a much stronger start than we were expecting and, on its own, it would be enough to upgrade our forecast. But it's only one month. We expect these readings to be choppy given the tough geopolitical backdrop.

Our December forecast for 6.5% average unemployment and 2.8% employment growth in 2026 looks reasonable for now, but we now see some upside to that forecast.

We are still looking for a more forceful rotation into goods-sector hiring, which tends to anchor broader gains in the province. After a year of flat growth, January's jump in the goods sector is reassuring. However, the construction gains may be difficult to sustain given the expected cooldown in home building. Oil and gas employment dipped again, consistent with the recent pullback in

oil prices, and with a flat profile for investment, we don't expect much there.

Not enough for the Bank of Canada to cut

Despite the soft jobs report, it won't be enough for the Bank of Canada to cut at the next meeting in our view. Core inflation is still sticky above target and the Bank is already at the low end of its neutral range. We maintain our forecast for the Bank of Canada to hold this year.

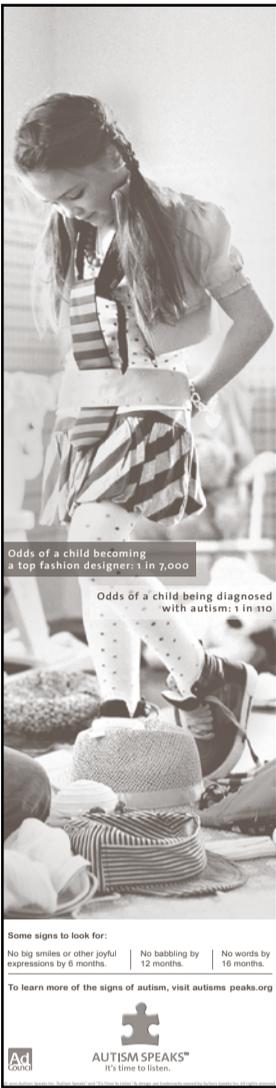




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Town Council update

The 2025 Municipal Enforcement Annual Report has been accepted as information by Whitecourt Town Council. The report is prepared annually for the Alberta Solicitor General, and outlines activities conducted by Municipal Enforcement Services. Over the course of the year, 2,794 activities were logged by Whitecourt Peace Officers. Whitecourt Town Council has adopted the 2026 Economic Development & Tourism Strategic Plan. The Plan builds on progress we made in 2025, and outlines steps we are taking to support our local businesses, and drive economic growth and investment over the next year. Download the plan from our website at www.whitecourt.ca/business/invest-in-whitecourt

whitecourt.ca/business/invest-in-whitecourt Council has adopted a bylaw amendment to a Local Improvement Bylaw related to an improvement tax that is paid by Millar Western Forest Products for erosion control measures that were installed along the Athabasca River bank. The land tied to the local improvement tax has been subdivided, and the amendment ensures the bylaw accurately reflects the current legal description of the benefiting property. Council has made appointments to the Capital Region Assessment Services Commission as part of Whitecourt's membership on the Commission. The Commission is a regional board that hears appeals as part

of the annual property tax assessment process. A Special Meeting of Council has been scheduled for 3:00pm on April 8, 2026 to discuss the 2026 Budget. Whitecourt and Woodlands County Councils have organized a Joint Regional Collaboration session in March. The session will allow Council to have open discussion on the shared vision for regional collaboration, and identify goals and areas of opportunity for partnerships. Council has amended the Whitecourt FireSmart Working Group's membership to include representation by Millar Western Forest Products. Whitecourt Mayor Ray Hilts and Councillor Mike Braun will be attending the Rural Municipalities

of Alberta Convention with Woodlands County Council in March. Attendance at the event will provide Town representatives the opportunity to hear rural perspectives on current issues alongside Woodlands County representatives. Whitecourt has proclaimed June 13, 2026 as Lemonade Day. Community Futures Yellowhead East is hosting the 2026 Lemonade Day event that teaches youth how to start own and operate their own business - a lemonade stand. Registration to the program is open until May 25, and further information can be found online at <https://lemonadeday.org/northern-alberta> Councillor Serena Lapointe was appointed to the Ad Hoc Culture & Events Centre Partnership/Sponsorship Committee.

Letter to the Editor policy

The Press welcomes readers to write letters to the Editor. A maximum of 300 words is preferred but not necessary. Letters must carry a first name or two initials with surname and include an address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to editing. Please email letters to wctpress@gmail.com.



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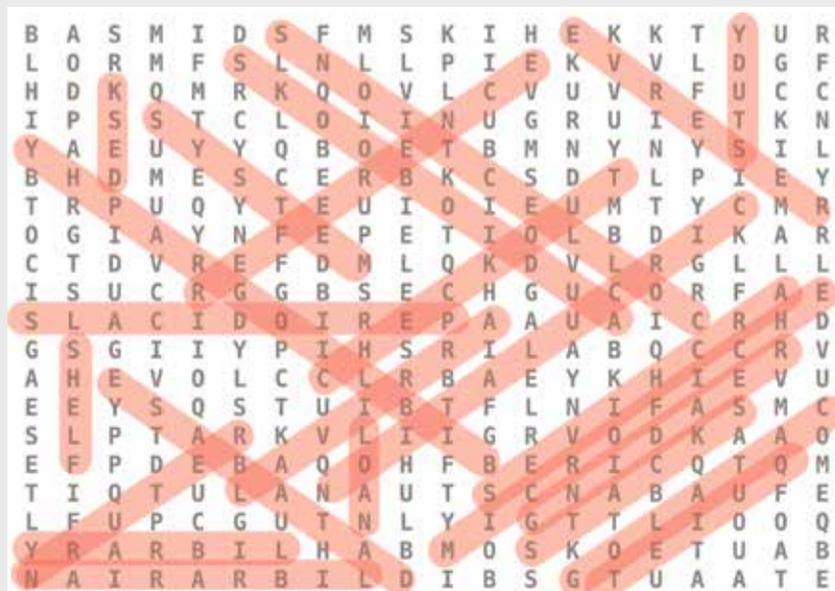
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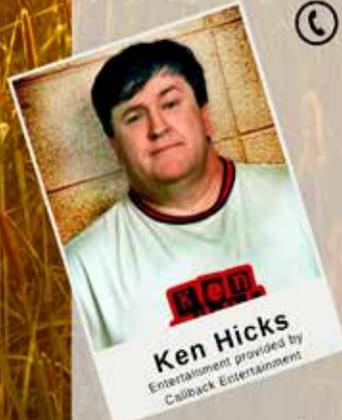
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Westward Community Centre

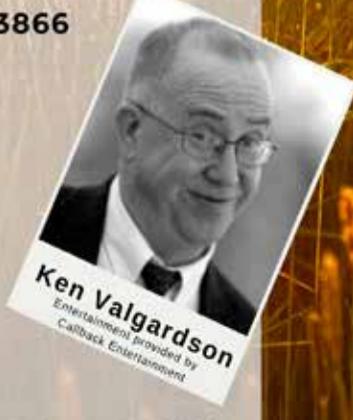
Friday March 6, 2026 | 5:30 pm DOORS OPEN

\$40 ADULTS	\$15 6 - 12 YRS	FREE 5 YRS & UNDER
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☎ 1-866-584-3866



Ken Hicks
Entertainment provided by Callback Entertainment



Ken Valgardson
Entertainment provided by Callback Entertainment

Pre-register before 12 pm, February 27, 2026

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