

Weppler gives seminar on the art of plowing

Minto farmer speaks on his experience as first local to compete at World Championships

BY DAN MCNEE
EXPRESS STAFF

HARRISTON – Ever since Carman Weppler made that first opening split at the ripe old age of 10, plowing became his identity from there on out.

The Minto farmer and now Wellington County plowing legend shared his competition experiences over the last couple years with a full house at the Harriston Carnegie Library on Feb. 10, an event hosted by the Harriston Historical Society. The HHS is also currently hosting an exhibit – *Plowing Matches – a Yearly Tradition* – on the library's top floor, and there was only one man they considered having lead a discussion on what has become an integral part of the area's agricultural identity over the past century.

After finishing as the Ontario Reserve Champion at the 2013 International Plowing Match in Mitchell, Weppler made national

news in 2014 when he won both the Ontario and Canadian conventional plowing titles. The distinction earned him the right to be one of two competitors to represent Canada at the 2015 World Championships (World Ploughing Contest) in Denmark this past October.

But before accomplishing this impressive feat, Weppler had been putting in his time in the trenches since 1999, the year he moved up to the Ontario competitive class from junior. After spending a lot of time near the bottom of the Ontario standings, in the early 2000s Weppler met his wife and started a family, and it was this immense family support that really allowed him to take things up a notch in the field of competition.

"It was this change in my mental game that took my plowing to the next level," Weppler told the crowd on hand last Wednesday night. "Little by little I started to move up the ranks."

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Dan McNee/Express Photo

DENIED – Norwell Redmen girls hockey goaltender Amanda Gans holds her ground despite being crashed into by a Wellington Heights opponent during the second period of their District 4 matchup on Feb. 11 in Palmerston. Despite a stellar performance by Gans, the Wolverines (9-1-2) blanked the Redmen (8-3-1) 2-0. Both teams advance to the District 4 playoff semifinals, which went yesterday (Feb. 16). The finals run Feb. 18.

CLIFFORD WOMAN FACES OVER 80 CHARGE

TOWN OF MINTO – On Feb. 5, 2016 at approximately 3:58 p.m., members of the Wellington County Ontario Provincial Police received a report of a possible impaired driver operating a 2008 Ford pickup truck southbound on Highway 9 in the Town of Minto.

Police located the vehicle stopped in the live lane at Queen Street at Union Street. Officers spoke with the female driver briefly and detected the odour of alcohol on her breath. A roadside screening device test was conducted which resulted in a fail. She was taken to a local OPP operations centre for further testing.

Her driver's license has been suspended for 90 days and the vehicle impounded for a period of seven days as per statute.

A 55-year-old Clifford woman has been charged with over 80 mgs contrary to the Criminal Code of Canada. She is to appear in Guelph criminal court on March 1, 2016 to answer to the charge.

Local author doubles efforts to raise wrongful benefit denial awareness

BY SHANNON BURROWS
EXPRESS MANAGING EDITOR

PALMERSTON – Jokelee Vanderkop knows first-hand the turmoil and upheaval one can experience battling for legitimate insurance benefits.

She's made it her mission to share that experience and information with others, because "Having a legitimate claim, medically backed by one's doctors, is no guarantee that an insurer will pay the benefits for which an individual has paid," she said.

That was indeed Vanderkop's experience, and it was an experience that inspired her 2013 book, *So You Think You're Covered! The Insurance Industry Rip-Off*.



Jokelee Vanderkop



Now, Vanderkop has updated and expanded the book with the professional contributions and knowledge she's gleaned on her journey to raise awareness on wrongfully denied benefit

claims.

"The first version was just helping claimants through the process, and this one exposes what is business as usual," Vanderkop explained. "At the root of this is an insurance/medical assessment system that crosses over — whether it's with auto insurance claimants, whether it's with WSIB claimants, or extended health claimants for disability. They're all sent to the same assessment doctors, and . . . unless you're writing most of your reports in favour of the insurer . . . you're not going to be retained."

Vanderkop says at least 50 per cent of claims are denied.

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Weppler delivers plowing seminar in Harriston

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Before delving into the World Championships and his experiences there, Weppler broke down the intricacies of competitive plowing.

Aside from the countless and constant adjustments to one's plow and the endless measuring that needs to be made over the course of a run to ensure accuracy, in addition depth, straightness and timing are all crucial elements of a run from the time a plowman or plow woman begins their opening split, works their crown, casts off, makes their rounds and ends with (hopefully) a tidy finish.

"And it's not just the plowmen who come out to turn up the land, but the spectators who come to decompress from the business of life," said Weppler of being involved in the excitement of a plowing competition.

Using an unfamiliar tractor and borrowed plow at the Worlds in Denmark, Weppler finished an impressive sixth overall in the stubble portion (his best event) of the competition on Day 1. On Day 2, facing a tough European field that thrives in the sod aspect of com-

petition, Weppler finished 17th of 27, a terrific placing in a tough event.

The Republic of Ireland took top honours at the 2015 Worlds, with Weppler saying that the European plowmen and their legions of fans take things to a whole other level across the Pond.

"In Ireland, the plowmen are like hockey players or movie stars here," he said with a laugh.

In closing, Weppler spoke with great enthusiasm of the upcoming Minto-hosted IPM in 2016, an event that is sure to bring even more attention to a craft that is growing more in popularity every year. Weppler added that he hopes to return to the World Championships in three years time, where he may again have the opportunity to paint his masterpiece on a plot of land 66 feet wide by 330 feet long.

"It comes with little financial reward and fanfare," he said.

The Harriston Historical Society exhibit, *Plowing Matches – a Yearly Tradition*, runs throughout the month of February on the top floor of the Harriston Carnegie Library.



Dan McNee/Express Photo

MASTER OF HIS CRAFT – Minto farmer and national plowing champion Carman Weppler explains an opening split to the crowd on hand at the Harriston Carnegie Library on Feb. 10. Weppler was the first plowman from the area to compete at the World Plowing Championships, which were most recently held in Denmark in 2015.

Public information sessions scheduled for Upper Grand's French Review

GUELPH – The Upper Grand District School Board is holding four public information sessions on the board's French Review.

The board strives to increase all students' ability to communicate

in French, with Core French and French Immersion (FI) being offered at the elementary and secondary level. Over the past 40 years, the FI program has seen incredible growth and success. However, with this success comes the pressure of managing the sustainability of the program.

A report developed by the board's French Review Committee contains recommendations to address a number of issues, including sig-

nificant pressure accommodating students, multiple boundary reviews and difficulty hiring enough qualified teachers.

The upcoming meetings will provide the public with information on the problems, alternatives and recommendations described in the report prepared by the French Review Committee.

Feedback forms will be made available at the meetings and online at www.ugdsb.on.ca/frenchre-

view.

Meetings will be held at four locations across the district. All are welcome to attend.

Centre Wellington
Wednesday, Feb. 24, 7-9 p.m.
Centre Wellington DHS (Fergus)

North Wellington
Thursday, March 3, 7-9 p.m.
Wellington Heights SS (Mount Forest)

Dufferin/Orangeville
Thursday, March 10, 7-9 p.m.
Westside SS (Orangeville)

City of Guelph
Wednesday, March 30, 7-9 p.m.
Centennial CVI (Guelph)

For more information on the French Review, and to read the report of the French Review Committee, please visit www.ugdsb.on.ca/frenchreview.

Local author doubles efforts to raise wrongful benefit denial awareness

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"They have a system in place of second opinion medical assess-

ments focused on discounting what your treating physicians have to say. And people don't have a clue how this works. They just think, 'Oh well, if your case was genuine, you would have been paid.' And the problem is the public is completely ignorant of what's going on."

It isn't until people are in this process that they realize the pitfalls and overwhelming obstacles they may be up against, said Vanderkop.

"The crux is the insurer assessment system," she said. "A lot of these assessors are doctors doing assessments, and these same doctors often serve as expert witnesses in court. The problem with a lot of these expert witnesses [is] you pay enough, they'll say what you want. . . there's now a whole bunch of court cases where the judges are starting to speak up."

SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN THERE

After fighting for her own claim, a battle that would last 12 years, Vanderkop finished the original version of *So You Think You're Covered! The Insurance Industry Rip-Off*, which she began penning in 2003. *The Minto Express* first reported in August 2013 on the book launch and Vanderkop's experience.

Vanderkop was involved in a head-on collision in February 1997. The crash cost her career as a secondary school teacher and resulted in multiple health conditions including chronic pain and brain impairment.

At her expense, the automobile insurance provider and employer's extended health provider battled over providing long-term disability. She explained the process saw her stripped of all her benefits oth-

er than a conciliatory stipend by the health carrier while both insurers "duked it out."

She said she learned later that the car insurer had already determined to cut off her benefits regardless of what transpired during mediation — even though she qualified for those benefits.

Vanderkop was without income from 2003 to 2009 and lived on her credit line, existing on \$30 per week for groceries.

So You Think You're Covered! is a tool Vanderkop she says will inform readers on how insurance providers can attempt to deny claims, and what claimants can do to help ensure they receive the benefits for which they've been paying.

At the beginning of 2015, Vanderkop set to work on the updated version. She explained her

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The Minto Express: 519-343-2440

The Wingham Advance Times: 519-357-2320

The Mount Forest Confederate: 519-323-1550

The Arthur Enterprise News: 519-323-1550

Clifford Horticultural Society learns floral arrangements for fun

BY BONNIE WHITEHEAD
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

CLIFFORD – Wayne E. Pfeffer showed how simple it can be to make beautiful floral arrangements at the Clifford and District Horticultural Society meeting held Tuesday, Jan. 26 at the Community Hall in Clifford.

Pfeffer loves creating floral designs and finds it challenging to get others interested in design. He learned with the trial, error, and practice method.

You may get frustrated, but one day you will find you are happy with the results, he said.

Following a Valentine's Day theme, he started with carnations, daisies, redwood and fern in an underwater display. In competition, you would fill the clear vase to the rim with distilled water to avoid bubbles and cover the mechanics of the design, the "flower frog." Pebbles, marbles, shells and glass beads work well, however he soon discovered some beads may float and others will sink.

He filled a vase with tulips and greenery, added sprigs of greenery to oasis to form a wreath, and filled a sleigh with red carnations and winter greenery. Add pieces

of wood, candles, or whimsical touches, but do not add any artificial materials unless specified in the design guidelines.

In a circular arrangement, there are basic rules. Add greenery first, large flowers at the bottom, smaller ones at the top to see a pleasing balance from every angle, and add something like baby's breath for the finishing touch.

He invited Helen Braun and Jim Measures to create a design in a coffee cup. They were handed flowers, plant materials and a pair of scissors. Within minutes, the two had created show-worthy entries and received applause from the crowd and good scores from the judge. Simply stated: Whether in a teacup or a foot tall in a sleigh, if the design makes you happy, then it's a winner.

Jean Yenssen thanked Pfeffer for his flower arrangements and assured him that everyone heard at least one idea to try next time. She was appreciative of the sleigh design donated for the raffle.

President Vic Palmer noted the society did not receive tulips through the grant, but 1,400 bulbs were donated and planted at the cenotaph park. The executive named June



Bonnie Whitehead Photo

FLORAL FUN – President Vic Palmer introduced June Ide as the newest director and Jean Yenssen thanked Wayne E. Pfeffer for his floral arrangements at the Clifford and District Horticultural Society meeting held Tuesday, Jan. 26 at the Community Hall in Clifford.

Ide a director who will become part of the decision-making team for the society.

The society has put a hold on the youth program. They will apply for a \$200 tree grant and look into planting trees and celebrating Arbour Day and National Tree Day.

In new business, the membership kits will be handed out in March. Carpooling will be arranged if

interest is shown in going to the Stratford Garden Show the beginning of March. Start now to keep a record of the volunteer hours to submit at the end of the year. Your volunteering efforts have an impact on the village and visitors.

Raffle prizes were won by Rita Measures, Karen Dowler, Blanche Freeman, Eleanore Gerber, Ann Bowen, Bruce Hutchison and Mar-

ion Wylie.

A lunch prepared by Karen Dowler, Blanche Freeman and Elsie Grummett was enjoyed at the end of the evening.

The next meeting will be held March 22 with guest speaker Linda Henhoeffter.

All meetings are free to attend, but bring along a toonie for a chance to win a prize in the raffle draw.

Local author doubles efforts to raise wrongful benefit denial awareness

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latest work now includes a completely new second part and additional advice for readers currently going through the claims process, or those who wish to educate themselves in case they ever do.

"I was actually out of copies," Vanderkop said of her original work. "I was going to write a second book based on what is part two here . . . [but] I realized this was so vital that I needed to get this information out sooner as opposed to later and it was going to be much better within this [original] book."

Included within, she explained, is the section useful to claimants on how to go through the process, what they are up against, and how to cope; the second part attempts to expose and force legislators to look at what's going on in the industry; and in the third part, an advice section "Which now contains even more comprehensive advice than before."

After passionately devoting years to researching and writing on this

topic and raising awareness among the general public, Vanderkop said, throughout this latest rewrite, even she was surprised at how deeply broken the system is.

"What came as a surprise is the system really is just set up this way to be advantageous to insurers and not the claimant."

STRIVING FOR CHANGE

Despite the adversity, Vanderkop said she has hope for change within the system.

"The optimism I have is to inform the public. My optimism is to make the public wake up and realize this can be them. Only when the public says, 'Oh, my gosh — is this reality?' are we going to see change."

"The public psyche has to come to terms that corruption and underhandedness is alive and well. . . the industry has tons of money . . . they do complete campaigns on fraud. We all know someone who's been fraudulent, we've heard a story about that. We im-

mediately think it extends way beyond, whereas it's the reverse. That's all we hear. We don't hear the other side because the legitimate claimants are muzzled."

"No one is going to put themselves

through years of this [process] if they're fraudulent," Vanderkop said.

The book will be available by the end of the month. The release date will be posted in The Minto

Express. For more information on Vanderkop, wrongful benefit denials, and to order your copy of *You Think You're Covered! The Insurance Industry Rip-Off*, visit www.deniedbenefitclaims.com

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