

Moonlight Madness a community affair



At just four weeks old, Levi Seaborn made his first public appearance at the Hastings Highlands Library on Friday, Nov. 27 to celebrate Moonlight Madness in Santa's arms with his brother Arlo alongside other young patrons and their families.

SARAH VANCE Special to This Week

By Sarah Vance

Despite freezing rain warnings, Hastings Highlands was open for business on Friday, Nov. 27 as locals and cottagers travelled to Maynooth to celebrate Moonlight Madness, a project of the Maynooth and Hastings Highlands Business Association, Downtown Affairs Committee.

"This is the third annual Moonlight Madness," said Joe Shulman, proprietor of Wildewood Gallery. "We begin our planning in September each year, after taking a short summer break."

The shops were open late; spaghetti was served at the Old Community Centre; Mr. and Ms. Claus were at the library; carollers could be heard on local roads; skates were exchanged at the outdoor rink; and a fellow of the Canadian Geographical Society performed at the town's international hostel.

"There is a lot happening tonight and lots of opportunities," said Canadian artist Nancy Brookes, proprietor of the Old Peterson Road Gallery, on Maynooth's main drag. "We will be open until 9 p.m. and anyone who makes a purchase at a local store will have their name entered into a gift basket draw."

A well known artist, Brookes has been painting for more than 35 years. Her gallery offers collections from other local artists such as Ketha Neuman, Arne Roosman and David Kay, which are displayed alongside an eclectic collection of antiques and consignment pieces. Local art collectors may also be interested in the fact that The Old Peterson Road Gallery boasts a collection of about half a dozen Earl W. Smith paintings, which are truly scarce and a challenge to obtain.

"The shop is very busy in the summer months with a strong, loyal clientele, but slower in the off-season," said Brookes. "This is also my studio. I paint when I am in the gallery, teach watercolour classes and I also run a framing business."

Although November's Beaver Moon, a name derived from the tradition of setting traps before the waters freeze, was waning behind heavy clouds, there was only growth for this project of the Downtown Affairs Committee, on Friday night.

"Tonight we are offering discount coupons to encourage people to make a purchase at our local area shops," said Tracy Hagar, Hastings Highlands councillor.

Christine Hass, in her capacity as the coordinator of the town's popular farmers' market, started cooking tomato sauce at noon, at the Old Community Centre. She was joined by a team which included Nancy Capstick, Joyce Dale, Terry Hass, Sandy Barnes, as well as Tracy Hagar and friends, who hosted a spaghetti dinner for more than 75 locals and cottagers.

"There were a lot of people from Mink and Papineau Lake here tonight, mostly four-season cottagers who come up every weekend," said Christine Hass. "We also saw a lot of people joining us from Bancroft."

One of Hastings Highlands's greatest assets continues to be the significant amount of seasonal tourists and cottage associations that

are organized on the region's lakes. These include Baptiste, Diamond, Kamaniskeg, Papineau, Mink, Salmon and Lake St. Peter. The Kamaniskeg Waterway boasts more than 400 property owners while the Papineau Lake Community Association represents 136 associates. These cottagers and their activities form a vital presence in Hastings Highlands.

Christine and her volunteers served food until it ran out, at approximately 8 p.m. and then some dinner guests took to the streets to sing Christmas carols while awaiting a performance from Canadian folk musician Ian Tamblyn at the local hostel.

"The apple raisin bread pudding ran out first," said Christine Hass. "We also served a gluten free apple crisp this year to go with our homemade crusty rolls, caesar salad and spaghetti with meatballs."

"The food was delicious and everyone's appetite was satisfied," said Kevin Hockley, a local artist who delivers commission pieces for clients such as the Royal Ontario Museum and as far away as the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama.

The money raised by Christine and friends will be applied to the cost of running children's activities that occur annually at the Hastings Highlands Library on Labour Day weekend as part of Maynooth Madness.

This dinner raises about \$1,200 annually and is one of many fundraising activities that help the summer activities run so successfully.

"Our community has been hosting that summer event [Maynooth Madness] for 26 years," said Christine Hass. "Tonight's spaghetti dinner offsets the costs of providing the many children's activities that include snacks, the popular Balloon Man and kids crafts, at no charge, during the busy Labour Day celebration."

Down the road, Mr. and Ms. Claus were entertaining local children at the Hastings Highlands Library. Assistant librarian Kristin Seaborn, made a guest appearance with her husband Noel, as their son Arlo introduced his newborn brother Levi to the patrons. From the outdoor community rink, Skate Maynooth hosted a skate and helmet exchange which began in the early afternoon and which contributes to making this popular winter activity accessible for everyone.

"After six years of awesome Friday night skates I have decided to hand the skates over to someone else," said Wendy Keating, outgoing Skate Maynooth co-ordinator. "Activities will continue with Joyce Dale running the show."

At the Arlington Hostel, Tamblyn entertained guests, many of whom reserved rooms and travelled long distances to attend the performance. At the Arlington, Frances White's name was drawn as winner of the gift basket, which included a small token from every participating shop.

"We sold the first two tickets for Tamblyn's concert to off-season tourists a few months ago," said Shulman. "After purchasing tickets they booked rooms at the Arlington Hostel."

A writer in residence at Carleton University, Tamblyn has released 38 CDs; holds an honorary doctorate from Lakehead University; and received the prestigious songwriter of the year award in 2010 from the Canadian Folk Music Society.

"I am one half of the marketing committee with Dianne Hammond who did the stunning graphics that appeared in both papers and which adorn all the local participating business," said Shulman. "The Downtown Affairs Committee is headed up by SunRun Pantry owner Natalie Wood."