

New Optimist Club busy in North Hastings



By Jim Eadie

A new volunteer organization devoted to making the world and community a better place for our children, the Tri-Township Optimist Club (TTOC), has hit the road running in North Hastings with enthusiasm and plenty of energy.

At the Jan. 27 regular meeting of Wollaston Township council, Club president Linda Patterson told councillors that after nearly 2 years of getting organized, the club has received their charter and is preparing to make a difference in the three municipalities of Limerick Township, Wollaston Township, and the Township of Tudor and Cashel.

"This will include all of the children who come to the Coe Hill Public School," said Patterson. "We are very excited to introduce our new club, and some of our plans for the next six months."

Council gave the club permission to post a new club sign on Hwy 620 at the west entrance to Wollaston near Glen Alda, subject to making arrangements with the roads department.

Patterson and her family moved to Coe Hill from Lucan Ontario where she was a member of an extremely active Optimist Club, which among many other things raised money for playground equipment, epi-pens for the schools, spelling bee's, and lunches.

Looking for a small rural community to settle the family, the Patterson's discovered Coe Hill after taking a wrong turn off Hwy 62.

"Look at this little place," she said. "It has everything we were looking for - a little school, a little library, a park, and outdoor rink, a little downtown, and a lake just down the street - all within walking distance." Patterson and her family decided to move to Coe Hill where they currently operate The Old Piano Eatery, and brought their Optimist Club enthusiasm with them.

"There is so much potential here," she said. "Optimist hopes to bring out the best in the community, support the children in any way, keep our children in our communities and promote leadership skills for them that will last them their lifetimes. We want to make a big difference in children's lives, give them good role models, and hope. Healthy children will follow, given a healthy planet, and a healthy community."

Already, the club has given money to support music projects for the students at the Coe Hill Public School (CHPS), and arranged for the donation of 25 ukuleles to the school for a ukulele band. Currently the club is providing refreshments at the outdoor rink on Friday's when the CHPS students have their weekly skate.

The summer event calendar will include operating a canteen at the pavilion in Coe Hill, an Easter egg hunt downtown on Apr. 4, and their 2nd annual water volleyball tournament on Jun 27. The club also hopes to partner with the municipality for Canada Day celebrations on Jul. 1, with plans for a free BBQ, parade, bicycle rodeo, entertainment and games for the children. Other projects presently under discussion include a possible band camp during the summer, and a soapbox derby.

Presently the local club has 17 members who meet monthly. Patterson notes that new members are always welcome, and she promises fun times doing good work in the community.

Currently the club has an upcoming Valentine's Day Draw for a giant basket of handmade organic fair-trade chocolate from the Maple Leaf Chocolate Company, a local small business. "It will also include truffles freshly made just before the draw," said TTOC member Tia Alexander, "as well as coffee's and hot chocolate."

On Mar 7 the club is holding an old fashioned "box social" at the Royal Canadian Legion in Coe Hill. Participants will prepare a lunch for two, and place it in a decorated box. The boxes will be auctioned off, and the purchaser will then relax and have lunch with the mystery lunch maker.

According to their web site, Optimist International is a worldwide volunteer organization made up of more than 2,500 local Clubs whose Members work each day to make the future brighter by bringing out the best in children, in their communities, and in themselves.

The purpose is to develop optimism as a philosophy of life; to promote an active interest in good government and civic affairs; to inspire respect for the law; to promote patriotism and work for international accord and friendship among all people; to aid and encourage the development of youth, in the belief that the giving of one's self in service to others will advance the well-being of humankind, community life and the world.

Further information about the local TTOC and their activities can be obtained by calling Patterson at 613-334-5330.