

Tavistock Gazette.

Serving Tavistock and area since 1895

VOLUME 125 • NUMBER 34

TAVISTOCK, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9, 2021

\$1.19 + .06 HST = \$1.25

**COVID
-19**
WEEK 64

THIS 'N' THAT

This past weekend felt like summer; hot and humid with temperatures over 30 degrees ... Premier Ford announced last week that school will not go back to in-class learning for the rest of this school year ... The provincial stay-at-home order expired on June 2 and the first phase of re-opening will be starting this Friday, June 11 ... Ontario reported 525 new COVID-19 on Monday, which was the lowest daily number of new cases since September 27 ... across the nation, over 61% of all Canadians have received at least one dose of the COVID vaccine while 7.5% are fully vaccinated ... There was lots of activity around the Gazette building on Saturday morning as some old equipment was removed with some tractor help ... after rallying from a 3-1 series deficit to knock out the Leafs, the Montreal Canadiens are still rolling and lead Winnipeg 3-0 in their second-round playoff series ... Flags being lowered in the township in remembrance of the 215 indigenous children whose bodies were discovered at the residential school in B.C.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Happy birthday today, **June 9**, to Hannah Ferguson (7) and anniversary for Bruce and Donna Swartzentruber (48th).

June 10: Happy birthday to Garner Zehr (5) and anniversary for Phil and Joyce Roth (43rd).

June 11: Happy birthday to Mateo Roman Reyes (2), Jack Bisch (9), Benjamin Bisch (9), and Fran Eekhof, and anniversaries for Keith and Eileen Erb (56th), and Brad and Laura Witzel (10th).

June 12: Happy birthday to Kierra Mason (3), Kaelynn Schlegel (12), Carson Gilmore (12), Sophia Bailey and Nicholas Danen, and anniversary for Tim and Jayne Whetstone.

June 13: Happy birthday to Ava Brooks (8), Shelby Zehr (14) and Jaris Marriott.

June 14: Happy birthday to Rianna Forthuber (16), Payge Schlosser (19), and Julia Harmer (19).

June 15: Happy birthday to Nathaniel Berg (6) and Rylee Weldrick (6).

And a happy belated 61st wedding anniversary for Ralph and Irene Baker who celebrated on **June 4**, and for Brian and Elysia Cook who had their 7th anniversary on **June 7**.

Congratulations to all!

Alisha Wilson's Journey Towards Helping People With Horses

By Rose Danen

Horses have been a part of Alisha Wilson's life since she was in diapers. "It's just in my blood. It's a way of life," said Wilson.

Her grandfather was a western rider and a huge lover of horses, and he passed that love on to Wilson's mother who, in turn, passed it on to her.

Now Wilson has taken her love of horses and channeled it into Transitions Equine Assisted Learning, a business where she teaches people leadership and transferable life skills with the help of a horse.

"I decided to take the leap, which was terrifying. But I did and now I love it."

Wilson first began thinking about starting an equine business after she was laid off from her job as a financial advisor at the CIBC Tavistock branch. It took her a while to figure out what her next steps would be, but after receiving overwhelming outreach from her former clients, she realized that she needed a job where she could help people.

"It made me realize that I made a difference. It sparked me to make a difference in a different way."

Wilson heard about an EAL Facilitator Certification program being offered at Dreamwinds Equine Assisted Learning Centre in Bradford, Ont. and decided that she could become an EAL facilitator and help people that way. The program, which originated from Cartier Farms in Saskatchewan, teaches individuals how to teach life skills to others through working with horses and riding exercises.

"Really, it's about finding the horse-human parallel," said Wilson. "They really taught us about understanding that humans need leadership, communication and boundaries, and horses also need leadership, communication and boundaries."

After completing her certification, Wilson opened Transitions EAL in April and began running sessions out of Millside Stables located east of Innerkip. So far business has been really good, according to Wilson.

"I'm witnessing a lot of really awesome stuff - changes in the people I'm working with for the good."

Transitions EAL offers a wide range of services both on and off horseback, including youth leadership workshops, date nights, corporate team building, and customizable individual sessions.

Wilson said she believes in the program because it helps people improve their communication and come out of their shell by harnessing a horse's adept ability to sense the subtlest changes in their surroundings.

"As you learn how to read their body language, it's really easy to see how they are so helpful in teaching life skills and



ROSE DANEN / TAVISTOCK GAZETTE

leadership because they provide immediate feedback," said Wilson.

One experience at Transitions EAL is particularly memorable and has solidified her conviction for this work.

Wilson recalls teaching an individual session, and the student's confidence began to slip as the obstacles got harder. "The pony picked up on it and the pony turned into what I call a bully," Wilson said.

They stopped the exercise, and Wilson began asking questions to help the student figure out what she could do differently to get through the obstacles.

"She got very emotional. She had an 'aha' moment and was like 'Do you think my confidence is the reason I get bullied?'"

The student realized that how she asserted herself not only impacted how the pony treated her, but also how the children at school were treating her, Wilson explains.

"I just about hit the ground. I said 'Yeah that could be. How you carry yourself - people can pick up on that too.'"

Wilson said that after that, the student completely came out of her shell as they continued the program.

"It was profound for me and for her parents too," said Wilson. "To me, that shows that I can help people."

Transitions EAL is a continuation of Wilson's lifelong journey in the equine world.

Her journey began in western riding, just like her grandfather. She rode horses competitively when she was younger in Florida where her family had lived since 1992. When she graduated high school, she went to work at a ranch in Florida.

Since her family moved from Canada to Florida when she was six, all of Wilson's extended family still lived in the area, her dad's parents being from Wellesley and her mom's parents from Thorndale. She'd return to Canada and stay with her grandparents every summer.

"In 2003, I came back to visit with my grandparents and I met my husband while I was here and never left," said Wilson.

Coming back to Canada to live in New Hamburg with her husband, there weren't a lot of western horse barns in the area, so Wilson slowly lost touch with horse riding. She worked in New Hamburg for a while until she went on maternity leave for her son, Nicolas. Her family then moved to Hickson and she began working at CIBC where she worked for over 10 years.

Through working at the bank, Wilson got to know everybody in Tavistock and began getting involved in the community. She joined the Tavistock Fair Board, became a 4-H volunteer, and was a member of the Tavistock Chamber of Commerce.

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