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# RAT CREEK PRESS

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PH: 479.6285 EMAIL: info@ratcreek.org

## Rat Creek Press wins crime prevention award

TRACEY COMEAU

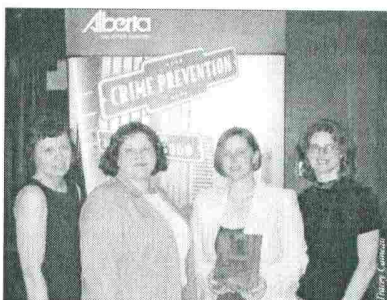
The Rat Creek Press collected its first ever award at this year's Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security Crime Prevention ceremony held on May 19.

The awards were divided into the categories of youth leadership, individuals, community organizations, businesses, media, and police members. There were 14 awards given out.

Nominated in the media category, the Rat Creek Press received the award for serving as the voice of north central Edmonton and giving the public a medium with which to share information on issues concerning the community.

"It's nice to have our work recognized," said Karen Mykietka, the Rat Creek Press' managing editor. "We don't write with awards in mind; we write with our community in mind. But it's nice when the two come together like that," she added.

Candidates for the award had to be nominated by a third party, as well as receive letters of support. The Rat Creek Press was suggested as an award



MEMBERS OF THE RAT CREEK TEAM AT THE CRIME PREVENTION AWARDS. FROM LEFT: JOY DYCK, CHERYL WALKER, KAREN MYKIETKA AND DAWN FREEMAN

recipient by Safedmonton, a branch of the city government

that focuses on reducing and preventing crime in the community.

"We really wanted to support work that is creating awareness... giving a voice to communities," said Wendy Walker, a representative for Safedmonton. "The Rat Creek Press was one of the first names put forward, and we were all in agreement that we wanted to support the nomination." Also among the award

winners was the Community Action Project Development Team (CAP), well known for lobbying for the removal of the Cloisters Apartments. The team's great work and effort proved fruitful when the apartments came down, to the collective sigh of relief from the Norwood community.

Harvey Cenaiko, Alberta's solicitor general and minister of public security, applauded the awards recipients.

"You are there for your community...you are there for your neighbours," Cenaiko said. "The cream always rises to the top."

The annual awards ceremony is held during the Alberta Crime Prevention Week in mid-May.

## Notorious Cloisters site to be redeveloped into owner-occupied housing Habitat for Humanity gets the nod to build on Trust Fund lots in Norwood

CAP DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Habitat for Humanity Edmonton will build three triplexes on the old Cloisters apartment site at 114 Avenue and 96 Street after being named the successful bidder by the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund (EHTF).

The announcement, made May 1, comes after almost three years of concerted efforts by the neighbourhood through the Community Action Project (CAP), as well as pressure from Capital Health and the Edmonton Police Service to have the problem Cloisters apartment buildings closed down.

The two buildings, owned by Aboriginal Partners and Youth Society since 2001, were taken control of by EHTF in 2004 and then emptied of tenants. On April 17, 2005, the buildings were demolished.

The Edmonton Housing Trust Fund, working together with CAP, came up with two agreed-upon goal statements:

- To redevelop the site into a safe, healthy, crime-free, non-violent part of the neighbourhood, and
- To have a mutually accountable, supportive relationship for current and future projects in north-central Edmonton.

After neighbourhood consultation through CAP, the Trust Fund issued a call for proposals in December 2005. Habitat for Humanity was the successful applicant from five proposals submitted. Norwood community residents provided their thoughts on the proposals at a public meeting held in January 2006.

"We worked with the neighbourhood to find a suitable use for the land once the demolition had been completed.

The Trustees are extremely pleased with the proposal presented by Habitat for Humanity. We believe it meets the needs of the neighbourhood and provides housing targeted in the Edmonton Community Plan on Housing and Support Services 2005-2009," said Carol Murray, Chair of the EHTF.

The Edmonton Housing Trust Fund will transfer ownership of the lots to Habitat for Humanity and they will construct three, two-storey triplexes featuring a minimum of three bedrooms each.

"As we move forward on the revitalization of this parcel, we fully expect Habitat for Humanity will engage the residents of our area and build on these goal statements to enhance our neighbourhood's character through owner-occupied homes," said Parker Hogan, a member of the CAP Development Team.



THE CLOISTERS APARTMENTS COMING DOWN LAST SPRING

Alfred Nikolai, President & CEO of Habitat for Humanity Edmonton said, "We have agreed to the terms and conditions of the transfer, but have not yet signed the contract." That is expected to occur in the near future. Nikolai added that Habitat plans to start construction of at least one triplex in August, to be finished by Christmas. Depending on the availability of materials and volunteers, all three basements may be poured this year. The other two triplexes would be pre-fabricated in the winter for construction starting in spring 2007.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for Habitat for Humanity and for nine families," said Nikolai. "By building nine new homes in the Norwood neighborhood, Habitat will help to revitalize and strengthen the com-

munity. We look forward to working with the Trust Fund and Norwood residents to continue building homes and hope for families."

Habitat is working with local school officials to identify families that currently reside in the area that could be suitable candidates to be recipients of these houses.

A formal announcement about the volunteers and construction timetable for the first triplex is expected in early June. Nikolai said, "It will be very special for us and for the city, and we hope everyone involved will also be very pleased."

Prior to the beginning of construction, Habitat will be holding a public meeting with the residents, community leagues, representatives from the schools in the area and other stakeholders.

### CONTENTS

Editorial.....	2
Community News.....	3
Local Business.....	4
Culture.....	6, 7
Resident Profile.....	8
Law And Order.....	9
Community News.....	10
Sports And Recreation.....	11
Community Notices.....	12



## Who are your kids hangin' with? Street gangs - the key is prevention

TRACEY COMEAU

We see the graffiti, we hear the horror stories and we cover in fear. But how much do we really know about the street gangs that recruit our youth and leave their mark on our community?

Street gangs are not to be confused with organized crime groups. Street gangs are defined as a structured group of usually adolescents or young adults who frequently use intimidation and violence to commit criminal acts in the hopes of obtaining power, recognition and control.

"The difference between a gang and a group of kids that are hanging out is that gangs usually have a very clearly defined leadership structure, and there's a systemic involvement in crime," says Karen Erickson, the project manager for the Community Solution to Gang Violence.

Bill C-24, which defines criminal organizations, and became a legal definition in 2002, describes a criminal organization as three or more members who have crime as their main purpose and stand to make money by committing criminal acts. A one-time group working together for a single offence is not classified as a criminal organization.

Sgt. Kevin Brezinski of the EPS Gang Unit says that while parents can supply the first means of prevention when it comes to youth joining street gangs, many are unaware of what they can or should do.

"Many times, you ask the

parent who their kids are hanging out with and they say 'Joe down the street,' but you ask what Joe's last name is or what his parents do and they don't know," Brezinski says. "We encourage parents to be aware of what their children are up to...who they associate with."

Parents are also encouraged to listen to their children and let them know no topic is off limits, make homework and school a priority, teach children to think for themselves and be responsible, and focus on a positive future.

Children can become involved with gangs and gang activities at any age. Warning signs include a lack of self-esteem, problems at home or at school, and money being acquired without a reasonable explanation.

The risk of youth joining street gangs also often comes hand in hand with the need to feel accepted, Erickson says.

"Young people need to belong. We all need to belong, and if you can't get that in positive ways then you tend to find negative ways," Erickson adds. She feels that there are many good programs and services available to help curb gang activity, but that there is always more to be done.

Brezinski says the misconceptions in the media about what gangs are and the risks that are involved with gangs sometimes add to their appeal to youth.

"The gang lifestyle is portrayed on TV as being glamor-

ous...it's not glamorous at all," Brezinski says. "Being involved in a gang - you're always looking behind your back, always looking over your shoulder for a rival gang. It's pretty obvious many of our gang members have been murdered over the past six years," he adds.

In 2004, police in Alberta reported 15 gang-related homicides, which was almost double the figure reported in 2003. Quebec had the highest amount of gang-related murders at 18, while Alberta shared second place with B.C., which also sat at 15 murders.

Governments have been cracking down on gangs, making it clear they are not welcome in our neighbourhoods. Anti-gang legislation has increased the severity of penalties for gang members, and law enforcement agencies have lessened their tolerance level towards gang activity.

In Alberta, gang-related criminal activity is stored in databases that are shared among the Criminal Intelligence Service of Alberta, the Edmonton Police Service and the RCMP. A \$2.1 million courtroom was added to the basement of the Edmonton courthouse to handle gang-related cases, and Alberta Justice provided \$8 million between 1998 and 2001 to target gang activity.

"There definitely is a step in the right direction with provincial funding in (preventing) gangs and organized activity," says Brezinski.



### The Community Solution to Gang Violence

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Spruce Avenue Society's

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Spruce Avenue School Gym 11424 - 102 St

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donated by Hole's Greenhouse.

## Second annual spring sweep a success

TRACEY COMEAU

Alberta Avenue's second annual Spring Street Sweep kicked off at the Coliseum Steak and Pizza restaurant on May 16, running for 2 days.

Put on by the Alberta Avenue Business Association (AABA), the Sweep entertained guests such as Mayor Stephen Mandel and New Democrat MLA Brian Mason.

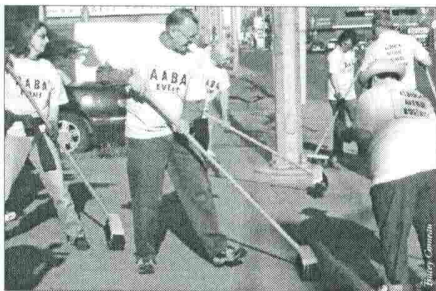
Plenty of volunteers showed up wide-eyed and chipper considering the 8 a.m. start, proudly donned bright yellow shirts announcing their alliance and picked up a broom.

"I think there's incredible spirit in Alberta Avenue...it's just wonderful," Mandel said. "In my humble opinion, this is one of the greatest neighbourhoods in the city."

In addition to the street sweeping, 12 businesses took advantage of the offer to have their store fronts power washed at the reduced price.

Peter Rausch, the Executive Director of the AABA, said he was pleased with the event and the participation, both of which have grown from the event's debut last year.

"The Avenue will look more inviting for customers and residents," Rausch added.



VOLUNTEERS PROUDLY PICKING UP A BROOM FOR THEIR COMMUNITY

TRACEY COMEAU

### STOX COMPUTER SERVICES

**Ph: 819-STOX Fax: 477-7879**  
Robin Stocks has been working with computer technology for seven years and recently started his own computer service business in his home. He specializes in setting up wireless networks, removing viruses and spyware, and other "technology issues" that come along with computers. Stocks says he supports both home and small business computers at an hourly rate of \$21 and non-profit organizations at a reduced rate of \$15/hour. Stocks supplies charities, small businesses and smaller daycares with the support they need, a little-known fact that travels mostly by word of mouth.

### COLISEUM SAFEWAY

**8118 118 Ave 477-6459**  
The newly renovated Safeway on 118 Avenue has really stepped it up a notch. Bright, clean and spacious, the new store makes shopping for groceries a pleasant experience. Each department has been renovated and improved, with the deli looking almost like a café and the floral section appearing as a mini flower shop. The addition of the Starbucks and sit-down area to drink your coffee in the store is sure to please customers both new and old. In fact, manager Ted Haymour

## Business Briefs

says the only downside of the new store is that it's not open 24/7. "We've had an excellent reception. People are wowed when they come in," Haymour says. Opening at 8 a.m. (so you can get your morning cup of coffee) and closing at 11 p.m. (so you don't have to choose between going to work and going for groceries) seven days a week, this Safeway is all about convenience.

### EDUCATIONAL TOURS AND TRAVEL

**9140 118 Ave 471-1125**  
Educational Tours organizes tours to anywhere in the world, specializing in Latin America. Here's where you can get information on wherever it is that you're planning to go. Owner Anna Alfaro says her goal is to educate people who are planning a trip by telling them more about the different countries and which ones suit the customer's needs. Customers are not charged for the information provided, and fees rely solely on the price of the tour decided upon. Open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Educational Tours can help you plan that vacation you've been dreaming of.

### EXQUISITE AFFAIRS

**9552 111 Ave 471-1366**  
Exquisite Affairs specializes in

weddings. In addition to supplying everything from floral arrangements, bouquets and jewelry for the bride, this store also provides beautiful backdrops for that memorable wedding photo. Zeina Abu-Meita, the manager of customer service, says they work within a bride's budget, no matter what it may be, to help prepare her for her big day. Previously, this mother and daughter duo ran the business out of their home; they moved to a storefront shop when the flowers started taking over their house. Business is by appointment only so that any schedule, day or night, can be accommodated.

### RAHMA EAST AFRICAN RESTAURANT

**11732 95 St 474-6655**

Owner Mohamed Abdi brings the taste of East Africa to the community. Born and raised in Somalia, Abdi moved to Canada years ago. He opened his restaurant in the beginning of May. He plans on improving the appearance of his eatery: putting a fresh coat of paint on the walls, changing the sign outside (which still says Café Cubita), and adding an outside patio. The board hanging over the cash desk boasts what the kitchen is serving - chicken and rice, goat meat, chicken steak, and Somali style beef steak included. Each dish is priced at \$9.99.

## Business Spotlight: A Taste of Latin America

TRACEY COMEAU

Nestled in among 118 Avenue's assorted arrangement of bakeries, restaurants, second-hand stores and other various businesses, Paraiso Tropical peeks out at the main street and beckons customers to come over and experience a small piece of Latin America.

Owned and run by Jesus and Alba Gonzalez, Paraiso Tropical is a cozy little store that has offered people Latin American imports - food, videos, spices, piñatas, clothing and more - for over 15 years. A quick look through the shelves of imported foods and spices and the freezers stocked full of ready-made frozen dinners such as chicken fajitas and empanadas, and it is clear that this is a one stop shop for all your Latin needs.

Jesus and Alba have been in business with their ethnic grocery store since 1991, when they were located at 97 Street and 106 Avenue. Three years later, they relocated to 86 Street and 118 Avenue. It was later decided that yet another move was in the cards, so Jesus and Alba once again started looking for a potential location that would fit their needs as well as their budget.

"We were looking at some places, but the rent was more expensive. The rent was better here," says Alba

of their current location on 91 Street and 118 Avenue.

The Gonzalez say they get customers from many different cultures in their store.

"We bring food from different (places) like Central America and South America," Alba says, which ensures the store has a little bit of some-

thing for everyone without culture being a barrier.

In addition to supplying the ingredients for various Latin American recipes, Paraiso Tropical also offers catering to other businesses. Their catering specialty is Spanish food. Alba says,



ALBA & JESUS GONZALEZ, PROUD OWNERS OF PARAIISO TROPICAL

A visitor to the store on any weekend will see hot ready-to-order meals such as different kinds of tamales and papusas. Kept in a heated display case on the side of the front counter,

treat everyone as friends, no matter their nationality or what they're shopping for. The office desks at the side of the store make certain Jesus and Alba are close to their customers at all times, lending to the personable atmosphere of the store.

"We don't depend on someone else; we don't have a boss," Alba says, one of the reasons she and her husband enjoy running their very own grocery store. And the other reason?

"We like it a lot!" she says.

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# Gangs in the 'hood – and next door

TRACEY COMEAU

Gangs are in our cities and in our communities. We are aware of their presence in our neighbourhoods as we pass the endless graffiti on our way to work. And thankfully, that's the closest some of us will ever have to get to a gang. So what do you do when one moves in next door?

Eastwood residents Christy and Darcy Morin were faced with that very problem after members of a self-proclaimed gang moved in beside them.

After a late evening out, Christy says, her husband went outside to retrieve a package they had forgotten in their van. He heard some commotion coming from next door, which was no surprise. He and his wife had called the police before about that same house and its inhabitants.

After informing Darcy that they knew when he would be at work and when his wife would be at home, the young man threatened to drop a pit bull in the Morins' backyard while their kids were playing, and left.

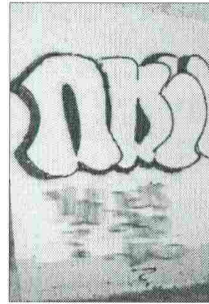
"The stuff he was saying really scared us. We thought 'what's going to happen to our little family?' And really, (we) got afraid to call the police," Christy adds.

The next night, while home alone, Christy says she heard pounding on her front door. A quick peek out her blinds confirmed her fear: the gang from next door. Frightened, she called her sister who in turn called 9-1-1 but was told they couldn't take a second hand report. So Christy called Avenue beat officer Norm Cameron whom she'd been talking to a couple hours earlier. The police arrived in



But even in the heat of the moment, Christy says it was hard for her to ignore the previous threats and pick up the phone.

"I can now understand abused people, because (the



"We really love the people."

The young men next door to the Morins moved out after about three or four months, Christy added, noting that the police were extremely helpful throughout the whole ordeal.

"The beat cops are phenomenal," she says. "You just can't ask for anything more."

Thankfully, stories such as Christy's are not a reality for many of us. Communities are coming together to help combat crime, gangs, and other unwanted disturbances in the area.

The Crystal Kids Youth Centre, located at 8718 118 Ave is one such centre intent on improving things by starting with the children - providing a safe haven for youth aged 6-17.

"We certainly give them positive role modeling here...we give them a safe place to be off the streets," says Miri Peterson, the acting executive director of Crystal Kids.

Inside the Centre, it is easy to see that the children attend because they truly enjoy being there. A group of children giggle at what they're watching on television. Another group participates in a pick-up basketball game with one of the supervisors.

The friendships formed and the love shared between the youth and the adults in the centre help curb the temptation of joining any kind of gang the children may be exposed



to in their everyday lives.

"There is an element that is visible on the street...we just sort of live with it and we know it's there," Peterson says of gang presence in the community.

"We provide support, nurturing and caring for the kids who come in here so hopefully they won't go down that path."

This effort seems to have paid off, as is evident when speaking to the youth at the Centre.

"Gangs are not cool – they do drugs and stuff. It messes with your mind and everything," says one youth, unnamed to protect his privacy.

"I don't trust (gangs)," says another.

Contributions to the neighbourhood such as the one Crystal Kids makes by keeping our children off the streets is one of the biggest ways to make the community a safer place to live and work.

And while gangs and gang activities certainly have their share of media coverage, it must be remembered that not all youth are involved in gangs. The combination of efforts by parents, teachers, mentors, neighbours and places such as Crystal Kids definitely helps keep it that way. No community is without its problems, and ours is no different. But by working together, hand in hand, we can hope to show gangs our community is no home for them.



A PROBLEM RENTAL PROPERTY NEXT DOOR TO DARCY & CHRISTY MORIN HAS BEEN THE THORN IN THEIR SIDE OVER THE 12 YEARS THEY'VE LIVED IN EASTWOOD. ONE WEEK IN JANUARY, THEY WERE THREATENED BY THE GANGBANGERS FLOPPING NEXT DOOR, HAD THEIR VAN STOLEN, HAD A FIGHT BREAK OUT THAT DAMAGED THEIR RENTAL VEHICLE AND HAD TWO MEN STABBED NEXT DOOR.

One of the young men from next door approached Darcy, angry with the calls to the police that had been taking place.

"He said if we ever called the cops again, there'd be hell to pay," Christy remembers.

what she says felt like seconds.

Christy says it turned out the young men were not trying to harm her, but rather were asking her to call the police as a fight next door had left two men stabbed while a number of others fled.

threats) really do a number on your psyche," she says.

Even with all their troubles, the Morins refused to move (as a police dispatcher officer had inappropriately suggested!).

"We really have a heart for the area," Christy says.

# This community does not tolerate PROSTITUTION



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# Province pulls plug on local registry office

TRACEY COMEAU

Police entered the office of the Elizabeth Avenue Registries at 10129 Princess Elizabeth Ave on June 15 with an order signed by Government Services Minister George VanderBurg. The registry's agreement with the Alberta Government Services was ended and the office was vacated. Computers and other equipment were seized in what has become the first raid and seizure in the 13-year history of privatized registries in Alberta.

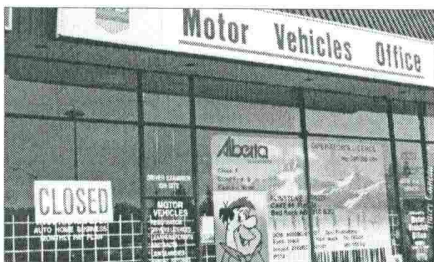
According to documents acquired by *The Journal*, the

owner of the registry, Douglas Doby, had been under pressure to sell the business after four B.C. gang members were found with fake licences issued by the registry. It is not known how the licences were transferred from Edmonton to the gang members in B.C.

There will not be another registry at that location, and customers are asked to visit other nearby registries for service.

A thorough investigation will follow.

Go to News at ratcreek.org for a link to the *Edmonton Journal* article.



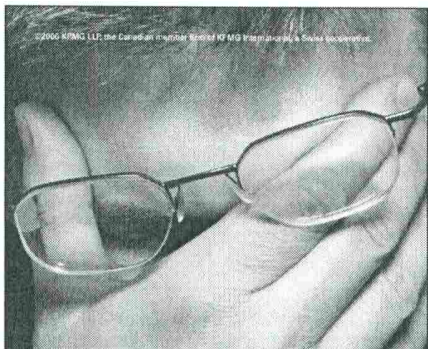
ELIZABETH AVENUE REGISTRIES IS NO MORE - THE BUSINESS HAS BEEN SHUT DOWN FOR GOOD.

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# Business Briefs

TRACEY COMEAU

### COLUMBUS GIFT SHOP 9321 118 Ave

A new gift shop has opened up on the Avenue. Owned and run by Vasilios Valotasios, this is the place to get those great decorated samurai swords you always dreamed of having. Along with the swords, the gift shop also sells blankets, pipes, flags, pictures, and Lord of the Rings merchandise. The Columbus Gift Shop is open Monday to Friday, from 10-3 p.m.

### KAMAKAZI INK 8648 118 Ave 702-7153

This new tattoo parlor on the Avenue offers custom tattoos as well as tattoo restoration and covering at a price of \$100 an

hour. Popular designs include dragons, and owner Steve Winget says he has inked a widely diverse clientele including a man who Winget says must have been close to 70 years old. Kamakazi Ink is open from 1-9 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, as well as 12-8 p.m. on Saturdays and 11-4:30 p.m. on Sundays. It is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

### POLISH FOOD AND GIFT CENTRE 10133 Princess Eliz Ave 477-8687

This Polish Food Centre has recently expanded, taking over the space once leased by the Salvation Army. Owned by Jack Tenderenda, this is your one-

stop shop for everything Polish including sausages, rye breads, and teas. If you are looking for Polish magazines, cards, CDs and the like, you will find them and much, much more between the walls of this market. "You can buy everything in one location," says Tenderenda about the variety of goods in his store. Business hours are Monday to Wednesday from 10-6 p.m., Thursday from 10-7 p.m., Friday 9-7 p.m., Saturday from 9-6 p.m., and Sunday from 10:30-2:30 p.m.

### CLOSED - MALAYSIA KITCHEN 9715 118 Ave

After approximately a year of operation, this restaurant still wasn't making ends meet and had to close.

# The Business of Travel

TRACEY COMEAU

Henry Woudstra knows travel.

Working in the travel industry his whole life, Woudstra has always called Butte Travel home. He opened the doors with the company in 1960 when he was just starting out, and took over the reins as owner in 1985. Now located at 95 Street and 117 Avenue, Butte Travel may not have always been in the same building but has always been in the Alberta Avenue area.

Starting off at the ground level and working his way up to the top position has enabled Woudstra to know all the ins and outs of the business as well as what it takes to keep the customers coming back.

Butte Travel specializes in arranging flights, tours, holidays and vacation packages. Woudstra, however, says he hasn't been able to arrange any holidays for himself for quite some time. Understaffed and very busy, Woudstra spends his time making sure his customers' vacations are well-planned before even considering taking one himself.

"It's a very time-intensive kind of work," Woudstra says, and doesn't seem to be bothered by the lack of time off.

Butte's senior travel consultant Pat Chobater agrees.

"It's so busy that sometimes you just go home

dead beat," she says.

Perhaps what makes Butte Travel so unique is the fact that aside from the bookkeeper, every staff member sells. There is no receptionist - the travel consultants take all the calls.

Woudstra himself, on top of his owner and managerial duties, acts as a travel consultant. And that's only one of the many ways Butte Travel is different.

Another key detail Woudstra takes pride in is the number of languages spoken within his business. Employing people of many different cultural backgrounds, he says, keeps him in touch with the varied cultures of the people that walk through his door.

"Because of the Polish connection, we sell a lot of tickets to Poland," Woudstra says.

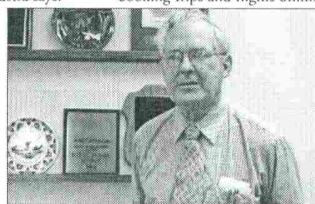
"Because of the Danish (connection), we sell a lot of tickets to Scandinavia. And I'm Dutch, so we sell a lot of tickets to Holland and Europe."

Keeping the customers in mind seems to come naturally to Woudstra. He recalls having to spend over three hours to get a new ticket for a customer who was empty-

handed at the airport, and driving to the airport himself to meet up with her and hand her the new ticket. As a result of his effort, the customer was still able to catch up with the group she had been traveling with while they were waiting for their connecting flight in Toronto.

"Those are pressure points that you have to be there to help the client," Woudstra says. "Those situations pop up all the time. But it's always a case where you can help your customer."

Woudstra says being in touch with his clientele is the best part about his job, but at the same time he is aware of the debate over how much longer the human touch of travel agencies will take precedence over booking trips and flights online.



HENRY WoudSTRA WILL HELP YOU PLAN THE PERFECT VACATION

Woudstra says he is not worried.

"Is there a future in travel? There absolutely is. We are busy."

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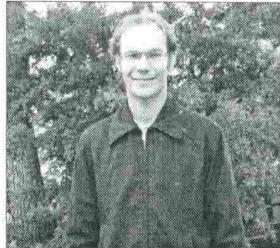
# World travel enhances connecting to the community

TRACEY COMEAU

Brad Goertz is the new face of the Community Action Project, better known in the community as CAP.

Setting up his office in Norwood Centre only three months ago, Brad has dedicated his time and energy to the community as CAP's lead organizer ever since settling down in his new position.

CAP's main objectives include finding leaders in the community and bringing them



TRAVEL HAS TAUGHT BRAD GOERTZ THE RIGHT SKILLS TO BECOME CAP'S NEW LEAD ORGANIZER

together to work out solutions, addressing issues in the neighbourhood, and finding ways to bring business back to the area.

"We try to make it a walkable community where you can take your kids and maybe get an ice cream or go to an art gallery," Goertz says.

While Goertz enjoys his new job, he didn't come to it empty-handed. He came prepared, armed with something he feels has been beneficial – his travel experiences.

Perhaps surprisingly,

Goertz says the four years he spent away from the workforce and traveling the world has made him better prepared for what he would encounter as CAP's lead organizer.

Taiwan, China, Mongolia, Salt Spring Island – Brad has seen them all in what he says was an eye-opening experience.

"It's a certain kind of experience...and the only way you can learn (certain) things is by doing them," Goertz says. "You can't read about it in a book and you can't teach it to someone else."

Some of those "things" Goertz refers to are the ability to be humble as well as the skill of being sensitive to what's going on with a person without actually being able to ask them. The latter came by way of language barriers which he constantly had to find ways to overcome.

In addition, Goertz says it was helpful to witness the mechanics involved in helping each city run, as CAP works closely with those same mechanics here. Being able to compare the two first-hand was valuable, he says.

Goertz did some work with CAP several years ago, but put it on hold while he dedicated his time to his travels. He financed his trips by teaching English overseas in what he describes as a "live-work kind of a plan." He lived in the countries he visited and got to know them as a resident

rather than a tourist, something he highly recommends.

"It's challenging, because when you live in another place it's different than when you're just a tourist," Goertz says. "You learn the language and you interact with the natives, you eat the same foods and fit into the same rhythms. It's a much more intimate travel experience," he adds.

Goertz worked to fit in with each society he was living in, as well as did his best to learn the local languages and customs. As a result he can speak Mandarin, along with a smidge of Mongolian.

"It's very immediate how much every day is a choice," Goertz recalls about his travels.

And while his new job has taken precedence over his traveling, Goertz plans to keep seeing the world when he retires. It's something he needs to do, he says, and the lessons learned in the process are priceless.

"You see how radically different the way of life is, but that it's a way of life and it works," Goertz says. "People get along in it and they have good lives and their values are different but they work. It reminds you that you're just one idea and one viewpoint in a world of them."

### onlineEXTRA

Learn more about Brad and read about his fantastic bike trip in Mongolia. Go to [ratcreek.org](http://ratcreek.org)

**COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT**

CAP organizers identify and train leaders in the community to revitalize and protect their neighbourhoods.

For more info call 474.8318 or email [brad@communityactionproject.ca](mailto:brad@communityactionproject.ca)

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