

Huron Economic Development Matters

Helping entrepreneurs make good things happen in Huron County!

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Huron's new Cultural Plan garners rave reviews

In addition to boasting numerous heritage and cultural experiences within its borders, Huron County now has an official Cultural Plan which serves to galvanize the thriving local arts community.

The call to research and develop a comprehensive blueprint for heritage and cultural endeavours within the County came in 2006 when Huron County Council and the Huron Business Development Corp. each committed \$5,000 to cover the cost of creating this important roadmap. This funding, coupled with a Job Creation Position with Huron Community Matters, allowed for the hiring of Rick Sickinger, the noted mastermind behind this initiative and author of the groundbreaking document.



According to Rick, the Municipal Cultural Plan was developed through grassroots community consultation and therefore addresses the concerns of the local cultural community as well as those of County residents. This makes the Cultural Plan unique to Huron and serves to bring together under one banner local arts and heritage activity.

“By having a Municipal Cultural Plan, Huron County is now in line with the development and funding strategies of both the provincial and

federal governments,” says Rick. “Both these levels of government have come out very strongly in favour of communities engaging in cultural planning.”

Having such a document in hand will give support and validation to the funding applications of the many local arts and heritage organizations as it shows proof of municipal support. Also, it serves to send the right message to the artists, heritage groups and arts organizations that they are recognized for the valuable contribution they make to the quality of life in Huron.

One of the most important parts of the adopted Cultural Plan for the County is the Action Plan. In this section of the document,

activities such as preparing an inventory of current and potential physical resources, offering workshops on locating and applying for arts sector funding, and creating a new staff position within the County’s Cultural Services Department, are clearly laid out.

At least one of these proposed activities has already been seen to with the allocation of \$18,000 from HEDM funding to support Rick’s salary for another year. Working in a part-time capacity, Rick will be working on a number of the initiatives that address the Action

Plan portion of the Cultural Plan document. Thanks to another JCP position, Rick will be joined in this important job by Melina Hussey whose focus will be the development of local arts programming for children and youth.

The complete Huron County Cultural Plan is available on the Heritage and Culture Partnership website at www.heritageandculture.on.ca.

Huron Economic Development Matters is a partnership between:

**“Sustainable Huron”
- have your say!**

**HEDM Approvals This
Quarter:**

(January 2008–April 2008)

- Huron Training Matters Program—\$4,000
- Customer Service Excellence Training —\$4,295
- Service Excellence Certificate Program—\$1,200
- Huron County Cultural Plan—\$18,000
- Buy Local! Buy Fresh! - \$4,500
- Above the Fall Challenge Course—\$12,500
- Youth Internships—\$24,000

Sustainable Huron looks at Huron’s well-being *Public input being sought*

The County of Huron will be seeking public input for its five-year review of its official plan. As a result, the concept of “Sustainable Huron” is being introduced county-wide to municipalities, councils, and the general populace. One of the goals of “Sustainable Huron” is to work towards the long-term viability of the communities in Huron County.

Planner Claire Dodds has spoken to various municipalities to drive home the point that “sustainability is about finding the balance between the environment, economy, and society.” The review will deal with the future of Huron County and help to develop a vision. Key elements to a sustainable, viable economy include: developing local resources and skills; having

affordable housing; a vibrant culture; a high quality of life; and clean water with a healthy eco-system.

Other necessary parts of a sustainable community include having renewable energy sources, viable downtowns, rich culture, social inclusion and transportation options. Local public meetings were held in Wingham, Goderich, Exeter and Seaforth. As part of these meetings, people were asked what they currently like about their communities, and what they would like their communities to look like in twenty years.

For more information on “Sustainable Huron,” or to submit your thoughts, contact the Huron County Planning and Development Department by calling 519.524.8394, ext. 3.

Huron residents encouraged to Buy Local! Buy Fresh!

There’s a new term being used when it comes to buying food – locavore: someone who only eats food grown locally. And in an effort to encourage more people to become locavores, the Huron Perth Farm to Table Committee has released its new Buy Local! Buy Fresh! map which highlights almost 100 places to buy locally produced food.

The colourful maps are available at all municipal offices, libraries, tourist booths and Agriculture Ministry offices in both Huron and Perth counties and are expected to have a shelf-life of two years. The \$22,000 cost of producing the 50,000 maps was supported by a variety of sources including Huron Economic Development Matters. This year’s

map replaces the Taste of Huron map released in 2003 and boasts a 50% increase in the number of producers listed. Each local producer wishing to appear on the comprehensive map and listing pays just \$35 to be included. According to Farm to Table chairperson Janice Dunbar, the jump in the number of producers participating is most encouraging.

“We’ve already started a list of producers wishing to be included in the next one,” said Dunbar. “We’re making some real progress in that regard.”

“We’re hoping people will pick up the map and make a conscious effort to buy local produce,” added Dunbar. “This map will help people find those local food producers.”

Becoming a locavore means great quality food at fair prices. It means supporting local farmers and it helps the environment by not having to rely on having food shipped long distances. All you have to do to become a locavore is Buy Local! Buy Fresh!



Youth gather to gain leadership skills *(and kick some serious butt!!!)*

The first question asked by the first presenter at the recent gathering of the Huron Youth Task Force was a simple one: How many high schools are there in Huron County?

But none of the two dozen students in attendance got it right.

The youth, who gathered at the Maitland Recreation Centre in Goderich on April 11th for another series of leadership skills presentations, represented

five Huron high schools but it took presenter Floyd Herman to remind them that one school was missing: the Bluewater Secondary School housed at the Bluewater Youth Detention Centre. Mr. Herman's presentation focused on what school is like when you're incarcerated and it certainly gave those listening something to think about.

The gathering was the second in a series of events organized to engage local youth and to present them with life and leadership skills in a fun and informal atmosphere. The youth events are planned and hosted by Community Developer Bonnie Baynham and Youth Engagement Coordinator Rob Bundy. The most recent gathering of the Youth Task Force included a talk about

municipal governance by Huron County Warden John Bezaire, a presentation on effective public speaking, a series of group development games and challenges and, thanks to the generous donation of the MRC facilities by the YMCA, a little time for some physical activity. One of the highlights of the afternoon was the kick-boxing demonstration staged by Ms. Baynham. All expenses for



Participants in the recent meeting of the Youth Task Force get out some aggression during the kick-boxing demonstration. That's Bonnie Baynham in the background preparing to drop a student to the floor with a well placed kick.

the event, which totaled just \$320, where covered by the HEDM's CREATE Fund. In addition to providing access to the facilities, the YMCA also presented each participant with a free day pass to the Rec. Centre for use at another time.

In his presentation to the students, Warden Bezaire clearly expressed his desire to see youth have a greater voice in local politics. Towards this end, the group agreed to meet again with the hopes of establishing a Youth Council to make recommendations to County Council about the things which affect young people in our area.

While planning to bring this energetic and enthusiastic group of young people together again is

underway, it has been noted by organizers how difficult it is to find time in a busy student's schedule what with school, part-time jobs and extra-curricular activities. However, when such a time is found the youth respond in a very positive manner and never fail to express their gratitude for having the opportunity to improve themselves and to make life in Huron a better place for our young people.

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We're on the web!

www.huroncounty.ca
www.smallbusinesshuron.ca

Huron Economic Development Matters

Results-to-date

(January 2008–April 2008)

- Number of business contacts—10,710
- Value of projects approved—\$68,495
- Small business loans approved—\$165,000
- Number of business start-ups and/or expansions assisted—58
- Number of jobs created and/or maintained—217

Better Business Seminar Series

The 2008

“Better Business” Seminar Series is up and running!

This workshop series is an excellent way for you to enhance your business management skills, improve your bottom line and meet with other business owners.

To view a complete listing of topics and dates, visit www.smallbusinesshuron.ca or call the Huron Business Centre at 519.527.0305.

Huron’s Rural Connections made in March
Enlightening internet workshops

High speed internet access is about to explode in Huron County! And with it, the opportunities for business owners, big and small, will increase ten-fold.

In March, the County of Huron, through the Small Business Enterprise Centre and with the support of the Huron Business Development Corporation, sponsored a month-long run of internet workshops that enlightened local business owners on the powerful successes that can come with using the internet.

A four-workshop series called “E-Biz Bootcamp” was delivered by the Student Connections group from Wilfrid Laurier University. This series was an interactive training experience that addressed not only the fundamentals of online business for owners new to the internet, but also showed existing online businesses how to evaluate and redesign their websites in an effort to make them more appealing and, above all, user friendly.

Other seminars held throughout the County included topics such as using high speed for profit, a security demo, website maintenance, and social networking.

On April 3, 2008, the “Rural Connections” month culminated in a mini-trade show, guest panel discussion and evening dinner with guest speaker Glenn Hall at the Holmesville Community Centre.

Local internet service providers highlighted their services at the mini-tradeshow while local business owners who make use of the internet on a regular basis talked about their successes in a guest panel format.

Mr. Hall, an Internet Business Advisor with OSIM, addressed the various ways

in which the internet can impact a business owner’s bottom line, increase their product selection and bring them closer to their customers.

Huron County is one of 18 counties that has received funding through the Ontario Municipal Broadband Partnership Program. This funding from OMAFRA went directly to infrastructure costs and a new wireless network is now available to the

those who had no high-speed access before. Comcentric (a group of local independent telephone companies) has been busy making this happen.

“The Workshops from Rural Connections were extremely helpful and came at the right time for me!! We just bought a business WITH a half finished webpage...I might have to do a few more changes but I really learned a lot! So Thanks! If there is ever something like that coming up please let me know!”

**- Vreni Beeler
Workshop Participant**

Consumer Survey targets downtown core

Since late last year, the Goderich Business Improvement Area has been working diligently at designing a community consumer survey, specifically to gather information vital to the future of its downtown core. From the information and feedback gathered, the BIA hopes to glean a better understanding of local retail and service shopping trends and patterns.

Following months of hard work by BIA board members, Mike Strickland and Rob Evans, Councillor Myles Murdock, Manager Jan Hawley and Goderich resident Debra Anderson, the BIA launched the project on April 4th, 2008 with the distribution of 3,400 surveys to households throughout the community. Since then, the response has been through the roof supporting a return rate of over twenty-seven percent, with many of the returns containing a great deal of written comment.

Furthermore, the BIA is pleased to have access to a youth intern, thanks to HEDM funding, to take on the massive task of compiling the results of the survey responses and to prepare a feasibility analysis. From this study, the Goderich BIA hopes that the need and desirability of new business opportunities are identified, which will ultimately help re-shape and revitalize the downtown business area. Completion of the eagerly anticipated report is expected sometime this summer.

In appreciation to those who responded, there is an opportunity to win several wonderful prizes, including an LG Portable GPS from Chisholm TV (retail value \$200), four chances to win a \$50 gift certificate from local fine dining restaurants - Bailey's and Thyme on 21, a gift certificate for Baechler Kitchen and Interiors (retail value \$100), as well as a beach and sandal

package from Wuerth's Shoes. Winners will be announced sometime in early June. *Stay tuned!*

Youth on the job

Goderich native Scott Young couldn't be happier about spending his summer at home. The third-year Laurier business student has been taken on as a Youth Intern by the Goderich BIA to assist in compiling data received from the recent consumer survey. Scott's task is to create a feasibility analysis from the 900 survey responses.

"It's interesting to read the comments people have made," says Scott. "People really do care."

With plans to return to university in the fall, Scott is working in his chosen field right here in Huron and will make enough money to continue his education.

Willing Workers find a new home for at-risk youth

The Willing Workers Youth Employment Project operating in Goderich has a new home. After spending almost four years as tenants of an old building owned by the Town of Goderich, a building now slated for demolition, the Willing Workers have moved their offices to Hamilton Street. This move was facilitated with bridge funding supplied by the CREATE Fund of the HEDM Committee and with considerable assistance from the Town of Goderich.

The project, which takes on at-risk youth and guides them towards

gainful employment, is primarily funded by Service Canada but has been without a contract since late 2007. Word from Service Canada is that an announcement regarding a fourth year of funding will be made soon and that the project will be successful in their application.

The Willing Workers Project was originally designed and operated by Rob Bundy under the sponsorship of Junior Achievement of London and District. It is now coordinated by Craig Harrison and Vanessa Yeates and provides a vital service to those young people having difficulty, for

various reasons, in making the transition to full-time employment. The Willing Workers Project uses community service to develop employability skills in youth and endeavours to connect participants with local businesses. Participants in the project are paid a weekly stipend equal to minimum wage.

The Willing Workers Project can be reached by calling 519.524.4201, or by dropping by their new Hamilton Street location, beside the laundromat in Goderich. Applications to participate in the project will be accepted in mid-June.

Leadership Survival Series building rural leaders

On April 1, 2008, the first workshop of the Leadership Survival Series for Rural Leaders was held in Exeter at the Town Hall.

Formerly known as the Ten Steps to Community Action Program, this revamped program was facilitated by River Rock Leadership, and run in partnership with the Huron Business Development Corporation and the County of Huron.

The program encompassed a total of ten workshops that were held on Tuesday evenings at various locations throughout the County. Each week the fifteen program participants gained a greater understanding of themselves, acquired new skills and knowledge



Each week Leadership Survival Series participants had the opportunity to share thoughts and experiences and learn how to become successful rural leaders.

and learned and networked with their peers. Workshop topics in the series included DiSC—Discover Yourself and Communicate More Effectively, Know Your Customers, “Hire”

Learning, Strength in Unity, Leadership—The Situational Servant Model, Decision Making for Survival, Difficult Yet Necessary Conversations, Serving and Contagious Service.

A graduation night is planned for Tuesday, June 10 at the Huron Business Centre in Seaforth. Deb Poulton, of River Rock Leadership, brought over ten years of training and development experience to the program—she has worked with many five-star training companies including the Ken Blanchard Companies.

Another Youth Intern on the job in South Huron

Amanda Marshall has joined the South Huron Chamber of Commerce as part of the Youth Internship Program offered by HEDM and according to chamber president Hugh McMaster, this is just the beginning for this talented young lady.

Amanda, who has a diploma in Marketing and Advertising from Sheridan College and took a photography course at Fanshawe

College recently, has been aiding the chamber in event planning and has just completed a Trillium application to fund a Farmers’ Market in Exeter.

“She’s been a great asset to our organization,” says Hugh. “We hope to be able to keep her.”

Amanda and her new husband recently bought a home and acreage near Kippen which they are renovating as their time allows.

Summer Company Program

The Huron Small Business Enterprise Centre has had an overwhelming student response to the 2008

Summer Company Program.

There were well over 20 student inquiries this year and it is hoped that Huron County will have 6 successful students enrolled in the program.

For more information on the Summer Company Program, visit the Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Summer Company Website:

www.summercompany.ca

The Mystery picture: Can you guess what this is?

It is not play-ground equipment and can be used by all ages. It will soon be installed at the Falls Reserve and we’ll tell you what it is in our next issue.

