

SUPPORT DONATION...

Elgin-Middlesex-London MP Gar Knutson presents a \$96,407 cheque to Nancy Mott, left, and Sandra Fennell. They are among the staff and partners of the new West Elgin Community Support Services project which recently opened an employment training centre at the West Lorne Complex at 160 Main Street in West Lorne. The centre offers workshops and special programs to help the unemployed find work.

Chronicle photo

Farm market being hosted by health centre

The West Elgin Community Health Centre is organizing its first local farmer's market. The market will be held July 31 at the centre's parking lot with no cost to vendors wishing to sell local produce.

The market will have something for everyone with a family focus that will see face painting, a ventriloquist and a barbecue being run from 11 a.m. until noon.

Proceeds from the barbecue will go toward programs at the centre.

There are still vendor spaces available for the market which will run from 9 a.m. to noon.



FARM FRESH

SCOTT HILGENDORFF/CHRONICLE

Cynthia Roodzant, Diane VanDyk and Janneke Fleuren, hold some samples of fresh fruits of the like that will be available at the West Elgin Community Health Centre's new farmer's market being held July 31.

Four Counties Hospital here to stay, says Minister of Health Smitherman

By Paul Mayne
The Spirit

After being questioned late last month by Lambton-Kent-Middlesex MPP Maria Van Bommel, Minister of Health and Long Term Care George Smitherman assured local residents that Four Counties Health Services is definitely not closing.

Van Bommel explained to the Minister that the recent change in governance and types of services available at FCHS, along with the appointment of a provincial supervisor, have become a contentious issue.

In addition to that, the hospital

has experienced a deficit of over one half million dollars this year and some community speculation was that the province would shut down the Newbury hospital.

"I want to alleviate any concerns that exist in the local community in Newbury with respect to the Four Counties hospital," said Smitherman. "The government of Ontario and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care remain committed to the delivery of health services at that hospital, and further committed to working with the member (Van Bommel) and the local hospital to make sure the alliance (with SMGH), which is an important part of improved health care delivery in southwestern

Ontario, remains and is strengthened.

"We believe that care needs to be provided when people need it and as close to home as possible, recognizing at the same time that some more sophisticated procedures are better provided in large volumes in big academic teaching centres, like the extraordinarily good work that goes on at London Health Sciences."

This was welcome news to hospital CEO Mike Mazza, who hopes this will now silence the "closing" rumours regarding FCHS.

"We were just thrilled with what he said," says Mazza. "It's what the community needs to hear."

JAN 2004

Staff settling in at new health centre

By Scott Hilgendorff
The Chronicle

Clients didn't notice too much disruption as the West Elgin Community Health Centre made its move down the street to its brand new \$4 million facilities.

"It was a smooth transition. Business as usual," said Doug Graham, executive director of the health centre.

"We've been doing treatment all week," he said on Friday.

The facility made its move late the week before and Graham said everyone is excited to be in the new, larger facility.

This week and last, partner agencies like the Arthritis Society have been moving into the larger facilities that offer more space and rooms to accommodate different services and agencies.

The facility also offers more space that Graham is expecting will attract two new doctors. WECHC received funding

approval earlier last year for a second full-time doctor and just last month, received word funding is in place now for three doctors.

Coupled with an increase in the salary doctors can be paid in this geographic area, announced last month, Graham is hopeful their current, aggressive recruiting campaign will bring two more doctors to West Lorne soon.

"Our highest priority is to get those physicians now that we have space," said Graham, adding there has already been some response to advertisements the centre has placed in a national medical journal.

Despite tough competition across the province for doctors, Graham said, "We're hopeful by summer we'll fill those positions."

He said space was their biggest problem with doctor recruitment, which the new

facility resolves.

While clients will get to see the new facility as they do business there, Graham said they will be having an open house with tours at the end of April.

Meanwhile, fund raising for the facility continues with \$20,000 left to raise.

The current campaign includes an aggressive raffle that has reached the break-even point now. Graham is hoping between now and the February draw, the raffle will be able to help bring them closer to the end of their final stretch of fund raising.

"The community should be very proud," he said of its support for the facility so far.

Since November alone, about \$20,000 was raised locally, in addition to thousands that have already been raised in the past year.

"It's a huge accomplishment for the community," he said.



Jason Bailey from Dutton-Dunwich, working for Campbell Brothers Movers, was part of the crew that helped staff move into the new WECHC.

Chronicle photo

Alzheimers focus of candlelight dedication at St. Mary's Parish Hall on Monday night

JEFF KEMPENAAR
staff

A rising musical talent from St. Thomas is performing her debut single One More Memory to raise money for the Alzheimer's Association Elgin - St. Thomas next Monday.

Sara Westbrook's grandfather died in 1998.

He had Alzheimer's and wasn't able to communicate with his daughter Linda, Sara's mom.

Linda began advocating for Alzheimer's and volunteering for the Alzheimer's Association.

She met another Alzheimer's advocate, Brenda

Hounam who discovered she had Alzheimer's at the age of 53.

Brenda, of Paris Ont., was very open about her experience with Alzheimer's.

Brenda had the same problems writing letters to her children as did Linda's father.

Linda wanted to get inside of

Brenda's head and find out more about the brain degenerating disease.

Sara spent six hours interviewing Brenda.

Brenda was struggling to tell her children about her before the disease took over.

What came out was a song and story Brenda had waited a long time to tell.

"It's making a huge healing difference for people," said Linda

The song has been

heard all around the world including Sara's performance at a Canadian Idol concert in Sarnia last month.

The song has touched families who have lost members from cancer to heart attacks.

Sara, 22-years-old, will perform the song at a candlelight dedication to families and friends affected by Alzheimer Disease and related dementias at St. Mary's Parish Hall at 7 p.m. Dec. 13.

Man rejected for flu shot protests

JEFF KEMPENAAR
staff

Ben DeClercq took up a battle for universal health care by protesting along the sidewalk in front of West Elgin Community Health Centre after he was told he could not get a flu shot last Thursday.

He came back a short time later wearing a cardboard sign, walking up and down the sidewalk in front of the centre last Thursday saying, "Health Centre Government \$?. Can't Get flu shot"

DeClercq, from Fisherville, east of Simcoe, does not live in the WEHC catchment area and does not qualify for service at the centre.

While visiting his mother's grave in the area and checking her house

in West Lorne, DeClercq heard the centre was holding an influenza vaccination clinic last Thursday.

With his health card in hand, he said he thought the provincial dollars spent on the centre would afford him access to the vaccine.

In the health centre, he said staff pointed him toward a pamphlet next to the check-in window saying, "influenza clinics available to only WEHC clients please"

DeClercq was upset he could not get a flu shot at the centre where he said his provincial taxes help fund.

The flu shot clinics are contracted by the medical officer of health at the Elgin St. Thomas Health unit to the physician at WEHC to admin-



Ben DeClercq protests for a flu shot at West Elgin Community Health Centre, Oct 14.

ister here in western Elgin County.

The physician, along with the registered nurses are only contracted to serve registered patients at the centre.

Anyone can come to the public health flu shot clinics being held Nov. 1 at West Elgin Secondary

School from 3:30-7 p.m., Nov. 2, Nov. 16 and Nov. 30 5-8 p.m. at Dutton Medical Clinic and Nov. 17 2-7 p.m. at the Dutton-Dunwich Community Centre, whether they area local residents or not.

However the five flu shot clinics held at WEHC are for the 3,000 registered clients serving under one physician.

"We are not a public health facility," said Doug Graham, executive administrator at WEHC. "If he resided in our catchment area we could put him on the waiting list."

There is a lengthy waiting list to meet the physician and have health records assessed to become a patient at the centre.

Graham said the centre's doctor and registered nurses need to know his medical history before treating him, so his files would have to be sent to WEHC before he could register as a patient.

As for the protest in front of the health centre, Graham said, "He demonstrated his rights, that's the great thing about this country."

DeClercq was instructed to go to the health unit in St. Thomas.

He said the new provincial Liberal government and federal government better open up access to health care.

He thought the \$4 million facility, with around \$3 million paid for by the province, would entitle access to all Ontarians.

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Walk-in clinic offered

By Scott Hilgendorff
The Chronicle

After about four months in private practice, Dr. Michael Tenki is taking on at least 100 new patients and will be offering a walk-in clinic on a trial basis.

"I live in the area and came here to service the area," said Tenki of his plans to expand his practice.

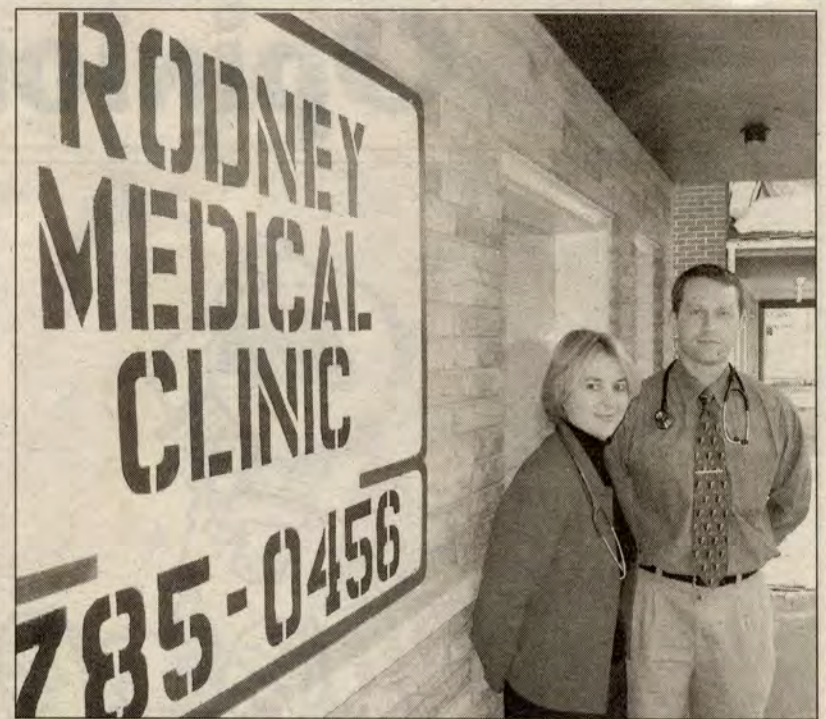
He left Four Counties Health Services in Newbury last October to go into private practice but, just starting out, was not sure how many patients he could effectively serve.

Settled in at his office in Rodney now, Tenki said it was time to expand.

With no walk-in clinics in the immediate area, Tenki wants to give it a trial run to help people who are without doctors by providing short-term care through the clinic.

He reminds people the clinic is for medical problems like sore throats and the flu and hopes by taking on more patients, he can follow them through long-term care needs as well.

Recognizing the doctor shortage, Tenki is hoping the medical practice will be filled with local patients from the area who have been without a



Melinda Wolfe and Dr. Michael Tenki are offering a walk-in clinic beginning later this month on a trial basis. He is also taking on 100 new patients.

Chronicle photo

primary physician.

"I want it in West Lorne but this is good news," said Coun. Michael Mooser at West Elgin Council's Feb. 12 meeting where council learned of Tenki's plans.

Mayor Graham Warwick has been talking to Tenki previously about the plans and said the doctor is trying the clinic in response to a need he is hearing from people in the area.

"I think he's trying to work with us," said Warwick of Tenki's response to local needs.

"I just wish something would happen at the medical centre in West Lorne," said Mooser.

Tenki's clinic will begin operation

at his building, The Rodney Medical Clinic at 226 Furnival Road on Feb. 24.

The clinic will be open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Warwick is hoping the clinic will see use by local people and not end up being flooded by patients from as far away as Chatham and London.

"Nobody in the world has a doctor," said Warwick of the shortage that sees Elgin County recognized as an underserved area.

That designation helps communities and hospitals provide incentives for new doctors to come.



SERVING UP

SCOTT HILGENDORFF/CHRONICLE

Nancy Mott, left, of West Elgin Support Services, serves up some hotdogs. Staff from the centre held an open house in West Lorne Friday to raise awareness about employment opportunities for students. About 100 students attended the barbecue as well as members of the community, like Bob Kuska, right.



Princesses prepare for Hallóween
 Princess Natalie and Princess Andrea Stone dressed up for the seventh annual Family Fun Night hosted by the West Elgin Community Health Centre at the Rodney Recreation Centre Monday night. The girls got to carve and take home their own pumpkin. With many organizations helping put on the event, it was anticipated 400 people would attend. About 200 pumpkins were purchased for the children.

Community support services spotlighted

The area's community support services were toured by MPP Steve Peters last week. Throughout the afternoon, Peters and Mayors Bonnie Vowel and Graham Warwick were taken on tour by volunteer drivers and community support organizers. Showing the strength of volunteers, the tour spotlighted services being provided like Meals on Wheels and transportation services. Peters also saw the need for provincial help in future planning of services in the area. A variety of community support services is offered by several agencies in the area. Coordinated by the West Elgin Community Health Centre, West Elgin Seniors Projects Action Committee and Elgin Support Services, programs are brought to seniors and the disabled to help them live in the comfort of their own home with the safety net of a community support network catering to any need. Helping coordinators are vol-

unteers spending countless hours with seniors and the disabled to ensure the programs work. "If there is one thing we're rich in around here it is volunteers," said Vowel. WECHC has 100 volunteers each providing anywhere from two to three hours a week to eight to 10 a week. "It's just neighbours helping neighbours," said Teresa Bobier who drives people to appointments in the area and to cities. It started with a volunteer helping her, now she is giving back. Lena Campbell has used the agencies to get transportation. "Anything I need or want, I know they can help," she said as she taste tested frozen meals at 144 Main Street in West Lorne. The frozen meals can be purchased and delivered to those unable to cook full meals easily in their own homes. Several clients of Community Support Services at WECHC live at 144 Main Street, operated by the Elgin St. Thomas Housing



Taste testing meals on wheels
 Left: West Elgin Mayor Graham Warwick dishes out some maple ham, a meals on wheels meal, while eating with Blanche Graham, left, Dutton/Dunwich Mayor Bonnie Vowel, right and Gene McRae while MPP Steve Peters talks to Lena Campbell. Corporation which finds housing to income and needs. "We're a community focussed on helping people at home," said Bonnie Rowe, an registered nurse and program coordinator at WECHC. She said the Ministry of Health and Long-term care is currently looking at the need for more seniors housing in the area.

Autistic boy getting to know his new friend

The Dunn family received a guide dog for their autistic son Jacob last month. After more than a year of waiting for a dog that would fit in with the family, Monte a 20-month-old chocolate lab came to his new home Nov. 11. During that year, Monte was being trained to help autistic children and taught simple commands with National Service Dogs. Meanwhile, Scott and Linda Dunn were busy raising money for the costs to have a dog. With community support, services clubs, family and friends, the Dunn's raised more than



National Service Dogs vest when he is working. His attention is to be focussed on Jacob and commands from a parent or teacher. It's been tough, so far, for the Duns because everyone on the streets wants to pet the handsome dog and find out what he

Jacob was one of 25 people to qualify for a dog last year, out of thousands of requests to National Service Dogs. Like all dogs, Monte gets to play at the house and relax when he is not working. Unlike other dogs, Monte has

The Dunn's have had to adjust to bringing a dog everywhere they go now. They have had trouble at restaurants in London where owners didn't understand it is the Dunn's legal right to bring a service dog in. The Ontarians

crimination against anyone with a disability, including physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal. He is not possessive of his food and can tolerate Jacob who is being trained not to pull on the dogs ears, or put his little hands in Monte's mouth.



Fun with bubbles
 Rhodric Hales makes bubbles at the annual Teddy Bear Picnic held at the Rodney Recreation Centre Aug. 10 by the Let's Connect Office with the West Elgin Community Health Centre, the Ontario Early Years Centre and the Elgin-St thomas Health Unit.

Women wanted for breast cancer focus groups

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Local women are among thousands believed to be missing vital breast screening due to the provinces doctor shortage.

"What we see is generally women aren't going on their own to get breast screening. They don't take the initiative on their own. Not until they find something. Generally they only go with direction of a nurse practitioner or physician," said Cynthia Roodzant, health promotion coordinator at West Elgin Community Health Centre.

If a women doesn't have a family doctor to send her for screening, the concern is, she won't have one done.

"We know we're under serviced," she said.

She is working with the Ontario Breast Screening Program to help save lives and get women to take advantage of free breast screening.

Women's health fair held

Women control the world, says Sharon Little

Before 145 women at the women's health fair at St. Mary's Parish Hall in West Lorne May 12, strength, encouragement and wellbeing were preached by motivational speakers, spiritual gurus and health professionals.

Little, a Rodney music teacher and wellness consultant told the room full of women to stop feeling guilty when they take time for themselves.

"145 women are here and the world won't collapse," she said. "So often we feel fear that we are not doing enough, not being enough, not giving enough not loving enough. Just stop! These feelings create stress which lead to health problems," said Little. "When we feel fear, our cells reverse and protect. When we are comfortable our cells grow."

While Little added retrospective to the evening, motivation-

al speaker and humorist, Eleanor Wood from Troy, near Hamilton, had women roaring with laughter and sighing with emotional connectiveness.

"Women can deal with things better with a sense of humour," Wood told the audience. "Don't let people take your sense of humour away. That is what helps you cope."

Wood said women cope with a lot in life.

She ran a dairy farm for 10 years while her husband Harvey worked at the bank.

"I didn't know anything about cows when I first started. I didn't know what was a wet one or a dry one...now I can come home in high heels and birth a calf," she said.

The women's health fair was organized by the West Elgin Community Health Centre, Healthy at Heart Elgin and St. Thomas-Elgin Health Unit.

It was organized to provide information on osteoporosis,



Menopause trivia played JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Nurse Practitioners, Karen Katsademas, left and Adrienne Tufford, centre, with the West Elgin Community Health Centre run a menopause trivia game with contestants Thea Long, Claire Champ and Huguette Sinasac at the Women's Health Fair May 12.

menopause, breast cancer screening and well being.

"We're looking for gaps in services provided to women. To make sure they are finding all the information and services they need," said Rose Marie Vandenberg, registered nurse and cancer prevention programmer with the health unit.

She said the event was for all women but mostly for women reaching the age of menopause (45-50), where women stop menstruating and producing estrogen.

"As you begin to age and start the next part of your life don't lose your sense of humour," urged Wood.

Local efforts made to stop same-sex marriage

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Local efforts are being made to stop same-sex couples from being included in Canada's definition of marriage.

A letter to Prime Minister Paul Martin and Elgin-Middlesex-London MP Joe Preston was circulated around St. Mary's Parish the first two Sundays of the month, requesting the definition of marriage not include same sex couples.

"It's one of the basic prin-

ciples in the church that marriage is between one man and one woman," said Rudy Huver, Grand Knight with the Knights of Columbus, West Lorne Chapter.

The Knights of Columbus were circulating the letter following a request from the Ontario Catholic Council of Bishops and the Ontario State Council of the Knights of Columbus that local parishes send letters.

About 225 letters were handed out at St. Mary's Church in West Lorne and

St. Helen's Catholic Church in Wallacetown.

Huver received 150 signed letters back and forwarded them on to the politicians before new same-sex legislation is voted on in the House of Commons in Ottawa within the next two weeks.

The letter asks the Prime Minister for a free vote on the new legislation redefining marriage, so Liberal backbenchers could vote "in accordance with their conscience."

"The sanctity of marriage

would be downgraded with same sex unions," said Huver.

He also said a free vote is the most democratic way to solve the issue.

He said he decided to circulate the letter because he believed in a paragraph in a letter from the Diocese of London.

It said: "Parliament can leave marriage unchanged while meeting civilly the requirements of those in other interdependent relationships."

It asks concerned citizens to declare they are against the redefining of marriage to include same sex couples and uphold the traditional meaning: "Marriage is the origin of the family."

Meanwhile, the United Church of Canada sent a news release to local churches saying: "Not everyone who speaks from the Christian perspective is opposed to same-sex marriage."

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SCOTT HILGENDORFF/THE CHRONICLE

Delicate touch

Sabrina Howarth works through a finger dexterity test at West Elgin Community Support Services. Local high school students in the Wildcats Employment Skills Training Program took part in finger and manual dexterity training Friday, earning certificates. The training was just one of many components the students study through class time and work placements. The dexterity training received support from the West Elgin Chamber of Commerce.

Asthma educator joins WECHC

An asthma education program has started at the West Elgin Community Health Centre.

Providing information and support for asthmatic patients at the centre, the program will also include public outreach.

Tracy Gooyers, certified asthma educator assists clients in managing their asthma through, what's being called, the Primary Care Asthma Program.

"People don't have to suffer with the symptoms," said Gooyers.

Gooyers will work with the primary health care team at the centre and is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care.

She'll provide breathing tests called spirometry to help clients get control of their asthma.

A coroner's inquest into the death of a young Toronto man led the province to extend asthma education to address the severity of the disease.

The disease of the lungs affects 10 per cent of Canadians.

Many live with asthma that is out of control dealing with coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness.

She encourages asthmatics to take the 30 second Asthma Test : (provided by The Lung



JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

New program

Tracy Gooyers is bringing asthma education to the area through West Elgin Community Health Centre.

Association)

1. Do you use your blue inhaler 4 or more times a week? (Except one dose/day for exercise)

2. Do you cough, wheeze, or have a tight chest because of your asthma? (four or more days a week)

3. Do coughing, wheezing, or chest tightness wake you at night? (one or more times a week)

4. Do you stop exer-

cising because of your asthma?

5. Do you ever miss work or school because of your asthma? (In the past three months)

If you answer "YES" to one or more of the following questions, ask your health professional how you can feel better.

To learn more about the new program and getting control of your asthma, contact Tracy Gooyers at 519-768-1715.

Seniors' home coming to West Lorne

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Funding was approved to build a 16-unit affordable retirement home in West Lorne. Ground could be broken mid-July with doors possibly opening Spring 2008.

The home will be located on former railway land next to the West Elgin Community Health Centre.

City of St. Thomas council approved an Ontario Works recommendation to fund \$3.5 million toward the construction of 51 units in three projects in the city and Elgin County.

Heritage House will receive \$72,993 per unit for a total of \$1,167,892.

West Elgin taxpayers will chip in a total \$622,221 in financial concessions, waiving of fees and the donation of land and a \$450,000 grant.

The total capital budget is estimated at \$2,264,796.

West Lorne Heritage Homes, the not-for-profit organization behind the project will raise \$70,000 through fundraising.

"It's definitely a turning point for the village and for its seniors," said board chair and former



Heritage Home

Construction of the Heritage Home will begin this year beside the West Elgin Community Health Centre in West Lorne. Here is a sketch of the 16-unit affordable housing for seniors project.

CONTRIBUTED

Aldborough Reeve Harry Mezenberg.

"It's to be big for people who are retiring and wish to stay in West Lorne," he said.

The project was selected because it includes the largest municipal contribution in addition to contributions to cover costs to clean up the for-

mer railway land and extend Munroe Line.

As well, community groups and service clubs were brought together to form the corporation, which showed the community was behind the project, said Mezenberg.

Please see City, page 2

Health centre close to signing new doctor

► Prospective physicians taken for tour around area hospitals

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

West Elgin Community Health Centre is close to signing a contract with two new physicians.

"The sun is rising over the hill. All we need is ink on paper now," said Executive Director Douglas Graham.

He said he hopes by summer two

new physicians will be operating out of WECHC full time and the centre's hours will be extended.

Recruiting two new doctors was Graham's last big task before he leaves the centre the first week of May.

He said the two new doctors will help the centre expand its client list to near 6,000 patients.

Currently, the centre has Dr. Kevin Mardell on full time and a part time doctor from London.

The centre received funding approval to hire new doctors earlier this year.

Graham said he has taken prospective doctors to Four Counties Health Services in Newbury and St. Thomas Elgin

General Hospital.

He encourages doctors to work with the hospitals and maybe pick up shifts in the emergency wards.

"Four Counties is an important hospital to us," said Graham. "We want to keep that emergency room open."

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Part-time doctor joins West Elgin Health Centre

A part-time doctor joins the West Elgin Health Centre this week.

Dr. George Kim, a resident physician from the University of Western Ontario signed a contract to see patients until next July in the primary health clinic.

"I'm delighted," said Cate Melito, new executive director for the health centre. "As people meet with him they will find him very approachable."

Kim will help Dr. Kevin Mardell on a part-time basis.

He has a special interest in managing chronic pain, said Melito.

The health centre has had several part-time family physicians before but each one

requires a recruitment process and meetings with many doctors.

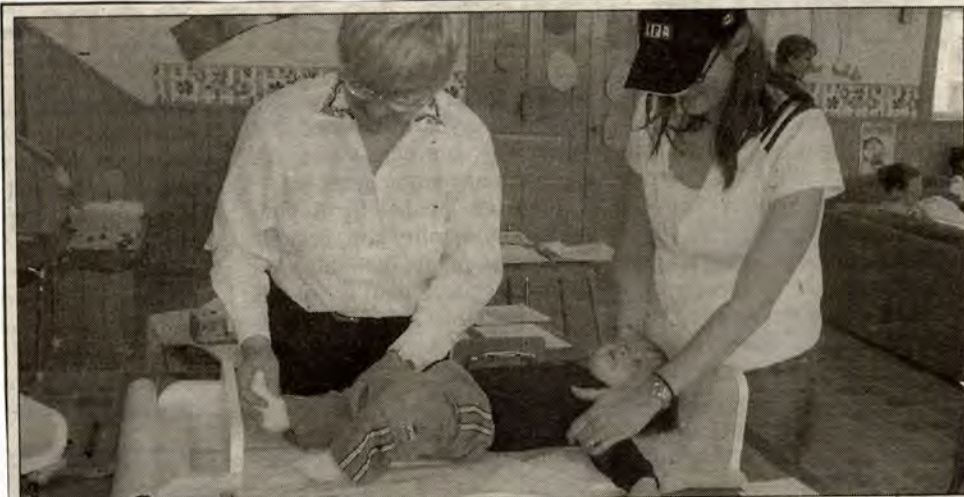
Dr. Kim visited the centre recently with his family, excited to work in a team atmosphere, said Melito.

His arrival comes during an active doctor recruitment process to bring full-time physicians to the health centre.

More clients and expanded hours won't start at the health centre until a full-time physician is contracted.

"Getting those two physicians is critical to that," said Melito.

As for the on going doctor recruitment, "I don't want to say anything until I have something tangible," said Melito.



Stretched

Kim Rowsom holds her eight-month-old son Karter still as Let's Connect Dietitian Diane Marcou gets a measurement. Weights and health information are collected monthly when a group of moms gather at Tiny Tots for the Growing with Babies program.

SCOTT HILGENDORFF/THE CHRONICLE

Youth centres ready to open in West Elgin and St. Thomas

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

Teens will be finding more to do in the coming months as two drop-in centres near openings.

A Youth Board of Directors has been

formed to start a teen centre at the West Elgin Community Health Centre.

Ashley Wooley, Brittany Jewell, Justin Regnier, Craig Hogland,

Ashley Phillips and Caitlin VanRaes are on the "front line", developing contacts in the community and setting up a drop in room at the health centre for youth.

A kick-off event is planned to be held at the West Lorne Arena soon as the teens begin fundraising campaigns to bring the project to life.

Meanwhile, the teens are working to create partnerships with community members and organizations to establish a committee to oversee the long-term future of the drop-in centre.

After three years, a permanent location for the drop-in centre is hoped to be established outside of the health centre.

Claudia Mior-Eckel and Gena

Chandler, program coordinators have been working with the teens to develop leadership, conflict management and mediation skills.

The centre was hoped to open in the next few weeks after school, until 9 p.m. this week for ages 15 to 19, with plans for programming for younger ages soon.

Meanwhile, a second, county-wide centre is nearly opened in St. Thomas.

Mary Jo McWilliam and Carolyn Smith, students from West Elgin Secondary School, have been sitting on a board to start the Elgin Youth Resource Centre.

This youth centre is focussed on giving teens a place to go if

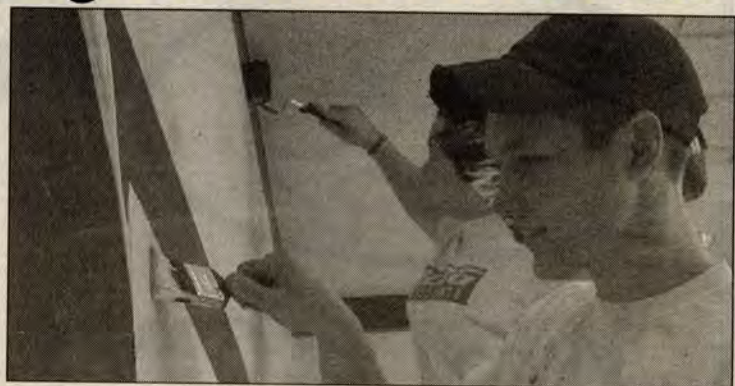
they need to get away from school or home.

At first the centre will house the Youth Employment Counselling Centre.

YECC purchased 5,000-square feet of space at 755 Talbot St. in St. Thomas where one full-time and two part-time staff members will provide programming for youth aged 12-24.

"It's not just for youth in school but for all youth," said Libby Barrett-Fletcher coordinator. "We hope to reach youth who have either dropped out or are very near to dropping out of school."

She said there are homeless youth in St. Thomas and across the county



Youth centre ready to go

Craig Hogland and Melanie Knapp, community youth worker, paint walls at the new teen centre that was hoped to open after school the next few weeks at the West Elgin Community Health Centre.

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

who are staying on friend's couches and barely getting through school.

She said the centre will offer a safe place for all youth to go where they can access mentoring resources, jobs, and a pool table.

Three youth were hired to gut and construct the centre in

St. Thomas. Barrett-Fletcher said plans have been made to use part of the building but concepts are still being discussed on how to use the space.

"How do you see the space?" she asks local youth.

Barrett-Fletcher said the centre is holding a contest for

youth to design a logo and name the new centre, any local students are encouraged to enter.

While both centres are in early stages, they are still looking for more youth involvement.

Collaborative programming is being discussed between both coordinators.



Prisoner of War remembers

George (Scotty) Bell from West Lorne was a Prisoner of War for six weeks in 1944 in Leeuwarden, Holland during the Second World War.

German infantry in Hackworth Forest Germany captured him in March and took him hostage to a hospital until Allied forces liberated Holland.

He had fought with the Algonquin Battalion, Third Division through France, Belgium and Holland, reinforcing the front line liberation army across the Rhine River into Germany.

Today he is a cheerful, mild mannered, short but solid man, 83 years of age. When he joined the army Oct. 1, 1942 he was 19-years-old and 145 lbs.

He trained for two weeks in England before going to France to join the reinforcement battalion after D-Day.

"I was scared from the minute I left Halifax until the minute I got home," said Bell.

Travelling with tanks, a rifle and 100 rounds of ammunition, Bell first saw fighting in Holland.

The front line had pushed the Germans out of Holland and Bell's battalion followed the movement into Germany.

Entering a forest that was supposed to be cleared out, tracers bullets began to fly.

Bell and another soldier hid in a hole no more than one metre wide over night.

By daylight, they saw a tank

with an 88 calibre gun less than 60 metres away set its target on Bell and the soldier.

The gunner opened fire killing the other soldier in the hole and the shrapnel hit Bell in the back left shoulder.

Bell climbed out of the hole and ran to a stretcher house where injured soldiers were being treated.

Before he could be treated, the Germans caught up with him.

Any soldier able to walk was ordered out of the house. Bell and six other Canadians were captured.

He was taken back across the Rhine River to a POW hospital in Leeuwarden.

The Germans were good to Bell, the eight other captured Canadians and two Americans. They knew the war was about to end.

"I was one of the lucky ones," said Bell.

In Leeuwarden, Bell and other POWs were kept on the second floor of the hospital

They were fed sandwiches every meal and had a bed to sleep on.

His wound was treated and healing.

He was captive from early March until April. 6.

The Canadian army that had conquered Italy in November 1944 joined the Allies in Holland and liberated the POW camp, freeing Bell.

He was taken in ambulance to England where he was sent home in August 1945.



SALUTING OUR VETERANS



Charlie Cronkite fought in Second World War for Canada.

Charlie Cronkite fought in the Second World War with the First Canadian Airborne at 16-years-old.

In November 1940 he signed up to parachute into Holland.

He was trained in Toronto, Orillia, Shilo Manitoba, with the airborne division than in England before seeing action.

In 1943 he saw his first action with the Victorian Highlander infantry in Italy.

Once Italy was liberated, Cronkite went to Holland after D-Day and helped

the Allied Forces liberate Holland and push the Nazi Germans back.

He climbed the ranks and became a sergeant.

He suffered a gun shot wound to his lower right leg while fighting in Holland.

He said he was treated very well by nurses and people in England.

He returned to Toronto Oct. 26 1945 and was discharged from the Canadian military in the fall of 1946.

He lives in West Lorne and is an active legion member.

D-Day Dodger remembers fighting in Italy

John (Johnny) Perger, from West Lorne fought in the Second World War in Ortona Italy 60 years ago.

It was his first exposure to the brutalities of war.

He had trained in England and Algiers, Northern Africa before shipping off the Florence Italy.

Perger was 24-years-old, hauling a 40 calibre Boford anti-aircraft gun from Ortona along the Adriatic Sea, almost to Rome with the 5th Division, 42 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment.

This year he is remembering a lost friend who he travelled with, Roy Roden, from Toronto, who was killed in Italy.

His memory is sharp at 84-years-old. He is tall, with steel eyes.

His battalion is credited with taking down three planes near Ortona.

He could spend hours talking about close calls and times he should have died. "I was one of the lucky ones," he said.

Fighting house to house, he remembers running up a street with his battalion when air bombing demolished a house he



John Perger fought in the Second World War.

After experiencing heavy shelling in Lee Valley where his entire camp was bombed by German aircraft, he joined the First Canadian Corp. in Naples.

The Corp. assembled to return to France and begin to push the Germans out of Western Europe.

Experiencing more fighting in Holland, Perger made it through the war unscathed.

However, he would rather talk about when he came home days before Christmas 1945.

Two years upon returning he married his wife of almost 58 years, Alice.

He grew tobacco for a few years until one year the entire crop froze in August.

He went on to work at Erie Flooring and still lives in West Lorne.

With ailing health and his wife ill in a wheel chair, Perger said he was glad to see the Canadians who fought in Italy recognized for their contributions in the war.

It was thought the soldiers fighting in Italy were D-Day Dodgers, missing the largest battle of the war at Normandy France.



OPTIMIST CLUB OF WEST LORNE INSTALLS 04/05 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SUBMITTED

The Optimist Club of West Lorne recently held the installation of its 2004/2005 Board of Directors. Pictured left to right front: John Eagleson, Pres.; Dorothy Staddon, Sec.; Zone Lt. Gov. Marlain Wolfe of Bothwell who lead the installation; middle row l to r: Doug Staddon, Dir.; Shirley Lorch, Dir; Bill Trask, Treas.; back row l to r: Ken Neil, Dir., Karen Goncalves, Dir. and Richard Hale, Dir. The club will be hosting the annual Santa Claus Parade on November 26.