

Muddy Paws turning out stylish pets

Muddy Paws Grooming Salon has been turning out plenty of stylish pets since it opened its doors this past September.

Owned by pet groomer Cathy Couper the new salon in West Lorne is located at 220 Graham Road (behind the old land office).

Offering all kinds of grooming and styling services for pets, Couper calls herself a pet stylist, taking in the matted and dirty and turning out the washed, groomed and styled.

With a full tub and sink, grooming table and dryer Couper can tackle the largest of dogs to the daintiest of cats and all pets in between.

Having worked in pet salons before and

seeing a need in the community, Couper got her certification and opened the shop.

Along with getting customers from Bothwell to London, she's been greeted with open arms by the business community, dropping off flowers to welcome the business.

She says every breed of dog has a specific cut.

She trims around the ears, toe nails, bathes and fluff dries the animal.

"People love their pets and want to make them to be pampered," she said.

Having worked at a local flooring plant for more than a decade, owning her own business is a dream come true.

"I love working with animals. I've always loved animals," she said.

Customers have been amazed at the transformation of the old garage to its current modern salon, work done by Charlie Lilly, John Pyka, Shaun Dowling and Carl Robinson.

Her motto is to provide personal service, where each pet is given time and not to have three or four dogs running all over the salon.

She already struck a deal with the Glencoe Animal Shelter to help with grooming newly taken pets for free.

Muddy Paws is open Mon. to Fri. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sat. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

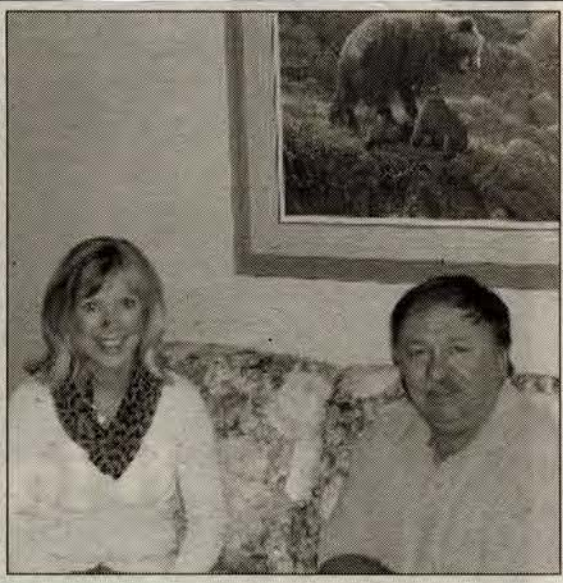


Muddy Paws JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE
Cathy Couper, owner of Muddy Paws, opened the modern pet salon on Graham Road in West Lorne recently.

Painting donated

George Okolisian of Pine creek Gallery donated this Robert Bateman print "Grizzly and Cubs" for the West Lorne Heritage Homes fundraiser. Linda Dunn won the print.

SUBMITTED



Italian imports in West Lorne

The Levesley family has moved its multi-million dollar paint importing business out of their home and onto Main Street West Lorne.

Italian Coatings and Accessories moved into the Main Street office after renovating the building.

ICA imports fine Italian industrial paints which it sells to distributors and manufacturers throughout North America.

Owned by Mark and Felicity Levesley, the couple grew out of their West Lorne-area home office and needed to hire staff.

With four daughters, their oldest Teresa is helping out with the business.

From Zimbabwe, the Levesley's were in the hotel business.



New digs JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE
Teresa, Mark and Felicity Levesley and Marie Humphrey of ICA in their new office in West Lorne.

He and Felicity were also very much sailing enthusiast and bought a sail boat in Europe and sailed around the Mediterranean Sea.

In Italy, the couple operated a sailing company and taught English. "Hopefully this is our last stop," said Mark, who still travels throughout the U.S. where most of the company's customers are and to Italy.

The owner of Industria Chimica Adritica met the Levesleys and asked Mark to teach the Italian employees some English.

Then, Mark was invited to a convention in Kuwait which led to him being hired by the company.

He, in turn, started exporting department taking ICA products worldwide, into Asia, India and eventually North America.

In 1997 he opened a subsidiary in North America, in Michigan, later opening a warehouse in London.

He settled in the West Lorne area after the couple had more children. "ICA sells many types of paint including polyurethane and acrylics, stains, wood flooring, solvents and a growing and advanced water-based paint."

"It's much less environmentally unfriendly," he said,

but it freezes in North America, while being distributed. Out of the West Lorne office, ICA provides technical advice and deals with customers from shore-to-shore.

While the renovations continue, Mark says the building gives the company the capability to provide training and presentations to distributors.

In the future, it's hoped the upstairs apartment, which has an office, will also be a showroom. The coatings are used on furniture, flooring, buildings and musical instruments.

More information can be found at www.icamaeria.com.

So long!

Well news spread before I even said it but as many of you know I'm leaving the paper at the end of 2007.

COLUMN

Following love, that's what I'm doing, it's an opportunity for new opportunities.

That's my spin, anyway. Making a change in your life can be tough, but not really.

Weigh the pros and cons, take a little risk and hope things will work out.

Meagan, my longtime partner is going back to school in her home town Peterborough.

Being from Dorchester, she made the initial compromise of coming down here to be with me. Now it's my turn.

I said it right from the beginning, when I started here summer 2004, that people living in the area are very helpful, giving of information and willing to cover for you if you can't make it to an event.

It maybe one of the strengths of the paper, the community gets involved and helps fill it.

Keep it up! Call if you have news or think something should be news.

Quantity not quality. I steal CityTV's saying - Chronicle Jeff - Everywhere.

Quality: I made mistakes. I'm sorry. You all had to suffer with my learning curve. If I was as careful with other people's words as I am with my own words, there wouldn't have been a problem.

It's a complicated thing, this reporting jazz. Some issues are very deep and technical. Yet a reporter is supposed to summarize and put into laymen's terms.

Reaching the "truth" or "fact" takes indepthness and technical language.

Sometimes it's a disservice to the "truth" and "fact" to paraphrase for the sake of saving space.

I've learned a lot about life from the people in this community.

I've seen the beauty of farmland and forests.

Having been warned that the newspaper industry breeds cynicism, people in this area have instilled belief that humans do everything for the greater good, whether they know it or not.

I've been in search of Johnny Canuck, Joe Blow and regular Tom, Dick and Harry.

Are they out there?

In this area, western Elgin, C-K, SWM, everyone is a leader or pillar, giving their time to "community".

There is no burnout to volunteers because they seem to just keep going and going.

More volunteers are needed but stuff still gets done. In the end people are still happy here.

There has been some tough times, tough news stories. But I've discovered for every bad story there is a good news story.

Another thing I've learned in life now, having spent most of it in a small town and rural area, the philosophy of rural people is ideal.

I lived in Toronto for a year before moving home. In a big city, you can be a "cidiot" and treat people wrongly because you'll never see them again.

Here, be nice to people because you'll see them next week. You'll meet their relatives and children.

So, keep up the good work, you've got one heck of a community here.

If you want to find me, you will.



Jeffified

Jeff Kempenaar

Plant expansion planned

Old boilers at Erie Flooring and Wood Products could be replaced by next summer.

In partnership with Dynamotive Energy Systems, work on a new system is planned for the second quarter of 2007 as part of an upgrade to the bio oil plant in West Lorne.

Dynamotive

announced plans to invest \$4.5 million to expand the biooil plant by 30 per cent.

The West Lorne Cogenerational Facility processes wood waste from Erie Flooring into oil to power a generator at the site and create electricity for the flooring plant.

Currently the plant processes 100 tonnes of biooil but

the expansion will see 130 tonnes of wood waste processed per day.

Pyrolysis equipment will be upgraded allowing the plant to process more bio mass, said Nathan Nuemer, spokesperson with Dynamotive.

The new boilers will allow the expansion of the biooil plant.

Sources with Dynamotive had left for vacation last week and could not be reached for comment.

Until the expansion is done, the plant will operate as normal but the plant will be shut down during the upgrade.

Not all of the biooil is used to generate electricity at the plant. Some is

shipped to commercial customers.

The announcement came in a financial press release Nov. 30.

It also announced, the plant will break even financially in 2007 with more beneficial electricity pricing from the province for renewable energy.

A proposed energy price could

increase the cost of renewable energy by 50 per cent.

The biooil plant began production in 2004. *JAN 07*

Spill distresses new manager



Creek cleaned JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE
An employee with the emergency response unit, who wished not to be named, adjusted a bloom that soaked up diesel fuel in a creek next to Marsh Line, Thursday.

Jeff Kempenaar
Staff

A diesel fuel leak at Erie Flooring seeped through storm sewers in West Lorne March 9 causing fumes to fill at least two homes.

One woman reported suffering headaches and losing time from work with illness from fumes that filled her Maple and Wellington Street home.

"I woke up at 3 a.m. to the smell," said Lynda Brand, who spent much of Thursday calling around to find help.

"I went to the basement and boom! Oh my God," said Paul Bruder, who lives with Brand, about encountering a wall of diesel smell that drove the couple from the home.

A Ministry of Environment officer said the diesel was spilled at the beginning of the daily operation at Erie Flooring.

An automatic kick off didn't stop the diesel fuel from over-filling a field forklift, new plant manager Alan Jones said Monday.

"We're deeply distressed this happened," he said. "We're doing all we can to make sure this never happens again."

"We're working diligently with the (municipality) and MOE to clean up the site."

Dave Thompson, provincial officer for London District was called to the scene by the municipal drains

superintendent in the early afternoon.

Thompson said it wasn't a lot of diesel but added, "A little can go a long way."

The spill reached a storm sewer that stretched down Wellington to Elm Street where it entered a small creek.

The spill reached beyond Marsh Line where Marcus Emergency Response, hired by Erie Flooring, set up a series of blooms along the creek to absorb the oil.

Blooms, soaked material that soaks up fuel, were set up as far down the creek as Thompson Line and were in place until Monday.

Please see Emergency, page 2



Gangle Insurance, Cotrac help Heritage Home
Jamey Welch, left and Cindy Ross present a cheque for \$1,000 on behalf of P.J. Gangle Insurance Brokers to Harry Mezenberg, Heritage Homes chair. While site preparation has begun at the West Lorne site, the fundraising committee continues to work toward the \$70,000 community portion of the cost. Also recently received, was a cheque for \$1,000 from Co-Trac Ford Lincoln, Dutton. *MAY 10/07* SUBMITTED

PM's chef cooks at Lakeview Gardens

The Prime Minister Stephen Harper's sous chef Jonathan Collins shared cooking tips at Lakeview Gardens Sunday.

About 45 people took notes and ate, as he cooked a pot roast, stuffing and dessert.

It's part of a new series of educational demonstrations owners Jim and Jacinta, Jonathan's parents, hope to hold at the greenhouse, restaur

ant and gift shop at Eagle.

Collins, 32, is planning to travel from Ottawa for the first Sunday of each month for demonstrations.

His pot roast served as an alternative to turkey and many in the audience were impressed.

Diligently, the crowd took notes and asked questions while Collins cooked, in the banquet room.



Cooking up public interest JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Jonathan Collins cooks at Lakeview Gardens Sunday.

Collins graduated from Le Cordon Bleu in Ottawa and soon after was hired to help the head chef at 24 Sussex Drive, Oliver Bartsch.

Impressing Bartsch, he was hired as sous chef.

As sous chef he helps with events and when there are visitors.

He also cooks at Rideau Hall and for the General Governor.

He cooked for the President of Mexico and Pakistan, along with leaders in industry.

"It's a privilege,"

he said, adding he has aspirations to become the head chef.

Collins said the Harpers, Stephen, wife Laureen and kids Ben and Rachel have tastes that range from sophisticated to everyday Canadiana.

When the Prime Minister is in the country, he and his family sit for a meal.

Otherwise, when the family is rushed, it's not out of the ordinary for the family to heat up a pre-made casserole.

"For some people they could be taking

advantage of their position," he said. Instead the family tries to keep a balanced, healthy and Canadian diet, knowing they won't always be in this position.

Collins' own children attend school with the Harpers. He's not treated as "hired help."

As for the Prime Minister's taste: hot, hot, hot.

"He likes it crazy hot," said Collins.

Whether its Mexican, Indian or just ribs, "the spicier the better," for Harper.



JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Preferred helps Heritage House

Preferred Insurance Brokers has donated \$1,000 to the West Lorne Heritage House seniors apartment. Peter Carr of Preferred is thanked by Harry Mezenberg, chair of the project. Foundation work was being completed last week. Servicing and framing are expected to be finished by the end of the month.



JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

Pioneer helps Heritage House

Ken Roodzant represents Pioneer Hybrid Ltd. which has given \$2,500 toward the West Lorne Heritage House seniors apartment. Harry Mezenberg, project chair thanks Roodzant at the site of the 16-unit geared to income apartment adjacent to the West Elgin Community Health Centre.

Redinger lends song for cancer

Musician Jeff Redinger, formerly of West Lorne has provided a track on a compilation album raising money for cancer.

Rosie's Gift a song written by Redinger is a tribute to his aunt Rosalie Krebsz.

"For this album I wrote Rosie's Gift which is dedicated to my aunt who passed away from cancer this past August. The song has never been released till now," he said in a release.

The original song was inspired by Krebsz life and seeing her in her final days fighting cancer.

"She set a good example for me and really helped me get to where I am," said Redinger. "The song is about her battle with cancer - though

the disease took her life, she never gave up the fight."

Rosalie took chances in life which has inspired Redinger to follow music as a career.

"Her gift to me was motivation," he said. "For me, her passing really put perspective on how short our time is here on earth. In that sense, I feel more than ever the importance of taking risks, chasing dreams and not giving up."

The album is called Notes and Hope and also features other local artists Hogwild and Aaron Walpole with a song featuring Sara Westbrook.

"It's quite an honour to be on this album with such a great cast of tal-

ented artists and do it for a good cause," he said.

Jeff is the son of sculptor Walter Redinger and his wife Marion, that live in the area.

Redinger has played several shows in the area over the past year and is currently recording his seventh album of new material.

The song features Ryan and Steve Browne also of West Lorne.

Ryan regularly plays with Redinger along with Mike Stillitano.

The album aids in the fight against cancer by using music as a way to generate funding for the cure against cancer. It's part of Project Benefit.

It is available at <http://cdbaby.com/cd/noteshop>.

Fire destroys Thomson Line home

Fire destroyed a Thomson Line home Thursday morning in West Elgin.

The Peixoto family's home was completely destroyed in a blaze.

The family of four, including two young children, was not home at the time but in London with appointments.

Deputy Fire Chief Stuart Jamieson said the

cause of the fire is undetermined. It appeared the fire started in the centre of the house.

He said the family arrived home at 3 p.m. that afternoon, devastated at the sight.

West Lorne Fire Department responded at about 10 a.m., finding the home completely engulfed by flames

A neighbour had spotted the smoke and

called 911.

About eight volunteer fire fighters battled the blaze in high winds and bitter cold for most of the day.

Family were reportedly staying with neighbours after the fire.

Jamieson said the family has insurance. He would not put a value on the home.



Destroyed

JEFF KEMPENAAR/THE CHRONICLE

This two car garage, attached to the two floor home was destroyed by a morning fire Dec. 7 on Thomson Line.

OPP give turkeys to safe drivers

OPP officers will be carrying out operation Christmas Turkey this holiday season.

Officers have been given 25 vouchers for a free turkey to give to safe drivers that they see on Elgin County roads.

For the last 10 years Optimist Clubs from Port Stanley, Fingal-Shedden, Union-South Yarmouth and the OPP have sponsored the Safe Drivers campaign in Elgin County.

The program is an incentive for driving safely at this time of year.

RIDE continues

OPP officers have continued the Festive RIDE program for the second week, setting up checks across the county. Last week, 2,500 vehicles were checked resulting in one 12-hour suspension and a few other offences.

Melody Church OMB appeal withdrawn

Melody Fellowship Church withdrew its appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board before a hearing March 16.

Members of the public, West Elgin council and the municipality's planner were not informed of the withdrawal and arrived for the meeting to learn it had been cancelled.

The OMB hearing had been scheduled to hear an appeal by the church to a zoning change that was rejected by council.

"It's done with," said Clerk Norma Bryant, adding the appeal had been withdrawn two days earlier.

Melody Fellowship recently purchased and began operating services out of the former Disciples Church on Graham Road in West Lorne, ending a more than three-year search for a permanent church home.



St. Marys annual auction another annual success

St. Mary's Catholic School's parent council held its annual auction in November at the Dutton-Dunwich Community Centre.

Humbly not advertising how much it raised, the silent auction and dance raised funds for the school.

Monies will go to the school's

computer lab, supplements to pay for busing for field trips and guest speakers.

As with every year a skid of beans sold for the highest amount, \$2,700.

"Only out in the country would a skid of beans be the big draw," said one of the organizers Lise Van Dyk, with the parent council.

"Lots of farmers come out for that."

No one was sitting after the auction when a classic rock band played the night away.

Auction

SUBMITTED

Mary Jane Buck writes her name in the silent auction at the St. Marys fundraiser in Dutton.

Test your knowledge of local history at libraries

The West Lorne and Rodney Libraries are in your community to serve you. They have a great deal of information to utilize and access. We have Fiction and Non-fiction books, audio books, CDs, videos, DVDs, great children's programs, adult activities, special events, public computer access, computer training and a whole lot more. If we don't have what you want, we'll get it for you! We have access to thousands of books and other material!

Did you know?

The West Lorne Library has a

temporary location at 168 Main Street, West Lorne. You can use the front or side entrance. Our shelves are stocked with great reading!

All the local history publications damaged in the fire are now restored and are available at the West Lorne Library.

There are 11 branches that we can source throughout Elgin County and the books are shipped twice weekly. If we are unable to locate a

RODNEY/WEST LORNE LIBRARY NEWS

By Janet Given

book from our branches we can draw from libraries throughout Ontario.

Historical question

Drop in at the West Lorne or Rodney library and research the answer to the following question.

The West Lorne and Rodney Libraries were opened in 1950-1951. Who was the Reeve at that time?

Submit your ballot and you could win a gift basket, compliments of your local library.

First three names with the correct answer in each library will win a gift.

Contest closes Dec.16.

Contact the West Lorne library at 768-1150 Mondays 2to 5p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays 2 to 8 pm, Fridays 2 to 5 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1pm.

Contact the Rodney Library at 785-2100 Mondays 3 to 5 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays 3 to 8 p.m., Fridays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. to noon.

Good Luck and we look forward to you visiting our libraries.

West Lorne Church of Christ (Disciples)



1887 - 2006

in March 1918 in West Lorne, daughter of John B. Ferguson and
rom Eagle. My father and his brother-in-law, Malcolm McKillop,
owned the hardware store in West Lorne and they and their families were members of
the Church of Christ (Disciples). The Fergusons had come as settlers from Scotland in
1818 and were neighbours of the McKillops on Talbot Road, Aldborough. John
Ferguson, my great great grandfather left the Covenanters Baptist Church, when the
movement toward a new Testament Church practising baptism by immersion and
weekly communion, came to the area around 1830 from the southern States. By the
time I was born, the Disciples Church in West Lorne was flourishing.

I remember the church so well in the twenties. Some ministers, particularly
Rev. Swaby-Smith and his family, lived in the house next door to the church and he
served both Rodney and West Lorne congregations. I remember falling off the
platform where we were practising for the Christmas concert, silver stars on long
streamers hanging from the arch above us. Particularly I remember Sunday School.
The Disciples SS was in the afternoon, church service at night. My father was the SS
superintendent and teacher of the Bible Class. It was so popular that there was an
attendance of about 200 men, women and children. It was a community attraction. The
additional wing to the church was built to accommodate class rooms and offices.

My father died in 1929. We had to go to St Thomas to live with my
grandmother. The Ferguson farm was our only inheritance and could not even be
given away because of the economic chaos that year. Gradually over the next decade
my mother made our home there at Eagle, first in the summer, then permanently. My
brother, Jack, lived there with her when he retired from New York and I always came
with my children to spend the summer. We never lost touch with the church, and took
part whenever we were there. Later I continued to come every year for the
Anniversary service, staying with Earl and Grace Lemon until they too were gone.

We look back at this time at all the changes in our society, our small towns,
our cities and our own lives. We realize that those memories are precious and still
remain when changes force us to move on. We can only celebrate and give thanks for
the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of this Church during the last 117 years.

Jean Ferguson Hambleton

(Mrs Ronald Hambleton)



**WEST LORNE CHURCH of
CHRIST
(DISCIPLES)
Celebrating Over 118 Years of
Faithful Witness
1887 – 2006**

**January 8, 2006
CLOSING WORSHIP**

Opening

Rev. Tom Rutherford
Area & Regional Minister

Announcements and Greetings

Call to Worship

*** Opening Hymn “O God of Vision” 288**

Invocation Prayer

Responsive Reading:

**“A Litany of Remembrance and
Celebration”**

Rev. Janet Anstead
Former Minister

L: We remember, with affection, the heroic efforts of our fathers and mothers in the faith, who labored to bring this congregation into being;

P: And the steady stream of men and women and young people, who, across the years have found inspiration here and who have given leadership to this congregation;

L: We rejoice in so rich a heritage. And thank you, O God, for those who laid the foundation for our community of faith.

P: We honour and express our gratitude for those who have given Pastoral leadership to this congregation. And who have served in other positions of responsibility. We thank you, O God, for the dedication and service of those who have answered your call.

L: We celebrate the victorious witness of this congregation.

P: We celebrate the outreaching concern of our members as we have reached beyond ourselves in the work and witness of the church of Jesus Christ. We rejoice that our labours have been effective and that the Gospel has been proclaimed.

L: Since 1887 this congregation within these facilities in which we meet today have served this community of faith as a center for worship, study and service. It holds the echoes of our precious memories and stories, and we consider it an old friend. However, the erosion of the years on both people and facilities have brought us to this point. In full awareness of our commitment to Jesus Christ, we have expressed our willingness to close our visible Ministry in this place and make available our accumulated assets so that the witness of this congregation may continue in perpetuity. To that end, we join the following covenant;

P: Affirming our membership in the church of Jesus Christ around the world, we renew our vows of fidelity to God and prayerfully covenant:

- that in terminating our visible Ministry, we commit all resources of people and property to the larger witness of the church,
- that with affection we lovingly release this facility that has served us well over the years; that it may be a welcoming home to a new community of faith;

- and that we individually covenant to continue to honor and serve Jesus Christ and the church, offering ourselves willing to whatever service God calls us to accept.

Prayer Hymn: "My Hope is Built" 537

Joys & Concerns

Intercessory Prayers and The Lord's Prayer

Communion Hymn
"Ours the Journey" 458

Communion – Invitation & Institution

Rev. Ron Dakin
Former Minister

Here at the West Lorne Church of Christ (Disciples) we invite all Believers to the Table regardless of denominational affiliation. We hold each element as served and partake together.

Scripture: Mark 1: 4-13

Sermon: "The Challenge of Faith"

Musical Solo

“Precious Memories”

Earla Walker

Hymn

“God Be With You Till We Meet Again”

343

*** Responsive Benediction:**

All: Comfort, O comfort your people,

Men: The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.
Get you up to a high mountain,
Lift up your voice with strength,

Women: “Here is your God!”
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Men: Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
The Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

Women: He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
those who wait for the Lord shall renew their
strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

ALL: In my Father’s house there are many dwelling
places.
Do not let your hearts be troubled.
Believe in God, believe also in me.

*** Sung Benediction: “Go Now In Peace”**

* Please stand as you are able



Advocates for West Elgin seniors carry on

WEST LORNE

SCOTT HILGENDORFF



ACROSS COUNTY LINES

We're taught to respect and revere our elders. We develop a host of stereotypes as we watch our parents and grandparents get older, finding ourselves beginning to care for the ones who used to care for us.

We start to make decisions for them, whether we mean to or not, thinking them less capable. Meanwhile, they struggle with the feelings that go along with feeling less and less productive. If we're not careful or sensitive to it, we fail to realize they start to feel less needed or redundant.

Without meaning to, that's what's happened to one of the most active bunch of seniors around these parts, as members of the West Elgin Seniors' Projects Action Committee have found themselves feeling redundant and less necessary.

All of them retired from the working world years ago and this week announced they have chosen to retire yet again from active service as members of WESPAC.

"There are people who are disappointed," said Jill Soos a retired teacher living in Rodney who announced the committee's dissolution, as one of a handful of executive members feeling they had less and less purpose.

Their purpose was being absorbed by the West Elgin Community Health Centre, a model facility providing pro-active health care to the region. One facet of its operation deals strictly with seniors' health and needs, and Soos said it was time for WESPAC to step back and let the health centre assume full responsibility for seniors' needs in western Elgin County.

"We thought we had our run and with the health centre, it was their time to take the handles and run," Soos said.

The decision didn't come easily and it wasn't without reflection on just how much WESPAC had accomplished. "Action" was the key word in the name of their organization and exemplifies just what they were — an active group of seniors that engaged the community, helped each other and eagerly worked to support the communities around them.

Seniors' groups often focus on socializing, card parties and keeping

one another connected, but this group broke through stereotypes and about the only thing its members didn't do was organize a card party.

Instead, more than 10 years ago, the group came together to organize the first of what became an event hundreds of seniors attended. Called Funshop, the event brought seniors from across the region together for a day focused on fun, games and entertainment, but also on learning and supporting one another. Each year featured speakers and displays covering a range of topics from seniors' fitness and driving issues, to estate planning.

A total of 10 Funshops were organized, helping fulfil the group's mandate of helping ensure seniors received the support and information they needed to maintain their independence and remain active in their communities.

Started through the Ministry of Health, the group continued to raise money through the Trillium Foundation, as well as through other local organizations and service clubs.

Instead of organizing card parties, this seniors' committee organized walking groups.

Instead of gathering to share slide shows from one another's vacations, they organized a transportation network that helped seniors get to

appointments in a rural area where transportation is a significant issue.

Soos said they called themselves "bush shakers and letter writers" for their abilities to get things done.

And the group was about more than serving seniors' needs, actively giving its support to others that were fighting in the last few years to keep West Elgin secondary school open.

It was through their relationship with the high school that WESPAC was able to end its operation on a high note this week.

The committee worked with students to produce a book called The Scars that Never Fade, featuring the stories and photographs of area veterans, written by students and published by WESPAC.

The book sold out. "We decided as a group it was better to go out with a bang," said Soos, adding WESPAC may be gone but its members are still active in various parts of the community. Soos now sits on the health centre's board, providing a voice for the senior community and encouraging seniors to ensure they don't hesitate to bring their needs to the health centre's attention, where WESPAC's legacy has been passed.

Scott Hilgendorff is a freelance writer based in Elgin County. Across County Lines appears Thursdays and Saturdays.

West Lorne Community Complex raised by fire

by Al Kirk

A priceless archive has been damaged and several of West Elgin's community and social groups are homeless after a devastating fire destroyed West Lorne's Community Complex situated in the heart of the village. The cause of the February 8th blaze is still under investigation. The damage has been estimated at \$1,000,000. It was originally feared that back issues of the West Lorne Sun were destroyed



Clean up is already under way in West Lorne after a devastating fire at the downtown West Lorne Community Complex. Photo by Al Kirk

Kiwanis Club, West Elgin Support Services, the Eco-Elgin Environmental

Continued On Page 2

along with other historical documents, but most of the collection now appears will be salvageable, albeit with extensive water and smoke damage.

In addition to the West Lorne Public Library which was the main tenant in the building, the



Boys book club reads on JEFF KEMPENAR/THE CHRONICLE
The boys book club resumed at the new temporary location of the West Lorne Library March 30.

West Lorne Library opens temporarily

Support Services getting files back

West Elgin Support Services has taken over the former youth centre at the front of the West Elgin Community Health Centre.

For the past month-and-a-half the support services has been trying to get back to business after fire drove it from the West Lorne Complex Feb. 3.

Employment counsellors continue to meet with clients in the back office space of the

health centre.

However Nancy Mott has moved to the front of the centre.

A job board and resource computers are now more accessible for the public.

"We'll be here until we move back into the old place," said Mott.

Reconstruction of the Complex continues and support services are meeting with engineers to plan how the new space will look.

Support services was able to take over the Centre Ice youth group spot earlier than thought, as the youth bumped up the move date to the West Lorne Scout Hall which is becoming Centre Ice's permanent home.

"We're just pushing on as before, meeting all of our clients needs. We didn't miss a jump," said Mott.

Many files have been saved by the restoration company.

"It's amazing. We didn't lose

all that much," said Mott.

"Make sure you put everything in filing cabinets," she warns.

Slowly, freeze dried files have been coming in and support services has been able to catch up with client work.

Also, Van Pelt's in St. Thomas has temporarily donated furniture to support services.

Included in West Elgin Support Services and operating out of the building were the YWCA of St. Thomas/Elgin and the Elgin Association for Community Living, Elgin Oxford Legal Clinic, Employment Services Elgin, Quad County Support Services, Violence Against Women Services, Elgin County, West Elgin Transportation Network.

These agencies have found a new temporary home in the West Elgin Community Health Centre and can still be reached at 768-0020.