

# The Creemore ECHO

Friday Garbage & Recycling pickup is on Saturday this week.

Thursday, December 31, 2009 Vol. 10 No. 1

Creemore.com  
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ANNUAL YEAR END ISSUE!!!!

News and views in and around Creemore

## Newsmaker of the Year: CAROLINE SMITH

by Brad Holden

In the *Echo* news department, 2009 was the year of the Accommodation Review Committee. The first nine months saw front-page story after front-page story about ARC "B," the gargantuan committee of students, teachers, parents, municipal politicians and business representatives that spent a year attempting to find a solution to the complicated accommodation mess that exists in the high schools of northern Simcoe County. Midland Secondary School is way under capacity, Penetang Secondary is just about right (though only a ten-minute drive away), Elmvale is overpopulated but crumbling, Wasaga Beach has no school and wants one (though removing that town's students from Elmvale, Stayner and Collingwood would result in the closure of at least one of those town's schools) and SCI's population is too large but declining (at least by the School Board's calculations).

Given free rein to come up with a preferred solution, ARC "B" eventually recommended the "status quo," at least until Wasaga Beach has enough students to open its own school without causing others to close. School

Board staff disagreed, however, and when a final staff report came to the Board it ignored the ARC's solution and recommended its own – close SCI, close Elmvale, close Penetanguishene and open a new "super school" in Wasaga Beach.

What followed were three School Board meetings attended by large crowds and full of motions, amendments and amendments to amendments. In the end, the Board's decision was "postponed," an outcome that effectively allowed the deadline on the ARC to run out, leaving SCI still standing and leaving the Board no way to revisit the issue without calling a brand new ARC.

No sooner did the ARC "B" situation cool off than another started to heat up – ARC "E," looking into accommodation issues at Clearview elementary schools, was formed in June and got down to serious work in September. But in the meantime, the Ministry of Education had released new guidelines on how ARCs should operate, outlining several new ways that the process could be made more transparent and public-friendly. Fearing that they were headed toward

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SCDSB Trustee **Caroline Smith**



**Lynn Gowan**

## Volunteer of the Year: LYNN GOWAN

by Brad Holden

In a place like Creemore, picking a Volunteer of the Year is like deciding on a favourite star in the sky. This village is blessed with a huge number of people who devote all kinds of time to community causes.

For most, it's a way of life – something they grew up watching their parents do and something they're passing on to their own children.

**Lynn Gowan**, our Volunteer of the Year, is a great example of that, especially this year, when she and **Julie Bigham** led a team of more than 100 volunteers and welcomed five times that many people to Creemore during last winter's massive Skate Canada Huronia Funskate event.

Executive member of the Creemore Skating Club's board since 1994 and its president since 2004, Gowan is a force to reckon with while walking the halls of the arena during events like the Huronia Funskate, the club's annual Carnivals or the recent Battle of the Blades. At any given time she can be simultaneously fielding two or three different questions from her volunteers, shuffling the next act onto the ice, signalling something to the DJ booth and zipping up a skater's costume.

"I like to see things run smoothly," she says with a smile, pondering why, year after year, she finds herself in such a stressful organizing role. "But

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# COMMUNITY Calendar

Submit your community events  
 info@creemore.com  
 phone: (705) 466-9906  
 fax: (705) 466-9908

## Upcoming Events

### Thursday, December 31

- **Happy New Year!**
- **New Year's Eve Skating** at Creemore Arena from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Free. Sponsored by mSPEC.
- **Hawaiian Luau New Years Eve** at Sunnidale Corners Hall. Doors open at 8 pm. Midnight Buffet. Party favours, prizes for best costume. Age of Majority only. Complimentary taxi service home. Break out those flowered shirts and shorts!! Tickets are \$15 per person, phone Marianne at 428-0223. Hosted by Nottawasaga Junior Farmers & Sunnidale Hall Board.
- **New Years Eve Gala.** Come celebrate Brett McLean and Carly Wenger's upcoming nuptials! Dress up or dress it down at Station on the Green in our home town. Tickets \$25 a couple or \$15 for a single. Midnight buffet and countdown included. Doors open from 8 pm to 1am. Age of majority. Please contact Karen Wenger at 466-3174 or email jaimeparker13@yahoo.ca for tickets.

### Friday, January 1

- **New Year's Day**

### Saturday, January 2

- **Art Opening** featuring artist **Donna Tranquada** at **Curiosity House** from 2 to 4 pm. This show features Donna's luminous watercolours of the landscape in and around Creemore.

### Thursday, January 7

- **Deadline** to submit your **CreemoreCentric** work of art. Submit to Mad & Noisy Gallery by 5 pm today. Purchase a canvas for \$20 and create your view of life in & around Creemore. This special art show runs from Saturday, January 9 to Sunday, January 31 and is open to the community to enter their artwork. Artwork will be sold by silent auction at the end of month as a fundraiser for the **Mad & Noisy Gallery**. Sponsored by **Purple Hills Arts & Heritage Society** & The Ontario Trillium Foundation.

### Saturday, January 9

- **Opening Reception** for the **CreemoreCentric Art Show** is today at Mad & Noisy Gallery from 2 to 5 pm. Come see what local people have produced in artwork showing their view of Creemore & area. This show runs to Sunday, January 31.

- **Storytime at Curiosity House** from 10:30 to 11:30 am. Join Miriam for stories and fun! 466-3400.
- **Toronto Symphony Orchestra** renowned violinist, **Etsuko Kimura**, and pianist, **Megumi Okamoto** start the new year with the music of Brahms, Beethoven and Vitaliat at 1 pm at New Life Church, Collingwood. Tickets are \$35. Tickets at Curiosity House or on-line [www.collingwoodmusicfestival.com](http://www.collingwoodmusicfestival.com). Information: 1-888-283-1712.

### Saturday, January 30

- **Purple Hills Arts & Heritage Society** invites everyone to a **Cocktail Party & Bidding War** at the **Mad & Noisy Gallery** from 5 to 7 pm. Bid on **CreemoreCentric** pieces, enjoy delicious food by Bite Me! and Roseberry Farms, cash bar.

### Saturday, February 6

- Set aside this date for the **Avening Hall Euchre Tournament**. \$10 per person. Cash bar. Snack and fun! For more information contact Carol at [rowbie5@bmts.com](mailto:rowbie5@bmts.com).

## Newsmaker of the Year: SCDSB Trustee Caroline Smith

(Continued from page 1)

a situation similar to ARC "B," where no matter what their recommendation was the Board staff would turn around and call for something like the closure of Duntroon Public School or the NCPS Annex, members of the committee asked the School Board if they could be disbanded so that a new ARC could be called for the area in the new year, operating under the new guidelines. After a bit of wrangling, their request was granted.

Looking back, these were two significant victories at the School Board, especially if you are of the mind that rural communities are better for the schools in their midst. And while many people deserve credit for these outcomes – the volunteers who sat on the two committees have all put in countless hours, and Councillor **Shawn Davidson** and Deputy Mayor **Alicia Savage** have both been outspoken when called upon – the person that we have chosen as our "Newsmaker of the Year" is the person who may have worked hardest of all on behalf of our schools, Collingwood/Clearview Trustee **Caroline Smith**.

Midway through her second term as Trustee for this area, Smith had been known to most before this year

as a somewhat mysterious Barrie resident who for some reason represented an area far from home at the Board. But this year she revealed her true colours.

A paralegal who became passionate about the education system 20 years ago when the eldest of her four children was identified as gifted in elementary school, Smith first ran for a position on the Board in 2001, taking on a well-entrenched Barrie Trustee and losing. Convinced she had something to offer, for the next election she chose the Collingwood/Clearview ward, where the incumbent was less secure. She won that election, and is now nearing the end of her second term on the Board.

Get Smith talking about the ins and outs of Simcoe County District School Board politics and you'll have trouble keeping up with her. She speaks quickly, and requires no prompting as she jumps from one subject to another at breakneck speed. It's this passion and intellect that she has called upon from the first moment in 2005 that it appeared that SCI and Duntroon Public had been identified as closure possibilities during Board staff's first foray into the new system mandated by the province – one involving capital strategic plans, identification of

schools that are "prohibitive to repair" and the calling of Accommodation Review Committees to determine the best schools to shut down.

It's a complicated situation, but one that basically stems from the current funding formula at the Ministry of Education. School Boards have essentially been told that they will not receive any money to build schools in areas that are growing until they sort out their under-capacity issues in areas where the population is more static. In the Simcoe County District School Board – geographically the biggest in the province – that means you have several Trustees from the GTA-influenced south who at times appear intent on closing schools in rural areas in the north.

In the face of this, Smith spent the year building up her email list (she now sends a newsletter to about 500 people regularly), lobbying municipal politicians, studying School Board bylaws and sitting on both of the local ARCs. And when it came time for critical decisions at the Board, Smith was a master of process – shifting alliances, filibustering when necessary, massaging motions and doing whatever she had to do to get the votes she needed to stay the execution on her schools.

"You have to have process," says Smith of her approach. "To do my job well, I need to know Robert's Rules, the Board bylaws and the Education Act. And I'm the type of person who likes knowing what Subsection 4.6.2.8 means. It's knowing how to stop things that makes you powerful."

Looking back on the year, Smith is grateful that the public got behind her and credits the ARC members as the real newsmakers.

"I feel sorry for those people, but they were wrong to think what they did was futile," she says. "If they hadn't stayed the course and complained that the process was dismal, who knows where we would be."

Instead, Smith scored two victories and is now preparing for a new year and new battles.

"It was a pretty good year," she says of 2009. "We didn't close Stayner, and we didn't go barrelling ahead with another ARC. Time and fairness was on the side of the public."

Now, it appears a new Clearview elementary ARC will be called in September 2010, using the new Ministry guidelines. There's no indication that another secondary ARC will be called – indeed, Smith is doubtful one can be, since bylaws state that schools can only be the subject of ARCs once every five years.

The key now, says Smith, is to focus on community partnerships with other agencies to keep our schools viable. Because closing them should never be taken lightly.

"Mistakes are inherited for years to come," she says. "Thankfully, we avoided any this year."

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