

# THE FREE PRESS PEOPLE

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THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 2001

PHONE 564-0005

## The Community NOTEBOOK

### ► Ramblin' along

The Caledonia Ramblers host a slide show on March 16 at 7:30 p.m. at the Spruce Capital Seniors Rec Centre (3701 Rainbow Drive). Dave King will show slides of Guatemala. Non-members welcome. Call 563-4233 for information.

### ► Help support Crimestoppers

Crimestoppers is looking for dedicated persons to sit on their board of directors. Call Norma (964-4374) for information.

### ► Intro into tracking

Prince George Search & Rescue holds an "Intro to Tracking" course on March 21 at their Hart Highway headquarters. Call Vicki (250-967-4172) for information.

### ► Learn to handle your dog

Prince George Kennel Club holds handling classes at the Columbus Community Centre starting March 12 at 7 p.m. Drop-in fee is \$10 or \$55 for all six weeks. Call Penny at 964-0665. PGKC's next monthly meeting is held March 20 at 7:30 p.m. in Studio 2880's Jack Bryan Room. Everyone welcome. Call Donna at 963-8399 for info.

### ► Supporting child care

Register now for the Fifth Annual Supported Child Care Conference at CNC on April 7. Workshops, keynote speakers, trade fair, lunch and continental breakfast all for \$40. Workshops filling up already (first come, first serve) so don't delay. For more information call Supported Child Care at 563-1147.

### ► Sign up for 24-hour relay

The 24 Hour Relay For a Friend is coming up on May 5 and 6 at Massey Stadium. The Canadian Cancer Society reminds people to get their teams registered for this annual fund-raiser. It promotes team spirit, group morale, and of course a community stand against one of our most feared diseases. Call Tami at 564-0885 for more information.

## Young Scientists

*Fairs growing in popularity as projects increase in difficulty*

School kids are always experimenting with science. They're pretty fair at it. So the school district combines the concepts in their annual science fair series. Each school holds their own in-house science fair, the best of those exhibits goes on to the zone level and the winners there go on to the coveted Central Interior Science Exhibition at the Civic Centre. This is the 25th anniversary of the district-wide event and the zone competitions are on.

There was a time when a cool science fair project was making a model volcano erupt using baking soda and vinegar. These days it is more common to see projects like "How Will Volcanic Ash Stimulate Growth of Plants?" The bar has been set a tad higher over the years.

"I've seen the degree of difficulty change," says Heritage Elementary teacher Larry Mikulasik, who sits on the CISE organizing committee. "That's both a good and a bad thing. I honestly think some of the projects are too difficult. There seems to be a little too much parental input, for some, but there is also the other side of it. I am always struck by the original ideas."

The level of technology involved in the projects has recently accelerated. Many of the exhibits now utilize laptop computers, artistic pie charts and detailed graphs, professional font designs and overall polished presentation.

Certain trends also emerge in this year's projects, at least among the 63 on display at Heritage Elementary for the Lakewood/DP Todd Zone event on Tuesday. Many of the experiments involved plant performance, many were concerned with human health. This was the first of eight zone science fairs in the school district. These lead up to the CISE event on March 28 at the Civic Centre, which will be an all-out public festival of science.

"I don't know if it is exactly 'fun' for the kids," Larry says, noting many of the students take their projects very seriously. "Hopefully they choose a project



Highland Elementary students Bridgitte McMillian and Amy Dale with their scientific investigation of lungs and smoking. JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS

that interests them, grabs their fancy. As I tell the kids in my class, if you play music maybe do a project involving that. If you are a cross-country skier maybe do something on how wax reacts with temperature or something like that."

Schools are not required to hold a preliminary science fair, and science-friendly teachers worry that the science field may suffer the fate of band and drama programs on the cut-back discard pile. Teachers are not afforded "release time" like they used to be, which means less attention to extra-curricular activities like science clubs or ultra-curricular activities like science fairs. It will be up to individual teachers' aptitudes and in-class effectiveness to develop the scientific minds of area students.

"It can be an interesting endeavor

for a student, to carry out a science fair project, but second, it develops research skills. Third, it develops all the incidental skills like the word processing, the font choices, how to use graphics programs, the backdrops, the art that is involved in the presentation," Larry says.

And there has been plenty of precedence in the local area of science fair projects that have jumped out and changed society. Many local projects have gone on to the national level and placed there as well. The public is invited to attend the 25th annual Central Interior Science Exhibition on March 28 at the Civic Centre. It is the kind of event where youngsters are the ones doing the teaching.

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