

CITY EDITOR: HARVEY TAYLOR
894-2231 EXT. 2678
htaylor@therecord.com

SECTION B

ROCK 'N' ROLL RIFT - B4
Hall of Fame nominations
not without controversy

BIRTHS / DEATHS - B6, B7



Budd White of Waterloo leaps from stone to stone on his unicycle while competing in an informal trials competition among several unicycle riders from Waterloo and Ottawa at the University of Waterloo on Saturday

DAVID BEBEE, RECORD STAFF

Three fall through thin ice

By MELINDA DALTON
RECORD STAFF

PUSLINCH

A 74-year-old Cambridge man is being treated for hypothermia after he fell through melting ice on Puslinch Lake on Saturday while ice fishing.

Two men on snowmobiles who tried to rescue Algzy Plichta also fell into the lake and had to be rescued by emergency crews.

The Cambridge man was fishing about 50 metres from Somme Island around 4 p.m. when he broke through the ice, said Platoon Chief Bob Laurence of the Cambridge Fire Department.

Plichta drilled a few holes where the ice was acceptably thick and fished while sitting in a lawn chair. But he must have walked around and stumbled upon a thin spot, Laurence said.

"His lawn chair was still sitting on the ice."

Plichta fell into water that was only about chest deep but he was unable to pull himself up onto solid ice.

Someone heard him shouting for help and called 911.

In the meantime, two snowmobilers raced to Plichta's rescue.

The two men, 42-year-old Brad Paradise of Kitchener and Bradley Maddick of Puslinch Township, tried to pull Plichta from the water, but both went through the ice with their snowmobiles, police said.

One snowmobiler had already broken through the ice when firefighters arrived, and the other fell in before their eyes, Laurence said.

The snowmobilers fell into shallow water and managed to pull themselves up onto the ice. Although they were wet and cold, both initially refused to get into the firefighters' ice-rescue pontoon boat.

"They wanted to stay and mark their snowmobiles with buoy markers" for later recovery, Laurence said.

Police had to be called to persuade the men to get in the boat.

Plichta was in the water about 40 minutes and suffered from hypothermia, Laurence said. He was admitted to Cambridge Memorial Hospital, where he was in serious condition last night.

Paradise and Maddick did not require medical treatment.

In addition to Plichta and the two snowmobilers who went into the water, firefighters also had to rescue a fourth man, who had walked out to the island.

That man was not in the water but would have been in danger if he'd tried to walk back to shore, said Laurence, who didn't know the man's age or what he was doing on the island.

"We weren't going to leave the scene and leave someone stranded on the island."

The ice ranged in thickness from about 13 centimetres to almost nothing, Laurence said.

"There were lots of thin spots."

Wellington OPP is reminding everyone that the ice has melted significantly due to the mild weather and it is not safe for anyone to use.

mdalton@therecord.com

• With files from Karen Kawawada, Record staff

Winter about to roar back

Enjoy today's balmy temperatures, freezing weather is just hours away

By MELINDA DALTON
RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO REGION

An early spring thaw had some area residents soaking up the sun on the weekend, and others keeping a close eye on rising rivers.

Whether it was biking, doing yard cleanup or simply sitting in the sun, people across the region found reasons to be outdoors.

Temperatures reached highs of 10 C on Saturday and 13 C yesterday.

And just as residents thought their unusual winter might be ending, the season was preparing a striking comeback — for late tonight.

First, the mercury is expected to hit 15 C today. But don't be fooled.

In the hours that follow, Old Man Winter will put a fast freeze on the ambitious early spring.

Snow is expected to arrive overnight, when temperatures plummet to the freezing mark.

The backlash will chill the area until at least the end of the

week, Environment Canada predicts.

Our taste of spring got underway Friday, when Waterloo regional police issued warnings about a possible flood after the Nith River spilled over its banks at around 5 p.m.

The New Hamburg fairgrounds, which typically see some flooding every spring, were closed as water climbed as high as the fence lining Jacob Street, just metres away from several homes.

The water started to seep back into the river Saturday evening, said Ralph Beaumont of the Grand River Conservation Authority.

"This was a typical spring run-off situation, not as bad as

some in the past," he said.

An area along Tannery Street in Ayr was also affected by the swollen river.

"We don't have any reservoirs on the Nith so we have to take what we get," Beaumont said.

Jacob Street residents in New Hamburg said they are used to spring flooding and have adapted.

"We're lucky this year because there's no ice on the river," said Manfred Chiduck, who has lived across the road from the flood-prone fairgrounds for 30 years.

"It came up very slowly this year and at that stage, you can go to sleep without much worry."

SEE SPRING: PAGE B2

Old factory could become lofts

Tiger Brand project among several planned

By KEVIN SWAYZE
RECORD STAFF

CAMBRIDGE

The former Tiger Brand factory in Cambridge could be converted into apartments this year by a Toronto developer already building condominiums and apartments two blocks away.

Lancer Group has an option to purchase 35 Water St. S., with a plan to convert the four-storey building into the "Tiger Lofts," with 54 rental units.

The building has been vacant since Tiger Brand Knitting fell into bankruptcy a year ago. Lancer is undertaking due diligence to examine the property, but vice-president Steve Lindy is upbeat the deal will close next month.

Renovations could start this spring, with apartments ready for tenants by early 2007, he said.



PHILIP WALKER, RECORD STAFF

The empty Tiger Brand plant could soon become condominiums.

Lindy wouldn't give any financial details about the project.

At Wellington and Main streets, a mild winter has construction ahead of schedule on Lancer's 172-unit Wellington Square project.

The 85 condominiums and 77 apartments are expected to be ready by September.

So far, 54 of the condominiums have been sold sight un-

seen. A two-bedroom model unit should open next month, Lindy said.

Cambridge is a good place to invest money in infill projects, Lindy said.

"Working in the city of Cambridge is a refreshing change from working in larger centres in the GTA," he said. "The approval process is more streamlined in a smaller municipality." Cambridge and Waterloo Re-

gion also waive development charges on projects in core areas. Cambridge waives application fees and offers to help pay for the cleanup of contaminated sites.

That's likely to help another condominium project at the north end of downtown, where a 1.2-hectare (three-acre) property has sat vacant for nearly three decades.

Realtor Tom Watson represents the landowner, Oskar Ganahl from Austria. Watson said a deal to bring in a development partner should close later this month.

"I don't want to say any more right now," Watson said. "I'm superstitious."

The land along Water Street north of Parkhill Road is contaminated with coal tar, a byproduct of the creation of coal gas a century ago. Between 1888 and 1910, the Galt Gas Co. produced coal gas at a plant on the property.

Later, a textile factory stood on the site, until it was razed to make way for flood-protection works after the 1974 flood.

SEE TIGER: PAGE B2

Activist believes 3 hostages alive

Friends and colleagues paid tribute yesterday to a slain Christian peace activist in Iraq amid heightened concerns for the fates of two Canadians and a Briton kidnapped along with the American.

Christian Peacemaker Teams members laid a single red rose in Nathan Phillips Square's Peace Garden in Toronto and held large photographs of the men as they sang a hymn for Tom Fox, 54. Fox's remains were picked up by American forces Thursday night.

His body was found near a west Baghdad railway line with gunshot wounds to his head and chest. There were signs he was tortured, Iraqi police said.

There has been no immediate word on the whereabouts of Fox's colleagues — Jim Loney of Toronto, Harmeet Singh Sooden, formerly of Montreal, and Briton Norman Kember — who

"I think we owe it to Tom to continue to hope and pray for the return of the other three."

ELLIS BROWN,
CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKER
RESERVIST

were kidnapped in November.

But Ellis Brown, a Christian Peacemaker Teams member, said from his St. Agatha home he believes they're still alive.

"I think we owe it to Tom to continue to hope and pray for the return of the other three."

The three men were last seen without Fox in a brief video dated Feb. 28.

Christian Peacemaker Teams has faced criticism for sending its volunteers into harm's way as the situation in Iraq further deteriorates.

SEE ACTIVIST: PAGE B2

Bureaucratic bungles leave core agency in the lurch

There are times when I wonder if politicians and bureaucrats ever talk to each other at Kitchener city hall.

For years, councillors and public servants have planned a project to clean up coal-tar contamination at the site of a former downtown gasworks at Gaukel and Joseph streets.

They knew the project would start in April.

They also knew it included extensive neighbourhood road construction and what appears to be an extremely attractive, redesigned entrance to Victoria Park beside the former KOR art gallery on Joseph.

Kitchener announced the \$6-million project at the end of January.

Officials said the park entrance will be closed because



FRANK ETHERINGTON

the parking lot beside the KOR building will become a fenced site, where contaminated soil will be stockpiled and tested before it is trucked to a dump.

With such a massive plan, you would assume project details and schedules would have been known for some time at city hall.

But considering the frustrating push-pull treatment given a

local agency that helps street kids, any such assumption would be wrong.

Reaching Our Outdoor Friends — ROOF — was in trouble when it was forced out of its Queen Street headquarters by a \$340,000 fire on Dec. 28.

Kitchener Mayor Carl Zehr, council and city officials moved promptly and generously to provide additional cash and a new home for ROOF.

That home was in the empty KOR building where city workers then scrambled to provide shower and laundry facilities for teens using the refuge.

ROOF was originally told it could use the building until April.

Agency directors and staff were delighted when the mayor told them council would allow

ROOF to stay in the building for a year.

Zehr gave the organization the news when he attended an opening of ROOF's new base on Jan. 10, two weeks before the city announced the coal-tar cleanup.

He said the agency could use the building rent-free until April, then pay \$600 a month until December.

ROOF's board chair Tim Sothorn said he was greatly relieved to have a year to get the agency back on its feet.

Now, following those excellent steps forward, consider the city's stumbling steps back.

Sothorn says ROOF is homeless again after being told by the city it would have to move out of the KOR building by mid-April because it will be in the middle

of the clean-up project.

Go figure.

When I talked to Sothorn he emphasized how grateful he is to the city for providing temporary headquarters and for now helping ROOF search for another headquarters.

He also said he's puzzled why ROOF was told it could stay for a year while construction work went ahead.

Zehr said it was thought ROOF could use the building while the project took place. He told me officials then expressed health and safety concerns about having the agency so close to a stockpile of contaminated soil and decided ROOF would have to move.

Ken Currier, Kitchener's operations director, said when his officials decided ROOF could

stay a year they didn't know the timing of the clean-up work.

But Jim Witmer, city remediation director, said ROOF was originally told it could only use the building until April because officials knew it would be in the middle of a construction zone.

Witmer didn't know why ROOF was then told it could stay a full year.

I would suggest the answer to that awkward question involves the left bureaucratic hand at city hall not knowing what the right hand is doing.

Which is a pity because such basic communication could have helped ROOF avoid yet another crisis.

• Frank Etherington can be reached at 894-2250, ext. 2608, or at fetherington@therecord.com.