

Community gathers to support recent fire victims in Coe Hill



Following a community pot luck dinner held to support his and another family who recently lost their homes and possessions in a fire, Gary Hicks receives a charcoal sketch of favourite artist Leonard Cohen by local artist Carolyn Henderson. From left, Kendra Post, Gary Hicks, and Carolyn Henderson. JIM EADIE Special to This Week

By Jim Eadie

For the third time in less than a year, Coe Hill area neighbours and friends organized a big community gathering to morally and financially support community members suffering a sudden tragedy.

Two families were left homeless on April 2 when their homes on Norman Lane in the hamlet burned to the ground, leaving Jeanaann Barnaby, as well as Gary Hicks and Mary Burbidge, with few possessions left.

On April 23 a large crowd filled the Wollaston Township community centre for a family-gathering style potluck dinner to raise the spirits of the two families.

The event included a silent auction to raise a bit of cash to help them out. The evening was capped off with a jam session featuring local musicians, led off by John Foreman.

‘There were so many people who came forward to help with this,’ said Pat Bird, one of the organizers of the evening. ‘People have come together, and given from the heart in many ways – it is amazing. It was maybe not a good year for some local businesses, but they still gave to this in a big way anyway.’

Joe Carrol, a local artist who makes high quality handmade cigar box guitars which are much sought-after, had recently sold one of his three string instruments to Hicks. ‘It burned up in the house,’ said Carrol. ‘He doesn’t know, but I am making another one for him. For me, life is good – I woke up this morning, and there was food in the fridge.’ Carrol also donated a hand made two string cigar box slide guitar to the evening auction sale.

‘I know that Jeanaann is completely overwhelmed by the people who have come forward and offered her their help,’ said Bird.

‘I feel very fortunate to live in this community,’ said Hicks. ‘Thank you everyone.’

Once the accounting is completed, money raised will be evenly divided between the two households. That amount was not available at press time.