

Old fashioned box social held at Coe Hill Legion



By Jim Eadie

The old fashioned 'box social' dates back to the very early days of our area, and to a time when there were no cars, Internet, movie theatres, computers devices or even electricity. They were a popular, even necessary way for people to socialize and often raise some money for a church or community project.

In those days, the women in the community prepared a lunch for two, and carefully placed it in a box, which was attractively decorated to disguise the contents, and also disguise who had actually made the lunch. Men were expected to bring their wallets, and the fancy boxes were auctioned off to the highest bidder. At the completion of the auction, the men opened the boxes to discover what was for lunch, and were joined by the lunch maker to eat together and visit.

Old stories abound about how the young unattached men and women in the community tried to create opportunities to meet one or the other socially, conveying subtle, or maybe not so subtle clues to each other in hopes of orchestrating a lunch (date) together.

On Saturday evening March 7, the old traditional 'box lunch' was resurrected once again at the Coe Hill Legion by the Tri-County Optimist Club in the hope to again generate a community social gathering, and at the same time generate some money for their projects benefiting children in the Coe Hill School catchment area.

Several dozen people arrived, some with decorated box lunches, and some with their wallets. In a modern change, both men and women were seen bidding for lunches being auctioned off by Wollaston Deputy Fire Chief Dave Jackson.

Kim Patterson had the winning bid of \$73 on a tiny box decorated with a fishing lure and some line.

'Hmmm,' he said. 'Looks like this is catch your own dinner.'

'Could be a box of Fish Crisp,' called out someone at the back of the hall.

'Alluring,' noted another voice.

'Well, I'm hooked!' joked Patterson.

At the end of the auction, Patterson was relieved to discover a note inside the box telling him a hot meal was in the stove in the kitchen.

Al Vandendriessche purchased a beautiful pink package, and discovered he had purchased a lunch brought by 6 year old Jerrylin Patterson. In addition to lunch, his lunch partner had also included a suitably large supply of Skittles, chocolate, and peach drink boxes.

Following an entertaining social evening with a meal, Jackson announced that a total sum of \$521 had been raised for the activities of the club.

Jerrylin Patterson reminded everyone that she is an "Optimist Kid", and had brought a lunch so that it would help the kids her age in the area.

No subtle or not so subtle activities to orchestrate a lunch date were observed, and organizers were so pleased with their first "box social" that they are planning to keep it as an annual event.