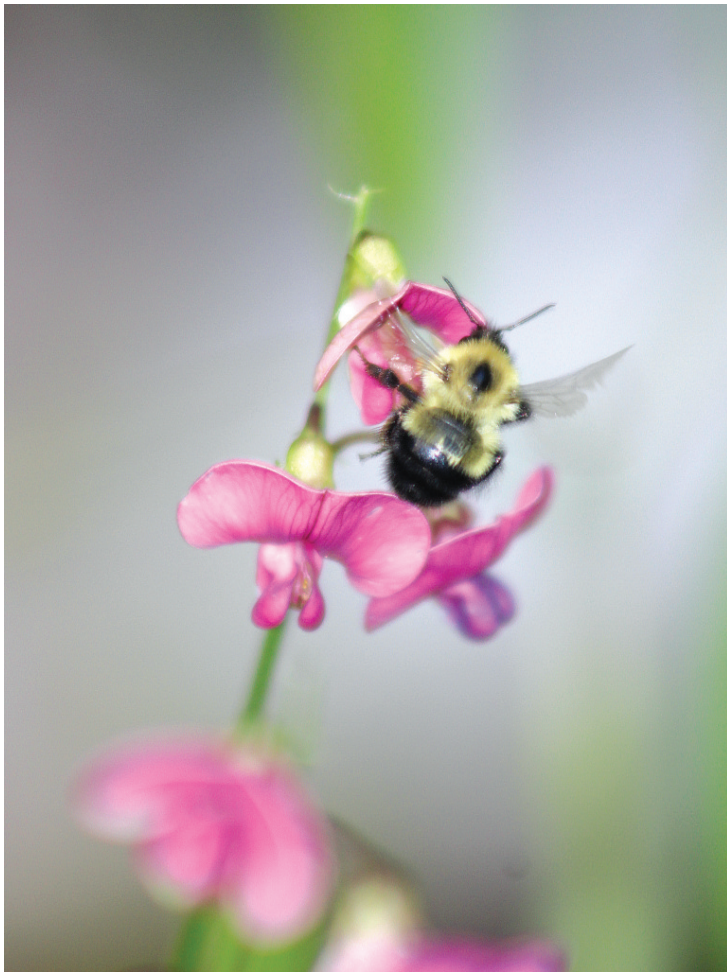


Outside the big box



By Nate Smelle

IF THERE IS ONE THING IN common with events like the Gemboree and Wheels, Water and Wings it is their ability to remind us of how lucky we are to have such a diverse business community here in Bancroft. In the summer months the impact of community celebrations like these are much more recognizable with the influx of seasonal residents. It is not as if this vibrancy only exists on special occasions, however, it does shine a little brighter when there are more people from outside the community enjoying what Bancroft has to offer. Living here year round it is possible to become complacent with the richness of local shopping opportunities, as we repeatedly replenish our supplies at many of the same stores week after week. Without a real need to leave the area to acquire one's creature comforts, this complacency does not arise from a lack of options. Walking downtown during the 51st annual Gemboree weekend I started to pay attention to how special a local shopping opportunity we have in Bancroft. For example, one can buy a new wardrobe and all sorts of creative collectibles at the Zihua Boutique and S, Re-Creations, Jungle Imports or the Old Tin Shed. If new is not your thing you can find quality second hand clothes and other items at Choices while at the same time supporting local health initiatives. Why would anyone want to hand over their hard earned cash to sweat shops that force their labourers to manufacture toxic clothes in a dangerously unhealthy work environment, when we can buy clothes made in Canada by people earning an arguably fairer living? Driving south to Toronto or north to Ottawa the closer we get to these city centres it isn't hard to see what happens when smaller towns say yes to sweat shops and big box stores. When a community allows these types of businesses to set up shop within its borders, it ends up trading a socially sustainable, high quality shopping experience for a slow death by convenience. Over time big box stores lower the bar for everyone. Driving locally owned businesses out of town they steal the profits from the independent business owner to line the pockets of international shareholders. For most full time work and fair wages are replaced with part time work at minimum wage. Ignorantly the sprawl-mart mentality worships self-indulgence and

purposeless consumption by keeping most of the people in the world living cheque to cheque at the brink of starvation. Why wouldn't someone earning minimum wage buy three polyester T-shirts from a sweat shop in Bangladesh for the price of one made of organically grown hemp fabric grown and manufactured here in Canada? One thing for certain is that poverty and low, low prices go hand in hand.