

The Fruits of Passion



By Nate Smelle

SOME WEEKS IT IS EASIER TO put together the words found in this column than others. This past week there was no shortage of things to write about in Bancroft and Hastings Highlands. On Saturday alone I found myself soaking in the local culture at four different events. Just before noon I met with a group of approximately 40 anti-Stephen Harper activists in Millennium Park in Bancroft, who were voicing their opposition to the federal government's latest omnibus Bill C-51. Before the crowd had dispersed I was back on the road heading north to Maynooth to take part in the seasonal seed exchange known as Seedy Saturday at the old community centre. After that it was off to the ANAF barn to indulge in all things green at the annual St. Patrick's Day celebration. The fun wasn't over yet. Later that night I made my way over to the North Hastings Community Centre to watch the Vito's Pizzeria Peewee Jets hockey club take on the Twin Centres Stars in the All-Ontario Finals.

My favourite part, the tricky part in writing this piece each week, is trying to find a common thread linking together the previous week's events. Rarely does such a theme stand out so obviously as this past week's did. I began thinking of this week's topic after noticing a similar passion in the voices of members of council in Hastings Highlands, when they spoke about their vision for the municipality at the special meeting of council on Wednesday, March 11.

When speaking of the municipality's strengths and the potential opportunities that lie ahead, the councillors and administrative staff participating in the strategic planning session seemed energized and enthusiastic about the future. I could sense the same sort of passion for community improvement talking with youth activist and organizer of the anti-Stephen Harper rally in Bancroft, Zen Trozzi. Although not old enough to vote at 16 years of age he is more engaged in the political process than many voting age Canadians. I found this passion again speaking with the Growing Stories Seed Library volunteer and co-creator Jane Kali at Seedy Saturday in Maynooth. She said it was the passion of this year's first winner of the Real Food Hero award, Laurie Ann Storrington, that originally inspired her to get growing and become a sustainable food advocate.

Walking down the road and into the ANAF barn to take in some of the St. Patrick's Day festivities, there it was again on stage, on the dance floor and in the volunteers making the whole celebration possible. Walking into the arena I could see it in the players, coaches, families and fans of the Vito's Pizzeria Peewee Jets and the Twin Centres Stars who filled the North Hastings community centre on Saturday and Sunday. Watching the players give it all they had right down to the last second in overtime on Saturday night you could tell how badly these teams wanted to win.

This type of passion is the fuel feeding the fire that is lit inside each of us whenever we are doing what we love. This social capital is a renewable resource that exists in every community, and it can be tapped into at any moment without having to drill, blast, dig or exploit our natural resources in any way. By harnessing this passion and refocusing that energy on creating truly sustainable growth we can begin to build healthier and more prosperous communities.