

Elementary school in Amherstburg part of local active transportation project

By Ron Giofu

A local active transportation pilot project headed by the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) involves an Amherstburg school.

The WECHU announced last week that schools from across Windsor-Essex County "can look forward to more support for active transportation when students return to in-person classes." Among the six schools selected for the pilot project include Stella Maris Catholic Elementary School.

Other schools include King Edward Public School, Margaret D. Bennie Public School, Talbot Trail Public School, Holy Name Catholic Elementary School and École élémentaire catholique Monseigneur-Jean-Noël.

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) stated it is supported by the Greater Essex County District School Board, Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, Conseil scolaire catholique Providence, Windsor Police, City of Windsor, Windsor-Essex Student Transportation Services, the County of Essex, and Bike Windsor Essex.

They are leading a project to increase the number of students walking and wheeling to and from school. The WECHU states funding for the work is provided through a \$60,000 grant from Ontario Active School Travel, a program of Green Communities Canada.

"We are very excited to receive this important funding that will allow us to leverage the strengths of our partners to make active and safe transportation more accessible for our students", says Eric Nadalin, manager of chronic disease and injury prevention at the WECHU. "The schools directly involved in this project are spread throughout our region and the systems built by this funding will have impacts across all schools and boards in Windsor-Essex."

Stella Maris Catholic Elementary School principal Brian Marenchin said the project is a way to encourage staff and students to be more active and walk, bike, blade or find another way to be active. He said it is a six-phase initiative with the first phase being to develop a planning committee. The second phase is to assess conditions including doing surveys with stakeholders.

"There will be a survey for kids and one for families," said Marenchin.

The third phase will be the development of an action plan with the fourth phase being the implementation of the plan. Follow up actions, including another survey, will be the fifth phase with keeping everything going being the sixth phase, Marenchin added.

"It's a tight timeline," he said, noting they have a deadline of March 2022.

Marenchin was pleased Stella Maris is included as part of the pilot project.

"We're just fortunate. I think it's important for all schools," he said, adding he hopes it expands in the future.

Marenchin added in the warmer weather months, he'll cycle about 50km to get to school.

"This is one of my biking routes," he said. "It's a great ride for me. It's a great form of exercise. This is a project that's near and dear to my heart."



Stella Maris Catholic Elementary School is one of six schools that is part of a pilot project to try and encourage more students to walk and cycle to school. The active transportation project is through the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU). RTT Photo by Ron Giofu

Believing that people walking or cycling to school is a bit of a "lost art," Marenchin said he is willing to do his part to bring such activities back to the forefront.

Active school travel includes walking, cycling, skateboarding and scootering as an alternative to the use of motorized vehicles for the journey to and from school, the WECHU states. The grant monies received through Green Communities Canada will support a variety of active school travel initiatives across the region including, walkability checks, transportation toolkits and infrastructure supports for bikes and scooters. The health unit adds that for the students and family members who join them, active school travel is one of the simplest ways to get active within the day.

The grant from Ontario Active School Travel has helped unite key partners across Windsor-Essex to promote this important contributor to health and safety for students and the community, the WECHU continued, adding "the committee has started moving this work forward, and the grant will carry through to early 2022."

This project is made possible through financial support from Green Communities Canada and the Government of Ontario.

Community Calendar

SATURDAY, MAY 8

PLANT SALE - Presented by the Amherstburg Fort Malden Horticultural Society. Held as part of the Amherstburg Farmers Market at G.L. Heritage Brewing Co., located at 8728 Howard Ave. (County Road 9). Runs from 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Don't miss out!

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23

BLOOD DONATION EVENT - Canadian Blood Services is hosting a blood donation event at the Columbus Community Hall, 190 Richmond St., in Amherstburg. It runs from 1-7 p.m. Appointments necessary. To book an appointment, call 1-888-2-DONATE (1-888-236-6236), visit www.blood.ca or use the GiveBlood app.

SATURDAY, JUNE 26

VIRTUAL 5K RUN/WALK - The Bryerswood Youth Camp Optimist Club is holding a virtual 5K walk/run. The cost is \$20 to register and people can e-mail Marie.Wilder@icloud.com to receive a registration form and waiver. The fee can be e-transferred to finance@bryerswood.com. Each participant receives a medallion. Proceeds go towards club's efforts to purchase the former Camp Bryerswood from Girl Guides of Canada.

ONGOING

THE HOUSE YOUTH PROGRAMS - Youth programs at The House Youth Centre have resumed virtually. Grade 9 & 11 students meet Tuesdays, Grades 10 & 12 meet Wednesdays. For more information, visit <https://linktr.ee/thehouseyouthcentre>, view the The House's Facebook page or e-mail program director Natalyn Brouillard at natalyn@houseyouthcentre.com.

BOTTLE DONATIONS - The Bryerswood Youth Camp Optimist Club is accepting empties of bottles. To donate bottles, contact Kim at yltkim@yahoo.ca or 519-564-9699 or Tracy at tcooper@gmail.com. People can also drop them off at 889 Bouffard Road in LaSalle.

COVID-19 MASS VACCINATION CLINIC - The Libro Centre in Amherstburg continues to be a mass vaccination centre for COVID-19. To book your appointment, visit www.wexax.ca or, if you need extra assistance or do not have Internet access, call 226-773-2200.

FISH FRY - Held Fridays at the AMA Sportsmen Club, 468 Lowes Side Road. Everyone welcome. Pickerel \$18, chicken \$15. Call in advance starting at 11 a.m. Fridays to place order. 519-736-5706. Runs from 3-6 p.m.

SENIOR ENGAGEMENT PACKAGES - Amherstburg Communities Services (ACS) offers free senior engagement packages. Delivered to your doorstep (contactless) each month. Call (519) 736-5471 for details.

COMMUNITY LIVING ESSEX COUNTY MEMBERSHIP DRIVE - Community Living Essex County has officially kicked off their 2021 annual membership drive campaign with the goal of securing 200 members. Members can be anyone from individuals, businesses or families who believe in Community Living Essex County's mission to support people with an intellectual disability to achieve their goals and dreams and to realize their value as full citizens in our community. Please know that as a member, your support may be expressed in a variety of ways including your time, your voice and/or your financial support through a Membership donation. It's easy to join! Find out more by visiting www.communitylivingessex.org and complete the easy online membership application; or if you have questions, call 519-776-6483, ext. 246.

VOICES OF TOMORROW - With the support of a partnership between Community Living Ontario, Community Living Windsor and Community Living Essex County, youth from Windsor and Essex County are leading a social impact project promoting inclusive employment for youth. The project, called "Voices of Tomorrow", is part of a series of Community Change Projects designed to empower youth with and without a disability to realize their role as active citizens and inform conversations on topics that impact their lives. They will be conducting a survey to capture youth experiences around employment as well as feedback from employers and educators. Any youth (aged 14-29), educators or employers from Windsor-Essex County who wish to provide their input are encouraged to fill out the survey, which can be found at bit.ly/voices-of-tomorrow-survey, which can be found here: bit.ly/voices-of-tomorrow-survey

To place your event in the Community Calendar please email: mail@rivertowntimes.com



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