

Local business owners trying to institute "Play Amherstburg" project

By Ron Giofu



Richard Peddie and Dan Gemus and their respective businesses – River Bookshop and the Dan Gemus Real Estate Team – are teaming up and offering "Play Amherstburg" as part of Open Air Weekends July 25 and Aug. 29. They are also doing it under the umbrella of THRIVE Amherstburg with the aim of making their test project a part of a white paper that will be going to Amherstburg town council in the fall. Submitted image

A pair of Amherstburg business are teaming up to try and see if children's programming will work as part of Open Air Weekends.

Both River Bookshop co-owner Richard Peddie and Dan Gemus from the Dan Gemus Real Estate Team are board members with THRIVE Amherstburg, with Peddie being a co-founder. The new "Play Amherstburg" initiative is something they said is part of that group's projects with their two businesses picking up the tab for the two summer dates.

The dates that "Play Amherstburg" are scheduled for are July 25 and Aug. 29 from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. The plan is they will occupy the parking spots along Richmond St. stretching from the bookshop to the real estate office.

Peddie said both Sundays will be used as a test to see if the concept works. If it does, it will be part of a THRIVE Amherstburg white paper and be included as part of a presentation to town council in the fall.

"You see Dalhousie St. and it's popping," said Peddie. "You see Richmond St. and it's pretty darn quiet. The two of us started talking about what to do about Richmond."

"Play Amherstburg" is attempt by River Bookshop and the Dan Gemus Real Estate Team to be creative and invest in the town, Peddie stated, adding the two test runs will be at their cost. If that is one of the recommendations to council, it will include a potential cost to the town next year.

Peddie pointed out he is an advocate for Open Air Weekends, and said THRIVE Amherstburg believes the focus needs to be on making it better. He said it is an example of "tactical urbanism," which is defined as "low cost, temporary changes in the built environment intended to inspire local neighbourhood and gathering places."

Family activities include temporary tattoo stations, performances by the

Rivertown Dance Academy, rock painting contests, magicians, a performance by members of the River Rock Ramblers, and additional storytelling times, with the latter already being offered Sundays at 1 p.m. by the River Bookshop.

There will also be cornhole and Jenga games. "Everything we are doing should appeal to kids but should entertain adults too," said Peddie.

"We're testing it on behalf of the town," Gemus said, adding that it will be suggested the town incorporate it into next year's event should it be successful.

According to Gemus, one of the realtors that works for him sold a home to Toronto residents with the new buyers choosing Amherstburg after visiting Open Air Weekends. He added the biggest criticism he hears about Open Air Weekends "is there is not enough entertainment in the streets."

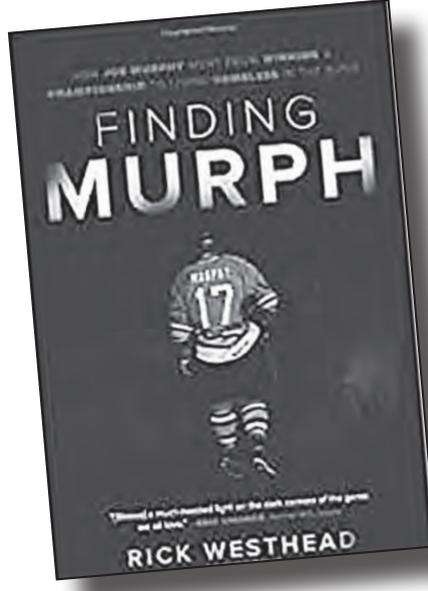
Gemus added he and his wife Niki have three children and would like to see more for children.

"We love coming down for Open Air," he said. "When (Peddie) approached me to help, I was all for it."

Peddie said THRIVE Amherstburg believes Amherstburg is great, but they are aiming to make the town even better.

"It's not criticizing, but it's not the status quo either," he said.

Book Review



Finding Murph

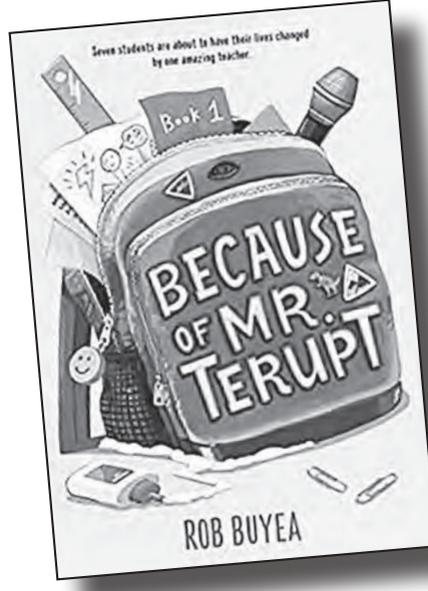
By Rick Westhead
Adult Non-fiction, Sports

Joe Murphy was a #1 draft pick in 1986 and played on the "Kid Line" in Edmonton as they won the Stanley Cup. Everything about his life and his hockey career was golden. College educated, dedicated to the sport and an all round nice guy, Murphy was on a path to success...but instead the path lead to a complete destruction of his life and potential. Rick Westhead gives us the story behind the story - Murphy's mental illness, substance abuse and the damage sustained by untreated head

injuries suffered while playing the game. This book is a sad look at a tragic life and the NHL's role in the downward spiral of a promising player, a spiral that ultimately left him unemployed and homeless - anyone who plays the game or loves someone who does should read this as a cautionary tale.

Submitted by Lori Wightman, of River Bookshop, Amherstburg

Book Review



Because of Mr. Terupt

By Rob Buyea
Middle Grade Fiction

A great book that follows seven fifth graders as they navigate a school year with a new teacher, Mr. Terupt. Rob Buyea knows kids and the way that he writes each individual student really makes them relatable and real. Each kid is a different personality type - new kid, bully, troublemaker, brain, follower, outcast and disinterested student - and each have the opportunity to narrate different chapters.

This book is a great one to read with your middle grader whether it is a read aloud situation or with each of you reading it yourselves. It's a book with a lot of teaching moments that highlights so many of the issues and concerns kids have nowadays. It's a bit emotional at times but not in a way that gets to be too much. And good news! There's 4 books in the series.

Submitted by Lori Wightman, of River Bookshop, Amherstburg

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