

Festival of Small Halls entertaining the countryside

BY SALLY SMID

The Ontario Festival of Small Halls brings exceptional Canadian musicians to small community halls across Eastern Ontario, providing an opportunity for some of Canada's best musicians to perform in smaller venues. They receive a warm rural welcome from many who do not often have such an opportunity. Of course there are also the fans that travel distances to see a particular artist as well. Lesser known entertainers also have a chance to gain experience and exposure. The program receives funding to help make this possible and part of the ticket sales go towards maintaining these cher-

ished small halls.

This year Fred Penner and Barbershop Therapy made appearances on the afternoon of Sept. 17th in Morton's Community Hall. Committee chair Ken Davies commented on the hall's new roof and parking lot. The program began with a short history of Morton which was formerly called White Fish Falls and was quite a thriving community before highways took businesses to larger centres. The close harmonies and dynamics of the lively Ottawa University quartet were much appreciated. Penner followed with his relaxed, playful manner and was well received by the almost capacity audience of 100 of mixed ages. In his 45th

year as an entertainer, he is known as a singer-songwriter, author, actor, speaker, TV host and more. His story telling and interactive songs were somewhat reminiscent of Munsch and Raffi. "My knees got pretty scratched up after crawling through that log over 1000 times," he remarked. The audience often sang and clapped along to unique renditions of *Puff*, *Sandwiches* and *The Cat Came Back*. The performance concluded with Penner, the quartet and audience joining together in a lively rendition of *This Little Light*.

This year award winning singer-songwriter Rose Cousins appeared along with Kingston's Julia Finnegan at the



Fred Penner and Barbershop Therapy closed the presentation together at the Festival of Small Halls event. Photo: Sally Smid

Joshua Bates Centre in Athens on Sept 16th. Both have somewhat of a story telling, folk style and were well received.

Many of the area events were sold out

including the Great Lakes Swimmers and Jenn Grant in Chaffey's Locks, The Outside Track in Delta, Rosie and the Riveters in Elgin, and Ashley MacIsaac in

Seeley's Bay. Dave Gunning appeared at St. Andrew's United Church in Toledo and Old Man Luedcke performed at the Lyndhurst Legion as well.

Township looking at gateway beds, postal deliveries and more

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Many challenges continue for the Athens council, but there is also a lot of dedication on the part of a variety of local volunteers that brings a certain amount of spirit and vision to this rural community. A delegation from the Athens Blooms presented some options for Athens eight Gateway Garden beds. "The goal of the group is to have them attractive with little or no maintenance," explained chair Jean Brassington. It was decided to plant several junipers for now in place of some perennials and this will be looked at further in the spring. There is still a great need for volunteers to help

move the program forward and former members are willing to advise.

Mayor Herb Scott thanked Brassington and club member Pat Blanchard on behalf of the community for "leading the charge and for the pile of work that you have done" in the past years.

Brassington also made a presentation about the upcoming Vimy Oak Program that will take place on Sept. 24 and the final placement of the tree near the Cenotaph was decided. There has been much fundraising done by the Garden Club and many donations have been made as well as much effort by the

Vimy Oak committee to make the event possible.

Diane Mitchell was present to represent the (CUPE) Union of Postal Workers in regard to lost home deliveries which is being reviewed. The group is proposing the reinstatement of door deliveries, local processing, and increased services which would help to strengthen rural areas which would include improved internet service. There is also a pilot project currently that involves postal workers also checking in on elderly residents. The council decided to give their support and agreed to send a letter to MP Gord Brown in this regard. Mayor Scott

mentioned that internet services have also been improved due to efforts on the counties level.

There was a report on roads from CAO Darlene Noonan who has had the challenging job of dealing with flooded roads and repairs in the absence of the road superintendent. Elgin St. South is the road remaining to be repaired and the issues with water and reconstruction of drainage in some areas still need to be remedied. The speed sign reminder will be going back up on Charleston Road soon.

The Athens Fire Dept. has recently purchased a truck that is being refurbished and upgraded. There is a concern at the

Department that many members are not available for daytime calls and additional volunteers are needed.

The bulletin board in Memorial Park will be relocated and repaired.

Sally Smid has retired from her position on the Athens Library Board

after 30 years and Mayor Scott thanked her for her years of service. Smid also presented plans about the mural project depicting the life of Joshua Bates which will be unveiled as part of a 150 Celebration on Oct. 22.

Continued on page 15

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