

The Barrhead Leader

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BARRY KERTON/BL



A ROCKING GOOD TIME – On Saturday, Jan. 28, the Barrhead Curling Club hosted its first-ever Mixed Double Bonspiel with eight rinks participating. Organizer Raya Linquist said the club has had a mixed-doubles league since the 2019-2020 curling season. In mixed curling, before the start of each end, two rocks are placed on the centre line, one in the front of the house acting as a guard, while the other is at the back of the four foot. These rocks must remain in play until the fifth stone. The other notable rule difference is that each player throws five stones, and the player that throws the first stone of the end must also deliver the team's last stone of that end. As for the winners, Taylor Measures and Curtis Sommers won the 'A' division, Joe and Marissa Stoik took the 'B' division while the 'C' and 'D' Division winners were the pairs of Keara Cramer and Tanner Measures and Brian and Virginal Mac-Gillivray. Juanita Tyschuk (above) throwing a rock during action, while teammates Curtis Sommers and Taylor Measures (right) enjoying a laugh between ends and Glen Plischke (left) sweeping his wife's rock.



Learning the extent of homelessness in Barrhead

Barrhead FCSS successful in getting the community in a 21 rural community survey being conducted by the Alberta Rural Development Network

BY BARRY KERTON
Barrhead Leader Staff

BARRHEAD – Homelessness is an issue in Barrhead.

Just how much of a problem is something the Barrhead Community Family Support Services (FCSS) are hoping they will learn through a survey on rural homelessness.

Executive director Karen Gariepy said it is no secret that Barrhead has had a homelessness issue for some time, but the problem is that they do not know to what extent.

"We know there are homeless in the community," she said. "People who are couch surfing, or in the warmer months, live in the valley, but we don't have a good picture of how many."

Gariepy said the survey will help FCSS and other community agencies identify to what extent homelessness is in the community and how many individuals are in danger of becoming homeless.

"Just how many people are one or two paycheques away from being homeless?" she said. "We need data, and hopefully, this will give us the information we need to go ahead with program-

ming and determining what services we need here in Barrhead."

Gariepy said the information will also provide FCSS and other community organizations with statistics when approaching the province and the federal governments as well as private organizations for grant funding.

The survey is part of a larger project by the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) to determine the extent of homelessness in 21 rural communities across the province.

The ARDN is a not-profit-organization created in 2009 by a partnership of the province's 21 public post-secondary institutions. Its mandate is to support rural sustainability through a wide variety of initiatives.

Gariepy said she learned about the project through the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta.

Barrhead FCSS learned that ARDN had approved their application to be one of the communities included in the survey early this month.

Gariepy said FCSS staff are currently in the process of training their staff in the procedures to conduct the survey as

well as contacting other organizations and community agencies who work with individuals who are homeless and at-risk populations.

The Ripple Connection Support Centre (RCSC) is one of the organizations Gariepy will be reaching out to.

The not-for-profit organization opened in 2010. It provides services for people who directly suffer from mental illness or brain injuries and their families and caregivers.

RCSC executive director Tracy Whitten agreed with Gariepy, saying that homelessness has been an issue in Barrhead for some time.

"It is worse now than it's ever been and it seems it is getting worse month by month," she said. "At one time, it was just individuals who were homeless, but now it's entire families."

Whitten said that rising inflation, especially the cost of food and utilities, combined with the economy, the number of jobs that do not pay a living wage and the limited number of rental options have created the perfect storm for many individuals.

"It's impacting a lot of people, and there are individuals and, in some cases,

as I said before, even families have been forced to live off the grid," she said. "We have quite a few come in here. I would hate to hazard a guess on how many are homeless. A lot of couch surfing goes on or having several people crammed into one dwelling. It causes a lot of conflicts."

She also hopes the information they glean from the survey will help them or another organization start a much-needed homelessness shelter or emergency mat-type program in the community.

The latter is a project the RCSC has been working on ever since they were able to expand their space but have not been able to secure the necessary funding.

However, in the meanwhile, Whitten said, RCSC will continue to provide people with a safe space to get out of the elements, have lunch, take a shower and launder their clothes.

The Ripple Connection Support Centre is open Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information about their programming, call 780-674-5548 or their website www.rippleconnection.ca. They are also on Facebook.

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