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Farm Museum closes, lays off staff, looks for financial help

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
Special to The Champion

The Farm Museum has been mothballed. While the board of directors hasn't abandoned the Milton facility, they've handed out pink slips and made no commitments to re-hire or reopen next year.

Operations at the site are unlikely to resume until the board can find investment partners.

"All 15 historical interpreters and eight staff members have been laid off and as of now, it appears we won't be offering a full public program in 1998," said John King, who took over as the site's general manager (shortly after Rick Fortin resigned) earlier this month.

The announcement comes eight months after the local attraction switched from the provincially-funded Ontario Agricultural Museum to the privately owned Farm Museum. The provincial government cut funding ties to the facility.

Mr. King, currently employed on contract, could not provide figures on projected losses, but said the museum "didn't raise enough to produce a positive bottom line."

This was due in large part to lower than expected attendance figures. Farm Museum management had hoped for 70,000 visitors this year but attracted only 40,000 (including both general admissions and classroom field trips).

"This past year was a learning experience for everyone, and a very difficult one. Being the first year of private ownership, the board of directors and staff members had to hit the ground running," said Mr. King.

"The board will now be re-evaluating the past year and developing a business plan for the future."

Board of directors chair Robert Monte said the group will be looking for partners "who want to feature attractions there and capitalize on the site's unique location and facilities."

They won't however, ask for long-term commitments.

"We're going to be talking to people in agri-food and produc-

• see MUSEUM on page 23



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Bishop Reding High's economics students have excelled in the Green Line Investment Challenge this fall. Among a group leading the way are (from left) Laura Mathews, Adam Bonin and Mike Shakespear. Absent from the photo is teammate Mike Johnston.

Kids make killing on bearish dip

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
Special to The Champion

Wall Street's loss was their gain.

Four grade 12 economics students from Bishop Reding looked into their proverbial crystal ball at the start of the semester and saw darker days ahead for the stock mar-

ket, the Standard and Poors 500 Index in particular.

Three weeks later their prediction came true and they cashed in — well, sort of.

"We figured the market was going to fall and S&P 500 with it, but we never expected the crash to be as drastic as it was," said Laura Mathews.

As a direct result of the October crash, she and her Reding teammates — Adam Bonin, Mike Johnston and Mike Shakespear — shot up the ranks in the annual Green Line Investment Challenge.

They now sit in 18th place among a total of 800 high school and university teams (from across Canada) in the fictitious stock market challenge, with just one week to go in the two-month contest.

Their portfolio — which began at \$500,000 — is now up to \$518,624.

Said Adam, "We went from 87th to

eightth place one week, right after the crash. We bet heavily against S&P 500 which is what's put us near the top. A lot of the upper-echelon teams are actually below \$500,000 because of how hard the market fell.

Participating teams were able to invest in equities traded on all major Canadian and U.S. stock exchanges.

Traditional buying and selling as well as option trading and short selling — which BR's star team did with S&P 500 — are all permissible.

In addition to S&P 500, the foursome went long with the Royal Bank of Canada, Bank of Nova Scotia, Canadian Tire, General Motors and Exall Resources, which has netted them a cool \$13,000 profit.

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Flower power fundraiser coming up

Milton's Army Cadets will patrol the local mall in a timely fundraiser the first weekend of December, selling the Christmas flower.

The cadets will be offering

poisettias at Milton Mall beginning the evening of Friday, Dec. 5, all day Saturday and on Sunday afternoon. It marks the second year of the money-raising activity for the youth group.



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