



Fine carving

Bart Brophy stands beside his team's book ends sculpture at the Canadian national snow sculpting competition in Montreal. His team, which includes Neil Cox and Gayle Hudson, won third prize at the Jan. 27-29 event. Brophy plans to enter in the upcoming Winterama sculpting contest, which he's taken part in before. (Photo by Gayle Hudson)

Insurance could hurt Winterama

by Robert Risk
Staff Writer

Some of Winterama's events, such as skydiving and snowmobiling, may have to be cancelled, due to the cost of insuring them.

Steve Robillard, Winterama chairman, said the committee doesn't have enough money for proper coverage, which is essential for holding "active" events.

"The helicopter rides will have to be loaded on the ice (in the harbor) so the town won't be liable if there's an accident," said Robillard.

Having to use the ice means warm weather conditions might force the rides to be scratched from the program, he added.

The smash up derby on Sunday is still scheduled because the Lions Club is sponsoring the event and is covered for it under their insurance policy.

Robillard said it was unfortunate the club is unable to cover other events under the same policy, but is looking at alternatives.

He said he hopes to meet with town council to discuss ways of resolving the situation, including more funding to pay for insurance.

"It wasn't a problem in the past, but we've become a litigious society. The people in town will have to decide whether they want interesting events (and pay for the insurance) or a euchre tournament."

Similarity to Trudeau stops here says Lewis

Doug Lewis does not anticipate that he will continue to follow former prime minister Pierre Trudeau's career path.

Both Lewis, Simcoe North's MP since 1979, and Trudeau, are lawyers.

Trudeau was the federal minister of justice. Lewis became federal minister of justice Jan. 30.

Trudeau went from minister of justice to prime minister.

"I don't think that's going to happen" (to me), Lewis said on his second day as minister of justice.

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Court appearances set for teens charged with murder



Krista Sepp
... left alone after a week

Two teenagers charged with first degree murder will appear for the first time in Midland Provincial Court Feb. 13.

A 16-year-old female and James Francis Tobin, 18, of 222 Manly St., Midland, are charged with killing Krista Sepp, a child care worker.

Sepp was working alone in a group home at 527 William Street in Midland last Friday when she was stabbed and cut with a knife.

Two group home clients were in her charge. The 16-year-old female, charged with the murder, is one of the two clients.

The Young Offenders Act does not permit authorities to release, or the news media to report, information about the 16-year-old girl.

Sepp, 21, was finishing her first week as a child care worker in the employ of Kinark Child and Family Services.

She was the only staff member on duty in the group home with two Kinark clients on the Thursday night-Friday morning shift last week.

The Sault Ste. Marie native was stabbed in her front and back. She died between 11:30 p.m. and 3:20 a.m., Police Chief Ernie Bates said.

Cuts on her hands suggest she tried to defend herself, he said.

The police have a knife which they believe is the murder weapon.

Investigation inside and outside 527 William St. continued through the weekend and into Tuesday.

Sepp was supposed to be in the group home with two Kinark clients through Friday night, Bates said. Midland town police found her body in the deserted house at 3:20 a.m.

Her shift would have started at 10 p.m., a Kinark representative said.

Midland police went to the group home after receiving a tip from the Barrie city police. The Barrie police relayed information it received from one of the two clients, who was supposed to be sleeping in the house.

That client surrendered to the Barrie police. He was released later the same day, after answering police questions.

Tobin and the 16-year-old girl from the home were arrested in a stolen Kinark vehicle near Bracebridge.

Tobin and the 16-year-old girl were denied bail in Barrie Provincial Court Monday. Tobin is in custody in the Barrie jail. The girl is confined to Brampton's Vanier Centre for Women.

A murder and suicide in 1981 were the last killings in Midland. The last charge of murder was laid 20 years ago.



Tobin
...murder charge

Publicity brings new focus to old problem union officials charge

A killing in Midland has focused public attention on an old problem, union official Neil Pollock says: staffing of group homes at night by only one person.

Pollock is Ontario Public Service Employees Union representative for the 25 to 30 Kinark group home employees in Midland.

Staff, as separated from the management of such group homes, do not necessarily know the background of young people with whom they are alone, Pollock said Monday.

In a separate interview, a Kinark representative said staff and management at the local level are aware of the background of each client.

Krista Sepp knew the background of the two clients for whom she was responsible at the time of her murder, Dr. Rick Morris said.

Because of the requirements for confidentiality about details of the record of a young offender, group home workers don't know with whom they are dealing, "unless they make it their business" to find out, in the way employees can learn things unofficially, Pollock said.

Morris, Kinark corporate assistant director of program services, said Kinark management and staff assess each young person before admission to a Kinark program.

Kinark accepts into its group homes children with emotional, behavioral and "other kinds of social difficulties," Morris said.

Kinark workers also help children and their families by going to private homes, he said.

He described Kinark as a private, non-profit corporation which operates 17 group homes in Ontario, four in Midland.

Clients range in age from eight up to 18. Clients are referred by the Children's Aid Society, by parents, and by the probation office, Morris said.

A volunteer board of directors runs the non-profit corporation. Kinark is licenced and funded entirely by the provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services, he said.

In 1984 Kinark took over operation of the Browndale homes in Midland, he said.

Morris described group homes as children's mental health centres.

Pollock described the Kinark group homes as similar to hundreds of similar group homes across the province.

The Kinark people "look like government employees," Pollock said. "They talk like government employees. They are funded by the provincial government. But Kinark is not a government agency."

Kinark is an example, Pollock said, of the provincial government's cutting direct social service to save money. "I don't believe that Kinark is lavishly funded," he said.

Kinark management has instructed the staff not to speak to anyone, particularly the press, Pollock said.

Morris refused a reporter's request to interview a staff member.

Didn't know offenders were in home, say Midland cops

How many group homes are operated in Midland by Kinark Child and Family Services? Town officials on Monday weren't sure.

And how many clients of Kinark group homes might have violent backgrounds?

Police Chief Ernie Bates on Monday said he has yet to be told officially that any young offenders are clients in the local Kinark group homes.

And even on the occasion that Kinark staff call the local police, Mayor Ted Symons said, they are "reluctant" to give police details about the individual.

The federal Young Offenders Act requires confidentiality about details of youths with criminal records under age 18.

Federal justice minister Doug Lewis (who also represents this riding in Parliament) suggested in a television interview on the weekend that the act is due for a review.

Midland's mayor had a long list of questions on Monday about Kinark. He didn't expect to get all the answers because of the Young Offenders Act, he said.

Cont'd on pg. 5