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## Bingo trouble puts local organizations into shortfall

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

A troubled bingo industry has a number of local charitable organizations suffering from a dramatic decline in revenues.

According to Sandy Larivee, the secretary for the Essex Optimist Club, the provincial smoking ban and slowed border crossings are keeping American dollars away, and a shift in bingo hall revenues has some volunteers paying out of their own pockets to help.

"There's just no money in bingo anymore," said Larivee, who is also the Essex Youth Centre's executive director. "It's had a serious impact on our revenue stream."

Last year, the EYC generated about \$30,000 through charitable bingos. It now stands to make about \$8,000-10,000 this year, Larivee says.

In an effort to save the sailing industry, Windsor city council approved a number of recommendations last April that have restructured the way charitable bingos operate.

The 60/40 split of the money made from a bingo continues to benefit the hosting clubs, but now charitable organizations or social clubs must pay a \$240 fee to cover staff expenses and the cost of

cards. The new paid staff model means permanent hall employees are replacing all but three volunteers per session. The regulations means there's less money for the clubs. Larivee estimates it's costing the EYC and Optimist Club about 25 percent of its income per night.

Honorariums, or money paid to volunteers to cover gas, meals or babysitting, have been removed, eliminating to a certain extent the incentive for volunteers to take part in the event. Larivee said without the pay, which was around \$20 per-night, volunteers will essentially be paying to be a part of the bingo.

"(Honorariums) covered the cost of getting our volunteers to the hall," she said. "It's an unreasonable expectation to have volunteers pay to volunteer."

Larivee said the youth centre requires \$120,000 per year in generated revenue to stay in operation. Lately, they've been forced to seek out other forms of fundraising such as trivia nights, golf tournaments, advertising campaigns for donations, and are currently seeking both federal and provincial grants.

SEE BINGO TROUBLE, 5



**THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY** - Darryll Erickson, left, and his father Stan take a 100-year-old horse-drawn sulkies plow through a field during the 51st annual Essex County Plowing Match in Comber Aug. 19. The event featured 17 plowers competing in 15 different class categories. It concluded with dinner and an award ceremony at the Comber Community Centre.

## Old time competition draws crowds to Comber

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Drizzling rain on Saturday morning wasn't enough to keep people from the 51st annual Essex County Plowing Match at Paul Lantin's farm near Comber.

"There's a bit of slippery traction for some of the tractors," Lantin said about conditions on his 85-acre wheat farm.

Still, 17 plowmen of all ages withstood the weather to compete in 15 class competitions, including antique drag plows and a 100-year-old horse-drawn plow.

"With today's conditions, it's going to make it a little tougher for some of the plowers," said Calvin Bridgen, president of the Essex County Plowmen's Association. "But a lot of people out here are very skilled and

it's a true art for them."

Plowers are judged on a number of factors, said Murray McLeod, secretary-treasurer of the ECPA.

McLeod did some preliminary judging during the event and looked at the levelness and uniformity of each area plowed.

Most plowers were required to create an "open split," in which sod is cut back and folded into a total of eight furrows in the centre of their portion of the field.

Awards were later presented to farmers in each class competition who successfully fit the judge's criteria.

The ceremony was preceded by dinner at the Comber Community Centre.

Donations were also made during the event to benefit the ECPA.

"It's not a big money maker, we're

just trying to raise enough money to hold next year's match," Bridgen said.

He added that in the last few years, the 40-member ECPA has taken on a significant number of younger members.

"That's been a real joy to see some of the young people come out," he said.

The Essex-Kent Junior Farmers supplied the food for a breakfast during the event.

Kentown Limited also displayed a number of new tractors.

"We've still been able to draw some crowds from other counties," Bridgen said of the event. "For some people, coming out here means they get to see some of the big machinery they see out in fields but might not understand. We get people stopping in out of curiosity."



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