

**TOWN'S DEBT BURDEN
REVIEWED**

Province cites high risk level

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VALENTINE'S DAY

Capt. Mark Popov home for holidays

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**MYERS RETURNS FROM LAND
DOWN UNDER**

Young Olympian swam with world's best

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Soup luncheon breaks fundraising record

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

As a brisk snowfall chilled temperatures outside, hundreds of steaming bowls of soup helped warm up local residents inside the cafeteria of Essex District High School Jan. 31, during a fundraiser for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario.

The fourth annual Essex Soup Luncheon was the most successful to date, raising \$16,629 for the provincial organization and increasing last year's total by nearly \$5,000.

The cafeteria doors opened to the public at 11 a.m. and within half an hour the venue was packed.

"We had overflow seating into the hallway," said organizer Cindy Barnett. "We did really well."

A variety of about 20 different soups were offered, donated by local restaurants and other businesses.

A number of new contributors prepared soups for the first time this year.

Julie Brown, owner of Julie's Tea Room in Cottam, said she decided to donate a batch to the event because she felt it would be a "great community activity" and a good way to advertise her business.

Well before the luncheon was over, Brown served her last bowl of butternut squash soup and needed to order more.

This year's event also brought in many new residents.

"I came to support the Heart and Stroke Foundation," said Cottam's Teresa Benson, picking up heart-smart recipe cards from the information table. "Eating healthy is so important these days."

SEE HEART, PAGE 3

SOUP'S HOT – Julie Brown serves up a hot bowl of butternut squash soup to EDHS teacher Deanna Reid during the fourth annual Essex Soup Luncheon last week. The fundraiser brought in \$16,629 for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario.

Fire devastates family's home, everything lost

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Kelly Roehler knew something wasn't right when she woke up to dead silence early Saturday morning.

In their home on County Road 34 just outside downtown Essex, Roehler and fiancé Darrell Teskey normally fell asleep with a fan running and the TV on.

About 5:45 a.m., she got out of bed, thinking the power went out and then heard something that sounded like rain.

She entered the kitchen to check the hydro panel and noticed smoke billowing out of it. What sounded like rain was actually a fire growing fiercely.

She screamed to wake up Teskey, who quickly

jumped out of bed and ran upstairs to rescue Roehler's 15-year-old daughter Tasha.

Unbeknownst to her, the flames were already starting to move up the walls and into the roof over Tasha's bed, soon filling the entire top floor with smoke.

Struggling to breathe, Teskey and Tasha made it

down the stairs and outside, where Roehler had already rounded up the family's two dogs.

They rushed next door to a neighbour's house and called 9-1-1.

When the trucks arrived, Darrell watched as the home he's lived in for eight years became more and more engulfed in flames.

SEE DAMAGE, PAGE 2



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