

# Horses power new driving club

BY ANDY COMBER

A great deal of enthusiasm has been shown for an Essex-based organization recently established to teach and promote driving horses.

"Originally, we did not know how much interest there would be," said Murdo McLean, an experienced horse driver and handler from Colchester South, who was elected president of the yet-to-be-named group at an inaugural meeting held Jan. 22.

"It was amazing. We expected about 10 people and 24 attended," said McLean, noting that the first gathering represented at least a dozen local families.

Not all those attending owned their own horses, but the common desire was to "know how to drive," said McLean, a former dairy farmer, who started a horse and carriage service a couple of years ago.

McLean said that an edu-



REVIVAL – In Woodslee, Lucille Diemer goes along for the ride as Anita Leschied drives a sleigh pulled by her pony "Littlebit." Leschied has recently joined a local group formed to teach and promote driving horses.

cated handler is essential for driving, which creates special demands on horses, with the complex harnesses and tack, the presence of a carriage's weight and noise

behind them. There is also more reliance on voice commands, he said.

Throughout Ontario and Canada there has been a resurgence in the art of driv-

ing, from simple one-horse carts all the way to elegant antique carriages and cutter sleighs. Today, it means driving the single pleasure horse to the classic four-in-

hand matched teams, seen in competitions such as the famed Calgary Stampede.

"There have been a number of reasons for the resurgence," said McLean, who pointed to the growing number of people around the county interested in horses and horse driving. As they get older, many horseback riders are turning to driving carriages to enjoy their horses in a fun and safe way, McLean said.

"There are almost as many reasons as there are people who have horses - satisfaction, to compete, exercise, to name a few."

McLean said the group wants to maintain the "social side" of horse driving, although it will support local competitions, such as the Cottam Horse Show and local country fairs. It will also host clinics to teach basic horse driving safety and techniques – the first starting in April.

"We want to inspire an interest," he said.

Some local horse driving enthusiasts expressed their excitement about the new group starting here in Essex.

"I think it serves a real purpose," said Anita Leschied, a Woodslee resident who has been enjoying horse driving for about the last five years.

Leschied enjoys driving two-person carts drawn by ponies, including a Welsh pony. With the recent snowfall, she has been driving a restored antique cutter sleigh, pulled with enthusiasm by her "Heinz 57 pony", part Welsh and Shetland, fondly named "Littlebit."

The new horse driving club plans to meet each month and held its last meeting at the Essex Civic Centre on Feb. 19. Besides determining a name for the fledgling organization, the group plans to hold events, perhaps even a sleigh party - weather permitting.

## Wanted: People who are wild about wetlands

Bird Studies Canada, in partnership with Environment Canada and Essex Region Conservation Authority, is on the lookout for volunteers to be trained as amphibian and/or bird monitors (no prior experience necessary) for wetlands in the Windsor, Essex and Lambton areas including marshes in the Detroit River and St. Clair River Areas of Concern. Marsh monitoring in the Windsor area has been ongoing since 1994 and, after fourteen years, there are existing MMP monitoring routes that require new surveyors. In addition, several wetlands

throughout Essex and Lambton counties have been identified as currently unmonitored and in need of surveyors.

"Participants in the Marsh Monitoring Program have been tracking marsh birds and amphibians since 1995," states Kathy Jones, the MMP volunteer coordinator. "This program provides everyone - from amateur naturalists to professional biologists - a unique and rewarding opportunity to help learn about and conserve wetlands." If you are interested in learning how to identify amphibians and/or marsh birds and are willing

to spend about 10 hours per year monitoring a local wetland then the MMP may be right for you.

"Volunteer-based monitoring efforts like the MMP are a great conservation and research tool," says Jones. "For example, population trends developed from 10 years of data collected by MMP participants have shown significant declines in Black Terns, Red-winged Blackbirds, Chorus Frogs and American Toads, as well as significant increases in Great Blue Herons and Spring Peepers."

Prospective volunteers can attend an Orientation

and Training Session on Saturday, March 3 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Ojibway Nature Centre in Windsor.

Come learn the techniques employed in this internationally recognized volunteer monitoring program from the folks who coordinate it. You can help advance the study and protection of the marshes in your area!

Space is limited, so please register by Wednesday, Feb. 28 or as soon as possible by emailing Wanda Haydt at [aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org](mailto:aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org) or by calling 1-888-448-2473 ext. 214.

## Herb Gray Harmony Award 2007 Nominations

The Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County requests nomination submissions for the 5th Annual Herb Gray Harmony Award.

The Harmony Award recognizes individuals, businesses and/or organizations for their innovative strategies and actions to support and encourage a harmonious society in Windsor and Essex County.

Nomination deadline is March 2, 2007 and awards individuals, businesses and/or organizations representing both private and public sector.

For nomination forms and more information please go to [www.themcc.com](http://www.themcc.com) or call 255-1127 ext. 15 or visit the Multicultural Council at 245 Janette Ave.

The Annual Harmony Awards are in recognition of the Honourable Herb Gray and his distinguished service to Canada for over 40 years. Declared the Multicultural Council's patron, Mr. Gray exemplifies the award named in his honour.

The awards will be presented at the Multicultural Council's Harmony Gala on April 26, 2007 at the Cociaro Club.




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12<sup>th</sup> Annual *Heritage Essex* presents...

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