

Rink activities the same, but numbers are down

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topping out at 75 players.

In response to the decline in numbers, Minor Hockey decided to offer the Initiation at no cost to any new players and that offer saw the program jump to some 25 participants as compared to only a handful last year. At the Atom level there are enough players to ice a local team but at the Pee Wee, Bantam and Midget levels Baddeck will be partnering with other communities in order to ice a full team.

The Silver Dart Skating Club is another longtime customer of the "Rink" and over the years its numbers have declined as well although they seemed to have leveled off at around 50 participants these past few years.

In a clear sign that Baddeck is not the only community grappling with these issues Cheticamp saw the loss of its Figure Skating program this fall with the result being that several skaters from the west side of the Island are skating in Baddeck this year. The SDSC offers programs from beginners to competitive levels with a membership spanning an age range from three years old to adults.

The other youth program based at the Civic Center would be the hockey program offered at Baddeck Academy. Presently the Bronco boys are on the ice while the girls are trying to muster the numbers needed to form a team. As team manager I can attest to the difficulty in keeping this program going these past few years as each year sees fewer players hitting the ice for our opening practices and more and younger players wearing the Bronco colors.

Moving to the adult side of things, Recreational Hockey would be a telling starting point as today a group of some 20 players get together twice a week to pick up sides as opposed to the heyday of rec hockey in the 80's when Baddeck had its own four-team League with another League featuring teams from throughout Victoria County as well as Inverness County teams based in Whycomagh. Once again Baddeck shares its pain with our rural neighbors as there is not one rec league in operation on the West side of the Island.

On a more informal basis the Over 40 group gets together once a week as do the Ladies Hockey group

while Ron's Hockey on Saturday evening continues as well. Family skating on Friday evenings continues as a going concern while Friday mornings see the Adult Skaters hit the ice for their weekly session.

Along with decreased numbers the people behind the scenes running these various programs must also battle other factors such as the increased costs in equipment, insurance, travel and raising the funds to offset the deficits that unfortunately appear when registration revenue fails to meet costs a trend that even in the hey-day of the "Rink" was always an issue.

From the Civic Center side of things the "Rink" is a business and costs must be met here as well with

the result that rates must go up further increasing the load on the volunteers running the various programs. And the people running the programs are for the most part the same people who volunteer to oversee the running of the Civic Center so the load on these individuals is immense.

Outgoing Chair of the Victoria Highland Civic Centre Board of Directors, Jon Saul, believes there are still many possibilities for the community to get involved, get active and support the Rink.

"The canteen is an opportunity for a community group to operate and the activities which the Civic Centre offers are there for all to use. It is just a matter of getting up, going out and doing it."

School garden yields products for market

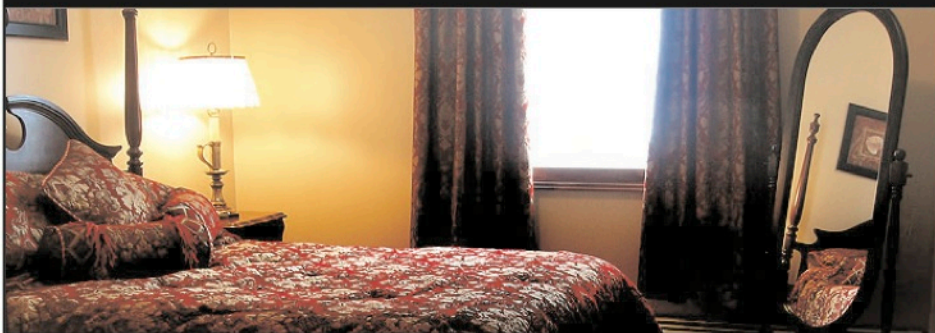


The grade 3-6 class at Middle River Consolidated School participated in an entrepreneurship project this year, thanks to a grant applied for by the Baddeck and Area Community Market. The students used their existing school garden to develop and market products that they made themselves, including herb jelly, herb vinegar, pickled carrots, and chow. Student gardeners and entrepreneurs pictured (l-r), seated are Ally Smith, Robert Berk, Grace Sutherland, and William Ross. Standing is Linnaea Oland, a recent Middle River graduate.

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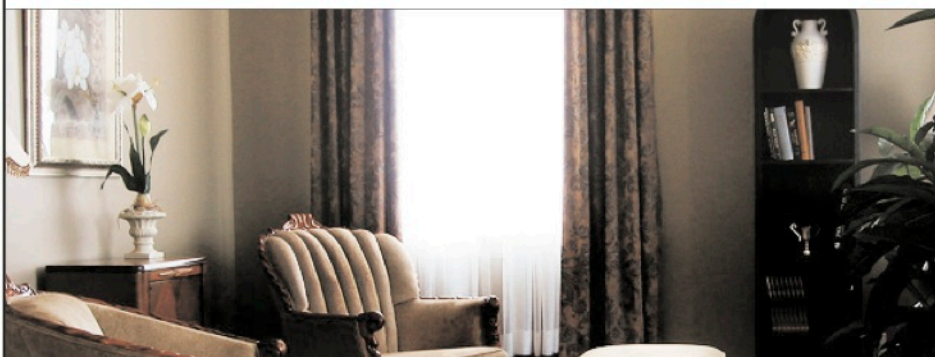
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remember their ultimate sacrifice.

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