

VALLEY IN BRIEF

Doc: 102-year-old waits 10 hours in ER

Dr. David Rhine, an emergency physician at Kelowna General Hospital, has spoken out about a frightening scenario that played out in the hospital's ER.

He said his first patient on his overnight shift Dec. 16, 2012, was a 102-year-old lady who waited 10 hours.

"She had waited in pain following a tumble in her home. She'd injured her back and ultimately we discovered she had a compression fracture of her lumbar spine," he said in an interview recorded shortly after his shift wrapped up.

"She waited 10 hours to get any kind of medication or assessment. I felt terrible about that."

Rhine said the delays are frustrating for everyone and cause unnecessary pain and suffering. He said people are dying because of the delays in care.

"We know there is an increased mortality rate because of these long delays," he said.

The video is one of 10 posted to the new site bcemergencycare.com, which is dedicated to shedding light on the troubles in B.C.'s hospitals.

Young adults work to prevent cancer

Young people interested in cancer prevention can join a youth forum in Vancouver in May.

The Canadian Cancer Society is inviting Southern Interior residents aged 19 to 25 to apply for seats at the forum. The goal is to have young people share ideas on health and cancer prevention with a wider audience.

The forum is the society's first ever. Previous youth leaders have lobbied against tanning beds, which research shows can cause skin cancer.

"About half of all cancers can be prevented and youth are a vital part of stopping cancer before it starts," said youth leader Jenny Byford of Cranbrook. "This is a chance . . . to take part in continuing a 75-year legacy of cancer prevention."

The forum takes place May 11 at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Vancouver. You have until March 15 to apply. Visit cancergameplan.ca/pdf/youth-forum-application.pdf.

FortisBC helps city buy gas vehicles

The Central Okanagan School District will receive \$67,893 from FortisBC to help buy compressed natural gas-fuelled vehicles.

It's part of \$6 million in incentives to transportation operators with further investment to follow during the next four years.

"These organizations have shown a commitment to choosing natural gas as a transportation fuel solution," said Doug Stout, vice-president of energy solutions and external relations at FortisBC.

"Building on the initial successes we've had with natural gas vehicles and the benefits they bring to the environment and our gas customers, this program is making widespread use of natural gas for transportation a reality."

The program became possible after the province implemented its greenhouse gas reduction regulation.

Biologist to speak about lake threat

The Okanagan Basin Water Board will hold a public meeting in Osoyoos on April 4 on the impending threat of zebra and quagga mussels infesting Okanagan lakes.

A webinar for local government, media and affected industry (e.g. tourism, fisheries) is being organized and will be announced soon. A public outreach campaign is also being developed.

Aquatic biologist Heather Larratt, contracted by the water board to research the threat to the Okanagan, is speaking with local government councils and boards on request.

Those interested in a presentation should contact the OBWB at 250-469-6323.

Such an invasion could cost the region at least \$43 million annually. The mussels are transported on boats and water-related equipment, and are currently in Ontario, Quebec and as many as 29 U.S. states.

— The Daily Courier

PEACHLAND FIRE

Man only saves painting**Power lines fingered as possible cause of blaze**

By Daily Courier Staff

David Tyson was barefoot when he ran from his burning house in Peachland early Thursday.

The fire grew so rapidly, he only had time to grab a valuable painting and get out without his shoes and socks. The Highway 97 home was in flames and full of smoke, making a return trip for more possessions potentially fatal.

"It shows how fast it happened," said Peachland Fire Chief Grant Topham. "He got one painting out but it was too intense to go back in."

"He's shaken up, distraught . . . At least he's not injured."

Tyson, in his 30s, was awake and mostly

dressed when flames broke out about 7 a.m. He told firefighters the power lines leading to the front of his house were arcing shortly before the fire ignited.

Topham believes the blaze started near the front of the house. Electricity from the power pole comes in at the front southeast corner.

"I didn't see anything suspicious," he said. "We got a call from dispatch previously that people on the highway saw arcing lines in that area. There's a reasonable chance that could be connected."

An insurance investigator will help confirm how the fire started. Until then, the cause is undetermined.

Smoke and flames were rising from several windows at the front of the house when Topham arrived. The interior was already engulfed. It

took 14 firefighters about 20 minutes to knock down the inferno.

The two-level structure, built in the 1960s, was destroyed. The walls were still standing but the roof had collapsed and the interior was gutted.

Firefighters aimed their hoses at a propane tank behind the house. They kept it cool so it didn't explode. Neighbouring houses — the closest was 100 metres away — were unscathed.

RCMP closed a highway lane to protect firefighters working on the house, which was built close to the roadside 500 metres south of Peachland. Police and Argo road maintenance workers directed commuters along a single lane for more than an hour.

Emergency Support Services has offered a hotel room, clothes and food to Tyson for three days. He is insured, Topham said.



GARY NYLANDER/The Daily Courier

War memorial

Keith Boehmer, curatorial assistant for the Okanagan Military Museum, looks over the new display at the museum called, *A Chance for Peace in Korea*, honouring the 60th anniversary of the Korean War. To the left is Paul Tomelin's photograph, *Van Doos on Hill 166* taken during the Korean War. The exhibit, which wraps up in June, profiles the relationship between North and South Korea since the end of the Korean War in 1953. The Okanagan Military Museum, located in the Memorial Arena on Ellis Street, is open Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Growers applauded for compact orchard

By STEVE MacNAULL
The Daily Courier

Apple growing is in Mike Melnichuk's blood.

The Kelowna orchardist was raised on his parents' apple farm in Ellison, worked the land with his father, went on to raise his three kids on the orchard and now he and his wife Priscilla have won the Compact Orchard Award at this week's 2013 Tree Fruit Industry Awards.

"When you have a compact orchard, you want to have that perfect combination of volume and quality," said Melnichuk.

"I feel we've done that with the two-acre orchard at 4571 Black Road planted with Honeycrisp. The trees are planted just two feet apart and the rows are just nine feet apart."

The 550-member B.C. Fruit Growers' Association handed out two other awards at its third annual horticultural symposium held in Kelowna this week.

Michel Labelle in Penticton picked up the Golden Apple Award for his 11 acres of apples grown using the high-yield super spindle and slender spindle methods.

Michael and Pat Beulah in Summerland won the Soft Fruit Award for his 20 acres in six varieties of cherries — Sweethearts, Lapins, Staccato,



GARY NYLANDER/The Daily Courier

Priscilla and Mike Melnichuk pose for a picture in their compact orchard in the Ellison.

Kootenay Special, Skeena and Sentennial — that are large-sized and destined for export markets.

Melnichuk's trees are also maintained in what's called super spindle style where they are supported to grow straight up to a controlled height of 12 feet.

The method conserves space and bumps up production to about 80 bins per acre.

Traditional plantings yield about 50 bins per acre.

Melnichuk was one of seven Okanagan apple

growers who visited Europe in the early 1990s to check out the new super spindle technique and in 1992 started to switch over some of his orchards.

Melnichuk was also one of the first orchardists to go into Honeycrisp in a big way with 16 of his 40 acres in the variety.

"It's a great looking and tasting apple that fetches a good price," explained Melnichuk.

"But it's also hard to grow. You have to make sure it doesn't get calcium disorders and you can't force a big crop out of it one year because it will give you hardly anything the next."

Melnichuk said all the doom and gloom talk about the orchard industry is premature.

"I feel as long as you grow good quality fruit there will always be a market. But it takes a lot of work and dedication and that's not for everyone," he said.

"I like living on the land. I like the mechanical end of an orchard as well as the growing part of it."

However, he does admit that competition from Washington state is fierce and the cost of land in the Okanagan is extreme.

"I guess I'm at an advantage because I grew up on an orchard and now have my parents land, but we've also added to it along the way," he said.

New seniors centre floor cracking

By J.P. SQUIRE
The Daily Courier

Seniors are cracking jokes about the floor of the main activity room at the brand-new Parkinson Activity Centre.

For the city and flooring contractor, it's no joke. Seniors say they noticed right away that the sprung wooden floor was developing cracks a much as one-16th of an inch wide, likely the result of wood shrinkage. City officials are now waiting for the flooring specialists to propose a solution with the work expected to be done during a summer shutdown in July.

"It's an esthetic and it's also a maintenance issue. It's a little hard to keep the floor clean if there is little cracks in it," said Steve Walker, a build-

ing technician in the city's design and construction services department.

"We found out about it right away. Just a little bit, like small spaces, but basically they're spread out throughout the entire floor."

The \$4.1-million Parkinson Activity Centre was designed as a "slab on grade" but the city didn't want dancing and other physical activities on an unforgiving concrete floor. So spacers on the slab, which allow a little bit of movement, hold up a specially engineered plywood that has grooves for radiant heat tubes. A traditional tongue-and-groove hardwood floor was then nailed on top.

The flooring contractor was already scheduled to come in because a nail had gone through a plastic heat tube causing a leak in front of the

activity room's entrance. The floor had been removed to fix the leak but "the floor was repaired a little too quick so there was still moisture below," said Walker. "That moisture came up through the floor and caused the boards to cup and warp a little bit."

Walker doesn't imagine the shrinking hardwood flooring can be squeezed back together, so repairs could involve filling the cracks or pulling the floor up and re-laying it.

"I think there's quite a bit you can do with that. The right guys can do magic," he said.

Both repairs are considered a warranty issue, so taxpayers shouldn't be on the hook.

Parkinson Activity Centre, which replaced the now-demolished Water Street Senior Centre, officially opened on Nov. 22.