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No Hate in Huron cabaret celebrates love in marathon at Goderich Legion

BY SCOTT STEPHENSON

On Saturday, Nov. 23, a wide-ranging collection of concerned and creative Huron County citizens and community groups gathered at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 109 in Goderich for the Community Cabaret 4 Caring and Camaraderie (CC4CC). The all-day marathon of an event was put

together by No Hate in Huron (NHIH), a newly-formed collective of local activists and artists that hopes to counteract the recent increase in acts of organized bigotry that, while petty, are still threatening to leave an ugly mark on the face of Canada's prettiest town.

First, there were the swirling rumours that a group of white supremacists had formed in Goderich under the gauzy guise of gathering as a men's fitness group. Now, it is entirely possible that those swirling rumours are just that - rumours, and that this group of guys just like to get together to celebrate their collective admiration for the male body in all its subtle potential and sweaty glory.

But there is another sign that all is not well in the Magic Kingdom of Ontario's West Coast, and it's one that leaves no room for nuanced interpretation, because it is a literal sign, painted bright green, that faces out onto Highway 21 just north of Goderich. The sign states, among other things, in big white letters, that "White Lives Matter". It may be pushing a tired ideology pulled from the ash heap of history, but the brazenness with which this sign declares its steadfast dedication to a less joyous way of being is still shocking enough to make the news, much to the collective sorrow and embarrassment of much of the rest of the town.

In response to this increase in intolerance in their neighbourhood, NHIH co-founders Patrick Corvyn and Mikuria Vandersnatsch worked with a large group of volunteers to make the CC4CC event a true spiritual success. The programming was open to literally any group or individual with a passion for any facet of their community that isn't driven by hatred. The afternoon portion of the event included a luncheon of lasagna, accompanied by keynote speakers, salons, discussion groups, an open mic, delightful original ditties by musician John Powers, coffee, donuts, the launch of an inclusive community art installation captained by Blyth-based artist Kelly Stevenson, and more.

The true turning point for the event came during a march around The Square that ended with the ceremonious removal of an entirely different green sign that had been mounted outside the entrance of Goderich's Lakeshore United Church (LUC) as a response to the first sign. The LUC sign reads, simply, "Be Kind. Respect Everyone. Love One Another." Some members of the public, however, had taken umbrage with the sign's message of peace and love, and it was decided that the sign would need to be taken down. It will now be rotated between local businesses and privately-owned property. As of the publication of this article, the original, "White Lives Matter" sign remains standing.

In the evening, the upper level of the Legion was transformed into a vaudeville-inspired cabaret that featured drag kings and queens, improv, music and poetry. One of the day's many hate-free highlights came near the end of the evening, when Goderich-based writer Nathanya Field shared just a few of the lush, poignant and humorous poems she's written for her wife over the years. No matter how much hate there may be in the world, there's just no arguing with a love like that.

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