

Matt Wilkie to be memorialized with park

BY CHRISTEEN JESSE
The tragedy happened over a year ago, but the town of Rocanville certainly has not forgotten.

Since his passing on April 17 of last year, Matt Wilkie has been honored and remembered for the inspiring life he led. Matt's passion for life has left a lasting impact on many, and his spirit is still very much alive in the community.

"It's an indescribable feeling," says Matt's father Bob Wilkie. "Everyone still talks of him in such a positive way and it just kind of gives you a feeling that you did something right when you were raising him."

20-year-old Matt was killed in a car accident while driving home from a charity fundraiser last spring. Immediately after his death, the Wilkie family was showered with condolences and overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from the community. Matt's parents say that support has not let up since.

"The community has been very supportive and it has opened our eyes for sure," says Bob Wilkie.

On the day of Matt's accident, a number of loving messages were written on the goal posts at the Rocanville soccer field, and on a clear, calm night later that week, a large number of youth gath-

ered on that same field to set off fire works to celebrate and remember the life of the young man. The fire works exploded in the sky—giving off light in the same way that Matt gave light to the lives of those around him.

The dull pain of loss still remains one year later, and members of the community continue to offer their support.

This month, on May 28, the Rocanville soccer field will be renamed 'Wilkie Field' in honor of Matt and his love of soccer. A bench and sign will be placed near the field as a permanent tribute to his life.

"The bench is a cement bench that the family has commissioned and the bench will have a plaque in memory of Matthew," says Sherry Ryan, who has been working to set up the memorial.

"Right after the passing of Matthew, my daughter wanted to do something to remember Matt," says Ryan.

The Ryans tossed ideas back and forth, wondering what they could do, and landed on the idea of dedicating the park to Matt. Once the town of Rocanville agreed to the idea, the planning was underway.

The sign is being painted by Darlene Strong, a local artist, and the unveiling will happen later this month.



Taken one year ago, this photo shows the goalposts on the Rocanville soccer field, which became a spontaneous tribute to Matt Wilkie following his death in a car accident.

On May 28, at 2 p.m. the field will be dedicated, the bench and sign will be unveiled, and an afternoon of soccer on 'Wilkie field' will follow.

The afternoon games will be played in memory of the young man who lived, slept, and breathed the outdoor sport. Everyone is invited to come to the event and take to the field—remembering Matt, while playing the sport

he loved most.

The Wilkies feel the dedication of the soccer field is a very suiting way to keep Matt's memory alive.

"It obviously is something that was important to him—it was his life being out there on that field," says Bob Wilkie.

"And between Norma and myself and the kids around here, we just thought it was a fitting tribute to him."

When asked what Matt would think of the dedication, Bob Wilkie answers with a chuckle.

"I honestly think he'd be embarrassed," he says. "I'm sure he would feel honored, but he would be more or less embarrassed about the whole thing. He would rather just get out there and kick the ball around."

So Matt will be happy to know that the field and

bench are intended to be a spot where people in the community can come to not only remember him, but remember other lives lost too.

"The park will be named in Matthew's honor, but if anyone wanted to plant a tree in someone else's honor or plant flowers or set up a bench or a picnic table in someone else's honor, they could. So it will be for more than just Matt . . . it's for anybody who has had a loss," says Ryan.

"It would just be a place for somebody to come and memorialize somebody they had lost."

Whether it brings a tear to their eye, or a smile to their face, people will remember those they have lost when they step on to the field or sit on the bench. Matt's memory will be forever cherished, and this dedication is just one more way the town of Rocanville is honoring the vibrant, young life of Matt Wilkie.

Since that fateful day last April, people have been remembering Matt in their own ways. The pen marks may have faded, and the fire-works have dissolved, but the memories are still alive. And soon, a permanent monument will exist to commemorate a young man who will be always remembered and forever missed.

Rocanville Rec Report

Kathy Brown, Recreation Director

THE MUSICAL RIDE

The next meeting for the Musical Ride will be on Monday, May 24 at 7 p.m.

Advance tickets are available at Conexus Credit Union in Rocanville, Moosomin, Whitewood and Spy Hill, TD Canada Trust in Rocanville and Langenburg, and the Credit Unions in Esterhazy, Wawota, St. Lazare and Birtle, as well as the Rocanville Rec Office.

Ticket prices are \$10 for ages 13 and up, \$5 for ages five to 12, and preschool free.

Elevated seating will be limited, so feel free to bring a lawn chair.

The gates will open at 3:30 p.m.

There will be souvenirs, hot dogs, hamburgers, drinks, popcorn, and cotton candy.

The barn is open for public viewing and there will be a meet and greet with the members after the performance.

The show lineup is as follows:

- Terrance Littletent Hoop Dancer at 6:15 p.m.

- McAuley 4-H Formation Riders at 6:35 p.m.
- Cowessess First Nation Drummers at 6:55 p.m.
- The ride will start at 7:45 p.m.

Tickets are available at the gates for the same price.

Shuttle service will be available but we encourage Rocanville citizens to walk to the ball field if possible to help alleviate parking. Remember your bug spray!

We are looking for volunteers for set up and tear down on the field and the bleachers. We are also looking for security, parking, gate workers, sales venders, etc. Call 306-645-2164 to get involved.

AT THE POOL

There is a chance that we could open the pool if we had a group of people willing to sit on the pool board for one, two and three-year terms.

There will be a meeting on Thursday, May 19 at 7 p.m. in the Rec Office.

We need to have some people with a bit of mechanical experience to help run the pool and assist with some mechani-

cal issues that arise from time to time, as well as members that can help with administration and fundraising.

AT THE SENIORS CLUB

Watch for work on the Seniors Centre in the very near future. The building is going to receive a facelift, including new windows, doors, siding and a tin roof. Exercises have stopped for the season but will resume in the fall. Cards, shuffleboard and the potluck supper will continue at their regular times.

DIAL-A-VAN

We are looking for members willing to sit on the Dial-A-Van board so we can proceed with this much-needed project in our community. Contact the rec office if you are interested in helping get this project off the ground. Call 306-645-2164.

ROCANVILLE RUN FOR REC

After the Musical Ride is over we will be planning for the next Run For Rec. We learned a lot from our first experience and know we'll put on a much better show this year. Watch for more information in the near future about dates, times, etc. If you would like to be involved with this very worthwhile cause (last year we raised over \$5000 for recreation) call the rec office at 306-645-2164.

Welwyn News

The United Church Sunday School provided a program for the congregation on Mother's Day during regular church time. The children recited verses, sang songs, played a clarinet solo and vocal solo, accompanied on the piano by Marilyn Hickie. Great unrehearsed program, kids and teachers! A special lunch for the congregation and children was provided following the service. The Sunday School mothers were presented with

a small floral arrangement from their children.

Mother's Day visitors with Doug and Barb Cuthill and Grandma Shirley were Charles and Jessica Cuthill, Katie and Cal of Esterhazy.

Pete Griemann and Lori Wittrock of Swift Current were weekend visitors with Bill and Susie Marsh.

Joe and Pat Santer visited Jeff and Gerri Paterson and family and attended a recital for Abby on Satur-

day. They also attended River Dance at the Conexus Art Centre in Regina on Thursday.

Jim and Ethel Belhumeur visited in Regina on the weekend with Don and Wanda and Lyndsey Duchscher.

Murdoch James was a visitor to Regina last week and attended River Dance in the Conexus Art Centre. He also visited with Jeremy and Sarah Stone and Ian when he was in Regina.

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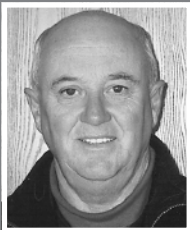


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