

Column 071025

Kudos and Huzzahs to Susie Ralph and the Christmas for Kids Committee for a spectacularly successful Christmas for Kids Gala. From the first glass of champagne (opened effortlessly by Al Parkin) to the last dance of the evening, the Lions Hall hummed with happy people, chatting, laughing, and opening their wallets to raise thousands of dollars for Christmas for Kids. Throughout the evening a crew of handsome young waiters – Lee Casement, Matt Hopkins, Rob McDougall, and Steve Ruskey served with grace and flair an array of delicious finger foods prepared in the kitchen by Joyce Casement and JoAnne Abrams of J & J Catering, Tim and Stasi Lloyd of Kelseys and Montana's, Bev Brooks and Joan Goodwin. Meanwhile, Nicki Van Camp, Jen Bennet, and Marilyn Hopkins sold hundreds and hundreds of tickets on an array 50/50 and raffle packages while the bidding heated up on the silent auction packages donated from near and far. A particularly inspired touch was the auction of wreaths, swags, and table arrangements by local artists and crafters. Anne Archer opened the evening as a wandering flute player, followed by Carolyn Stewart, founder and conductor of the Blue Skies and Perth Celtic Fiddle Orchestras. As the crowd warmed up to the spirit of the evening, The Limestone Chorale – composed entirely of educators, took them to the next level with a cappella numbers ranging from jazz to celtic. John McDougall could begin a second career as auctioneer. He kept the bids flowing fast with humour and just the right touch of coercion, so that autographed bottles of Dan Ackroyd wines, a picnic basket of expensive goodies, a five course dinner for four at Craig Trails, and other donations raised many, many hundreds of dollars. The evening heated up even further as Bill Kendall and Tom Revell took the stage as R K'd. They were soon joined by Bill Lansdell, Ryan Bowes and Kurt Campbell of Still Standin, and the dancing began in earnest. (Bill L. says that the band's fourth member, Dennis Pachecko, was very sad to miss the event and the band sends him all its best wishes as his family deals with a major health issue).

We remember the Lions Hall in the late 60's into the early late 70's as the place to go for a special dress-up night. You'd get your hair done, find a lovely outfit, and head out for the Valentine or Christmas Dance. In the 80's and 90's as people looked more and more to Kingston for their entertainment, the hall faded as a venue for this kind of event. Part of the joy of the Christmas for Kids Gala was watching our community use that hall once again to create its own elegance in its own way. And in that vein, it is notable that at the beginning of the evening four women were called to the front of the hall. None of them knew why they were there until it was announced that they were all wearing Geoffrey Murray original dresses. So not only can we have elegance in our local hall, we can have elegance in locally created outfits. The joy of the evening, though, was that whether you were dressed in a stunning original creation or in slacks and shirt, you were made welcome as part of this caring and funloving community.

The Verona Community Association Website is undergoing its annual housecleaning and revision. If your club, church or organization has information to get out to the public, take a look at the site [www.veronacommunity.on.ca](http://www.veronacommunity.on.ca) to see if there's anything that needs adding or changing. The website is maintained by VCA volunteers, so information should be of a general nature, not anything that needs to be updated on a regular basis. It can, however, provide a link to your organization's website for more detailed info. E-mail [inie@sympatico.ca](mailto:inie@sympatico.ca) with your details.

Joyce Casement's annual Christmas Craft Sale is a Verona tradition. Look for it this year on November 3 from 9 – 2 at Trinity United Church. It's sponsored by local crafters.