

local news

GP man teaches Ugandans trade

Couple heading to Africa this month as volunteers with EMI

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Herald-Tribune staff

A Grande Prairie man has been going to Uganda for the past four years to teach university students surveying by providing a practical hands on approach.

Patrick Cochrane has been providing a practicum course in geomatics in the Ugandan capital city of Kampala since 2011. In partnership with three universities, Cochrane provides an eight-week practicum course to nine third and fourth-year geomatics engineering students.

“Even though they have great universities in Uganda, they teach great theory, but to take that theory and connect it to practice on the ground there was a disconnect there,” he said.

Cochrane and his wife, Joan, have been volunteering with Engineering Ministries International (EMI) since 2002 and have visited numerous countries in Africa, Caribbean, Central America, and South America providing hands on education to students and working in relief efforts.

EMI is a Christian ministry that provides education to and designs facilities (hospitals, orphanages, schools, clean water projects, etc.) for



Patrick Cochrane (left) and his wife Joan, will be heading to Uganda to volunteer with Engineering Ministries International.

poor communities in developing countries, according to EMI's website. Cochrane is also a board member for EMI.

The former federal public servant said it was his oppor-

tunity to give those in the developing world a hands up.

“Things have been changing in the last 10 years in the way that relief and development have been carried out. A lot

of times, it was the those from the developed world going into the developing world and just throwing resources at it hoping that would fix the problem, but that's just

been doing way more harm. The best way to improve the situation for the people in the developing world is to empower them and give them dignity to help themselves,”

he said.

This summer, the Cochranes will once again return to Uganda for their fifth training cycle where students will develop a topographical survey for an upcoming EMI design project.

While the practicum is free for students, it costs the Cochranes \$9,000 to go to Uganda to train them, all of which is raised through donations.

The retired engineering technologist said what he teaches is paid forward by former students who have gone on to teach other engineering and surveying students what they have learned.

Cochrane mentioned that although it's difficult to find work in Uganda, the majority of his students, due to their hands-on experience, find work with the Ugandan Roads Authority and foreign oil and gas companies.

“It's not guaranteed that they'll find placement, but its certainly a leg up over their peers who certainly don't have this kind of training,” he said.

“The ultimate goal of this training is to get them up and running and comfortable and confident and competent on the equipment.”

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City rec facilities get reno boosts

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Recreational spaces within the City of Grande Prairie will see a boost in renovations as council has approved funding for a number of projects beginning with the Grande Prairie Curling Club.

The curling club had its \$368,104 tender awarded recently by council which would allow the almost 40-year-old building to get a facelift.

“It's going to be a total remodel of the upstairs -

brand new ceiling and lighting, new flooring, the washrooms, new coatroom, and a new wet room,” said general manager Rodney Rollenberger.

Rollenberger said the renovations have been in the works for a couple of years and that the project was supposed to have started last year, but due to timing and not getting the drawings completed, it was back.

Also included in the renovations is the exterior of the building such as part of the roof and a new entranceway.

“The renovations are going to modernize the facility, so get us back into this correct era and then hopefully enhance it for rentals as well for public use,” said Rollenberger, who hoped the renovations would boost the club's revenues by 10% to 20%.

Construction will begin in May and finish by the end of August.

Administration is also looking at renovating the change rooms, bathroom, storage area, and flooring downstairs.

Once all the renovations are completed, the total

amount spent in renovating the building will be about \$2.5 million.

The city also has plans to complete the exterior of the arena (siding, window, and improving R-Value for energy efficiency), but that has yet to be included in the capital budget.

Bear Creek Pool

The Bear Creek outdoor pool is also one step closer to realization as a tender for \$386,700 in engineering costs was awarded by council.

The pool was constructed

in 1962 and was taken out of commission in 2013. The total budget for the project is \$5 million.

The next step is for the engineering firm to work with a number of design options, which will be submitted to the council of the whole where further direction will be given to administration.

The city hopes to open the pool in July 2018.

Ball Diamond Construction

Construction of the South

Bear Creek ball diamonds in the amount of \$488,034 awarded to Sid Puddicombe Associates Ltd. The money will pay for two diamonds (#9 and #10).

Revolution Place/Bowes Gardens

Revolution Place and Bowes Family Gardens will receive upgrades to their air conditioning unit in the amount of \$349,000.

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