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News

Heritage schoolhouse begins new life as Saanich community centre

By Brittany Lee - Saanich News

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The recently renovated old Royal Oak schoolhouse on West Saanich Road hosted its first community meeting on March 15.

Different groups are taking advantage of the free space and scheduling monthly meetings.

Royal Oak couple Greg Holloway and Kathleen Wilkins recently started the Royal Oak Neighbours Club, or RONs Club, to help build a sense of community.

The club, which meets for the first time tomorrow, also helps facilitate other group meetings, such as a yet-to-be-named community heritage society.

The notion of the neighbourhood club is to get Royal Oak residents to meet at the coffee-house, Crumbsby's at the Schoolhouse, each month to mingle and discuss issues important to the community, Holloway said.

"This is going to be a trial and error experiment, but we'll hopefully find topical themes that people would like to come and spend an evening

talking about and to do this in a way that engages folks,” he added.

The cafe housed a group of Royal Oak residents interested in preserving the history of the area on March 15. The heritage group plans to meet every second Thursday of the month, starting with their next meeting on April 12.

“They want to develop a repository for photographs and stories and memories of the Royal Oak area, from people who’ve lived here and grown here and farmed here,” Wilkins said.

The heritage club is relatively small right now because organizers wanted to start with people who already have memories to share, Holloway said, adding he would love to see this group grow in the future.

The RONs Club will hold its first meeting on Thursday (March 29) at Crumsby’s, 4525 West Saanich Rd. There will be a social hour from 6-7 p.m. followed by a meeting to discuss allotment gardening from 7-9 p.m.

Carol Pickup and John Tupper, representatives from the Agnes Street Community Gardeners’ Association, will talk about allotment gardens.

Holloway and Wilkins encourage their neighbours to come out and meet each other. They are also seeking topics and presenters for future RONs Club meetings, to be held on the fourth Thursday of each month.

For more information or to present ideas for meetings, email info@planetwater.ca.

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