



Left to right, Bruce, Bullen, Debiuk, Ferguson, Vitt and Foundation Executive Director Meredith Boerchers.

## **I Care About a Cause event on recreation, culture and heritage turns into a discussion on community**

The Selkirk & District Community Foundation hosted I Care About a Cause May 27 at the Clandeboye Community Club and the causes of the evening were recreation, culture, and heritage.

It was an enjoyable hour that brought together donors and some of the organizations they support through their gifts to the Foundation. Recreation, Culture, and Heritage is a Vital Signs sector.

By the end of the night, it would probably be safe to say that there was a realization that what we were really talking about was community.

There were four panelists representing the Clandeboye Community Club, Selkirk & District Ukrainian School of Dance, Selkirk & District Arts Festival and the Clandeboye Pipe Band and as each explained their group and some of the grants they'd received from the Foundation, the community theme was always present.

“The panelists all had great stories about what they do in the community and it was true, that recreation, culture, and heritage emerged as defining components of all our communities,” said Deborah Vitt, Foundation Chair and co-host of the evening.

“Everything came back to community, and how vital all three are to the people who call St. Andrews, St. Clements and Selkirk home.”

Rosalyn Ferguson, a new board member of the Clandeboye Community Club, is carrying on a family tradition by joining the board – both her parents, Gary and Wendy Church, served as well.

The Foundation has supported the club on several occasions with grants, allowing them to redo flooring in the building, paint the interior and buy a floor sweeper, fondly nicknamed Henry.

The improvements have helped keep the club going and contributed to its ongoing success as it approaches its 90<sup>th</sup> year. Everything from weddings, socials and showers take place at the club, and Brownies and Girl Guides have used the club for years.

“We’ve been around a long time, (the club) is kind of like the centre or the heart of this little village,” Ferguson said.

“Our hall is very busy, it’s hard to find a Friday or Saturday night, especially during the summer, where there isn’t something going on. It’s a wonderful problem to have.”

They hosted country music star Aaron Pritchett last October for two nights and raised \$13,000 for the club, and even gave money out to some other non-profits.

“We definitely want to plan more things like that in the future where we can use this space and people can come together from the community but also so we can give back where we can too. We have lots of plans to use it in the future, those grassroots kind of ideas,” Ferguson said.

Andrea Debiuk from the Selkirk & District Ukrainian School of Dance, says they’re celebrating 55 years this summer and new costumes purchased with the help of a Foundation grant have received rave reviews.

During a recent trip to Saskatoon, the first out-of-province performance in many years, the Fialka troupe wore the new costumes, which were ordered from war-torn Ukraine.

“This past year we actually replaced costumes that were 40 years old,” Debiuk said.

“We were able to buy the new ones directly from a company in Ukraine, and they could only work during the hours they had electricity, because of the bombing, but we were able to support that company in the war, for our beautiful brand-new costumes.”

Debiuk says when they get together for practices at Happy Thought or East Selkirk Middle School, it’s not just the dancers who are keeping culture and heritage alive, it’s the parents too, who take Ukrainian braiding and beading classes instead of just sitting in the hallways waiting.

“We talk about heritage, we talk about community,” she says.

“Instead of the parents just dropping kids off, we’re together, we’re building that heritage. And in the last couple of years we have some newer immigrants from Ukraine who were displaced, and you see the joy on their faces, to know that they’re not losing their heritage by being displaced, they get to carry that on.”

Besides the costumes, the Foundation has provided grants to buy dance barres. The group started with 34 students, and now has 90 plus seven instructors.

Jessica Bullen took over the Selkirk piano festival three years ago and expanded it into a full-blown arts festival, with much success.

“We wanted it to be an arts festival,” Bullen said.

“As a team we really wanted to see all art forms represented, that includes visual arts, piano, band, small ensemble, dance, speech, vocal, strings and choir. We wanted to see all of our artists perform.”

From year one to year three, they’ve more than tripled the number of participants.

“We have grown immensely in the last three years. Our first year we started with 75 participants and this year we had almost 400. It’s massive growth,” Bullen said.

A Foundation grant helped the festival pay for things like rentals, adjudication fees and even piano tunings.

Being able to perform during the festival, and during the gala that closes the event, gives students skills they carry through their lives, she says.

“It’s interesting to watch our children grow and learn, and the confidence that we’re seeing in our children when they’re on stage...you see the joy on their faces,” Bullen said.

“This helps you throughout your life...it helps with your job, and with being able to speak in front of a crowd too.”

Rob Bruce is the President of the Clandeboye Pipe Band, and dressed in his kilt and performance wear, he spoke about the importance of getting financial help from the Foundation.

“We’re a community-based pipe band, not for profit. We raise our own funds...but sometimes given what the expenses are, we needed a bit more help,” Bruce said.

Several other pipe members were in the crowd, all dressed the same as Bruce, thanks to a Foundation grant that allowed them to buy matching kilts.

“New kilts are \$900,” he said.

He described the pipe band as a teaching band and admitted he had little experience when he joined. It’s a tough instrument to play, he said, despite the fact it only has nine notes. They continue to seek new members, and currently their group ranges in age from 24 to 70-plus.

“We wanted to be a teaching band and wanted to be inclusive for all,” he said.

Bruce drove the community angle home when he talked about receiving a grant from the Clandeboye Community Club, from money the club had raised at the two-night Aaron Pritchett concert.

“We appreciate the contribution from the Foundation, but we also give back,” Bruce said.

“I’m sure some of you have been here for the Robbie Burns Nights we host, and some money raised from that event...we just wanted to give back to the community club, but then they turned around and gave money back to us,” Bruce laughed.

That struck the perfect note for the other members of the Clandeboye Pipe Band to join him up front and play a song to end the evening.

