

Global sea merchants seek advice

Local security specialist busy in wake of 'pirate' attacks

BY TAMARA DE LA VEGA
HUNTSVILLE FORESTER

It may seem far away, but the conflict involving piracy in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia is making its way to Huntsville.

Local resident and security specialist Sunil Ram said he's been getting phone calls from sea merchants and ship owners around the globe concerned with the safety of their cargo.

He said his advice has been to take non-lethal action wherever possible. Such action may include greasing the rails of a ship as well as making high-pressure hoses

available to repel illegal boarding. Ram is also suggesting that ships carry powerful floodlights, sirens and, if necessary, an armed security team.

One such inquiry has come from a company based out of Athens, Greece. Ram is organizing a team made up of maritime security experts to protect it from what is being referred to as Somali pirates given to commandeering cargo ships mak-



SUNIL RAM

ing their way off the coast.

His crew plans on departing sometime at the end of this month or the first part of December.

He said what started off as disgruntled border-vessel fishermen has grown in sophistication to include former military men and idealists, now empowered financially.

"These are mostly fishermen and they have some real legiti-

mate concerns like over fishing - I mean, those are tuna-rich waters. What's happening is you've got vessels illegally fishing there for years and also they're dumping all kinds of toxins.... That area is a dumping ground."

At the same time, Ram said he has no sympathy for the men detaining the vessels because some of the cargo involves food shipments like grain bound for Iran. Regardless of what you think of a country's government, food is meant to help its people, he said.

"If you were boarding vessels and taking over a food shipment

and feeding your own people, I can understand that, most people can understand that, but these shipments are being returned when ransom is paid, so they're not doing it for their own people," he added.

"The big fear now is... a lot of this money is going to be funneled through to Al Quaida. I'm anticipating in the next little while you're going to see a lot of war ships in that region."

Ram said he is advising clients to take the longer route and avoid the Gulf of Aden wherever possible, unless the nature of the cargo they are carrying is time-sensitive.

Fighting poverty in the kitchen

BY KAREN LONGWELL

Reducing the effects of childhood poverty can start in the kitchen.

A new pilot program is gearing up to address poverty issues through healthy meals on a budget, said Lee Ann Rogers, programs manager for Muskoka Family Focus and Children's Place (MFFCP).

"We really want to try to address child poverty in our area and we are hoping by providing this service and these resources to families that will help," she said.

The community kitchen, one of three pilot projects approved for funding under the Muskoka Best Start Network, will allow parents to learn budget-friendly nutritious recipes while their children participate in a program with a staff member, said Rogers.

MFFCP, a not-for-profit organization that provides resources to parents, is working on identifying four areas to run the pilot project. Areas with high unemployment rates or with families living below the low income cut-off are being targeted.

Similar to its Early Years programs, MFFCP's community kitchen programs will involve families with children from newborn to six years old.

Early Years programs are generally held in community centres or churches. They offer parents a chance to have quality time with their children while interacting with other parents.

Volunteers will be trained to be leaders at a community kitchen at the four Early Years locations.

"We are hoping that this community kitchen will be sustainable in the future," said Rogers, noting it will run on a pilot basis to begin with. "It's a learning process for us as well," she said.

Another new idea, which was also approved for funding, is a pilot child care program at the

Adult Education Centre in Bracebridge. The program would provide child care for people attending classes.

This program is pending discussions with the Trillium Lakelands District School Board because the board operates the centre, said Rogers.

"They (adult students) are (often) young moms and child-care is difficult to find," said Rogers. "It would support the young people going back to school, which in turn does a lot of different things. If people can get an education, and get decent jobs and be better off to support their family, it addresses the childhood poverty issue we are facing."

The third project approved for funding is a dinner program in Severn Bridge, said Rogers.

The dinner program is for parents who work outside the home, have a child from newborn and six years old and cannot attend the day Early Years programs, said Rogers.

The dinner program usually starts at 5 p.m. with the parent spending quality time with their child or children, interacting with parents and asking any questions they may have for the facilitator.

Then at 6 p.m. a free dinner is served.

"It is based on the Canada Food Guide - completely nutritious," said Rogers.

Recipes are available for the parent to take home.

Currently, there are about seven dinner programs happening around Muskoka. This will be the first in Severn Bridge, said Rogers.

The three pilot projects should run from January to March.

The community kitchen program received \$10,250 in funding, while \$8,000 was earmarked for the pilot child care program. Seven thousand dollars was set aside for the dinner program in Severn Bridge.

Support the food bank Dec. 3

BY NANCY EWING

Port Sydney News

The Port Sydney/Utterson and area Chamber of Commerce would like local businesses and residents of Port Sydney to be aware that there is a chamber-endorsed petition available at Zanetti's General Store, Dean's Home Hardware, The 141 Café and the Utterson Post Office. The object of the petition is to generate as much support as possible to try and obtain digital Internet, telephone and digital cable service into the Port Sydney area.

If you have any comments or questions call Nancy at 385-1117. A copy of the petition is available on the chamber website www.portsydneycocf.com.

The chamber Christmas dinner event will take place at the Trillium Resort and Spa on Thursday, Dec. 4. We invite our members, their families and employees to join us. We also welcome any prospective members to come out and get to know us. Please call Nancy at 385-1117 or e-mail info@portsydneycocf.com for tickets.

The chamber is looking for volunteers to help out with our winter carnival. The carnival runs from Wednesday, Jan. 28 to Sunday, Feb. 1. We are in the planning stages and already have many events lined up. This will be the 52nd winter carnival and we plan on making it bigger and better than ever before.

If you can help out in any way please give us a call at 385-1117 or e-mail the chamber office at info@portsydneycocf.com. The winter carnival family breakfast and silent auction will take place at the community hall on Sunday, Feb. 1. If you can donate any items or gift certificates etc. for our silent auction please contact Karen Prince at 385-0816 or e-mail her at gord.prince@sympatico.ca.

The Port Sydney volunteer firefighters will be knocking on your door on Wednesday, Dec. 3 to receive your donation to the food bank. Please support your community and give generously. If you would like to have your event listed in this column please contact Nancy at the chamber office at 385-1117 or e-mail info@portsydneycocf.com.

SALVATION ARMY ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE

In conjunction with the Huntsville-Port Sydney and Lake of Bays (Dwight, Dorset, Port Cunnington, Hillside and Interlaken, Burk's Falls, Emsdale, Novar, Sprucedale and Kearney) Fire Departments Du-Ya-Wanna Snowmobile Club • Huntsville OPP Muskoka Ambulance • Huntsville Air Cadets The Motorcyclists of Muskoka

Wednesday, December 3rd

Starting at 6:00 p.m.

Watch and listen for the fire trucks coming door to door. Leave your porch lights on and Santa, with the help of the fire departments, will pick up your NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS!!!

Drop off outlets:

- Huntsville Fire Hall Station #1 or the Salvation Army
- Port Sydney Fire Hall • Lake of Bays Fire Hall



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† Limited time offer. Prices do not include tax. PMS 0311 0311. Some applications. Please refer to the actual offer. November 30th, 2008 at participating Dealers. Wood-Pro™ Kit offer applies to purchases of new chain saws, and is valid until November 30th, 2008, while supplies last.

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We Have It All AT YOUR Huntsville Place Mall

Christmas Has Arrived!
It's our 4th annual Huntsville Farmers' Market Saturday, November 29

Santa Claus is at the Mall Saturday, November 22, 29 & December 6
10 a.m. to 12:30 & 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.

STARTING DECEMBER 13 SANTA WILL BE HERE DAILY

Weekdays	10:30 - 12:30	1:30 - 3:30	5:30 - 7:30
Saturdays	10:00 - 12:30	1:30 - 3:30	
Sundays	12:30 - 3:30		

Photography provided by Lorrie Lamb

There is photo taking with Santa - bring your own camera or, for a small fee, we will take one for you.

Hailey's Teddy Bear Wish
"My wish is that every less fortunate child in our community has a teddy bear to love this holiday season."

Please bring a bear to the Huntsville Place Mall by December 15 where they can be dropped off and donated to those who need them.

A & P	COTTON GINNY	NORTHERN REFLECTIONS	SAM'S EXPRESS DINER
ANDY'S HAIR DESIGN	THE CLOTHES CLOSET	PAINTED PORCH	SAN DIEGO GIFTS
ARDENE	HALLMARK	POPP'S	SCOTIABANK
BECKER SHOES	HAMPTON LANE	PEARLE VISION	STITCHES
BELL WORLD	HOMELIFE REAL ESTATE	RICKI'S/BOOTLEGGER	THE SOURCE
BENTLEY	KINGS BUFFET	RON HENRY	TIM HORTONS
CD PLUS	CHINESE RESTAURANT	JEWELLERS	VIA BELLA
COLES BOOKSTORE	NEAR NORTH GIFTS		ZELLERS

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