

**For Immediate Release
August 24, 2005**

LOCAL SKATEBOARDERS GAIN SUPPORT FOR BOTTLE DRIVE

Medicine Hat – The Medicine Hat Skateboarding Association is conducting a bottle drive Thursday, August 25, 2005 from 6 – 9 pm in the South Ridge and Saamis Heights neighborhoods. The money raised for the drive will go towards sponsoring a theatre seat at the Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre.

Chris Nickel, President of the Medicine Hat Skateboarding Association says, “We want to let people in Medicine Hat know that there are skateboarders here who are concerned about their city and want to make a positive difference.”

Local businessman Wes Reinheller from the Medican Group of Companies heard about this venture through the August 10th Medicine Hat News article, *Skateboarders reach out to improve the community* (see attached) and has since offered to match whatever the skateboarders raise in the bottle drive to donate to the Esplanade.

“I was personally encouraged to see a group of young people in our community step up and want to make a difference in our city,” says Reinheller, adding “I would also like to challenge other business owners to follow the lead of the skateboarders in our city by also matching the amount raised in this bottle drive for the Esplanade.”

Approximately 50 young skateboarders have volunteered to knock on doors Thursday from 6 to 9 pm.

Residents who wish to support the bottle drive may drop off their bottles at the Redi Bottle Truck parked at the Notre Dame Academy at 646 Spruce Way SE on August 25 from 11 am to 9 pm.

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**Attached: *Skateboarders reach out to improve the community*, Medicine Hat News
Official Quote, Wes Reinheller, Medican Group of Companies**

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Skateboarders reach out to improve the community

PETER CRNOGORAC

August 10, 2005 – Medicine Hat News

With what many of them believe is an unjust bad reputation around Medicine Hat, skateboarders are trying to prove the public wrong by forming an association which will help improving the community and their own image.

The Medicine Hat Skateboarding Association was formed by Chris Nickel, 25, in November because he says he wants the community to readjust the way skaters are viewed.

"We want people to get the idea that we're not a bunch of hooligans damaging their handrails in front of their businesses downtown," he says. "Many think graffiti and the drug problems are caused by skateboarders but that is a false view."

First and foremost, the individuality usually associated with skaters is what Nickel wants to maintain, and he believes that by organizing they can emulate what skaters are really made of.

Nickel, along with Alyssa Loates, events co-ordinator at The Dream Centre in Medicine Hat, and Terrence Kowalchuck, with the Dream Centre and Eagle Nest Ranch, a youth summer camp, decided the best way to freshen up the skate boys image was by doing something for the community.

"We wanted to do something positive," Loates, one of the 12 association members, says.

"So we decided to do a bottle drive on Aug. 25 and donate the funds to the Esplanade."

Loates says the money raised will go to sponsor a seat or two at the new arts centre which will have a plaque showing the skateboarding association had raised the money.

On Tuesday afternoon at the skate park near Kin Coulee, about 10 kids were tricking it up. Some were enthusiastic about the drive while others hadn't heard about it.

"We'll show the city that we're not that bad," says 14-year-old Tanner Armstrong when explaining why he's going on the drive.

"And maybe they'll get us a new skate park or fix this one up."

Loates, who has met and worked with most of the kids at the park, asks one skater with shaggy black hair named Tito Ferretti, 15, if he'll be part of the drive on Aug. 25.

While slowly rolling by on his board, he shrugs his shoulders and says, "I dunno." After Loates explains more about the drive, he says, when asked why he wants to help on Aug. 25, "To get bottles to buy chairs for the Esplanade."

As Loates watches the kids practice, she says she believes the association and fundraising is important because it gets the youth "plugged into the community" and caring about their city.

"The association has 12 goals," she explains. "One is to build relationships with the city and the community. This is a good thing for them," she says about the association, while swooping her hand in front of the kids on boards sliding on rails and jumping off ramps. "They had no leadership, no one to guide them, to create standards."

Nickel believes the bottle drive that will take place all day in the South Ridge area is just a small part of the image and ideals the association is about, and that the drive is just the beginning.

If anyone wants to join the Medicine Hat Skateboarding Association, Nickel says he will be at the Summer Festival on Aug. 20 in front of Separate Minds skateboard shop on 3rd Street S.E. and anyone who pays \$5 can join the association and receive e-mail of upcoming events such as skate trips to Calgary and future fundraising events.

**Comments by Wes Reinheller, President of the Medican Group of Companies
August 23, 2005**

In response to a Medicine Hat News story by Peter Crnogorac from the week of August 8, 2005 entitled "Skateboarders reach out to improve the community", I would just like to say that I was personally encouraged to see a group of young people in our community step up and want to make a difference in our city. It's great to see young people taking the time this Thursday evening to hold a bottle drive in Southridge to raise funds for the Esplanade. I'm personally challenged by what the youth are doing, and I would like to match whatever the skateboarders raise in the bottle drive to donate to the Esplanade. We want to be able to support our community and believe in strengthening our downtown. I would also like to challenge other business owners to follow the lead of the skateboarders in our city by also matching the amount raised in this bottle drive for the Esplanade.

Wes Reinheller
President
Medican Group of Companies