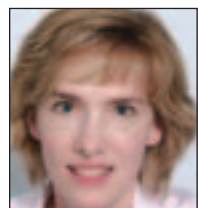


Funky slings free up new parents

“I love sewing, I love fabric and I love babies,” Tanja MacKenzie says.



CHRISTIE ZIMMER
time crunched

We sit at a picnic table at Sunnyacres Park in Guelph watching the youngest of MacKenzie's four children, four-year-old Maiya, and my five-year-old daughter col-

lect leaves that have drifted into the wading pool.

Her eight-year-old son Jakob stops by the table and when he sees she's taken out one of her handmade baby slings to show me, he points to it and says, “I help.”

It's true. Occasionally, he helps his mom add the soft padding to her chic collection of pouch slings.

You see, in addition to keeping a watchful eye over her large family, MacKenzie is the owner, designer, seamstress and marketing director for her clothing and baby-wear label, Sewfunky.

This is a woman who knows something about time crunches.

She also knows her way around a sewing machine. So when she couldn't find a comfortable baby carrier after the birth of her son Ben six years ago, she made one herself.

While out in Guelph with Ben snuggled into his handmade sling, she found herself answering one question with surprising regularity. “Where did you get that funky sling?”

And so Sewfunky was born.

MacKenzie offers her customers four types of slings which allow them, quite literally, to wear their babies while they get on with other tasks. These are not your generic baby carriers made from sturdy, serviceable material with plastic buckles and seatbelt straps. No, they are apparel, made for comfort and style. To accommodate the varied lifestyles of today's parents and caregivers, MacKenzie's slings are available in organic fabrics, stretchable cotton, cool linen, bamboo, sports mesh and even silk.

“Parents really need their hands and babies really want to be held. It's about getting your hands and your life back,” MacKenzie says. “I just want parents to know that there's an easier way.”

MacKenzie notes that slings give parents, grandparents and caregivers an easy opportunity to bond with babies and toddlers and to quickly calm a fussy child. The sling can also be put on prior to leaving the house. When you arrive at the grocery store or mall there is no need to struggle with straps and buckles. Simply transfer your little one from car seat or stroller to sling and be on your way.

As we chat, MacKenzie occasionally points out one of her slings, worn by a parent wandering past or through the park. Kasia Anderson is kind enough to stop by with 15-month-old son Avyn to show me how she uses her sling. She picks up a struggling Avyn, who until now has been happily toddling along on two feet. As soon as he is placed into the soft folds of the sling, he settles and begins to nurse. Another satisfied customer.

Christie Zimmer lives in Guelph. She can be contacted at christiezimmer@rogers.com.



Phil Fletcher, left, and Ken Murray chat before entering Ellis Chapel in Puslinch for a Sunday afternoon service in June 2007.

A symbol of faith

Ellis Chapel celebrates with ecumenical service

Joanne Shuttleworth
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PUSLINCH TOWNSHIP — Like any church, the Ellis Chapel in Puslinch Township affords shelter and communion for worshippers. But perhaps more than that, this little historic church stands as a symbol of the power of faith.

“It symbolizes the religious aspirations of the early settlers,” said Ken McLaughlin, a historian and former dean of St. Jerome's College at the University of Waterloo. “There was a powerful need for spiritual identity in the New World. A lot of small churches began popping up in the region in the 1850s.”

Now with new doors and a recently spiffed-up landscape, the little chapel celebrates its 147th anniversary Sunday, with a hymn sing, a talk by McLaughlin on the history and importance of the church, and an ecumenical service followed by refreshments in the yard.

“We'll feed the soul and then feed the body,” quipped Ken Murray, who sits on the church's board of trustees. “It's been an absolute joy participating in this. As a preacher's kid, I get a kick out of being there.”

Ellis Chapel was constructed over two years and the first service was held in 1861. The building went up through the efforts of nearby families, who contributed building material, money and muscle to the project.

The land, which now backs onto a service centre and McDonald's on Highway 401, was donated by Edward and Mary Ellis.

McLaughlin said rural churches had a different feel and function from urban ones back in the day. Many, like the Ellis Chapel, were of a basic construction and provided the necessities for worship without the adornments.

It's worth noting that Guelph's landmark church, the Church of Our Lady Immaculate, with its detailed stone work and ornate stained glass windows, was built around the same time. It, too, is a symbol of faith, “but these rural churches remind me of the relationship farmers had with the land, with God and with the seasons,” McLaughlin said. “They are different from urban churches and Ellis Chapel is elegant in its simplicity.”

Indeed, the tiny church measures a modest 40 feet by 30 feet and accommodates about 125 people. It features pine plank flooring, simple pine pews and six Gothic windows.

There is no electricity, no water, “and no Johnny-on-the-spot,” Murray said, which is why it is only

GUELPH MERCURY



LISA MALLECK, MERCURY NEWS SERVICES

on the web

what: 147th anniversary of Ellis Chapel

when: Aug. 17, 2:30 p.m.

where: On Ellis Road in Puslinch Township, accessible from Townline Road or Wellington roads 34 or 32

cost: Free-will offering

open from June to September, with monthly Sunday church services and a few hours through the week when the public can see inside.

It is also available for weddings, baptisms, memorial services and other ceremonies.

It began as a non-denominational church and continues that heritage. McLaughlin said that puts the church ahead of its time.

“It was a precursor to the ecumenical movement that occurred 100 years later,” he said.

It always relied on the community to see to its upkeep and continues that tradition, too.

In May this year, Capital Paving put together its own working bee to repave the parking lot and spruce up the property.

“The company has (donated services for charities) before but this was the first time our employees decided to give their own time to a cause,” said Bernice Pytlinski, controller at Capital Paving. “The church is a historical site in Puslinch and everyone here knows about it.

“We wanted to keep the heritage, too. It's a special place. Such a pretty chapel.”

Ellis Chapel provided services to its community for 40 years but as the congregation shrank in favour of bigger, urban churches, the windows were boarded up, the doors locked and the church was abandoned.

Murray said it was during construction of Highway 401 when the chapel was rediscovered by workers who first thought it would make a good storage shed. One, Loyd Frank of London, Ont., encouraged the original families to form a board of trustees and restore it. The first service in the newly renovated building was in August 1963.

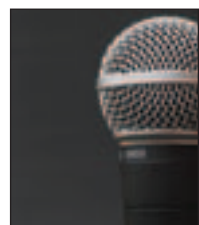
“It was unique when we began and it remains so,” Murray said. “This church was built by people in the community to fill a need.”

“Religion can be a dividing force or a unifying one,” McLaughlin agreed. “This little chapel drew people together.”

guelph

after dark

Find out what there is to do in Guelph after the sun goes down.



music

tonight

Trinity Road

where: Albion

when: 9 p.m.

cost: no cover

...

John McKinley

where: Molly Bloom's

when: 9 p.m.

cost: no cover

saturday

The Alley Dukes'

final show

with PDH and

The GreaseMarks

where: Shadow

when: 9:30 p.m.

cost: \$10 advance at

www.ticketscene.ca,

\$15 at the door

...

Vacuity

with The Free Press,

Mandippal Jandu

where: Jimmy Jazz

when: 8 p.m.

cost: \$5 (19+)

...

Dave Huber

where: Molly Bloom's

when: 9 p.m.

cost: no cover

...

John Zadro

where: Manhattans

when: 7:30 p.m.

cost: no cover

monday

Songwriters' Café

where: Manhattans

when: 7:30 p.m.

cost: no cover

tuesday

Myles Calvert

where: Manhattans

when: 7 p.m.

cost: no cover

wednesday

Brent Rowan

CD release party

where: Manhattans

when: 7:30 p.m.

cost: no cover

etc.

monday

Art with Heart

paintings by children of

Mogra Star Academy

in Nairobi, Kenya on sale.

Proceeds to

the academy.

where: Stone Store

when: 10 a.m.

to 2 p.m.

cost: \$25 each



As people start trying to eat locally produced food, we look at what Guelph has to offer patio patrons – Sleeman, Wellington and F&M breweries all operate in the city and produce suds the Royal City can be proud of.

READ ABOUT IT THIS SATURDAY

Guelph Mercury

