

NEWS



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outside Saskatoon

SAY NO TO RANSOM

Former hostage Amanda Lindhout explains why **NP1**



DOGS ASSIST WAR VETS

U of S study looks at how dogs can help veterans **A3**



SASKATOON STARPHOENIX



IN GARTH'S GRIP

Country star sets record ticket pace **A2**

SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 2016

ESTABLISHED 1902

POSTMEDIA



John James McKenzie, a client of the Scattered Site Outreach Program in La Ronge, prepares to go to sleep on a lounge at the shelter on April 21. Money to keep the shelter open overnight has dried up, leaving many to wonder what will happen to those without a place to go at night. **LIAM RICHARDS**

DYING OUTSIDE

In La Ronge, being homeless can kill you, writes Andrea Hill. **Weekend D1**

SPORTS



RUSH

Pressure on to nab first place overall **B1**

NBA

Can the Raptors pull out a Game 7 victory? **B5**

Deceased superstar Prince passed on Saskatoon

LES MACPHERSON



As the mourning continues for the pop music icon, fans in the Bridge City may recall that three times the purple one cancelled shows. Prince never did play in Saskatoon and those willing to buy tickets to his shows would have found his explanations less than satisfactory. Prince's dalliance with the city's fans is not the only such example of performers abandoning the first rule of show business: That the show must go on. **A3**

WEEKEND

WELLNESS

Feel better by cleansing your mind **D9**



TRAVEL

Remember your manners on vacation **D10**

WEEKEND

MIND YOUR MANNERS

Tips for being a good tourist **D10**



CLEANSE YOUR MIND

Try decluttering mental space **D9**

SASKATOON STARPHOENIX SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 2016

SECTION D



Regan McKenzie, a regular at Scattered Site, sleeps in the bush when the centre isn't open during spring and summer. He is among 90 people who have spent at least one night in the homeless shelter over the past six months. He's hopeful the centre reopens next fall when temperatures dip but funding for the overnight program has dried up. PHOTOS: LIAM RICHARDS

'HOW MANY PEOPLE DO WE HAVE TO LOSE?'

Northern Saskatchewan's largest community seeks funding for emergency shelter as homelessness 'crisis' worsens every year, **Andrea Hill** writes.



John James McKenzie, left, and Gilbert Bird, clients of the Scattered Site Outreach Program, watch a movie before they go to sleep on loungers on the night on April 21. Fire regulations prohibit beds from being used.

LA RONGE Devin Bernatchez will never forget the last time he saw his cousin.

It was a chilly afternoon in late December 2014. Bernatchez, then 34, was driving down the streets of downtown La Ronge.

Kevin Richie — who'd lost his job and battle with addictions less than five years earlier — was making the same journey by foot with a group of other homeless men.

Richie, also 34 at the time, was easy to pick out of a crowd; he had a distinctive gait because his toes had been amputated in his late 20s after he'd trekked barefoot through the snow.

Bernatchez pulled over and offered Richie a ride to the Scattered Site Outreach Program. The organization was hosting a Christmas meal for the town's most vulnerable, and Richie wanted to be part of it.

"I'll always remember the conversation I had with him is that he wanted to get a job, he wanted to do good things," Bernatchez says. "I could see the determination that he wanted to do better."

Richie never got the chance.

By all accounts, the former lumberyard worker from Lac La Ronge Indian Band had a jovial evening at the Scattered Site Christmas dinner. Workers there cajoled him into sitting on Santa's knee for a picture, despite his protestations that he didn't want to sit on a man's lap.

Then evening came, and Scattered Site closed for the night.

The next time Richie was seen he was dead, frozen in a shack on the side of the highway. Bernatchez was told alcohol poisoning took his life before the cold did.

Richie was not the first homeless person in La Ronge to die that way. Workers at Scattered Site say that, on average, three of their clients die outside at night each year — some from exposure, some from drug overdoses, alcohol poisoning or untreated illnesses.

"That's a lot of people to lose in your community," says Jackie Ballantyne, a community outreach worker with Scattered Site. "If this was, say, a small community down south, if you'd lost that many people, you'd think what the hell's going on? Why does this continue?" Bernatchez knows Richie's ad-

ditions led to his death, but he can't help wondering if his cousin's fate would have been different if Scattered Site — or any place in the town of roughly 3,000 people — had provided overnight shelter for the homeless at the time.

Bernatchez wasn't the only one with those thoughts. Less than a month after Richie's death, Scattered Site started a temporary overnight program.

"We got very disturbed at losing people each winter," says Rob MacKenzie, former chair of the North Sask Special Needs group that oversees Scattered Site. "One person freezing to death is one person far, far too many and we recognized that problem and felt that it was absolutely essential that we try to do something about it."

Scattered Site launched a community fundraiser and collected \$13,000, which allowed it to hire staff to open five nights a week from mid-January until the end of March 2015.

The aging Scattered Site building did not meet building code requirements for beds to be set up, nor could the centre have afforded them if they were allowed. Men and women curled up on couches or sat in metal chairs, heads resting on plastic tables.

When money for the overnight operation ran out, Scattered Site returned to its normal daytime-only hours. Because of the high number of people who relied on the extended service — more than 20 — Scattered Site was able to write a compelling grant application for federal money. In November, Ottawa awarded \$80,000 so the shelter could be staffed seven nights a week over the winter.

MacKenzie was "ecstatic." "It would have been really tough to go into November and say 'Well, the lake's freezing and so are people and we can't provide anything,'" he says.

Scattered Site re-launched its extended hours program in mid-November and purchased 10 loungers for clients to sleep in at night — they're cheaper than beds and technically allowed.

SEE CRISIS ON **D2**

'We need something, a better shelter,



Devin Bernatchez's cousin Kevin Richie was found frozen in a shack outside La Ronge in December 2014 after enjoying a Christmas meal at Scattered Site. "He wanted to get a job, he wanted to do good things," says Bernatchez, above. "I could see the determination that he wanted to do better." *LIAM RICHARDS*

CRISIS FROM **DI**

Ninety people have spent at least one night in those loungers in the last six months. The shelter has capacity for 10, but will house more on the coldest nights. Most who seek shelter are men, and only one identified as non-aboriginal. Many are from the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, but others hail from Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, Montreal Lake Cree Nation, Hatchet Lake Denesuline Nation and other northern communities. The clients range in age from 19 to 62.

All could be looking for other sleeping arrangements soon. Money for the extended hours program has dried up again. It runs for the last time tonight.

Spring has arrived in La Ronge, but people continue to seek overnight shelter at Scattered Site.

Temperatures still dip below zero when the sun sets, and the lake remains covered in ice.

On one of the last nights the centre is open, two men arrived before the doors opened at 10 p.m. There was never enough money for Scattered Site to run 24 hours a day, so clients have to find other ways to stay warm during evenings and on weekends when there's no daytime program.

One man in a tattered, oversized

coat rubbed his shaking hands together to warm them. Another rocked back and forth on a pair of crutches, his large rubber boots scuffing the ground. As they fidgeted, the motion-sensor light above the shelter flickered on and off, occasionally illuminating the unassuming Scattered Site entrance, which is accessed from an alley off the town's main downtown road.

When outreach worker Jackie Ballantyne arrived and pushed her key into the lock, they rushed into the warmth.

"You guys need to use extra blankets tonight because our fuel has all run out," she told them as she bustled to the kitchen to make dinner.

It was the latest hiccup in a rough week; days earlier, the building shifted so much that the door jammed shut. Staff had to pry it open with a crowbar to let people in.

As Ballantyne buttered bread for sandwiches, Scattered Site filled up. A half-dozen men milled around the main room, watching TV and talking as a staff member deftly moved tables to the side and turned loungers into structures resembling beds.

Regan McKenzie, a regular at Scattered Site, said he'd sleep in the bush when Scattered Site was no longer open at night.

Surviving in spring is manageable, but McKenzie said he hopes the centre reopens next fall.

"Winter is different," he mumbled. "People pass on."

McKenzie spoke from experience. Last winter, before Scattered Site offered extended hours, one of his friends, whom he declined to name, had too much to drink and tried to get into the centre at night. The doors were locked. The man passed out and froze to death.

"It's hard to talk about," McKenzie said. "He's there now."

He inclined his head upward and it was unclear whether he was referring to heaven or a collection of paper feathers on the wall above him. Each feather bears the name of a Scattered Site client who died since the organization opened in 2007. Twenty-seven feathers adorn the wall, including one with Richie's name and two that were added this winter.

Ballantyne said there have been more losses than feathers.

Homelessness in La Ronge has been a problem for as long as most people can remember, and it appears to be increasing, say politicians and those who work with the town's most vulnerable people.

"We live in a community with some social issues, and some of what's refreshing about it is they're not under the carpet, they're right out there, and so it's no secret that we have a population that experi-

ences various forms of homelessness," says Carla Frohaug, chair of North Sask Special Needs.

Northern residents agree homelessness there is different than in the south. There's more poverty, higher unemployment, less access to mental health and addictions services and less affordable housing. A significant number of people relying on Scattered Site services are part of a transient homeless population — they may be couch surfing, with roofs over their heads one night, but not the next.

A lack of affordable housing means many people are often crammed into a single home. NDP MLA Doyle Vermette, who represents the northern riding of Cumberland, says he's heard of houses with so many people that they sleep in shifts so that beds, couches and patches of floor can be shared.

"It's getting worse, not better," he says.

While the homelessness "crisis" is present across northern Saskatchewan, Vermette says it's felt most acutely in La Ronge because the town — the largest in northern Saskatchewan — is a gathering place for vulnerable people across the north.

A year ago, Vermette presented a petition to the legislature asking for funding to build a permanent 24-hour homeless shelter in La

Ronge. No action was ever taken.

"How many people do we have to lose before governments and people respond?" Vermette asks. "We need something, a better shelter, a place where they can have a bed."

Frohaug says a big part of the problem is jurisdictional: La Ronge bumps up against Lac La Ronge Indian Band reserve land, which can complicate things when looking for money.

"On-reserve and federal funds and off-reserve provincial support are right across the street from each other," she says. "Those are significant barriers to serving the population that we're trying to serve here."

There's agreement among those working with the town's vulnerable people that all levels of government need to pitch in if La Ronge is ever to build a permanent 24-hour emergency shelter that would have luxuries — like beds and a sprinkler system — not present at Scattered Site.

"It's very important, very needed for the community," says La Ronge Mayor Thomas Sierzycki.

"The municipality will do everything in our power, whether it's tax levies, making sure that we can supply land if there is a shelter that we will be built ... But, as a municipality, we're very limited in what financial ability we do have, and (in) a community of our size, SEE CRISIS ON **D3**

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THE DIVERGENT SERIES ALLEGIANT FRI - WED 12:50 3:30 6:55 9:35 NEW ARRIVAL! THU 3:30 6:55 9:35	Violence, Coarse Language PG	10 CLOVERFIELD LANE FRI 1:15 3:45 6:45 SAT 1:15 3:45 SUN 1:15 3:45 9:40 MON - THU 1:15 3:45 7:15 9:40	Violence, Frightening Scenes 14
MOVIES FOR MOMMIES A Special Presentation of <i>ALLEGIANT</i> will screen in a baby friendly environment on Thursday, May 5th at 1:00 p.m.		KUNG FU PANDA 3 FRI - THU 1:05 3:20 7:10	No Advisory G
MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING 2 FRI - THU 1:10 3:25 7:05 9:15 NEW ARRIVAL!	Sexual Language PG	THE REVENANT FRI - THU 12:45 4:05 7:45	Violence, Scene Of Sexual Violence 14
BAAGHI FRI 19:10 FRIDAY TO SUNDAY ONLY! SAT 6:10 9:10 SUN 6:10	HINDI w/ Eng. Subtitles	GODS NOT DEAD 2 FRI - THU 1:00 3:40 6:50 9:30	Violence G
LONDON HAS FALLEN FRI - THU 1:20 3:35 7:00 9:25	Frequent Violence 14	HOW TO BE SINGLE FRI - THU 9:20	Coarse Language, Sexual Content 14

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NEW ARRIVAL!
FRI 7:15
SAT - SUN 2:45 7:15
MON - THU 7:15

KNIGHT OF CUPS
NEW ARRIVAL!
FRI 7:00
SAT - SUN 4:00 7:00
MON - WED 7:00
THU 9:30

EVERYBODY WANTS SOME
FRI 9:30
SAT - SUN 4:45 9:30
MON - WED 9:30

I SAW THE LIGHT
FRI 9:25
SAT - SUN 12:30 9:25
MON - WED 9:25

SPECIAL EVENT
TUNNEL OF HOPE
 Presented by Congregation Shir Chadash as part of the congregation's annual Holocaust memorial program.
 Admission: by donation.
 SUN 1:30

FESTIVAL CINERGIE SASKATOON - MAY 3 TO 7

LES BOYS DU BALLET
 French with English subtitles
 Screening followed by Q&A / discussion with filmmakers *Janelle Wookey & Jérémie Wookey*
 THU 7:00

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ZOOTOPIA (G) CC SAT 11:40, 2:20, 4:55, 7:35, 10:15; SUN 2:20, 4:55, 7:35, 10:15	THE JUNGLE BOOK (PG) (MAY FRIGHTEN YOUNG CHILDREN) CC SAT 11:30, 2:10, 4:50, 7:25, 10:10; SUN 2:10, 4:50, 7:25, 10:10	THE BOSS (14A) (COARSE AND SEXUAL LANGUAGE) VIP 19+ SAT-SUN 4:50, 7:45, 10:40
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE (PG) (COARSE LANGUAGE, VIOLENCE, MAY FRIGHTEN YOUNG CHILDREN) CC SAT-SUN 3:30	THE JUNGLE BOOK 3D (PG) (MAY FRIGHTEN YOUNG CHILDREN) VIP 19+ SAT-SUN 3:35, 6:30, 9:25	KEANU (14A) (FREQUENT COARSE LANGUAGE, VIOLENCE, NUDITY) CC NO PASSES SAT 11:00, 11:55, 2:25, 7:20; SUN 11:55, 2:25, 7:20
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 3D (PG) (VIOLENCE, COARSE LANGUAGE, MAY FRIGHTEN YOUNG CHILDREN) CC SAT-SUN 12:10, 6:50, 10:15	THE JUNGLE BOOK 3D (PG) (MAY FRIGHTEN YOUNG CHILDREN) ULTRA VX SAT-SUN 12:00, 2:40, 5:20, 8:00, 10:40	MOTHER'S DAY (PG) (COARSE LANGUAGE) SAT-SUN 1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00
THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR (PG) (FRIGHTENING SCENES, VIOLENCE) CC SAT 11:30, 1:30, 2:15, 4:15, 5:00, 7:00, 7:40, 9:45, 10:30; SUN 1:30, 2:15, 4:15, 5:00, 7:00, 7:40, 9:45, 10:30	DEADPOOL (14A) (NUDITY, SEXUALLY SUGGESTIVE SCENES, VIOLENCE, COARSE LANGUAGE) CC SAT 12:05, 2:55, 5:30, 8:10, 10:45; SUN 7:50, 10:30	RATCHET & CLANK (PG) (VIOLENCE) CC NO PASSES SAT-SUN 4:45, 9:50
THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR (PG) (FRIGHTENING SCENES, VIOLENCE) VIP 19+ SAT-SUN 4:05, 7:10, 10:10	THE BOSS (14A) (COARSE AND SEXUAL LANGUAGE) CC SAT 2:50, 5:15, 7:50, 10:20; SUN 12:20, 2:50, 5:15, 7:50, 10:20	HELLO, MY NAME IS DORIS (PG) (COARSE AND SEXUAL LANGUAGE) SAT 11:10, 1:25, 4:00, 6:45, 9:40; SUN 1:25, 4:00, 6:45, 9:40
		PAN (PG) (VIOLENCE) CC SAT 11:00
		WORLDGAMING STREET FIGHTER V REGIONAL FINALS LIVE (I) SUN 2:00

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ZOOTOPIA (G) CC SAT 4:40; SUN 4:25	THE JUNGLE BOOK 3D (PG) (MAY FRIGHTEN YOUNG CHILDREN) CC SAT 11:05, 1:40, 7:00, 9:45; SUN 1:30, 7:00, 9:45
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE (PG) (COARSE LANGUAGE, VIOLENCE, MAY FRIGHTEN YOUNG CHILDREN) CC SAT 1:45; SUN 1:40	THE BOSS (14A) (COARSE AND SEXUAL LANGUAGE) (PG) (NUDITY, COARSE LANGUAGE, DRUG USE, SEXUALLY SUGGESTIVE SCENE) CC SAT 11:10, 11:55, 4:35, 7:35, 10:20; SUN 1:55, 4:35, 7:35, 10:20
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 3D (PG) (VIOLENCE, COARSE LANGUAGE, MAY FRIGHTEN YOUNG CHILDREN) CC SAT 3:40, 6:50, 10:00; SUN 3:35, 6:45, 9:55	MIRACLES FROM HEAVEN (G) CC SAT-SUN 4:50, 10:05
THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR (PG) (FRIGHTENING SCENES, VIOLENCE) CC SAT 11:10, 11:55, 4:35, 7:35, 10:20; SUN 1:55, 4:35, 7:35, 10:20	A HOLOGRAM FOR THE KING (PG) (NUDITY, COARSE LANGUAGE, DRUG USE, SEXUALLY SUGGESTIVE SCENE) CC SAT 11:15, 1:25, 4:55, 7:10, 9:35; SUN 1:20, 4:55, 7:20, 9:35
THE JUNGLE BOOK (PG) (MAY FRIGHTEN YOUNG CHILDREN) CC SAT 4:20; SUN 4:10	

IT'S ON AT THE BROADWAY

SATURDAY
SJO PRESENTS:
TOMMY BANKS AND FRIENDS
7:30PM

SUNDAY
C3 CHURCH 10:00AM
FRANCOFONIA 7:00PM
VIVA 9:00PM

a place where they can have a bed'

CRISIS FROM D2

and (in) a community of our size, budgets are very tight."

In an emailed statement, Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services spokesperson Leya Moore said the government is in touch with leadership at Scattered Site and is aware that "a significant majority of the individuals they provide services to fall under federal government responsibility."

She said the provincial government can play a role by connecting individuals to other human service providers, including the federal government, and that anyone in La Ronge can go to a provincial income assistance office to request emergency accommodation, which could consist of a night in a local hotel. The province's practice is to provide emergency accommodation for one night, even for people who would typically be federally funded.

Georgina Jolibois, NDP MP for northern Saskatchewan, says groups in La Ronge may have more luck seeking federal funds for a 24-hour shelter and that opportunities are greater now than they were under the Conservative government. The Liberal government's budget, released last month, pledged \$57.9 million to tackle homelessness this fiscal year.

Jolibois said she hopes her constituents in La Ronge — where the need is among the greatest in the country — get some of that.

The cost to build a 24-hour emergency shelter would likely be in the ballpark of \$1 million, says Ron Woytowich, executive director of La Ronge's Kikinahk Friendship Centre. He's in the process of find-



Jackie Ballantyne is a community outreach worker at the Scattered Site Outreach Program. PHOTOS: LIAM RICHARDS

ing funds to make it happen.

The shelter would benefit the whole community, he says. Businesses wouldn't have to worry about homeless people seeking refuge in their entranceways, and fewer homeless people would end up in jail cells and hospital emergency rooms, ultimately saving governments money.

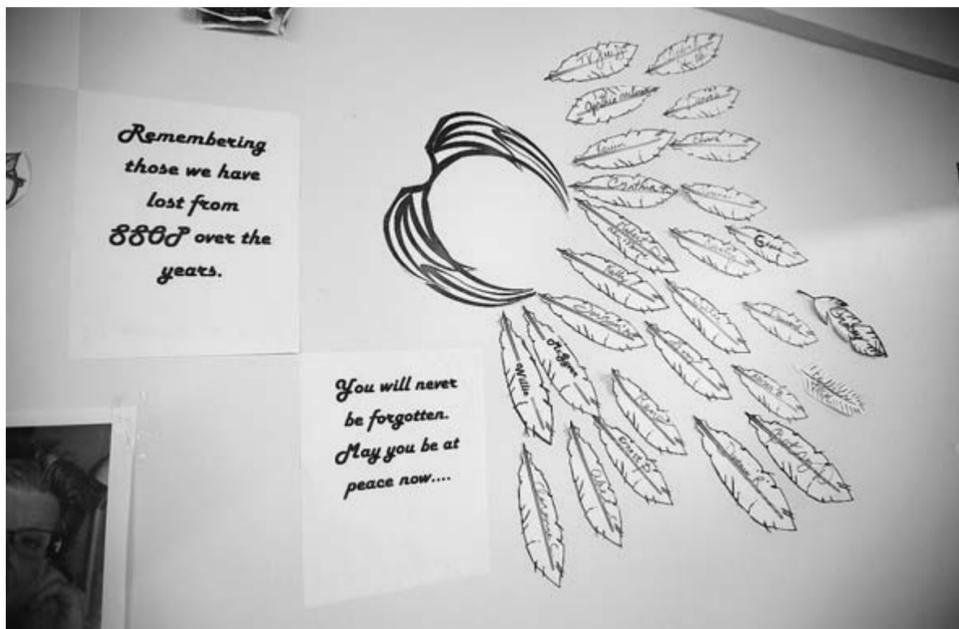
Plus, the benefit for vulnerable

people would be significant. Woytowich, like other leaders in the community, is adamant the need for shelter continues even after winter ends.

"Everybody thinks, 'Oh, it's not so bad because it's summer,' but it rains big time here and everything else, and we have bears in town," he says.



Curtis Badger, an outreach worker for Scattered Site Outreach Program, goes over some paperwork as clients sleep on loungers for the night.



The memorial wall at the Scattered Site Outreach Program, has 27 feather cutouts bearing the names of clients who have died since the organization opened in 2007.

A 24-hour emergency shelter won't eradicate homelessness in La Ronge, but Lac La Ronge Indian Band Chief Tammy Cook-Searson says it would go a long way to help people who want to turn their lives around and become contributing members of society.

"If you don't feel safe, if you don't have a good night's rest, if you don't have a good meal, then you're not able to deal with the inner issues that you need to deal with and are causing the addictions in your life," she notes.

Bernatchez wishes his cousin had that opportunity.

After Richie's death, Bernatchez went to the shack where his cousin died and collected his belongings. Among his clothes and

some sleeping things, he found scribbled notes outlining Richie's goals. The "proud man" had wanted to get sober and become a carpenter.

"Homelessness took that away from him," Bernatchez says sadly. "He succumbed at an early age and probably shouldn't have been a homeless person. He probably should have been doing something really good with his life right now."

With the future of a 24-hour shelter in La Ronge uncertain, leaders there are hoping to at least find money to reopen Scattered Site overnight next winter.

"It's a bit of a Band-Aid, but it's what we can do right now," Frohauag says.

ahill@postmedia.com

ANNIE'S MAILBOX

Hygiene issues put off friend

KATHY MITCHELL
AND MARCY SUGAR

Dear Annie: Why do old men (over 60) don't or won't shower or wear clean clothes?

I have several older male friends who smell so bad that we don't want to be any closer than 12 feet. And they wear the same clothes for weeks until the clothes almost fall off their bodies. When they come to visit, the furniture where they sit smells for a couple of days, and the same thing happens when they ride in my car. And going into a store with them is embarrassing.

These men are not stupid. They are educated, intelligent and had good jobs with good paycheques. With the warm weather coming, I know it's going to be really bad. They have families and other friends, but these people either have no problem with the smell or don't see the men often enough to be aware of how bad it is.

These men all live alone and their homes are filthy. They aren't under a doctor's care or living in a nursing home, so they don't have medical problems that make them smell like this.

Wondering
Dear Wondering: We appreciate that you are friends with these

men, but your letter is so filled with insulting generalizations that we hardly know where to begin. First, 60 is not "old." You'll be there sooner than you think. Second, most men that age shower regularly and smell perfectly fine. So it seems your particular problem is about specific men who happen to live alone. We assume these men used to live with someone who did their housekeeping and laundry, and reminded them about hygiene.

If you know the family members, you should ask one of them to talk to their relative about this. Perhaps they (or you) would be willing to go to their homes and toss in a load of laundry, vacuum or wash some dishes. Or give them the name and phone number of a cleaning service and suggest they set up a regular schedule. We assure you, these men have no idea that they have an unpleasant odour and would be mortified to realize that others notice. Please be kind enough to intervene.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, long-time editors of the Ann Landers column. Questions to: anniesmailbox@creators.com; Facebook.com/AskAnnie; or Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 737 3rd Street, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

Alkaline diet ended woman's back pain

MIA STAINSBY

Julie Cove was a mess. An interior designer with a home furnishings store and three children, she suffered agonizing back pain.

She tried massage, chiropractic, laser light therapy, physiotherapy, osteopathy, Chinese medicine, cortisone shots, prescription drugs and finally, surgery, which helped, until it didn't. That was 10 years ago.

"I was so out of commission I couldn't be a mom. I could only stand up three to five minutes at the most," said Cove, 52, who lives on Vancouver Island.

She liked what she read about balancing the body's acid/alkaline pH to recover health. The idea is that our modern culture tends to make us overly acidic.

While the body maintains the ideal 7.365 pH in our blood, poor diets, stress, lack of exercise and toxins can assault us like acid rain.

"Our body's blood pH will appear normal, but behind the scenes it is working overtime to maintain it, especially if your body is overly acidic," says Cove.

When alkaline minerals are constantly "overdrawn from our body's bank" to buffer acids and maintain the delicate alkaline pH of blood and tissues, it borrows from organs and tissues, Cove says.

Most vegetables are alkaline. Some fruits are alkaline, but says Cove, most are moderately acidic,



Julie Cove

as are many dairy products and meat. Alcohol, coffee, fruit juices, cocoa, eggs, and deep-fried foods are highly acidic.

Google brings up dozens and dozens of such lists online.

On the first three days of her alkalinity diet, Cove only drank nutritive alkaline juices and took alkaline supplements (calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium). She progressed to solid food, eating 75 per cent alkaline and 25 per cent acidic foods.

"I started in late September and by Christmas, I was completely out of pain and off anti-inflammatory medication. The doctors were pretty amazed and I didn't need a second surgery," she says.

Cove closed her business and became a certified holistic nutritionist. Now she's written *Eat Better Live Better, Feel Better* (Appetite by Random House) with 150 highly alkaline recipes.

"Modern life takes away from

the body's ability to maintain a balance," she says. "We're subject to (acidifying) toxins all around us like off-gassing rugs, car fumes, pesticides and other chemicals."

Over time, Cove says, the body can't neutralize acids and that can cause inflammation, fatigue, irritability, bloat, plaque buildup, indigestion, or chronic disease.

She recommends eating 75 per cent alkaline food and 25 per cent acidic foods such as whole grains, nuts, legumes, low sugar fruits, plant protein and some fish.

As well, Cove recommends drinking three to four quarts of alkaline or filtered water daily, exercising daily (not over-exercising and creating lactic acid), dealing with stress and finding joy.

Two nutritionists agree that alkaline foods are healthy but wonder if it isn't just the fact that they are healthy, period.

"I recommend similar foods — eating more whole plant-based foods, adding lemon, drinking more water, reducing coffee, alcohol, red meat — all considered acidic — but I talk of it in a more general way," says Vancouver nutrition consultant and chef Mikaela Reuben.

Leslie Beck, registered dietitian and author of 12 books on nutrition, wants more science and clinical trials before saying that eating alkaline foods changes the body's alkalinity.