

Antenna has now been raised for Channel 26

By **BARB RAYNER**
barbrayn@nbnet.nb.ca

ST. ANDREWS - The transmitter for Channel 26 (St. Andrews Community Channel) has been raised and Councillor David Welch said at last Monday night's town council meeting that he thought St. Andrews should be extremely proud of this.

It means that broadcasts from the St. Andrews Community Channel, CHCT, can now be watched by those with both satellite and cable within the town as well as nearby surrounding areas.

President of the community channel Chris Flemming told town council that the work on the transmitter was done with a lot of help from people both within and outside the community. He said they had three people who were regularly coming from Fredericton to help them to do this.

He said the transmitter was raised the Friday before last which was a big job and they proved it was done correctly when it survived the strong winds the following night.

Now, said Flemming, the transmitter has to go through the testing phase so only the bulletin board is being shown right now to ensure they are not impinging on anyone else's broadcast sector.

The testing phase should last about two weeks, he said, then they should be given permission to run all their regular programming over that transmitter.

Flemming said Brian Dickson, one of the volunteers with the community channel, has checked the signal around town where it is good but they are not getting such a good signal outside the town which may mean the tower is not high enough. He said a flyer will be going out shortly to let people know they are available on channel 26.

"We are very excited about this and we are looking forward to doing great things."

Councillor Welch pointed out that those who are not on cable but have satellite will need to use a bowtie antenna and Flemming said those who are technically challenged by this can contact the community channel at 529-2601. Information on how to attach the antenna is also available on their website at www.CHCT.ca

The bowtie antenna should be attached to the antenna feed on the back of the television and then you flip a switch to go over to the antenna. Those further afield may be able to receive the channel with a UHF antenna.

Councillor Mary Myers said it was marvellous the expertise that is available in St. Andrews and the fact that people are willing to share this.

Councillor Welch said the community channel would like to see more people stepping up to the plate to volunteer and suggestions for different types of shows which could be offered.

The St. Andrews Community Channel has been providing residents with coverage of local events for the past 13 years - and the new transmitter means they can expand that coverage to include areas outside the town boundaries as well as to those with a satellite dish.

In order to do this they applied to the CRTC and Industry Canada for a low power television broadcast licence and their application was approved Nov 23 last year. Now they are able to broadcast off air on UHF 26.

Cable subscribers will continue to receive the community channel on channel 10 but this will enable those who don't have cable to pick up the local programming as well plus it will send their signal in the vicinity of 12 kms outside of town so people in Bayside, some of Chamcook and possibly Bocabec will be able to tune in as well.

UHF 26 has been assigned to them by Industry Canada as a safe frequency so they won't interfere with anyone else.

The idea of forming a community channel was put forward in 1993 by former RCMP corporal Rinnie Plomp who had previously helped to establish channels in Minto and Grand Manan. The St. Andrews Community Channel was launched with start-up funding and equipment from Fundy Cable.

Their first broadcast was March 13, 1993 and by Dec. 7 of that year, the community channel was registered as a non-profit corporation. The first organization meeting of St Andrews Community Channel Inc was held Feb. 15, 1994 with board members, members of the company and the general public in attendance. The board has met on a

monthly basis ever since.

The community channel have their studios in the arena so they can broadcast live from most locations in the building particularly the hockey rink. The booth they use at centre ice was the result of local groups chipping in. They operate digitally so can broadcast directly to air without the use of tape.

CHCT TV is an independent, low power television broadcast station which will be offering local programming. Over the years the St. Andrews Community Channel has provided the town with a variety of television programming including discussion panels, variety shows, concerts, cooking and gardening shows, holiday festivities, special events, interviews, church services, town council meetings, arena events, the aquaculture fair and public meetings.

In order to provide this wide range of programming, volunteers offer their time and talent in planning, setting up and shooting local events as well as carpentry work, set building, painting, hauling equipment and driving.

Their work has not gone unnoticed and in 1994/95 they received a certificate of appreciation from the Governor General for their contribution to the "Canada Remembers" program. In 1995 they received a Fundy Cable award for community programming and in 1997 they received a recognition award for their contribution to the Fundy Annual Report.

On New Brunswick Day 1998 the province presented them with a merit award for local community television service and in 1999/2000 they received a War Amps recognition award. In 2004 they were awarded the Robert Thompson Memorial Award in recognition of dedicated service to youth activities in St. Andrews in 2003/4 by the St. Andrews Minor Hockey Association.

Over the years the board has been successful in raising operating funds from individuals, local organizations, the town of St. Andrews and various granting agencies.

They have also received support from local businesses and service clubs in the form of donated materials and supplies and, on occasion, have raised funds through contract work for various organizations.