

STRATFORD **TIMES**

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Respectful workplace policy remains in place, but will be reviewed

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The City of Stratford's respectful workplace policy will be reviewed, but it will not be suspended – despite one councillor's push to do so.

Coun. Cody Sebben put forward a motion at the council meeting on July 22 to suspend policy number H.1.36, the respectful workplace policy, and to direct staff to provide options for a future review.

Sebben made that motion after three Stratford residents were suspended from city-owned property over alleged infractions to the respectful workplace policy during a February council meeting.

For three-months Barb Shaughnessy, Mike Sullivan, and Ken Wood were not allowed in council chambers and had to communicate with city staff through the city's solicitor. After Shaughnessy and Sullivan challenged the banning through David Donnelly of Donnelly Law, public discourse circulated around if such an action from the city was justified, with representatives from the city often saying it was an "operational" matter and an investigation found the three of them had acted against the policy.

That suspension was lifted on July 2.

Ultimately, councillors largely found that the policy was integral to the work the city does, with some, like Coun. Larry McCabe, acknowledging that it had recently gone "awry."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

SCOOPS UP

Ruth and Richard Kneider of Simple Dreams Ministries serve up ice cream for Stratford General Hospital staff on July 19. The Kneiders said that this was just one way they could give back to people that have helped not just them, but the whole community.

Simple Dreams scoops up ice cream for Stratford General Hospital Staff

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

With a forecasted high of 23 degrees Celsius, July 19 was a warm day for some cool ice cream for Stratford General Hospital staff.

Simple Dreams Ministries, a local organization that has hosted a number of events for the community over the years, parked its Big Scoop ice-cream trailer in the hospital's parking lot and served up free ice cream for staff that day.

Richard Kneider, who runs Simple Dreams with his wife,

Ruth Kneider, explained that after being in Stratford General Hospital numerous times over the years, he once took a tub of ice cream for the nurses and the staff that helped him. Speaking with physician Dr. Shanil Narayan, the idea of expansion came to mind.

"The thought had come to mind some time ago that it would be exciting if we could provide that for the entire staff at the hospital," he said.

"We just really appreciate the service we have access to," Ruth Kneider added. "This is a way for us to give back."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



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Respectful workplace policy remains in place, but will be reviewed

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Only Sebben and Coun. Geza Wordofa voted to suspend it, although council voted unanimously to have staff prepare a review of the policy.

In defence of the policy, Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach said that it is bigger than this one instance.

"We have almost 600 employees in the City of Stratford and we need this respectful workplace policy to protect all of our employees," Burbach pointed out. "We have multiple properties with multiple people doing all kinds of jobs ... All over Canada, all over the world, we've seen in the past several years sort of a degradation of respect. And I think what this policy does is encourage people back towards just general respect to each other. And I've said this many times, I don't think that this respectful workplace policy is hard to follow."

Sebben, when he first put forward the

motion, said that he has heard concerns from many people about the policy's implementation and, counter to what Burbach and some other councillors had said, were worried about following the policy.

"I've also heard from people who have received notices, letters based on comments made at meetings," Sebben said. "Others still have told me they're hesitant to seek help or concern of receiving a notice. In my opinion, this policy has created an atmosphere where people are becoming increasingly discouraged from engaging with council."

Coun. Lesley Biehn asked Dave Bush, director of human resources, if he felt that a review of the policy was warranted. Bush answered succinctly.

"Yeah, I believe the time is now," he said.

Numerous delegations at the most recent council meeting and past meetings brought up the case of Bracken v. Town of Fort Erie, a case the Ontario Court of



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Coun. Cody Sebben put forward a motion at the council meeting on July 22 to suspend policy number H.1.36, the respectful workplace policy, and to direct staff to provide options for a future review. The policy was not suspended but council unanimously voted to conduct a review.

Appeal reviewed. The court found that the town was not justified in issuing a trespass notice to an intimidating citizen, since said citizen was never threatening or violent.

Coun. Mark Hunter said that using this case as an example of why Stratford's policy is erroneous is misinterpreting that case. The reason why the court was in favour of Bracken was because he was neither a worker nor were his actions in the workplace, Hunter said.

He further stated that staff members are required to attend council meetings as a condition of employment, making the Stratford council chambers a workplace. Per provincial legislation, the city needs to protect its staff – from both violence and harassment – and cannot override that legislation.

"I'm confused a little bit by some of the flak around this," Hunter exasperated. "I don't know why it's so challenging to have to be respectful of people."

Coun. Taylor Briscoe also said that in Bracken v. The Town of Fort Erie the court further enumerates ways that charter rights and a workplace safety policy may be balanced, including providing contact through a city solicitor, through email, or sending a delegate to council on their behalf – opportunities all of the affected individuals in Stratford were afforded through this policy.

"We do actually heed the court's warning of how to balance that right with the balance of our workplace policies," Briscoe said. She later stated that "a consequence for behaviour is not the same as somehow overwriting a charter right."

Before council deliberated on the motion, many Stratford citizens delegated on the matter, including Wood, Robert Roth, Jane Marie Mitchell, David Yates, Tim Forester, Shaughnessy, and Jason Davis. In addition, Sullivan and Joan Bidell provided written correspondence.

All of the delegates supported Sebben's motion in full, to varying degrees.

Wood, one of the recently suspended citizens, spoke at the meeting. He acknowledged that he used "intemperate language," for which he offered to apologize, but that words alone are not violence.

Roth, a retired journalist and the spokesperson of Save Our Speech Stratford, came to council chambers wearing a Royal Canadian Regiment uniform, saying that when he first donned the uniform he made a pledge to defend the country and the values for which it stands – and that he felt compelled to wear it that evening.

He said the policy does not belong in the chamber.

"People are legally entitled, despite what was said earlier, to use tough, unflattering and even hostile language to criticize politicians," Roth said. "That may not be pleasant, or even preferable, but it is the law. Policies are for employees, not members of the general public."

Jason Davis, who disclosed that he suffers from PTSD after a violent altercation many years ago, shared that he knows firsthand how important it is for staff to feel safe at their work. Once, a customer threatened him at his job and his employer did nothing to stop it. He ended up leaving that position.

Davis also said that there needs to be checks and balances between the feelings of staff and actions on behalf of the city and that the same protections to ensure staff don't feel intimidated need to also be afforded to citizens.

"It's important to have protections there so that we can keep staff and we can make sure everyone goes home feeling safe and welcomed and able to have open ideas," Davis said. "But it's also important that the citizens that come to speak in this room be able to have those same feelings and not feel intimidated or not feel fear that something they do even subconsciously can be turned around and sent by a letter or an email within the hour they finished speaking."

Simple Dreams scoops up ice cream for Stratford General Hospital Staff

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Mark Gibson, corporate lead of volunteer services and student engagement at the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA), further explained that the organization partnered with The Big Scoop to make this day happen and get staff to take a break and enjoy some ice cream and sunshine.

Gibson pointed out that ice cream was also being served to staff of the other HPHA sites that same day: St. Marys Memorial Hospital, Clinton Public Hospital and Seaforth Community Hospital.

Perth-Wellington MP John Nater was there at Stratford general to help the Kneiders scoop. As he said, he's had some experience in the past when he's helped out before.

"Richard has taught me a couple of times," Nater laughed. "There's a real

technique to it. I have not mastered it."

Richard Kneider disagreed with the local MP, adding Nater is good at serving pizza, something that will come in handy in the next few weeks when Simple Dreams hosts its annual Pizza and Pool Party.

"Believe it or not, this will be about the 14th or 15th year that we've been having it," Richard Kneider said. "We partner with the city – and we're very, very thankful for that – and with Domino's Pizza and we just have a free pizza pool party."

This year, the party takes place on Aug. 5, the civic holiday, and runs from 2:30-4 p.m. at the Stratford Lions Pool.

Families can come down and enjoy a free swim and some pizza, Richard Kneider said. Ruth Kneider added that all they need to bring is their towels and their swimsuits.

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Wanted Wednesday program yields results for Stratford police

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The Stratford Police Service is thanking the community after the service's Wanted Wednesday social-media-outreach program recently resulted in the arrests of four people with outstanding warrants.

According to police, the program was developed to obtain assistance from community members in the location of high-risk people wanted on outstanding arrest warrants by the Stratford Police Service. The goal of the program is to improve the safety and wellbeing for victims of crime, as well as the community in general, by expediting the location and arrest of people with outstanding warrants.

"We did it pre-COVID and we took it from a couple other services that were doing it and seemed to have a bit of success with it," said Stratford police Insp. Mark Taylor. "We kind of took it on ourselves and then COVID hit and we kind of got away from it because nobody was supposed to be out and about anyway, so it was getting more difficult. ... Now, since COVID has kind of lifted and everything is getting back to normal, we decided to take it back on again and ran it for three weeks and have been successful three weeks in a row."

Thanks to the response from the community, all four Wanted Wednesday posts have resulted in arrests.

The first Wanted Wednesday press release was posted on social media and sent to local media on June 12. This release highlighted Joshua McCann, who had outstanding warrants for criminal harassment, break and enter, mischief under \$5,000, trespass by night and breach of probation. McCann was located and arrested on July 5 at a residence in Stratford.

The second Wanted Wednesday subject, Barry Prouse, was posted to social media and a release was issued to local media on June 19. Prouse had an outstanding warrant for possession of stolen property, fail to comply and breach of probation. Prouse was located and arrested at a residence in Stratford on July 6.

The third subject, John Flood, was posted to social media and a release was issued to media on June 26. Flood was wanted

for a domestic-violence-related breach of probation. Flood was made aware of the post and turned himself in to Stratford police on July 3.

The fourth subject, Kirkland St. Louis, was posted to social media and a press release was issued to media on the morning of July 10. He was wanted for assault, assault with a weapon, forcible confinement and two counts of fail to comply. St. Louis was located and arrested in the Town of St. Marys later in the afternoon on July 10.

None of the above charges have been proven in court.

"The impression, maybe, is we're out actively seeking people who are wanted on warrants. In fact, we've got a lot of other things on the go and our officers are very busy doing other things and doing other investigations," Taylor said. "The officers themselves tend to forget who is wanted and where they might be. Seeking the public's assistance and locating these people has been beneficial to us and it has worked out so far."

With plans to continue the Wanted Wednesday program, Taylor and the Stratford Police Service is thanking those who sent in tips that led to each of the four arrests. While the program depends on the community's help, he said it also puts pressure on those with outstanding warrants, either giving them the encouragement they need to turn themselves in to police or even serving as a reminder that they have outstanding charges and warrants for their arrest in the first place.

"There are the one-offs where people actually do not even know they have a warrant. They miss a finger-print date or they miss a court date and things slip their mind and they're put on a bench warrant or a first-instance warrant," Taylor said. "We get their photo in the paper and they happen to see it on social media and they say, 'Hey, looks like I should probably check in with the police station.'"

No matter the charges or circumstances, Taylor says it is always in someone's best interest to voluntarily check in with police to settle any outstanding warrants, something that usually only takes about 20-30 minutes to process, depending on the warrant and the charges.

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Editorial

Suddenly, the Dems got it right

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

Last week (in the St. Marys Independent), I wrote about how this U.S. election cycle is going to be full of interesting twists and turns, but I didn't anticipate just how quickly things could change.

On Monday of this week, I wrote an editorial for this week's newspaper about how U.S. President Joe Biden's endorsement basically snuffed out any real chance of a competitive contest to find his replacement. I wrote about how Biden was too close to the situation to make an unbiased decision - just like he was wrong about endorsing himself as the Democratic nominee over the past several months, I thought he was wrong about endorsing his VP Kamala Harris as his replacement.

Like many others, I thought that the Democratic National Convention would be the place to choose among the many excellent choices to become the party's nominee. Atop my wish list were people like Michigan's Gretchen Whitmer, Illi-

nois' J.P. Pritzker, or Indiana's Pete Buttigieg. In my opinion, these candidates, all from swing states, were better choices than Harris who, as Biden's vice president, had a fair amount of baggage that had been illustrated in recent polling vs. Trump that showed her not faring much better than Biden.

However, not long after I finished my editorial on Monday afternoon, it quickly grew stale and out-dated. By Tuesday morning, press day, it was unprintable for this week's paper.

Suddenly, it appears as though the Democrats got it right. Following Biden's Sunday afternoon endorsement of Kamala Harris, the entire party rallied and united around her, and she stepped up to meet the moment.

Her first speech as the presumptive 2024 Democratic nominee was much stronger than the performances that I remember from her when she unsuccessfully ran for the 2020 nomination. When watching her speak, how refreshing it was to see the issues of this upcoming election (i.e. wom-

en's rights, character of U.S. leadership) articulated in a coherent, understandable fashion. It was sure a sharp contrast from the debacle that was the June 27 CNN Debate, where the most memorable exchange was two old men arguing about who was the better golfer.

Biden's decision to drop out of the race, and his announcement a half hour later to endorse Harris, has been enthusiastically endorsed by a huge mass of people who were so desperate for a stronger, younger candidate. In the first 24 hours after the announcements, the Democrats raised \$81 million in donations from more than 888,000 different contributors. Meanwhile, 30,000 people volunteered to help with the campaign. At the same time, prominent Democratic leaders have pledged their support to Harris, who now has secured enough delegates to guarantee her nomination.

Instead of a drawn-out leadership selection process and potential infighting among the party, they have united behind the vice president. The focus is now on

the issues of the election rather than the question of who will replace Biden.

I didn't think Kamala Harris was the right choice, and I don't think I was alone on that, given her mediocre showing in "what if" polls during the past few months. But now things have become real, and change is afoot in this election race.

After watching the last 24 hours unfold, I've changed my mind, and I think that many others will take another look at Harris and what she offers in contrast to Donald Trump. The next polling that takes place will surely see an uptick in her support levels now that she is actually the candidate. Meanwhile, the Republicans who have painted Biden as the "old man with cognitive issues" now are saddled with Trump as the much older, less mentally stable candidate in this race.

The real poll happens on Tuesday, November 5, 2024, and I think that we will find out on that day that Kamala Harris will become the next President of the United States.

Letters to the Editor

Bingo Country Fiasco

At 12 midnight June 1, 2024, city council shut Bingo Country down. They refused to give them a new lease.

When Ted Blowes was mayor, he led a committee from city council, called a meeting with Bingo Country. Mayor Ted Blowes made a proposal that would find a permanent home for Bingo Country if they would pick up payments that the city tax payers were paying to the local groups. A deal was made.

Facts: The city of Stratford was receiving \$1,000 a month plus \$100 a day.

With the Stratford council shutting Bingo Country down, the council will have to pick up the funding to all the organizations. Last year, Bingo Country paid \$130,000 to the groups.

These are only some of the groups that were funded by Bingo Country. They are Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary, Optimist, Kinsman, civic beautification and environmental awareness. This group supports the swan release, Winter Festival, the pergola rebuilding, the Via Rail flowers and plants, partnership with Upper Thames, Stratford in Bloom, Green Week, Pumpkin Parade, Christmas Lights. Others are Knights of Columbus, which has given the Stratford Hospital Foun-

dation \$200,000, the girls softball, midget boys baseball, plus many more.

This council is the only one that has not respected the agreement that was made by Mayor Ted Blowes and Bingo Country.

For the eight people who lost their jobs at Bingo Country, I can only recommend that you contact the mayor and councillors to help find you a job.

For the bingo players, I can only suggest that a couple of busses could take you to Woodstock bingo hall and casino.

*Lorne Bolton,
Stratford Ontario.*

Stratford needs a better indoor, public pool

With ambitious plans underway for new housing to accommodate existing inhabitants and a hoped-for influx of new residents, now is a great time to think about developing adequate athletic facilities.

Specifically, Stratford needs a new, good, swimming pool. The decrepit Lion's pool is open only on summer days when it isn't raining. The YMCA pool is open year-round, but this ancient, dank pit with a meandering path to a bleak sauna is far from welcoming.

Swimming has many benefits. Almost anyone of any age or ability can do it. Swimming is excellent for people with injuries, arthritis, or MS. It works the entire body without load-bearing stress. It promotes

long life, is a wonderful social activity and, perhaps most importantly, alleviates mental stress.

Swimming feels good. To negative nellys who say, "We can't afford it," I reply, "Can we afford not to?" Perhaps we could even persuade some developers to chip in for the goodwill. Other communities in this part of Ontario - Goderich, St. Marys, New Hamburg, Waterloo - have all constructed first-class swimming pools that are inviting and well used.

Let's join them Stratford!

*Signed,
A. R. Templeton,
Stratford*

Stratford Summer Music offers thanks to the community

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the City of Stratford council for its continued support of Stratford Summer Music. The community grant we received is essential in enabling us to continue delivering high-quality music performances, educational initiatives and free events that have delighted Stratford residents and visitors for the past 23 seasons.

We also express our gratitude to our patrons and generous donors who make all this possible. We continue to strive to remain accessible and inclusive, offering more than half of our events free of charge.

In collaboration with Destination Stratford, we are

working to expand our programming into the off-season months, aiming to establish Stratford as a year-round destination. Stratford Summer Music kicks off its 24th season on July 18, and you can find details of this season's events at www.stratfordsummermusic.ca.

The arts community has faced significant challenges as non-profits like ours strive for sustainable funding models. We've made substantial progress, and it's all thanks to your support.

Thank you for standing by us!

*Crystal L. Spicer,
executive director Stratford Summer Music
Jeremy Wreford,
board chair Stratford Summer Music*

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City's HR department sees big expansion, but it's long overdue according to director

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford city council approved three new human resources (HR) positions at the July 22 council meeting, a huge expansion for the small department.

Dave Bush, director of human resources, said that the expansion is long overdue. "I'm sounding the alarm bells now," Bush said. "Because we need support internally to build this corporation to achieve our priorities. The funding for this is already built into the budget for this year. So the impact is negligible."

Stratford's HR department was formalized in 1988 with two positions, a director and an assistant. Over the years the department has jostled around, with titles changing and positions being formed, and now there are four positions: the director of human resources, a manager of health and safety, and two HR coordinators.

Additionally, two positions were created in the diversity, equity, and inclusion team, which are technically under the HR

umbrella, although don't support the day-to-day operations of the department.

Standard HR industry practice is an HR to employee ratio average of 1.7 HR staff, rounded to two, per 100 employees. At over 400 full-time employees, that means the city would support an HR team of eight.

Bush proposed the hiring of three more individuals – an HR assistant, a wellness, health, and safety coordinator, and an organizational development coordinator – but he also called that just the first step of many.

The department will be modernizing and working to automate certain practices once it has a full complement.

Currently, Bush said that the cost to just manually run payroll equals about 10 full-time positions at an average salary of \$75,000, meaning that the expansions he recommended will have some cost-saving benefits, although noted they would be "down the road."

As some councillors pointed out, the position would also go to helping the high

staff turnover. Currently, there has been an average of 180 job postings a year for the last five years in the City of Stratford and the inability to retain talent is not without cost.

"A strong HR department will help us to be able to retain talented people who are really great," Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach said. "If that salary was \$80,000, we're spending an extra \$40,000 to pay somebody else to work overtime, to hire a consultant, to put an ad out and then hire somebody. That process takes time ... It's very expensive to have such high staff turnover so I really think this is quite critical."

Coun. Larry McCabe even went so far as to call the staffing issue a "crisis."

Coun. Cody Sebben didn't believe that hiring these positions would be a silver-bullet for the turnover crisis the city faces and advocated for hiring the positions in a temporary, one-year contract capacity, though his amendment failed.

Coun. Mark Hunter also made an amendment, that the funding to offset the equivalency of the three positions be

found through the implementation of a recent service review study. That amendment was unanimously passed.

In a recorded vote, Sebben, Coun. Lesley Biehn, Coun. Geza Wordofa, and Mayor Martin Ritsma opposed the hiring of the positions, which carried regardless.

Biehn argued that this expansion equals half a percentage point to the tax rate.

"I'm just concerned about doing this outside of the budget process," she said. "I also have concern that we will be approving these before seeing all of the other expansion requests that are also coming through."

There will be a four month impact on the 2024 operating budget of \$113,681. It can be offset through staffing variance with the department, as noted in the management report, and use of the HR salary contingency reserve, which has a current balance of \$69,214.

There is an expected annualized cost of \$341,043, including wages, benefits, and one-time costs for cellphones and other hardware.

Letter to the Editor

In defence of free speech and democracy

I feel obliged to respond to the letter by Stratford ex-Mayor Karen Haslam that appeared July 12 criticizing citizens fighting for free speech at Stratford city hall.

The city has used its respectful workplace policy to limit that free speech by, among other things, banning some citizens from the council chambers for three months for comments they made at an earlier meeting.

At press time, council was considering whether to review the policy. Either way, the past months have given us insight into how precious and vulnerable our rights are.

According to the city's workplace policy, speech that is "inappropriate," "unreasonable," "offensive," or "vexatious" can be banned. These words are so subjectively far-reaching that they can be used to ban virtually anything councillors simply do not want to hear.

Fortunately for advocates of free speech, the Ontario Court of Appeal in the case of

Bracken vs. Fort Erie has made it abundantly clear that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms supersedes workplace policies and people have a right to express themselves in a frank, robust and even hostile manner to their politicians. In short, the public has a right to criticize government. Politicians do not have the right to decide whether such criticism is "inappropriate" and then penalize people for it.

As a former municipal councillor myself, I can say that politics is not for the thin-skinned. Hurt feelings and wounded egos do not trump free speech. As President Truman once said, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen."

In her letter, ex-Mayor Haslam fomented the fiction of "vicious attacks and ramblings of certain individuals and groups now harassing council members."

I have watched the video of the council meeting that preceded the bans. There were no "vicious attacks" or "ramblings" or harassment. I saw people asking tough but legitimate questions about city hall behaviour and processes.

More to the point, the idea that any politician should have the power to decide – and veto – which opinions are substantive and which are merely "ramblings" is dangerously pretentious. The Charter gives people every right to "ramble," as the ex-mayor so disdainfully puts it.

The ex-mayor contends that councillors "engage in educated discussions in order to make informed decisions." As the report of an independent investigator has shown, the councillors were hardly "educated" or "informed" when they held 142 closed meetings between 2018 and 2023 and took 132 votes that violated the Municipal Act. During that time, some votes were "flagrant or egregious breaches" of that act.

"One of those," says the report of Tony Fleming of Cunningham, Swan, Carty, Little & Bonham LLP, "occurred May 24, 2022, when council voted to give the city's chief administrative officer the authority to issue a request for proposal and then, without tender, enter into a contract for as much as \$300,000."

The ex-mayor says politicians should not

"abandon the duty to make these decisions without looking over our shoulders to see if we look good." In fact, the failure to make such ethical shoulder checks is precisely why we suffered the multi-car pile-up outlined in the 120-page report.

The ex-mayor further says decisions should be made "without thinking of our re-election opportunities." Hmmm. If you are making a decision that you fear is negatively affecting your "re-election opportunities," that can only mean that you are not representing your constituents, and that is supposed to be your job.

The council chambers is not a simple "workplace." It is a hall of democracy, a public forum, with specific legal, moral and democratic traditions and obligations that soar far above the parameters of a simple "workplace."

In such public forums, the sanctity of free, unfettered, democratic discourse is paramount. That is a principle worth defending.

Sincerely,
Robert Roth, Stratford



LOCAL MATTERS.



Remember that time when **Amazon** sponsored your church fundraiser?



Remember when **Facebook** bought a case of Girl Guide cookies to support your daughter?



Remember when **Google** provided free pizza to your child's soccer team when they won the championship?

Hospital workers rally outside Rae's office in protest of "two-tiered health care"



Treena Hollingworth, a PSW at Stratford General Hospital, goes to take the microphone from Sharon Richer, secretary-treasurer of CUPE's Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) during a demonstration on July 8.

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Treena Hollingworth, a PSW at Stratford General Hospital, was one of the many demonstrators who rallied outside MPP Matthew Rae's Stratford office July 8.

Hollingworth told the crowd of Canadian Union of Public Employee (CUPE) workers that with only half a per-cent increase to public hospitals in the provincial budget last year and a 200 per-cent increase for private clinics, a two-tier health-care system is slowly being entrenched in the province – and that is a dangerous precedent.

"Ontarians are proud of what we built," Hollingworth said over a microphone to the crowd. "Our public hospitals are a vital part of our community. Unfortunately,

due to this government, our public hospitals are under threat."

Hollingworth and other local hospital workers were specifically protesting the privatization of MRIs and CT scans, as announced earlier in June by the province as a way to cut wait times.

By adding 100,000 more of these procedures at community surgical and diagnostic centres, the province hopes this is the first step to reduce wait times to 28 days.

Michael Hurley, president of CUPE's Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) for the last 35 years, said that logic is not sound.

"What's driving waiting lists in the hospital system is staff shortage," he said. "What's needed to address that, really, is an aggressive program of incentivizing the people who are still working.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTOS)

Sharon Richer addresses the demonstrators. The back of her shirt, which reads "We oppose the privatization of hospital services," sums up the group's message.

"What we know about the impact of this kind of approach from places like France and Australia and Britain is that, ironically, waiting lists don't shorten. They get bigger."

Hurley explained the private clinics end up competing with the public system for staff, which only exacerbates staffing problems. Privatization is twice as expensive and comes with longer waiting lists, he claimed.

Furthermore, Hurley asserted places like Stratford will be negatively impacted by this action in particular.

"These surgical centres that they're going to establish; they'll be in a city like London. They're not going to be even in Stratford – and they're sure not going to be in Clinton."

It is precisely because of this acute threat that Hurley said they chose Rae's

office to demonstrate at; although, he said that CUPE/OCHU has more protests planned this summer across the province.

In an emailed statement, Rae said his government is continuing to make investments in health care, including \$550 million to support small and rural hospitals and \$540 million to expand primary care teams.

"Operations performed in community care centres will continue to be covered by OHIP and assist in alleviating pressures on our hospitals," Rae said. "Similar programs already exist in Ontario and other provinces such as British Columbia and Quebec with great success.

"Patients shouldn't have to wait for routine appointments like these. I will continue to support actions that reduce wait times and strengthens our publicly funded health-care system."

Stratford sees huge amount of rain over short period, city warns about hazardous conditions

CONNOR LUCZKA

Times Correspondent

A huge amount of rain fell over Stratford in a short period of time, prompting warnings from local agencies around the hazardous conditions created by the storm.

On July 16, Environment Canada issued a heavy rainfall warning for the region, with amounts between 50 to 80 millimetres expected to pour down over Stratford and area.

While in Stratford that amount did not come down all at once, day after day of heavy rain resulted in some flooding across the city.

Jeremy Witzel, manager of public works and infrastructure services, said

that 42 millimetres of rain was recorded in the morning of July 16, from 3:30 p.m. until 7:30 a.m. – that was on top of the 48 millimetres of rain on July 15 that severely saturated the ground.

"Our environmental services team and infrastructure on-call supervisor were out patrolling and reporting to alarms/concerns just after the initial rainfall had occurred," Witzel said in an email. "They responded to several locations that were called into the emergency on-call service. We experienced a high rainfall level in a short period (and) we believe our system handled it well."

Witzel said that Norfolk Street, from Romeo Street South to Borden Street, was closed for a period due to water over the roadway. Most of the on-street

flooding was due to plugged catch-basin grates. Once found and cleared, the water was able to escape in the storm sewers.

Public works teams followed the storm sweeping debris and clearing out road shoulders, Witzel said.

Witzel also said the investment the City of Stratford has recently put towards stormwater infrastructure is noticeable.

In 2021, city council approved a \$19.3-million storm sewer diversion line on Queen Street, aimed to help mitigate flooding in the downtown core after similar storms to the one that just passed over the city.

After the recent downpour, the Stratford Fire Department urged residents and visitors to be cautious around local watercourses in the days following.

Elevated water levels and fast-flowing currents had created hazardous conditions in and around the Avon River and its tributaries.

"We have received several reports from concerned citizens about young people playing near the water of a tributary at the east end of the city, as well as at the T.J. Dolan Natural Area," a media release from the fire department stated. "Such activities are perilous and should be stopped immediately to prevent tragic accidents."

The fire department recommends if anyone is near any bodies of water during periods of elevated water-levels and fast currents, to exercise extreme caution and to ensure that young children, teenagers and pets are kept away from riverbanks.

Former MPP, Stratford's John Wilkinson, elected as board chair for Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

With plenty of experience advocating for local health care as a member of provincial parliament, first for the Perth-Middlesex riding and then for Perth-Wellingington after the boundaries changed, Stratford's John Wilkinson is now serving as the chair of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA) board of directors.

After the recent annual members meeting, the board held its 2024-2025 organizational meeting where Wilkinson was elected chair. Having served as chair of the Stratford Perth Community Foundation board prior to joining the HPHA board in 2021 and then serving as vice chair of the HPHA board beginning in 2022, he assumed the role of HPHA board chair after past chair Stephen Hearn completed his two-year term in June 2024.

"Supporting health care was a big part of my time when I was the local MPP," Wilkinson said. "That's a big part of the job for any MPP because health care is something that is provided by the provinces, so you can't be a provincial politician without spending a great deal of your time dealing with health care. That includes supporting hospitals as a big part of that – many hospitals that were a part of my two ridings – ... so I was used to working with all of my hospitals, including the HPHA."

"Being a Stratford native, the Stratford General Hospital has been part of my life and my family's life – our three kids were born there – and, like almost everybody else in town, we support the hospital."

Wilkinson said his time as the local representative at Queen's Park gave him a unique understanding of how the current MPPs for Perth and Huron counties – Matthew Rae and Lisa Thompson – are able to advocate for local health care and work with the HPHA board and executive team to continually strengthen local health care.

One of the major issues the board has been tackling post-pandemic is the ever-present need to recruit more staff.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Former Middlesex-Perth and Perth-Wellingington MPP John Wilkinson has been elected chair of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance board of directors.

Following the burnout of the COVID-19 pandemic for hospital staff, Wilkinson said many – especially those of the baby-boomer generation – have opted to retire. Coupled with that same generation's increasing demand for local health-care services, Wilkinson said area hospitals find themselves short staffed, a challenge many if not all hospitals are facing across the country, but one board members are rising to meet.

"The entire system doesn't have enough people, so our job is to make sure that we offer, as an alliance, a wonderful career and personal-life opportunity for everybody who decides to work for us, and I'm very, very impressed with what our recruitment team has been able to do," Wilkinson said. "We have people joining the HPHA all the time ... because we're one of the largest employers, I would say,

in the region.

"... We want to provide them an opportunity to find their satisfaction in their career as a health-care worker right here in our four, local communities and, by and large, we're doing that."

Wilkinson said that need for satisfaction for employees or potential employees extends beyond their careers and the walls of the four local hospitals. It's important for the health-care alliance to work with community partners to ensure its staff, especially those trained health-care professionals who have moved here from other countries, feel as though they are part of their communities.

Wilkinson also said the board is focused on working with the local high schools to ensure students hoping to work in health care know there is plenty of opportunity with the HPHA close to home.

That collaboration between communities, the health-care alliance and each of the four local hospital foundations is crucial. "As the chair of the HPHA's volunteer board," Wilkinson said the board needs to support all of the HPHA's volunteers, whether they volunteer at the hospitals themselves or with the foundations to raise money for necessary equipment and building upgrades, and he encourages everyone to consider volunteering with the health-care alliance in whatever way they can.

At its 2024-2025 organizational meeting, the board also elected a new vice chair, Greg Stewart, and welcomed two new members, Franklin Famme, lead partner of Famme and Co. Professional Company in Stratford, and Bill Whetstone, the commercial lead for Bruce Power and a councillor with the Municipality of Bluewater Bayfield. Famme and Whetstone have replaced outgoing board members Gary Austin and Joe Looby. Famme was also elected as treasurer for the board.

Eight community members were also introduced at the annual members meeting as having been recently appointed by the board to the HPHA's board committees. They include:

- Joe Adams, St. Marys and area
- John Bolton, St. Marys and area
- Elizabeth Hill, St. Marys and area
- Kevin Hulley, Clinton and area
- Wendy Hutton, Seaforth and area
- Richard Seip, Seaforth and area
- Michael Stilwell, Clinton and area
- Emma Vigil, Stratford and area

"The HPHA and those we serve benefit significantly from local volunteer leaders who step forward to govern," said HPHA CEO and president Andrew Williams. "Strong, innovative, accountable, patient-focused, system-first governance is a hallmark of the HPHA, and today's announcement reinforces this moving forward."



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Stratford police issues scam alert

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Throughout the week of July 8-12, the Stratford Police Service has received several calls regarding a suspected Princess Margaret Hospital Lottery scam.

The victims received a phone call from a male claiming to be with Princess Margaret Hospital Lottery. The victims were informed they had won \$2.9 million and a Dodge Ram pickup truck. The caller advised he would attend the victim's residence and instructed the victims to have a pre-paid Visa card ready to provide him in order to receive their prize.

None of the victims who contacted police disclosed any further personal information and did not provide the caller with a pre-paid Visa.

Police say it is suspected the caller obtained information from the phone book about the victims and used this information to learn their names and addresses.

The Stratford Police Service would like to commend the victims for not falling for this scam and for contacting police to make us aware. If any community members received similar calls of this nature and had a loss of finances, please contact the Stratford Police Service at 519-271-4141 ext. 2 to file a report.

Nurses, support staff recognized by Tuer-Hodes Awards



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Judy McMillan, Marissa McKee, Lauren Upper, Donnalene Tuer-Hodes, Ryan Itterman, Samantha Metelski, John Wilkinson, Janita Johns, Leigh Chapman and Lynanne Mason at the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance's Tuer-Hodes Awards presentation July 8.

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Samantha Metelski and Lauren Upper are this year's winners of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA)'s Tuer-Hodes Awards, winning the nursing and inter-professional practice awards respectively.

Metelski is "a dedicated critical care nurse known for her positive and friendly demeanour," a post on the HPHA's Facebook page announcing the awards reads. "She fosters a supportive atmosphere on the unit, where she organizes social events to boost morale and camaraderie among colleagues. Samantha's strong communication skills and advocacy for patients make her a respected leader within the team."

Upper, a senior medical laboratory technologist, is described as a person with a calm demeanour and problem-solving abilities in that same post.

"Lauren's expertise extends beyond her technical skills as she excels in explaining complicated concepts in understandable terms and actively participates in quality initiatives to improve program objectives."

Started seven years ago, the annual awards are a way for the HPHA to respect the many valued team members that make care exceptional at the four sites that the organization operates: Stratford General Hospital, Clinton Public Hospital, St. Marys Memorial Hospital and Seaforth Community Hospital.

Donnalene Tuer-Hodes started the awards when she retired after spending 43 years of her 45-year-career at the HPHA, working at all four sites as the chief nurse executive among other roles.

"I got to know all the nurses well, as well as the other support staff," Tuer-

Hodes said. "So, I just thought it was nice to start with nursing and then see how it evolved.

"I think they deserve it."

Dr. Leigh Chapman, chief nursing officer of Canada, was in attendance for the awards. She told the Stratford Times that recognizing excellence can sometimes be costly for health-care organizations, but it is a necessary cost.

"It's not cost neutral to have these types of award ceremonies," Chapman said. "But it is just such an incredible investment in recognizing that it has a ripple effect. It's not just for the nominees and the award recipients, but it's also for their unit. (It) builds pride within the unit and I think it is a moment to pause and reflect on the things that happen every day."

Janita Johns, a charge nurse for surgical services at Clinton Public Hospital, and Arlene Lanting, manager of patient care at St. Marys Memorial Hospital, were also nominated for the nursing award.

Marissa McKee and Judy McMillan, both registered dietitians at Clinton Pub-

lic Hospital and Stratford General Hospital, were nominated for the inter-professional practice award.

Tuer-Hodes set up the awards but it is a reviewing committee that ultimately decides who wins.

Lynanne Mason, vice president of partnerships, transformation and chief nursing executive at the HPHA, said this year was very difficult to pick recipients since there were amazing individuals nominated.

Mason said both of those who won and those who were nominated were picked because of their efforts to foster camaraderie among their peers and spread positivity throughout the whole community.

"We all know that the community is the anchor of our health-care system," Mason said. "And if we're strong in our community, then we'll be stronger even more in our hospitals and our health-care system. I think that's really what stood out for each of them; their ability to go above and beyond, stay positive, face the hard days, but then come back and really retain their passion and keep growing."

Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

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July 14 Frank Harmer, Mitchell	\$50.00
July 15 Paul & Karen Nyenhuis, St. Pauls	\$50.00
July 16 Don Mullin, St. Marys	\$50.00
July 17 Mark Ross, St. Marys	\$50.00
July 18 James Heinbuch, Tavistock	\$50.00
July 19 Scott Skinner, Stratford	\$50.00
July 20 Tim Austin, Dover Centre	\$200.00
July 21 Chris Biblay, Kirkton	\$50.00
July 22 Ryan Stewart, Embro	\$50.00
July 23 Larry Cossey, Mitchell	\$50.00
July 24 David & Lenore Mountain, St. Marys	\$50.00
July 25 Marianne & Robin Lupton, St. Pauls	\$50.00
July 26 Jeff & Jeremy Witzel, Shakespeare	\$50.00
July 27 Joanne Zegers, Stratford	\$200.00

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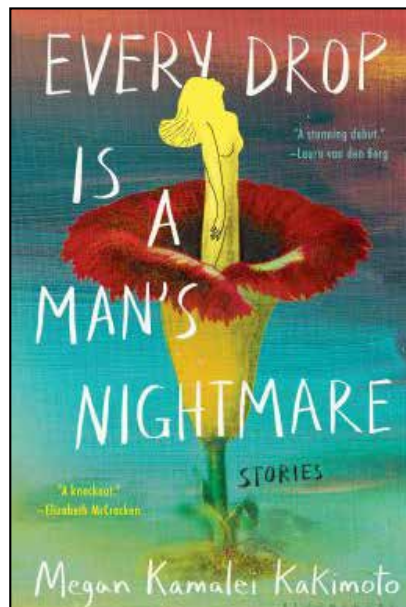
ALIDA LEMIEUX

Stratford Public Library

Every Drop is a Man's Nightmare, by Megan Kamalei Kakimoto
@SPL: FIC Kakim (available from North Perth Public Library)

When you think of Hawaii, do you picture surf boards, palm trees, and ukuleles? Megan Kamalei Kakimoto's debut short story collection will transport you to a Hawaii dripping with leis, azure waves, and house geckos, yes, but also one populated with haunted highways, superstitions, waxing salons, and Elvis impersonators. These stories centre on Japanese and Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) women like the author herself, and tie in aspects of Kānaka folklore with themes of sexuality, motherhood, body politics and the ghosts of colonization.

Some of the stories in this collection are realistic. Take *Madwomen*, in which a haggard single mom tells her six-year-old son an embellished legend to scare him into behaving. In others, folk tales and reality blur the lines: a



Menehune (a little person from Kānaka folklore) moves into a family's broken dryer and starts fixing things in their house; a woman must give up a personal trait in exchange for a bikini wax; and a widow witnesses the limbs of her dead wife growing from a corpse flower in her living room!

For readers hesitant to pick up a short story collection, here's my pitch! Most of these stories are short enough to read in one or two sittings, but long enough and richly detailed enough to immerse yourself in. All the tales are united by the intensely sensual yet charged Hawaiian setting. Even though you must part with one main character to meet the next, you sit with the land, sea, and culture and get to know it throughout the whole collection. A note: Kakimoto weaves a substantial amount of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i

(Hawaiian language) into the text. For some, this may be distracting. For others, the language will lend tremendous authenticity to the stories. Keep your Google Translate handy!

Stratford sorority members donate \$5,500 to Stratford Perth Hospice Foundation

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Members of the Stratford chapters of Beta Sigma Phi sorority recently donated \$5,500, originally saved for a convention that never came to fruition, to the Stratford Perth Hospice Foundation's Every Day Counts campaign.

Beta Sigma Phi is an international sorority established for the enrichment of women under the motto, "Life, learning and friendship." Stratford has had chapters for years and they held their first convention in May 2012. At that time, \$5,000 was held back to provide start-up money for another convention in five years. The remaining profit was donated to the Stratford General Hospital Foundation.

The second convention was held October 2017, and again \$5,000 was set aside for the next convention in 2022. However, between 2017 and 2022, membership dropped and the sorority decided not to host another convention. Instead, the sorority council voted to wait until their saved funds, which they had invested, matured in June 2024 before closing the account, withdrawing the \$5,500 and donating it to a worthy cause.

"My brother passed in a room in the hospice that was supported by somebody we went to school with and grew up on the same street," said Laureate Upsilon chapter president Lori Colbeck about why the sorority chapters chose to donate the money to hospice. "One my dear friends from my parish, who I just loved dearly, passed away in hospice and our next-door neighbour, who was the same age as me but felt



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

LIFE, LEARNING AND FRIENDSHIP

Stratford's Beta Sigma Phi sorority chapters recently donated \$5,500 to the Stratford Perth Hospice Foundation. Pictured from left are Laureate Epsilon Delta (LED) chapter president Denise Schellenberger, LED chapter vice president Pat Wilby, hospice foundation director of fund development and stewardship Lucie Stuart, Laureate Upsilon chapter president Lori Colbeck and sorority council representative Pam Ayres.

like my dad; he passed away in hospice. And I was able to be with all three of those people."

"It's touched all of us and none of us know when or if we're going to need it," added Laureate Epsilon Delta chapter president Denise Schellenberger.

And by contributing to the Every Day Counts campaign, hospice foundation director of fund development and stewardship Lucie Stuart said the sorority's donation will ensure someone has a room at the hospice and the care they need through their end-of-life journey.

"This is amazing," Stuart said. "... It came out of the blue, which is wonderful, and I know the group had given before. ... We have to raise \$350 a day per room annually to operate the hospice. We get 50 per cent of our funding from the ministry of health; the other 50 per cent is fundraised locally.

"So, \$5,000 goes a long way to covering that cost. If you think \$350 a day, I think that's a couple of weeks paying for the care for somebody in a room. That means there is no cost for somebody that stays here. We want it to be that way."

For more information on the Every Day Counts campaign, visit www.rotaryhospice.ca/every-day-counts.

Though the sorority is not primarily a fundraising organization, Stratford's Beta Sigma Phi chapters have a history of donating both money and needed items to charities in the community including to Shelterlink, Optimism Place, The Emily Murphy Centre, L'Arche Stratford and the hospice foundation.

HPHA network outage didn't result in any issues with care, cyber security concerns

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

There were no issues with patient care reported at the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA) as a result of a recent network outage.

For about 12 hours on July 19 the HPHA experienced a network outage that hit many organizations across the globe, impacting many vital industries like finances, airlines, and healthcare.

Starting from a mistake in a software upgrade, Lynanne Mason, vice president of partnerships, transformation and chief nursing executive, said that the outage impacted the HPHA's ability to access electronic records and utilize certain services.

All departments within the HPHA were affected in one way or another, but all areas had access to at least one computer and had well-established downtime procedures to ensure the continuity of patient care – which was a priority.

"Patient care remains our primary focus," Mason was quoted in a media release during the outage. "And our healthcare professionals are actively delivering uninterrupted care despite the network outage."

There was no concern regarding cyber security as a result of the outage, representatives from the HPHA stated.

After the issue was resolved, representatives from the HPHA thanked all staff and partners for their efforts in swiftly mitigating the situation.

Weekend Quiz

1. Who sang the original Mrs. Robinson (1968)?
2. Who is the demigod in the Moana movie?
3. When was the frisbee invented?
4. What does NATO stand for?
5. What is the centre of a black hole called?
6. The main circuit board of a computer is called what?
7. What imaginary line divides the earth's hemispheres?
8. In which outdoor game do players try to throw small bags into holes on a raised platform?
9. The sport of Judo originates from what country?
10. What is the national animal of Brazil?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

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Stratford judged for this year's Communities in Bloom competition

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

International Communities in Bloom judges Susan Ellis and Bob Ivison recently toured Stratford to evaluate the city for this year's Communities in Bloom competition.

Stratford is competing in the International Challenge - Medium category along with:

Brooks Region, Alberta, Rosemere, Quebec, Szentes, Hungary, and Trim-Meath County, Ireland.

The judges looked at things like community appearance, environmental action, heritage conservation, tree management, landscaped areas and plant and floral displays.

Ellis and Ivison were also in attendance at the Stratford city council meeting on July 22, where they spoke the Festival City's praises.

"We've had a really thorough visit of Stratford and we are delighted to be here," Ellis said, pointing out that Stratford has a distinction not many share: it has been a part of Communities in Bloom for 30 continuous years.

"That's a very unique and dignified and distinguished club that you are in," she said.

Mayor Martin Ritsma thanked the two for coming and the work that Coun. Brad Beatty, Coun. Bonnie Henderson, and Quin Malott, parks, forestry, and cemetery manager, do for the annual competition.

This year is the 30th year of Communities in Bloom. The national symposium is being hosted in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Next year, the symposium returns to Stratford.



LOVE & HOPE GROW HERE

Communities in Bloom judges are shown through the Ted Blowes Memorial Pollinator Peace Garden for this year's competition.

(CITY OF STRATFORD PHOTO)

MAPH sounds alarm on job security, opportunities for newcomers

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Multicultural Association of Perth Huron (MAPH) is calling attention to a lack of job security and opportunities for newcomers to Canada – be they refugees or immigrants.

Kelly McGarrell, a board member of MAPH, said that it has been a long standing issue but just recently it has felt especially worrying.

"If you look at what's going on in the world, there are so many different ... crises simultaneously happening,"

McGarrell said. "The need now is because you look at Syria, you look at Ukraine, Uganda, Sudan, the Palestinian situation, if you can call it that, right now ... it's reaching a tipping point because there's more crises and there are no solutions.

"I started with the organization in 2012," McGarrell further stated. "This is so much different now than it ever was before."

McGarrell explained that there are a number of factors contributing to newcomers' difficulty finding employment.

"There's no work history here," McGarrell said. "So it becomes increasingly difficult to justify their skills here in our country ... in the organization (we have the) benefit of a very strong network, and we try our best to help people find meaningful employment based on the people that we already know and interact with. But that can only last for so long before those connections run out."

Aside from a lack of in-country experience, language barriers and driving licences are big hurdles as well.

Yonas Gebrekiros, one of the newcomers that MAPH has been assisting, pointed out that many jobs require a driver's licence but newcomers have to get a G1 and then wait a year for even their G2, let alone their full licence.

Steve Landers, a MAPH volunteer, said that employ-

ment is an important issue facing newcomers, but it is one of many interconnected problems.

"People are eating at food banks right now," he said. "Which is okay, but that shouldn't be a permanent solution. People are having trouble getting accommodation. They're having trouble getting work. It's all tied together."

"They have to feed their families," McGarrell said. "They have to be able to live here once they come."

McGarrell believes that if the government brings refugees and other immigrants into Canada then it needs to have more supports put in place to make sure that they can land on their feet. Anything less, she said, is irresponsible.

Landers went a step further and called it a form of cruelty.

In light of these expounding challenges, the organization is asking the community to open their doors and reach out if there are any positions available.

"And take chances on really hard working, willing people," McGarrell said.

MAPH is currently assisting around 80 families, president and founder Geza Wordofa said, though the organization has helped hundreds more settle into Canada over the years.

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Draft work plan for Grand Trunk renewal project presented to committee

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Work on the Grand Trunk renewal project continues to inch closer but, as said many times before, it will be a multi-year, if not a multi-decade project.

At the most recent ad hoc Grand Trunk renewal committee meeting on July 15, the draft work plan and guiding principles for the project was presented to the committee by Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford, on behalf of Emily Robson, corporate initiative lead with the city, who has taken the lead on steering the plan.

Gerber said that much of the work will be done at the staff and city level, but the working groups are expected to contribute.

What has been created, essentially, is a list of high level results assigned to each working group, with tasks listed for each of the working groups. Gerber said that the intention is to have some tangible things for the committee, for city council, and by extension the wider community, to be engaged with and help move the project forward.

Finalizing vision and guiding principles, site analysis and environmental assessment, developing key partnership models, communications and community engagement, procurement and RFP processes and structuring legal agreements, financial and real estate modeling, analysis of economic, environmental, and social impact, and government relations are the key goals in the plan.

Ultimately, the results the group wants to see as a result of the work plan are:

- A final draft of the vision and guiding principles endorsed by the committee and council and incorporated into procurement documents.
- Recommendations on an additional site assessment, for approaches to carbon neutrality provided and a complete internal formal consultation on the site.
- The establishment of a formal agreement for the construction and operation of a community recreation/amenity facility, including the programming of space and high-level design.
- The activation of the site through placemaking interventions.
- A council-endorsed strategy for land disposition and development partner selection.
- Development scenarios articulated and the preferred model endorsed by council.
- An impact analysis provided to inform



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

RENEWAL PROJECT

Just outside the main building of the Grand Trunk block is a timeline of its history in the Festival City, provided by the Stratford Perth Museum. Its history starts at its initial construction in 1879 and stretches all the way to the renewal efforts underway today.

development scenarios and recommendations on preferred models.

- The determination of the best opportunities for collaboration and government relations priorities set.

"We're going to set some ... I would say aggressive timelines and dates to some of these things," Gerber said. "We may not meet them all."

At the August 12 council meeting, the committee wants to provide the work plan for consideration. At the Sept. 9 meeting, the committee wants council to consider the final vision and guiding principles. At the Oct. 15 council meeting, the committee wants council to consider the key partnership model. Then, at the Nov. 25 meeting, the committee wants council to consider its recommendations for the site.

"This is a living, breathing document,"

Gerber said. "It's not something that's going to get stuck on a shelf, it is also not set in stone. So there will be things that will come up over the course of the next 30 days, three months, three years, that will be added and taken away from this work plan. But this is what we have so far."

After Gerber presented the plan at the meeting, Mayor Martin Ritsma also gave a brief update on a meeting he had just that morning.

Ritsma shared that he had met with several individuals from the federal level nearly a year ago, including Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre and MP Scott Aitchison, shadow minister of housing and diversity, where he spoke about the Grand Trunk project.

"And Scott said at one point, 'so you are the city with 18 acres in the middle of it?'"

and I said 'yes, we are.'"

Then, just the week prior to the latest committee meeting, Ritsma received a phone call from MP John Nater telling him that Aitchison was going to be in Stratford and would like to meet at the site.

"So we had a wonderful meeting today on site and talked about many things about the history of the locomotive shops, we talked about current parking, and different aspects of the project. He was really intrigued with our transit hub and where it stood and how that fits with monies, grant monies that might flow with regards to housing and proximity to transit hubs.

"But most importantly ... he encouraged us to continue that work is funding that could be connected to infrastructure, because whatever we put there will require infrastructure."

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Times Past: Performing Shakespeare before the Festival

BETTY JO BELTON

Stratford-Perth Archives

The tradition of performing Shakespeare's plays in Stratford may be older than you think. For example, a "fair sized audience" came out to see these young thespians perform Love's Labour's Lost in the City Hall Auditorium in 1927. The actors were all students at the Stratford Normal School or teachers' college. The college's beautiful copper-domed Italian Renaissance style building still stands next door to the site of the main Stratford Festival Theatre and is now used by the Festival for their bookstore.

Students staged at least one of Shakespeare's plays every year. Their first show was As You Like It in 1913. Sometimes two casts performed the same play and held a friendly competition to see which one did the best job for their audiences. In 1927, two casts performed two different plays. Love's Labour's Lost was presented on May 26 and The Tempest on May 27. A newspaper reporter commented that the students were doing "their part in carrying on the tradition of Stratford's connection with the works of the great writer, a tradition that has been fostered through the years in various ways but which found no definite annual observance until the students of this school commenced this yearly production." The reviewer goes on to diplomatically observe that while some actors, including Teddy Deichert as the constable, "handled their parts exceedingly well... they received fine support from the rest of the company."

An article in that year's "Classic" year-book for the Normal School, described how "this year's plays were as well presented as in former years and proved equally popular with the public. Few realize the immense amount of work required by the principals in the plays and the trainers to put on these plays. This year, Mr. L.R. Halnan, Mathematical Master and Miss A. Johnston, Librarian, trained the cast for Love's Labour's Lost and deserve great credit for the success of that production. Mr. H.G. Manning and Miss E.M. Everson were the trainers for The Tempest and were equally painstaking in their work. Miss E.M. Cottle assisted Miss Everson in preparing many of the costumes that could not be secured from the Toronto Costumer. The scenery used,



Stratford Normal School cast Love's Labours Lost 1927

(STRATFORD-PERTH ARCHIVES PHOTO)

which was very effective and suitable, was painted in 1913 for As You Like It by Mrs. Mayberry, Art teacher. The stage committee which was the same for both nights and consisted of Messrs. Slattery, West, Eidt, McClean, Johnston, Hoff and McLean proved most original and efficient in both plays, but particularly in the first scene of The Tempest representing a storm at sea. Some in the audience declared that it made them feel sea-sick...The great value of the work is, however, manifold. First, there is the value to the members of the casts, who learn their parts so well and attempt to interpret the characters they represent. Second, there is the school spirit aroused, for all are interested, if not actually participants. Third, there is the interpretation of

Shakespeare to the public, with its stimulation to further study of this great Master of English literature. The past fourteen years of Shakespearean effort in Stratford Normal School have proven that these plays are ever new."

This copy of the cast photo belonged to Teddy Deichert, who played Dull the constable. His fellow cast members were A.K.C. Seale as Ferdinand, King of Navarre; R. Speer as Berowne; C. Dunseith as Longaville; F. Kelly as Dumaine; P.P. Pigeon as Boyet; L. Scarrow as Marcade; C. Gardiner as Don Adriano de Armado, Spaniard; Thos. McQuaid as Sir Nathaniel, a curate; Robt. Knight as Holofernes, a school master; T. Deichert as Dull, a constable; W. Stewart as Costard, a clown; Jas.

Lane as Moth, page to Armado; Miss H. Roy as Princess of France; Miss R. Manson as Rosaline; Miss M. Sugrue as Maria; Miss D. Lennox as Katherine; Miss V. Wyers as Jaquenetta, a country wench; Besides Deichert, who can be easily identified by his police officer's uniform, I am not able to match these names to faces. If you recognize any relatives or a teacher from years past, please contact Stratford-Perth Archives at archives@perthcounty.ca If you'd like to see the original photograph, it's currently on display as part of the Archives Treasures Old and New exhibit in the James Anderson Gallery. Admission is free. For information about hours and location, please visit www.perthcounty.ca/en/StratfordPerthArchives

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Stratford businesses open doors to embrace Summer Sidewalk Sale

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

Shop owners took their stores outside to Stratford's sidewalks recently.

On July 13, the Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) hosted their Summer Sidewalk Sale encouraging shop owners within the downtown district to open their doors and set up their products along the sidewalk area outside the front of their business.

"I like to be out there with the customers and I'm hoping (to) maybe even get to know some of our fellow shop neighbors," said Tiffany Glass, co-owner of H.H. Delea & Company. "You see them and you wave but you don't really get to talk, so that's something I would like to change."

Glass runs the H.H. Delea gift shop with her husband Harry Gidge and their daughter Carmondy Gidge as well as one other staff member, Terri Bebingh, on 97 Ontario St. The business specializes in selling an assortment of items to their customers ranging from bathroom accessories, greeting cards and soapstone carving kits.

"As a family run business, we work together and we try to have a balance but sometimes we have to take the business home with us and discuss it on our off time," said Harry. We try to leave that business at work because at home we have three children. This is our job; it's a lot of work and we are constantly trying to improve and make it better."

Located on 69 Ontario St. downtown Stratford, Gallery INDIGENA owner Erla Boyer is thrilled to be participating in the Summer Sidewalk Sale as she decorated the foot of her door with artwork created by talented indigenous artists.

Boyer has held her shop in Stratford for 25 years and worked in the Indigenous art selling business for the last 54 years.

"We specialize in Indigenous art and ev-



H.H. DELEA & COMPANY WELCOMES GUESTS TO THEIR FAMILY OWNED GIFT SHOP

(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

Carmondy Gidge, Harry Gidge, and Tiffany Glass show off their wares to residents and tourists passing by for the Stratford Summer Sidewalk Sale.

everything we sell, even if it's made in China, royalties go to the artist. We try to have as much as possible made in Canada," said Boyer. This is a huge gift shop of carvings, mugs, bags, artworks and many other things."

The Stratford shop features many unique items handmade by Indigenous artists such as bison handbags, clothing originating from the Arctic and painted artwork ranging in price up to \$3,200.

"I really take pride in the fact that we have spread this art to millions of people in 50 years," said Boyer. "People just keep coming back and coming back and they support the Indigenous artists. But this is quality art, it's not airport art."

Danna Nicole is a women's boutique on 87 Ontario St. that sources European and Canadian made clothing brands.

"I love coming to work with a rock star team every day, that aspect as an entrepre-

neur is fantastic. I adore the support from our sales reps with some I've known from two decades," said owner Danna Link. "In Stratford we have the perfect mix of loyal local clients as well as tourists that come once a year. Every day is different."

The day-long sidewalk sale was accompanied with sunshine and comfortable temperatures, allowing owners and customers to mingle in the fresh outdoors on a rain free day.

Chuck's Roadhouse to take over former Hub Restaurant in downtown Stratford

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Popular Canadian-chain Chuck's Roadhouse is coming to downtown Stratford, set to take over where the former Hub Restaurant was located.

The corporation listed a franchise opportunity on its website, identifying the location as 31-33 Market Place in Stratford.

Described as a prime downtown location in a high-traffic tourism area, the listing is labelled as "sold," though there are no further details as of publication.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

The former Hub Restaurant in downtown Stratford may be getting a new restaurant soon. Popular Canadian-chain Chuck's Roadhouse has listed the location as a franchising opportunity on its website – and it's labelled as "sold" as of publication.



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Junction 56 pleased LCBO reached agreement, ending recent strike

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Local distillery Junction 56 will be selling spirits through their largest retailer once again.

The LCBO reached an agreement with the OPSEU union, representing 10,000 employees, ending a week-long strike on July 22. LCBO stores reopened on July 23.

"We are glad that the LCBO and their employees were able to reach an agreement that works for everyone," Mike Heisz, owner of Junction 56 said in a statement to the Stratford Times. "We look forward to resuming our distribution through LCBO stores. For anyone that discovered us during the time of the strike we hope that they continue to look for us on LCBO shelves or visit us in our retail store."

The LCBO employees represented by the union walked off the job on July 5, protesting the sale of alcohol in convenience stores and grocery stores. The movement

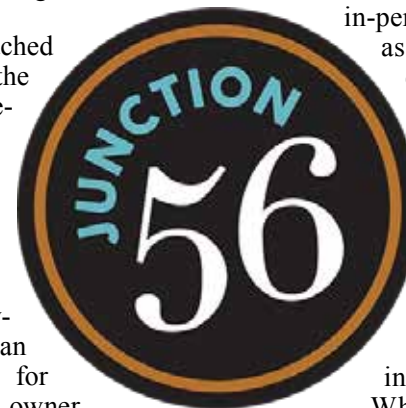
also came out of a concern of job loss.

Junction 56 experienced a loss and a gain simultaneously during the strike. During a July 17 interview, days before the strike ended, Heisz said that in-person sales were up as well as online deliveries. However, the LCBO is Junction 56's biggest customer, so the distillery lost out on distribution through the LCBO during the strike.

"It's kind of a double-edge sword for us in that we gain locally, and we lose across the province a little bit," he said.

Whether purchasing at Junction 56's retail space on 45 Cambria Street, online store, or through the LCBO, Heisz said it's important to support local distilleries and breweries.

"Everything to do with us stays within your local community in Ontario," he said. "There's no multinational corporation that owns us and all the employees are locally, and any taxes are paid in Ontario. Really, it's just about supporting the economy of Ontario and the local economy with jobs."



Local real estate agent celebrating 30 years in the industry

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Nowadays, if a person stays at the same job for 30 years it is considered to be out of the ordinary. Tavistock's Sandra Eby is extraordinary then, since she is celebrating 30 years and counting in the real estate profession.

Eby works locally and most of her clients are in the immediate area – like Tavistock, Baden, New Hamburg, Woodstock, St. Marys, Stratford, and Mitchell. She enjoys what she does and said that in her career she has even had the chance to sell some houses three or four times.

Eby and her husband Monty have two sons, one living in British Columbia and the other in Tavistock. She has a twin sister in St. Thomas and three brothers. Her sister Carol has been selling real estate in London for 40 years.

She is now a sales representative with RE/MAX a-b Realty Ltd., but before that was with Coldwell Banker for 27 years.

Eby said she has always enjoyed meeting new people and feels the best advertising is satisfied customers telling others who are looking into buying or selling their property about her.

After 30 years, Eby has proven that



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Sean Stewart and Rachel Kreynin are shown recently, with Sandra Eby in front of their new home on Railway Ave. in Stratford.

The couple met in Europe and have purchased their first home together in the Festival City with Sandra's help.

being honest and cordial goes a long way in the business she is in, and hopes to continue for many years to come.

Sales representative Sandra Eby can be reached at 519-272-7676 or via email at mseby@rogers.com.



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Fellini's celebrates 30 years of high-energy hospitality

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Family-owned restaurant Fellini's Classic Italian Cucina celebrated 30 years in business, and reminded proprietor David Martin of fond memories.

Martin moved back to Stratford from Toronto to open Fellini's on July 4, 1994. The restaurant on 107 Ontario St. became a birthday and anniversary destination, with many customers returning over the years with their growing families.

"It's nice to see people coming in who were here on their first date and then they got married and had their rehearsal party here, and now they bring their kids in," Martin said. "It's kind of neat to see that chain carry on."

Martin also enjoyed working with the staff over the years, and noted there are several who



PEARL ANNIVERSARY

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Mayor Martin Ritsma surprised owners Ann and Dave Martin in their dining room with a certificate commemorating the 30 years that the Stratford staple has been serving food, doing business, and creating jobs in the Festival City.

stuck around for five, eight, 10, 20, or even more than 30 years. Preparing for the lunch rush and the dinner rush requires a lot of energy that Martin com-

pared to being part of a theatre production. The staff prepare for lunch customers trickling in from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., then the restaurant closes until 4:30 p.m.

to prepare for dinner, which either runs until 8 or 9 p.m.

"We're all addicted to this kind of business," Martin said. "We say it's showbusiness here."

The biggest challenge in recent history was the COVID-19 pandemic that walloped the hospitality industry with restrictions such as takeout only during the lockdown and outdoor seating only during early re-opening stages before getting the clear to run indoor dining with capacity limits.

"It was definitely a major struggle for all of us," Martin said. "You had to pivot pretty hard, which we did."

Fellini's prepared more takeout orders than usual and the closure of indoor dining gave the restaurant staff time to renovate the space with upgraded upholstery, tabletops, repainting, and other maintenance upgrades. From the pandemic on, the restaurant also

closes on Sundays and Mondays to give the staff a break, along with having a break between lunch and dinner hours.

Martin said that the veteran staff are appreciative of the changes.

"We don't quite have a full energy load that the younger ones do," Martin said. "So it's working well for us to shut down and have a breather, reload and when our guests come in for dinner, we're in a better mood and hopefully do better at our job serving."

As far as doing anything to commemorate the anniversary with the customers, Martin is focused on ensuring that Stratford Festival goes and summer tourists are experiencing great hospitality.

"This time of year, we're just keeping everybody moving and happy, and our staff are working pretty hard right now," he said.

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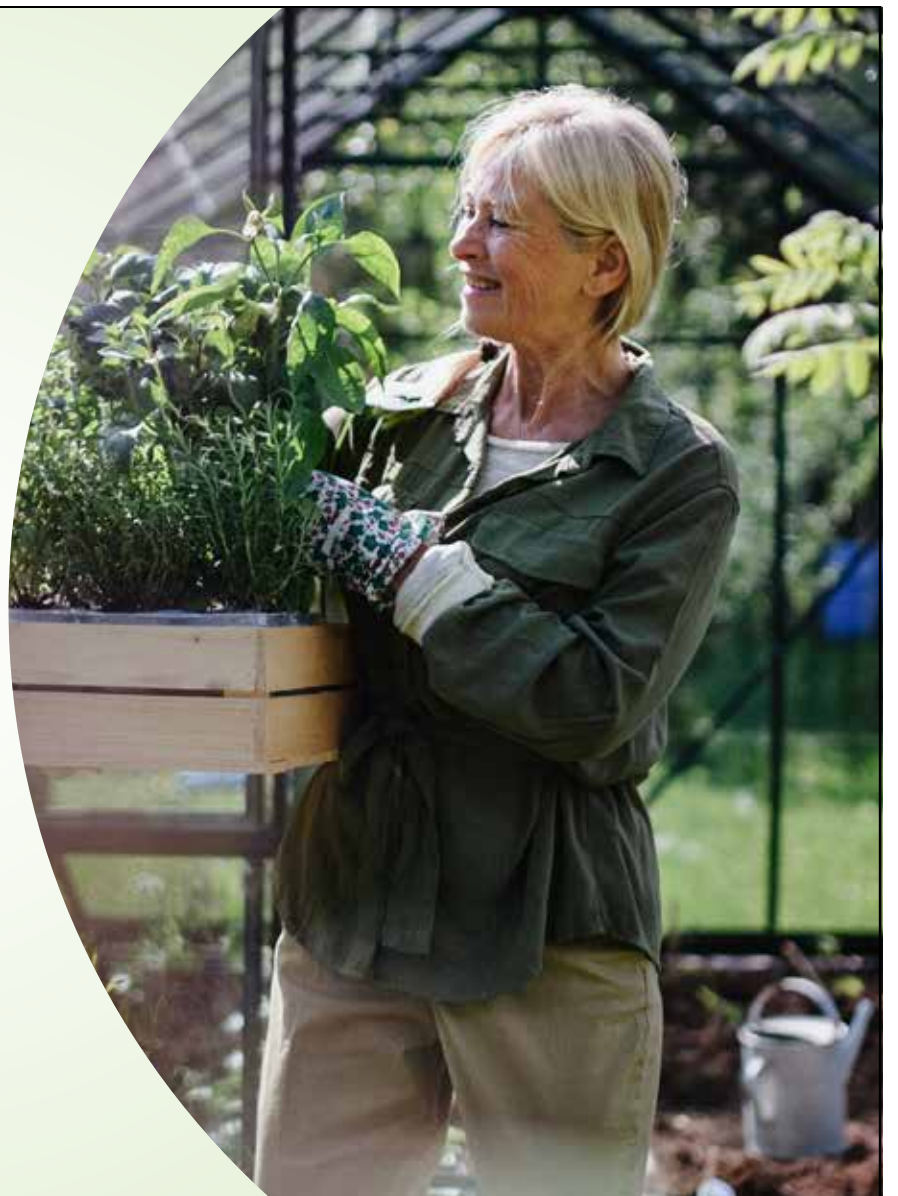
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STRATFORD *TIMES* SPORTS

U15 Flames take Silver at home tournament

AMANDA HERTEL

Times Contributor

The U15 Himburg Stratford Flames team finished in second place to earn the silver medal in the annual Stratford Minor Girls Baseball Tournament that took place from July 12 to 14.

The team faced the Exeter Extremes One on Friday evening. Pitcher Addison McCann dominated on the mound, throwing an amazing 11 strikeouts over four innings. Batters Sophia Koss and Cassidy Koch both had RBI hits to drive in runs, and Sophie Anderson, Riley Himburg, and Chloe-Lynne Taylor showed exceptional fielding skills to keep the Extremes at bay. Stratford won the game 5-3.

The tournament continued Saturday against the Sweaburg Storm and the Mount Forest Mavericks. The girls took both games with big wins, including an 11-4 victory against Sweaburg, followed by a 9-0 shutout against Mount Forest. Both games saw more stellar pitching from McCann and Ayva Culligan, the latter of whom came in as the relief pitcher late in the game against Sweaburg and threw her first-ever strikeout to end the game. The girls brought out some new moves as well, with Miley Demo being awarded player of the game for her bunting excellence and both Vitoria Brander and Zoey Spacek making dramatic steals at home base to secure the wins.

In the finals, the undefeated Flames went up against Elma Express. The Express showed fantastic fielding and hitting and despite another excellent effort by Stratford, led by another great game by McCann on the mound and amazing fielding efforts by Culligan and Mya Thomson, Elma pulled ahead and took the game and the tournament with a 5-0 win.

Head coach Casey Himburg said that all the hard work at the team's practices this year has paid off.

"I'm so proud of these girls and how much they've improved this season," Himburg said. "It's always tough to lose out in the finals, but the amazing showing of this team throughout this tournament has been incredible. I couldn't have asked for more from them."



TAKING HOME THE SILVER

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U15 Stratford Flames Himburg claimed the Silver medal at the annual Stratford Minor Girls Baseball Tournament on July 12-14. The Flames are pictured in their red jerseys beside their finals opponents. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Ayva Culligan, Miley Demo, and Sophie Anderson. In the second row, from left, are Riley Himburg, Sophia Koss, and assistant coach Rachel Horan. In the third row, from left, are Cassidy Koch, Vitoria Brander, Addison McCann, Chloe-Lynne Taylor, Zoey Spacek, and Mya Thomson. In the back row, from left, are head coach Casey Himburg and assistant coach James Anderson.

First-year U8 Phantoms make it to provincial semis

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

In the first Ontario Ball Hockey Championship appearance for the U8 Stratford

Phantoms, the team got within a goal of playing for the provincial title.

After a competitive round-robin, the Phantoms entered a breakneck-paced quarter-final game against the Oakville

Rangers for a very intense clash in which the Phantoms won a 4-3 victory in overtime. The scoring was opened by Dawson Bickell, his first of two in the game. Nate Sutherland also scored for Stratford before Bickell tallied his second of the contest. In the extra frame, Sutherland potted the game-winner to propel the Phantoms to the semi-finals.

Awaiting Stratford in the semis were the Brampton Bulldogs. Sutherland continued to have the hot hand for the Phantoms, scoring on a penalty shot in the first period. In the second, Elliott Everard found the back of the net on a goal assisted by Peta Nurse. Bickell got back on the score-sheet with a third-period goal assisted by Wyatt Hallock.

The Phantoms led 3-2 until Brampton scored the game-tying goal with three minutes and 16 seconds left, tying things at 3-3 and, for the second straight game, sending the Phantoms into overtime. Unlike their quarter-final, however, Stratford came up short, with the Bulldogs scoring with just nine seconds left in overtime to win 4-3.

Sutherland and Bickell won MVP awards during the tournament, as did Theodore Beech, who scored the Phantoms' first-ever provincial tournament goal and scored four times during the round-robin.

Defensively, the team got strong performances from Hayden Payne, Greyson Rattray, Beau Kelly, Austin Mergl, Henry Koscak, and Liam McLean. Another MVP award went to McLean for a herculean effort that saw him block 10 shots in a single game.

Rounding out the five MVP award winners for the Phantoms was goaltender Lauren Bos, who head coach Bryan Nurse had high praise for following the tournament.

"Our goaltending and defence were amazing," raved Nurse, who also helped get the Stratford Minor Ball Hockey (SMBH) league off the ground. "Lauren was unreal every game she played for us and she will have a bright future if she continues pursuing her goalie dreams."

Nurse also described what made the team's showing so impressive.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 17



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First-year U8 Phantoms make it to provincial semis

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

"Being a first-year team in provincials and taking a win from Oakville in a top division is phenomenal. We had unbelievable growth. The team unity was incredible. Learning to change on the fly was impressive. It was an exciting and fantastic weekend and we look forward to next year." "Pushing yourself to your limits will let you know what you are truly capable of achieving," Nurse continued. "I was impressed with how well the players listened to the coaches and the energy they brought. The way they evolved in every game and became better than the last game. We came together as a team very quickly and only practiced four times. We went far because the coaches, team staff, players, and parents were one big unit that worked together really well."

The Phantoms was the first of its kind for the SMBH league, which has been building over the last several years as a ball hockey house league.

"We ran for a year in 2019. We had a great

season and going into 2020 it looked very positive. Our numbers were up and then that was all kiboshed for two years due

to the pandemic. It's definitely been a slow comeback for us.

"In the first year back, there were a lot fewer players than we had seen," added Nurse.

"But we're finally starting to see those effects from the pandemic subside. We're starting to see more people returning and I hope that keeps growing."

Nurse explained why ball hockey can succeed in Stratford.

"I've been a competitive coach and player for 20 years, and what makes ball hockey so special is the affordability. The model that every child has a place in this game is big. I like being able to focus on the people who may not have the opportunity to play ice hockey at a high level because of financial reasons."

According to Nurse, increasing the league's visibility is the organization's

biggest mission.

"Knowing about it is huge for us right now. We want more people to know that there is a league that is accommodating for different levels and player needs. It's all the great cardio of the running with the mix of hockey skills. It's new, it's a little bit different than normal hockey, and again, the affordability is awesome and brings out a lot of different people."

As awareness of the league grows, Nurse has aspirations for more rep teams and local players representing Stratford at provincial and national levels.

"We're planning to have more teams and age groups competing on a provincial level. Additionally, when you get to U14, you can compete on a national level as well and you have a chance to be selected for Team Canada. It's not a tapped-out resource in our area. It's just starting to gain that traction and I'm hopeful that, in the coming years, we start seeing some of our players getting to compete at those levels."



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Riders saddle up under blue skies for Stratford and District Saddle Club's July meet

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

It was a busy day for horses and riders at the July meet of the Stratford and District Saddle Club.

On July 21 sunshine and great weather prevailed for the young western riders and their horses at the Schlotzhauer riding facility, north west of Shakespeare on Line 137. The past couple of planned shows had previously been rained out.

Many classes, including for beginners and experienced riders, occurred throughout the day before the capable judge of Cristy McMullen of Aylmer.

Horsemanship classes provided a learning experience for many of the younger riders, and later in the day there were many speed and time trial classes for more experienced riders.

For more information or to enter in the August 11 competition, email Helen Thomson at hmthomson95@gmail.com.



Western rider Ben Bell from the Shakespeare area rides his horse, Comet, to victory in some of the classes he entered during the Stratford and District Saddle Club meet on July 21. Bell was the top points champion after last summer's shows, and was sporting his championship belt buckle while competing this year.



Three of the younger riders at the horse show included Dominic Power from Stratford in the saddle, Makayla Tinney standing behind, and Hailey Bell at the halter of her horse, Calypso. All three were riding and competing in the show.

(GARY WEST PHOTOS)



Stratford and District Saddle Club President Martin Ritsma (centre), congratulated Annan Murphy from St. Marys area on Cleopatra (left) and Avery Wilhelm from Stratford area on Captain Insano (right). Both were experienced riders competing at the meet.



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Its BYOV, or bring your own vinyl, at Revival House

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Vinyl record collectors can share their music during Bring Your Own Vinyl Nights at Revival House.

The Revival Vinyl Society (RVS) was formed in 2016 after DJ Darren Dumas, a.k.a. "Mista D," found out Revival House owner Rob Wigan was looking for ideas for a new monthly event. Dumas suggested a Bring Your Own Vinyl Night and said he would host it.

Over the past eight years, the Bring Your Own Vinyl Nights would run from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m., and sometimes finish at midnight. Attendees would bring their own records and write down the tracks they would like to hear on a sign-up sheet. Dumas keeps the records safe in a milk crate during the night.

"We encourage a social environment for record collectors to share their love of vinyl and music in general among like-minded individuals," he said to the Stratford Times.

Dumas said Revival House, located at 75 Brunswick Street, is the best place to host a Bring Your Own Vinyl Night for

several reasons.

"The owner, my good mate, Rob Wigan, and his own personal love for vinyl," he said. "Beyond that, his staff are a fantastic group of people, the food and drinks and always amazing, and while we are usually up in The Belfrey for RVS, we have sometimes held the night down in the main room for special occasions with larger crowds, or even outside on the patio if the weather works in our favour."

Although streaming has been a predominant way of music consumption over the past two decades, the vinyl record is still loved by many. Dumas said that vinyl is still as popular as ever, as it offers something tangible that streaming cannot.

"Viewing the album artwork and packaging while diving deeper into the music by reading the liner notes is an experience that was commonplace until the arrival of the iPod, and a lost art to most of those born in the age of streaming," he said. "In 2024, vinyl is the most popular physical form in which people purchase music, and the creativity in some special vinyl releases these days is at its highest."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

FOR THE LOVE OF MUSIC

Looking to share your favourite albums with others? Stop by Revival House on Bring Your Own Vinyl Nights, which usually happen on the final Thursday of every month.

"It's a fun thing to collect, and music holds memories for everyone."

In addition to listening to a variety of vinyl record tracks while socializing over food and drink, RVS also has record giveaways from their sponsor Sound Fixation on Bring Your Own Vinyl Nights.

RVS also runs record conventions and vinyl dance parties.

Bring Your Own Vinyl Nights usually run every last Thursday of the month, unless said otherwise. More information can be found by visiting www.facebook.com/revivalvinylsociety.

Something Rotten! and La Cage aux Folles extended to mid-November

Both musicals – *Something Rotten!* and *La Cage aux Folles* – are being extended to mid-November. These shows are thrilling audiences and reminding people of the joys of live theatre.

Something Rotten!, the show that launched the Festival's 2024 season in April, is being hailed by critics and audiences as one of the best musicals ever.

Helmed by director-choreographer Donna Feore with music director Laura Burton, *Something Rotten!* is a hilarious, laugh-a-minute musical, filled with dazzling dance numbers and unforgettable songs, including "God, I Hate Shakespeare," "Hard to Be the Bard" and "Welcome to the Renaissance."

It follows a pair of discouraged playwrights, Nick and Nigel Bottom – played by Mark Uhre and Henry Firmston – as they try to find a way to succeed in theatre when their main competitor is the rock star William Shakespeare, played by Jeff Lillico. When Nick consults the soothsayer, Thomas Nostradamus, played by Dan Chamero, he sets out on a path to develop the world's first musical, and true hilarity ensues.

The production also features Starr Domingue as Bea, Juan Chioran as Brother Jeremiah (did we mention there are singing and dancing Puritans?), Steve Ross as Shylock and Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane as Portia.

Each and every performance is producing super-fans, who are returning time and again, asserting that *Something Rotten!* is really something fantastic. Less than halfway into the run, more than 4,000 people have returned to see the show for a second time – some more than twice!

If you love musicals, this show's for you! If you love Shakespeare, this show's for

you! And if you HATE Shakespeare and/or musicals, you will revel in the good-hearted roasting both genres take in this hilarious theatrical sendup.

Over at the Avon Theatre, the musical *La Cage aux Folles* has earned its extension, as it packs houses and makes headlines with a dazzling production, which at its heart is a touching family story about acceptance in a politically divided world.

It features Sean Arbuckle, as Georges, the manager of a drag club in St. Tropez, and Steve Ross as Albin, his life partner and the club's star performer. Georges agrees to "play it straight" to meet the ultra-conservative parents of their son's new fiancé, while Albin is shocked to discover that he is being sidelined. The ensuing clash unravels truth and consequences with heartwarming grace – and fabulous drag performances!

The production is directed by Thom Allison and choreographed by Cameron Carver with music director Franklin Brasz. It features Juan Chioran as Edouard Dindon, James Daly as Jean-Michel, Aidan de-Salaiz as Francis, Starr Domingue as Jacqueline and Heather Kosik as Anne.

The production features the unforgettable anthem "I Am What I Am," sung by Steve Ross in what many are calling the performance of a lifetime, as he brings the character of Albin to vivid life: by day, a caring, if dramatic, spouse and parent, by night a star performer, the headliner of *La Cage aux Folles*, home of Les Cagelles. These drag performers entertain in supreme style, with opulent costumes and sensational hair and makeup. Their cabaret-style performances range from sexy and sultry to zany and outrageous. The show is a perfect combination of guts and glitter – with a whole lot of love thrown in.

Tickets for the additional performances listed below go on sale Friday, July 19, and are available at www.stratfordfestival.ca or

by calling the box office at 1.800.567.1600. Tickets are still available for current performances.

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2024 Emerging Artist - Apolline

New video entices Rotarians to visit Stratford for next year's district conference

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

A new video created by Stratford's Ballinran Entertainment in collaboration with Stratford's three local Rotary Clubs is enticing Rotarians in the region and beyond to visit Stratford next year for the annual district conference.

As Stratford will be in the spotlight when Rotarians from as far as Michigan attend the Rotary District 6330 Conference from May 2-4, 2025, the local production company recently teamed up with Stratford Rotarians to put Rotary in the spotlight and promote next year's conference.

"As of July 1, I am district governor for the rotary area that our clubs are in," said Rotary governor for District 6330 Katherine Hahn, who is also a member of the Rotary Club of Stratford. "The role of the district governor is to host a conference every year to celebrate their year. ... Since I live in beautiful Stratford, I thought this is the best place to have a conference."

Hahn brought the initial idea of shooting a promotional video for the Stratford conference to Ballinran Entertainment president and executive producer Craig Thompson. While the idea was just to use the video to promote Stratford and the next year's conference at this year's district conference held recently in Owen Sound, the participation of numerous local Rotary members who highlighted much of the work done locally by Rotarians, often behind the scenes, made the video so much more.

"That was what we originally started with – all the reasons why you should come to Stratford for the conference – and then it kind of morphed into celebrating



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ROTARY

Rotary governor for District 6330 Katherine Hahn and Ballinran Entertainment president and executive producer Craig Thompson recently teamed up to shoot a short film highlighting the work Rotary does in Stratford and promoting the city as the host of next year's Rotary District 6330 annual conference.

all the good things Rotary does in Stratford and the community projects that we do, and this sort of relationship that Craig and I share with the community," Hahn said. "It really morphed into something quite amazing."

"Originally the film was just to get people to sign up and promote what the conference was going to be about next May, and I wanted to make sure all three Rotary Clubs were represented," Thompson said. "I didn't want to have a voiceover thing, so what we decided to do was have multiple members of Rotary each showcase some accomplishment in the community

because I thought the first thing we needed to do was show just how many things Rotary touches in Stratford – things that you don't see and things that you do see."

With an intro and outro by Stratford actor Michael Fox, as well as appearances by Hahn dressed all in white as a magician – a nod to the 2025 conference theme, "the magic of Rotary" – the film features clips from numerous local Rotary members speaking about local Rotary projects that have made a difference for residents of Stratford.

Among those who appear in the film are Rotarian and Stratford Perth Hospice

Foundation director of fund development and stewardship Lucie Stuart, who speaks of the impact Rotary has in raising funds for Rotary Hospice Stratford-Perth; Rotarian Dr. Doug Thompson, who speaks about the clubs' tree-planting efforts at the T.J. Dolan Natural Area; Rotarian Mark Smith speaking about the recreational opportunities for residents of all ages at the Stratford Rotary Complex; and Rotarian and member of the Order of Canada Jean Aitcheson, who speaks about Rotary's support of the mental-health unit at the Stratford General Hospital.

"What we want to be able to do is show the broader community in Stratford, 'Hey, this is what Rotary is doing. Let's be proud of our community and we're going to welcome all these delegates from Michigan and southwestern Ontario to Stratford next year.' We want to showcase not just Stratford as a destination, but as an active Rotary community," Craig Thompson said. "... We're always asking the government to solve our problems for us, but Rotary is an example of how we pull up our own bootstraps and serve the community because not everything can be solved by government or finger-pointing or complaining. This is what Rotary does and they don't do it with a lot of recognition."

"We've been referred to as the best-kept secret in Stratford," Hahn said.

Hahn is currently looking for sponsors for next year's conference. Those interested can send an email to discon2025@rotarystratford.com.

For more information about next year's district conference in Stratford, visit rotarystratford.com/events/rotary-district-conference-2025/.

Small-Town Strip Club heads to Lucknow's Music in the Fields

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Stratford based band Small-Town Strip Club will be performing at an annual non-profit music festival, Lucknow's Music in The Fields, as winners of the Emerging Artist Showdown.

Small-Town Strip Club won the showdown and will be performing some sets at the beloved rural Ontario music festival at the Emerging Artist Side Stage Aug. 24 ahead of Kip Moore and the Reklaws. Runner-up Colt McLauchlin will also perform. The band encouraged fans on social media to vote for them as much as possible.

"We're incredibly grateful for this opportunity and excited about what lies ahead," the band said in a statement sent to the Times. "We want to thank our supporters for their unwavering support and invite everyone to come out and see us perform at Music in the Fields. It will be one for the books."

Music in The Fields will run from Aug.

22-24 at Lucknow's Graceland Event Grounds. The Glorious Sons and Brett Kissel will also be performing at the festival.

Small-Town Strip Club performed at several venues across Ontario that hold up to 300 people each. Performing at Music in the Fields will expose the band to a larger audience and, perhaps, new fans.

"Getting on legitimate festivals alongside professional musicians we look up to such as The Glorious Sons or Brett Kissel is a big step for the band," the band said. "It's a significant milestone that can open doors to new opportunities, help build our fan base and increase our chances of getting on other event opportunities."

In addition to Music in the Fields, Small-Town Strip Club will be working on its upcoming LP and performing a couple of shows including the pregame and half-time show at a Hamilton Tiger Cats game.

Proceeds from Lucknow's Music in the Fields will support Mental Health Matters Wingham. To purchase tickets, visit www.musicinthefields.ca/2024-tickets.



(JOHANN YUNDT PHOTO)

EMERGING ARTIST

Stratford's Small-Town Strip Club is thankful to be selected as the emerging artist showdown winner ahead of Lucknow's Music in the Fields, which will take place between Aug. 22 and 24.

Home Suite Home changing lives one tiny home at a time

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Home Suite Home is a non-profit organization new to Stratford that will transform lives one tiny home at a time. With just ten square metres of land, independence and housing can be achieved for a member of the unhoused community within the city.

General Manager Jeff Murton spent decades working with non-profits and faith-based organizations in the United Kingdom, U.S., New Zealand and now Canada. One day, in the subway he encountered a father and young daughter laying on the platform. He felt compelled to do something to brighten her day.

"I bought a pastry, came over to the girl and her eyes popped open terrified. And I said 'It's ok, I'm just getting you something,' and she said 'You can see me? You see me?' ... And that really got me going on a pathway," explained Murton.

Upon moving to Stratford he united with Vicky DeVocht who shared the same passion and vision as he did and within months Home Suite Home was developed and became a non-profit in May of this year. They collaborated with Hive Design and Teahen Construction for prototype designs and are now gearing up to fundraise for the first build.

The first fundraiser was auctioning off a basket filled with donations by local businesses eager to participate. The basket was successfully auctioned off at a farmer's market in early July. The second upcoming event is a garage sale on July 27 at the Bethel Church parking lot from 7 a.m. until noon. If you've missed these opportunities to participate in fundraising, there is a barbecue planned for August 24, though more information will come in future issues.

The mandate of Home Suite Home is to provide homes for those suffering as hidden homeless and also helping those living unsheltered. The hidden homeless are the couch surfers, or those forced to live with family because there were no other options for them. They are employed but could be living in a car or a tent.

"We are specifically targeting the ones before they get (unsheltered). So they've been living with family members and perhaps they have land on their own property to allocate a space for a loved one to live. So you're not splitting up families, you're actually keeping them together but they are gaining their independence," said Murton.

Ideally, property for a tiny home can be sourced through private homeowners who have ten square metres to allocate to a six square metre tiny home build. There could also be opportunity for businesses that own property to donate or lease for a period of time. Additionally, they are targeting builds within the city limits, given that people still need access to services. Furthermore, Home Suite Home is in the process of acquiring charity status with the federal government so that once approved, they will be able to issue tax receipts.

There are criteria for the hidden home-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

HELPING THOSE LIVING UNSHELTERED

An example of the type of tiny home that Home Suite Home, the new non-profit organization, is intending to build within the year.

less to qualify for a tiny home. Among them, they have to have a minimum income of \$25,000, they will need three references and a clean police check. The organization will be quite explicit in the type of candidate that will qualify as they will need to be able to maintain the dwelling while living there and pay the bills, among other things.

The immediate goal for Home Suite Home for the upcoming year is to build the first home. They believe they can do this within 12 months.

"We actually want to have our first home and our first person in a Home Suite Home. That's our goal. I'm going to rejoice when someone is standing at the front door shaking their keys and we say 'In you go.' It's certainly accelerating right now, and if the charity status drops in line I think we can do it. We are quite confident," said Murton.

In the meantime, they have launched Hope Essentials, an online store specializing in products meant to assist those that are currently unhoused. Each purchase assists in two ways. First, the product will be delivered directly to agencies on the ground in connection with those in need of assistance. Second, a portion of the purchase price goes toward the fundraising for the first tiny home.

"We were focused on just the home and then someone said 'Are you doing anything for the people that are experiencing homelessness?' And then we thought, why don't we get certain things online that people can purchase? The money will, one,

purchase the item, and secondly when we source that item and deliver that item, if we can get a bargain on the item the remaining money goes towards the tiny home. So you're helping someone right now and someone who is going to get a home," explained Murton.

The Strike Ya Match campaign of fundraising is in three parts. The campaign song, Strike Ya Match was conceived and performed by Steven and Renata Hazel and is available for download for \$5. It talks specifically to the type of people and how living without a home affects them. This is released in memory of Steven and

also Sue Murton, who both have passed away and were the heart and soul of the mandate.

The second component is a straight donation, where people can donate at planned events or direct to the campaign on the website. The third component is to hold a Strike Ya Match event yourself.

"What's your passion? Turn your passion to compassion."

For more information about Home Suite Home and the Strike Ya Match campaign, or to shop the Hope Essentials store, visit homesuitehome.org. Volunteers are always welcome.

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Stratford Farmers Market a happening place to be Saturday mornings at the Rotary Complex

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Saturday mornings at the Stratford Farmers Market are still a happening place to be between 7 a.m. and 12 p.m. at the Rotary Complex off McCarthy Road.

There continues to be an indoor market there year-round where there are two area meat vendors, baked goods, bird-feed sales, a micro brewery and many more local sellers of various handmade items from local residents and area farms.

Come to the market hungry since the Stratford and District Agricultural Society members are there bright and early at 7 a.m. to serve up Perth County back bacon or sausage on a bun, and the smell of frying onions entices hungry market goers to their outdoor barbecue.

Fresh sweet corn has made its first appearance of the year and the ears of corn look better than ever.



Sweet corn sales were brisk on Saturday as Diane Mitchell, Chloe Knoll and Maria Chesney are eager to show off the full cobs of sweet corn produced from their Thames River Melon Farm near Innerkip in Oxford County. They also said their homegrown musk melons are also now selling at their outdoor market stand, along with many other vegetables and fruit.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

The gentle sounds of the harp were ringing in the air for entertainment at the Saturday farmers market in Stratford. Elysha Vorstenbosch, (Elysha V Music) from the Mitchell farming area kept market goers entertained throughout the morning market.

Perth County Holstein club's 2024 Sweepstakes winners announced

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Every Year, the Perth County Holstein Club, one of the longest-running Holstein associations in Ontario, holds their Sweepstakes competition, open to all Holstein breeders in Perth County.

The Sweepstakes entries are measured by their profitability for their farm owners.

This year in the two-year-old class, there were 61 entries from 14 different Perth County farms, and in the 80,000-plus kilograms of milk class, there were 29 entries from 13 different farms.

In the two-year-old class, the winning entry was from the Newmorning Holstein Herd of Dennis and Nicole Noom and family whose dairy farm is near Monkton.

Their winning cow was Newmorning Legend Lester with 14,560 kilograms of milk in 305 days, amassing a total of 940 points out of a possible 1,000, and showed a profit of \$14.82 per day.

The family also had the second-place winner, Newmorning Duke 513, who had a total of 12,756 kilograms of milk with a \$12.64 per-day profit.

Third place went to the Impact farm of Bill and Alicia Killing near Stratford, with Drewholme Aristocrat Leisure P's \$12.58 per-day profit.

In the 80,000-plus kilogram lifetime class, the winning entry was from the Stratford area Squibb Farm, Squibbland Rita Windbrook, which won with \$32.05 per-day profit and over 144,101 kilograms of milk in its lifetime.

Second place went to the Noom family with their entry Newmorning Bookem pi, with \$30.09 per-day profit and third place was Newmorning Bookem Lester 1922 with \$28.67 per day.



(PATTY JONES PHOTO)

The two-year-old Holstein Sweepstakes winner in Perth County, Newmorning Legend Lester, for Dennis and Nicole Noom and family near Monkton.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Sweepstakes winners from Bill Killing (Impact Farm), TJ de Wit and Geoff McMullen (Perth County Holstein Directors), and Nicole Noom (Newmorning Farms) accepting the award for their winning two-year-old entry.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured are Steve Squibb, owner of the Sweepstakes winner in the 80,000-plus kilogram class, Perth County Holstein Breeders Club president TJ de Wit, club director Geoff McMullen and Nicole Noom.



(PATTY JONES PHOTO)

Squibbland Rita Windbrook, the winning Sweepstakes entry in the 80,000-plus kilograms class for the Squibb family near Stratford.

Wheat yields above average, despite rain

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Most farmers in the areas of Perth, Waterloo and Oxford counties will tell you that 2024 has been one of those years when working between heavy rains can be very

trying.

A bright light so far has been the harvest of winter wheat, which has been occurring over the middle of July this year depending on the area of the county and cloud bursts of rain that can occur.

In speaking with area farmers, most of

the wheat yields have been in the 100 to 130 bushel per acre range, and farmers are commenting that there is lots of straw and very little lodging this year.

Wheat moistures have been in the 14 to 15.5 per cent range and 50 per cent of the wheat is now off in the immediate area at the

time of publication.

They commented that this year's yields are above average and good to excellent quality.

Most area farmers said they do applications of fungicides during the wheat growing season in order to reduce the risk of disease.



Gary Pletsch is shown combining an excellent crop of winter wheat between Shakespeare and Stratford, with sunny, warm weather and very little humidity. "Yields were well over 100 bushel an acre and moisture levels were where they should be," Pletsch said.

Dan Bell is shown combining a large field of winter wheat in Perth County's South East-hope township, north of Tavistock. Farm owner Dwayne Dietrich said "wheat yields and moisture were excellent and there was lots of straw this year, and baling after the combine worked as well as it could have."

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The doctor is in: Grateful Ukrainian neurologist hopes to practice medicine in Canada

JULIE ASHLEY

Times Contributor

Even as a young girl in Ternipol, Ukraine, Halyna Patrilyak dreamed of being a medical doctor, having a family, owning a home and travelling to see the world and meet people from different walks of life – ambitious dreams, for sure. Not only did Halyna eventually fulfill these dreams through hard work and ambition, she went on to complete several specializations that resulted in her practicing as a neurologist for 15 years ... until the war broke out. She was forced to stop her practice and leave her beautiful community.

Halyna reflects, “I put my whole life in a suitcase, looked at it and cried, asking myself every time why? War destroys people's destinies. Why am I forced to leave my native home and everything I have acquired during my life? The soul ached, and the heart cried.”

I immediately pause when I hear her words. I, nor most living Canadians, can imagine what war feels like, what it sounds like, what it looks, or even smells like. This, in fact, is one of the factors that brought Halyna and her two sons to Canada. The peacefulness of our country is a main factor for many other Ukrainians whose lives have been continually interrupted by war. They know that war has not been part of our recent history, unlike so many other countries. We sometimes forget that fact amidst our privilege.

Halyna talks about leaving Ukraine and asking God for wisdom to make the right decisions and encounter good people. She could not know what the future held when she arrived in February 2023.

She recounts for me, “The first words I heard were ‘Welcome to Canada!’ These words sustained my every day.” Halyna reflects gratefully that her prayers were answered. She comments on the many residents and volunteers who helped her family find housing, work, opportunities to learn English, and other logistics of settling here. There were even additional experiences offered to visit cultural events to learn more about Canada or to enjoy some Ukrainian events to enjoy some of what was left behind. Even simple words of kindness from others gave encouragement to Halyna.

Her sons, Vasyl, 18, and Denys, 17, attend St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford and are excited for the abundance of opportunities ahead of them, with little fear of war interrupting their futures.

Halyna's preparation for life in Canada began before she knew she would need it. While she studied at medical school with students from different countries, she would help them adjust to Ukraine and recognized how difficult it was to come to a foreign country. “I had no idea that I would, a few years later, face the same challenges.”

As was her dream, Halyna travelled extensively, given her higher station in life as a



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Halyna Patrilyak was a practicing neurologist in Ukraine for fifteen years ... until the Russian-Ukrainian war broke out and she fled to Canada with her two sons. Now, Patrilyak works as a personal support worker in Stratford.

reputable professional and experienced neurologist in her country.

She reflects on her travels to many countries including Israel. There, she found it startling to see military women with weapons on the streets. That memory haunts her as we fast-forward to today. She worries about the men and women in military uniforms on the streets, everyday for many hours, enduring alarm sirens, rockets overhead, destruction, and for many, death. In Israel and Palestine, the situation is similar. She wants to underline for me how horrific it is and how no one is safe from war, due to the cruel mistakes made by politicians and how the politics funnel down to innocent citizens. This could happen to Canada too.

I am in awe of Halyna's humility and patience given that her specialization and skill level is in such demand in Canada, where people wait many months to see a neurologist. She had hoped that she could use her education and skills in Canada in medicine, but this door was closed. She needed to put food on the table here. It is not a well known fact, but Ukrainians are not always able to bring their financial resources with them. With few options, Halyna began work in a factory as a welder, since welders are in demand here, and it is known that this can be a method for improving chances for permanent residency in Canada. I winced at this thought. How is it possible that we do have the methods in place to fast track someone who brings so much of what we need so desperately?

Halyna left welding as she could not endure the physical challenges so has now found work with the elderly as a personal support worker. She is happy to be working in the general field although at a position

well below her capabilities. Being so grateful to the Stratford community, she decided to volunteer at Stratford General Hospital, and humbly prays for those who have helped her to now.

Being the gracious person she is, Halyna seems less concerned about her own situation and wants Canada to know the plight of her people.

It is my hope that Canada will soon change their hearts (and policies) to allow Halyna to practice medicine here too.

You know someone whose story should be told? Please reach out to me at jraeashley@gmail.com.

Dear compatriots of Canada,

Your country has long been a beacon of hope, compassion and opportunity for those seeking refuge from conflict and hardship. Today, you face a crucial moment to once again demonstrate these values as you welcome Ukrainians fleeing a devastating war in their homeland.

These people have experienced incredible difficulties. We left our homes, our livelihoods, and often our loved ones. We come to Canada not by choice, but by necessity, looking for safety and a chance to rebuild their lives.

As Canadians, you have the power to dramatically change our lives. Here's how you can help:

Embrace them with open arms. A simple smile, kind word or offer of help can mean everything to someone adjusting to a new country.

Provide employment opportunities. Many Ukrainians coming to Canada are skilled professionals eager to contribute to the economy. By offering them jobs, you not only help them achieve financial stability, but also enrich your workplaces with diverse perspectives and experiences.

Support their integration. Learning a new language, understanding local customs and navigating unfamiliar systems can be challenging. Offer patience, guidance and resources to help newly arrived Ukrainians easily integrate into your communities.

Celebrate their culture. Ukrainian culture is rich and vibrant. By embracing and honoring their traditions, you create a more inclusive society and help them stay connected to their heritage.

Protect their rights. Ensure that newly arrived Ukrainians are treated fairly and have access to the supports and services they need to thrive in Canada.

Remember, many of our ancestors once came to Canada in search of a better life. By extending a helping hand to Ukrainians today, you honor this heritage and strengthen the diverse structure of our nation.

Together, we can turn this difficult time into an opportunity for growth, compassion, and unity.

Thank you for your open hearts and minds. Your kindness and support will change the world for the better for those who need it most.

— Words from Halyna Patrilyak.

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Intriguing India: The trip of a lifetime



HILARY PURVIS

Contributor

This year marks a milestone birthday for my sister and next year, a milestone birthday for myself. What a great reason to finally visit our family roots, in this case, India! Our father was born and raised in Allahabad, and spent his formative years in Calcutta, now known as Kolkata. With the fall of the British Empire, his family moved to England and later to Canada, which he proudly called 'home.' We spent our childhood hearing about this exotic country and have always wanted to travel there. Like many people, the idea of such a trip is daunting, overwhelming and somewhat intimidating. After quite a bit of research, we've found the perfect trip – a fully guided tour



that includes the top sites as well as cultural exploration cruising the Ganges river.

Beautiful, exotic and chaotic, India is a country unlike any other. Wondrous sights rich in romance and intrigue reflect the history of centuries of Mughal rule followed by the British. The Golden Triangle of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur are home to some of the world's most famous landmarks and UNESCO sites. The Taj Mahal in Agra and Humayun's Tomb

in Delhi were built as grand tributes of love. The Pink City of Jaipur, a centre for the arts, is famous for its many palaces.

One of the world's most sacred bodies of water, the Ganges River flows throughout India and Bangladesh, through a myriad of small villages and densely-populated cities. Life on the river is very different from the hustle and bustle of the large cities, and very few travellers have the opportunity to experience it. The architec-

ture along the Ganges is magnificent, dotted with mosques, palaces, temple complexes and intricately-carved Hindu temples.

In the next 10 years, India is expected to become the world's hottest travel destination, and Stonetown Travel wants to take you there in luxury. My sister and I are currently planning a fully-escorted group tour to India in Fall 2025 and would love you to join us. The tour will begin in Delhi and

explore the Golden Triangle. The trip will continue to Kolkata where travellers will board an exquisite small cruise ship for a Ganges River cruise. You will travel safely and comfortably, enjoying India's finest accommodations.

To learn more about this once-in-a-lifetime travel experience, please contact Stonetown travel.

Hilary Purvis is a travel consultant with Stonetown Travel in New Hamburg.

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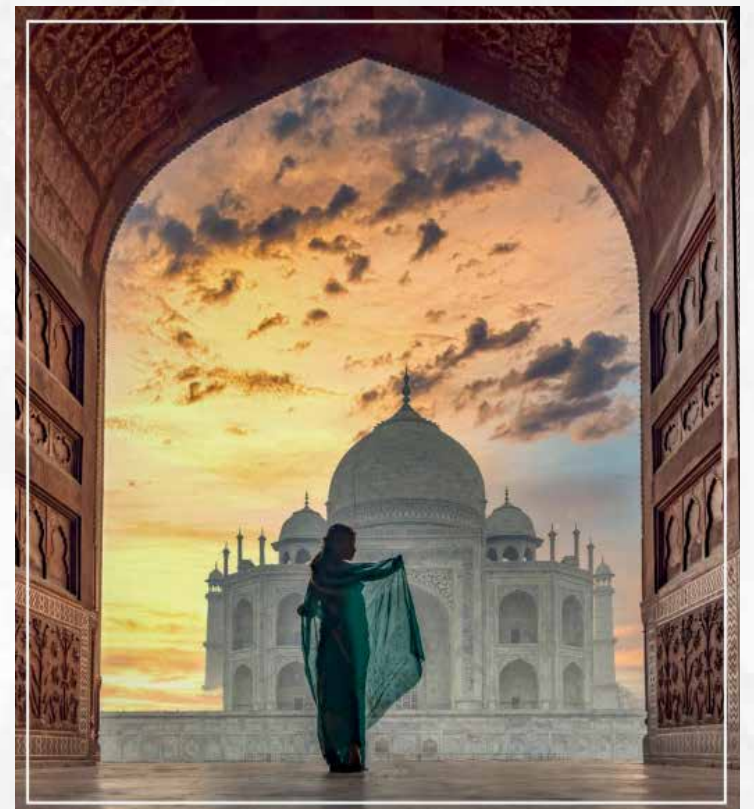
A cultural immersion unlike any other, this voyage brings you right to the heart and the highlights of India. See the Taj Mahal by sunrise and sunset, wander the Pink City of Jaipur, and so much more.

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How to emotionally ease into retirement



IRENE ROTH

Times Freelance Columnist

Retirement marks a significant life transition for all of us that brings a mix of excitement and apprehension. We wait for it with breathless anticipation. Yet, when we finally retire, we feel lost and purposeless. This can be hard to cope with in the beginning.

The shift from a structured working life to a more flexible lifestyle can be challenging, especially on an emotional level. But it is possible to recreate a life for yourself that is healthy and emotionally refreshing, imbued with purpose and meaning.

In other words, easing into retirement requires thoughtful

preparation, self-awareness, and proactive steps to embrace this new phase with positivity and fulfillment. It requires that we accept that our life will be different and will feel weird for a while. That's all part of the process of recreating a life for yourself.

Here's a comprehensive guide to help you emotionally transition into retirement smoothly.

First, accept that it's a big change. Retirement is a major life change that can affect your sense of identity and purpose. Acknowledge that it's normal to experience a range of emotions, from joy and relief to anxiety and uncertainty. Understanding that these feelings are a natural part of the transition can help you manage them more effectively.

Second, take time to reflect on your career and the accomplishments you've achieved. Celebrate the milestones and contributions you've made. This can help provide closure and create a positive foundation for moving forward.

Third, set realistic goals and expectations for your retirement. While it can be a time of

freedom and exploration, it also comes with its own set of challenges. Being prepared for both the ups and downs can help you navigate this new chapter more smoothly.

Fourth, identify your passions. Retirement offers the opportunity to pursue activities and interests that you may have put aside during your working years. Reflect on what truly excites and motivates you. Whether it's traveling, gardening, painting, or volunteering, engaging in activities that you are passionate about can bring a renewed sense of purpose and joy.

Fifth, set personal goals can provide direction and a sense of achievement. These goals don't have to be grand. They can be as simple as learning a new hobby, reading a certain number of books, or improving your fitness level. Having something to strive for keeps you motivated and engaged.

Sixth, volunteer and give back as much as you can. Many retirees find fulfillment in giving back to their communities. Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose, build social connections, and make a positive im-

pact. Find causes that resonate with you and offer your time and skills to help others.

Seventh, stay mentally sharp. Keeping your mind sharp is crucial for emotional well-being. Engage in activities that stimulate your brain, such as reading, puzzles, learning new skills, or taking courses. Lifelong learning can provide a sense of accomplishment and keep your mind engaged.

Eighth, practice Mindfulness and Relaxation. Techniques like mindfulness, meditation, and yoga can help reduce stress and promote emotional balance. These practices encourage you to live in the present moment, manage anxiety, and cultivate a positive outlook.

Ninth, nurture existing relationships. Retirement provides more time to invest in your relationships. Strengthen connections with family and friends through regular visits, calls, or virtual meetings. These relationships can provide emotional support and a sense of belonging.

Tenth, stay open to new experiences. Retirement is a time to explore new possibilities. Be

open to trying new activities, traveling to new places, and meeting new people. Embracing change with a positive attitude can lead to unexpected joys and opportunities.

Eleventh, be patient with yourself. Adjusting to retirement is a process that takes time. Be patient with yourself as you navigate this transition. Allow yourself to feel a range of emotions and understand that it's okay to take things one step at a time. So, be sure to make self-care a priority for yourself.

Easing into retirement emotionally involves more than just financial preparation; it requires self-awareness, planning, and a proactive approach to well-being. By understanding the emotional impact, finding new purpose, maintaining mental health, building social connections, embracing change, and creating a new routine, you can navigate this transition smoothly and enjoy a fulfilling and joyful retirement. This new chapter in your life can offer endless possibilities for growth, exploration, and happiness. Embrace it with an open heart and a positive mindset.

We need to talk



BRUCE WHITAKER

Times Freelance Columnist

Just spend a few minutes on Facebook groups Stratford.Life and Stratford.Connect and it becomes obvious that we have a hard time talking with one another when we disagree, especially during these volatile times. In such conversations, we often fail to listen to the nuance in arguments, jump to conclusions and sometimes enter discussions swinging. We're in the fight to gain agreement on our position no matter what it takes. This con-

stant negative connection makes us shallower thinkers and more impatient with others.

Civil discourse is the practice of deliberating about matters of public concern in a way that seeks to expand knowledge and promote understanding while maintaining a level of respect. In essence, it is about collaborating with others to achieve mutually satisfying results. The word "civil" relates directly to civic in the sense of being oriented toward public life.

Small cities, such as Stratford, may offer the best places to practice civil discourse by addressing divisive public issues. People in smaller places care, in part, because they see the direct results of local decisions. If municipal government and civic groups are motivated and capable, they can affect positive and genuine discourse.

Recently, there has been debate on whether certain Stratford residents should be allowed to voice their concerns to Stratford

city council based on recent behaviour. The city ultimately decided that a few residents were inappropriate through their behaviour. They were banned from council meetings and city facilities for a stated length of time. It caused dissension. The end result has been a lack of civility between the parties and a growing division of trust.

A more constructive approach to discourse is offered through the teachings of Milan Kordestani in his book, *I'm Just Saying: A Guide to Maintaining Civil Discourse in an Incredibly Divided World*. The author suggests entering conversations with a basic level of trust and sincerity. Each side is made up of human lives bringing with them their own fears, concerns, hopes, and anxieties. It is up to all parties to do their best to begin and end every encounter with the same common courtesy. Meeting each other on the common ground of shared humanity eases the grasping of differing perspectives.

Mr. Kordestani goes further by suggesting thoughtful questions that demonstrate openness by going deeper, and trying to stay curious. Discussions need to move from "I know everything about them and their position" to "I wonder if I fully understand what they are saying." It's all about becoming more informed. He stresses that the best way to bring civility to the discussion is to try to dispel misconceptions and fear caused by false narratives that separate us.

The American education system recently adopted, as part of its peace curriculum, a civil discourse component. The objective is for students to advance the understanding of one another through more effective listening. The "speaking" students share their points of view. Once the speakers are finished, the "listening" students summarize the words of the speaker. Should the listener not be accurate, the speaker provides clarification. The dialogue goes back and

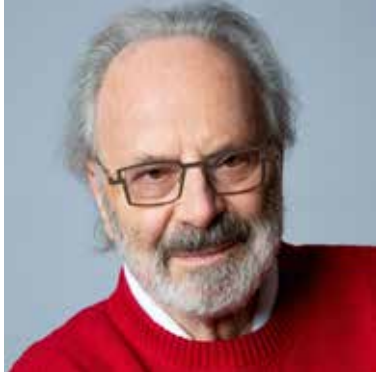
forth until the speaker's position is understood.

The dissension in Stratford is creating a fearful environment of being misunderstood leading to blowback – people are much less likely to communicate. Banning residents is not a wise choice as it limits communication, leaving questions unanswered. Instead, we should be welcoming the valued contributions of citizens and embrace engagement. Obviously, there may be a few who are not as civil as others, however, the greater importance is in the message to all that they truly matter.

The City of Stratford would be prudent to take the first step to improving relationships by reaching out to residents in order to create public forums that have some authority and legitimacy, leading ultimately to positive, collaborative solutions. This could go a long way to reestablishing the trust that is required for a truly well functioning community.

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO US!
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Are You Happy?



THOMAS R. VERNY, MD

Times Contributor

According to a new Gallup poll published in The World Global Happiness Report if you are a Canadian your happiness index was 6.9 out of 10 (maximum happiness), if American, 6.7. Compared to other countries, Canada placed 15th and the U.S. 23rd. The top happiest countries were Finland (7.7), Denmark (7.6), and Iceland (7.5). Interestingly, in both countries as well as Northern Europe, the older generation is significantly happier than the younger one.

Happiness, much like love, is one of the emotions and experiences in human life that is highly valued yet, in some ways, the most elusive. Turning to the academic literature for assistance to address this riddle, it becomes quickly apparent that happiness is complex and cannot be defined or measured using just one dimension.

Subjective well-being is a very active area of research with about 170,000 articles and books published on the topic in the past 15 years. These studies show that

certain factors such as personality, health, social relationships, religious belief and employment are strongly and positively associated with happiness. The most reliable predictors of life satisfaction are personality traits of extraversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability. In addition to these largely genetically inherited traits influenced as they are by family constellations, childrearing, education and culture are lifestyle choices including healthy diet and exercise on the positive side and spending too much time watching TV or on the computer, alcoholism and substance addictions on the negative side.

All studies agree that fostering one's physical and mental health increases a person's chances for a happy life. The positive relationship between health and happiness is likely reciprocal: being healthy enhances happiness and being happy benefits your health.

One such study conducted by medical researchers in Shanghai found potential causal evidence that better mental well-being, measured by life satisfaction, mood, neuroticism, and depressive symptoms, promote a longer and healthier life.

A surprising finding of this research was that when it looked at 33 mediators, or factors that contribute in varying degrees to increased well-being and, thus, healthier aging, eating more cheese was found to contribute more significantly than eating fresh fruit. [6].

While high fat foods are often

considered detrimental to health, studies at University College Dublin suggest that in moderation, the consumption of dairy fat can lower cholesterol and reduce mortality from all causes including cancer. Findings from Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China reinforce the above and assert that cheese consumption has neutral to moderate benefits for human health.

While studying in Boston, I had the good fortune of meeting Abraham Maslow, Professor of Psychology at Brandeis University. In 1945 he first published his 'hierarchy of needs that motivate humanity' and then continued to expand on these needs that include basic (physical, safety), social (love, esteem), and self. Physical needs must be satisfied before social needs, and social needs before self-fulfillment. To act unselfishly, a person must have met their most basic needs, an achievement that leads to growth and self-actualization and, we may add – happiness. Yew-Kwang Ng, Distinguished Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, suggests a higher fifth level, not of self-actualization, but 'beyond oneself' a concern for the welfare of others including animals.

Actions or activities that an individual undertakes to benefit or protect the environment have been shown to dramatically boost human happiness. "There is mounting evidence, from dozens and dozens of researchers, that nature has benefits for both physical and psychological human wellbeing," says Lisa

Nisbet, PhD, a psychologist at Trent University in Ontario, who studies connectedness to nature. "You can boost your mood just by walking in nature, even in urban nature. And the sense of connection you have with the natural world seems to contribute to happiness even when you're not physically immersed in nature."

This does not preclude important instrumental values of happiness, including success in one's career and productivity or work performance. In fact, Charles Henri DiMaria from the Laboratoire d'Economie d'Orléans, Paris, France has proposed that promoting subjective well-being is not only desirable on its own but leads to higher productivity and the economic prosperity of the country.

A word about perfectionism. While I think it is important in life to apply oneself fully and professionally to any enterprise, striving to be the perfect son or perfect father or writing the perfect column is a surefire recipe for grief and disappointment. In fact, there is now research to show that as Tzuhsuan Ma has written, "As soon as you release yourself from being perfect, you would be surprised just how many ways there are to solve a problem." My advice, have realistic expectations and aim for very good rather than perfect and you will enjoy life a lot more.

Does Money Buy Happiness? The answer is, yes and no. At any given time, those with higher incomes are generally happier, both within and across nations, but over time, happiness does not

increase as incomes rise. A key reason for this paradox is that our satisfaction with our income depends much on how it compares to the incomes of others.

And I cannot let you go before I tell you about a recent study by Kira Birditt, research professor at the University of Michigan who found that couples who drink together live longer. This is not advocating for increased consumption of alcohol. Rather the study emphasizes the importance of shared lifestyle habits for both health and relationship satisfaction.

And remember, most people derive happiness by helping others in need, animals or humans. So, be prepared to sacrifice a little of your own happiness if it will increase the happiness of others.

Dr. Thomas R Verny MD is a psychiatrist, podcaster and author of 47 scientific papers and eight books including the international best seller, The Secret Life of the Unborn Child, published in 27 countries and the recently released, The Embodied Mind. The Embodied Mind shows how intelligence and consciousness—traits traditionally attributed to the brain alone—permeate our entire being. Dr. Verny lives with his wife in Stratford.

In Pushing Boundaries, Dr. Verny will report on pioneering research and breakthrough discoveries in science and the arts as they impact our lives. He will try to address the question of readers everywhere, "Why should I care, of what value is this to me?"

Time to ask ourselves some tough questions about our environmental impact

ANNA KOWALCHUK

Times Contributor

Change is rarely easy or fun, especially if we feel that we are being compelled or coerced into it. The fact is, though, that the overheating of our planet by human activity has reached such a crisis that, whether or not we like it, change is not only necessary, it is necessary now.

So, let's all take a deep breath, set our hearts and minds to "warp speed ahead," and face this reality with as much dignity and courage as we can – our children and grandchildren are depending on us.

In my previous installment, I challenged readers to think and act outside the box in terms of how they might make a positive impact on the current climate trajectory. Here are some hard-ball questions we could and should be asking ourselves:

- Can I, a reasonably healthy adult human, make that trip by bike, bus, train or on foot instead of by car?
- Can I, a member of municipal government, commit to adding more bike lanes and/or improving public transit in order to facilitate that more environmentally sustainable choice?
- Do I, a habitual shopper, need to purchase yet another petroleum-based, plastic doo-hickey that will just get tossed tomorrow but will live forever in a landfill?
- And, as a designer/manufacturer of said doo-hickey, can I implement more sustainable production methods and use more bio-degradable materials instead?
- Do I, a keen traveller, need to engage in highly polluting air trips when I can explore the wonders of here using more sustainable options, or wait until more environmentally responsible air-travel be-

comes available?

- Do I, a heat-sensitive person, need to crank up my AC so that my entire home is the temperature of a meat locker when I can, perhaps, hunker down in my nice, cool basement to where I've relocated my TV and bar fridge?
- At the same time, can I, an architect/city planner, insist on new builds that are more innovative and less insatiable in their consumption of heating/cooling energy?
- Do I, a health-conscious hydrator, need to buy gallons of water in ocean-clogging plastic bottles when the city supply is safe, plentiful and free?
- And do I, a retailer, need to be selling them?
- Should I, a caffeine addict (and who isn't?), be idling my car for up to 20 minutes to get a coffee from a drive-through

that is handed to me in a cup that is both non-reusable and non-recyclable?

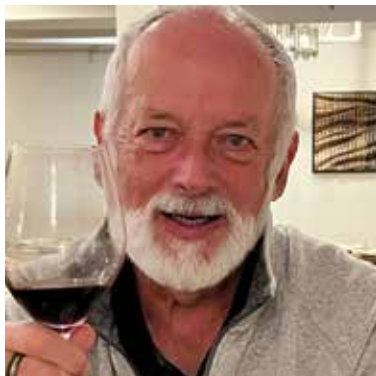
- And should I, a drive-through owner, be living with such blatant environmental irresponsibility on my conscience?

I assure you, dear reader, that my intention in posing these questions is not to point fingers, but simply to disturb a slumber from which we all, sooner rather than later, must awake.

My next installment will feature some folks who have, not only woken from this slumber, but have made the changes necessary to live a happy healthy, guilt-free lifestyle that is both environmentally sensitive and economically sound.

If you know of an individual, company or organization that deserves recognition for their innovative and sustainable environmental practices, please contact me at frogsaleaping@yahoo.com.

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Into the woods with Lori McCarthy



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

We walked a short distance into the forest that surrounds Lori McCarthy's home. En route, Lori pointed to two or three different plants and told us to pick some of the leaves or small branches. These we carried to a rough-hewn table set up in a clearing and we began to create the first of at least a dozen amazing tastes we were to experience that afternoon.

It's unusual, to say the least, to refer to a person as a destination, but I can't think of a better description for McCarthy. She would argue the point, maintaining the destination she represents is actually Newfoundland and Labrador. I couldn't imagine a better ambassador for Canada's newest province.

But I would still maintain that McCarthy herself and the unique experience she has created qualifies as a destination, and one worth seeking out.

McCarthy is a passionate Newfoundlander, a highly trained chef and a self-described outdoors-woman.

After working for many years in the restaurant business, she decid-



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Tea and dessert by the sea.

ed to combine all of her passions, and she has developed an unparalleled experience for visitors to her part of Newfoundland, only a few minutes out of St. John's.

McCarthy led our group of five travel journalists and two convivial hosts from Destination St. John's to the table in the woods.

On our way, we had foraged for some leaves of sweetgale, a shrub native to many parts of Canada. McCarthy invited us to grind our sweetgale leaves with sugar. She distributed glass mugs and we combined the sweetgale with cranberry sugar, partridgeberry syrup, black current leaves, a stalk of rhubarb we had picked from her garden, strawberry rhubarb kombucha and some soda and ice. I think the soda was the only thing not foraged on Lori's property.

The result? One of the most delicious drinks I have ever enjoyed, and that was just the start.

McCarthy led us a few metres on to where she had started a fire in a fire pit, which was surrounded by low, rough-hewn benches. Beside the fire was a plank laid on its side, on which was pegged a large fillet of arctic char.

The meal was astonishing. The smoked char was served along with amazing mussels. McCarthy had harvested some divers' scallops, which you can't buy in a store, and served a potato salad complete with tiny, delicious Newfoundland shrimp.

A couple of McCarthy's friends showed up carrying a guitar and we were regaled with Newfoundland folk songs as we enjoyed this exceptional meal.

Then we were invited into a craft building where we made our own sweetgale sugar and other spices to take with us.

Finally, we walked a trail down to the water's edge where McCarthy served us tea in actu-

al china cups and a collection of wonderful, homemade desserts.

She explained this was the setting that inspired her to bring her culinary skills back into her beloved Newfoundland woodland where she engages in what she calls "storytelling through food."

She told us after working for years in restaurants, she had a mug-up with her mom. McCarthy had been watching chefs from around the world as they incorporated products from their local landscape into their culinary creations. As she and her mom sat sipping tea by the sea, she wondered if her own experience could be converted into an actual business, enabling her to pursue all the things she is passionate about.

As it turns out, it could. "At its heart, my work is storytelling through food," she said. "Stories collected and retold, stories of integrity, authenticity and my unwavering, non-negotiable commitment to tell the real sto-

ries of Newfoundland and Labrador. Those stories that live deep in my soul and in the souls of those around me."

McCarthy has collected an archive of Newfoundland and Labrador stories, songs, poems and scrapbook entries, and part of her time with visitors is spent in reading some of these authentic, home-grown treasures. In fact, I first met McCarthy not in her woods, but on the stage of our Travel Media Association of Canada convention in St. John's a few days prior to our foraging visit. During her keynote talk to our members, she read some poignant prose by a Newfoundlander and also talked with great emotion about her grandmother – and she brought many of us to tears right alongside her.

That's the kind of heartfelt commitment McCarthy's guests are in for. It's an unforgettable experience, one that carries you right into the heart of Newfoundland culture.

And McCarthy makes it clear this work is not only for the entertainment of visitors.

"I want my children and their children to love and appreciate the gifts this land has given us. Our stories, our food, our whole way of life, they're all worth passing down. They're part of who we are, where we've been and where we're going."

If you are interested in spending time with McCarthy – and I could not recommend that more highly – you can contact her at lorimccarthy.ca.

Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer, and President of the Travel Media Association of Canada. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email pknowles@golden.net.



Lori McCarthy in the craft room where visitors can make condiments from the plants they forage from the woods.



The incredible beauty of Newfoundland's shoreline – the perfect setting for a "mug-up."

Riddles

Which way did the outlaw go when he stole the computer?
He went data way

Why wasn't the outlaw allowed to be buried in the town cemetery?
He wasn't dead

What kind of horse eats and drinks with its tail?
They all do. They do not take their tails off to eat or drink

Where do race cars go swimming?
In a car pool

What kind of egg travels to unknown places?
An eggs-plorer

Why can't you play basketball with pigs?
Because they hog the ball

Backward I am heavy, but forward I am not.
What am I?
The word "not"

What can be swallowed, but can also swallow you?
Water

What can burn the eyes, sting the mouth, yet be eaten?
Salt

Sudoku

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		9		5				
				4		7		2
7				2		5	6	
1	5				3	2		8
	7		1					9
8			5					

Solutions on page 39



Pet of the Month



MAIZY

Meet 2-year-old Maizy! She is a vibrant and super affectionate large dog with a big heart full of life. Maizy is looking for an active and energetic home where she can thrive and be her best self. She loves to run, play and explore, making her the perfect companion for a family with older kids who can match her enthusiasm. Maizy would love to find an active home that can take her long walks and beautiful adventures. She would do best as the only dog in the household, ensuring she gets all the attention and love she deserves. If you're looking for a loyal and devoted furry friend who will be your one and only dog, Maizy is the one for you. Her playful and loving nature will bring joy and laughter to your home. Submit an adoption survey at <https://kwsphumane.ca/adoption-process>.

Word Search

SUMMER OLYMPICS

G	Q	Q	J	I	I	S	P	X	K	C	N	H	V	A	H	Q	V	F	H
X	N	F	I	I	O	A	G	B	H	N	L	K	T	O	G	Z	B	E	X
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- ATHLETICS
- SWIMMING
- GYMNASTICS
- CYCLING
- DIVING
- BASKETBALL
- TENNIS
- ROWING
- SOCCER
- VOLLEYBALL
- BOXING
- WRESTLING
- FENCING
- ARCHERY
- CANOEING

COMING EVENTS

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Eugen "Bob" Nothof

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Food to be served at 4:00 p.m.

FOOD TRUCK MONDAYS

Monday, July 29, 2024 at Grace United Church in Tavistock, 116 Woodstock St. S. • 4:30 until 7:30 pm

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enjoy delicious food prepared by: Crystals Fries, SWAT,
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FOOD TRUCK MONDAYS

Monday, August 5, 2024 at Grace United Church in Tavistock, 116 Woodstock St. S. • 4:30 until 7:30 pm

Proceeds supporting Tavistock Home and School Ass'n
(new playground equipment)

enjoy delicious food prepared by: Born2Eat, The Wild Boar and BeaverTails

FOOD TRUCK MONDAYS

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Proceeds supporting Camp Bimini
enjoy delicious food prepared by: 'Fo Cheezy, Moreish Ice Cream and Ish n Chips

CLASSIFIEDS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

OBITUARY



JOHN LEWIS CRABB

John Lewis Crabb, age 85, passed away peacefully with his family by his side at Stratford General Hospital on Wednesday, July 17, 2024. Born in Ottawa, ON., son of the late Lewis and Roberta (Dunn) Crabb, John is survived by his true love and best friend of 44 years, Hélène Fortin Crabb. Proud father of Julie (Allison), Stéphanie (Joseph) and Charles (Mira). Grand-father of Daniel, Benjamin, and Sophie Lavoie.

John will be fondly remembered by his sister Mavis (Millar), his niece and nephews Mark (Pam), Michael, Danna (Nicholas) and Paul as well as his brothers-in-law Jean (Isabelle), André (Nancy) and Michel Fortin.

John pursued a career in journalism first with the Ottawa Journal and then the Wall Street Journal. In mid-career, he turned to speech writing mainly for cabinet ministers and senators. He was also speech writer and communications officer for Texaco Canada in Toronto for 10 years.

John loved baseball. As a child, he played pickup ball in Ottawa and continued playing for decades, most memorably with the Alta Vista Ritchies in the National Capital Baseball League. He also coached countless Little Leaguers, leading several of his teams to league championships. He seemingly always had a ball in his hands, experimenting with new grips that he would workshop with his grandchildren, much to their delight.

He loved music and soon after moving to Stratford in 2013 he became a yearly subscriber to the Stratford Symphony Orchestra and INNERchamber.

John was a kind man and a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He loved his family and supported everyone in all their endeavours. John had a deep sense of humour; there was always laughter when John was around. His words might have been amusing but they were always full of wisdom. His thoughtfulness will be so deeply missed by his whole family.

In keeping with John's wishes, cremation will take place and there will be a celebration of life at a later date. As expressions of sympathy, memorial donations may be made to INNERchamber Stratford or to Carleton University School of Journalism through the W. G. Young Funeral Home, 430 Huron St, Stratford. www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com

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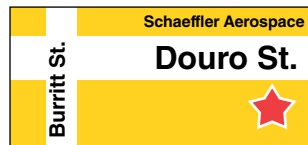
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