

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1322

Thursday, July 16, 2026

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FISHING AT THE WEST QUARRY

(MURRAY GRANT PHOTO)

Now that the work is complete, the West Quarry is a wonderful place to fish, canoe or kayak. However, please note that, for safety reasons, there is no swimming allowed. Pictured, a group of young fishermen get ready to land their catch.

Town reopens West Quarry following cleanup project

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys has announced the West Quarry has reopened following the completion of the West Quarry Cleanup Project.

The project focused on improving site safety, addressing invasive species and reducing long-term liabilities from when the site was an active quarry. Work included removing 900 cubic metres of waste concrete and 7,500 pounds of hazard-waste steel material, clearing overgrowth, improving water access, installing scenic fencing, and restoring portions of the site as open greenspace.

In conjunction with the reopening, town council recently approved an updated Quarry bylaw to allow for the use of human-powered watercraft, such as canoes, kayaks and paddleboards, as well as fishing at the West Quarry between dawn and dusk from April 1 to Nov. 30. Swimming remains prohibited, and visitors are asked to follow all posted rules and safety signage while using the area.

"We are pleased to reopen the West Quarry area and thank the community for their patience while this important work was completed," said Mayor David Forster.

"We are pleased to reopen the West Quarry area and thank the community for their patience while this important work was completed," said Mayor David Forster.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

Perth South updates asset management plan to reduce long-term infrastructure funding gap

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The Township of Perth South has adopted an updated asset management plan that charts a more sustainable path for maintaining roads, bridges, buildings and other municipal infrastructure over the next decade while significantly reducing its long-term infrastructure funding gap.

Council approved the 2025 Asset Management Plan following a presentation from Andrew Mirabella, associate partner with Hemson Consulting, at its July 7 meeting. The provincially required plan evaluates the township's infrastructure, its current condition, desired service levels and the investment needed to maintain those assets over time.

"Part of that requirement is to ensure when grant opportunities do come along, the municipality has an asset management plan demonstrating the requirement for the infrastructure and the needs," Mirabella told council. "You use that to support your applications."

"Aside from the grant side of things, this is obviously a fiscally prudent document to understand how municipalities manage their infrastructure, the quantum of the infrastructure they own, the conditions and so on."

Rather than aiming to replace every asset at the end of its expected lifespan, the updated plan uses a lifecycle approach that prioritizes maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement based on the level of service residents expect.

According to Mirabella, Perth South owns approximately \$401.3 million worth of municipal

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Contact David Forster, Broker of Record - 519.949.0501

COMMUNITY

Town reopens West Quarry following cleanup project



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF ST. MARYS)
St. Marys residents enjoying the West Quarry via canoe.

Continued from front
pleted,” said Jed Kelly, St. Marys director of public works, in a press release. “There are still a few finishing touches to be completed in the coming months, such as installing permanent fencing around the pillars, additional tree planting, bench donations and pathway installations. The grass is well established now and we are eager to have residents and tourists enjoy-

ing the space this summer.”
The West Quarry Cleanup Project was completed with support from the Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation. The town will continue to monitor restored areas and complete any remaining seasonal maintenance as needed.
For more information on the West Quarry, visit townofstmarys.com/westquarry.



(MURRAY GRANT PHOTO)
The majestic limestone pillars at the West Quarry.



(MURRAY GRANT PHOTO)
There are many places to cast a line at the West Quarry.



(MURRAY GRANT PHOTO)
Another fishing platform at the West Quarry.



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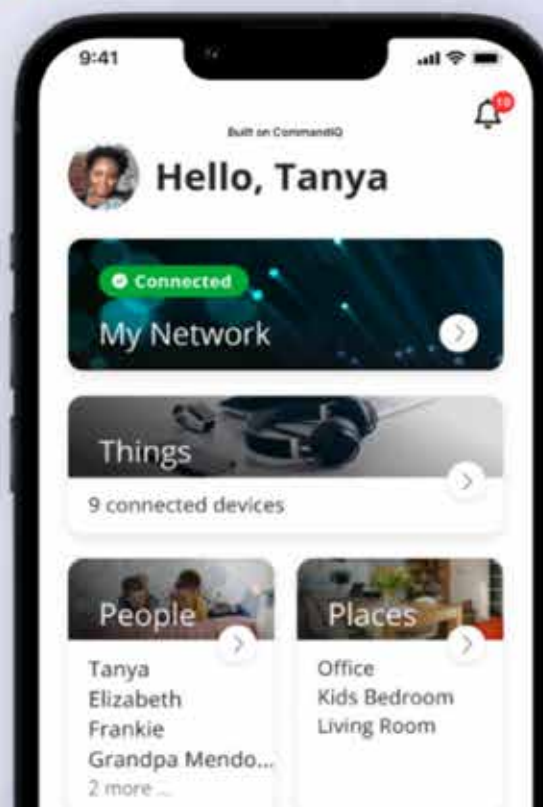
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EDITORIAL

Explaining the Independent’s ‘For Rent’ sign



STEWART GRANT
Regional Editor

Starting last week, many people have noticed the “For Rent” sign in the St. Marys Independent window at 36 Water St. S,

and they’ve been in to ask Wendy and Cindy what’s going on.

Others may have seen the “Sold” sign recently go up in the former O’Grady’s / former Ivy’s Boutique building at 143 Queen St. E, which has been listed for several months.

The signs are related. The Independent is moving this year!

Also moving to 143 Queen is my other downtown business, Stonetown Travel, which is currently located across the street.

For the last several years, since buying the St. Marys Independent in 2014 and Stonetown Travel in 2018, I’ve been paying rent at

two separate locations while personally not being all that present at either office. I’ve typically worked from home because both downtown offices’ open concept never really gave me a chance for my own space where I didn’t feel like I was distracting others.

The Ivy’s Boutique building, located beside Snapping Turtle Coffee Roasters, offers the chance to bring both businesses together – Stonetown Travel in the front, Grant Haven Media in the back – while providing me an office in the middle so I’m more connected to my team and to the community that we serve. I’m

excited for our team to truly have our own modern space and to be together.

The projected closing date for the building purchase at 143 Queen is July 28, and then we’ll do some interior renovations to prepare a planned opening in September.

These moves create some interesting opportunities within the downtown.

Stonetown Travel’s current space, located in the historic Grand Central Hotel building at 150 Queen St. E, would be ideal for a clothing / retail store to complement the already strong

lineup that side of the street that includes businesses such as The Chocolate Factory, O’Grady’s Clothing & Accessories, Dunny’s Source for Sports, Hyggeligt and Bungalow. For more information on this space for rent, contact building manager Adam at 519-801-8152.

The St. Marys Independent’s quaint space at 36 Water St. S is located on a corner lot and is full of possibilities. Landlord Merlin Linares has made many upgrades to the building over the years and can be reached at 519-276-9240 for rental inquiries, just as the sign indicates.

Bravo

We have 4 Bravos this week

1) Bravo to the young gentleman who graciously swapped his lower placement numbered card with me at the St Marys Life Lab. Being handicapped, it was much appreciated!

2) Bravo to the small-town businesses that make up this town! On Tuesday, I went into Sunrayz and was hoping to purchase a St Marys T-shirt for a friend. Not realizing they are custom made, the store asks for a couple days' notice, but of course, I needed it for the next day. Dan and Pam were on their way to London and returned to press my T-shirt! Only in St Marys.

3) Bravo to the several individuals who stopped their vehicles on James Street to assist my wife to her feet after she had fallen. She was uninjured and all is well. Many thanks. The town worth living in!

4) A big thank you to the gentleman who paid for my pizza order Saturday. You completely made my day with your kindness. Thank you so much for your generosity.

Boo

We have 1 Boo this week

1) Boo to the individual who is raiding our community garden! Countless hours are spent by many individual gardeners, and you apparently think it's cool to steal from them. IT IS NOT! Please stop. There are many eyes looking at our community gardens.

*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered. Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.

Quote of the Week

“We are here to announce that we changed the bylaw. You can now paddle board, canoe (and use) any human-powered watercraft in the area. Fishing is also allowed but we ask that you respect the rules and be here from dawn to dusk, but no swimming. ... We do ask you to enjoy the space, follow the rules, wear a life jacket and respect all safety guidelines.”

- Mayor Al Strathdee on the reopening of the West Quarry after all of the recent work completed

Overheard

AT THE COFFEE SHOP

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My four summer food groups are smoked, barbecued, grilled and ice cream.

I was telling someone about my summer beach body goals but forgot to mention what summer.

Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others? Either email them to us at info@stmarysindependent.com with the title “Overheard at The Coffee Shop”, call 519.284.0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA

Restoring small-town journalism, one community at a time!

St. Marys Independent

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Thoughts OF THE WEEK

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We worry about what a child will be one day, but forget that he is someone today.

Time flies whether you are having fun or not, your choice.

My mood has so many swings, it's a park now.

A lie may take care of the present but it has no future.

St. Marys hosting municipal hazardous and special product event on July 18

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys is hosting its next Municipal Hazardous and Special Product Disposal Day on Saturday, July 18.

The event will run from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the municipal operations centre (MOC) located at 408 James St. S (enter off South Service Road). It is open to residents of St. Marys and Perth South.

Items that will be accepted at the disposal event include:

- Acids, aerosol cans, antifreeze
- Bases, batteries, bleach
- Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFLs), fluorescent tubes
- Fertilizers, fuels, garden and pool chemicals
- Household cleaners, motor oil, paints, pesticides

- Propane tanks/cylinders, solvents, stains, Varsol

All materials must be sealed and in their original containers with labels. Materials should be transported in the rear of vehicles (trunk, truck bed, etc.) and contained in rigid containers for safe transport and unloading. Vehicles with materials in the back seat will be redirected to a separate area of the parking lot where they can be moved to the trunk or tailgate. Residents are asked to remain in their vehicles at all times as materials will be unloaded by trained staff.

Please note that the MHSW depot that was located at the St. Marys Landfill has now been closed, and MHSW material will no longer be received at the landfill.

For more information about waste disposal services in St. Marys, visit townofstmarys.com/MHSW.

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



ELECTION NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

Nomination packages are available for pickup by appointment only during the construction of the Church St. stairs at Town Hall. Please call 519-284-2340 ext. 212 or email clerksoffice@town.stmarys.on.ca.

Municipal nomination forms must be filed in person (by appointment) at St. Marys Town Hall by Friday, August 21 at 2 PM. Nomination forms for school board candidates shall be filed with the respective municipalities.

More details: townofstmarys.com/elections

SWIMMING QUARRY OPEN FOR SEASON

Cool off this summer at Canada's largest outdoor freshwater swimming pool. The Swimming Quarry is open daily from 11 AM to 7 PM. Splash, climb and slide at the Super Splash St. Marys inflatable park (tickets sold separately).

Learn more: townofstmarys.com/quarry



STONETOWN HERITAGE FESTIVAL

There's fun for everyone at the annual Stonetown Heritage Festival on Saturday, July 25! This free event celebrates the cultures, stories and histories that shape the past and present of St. Marys. The festival features family-friendly activities, heritage tours, art, vendor's and farmers' market, and live music and dance.

Learn more: discoverstmarys.ca



WEST QUARRY REOPENED

Council recently approved an updated Quarry By-law to allow for the use of human-powered watercraft, such as canoes, kayaks and paddleboards, as well as fishing between dawn and dusk from April 1 – November 30. Swimming remains prohibited.

Learn more: townofstmarys.com/westquarry



SHOWER PROGRAM Pyramid Recreation Centre

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Senior of the Week



Our Seniors of the Week are Ron and Karen McKnight. Ron and Karen will celebrate an incredible 65th wedding anniversary on July 22. Karen was born and raised in Stratford, while Ron grew up in St. Marys. Together, they have called St. Marys home since the early 1960s, where they raised their family. They are proud parents of two children, grandparents to four grandchildren, and great-grandparents to three great-grandchildren. When they're not enjoying drives and sightseeing around town, they love spending time relaxing at their cottage in Grand Bend. Congratulations, Ron and Karen, on this remarkable milestone! Happy 65th anniversary and many more wonderful memories together.

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519.284.0041 or info@stmarysindependent.com.

St. Marys Library Summer Programs well underway

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

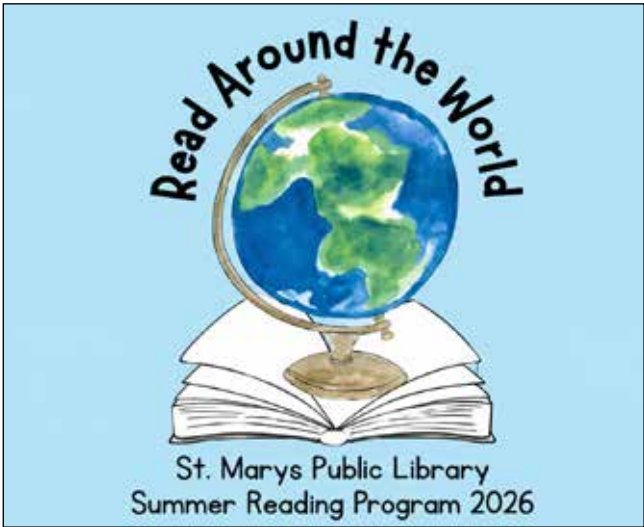
Summer is in full swing and so are the many activities that the St. Marys Library has available for a variety of ages, and programs that cater to a variety of interests.

One of the most popular is the reading challenge. There are currently 200 kids signed up for the challenge which is more than double from last year.

“The theme this year is ‘Read Around the World,’ ” said summer program coordinator Grace Schearer. “I love that the kids stay engaged with reading and are keeping up their skills over the summer.”

When they sign up at the library for this program, participants receive their own passport where they will track their reading. The more they read, the more milestones will be met, giving them a chance to win prizes. Some of the other programs available for kids include:

- The Discovery Den on Mondays offers hands-on activities focused on science, robotics, imagination and investigations.
- On Tuesday and Wednesdays, sign up for Reading Help, through which kids work with Schearer to increase confidence with reading and literacy skills.
- On Tuesdays from 1:45-3 p.m., Crafty Kids is a fun program full of crafts, exploring creativity and building a new project to take home.
- Helping Schearer out is part-time summer student, Emily Schrubsole, who looks after the Imagination Station. This is a drop-in program on Wednesdays from 2-4 p.m. for kids to take part in games and activities.
- On Mondays and Wednesdays from 12-1 p.m., join Schearer for Picnic in the Park. Kids can bring their own lunch, get outside and listen to some stories.
- Newly added this year is the Teen Program that takes place on Wednesdays from 6-7 p.m., providing a mixture of crafts and games as well as newly added activities like a Mario Cart tournament, escape rooms, printmaking and pizza and snacks on select dates.
- Thursday has Fluency Fitness from 2-3 p.m. that



combines literacy skills with movement and having fun outdoors.

• Funday Fridays run from 11-12 p.m. with special guests and unique events.

For any events in the library space, the number is capped at 20 kids, however, if it is outside, that changes to approximately 30. A child under seven must have a caregiver over 12 with them. For any program that requires signing up, it is done through ActiveNet and becomes available on the Friday of the week before at: www.anc.ca.apm.activecommunities.com/townofstmarys/activity

“My favourite part is the 15 minutes of reading at the beginning of the programs. This helps them with their passports and it gives them a calming entry into the program after engaging in a book they have chosen,” Schearer said. “Seeing a timer helps the kids keep track and know that they can do 15 minutes of reading and will get a circle filled in.”

The library has so much to offer throughout the summer with a variety of programs that have something for everyone. Check it out!

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. The Daytona 500 takes place in what US state?
2. What is the largest ocean on Earth?
3. What are the birth flowers for July?
4. Who won Wimbledon 2026?
5. What part of the brain controls hunger?
6. The fear of fire is known as what?
7. What is the primary mountain range in Iran?
8. Who is Percy Jackson’s father?
9. What was used to fill thermometers before mercury?
10. What is the name for what an archer carries their arrows in?

This week’s answers are found on pg. 35



SCAN TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE



SEE YOU AT THE STONETOWN HERITAGE FESTIVAL!

We love our community, and we’re proud to be celebrating with our neighbours downtown on Saturday, July 25th!

Protecting little eyes is a community effort. Stop by our booth at the festival—we are giving away 200 free pairs of kids’ sunglasses to keep our youngest residents safe from UV rays this summer.

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COMMUNITY CARE – IT’S WHAT WE BELIEVE IN.

Police drone helps Stratford officers locate missing person in Perth South

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

Earlier this month, the Stratford Police Service used drone technology to locate a missing person in Perth South.

After receiving a missing person report, several officers began searching the area after learning the person was believed to be in medical distress.

The Stratford Police Service drone was deployed around 11 p.m. as part of the search, leading to the safe discovery of the missing person, who was found in a cornfield.

The police drone provides a broader view of a search area, similar to a helicopter, said Const. Darren Fischer, community resource and media relations officer. It is particularly useful at night because of its heat-seeking technology.

"The drone provides a much broader view of an area; it's similar to what a helicopter can do," said Fischer. "Utilizing the heat-seeking technology at night helped officers pinpoint where that indi-

vidual was, which helped them walk to the right spot."

Fischer said the quick actions of officers, combined with the use of the drone, ultimately saved the person's life. He said the search and location of the missing person was greatly assisted by the drone technology.

"If the drone was not available, this search would have taken a significant amount of time in a grid-style search," said Fischer. "Because this person was in medical distress, the timeline to locate them was extremely important."

At this time, a select number of officers have been trained to operate the technology, and the drone will continue to be used only in specific cases.

The Stratford Police Service has also used the drone to locate a wanted person in the past. In that case, the drone also helped officers successfully locate the person.

The missing person was transported to Stratford General Hospital for further medical care and is now safe.

Friendship Centre improvements coming this summer

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys is pleased to announce a series of improvements to the Friendship Centre designed to enhance accessibility, comfort and the overall experience for members, clients and visitors.

The project will include a full interior repaint with updated colours, renovations to the main reception area, the removal of the front hall desk to improve traffic flow and the addition of new coat racks and benches to provide more convenience and comfort for visitors. The project will also include the installation of sliding doors at the main entrance to improve accessibility.

To complete these improvements, the Friendship Centre is expected to close for approximately four to six weeks, starting the week of July 20. Town staff have developed a service continuity plan to ensure programs and services can continue with minimal disruption.

"We are excited to make these improvements to the Friendship Centre while continuing to provide the programs and services that our community relies on," said Jenny Mikita, St. Marys senior services manager, in a press release. "These updates will create a more welcoming, accessible and functional space for everyone who uses the facility."

Throughout the closure:

- Customer service, registrations, payments and volunteer inquiries will continue Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Pyramid Recreation Centre (please enter through door B or D).

- Group fitness classes, Falls Prevention and several social and recreational programs will relocate to spaces within the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

- Pickleball will move to the St. Marys DCVI double gym.

- Shuffleboard will relocate to the LIND Sportsplex.

- Mobility Services and Friendship Centre staff will continue serving the community from temporary locations within the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

For details on all program relocations, schedule changes, temporary cancellations and other Friendship Centre services during the facility improvements project, residents are encouraged to view the latest PrimeTime Friendship Centre Newsletter online at townofstmarys.com/friendshipcentre. Participants of programs that will be temporarily cancelled or modified during the closure period will be notified directly.

For more information about the Friendship Centre improvements or to inquire about specific programs and services, contact the Friendship Centre at 519-284-3272 or friends@town.stmarys.on.ca.

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Perth South updates asset management plan

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

assets, including roads, bridges, buildings, vehicles, water systems and equipment. Nearly 34 per cent of those assets are rated in good or very good condition, 25 per cent in fair condition and 41 per cent in poor or very poor condition. Roads, buildings, vehicles and machinery account for most of the infrastructure requiring attention.

“We do have a lot of assets that are in very poor condition and are overdue by virtue of design life,” Mirabella said. “So, you will see in those instances and your condition for vehicles, for example, the current average condition is poor. The intention over the next 10 years is to address some of that backlog and bring up our overall weighted condition. And that increase is built into the financial strategy.”

“Similarly on the machinery and equipment, there are a number of assets that are overdue, the intention being to improve that and decrease the number of assets that are overdue and improve the overall condition of your equipment.”

The lifecycle approach to addressing the infrastructure funding gap proposed in the plan focuses on extending the useful life of municipal infrastructure

through regular maintenance and rehabilitation before full replacement becomes necessary. The plan also considers expansion projects, operational improvements and, where appropriate, non-infrastructure solutions to help manage costs while maintaining service levels.

Using a traditional benchmark approach, the township would need to spend about \$93.3 million on tax-supported infrastructure over the next 10 years, compared to projected funding of \$41.3 million, leaving a funding gap of roughly \$52 million. Closing that gap would require an estimated 19.6 per-cent increase to the municipal tax levy over the decade – equating to a nearly \$945,000 increase to the levy annually.

However, by adopting proposed levels of service that emphasize lifecycle management and strategic investment, the township’s projected infrastructure need falls to approximately \$51.1 million over the same period. With projected funding remaining at \$41.3 million, the funding gap is reduced to about \$9.8 million. According to the presentation, closing that remaining gap would require an estimated 3.7 per cent tax levy increase over the 10-year period – a roughly \$178,000 annual increase to the levy – rather than a

nearly 20 per-cent levy increase under the benchmark scenario.

The proposed service levels generally maintain current standards for roads, bridges, culverts, buildings and other municipal assets, while identifying targeted improvements for areas such as vehicles and machinery and equipment where replacement backlogs currently exist.

The plan also outlines several strategies to further reduce the remaining funding gap, including continued investment in infrastructure, seeking funding from senior levels of government, improving asset data quality, refining service-level measures, assessing the township’s tolerance for infrastructure risk and continuing to coordinate capital projects.

“What you’ve presented here is exactly the same as is being presented to every municipality in Ontario; none of them have enough money unless we raise taxes 25 per cent a year forever,” Coun. Jim Van Nes said. “What’s the solution?”

“That’s why there’s the second option we put in here where the tax levy isn’t impacted as drastic, right?” Mirabella responded. “This is about trying, as a municipality, to put yourselves on a path forward to recognize that we are slowly addressing the infrastructure needs. We

know a municipality your size, or an even bigger municipality, can’t address all the needs today or even in the next five to 10 years. But if we try to think about the investment strategy in line with the levels of service, which I think was a great provincial direction there; if we look at it more from how we want to see our service levels and where we want to go and manage our finances toward that, that’s what that second strategy does and at least we can continue those levels of service and where we are relative to that, and then we can kind of pivot accordingly.

“But it’s still going to require investments from the province, and this is still relying on posted funding for the next five years. If the province does pull the plug on some of those grant monies, that’s going to put a bigger hole in your investment strategy. So, part of this is to continue to say to the province, ‘We’re trying to do our part, but we do, very much, need continued assistance in order to carry out these needs.’”

Council ultimately approved the updated asset management plan, which will guide future infrastructure investment decisions and help the township maintain municipal assets while managing long-term financial sustainability.

Council eyes upgrades to St. Pauls playground, explores new public works complex after building assessment

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Following the adoption of its updated asset management plan, Perth South council has turned its attention to the condition of several aging municipal facilities, identifying the St. Pauls playground and two public works buildings as priorities for future investment.

Council discussed the township’s 2026 building condition assessment at its July 7 meeting, focusing on facilities rated in poor or very poor condition and directing staff to begin planning for long-term improvements.

The most immediate discussion centred on the St. Pauls playground, which the assessment rated in very poor condition. While the report attributes much of that rating to the age of the playground equipment and recommends replacing both the equipment and protective surfacing, it also suggests verifying the actual condition of the equipment before proceeding with replacement.

The assessment estimates replacing the playground equipment and surfacing would cost approximately \$120,000. It also notes the existing chain-link fence and concrete bench are currently in fair condition but should be addressed in the short to medium term for health and safety reasons.

Earlier in the meeting, council heard from the Optimist Club of Downie, which offered to contribute up to \$50,000 toward

replacing the playground equipment and indicated it would assist with additional fundraising if needed.

“In honour of our 50th anniversary, we’ve been looking for a major community project to complete,” Downie Optimist Club president Manny Puetz said. “In researching what we could do, we came across a report on building condition assessment, and one item stood out to us, and that was the rating on the playground equipment and at the pavilion.”

“Being a club of 68 members that is interested in the youth of our community and making things accessible and inclusive to all, we thought updating and upgrading this equipment would be a great project.”

Council members discussed pursuing grant opportunities to help offset the remaining costs, particularly programs supporting accessible and inclusive playgrounds. The discussion also expanded beyond simply replacing the existing equipment to the possibility of creating a larger park improvement project for the St. Pauls property that could better serve families for years to come.

The building condition assessment had specifically recommended the township investigate alternate playground surfacing materials and work with the Optimist Club of Downie on any rehabilitation or replacement project.

Council also focused on two public works facilities identified as being in poor condition: the public works building in St. Pauls and the public works sand and salt

storage Quonset in Rannoch.

Rather than investing heavily in aging facilities at separate locations, council supported the idea of planning for a new, centrally located public works complex that would combine storage, equipment and shop functions into a single site.

The assessment recommends continuing necessary maintenance on both existing public works buildings in the short term while budgeting for a combined facility to replace them.

Council directed staff to return with a report identifying three potential properties capable of accommodating a new public works complex. In addition to housing public works operations, council discussed selecting a site large enough to accommodate future expansion, including the potential addition of a fire hall and municipal offices should those needs arise.

The building condition assessment found the Rannoch Quonset should ultimately be replaced as part of a new centralized public works complex, while ongoing maintenance should continue at both existing public works buildings until a long-term solution is implemented.

“I think we need to put some urgency behind this,” Coun. Jim Van Nes said. “If I had my choice, I’d be saying to staff we’re going to build something in four years. Tell us where we’re going to build. I don’t want to be spending half a million dollars on the shops here and another three-quarters of a million down in Rannoch on that salt shed ... and then four or five years lat-

er say, ‘Oh, now we’re going to build.’ I think we can Mickey Mouse some of these buildings along as long as we have a stated plan by 2029, 2030, whatever, but I would like to give that direction to staff to start that process.”

“My personal opinion is I would like to see shovels in the ground in 2028. The urgency is there. Certainly, the sand and salt storage shed in Rannoch is questionable,” said deputy mayor Bob Wilhelm, referring to a hole in the shed’s back wall – something director of public works Ken Bettles said he could have patched in the short term.

The assessment reviewed municipal buildings and facilities across Perth South, identifying maintenance requirements, repair priorities and replacement timelines intended to help council plan future capital investments while extending the useful life of township assets.

While most of Perth South’s other solely owned buildings were rated as being in fair or good condition, the township does share several buildings with South Huron on the Kirkton-Woodham Community Centre property that have been rated as being in poor or very poor condition. Township CAO Will Jaques said staff have already begun discussions with South Huron about how to replace or upgrade those buildings.

Council will consider the staff reports and funding opportunities as work continues on both the St. Pauls playground improvements and the planning of a future centralized public works complex.

St. Marys Library Funday Friday goes to the dogs



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Mary Silverthorne calmly greets one-year-old Scrambo, the Idaho shag sheepdog, as part of the training demonstration by Jenelle Miller during Friday's show.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Every Friday, the Library Summer Reading program is hosting Funday Fridays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. where participants can listen to guest speakers, enjoy hands-on activities and a lot of fun.

This past Friday, July 10, the entertainment went to the dogs from Four Paws Flying Entertainment. Jenelle Miller has been training dogs since 2004 and entertaining at events and shows since 2014. The excited kids



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Sprocket, a nine-year-old Jack Russell/terrier mix rescue dog shows off his agility talent with trainer Jenelle Miller. Known as hunting dogs, this breed needs to be kept busy to wear off some energy.

who were on hand to watch Jenelle with her dogs, Bongo, Niche, Scrambo, Basil and Sprocket, were enthralled with the Frisbee, rope jumping, hoop jumping, dancing and many other tricks that were performed.

Along with the tricks, Miller shared ways to help train dogs and how to redirect their attention to avoid bad behaviour. The dogs that performed were aged from one year to 11 and a half years old. It was evident to see the care and time Miller and her family have put in with these dogs by the trust and respect the dogs and trainer



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Three-year-old mixed breed, Niche, showed off some hoop-jumping and dancing skills.

had for each other.

Miller, who has won awards in disc and agility training, says it typically takes about a year for a dog to learn an assortment of tricks. Miller and her dogs perform at a variety of shows and competitions.

It was fun watching the audience cheer on the dogs and be in awe of what they could do. After the show was over, Miller brought all of the dogs out to interact with the crowd and willingly answered any questions that came up regarding training and care for the canines.

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Local municipalities seeking joint compliance audit committee applicants for 2026 municipal election

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys, City of Stratford, Municipality of North Perth, Township of Perth East, Township of Perth South and Municipality of West Perth are currently seeking interested applicants for appointment to the joint compliance audit committee for the 2026 municipal election.

Applicant qualifications

- Demonstrated knowledge and in-depth understanding of the campaign financing rules of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996;
- Proven analytical and decision-making skills;
- Experience working on committees, task forces or similar settings;
- Demonstrated knowledge of quasi-judicial proceedings;
- Availability and willingness to attend meetings (day-time and/or evening); and
- Excellent oral and written communication skills.

Applicants with a background in accounting, law, law enforcement and academics are encouraged to apply.

Please note that those individuals who are running for office in municipal elections for any of the participating municipalities, or who have conducted audits or provided financial advice in respect of municipal elections for



any of the participating municipalities or candidates will be disqualified.

The purpose of the joint compliance audit committee is to:

- Consider compliance audit applications, decide whether they should be granted or rejected;
- Appoint an auditor if the application is granted;
- Receive the auditor's report;
- Consider the auditor's report and decide if legal proceedings should be commenced; and
- Advise council of the originating compliance audit application whether the auditor's report indicates apparent contraventions and whether there appears to be rea-

sonable grounds for the application.

The term of the committee will commence in 2026 and continue through to 2030. Municipal election candidates have until Tuesday, March 30, 2027, to file their initial financial statements. Any requests for a compliance audit will occur after that date in accordance with the following deadlines:

- For financial statements due March 30, 2027, the clerk must receive compliance audit applications by June 28, 2027.

- For financial statements filed during the 30-day grace period or under a court-ordered extension, the clerk must receive compliance audit applications within 90 days of the financial statement filing date.

A by-election could also result in the need for the joint compliance audit committee to sit during the term of council. The remuneration will be an established per-diem rate (plus mileage).

Application process:

The application form can be completed online at the City of Stratford website (www.stratford.ca) or a copy obtained by contacting the municipal clerk of the Town of St. Marys, City of Stratford, Municipality of North Perth, Township of Perth East, Township of Perth South or Municipality of West Perth.

The last date for submission of applications is 4:30 p.m. on Aug. 28.

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Huron District Freemasons donate to three hospices



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Huron District Deputy Grand Master Jamie McFadden presents Huron Hospice executive director Willy Van Klooster with a \$3,500 donation.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

The role of district deputy grand master of the Freemasons is a prestigious honour to have and one that R.W. Bro. Jamie McFadden took very seriously as he's finishing his year in the role.

As his term comes to a close, McFadden shared that one of his goals was to resurrect and spearhead a chosen charity to support throughout his year as district deputy grand master of the Huron District Freemasons. What he picked was to raise funds for the three brick and mortar hospices located in Huron and Perth counties.

The Masonic Foundation of Ontario topped up the amount raised by 33 per cent, bringing the grand total to \$10,500. This amount was split evenly in three ways with \$3,500 going to Huron Hospice in Clinton, Jessica's House Hospice in Exeter and Rotary Hospice Stratford in Stratford.

Last Wednesday, McFadden and Huron District Secretary W. Bro. Cliff Anderson

travelled to all three locations presenting cheques to the executive directors for the hospices who were all very grateful for the donation. Funds donated to the hospices will help towards the associated costs of running the facilities. The hospices all need to raise a substantial amount each year to keep them going.

In 2017, the South Huron district deputy master at the time ran a charity for Jessica's House. McFadden said if he were to ever take on the role, he would want to do something similar and thanks to the added 33 per cent from the foundation, McFadden was thrilled with what was accomplished.

The Freemasons are a brotherhood of all faiths that focus on making good men better and believe strongly in helping others. The Ontario Masons are made up of 38 districts with the first recorded Canadian member being from the mid 1600s. The Huron District is made up of Stratford, St. Marys, Listowel, Goderich, Carlow, Ailsa Craig, Granton, Mitchell and Exeter. The local club is alive with tradition, service and spirit.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Executive director of Jessica's House Cheryl Pfaff accepts the \$3,500 donation from Huron District Deputy Grand Master Jamie McFadden.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Rotary Hospice executive director Louise Lepp was happy to receive her location's \$3,500 donation from Huron District Deputy Grant Master Jamie McFadden.

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- An accessible washroom will also be available on-site.

If you have an upcoming appointment, our reception team will contact you with parking and check-in instructions.

If you have mobility concerns or require assistance during your visit, please call **519-284-1540** before your appointment so we can make the necessary arrangements.

If you experience an eye emergency while the clinic is closed (July 13-17), please visit your nearest emergency department or the **Stratford General Hospital Emergency Department**, where ophthalmology on-call services are available.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we improve our clinic. We look forward to continuing to provide you with exceptional care throughout the renovation.

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STRATFORD NISSAN



Melodies at the Museum returns for a 13th season

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The St. Marys Museum is hosting its 13th Melodies at the Museum summer concert series this August.

Each Wednesday evening from 7-8 p.m., a different musical performance will take place outdoors at the performance stage in Cadzow Park (217 Park St.).

Aug. 5: The Faultliners

The Faultliners will open the series on Aug. 5. The Faultliners are a dynamic acoustic duo featuring Stacey Frayne on vocals and Alex Richards on guitar. Blending soulful vocals with skilled guitar work, the pair delivers an eclectic mix of classic favourites and modern hits, with a special affection for the music of the 1990s.

Their sound strikes a balance between nostalgia and freshness, breathing new life into familiar songs while keeping audiences singing along. Whether performing intimate acoustic sets or energizing a lively crowd, the Faultliners bring an energetic vibe that pays homage to the past while embracing the present.

Aug. 12: Jazzm@x

The Kintore-based jazz septet known as Jazzm@x (pronounced Jazzmatics) returns to the stage on Aug. 12. Jazzm@x was born because of big-band charts received by a member of the band from Andy Hoe, a venerated bandleader and sax player from St. Marys.

More of these charts were also purloined or borrowed from high schools, and the idea that they could perform this music came to be. Carol Shaw (tenor sax), Wade Whittaker (bass), the Four Irvines (Dan on drums, Barb on keyboards, D'Arcy on alto sax/flute and Judy on trumpet) and an import from Mitchell, Brad Carew (trombone), combined to form Jazzm@x in 2002.

Since then, the group has performed in many venues,

playing a range of styles from jazz standards to Bossa Nova to Funk.

Aug. 19: York Street Thought Process

Former museum employee Jaron Camp will take the stage with Rachael Frankruyter on Aug. 19. After years of playing together, Camp and Frankruyter created the duo project York Street Thought Process.

They have collectively performed at a variety of venues throughout Canada, including the Mariposa Folk Festival and Winnipeg Folk Festival. The duo creates a playful mixture of indie-folk and improvisation; from a wide range of original music to classic covers. Their debut album was released in August 2022.

Aug. 26: The Gee Gees

The series finale will take place on Aug. 26 with The Gee Gees. The Gee Gees are three moms who love to play, sing, laugh and have fun: Lana Coghill (Embryo), Heather McKay (St. Marys) and Karen Richardson (St. Marys).

In the beginning, it was three girls playing acoustic

guitars and so the name of The Gee Gees for the Guitar Girls was decided. Since then, the members have added bass guitar, banjo, ukelele, harmonica, drums, violin, bag pipes and various percussion instruments. The Gee Gees are also known for providing sweet harmonies in their folk, country and contemporary repertoire. Audience participation is always encouraged, so please feel free to sing along.

All concerts will take place on the performance stage in Cadzow Park. If the weather looks questionable on the concert day, visit the museum's Facebook page by 5 p.m. for a decision regarding the concert, as performances will not take place in the event of inclement weather.

Admission is by donation with all proceeds going to the St. Marys Museum. McCormick Canada and the Friends of the St. Marys Museum are sponsoring the performers.

For more information, contact the St. Marys Museum at 519-284-3356 or museum@town.stmarys.on.ca.

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Perth County paramedics launch summer care kits for people experiencing homelessness

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

While responding to a call, Perth County paramedic Nicole Player recognized a need in the community and decided to bring a new idea forward to the Perth County Paramedic Services Community Care Fund.

"The idea for the community care kits came from a call I attended for someone experiencing homelessness who declined transport to the hospital," she said. "As paramedics, we often respond to calls where the person doesn't end up needing or wanting to be transported to the hospital. We were in a rural part of the county where access to community resources can be limited, and it didn't sit right with me to leave knowing we couldn't offer anything beyond medical care."

She said the experience inspired her to develop an initiative to distribute care kits containing summer essentials to people experiencing homelessness.

"The goal was to create something simple that our crews could carry and provide in the moment, when someone needs a little extra support," she said.

The care kits are intended to provide relief by supplying much-needed items during the summer months. Each kit includes sunscreen, electrolyte beverages, bug spray and personal care items to help individuals stay safe, hydrated and healthy, particularly during periods of hot weather.

The initiative is funded through the Perth County Paramedic Services Community Care Fund, which supports projects and initiatives that improve the wellbeing of vulnerable residents throughout Perth County.

The fund was established in 2015 after paramedics noticed many people wanted to express their gratitude through monetary donations or gifts. Instead, Perth County Paramedic Services created the fund to accept donations that could be reinvested into the community. The fund is also supported through payroll contributions from paramedics.

"When someone brings forward an initiative, like



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

From left, Perth County paramedics Nicole Player, Lucy Kus and Jodi Grobbeck display the summer care kits that will be distributed to individuals experiencing homelessness throughout Perth County.

Nicole, we have funds available to help," said Tristan Barter, deputy chief of operations with Perth County Paramedic Services. "The suggestion is brought to the committee, and we decide how to use the funds to help the community."

Other initiatives supported by the fund include Christmas hampers, assistance for families and children in need, taxi rides for people who cannot afford transportation to and from the hospital, dry socks for people experiencing homelessness and food vouchers.

"We really try to talk to people and learn what our communities need," said Debbie Hunter, deputy chief of mobile integrated health supporting the Community Paramedic Program in Perth County. "Whether that's kids, older adults, those experiencing homelessness or even someone working outside all summer, we want to help everyone."

Beyond the physical items in the care kits, Player said they provide another opportunity for paramedics to connect with vulnerable members of the community and start conversations.

"I hope these care kits remind people that they're seen and that someone cares," said Player. "Sometimes a bottle of water, sunscreen or bug spray won't solve the challenges someone is facing, but it can make their day a little easier and show compassion in a moment when it's needed most."

"At the end of the day, we're all members of the same community, and everyone deserves to be treated with dignity, kindness and respect."

In addition to personal care items, the kits include information on accessing local community support services. A total of 100 care kits will be distributed by Perth County paramedics throughout the summer.

For more information or to donate to the Perth County Paramedic Services Community Care Fund, visit the Perth County website at

www.perthcounty.ca/living-here/paramedic-services/paramedic-community-care-fund/.

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The history of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 236 in St. Marys

ST. MARYS LEGION

Contributed Article

The Royal Canadian Legion is Canada's largest veteran support and community service organization. Born from a need to advocate for care and specialized support for First World War veterans, it has grown into a cornerstone of Canadian society.

After World War I, around 15 fragmented veterans' groups emerged across Canada. Urged by Field Marshal Earl Haig, these factions – most notably the Great War Veterans Association – united in Winnipeg in 1925. The organization was officially incorporated by a special Act of Parliament on July 17, 1926.

In 1921, the Legion's precursor adopted the poppy as a symbol of remembrance, inspired by John McCrae's poem, "In Flanders Fields." The first national Poppy Campaign followed shortly after. In 1948, the Canadian government granted the Legion trademark protection to safeguard the poppy's integrity.

Following the Second World War, the Legion expanded rapidly to support millions of returning troops, aiding heavily in the implementation of the Canadian Veterans' Charter and advocating for health-care facilities that evolved into Veterans Affairs Canada. In 1960, Queen Elizabeth II granted the organization the "Royal" prefix, formally cementing the name.

St Marys officially became Branch 236 of the Canadian Legion upon receiving its charter dated April 23, 1932.

On April 29, their first banquet was held in the Hutton Block on Water Street. One hundred Veterans sat down to dinner and were present from the Indian, South African and the Great War. The guest speaker was Col. Pickering of the British Empire Service League of St. Thomas, who spoke to the members and presented the president, Robert Hurst, with the Charter. Speeches were also made by MP F.G. Sanderson and MLA C.E. Richardson.

Through the '30s and '40s, the Legion met at various locations, including rooms in the opera house and the upper story of the south end of the Great Star Flour Mill.

Legion members finally found a place suitable for a permanent Legion site and the present lot and building at the corner of Church

and Station streets, which was bought for the amount of \$7,000 on April 7, 1954. The building only had a dirt floor and had to be completely remodelled. On Feb. 26, 1960, the mortgage was burned. Two months later, the first liquor license was obtained.

The Legion carried on nicely until March 6, 1976, at 4:30 a.m. when the Legion building caught fire with approximately \$100,000 damage. Legion members decided immediately to rebuild as rapidly as possible, "better than ever." The second mortgage was burnt on Jan. 22, 1977, at a supper and dance held for this special event.

On Aug. 19, 2017, the branch held a ceremony to acknowledge its current official name – Royal Canadian Legion Perth Regiment Veterans' Branch 236 St. Marys. The new charter was presented by the Zone C2 commander, Linda Haggdorn, dated June 13, 2017.

Through the years, the St. Marys Legion has worked tirelessly in support of veterans and their families. Assistance has been provided to veterans in applying for and receiving medical pensions and lump sum payments for injuries and illnesses resulting from their military service. Poppy Funds have been used for items such as the purchase of equipment for the St. Marys Memorial Hospital, medical equipment for local veterans, assistance with housing and vehicle repairs for veterans, support for army and air cadets, school bursaries for veterans' families and more. Thousands of dollars have been donated to Operation Leave the Streets Behind, a Legion-run program that secures shelter for homeless or near-homeless veterans.

Money donated from the proceeds of lotteries such as the weekly meat draws, the annual elimination draw and monthly bingos has benefitted the local food bank, various youth sports organizations in St. Marys and other.

During the Remembrance Period each fall, Branch 236 runs the Veterans' Banner program which displays banners of veterans with ties to St. Marys all through the town. A Remembrance parade is annually held on the Sunday prior to Nov. 11, and assistance is provided to Perth South for their service at the Rannoch Cenotaph. The Legion also provides a colour party to the Town of St. Marys to help in the execution of their Nov. 11 service. Local schools are provided with veterans and Le-

gion volunteers to assist in their remembrance services. Those same schools are encouraged to participate in the Legion's poster and prose contests, with cash awards being given to students at the local, zone, district, provincial and dominion levels.

Today, the Legion has over 1,500 branches across Canada, the U.S. and Europe. While its roots lie in WWI, the organization serves

modern Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP Veterans. Membership is open to any Canadian citizen or citizen of an Allied nation of legal voting age, meaning you do not have to be a veteran to join and support the cause.

The Royal Canadian Legion is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, and the St. Marys Legion is hosting a free anniversary barbecue from noon to 1 p.m. July 17.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Legion  100 1926-2026

Branch 236 St Marys

Perth Regiment Veterans' Branch 236 St Marys



July 17th, 2026

Free BBQ Lunch 12 PM - 1 PM

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Seven years of creation and growth with Zenfire Pottery and Mercantile

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Zenfire Pottery and Mercantile is celebrating seven years of creating and showcasing a variety of handmade pottery in Downtown St. Marys.

"It feels surreal. It has grown into more than I could have imagined. The space really does feel like a second home," owner Angela Patterson told the St. Marys Independent.

As there will be a larger celebration for the 10th anniversary, Patterson said the seventh anniversary celebration will be a simple one. In the meantime, she's reflecting on Zenfire becoming the place to be for all things pottery in southwestern Ontario.

"The growing community of potters through our classes has been the most rewarding and fun," she said, referring to community of potters as her second family.

Patterson recently hired a front-of-house manager so she can focus on her

own pottery creations and studio developments such as researching new glaze colours.

"I'm super excited to do more throwing, which is where my true passion lies," Patterson said.

She gives many thanks to all the customers from the past seven years.

"I am so grateful, every day, for our loyal local customers, whether you have been here since the beginning or are just finding us now," Patterson said. "Whether it's a gift you're shopping for or a workshop or class you've taken, we appreciate everything you've done to support Zenfire. Thank you."

Zenfire is currently hiring for a maternity leave contract front-of-house manager and program coordinator to start training in September. Anyone looking to apply can send an email to zenfirepottery@gmail.com.

The shop is open from Wednesdays to Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and can be found at 114 Queen St. E.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELA PATTERSON)

Angela Patterson is grateful to everyone who supported Zenfire Pottery and Mercantile throughout the past seven years and contributed to the growth of the shop and the greater pottery community of southwestern Ontario.

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St. Marys, Ontario

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ANAF Veterans Club hosts Bavarian Gardens event over the weekend



(PHOTO COURTESY OF CECIL THOMPSON)

The Army Navy and Air Force (ANAF) Veterans Club in St. Marys hosted its annual Bavarian Gardens event over the weekend, on July 10 and 11. The event featured a variety of live music including a Friday night performance by The Sarcastic Onions (pictured).



(PHOTO COURTESY OF CECIL THOMPSON)

St. Marys and Stratford based cover band, Harmony of Friends, took the stage on Saturday afternoon.

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SCAN TO VIEW

St. Marys Independent **SPORTS**

The old diesels: U18-GT1 Storm the first top-tier girls team in St. Marys Minor Soccer history

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

This season marked a major notch in the record books for St. Marys Minor Soccer, with the association fielding its first-ever tier-one girls squad with its U18-GT1 team.

Head coach Nathan Brown said the team's ascension to their league's top tier has been years in the making, including last season when they won a league title and district cup in the third tier.

"We've been toying with it for the last couple of years," said Brown. "All things considered, we could have done it last year, but the girls that were graduating last year, they needed that championship. They needed that district cup, coming up through tier three, building their skills for seven years. There was a bunch of them I had for seven years and they graduated with two massive trophies, which was awesome. Now, we're at tier one and we're trying to do the same thing."

Brown added the squad has reached the league's top division thanks to years of growing their understanding of every little detail of the game.

"They all understand the game," Brown said. "We can talk about things and I'm not having squirrely eyes looking at me like, 'I have no idea what you're talking about.' Building over those years, we're at a place that we're finally at tier one and we're going toe to toe with some of the best teams in (the Elgin-Middlesex Soccer Association) right now. It's pretty awesome to watch."

With an incredibly strong roster led by veteran linchpins including Marin Chateauvert, Bronwyn Hawkins, Maddie Monisit Brown and Charlotte Richardson, the team has blossomed into a powerhouse in the Elgin Middlesex Soccer Association (EMSA), with, as of the Independent's press time, just one loss so far this season.

Chateauvert and Hawkins said the group has a strong work ethic that pulses through the veins of each member of the roster.

"To me, (playing tier one) is just good recognition for all the hard work we've been putting in through these years, and constantly showing up to practice, having our extra training sessions, everyone working together," Chateauvert said. "There's not really one person who isn't fully committed. Everyone's committed and everyone's always showing up."

"It feels good to know that all our hard work has paid off and helped us get to where we are today," Hawkins echoed. "We're always pushing each other to be our best in practices and having fun in our mini-games and drills. We're getting a lot better at incorporating crosses and getting switches in and all that stuff to really



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

The U18 Girls Tier One St. Marys Storm are the first-ever girls' St. Marys Minor Soccer team to play in the first tier.

dominate our games."

The team's rise to becoming the first St. Marys girls' team to play tier-one soccer not only came after dominating in the third tier, but, going back even further, according to Hawkins and Monisit Brown, spending their early years in soccer together not near the top of the standings.

"The past few seasons we've been able to be at the top of the tier-three standings," said Hawkins. "It's really great to be tier one this year and playing really well and still be at the top of the standings and grow together."

"It's a great step up because when we were much younger, around U9, we lost 13 straight games or something like that," Monisit Brown recalled. "So, it's great to have our confidence built up this much that we can go tier one in U18 in our final year, especially with the older girls setting all the 2010s up for next year to go back into tier one as well."

The years of growing together, both as players and people, has forged a tight-knit bond amongst the group that is no small part of their on-field success.

"I think the biggest part is how well we get along," Chateauvert said. "Everyone's friends. We are always joking on and off the field at practice, even when Nathan (Brown) doesn't want us to be. We're always joking, always laughing, always talking, and so we built that bond that translates to playing the game and being able to know where each other will be on the field."

"The bond that we have is really special," said Richardson. "We're all supportive to each other. We love being together on the bench even. Everyone's contributing, whether they're on the field or on the bench, we cheer each other on. Everyone wants the best for each other and we just support each other. I think that makes us so special."

Brown described that closeness as manifesting itself in "consistent positivity and pressure."

"They're always saying, 'We can do it, let's go, come on, we know we can do it, play for each other, dig in,' and the leaders on the team, they get out front and bring the team with them," Brown said. "They all get along off the field. They're doing gatherings off the field and outside of work. They've all bought into what we wanted to do at the start of the year, and we had a criterion of how often they had to get here and how much time they need to put into it, and it's been pretty cool to watch them execute."

Richardson added, above all else, the Storm's familiarity built up over the years has led to an uncanny ability to know where one another will be on the pitch.

"I think our ball movement is really the key thing," Richardson said when discussing the team's success. "Our communication is really good. We've all bonded and got closer on the field and off the field, so that helps us move the ball and know where each other needs to be. Even if we don't say it, we know how to pass and we know where we're going to go

and we just move around the field really well together now."

Of course, the development the girls have experienced throughout the years doesn't happen without the work of a dedicated coaching staff, with Brown leading a trio that also includes highly skilled coaches in Mark Muir and Andrea Thompson. All four veteran players, including Monisit Brown and Chateauvert, had positive reviews of their tough-but-fair and fun coaches.

"They're hard enough on us to the point that we understand how far we need to go," Monisit Brown said. "If we push their buttons too much, they're super hard on us, but otherwise they're super fun, but they still push us."

"They know how far we can go," added Chateauvert. "And so, they're hard on us because they want to get us to that point. Their coaching has given us the ability to be confident with how we play and how we move the ball around."

As a bench boss for this core of girls in both hockey and soccer, Brown began describing the girls as the "old diesels," a playful descriptor used to explain the team always performing much better in the second half of games.

"It was something that was given to us just because we start so late, but honestly, my dad's not wrong about it," Monisit Brown admitted. "He gave it to us because every game we start in the second half, which is why he makes us come an hour early now. But honestly, it's very fitting, and it shows us that if, as he puts it, 'you are the old diesels, you guys aren't going to be able to win these games,' and I think it just puts it into perspective on what we need to do."

However, through all the learning experiences, their "old diesel" moments and the countless hours of work put in by both players and coaches, now, the team can proudly lay claim to being the first girls' team in St. Marys to play tier-one minor soccer. However, for Brown, he doesn't foresee this being the last.

"Hopefully, number one, it motivates the competitive young girls in lower age groups. The U9 competitive girls, there are a bunch of firecrackers on that team and I can see them playing this level when they get there. This year, we've only got five graduating players, 13 are staying with a couple more joining the fold next year."

"Hopefully, they stay tier one and keep infusing that compete level," Brown continued. "And that will mean the graduating girls this year have done their job, and hopefully towns outside of St. Marys go, 'Holy smokes, they have a tier one program, I want to go there and compete with them.'"

Jonah Lariviere helps Western relay team win gold, set national track record

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

St. Marys native Jonah Lariviere was part of the Western University's 4x800-metre relay team that captured a gold medal at the Ontario U20 Senior and Para Track and Field Championships July 10-12 at the University of Windsor.

Lariviere, along with Ryan Johnson, Kirk Hallman and Matteo Di Ciocco, finished with a time of 7:40.12 in the U20 men's 4x800-metre relay to capture the top prize and break the all-time record of 7:40.4, set by Mississauga TFC in 1981.

Lariviere explained the significance of writing their names in the record book to him and his teammates.

"It means so much to not just me, but to all the boys who went out and gave our very best on the track," Lariviere told the Independent. "The previous record had stood for a long time, which just shows how much of an accomplishment our race was."

According to Lariviere, their intense preparation for the race led the quartet to believe they had a chance to not just win, but to do so in record-breaking fashion.

"Ryan, Matteo, Kirk and I had been preparing for this race a few weeks before it happened. At first we just thought



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Ryan Johnson, Jonah Lariviere, Matteo Di Ciocco and Kirk Hallman. Lariviere, a St. Marys native, along with Johnson, Hallman and Di Ciocco, won a gold medal and set a new Canadian record in the 4x800-metre relay at the Ontario U20 Senior and Para Track and Field Championships July 10-12 at the University of Windsor.

it would be cool to attempt the record, but as our individual fitness and talents became known leading up to the race, we became more confident. The race plan was to maintain a 1:55 average per runner, which was well within our capabil-

ities so there wasn't too much worry on that front. Our primary obstacle was the weather, which can be unpredictable, but it turned out perfect for us.

"The most important part of the race was honestly the mental preparation,"

Lariviere continued. "The boys put so much into keeping our sights on the record and just maintaining a positive outlook for the performance, there was no chance it would go any other way. Teamwork plays a big part in relays, and we have that down to a science as we've been racing with and against one another for the past several years."

According to Lariviere, who was the one to cross the finish line as the fourth and final member of the relay, he initially wasn't sure how they did when he finished running, but soon enough, the results came in and brought a large wave of jubilation with them.

"I crossed the line and I was almost completely sure we had achieved our goal, but there was still some doubt in the back of my mind, so I didn't get too excited in the moment," said Lariviere. "My teammates, on the other hand, were standing right by the clock so they were ecstatic right away. They swarmed the track and we got a huddle going; everyone was so pumped. The feeling was unreal; it was almost too good to believe when I saw our final time. I felt satisfied and just an overwhelming pride and thanks for my teammates and coaches who helped to get us this far."

Four St. Marys area baseball players compete in U11 All-Star Game



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Four U11 baseball players from in and around St. Marys hit the field at Labatt Park in London July 12 for the U11 All-Star Game. Pictured from left to right are Carson Deactis of the U11 HL Blue St. Marys Rockies, Owen Simons of the U11 HL Grey St. Marys Rockies, Carter Van Wieren of the U11 HL Red St. Marys Rockies, and Hunter Jackson of the U11 Thamesford Toros. The four local players were part of an all-star team that defeated London EBBA 12-3, and all four contributed with strong pitching and hitting performances.

Campbell and Irwin, Monroe and Carter winners of Battle of Gowanbrae

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys Golf and Country Club's (SMGCC) annual Battle of Gowanbrae tournament ran July 10-11, with Tim Campbell and Liam Irwin winning on the men's side after the three-hole shootout, while Leslie Monroe and Leah Carter finished atop the ladies' field.

Following his duo's tournament win, Campbell said he and Irwin were playing solid, complementary golf throughout the two-day Battle of Gowanbrae.

"It was a really fun setup," said Campbell. "Cam (Charlton, the SMGCC's head superintendent) did a great job with the greens. The greens rolled out nicely. We ham and egged it well and made some putts, so it was good fun."

Campbell and Irwin got to the playoff as the winners of the Blue Two division, winning all four of their matches and racking up 11 points through their four nine-hole rounds.

Brett Sippel and Mark Vandenberg were plus-eight after four matches to qualify for the shootout in the first Blue division and finished as runners-up to Campbell and Irwin on the final hole of the shootout. Sippel and Vandenberg won three of their four matches, with the other match being a tie.

On Hole 9, the third of the shootout, Campbell and Irwin won with a par while Sippel and Vandenberg got trapped in the long grass behind the ninth green.

Irwin gave his teammate the flowers for pulling out the win in the playoff.

"It was all Tim (Campbell) in the shootout," Irwin said. "He doesn't miss. He just hits it down the middle on the green and two-putts every time, and I just slap the ball in every other direction."

Campbell described his play during the three holes of the shootout.

"I had just a little thin seven-iron on number seven, and I got up and down there," said Campbell. "It was a nice chip. Number eight was pretty straightforward. I was lucky to get a stroke there. And then number nine; I was maybe a little nervous on the third shot with the putt, but made the fourth one, so I was happy to make it all work out."

Campbell credited Irwin with giving the duo some momentum to build on the rest of the day on their first hole



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Battle of Gowanbrae 2026 winners Liam Irwin (blue shirt) and Tim Campbell (white shirt) celebrate after shaking hands with playoff runners-up Brett Sippel (back) and Mark Vandenberg (not pictured).

of one of their second-day matches.

"Liam (Irwin) drove the 13th green (on day two) to start us off," Campbell said. "So, that was a big push against a difficult team (in Kyle Heinbuck and Steve Hinz) and a good start for us."

"It's about 270 (yards) to get to the front of the green today, uphill and into the wind when we got there," added Irwin. "But, after waiting for the shotgun to start, it died down a bit. I just hit a mini-driver and got a good bounce off the front of the green, and it stayed on the back, and I was able to make a nice two-putt. It was a good way to start."

The teams of Justin Lingard and Seth Knox in the Blue Three division and Scott Rinn and Dan Gracey in Blue Four each qualified for the shootout with plus-five points. Lingard and Knox recorded three wins and a tie, while Rinn and Gracey won two, tied one and lost one.

In the first white division, Steve Fisher and Eric Henkemans won twice and tied twice for three points to qualify for the shootout. Fred Pinkerton and Gord Russell won



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Leah Carter and Leslie Monroe, the ladies' division winners of the St. Marys Golf and Country Club's (SMGCC) 2026 Battle of Gowanbrae tournament.

all four of their matches, scoring nine points to qualify for the three-hole finale in the second white bracket.

The ladies' side of the tournament was won by the pairing of Monroe and Carter, who won three of their four matches to score plus-eight points and take the title in the red division.

Monroe and Carter both joked jubilantly following the win.

"Because we're awesome," Monroe said, laughing, when asked why they emerged victorious. "Leah (Carter) did great. I had some pretty good drives. Hole 5 in this last game; I drove the hole and got very close to the pin. It was super cool and that actually got us a good point that we needed."

Carter emphasized how Monroe put the pair in great spots off the tees.

"Leslie (Monroe)'s drives are on point," said Carter. "I'm really good at punching out of trees. I'm really good at that. It certainly wasn't my putting. I did nothing that was super. I'm just like Ernie Clement. I hit solid doubles and nothing super special, but just solid."



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Tim Campbell putts during the three-hole shootout to determine the winners the St. Marys Golf and Country Club's Battle of Gowanbrae tournament July 11.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Liam Irwin tees off on Hole 7 during the Battle of Gowanbrae tournament, hosted July 10-11 at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Leslie Monroe putts on Hole 18 on the second day of the St. Marys Golf and Country Club's annual Battle of Gowanbrae tournament.

MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Alice Hinz makes contact with the ball during the St. Marys Building Centre U9 HPFL Red St. Marys Rockies game last Tuesday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Emerson Muir fires a pitch towards the plate during last Thursday's Happy Valley Family Health Team U11 HL Grey St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Ayla Boemer releases a pitch during the St. Marys Kinsmen Club U13 HPFL Red St. Marys Rockies game last Tuesday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Evan Wolfkamp throws the ball to third base during last Wednesday's Cubberley Plumbing and Heating U15 OBA St. Marys Rockies game.



(CHARIS MUHTAR PHOTO)
Mya Grose blasts the ball up the field with a kick through the midfield during this past Sunday's U11 Girls Tier Two St. Marys Storm game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Kylie Blake launches the ball from the keeper's box during this past Monday's U12 Girls Tier Two St. Marys Storm game.

St. Marys Minor Soccer hosts summer development camp



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

St. Marys Minor Soccer and Stratford-based youth soccer coach Eddie McKenna of McKenna Training hosted a summer development camp at Solis Fields in St. Marys July 6-10. The half-day camp was open to players born between 2012 and 2017 and, according to a St. Marys Minor Soccer newsletter, was “designed to help players build confidence, improve technique, and enjoy the game alongside their friends.”



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

As part of the week-long skill development camp, which ran from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. each day, the young players took part in drills, games, and workouts and stretches. The camp is also a continuation of the increased collaboration between St. Marys Minor Soccer and McKenna’s training offerings, and, per Minor Soccer’s vice president Brad Wittig, is part of bringing “more of a formal academy approach” to the St. Marys Minor Soccer program.



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OBA hosts U9 Jim Lutton House League tournament in St. Marys



The U9 WOBA Blue St. Marys Rockies took part in the U9 Jim Lutton House League tournament, hosted in St. Marys July 10-12. Pictured on the left is Parker Hammond earning a hit during one of the Rockies' games. On the right, Nico Sicilia launches the ball from the outfield back towards the bases.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)

The tournament was run by the Ontario Baseball Association (OBA) and featured more than 20 teams competing on five of the diamonds in St. Marys. There was also a special ceremony during the second day of the tournament, featuring Jim Lutton, a legendary figure within Ontario minor baseball after whom the tournament and many others are named. St. Marys Mayor Al Strathdee and director of operations at the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum Scott Crawford also appeared during the ceremony to welcome teams to the town and the Hall of Fame grounds, and celebrate Lutton. All three then threw ceremonial pitches. Pictured on the left is Crawford. In the middle is Strathdee. On the right is Lutton.





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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Confessions of a soccer skeptic – how the World Cup finally won me over

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

I have never been a real football fan. For years, my relationship with the sport was purely passive; I used to treat football games as background noise while someone else in the house was actually watching. To me, a penalty or an offside was a complete mystery, a set of foreign terms that meant absolutely nothing. But this World Cup has shifted something in my personality.

It all started at home. My son, Alex, is a massive fan of Lionel Messi, whereas I, apparently, have found myself firmly in Cristiano Ronaldo's camp. With this tournament widely anticipated as the "Last Dance" for both legends before their eventual retirement, the stakes felt incredibly high right from the kickoff. Suddenly, I wasn't just listening from the other room; I was waiting for every game to start, watching the screen with undivided attention.

It feels as though a hidden door to another world has swung open for me. Tracking all the teams throughout the championship has become about so much more than just sport – it has been an unexpected geography and culture lesson. I have learned the locations of small countries I barely knew existed, picking up fascinating trivia along the way.

Of course, diving into this world also brought a few culture shocks. I was naive enough to think that an event of this magnitude would be free for the public to watch on national TV. Discovering the average price of stadium tickets – and realizing you have to pay for specific streaming subscriptions just to watch the



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

More than a game, this year's World Cup has brought a surprising mix of high-tech sensors, high-altitude drama and community spirit to local living rooms.

broadcast at home – was an eye-opener.

And then there are the crowds. Every time the camera pans over the packed stadiums, a wave of secondary anxiety hits me; crowded spaces naturally make me feel uncomfortable. Yet, even through the screen, I can understand that the live vibe inside those arenas is something magical and entirely unique.

The deeper I look, the more fascinated I am by the strict, almost corporate world of FIFA. For instance, I was surprised to

learn that famous arenas were forced to drop their iconic corporate names for the tournament. Stadiums are temporarily re-branded with generic, city-based names simply to protect the exclusive rights of official FIFA sponsors.

The venues themselves hold incredible secrets. Mexico's legendary Estadio Azteca sits about 7,300 feet above sea level. Alex shared a fascinating fact with me; at that altitude, players have to sprint through much thinner air. While the reduced drag gives the ball a literal boost – allowing it to travel faster and straighter – the players are left suffocating in the intense heat. To make it even more futuristic, Alex told me the official match ball has a high-tech sensor hidden inside. It tracks the ball's exact location in real-time, helping officials instantly decide if it crossed the goal line or if a player was offside.

But as a writer and an observer, my absolute favourite part of this experience is watching how fans here in Canada react. Because Canada is a beautiful

tapestry of immigrants, our communities become a vibrant mix of loyalties. People cheer passionately for different countries, yet the atmosphere remains incredibly friendly, celebratory and respectful – never aggressive. I truly love that about this country.

And finally, I have to address the age-old debate: soccer or football?

At first, I honestly thought soccer was a completely different sport, assuming North America had just invented a new word. It turns out, "soccer" actually has British origins! It comes from 19th-century British slang for "association football." So, while they sound like rivals, soccer and football are just two names for the exact same beautiful game, separated only by history and linguistics.

Ultimately, I've realized that the rules, the stats and the terminology don't matter as much as the big picture. The most beautiful thing about this sport is its undeniable power to unite people, families and nations all over the world.

Straight From The Shelves

By Laura McAsh, St. Marys Public Library

Explore materials and try new artistic techniques in a supportive setting at this week's Funday Friday program, the Paint & Palette Workshop! To attend this free event, register on ActiveNet: tinyurl.com/SMPL-ActiveNet. Please note that participants under the age of 7 must be accompanied by a caregiver who is at least 12 years old.

Friday evening, head over to Cadzow Park for an outdoor screening of "Hoppers," a fun film about a young woman who hops her consciousness into a robot beaver to try and save a nature area from being developed. Bring a blanket or chair for maximum comfort and grab some complimentary popcorn from the Friends of the Library to enhance your experience. This Movie in the Park is proudly sponsored by Quadro.

UP THIS WEEK

- Fri., Jul. 17: Funday Friday – Paint & Palette Workshop* (11 a.m. to 12 p.m.), Movies in the Park – Hoppers` (dusk)
- Sat., Jul. 18: Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Mon., Jul. 20: Picnic in the Park^^ (12-1 p.m.), Discovery Den* (3:15 – 4:30 p.m.)
- Tues., Jul. 21: Reading Help* (10:30 – 11:30 a.m.), Crafty Kids* (1:45 – 3 p.m.)
- Wed., Jul. 22: EarlyON Play & Read (9:30 – 10:30 a.m.), Picnic in the Park^^ (12-1 p.m.), Mahjong~ (1-4 p.m.), Imagination Station (2-4 p.m.), Reading Help* (2:30 – 3:30 p.m.), Teen Program* (6-7 p.m.)
- Thurs., Jul. 23: Mini Makers* (10:45 a.m. to 12 p.m.), Fluency Fitness^^ (2-3 p.m.)

*Registration Required

^^Held at Kin Park (109 James St. N)

*Held at Cadzow Park (217 Park St)

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: The Pullets

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

This week's photograph is the colour version of the July picture in the Rotary Club's 2026 Historic St. Marys calendar. Photographer Maurice Oliver took it in 1961 as a record of the Pullets, a popular local team who played women's competitive softball (more accurately called "fastball") at the senior level. Seated in the front row, from are Donna Hearn, Doreen Garrett, Loiey McEwan, Joyce Steele, Noreen Schlotzhauer. Standing behind them are Marj Leslie, Elaine Shackleton, Dawn Blackler, Shirley Harmer, Marilyn May, Bernice Steele, Erna Constable Little. The coaches in the back row are Jim Blackler, Clare Odbert and Gordon McEwan. Missing is Pat Blackler, also a key member of this team. (NOTE: This list gives surnames of these young women as they were in 1961. Many readers will know them by their married names.)

This is a lovely studio picture of the team members, but their careful poses, clean uniforms and perfect hair styles do not reflect the players in action. The three coaches would not be wearing jackets and ties at the ballpark either. Another photograph in the St. Marys Journal Argus, June 14, 1961, shows the Pullets in a more informal setting. This same group is lined up on the bench waiting for the start of a crucial league game. They have their ball gloves, a bat is ready beside them, and Loiey McEwan, the catcher, is wearing her protective gear. They are waiting for the signal to take to the field. They are ready to play ball!

The choice of the team's photograph for this year's calendar was a good one. In 2026, 65 years after the photograph was taken, Loiey McEwan, front and centre in the picture, was selected as one of this year's inductees for the St. Marys Sports Wall of Fame. Loiey, the daughter of Gord and Lois McEwan, grew up on St. George Street North, just down the hill from Queen Street. She had an older sister, Lou, and two younger brothers, Bob and Terry. Her cousins, the Hearn family, lived close by. During her years at the St. Marys Collegiate, Loiey was a multi-sport athlete – track and field, volleyball, basketball, any sport offered – she was good at them all.

In the summer, Loiey played ball with the St. Marys Pullets. She was catcher, the most demanding position on any ball team, and with her help, the Pullets won several tournaments and provincial championships. Loiey married Ken Moir and moved to Kitchener but went on to play with teams that won both national and international recognition. Even as she was busy raising her family, Loiey's involvement in fastball at a high level wasn't over. In July 1988, the St. Marys Creamery Juniors won the Ontario provincial elimination tournament, a tournament that they hosted in St. Marys and St. Pauls. The team then went 7-0 to win the Canadian National Championship in Lloydminster, Alberta, an amazing accomplishment for a small town team. Another of Loiey's cousins, Brian Dundas, was head



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ADANAC IMAGES COLLECTION, R. LORNE EEDY ARCHIVES, ST. MARYS MUSEUM)

A studio photograph of the St. Marys Pullets Senior Ladies Fastball Team, 1961.

coach. Loiey, along with Richard Kennedy and John Urquhart, were his assistant coaches. Her nephew, Tony McEwan, was a member of the team. Ron Marriott was the manager. The Creamery Juniors were inducted to the Sports Wall of Fame in 2024.

Although Loiey and the other members of the Pullets were trailblazers in St. Marys for the recognition of women in sports, there had been earlier local women's teams that were strong competitors. In the 1920s, the Methodist and the Anglican churches and a couple of local industries played in a women's inter-town league and, on special occasions, sent all-star teams to compete in nearby communities such as Kirkton, Stratford and London. But it is challenging to find much information about these young female athletes in the archived copies of the Journal Argus. Men's lacrosse, soccer and baseball dominate summer sports stories. There are occasional short reports about the activities of the women's league when there is space. Credit goes to Stan Moore who, when he arrived in St. Marys as Recreation Director in the mid-1950s, brought the philosophy that a community should provide sports and leisure activities for everyone no matter what age or gender – men and women, boys and girls!

In a newspaper article, published on July 4, 1962, Harold Irvine, a Journal Argus reporter, explained the origin of the name "Pullets." In 1953, a group of young teenage girls who wanted to play ball had formed a short-lived, five-team town league. For some reason, they chose mainly poultry-themed names: the Clucks, Double-Yolkers, Chicks, Mudhens and – an outlier – Nine Old Women. Irvine credits Gord McEwan for giving the name "Pullets" to an all-star group selected from these five teams. Irvine thought the name was "a stroke of genius," especially as they improved until they were "Queens of the Fastball Barnyard."

In the late 1950s, the Pullets played against teams from such places as Medina, Ballymote, Kirkton, Thorndale, and

gan at 9:30 a.m. on all three diamonds. The final was played in the evening at the quarry diamond for a trophy donated by local businessman, A. A. Skinner. The first year, the Pullets were eliminated early in their own tournament. In 1962, they were runners-up, losing the final game to a team from Toronto. In 1963, entries were divided into A and B divisions for the tournament. The Pullets were triumphant in the A division, defeating the tournament favourites, the Sarnia Belles by a score of 6-3 to win the Skinner Trophy.

At that time, although St. Marys had teams in a fastball league for men and was building a minor ball program, the Pullets and the younger junior girls' team, the Jets, were the only local teams playing serious competitive ball at the provincial level. As the senior team, the Pullets had prime time at the new diamond – Saturday evening! Recreation News, a regular column in the Journal Argus, announced the upcoming games and the Pullets regularly gave the hometown crowd an exciting night of well-played ball. At the beginning of the 1963 season, Gordon McEwan wrote an article for the Journal Argus that reviewed the highlights in the Pullets' history. He recalled how they decided in 1958 to compete in the Provincial Amateur Women's Union's elimination playdowns. The PWSU (now PWSA when "Union" was changed to "Association" in 1976) had been formed in 1931 to promote and manage the growth of the sport for women in Ontario. Competition at that time involved a best-of-three series between two PWSU-assigned teams, the winner moving on. Gord explained how, in their first years, the Pullets were eliminated in early contests, but by 1962, they survived several rounds of tough competition and were awarded the PWSU Senior AA Championship.

In September 1963, the Pullets won the Senior AA division for the second year in a row, but newspaper coverage of this accomplishment is hard to find. The St. Marys Lincolns, Ontario Junior B champions in 1962-63, were gearing up for the 1963-64 season. Attention to women's sports was put on hold until the following summer.

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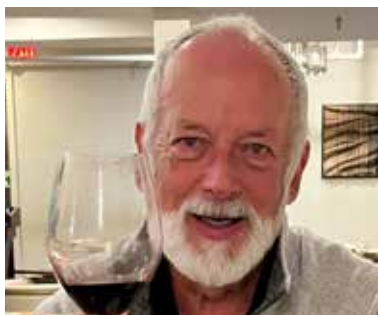
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Leaning into history with the famous Tower of Pisa



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

It turns out, one of the world's most famous destinations is the result of a mistake. In fact, a series of mistakes.

We had the chance to visit Pisa and verify for ourselves that the Leaning Tower of Pisa is, indeed, leaning and not simply an optical illusion. This was a day trip that was part of our terrific Viking Mediterranean cruise.

Pisa is a city in the beautiful region of Tuscany. If you are visiting this part of Italy, be sure to allow time to enjoy the area and make Pisa one relatively small part of your stay. I say this because, while every traveller wants to see the Leaning Tower, the entire experience can be accomplished in a few hours.

The tower is one of four historic buildings located in the "Square of Miracles," a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There you will find the Pisa Cathedral, a round, domed building known as the Baptistry of St. John, the Camposanto, as well as the Leaning Tower.

All of them are built in the

wrong place because the subsoil in the area of the Square of Miracles is, to be somewhat Biblical about it, "shifting sand." The unstable topography means it isn't just the famous tower that leans – everything here is susceptible.

We got an immediate introduction to this local reality when our enthusiastic guide led us into the square through what she called a back door. After the trek from the coach park, we followed a wall to a gate with a tower and entered the square from the side.

That tower in the wall – not the iconic one by any means – was also askew. The guide explained that darn near everything in this part of Pisa is off-centre because of the unstable terrain.

Our first view was of the baptistry, a large, round, domed Gothic building constructed over a 200-year period starting in 1152. And although the word "leaning" does not appear in its name, it does in fact tilt slightly, leaning 0.6 degrees toward its neighbour, the cathedral.

Speaking of this, it's good for prospective visitors to know that you can see all of these amazing buildings from the outside, free of charge, but it will cost you up to 35 euros if you want to enter all of them.

The Pisa Cathedral – officially, the Primatial Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary – is a striking, Medieval masterpiece started in 1064 and completed in its original form in a surprisingly short time. It was finished in 1092.

Nearby sits the Camposanto Monumentale, which is an enclosed cemetery created in the centuries following the construction of the cathedral and the baptistry, and today, famous for its frescoes.

I've saved the best – or at least, the most famous – until last: the Leaning Tower of Pisa. I confess, I knew almost nothing about this modern wonder of the world. I didn't know it is actually the free-standing bell tower of the cathedral. I didn't know that it began to lean during construction, so the engineers of the time tried to compensate architecturally with the result that the tower actually has a bit of a banana shape. And that the ongoing problems of unstable sand caused the project to end up significantly lower than planned – the tower is 56 metres high; it was intended to stretch 70 metres. That still involves a climb of 300 stairs if you are so inclined and are willing to pay the entrance fee.

This series of mistakes, adjustments and miscalculations has resulted in one of the most famous buildings in the world. Our guide laughed as she said, "We appreciate in Pisa this mistake very much."

The reason for that gratitude is immediately apparent when you consider the crowds of tourists wandering around the square, approximately half of whom are posing for photos as they "hold up" the tower.

Like many historic buildings,



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

It's not the famous tower, but this tower on a wall in Pisa is also leaning.

the tower took forever to build – 199 years in three stages beginning in 1173.

The tower was closed to the public for 10 years, ending in 2001, as engineers sought to counter the continuing lean. They were moderately successful – the lean was reduced by just under half a metre, and the tower was open for climbing once again.

The tower is certainly still leaning; it tilts five degrees, or four metres off true, enough that it is clearly evident and very dramatic. Nonetheless, the engineers of the most recent adjustment assure us that the tower is stable for at least another 300

years and it has surprisingly withstood four strong earthquakes since 1280.

So, it will probably be fine if you decide to climb those 300 steps. For us, after exploring the square and looking at the tower from every direction (it leans to the south, by the way), we found our best perspective as we enjoyed a refreshing treat on the terrace of a nearby gelato shop.

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



The tilt of the Leaning Tower of Pisa is clearly evident, caused by unstable subsoil.



The baptistry, one of four historic buildings in the Square of Miracles.



The economy of Pisa is heavily dependent on tourism; "We appreciate this mistake very much."

EAT AT OUR HOUSE: Peak-of-summer lazy days recipes



LAUREN EEDY

Independent Columnist

The following are all very user-friendly. Forget takeout pizza and make your own dough that doesn't take 12 hours to proof! Very minimal effort involved and you can customize to your taste. Feel free to make the dough into personal pan pizzas or just do an entire sheet pan, set it and forget it.

The Caesar salad dressing has been included in this column years ago as it is a staple in our household, it's so convenient to make, doesn't include loads of sodium and is more affordable than purchasing store-bought.

If you have a favourite pie pastry, use it for the last recipe or feel free to grab a premade crust from the store to save you time in the kitchen. Nothing says summer like cherry pie!

Same-day sheet pan pizza

Dough ingredients:

- 430 ml lukewarm water (38-40°C) (about 1 ¾ cups)
- 7 g instant yeast (2 ¼ tsp)
- 1 tsp honey
- 500 g bread flour or all-purpose flour (4 cups)
- 5 g salt (1 tsp)
- 20 ml olive oil (4 tsp)
- Semolina flour
- Fresh mozzarella, grated

Pizza sauce ingredients:

- Passata
- Garlic
- Salt and pepper

Method:

• Whisk the yeast and water, add honey and whisk again. Add flour and salt and mix until flour is absorbed.

• Cover and rest for 20 minutes. After 20 minutes, wet your hands and do four stretch and folds, turning the bowl after each one. Flip the dough, fold in half, cover and rest another 20 minutes.

• After 20 minutes, wet your hands and do either four coil folds after each fold or four stretch and folds. If doing stretch and folds, flip dough and fold in half. Drizzle dough with olive oil, cover and rest for one hour.

• Preheat oven to 230°C or 445°F.

• If you're not sure if your sheet pan is non stick, use parchment paper. Oil your pan, including sides. Sprinkle semolina on the bottom after the oil.

• Turn the dough out onto your baking sheet. Oil your hands and gently stretch it from underneath to cover the whole surface of the pan. Flour the top of the dough, cover and rest for 15 minutes.

• Flour your hands and dimple the dough over entire surface. Spread pizza sauce and bake 17-20 minutes.

• Take out and add cheese and bake another 7-10 minutes.

Homemade Caesar salad dressing

Far better than store bought. We haven't bought Caesar dressing since we learned this recipe at the Stratford Chefs School.

This is that same recipe.

Ingredients:

- 1 can or 2 oz oil-packed anchovies (can be found in the refrigerated seafood section)
- Garlic (recipe calls for 2 cloves but follow your heart)
- 3 large egg yolks
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp Worcestershire
- 1 medium lemon, juiced to yield 2 tbsp
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 4 tbsp fresh parmesan cheese, grated
- Black pepper, freshly ground

Method:

• To make anchovy paste, drain oil-packed anchovy container. Mince anchovies and garlic cloves together until mixture is smooth and paste-like. About 3 minutes.

• Whisk egg yolks in a medium bowl until smooth.

• Add the mustard and Worcestershire. Whisk until combined.

• Add anchovy, garlic paste and whisk until combined.

• Whisk in lemon juice until smooth.

• Slowly whisk in olive oil to create a thick emulsion. Continue to whisk another minute.

• Slowly whisk in vegetable oil and parmesan. Continue to whisk until thick.

• Season with fresh black pepper

• Leftover dressing can be stored in the refrigerator for one day. Let sit 10 minutes and stir.

• Serve with your choice of kale or romaine, homemade croutons or bacon if desired. Lovely in chicken Caesar salad



(LAUREN EEDY PHOTO)

Cherry pie made with fresh, seasonal charries is one of those classic summer favourites.

wraps.

Cherry pie

Ingredients:

- 3lbs sweet cherries
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup cornstarch
- 1-2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/4 tsp almond extract
- 1/4 tsp salt
- Butter
- 2 pie crusts (homemade or store-bought)
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp water
- Sugar

Method:

• Prepare the cherries by chopping and pitting. Mix together with sugar, cornstarch, lemon

juice, vanilla, almond extract and salt. Let mixture sit for 15 minutes to release natural juices.

• Prepare pie crust.

• Pour cherries and juice into prepared crust. Sprinkle a bit of butter on top and top with top crust (I like to have cool butter and grate it). Create a few slits in crust to release steam or create a lattice for top of pie. Up to you.

• Brush top crust with egg wash and a sprinkle of sugar.

• Bake at 400°F for 30 minutes. Cover crust with foil and reduce heat to 350°F, bake for another 30-40 minutes.

• Let cherry pie cool at room temperature before serving. Pie will thicken as it cools. Pair with vanilla ice cream or frozen vanilla yogurt.

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A coin!
- Why did the teddy bear say no to dessert?
Because it was stuffed!
- What gets wetter the more it dries?
A towel!
- What kind of tree fits in your hand?
A palm tree!
- What did one wall say to the other wall?
I'll meet you at the corner!
- What do you call a dinosaur that is sleeping?
A dino-snore!
- What kind of band never plays music?
A rubber band!
- Why can't Elsa hold a balloon?
Because she'll let it go!
- What do elves learn in school?
The elf-abet!
- Why did the cow cross the road?
To get to the udder side!
- What kind of key opens a banana?
A monkey!
- Why did the golfer bring two pairs of pants?
In case he got a hole in one!
- Why do bees have sticky hair?
Because they use honeycombs!
- What did the ocean say to the beach?
Nothing, it just waved!

- Word Search -



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CANADIAN BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

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T T T J E I W B R I O L T G F A K Q A G
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Q N E F H T M V Y G H Z T V S C W D W E
T D X V I S I T O R S H B I G F U D S Y

- St. Marys
- Church Street
- Baseball
- Hall of Fame
- Museum
- Tourism
- Contributions
- Community
- Visitors
- Achievements
- National landmark
- Source of pride
- History
- Memorabilia
- Showcase
- Research
- Gift shop



The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK

What do you call a bear with no teeth?



A gummy bear!

Zac (5) and Maeve (3) Downham

Hey Kids... Every Riddle Kid that appears in the paper gets a FREE MILKSHAKE at the Sunset Diner!

St. Marys Veterinary Clinic is pleased to be the sponsor of the

PET OF THE WEEK



As the school year ends and summer begins, families get busier - but don't forget your pets! Extra activities, travel, and visitors can be stressful for furry friends. Make time for walks, play, and a calm routine to keep tails wagging all summer long. *Happy pets make a happy summer!*



DOUG & MEATLOAF

Our Pets of the Week are Doug and Meatloaf. They are 15-week-old barn kittens turned into spoiled house cats. They are owned by Deirdre Votary of St. Marys.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent



AUGUST 22 AND 23 1PM

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Thorndale area women farmers recognized at farmer's market

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Recently at Masonville Farmers' Market, Thorndale area women farmers who are vendors at this market were recognized for their profession by London North Centre MPP Terence Kernaghan.

The United Nations declared 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF). Led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), this global campaign spotlights women's crucial roles in agrifood systems while addressing systemic challenges like land access, financing and gender inequality. Recent censuses show women make up roughly 36 per cent of farmers in North America and 40 per cent of the global agrifood workforce. Empowering rural women could potentially boost global resilience by millions.

As this is a global initiative, Canadian organizations and provincial governments are celebrating leadership, innovation and hard work of female agriculture professionals.

"What a fun surprise to receive this recognition at the Masonville Farmers' Market for the UN International Year of Women Farmers," said Bronwyn Mund of The Wandering Bee, a Thorndale area flower farm. "I am grateful to be one of so many amazing women growing flowers, food and stronger communities every day."

"A special thank you to Masonville Farmers' Market and MPP Terence Kernaghan and our area MPP, Rob Flack, and to my fellow women farmers, Shelley Hunter from Ataboy Garlic Farms and Michele Bowering from Great Lakes Goat Dairy."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Shelley Hunter of Ataboy Garlic Farms, Bronwyn Mund of The Wandering Bee, Terence Kernaghan, MPP for London North Centre, and Michele Bowering of Great Lakes Goat Dairy.

Thorndale's Back Forty Bash returns July 25

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Cultural and music festivals are the highlight of summer in various towns and cities of across this region. In Thorndale, that spotlight shines on the annual Back Forty Bash.

Since 2018, this lively 19-plus event has become a prime community affair on the local summer calendar. This year's Back Forty Bash is set for Saturday, July 25, from 7-11 p.m. at the Thorndale Fair

Grounds.

The Back Forty Bash, hosted by I Love Thorndale and Thorndale Agricultural Society, is a fundraiser for these two groups. This year's theme is the 1980s, featuring live music by Gravity Wagon, a popular local seven-piece band known for their energetic music of rock, pop and dance hits.

As for the "backyard" games, there will be KanJam, corn hole, axe throwing and giant pong with prizes for winners. The Thorndale Lions will be selling their fa-

mous wings and fries and, as this is an adult event, there will be a cash bar with all the favourites, including non-alcoholic options.

"This event wouldn't be possible without the generous support of our local businesses and sponsors, whose contributions help bring it all to life," said Arden McClean from I Love Thorndale. "The Back Forty Bash is more than a fundraiser, it is a celebration of community spirit, where friends and neighbours come together for a fun night of games and fan-

tastic live music, which captures the heart of Thorndale."

For more information and tickets, check out www.ilovethorndale.ca/back40/. Tickets will also be available, cash sales only, at the Thorndale Hardware Store and there will be pop-up ticket sales at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre on the morning of July 18.

The Back Forty Bash is a beloved local event that combines the community spirit with big summer fun. Organizers are still looking for volunteers.

Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society's Green Thumb Garden Tour a great success

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society hosted their 27th annual Green Thumb Garden Tour, their main fundraiser on Sunday, June 28.

Now in its 27th year, the tour remains the society's main fundraiser. The Green Thumb Garden Tour committee com-

prised of Mellanie Lisle-Gilchrist (chair), Elaine Clays, Marylou Bontje, Barb Krasnicki, Elaine Wein, Dot Deller and Norma Poel deemed the event a success.

Tickets were sold in advance and at Thorndale's Cenotaph Garden on tour day. Visitors explored three community-maintained gardens and five private gardens, each offering unique features, displays and inspiration for 74 guests from Lon-

don, Strathroy, St. Marys, Dorchester and nearby areas. Refreshments were served at three private gardens, with ice cream offered at another garden for a welcome treat on a hot day.

Each host garden received a cardinal garden stake from Practical Art (Steve Pietens).

"We sincerely thank our draw sponsors - Bella Vista, Cove's Automotive,

the Deller Family, the Gilchrist Family, Mutal One Insurance, Thorndale Country Mill, Thorndale Restaurant and Thorndale Hardware," said Lisle-Gilchrist, Green Thumb committee chair. "Special thanks also to Thorndale Family Restaurant for staying open late to feed and refresh our hot, tired volunteers. It was greatly appreciated."

CELEBRATION



Happy 30th Birthday on August 1st, MacKenzie!
Love, Jim and Marie

CELEBRATION



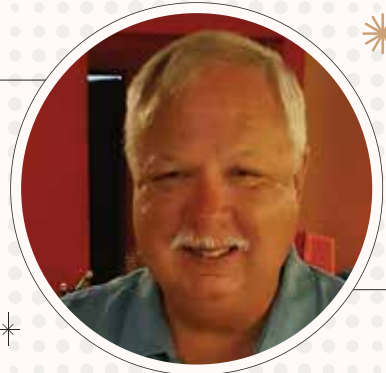
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			4				

Solutions on pg. 35



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OBITUARY

Weston



With profound sadness, we announce the passing of Marlene Weston (née Martin), who died peacefully surrounded by her family at Stratford General Hospital on July 10, 2026, after a long and courageous battle at the age of 76.

Marlene was born in London, Ontario, on November 18, 1949, the eldest daughter of the late Joan Martin (née Melville) and the late Arthur Martin. She was a loving sister to the late Barb Kemp (Chuck) and Mike Martin (Donna). Marlene was a devoted mother to Aaron

Weston (Deb Koch), Joe Weston (Tracy), Julie Dittmer (Todd), and Andrea Weston (Chris McMullen). She was a proud and loving grandmother to Decole (Chelsea), Holden (Marlee), Gage (Cody), Braiden (Sam), Shaelyn (Brandon), Jake, Abbie (Billy), Sydney (Ryan), Owen, Paige, and Danny. She was also blessed with many cherished great-grandchildren, whose visits and milestones brought her endless joy. Marlene is lovingly remembered by her many nieces, nephews, extended family members, and friends, all of whom were fortunate to experience her kindness, generosity, and unwavering support.

She fell in love with and married the love of her life, Bob Weston. Together they built a wonderful life in St. Marys, where they raised their family and created a home filled with love, laughter, and enduring memories. Bob predeceased her, but their partnership remained a source of inspiration to all who knew them. Marlene also cherished the close relationships she shared with Bob's family. She held a special place in her heart for her late parents-in-law, Bob and Vera Weston, and remained closely connected to their many children and spouses, who became an extension of her own family throughout the years.

For many years, Marlene worked at the St. Marys Public Library, where she combined two of her greatest passions: her love of books and her dedication to her community. She was known for her welcoming spirit, helping hands, and commitment to making St. Marys an even better place to live. Marlene treasured her many lifelong friendships. Among her closest friends were Madelyne Campbell, Jackie Iredale, and Nancy Skirten, whose companionship brought her immense happiness over the years. She especially looked forward to annual cottage getaways with "the gals," a cherished tradition that spanned over 25 years and created countless treasured memories.

A gifted and passionate crafter, Marlene loved to create. Her love language was sharing handmade gifts with those she cared about. Whether knitting, crocheting, quilting, or scrapbooking, she poured her creativity and affection into every project. Her prolific talent for quilting produced beautiful works that will continue to warm both homes and hearts for generations. We take comfort in the many meaningful friendships she cultivated, the passion projects she embraced, and the broad community network she developed throughout her life.

Her commitment to organizations and endeavors such as the Grand Trunk Railway project, the Knitting Guild, the Quilting Guild, and the Hospital Auxiliary reflected her desire to contribute, connect, and make a difference. Marlene also loved to travel and embrace new experiences. She loved the beach, a good book, and spending time with the people she loved. Among her favorite trips were the many visits to Connecticut, where she spent cherished time with her daughter's family and created memories that will be treasured forever.

She will be deeply missed for her genuine smile, infectious laughter, unwavering devotion to her family, and fierce loyalty to her friends. Though our hearts are broken, we are grateful for the remarkable example she set through a life defined by kindness, creativity, resilience, and love. Her legacy lives on in her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, extended family, dear friends, and the countless lives she touched through her community involvement and caring spirit.

Please join us in celebrating Marlene's remarkable life at the Royal Canadian Legion in St. Marys on Thursday, July 16, from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Remarks will be shared at 5:00 p.m., and anyone wishing to share a favorite memory or say a few words is warmly welcome to do so.

Those wishing to honour Marlene's memory are encouraged to support the St. Marys community she loved so dearly. Consider contributing to organizations such as the St. Marys Public Library, the local food pantry, or other community initiatives that help enrich the lives of others. Just as importantly, take time to check in on a neighbour, lend a helping hand, or perform a simple act of kindness. Marlene believed deeply in community, connection, and caring for others. The family can think of no better tribute than continuing the spirit of generosity, compassion, and friendship that she shared so freely throughout her life.

Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

"A life woven with kindness leaves warmth that time cannot unravel."

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9	3	6	7	4	5	2	1	8
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7	1	4	9	5	3	8	2	6
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THE WEEK AHEAD



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PRC & Friendship Centre events – See the Stonetown Crier on Page 5

St. Marys Public Library events – See Page 26

FRIDAY, JULY 17

- Royal Canadian Legion 100th anniversary celebration – Free BBQ lunch 12-1 p.m.

- Cascades BBQ – 4-7 p.m., Retired team members are welcome to join

- A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 18

- St. Marys Farmers Market at Milt Dunnell Field – 8 a.m. to Noon

- Hazardous and special product disposal day at the MOC – 8 a.m. to Noon

- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw – 5 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 19

- Tom & Sharon Bickell's anniversary & birthday celebration at the Bickell homestead 5637 Line 10, Perth South – 1-4 p.m.

Looking Back

AMY CUBBERLEY

Independent Columnist



Dry townships, round bales

25 years ago (2001)

Twelve youth and three leaders from 1st Kirkton Scouts left for PEI on July 5 to attend the 10th Canadian Scouts Jamboree. Travelling were leaders Jim Britnell, Tim Weber and Gerald Johns with youth Trent Taylor, Bradley Robinson, Adam Griffin, Brendan Shute, Michael Cowdrey, Tim Robinson, Aubrey Thomson, Tyler Denham, Ryan Mills, Matt Johns, Ryan Britnell, and Seth Weber.

Parks Lawn Bowling Club held a Mixed Pairs tournament at the local greens on Friday with eight greens in play.

50 years ago (1976)

West Nissouri voters said no to both questions on the Township liquor ballot last Monday. Blanshard Township, adjoining West Nissouri to the north-west, is also dry.

Something new in this area, although the equipment has been used in Western Canada for several years, was a demonstration recently of a baler which rolls up hay in 1500 lb. round bales on the farm of Joe Facey, West Nissouri Township.

75 years ago (1951)

Rev. Fr. John McIvor of the Scarborough Mission, who has been serving in the San Dominican Republic, was a visitor at Nazareth House this past week. Fr. McIvor was one of the men who first arrived in St. Marys to establish the Nazareth House school several years ago.

Harc Ready and Bill Laidlaw, while driving through the country on the weekend near Thedford, came across a cherry growing region on what is known as the "Ridge Road". They were able to pick a couple of baskets of the choicest sweet cherries at wholesale price without the use of a stepladder.

100 years ago (1926)

The loveliest array of lilies we have seen for a long time is in the garden of Mrs. O'Connor, Wellington Street. Mrs. O'Connor, who is a great flower lover, has her garden bordered with Madonna Lillies with many hundred now out in gorgeous bloom.

Dr. Elizabeth McMaster arrived home last Thursday from India, leaving there on March 15 and coming to London, England, where she spent six weeks in hospital work. She then sailed on the Alaunia for Montreal, having a good passage all the way.

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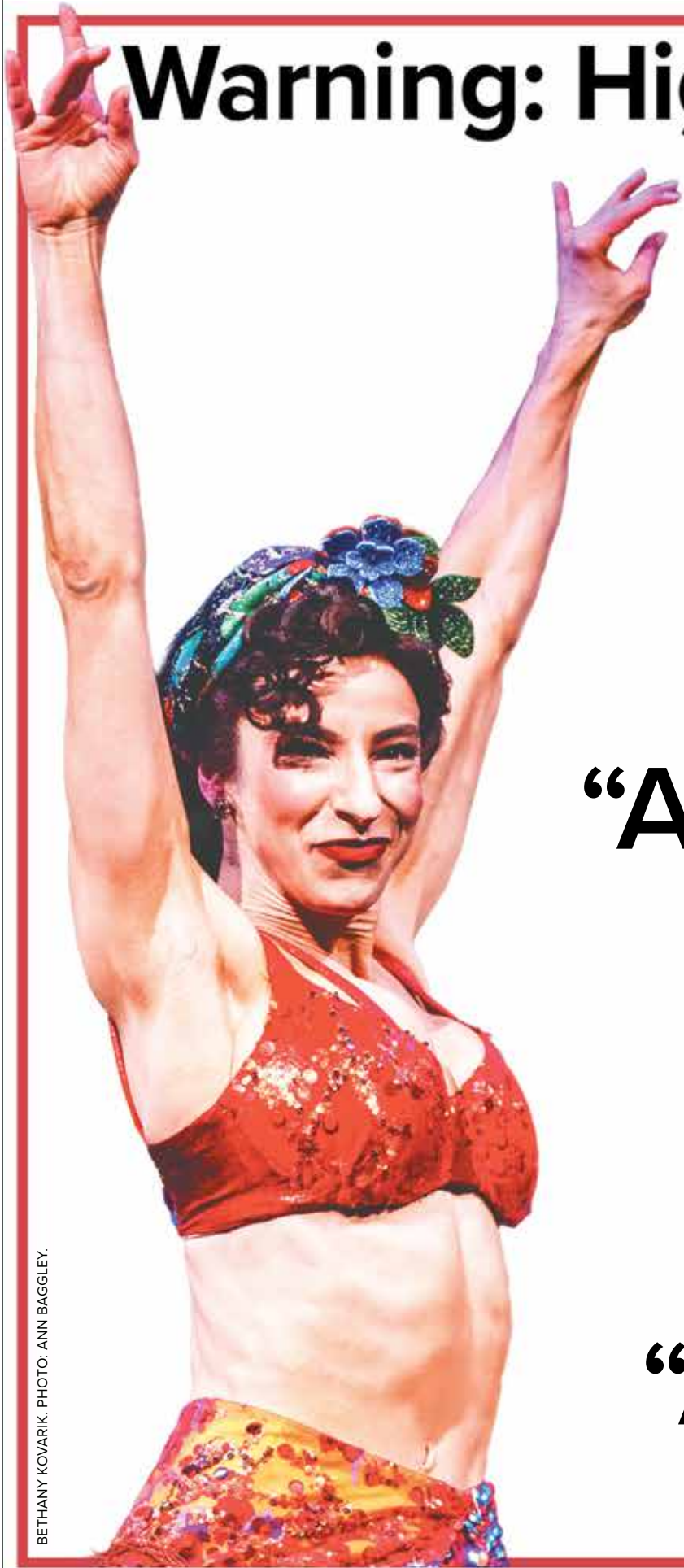
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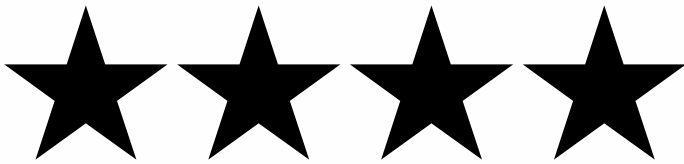


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