

# St. Marys Independent

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Thursday, April 2, 2026

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**SKC HOSTS MASTER OF THE RING TOURNAMENT** (EMILY STEWART PHOTO)  
Rowan Meeks at the Master of the Ring Tournament, hosted by Stonetown Karate, at the Stratford Rotary Complex on March 28. See full story on page 23.

## Perth County continues discussion on invasive-species strategy

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Perth County council is continuing its discussion on how best to address the growing threat posed by invasive plant species, including whether funding set aside for giant hogweed eradication could support a broader, coordinated approach across the county.

After hearing from Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) forestry and restoration supervisor Rob Davies about the conservation authority's collaborative invasive-species program at its March 5

meeting, council revisited the topic during discussion of the county's 2025 weed report at its March 19 meeting.

Councillors considered whether some or all of the \$25,000 included in the 2026 budget to address giant hogweed could instead be used to support broader efforts to map, monitor and control invasive species across the county.

"This is probably an opportunity to address what was carried over from a few meetings ago with regards to the money we had set aside for invasive species," Coun.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

## St. Marys council approves land-lease agreement with Bell for new cell tower on Carling Street

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

St. Marys council has approved a land-lease agreement with Bell Mobility that will allow the telecommunications company to construct a new cellular tower on municipally owned land near the northeast edge of town.

Council approved the agreement at its March 24 meeting following a staff report recommending the town enter into a lease arrangement for a portion of unused land along Carling Street within the town's industrial area.

"We received an inquiry from Bell in the fall of last year," St. Marys public works director Jed Kelly told council. "They are looking to install another cell tower in the Town of St. Marys. They were looking somewhere in the north or northeast. They were inquiring about landowners up there. Ultimately, they'd prefer to deal with the municipality. We went back and forth a bit, but ultimately what we landed on was the very northeast corner of the town. It's an unused portion of the Carling Street road allowance. Currently the road allowance is open but unimproved.

"Right now, Bell is looking for a commitment to execute the agreement, and the once that is done, they will start the public-consultation period."

According to the report, the proposed tower is intended to improve cellular connectivity and internet service in the northern part of St. Marys, an area that has experienced coverage gaps and

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# COMMUNITY

## Perth County continues discussion on invasive-species strategy

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Walter McKenzie said, tabling a motion proposing the funding be used, in whole or in part, to support invasive-species control on public lands and roadsides, particularly to address the spread of giant hogweed, phragmites and Japanese knotweed – three of the most concerning plants currently affecting Perth County.

“... There may be other invasive species, but those are the three that we talked about, and those are the three that seem to be an issue in, certainly, the southern part of the county. ... I’m not looking to spend the whole \$25,000; let’s take what it needs and spend up to \$25,000, but if we don’t need it, we wouldn’t spend it. I think we still have to have a follow-up (report) at some point in time to make sure this program is working.”

According to public works director Bill Wilson, however, Perth County already has a roadside-vegetation management program that allows its weed-control contractor to identify and treat invasive species along county roads, including phragmites. Council heard this work could potentially be expanded to include local municipal roads in the future as mapping efforts improve.

The UTRCA program aims to create a coordinated strategy to identify, map, monitor and control invasive species across the watershed, with a focus on the three of most concerning weeds mentioned by McKenzie. These species are considered particularly problematic due to their environmental, economic and human-health impacts.

Giant hogweed, for example, produces a toxic sap that can cause severe skin irritation, blistering and long-term sensitivity to sunlight when it comes into contact with skin. The plant can also reduce biodiversity and limit recreational

use of natural areas.

Japanese knotweed is known for its aggressive root system, which can damage infrastructure including foundations, bridges and drainage systems, while also crowding out native vegetation and reducing biodiversity.

Phragmites, an invasive grass species, spreads rapidly in wetlands and roadside ditches, forming dense stands that disrupt water flow, increase fire risk and create challenges for municipal infrastructure maintenance.

The county’s weed report notes that complaints in 2025 included issues related to giant hogweed, sow-thistle and dog-strangling vine, as well as growing concern about invasive species not currently listed as noxious weeds under provincial legislation, including phragmites, garlic mustard and Himalayan balsam.

The UTRCA’s program is designed to address these concerns through a collaborative, multi-year effort involving municipalities, conservation authorities, industry groups and private landowners. The approach emphasizes early detection and rapid response, as well as prioritizing areas where coordinated treatment can produce long-term results.

“I think we do need to seek clarity ... on whether we’re going to give some money to the conservation authority or whether we’re going to essentially keep it for our own team’s purposes and focus our efforts on our own land, leaving the ratepayers to pay their own bills on their land in terms of weed control,” Coun. Todd Kasenberg said. “I do have vague concern about that notion that if we leave the ratepayer to handle it, those who don’t actually do it exacerbate the problem.”

“I think that we should take a seri-

ous look at education because I think there are a lot of ratepayers who really don’t know how big the issue is with some of these weeds,” added Coun. Bob Wilhelm. “Perhaps we need to educate them.”

A key challenge in controlling invasive species is a significant portion of affected land is privately owned, making cooperation from landowners essential to any long-term strategy. According to the UTRCA presentation, fragmented efforts are often ineffective because invasive plants can quickly spread from untreated properties into neighbouring lands, undermining progress made elsewhere.

“Our new approach is a collaborative, coordinated approach to identify, map, monitor, prioritize and control invasives within the Upper Thames River watershed,” Davies told county councillors at their March 5 meeting. “Specifically, we’re going to target giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and phragmites because we know these species are significant issues across our watershed. The local awareness and local action will get efficient results. We’re looking for partnership between private landowners, municipalities and (conservation authority) lands, and we’re hoping for a sustained, multi-year program.

“The collaborative support of our partners with either access to lands, landowner contacts, identification, moni-

toring, mapping or control efforts will result in effective, efficient, informed decisions at both the local and regional levels, and it also gives us the ability to leverage those funds to make any investments go that much further.”

Ultimately, council referred McKenzie’s amended motion back to staff for further analysis on how much funding the county could or should contribute to the UTRCA’s program, whether similar services are available through the county’s other conservation authorities (Maitland Valley and Ausable Bayfield) and whether a portion of the \$25,000 should remain dedicated to internal control efforts on county and lower-tier land.

“We already pay into the conservation authorities through our lower tiers, so I have a problem if we’re going to give them more money, especially if this program is not one that’s mandated,” Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz said during the discussion. “To me, it’s over and above. Yeah, it might be a problem; it sounds like we’re already addressing it here at the county. So, I’m not in favour. If Walter’s motion only pertains to the county ... I can support that, but I cannot support giving more money to the conservation authority.”

Staff are expected to report back to council with additional information to help guide future decisions about how the county will approach invasive-species management moving forward.

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# St. Marys council approves land-lease agreement with Bell for new cell tower on Carling Street

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

capacity limitations in recent years.

The proposed site was identified as suitable due to its location near existing infrastructure and minimal impact on surrounding land uses.

Municipal staff considered several potential locations before determining the Carling Street site represented the best option for improving coverage while limiting visual and planning impacts on residential areas.

Cellular towers fall under federal jurisdiction through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), meaning municipalities do not have final approval authority over tower placement, but they do participate in consultation processes and review site compatibility with surrounding land uses.

As part of the agreement, Bell will lease the land from the town under an initial five-year term with options for

up to three additional five-year extensions. The lease will provide annual revenue to the municipality, beginning at \$16,000 per year, with escalation provisions applied over time.

The report notes the tower is expected to support improved wireless coverage and network reliability for residents, businesses and emergency services in the surrounding area.

With the lease agreement now approved, the project will move into the public consultation phase required under federal guidelines. The consultation process includes notification to nearby property owners and an opportunity for public comment on matters such as tower location, design and compatibility with surrounding land uses.

According to Kelly, the tower will be 200 feet high – similar to the cell tower near the St. Marys Cemetery

– and Bell will be required to notify neighbours within a 600-foot radius of the preferred site, as well as publish a notice in the newspaper to invite public comment.

“This will be similar to what the neighbours have there, so I really don’t see an issue,” Coun. Fern Pridham said. “This is a really good thing that’s happening here.”

Feedback gathered through the consultation process will be considered as Bell finalizes its tower design and proceeds with the regulatory approvals required for construction.

“We will have one more kick at the can if we have a bunch of people with pitchforks at town hall regarding this,” Kelly said, referring to the fact that final approval of the cell tower won’t happen until after the public-consultation period is completed and the town could identify an alternative site in the event of significant public opposition.

## St. Marys Kinettes to host annual Easter Egg Hunt

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

One of the longstanding events many look forward to every year is a visit from the Easter Bunny, who always makes an appearance at the St. Marys Kinettes Easter Egg Hunt.

The bunny is usually a hit with the little ones, but some still get a little frightened.

This year, the hunt will take place on Saturday, April 4, from 9-11 a.m. at Lions Park in Milt Dunnell Field.

As in past years, the club will accept donations of money and non-perishable food items for the Salvation Army food bank.

Kids between zero and nine years old must be accompanied by an adult.

The Easter Egg Hunt has been held an-

nually since the early ‘80s and has carried on in all different weather.

“Rain is always an enemy, but being the strong club we are, we persist and carry on,” said Kinettes life member Phyllis Spearin.

It originally started at the park beside the quarry. It was then moved to Westover Inn and remained there for years until moving to Milt Dunnell Field in 2020

where it was more of a drive-through hunt due to pandemic restrictions.

Kids can search for an egg and trade it in for a delicious Easter treat. There are also games and face painting.

Kids and their families are welcome to come out on Saturday morning and meet the Easter Bunny.

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# EDITORIAL

## A farm girl at heart: Getting to write about rural Ontario

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

Recently, with my change in title to director of community engagement for Grant Haven Media, I've had the opportunity to connect with more of our local papers than ever before, including our rural publications and farming papers. It's something I don't take for granted – in fact, I feel incredibly lucky to now be writing about rural Ontario and the agricultural communities that shaped me.

Although people often look at me and assume I'm a city girl, I actually grew up on a small beef farm in Chesley. The only thing Chesley is really known for is Chesley Lake – which, ironically, isn't even in Chesley and is actually located about a half-hour northwest of the town.

We had about 30 head of Simmental cattle and at one point, I even had six of my own cows and calves. Raising them gave me a headstart on saving for college, but it also opened the door to countless pets along the way, including a pot-bellied pig named Jamie, a donkey named Francis and even a peacock named Iago. My sisters and I loved living on the farm, but I think I was the most animal-loving out of all of us.

Growing up, I showed calves in 4-H and even went to The Royal a few times. I also

generally came home from livestock sales with at least a few rabbits or chickens. At one point, my dad blocked off an entire pen just for my animals. Through one winter, I kept Jake, Iago, several ducks and chickens, and a few guinea hens together before letting them roam free around the farm – including up by the house – in the spring.

One of my favourite things about being the local animal-loving farm kid was that whenever someone had a newborn animal whose mother died, I was usually the first person they called. At one point, I had a pet sheep named Oscar that I raised from birth. He sucked on a soother, knew how to unlatch gates and sometimes slept outside with my dog. He even tried to sit in my lap when he was fully grown.

I loved living on the farm. I loved the scratches down my legs every summer from unloading hay, and I loved connecting with the land in a way few people ever get to experience. Beyond all the pets, farm life grounded me and I feel blessed to have grown up that way.

Now, through journalism, I've been able to reconnect with those roots in a completely unexpected way. Writing for our rural community newspapers and farming publications has allowed me to re-establish that connection more every day. Recently, I attended

the annual general meeting for the Ontario Agri-Food Discovery Centre concept – a future STEM-based learning centre designed to teach kids where their food comes from. I've written about soybeans and the challenges farmers across Ontario face, as well as issues affecting dry bean producers. I've spoken with local representatives and community leaders who care deeply about supporting rural communities and agriculture.

In a roundabout way, I've come back to farming – not by working the land, but by telling the stories of those who do. And I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to connect with farmers and those in the agri-food industry after leaving that life so many years ago.

Through my work, I've also been reminded of the emotional connection farmers have with their land and livestock. Recently, there was a fire on a local farm, and I felt deeply for the family. I know the pain of losing livestock. I think the first time I ever saw my dad cry was when we lost a cow during a difficult birth. While animals provide income, they also become part of the family, no matter the

size of the operation. It's something people who haven't lived it don't always understand.

The same goes for the land. Yes, crops represent livelihood, but farmers also care deeply about their growth. They prepare the soil, plant the seeds and watch them grow. They wake up at night hoping frost won't damage early crops and pray rain holds off after hay is cut. Farmers know their land, their crops and their livestock better than anyone. Now, I'm privileged to write about them from a new perspective – someone who no longer lives on a farm, but still appreciates it deeply and wants to share their stories.

While farming isn't the path I see for myself now, I still dream of owning a home with a bit of land – maybe a few chickens and perhaps another pot-bellied pig someday. My parents no longer have livestock and now focus on soybeans and grain, but they still own more than 200 acres. When I return, my shoulders drop and I finally relax. That's the feeling of going home, I suppose.

And for me, home will always be the farm.

### Quote of the Week

*"U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has demonstrated through their actions in Minnesota and across the U.S. that they bring fear and disorder, not safety and security. Any presence of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Toronto is liable to create fear during a time when we want to welcome the world and ensure that everyone feels safe."*

**Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow on ICE being present during the World Cup.**

### Bravo

We have 1 Bravo this week.

1) Bravo to the St. Marys Independent on their recent Farm Edition. So well done and professional. It should make everyone included proud to be a part of and the rest of us proud to live in such an incredible part of Ontario!

### Boo

We have 1 Boo this week.

1) Boo to the people who think it's ok to drive under the speed limit and then brake check you when you're behind them, then proceed to flash the, 'you know what'. Cut up your license and walk, thanks!

\*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.

## Overheard

# AT THE COFFEE SHOP

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I don't get why rich people like Tiger Woods don't just hire drivers.

Easter egg hunts are proof that your kids can actually find something if they want to!

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](mailto:info@stmarysindependent.com) with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519.284.0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

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## St. Marys Independent

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The first step is always the hardest.

# Town of St. Marys' spring cleanup underway

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Public Works team at the Town of St. Marys is beginning their annual spring cleanup initiatives, focusing on street sweeping, sod repairs and pothole maintenance.

After a long winter, the team is looking forward to restoring streets and public spaces as warmer months approach.

Spring street sweeping is underway with the public works team aiming for two passes on every street in St. Marys. Delays may occur due to snow accumulation or further use of winter materials, but a second sweeper has been added to the fleet to speed up the process.

Sod repair is currently on hold due to the possibility of additional plowing based on the weather forecast. Work is expected to start in early April if conditions improve, with staff inspecting and repairing minor areas and rolling sod where possible.

Major repairs with topsoil and seed are planned for May. Residents can request maintenance by emailing [publicworks@town.stmarys.on.ca](mailto:publicworks@town.stmarys.on.ca), which will prompt a work order and onsite inspection.

The Town of St. Marys is tackling a high number of spring potholes, using a premium cold-patch solution until asphalt plants reopen in the coming months. Repairs are most effective on dry days with temperatures above freezing.



“Our crews are addressing potholes as they appear and are using the best available materials until paving season begins,” said town director of public works Jed Kelly in a press release. “We appreciate residents’ patience as we work to keep streets safe and accessible.”

Residents are reminded the yard-waste and brush depot at the municipal operations centre (408 James St. S) is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week for drop-offs. Boulevard sand can be raked into gutters for sweeping only until April 30, but branches, leaves and yard waste must go to the municipal operations centre or landfill.

Annual leaf and yard-waste collection will begin on April 20 and run until Nov. 23. For details and the collection map, visit [www.townofstmarys.com/yard-waste](http://www.townofstmarys.com/yard-waste).

For further information or to report specific concerns, contact the public works department at [publicworks@town.stmarys.on.ca](mailto:publicworks@town.stmarys.on.ca).

## STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



### SCRAP METAL AND E-WASTE COLLECTION

Items for collection to the curb by 7 AM on April 11

St. Marys Volunteer Firefighters and Kinsmen Club will be collecting scrap metal and e-waste curbside.

Proceeds support important causes:

- Scrap metal → Muscular Dystrophy Canada
- E-waste → Cystic Fibrosis

### LEADERSHIP COURSES

Take the next steps toward lifeguarding and learn skills that save lives!

- **Bronze Medallion & Emergency First Aid Course**
  - Sundays, 8:30 AM - 1:30 PM | March 29 - April 26 | PRC
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  - Sundays, 8:30 AM - 1:30 PM | May 3 - May 31 | PRC

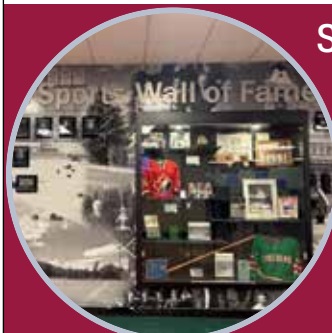
More information: [townofstmarys.com/aquatics](http://townofstmarys.com/aquatics)



### SPORTS WALL OF FAME NOMINATIONS

Do you know someone who has made a significant contribution to sports in our community? Nominations are now OPEN for the 2026 Sports Wall of Fame! The nomination period is open until April 30 for the following categories: Individuals, Teams and Builder.

Learn more: [townofstmarys.com/sportswall](http://townofstmarys.com/sportswall)



### MUNICIPAL HAZARDOUS AND SPECIAL PRODUCT DISPOSAL DAY

April 11 | 8 AM - 12 PM | Municipal Operations Centre

Residents can safely dispose of items such as:

- Paints, motor oil, cleaners & solvents
- Batteries, propane tanks & aerosols
- Fertilizers, pesticides & pool chemicals
- Fluorescent bulbs and more

More information: [townofstmarys.com/mhsw](http://townofstmarys.com/mhsw)



### SHOWER PROGRAM

Pyramid Recreation Centre

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*Hello Spring*

**FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY (FOL)**

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**Indoor Easter Farmers' Market**  
at the PRC - Saturday, April 4, 2026 - 8 - 12 pm

**FOL Social** - at the library  
Wednesday, April 8, 2026 - 6:30 - 8 pm

**Management Committee Meeting** - at the library  
open to the public - Wednesday, April 15, 2026 - 6 - 8 pm

**Dinner / Theatre** - Saturday, May 2, 2026  
*Boeing Boeing* - Dine at the Westover (reservations required)

**Spring Book Sale**  
Wednesday, May 6 - Saturday, May 9, 2026

**Donations of books, music, DVDs & puzzles are greatly appreciated.**

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## Senior of the Week



Our Senior of the Week is Nan Skirten who celebrated her 80th birthday on March 25. Nan was born and raised in Nova Scotia and moved to St. Marys with husband Jim in 1967. They have two sons and four grandchildren. Nan enjoys time with family and friends and can often be found enjoying her daily tea with the "boys" at Tim's and her walks about town, always with a smile on her face. She is a longtime volunteer at the Boutique at St. Marys Memorial Hospital and is a member of the Knit & Chat group that meets weekly.

Happy Birthday, Nan.

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519.284.0041 or [info@stmarysindependent.com](mailto:info@stmarysindependent.com).

## WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. What is the birthstone for April?
2. Who is the newly elected leader of the NDP?
3. The Cooper's Hill Cheese-Rolling and Wake takes place annually in which country?
4. Children born from 2025 to 2039 will belong to which generation?
5. What are the three main macronutrients?
6. Who stars as the lead role in Shutter Island(2010)?
7. Canada's federal minimum wage grew April 1st, 2026. What is minimum wage?
8. Angkor Wat is the largest religious monument in the world found in what country?
9. How far is 1-light year in kilometers?
10. How many sides does a heptagon have?

This week's answers are found on pg. 35

# Nominations open for St. Marys Sports Wall of Fame 2026 inductees

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

*Staff Contribution*

The Town of St. Marys is proud to recognize the outstanding achievements of local community athletes, teams and builders of sport through representation on the Sports Wall of Fame at the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

The nomination period for the 2026 season begins on Wednesday, April 1, and will close on Thursday, April 30, at 3 p.m. Application forms can be found on the Town of St. Marys website by visiting [www.townofstmarys.com/sportswall](http://www.townofstmarys.com/sportswall). The selected representatives for induction will be recognized in the fall at the unveiling ceremony.

"We are proud to showcase St. Marys' sports accomplishments," said town recreation manager Joannah Campbell in a press release. "Our community is incredibly supportive and engaged. It is important to acknowledge the committed individuals, teams and builders that contribute to the success and growth of sports in our town."

For more information about the Sports Wall of Fame, or to nominate an individual, team, or builder, visit [www.townofstmarys.com/sportswall](http://www.townofstmarys.com/sportswall) or follow the Pyramid Recreation Centre on Facebook ([facebook.com/pyramidcentre](https://facebook.com/pyramidcentre)). Hard copies of the nomination application can be arranged for pick up at the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

## Easter hours for Town of St. Marys facilities

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

*Staff Contribution*

The following hours will be in effect at Town of St. Marys facilities on Good Friday (April 3) and Easter Monday (April 6).

### Closed Friday, April 3, and Monday, April 6:

- Administrative offices (Town hall and municipal operations centre)
- Adult Learning
- Aquatics Centre (located at the Pyramid Recreation Centre)
- Child Care Centre, Before/After School Programs
- EarlyON Centre
- Fire Hall
- Friendship Centre
- Landfill (Closed April 3-6)

- Library
- Mobility Services offices (Rides must be booked by 12 p.m. on Thursday, April 2)
- Museum
- ServiceOntario
- Youth Centre

### Home support services

- Home support services such as Meals on Wheels and Telephone Reassurance will continue.

### Garbage and recycling collection

- Will continue as scheduled. Details: [www.bra.org/my-services/st-marys-town/](http://www.bra.org/my-services/st-marys-town/).

### Pyramid Recreation Centre

- Arena open Friday, April 3, and Monday, April 6
- Closed Sunday, April 5, at 3 p.m.

### St. Marys Train Station

The Train Station will be open; visit [www.viarail.ca](http://www.viarail.ca).

## Scrap metal and e-waste pick-up Saturday, April 11

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

*Staff Contribution*

It's that time of the year to purge as the St. Marys Volunteer Firefighters and Kinsmen Club of St. Marys take to the streets on Saturday, April 11, to pick up scrap metal and e-waste.

The pickups not only benefit homeowners; proceeds from the scrap metal collection support Muscular Dystrophy Canada, while the e-waste collection supports Cystic Fibrosis.

Residents must have items to the curb no later than 7 a.m. on the morning of Saturday, April 11, and are asked to separate scrap metal from e-waste to assist volunteers. As the pick-ups are fundraisers, please leave the donations for the firefighters and Kinsmen.

**The following items are considered e-waste and will be picked up:**

- DVD and VCR players
- Cameras, cellphone, pagers, portable media players and PDAs
- Computers, keyboards, mice, copiers, scanners, fax machines and printers
- Radios, monitors, televisions, tuners, video projectors, record players
- Telephones, answering machines
- Small appliances, speakers, fax machines and micro-waves

### The following items are not acceptable for pick-up:

- Household bulk items
- Hazardous liquids or paint
- Household garbage
- Brush and yard clippings
- Tires
- Construction or demolition materials
- Commercial or industrial materials

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# Donations and more volunteers needed for St. Marys Station Gallery



EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

The St. Marys Station Gallery is looking for financial donations and more volunteers to keep operations running smoothly amid rising costs.

Duncan MacDonald, curator and director of the St. Marys public art gallery, launched a GoFundMe campaign for the gallery with a \$600 goal. As of March 30, \$305 had been raised.

MacDonald said the St. Marys Station Gallery has lots of local sponsors, with the Town of St. Marys being the largest sponsor. Hubbard Pharmacy, the St. Marys Golf and Country Club, the Rotary Club of St. Marys, the Kinsmen Club of St. Marys and St. Marys Cement also sponsor the gallery.

However, there are rising costs everywhere and MacDonald is looking for extra funding.

"We're just needing to bolster up some funding so we can keep doing what we do really well at the gallery with exhibitions and art education," he said.

The funds raised will support the purchase of materials for the gallery's art-education program. While some of the adult students will bring their own materials, the gallery supplies most of the materials

used in its art classes.

"When people take classes, the Station Gallery Art Education program provides a bit of everything, especially for children, as you can imagine," MacDonald said. "It's important to keep it restocked."

The Station Gallery recently closed its Art Olympics exhibition, which featured artwork using pencils, watercolours, acrylics, collage and ink under MacDonald's instruction.

The money raised will also support the costs that come with opening receptions.

MacDonald added any financial donation, whether it's through the online fundraiser, e-transfers, or cash, can help the gallery operations.

"I understand it's slightly tighter times for everybody, so we're not expecting huge amounts, but if it's five or 10, 20 bucks, every little bit actually helps from the community," he said.

The St. Marys Station Gallery is also looking for two to three volunteers who can dedicate their time on Wednesdays and Fridays at any time between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

To find out more, email [stmarysstation-gallery@gmail.com](mailto:stmarysstation-gallery@gmail.com). Donations to the GoFundMe can be done online via [www.gofundme.com/f/st-marys-station-gallery-fundraiser](http://www.gofundme.com/f/st-marys-station-gallery-fundraiser).



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# Business LeadHERship Summit returns to St. Marys with sold-out event

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

The sold-out 2026 Business LeadHERship Summit will take place Monday, April 27, at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club.

Fresh Idea Collective will bring more than 150 business owners and community leaders together for a full-day leadership experience designed by women for women. The event aims to connect, reflect and strengthen women in leadership while promoting a sense of community throughout the region.

"I like to say it's not just a one-and-done event," said Kerry Ramsay, founder of Fresh Idea Collective. "It really is the beginning of meaningful connections. One exciting fact is that of the attendees who have already signed up for this year's business leadership summit, 45 per cent have never attended a Fresh Idea Collective event before, so we're very excited for those women to get to know each other."

This year's Business LeadHERship Summit will once again welcome eight student leaders – four from Stratford District Secondary School and four from St. Marys DCVI – made possible by local sponsorship.

"Our goal is not only to celebrate our



(SELENA JONES PHOTO)

Fresh Idea Collective is once again bringing together women in leadership and business at the 2026 Business LeadHERship Summit. Pictured are local business owners, from left, Lesley Spencer-Cooper of MALT Staging and Design, Camille Fortin Bensler of At Home with Camille and Natalie Moore of Moore Creative Consulting.

local women in business leadership, but also to inspire the next generation of female entrepreneurs as they begin to explore their own potential, build confidence and envision what's possible for

their future," said Ramsay.

The keynote speaker at this year's event is Cheryl Himburg, owner of Key Element Solutions. She will speak about her journey leading with vision and creating

the life of her dreams.

Later in the day, workshop leader Aileen Edwards of AME Consulting will discuss how business owners can lead with confidence and build executive presence.

"This is really going to be a power-packed day," said Ramsay.

A highlight of this year's event will be an interview with Kristine Hayes and Kelly Heleniak, owners of Shaw's Ice Cream, including their experiences with the ups and downs of owning the ice-cream business.

Throughout the day, attendees will have opportunities to connect with other like-minded business owners, listen to live music by Evangelina Kambites of the Stratford Festival, take part in movement breaks hosted by local wellness businesses and watch real-time graphic recording by Emma Richard, who will bring the day's ideas to life visually.

"The Fresh Idea Collective community just continues to grow, and it's not anything magical," said Ramsay. "It's simply that a lot of women are tired of doing business on their own. It's the right moment, it's the right time and I believe it's having an incredible impact, which is why it's continuing to grow."

For more information on Fresh Idea Collective and its events, visit [www.freshideacollective.com](http://www.freshideacollective.com)

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# St. Marys council remuneration totals nearly \$144,000 in 2025

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The members of St. Marys council were paid a total of \$143,968.20 last year in salary and expenses.

St. Marys council received its annual report outlining remuneration and expenses paid to members of council during the 2025 calendar year at its March 24 meeting. Prepared as an annual requirement of the Municipal Act, the report provides a detailed summary of salaries, mileage and conference expenses paid to the mayor and councillors, as well as remuneration related to service on local boards.

“The attached schedule in the agenda outlines the remuneration and reimbursed expenses paid to or on behalf of members of council from public funds for the year ended Dec. 31, 2025,” St. Marys director of finance Spencer Steckley said. “This is

a standard annual reporting item, and it is provided to ensure transparency and meet legislative compliance.”

Mayor Al Strathdee received a salary of \$36,412.98, along with \$935.80 in mileage expenses and \$999.14 in conference and training expenses, for a total of \$38,347.92.

Each councillor received a base salary of \$17,188.98 with additional remuneration or expense reimbursements varying depending on board participation and travel requirements.

Councillors Marg Luna and Dave Lucas received additional remuneration related to service on the Spruce Lodge board, totalling \$2,112.

Mileage expenses totalled \$1,310.20 for the year, while conference and training expenses totalled \$999.14.

During a brief discussion prior to receiving the report for information, members of council reviewed which public

boards and committees report remuneration and expenses through the municipality and which provide compensation separately.

“I’m confused about the Spruce Lodge issue,” Luna said. “Coun. Lucas and I were paid for our expenses by Spruce Lodge, so I’m confused as to why that money is showing up in our budget. We don’t reimburse Spruce Lodge for those expenses, do we?”

“As per the Municipal Act ... any expenses paid by a local board is to be included within the annual report,” Steckley said, later noting he would look into clarifying how the Spruce Lodge board members who also sit on St. Marys council are paid and reimbursed for future remuneration reports.

Coun. Fern Pridham also asked Steckley why pay and reimbursement to Coun. Jim Craigmile for his seat on the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

(UTRCA) board was not reported as part of this annual report.

“I’m just wondering why it doesn’t appear here because it’s the same sort of thing as Spruce Lodge; you get paid by (UTRCA) but it’s public funds,” she said.

“The (Municipal) Act is pretty specific,” Steckley responded. “It mentions, specifically, local boards and I believe the Upper Thames authority is a special agency, so my understanding is they would be excluded from it. Coun. Craigmile, I believe, represents multiple municipalities. He represents South Huron and Perth South as well as the Town of St. Marys, so that’s the rationale behind the exclusion of those funds.”

Under provincial legislation, municipalities are required to annually disclose remuneration and expenses paid to members of council and local boards to ensure transparency and accountability to taxpayers.

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# Tamblyn to perform at Harrington Hall April 19

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

The Harrington and Area Community Association is hosting a concert at Harrington Hall, 539 Victoria St., Embro, on Sunday, April 19, at 2 p.m.

Doors open at 1:30 p.m. and snacks, soft drinks and desserts will be served to guests. Ian Tamblyn, a multi-award-winning singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and storyteller, will perform for the first time in the region next month and says he's looking forward to visiting somewhere new.

"This will be a new experience for me, and despite the fact that I've been playing for over 55 years, I've never been to Harrington," said Tamblyn. "For one reason or another, I seem to find myself in small places with little enclaves of community-based concert halls and coffee houses. I've been doing that for many, many years, and really, I prefer playing in such places."

Tamblyn was nominated as English Songwriter of the Year by the Canadian Folk Music Awards in 2022, and in the same year, he was appointed an officer of the Order of Canada.

His music reflects diverse themes, including Canadian landscapes and people. His upcoming album focuses on small communities across Canada.

"I did four albums celebrating the four coasts of Canada – the Superior coast, the West Coast, the Arctic coast and the Labrador Coast," said Tamblyn. "I've been to all of them, and I wanted to do an album reflecting those parts of the country, not just the landscape, but the people there as well."

Attendees will hear a range of music as Tamblyn says he generally gets a feel for the audience and bases his performance around that.

"Each evening, I don't have a planned set list. I sort of go where I want to go and also get a general vibe from



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Ian Tamblyn, singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and storyteller, will bring his Canadian music to Harrington this April.

the audience and see what works for them," he said.

The community association is a volunteer-operated, registered non-profit that manages several local facilities and events. Its primary role is to oversee and maintain the Harrington Conservation Area and the Harrington Grist Mill, both owned by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, as well as manage Harrington Hall – the venue for the upcoming concert – on behalf of the Township of Zorra.

The association hosts a number of events each year, including a Christmas potluck, an open house on the second Saturday in August and one or two concerts. Its largest fundraiser is the "Celebrate Harrington Community Auction," an online event scheduled to take place shortly after the upcoming concert.

Tickets for the concert are \$30 and available in advance at [exploreharrington.ca](http://exploreharrington.ca) or by calling 519-536-0955.

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# Project SAPPHIRE leads to significant drug seizure by Stratford, Woodstock and London police

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

In 2025, the Stratford Police Service (SPS) street crime unit partnered with the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario (CISO) to investigate the trafficking of cocaine within the City of Stratford and surrounding municipalities, police said in a press release.

In December 2025, SPS and Woodstock Police Service street crime units, along with members of the SPS emergency response unit, London Police Service emergency response unit, and uniform members executed Controlled Drugs and Substances Act search warrants in St. Marys, Woodstock and London.

In March 2026, the project concluded with the execution of two Controlled Drugs and Substances Act search warrants in the City of London and one in the City of Stratford.

During the course of the investigation, SPS officers seized the following:

- 90 grams crack cocaine
- 167 grams of methamphetamine
- 2,473 grams of cocaine



(PHOTO COURTESY OF STRATFORD POLICE SERVICE)

The drugs seized by the Stratford Police Service and its partners as part of Project SAPPHIRE have an estimated street value of more than \$266,000.

• Approximately \$91,000 in cash  
The drugs seized have a street value of over \$266,000. The search warrants executed in December 2025 resulted in a 37-year-old male being charged with two counts of possession for the purpose

of trafficking. A 52-year-old female was also charged with possession for the purpose of trafficking.

In March 2026, a 33-year-old male and a 29-year-old female were charged with possession for the purpose of trafficking

and possession of property obtained by crime.

A 32-year-old male was charged with trafficking and 12 counts of possession of property obtained by crime.

A 48-year-old male was charged with possession for the purpose of trafficking and weapons offences.

A warrant will be sought for a 30-year-old male who will be charged with trafficking and four counts of possession of property obtained by crime.

In the press release, the SPS thanked its police partners including Woodstock Police Service, London Police Service, Guelph Police Service and CISO for their assistance during this investigation.

“Project SAPPHIRE illustrates the effective collaboration and coordination of multiple police services to combat drug crime,” the release stated. “The successful completion of this investigation was made possible through funding provided by the Ontario Government, Ministry of the Solicitor General, in which Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario supported this investigation.”

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# Ontario Agri-Food Discovery Centre releases early concept drawings for future STEM-based learning centre

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

At the Ontario Agri-Food Discovery Centre’s 2026 annual general meeting March 26, board chair Steve Dolson introduced the team from Moriyama Teshima Architects, which developed concept designs for the future 10-acre site in Listowel.

The Ontario Agri-Food Discovery Centre aims to become a place for learning and play that showcases the innovation and importance of the agriculture and agri-food sector across Ontario, while highlighting what Huron and Perth counties have to offer.

Though still in the conceptual phase, the centre is already drawing attention and praise from local politicians, including Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae.

“This centre will showcase the strength of Ontario’s agri-food sector and the people behind it,” he said. “It’s an industry that drives our economy and puts food on our tables every day.”

The STEM-based centre is envisioned as a hub for science, education and community engagement, promoting curiosity and bridging the gap between consumers and agricultural practices. It will also highlight diverse career opportunities in the agri-food industry.

At the meeting, plans were discussed for an expanded facility, growing from 20,000 square feet to 34,000 square feet, with estimated costs increasing to \$38 million.

The board secured \$100,000 in grants from the Gay Lea Foundation and the Agricultural Adaptation Council, allowing the project to move forward with architectural proposals and the concept phase.

A total of 41 proposals were received before selecting Moriyama Teshima Architects. The overall project is expected to raise \$40 million to \$50 million, including \$100,000 for concept design, \$300,000 for planning and \$150,000 for fundraising support.

The firm has worked on a number of civic and cultural institutions, including the Canadian War Museum, the Aga Khan Museum, the Discovery Centre and the



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Pictured from left, Ehsan Naimpour, Diarmuid Nash and Olivia Keung from Moriyama Teshima Architects, and Steve Dolson, board chair, announce new concept designs for the Ontario Agri-Food Discovery Centre at the 2026 annual general meeting in March.

Honey Bee Research Centre. They are currently leading new design work at Science North, as well as the Rouge National Urban Park Visitor, Learning and Community Centre.

Their approach to the project focuses on helping the public better understand Ontario agriculture and making food systems more visible.

“Food is everything. Food is national security. Food is economy. It’s employment. It is energy, history. If we approached many of today’s issues understanding the

importance our food makes, we would be making much better decisions,” said Diarmuid Nash, a partner with Moriyama Teshima Architects. “Food is infrastructure, it’s climate resilience, it’s economic strength and it’s community stability, and yet, for something so fundamental to our lives, much of this food system remains invisible to the public.”

He reiterated the centre is about making the agri-food system visible to everyone, including those in urban centres like Toronto.

“It’s a place for agriculture, technology, sustainability and education to come together – a place where Ontarians can better understand the land that sustains them, the systems that support it and the innovation shaping its future,” he said. “While the building is about agriculture, it’s also a civic institution about stewardship. It reflects resilience and it’s about the future of food in Ontario.”

Olivia Keung, director of sustainability with the architectural firm, said the concept will focus not only on the agri-food sector but also on sustainability and land use.

“Our projects focus on public engagement, learning and connections to the landscape,” she said. “We were inspired by the conversations during the tour and throughout the months we have been working together with the board, and we are deeply committed to sustainability and innovation.”

Keung said sustainability is a top priority for the concept.

“Architecture must embody environmental sustainability. That same belief – that buildings can actively demonstrate stewardship, innovation and responsibility to the land – is central to how we approach the Ontario Agri-Food Discovery Centre,” she said.

The project began in 2020 with a feasibility study conducted for the Municipality of North Perth. A non-profit organization was formed in 2021, gained charitable status in 2022 and developed a strategic plan in 2023. In 2024, the Municipality of North Perth committed 10 acres of serviced land as the project expanded to a provincial scope.

The board plans to launch a capital campaign next year.

More information is available at oafdc.ca.



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# Browns Women's Institute donate to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

The Browns Women's Institute (WI) presented a cheque for \$1,000 to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation last Thursday, March 26.

The money was raised by making and selling homemade apple crisp. The successful fundraiser made enough for them to donate \$1,000 to the health-care foundation and \$750 to Browns Church.

The WI is a community-based organization for women based on friendship, education and support that was originated in Stoney Creek in 1897. WI is still active across Canada with approximately 4,500 members, but like all volunteer organizations, clubs are finding it tougher to get members. For years the WI's mission has been to focus on "For Home and Country" by playing a big role in supporting local causes.

Browns Women's Institute is one of six left in Oxford County. The group has their meetings at Browns School located at 136545 13th Line, St. Marys. The group has 14 members, meet monthly and continue to work together on projects to help others and improve their community all while taking part in fellowship.

Their current work-bee project was to make and fill over 100 hot/cold rice packs for the London Children's Hospital. On site at the school is a Barn Quilt the WI donated, as well as a memorial bench in memory of the late Sheila Greason.

The club hosts euchre every second and fourth Thursday of the month. For \$5, attendees get a dessert and some social time playing a fun card game.

Anyone interested in learning more about the Browns Women's Institute can email Carol Miller at [cmiller54@hotmail.com](mailto:cmiller54@hotmail.com) or call Nancy West at 519-670-4008.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

A successful fundraiser by the Browns Women's Institute allowed the club to donate \$1000 to St. Marys Healthcare Foundation. Pictured in the back row, from left to right, are board director Brandon Boyd, Women's Institute members Nancy West, Edith Eedy, Judy Taylor, Ruth Ann Haves, Carol Herbert, Lynn Dietrich, Evelyn Arthur and Carol Miller. In front, from left, are Women's Institute member Liz Harrison, board director Linda McFadyne and member Dianne Greason. Absent are members Evelyn Douglas, Annie VanHooydonk, Janet Uren and Willie Vanstrien.

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Photos Courtesy of the St. Marys Museum & Archives

The evening includes two short monologues portraying life in 1926 — one rural and one urban — followed by an exploration of how technology has changed rural and urban life over the past century.

Doug Johnston and his son Devin will lead a presentation, drawing on their experience at Maplevue Farms, a fifth-generation family dairy and cash-crop operation and the longest continuously milkproducing farm in Perth County.

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### Municipality of Thames Centre Notice to Residents and Property Owners Regarding Noxious Weeds

The main purpose of the Weed Control Act, R.S.O. 1990, is to reduce the impact of noxious weeds on the industries of agriculture and horticulture. Primarily this Act applies to agricultural and horticultural lands that generate income or other benefits to agriculture; this excludes lawns, gardens and private areas for personal enjoyment and leisure.

Under the Weed Control Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter W.5 Section 3, 16 and 23, you are requested to destroy all noxious weeds on your property.

#### IN URBAN AREAS

Section 3, 13, 16 and 18 do not apply to noxious weeds or weed seeds that are far enough away from any land used for agricultural or horticultural purposes, as they do not interfere with that use.

All properties within the Municipality of Thames Centre are hereby requested to be in compliance with the Weed Control Act by the 15th day of April, 2026 and throughout the growing season.

The co-operation of all citizens is earnestly solicited.

**Mark Brown**  
Area Weed Inspector  
County of Middlesex  
519.434.7321, ext. 2253

**Jana Nethercott**  
Clerk  
Municipality of Thames Centre  
519.268.7334

# St. Marys Memorial Hospital Auxiliary has plenty planned for spring

JANIS FREAD

*St. Marys Memorial Hospital Auxiliary*

Ooh-la-la is the Parisian theme of this cheerful quilt stitched by Daphne Evely and quilted by Betty Groenestege-Jantzi, which is the first prize in the Auxiliary's spring raffle.

Displayed by Evely and Anne Edwards in the adjacent photo, the quilt is hanging in the hospital Boutique where raffle tickets are available for \$5. Second prize is a \$100 Esso gas card and third prize is a \$50 gift certificate for Petals and Foliage. Tickets may also be purchased from any Auxiliary member for the draw on May 3.

Coming up Easter weekend is the Auxiliary's traditional Easter Bake Sale! Come downtown on Saturday, April 4, when we'll be selling all kinds of delectably delicious home baking at our table in Troyer's Spices. We'll be there from 9 a.m. to noon, but we're known for our baking and have yet to last until noon, so come early!

The spring line of garments and accessories from the hospital Boutique will be available at our Sip & Shop on Sunday, May 3, at the Friendship Centre. Join us to enjoy light refreshments while browsing through a selection of ladies' garments, purses, handmade jewellery and a special selection of South Asian garments and jewellery. We will be joined by Tisket a Tasket's collection of vintage treasures and will be open from 1-4 p.m.

To promote everything to do with books, the Auxiliary will be at the Friends of St. Marys Public Library's Spring Book Sale, selling book sleeves, wheelchair book carry bags and walker book carry bags. More details to follow.

For updates on fundraising events or to become a volunteer, follow the Auxiliary on Facebook at The Boutique at St. Marys Memorial Hospital or email [smmhauxiliary@gmail.com](mailto:smmhauxiliary@gmail.com).



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. MARYS HOSPITAL AUXILIARY)

The quilt stitched by Daphne Evely and quilted by Betty Groenestege-Jantzi that will serve as the first prize in the St. Marys Hospital Auxiliary's spring raffle. Pictured holding the quilt are Evely and Anne Edwards.

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# More than \$880,000 in Gas Tax funding announced for transit in Perth County

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Perth County municipalities will be receiving a total of \$882,866 to support rural public transportation through the 2025-2026 Gas Tax program, Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae announced in a press release.

This funding can be used to expand service hours, increase routes, purchase new vehicles and improve accessibility to increase transit ridership.

“We’re maintaining this funding to help municipalities expand transit and keep people connected,” Rae said in the press release. “This funding means better service and stronger communities across our riding.”

The Ontario government is investing over \$380 mil-

lion in 107 municipalities across Ontario to improve local transit through the Gas Tax program.

“Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is investing nearly \$70 billion in public transit to protect Ontario by building a stronger, more resilient, self-reliant economy,” added Ontario Minister of Transportation Prabmeet Sarkaria in the release. “Today, we’re ensuring municipalities can continue to deliver safe and reliable transit services for their communities.”

For 2025-2026, municipal Gas Tax allocations have been maintained at 2024-2025 levels. In addition to the Gas Tax program, the government supports municipal transportation projects through the Connecting Links, and Ontario Transit Investment Fund programs.

Funding amounts will be allocated as follows:

Municipality	Funding Amount
St. Marys	\$163,485
North Perth	\$80,090
Perth East	\$73,121
Stratford	\$513,030
West Perth	\$53,140
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$882,866</b>

# UTRCA advises caution near watercourses amid rainy, spring weather

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

With rain in the forecast, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) is reminding everyone to be cautious near watercourses.

In a press release issued March 31, the

UTRCA said a low-pressure system had entered the region, with rain in the forecast every day for the rest of the week. Up to 50 millimetres of rain was forecast by the end of Saturday.

The UTRCA said it did not expect serious flooding but was watching this system closely. The UTRCA said it would

operate its flood-control reservoirs at Fanshawe, Wildwood and Pittock Conservation Areas to reduce downstream flooding.

The UTRCA reminded the public to use extreme caution near all local waterways. Caregivers are reminded to keep children and pets away from watercourses. Stream

banks may be slippery and unstable, and the water is very cold and fast-moving.

“Stay out of any flooded areas and do not drive through flooded roadways,” the conservation authority warned in the press release. “It is not safe to take shelter along riverbanks or in low lying areas that are prone to flooding.”

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Sunday: Closed

# Community dinner proceeds donated to Salvation Army



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTO)

Shirley Porter, representing the United Church, was pleased to present a cheque from the proceeds of the community dinners to Jennifer Morris, community and family services manager at the Salvation Army. Community dinners at the United Church are held every other Monday at 5 p.m. and are prepared by various service clubs, churches and businesses in St. Marys. Due to the next Monday being a holiday, the community dinner will be held on Tuesday, April 7.

# Easter Bunny visits Country Roots Market



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTO)

Country Roots Fresh Market held their annual Spring open house on Saturday, March 28 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Many children were there to meet the Easter bunny, enjoy an Easter egg hunt, play some fun games and enjoy some Easter treats. Grace Bickell, the Easter Bunny and Sarah Nairn had fun entertaining the children that attended.

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# The jury is in; social media is killing our kids

LOREENA MCKENNITT

Editorial

Last week's verdicts in two U.S. court cases (New Mexico and California) must have been bittersweet wins for the parents whose children took their own lives as a result of some connection to social media. The cases showed Meta and YouTube to be gravely negligent and are now being considered this era's "tobacco moment": the day the world finally woke up to the fact that they are harming and killing our children.

In the New Mexico case, jurors found that Meta (parent company to Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Threads) had misled consumers about the safety of its platform, enabling sexual exploitation of young users, fining them \$375 million USD. In California, the court found Meta and YouTube (parent company Google) deliberately designed their platforms to be as addictive as cigarettes or online gambling, fining Meta \$4.2 million USD and YouTube \$1.8M. Snapchat and Tik-

Tok apparently settled out of court, unconvinced they could win.

And yet, these dark interactions occur not only through social media sites where bullying, suicide, image manipulation and human trafficking occur, but through pornography channels and gaming portals, which are implicated in loss of privacy, radicalisation, or inducing psychosis as a result of spending more time in virtual worlds than the real one – all before the introduction of AI.

Unwittingly, and perhaps through our own addictions to devices, we've allowed our children to be exposed to content in ways we would never have dreamed of in an analogue setting. Which one of us would leave our doors wide open for the world to come in and engage with our children without our knowledge, permission, protection, or approval, hour after hour, day after day, for nearly two decades?

The digital parental controls which have been sold to us as our responsibility have proven to be patchy and insufficient.

The verdicts of these court cases are saying it is the tech companies' responsibility to make products safe, not ours.

When new consumer products enter the market without adequate research and testing – as happened here – problems can arise, and it often takes a long time for the full effects to become clear.

But this has been the long-held strategy adopted by tech, what Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg spoke of in the early days of Facebook: "Move fast and break things." Well, they've broken our kids in the process while moving faster than our democratically elected representatives could table and ratify legislation to protect our children and families from their predatory behaviour.

While we wait for the Canadian government to retable its long-awaited online harms bill, we can take some comfort in knowing that many other countries and states are well on the path of legislation. Too, there are more than 1,500 court cases yet to come, including four put forward by Ontario schoolboards.

The trend is confirming what most parents, teachers and doctors, have long seen with their own eyes. Childhood has changed drastically since the advent of smartphones and social media in the past 15 years, and it has not been good.

Clearly, our children are in a medical and mental-health emergency, and we want to see every level of government – federal, provincial, municipal and even down to school boards – adopting the posture of urgency and duty of care while we await legislation to address the threats. Just as we would no longer send our children into a room full of tobacco smokers and wait for the law to step in, our children need rescuing now.

Each and every family has their own, unique experience, and I welcome hearing from anyone who wishes to share or reach out to [info@wisecommunities.org](mailto:info@wisecommunities.org).

*Loreena McKennitt is a member of The Order of Canada, Director of The Falstaff Family Centre (Stratford) and founder of The Stolen Child Project and Wise Communities.*

## Friendship Centre hosts scrapbooking garage sale



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTOS)

On Saturday, March 28, the Friendship Centre held its annual scrapbooking garage sale. There was a huge array of scrapbooking items for sale as well as a bake sale. Over 700 people attended. Pictured on the right, from left to the right, are Doreen Mate, Ray McNichol, Marg Lamont, Jim McNichol and Jeannie Papple. They had a big table set up with many interesting scrapbooking supplies for sale. Proceeds from the scrapbooking garage sale totaled \$4,927.65 and will support the Friendship Centre's programming and services.



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# St. Marys Independent **SPORTS**

## Provincials-bound U13 A Boys end season unbeaten in league play

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The St. Marys Firefighters U13 A Boys St. Marys Rock will compete at the Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) Provincial Championships April 3-5 in Whitby after a near-perfect, defeat-free season in league play.

Back-to-back, three-game sweeps in their two playoff series against the Mt. Brydges Cougars and Strathroy Junior Rockets gave the Rock a masterful 37-0-1 record in league play, with the sparse losses experienced by the group coming in tournament play.

Head coach Merlin Malinowski called his team's season "incredible."

"The more you look back over it, the more impressed you are," said Malinowski. "To go through the regular season and two rounds of playoffs and not lose a game is phenomenal. It hasn't quite set in yet, even for me. I think it's one of those things that, as you move forward and you start to look back on it, you realize how impressive it was. They're looking forward to this tournament, and they want to go in and do really well there, so in their minds, the season hasn't finished yet.

"But I think, going forward in their lives, this is going to be one thing that they look back on and realize how special this was."

Malinowski added the team's well-rounded skillset and positive-yet-intense hunger to push one another to be better comprised the backbone of their strong campaign.

"It's just a good bunch of young hockey players," Malinowski said. "You have the skill, you have really good goaltending from both guys and then you have good defence. We have three lines and nine forwards who are all skilled for their age. And then on top of that, they all push each other, so if one kid was doing really good, the next kid in line thought, 'I'm going to do better.' There wasn't any kind of jealousy, but there was a really healthy competitiveness within the team."

Malinowski further described how the team's excellent practice habits have built up their healthy competitiveness.

"They challenge each other in practice. When we would do one-on-one battle drills or one-on-one full ice drills, they were trying to beat each other, and that just makes everyone better. You can have teams where a handful of kids don't care as much in practice, and so they don't get better. But when we're battling against each other in practice, if you're making me work and I'm making you work, you just can't help but get better."

The Rock outscored Mt. Brydges in their playoff



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys Firefighters U13 A Boys St. Marys Rock won their league championship March 23, completing a sweep of the Strathroy Junior Rockets to cap off an undefeated year in league play. The team will compete at OMHA Provincials April 3-5. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Matthew McCarty and Luke Savile. In the second row, from left, are Jax Parsons, Talon Nov, Theo Keller, Charles Coppins, Gavin Santagapita, Joey Brown, Keaton Ward and Attley Ehgoetz. In the third row, from left, are Emmett Parkinson, Talan Ward, Hudson Monteith, Liam Showers, Owen Leslie-Robinson, Nick Simons and Myles Havens. In the back row, from left, are coaches Harper Murrell, Jon Ward, Deon Keller, Jeremy Savile, Mark Monteith and Merlin Malinowski.

semi-final by a whopping 20-2 margin to take a three-game sweep before downing the Junior Rockets in three straight to claim the league pennant, scoring 14 goals on Strathroy while only surrendering three during the series.

"I've been coaching these kids for three or four years, and each year we've added a couple of pieces, and you could just see the depth on this hockey team," Malinowski said. "You could tell this year this was a special group. Could you tell they were going to go undefeated in the regular season and playoffs? No, we didn't know it was going to be that good, but we felt early in the season that these kids had a really good chance of getting to the OMHAs."

When it comes to each player's constant desire to improve and push their teammates to get better, Malinowski noted it's a mindset not many teams manage at the U13 age level.

"It's very impressive to see kids this young have that mentality. You don't see that very often, where you have

a team of 15 kids, 15 individuals, that are all on the same page as far as competing with each other. And again, there was never any jealousy. When you have that, you can start tearing guys down instead of trying to rise up to their level.

"One of the other impressive things for me as a coach is one night, it would be one kid doing well, and the next night, it was a different kid, and the next night, a different kid," Malinowski continued. "Everybody has their moments to shine, and it just rolled throughout the year."

When looking ahead to provincials, Malinowski noted the team simply has to keep performing the way they have up to this point.

"We just have to keep playing the way we've been playing and just really stay focused in the moment. When we were at internationals, we lost focus in a couple of games for various reasons, and I think for us to have success, if we can go in there and just really focus on the game and playing between the whistles, they're going to have a decent chance."

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# U12 A Boys win gold at St. Catharines tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys Building Centre U12 A Boys St. Marys Rock captured the top prize at the Warriors Tournament in St. Catharines March 20-22.

Head coach Brent Kittmer told the Independent the team delivered well-rounded play throughout the weekend.

“For me, (the story of the tournament) was consistency, a balanced attack and good team defence and goaltending,” said Kittmer. “Overnight tournaments are a marathon where you are trying to balance being competitive but still letting the players have fun. It typically means you have later nights and some tired legs. In both of our games on Friday, we looked a little tired to start, and naturally nervous because each game means something.”

Kittmer added the team received contributions up and down the lineup all weekend.

“In five games, we had 10 different goal scorers with different individuals stepping up each game and when we needed a goal most. I thought our defence played well all weekend and limited the number of shots and scoring chances we allowed. And whenever we did give up a shot, or there was a high-danger chance, our goalie, Nathan (Walt), was there to make the save.

“Nathan played all five games because Anderson (Murray) wasn’t available,” Kittmer continued. “I can’t imagine the pressure Nathan felt knowing he was the only goalie and had to play all five. Throughout the weekend, he made a number of sacrifices to stay rested and ready, and his play in the games was amazing.”

St. Marys went undefeated through the five-game tournament, which saw the top teams from a four-game round-robin meet in the gold-medal game. While the Rock picked up three wins, Kittmer was most impressed by their effort in their one tie of the round-robin.

“In round-robin play, we felt our Saturday morning game against the Haldimand River Kings was going to be our most important because we knew they were a very competitive team that had a good chance



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys Building Centre U12 A Boys St. Marys Rock won gold at the Warriors Tournament in St. Catharines March 20-22. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Nathan Walt, Ryland Urquhart, Rylan Lord, Cooper Sass and Leo Furtney. In the middle row, from left, are Greyson Eeley, Dean Feeney, Finnley Harburn, Karson Garrett, Kane Douglas, Marcus Stuckless, Cameryn Stokes, Jakob Kittmer and Jaxon Wittig. In the back row, from left, are head coach Brent Kittmer, assistant coach Jared Stokes, trainer Ben Douglas and assistant coach Brayden Lord. Not pictured were Anderson Murrah, Alec Harlton and assistant coach Adam Zurbrigg.

to make the finals. That game was our best in round-robin play, and the players came out right from the start with a pace that dictated the play. Although the game ended 1-1, we felt that we outplayed and out-chanced Haldimand.”

The tie also made Haldimand’s road to the finals much more difficult, as they had lost a game on the first day of the tournament.

The Rock met the Burlington Jr. Raiders in the finals, with Kittmer noting the group overcame exhaustion to deliver another strong showing.

“It was a typical final where the players were fighting nerves and tired legs from the previous two days,” Kittmer said. “From the start of the game, we dictated the pace of play and were doing a great job of hemming them in, but they were able to get a goal on a broken play to go up 1-0. The players did a great job of not allowing that to affect them, stuck with

their game and we were able to tie it up before the end of the first.”

Kane Douglas netted the first-period equalizer for the Rock, followed by a strong individual effort by Finn Harburn to rush the puck to the net and bang in his own rebound, giving the Rock a 2-1 lead less than a minute into the second.

“After that, I was very impressed with how the players shifted to a defensive mindset, took away Burlington’s time and space, and really gave them very few opportunities to get into a good scoring location,” said Kittmer. “There were definitely a few tense sequences, but Nathan (Walt) was always there to make the save.”

Midway through the third, Cam Stokes put home a rebound after a point shot by Jake Kittmer to make it 3-1 in St. Marys’ favour. Stokes then buried his second of the game less than three minutes later, poking a sliding puck through the Burl-

ington netminder’s legs, to increase the Rock’s lead to three goals and ultimately seal a 4-1 victory.

According to the head coach, the Rock’s tenacity made it harder and harder for the Raiders to catch up as the game progressed.

“By the midpoint of the third, our strong play was starting to wear Burlington down,” Brent Kittmer said. “As was the story through the weekend, the ability of the players to keep their level of play consistent through the game and wear Burlington down, combined with good team defence and goaltending, is what ultimately made the difference.”

Brent also credited affiliate player Alex Harlton for stepping up admirably and giving the team high-quality minutes all tournament.

“Alex stepped in earlier this year to help the team out when we had injuries and sicknesses. Alex once again helped us this weekend in our round-robin games as we had players recovering from illness, and she played incredible as she always does.”

The tournament marked a high point for the Rock, which has fought hard through an up-and-down season, with Brent Kittmer having high praise for the team’s development and character.

“This team is a great group of kids,” Brent Kittmer said. “They are one of the best dressing rooms that I’ve been part of, where the laughs, positivity and camaraderie take top priority. They’ve had a great year where everyone has developed, and ending the season with a tournament win was the reward that they deserved after having stayed positive through the difficult stretches in the season.

“This year, we had a number of new players on the roster, and people playing new positions. It took them some time to gel on the ice and play as a team. In the last six weeks of the season, they really started to click and play as a team, and their level of consistency increased. In my view, we started playing our best hockey at the right time and got a tournament win for it.”

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# U18 A Boys win league title, set for 'one last dance' at provincials

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys Cement U18 A Boys St. Marys Rock captured their Shamrock League Championship and will compete at the Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) Provincial Championship April 3-5.

Head coach Gord Cookson told the Independent the trip to provincials is a fitting conclusion to the minor hockey careers of their large graduating class.

"I think it's big," said Cookson. "A lot of these guys, it's their last year. They've had pretty successful minor hockey careers, and I think they want a big push here. With it being their last year, everyone, even the second years, are fighting for the third years also. It's one last dance for these guys, and just to be there and have a chance is all we want. It's going to be a really hard tournament to win, but usually, when we play good teams, it brings the best out of us."

After grinding out a win in their semi-final series against the London Junior Mustangs, the Rock took on the Strathroy Junior Rockets in the league final. A depleted St. Marys squad fell in the opening game of the series, but a thrilling overtime victory, according to Cookson, propelled the Rock to their championship banner.

"We were missing four guys in Game 1 due to injury and suspension, and they got away with a 3-0 win which included an empty netter. But the big game was Game 2, when we won in overtime, and I feel like just that win in overtime and



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys Cement U18 A Boys St. Marys Rock won their Shamrock League title and will compete at the OMHA Provincial Championship April 3-5. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Zach Larmer, Finn Wright, Reid Taylor, Sam Johnson, Evan Ballantyne, Simon Taylor, Luke Binning, Jared Ballantyne, and Ethan Jarmuth. In the back row, from left, are coach Lucas Spence, Kolton McAllister, Eli Rivollos, Ethan Henderson, Ben Ewing, Hayden Wright, head coach Gord Cookson, Danny Switzer, Nic Brintnell, Evan Pym, coach Kyle Spence, and coach Mason Boonstra.

the excitement that surrounded that with it being playoffs and at home.

"I think it got the boys ready for the rest of the remaining games and catapulted us to go on and beat Strathroy the next two games," Cookson continued. "Just having the home crowd and getting a win in front of them in overtime was exciting. I think everyone got chills and there was a lot of adrenaline going through us after that, and that excitement helped us reset our goal towards getting these OMHAs."

Cookson added the team has shown a great ability to generate momentum in

high-pressure situations.

"As a whole, it's just about trying to turn the momentum in the game. Sometimes, we just need to get one line going, and then every other line follows suit. We did a good job at that when we needed to win. We had people step up, and then everyone else followed suit, so it was a good team atmosphere."

Although the team boasts a winning pedigree and a strong ability to perform in big moments, they have strangely come up short in all of their tournaments so far this season, a dubious record Cook-

son says the team is determined to change at the biggest tournament of the season.

"All year, we haven't won a tournament," Cookson said. "We've had no problems getting in. We'd finish first in our pool, we'd make it to Sunday, and we just can't find a way to win on Sundays, and I feel like us not winning a tournament through the regular season has meaning behind that where maybe we just win one tournament all year, and that's these OMHA Provincials coming up."

Cookson added reaching provincials marks an incredibly special way for him and the rest of the coaching staff to wrap up their tenure with the group of players they've coached for many years.

"Me, Kyle (Spence) and Lucas (Spence) have had a majority of these kids for the last five years, and they're graduating this year, and it's also our last year. So, we're going out together, and there's no other way we would want to go out. Hopefully, it's with red hats, but being able to finish off the season with the bulk of these kids is what's really special."

Looking ahead to the provincial championship, Cookson said the team's pace and puck movement are key to finding success.

"If everyone buys in, we get on a roll, we just find tape out there, get some good passes in and we can move up and down the ice pretty quickly, then we might find success," Cookson said. "We have some guys who can finish, so if we can get our passes where we want them to go and don't grip the stick too tight, I think we're going to be successful."

## St. Marys Curling Club hosts Competitive League wrap-up



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured is the team of Brady St. Louis, Jason Clarke, Aaron Waugh and Mark King, who won the A division of the St. Marys Curling Club's Competitive League Wrap-Up's Championship Weekend.

JASON CLARKE

St. Marys Curling Club

St. Marys Curling wrapped up its Competitive League season this past weekend with an exciting Championship Weekend

featuring strong play and great competition throughout.

Congratulations to our 2026 champions. In the A division, the team of Brady St. Louis, Jason Clarke, Aaron Waugh and Mark King captured their third title in



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured is the four-person squad of Dennis Lunn, Jeff Jackson, Pat Murray (skip) and Steve Hutton who were the winners of the B division of the St. Marys Curling Club's Competitive League Wrap-up's Championship weekend.

three years after a weekend of high-level curling.

Pat Murray, Jeff Jackson, Steve Hutton and Dennis Lunn put together a strong weekend to claim the B side.

The new playoff format brought in-

creased excitement with more teams competing for a chance at the title and meaningful games taking place throughout the weekend. The event drew great support from members and spectators, making it a fitting end to the season.

# U18 B Boys ride mid-season bounce-back to provincials

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

Being resilient can take you far.

Just ask the St. Marys Legion U18 B Boys St. Marys Rock, who are headed for the Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) Provincial Championship April 3-5 thanks to a monstrous surge in the second half of their season, capped off by the Rock sweeping both their playoff semi-final and final series.

Head coach Sam Bolton credited the team for fighting back after a cold start to the campaign.

“We battled adversity at the start of the season,” Bolton told the Independent. “In our first 15 games of the year, we lost a lot of them, but I think they’re just a competitive group. For them, it’s just who they are as kids and who they are on the ice. They just didn’t give up. Even in big games, there is just no quitting them.”

Through their first 15 games of league play, the Rock managed just two victories, posting a 2-12-1 record. However, according to Bolton, everything changed after their 15th game of the regular season when they attended the Bobby Orr Hall of Fame Tournament in Parry Sound in December.

“The start of (the turnaround) was when we won our Parry Sound tournament,” said Bolton. “Since then, they finally realized we played some good teams, and they realized that we’re also a good team, and we can beat these good teams. They got tired of losing, and from that, they got a ton of motivation, and the season turned around from there. They started looking at provincials and thinking, ‘We can get there, we just have to put the effort in.’ And that’s what they did.”

Since the tournament in Parry Sound, the Rock has posted a sparkling 18-1-2 record, culminating in a three-game sweep of the East Lambton Eagles, during which



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

The St. Marys Legion U18 B Boys St. Marys Rock captured their Shamrock League Championship and will compete at the OMHA Provincial Championship April 3-5. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Harper Murrell, Jaxon Brown, Cainan O’Doherty, Zach Matheson, Brody Cox and Isaac Cousineau. In the back row, from left, are coach Ian Bolton, Luke Richardson, Grayson Gerber, Owen Dittmer, Simon Greig, Andrew Davis, Cohen Ahrens, Hunter Pickel, Brody Higham, Owen Maxwell, Ethan St. Clair, coach Owen Hartman and head coach Sam Bolton.

St. Marys outscored the Eagles 15-3, followed by another sweep in the league final over the South Kent Lightning. The Rock outscored South Kent 13-4 in the league final, punctuated by a 6-0 win in the third and decisive game.

Following the Game 3 victory, Bolton raved about his team’s performance.

“From the start of the game, from the first shift of the first period through to the last moment, they played hard,” Bolton said. “They used their big bodies. They just didn’t give up. They didn’t let the foot off the gas, and that’s what we said to them before the game. This was going to be the toughest game to win, to close out a

series, and they battled hard the whole time.”

Looking ahead to the provincial tournament, Bolton emphasized the team’s resiliency as the most important element of the team’s game in order to find success.

“The key for us is to not give up. They have to battle hard right from the start. That’s what we’ve been on them all year about is take it to our opponent right on the first shift and just play three full periods of hockey. Sometimes, they can take off some shifts, and that hurts us in big games, but they get right back into it and just battle hard, and if they can maintain that at provincials, that’s how we have a chance to have some success.”

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# Lincolns stellar in series opener against Sugar Kings

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

In the first game of a series fit for the final, the St. Marys Lincolns turned in a near-perfect performance, continuing their roll from the first round of the playoffs into round two in a heavyweight clash of two of the best teams in the Greater Ontario Hockey League (GOHL).

The Lincolns picked up a 4-2 victory over the Elmira Sugar Kings to take a 1-0 series lead. Game 2 of the series took place on March 31 after the Independent's press time. Head coach Jeff Bradley was thrilled with his team's performance after more than a week since their last game.

"We executed our gameplan," Bradley told the Independent. "We know where Elmira is dangerous, and we're trying to take that away from them, whether it be their power play or getting opportunities off the rush, and I thought we did that very well."

A back-and-forth first period that Bradley referred to as a "feeling-out process" saw both teams get goals against their previous team, with former Lincoln Ryan Cornfield putting a loose puck into an empty net off a net-front scramble to give the Sugar Kings a 1-0 lead. Before the period was done, however, former Sugar King Jack Clarke tied the game at one apiece with his first goal of the playoffs.

The Lincolns also got a goal from Lincs' captain Chase MacQueen-Spence, his first non-empty net goal of the post-season, which went down as the eventual game-winning tally.

Bradley, impressed with every member of his lineup, noted the goals by Clarke and MacQueen-Spence provided a big jumpstart to the team's forward group.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Cam Kean, pictured, had a goal off a point shot during the St. Marys Lincolns' 4-2 win in Game 1 over the Elmira Sugar Kings on March 29.

"Jack (Clarke) has been unbelievable," said Bradley. "Chase (MacQueen-Spence) was excellent. That was a massive game for Chase. He was on for three out of four

of our goals, and he had a goal and an assist. It was nice to see both Jack and Chase get rewarded for their efforts. They give us a threat on every line, and in a series like this one, having four lines playing well is really important."

Cam Kean also buried his second goal of the playoffs in the middle frame on a shot from the point through a maze of bodies that fooled Liam Reid on the glove side.

Oven Voortman extended the Lincolns' lead to three in the third period, making it two straight games with a goal and three straight with a point for the Thunder Bay product. Ryder Roberson answered for Elmira, cutting the lead back to two, but the Lincolns managed to shut down the Sugar Kings' offence the rest of the way.

Colby Booth-Housego earned the win in between the pipes, making 44 saves in his victory bid. Heading into Game 2, Booth-Housego has recorded a save percentage of 0.957 in four straight outings, and hasn't had a save percentage under 0.909 so far this post-season.

When breaking down the team's thoroughly strong effort, Bradley noted the players' focus was at the heart of their success all game.

"I was most impressed by their focus. We talked about the importance of every shift and the importance of what you should be doing when you're not on the ice, and I thought we did a good job of that.

"We have a gameplan that needs to be followed," Bradley continued. "And if it is, we think we'll be successful, but the players have to go out and execute that, and you can't go out there unfocused and not prepared and not thinking. That's hard to do sometimes against anyone, and the fact that we did it against such a quality opponent, I think that's the most impressive thing."

# U10 A Boys off to provincials as league champions

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Dunny's Source For Sports U10 A Boys St. Marys Rock won their Shamrock League title and will compete at the Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) Provincial Championship April 3-5.

According to head coach Rodney Harrison, the team's two biggest intangibles they've emphasized all year are at the heart of the success of their season.

"As a coaching staff, we push attitude and effort," said Harrison. "Those are the only two things we can control, our attitude and effort. If you have a good attitude and a good effort, we should be able to pull through in the long run, and it should lead to success. And if it doesn't, it just wasn't our night, or sometimes you get beat by a better team. But if you lose, don't worry about it. Just respond. Come back with a good attitude next game, learn from it and move forward."

The Rock defeated the Ausable Valley Coyotes in their playoff semi-final series, winning the best-of-five series 3-1. This set them up for a clash against the Mt. Brydges Cougars in the final, which St. Marys won in five games.

Harrison stated their semi-final win over an Ausable Valley squad that was very comparable to the Rock in terms of their play style and skillset sharpened the Rock's game heading into the final.

"I think the semi-final series (against Ausable Valley) really set us up for suc-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Dunny's Source For Sports U10 A Boys St. Marys Rock won their Shamrock League banner and are headed to the OMHA Provincial Championship April 3-5. Pictured in the first row, from left to right, are Jack Becker and Everett Douglas. In the second row, from left, are Zach Rasenberg, Zac Bes, Landon McIntosh and Jacob Zwambag. In the third row, from left, are Quinn Stewart, Ben Hemstock, Brody Pearson, Max Bilyea, Maclean Ross, Carter Van Weiren, Ryker Harrison, Callum Palmer and Nicholas Madsen. In the back row, from left, are coaches Drew Pearson, Dan McIntosh, Rod Harrison and Chris Van Weiren.

cess in the final series (against Mt. Brydges). We won almost every game against Ausable Valley this season, and they play similar to us. They're big. They're hard-nosed. They never give up. They have some skilled guys who can get the job done. It allowed us to instill that the compete level doesn't start at the puck; it starts in your first stride in the race for the puck.

"We did a good job in the semis, and that led into the championship series against Mt. Brydges, who is a highly skilled team," Harrison continued. "I

think we had a little more size that playoff hockey might favour a little bit, and I think we were a bit more ready for that contact that playoff hockey brings."

Harrison added the team spent much of their practice time going into the post-season refining their competitive skills.

"In the last six weeks of the year, a lot of our practices were geared towards body positioning," Harrison said. "We were focused on making sure that we're pushing attackers to the outside, playing outside the dots, getting pucks behind their defencemen and getting through the

neutral zone with speed. You've got to get body position and be able to box them out and compete in front of our net."

That strong positioning and compete level on the defensive side of the puck balances a high-octane attack possessed by the Rock, which Harrison said he and the rest of the coaching staff encourage so not to stifle the creativity and love of the game for his young squad.

"One of the things I'm big on as a coach is giving them a safe place to make a mistake," Harrison said. "I don't want kids gripping their sticks too hard. If something goes wrong or we make a mistake, it's not the end of the world, and we will respond. You've got to let them think for themselves and make their own choices. I think it makes you a better player, and at times it works out, and at times it doesn't, but when you need a goal, a play like that could be the difference."

Harrison also explained why the team believing in themselves is a major key to all of their success this season and will continue to be key when they get to the highly competitive provincial final.

"We just need to play as a team. At this level, eight of the best teams in Ontario are there. It's going to need to be a complete team effort, and we do have what we need. We need good goaltending, which we have. We need skilled defencemen, which we have. We need skilled forwards, which we have. Everyone is beatable, it's just a matter of executing and believing in ourselves."

# Stonetown Karate's second annual Master of the Ring Tournament brings close to twice the competitors



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Callum Houston representing Stonetown Karate at the Master of the Ring Tournament. Stonetown Karate hosted the event on March 28 at the Stratford Rotary Complex.



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Isla Houston, part of Stonetown Karate, was representing the St. Marys-based karate centre at the Master of the Ring Tournament at the Stratford Rotary Complex on March 28.

**EMILY STEWART**

*Independent Reporter*

The second annual Master of the Ring Tournament, run by Stonetown Karate, brought in lots of enthusiasm and nearly double the participants.

Stonetown Karate held their Master of the Ring Tournament at the Stratford Rotary Complex on March 28. The tournament saw a variety of competitions throughout the day with participants of all ages. The Master of the Ring Tournament brought about 400 competitors, which is nearly double the number who

competed at the 2025 event.

"It went very well; Ran smoothly, lots of compliments. Judges, volunteers and families; they all seemed to really enjoy it," said Sensei Jeremy Lorentz, owner of Stonetown Karate.

In a follow-up with the St. Marys Independent, Lorentz said he's grateful for the 40 volunteers who dedicated their time to helping out with the event's operations.

"We couldn't do it without our karate parents who are a crucial part in making our tournament run smoothly. They help with registration at the door, scorekeeping at the rings, tech, food and answering

questions," he said. "These individuals make our tournament one of the most liked tournaments in our circuit and we wanted to give them a shout out for their efforts."

All Stonetown Karate students are part of the World Karate Commission circuit (WKC) that runs provincial, national, and world events. The Master of the Ring Tournament is part of the WKC circuit and the last tournament before the Ontario Provincials in Brantford on April 11.

"It's a great final time to hit the mats and have all those competitors be ready for the provincials," Lorentz said.

He added at least five to six higher-end competitors usually compete in the Ontario Provincials tournament each year.

"Generally, cross our fingers, we've been pretty lucky because they all tend to make the provincials and then they go to the nationals, they make Team Canada there and then head to the worlds," he said. "We've always been very lucky with the smaller group that goes."

More information about Stonetown Karate and its programming can be found online either by visiting the Stonetown Karate Facebook page or [www.stonetownkarate.ca](http://www.stonetownkarate.ca).

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# Blight, Hollestelle-Black to represent Ontario at Eastern Canada Ringette final

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

St. Marys natives Payton Blight and Adrianna Hollestelle-Black, along with their U19 A Dorchester Dragons squad, will represent their home province as Team Ontario 2 at the Eastern Canada Ringette Championships April 16-19 in Mississauga.

Blight and Hollestelle-Black both called qualifying for Easterns as a great exclamation point on their time playing youth ringette.

"I am so proud to represent Ontario at the Eastern Canadian Championships," said Hollestelle-Black. "I am honoured to be one of a few players to represent their province at this tournament. The competition will be tough as we face off against the best teams from each of the other provinces. I am excited, having not reached this final tournament at the A level, and it is the perfect way to finish my career in youth ringette."

"I am very excited and proud to get the opportunity to attend Easterns and represent our province," said Blight, echoing her teammate's sentiment. "Having played ringette at the provincial level since U12, I had always hoped to have the opportunity to move on to the Eastern Canadian Championships. Our team has worked very hard for this opportunity, and I can't think of a better way to complete my 15 years of ringette before heading off to university in September."

The team qualified for the Eastern Canada Championships by advancing to the finals of their provincial championship March 12-15. A strong performance throughout the provincial tournament was punctuated by a win in the semi-final that earned their spot at Easterns.

Hollestelle-Black described the team's approach to getting ready for Easterns.

"As we prepare, we continue to put in strong efforts at practices, and we're working hard to get stronger as a team," Hollestelle-Black said. "For most players, this is a first for them. We will need to stay calm and play our game. The excitement and pressure of representing your province is big, but if we just take a few deep breaths and support each other, we will be successful."

Blight said the group's teamwork and compete level



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Payton Blight and Adrianna Hollestelle-Black. The two St. Marys natives are part of the U19 A Dorchester Dragons team that will compete as Team Ontario 2 at the Eastern Canada Ringette Championships April 16-19 in Mississauga.

are their biggest priorities.

"I think the key is hard work, dedication and working together as a team," Blight said. "Our team has players that span from Goderich to Tillsonburg, and we have spent the season trying to learn how each other thinks and reacts during the game in order to predict what is going to happen in certain circumstances. We have spent countless hours working on various plays, as well as strength training and staying calm and focused throughout the game."

Both Blight and Hollestelle-Black are playing for the Dragons for the first time this year, and both credited the coaching staff, led by head coach Laura Dayman, for playing a big role in their improvement both on and off the ice.

"The coaching staff this season, especially our head

coach, Laura, has been a huge part of my personal growth this season," Hollestelle-Black said. "Technically, my edge work continues to improve, and I am better able to shake things off when things don't go as planned on the ice. One saying we use frequently is, 'hard work beats talent.' This motivates my team and me to stay focused on the end goal, which was qualifying for Easterns."

"Laura and her sister, Grace (Dayman), have taught us many new skills and also how to manage our emotions during stressful situations and throughout important games," added Blight. "Our other two coaches, Kristy (Beldman) and Keri (Kowalski), have helped with skills training but also with our nutrition while competing at tournaments, even putting together daily nutrition packages for each of the players during competitions so that we are eating for optimal performance."

When reflecting on what it means to reach the Eastern Canada Championships and the possibility of finding success there, Hollestelle-Black noted it's a special way to wrap up the pair's time playing youth ringette together.

"Having success at Easterns would mean a lot to me because we are competing against the top teams from all eastern provinces including P.E.I., Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia," noted Hollestelle-Black. "Personally, this is the last year of minor sport for me, and I'm glad that I get to go with my teammate, Payton (Blight), who I started playing ringette with all those years ago."

For Blight, there would be no better way to close out her youth ringette career than Easterns success.

"Success at Easterns would mean so much," Blight said. "I have spent 15 years playing ringette and have been struggling with the fact that this will likely be my last year – until I finish University, anyways. Having the opportunity to compete against some of the strongest teams in the country is such an incredible experience, and I feel so lucky to be able to attend these Championships. Adrianna (Hollestelle-Black), Emily (Deighton) and I have played together for many years and are so happy to be able to share this experience with each other as well as with our new teammates. It truly is an experience of a lifetime."

# St. Marys Bowling Lanes hosts Bowler of the Year tourney



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

On March 29, 21 YBC bowlers who earned bowler of the month in their division this season competed in the Bowler of the Year Roll off at St. Marys Bowling Lanes. The tournament was a three-game pins-over-average format. The winners were Nathan McKeen in the senior division, Erin Slaney in the junior division, Asher Gregory in the bantam division, and Ivy Kittmer in the peewee division. They will compete in the Grand River Zone competition on April 19 at Victoria Bowl in Kitchener. Pictured in the photo on the left, from left to right, are Asher Gregory, Erin Slaney, and Ivy Kittmer. In the photo on the right of all the Bowlers of the Month, in the front row, from left, are Jesse Graham, Harley Robertson, Pearl Fisher, Ethan King, Austin Kittmer, Arely Gregory, and Brendan King. In the middle row, from left, are Christie LeBlanc, Amanda Kittmer, Ivy Kittmer, Asher Gregory, Felix Louwagie, and Rosie LeBlanc. In the back row, from left, are James Van de Gevel, Jase Robertson, Leia Slaney, Erin Slaney, Aisla Fisher, and Natalie McKeen. Not pictured was Nathan McKeen.

# MINOR SPORTS **SCRAPBOOK**



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Arianna Hunniford makes a pad save during the St. Marys Kinsmen U9 C Girls St. Marys Rock game last Saturday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Jase Hazen fires a quick shot on net during last Wednesday's Tremblett's Independent Grocer U11 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Lane Munro backhands the puck on goal during the No Snow U13 B Boys St. Marys Rock game last Wednesday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Gavin Terpstra blasts a shot off the rush during last Wednesday's Armstrong Motors U15 LL Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Abby McMillan rushes into the offensive zone with the puck during the U18 C Girls St. Marys Rock game last Wednesday.

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# COLUMNS

## UKRAINIAN CORNER: The Paska Protocol – where silence is golden and chocolate is currency

TETIANA DIDKOVSKA

Independent Columnist

Welcome to the time of year when my kitchen looks like a flour-dusted battlefield and my backyard looks like a neon-colored treasure map. If you've ever tried to explain to a toddler why a giant rabbit is hiding chocolate eggs in a cedar hedge while their mother is busy hand-painting a masterpiece on a fragile eggshell, you've experienced the beautiful, sugar-coated chaos of a Canadian-Ukrainian Easter.

This year, the stakes are particularly high. Between honouring the quiet reflection of Passionate Friday and gearing up for the high-octane energy of a Canadian Sunday morning, I'm diving headfirst into a brand-new Paska recipe. My goal? A loaf so tall and fluffy it deserves its own zip code. My fear? A flatbread that looks more like a pancake.

For kids, however, Easter isn't about the perfect rise of the dough; it's a high-stakes endurance sport. Whether you're in an Ontario backyard or a village near Kyiv, the mission is simple: maximum treats, minimum rules, and enjoying that glorious extra day off.

In Canada, the Easter Bunny is essentially a furry, long-eared logistics manager specializing in the "Hide and Seek" method. Kids wake up at 6 a.m. to hunt for plastic eggs containing stickers, jelly-beans, or – if they've hit the jackpot – solid chocolate.

In Ukraine, the eggs aren't just for eating; they are a multi-hour craft project. Enter the Pysanka.

The Canadian Perspective: "I found 12 plastic eggs and a Kinder Surprise!"

The Ukrainian Perspective: "I spent three hours with a tiny wax-funnel and a candle flame to make a geometric pattern, and if I drop this, my ancestors will weep."

In Ukraine, the Paska isn't just a recipe, it's a spiritual event with more rules than a high-security airport. Traditional-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

**Pysanka isn't just a dyed egg. It's a geometric masterpiece created using a "wax-resist" method. Think of it like a tiny, fragile batik. You use a small tool called a kystka to draw patterns with molten wax, dip the egg in dye and repeat.**

ly, baking the Paska is a serious test of character.

There is an old belief that the dough is sensitive to the "vibe" of the house. You aren't just supposed to be quiet; you're supposed to be a saint. No arguing, no slamming doors and definitely no loud music. If someone loses their temper, the bread might "take offense" and refuse to rise. In a house with kids, this is the one day of the year where "Silence is Golden" isn't just a saying – it's a culinary requirement. I'll be over here whispering sweet nothings to my yeast and hoping no one decides to practice their indoor soccer skills while the dough is proofing.

We've reached a new milestone in our house this year. Alex is currently locked in a deep internal debate that every growing kid eventually faces. On one hand, the

thrill of the hunt is calling. On the other hand, he's starting to wonder if he's "grown-up" enough to skip the cardio and just negotiate for a massive chocolate egg and a bunny upfront.

It's the ultimate Easter dilemma: Do you work for your sugar, or do you move straight into corporate-style procurement? Watching him weigh the pros and cons of dignity versus a backyard sprint is the highlight of my week.

In Ukraine, Easter is the unofficial "Starting Gun" for picnic and garden sea-

son. It's the moment everyone heads to the countryside to poke at the soil and eat outdoors.

Now, I'm an optimist, but I'm not enough of a risk-taker to start my gardening season in Canada while there's still a chance of a surprise April blizzard. My seedlings aren't ready for that kind of emotional trauma. However, while I might leave the gardening tools in the shed for a few more weeks, I am definitely declaring Barbecue Season open. If the kids are hardy enough to hunt for eggs in the snow, I'm hardy enough to flip a burger in a parka.

Canadian kids have the Egg Hunt. It's a sprint. It's every toddler for themselves.

Ukrainian kids have "Egg Knocking." This is the "Fight Club" of Easter. Two people hold a hard-boiled egg and bash them together. The person whose egg doesn't crack is the winner. Every kid spends the morning inspecting the carton to find the "Iron Egg" – the one with the strongest shell. Winning an egg-knocking tournament provides more playground street-cred than any chocolate bunny ever could.

Whether your Easter involves a strategic backyard reconnaissance mission for chocolate or a meditative standoff with a rising loaf of bread, the finish line is exactly the same: A house that smells like a delightful mix of incense, vanilla and competitive spirit, and children who are 40 per-cent cocoa and 60 per-cent pure – unadulterated vibration by 7 p.m.

In the end, Canadian and Ukrainian traditions both agree on the most important rule of international diplomacy: it doesn't matter where the egg came from, as long as you get to keep the leftovers.

## Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

Mark your calendars: the Friends of the Library Spring Book Sale is happening early May! Browse the massive selection of items--all for sale by monetary donation--at the Lind Sportplex (the Quarry) Wednesday, May 6 to Saturday, May 9. If you have any items you'd like to donate to the sale, please bring them down to the Library. We accept almost everything, the notable exceptions being VHS tapes, textbooks, and magazines. If you're unsure about something, give us a ring or stop by and

we'll let you know if we can accept it. Thank you for supporting your Library! Up This Week

Fri., Apr. 3: CLOSED  
Sat., Apr. 4: Dungeons & Dragons (10 a.m.)

Mon., Apr. 6: CLOSED  
Tues., Apr. 7: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Wed., Apr. 8: EarlyON Play & Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Brain Health Screening Workshop\* (11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and 12:45 – 2 p.m.), Mahjong (1-4 p.m.)

Thurs., Apr. 9: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

\*Registration Required

## Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett • 519.272.5742 • [jtsquote@gmail.com](mailto:jtsquote@gmail.com)

Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel's Tree Service. For contact call 519.272.5742 or email [jtsquote@gmail.com](mailto:jtsquote@gmail.com)

Dear Arborist,

I have 10 tall spruce trees on my property. A few years ago, the top of one of the spruce trees broke out about 30 ft from the top and fell over. It looked perfectly healthy with no obvious marks or damage.

Now, I am concerned about my other spruce trees, especially by the house. How do you feel about topping spruce trees.

Thanks, Aaron

Dear Aaron,

Sounds like a Norway spruce. A Norway spruce will sometimes develop dry rot around 30 ft from the top of a

full grown tree. The two main kinds of decay in trees are wet rot and dry rot. Wet rot is normally fairly obvious, but not always. Dry rot is decay caused by a fungal infection, and is often very difficult to detect.

As for topping a tree, we don't normally recommend that. The reason is it will send up sucker shoots as new growth. The new growth is much weaker than the original trunk of the tree. If you do decide to top a tree it has to be done on a regular schedule of around 5 years at the most. Other available options for trees around buildings would be to pull back from the building to reduce weight, or to remove the tree entirely.

Sincerely, The Arborist



# HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Adelaide Clayton, part two

MARY SMITH

*Independent Columnist*

Adelaide Clayton began teaching at the St. Marys Collegiate Institute in 1892. Within a few years, she had become popular with her students as well as respected by her colleagues. As the only female teacher in the school, she was a role model for many of the girls who were privileged to take her classes. She inspired them to continue their education and to find purpose in their lives. This week's photograph was taken in 1898 and shows Miss Clayton with a group of her senior students. She is the small woman in a black, high-collared dress, sitting in the centre of the middle row. In 1898, Adelaide Clayton was 31 years old, but she does not look much older than the young women around her.

Several of these girls, with Miss Clayton's encouragement, went on to university, including the tall, fair-haired Kathleen Rice in the centre of the back row. In this photograph, she was only 16 years old but already determined to make a life of her own. Years later, she gained fame as a working prospector in northern Manitoba. But before that, she graduated from St. Marys Collegiate and in the fall of 1901, she was one of eight local graduates to begin studies at the University of Toronto. She was also one of four local scholarship winners. Three of these scholarship students, including Kathleen, were female, and former students of Miss Clayton.

In October 1899, just as the St. Marys Collegiate was settling into the fall semester, the South African War began. The British Empire, at the height of its power, had established a colony in the south of the African continent and wanted to expand its territory. The war was an imperial aggression against two small, independent Afrikaner (or Boer) republics, Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The Afrikaners were descendants of 17th century Protestant Dutch, French and German refugees who had migrated to the Cape of Good Hope. They were unwilling to submit to British rule and staged guerrilla warfare to protect their homes. In Britain, public opinion supported sending troops to South Africa to subdue the Afrikaners.

In Canada, opinion was divided. Most people of British descent were ardently in favour of supporting the Empire. Quebec was strongly opposed. At last, Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government agreed to help Britain. Before the war ended, Canada had sent three contingents to South Africa, and more Canadians also served with British units. In total, more than 7,000 Canadians served in the Boer War, the first time Canadian regiments were engaged in battle overseas. Although the Canadians set off ready for adventure, battlefield conditions were grim. The Afrikaners were well-trained and well-armed. They moved through their familiar terrain with confidence, waging fierce attacks on the British troops and allies. Canadian soldiers, in an unfamiliar climate, fell victim to disease. Of the 270 Canadians who died during the South African War, more died of illness than of battle wounds.

Fiercely patriotic, Adelaide Clayton was appalled by reports of the suffering of the Canadian and British soldiers. The Red Cross and Red Crescent movement began in 1863 as international organizations to help those wounded in battle, regardless of nationality. A Red Cross society had been formed in Canada, and the South African War provided its first real chance to offer aid. Canadians responded generously to the organization's call for donations of money and goods, and the Canadian Red Cross was able to send a wide range of medical supplies and nourishing foods overseas. Certainly, Adelaide Clayton supported these efforts, but she believed that her



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS MUSEUM'S HISTORIC IMAGES, R. LORNE EEDY ARCHIVES)

**Adelaide Clayton, teacher at the St. Marys Collegiate Institute, is seated in the centre of the middle row of this 1898 photograph. She is surrounded by some of the young women that she taught at the school.**

role as a teacher provided an even better opportunity. Why shouldn't the energy of her young students be put to use! In late 1899, she established the first Junior Red Cross. It was a formally organized group called "The St. Marys Maple Leaves." These students – mainly girls – collected and packed medical supplies and comforts for soldiers. In the first months of 1900, they sent \$341 to the Canadian Red Cross Society, \$300 of it raised by a successful bazaar, held in the town hall auditorium.

Her ability to rally young people to a cause was one of Adelaide Clayton's strengths and increased her value as an educator. However, in 1904, after teaching 12 years in St. Marys, she resigned from the Collegiate Institute and returned to Listowel. She probably had several reasons. Perhaps she was tired of boarding houses, no matter how congenial. In 1891, her father had built a handsome, 12-room house that he called "Sherwood," in a residential part of Listowel. Both Adelaide's parents were getting older and their beautiful house had rooms to spare. For Adelaide, the time may have felt right to move back home. A clue that her parting from the St. Marys Collegiate Board was not quite amicable is found in a small item in the County of Perth Herald, April 5, 1905: "Miss Clayton, a former teacher, may sue for salary, holding that she is entitled to pay for a month during which she was sick, the St. Marys Collegiate Board claiming that they should pay only a portion of the month's salary."

Back in Listowel, Adelaide was not idle. In April 1905, a teacher resigned at the local high school and Adelaide stepped in as a substitute. By the autumn semester, she had a permanent contract. She continued to teach for several years but by the time of World War I, she was ready for other challenges. She and her mother were instrumental in starting the Women's Patriotic League in Listowel to support the war effort. League members worked tirelessly, knitting socks, mittens and scarves for men on active duty. They prepared bandages and surgical dressings and made dressing gowns and pyjamas for the wounded in hospitals – all distributed through the Canadian Red Cross. Adelaide was delighted to note that, in a revival of her 1899 initiative, Junior Red Cross societies sprang up all over Canada during the war.

In 1919, Adelaide's mother, Minnie Clayton, died. Adelaide stayed with her father. Like him, Adelaide was Conservative in politics. After the war, when women

got the right to vote, she became involved in the party's organization. She was the first woman appointed to the executive of the Ontario Conservative Party. She kept contact with her former student, Arthur Meighen, and campaigned strongly for him during the federal elections in the 1920s. A confident, well-educated woman, she spoke at election rallies and was sought after as a speaker for other occasions. For example, she spoke at a Home and School conference on "The Function of Great Literature in Character Building," and to Women's Institute groups on the importance of medical inspection of schools. In August 1925, she was invited to speak at the Conservative Party picnic in Springbank Park. The Listowel Banner mentioned that "Miss Adelaide Clayton, B. A., Listowel, was advertised as one of the foremost lady speakers of Canada."

In the summers, her sister, Vivian, a teacher in Sault Ste Marie, came home for the holidays. With their father, they often spent time at a cottage at Point Clark. But one year, Adelaide had another intriguing job. In late spring 1922, the editor of the Listowel Banner announced his plans for a summer vacation. "During my absence, the staff will carry on as usual and the editor's chair will be occupied by Miss Adelaide Clayton, B. A., a talented lady of considerable literary ability, whose articles under an assumed name, occasionally appear in the Toronto Globe and certain magazines."

William Clayton died in 1934. Adelaide stayed on at Sherwood and when Vivian retired from teaching, she joined her in their family home. Both sisters lived to a great age, always involved in many aspects of their church and their community. But, closest to Adelaide's heart was the work she started in 1899 with the Junior Red Cross. In 1938, at the 16th International Red Cross Conference in London, England, she received official recognition as the founder of the first Junior Red Cross branch. In 1940, she was awarded a life membership medal by the Red Cross for her ongoing dedication to service. In an interview, a short time before she died in 1961, Adelaide Clayton marvelled at the way teachers used Junior Red Cross activities in their classrooms. She was delighted that they were teaching children that they could help others, spreading the spirit of friendship around the world. "For friendship is the only thing that will hold the world together."

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# OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: A tasty Perth County craft brewery day trip



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

The beer was very good, but what I was really interested in was the story behind the brand.

Let's face it, the life of a travel writer is hard, slogging work. Take this day for example. I had decided to write a feature about a day trip to two Perth County craft breweries. I asked three buddies if they would like to come along as I visited Black Donnellys Brewing Company in Russeldale and Black Swan Brewing in Stratford. They were understandably reluctant – it took up to 15 seconds for them to agree – and off we went. As I said, I have a very demanding job.

I've been interested in the Black Donnellys brand for quite a while. Having grown up in southern Ontario, I knew the story. Early in my life, I read the harrowing accounts (some more or less true) about this family, their reportedly nefarious deeds and the massacre that occurred when their neighbours attacked them in their Lucan area home. There are now books, plays, songs, a TV program and a museum about the Donnellys.

I'm not going to go into all

the controversy about the Donnellys, their alleged crimes, the conspiracy against them and the Feb. 3, 1880, night when their Biddulph township neighbours slaughtered five Donnelly family members. What interested me is how craft brewer Neil Douglas was able to use the brand, "Black Donnellys," and various terms associated with the story when he opened his brewery on Highway 23, 10 minutes south of Mitchell.

Turns out, he simply did it! Nobody owned rights to the names. He told me, "I wondered if there would be push-back," because of the gruesome nature of the story, but that didn't happen. People were more intrigued than concerned.

So, after naming the brewery, he followed up by naming the various beers after details of the story: Roman Line Lager (from the road where the Donnellys lived); Dark Horse Ale; 1880 Mile Stout; Biddulph Township Haze IPA; Shillelagh Law Belgian Quad; Seven Sons Amber Lager; and Vigilante IPA, to name a few.

Some of those names – like "Seven Sons" – actually arose from contests Douglas conducted with his customers.

My friends and I sampled flights of Douglas' beer, and the consensus was this is good stuff. Personally, I tried the Seven Sons, Roman Line, Dark Horse and Shillelagh Law, and would be hard pressed to choose one over the other – although the eight per-cent Shillelagh was really tasty. The four of us chose four different beers as our

favourites, but agreed they were all excellent brews.

Douglas buys hops and grain from western Canada, England, Germany, Austria and some hops from the Tavistock area, but he says the real key to the taste of his beers is the pure well water from his property.

"That makes the beer," he told us.

In total, Douglas and brewmaster Scott Jacobs produce 10 beers. They are served at the brewery (with a comfortable interior, a patio in the warm months, live music every couple of weeks and pizza and snacks available), and at 10 pubs across an area stretching from the Scran and Dram pub in New Hamburg to the shores of Lake Huron.

Our flights consumed, and information gathered, we headed east to Stratford to visit Black Swan Brewing on Downie Street. It was mid-afternoon on a Wednesday in March, so there were few customers, but within an hour or two, the place was full.

The Black Swan is owned by Ryan Stokes, a teacher by day. We were enthusiastically greeted by one of his former students, Sierra Sauvé, who provided us with lots of information and some really fine flights of beer.

The Black Swan opened almost 12 years ago, and in an era where some craft breweries are struggling, both it and the Donnellys seem to be thriving, building on excellent products, friendly service and a loyal customer base.

Sauvé told us that while the



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The Black Donnellys' Neil Douglas preparing a flight of beer.

warmer months bring lots of Stratford visitors to the brewery, the key to year-round success lies with their regular, local clients.

And here's a tasting tip from those regulars: it's common for those in the know to order a blended beer, combining a couple of the brews on tap to make their own special beer.

It's an interesting idea, but after tasting the beers in our flights, we all agreed it would not be difficult to choose a favourite straight from the taps. But as usual, we couldn't agree as to what that favourite would be. Votes were cast for Road Trip Golden Ale, English Pale Ale and New Vienna Lager. And our cast of enthusiastic amateurs also liked the Wild

Child Sour (the sour beers are changed seasonally). The list of beers not enjoyed was blank.

The seating area in the brewery is not enormous, but the Black Swan has a patio out front (in typical Stratford style) in the warm months. But if you opt to sit outdoors, be sure to pop in and see the large Black Swan painting by Drew Simpson, an impressive adaptation of the 17th century work by Jan Asselijn called "The Threatened Swan." Cheers!

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](mailto:pknowles@golden.net).



Black Donnellys' brewmaster Scott Jacobs.



Sierra Sauvé at the Black Swan Brewery in Stratford.

## FROM THE GARDEN: Early bloomers – the garden’s first promise



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

Anxiousness is setting in. It is sunny and warm one day, then bitter cold with flakes of snow in the air, the next. We know spring is a gradual process, but we grow impatient with Mother Nature testing our tolerance. We crave, we need warmth, new growth, and most of all, colour in our gardens.

As we wait for the true gardening season to begin, it is the early risers, those spring bloomers to reassure us the wait is nearly over. These promises of spring are spirited plants that don’t ask for perfect conditions. They simply get on with the business of blooming, offering splashes of colour when we need them most.

Snowdrops, with their delicate white bells, are the quiet poets of

early spring. They bloom while frost still lingers, poking their heads through patches of snow, offering a gentle reminder that winter is loosening its grip. Their bulbs are planted in late September or October but can also be planted or divided in spring just after flowering, known as planting “in the green” to let them slowly form patches of green in partial shade. Over time, they will naturalize and form large, dense, self-multiplying colonies.

Crocuses are another first to appear, pushing through the soil — and sometimes even a crust of snow — with their bright purples and yellows. Their corms are also planted in the fall, just a few inches deep. They are happiest in sun or light shade and thrive in well-drained soil.

For something more dramatic, Hellebores, known as Lenten roses, are hard to beat. Their elegant, nodding flowers appear from late winter onward in shades of plum, cream, pink, and even near-black. They prefer partial shade and rich soil, and once settled, they are wonderfully low-maintenance. A quick tidy of old foliage in late winter lets their new blooms shine.

Not far behind come the ear-

ly tulips, especially the species varieties. They bloom weeks before the classic midspring tulips and bring vivid reds, pinks, and oranges to the garden. Plant the bulbs in sunny spots in autumn and let them bask in the spring light. A little protection from squirrels never hurts, but once established, they are surprisingly resilient.

Primroses bring a burst of saturated colour just when we are craving it most. Their magentas, pinks, reds, yellows, and purples brighten shady corners and cool spring days. They need moist, well-drained soil and a bit of shelter from the afternoon sun, and they will reward you with weeks of blooming colour.

We should not overlook the tiny but striking dwarf irises. Their jewel-toned blues and purples appear early and low to the ground, perfect for edging walkways or tucking into rock gardens. Plant the bulbs in fall in a sunny, well-drained spot, and they will return reliably each year.

Early daffodils bring that unmistakable glow of spring. Their sunny yellows and whites are a welcome sight after months of grey, and best of all, deer and



squirrels tend to leave them alone. Plant the bulbs in fall and allow the foliage to die back naturally after blooming to ensure next year’s display.

And then there are my favourites. Pansies and violas are the charmers of spring with their cheerful “faces” unfazed by chilly nights, taking temperatures as low as -4C. Plant them as soon as the soil can be worked in sunny areas or in containers. Keep them watered, and with

regular ‘dead heading’ they will carry on blooming long into the summer months.

These early bloomers bridge the gap between winter and the gardening season we long for. Our gardens are waking up; winter has finally loosened its hold. With their cheerful colour, these flowers offer the promise of spring. Soon enough, our gardens will be bursting with more growth and new life.

## RURAL REFRESH: Farming, family impacts and mental health



JACLYN TURPIN

Independent Columnist

Years ago, it was only natural to see a farmer and his wife (often a farmer too, but somehow once removed from the position and titled “farm wife”) working together with their kids in tow. Women stayed home to do the (often) thankless job of homesteading and the many roles of home management. Children started working on the farm at a young age, were exposed to many dangers and hard work, and often had the toughest managers of all, their parents!

Today, we see a shift as off-farm work has become a norm

in many families. For some, it is a volunteer position, a part-time job, a link to benefit plans or a pension, or perhaps the access to income to keep debt payments afloat. For others, it’s a hope for their own identity – a role outside the farm. What hasn’t changed is that farming is a lifestyle.

When I married my husband (a dairy farmer), I was clear in communicating my decision to work off the farm. Though I too grew up in a farming family, my dream (as far back as I can recall) has been to do counselling with caregivers and people who are grieving, and I especially enjoy my work with folks who are tied to agriculture or who, themselves, identify as farmers – a way of life and perspective that seeps its way into every aspect of our being.

When we talk about mental health in agriculture, for me, it is not only about the one in the tractor seat or the barn, but also those who are balancing other work and child-care demands,

getting groceries and delivering meals, running for parts and doing bookwork.

My husband and I are raising two young children. We decided that between the two of us, we would do most of the child care ourselves and so we flex our schedules, work early mornings, evenings and weekends, and each of us often spend time solo parenting. Most importantly though, we work (and farm) as a family, but not in the traditional sense.

My kids have ridden in all kinds of equipment and are pre-conditioned to tractor meals and “parts runs,” just as they have both often been present and helped with dragging branches across the lawn, helping with garden clean up and making meals. They enjoy playing in the barn, digging with their tractors in the feed and (so far) don’t argue when visiting the barn includes sweeping, bedding hutches and feeding bottles to the calves.

Our lifestyle and choices are

made possible with their involvement in nearly everything we do. Of course, there are lots of conversations about safety and the dangers of farming and barn equipment. Both kids are still too young to be left unsupervised.

As they grow and things change, will they enjoy the farm lifestyle just as much? Who knows? But as much as I have tried to introduce them to different careers and lifestyles (garbage trucks, taxis and police cars among many tractor toys), I know they too are already exposed to the many stressors, excitements and schedules that agriculture includes.

It is engrained from the start. For myself, even without doing routine chores or sitting in the tractor seat, I live it every day and it impacts my life immensely, just as it impacts my husband, “the farmer,” and our children, and their upbringing. We recognize and live the stress of a balancing act: our plans change with the weather, I do

bedtime solo when there is field work and breakdowns will forever delay our arrivals. Though I may not be the farmer (and I prefer not to be titled “the farm wife”), working off farm or not, together we are raising a farming family. Though different in some ways, farming today is still not only involving of farmers, but rather, rooted in family.

And so, when we (those identifying as farmers or otherwise) find ourselves anxious about the pressures of agriculture (and especially the upcoming season), let’s acknowledge the reach and the impact that farming has, and do it differently than our parents did. Let’s talk about it, build community and reach out. Stress has always been a part of farming, but the conversations about it haven’t.

Jaclyn Turpin is a social worker and owner at Rural Refresh, a counselling agency serving St. Marys and area. Follow along on social media for details on an upcoming group offering support for spouses in agriculture.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.GRANTHAVEN.COM](http://WWW.GRANTHAVEN.COM)

# Riddles

I hop around with floppy ears, bringing eggs this time of year. What am I?  
The Easter Bunny

I'm colourful and hide with care, find me if you look with flair! What am I?  
An Easter egg

I'm sweet and shaped like a bunny or egg, you might eat too many, I beg! What am I?  
Chocolate

I'm filled with treats and fun surprise, you carry me as you hunt for prize. What am I?  
An Easter basket

I chirp and peep and fluff around, at Easter time I can be found. What am I?  
A chick

I'm hidden high and hidden low, find me fast, ready, go! What am I?  
An Easter egg

I bloom in spring in colors bright, making Easter a cheerful sight. What am I?  
A flower

I'm a treat with a shell so thin, crack me open, candy within! What am I?  
A chocolate egg

I hop but I'm not a frog, I'm fluffy, not a dog. What am I?  
A bunny

# - Word Search -



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## MARCH NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

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

- War in Iran
- Drone attacks
- Paralympic Games
- Mojtaba Khamenei
- Strait of Hormuz
- Kharg Island
- Venezuela wins WBC
- Energy prices up
- Stock prices down
- Air Canada tragedy
- Tiger Woods DUI
- Blue Jays return
- NDP Avi Lewis



The **Riddle Kid** OF THE WEEK

What's the Easter Bunny's favourite sport?



Basket-ball!

**Maya Parkinson (16mo)**

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



**EASTER PET SAFETY TIPS: TOP 3 HAZARDS TO WATCH FOR**

1. Chocolate: Even small amounts can be toxic to pets, causing upset stomach, pancreatitis, or more severe health issues.
  2. Plastic Easter Grass: Pets can't digest plastic. Consuming Easter grass may lead to choking, upset stomach, or dangerous blockages.
  3. Plants: Many plants pose risks, but Easter Lilies and spring bulbs are especially dangerous for pets. These often lead to emergency calls to the vet around Easter.
- The team at St. Marys Vet Clinic wishes you and your loved ones a very happy Easter!



### IVEY

Our Pet of the Week is Ivey, a 10-month-old golden doodle. Ivey loves going for long walks, collecting sticks and playing with her toys. She tolerates the four cats in her household but can't understand why they don't want to play with her. She loves playing with her dog friends and especially enjoyed watching curling during the Olympics.



# Thorndale News

A section within the  
St. Marys Independent

**THORNDALE WEEKLY NEWS**

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## Thorndale Agricultural Society's new event successful

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Recently, the Thorndale Agricultural Society organized and hosted a Farm Toy and Sale Show at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre.

There were 14 exhibitors and vendors from across southern Ontario, from as far away as Lucknow in Bruce County to Lambton County. Some vendors sold a variety of scale-model farm toys and collectibles, while other exhibitors set up interesting three-dimensional displays depicting farms on a smaller scale.

As the success of any new event is hard to predict, Thorndale Agricultural Society president Patrick Duffin said he was pleased with how it went.

"I am very pleased; this has been very successful and the crowds of people have

been impressive. And many thanks to the Dorchester Ag. Society for the food booth."

The Thorndale Agricultural Society is more than an organization that puts on the annual Thorndale Fall Fair. Throughout the year, it organizes many community events such as the Thorndale Dinner Theatre, Ladies Night in the spring, the Back40 Bash in July in collaboration with I Love Thorndale, and later in November with a community Social Night.

"As the Thorndale Ag. Society promotes farming in many displays, competition and activities at our Thorndale Fair, this Farm Toy Show and Sale is another way we can promote farming in a fun and different way. With the success of this event, it could fully become another annual event for our society," Duffin said.



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Thorndale Agricultural Society president Patrick Duffin and board member Ian Ferguson at the society's recent Farm Toy and Sale Show.

## Thorndale Lion's largest event – a fun evening for the community

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

It takes all hands on deck for the Thorndale Lions Club's largest annual event, the Social Gaming Night and Elimination Draw, which was held last Saturday evening, March 28, at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre.

With all tickets sold, the evening was busy with attendees enjoying the video music, trying their luck at the different gaming stations, including wheels of chance, blackjack' tables, a darts game and the ever-popular horse race, which brought out the most cheers from the

crowd. There was also a penny raffle and a silent auction.

The elimination draw took place throughout the evening with the last ticket draw for \$2,000 to the lucky winner.

"We are grateful our community comes out to support us, and we greatly appreciate the extra help from our wives and partners for tonight's busy event," Thorndale Lions president Tony Sireon said.

Proceeds from the Lion's Social Gaming Night will go to the community projects the Thorndale Lions support. The club's next community event is their breakfast on Sunday, April 26.



(TONY SIREON PHOTO)

The Thorndale Lions Club held its annual Social Gaming Night and Elimination Draw March 28 at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre.

## What's on at the Thorndale Library in April

Here's a look at what's happening at the Thorndale Library in April.

**For young families:**

- Thorndale Storytime (Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.): Join us for stories, songs, rhymes and fun!

- Happy Hour (Thursday, April 9, 16, 23, 30, 3:30-4:30 p.m.): Drop in for crafts and games! Ages three to six. Parents

must be present in the library.

**For school aged:**

- Afternoons Unplugged (Wednesday, April 8, 15, 29, 3:30-4:30 p.m.): Recharge with crafts, games and yapping with your friends. Ages seven to 12.

- Paint By Prompts (Wednesday, April 22, 6:30-7:30 p.m.): Get creative with prompts to tell you which background,

subject and action to paint. Ages seven to 17.

- Miniature Magic for Teens & Tweens (Friday, April 24, 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.): Make jewelry, miniatures of animals, or a keychain. Ages nine to 18.

**For all ages:**

- Used Book Sale (Saturday, April 11 to Friday, April 17 during library open

hours): Purchase previously used books by donation to support our library programming.

- Seed Library (April 1-20): Where people can pick up seeds – flowers, vegetables and herb seeds – for their garden.

For more information or to register, call 519-461-1150 or email thorndale\_staff@middlesex.ca.

## OBITUARY

### Thompson



Bessie Rae (Hotson) Thompson passed away peacefully on March 26, 2026 at St. Marys Memorial Hospital in her 91st year.

She lived a long beautiful life full of love, kindness and generosity. She was a loving wife of 64 years to Vernon Oliver Thompson, who predeceased

her in 2022, and a caring mother to Gary (Yvonne). Bessie was also a proud grandmother to Zachary (Taylor) and Evan (Emma). She is survived by her sister, Lillian Marziali and sister-in-law, Edna Hotson. Bessie will be missed by her many beloved nieces and nephews. Bessie was predeceased by her brother Donald Hotson, and sisters Mary Kellestine and Grace Sparks. She was also predeceased by her sisters-in-law Anna Stephens and Helen McLean-Nethercott, brothers-in-law Volly Marziali, Webb Kellestine, John Sparks, Lloyd McLean, Gordon Nethercott, and Bill Stephens.

Bessie began her life on a farm in Downie Township and went to public school at SS#7 Downie. She sang in choirs and competed in music festivals throughout her school years. She went to high school in St. Marys. Bessie worked as a telephone operator for Blanshard Municipal for several years. Once married, Bessie and Vernon farmed in Motherwell where she also worked as a caretaker of the Motherwell Presbyterian Church and drove a mail route.

Bessie and Vernon later moved to St. Marys where they lived for almost 30 years. Bessie was an active member of the Motherwell-Avonbank Presbyterian Church and later Avonton Presbyterian Church, and had a Life Membership in the Motherwell Women's Institute which she joined in 1960. In 1997, she was the winner of the Federated Women's Institute in Canada Award for Inclusion in the Golden Book of Recognition for Volunteerism. In 2010, she was recognized for 50 years of continuous volunteer service at the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards ceremony. For many years, she acted as curator of the Tweedsmuir Book, which recorded the history of the community and Women's Institute.

Bessie loved music and art, crafting and quilting, puzzles and games, antiques and collectibles, travelling and spending time with friends, family, and neighbours. She especially loved to be helpful and had a special knack for seeing where there was a need and knowing how to fill it. She had a genuine interest in people's lives and a strong sense of community.

Cremation has taken place and a memorial service to honour Bessie's life will be held on April 10, 2026, 2 pm at the ST. MARYS UNITED CHURCH, 85 Church St. S. St. Marys, with reception to follow. As expressions of sympathy, donations may be made to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation or the charity of your choice. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

## OBITUARY

### Sumstad



Richard Erik Sumstad passed away on March 28, 2026, with his adored wife and partner in life, Kris, by his side.

Born in Albany, Georgia, on November 19, 1964, Rich was the much-loved son of Jacqueline and Reidar, brother of Kristine and Karen, and son-in-law of Veronica and

Wayne Ridgway. Together with Kris, Rich built a life based on their shared passions: music, travel, entertaining, and nurturing their extensive fur family, which currently includes their two wonderful wolfhounds, Tally and Luchta.

In pursuit of his professional goals as a musician and educator, Rich was a force. His commitment to excellence and growth inspired everyone around him. Most importantly, Rich was a champion of youth. His calm, loving, steadfast, and fiercely loyal presence will be deeply missed by members of his extended family and friends around the world. The breadth of Rich's impact cannot be measured.

The Funeral Service will be conducted in the Community Hall at the St. Marys Pyramid Recreation Centre, 317 James St. S. St. Marys, on Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 7 pm. Reception to follow. In lieu of flowers, please consider honouring Rich through a donation to the Canadian Cancer Society, with the designation Clinical Trials. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

## OBITUARY

### Clark



Doreen Katherine Clark passed away peacefully at St. Marys Memorial Hospital on March 23, 2026 in her 92nd year.

Predeceased by her husband George Clark (1998). She leaves behind her children Vicki Elderhorst and her husband Rudy, and Gregory Clark and his wife Mary. Grandmother of Kyle,

Erica, Katherine (Kyle). Great-grandmother of Louisa. Sister of Gordon Clysdale. Also remembered by Carol Kehoe and many other close friends. She will be missed by nieces and nephews and all her neighbourhood dog friends (and their owners). Predeceased by her parents Keith and Victoria Clysdale and siblings Alan Clysdale (Sylvia) and Karen Hughes (Joe).

A private family graveside service will be held at a later date. Memorial donations may be made to Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth or Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

## OBITUARY

### Gregory



Floyd Wilson Gregory passed away at Wildwood Care Centre, St. Marys on March 29, 2026 at the age of 84. Beloved husband of Jeannette Zvonkin, married April 29, 1978. Father of Joshua Gregory and Kaedi Jayne Gregory "Mable." Grandfather of Jacob Pardy, Taylor Pardy and Jameson Ulch. Brother of Bill

(Nadine), Ilean and Gordon (Cindy). Also remembered by cousins Rochelle (Dan), Will (Molly), Missy (Micah), Mike, and Jordan.

Floyd drove a milk truck from early 70s, retiring in the 2000s. He loved NASCAR, Delaware Speedway, motorcycles; anything with an engine; always tinkering.

Cremation to take place. A private family interment in St. Marys Cemetery. A Celebration of Life date will be announced later through [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca). Memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth.

## OBITUARY

### Youlton



YOULTON: Robert Terence

A resident of Ridgeway, Terry Youlton passed away at the Riverview Gardens on Saturday, March 21, 2026 at the age of 89.

Born in London, Terry was the son of the late Robert and Eva (née King) Youlton and grew up in Bothwell and Glencoe.

Beloved husband to Mary Jane

Youlton (née MacDougall). Loving father of Rick Youlton (Joanne), Kathy Rae (Don), the late Peggy LaRoche (1992) and the late Doug Youlton (1983). Proud Grandpa to 12 Grandchildren and 16 Great Grandchildren. Predeceased by his siblings Barbara Humphrey (late Bill), Shirley Davis (late Larry) and Gordon Youlton (late Helen). Also missed by many friends and extended family.

As per Terry's wishes, cremation has taken place. A Memorial Service will be held at McKinlay Funeral Home, 459 St. Clair Street, Chatham on Saturday, April 18, 2026 at 11:00am. A Celebration of Life will follow the service at the McKinlay Reception Centre, 463 St. Clair Street Chatham from 12:00pm - 4:00pm. Private family interment at Greenwood Cemetery to be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations made in memory of Terry to the Alzheimer Society, Diabetes Canada, Rotary International or the Church of the Advent, Ridgeway would be appreciated by the family. Online condolences may be left at [www.mckinlayfuneralhome.com](http://www.mckinlayfuneralhome.com)

## IN MEMORIAM

### IN LOVING MEMORY OF

### Leigh Anne Youse



1968-2021

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## Looking Back



AMY CUBBERLEY

Independent Columnist

### Tollgate theft

**25 years ago (2001)**

The mayor and town council announced the appointment of St. Marys' new Chief Administrative Officer-Clerk, James Timlin. There were 29 applicants for the job, which became vacant after Ken Storey announced his retirement. Timlin, who hails from eastern Ontario, has over 20 years of municipal experience ranging from Metropolitan Toronto to the Town of Kingsville.

Crime Stoppers need your help to solve a break-and-enter at the Tollgate Coffee Shop on Queen Street. Sometime after closing on March 22, an unknown person entered the coffee shop by forcing open the rear door. About \$500 in cash and one carton of Players cigarettes were stolen.

**50 years ago (1976)**

St. Marys power consumers will be paying more for power come May. While rate increases of 14.3 percent for domestic consumers and 14.7 percent on the general rate are not cheered by anybody, they are still better than the 23.8 percent increase in the Ontario Hydro rate to the local P.U.C. effective the first of January this year. This increase will reflect in an increase of \$3.00 per month to the average domestic consumer. The average domestic bill for two months is now about \$47.00.

When Chairman John Stephen of the Blanshard Mutual Fire Insurance Company and other officials of the Company were in Toronto last week they were pleased to receive a plaque in recognition of 100 years of service by Blanshard Mutual.

**75 years ago (1951)**

Thirty-five boys heralded the beginning of spring on Monday by being treated to double-dip ice cream cones in the Grill next door to the Journal Argus. They were the St. Marys Boy Choristers and their leader, Mr. Lloyd Bradshaw, was just telling them by way of ice cream that they had finished a good practice session.

George Rozman, owner of the St. Marys Bowling Alley, is planning to build a large house on the ground to the west of the alley this spring. He already has some materials on the ground ready to start when the milder weather arrives.

**100 years ago (1926)**

Research in the cement industry has disclosed information that is adding years to the life of the modern road. It has been found that the quantity of water used in mixing concrete is just as important as the quantity of cement. It is now known that keeping a concrete road wet for ten days after it is placed, instead of letting it dry out, increases its resistance to wear by two-thirds.

A large plate glass window on the eastern side of the Lyric Theatre block was smashed by the force of the wind on Tuesday night.



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**About Grant Haven Media:** At Grant Haven Media, we are committed to delivering top-quality news and information to our readers. As a leading newspaper company, we take pride in our dedication to journalistic excellence and community engagement. As we continue to grow, we're looking for enthusiastic individuals to join our dynamic sales team.

If you are interested, contact  
 Heather Dunbar at:  
[heather@granthaven.com](mailto:heather@granthaven.com)

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# THE WEEK AHEAD


**SPONSORED BY: McDonald's St. Marys**  
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**PRC & Friendship Centre events – See the Stonetown Crier on Page 5**  
**St. Marys Public Library events – See Page 26**  
**Thorndale Library April events – See Page 31**

**FRIDAY, APR 3**

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. Good Friday darts, Sign up by 12:00 p.m., Darts start 12:30 p.m.
- St. Marys United Church presents “The Crucifixion” – 3 p.m.
- A.N.A.F. Easter meat draw – 6-8 p.m.

**SATURDAY, APR 4**

- Easter Farmer's Market at the PRC – 8 a.m. to Noon
- St. Marys Kinettes Easter egg hunt at Lions Park, Milt Dunnell Field – 9-11 a.m.
- Hospital Auxiliary bake sale at Troyer's Spices – 9 a.m. to Noon
- Thorndale Optimist Club Easter egg hunt at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre - 9:30 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. – Registration required at [www.ilovethorndale.ca](http://www.ilovethorndale.ca)
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw – 5 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Elmira Sugar Kings at the PRC – 7:30 p.m., Game #4

**SUNDAY, APR 5**

- St. Marys Lincolns vs Elmira Sugar Kings at Dan Snyder Memorial Arena – 7 p.m., Game #5

**MONDAY, APT 6**

- Science Hill Country Club opens for the season

**TUESDAY, APR 7**

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee – 10 a.m. to Noon
- Community dinner at St. Marys United Church – 5 p.m., Sponsored by Home Hardware
- St. Marys Legion cribbage – Starts 7 p.m. sharp
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Elmira Sugar Kings at the PRC – 7:30 p.m., Game #6

**WEDNESDAY, APR 8**

- Friends of the Library social at the library – 6:30-8 p.m.

**THURSDAY, APR 9**

- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun – 12-1:30 p.m.

# St. Marys Independent

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