

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1313

Thursday, May 14, 2026

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St. Marys firefighters take part in mandatory survival training



GEARING UP FOR SURVIVAL TRAINING (WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)
Firefighter Mackenzie Forman tackled the survival-training course on Saturday as part of his training. Captain Greg St. Clair put on Forman's blindfold right before he took on the challenge. See more photos on page 9.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

On Saturday, the St. Marys Fire Department took part in annual survival training.

Captain Greg St. Clair designed the obstacles based on the International Association of Firefighters survival program outline. The exercise is to simulate what firefighters would experience when faced with being inside a structure during a collapse. This could include breaching through walls, squeezing through tight spaces smaller than 16 inches by inches, and dealing with wire entanglements.

The firefighters wear full gear along with their self-contained breathing apparatus, adding an additional 80 pounds to their bodyweight. To keep the training as authentic as possible, the firefighters go through the course blindfolded so they have no idea what they will encounter. In a real situation, being able to see is very unlikely, so they practice it this way in hopes the other senses will kick in to carry them through.

Staying calm to conserve their air is one of the most crucial aspects of the training as they persevere through the difficult spaces. When they get near the end, instructors will turn off the firefighters' air supply, forcing them to finish the last 10 feet both blind and out of air. Not to worry though, as they have spent earlier training nights practicing for this situation. The firefighters finish times are noted, as well as how much reserve air they have left in their cylinders. This gives them a benchmark to work from, year after year.

"The popularity of lightweight construction in new home building is posing a significant risk to firefighters," St. Clair said. "We are arriving on scene and entering structures just as the collapse window is opening. We need to be prepared

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Perth County to submit concerns over province's Bill 98 planning changes

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor


Perth County council has endorsed planning staff's comments on the province's latest round of proposed planning and development legislation, raising concerns about the impact Bill 98 could have on local de-

cision-making, rural planning and municipal flexibility.

At its May 7 meeting, county director of planning Andrea Hächler presented a report outlining staff comments on Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, before the May 14

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COMMUNITY

Perth County to submit concerns over province's Bill 98 planning changes

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

provincial comment deadline.

"With the bill came out 21 related Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) postings that municipalities have been invited to comment on," Hächler said. "The bill proposed nine pieces of legislation be changed, including the Planning Act, the Development Charges Act, Building Code Act and Municipal Act.

"... You'll note I only commented on seven of the nine (legislation) changes because I felt those impact Perth County the most. ... This was released on March 30 and we were given to April 29 to comment. Luckily, that deadline was extended to May 14, so I was able to get a report to council and we'll have time to get comments into the ERO posting."

Bill 98 is the 19th piece of provincial legislation related to land-use planning and development in the past eight years. The bill received second reading April 14.

The proposed changes include standardizing municipal official plans, reforming site-plan control, establishing a minimum residential lot size in fully serviced settlement areas, prohibiting some mandatory enhanced development standards at the lot level, streamlining complete-application requirements and updating parkland dedication rules.

While county staff say they support efforts to make planning processes more efficient and user-friendly, Hächler raised concerns that some of the proposed changes would reduce municipal discretion and limit Perth County's ability to respond to its specific rural, agricultural and settlement-area contexts.

One of the major proposed changes would allow the province to prescribe a standard structure, table of contents, list of schedules and land-use designations for all municipal official plans. The county's official plan would need to comply with those requirements by Jan. 1, 2029.

"Just simply standardizing official plans doesn't give us the ability to address area-specific contexts," Hächler said. "Perth County in particular has prime agricultural lands, you have smaller, rural settlement areas and we definitely don't have an official plan that would

look like a City of Toronto official plan or a Region of Muskoka official plan."

Staff cautioned that while consistency may help in some cases, a one-size-fits-all approach could limit the county's ability to reflect local landscapes, resources and land-use patterns. Staff also warned standardized designations could result in more official plan amendments to address site-specific circumstances.

"So, we're asking the province to allow us to build in site-specific contexts and not to standardize official plans to that extent," Hächler said.

The county also raised significant concerns with the province's proposed site-plan-control changes. Bill 98 proposes removing site-plan control as a land-use planning tool and replacing it with a more standardized process focused on public health and safety. The legislation would also limit the number of circulations, create different review streams depending on project complexity and introduce a site-plan review panel or arbitration process for applications exceeding statutory timelines.

County staff are not supportive of removing site-plan control, noting it remains an important tool for addressing matters such as access, grading, drainage, stormwater management, building location, parking, garbage storage and snow storage.

"The stormwater and the grading and stuff like that; is there another way we can ensure those are being done without site-plan control?" Coun. Hugh McDermid asked during the council discussion.

"There is a bare minimum that your building officials can ask for through the building permit that would likely speak to grading and drainage. However, in terms of any sort of compatibility issues (with neighbouring properties), we wouldn't be able to address those any longer," Hächler responded, noting the locations of things like garbage dumpsters and snow-storage areas, as well as the types of outdoor lighting within a proposed development would not be subject to change regardless of their impact on neighbours.

Staff also argue the province could reduce the number of application circulations by restoring municipal authority

to require pre-consultation before an application is submitted. While many applicants already take part in pre-consultation voluntarily, staff say applications submitted without that early discussion can take longer to review.

Another proposed change would give the minister authority to set a minimum residential lot size in fully serviced settlement areas. The proposed minimum would be 175 square metres, roughly equivalent to a lot nine metres wide and 19 metres deep.

While county planning staff say they generally support smaller residential lot sizes and have been exploring reductions through local zoning bylaw reviews, the report raises concerns that the proposed minimum may be too small in some situations. Staff identified potential impacts related to stormwater management, reduced permeable area, parking, driveway spacing and sightlines, particularly for corner lots.

Bill 98 also proposes changes to the way municipalities can require studies and materials as part of a complete planning application. The province is considering a standardized list of core and contingent studies, as well as expanded electronic submission requirements.

County staff caution that a province-wide online submission model could create barriers in rural areas where internet service may be limited or unreliable.

The report also notes the needs of the traditional Anabaptist community, where modern technology is not used, should be considered.

Staff also raised concerns about proposed changes to Minister's Zoning Orders that would remove the legislative requirement for the minister to provide public notice on amendments or revocations. County staff recommend public consultation and consent from the host municipality before changes are made to existing MZOs.

On parkland dedication, the proposed changes would require municipalities to accept a broader range of lands, including some encumbered lands and privately owned public spaces, toward parkland requirements. Staff warn this could lead to smaller, disconnected or less useful parcels that do not align with municipal parks and trails plans.

In its report, county staff acknowledge the province's goal of supporting more residential development but note planning applications in Perth County generally meet legislative timelines and there are already a significant number of approved residential units in serviced settlement areas.

Council directed planning staff to submit the county's comments to the province and forward the report to the county's lower-tier municipalities for information.



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COMMUNITY

Are we training a puppy, or are we training ourselves?



GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

For the past few weeks, Julia and I have been taking our 10-month-old beagle puppy, Piper, for training at our local PetSmart.

We waited until she was a

little older so she could fully benefit from and participate in the training course – or at least that’s what I tell myself when, really, we just didn’t get around to it until now. In the meantime, she developed a somewhat wild streak, especially when other dogs are around, or she’s playing with her sister, Phoebe, or she smells something particularly interesting – which is everything.

She used to get so excited when people came to the door or when we came home after being out, and she would be hard to control, which often led to her jumping up on us or our visitors, scratches from those sharp, little puppy claws, or even her

falling off furniture.

Don’t worry, she’s indestructible and nothing seems to phase her except when she gets a needle at the vet. For those, she’ll cry bloody murder.

Piper is the first puppy I’ve ever owned. I didn’t grow up with dogs and Julia got Phoebe before we met, which means I missed that all-important puppy-training stage. As someone who is used to owning cats, the notion of being actively involved in training and demonstrating that we are the leaders of our little family pack was somewhat unknown to me.

Beyond learning to use the litter boxes, cats are entirely independent and there is no doubt

they rule the roost.

Now, I’ve come to realize the importance of my own body language and posture, and that I need to communicate with our dogs in a way they understand, not the other way around.

So, to any of our neighbours who have heard Julia and I growling at our dogs while out on our walks or in the backyard, I apologize, but it’s something you’re going to have to get used to. I promise, we’re not crazy. We’re just learning how to communicate effectively with another species.

So far, we’ve definitely seen a behavioural shift in both dogs, not just Piper. Phoebe no longer feels she needs to discipline

Piper when she steps out of line, which has meant fewer snarly standoffs between the two dogs.

For her part, Piper is taking to the training very well. She loves hanging out with the other dogs in class, she really loves the treats we used to reinforce the behaviour we like, and she’s quickly become the teacher’s pet – taking after both Julia and I.

And on our part, Julia and I are much more comfortable taking our rightful places as pack leaders, ensuring the dogs obey our commands instead of us cowering down to their demands.

Are they perfect? No, but they’re getting better every day.

Bravo

We have 2 Bravos this week.

- 1) Bravo to Forrest, the Independent new Skunk’s Hollow paper deliverer. He wrote a personal note, introducing himself, sharing a bit about him and his family. Very impressive for his first job, and a great customer experience!
- 2) Bravo to Andrea M. for finally cleaning the air fryer. You are an integral part of our household!

Boo

We have 3 Boos this week.

- 1) Boo to the construction on Ontario Street leaving tires piled up even after the site manager was politely asked to remove them.
- 2) Boo to neighbours that leave large amounts of junk all over their lawns. Please tidy it up!
- 3) Boo to people who let their dogs do their business in other people’s gardens. Just stop. Honestly.

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

Quote of the Week

“I know that when you hear the word ‘outbreak’ and watch a ship sail toward your shores, memories surface that none of us have fully put to rest. But I need you to hear me clearly: this is not another COVID. The current public health risk from hantavirus remains low.”

— Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization director-general, commenting on the similarities, or lack thereof, between COVID-19 and the hantavirus outbreak on the expedition cruise ship, MV Hondius.



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

St. Marys Independent

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The bad news is time flies. The good news is you are the pilot.

It is nice to be important but it is more important to be nice.

You understand life better once you stop resisting it.

Don't trust words, trust actions.

Overheard

AT THE COFFEE SHOP

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The first five days after the weekend are always the hardest

Who sticks to their budget when it comes to buying plants?

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

St. Marys residents reminded to follow open-air burning and firework rules ahead of Victoria Day weekend

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

With the Victoria Day long weekend approaching, the Town of St. Marys is reminding residents of some safety measures required to enjoy open-air burning and setting off fireworks within the town.

An open air burn permit is required for all open-air burning in town, including backyard campfires and outdoor fireplaces. Residents can apply online at www.townofstmarys.com/burnpermit or in person at the municipal operations centre (408 James St. S). The fee is \$25.

The permit requirement is part of the open-air burning bylaw, which was enacted by council in 2017. The bylaw provides guidelines for when open-air fires can be set, how big fires can be, what materials can be burned and how far fires must be from structures, like houses and sheds. The bylaw also au-

thorizes the fire chief or a delegate to issue an order to discontinue activity and an order to extinguish.

The fire department reminds residents to never leave a fire unattended, never burn when it is windy and always have a source of water available to be able to extinguish the fire.

In St. Marys, the sale and use of fireworks is governed by bylaw 57-2021. This bylaw states that fireworks can be set off on Victoria Day (May 18) or two days before or after. Fireworks must be set off between dusk and 11 p.m. and can only be set off on private property.

Practicing safe open-air burning and responsible fireworks use is essential for protecting our community. This upcoming long weekend is an excellent opportunity for all St. Marys residents to remember the importance of following local rules to keep everyone safe and ensure a fun, worry-free celebration.

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



FRIENDSHIP CENTRE CHOIR

May 27 | PRC | 6:30 PM

Join The St. Marys Friendship Centre for a heartwarming evening of music, community, and sweet treats as the Friendship Centre Choir wraps up their season! Tickets are \$12 each. Pre-registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis through ActiveNet.

Tickets: townofstmarys.com/activenet

TOWN HALL STAIR RECONSTRUCTION

Town Hall's outdoor staircases will be undergoing construction starting the week of May 11. Access to the Town Hall service desk and public washroom will be closed for approximately six weeks. Services usually offered at Town Hall will be provided online, by phone or at other municipal facilities.

Learn more: townofstmarys.com/news



BURN PERMIT

An Open Air Burn Permit is required for all open air burning in town, including backyard campfires and outdoor fireplaces. Residents can apply online or in person at the Municipal Operations Centre (408 James St. S). The fee is \$25.

Apply: townofstmarys.com/burnpermit

SPRING FLUSHING

Our spring water flushing program is currently underway and will continue until May 22.

If you experience discolouration, run cold water and avoid doing laundry until it runs clear.

View a full map & details: townofstmarys.com/flushing



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Senior of the Week



Our senior of the week is Shirley Paul. Shirley turned the ripe young age of 103 on May 10.

She was born in Stratford where she went to school. She became an elementary teacher and married Lee Paul in 1946. The two were the third generation of the Paul family to live on the farm outside of Kirkton. Shirley was part of the trio, the Paul Brothers and Shirley, where they travelled around entertaining with comedy acts and music. She told this reporter when she turned 101 that the secret to living this long was to just keep moving. Happy Birthday, Shirley!

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

Thames River Paddling Club installs Wildwood Conservation Area's second AED

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

The Thames River Paddling Club (TRPC), in partnership with Andrew's Legacy, brought another automated external defibrillator (AED) to the Wildwood Conservation Area.

The TRPC used the funds raised from the annual Wildwood Dragon Boat Challenge to install an AED in the canoe/kayak/washroom area nearby the marina. The club also used funds raised to bring an AED to Stratford.

"It feels great to help improve safety access for people using the lake and marina area at Wildwood Conservation Area," said Ben Gerber, TRPC president and coach. "Having an AED installed closer to the water can make a real difference in an emergency situation where every minute counts."

Andrew's Legacy is a charity committed to installing AEDs in schools and sporting areas in the community in memory of Andrew Stoddart, a star athlete who died at just 15 years old from sudden cardiac arrest.

An AED is a portable device checking heart rhythm and can send an electric shock through the body to restore its natural heart rhythm, for example when the body goes into sudden cardiac arrest. If sudden cardiac arrest is not treated within minutes, it usually causes death. An AED can increase the chance of survival if used within five minutes of a sudden cardiac arrest.

"For on-water users especially, emergency response times can sometimes be delayed simply due to location and access around the lake. Having an AED available nearby gives people a much better chance of receiving immediate assistance while emergency services are on the way. It is an important safety resource for paddlers and everyone enjoying the conservation area," Gerber said.

The Wildwood Conservation Area also has an AED in-



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THAMES RIVER PADDLING CLUB)

In partnership with Andrew's Legacy, the Thames River Paddling Club (TRPC) brought in a new automated external defibrillator to the Wildwood Conservation Area using funds raised from the annual Wildwood Dragon Boat Challenge.

stalled at the front gate.

While the location of the next AED installed at Wildwood is yet to be determined, the cost of another AED is estimated at around \$2,000, which also covers the cost of an outdoor case. Possible locations will be reviewed after the next Wildwood Dragon Boat event on May 23.

"We are very thankful to everyone who has supported the event and this initiative so far. The dragon boat community, volunteers, sponsors and partners have all helped make this possible," Gerber said. "At the end of the day, this is about improving safety for everyone who uses the water at Wildwood and helping ensure lifesaving equipment is accessible when it is needed most."

For more information on Andrew's Legacy, visit andrewslegacyforever.ca.

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. An educated guess made at the start of an experiment is called what?
2. What does VHS stand for?
3. Which celebrity has fulfilled the most Make-A-Wish requests?
4. The Dead Sea is located between which two countries?
5. An orca can also be called a what?
6. What archeologist discovered King Tut's tomb?
7. How many time zones are there in Canada?
8. What year did Leonardo DiCaprio finally win his first Oscar?
9. Before Tokyo became the capital city of Japan, where was the capital located?
10. How many syllables are in the word Mississippi?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31



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Gearing up for Stonetown Summer Series

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Stonetown Summer Series is coming to life this July. To spread out the excitement throughout the month, many events are being featured with activities planned for everyone to enjoy.

To kick things off, The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame Induction Day will be taking place on Saturday, June 20. This annual event features the celebration of outstanding careers and the induction of baseball legends. This year's lineup of inductees includes Decon White, Stubby Clapp, Late Psota, Bill Stoneman, Jim Baba and Paul Runge.

Following this event on the grounds of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame will be the Rotary Brews and Food Fest on Sunday, June 21. Enjoy an afternoon of Ontario Craft Beer and Food Truck vendors.

July will begin with a commemorative Canada Day celebration held at Cadzow Park happening on the afternoon of July 1. This event is a great chance to celebrate the community and reflect on what it means to be Canadian. Enjoy local entertainment, musical performances, the Canada Day parade, children's inflatable fun and more.

Want to experience the thrill of a triathlon? Coming to St. Marys again this year is the Stonetown Triathlon on Sunday, July 5. Participate as an athlete or cheer from the sidelines.

July is packed with even more exciting events for all ages. Try lawn bowling on July 11, catch an outdoor movie at Movies in the Park on July 17, and visit the lively Army & Navy Air Force Bavarian Gardens July 10 and 11. Car lovers can explore the Lions Club Car Show happening July 18, and the St. Marys Farmers Market is open every Saturday to browse local goods.

To end with a bang, celebrate local heritage at the Stonetown Heritage Festival on Saturday, July 25. This downtown free event will feature heritage tours, art, live music and more. Be sure to pick up tickets for the 35th annual St. Marys Horticultural Garden Tour at the Heritage Festival. Enjoy local garden masterpieces on July 26. Also be sure to enjoy rides and music at Kinsmen Summerfest July 23-26. Don't miss a moment of summer fun!

For more details regarding any of the events listed above, visit www.discoverstmarys.com/events. Events are still being added to this exciting lineup.



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<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">7MM THICK LUXURY VINYL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PAD ATTACHED</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$279 /SQFT</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">8MM THICK LUXURY VINYL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PAD ATTACHED</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$299 /SQFT</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">9MM THICK LUXURY VINYL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PAD ATTACHED</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$399 /SQFT</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">10MM THICK LUXURY VINYL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PAD ATTACHED</p> <p style="text-align: center;">9X MORE SCRATCH RESISTANT</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$399 /SQFT</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">LOOSE LAY VINYL PLANKS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">GREAT VALUE</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$299 /SQFT</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">GLUE DOWN VINYL TILES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">GREAT VALUE</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$299 /SQFT</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">DOOR CRASHER 7MM LAMINATE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PAD ATTACHED</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$199</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">VINYL STAIR TREADS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TREAD & RISER INCLUDED</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$49.99 EA</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">VINYL ACCESSORIES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">T-CAP REDUCERS NOSING</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">1000'S IN STOCK</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">7'X10' AREA RUGS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">100'S TO CHOOSE FROM</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">STARTING FROM \$199</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">2'X9' ACOUSTIC WALL PANELS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 COLOURS TO CHOOSE FROM</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$139 EA</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">1"X6" SQUARE BASEBOARDS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">14 FOOT LENGTHS</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">FROM \$149 /LINFT</p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BUY IT TODAY... TAKE IT TODAY</p>



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Downtown Spring Bingo Crawl happening throughout May

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Who wants to play Bingo? For the month of May, the St. Marys Business Improvement Area (BIA) is giving locals the opportunity to join in the fun.

They BIA has been looking for ways to bring people to the downtown area that would bring customers to local restaurants, retail stores and service businesses, but not add a lot of work for the business owners. This is the first year for the crawl and it is a great way to get residents and visitors to check out all of the wonderful spots the downtown has to offer.

The Bingo cards are free and can be picked up at most downtown businesses. The cards are a good size to fold up in a purse or bag while shopping. They have 16 squares on them with an action item in each square. Once complete, the store owner will initial the applicable box. When a line of four boxes is complete, names will be entered into a draw for \$100 in St. Marys money.

However, if the full card is completed, that will be an automatic win of St. Marys dollars.

Any of the businesses within the downtown BIA can participate and sign a card. This includes retailers, restaurants, cafés, service businesses and also staff at town hall.

Some of the action items include purchasing a treat for a friend, having lunch in a downtown restaurant and shopping in a store not visited yet.

The Bingo crawl runs until May 31 when cards will need to be handed in to the Flour Mill or Betty's Bookshelf.

"The BIA exists to help keep downtown vibrant by supporting local businesses, encouraging community engagement and creating initiatives that bring people downtown," organizer and BIA board member Alex



Alex O'Shea from the Flour Mill holds up a Bingo card patrons of downtown businesses can fill out as part of the BIA Bingo crawl taking place in May.

O'Shea said. "After a long winter, it's encouraging to see people back out on the streets, exploring shops, stopping for coffee and enjoying downtown St. Marys again. We hope this event gives people another fun reason to visit local businesses this spring."



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Purchase an iced drink	Have a service completed downtown	Purchase a treat for a friend	Shop a seasonal special

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(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

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St. Marys firefighters take part in survival training



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

St. Marys firefighters had to maneuver through tight spaces blindfolded, as Mackenzie Forman is doing here.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

One obstacle was set up to simulate an office building collapse consisting of many wires to get through.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

to both self-rescue or to assist a fellow firefighter that is in trouble if things go bad. This training does exactly that. We practice techniques to get ourselves out,

while remaining calm, utilizing tactical breathing and focus exercises.”

In September, the department will be going to Ingersoll for their third year to

take part in live-fire training, which is now mandatory every year.

The mandatory training the volunteer firefighters do is the same as those who

serve in a career role. This shows how committed the department is to our community and how members stay on top of knowledge and different skillsets.

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St. Marys Friends of the Library hosts successful Book Sale



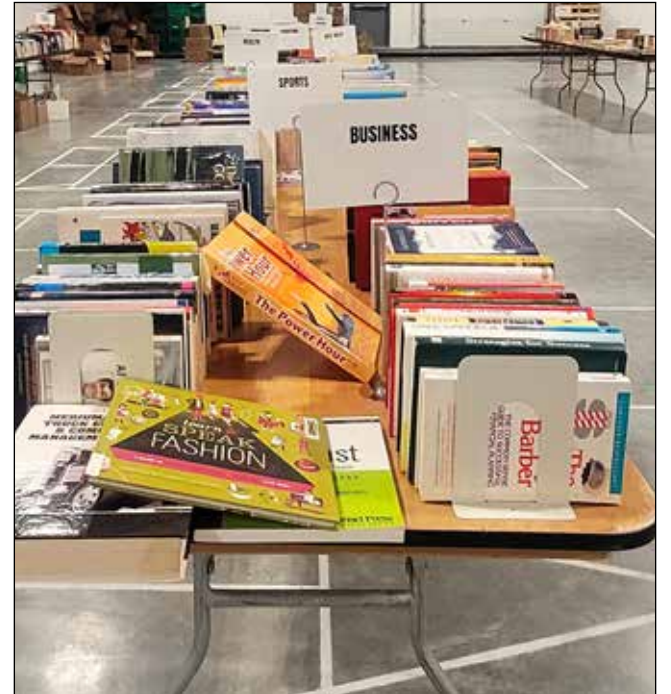
(KAYLA ROCK PHOTO)

Volunteer Lorna Parkinson showing off books at the St. Marys Friends of Library book sale over the weekend.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

St. Marys Friends of the Library (FOL) chair Megan Feeney and volunteer Tara Firby stopped all their hard work for a picture during the FOL book sale.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

There were many books about a variety of subjects available to peruse during the three-day book sale.

KAYLA ROCK

Independent Reporter

The bi-annual Friends of Library (FOL) Book Sale in St. Marys was quite a success and continues to bring the community together, drawing between 700 and 800 visitors each year as residents browse tables stacked high with donated books.

Operated entirely through donations, the event allows visitors to fill bags with books for as little as a nickel, making it both affordable and accessible for readers

of all ages.

Guests are greeted by a welcoming team of volunteers, whose enthusiasm and dedication have become a hallmark of the event. Among them is longtime volunteer Lorna Parkinson, who says giving back to the community has always been important to her.

“I have always been involved in volunteer experiences and love to give back to the community,” Parkinson said. “I love books and what books do for people.”

The sale is organized by the Friends

of the Library, a volunteer-driven group. Through fundraising efforts like the book sale, the organization donates approximately \$20,000 annually to the St. Marys Public Library. Those funds help support local initiatives and events, including Movies in the Park and monthly community socials.

Organizers say the library is not only a historic landmark in the community, but also an important gathering place they hope to keep vibrant and accessible for future generations. The Friends of the

Library aim to ensure the space remains filled with activity, support and opportunities for connection.

The event also provides a meaningful way for residents, particularly retirees, to stay involved in the community through volunteer work. The Friends of the Library regularly provide sign-up sheets and volunteer information at their events, encouraging anyone interested in helping out to connect through their social media pages and website.

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BIA approves revised downtown banner designs for St. Marys

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The St. Marys Business Improvement Area (BIA) board has approved a series of revised artistic banner designs that will soon add new colour and character to the town's downtown core.

At the board's May 11 meeting, members approved four double-sided banner concepts commissioned as part of a collaborative streetscape-enhancement initiative between the Town of St. Marys and the BIA. The banners, designed by local artists Heather Poechman and Liz Emirzian, are intended to replace the town's traditional summer hanging baskets with a more coordinated and long-term downtown beautification program.

"My department embarked on working with the two artists that the BIA selected for the (utility box art wraps) downtown to have some continuity there and see what we could come up with," said town tourism and economic development manager Kelly Deeks-Johnson.

"So, we provided themes, just like you did for the hydro boxes, and they were similar themes. The only theme that we did add that wasn't in the original themes was baseball."

Poechman's original designs are themed around "Shop Local" and baseball, while Emirzian's original designs feature river scenery, including both loons and a heron.

Board members approved the designs with two minor revisions following discussion at the meeting.

One of Emirzian's nature-themed banner concepts originally featured loons along the Thames River, a bird board members Angela McPherson and Dan Troyer



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Initial designs by artists Heather Poechman and Liz Emirzian for St. Marys' new downtown banners. Two of these designs will be revised by the artists before all four go to council for final approval.

suggested be replaced with ducks to better reflect local wildlife commonly found in St. Marys.

The board also requested a revision to Poechman's baseball-themed banner to include female representation alongside the existing player imagery, as suggested in correspondence from the owner of Hyggeligt Fabrics, Chantal Lynch.

"I had also made some original swaps with the Shop Local one to add in various things that fit more within (the downtown)," Deeks-Johnson added.

Once finalized, the revised concepts will be forwarded to St. Marys council for final approval before printing and installation.

According to Deeks-Johnson, the banners are expected to be installed beginning July 1 – after most of the town's Pride banners are taken down – and remain in place until they are replaced by the Royal Canadian Legion's veterans' banners ahead of Remembrance Day. The banners are expected to remain in use for two to three seasons before new designs are commissioned.

Deeks-Johnson's report to the board notes the banner-design initiative aligns with both the St. Marys BIA strategic plan and the town's tourism master plan. Printing costs for the banners will be split between the town and the BIA, while the design work was funded through the tourism budget.

Smile Cookie campaign raises over \$18,000 for local health care

BERNICE DE DECKER

St. Marys Healthcare Foundation

The 2026 Smile Cookie campaign was another incredible success for the community, raising a total of \$18,486.98 in support of new trauma lights for the St. Marys Memorial Hospital emergency department.

The campaign goal of \$16,600 was officially reached by Friday during Smile Cookie week. Thanks to the incredible support of community members, volunteers and local supporters, more than 9,000 Smile Cookies were sold throughout the campaign.

The foundation extends a heartfelt thank-you to the many volunteers who generously donated their time to decorate cookies throughout the week. Special thanks go to manager Shari-Ann McHardy and owner Paul Whaling, along with the entire staff at the St. Marys Tim Hortons, whose hard work and dedication helped make the campaign such a success!

Every cookie truly made a difference and the Foundation is deeply appreciative of the continued generosity and enthusiasm shown by the community year after year.



(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are St. Marys Healthcare Foundation communications coordinator Bernice De Decker, health-care foundation board member Wendy Lamond, St. Marys Tim Hortons manager Shari-Ann McHardy, Huron-Perth Healthcare Alliance director of patients Jacqui Tam, health-care foundation board member Mark Kennedy, health-care alliance manager of patient care Arlene Lanting, health-care foundation board member Linda McFadyen, health-care alliance president and CEO Andrew Williams, and St. Marys Tim Hortons owner Paul Whaling.



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Perth County survey shows strong business confidence, growth across sectors

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Businesses across Perth County are continuing to show confidence in the local economy, with many planning for change or growth in the coming years, according to the county's latest business retention and expansion (BR+E) survey.

County economic development and tourism staff shared the survey results with council at its May 7 meeting as part of a broader update on economic activity and tourism across the region.

"This time, our BR+E was focused on being a concise, business-level, intelligence-gathering exercise as opposed to a community-level temperature check," said county economic development officer Justin Dias. "So, that survey has been completed and those results help to inform our staff's response and deliver resources to those businesses requesting additional funding, joining our programs, or other resources related to their survey responses."

The 2026 BR+E survey collected 142 responses from businesses across Perth County, representing a range of sectors including retail, agriculture, arts and recreation, manufacturing and construction. Responses were spread across all four lower-tier municipalities, with the largest share coming from North Perth, followed by Perth East, West Perth and Perth South.

One of the most notable findings from the survey is 66 per cent of respondents indicated they are planning some form of change within the next two years, whether that be expansion, relocation, downsizing or selling their business.

At the same time, businesses identified a range of supports they would like to see from the county, with grant and loan programs topping the list. Other commonly requested supports included marketing assistance, social media and digital marketing training, artificial intelligence tools, succession-planning resources and workforce-related supports.

Workforce challenges remain a key concern for many businesses. More than 40 per cent of respondents reported difficulties recruiting or retaining employees, with common issues including a lack of qualified applicants, competition for labour and a limited pool of candidates.

"Of the 142 business responses, 68 per cent chose to remain anonymous, and that's understandable," Perth County Warden Dean Trentowsky said during the council discussion. "But 42 per cent of the respondents reported experiencing workforce, recruitment or retention challenges. ... I guess my concern is ... how do we help them if they remain anonymous, but they indicate they're in trouble and need help? ... It's kind of like a 911 call comes in and they say, 'I need police, fire and ambulance,' and then they hang up the phone and we don't know where

to go.

"We have the ability to offer some assistance, but how do we make that connection ... and try to offer some assistance?"

Speaking to Trentowsky's concern, Dias said the county can address the issues raised around workforce, recruitment and retention challenges through a general approach. One piece of that puzzle, Dias explained, is letting businesses across the county know about the relaunch of Ontario Job Grant, the redesigned Canada-Ontario Job Grant program that provides up to \$10,000 in funding to help employers train their employees and update their skills so they can adapt to a changing economy.

"This is a program designed to help employers access the specific training they need to help their employees upskill or get the skills they need to be retained or once they're recruited," Dias said. "That's something we shared yesterday on our socials; we're going to push that out to ensure as many businesses as possible can take advantage of it."

Coun. Rhonda Ehogoetz also noted that Perth County council and its member, lower-tier councils can continue pushing for new housing and higher densities in their communities to support employers as they bring new workers into the county.

Despite those challenges and broader economic pressures such as inflation and uncertainty, roughly two-thirds of respon-

dents still rated Perth County as a good or excellent place to do business.

In addition to survey results, staff also provided council with a snapshot of where business expansion is occurring across the county using building permit data.

In the agricultural sector, nearly \$97 million in construction activity was recorded in 2025, including new builds, renovations and additions. West Perth accounted for the largest share of that activity, followed by Perth East, with North Perth and Perth South each making up smaller but still significant portions.

Commercial and industrial construction activity also remained strong, totalling more than \$53 million across the county in 2025. In contrast to agricultural development, Perth South led the way in commercial and industrial investment, followed by Perth East and North Perth, with West Perth accounting for a smaller share.

Staff noted the inclusion of building-permit data provides a more complete picture of business expansion across Perth County, capturing activity that may not be reflected through formal funding applications or direct economic-development support.

The county plans to continue tracking this data on a quarterly basis moving forward to better understand growth trends and support ongoing business-development efforts.

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Discover how Town of St. Marys grants can help enhance local properties and increase housing supply

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

As spring brings warmer temperatures, excitement is building among St. Marys residents ready to enhance their properties.

To support these efforts, the Town of St. Marys building department is highlighting two essential funding programs that empower property owners to beautify, conserve and improve their homes and businesses. These initiatives provide valuable resources to help transform properties and contribute to the community's ongoing growth and revitalization.

The Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a funding source offered to pri-

vate property owners to help offset some of the cost of projects that help achieve the town's community, development and housing goals. Eligible projects must be located within the Community Improvement Project Area, improve existing conditions, complement surrounding architecture and natural settings, and align with the objectives outlined in the town's Community Improvement Plan.

Through the CIP, the town offers a range of grant programs aimed at encouraging attainable housing, downtown improvements and industrial-area upgrades. Funding opportunities include housing-focused grants, downtown façade, signage and rental-housing incentives, infrastructure and service-connection fee grants, and

redevelopment or adaptive reuse support, depending on availability each budget cycle as determined by town council. Applicants must meet eligibility requirements. For more information on available programs and the applications steps, residents are encouraged to visit www.townofstmarys.com/cip.

The Heritage Property Grant is another funding source available to owners of heritage designated properties in the Town of St. Marys and offers up to 50 per-cent funding for eligible conservation work on designated heritage properties in St. Marys, with a maximum of \$2,500 for façade painting and \$7,500 for architectural work. Property owners must match the grant amount, and only one grant is avail-

able per property each year. Learn more at www.townofstmarys.com/heritagegrant.

"These grants make a real difference for our community," said town director of building and development services Grant Brouwer in a press release. "We're proud to offer programs that support property owners in preserving their heritage and improving their spaces. By providing these resources, the town is investing in both our history and our future."

Residents are encouraged to apply for these grants since funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Staff can answer any questions and look forward to engaging with those interested in enhancing their properties through these programs.

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Holy Name of Mary School students join UTRCA to tackle the issue of invasive goldfish

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Mrs. Becker's Grade 6/7 class has been working on a very interesting project since the fall of 2025.

The program the project falls under is called the Green Leaders Initiative, a youth-driven effort focused on community-based climate action, biodiversity restoration and sustainability education. Mrs. Becker applied for the program, which involves six steps towards completion and compiling all the information, culminating in a presentation at Huron University in London with 16 other schools.

The first step the class completed was a walk around St. Marys to see what environmental issues they could find. They found examples like garbage, recycling and invasive species along the Grand Trunk Trail, as well as in our water ways. For step two, the class decided on what issue to select, stemming from what they found on their walk. They decided to delve into invasive species in our waterways.

The research step comes next. The class was paid a visit by Upper Thames River Conservation Authority aquatic biologist Erin Carroll who discussed invasive species like zebra mussels, gobies and goldfish. The class discovered there



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Cameryn, Ryker, Connor and Nate meet with the newspaper to share information on invasive goldfish affecting our rivers.

are goldfish in the Thames River Watershed and they are causing damage.

Students Nate, Cameryn, Connor and Ryker shared what they learned during this process on why goldfish are invasive. When goldfish are flushed down the toilet, the students explained, they don't live, so that is not what is causing the goldfish to end up in the rivers.

However, because goldfish can live up to 30 years, owners are releasing them

into storm drains and rivers when they no longer want to take care of them. The reason the goldfish are considered invasive is they eat the plants and stir up water. The native species can't get at their plant food and end up dying off.

Also, when the goldfish stir up the water, the predator fish can't see as well and are not finding food. They will also eat fish eggs, killing off future generations of native fish. When goldfish are released

into larger water sources, they grow based on the size of the waterway and can reach 18 inches long and four pounds in weight.

Step four in the program teaches the students to use their decision-making skills to come up with a policy or practice around what they want to change, and to come up with a strategy on how to achieve this.

The students shared some ways on how to avoid dumping goldfish in the rivers:

- Give unwanted goldfish to a friend or family member;
- Build a small pond not connected to a stream for goldfish;
- Donate an unwanted goldfish to someone who has a pond; and
- Learn the information, consider how long they live and think before buying.

The next step was to take action and get the information out to the community. The class was divided into groups to determine how to do that. They used avenues like the newspaper, radio, social media and speaking with people in person at Pet Valu.

The final step will take place on May 22 when the class will go to Huron University in London to share what they learned. They will talk about their successes, challenges and what they learned through this experience.

Friendship Centre Choir to celebrate season's end with spring concert and sweet treats

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Friendship Centre Choir will take the stage at the Pyramid Recreation Centre on Wednesday, May 27, at 6:30 p.m., inviting the community to enjoy an evening of uplifting music and light refreshments during their end-of-season concert.

Led by musical director Lanny Hoare, the choir is made up of 27 enthusiastic older adults who meet weekly at the Friendship Centre to rehearse and build community through song. The group is always welcoming new members and encourages anyone interested in joining to reach out to the Friendship Centre at 519-284-3272.

"This choir is about much more than singing," Hoare said in a press release issued by the Town of St. Marys. "It's about connection, confidence and the joy that comes from creating something together. We're proud of how far we've come this season and look forward to sharing our music with the community."

All proceeds from the concert direct-

ly support the Friendship Centre and its choir program. Tickets are \$12 and include a sweet treat and light refreshments.

Pre-registration is required and is available on a first-come, first-served basis through ActiveNet at www.townofstmarys.com/activenet or by calling the St. Marys Friendship Centre at 519-284-3272.

Holiday hours for town facilities – Victoria Day (May 18)

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Please note the following hours will be in effect for Town of St. Marys facilities for Victoria Day (Monday, May 18).

Closed Monday, May 18:

- Administrative offices (town hall and municipal operations centre)
- Adult learning
- Aquatics Centre
- Child Care Centre, before/after school programs
- EarlyON Centre
- Fire hall
- Friendship Centre
- Landfill
- Library

- Mobility Services offices (rides must be booked by 3 p.m. on Thursday, May 14)
- Museum
- Pyramid Recreation Centre
- ServiceOntario
- Youth centre

Reminder:

- Public access to town hall is currently restricted due to the Church Street town hall staircase reconstruction. Services usually offered at town hall will be provided online, by phone or at other municipal facilities during the closure. Learn more at www.townofstmarys.com/news/posts/town-hall-outdoor-staircase-reconstruction/.
- No change:**
 - The train station will be open; visit www.viarail.ca for train scheduling.
 - Home support services such as Meals on Wheels and



telephone reassurance will continue.

- Curbside leaf and yard waste collection will run as scheduled

Local students tackle global conflict at Model UN



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Students from all three Stratford high schools participate in the second annual Stratford Regional Model United Nations at city hall, where they debate global issues, negotiate resolutions and take on the roles of international delegates as part of a day focused on diplomacy, public speaking and collaboration.

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

Students from all three Stratford high schools, Nancy Campbell Academy, St. Michael Catholic Secondary School and Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS), recently met at the Stratford city hall auditorium for the second annual Stratford Regional Model United Nations (MUN).

This educational simulation of a real United Nations aims to teach students essential skills in diplomacy, public speaking, negotiation and research by simulating UN committees. MUN also aims to help senior students understand global affairs, international relations and complex world problems, while fostering critical thinking, teamwork and leadership skills necessary for future careers.

More than that, Mark Boersen, organizer and teacher at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, said the program also aims to connect local students and foster a sense of friendship throughout the city.

“Our MUN is really the only venue that allows for all three Stratford high schools to come together and to work together in a diplomatic fashion to try and work through an issue,” he said. “More importantly, I suppose that there is an aspiration that our local MUN builds a stronger community.”

“When our city high school students collaborate and debate, they are not just meeting once and leaving. Hopefully, they are forming connections that they can keep developing. I hope, even more than a final resolution, that their MUN is a meaningful experience and will lead to long-term friendships or even joint initiatives amongst the three schools.”

The day is hosted at city hall, which not only lends to the overall structure of the day but also offers an accessible space for all students to join, noted Boersen.

“The space adds gravitas to the day.

Plus, city hall allows for an accessibility advantage,” said Boersen. “Our local MUN removes barriers like travel costs and logistics, making it easier for more students to participate. That inclusivity often brings in a wider range of perspectives, which actually improves the quality of discussion.”

This year’s topic was the escalation of conflict involving Iran and regional security. Earlier this year, tensions in the Middle East escalated into direct military confrontation between Iran and the coalition, led by the United States and Israel. Coordinated strikes targeted Iranian military and nuclear facilities, leading to retaliatory attacks and widespread regional instability.

One of the delegates, a Grade 12 student from St. Mike’s, Vincent Macissac, representing North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), said he has looked forward to MUN and was eager to start negotiations, specifically related to this year’s topic.

“I think the topic was very relevant, especially given what’s going on in the world right now,” said Macissac. “We’re very polarized. So, something like the Iran war, which is very two-sided, especially with the EU being neutral, you have that middle ground from a lot of countries, and then you have a very pro-US stance from Israel, and on the other hand, you have very anti-Israeli stances from some countries like Lebanon.”

Delegates were asked to determine how to prevent a regional war, whether international law was violated and what role the UN should play in enforcing peace. Later, they debated and tried to negotiate a resolution addressing key factors such as a ceasefire or de-escalation mechanisms, the protection of civilians and humanitarian access, nuclear monitoring, the security of global energy routes and UN peacekeeping missions.

As a standout leader throughout the day,

Macissac said he believes his passion for global relations is why he took on more of a speaking role, and by speaking up, he believes he can lead others to do the same.

“I like speaking out and being a leader,” he said. “I’m really passionate about Model UN and things like international relations. I really want to get people interested, and I think playing that leadership role is why I jumped at the chance to talk to different people, build alliances, start conversations and even debate. This gets other people talking. It gets people emotional.”

At the end of the MUN, students came to a final resolution.

“Delegates reached a resolution at the 11th hour,” said Boersen. “They managed to come together to hammer out a resolution in response to the Iran Crisis despite back-and-forth negotiations.”

Though the resolution came together at MUN, Boersen said he’s not sure how the resolution would stand up in the real-world United Nations.

“Honestly, I am not sure how their resolution would stand up in the real world with very real pressures and political players, but it is the aspiration of the student delegates to try and work things out and come to some sort of understanding,” he said. “As I have said, the UN isn’t perfect; it too struggles, and it reflects the world as it is, not as we wish it to be. And that is why their role as delegates is so meaningful and important.”

Macissac also said aspects of the resolution could have been the same in a real-life UN, but overall, he still believes students have a lot to learn before heading off to the global stage.

“I think there’s a lot that we don’t know still,” he said. “I don’t think it’s exactly what the UN would pass, but I do think these learning opportunities give students a great understanding of our world.”

“Our world is very polarized right now,

and it’s super easy to feel overwhelmed with what’s going on, and it’s hard to understand. Something like this gives us an opportunity to learn about other places. A lot of students now don’t really have the opportunity to travel, and I think for a lot of people, this is possibly their first experience hearing about different cultures, different laws and different societies.

“I think it’s also great to understand how hard it is to pass something in the UN because I think, as a society, you want to blame politicians or leaders for a lot of stuff. However, when you play that Model UN position, you begin to understand how difficult it is to come together as a community of over 194 countries with completely different interests and come to a resolution that will benefit everybody.”

This realistic experience has given Macissac a taste of public relations, where he sees himself navigating toward it after taking time to travel and returning to St. Mike’s for a fifth year next year, then heading off to university to possibly focus on public relations.

“I would like to do one more semester of school, and then I’d like to do a second semester where I travel and work. More specifically, I’d like to travel to Eastern Europe somewhere, very niche places, because I think, honestly, those unheard places tell the greatest stories.”

“This might be a little bit of a reach, but I would also like to pass through Ukraine if I could. Just to see what it’s like, to be in a country that’s facing such hardship, and talk to people who are very passionate about their own culture. I think it’d be a great learning opportunity, too. Eventually, I would like to do something where I work for the Canadian government, but abroad, something like a diplomat, or, even better, an ambassador. That’s really my dream or my hope for the future.”

St. Marys Independent **SPORTS**

DCVI Senior Girls Soccer team wins three of four games

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Soccer team picked up three wins in four games, including victories in both of their games on May 5 along with another win on May 11.

According to head coach Richard Farmer, the senior girls displayed a significantly stronger game in their pair of road wins on May 5 against St. Anne's and South Huron.

"The girls were a different team (on May 5)," Farmer told the Independent. "They were moving the ball around really well, and I have a better handle on their best positions now. They were in full control against St. Anne's, who never really challenged us. They played, positionally, really well, particularly in the attacking zone. They were spread out and finding open spaces, making the passing easier.

"As a result, we are scoring more now."

Charlotte Richardson scored two in the win against St. Anne's and Marin Chateauvert, Emma Hodkinson and Alanna Savile each got one as well.

In the second game against South Huron, Richardson scored on a penalty kick that was earned by Savile, and Chateauvert scored off of a header from a corner kick. South Huron scored their goal on a penalty kick due to a handball in the box.

Farmer noted the game against South Huron was a much harder test.

"South Huron was a different beast," said Farmer. "They are a really skilled side that pressed us hard. Had we played like we did in the first week, this would have been a different result. The girls



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Emma Hodkinson scores a goal during the St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Soccer team's game against Listowel on May 11.

were gritty, they fought for every ball and played a strong physical game. The win gave us a strong chance to go to WOSSAA, but they know they still have a lot to play for as four of the top five teams are single-A teams and there are only two WOSSAA spots."

The Salukis returned to the field on May 11 for a pair of games, winning their second game of the day against Listowel.

Emma Hodkinson scored the opening goal of the contest before Cortney Linton came up clutch, netting the eventual game-winner in the second half to propel St. Marys to a 2-1 win.

While not a perfect performance, Farmer noted the Salukis overcame several massive holes in their lineup to get the victory over Listowel.

"It was not a pretty game," Farmer said. "It was a little sloppy. We can play better than that, but we were missing a couple of key players positionally. Charlotte (Richardson) wasn't playing. Our centre-back pairing wasn't playing. Adrianna (Hollestelle-Black) was unavailable for this game, and Bronwyn (Hawkins) had an injury and played the first half but wasn't able to move very well, so not having our centre backs and our central

midfielder made it tough to control the game the way we usually can, but we got the win and that kept our playoff hopes alive."

In Richardson's absence, Farmer highlighted Chateauvert and Lena Thompson as a duo who had to elevate their game.

"Marin (Chateauvert) had to step up. She's our team captain, so Marin had to step up, and then Lena (Thompson) had to step up and fill in for Charlotte (Richardson's) position, and she had a lot of control of the ball. She was able to get possession back. She was able to hang on to it. She was able to get down to the corner a fair bit and get the ball into the box. She filled that position well. When you don't have your starters, it makes a difference, but we got our game-winning goal from Cortney (Linton) who isn't one of our regular starters, so that was good to see."

The win over Listowel was key to keeping the Salukis' aspirations for a lengthy playoff run afloat, with Farmer citing the team's "scrappiness" as a key to finding success the rest of the year.

"Not all the girls are soccer players, but they're all feisty," Farmer said. "They're all scrappy, and they all fight for every ball, which is what I want from them because, if we're going to be in the playoffs, we're going to be playing against some pretty strong teams. South Huron is technically really strong. We managed to beat them from that sheer determination and scrappiness.

"F.E. Madill, we're going to play them. They beat us the first time. They're likely to be in the top four. We need to be scrappy against them too."

DCVI senior boys score 3-0 win over St. Anne's

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys DCVI Senior Boys Soccer team defeated St. Anne's on May 5, riding a major uptick in their ball control to a 3-0 shutout victory.

Richard Farmer had high praise for the senior boys' showing against St. Anne's.

"This was a different team that showed up (on May 5)," said Farmer. "They were moving the ball around really well and playing an excellent possession game. Luke (Binning) had his best game of the season and stood out as a team leader. He also scored a sensational goal. We controlled the game in the middle of the field, not allowing St. Anne's offence to do anything. It was an easy day

for our keeper."

Farmer added the Salukis delivered a strong effort in their second game of the day as well but fell in a tight 1-0 clash against South Huron.

"The result (against South Huron) doesn't reflect the game," Farmer said. "We were the better team, but South Huron has the best defence in the conference and are really hard to break down. We had most of the possession and moved the ball around well but could not get past the defensive line. The only shots we had were from outside the box and either off-target or saved."

In their 3-0 victory against St. Anne's, along with Binning scoring once, Italian exchange student Cesare Benedetti scored two goals.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Ben Robson steps into a shot during one of the St. Marys DCVI Senior Boys Soccer team's games on May 11.

DCVI junior boys soccer team wins season opening game

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys DCVI Junior Boys Soccer team picked up a 3-0 victory in their first game of the regular season May 7 against Listowel District Secondary School (LDSS).

Head coach Jordan Kustec credited the group for strong two-way play at both ends of the pitch.

“Our offence was really solid,” said Kustec. “They have pretty good communication. These guys are friends on this team, and they are always talking outside of the game and theory-crafting on how they’re going to be playing. Our offence has really good synergy, and our defence wasn’t lacking as well. If they got in our zone, it was constant pressure from us to get it out.”

Kustec further explained how the team’s offensive prowess comes from a collegial approach by the players.

“The coaches had some comments about, ‘Okay, this is what we can do differently,’ at halftime. Roger (Sebben) is 19 years old and is helping me coach, and he is great during practice. He even plays during scrimmages to even out the teams. And the captain, Ahmed (Aijan Al Hadid), had a discussion with the entire team about what they wanted to do in the second half. Ahmed is the brains of the offensive side of the field.”

Ryder Forrestall opened the scoring for the Salukis before adding a second goal later in the game, despite, according to Kustec, intense pressure from the LDSS defence.

“Ryder (Forrestall) scored the first goal, and he’s a really exceptional player, and to Listowel’s credit, they covered him the rest of the game,” Kustec said. “They always had someone on him. Ryder actually scored another one later with a nice assist by Ahmed (Aijan Al Hadid).”



Brayden Wheeler also chipped in a goal for DCVI en route to their 3-0 win.

Along with a solid showing by the team’s offensive attackers, Kustec also praised the play of their entire defensive unit.

“Our defence is really good. They’re very athletic. They’re great about thinking where the ball is supposed to go. They’re very smart. They’re well coordinated. They know when to clear it and when to pass back to another player.

“The players on defence just don’t give up,” Kustec

continued. “If something goes past them, they’re not going to get frustrated by that, and that was something that everybody on the team was working through throughout the game. If something doesn’t go your way, you just have to keep going and you don’t give up.”

Kustec highlighted several individuals who help make up the Salukis’ strong defensive corps.

“Defensively, we have two kids who are international students that are just at DCVI, Eduardo (Chamorro Rodrigues) and Pablo (Vazquez Arias), and they’re both really solid on defence,” Kustec told the Independent. “The players on the team call one of them ‘The Wall’ because nothing gets past them.

“Jack (Brockman/Wilkinson) is one of our defensive players, and every pass that he makes to the midfielders just makes a lot of sense. He’s a very cerebral player. He was actually a little bit sick before the game started. And I kept asking him, ‘Are you good to play?’ And he just kept saying, ‘Yes, I got this.’ And he went out and did a really great job.”

With the game being just the beginning of the regular season, Kustec said the team is starting from a great place in terms of their ability and their structure.

“In practice, we’ve been working on our passes and also just taking as few touches as possible, and keeping our touches close to ourselves, because if you don’t do that, it gives the other team a huge chance to swoop in and steal the ball. We also focused a lot in these last few practices on our shooting and having drills where two offensive players would be faced with two defensive players, and they’d have to pass to each other and then take a shot.

“And that kind of coordination and communication between our players really showed on the field. There are definitely improvements we can make, but I was really happy with what I saw.”

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Lincolns host year-end awards banquet



Pictured from left to right are Vaughn Barr, presenter Owen Robinson-Leslie, and Devun Colebrook. Barr and Colebrook were the co-winners of the Earl Leslie Award, presented by Robinson-Leslie, which is presented annually to the St. Marys Lincolns' rookie of the year. The award presentation was made on May 9 at the Lincolns' annual end-of-season awards banquet, which was hosted at River Valley Golf and Tube Slide. In addition to the presentation of their yearly awards, the Lincolns also hosted a dinner and recognized their league award winners.



Pictured from left to right are Pam Ryan, presenter Jacques Cousineau, and Ryan Hodkinson. Hodkinson and Lincoln Moore, who was unable to attend the banquet and was represented by Ryan, his billet mom, were co-winners of the Jacques Cousineau Award as the Lincolns' playoff MVPs. Hodkinson and Moore also were co-winners of the Fan Appreciation Award. Individually, Hodkinson won the Harold Maxwell Award as the regular season points leader for the Lincolns, while Moore received the Bannerman Memorial Award for veterans of the year.



Pictured from left to right are presenter Donna Aldis, Chase MacQueen-Spence, and Blake Elzinga. MacQueen-Spence and Elzinga were co-winners of the Jack Boyd Memorial Award for most dedicated players.



Pictured from left to right are Owen Kalp, presenter Mike Brogden, and Jacob Montesi. Brogden presented the David Baynes Award to co-winners Kalp and Montesi as the team's top defencemen.



Pictured from left to right are presenter Brian Dundas and Owen Voortman. Voortman was the recipient of the Carmen Stacey Memorial Award for demonstrating outstanding ability and sportsmanship.

(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)

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Lincolns host year-end awards banquet



Pictured from left to right are presenter Rob Mossey and Chase McDougall. McDougall was the first-ever winner of the Lincolns' newest award, the Rob "Bear" Mossey Award for significant community engagement.



Pictured from left to right are Brogan Colquhoun, presenter Ben Hemstock, and Ryan Hodkinson. Colquhoun and Hodkinson were named co-winners of the Frank Edge Award as the regular season MVPs.



Pictured from left to right are Derek Galloway and presenter Myrt Hearn. Galloway represented Declan Ready, who billeted with Galloway's family and received the R.G. Kelly Hearn Award as the most improved player.



Pictured from left to right are presenter Lauren Cameron and Ethan Weir. Cameron presented Weir with the D.R. Stevens Award for outstanding leadership at the St. Marys Lincolns' awards banquet May 9.

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(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)
Pictured from left to right are Jacob Montesi, Owen Voortman, head coach and presenter Jeff Bradley, and Chase MacQueen-Spence. Montesi, Voortman, and MacQueen-Spence received engraved watches after spending four seasons with the Lincolns.

Hodges wins St. Marys Tennis Club's Rusty Springs tournament



(ANDREA MACKO PHOTOS)

The St. Marys Tennis Club held its Rusty Springs cumulative-points doubles tournament on May 9. The tournament was a great way to knock out winter's rust and mix and mingle with other players. Pictured on the left, from left to right, are Don Van Galen, Callum Hughson, Andrew Hodges and Adam Pallone. Hodges was the winner of the tournament, while Pallone finished as the runner-up and Hughson and Van Galen tied for third place. Pictured on the right is Hodges returning the ball back over the net during one of his matches. Hodges and Hughson, both of whom have Scottish heritage, wore kilts after a "kilt match" was long discussed by the two members of the club after seeing it on social media. The kilt match was also meant to honour the Scottish holiday, Beltane, which marks the peak of spring and the start of summer. The tournament was managed by John Stevens. To discover or reignite a love of tennis, try out the St. Marys Tennis Club for free Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7 p.m.

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St. Marys Bowling Lanes presents end-of-season YBC awards



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Pictured are competitors from the Bantam division of the St. Marys Bowling Lanes' Youth Bowl Canada (YBC) league, which hosted its year-end awards banquet on May 9. The Bantam group included Amanda Kittmer, Christie LeBlanc, Asher Gregory, Felix Louwagie, and Wyatt Rabideux, and all bowlers in all divisions received medals for their highest score of the year.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Pictured are members of the Bowlasauras division at the St. Marys Bowling Lanes, after being awarded their medals for their highest score of the season. The Bowlasauras division included Pearl Fisher, Drew Kemp, Brendan King, Ethan King, Myla King, Ivy Kittmer, Austin Kittmer, Arely Gregory, Hunter Rabideux, Addilyn Smith, Harley Robertson, and Aiden Smith.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Pictured are members of the Junior division at the St. Marys Bowling Lanes with their high score medals. Included in the Junior category were James VandeGevel, Jack Brockman, Aisla Fisher, Jesse Graham, Rosie LeBanc, Natalie McKeen, Jase Robertson, Erin Slaney, Leia Slaney, Nate Sims, and Bridget Stevens.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Pictured are the St. Marys Bowling Lanes' YBC Senior bowlers after receiving their medals for their high scores of this past season. Rory Brockman, Nathan McKeen, and Landon Ball made up the Senior group. Nathan was one of six bowlers, alongside Natalie McKeen, Brendan King, Ethan King, Aisla Fisher, and Pearl Fisher to have perfect attendance.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Pictured on the left are Brendan King and Harley Robertson, the champions of the Bowlasauras division. In the middle is Amanda Kittmer, the Bantam girls' champion. Not pictured was Bantam boys' champion Asher Gregory. On the right is Rosie LeBlanc, who won the award for Most Improved Bowler.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Pictured on the left are Aisla Fisher and James VandeGevel, who were the boys and girls champions of the Junior YBC division at the St. Marys Bowling Lanes this past season. On the right are the Senior division champions, Rory Brockman and Nathan McKeen. Nate Sims and Amanda Kittmer were given prizes for being the top chocolate sellers.

MINOR SPORTS **SCRAPBOOK**



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Rowen Elder backhands the puck on goal during a Radar Auto Pars U9 LL Boys White St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Matt Scott sends a shot towards the net during a Cubberley Plumbing and Heating U13 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Luke Binning makes a save on an incoming shot during a St. Marys Cement U18 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Mary McCutcheon fires the ring on target during a St. Marys Rotary Club-A.N.A.F. U14 A St. Marys Snipers game.



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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Strange things, Ukrainian style

TETIANA DIDKOVSKA

Independent Columnist

They say that to see the world, you need to travel far and wide. But here's a little secret; sometimes, all you have to do is look more closely at the map of Ukraine because it feels as if someone took pieces of different countries, mixed them with legends, added a touch of magic and created something entirely unique.

Let's start with a place where roads are made of water. Vylkove is often called the Ukrainian Venice. But truth be told, it has a personality all its own. Here, instead of streets, there are canals; instead of cars, there are boats; and an ordinary walk can turn into a small adventure. The postman arrives by boat, neighbours wave to each other across the water, and time itself seems to slow down just a little. And suddenly you catch yourself thinking, maybe this is what real luxury feels like – living without rushing.

And then an unexpected twist because Ukraine loves to surprise. Imagine this. Heat, a white shimmer under your feet, and water where you simply cannot sink. No, this isn't the Middle East. This is the salt lake near Henichesk. Here, you can float effortlessly as if you've suddenly mastered the art of doing absolutely nothing. While your mind tries to figure out how it works, your body has already decided, "That's it, I'm on vacation." They say the water has healing properties, but even if you don't believe in that, it definitely cures you of hurry and unnecessary thoughts.

But the real mysteries begin where history steps in. Kamiana Mohyla (3) is a place that looks like a film set about ancient civilizations or aliens. Stone mounds, caves, prehistoric carvings—and the quiet feeling that you are far from the first, or even the hundredth, visitor here. Some call it a place of power. And even if you're a skeptic, it's hard not to wonder: what if these symbols were left here for a reason? What if they are still "speaking," and we've simply forgotten how to listen?

And just when you think nothing else can surprise you, Ukraine plays another card – Aktove Canyon. If you've ever wanted to find yourself somewhere between Arizona and a fantasy film, this is the place. Cliffs, a winding river, untouched nature and a silence that feels louder than any city. Here, you want to speak in whispers, or better yet not speak at all because sometimes, the best conversations happen in silence.

And there you are, standing in the middle of this canyon, wondering how is it possible that all of this exists within one country? A city on water, a mini sea, ancient mysteries and wild landscapes, all within reach of just a few journeys.

Ukraine doesn't shout about its wonders. It almost hides them, a little shyly, as if saying those who truly want to find them will. And maybe that is its greatest magic because the most meaningful discoveries always begin with a quiet sense of wonder and end with the desire to come back.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Clockwise from left: Vylkove is often called the Ukrainian Venice, but truth be told, it has a personality all its own. This is the salt lake near Henichesk. Kamiana Mohyla is a place that looks like a film set about ancient civilizations or aliens. Aktove Canyon.

FROM THE GARDEN: Spring's beauty of intoxicating fragrance



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

As the days are warming, our landscape and gardens are busting out in leaf and flower. Along the edge of our property, lilac bushes are full of flower stems soon to burst open with their mauve flowers and fill the air with their intoxicating fragrance.

Syringa vulgaris or the common lilac is a species of a deciduous flowering plant in the 'olive' family. There are around 25 distinct botanical species with the *Syringa* genus, primarily native to Asia and Europe. Through breeding, over 1600 unique cultivars have developed, all descending from *Syringa vulgaris*, famous for its fragrance and light purple or white flowers. Other common varieties such as 'Beauty of Moscow' have double white flowers; 'Sensation' is

known for its white edged purple flowers, 'Charles Joy' has deep reddish-purple double blooms while 'Tinkerbelle' is a compact variety with pink flowers. The French hybrids are known for double blooms in varied colours. Japanese Tree Lilac, *S. reticulata* is a large tree-form with white flowers, while the Dwarf Korean lilac (*S. meyeri*) are small shrubs ideal for small spaces. There are also hybrids like 'Bloomerang' that bloom in spring and again in late summer.

Lilac has a deep-rooted history originating in ancient Greek mythology. The genus name 'Syringa' derived from Greek, meaning hollow tube or pipe. The common name 'lilac' borrowed from the French and Spanish word of the same name, refers to the light purple colour of its flowers.

The lilac has had a diversified history over the ages. It has been a popular part of Mediterranean culture. The Celts regarded it 'magical' due to its incredible fragrance. During the Victorian Age in Britain, it signified old loves and was often worn by widows. People of Russia believed holding a sprig of lilac over a newborn baby would bring wisdom to the child. In English folklore, bringing fresh

lilac flowers into the house was considered bad luck. In American folklore, however, lilacs placed in a haunted house were believed to drive out ghosts. Here in Canada, settlers planted lilac bushes by the door of their rustic homes. The fragrance of the lilacs helped to freshen the home after a long winter. Today in the Ontario countryside, it is common to see old lilac bushes as signposts to those lost farmstead homes.

Lilacs are a popular ornamental plant for gardens and parks, as they are easy to grow. They need fertile, rich, well-drained soil and grow to about six to seven metres in height. They will also produce secondary shoots or suckers from the base of the root system. Pruning these suckers out will keep the lilac bush from spreading aggressively. But on the other hand, if you want to form a wide thicket hedge, leave the shoots and it will spread over the years.

A common question about lilacs is 'why are my lilacs not blooming?' Well, there could be a few reasons why. The main reason is that people prune their lilacs in the fall. Pruning should be done right after the last lilac blooms as there is only a win-



dow of about ten days before the plant will set the blooms for next spring. Lilacs also need at least six hours of sun, less than that they will not bloom well. They also do not like fertilizer. So, if you feed your bushes, you will have healthy green foliage but no blooms. You could add compost in the fall to keep the soil rich &

humus.

Spring is an exciting time of the year. As our gardens develop colour, breath in and enjoy the delightful fragrance of lilacs that grace our landscape.

Source: <https://gardening.usask.ca/articles-and-lists/articles-plant-descriptions/trees/lilacs.php>

HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Preserving records

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

For researchers interested in the social history of Ontario, records kept by the historic churches are an invaluable resource. In the past, almost everyone claimed, at the least, an affiliation with some specific denomination. Churches recorded important family events in their registers – baptisms, marriages and burials. These records are of great interest to genealogists and recently, to a number of people from other countries, the majority from the United States, who want to prove Canadian citizenship by virtue of having ancestors who were born and lived here. As well as marriages, births and deaths, churches hold other records, including photographs, minute books, and letters, that provide insights into day-to-day life, not only in the specific church but also in the community at large. Common occupations, cycles of prosperity or economic uncertainty, outbreaks of diseases such as tuberculosis and smallpox – these are among the issues that can be determined by studying these historic records.

The challenge is to preserve these often-fragile records while still finding ways of making them accessible to researchers. Recently, five historic ledgers were removed from their place of safe-keeping in the St. Marys United Church. They are currently in the St. Marys Museum where their contents will be digitized. These ledgers contain the names of members of the Methodist Church in the St. Marys area, dating from 1858 – long before it joined the United Church of Canada in 1925. In 1858, a missionary minister, the Reverend Thomas Williams, reported that there were enough members in this village to form a congregation and to build a church. The list of these members is entered on the first page of the earliest of three ledgers that, looked at sequentially, cover the period from 1858 to 1922. There are also two marriage registers, recording marriages from 1858 to 1910. Once the pages of these ledgers have been digitized, they will be returned to the St. Marys United Church. Digitization is one method of preserving the information contained in the ledgers and making it more easily accessible to future researchers who will be able to find this information at the Museum.

In London, the Anglican Diocese of Huron's archival record-keepers are facing an enormous challenge. In 1976, the Reverend Dr. J. Douglas Leighton, a historian and teacher at Huron College, realised that individual parish documents were scattered in churches across southwestern Ontario, many stored in basements and closets, some vulnerable and neglected. Dr. Leighton worked to bring these documents to a central location within the Diocese and created a dedicated space for them. By 1994, the Cronyn Memorial Archives officially opened in a new purpose-built space at Huron College.

However, Huron has grown into a much larger institution in the intervening years and can no longer provide space for the Archives. The Diocese decided this was a



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. JAMES ANGLICAN CHURCH)

This beautiful stained glass window beside the altar in St. James Anglican Church is in memory of Rev. Archibald Lampman, Founder of this Parish, Rector 1851-1858.

chance “to right-size the Archives for the future, to consolidate a collection that had outgrown its current home, and to plant the Archives in the heart of the Diocese, at St. Paul’s Cathedral.” Now renamed the Leighton Archives, the Diocese will establish a climate-controlled, secure archival vault in the basement under the Cathedral sanctuary. This project is enormously expensive and will require a fundraising campaign. But it is extremely important to find a home for these records of over 170 years of Anglican life in this region some even predating the diocese’s founding in 1857.

Other founding denominations also keep historic records in central archives. The Roman Catholic Diocese of London on Waterloo Street contains the archives. For the Presbyterian Church, the United Church of Canada and the Salvation Army (Canada and Bermuda Territory), the official repositories for archival records for the churches in this part of Ontario are in Toronto. The Canadian Baptist Archives are housed at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton. All these institutions have very accessible websites with clear instructions for submitting requests for information.

Would records stored locally, like the Methodist ledgers, currently at the Museum, be better cared for at a central location? Possibly! Would they be as accessible to researchers? Not really! Once they have been described and sorted, and finding aids have been created, all these historic records should be available to researchers by appointment, or by request. (That’s with the exception of some recent records that might be closed to protect personal privacy.) But it is physically much easier for someone to park outside the St. Marys Museum and walk into the reference area than it is to travel to Toronto and hunt for nearby parking. Also, these larger institutions are sometimes overwhelmed with the responsibility of caring for an abundance of material and the increasing number of research re-

quests. The Canadian Baptist Archives will be closed to external requests from May to September 2026 “to focus on administrative projects” and the Leighton Archives in London will be closed until the relocation has been completed in the fall. In the meantime, requests submitted by email or by regular mail are “placed in the queue.” Ideally, before historic records are transferred, copies – either digitized or on microfilm – can be deposited somewhere local and easily accessible – for our community, in the St. Marys Museum and Archives.

In 2026, St. James Anglican Church in St. Marys is celebrating the 175th anniversary of the congregation. In 1851, the Reverend Archibald Lampman was appointed missionary priest and given responsibility for two new parishes: St. James, St. Marys and St. James, Clendeboye. These two centres were 30 kilometres apart on semi-cleared trails through the bush. Lampman, however, was ready

to meet the challenges of this two-point charge. Born in 1823 in Oxford County, he was the third generation of his family in Canada, a descendent of United Empire Loyalists and of veterans of the War of 1812. He thoroughly understood the hardships faced by his parishioners and the importance of his ministry. He performed the sacraments of baptism and marriage and brought the familiar and comforting service from the Book of Common Prayer to families, isolated and often homesick in log cabins in the bush.

Lampman kept meticulous records that have survived. They can be read on microfilm at the Museum. They show that the young minister had enormous energy. Starting in the winter of 1851, as well as weekly preaching, in January and February alone he baptized 27 children in seven different ceremonies in St. Marys and in the townships of Blanshard, Bidulph and McGillivray. By the end of 1851, he had performed 101 baptisms as well as marriages and burial services. In 1858, the congregation of St. James, St. Marys, had the resources to build the first permanent church on their property at the northeast corner of Church and Elgin Streets. Archibald Lampman helped with the planning of the new church, but the year that it opened, he was appointed rector in the village of Morpeth in Kent County. He married there and, in 1861, had a son, also called Archibald. He grew up to become one of Canada’s best known 19th century poets.

It took all of 1858 to finance and build the new church. Finally, it was ready! The Diocese of Huron’s first Bishop, the Right Reverend Benjamin Cronyn, came to St. Marys to consecrate the building in February 1859. On Sunday, May 17, 2026, the current Bishop of Huron, the Right Reverend Todd Townshend will visit the church to mark the 175th anniversary of the congregation. The service will be at 10 a.m., followed by a reception and lunch in the parish hall. All are welcome to join in the celebration.

Straight From The Shelves

By Laura McAsh, St. Marys Public Library

The times are a changin’, and changing with them is the location of two of our on-going programs. Firstly, our weekly offering of “Mahjong” is now to be enjoyed at the Friendship Centre in Meeting Room A. Secondly, “Books & Brews” will be held at The Creamery in May and June, and at the Legion starting in September. They’re the same stellar programs you know and love, just located at different venues moving forward. We’ll see you there!

UP THIS WEEK

- Fri., May 15: Open 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 - Sat., May 16: Dungeons & Dragons (10 a.m.)
 - Mon., May 18: CLOSED
 - Tues., May 19: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
 - Wed., May 20: EarlyON Play & Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong~ (1-4 p.m.), Books & Brews*^ (8 p.m.)
 - Thurs., May 21: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- *Registration Required
^Held at The Creamery (120 Parkview Dr.)
~Held at the Friendship Centre - Meeting Room A (317 James St. S.)

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Uncovering a dark story in Canadian history



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

We couldn't help noticing a collection of large boulders scattered around the park in front of the Steveston Tram museum. My friend, Rod, called me over and pointed to an inscription on the first of the boulders.

"Steveston Nikkei Memorial," it read in large letters. "Nikkei" refers to people of Japanese descent who are living outside Japan.

Steveston is the community at the extreme south end of Richmond, B.C., which in turn is just south of Vancouver. We were in Steveston as part of a tour of the area during the 2026 Travel Media Association of Canada annual conference, which was hosted by Richmond.

The Nikkei Memorial was set up in 2019 and the first inscription explains "This Nikkei Memorial marks the 75th anniversary of the forced removal of Steveston's Japanese Canadian community in 1942, during World War II."

This is something those of us who live in southwestern Ontario don't hear a lot about. In fact, this is only one of many stories of racism and cruelty that are glossed over or ignored in our comfortable communi-

ties. Think about the treatment of Black people escaping slavery via the "Underground Railway," who were not, in fact, well received in Ontario. Or the shipload of German Jews who were barred from landing in Canada, and who Prime Minister Mackenzie King sent back to Germany to die in concentration camps. Or First Nations people who continue to bear the scars of systemic maltreatment by the Canadian government.

I have come to believe travelling should involve significant doses of both entertainment and education. And sometimes, that education involves rather shocking revelations. I learned a lot during my brief visit to Steveston. The first lessons came from the stone monuments in that Nikkei Memorial.

During World War II, those in power decided people of Japanese descent were a potential threat, since Canada was officially at war with Japan. In Richmond alone, more than 2,000 Nikkei residents were relocated to internment camps in the interior of British Columbia, or to farms in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario. Even more astonishing, some Canadian-born Nikkei people were deported to Japan, a country where they had never lived.

It gets worse. World War II ended in 1945, but it took four more years before the Nikkei were permitted to return to the B.C. coast. Surprisingly, some did!

Evidence of this officially sanctioned atrocity is everywhere in Steveston. We visited the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site and the

Gulf of Georgia Cannery. A poignant poster about BC Packers explains, "At the height of the canning industry there were European, First Nations, Chinese, Japanese and Indian workers all working on the site. ... A surprising number of women worked here, some keeping their babies with them during the work day."

But "rigid racial separation was considered normal." And, come 1942, all of the Nikkei people were gone. There had been 250 families living on the Steveston waterfront. Then there were none.

At the Britannia Shipyards, we visited the small wooden home of Otokichi and Asayo Murakami and their 10 children. Otokichi was a prominent shipbuilder and fisher; Asayo worked on the canning lines and was a devoted gardener. Their family moved into the home in 1929, and they thrived until 1942, when they were sent into internment.

As noted, some of the Nikkei actually returned to their communities when that was allowed in 1949 – some years later than this happened in the United States. But they came back to nothing – their homes and their fishing boats had been seized by the government and sold, mainly to white buyers. The money raised was brazenly allocated by the Canadian government to pay for the cost of the Nikkei's internment.

There was evidence of this dark period in Canada's history all over Steveston, which is otherwise a delightful small community. But the good news is there is that evidence. The story of the Nikkei is being told in



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The onetime home of the shipbuilding Murakami family.

these historic sites. And finally, since 2022, it has been included in the history curriculum in British Columbia schools. Better very late than never, I suppose.

And it turns out the Nikkei story is not the only account of blatant prejudice visitors can discover at these meaningful historic sites. We also learned about the Chinese head tax, which had its greatest impact in British Columbia. Today, the City of Richmond's population is 70 per cent of Asian origin.

Chinese workers were welcomed during construction of the railway, especially the Canadian Pacific Railway which linked western Canada to the east. But when the railway was completed, white Canadians no longer wanted to share "their country" with Chinese immigrants. The head tax was implemented by the Canadian government. At first, any person

of Chinese origin immigrating to Canada had to pay \$50. By 1900, it was \$100. Three years later, it climbed to \$500 (more than a year's salary). Yet hopeful Chinese people paid (about 81,000 people up to 1923), often borrowing the money from employers. Imagine what happened to those people when the shipbuilding and cannery businesses shut down.

I had heard about Japanese internment, and vaguely knew of a "head tax," whatever that meant, but my day as a tourist in Steveston was an eye-opening one, an experience I highly recommend to any traveller. Not a lot of laughter, but a very healthy dose of learning.

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



The boulders in the Nikkei Memorial, which commemorate the internment from 1942-1949, come from Québec – the farthest point in Canada where Nikkei internees were unwillingly sent.



This statue, at the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site, is "dedicated to the pioneering Japanese fishermen."



A sculpture outside the Gulf of Georgia Cannery honours workers, including a Japanese woman.

Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent



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Information session held in Thorndale for candidates in the Oct. 26 municipal election

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Thinking about running for a seat on Thames Centre council this year?

Nominations opened on May 1. Knowledge about a position on municipal council is important for a candidate. Last Monday evening, May 4, Thames Centre staff held an information session at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre for anyone interested in running in the upcoming municipal election.

Another session was held May 6 in Dorchester. These sessions provided information for potential candidates on important dates leading up to the municipal election on Monday, Oct. 26, including when nominations close, advanced voting, November's inaugural council meeting and four training sessions for the new council.

In her presentation, Thames Centre clerk Jana Nethercott also explained the roles of staff, councillors and the may-

or's position. She also clarified candidate eligibility and qualifications, campaign contributions and the importance of a candidate's detailed financial records of their campaign. More information regarding this can be found at www.thamescentre.on.ca/council-and-administration/2026-municipal-election/.

After Nethercott's presentation, attendees had the opportunity to have an informal conversation and ask questions of Middlesex Centre Mayor Aina DeViet, Thames Centre Mayor Sharron McMillian and Bernia Martin, Woodstock councillor and deputy warden for Oxford County.

Topics such as day-to-day duties, meeting preparations, time commitment and their insight about serving the public in their municipal roles were covered. Nethercott and the CAO, Jillene Bellchamber-Glazier, were also on hand to answer questions regarding nominations, finance and voting procedures.



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

The Municipality of Thames Centre held two municipal-election information sessions for candidates recently, one in Dorchester and the other in Thorndale (pictured).

New addition for West Nissouri Public School announced

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) recently announced it has received funding approval from the Ministry of Education to construct an addition on West Nissouri Public School in Thorndale.

West Nissouri Public School was established in 2009 through the amalgamation of three area public schools and was opened in the fall of 2010. Currently, there are 21 classes from kindergarten to Grade 8 with a school population of 489 students, a number that is anticipated to grow.

"Thorndale is one of many communities that is growing rapidly in southwestern Ontario," Thames Centre Mayor Sharron McMillian said. "This provincial investment keeps more kids in classrooms instead of portables and ensures that children in our community have access to a more modern, high-quality learning environment. This is great news that will support children in Thorndale for decades to come."

Thames Centre Heritage Depot marks official opening May 14



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

The Thames Centre Heritage Depot marked its official opening May 14. Pictured from left are volunteers Lynn Crocket, Paul Stevens and Susan Ralyea, who are delighted by the opening of this heritage-document collection depot. Representatives will be available to collect old documents, records, photos and more at their location at the FlightExec Centre, 2066 Dorchester Rd., in Dorchester on Tuesdays and Thursdays (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) on the second and fourth weeks of the month and at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre on the third Wednesday of each month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Riddles

I'm small and white and love to fly, you hit me hard up to the sky. I land in grass or sometimes sand...
What am I across the land?
A golf ball!

I have a head but never think, I help your golf ball soar in a blink. You swing me hard with all your might... What am I holding tight?
A golf club!

I'm the place where golfers start, the very first shot is my part. You put your ball on top of me...
What little thing could I be?
A tee

You yell this word when someone's shot is heading where it should NOT! Duck your head and move away... What warning do golfers say?
"Fore!"

I'm the grass that's tall and rough, hitting from me can be tough. Golfers groan when I appear...
What grassy spot am I here?
The rough!

I zoom through the course with people inside, from hole to hole I help them ride. I'm not a car for city streets... What am I with tiny seats?
A golf cart!

I'm a bird, but not with wings. A golfer smiles when someone sings! One shot under par is my name...
What golf score wins the game?
A birdie!

- Word Search -



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B W T H M P L F I U S V R P T M N B X K
P C T B H W H X E W U C H R S M V F Y R

- Birdie
- Bunker
- Rough
- Slice
- Caddie
- Driver
- Stance
- Eagle
- Mulligan
- Fairway
- Handicap
- Wedge
- Putt
- Stroke
- Green
- Comaraderie



The **Riddle Kid**
OF THE WEEK



What's a golfer's favourite letter?

Tee!

Jude Robinson (17 mo)

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



FIREWORKS CAN BE FUN FOR US — BUT FRIGHTENING FOR PETS

Loud noises and bright flashes may cause anxiety, panic, or pets running away. Help Keep your pet safe by bringing them indoors before fireworks start, create a calm, quiet space, ensure ID tags or microchips are up to date. A little preparation helps keep your pet safe and stress-free. Celebrate responsibly—for every member of the family.



PENNY

Our pet of the week is Penny. She is an 11-week-old Cavalier King Charles spaniel. Penny loves to chew her toys, likes to cuddle and play outside. She lives with her Shackleton family in St. Marys.



IN MEMORIAM

Waghorn

In Loving Memory of
Benjamin Douglas Waghorn - 1968-2025



You are missed in the smallest moments and the biggest ones, yet we hold your memory with so much love, carrying you in our thoughts, our stories, our everyday lives. You are still with us in everything we do, as we continue learning to live with the space you've left behind. We miss you deeply, always

Your daughters **Jocelyn & Karissa (Isaac)**
 Your sister **Cindy**
 Her Children **Ryan, Rene (Andrew) & Jordan**
 Her Grandchildren **Morgan & Macie**
 Your Mom **Marilyn**
 (Al & his children **Scott & Jen & Family**)

THANK YOU

Coulthard

The family of the late Ann Coulthard would like to thank everyone for their support and kindness following the recent loss of our Mom, Grandma and Granny. All the kind words, the thoughtful visits, the food, the flowers and donations in her memory brought us a lot of comfort. We appreciated everyone who made her funeral service special – Robert, Dan, Brian, Royce, Lee, Jay, Joan and Diana as well as Andrew Hodges Funeral Home and St. James Anglican Church.

We also want to thank everyone who helped in so many ways in recent months. The staff at St. Marys Memorial Hospital, Cedarcroft Place Retirement Residence and Jessica's House Hospice all provided compassionate and professional care for Mom. Kathleen from Better Ways for Seniors and Mom's dear friend Sheila helped Mom to enjoy living at home as long as she did.

We have been reminded of how many people loved Mom and how fortunate we are to be surrounded by such a caring community of family, friends and neighbours.

Thank you
Coralee, Dale, Alex, Darwin, Jenna and Hank

Looking Back



AMY CUBBERLEY
Independent Columnist

Sudden arena closure

25 years ago (2001)

The closure of St. Marys DCVI and the consolidation of three elementary schools into the vacated high school building is suggested in an independent consultant's report distributed to the Avon Maitland District School Board trustees. Prepared by a company called Urban Analysis Group, the report makes 20 different recommendations based on enrolment projections stretching to 2015.

The St. Marys firefighters served about 600 people at their annual fundraising breakfast at the fire hall on Sunday.

50 years ago (1976)

St. Marys was hit by a king-sized blockbuster Monday evening. At a combined meeting of Town Council and P.A.R.Q., Clerk-Treasurer Ken Storey gave the word that following an edict from the Ministry of Labour, the town arena would be closed as of Tuesday morning. Reason for the closing: the Ministry of Labour states the Arena does not meet the 1975 National Building Code requirements for snow load and wind load requirements.

In case some wondered at all about the yellow tulip bed at the Town Hall cenotaph this spring, we are told this is the symbol to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion.

75 years ago (1951)

Some unthinking youngsters roaming the riverbank by the Flats smashed a nest full of wild duck eggs this past weekend. This piece of sabotage could bring a fine under the fish and game laws.

When a baby buggy in which a very small child was nestled started to roll toward a three-foot drop over the brink of a curb in front of a neighbouring store one day last week, William Carr, agile old-timer of the Carr Hardware Store, got there in time to save the small citizen from a nasty fall. The mother of the baby had parked the carriage, thinking the brakes were set.

100 years ago (1926)

A particularly sad drowning accident occurred on James Street on Friday afternoon when Launzie, the little son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Lloyd, of Park Street, fell into a cistern while playing at his uncle's home.

Paul Bergmann, the paving contractor, expects to commence paving operations on the remaining four miles of the St. Marys to Stratford link of the Provincial Highway by the end of this week.

CELEBRATION

HAPPY RETIREMENT ROY MAYNARD!

Please join us to celebrate this great achievement

MAY 30TH AT 2PM
 ARMY & NAVY, ST. MARYS

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Saturday, May 16th 8am - 1pm
 Rain Date, Sat. May 23rd 8am-1pm

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Sudoku

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

Solutions on pg. 31

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One Community at a Time.**



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Hypothesis
2. Video Home System
3. John Cena
4. Isreal and Jordan
5. A Killer whale
6. Howard Carter
7. Six
8. 2016
9. Kyoto
10. Four

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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



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

St. Marys Public Library events - See Page 25

FRIDAY, MAY 15

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw - 6 p.m.
- Learn to bowl at Parks Lawn Bowling Club at Milt Dunnell Field - 6:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 16

- St. Marys Farmers Market at Milt Dunnell Field - 8 a.m. to Noon
- Garage sale at 84 Peel Street South - 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- St. Marys Cemetery decoration day - 9 a.m. to Noon
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 p.m.

MONDAY, MAY 18

- Victoria Day

TUESDAY, MAY 19

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee - 10 a.m. to Noon

- Community dinner at St. Marys United Church - 5 p.m., Sponsored by the Salvation Army

THURSDAY, MAY 21

- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun - 12-1:30 p.m.
- Nourish Market at St. Marys United Church - 2-4 p.m.
- Scott Woods benefit concert in support of Camp Bimini at St. Marys United Church - 7-9 p.m.

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