HOME-BASED CHILD CARE PAGE 5

SPORTS WALL OF FAME INDUCTION PAGE 18

St. Marys Independent

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HONOURING THE NAMES OF THE FALLEN (WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)
The Colour Guard takes its place around the cenotaph at the start of the Remembrance service on Nov. 8. See more photos on page 9.

Rare Rufous hummingbird draws birders to St. Marys for first-ever Perth County sighting

GALEN SIMMONS
Regional Editor

A tiny visitor from western North America has made a backyard on Queen Street West in St. Marys the centre of attention for bird-watchers from across the region after being identified as the first recorded Rufous hummingbird in Perth County.

Brent and Cathy Cubberley had no idea they were hosting such a rare visitor until Brent Cubberley mentioned to his son-in-law, avid birder Derek Ruthig, that two hummingbirds were still visiting his backyard feeder in early November, long after most hummingbirds would have migrated south for the winter.

"I feed the orioles, and then the hummingbirds have come in, and it got later in the year and later in the year, and I'm wondering about how long I should leave a feeder out," Brent Cubberley said.

After discussing the unusual visitors with Ruthig and fellow birder Dave Wallace, Brent Cubberley was encouraged to leave the feeder up and try to get photographs.

Ruthig managed to capture video show-

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

Stonetown Cheese calls Royal Agricultural Winter Fair wins 'A nice wrap-up to the year'

GALEN SIMMONS
Regional Editor

Stonetown Artisan Cheese has once again earned awards for a variety of their cheeses at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

Stonetown Cheese earned first place for its Wildwood cheese in the firm and hard, surface ripened, brushed and natural rind category. Stonetown also won second- and third-place awards for Grand Trunk and Wildwood Reserve, respectively, in the same category.

Wildwood also earned the Grand Champion, variety cheese, cow's milk honour. This is the second year in a row Wildwood won Grand Champion at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

The local producer's Farmstead Fontina also won first place for a second consecutive year in the semi-soft cheese, interior ripened category, with Homecoming earning second place in semi-soft cheese, surface ripened.

Ramon Eberle, cheesemaker, called the wins "a nice way to wrap up the year" and said the awards speak to the quality of the cheeses and the hard work put in by everyone on the Stonetown Cheese team.

"We had a great year last year in 2025 and we seem to always do well at the Royal. We had the Grand Champion at the Royal and repeated that again this year," said Eberle.

The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, which runs until Nov. 15 at Toronto's Exhibition Place, also

CONTINUED TO PAGE 7

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COMMUNITY

Rare Rufous hummingbird draws birders to St. Marys



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

The first-ever recorded sighting in Perth County of a Rufous hummingbird, native to northwest North America, happened in a St. Marys backyard last week. Pictured, the hummingbird, an adult female, perches on a tree branch.



(BRETT FRIED PHOTO)

A Rufous hummingbird drinks nectar from a hummingbird feeder in the backyard of Brent and Cathy Cubberley's home in St. Marys.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

ing an unusual spot on one hummingbird's throat, suggesting it wasn't the Ruby-throated hummingbird commonly found in Ontario.

"We got a video that you could see this one unique spot on the throat of this hummingbird, which indicated that it wasn't a Ruby-throated hummingbird," Ruthig said. "It was something different."

Additional photographs confirmed the bird was something special, and members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists were contacted to help verify its identity. The bird was identified as an adult female Rufous hummingbird, a species normally found in western North America.

According to wildlife biologist Brett Fried, who is involved in bird conservation, research and the documentation of rare bird sightings in Ontario, Rufous hummingbirds typically breed west of the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia, southern Alaska and the northwestern United States before migrating as far as Mexico for the winter. Some travel more than 6,000 kilometres annually.

While Ontario's Ruby-throated hummingbirds generally have green upperparts and, in females, whitish underparts, female Rufous hummingbirds have rusty-orange colouring along their flanks and tail feathers, along with a small patch of iridescent orange-red feathers on their throats.

Fried said photographs of the bird's spread tail, including a distinctive notch in one of its feathers, provided strong evidence distinguishing it from the closely related Allen's hummingbird.

The sighting is particularly significant because Rufous hummingbirds are exceptionally rare in Ontario. The Ontario Bird Records Committee had accepted just 38 provincial records through its 2021 review, with only a handful of additional sightings reported since.

"This represents the first documented Rufous Hummingbird for Perth County, making it a particularly significant record for the local birding community," Fried said.

Interestingly, another Rufous hummingbird, a young male, has been observed at a private residence in Waterloo since September.

Fried said the birds' presence in southwestern Ontario could be the result of unusual migratory instincts, changing weather conditions or strong winds pushing them eastward, though there is no definitive explanation.

Despite arriving in Ontario as winter approaches, Fried said the species is surprisingly resilient, capable of surviving freezing temperatures and entering a state of reduced metabolic activity called torpor to conserve energy.

For the Cubberleys, the discovery has brought an unexpected influx of visitors to their Queen Street West home.

A designated viewing area was established in their backyard for Nov. 6-8, with roughly 130 birders, some from as far away as New Market, Hamilton and Vineland, visiting St. Marys to see the bird over the weekend. Among them was Steve, a Stratford resident originally from the West Coast who said he had seen the species before but never in this part of Ontario.

The rare sighting also presented an unexpected opportunity for the Town of St. Marys, which set up a tourism information booth and collected donations toward a bird-viewing platform being constructed along the Grand Trunk Trail, overlooking a field on Ruthig's property where rare birds, including the threatened bobolinks, have nested.

Amy Cubberley, the town's director of tourism and culture and Brent and Cathy Cubberley's daughter, said the town plans to place a greater emphasis on birding tourism in 2027.

For Brent Cubberley, who plans to keep his feeder available and take steps to help his unusual guest through colder weather, the experience has been a reminder that one never knows what might show up in their backyard.

"It's none of my doing," he said. "I just feed the birds."

"I just thought it was a hummingbird."

7 Day Forecast

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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
Nov-11th	Nov-12th	Nov-13th	Nov-14th	Nov-15th	Nov-16th	Nov-17th
Cloudy showers	Cloudy showers	Sun & cloud	Potential showers	Mainly cloudy	Mainly cloudy	Mainly sunny
11°C	6°C	5°C	5°C	6°C	7°C	8°C
Feels like 10	Feels like 2	Feels like 2	Feels like 1	Feels like 4	Feels like 6	Feels like 7

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Lyric Flowers reopens in new location

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

One never knows when life will throw them a curve ball and that is exactly what happened when Lanny Hoare, co-owner of Lyric Flowers, was in Toronto enjoying a nice weekend with his partner, Jay Harrison.

What he initially thought was extremely bad heartburn turned out to be a massive heart attack. The pair rushed to a Toronto Hospital and Hoare was in surgery almost immediately.

In times like this, a reset on priorities and readjustments need to be made. Hoare and Harrison had to make some decisions regarding their popular flower business and decided to relocate across the street to where Urbshott-Galloway was located before their move to 199 Elgin St. E.

Due to orders from his family doctor and his cardiologist, a change involving things like lifting and stairs had to be taken into consideration.

"Am I surprised I took a heart attack? Due to genetics, I would say no. Am I surprised that it happened this soon? Yes," Hoare said. "I had absolutely no symptoms leading up and I was playing tennis two days before."

The new space is a fresh start. It has been painted, and it has new flooring and new lighting. The space they had previously was a larger "store" vibe. The new location is smaller, quainter and cozier. There are no stairs to climb and after a tough stretch, Hoare and Harrison are embracing the new space.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Owners of Lyric Flowers, Lanny Hoare and Jay Harrison are happy to welcome locals into their new space at 116 Queen St. E. The couple is very happy with the bright new boutique. The space is smaller but the owners are committed to delivering just as much quality, service and passion for the flower business as they did before.

With a new rejuvenated business plan, the couple is in discussions with local organizations on joining up for events and functions like they have done previously.

The new space also works great for Harrison's workshops he is hosting for the upcoming Christmas season. The new store can fit 12 people comfortably around the island in the workspace. Lyric Flowers, which is celebrating its 15th anniversary on Nov. 25, is still doing weddings.

Hoare and Harrison have been working with a business consultant who suggested some amendments including a new POS system that will simplify things like tracking sales and inventory, and they will be installing a new suspended sign over the front of the business.

There is also a new website being launched in the new year. Greeting cards are still available for purchase, and the business has a new line of candles and soaps from the Palm Candle Company in Guelph. Both Hoare and Harrison met with a representative of the business and curated two signature scents. One is called Artistry, which is more of a citrus scent, and the other is called Strong and Stone, which is more of a tree, water and rock scent.

Harrison loves the new space.

"It's manageable, it's positive, the flow is great, it's just a whole new vibe. That is what we needed."

After so many positive steps in the right direction, both are excited to welcome the community into the new boutique as they move forward with a bright new future for their business.

Lyric Flowers is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.



EDITORIAL

Staying engaged after the votes have been tallied



GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The excitement from the Oct. 26 municipal elections has all but died down, and a new slate of council members will take their rightful seats around their respective council tables within the next week.

With a lot to learn for those who are new to their roles, the real work of governing, setting budgets and strategic direction, reading through countless agendas filled with detailed reports, and attending council, committee and board meetings is about to begin.

And while many of us have placed our trust in those we've elected to serve, those of us who will not be serving on council need to stay engaged in municipal politics to hold those we've elected accountable for the promises they made during election season.

Though most people don't have the time in their day to attend every council meeting, read every report or advocate on every issue that reaches council chambers, there are more manageable ways to stay involved and engaged as we transition from the excitement of an election to the often less-interesting minutiae of running a municipality from day to day.

For starters, consider volunteering to serve on a municipal committee, community board or with a local organization working toward a cause you believe in.

I recently joined the fundraising committee for the Community Commons project at 14 Church St. N. in St. Marys because I believe in what the project aims to accomplish and wanted to lend a hand in making it a reality.

Like many of you, I have a busy schedule, and I can't always make it to every meeting. However, with meetings generally held once a month, it's a manageable commitment that allows me to contribute what I can.

Another simple way to stay engaged is to pick up your local newspaper each week and read about the decisions being made at council.

As journalists, we spend countless hours attending meetings, reviewing reports and asking questions so residents can remain informed without having to do all that work themselves. Even spending 15 or 20 minutes each week catching up on municipal affairs can make a difference.

And when something catches your attention, don't be afraid to reach out to your local councillor. Whether it's a concern about road maintenance, recreation facilities, housing or municipal spending, a conversation can help you better understand what's being done and ensure your concerns are heard and considered.

Municipalities also provide opportunities for public input through surveys, open houses, budget consultations and public meetings. Taking a few minutes to complete a survey or submitting a letter to council can help shape decisions that directly affect your community.

When an issue is particularly important to you, consider speaking as a delegation before council. You don't need to be an expert to share your experiences or explain how a proposed decision might affect you, your family or your neighbours. Sure, speaking in public can be intimidating, but if you can remember that the folks you elected to serve on council really do want to hear what you have to say, it really isn't that daunting.

Most importantly, remember that civic engagement doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing commitment. You can follow one issue closely, support one community initiative or simply ask questions when something doesn't seem right.

Democracy doesn't begin and end at the ballot box. Electing our municipal representatives is just the first step. Holding them accountable, offering constructive input and helping build the communities we want to live in are responsibilities we share.

After all, the decisions made around the council table will continue to affect our daily lives long after the campaign signs come down.

Bravo

We have 4 Bravos this week

1) Bravo to St. Marys Minor Hockey Association for having the foresight to engage speaker Adam Bennett for an evening team talk titled "Preparing For Your Mental Game." To have this interesting and engaging talk made available to SMMHA players, coaches and parents was thinking outside of the box for a minor hockey association.

2) Bravo to Al Strathdee who had Tim Hortons coffee, donuts and muffins for the people working on election day at the Pyramid Centre.

3) Bravo to the community for building a town parents feel comfortable and safe letting kids be kids in our public recreation center.

4) Bravo to the house in Avonton that put on the amazing Halloween experience! Our daughters were so excited to go back trick or treating here again. You do a great job balancing spooky without terrifying them, thank you!

Boo

We have 1 Boo this week

1) Boo to the drivers who misuse accessible parking spaces in our municipality. These spaces assist people with disabilities. The yellow-striped area beside an accessible parking space gives someone using a mobility device room to exit a vehicle; it is not a parking spot.

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

Overheard AT THE COFFEE SHOP

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Much of the world was happy to see a blue tsunami.

If you want to buy me a gift. I'm a size 7 days in the Bahamas.

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

Quote of the Week

"Thank you for all of the support I have received from the public, staff and councillors during my 12 years as mayor. We live in a wonderful community with people who care deeply about our community. I was very fortunate to serve as mayor and I'm very optimistic about the future. Thank you and good luck to the new council!"

- Outgoing Mayor Al Strathdee as he leaves office after 12 years

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA

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St. Marys Independent

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Thoughts OF THE WEEK

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Heroes are ordinary people who make themselves extraordinary.

A hero is a person intent on making this a better place for everyone.

Courage starts with showing up and letting yourself be seen.

You can't swim for new horizons until you have courage to not see the shore.

Stratford opens the door for more home-based child care in St. Marys

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Residents of St. Marys interested in starting their own home-based child-care business have a new opportunity to explore becoming child-care providers through a program administered by the City of Stratford's Stratford Home Child Care Program, a licensed home child-care agency.

The initiative aims to help address child-care shortages by creating opportunities for interested and eligible residents to provide licensed child-care in their homes. By supporting more individuals in entering the child-care sector, the program hopes to increase available child-care spaces for families while creating meaningful self-employment opportunities.

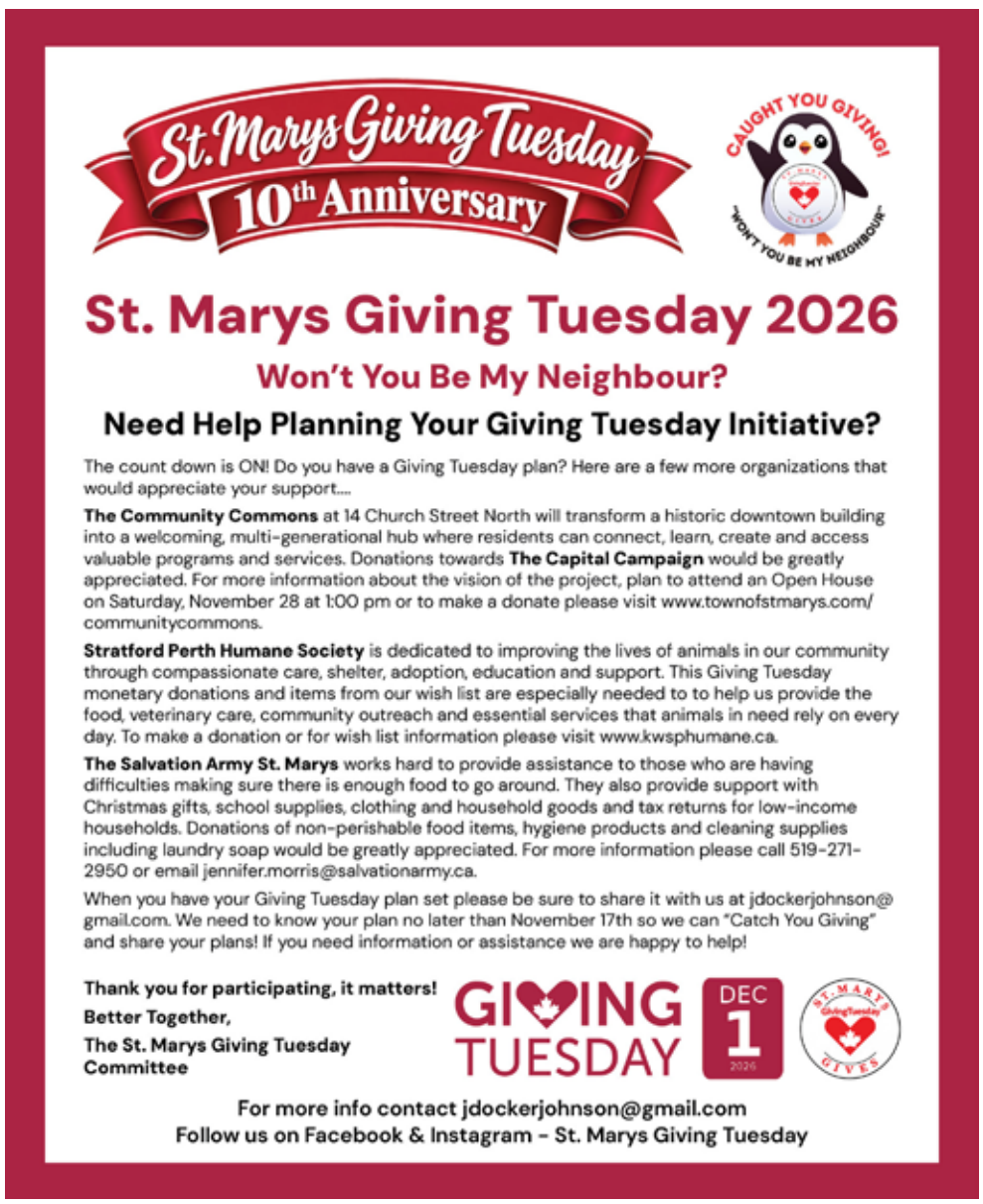
Access to reliable child care is an important part of a thriving community, helping parents and caregivers balance work and family responsibilities while supporting local workforce participation. Expanding the availability of licensed child care requires innovative approaches, and opportunities for home-based providers can play an important role in meeting local needs.

The Town of St. Marys recognizes the importance of addressing child-care shortages and applauds the City of Stratford for its efforts to create new pathways for residents interested in becoming child-care providers with the support of a licensed agency.

"Access to child care is an important need for families in our community, and we welcome initiatives that help create more options," said town CAO Brent Kittmer in a press release. "We are happy to support the City of Stratford in developing this opportunity and encourage residents who may be interested in operating a home-based child-care business to learn more.

"Programs like this have the potential to support St. Marys families while creating rewarding opportunities for residents to build a business of their own."

Residents interested in participating are encouraged to learn more about the program, including eligibility criteria, licensing requirements and the steps involved in establishing a home-based child-care business. For more information about the program and how to get started, visit stratford.ca, email homechildcare@stratford.ca, or call 519-271-3771 ext. 6258.



STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



St. Marys Craft Show

November 21 | 9 AM - 3PM | Pyramid Centre

The Friendship Centre's annual Craft Show is back at the PRC! Shop from over 60 talented vendors featuring nearly 100 tables of handcrafted treasures from home décor and jewelry to festive gifts and treats. It's the perfect place to start your holiday shopping while supporting local makers!

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Community Grant Application

We can help your community project grow! The Community Grant Program applications are live. This program provides funding for programs, projects, activities and events that enrich the community and advance Council's strategic goals. Applications close November 30th.

townofstmarys.com/grants



Celebrate the Holiday Season

Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade: Nov 20
Downtown St. Marys Merchant Open House: Nov 20-22
St. Marys Craft Show: Nov 21
Giving Tuesday: Dec 1
WinterLights Night Market: Dec 4-5
St. Marys Museum Holiday Open House: Dec 6

wwwdiscoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays



Shower Program

Pyramid Recreation Centre

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Senior of the Week



Our seniors of the week are Maurice Hutton and Joan (Donaldson) Hutton who are celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 12. Maurice and Joan were married in Ailsa Craig. Although they had known each other through mutual friends, their romance blossomed after attending the Crystal Ball in Chatham together. Both were raised on family farms, with Maurice growing up in Zorra Township, where the couple continues to reside today, and Joan growing up just outside Ailsa Craig. Over the past six decades, Maurice and Joan have built a wonderful life together, raising three children and welcoming six grandchildren. Maurice continues to farm, while Joan enjoys sewing and quilting in her spare time. They also share a love of travel, recently embarking on a cross-Canada road trip to the West Coast, visiting friends and family along the way. Their enduring commitment to one another and the strong family they have built are truly worth celebrating. Wishing Maurice and Joan a very happy 60th wedding anniversary!

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

Perth County's Mobile Integrated Health program completes more than 5,100 patient visits over past year

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Perth County Paramedic Services' Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) program continues to help vulnerable residents access health care while reducing pressure on emergency services, with more than 5,100 patient visits completed over the past year.

Deputy chief of mobile integrated health Debbie Hunter presented an update on the program to Perth County council Nov. 5, highlighting its accomplishments between Oct. 1, 2025, and Oct. 1, 2026, as well as priorities for the coming year.

"Since the program began, MIH has become an integral part of our local health system," Hunter said. "Our role continues to focus on connecting residents with the right care at the right time in the right place."

Over the reporting period, community paramedics completed 5,146 visits involving 1,217 individuals, along with 147 wellness checks involving 98 individuals that could otherwise have resulted in calls to 911. The program also recorded 327 emergency calls involving 99 clients, including 38 initiated by community paramedics who identified emergencies while visiting patients.

Other statistics highlight the range of services provided, including 2,267 referrals to community partners, 6,817 vital-sign assessments, 1,208 blood draws for homebound patients and 1,853 medication-management interactions.

Of those enrolled in the program, 56 per cent were 65 or older, while 41 per cent were between 25 and 64. Stratford residents accounted for 59 per cent of clients, followed by North Perth at 17 per cent, St. Marys at 11 per cent, West Perth at eight per cent, Perth East at four per cent and Perth South at one per cent.

Hunter explained the program takes a proactive approach to health care, identifying potential problems before they become emergencies and connecting residents with appropriate services.

"Our value isn't just measured by how many calls we prevent. It's also measured by the care we provide, the barriers we remove and the support we offer before a situation becomes a crisis," she said.

Looking ahead, Hunter said expanding palliative-care services will be a priority, with paramedics receiving additional training and the introduction of symptom-relief kits to better support patients and families receiving end-of-life care at home.

The program will also continue its partnership with Stratford Social Services through the Access Resource Connection (ARC) program, which combines health care with housing and outreach supports for vulnerable residents. People experiencing homelessness currently represent half of ARC's caseload.

However, the report notes provincial funding for 2027-2028 remains uncertain. Without increased funding to offset rising costs, the service may need to consider reductions.

Warden Dean Trentowsky praised Hunter and her team for their work.

"It's an invaluable service, and our communities in Perth County are very grateful to have you and the staff lead this on our behalf," Trentowsky said.

Council unanimously approved the report for presentation to the Municipal Shared Services Committee Dec. 17.

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. How many times has Donald Trump been impeached?
2. What sport's lingo uses the term "Bonspiel"?
3. In the game of Battleship, how many hits does it take to sink the submarine?
4. Which actor bought the first Hummer made for civilian use?
5. What is the Minion's primary language called?
6. Lego originated from what country?
7. What is the tallest type of horse?
8. Which ocean does Bangladesh have direct access to?
9. In the beer world, what does the abbreviation IBU stand for?
10. Who is the "Father of Country Music"?

This week's answers are found on pg. 35

Ultimate Foot Care
Big News
For St. Marys!
Something exciting is happening at Ultimate Foot Care!
We're thrilled to welcome a visiting Chiropodist Nav Sekhon, B.Sc (Hons), D.Ch to our clinic, bringing specialized foot care services right to our community!
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Stonetown Cheese calls Royal Agricultural Winter Fair wins 'A nice wrap-up to the year'

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

promotes the cheeses. For two weeks, the fair has a Champion Showcase where visitors can sample prize-winning cheeses. Producers can also sell their cheeses at the fair.

Stonetown Artisan Cheese is preparing for a busy Christmas season, which includes putting together popular gift baskets, boxes and 12 Days of Cheesemas Advent Calendars.

To learn more and to purchase Stonetown Cheese products online, visit stonetowncheese.com.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF STONETOWN CHEESE)

It's another award-winning year for Stonetown Artisan Cheese at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair! Stonetown's Grand Trunk, Wildwood, Farmstead Fontina, Homecoming and Wildwood Reserve Cheeses all earned awards at the fair, including the second consecutive Grand Champion title for Wildwood.

Health unit holding respiratory vaccine clinics

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) will hold influenza (flu), COVID-19 and RSV immunization clinics across Huron and Perth from Nov. 23 to Dec. 4.

These clinics are for residents who have not been able to get immunized at a pharmacy or through a health-care provider. Contact a pharmacy or health-care provider first. HPPH clinics offer an additional option to help residents get protected this winter.

"Getting immunized is one of the best ways to protect yourself, your family and our community from serious illness this respiratory season," said Dr. Miriam Klassen, medical officer of health for HPPH, in a press release. "Most people can get immunized through their local pharmacy or health-care provider. These HPPH clinics are for anyone who has not been able to do that, so no one in Huron and Perth misses the chance to be protected."

Annual flu and COVID-19 immunizations are recommended for everyone aged six months and older and can safely be received at the same time. RSV immunization is available to eligible residents. Staying up to date on recommended immunizations helps protect against serious illness, especially for young children, older adults, pregnant people and people with certain health conditions or weakened immune systems.

Clinic options: HPPH community clinics are for the general population. HPPH family-focused clinics are for families with young children and anyone who is nervous about getting immunized.

Appointments are required for all clinics. Visit www.hpph.ca/vaccines for vaccine and eligibility information, and to book an appointment.



New roof for the Tradition Mutual Centre for Wellness

BERNICE DE DECKER

St. Marys Healthcare Foundation

A roof may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about health care, but maintaining the building where care happens is an important part of keeping our community healthy.

It is an important facility in local health care. Home to family doctors, LifeLabs, the YMCA gym and a variety of health-care professionals and wellness services, the wellness centre connects residents with the care and resources they need, close to home.

After years of serving the community, the building is now in need of a roof replacement. This project is about more than maintaining the structure itself. It's about protecting an important community space, supporting the health-care professionals who work there and ensuring it can continue serving our community for years to come.

We are incredibly grateful to our community for the support that has helped make the Tradition Mutual Centre for Wellness what it is today. Thank you to everyone who has already contributed to the roof replacement and continues to support the future of this important building.

So, why does the roof need replacing, and what does this project mean for the future of local health care? Read more on our website: www.stmaryshealthcare.foundation.



Doug Biesinger, HPHA director of facilities management and environmental services, a contractor from Atlas-Apex Roofing and Bernice De Decker, communications and fundraising coordinator with the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation, stand on the roof at the wellness centre, which is in need of a new roof.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

The Traditional Mutual Centre for Wellness, which was completed in 2003, is in need of a new roof.

ART EXHIBITION

Kim Atlin Art Exhibition

at River Valley Golf Course
519.225.2329



Raised in rural Ontario, Kim moved to Toronto to attend the Ontario College of Art and Design and stayed. Recently re-locating from Toronto to Owen Sound, Kim's fascination with the colours and textures of the world has kept her and her brush wandering. Kim is a frequent exhibitor in group shows in Toronto, Ontario; Saint John, New Brunswick; New York City, New York; Palm Desert, California; as well as numerous other locations.

ART SHOWS

Saturday, November 14 - 10am to 5pm
Sunday, November 15 - 10am to 3pm

4725 Line 1 St. Marys. ON
Just off Highway 7. 10 minutes from St. Marys and 30 minutes from London

For more information visit www.kimatlin.com or follow Kim on Instagram @ kimatlin.
For more questions kim@kimatlin.com 416-706-5447

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Sunday, November 15 - 10am to 3pm

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- Cadmium, Pyrrole, or Napthol Red Light
- Titanium White and Black
- Cadmium, Bismuth, or Arylide (Hansa) Yellow Lite or Deep

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Royal Canadian Legion Branch 236 marches from Legion to Cenotaph



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Jeff Bell, representing Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae, Mayor Al Strathdee and Perth South Mayor Sue Orr listen on as the poem, "In Flanders Fields," was read to the crowd by Keith Mitchell, who was on hand to represent Perth-Wellington MP John Nater at Sunday's Remembrance service.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

The Stratford Police Pipes and Drums band were on hand with their musical talents to lead the Legion parade from the Legion to the cenotaph. Following behind are the Colour Guard, veterans and special dignitaries.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Stratford Police Pipes and Drums band led the parade to and from the Legion and Cenotaph on Sunday followed by the colour guard, veterans, local dignitaries and some wreath layers to honour all of those who have served for our freedom.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Mayor Al Strathdee lays the Town of St. Marys wreath at the cenotaph on Sunday.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

On Sunday, Nov. 8, the St. Marys Legion Branch 236 held its annual Remembrance Day parade.

Veterans, local dignitaries and wreath layers, led by the Stratford Police Pipes and Drums band, marched from the Legion at the corner of Church and Station streets to the Cenotaph on Queen Street. The ceremony is a tribute to all of those who have served.

The poem, "In Flanders Fields," was read by Perth-Wellington MP John Nater's representative, Keith Mitchell. There were approximately 40 wreaths laid at the cenotaph, placed there by representatives from government, service clubs, businesses and individuals showing respect and mourning the fallen.

Mayor Al Strathdee shared the story of a young soldier, Lloyd McKnight, who was from St. Marys and enlisted to go to war. He spent time in England and then was sent to Italy. At the age of 29, he was wounded in battle and died later that same evening.

His name will remain engraved on the St. Marys Cenotaph. The crowd prayed, sang "O' Canada" and "God Save the King," and the Colour Guard, along with the band, led the group back to the Legion.

For more stories of local soldiers, visit the Legion's website at https://rcl236st-marys.ca/cenotaph where Niki Sumpter has been putting together stories on all of the veterans commemorated on local veteran's banners and on the cenotaph.



Town highlights transportation options available to St. Marys residents

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Following council's recent decision to withdraw from the PC Connect program, the Town of St. Marys recognizes residents may have questions and concerns about how they will travel to appointments, work, shopping and other out-of-town destinations.

While the end of PC Connect service will mean one less transportation option for residents, several local and intercity services continue to connect St. Marys with destinations both within and outside the community.

Rideshare and taxi services

Rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft are increasingly available in St. Marys, offering residents a flexible option for both local and out-of-town trips.

Recent sample fares showed trips within St. Marys available for approximately $5 to $8, while a trip from downtown St. Marys to the Stratford General Hospital was approximately $19 to $22. Rideshare services offer a flexible, on-demand transportation option, with fares varying based on time and demand. For those traveling with friends or family, sharing a ride can also help make trips more affordable.

Stonetown Taxi and Delivery Services also provides transportation daily from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. within and outside St. Marys, with a flat rate of $12 for trips within town and $45 for trips between St. Marys and Stratford.

FlixBus

FlixBus provides another intercity transportation option and is expanding its St. Marys service beginning Dec. 7. Service in St. Marys is provided on demand, meaning the bus will only stop in the community when a passenger has booked a trip. Passengers should book their trip at least two hours before the scheduled departure time.

Currently, a morning bus departs St. Marys at 7:55 a.m. and arrives at Stratford's Cooper Terminal at 8:15 a.m. Return trips depart Stratford at 10:55 a.m. and 4:55 p.m., arriving in St. Marys at 11:15 a.m. and 5:15 p.m.

Beginning Dec. 7, a second daily departure will be added in each direction, with service operating seven days a week. The expanded schedule will include:

• Eastbound, toward Stratford, Kitchener, Guelph, Toronto Pearson International Airport and Toronto: departures at 7:55 a.m. and 2:55 p.m.

• Westbound, toward London: departures at 11:20 a.m. and 5:15 p.m.

Eastbound and westbound buses use separate boarding locations on Water Street. Fares between St. Marys and Stratford start at approximately $6. For more information about Flixbus's accessibility standards, visit www.flixbus.com/service/passengers-with-reduced-mobility.

St. Marys and Area Mobility Service

The St. Marys and Area Mobility Service provides accessible transportation for medical appointments, adult day programs, social excursions and local errands.

The service is available to seniors, individuals recovering from illness or injury and people with varying abilities. Door-to-door transportation is available seven days a week, with booking hours Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

VIA Rail

VIA Rail provides daily passenger rail service to and from St. Marys, connecting the community with destinations along the Toronto-Sarnia corridor, including Stratford, Kitchener, Toronto and London.

Trains stop at the St. Marys Train Station, 5 James St. N., seven days a week. Passengers are encouraged to purchase tickets in advance online or by phone. A self-service computer is also available at the station for ticket purchases, with town staff available during designated service desk hours to assist passengers.

Schedules, fares and booking information are available through VIA Rail.

"We recognize that the end of PC Connect service will have an impact on residents who have come to rely on it, particularly for travel to work, appointments and other essential destinations," said CAO Brent Kittmer in a press release. "At the same time, we're encouraged to see other transportation providers continuing to serve St. Marys and, in some cases, expanding their services. We want residents to be aware of the options available to them and to be able to choose the service that best meets their needs."

Residents are encouraged to check directly with transportation providers before travelling for the most up-to-date information on schedules, fares, availability and accessibility.

For more information on transportation options, visit townofstmarys.com/transportation.

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Town of St. Marys invites community sponsors to support free skates and swims

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys is inviting local businesses, organizations, service clubs and community groups to help make recreation more accessible by sponsoring free swims and skates at the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

Through the town's sponsorship program, community partners can provide residents and visitors with free admission to public skating and swimming opportunities throughout the year.

"These sponsorships help remove financial barriers to recreation while allowing sponsors to give back to the community in a meaningful and visible way," said town director of community services Stephanie Ische in a press release. "We're grateful to the organizations and businesses that invest in our community by helping make these programs accessible to everyone."

Sponsors receive recognition for their support and have the opportunity to align their organization with positive community experiences enjoyed by residents of all ages. Organizations interested in sponsoring a free swim or skate can submit a request online through the town's website at townofstmarys.com/sponsorships.

The Town of St. Marys encourages businesses and community organizations interested in supporting active, healthy lifestyles to consider becoming a sponsor.

For more information, contact the Town of St. Marys community services coordinator at prccsr@town.stmarys.on.ca or 519-284-2340 ext. 628.

Zenfire supported Empty Bowls with handmade bowl sales and donations

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Ahead of the Empty Bowls fundraiser on Nov. 6, which supports the Stratford House of Blessing Food Bank, Zenfire Pottery and Mercantile sold handmade bowls in a variety of designs.

The bowls were sold for $25 each with proceeds supporting House of Blessing. Any leftover bowls were donated to the organization to use at the Empty Bowls event.

"Part of being a potter is to be able to donate bowls to Empty Bowls," said Angela Patterson, owner of Zenfire Pottery and Mercantile. "I enjoy that it's staying in our community. Stratford is close to us and to help anybody eat healthier is a benefit."

Up to 10 potters throw the bowls used as part of Empty Bowls during the Stonetown Heritage Festival in the summer and festival attendees can watch the process.

"The best part of it for us is just the teamwork that goes with it," said Patterson.

Empty Bowls is a North American-wide event that raises money for local food banks. Stratford's event at the Rotary Complex on Nov. 6 had a variety of food by local restaurants and more than 800 unique hand-crafted bowls.

"It's such a fun community event. To be able to select a handmade bowl whether it's from our studio or somewhere else, is very special – and hanging out with your friends and supporting a good cause," Patterson said. "I know they do a lot of work organizing it and it helps people in Stratford."



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Angela Patterson, owner of Zenfire Pottery and Mercantile, holds bowls created for the Stratford House of Blessing's Empty Bowls fundraiser on Nov. 6.

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Local woodworker's creations help support St. Marys Imagination Library

BRENDA CANE BLACKWELL

Contributed Article

When Dennis DesRosiers was a boy of just eight, he travelled from Windsor to LaSalle to stay overnight with his aunt and uncle. His aunt made her "world-famous jam squares," while DesRosiers spent the next day in Uncle George's woodworking shop in the barn.

Together, they created a crèche for his mother's nativity scene back home.

This was a red-letter day for DesRosiers. It instilled in him a love of woodworking, a hobby that would outlast his professional career. Today, his creations have become a source of community inspiration for the St. Marys Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

It's a heartwarming chain of unlikely events.

Using end-grain wood, DesRosiers creates one-of-a-kind cutting and charcuterie boards, lazy Susans, ornate chessboards and fine furniture, which he gifts to friends.

His friends, in turn, often express their appreciation with a contribution to the St. Marys Imagination Library. DesRosiers never asks for money, but if friends insist, he encourages them to help local children receive Dolly's books.

The book-gifting program currently supports 329 St. Marys children, each receiving a free book in the mail every month from infancy until their fifth birthday. That's approximately 60 books per registered child.

Since its inception in 2021, 16,329 books have been delivered to St. Marys children through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Chantal Lynch of Hyggeligt Fabrics in downtown St. Marys brought the program to town. She and DesRosiers are local partners in administering the program and securing community funding through an endowment held by the Stratford Perth Community Foundation.

Already, 320 children have completed the program. In a touching tribute to Parton's legacy, each receives a personal graduation letter from Dolly.

The St. Marys program is part of a national effort.

Every month across Canada, children open the mail to find something addressed just to them – their very own books. Their eyes light up. Families snuggle together to read. Bedtime rituals begin. A love of stories takes root.

Now imagine that moment happening across an entire community, month after month, year after year. This is the magic of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

What happens to DesRosiers' wooden creations?

In baseball, one might call it a double play or, in our case, a home run.

This holiday season, we will be gifting a beautiful end-grain chessboard made by DesRosiers to our two adopted Turkish grandsons, ages 12 and 14. Both are chess enthusiasts who emigrated to Canada as small children.

When they receive the chessboard, they will hear DesRosiers' story and learn about the wider impact of the Imagination Library.

In turn, though DesRosiers never asked, we look forward to making a donation to the program.

Recent international research involving more than 86,000 families across five countries over 12 months found that, after receiving just 10 books, children were four times more likely to demonstrate stronger emerging literacy skills than those who had not received books.

Canadian children participating in the program were also 13 times more likely to be read to at least four days a week.

The research reinforces what communities have long known; access to books encourages families to read together, strengthens early literacy skills and builds meaningful connections.

For those with a beautiful new grandbaby, remember that parents hold the key to raising strong readers. You are building language skills while that small child's brain is wide open to learning.

This holiday season, consider making a donation to the St. Marys Imagination Library.

Help build on Dolly Parton's wonderful legacy of literacy.

To register a child email stmarysimaginationlibrary@gmail.com or call 519-284-1508.

To make a donation:

Make cheques payable to the St. Marys Imagination Library Fund and mail them to 144 Queen St. E., Box 2386, St. Marys, ON N4X 1A2.

To become a program partner:

Contact Rachel at the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation at 519-271-1503.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

St. Marys woodworker Dennis DesRosiers displays one of his handcrafted end-grain chessboards. DesRosiers encourages friends who receive his woodworking creations to make donations to the St. Marys Dolly Parton Imagination Library, helping provide free books to local children from infancy until their fifth birthday.

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Stonetown Arts celebrating 15 years of showcasing local creativity with annual Art Show & Sale

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

For 15 years, the Stonetown Arts Annual Art Show & Sale has given local artists an opportunity to showcase their creativity while giving residents and visitors a chance to discover just how much artistic talent exists in St. Marys and the surrounding area.

That tradition continues over the final two weekends of November when 25 local artists, including four newcomers, will display and sell their work at Riverwalk Commons, 84 Water St. S.

"We are really excited that this year is our 15th anniversary," said Cathy Atwell, chair of the show and sale committee. "This is our one big signature event of the year. And people, over the years, as it's become better and better known, look forward to it."

This year's show will feature a diverse collection of original artwork, including acrylic and oil paintings, encaustic art, glass, wood, textiles, jewellery and mixed media. Every piece is unique and has not appeared in a previous Stonetown Arts show.

Among the returning attractions is the popular Members' Challenge, which invites participating artists to create original works on five-by-seven-inch birch panels using a common theme.

This year's theme, "On the Farm," celebrates the area's agricultural roots, with each piece available for $50. To commemorate the anniversary, every Members' Challenge creation will also bear a special stamp on the back.

Behind the scenes, preparing the annual exhibition takes considerable work from a dedicated committee of volunteers and participating artists.

Atwell said artist Annette Goodale coordinates the exhibition's layout, while a team of experienced artists carefully arranges the pieces to create a cohesive display.

"When the art comes in on art-intake day, that's my favourite day of the year," Atwell said, describing the excitement of seeing everyone's creations for the first time.

Kathy Blake, co-chair of Stonetown Arts and a show committee member, said the exhibition also fosters friendships and mentorship among participating artists.

"There's no competition," Blake said, explaining that more experienced artists willingly share their knowledge and techniques with those just starting out.

The exhibition's opening reception, Nov. 20 from 6-9 p.m., will feature refreshments and special anniversary cupcakes. It coincides with the St. Marys Santa Claus Parade, so visitors should anticipate possible road closures and limited parking.

The show continues Nov. 21 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Nov. 22 from noon to 5 p.m., Nov. 27 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Nov. 28 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Admission is free, and the venue is accessible by a rear ramp. Artwork can be purchased using cash, cheque or e-transfer.

While sales are appreciated, Atwell said the greatest reward comes from seeing people discover and appreciate the community's artistic talent.

"It's a way of bringing something to the community; being able to bring this beauty to the community just for their pleasure," she said.

As always, Atwell extends her thanks to the show's organizing committee: Julia Armstrong, Rob Anderson, Blake, Sandy Craig, Bonnie Innes, Donal O'Connor and Paula Wilcox.





Artwork created by Stonetown Arts members on display as part of last year's Stonetown Arts annual Show & Sale. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)





Alzheimer Society seeking volunteers to help keep minds and bodies moving in St. Marys

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Do you have a smile, a sense of humour and two hours to spare on a Thursday afternoon?

If so, the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth is in need of volunteers to help bring a little laughter, physical activity and social connection into the lives of people living with dementia and their caregivers in St. Marys.

The society is seeking volunteers to help facilitate its Minds in Motion program, held Thursdays from 1-3 p.m. at the Friendship Centre in the Pyramid Recreation Centre. The program runs in eight-week sessions and combines one hour of gentle, easy-to-follow physical exercise with another hour of social interaction and activities designed to stimulate the mind.

"Minds in Motion is based around meeting new people, sharing laughs and creating that connection," said Paulina Balch, volunteer coordinator with the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth. "It's for people who are living with early-stage dementia and their caregivers."

Led by social recreation program coordinator Pam Balfour, the program provides participants with an opportunity to remain physically and mentally active while building relationships with others who may be facing similar challenges.

For caregivers, Balch said the program also offers a welcome break from the everyday pressures of caring for a loved one living with dementia.

"It gives a safe space for caregivers to interact with other caregivers and know that they're not alone," she said. "This is a place where you can kind of forget about that and you can just have fun and let go of all the pressures and everything that you have to do back home."

Volunteers would assist with the physical activities, encourage conversation among participants and help facilitate the social portion of the program.

No previous experience or special qualifications are required, and Balch said volunteers would receive some initial training before jumping in.

The opportunity could be particularly appealing to retirees looking to become more involved in their community or students interested in pursuing careers in health care.

Beyond helping participants, Balch said volunteering offers opportunities to make new friends, learn from others' experiences and develop meaningful connections within the community.

"Two hours a week to make a difference in somebody's life who's got so much going on," she said. "I feel like volunteering does a lot for the volunteer, not just the people who are receiving it."

While the society is particularly interested in recruiting volunteers for Minds in Motion, Balch said other volunteer opportunities are also available for those interested in lending a hand.

Anyone interested in volunteering with Minds in Motion or learning more about other opportunities with the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth can contact Balch at paulinab@alzhp.ca or 519-271-1910, ext. 231.

Fifth annual To St. Marys With Love set for Dec. 6

REV. GWEN AMENT

Contributed Article

Dec. 6 is not far off, but excitement is building as we prepare for this year's "To St. Marys With Love" free community dinner event at the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

Inspired by the "To Stratford With Love" event which has been running almost 40 years, this event is offered to bring people together – people new to St. Marys, those who are looking to connect but who are on their own, people needing a reason to celebrate in challenging times, people who have lived here all their lives and people of varying abilities.

One attendee writes: "This was one of the first events I attended … when I moved to St. Marys almost two years ago now. It was the most wonderful experience, truly welcoming and so generous. What an excellent community initiative and one more example of why I feel so blessed to live in St. Marys."

Thank you, Sharon. That is the reason the event was started. The hot roast-beef supper with mashed potatoes and carrots followed by dessert is all prepared and served by volunteers. It's a great way to connect with all of our local service groups as they all provide the people power needed to dress the hall, serve, entertain and clean up.

Tickets are free but required and are still available at the library and The Sunset Diner. Entry through Door D begins at 4:30 p.m. with dinner served at 5:30 p.m. We look forward to meeting you there.





VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.GRANTHAVEN.COM

Browns Women's Institute selling frozen apple crisps





(PHOTOS COURTESY OF BROWNS WOMEN'S INSTITUTE)

Members of Browns Women's Institute worked hard Nov. 5 to assemble, package and freeze 200 apple crisps at Browns Schoolhouse, which are now available to purchase.

NANCY WEST

Browns Women's Institute

Browns Women's Institute (WI) members and a couple of our friends were working hard last Thursday, Nov. 5, assembling and packaging 200 apple crisps at Browns Schoolhouse.

They are now frozen and available for you to stock up in your freezer.

This is our second Apple Crisp event, which we initiated a year ago. They were a great hit in our community, and we have them for sale again at the same price as last year, $15 each.

Many thanks to all our members for their efforts last Thursday, and to Trembletts Independent Grocery store in St. Marys for their generous donation of some of the ingredients. We appreciate it very much!

Part of the proceeds from the project will be donated to local schools for their student snack programs and part will be used in the maintenance of Browns School.

We have half of our inventory pre-sold, so they are going quickly. Please contact Nancy West at 519-670-4008 to order yours and arrange pick-up or delivery.

Veteran gravestones honoured ahead of Remembrance Day





(WENDY LAMOND PHOTOS)

On Saturday, Nov. 7, over 500 Canadian flags were placed at veterans' tombstones by family and friends, honouring their loved ones ahead of Remembrance Day. Pictured above, Sylvia Boyd places some flags at a family tombstone. Above right, Ruth Fletcher places some flags at her family stone. Between the families of McNaughton, Coddington, Swan, Ball, Fletcher, Boyd, Cubberly and Ingram, there are over 20 veterans buried in the St. Marys Cemetery.



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St. Marys Independent SPORTS

Female legends Shackleton, Moir celebrated at third annual St. Marys Sports Wall of Fame induction ceremony



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Amie Shackleton and Loiey Moir, who were inducted onto the St. Marys Sports Wall of Fame Nov. 2.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Kristin DeBrabendere (right) presents the Sports Wall of Fame plaque to her friend, Amie Shackleton (left), who was part of the 2026 class inducted Nov. 2 in a ceremony at the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

SPENCER SEYMOUR
Independent Sports Reporter

Two trailblazing women were celebrated Nov. 7 during the St. Marys Sports Wall of Fame induction ceremony at the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

Loiey Moir and Amie Shackleton were present for the ceremony as their plaques were unveiled, while the third inductee, Mike Teahen, was unable to attend. Teahen will be celebrated during next year's ceremony.

Shackleton, a prolific curler, has competed at the highest levels of the sport, including Trophy Provincials, Silver Tankards, Ontario Mixed Curling Championships, Intermediate Women's Provincials, and the Scotties Tournament of Hearts, and she has racked up numerous accolades and championships.

Kristin DeBrabendere nominated Shackleton and helped introduce her during the ceremony, noting Shackleton was as fair and honest as she was skilled.

"Curling and life share a common feature; there is no referee," said DeBrabendere. "There is no one hovering over your game ready to call out a foul or make sure everyone is following the proper rules and etiquette. Instead, the game depends on the integrity of the players. When you make a mistake, you own it. Amie has always set a high bar for herself and her teammates to take accountability. If she makes a mistake, she will be the first to own it and expects everyone else to do the same."

DeBrabendere added Shackleton also made sure she celebrated the positive moments for herself and her fellow curlers.

"Owning your mistakes is important, but so is celebrating your successes. When you see someone doing something good, let them know. Amie is always the first to give credit where credit is due. When someone makes a good shot, she's going to tell you, even if you are her opponent and even if that great shot you just made really screwed up her end. Anyone who has played with her knows there is no higher praise than when you hear, 'Pistol,' or, 'That's a peach.' "

Shackleton then spoke during the ceremony, noting the sport she loved most has given her far more than just trophies and banners.

"Today, I'd rather focus less on the championships and the accomplishments, and I want to share what curling has given me over the past 40 years. The opportunities, the experiences, the life lessons, and most importantly, the people, because when I look back, those are the things that mean the most to me," Shackleton began.

"Curling wasn't part of my family growing up. In fact, I'm not even sure I knew what curling was before I signed up for it as a school elective. Kelly Switzer asked me to try curling with her because her dad was a curler, so I signed up. After that school elective, it turned into a 40-year love of the game."

Shackleton recounted how the local curling association played a big role in her falling in love with curling.

"One of the things that made the St. Marys Curling Club so special was how welcoming it was," said Shackleton. "At 14, I joined the women's league, curling against my school friends' mothers and grandmothers, and building friendships with people decades older than me. I remember admiring curlers like Barb Seaton and hoping I could curl like them someday, and years later, I had the privilege of becoming Barb's teammate."

Loiey Moir was instrumental in the expansion and development of ladies' fastball in town and competed as a member of the St. Marys Pullets, who won the Ontario provincial championship in 1962 and 1963, before adding a Canadian National Championship in 1971 and representing Canada at the World Ladies Fastball Tournament in 1972.

Brian Dundas, along with Terry McEwan and John Urquhart, described Moir as having a mind for the game as great as her on-field abilities.

"We were fortunate enough to have Loiey join us with the Creamery Junior ball team in 1988 when we went to the Canadiens. We needed a certified coach, and unfortunately nobody on our coaching staff had the necessary certificates," Dundas said.

"What we got was so much more than a certified coach. Her catching ability and knowledge of the game was second to none. Once the opposing team had gone through the batting order, Loiey could tell us how many pitches each batter faced, whether they had hit the ball hard and exactly where it had gone. Her understanding of the game was incredible, and it's easy to see why she had reached the levels she did in her playing career."

Moir spoke about her enshrinement on the wall of fame, crediting the people closest to her with helping her reach the levels she did.

"As I look back over my fastball-playing years, I realize one does not get an opportunity to play a sport they love at such a competitive level without the support of many people along the way. The coaches who gave hours of their time for the benefit of each and every player. My husband, who cared for our three children, Peter, Mike and Jenny, so I could travel to my many games, and my mother, who looked after Jenny as a wee baby so I was able to go to Italy.

"I hope you knew how much I appreciated it," Moir continued. "Also, to the many women who were my fastball teammates, I remember all your names and cherish the ones who have become lifelong friends."

After Moir's humble acceptance speech, she was surprised by her daughter, Jenny May, and grandson Will May joining her at the front of the room to speak about Moir's induction.

"It's a pretty special day when you get to stand up and celebrate your mother," said Jenny May. "But it's even more special when you get to celebrate her for something that has been such an integral part of who she is in her life. As we know, mom, your love of fastball and of sport in general didn't end in high school. It has been a lifelong passion, one that has taken you places you never imagined, brought joy and inspiration to your community and your family, and created a legacy that we are here to celebrate today."

Jenny May was emphatic about how proud she was of her mother's influence on how women's fastball was perceived.

"Mom, you were part of a generation of women who helped break new ground in a sport that wasn't necessarily making room for women. You didn't wait for opportunities to come along. You helped create them, and it all started right here

CONTINUED TO PAGE 19

Female legends Shackleton, Moir celebrated at third annual St. Marys Sports Wall of Fame induction ceremony

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

in St. Marys. Being a part of the women's fastball contingent that travelled to Italy to be assessed as a potential Olympic sport; that notion is just incredible to me. Just think about that for a moment. You're part of an effort to demonstrate that women's fastball belonged on an international stage, and that women deserve the opportunity to compete at the highest level of sport."

Jenny May further detailed what her mom's place on the Sports Wall of Fame means to those closest to her.

"While this recognition is about your contributions to women's fastball, it is about something much bigger. It's about a woman who helped open doors for other women. A woman who challenged expectations, earned respect and helped move a sport forward. A woman who demonstrated that you didn't need to wait for permission to participate, compete, coach, or lead to make a difference. And it's about a mother and a grandmother whose influence has reached far beyond the ball field and into the lives of her family and community.

"Mom, at 86 years of age, you have quite a legacy, and today you get to see that legacy recognized in a very special and deserving way," added Jenny May. "On behalf of your three children, your grandchildren and everyone that's here, congratulations. We are terribly proud of you."



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Will May (left) speaks at the podium, following Jenny May (middle), who both helped honour their grandmother and mother, Loiey Moir, who was part of the 2026 St. Marys Sports Wall of Fame class inducted Nov. 2.

Will May also had a chance to talk about his grandmother, noting how impactful she was when he was playing baseball as a kid.

"Grandma went above and beyond at every step and in every way to make this connection extra special," Will May said. "She was not just my grandma; she was my practice partner and travel companion. I remember many days getting home from school, putting my bag down inside and heading out into the street to throw the ball around.

"I think for a young man, being able to throw the ball with your grandma is definitely an experience that I value very deeply and is not shared by many. Even though I probably threw the ball too hard at her sometimes and she was certainly worried about the cars parked in the street, I hope she took the same enjoyment that I did from those experiences."

Both Moir and Shackleton emphasized how meaningful it was for them to be part of a class celebrating two female sports icons in St. Marys history.

"I was extremely excited to be a female representing the sport of curling in St. Marys," said Shackleton. "I felt a pure sense of joy for our town and for the sport, especially women in sport. I think it's long overdue, and I think it's incredible that Loiey and I could be inducted at the same time. I'm honoured to be inducted with her at the same time."

"It's very important," Loiey added. "It's very important for young women to realize that things have changed. It's better than it was when I was playing. It's important for them to know the world is out there and they can accomplish and do what they want and love, and it'll work for them."

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Thomson, Linton capture bronze medals at World Karate Championship

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Eric Thomson and Miles Linton of Thomson Martial Arts in St. Marys combined for three bronze medals at the World Karate Championship, held Oct. 24-30 in Chiclana, Cádiz, Spain.

For both Thomson and Linton, it was their first world-championship medals, and Thomson was very happy to finally add some hardware from the global stage.

"It's been a long time coming," Thomson told the Independent. "I've participated in five world championships at this point without meddling, so there's been a lot of hard work between the first time and actually getting a medal. It's rewarding to have that effort actually pay off."

Thomson earned the bronze in the 35+ men's point fighting (85 kilograms and over) event, while Linton captured a bronze in the 12-13 point fighting (60 kilograms and under) and the 12-13 tag team point fighting competitions.

Thomson said he enjoyed watching Linton find success.

"It feels good as an instructor to see students go and have success," Thomson said. "Miles put in a ton of work over the last year, and it paid off for him. I think he might have even had higher expectations than where he ended up, but it was a very good experience for him."

According to Thomson, Linton, competing at the worlds for the first time, did a great job harnessing the natural nervousness that comes with a global stage debut, which Thomson said was a big factor in his two bronze medals.

"It's his composure under pressure. You could tell he was very anxious going into it. The first day, he had a loss, and then he settled into it. When he did the team events, he was much more composed and in a better spot. He got some of that anxiety out and he did well under the pressure because it's hard when you work for a long time and the fights are two minutes long. There's not a lot of time to get yourself together between starting the match and ending the match, so you have to be composed right from the start."

Thomson was proud of the result, but he's aiming for more next time he's at worlds.

"It was a sense of accomplishment, but it does still feel like there's more that can be done," Thomson said. "Hopefully, next time, we end up with a gold when we go, but again, I lost the fight that I lost to the eventual winner, and it was very close. I feel like I could have had it, but I am still proud of the accomplishment."

Thomson explained what will help him and Linton find even more success at the worlds in the future.

"If you truly want to be one of the best, you've got to really work at it. Karate is a hobby that anybody can do, but not everybody's made out in the sport to make it to that level, but if you want to, you've got to really work at it," Thomson said.

"Some of the most impressive athletes I watched were in the 54-and-up division this year for the first time, and I watched a couple of the guys that were in that division who did their first world championship in 1996 or 1997, and they're still competing. The dedication they have to keep their bodies in the shape they are, well into their 50s, is absolutely impressive. And same with some of the young athletes; how skilled they are at such a young age is a major dedication to the sport."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Eric Thomson and Miles Linton, who represented Thomson Martial Arts at the World Karate Championship Oct. 24-30 in Chiclana, Cádiz, Spain and combined for three bronze medals.





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Isabella Mills commits to Western University

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

After years of dedication, hard work and perseverance, St. Marys native Isabella Mills will be joining Western University full-time next year after committing to the London post-secondary school on Nov. 2.

The Grade 12 student at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford has been involved in track and field since she was 12 years old and has trained with Western's youth track and field program since 2019. What began as a passion for the sport has grown into a long-term commitment, with Western becoming both an important part of her athletic development and her future aspirations.

Mills called finalizing her plans to attend Western as a member of their track and field program "a huge relief."

"Western has always been a huge part of my life, running with the club over the last several years, so finally knowing that for sure I'm going to be going there next year is obviously a huge thing for me," Mills said. "It's always been my number one choice. It's been a huge goal for me for many years now, so finally being able to fulfill that goal is a huge accomplishment for me."

Mills added her familiarity with the program and the relationships she has built over the years made Western her number one post-secondary destination.

"Honestly, I feel like I've known I wanted to go there for so long that it's always been a part of me," Mills said. "I've been in the club for almost seven years now, so I've always just been a part of that community, and the team at Western is just amazing. They're just such a fun team to be around. They're always looking out for each other and they're always with each other, and their team truly is a huge family."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Western University's track and field coach Caroline Ehrhardt, Kene Mills, Isabella Mills, Christina Boscarato and Western's combined events coach, Vickie Corley. Ehrhardt and Corley, along with Isabella Mills' parents, were on hand as the St. Marys native finalized her commitment to attend Western University next year as a member of the track and field program, after years of hard work and training, as well as a long-standing dream of eventually joining Western.

Throughout her athletic career, Mills has competed in a variety of track and field events, including hurdles, long jump, high jump, shot put and middle-distance running. Her versatility and willingness to take on different challenges have helped shape her into a well-rounded athlete.

Her journey has included both successes and challenges, but through the highs and lows, Mills has remained committed to improving and pursuing her goals. Her coaches have recognized not only her athletic ability but also her determination, competitive mindset and willingness to keep developing.

Mills said she plans to study something in the sciences while beginning the next chapter of her academic and athletic journey.

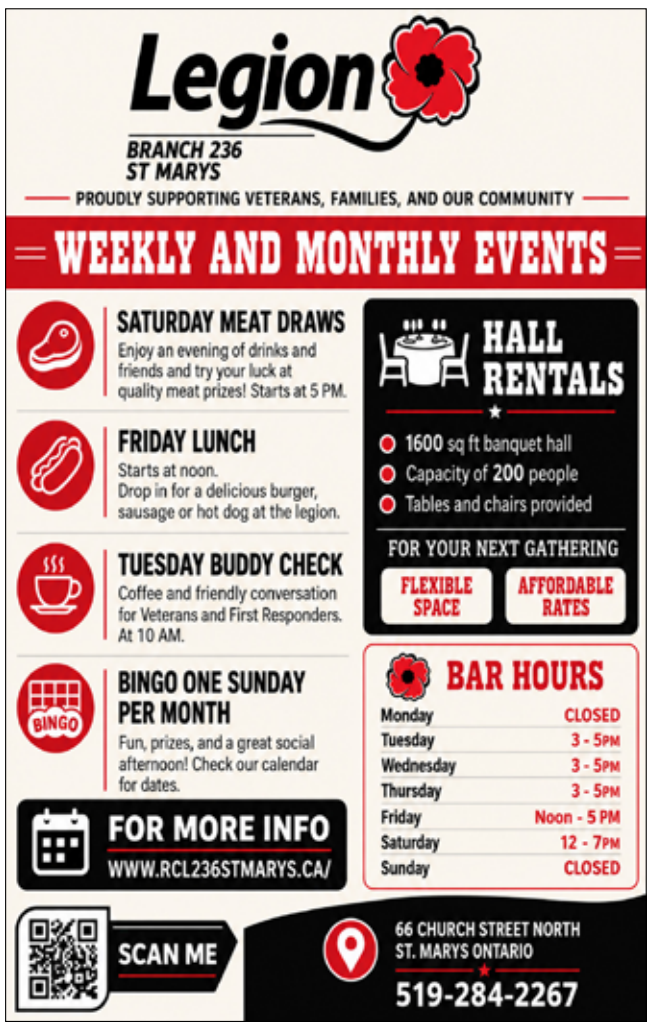
When forecasting her university track-and-field career, Mills explained she wants to be a significant contributor to Western's program.

"Obviously, I want to be a huge contributor to the team. Even though track is an independent sport, for OUAs and USports, there still are those team aspects with it, so I'm excited to see that because right now with track, for me, it's obviously more individual, whereas in post-secondary school, it's going to be more team-centric. Having people on the sidelines cheering for you and things like that is just going to be a huge change.

"Western is really known for their coaches," Mills continued. "Their coaches are phenomenal. Practicing more is going to be a big change. I'll be practicing several days a week, which is going to be a huge change, and hopefully it will increase different marks and goals that I have for the years."

As she prepares for the transition to university athletics, Mills is looking forward to continuing to develop as an athlete while contributing to a program that has been part of her life for nearly seven years.

For Mills, this commitment represents much more than signing with a university. It is the culmination of years of dedication, perseverance and a dream she has worked toward since she was a young athlete.





Lincs earn playoff-style win over Maroons; Hodkinson, Elzinga, Bruining carry team to 15th straight win in Listowel

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

For much of the St. Marys Lincolns' winning streak, the one bucket of cold water you could throw on the team was that they hadn't done it against too many high-end teams.

They had one against the St. Thomas Stars, which amounted to the Lincolns versus Dylan Durno and his band of merry men, and a few against an Elmira Sugar Kings squad who, on paper, look like a great team, but so far this season, have struggled mightily.

Other than that, there hadn't been too many high-end opponents for the Lincolns to go up against.

That all changed Nov. 6 and Nov. 8.

In the span of three days, the Lincolns played two of the best teams in the league – the hyper-tenacious, hyper-skilled Chatham Maroons, followed by the structured-to-the-hilt Listowel Cyclones.

When the dust settled, the Lincolns' win streak was at 15 games.

Head coach Jeff Bradley told the Independent he was mostly thrilled with the team's resilient 6-5 victory over the Maroons Nov. 6.

"We limited them to 22 shots and found a way to win," said Bradley. "Our special teams were an issue, both the penalty kill and powerplay, but I thought we played great otherwise. We had to make some adjustments throughout the game, but I thought we did a good job. I thought we responded really well after being down by one, and I thought we responded very well when they came back and tied it up."

Bradley detailed how the Lincolns adjusted to coverage through the middle of the ice by the Maroons.

"Chatham did a really good job in the middle of the ice, and we kept trying to feed pucks to the middle, so, in the intermission, we got the projector up and showed the turnovers in the middle of the ice. Then after Mikey (Pope) scored his goal on that controlled breakout, they started to take the middle of the ice away on our controlled breakout, so we drew something up where we would send it up in the middle and have speed on the weak side, and ended up getting Callum (McAuley) a breakaway."



(CHARIS MUHTAR PHOTO)

Campbell Lehto roars in celebration after scoring a goal during the St. Marys Lincolns' 6-5 win over the Chatham Maroons Nov. 6.

The Lincolns went down 1-0 just two minutes into the game after Santiago Jimenes opened the scoring with a powerplay goal, continuing the rough stretch for the Lincolns' penalty kill.

Almost exactly 10 minutes later, Devun Colebrook tied the game at one apiece, before Mikey Pope then lifted the puck over goaltender Gannon Hunter's shoulder to go ahead 2-1.

Bradley credited Pope for having his best game of the season.

"Mikey has been asked to be a bit more defensive-minded and a bit more responsible, and I thought that was his best game for us. The thing Mikey is learning is that, even though he is faster than most people, even though he's got a better shot than most people, and even though he moves the puck better than most people, he doesn't need to do it all himself, and he can trust his teammates."

Campbell Lehto and Owen Bruining extended the Lincolns' lead to 4-1 with goals three minutes apart midway through the second, but in the latter half of the period, Chatham clawed back to make it 4-3.

It took just one minute and 41 seconds for Matteo Mosca to tie the game at four apiece in the third, but Ryan Hodkinson responded for the Lincs, tipping a shot to give St. Marys a 5-4 lead. Once again, the Maroons answered, with Jimenes completing the hat-trick to make it 5-5.

Both teams looked for a hero. Enter Blake Elzinga.

Elzinga fired home his ninth of the year with three minutes left, giving the Lincolns the 6-5 lead and, in turn, their 14th straight victory.

"Blake is a big-time player, and he came up big for us," Bradley said. "He's paid his dues in this league, and he's become a premier player in the league, and probably one of the top five players in the league."

Top line dominates in Listowel

Elzinga. Hodkinson. Bruining.

The Lincolns' 6-1 victory over the Cyclones can be summed up by those three names.

Combining for 11 points and having a hand in every goal the Lincolns scored, there was no question the game was defined by the Lincolns' nuclear-option first line.

James MacGregor was the beneficiary of an aggressive start by the top forward line, opening the scoring 35 seconds into the game. That remained the only goal of the first period before a four-goal offensive eruption in the second, which included Elzinga netting two, the first of which came 27 seconds into the frame.

Chris Mabey capped off a strong weekend with his first career Greater Ontario Hockey League (GOHL) goal, resulting in Bradley praising the Guelph Storm prospect's two performances.

"He's been playing fantastic, so for him to get production is important for his confidence. He does want to produce and get some points. It always feels nice, especially when you deserve them and they're just not coming. So, for him to get a goal in a game that is tighter than the score would suggest, everybody was really happy for him.

"Chris is getting used to getting up-ice a little bit more," Bradley continued. "We play pretty tight up-ice, and that's sometimes a hard concept to grasp for a young defenseman, and I thought he did a terrific job of that (against Chatham)."

Ethan Weir scored two minutes later on a powerplay

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Lincs earn playoff-style win over Maroons; Hodkinson, Elzinga, Bruining carry team to 15th straight win in Listowel

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with the help of a lost Listowel stick. First, Pope batted the stick out of his way as he received a pass from Elzinga, the latter of whom benefited a few moments later when the stick, still lying on the ice, helped Elzinga keep the puck in the zone. A couple of passes later, Weir banged home his 10th of the year.

Bruining added his 14th of the year 66 seconds into the third, with the Cyclones' lone goal coming halfway through the third on a breakaway by Shayne Keefe.

One of the biggest bright spots for St. Marys was their penalty kill, which, after allowing at least one powerplay goal against in five of their last six games and having a putrid 63.6 penalty-kill percentage over that stretch, went a perfect six-for-six against the Cyclones, whose powerplay was second in the conference.

Assistant coach Mike Siddall described why the penalty kill was more effective.

"On Thursday and Friday, we let in three (powerplay goals) in two games, so obviously something was going wrong," Siddall said. "It just came down to small details. We looked at what Listowel did and had a game plan for them, and had to tweak it in the second period. Guys were buying in a little more today."

No penalty kill was better, however, than their second-last of the game.



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

Chris Mabey nets his first career GOHL goal during the St. Marys Lincolns' 6-1 victory Nov. 8 against the Listowel Cyclones.

After a holding charge against Colebrook, with 90 seconds left in the man advantage, the puck ended up behind the net, where MacGregor pinned it against the boards. Jack Taylor soon joined to help, with Ronen MacFarlance also coming in to assist. Meanwhile, at the top of the faceoff circles, Ryan Cranny and Hudson Wiles waited for their powerplay cohorts to pull the puck loose. And they waited. And they waited. And they waited some more.

It took at least 45 seconds before the Cyclones finally managed to get the puck loose.

"It's a good feeling seeing something like that," said Siddall. "Our swarm is something we're trying to work on. A lot of times, we get two guys into the pile, which is great, but then our third guy is hanging out, not doing anything, so getting that third guy in the pile is big for us, and that's what we did there, and kept pushing guys in and killed almost half a penalty."

MacGregor credited the entire four-man unit with helping to totally shut the game down for close to a minute.

"It's a little trick I learned when I was younger," said MacGregor. "Campbell Lehto, Ronen MacFarlane and Jack Taylor helped me out behind the net, just pinning the puck against the wall, and it was just a great effort by all three of us in there. We got the puck pinned and I felt, as a team there, we did a great job killing off that powerplay. I know the momentum swing after that is huge. The boys were going after that."

Taylor recounted the verbal exchange between him and MacGregor as they kept the puck along the wall.

"I saw James stop the puck there behind the net, and I thought I'd come in and help," Taylor said. "We just were talking, having a good conversation about how long we could keep it there, holding that puck up trapped in between both of us, and just didn't look up and just kept holding it until they finally knocked us off and were able to get it out from under us. We just got the puck real tight in between both of our sticks and put all our weight on the puck."



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DCVI senior girls basketball team wins playoff semi-final

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Basketball team advanced to the Huron-Perth playoff final and secured their spot at WOSSAA with a gritty 31-24 victory over Mitchell in their playoff semi-final Nov. 4.

DCVI led 12-2 at one point during the second quarter before Mitchell got on a heater offensively, closing the deficit to just 16-13 by halftime. In the third quarter, Mitchell continued to roll, pulling ahead 21-18. In the second and third quarters, Mitchell scored 12 points from three-point range.

Head coach Monica Ryan explained why Mitchell's shooting from distance made them such a challenging opponent to contain, but she was also happy with how her team defended them for most of the game.

"It's their three-point shooting (that makes them such a tough opponent)," said Ryan. "They can shoot, and we had to remind the girls to get out on the shooters, and they really bought into the mentality and they went out with a hand in their shooters' faces. I'm so proud of them. They played really great defence."

The Salukis clawed back in the fourth, scoring 12 points to secure their seven-point win and advance to WOSSAA and the Huron-Perth final. Ryan attributed the Salukis' big fourth quarter and ability to pull out the win to the team's spirit and belief, as well as the play of the team's leading scorer, Charlotte Richardson, who ended the game with 16 points.

"Just the intensity and the confidence and the energy that you could sense from them, and it spread like wildfire," said Ryan. "A lot of credit goes to Charlotte for always being our link on offence. Obviously, Charlotte is a strong player and we can rely on her at both ends of the court. She wasn't getting the calls that we would normally get, and it was super frustrating, but I'm just so proud of how tenacious she was to keep fighting."

One of the most impressive performances from DCVI's senior girls came from Lily Hollestelle-Black, who scored six points and delivered a strong, opportunistic effort on both sides of the ball.

"I think Lily deserves a huge shoutout for bringing the energy when we started to get tired on both ends of the court," Ryan said. "It was amazing to see that game from her. She doesn't always get the minutes that everybody would like to see, but when I put her in, I know that she is coming in with energy, she works hard and she's so coachable. It doesn't hurt when she knocks down her free throws either. She plays smart. She played the weak side really well and found her space, and she was ready to shoot."

Ryan also credited Regan Jones for rising to the challenge of being a greater shooting option while maintaining her masterful defensive play.

"Regan Jones had the best game of her season. She must have had at least 20 rebounds. It might not totally show on the scoresheet, but she made some really smart plays and she was looking to score. She always plays good defence, but I've been asking her more recently to be ready to shoot and produce. She's often open on the weak side, and I was just proud of that mental fortitude to be ready to shoot and build up that confidence."

Morgan Reid and Lena Thompson each chipped in three points for the Salukis, and Alanna Savile added two points.

As Ryan looks ahead to the team's next steps, as good as the team has been this season, she sees even more opportunity to grow.

"We're still working on being more patient with the ball and trying to find the open person. With the defensive pressure that Mitchell brought, it means that there were openings on the other side of the court, and we're still not totally tapping into that, which means we just have a whole other layer to grow, and as we go into a couple of big games, we're looking to have scoring contributions from many different players, both in the Huron-Perth championship and WOSSAA on Nov. 19 in London."

St. Marys, who finished second in the Huron-Perth regular season standings, faced St. Michael Catholic Secondary School Nov. 11 in the league championship after the Independent's press time.





(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)

On the left, Charlotte Richardson releases a shot from distance during the St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Basketball team's 31-24 playoff semi-final win Nov. 4. On the right, Lily Hollestelle-Black puts up a lay-up. Richardson led the Salukis with six points, while Hollestelle-Black had a stellar performance, which included six points.





MINOR SPORTS SCRAPBOOK



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Everett Boyer kicks out the pad for a save during the Downie Optimist Club U9 MD Boys St. Marys Rock game last Saturday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Nate Campbell fires a shot from the slot during last Wednesday's Core Fuels U10 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Price Cameron launches a shot from the blueline during the Core Fuels U11 B Boys St. Marys Rock game this past Monday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Warren Atwell releases a long-range blast during this past Monday's Core Fuels U12 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Evan Sutherland drives the net for a scoring chance during the U16 A Boys St. Marys Rock game last Wednesday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Ellie MacArthur wires a shot towards the opposition's goal during last Saturday's U18 B Girls St. Marys Rock game.

Six St. Marys youth bowlers qualify for zone tourney







(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Youth Bowl Canada (YBC) bantam, junior, and senior bowlers in St. Marys competed in their home lanes Oct. 11 in the YBC Singles Roll-off, a five-game scratch tournament to determine who would be going to the zone competition Nov. 15. The winners of the bantam competition were Brendan King and Athena Boyd, pictured on the left. Leia Slaney and James Van de Gevel, pictured in the middle, will represent the junior bowlers, while Landon Ball and Natalie McKeen, pictured on the right, along with Nathan McKeen, not pictured, took the senior division.

St. Marys Bowlers compete at Stratford tournament







(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

On Nov. 8, the St. Marys Bowling Lanes sent three teams to the Bob Howie All-Star Tournament held at Mike's Lanes in Stratford. The tournament format was teams made up of three bowlers, including a senior, junior, and bantam. The teams bowled three games. The mixed team, as pictured on the left, from left to right, of Leia Slaney, Nathan McKeen, Asher Gregory, and coach Helen Brockman, placed second. Gregory is a first-year bantam and bowled above his average in all three games, as did Slaney. Pictured in the middle, from left, are Ivy Kittmer, Rory Brockman, Aisla Fisher, and coach Aaron Fisher. The girls' team finished third, and Kittmer, a first-year bantam, bowled over average in all three games. Pictured on the right, from left, are Landon Ball, Felix Louwagie, coach Scott Louwagie and James Van de Gevel. The boys' team finished in fourth place, and Van de Gevel bowled over his average in all three games, including a great 237 game. A special thank you to the Downie Optimist Club for sponsoring our bowlers' lineage fees.

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Thorndale News

A section within the St. Marys Independent





Meet Thames Centre Ward 1 Coun. Brad Andrews

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Newly elected Ward 1 Coun. Brad Andrews is balancing his enthusiasm for serving the community with the responsibilities of municipal office.

For the past nine years, Andrews has resided in Thorndale, along with his wife and two young children. He owns a cybersecurity business, ManagePoint Technologies Inc., which employs 14 people and welcomes Fanshawe College co-op students to help further their education and gain valuable workplace experience. Last month, his company Pax8's Canada Hall of Fame award recognizing ManagePoint Technologies for being one of the fastest-growing and longest-serving partnerships in Canada.

"The campaign trail showed me just how passionate our community is," Andrews said. "Everyone wants to work together. I am pleased and honoured to have received the trust and support of the community in both urban and rural areas, and I will work tirelessly over the next four years."

As Andrews and the rest of Thames Centre council is sworn in on Nov. 16, much of his first few months in office will involve learning the complexities of municipal government while beginning to advocate for the priorities that matter most to Ward 1 residents.

"There are a few things I'd like to see for Ward 1 over the next few years, starting with the Thorndale Lions Community Centre expansion," Andrews said. "The committee is currently developing a master plan for the grounds, which will guide what the expansion can include. Priorities I want to see addressed are a stage for performances, a better-functioning kitchen and more activities for all ages.

"Beyond the community centre, the school expansion is in planning and it's very important that we work closely with the school board to ensure student safety. One example I'd really like to see is a way to seperate students who walk from those arriving by bus. I also want to make sure the next phase of King Street in Thorndale is completed with safety and traffic calming at its core."

Before taking on their full responsibilities, Thames Centre's newly elected council members will participate in an extensive orientation program designed to prepare them for municipal leadership. The training begins with a county-wide orientation covering topics such as the role of council and staff, the code of conduct, conflict-of-interest rules, meeting procedures, freedom of information legislation and the responsibilities of the integrity commissioner. Additional sessions introduce councillors to municipal governance, planning processes, procurement policies, budgeting, asset management and risk management.

Council members also take part in a tour of municipal facilities and receive departmental briefings from senior staff to help them better understand the services and infrastructure they will oversee. According to the clerk's office, training will continue throughout the term as councillors identify areas where they would like additional information and guidance.

"Across Thames Centre, we need to make sure plans align with servicing capacity, community fit, road impacts and safety, among other things," Andrews said. "It is important that we work with both developers and residents to find solutions that work for everyone. I'm also committed to responsible budgeting that keeps the municipal tax increase at or below inflation.

"I'm proud to have been chosen to represent our community. I look forward to connecting with residents throughout my term and bringing all voices and opinions forward as best I can."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Thames Centre Ward 1 Coun. Brad Andrews.

Thorndale's Christmas Toy Drive is an annual tradition

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Sheena Ball, a registered massage therapist at 160 King St. in Thorndale, has launched a Christmas Toy Drive campaign earlier this month.

This toy drive, originally initiated by Ball in 2021, has become an annual tradition in the community of Thorndale.

"Christmas is my favourite holiday," said Ball. "With the continued economic uncertainty facing more and more families in this area, I want to bring, with the help of the community, joy to families who are struggling this Christmas."

New, unwrapped toys for children up to age 16 can be dropped off at 160 King St., upstairs by the Christmas tree until Thursday, Dec. 10. Since older children can be harder to buy for, Ball suggests board and card games or sports equipment. Gift cards in $25 denominations are also accepted.

Ball is again partnering with the Thorndale Fire Station. Firefighters will deliver toys collected at the Thorndale Christmas Parade on Friday, Dec. 11, along with donations from her "Christmas in July" campaign and this month's drive, to the Thames Centre Food Bank in Dorchester for distribution to local children in time for Christmas.

"Thank you to this amazing community for your participation this time of year," Ball said. "Every little bit helps to ensure every child experiences the joy of the season."



COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Is Disney worth the hype?

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

Before moving to Canada, I thought there was only one Disneyland in the world – the one in Paris. Growing up in Ukraine, we simply didn't have a theme-park culture. Our parents never felt guilty for not taking us to Disney, and it was never a measure of a happy childhood. It was just something we saw on television screens or in glossy foreign magazines.

Discovering what Disney means in North America came as a fascinating cultural shift. Here, it isn't just an amusement park; it's a whole lifestyle and a deeply ingrained tradition. It feels like almost everyone follows the same unwritten life script; your parents take you when you are small, you take your own kids when you grow up and then you head back with a group of adult friends when you're older. Planning a multi-day Disney itinerary is treated as a classic rite of passage.

From a business standpoint, I totally get why it works so well. Building an industry around children's dreams is one of the smartest and most profitable ideas in human history. As parents, our natural instinct is to give our kids everything we can and to see that pure, unconditional joy in their eyes. Entertainment giants understand that emotional trigger perfectly.

At the same time, I still struggle to fully embrace the hype surrounding both locations. It isn't even just about the cost, though ticket prices can make any parent pause. The differences between the two continents are striking. Walt Disney World in Florida is a massive resort spanning about 40 square miles – roughly the physical size of the city of Paris itself. Disneyland Paris, on the other hand, is much more compact. Tickets for the Paris park are roughly three times cheaper than Florida's, and the European price comes with no hidden surprises on your receipt because taxes are already included upfront.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Alona Vasylieva reflects on family travel choices, comparing the North American Disney culture with her European experiences.

Beyond the numbers, comparing the two parks reveals some fun cultural quirks. When Disneyland Paris opened in 1992, management strictly banned alcohol, following traditional American rules. The French public was so genuinely offended by the inability to order a glass of wine with lunch that attendance dropped sharply, forcing Disney to reverse its ban a year later.

Over in Florida, the scale requires a completely different kind of engineering magic. To prevent a cowboy from Frontierland from walking through Tomorrowland in full costume and ruining the illusion, the entire Magic Kingdom was built on top of a massive network of underground tunnels. Guests are actually walking on the second floor while a hidden underground city handles logistics beneath their feet. Interestingly, North America's obsession with the brand has deep Canadian roots too; Walt Disney's ancestors originally migrated from Europe to Ontario, and his father, Elias Disney, was born right here in Canada.

To be fair, I know Disney parks are designed for the whole family to enjoy together, not just the kids. There is a lot of thought put into creating shared magic for every age. But on a personal level, I find it really hard to feel comfortable surrounded by massive, endless crowds. Navigating a sea of people while trying to keep track of schedule apps, ride reservations and long queues under blazing heat or sudden rain turns what should be a holiday into hard work.

Then there is the reality of bringing young children into all that noise. Little kids often just can't process that level of non-stop excitement and sensory stimulation. Between the roaring music, dense crowds, giant costumed characters and continuous treats, the magic can quickly turn into pure overwhelm. By late afternoon, what started as a dream day frequently ends in a meltdown brought on by emotional exhaustion and a total sugar overload.

Am I ready to dedicate an entire family vacation solely to managing schedules, crowds and sugar crashes at a theme park? I'm honestly not so sure.

A truly great family vacation should work for everyone in the household, not just the children. Parents work hard all year and deserve a chance to slow down, catch their breath and actually rest, rather than feeling like they just completed a high-stress endurance test.

Children certainly love the grand spectacle of fairytale castles, but when I look back at my own best memories, they rarely came from expensive tickets or perfectly timed schedules. Kids often remember the simplest moments just as vividly – building a campfire, exploring a new town, playing on a beach, or just having unhurried time together as a family.

I believe that magic doesn't only exist inside a fairy-tale kingdom with a price tag attached. Sometimes, the best magic happens whenever we slow down and simply enjoy the journey together without the stress.

Straight From The Shelves

By Laura McAsh, St. Marys Public Library

The holiday season is the perfect time for cozy romance, unless you're Adam Wheatley. Adam–-the protagonist of Aaron Kyte's debut novel, "A Christmas Inn, Maine" –-is newly single, unemployed, and back in his hometown. Sworn off romance, the former book editor decides to focus his time and energy on restoring his sister's inn, with the grand plan to unveil its renovations on Christmas Eve. Fixing the inn is far from smooth sailing, however, and Adam soon enlists Graham, a contractor willing to provide his services in exchange for a place to stay. As luck would have it, Graham is as sweet as he is handy, and his presence complicates an already confusing period of Adam's life. Will the two be able to build something special or will the whole building crumble down around them?

Join us on Thursday, November 26 at 7 p.m. in the Friendship Centre's Multipurpose room for our Local Author Talk with Aaron Kyte! Enjoy a discussion led by Library CEO, Sarah Andrews, followed by an audience Q and A session and the opportunity to have your copy of "A Christmas Inn, Maine" signed by the author. Register for this free event here: tinyurl.com/AuthorTalk-AaronKyte

Up This Week

- Fri., Nov. 13: Open 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Sat., Nov. 14: Dungeons & Dragons (10 a.m.)
- Mon., Nov. 16: Beginners Mahjong (10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.)
- Tues., Nov. 17: Make and Take – Clay Creations* (6-8 p.m.)
- Wed., Nov. 18: EarlyON Play & Read (9:30 – 10:30 a.m.), Books & Brews*^ (7 p.m.)
- Thurs., Nov. 19: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: St. Marys – Some origin stories

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

In 1942, the town's administration and council chose Sunday, September 13, as the date to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of St. Marys. The reasons for choosing that date are not clear. The town site had been set by surveyors as early as 1839. The first permanent settlers arrived in St. Marys ca 1841 and the settlement became an official village in 1855. In 1864 it became an incorporated town. However, with many residents concerned about friends and family members caught up in the turmoil of World War II, town officials may have seen a quiet centenary celebration as a way of boosting local morale.

The word "founding" is open to interpretation. It can simply mean "the act of starting something new" or, more formally, "the act of creating a new corporation or government." The concept of "Founders" doesn't carry the same weight in Canada as it does in the United States. But who should be credited for establishing the new community of St. Marys? Who were the first people to arrive at this site and decide to make it their home? Who cut down the first trees to make the first clearing in the dense forest?

There are several contenders. In the St. Marys chapter in his History of Perth County, published in 1903, historian William Johnston seems to give the credit to Thomas Ingersoll. He states: "To this spot came Mr. Thomas Ingersoll in 1841 and was the first pioneer at Little Falls." Johnston explains that Ingersoll "had made certain arrangements with the Canada Company to erect a saw and grist mill as an inducement for settlers." He continues: "Mr. Ingersoll sent a staff of workmen to proceed with these improvements in the autumn of 1841." A sawmill was built on the west side of Water Street, close to Trout Creek. Johnston says: "At this point was cut down the first tree in St. Marys." But who wielded the axe? Perhaps it was James McKay, one of the "hardy backwoodsmen" sent by – or accompanying – Ingersoll. McKay stayed and built a home and business in St. Marys.

George Tracy, a pioneer entrepreneur, who had settled with his family in Beachville, Oxford County, also travelled into Blanshard Township as early as 1841. He acquired a large parcel of land from the Canada Company within the southern limits of what would become St. Marys. In 1842, he returned with his adult sons and built a log house on the corner of Church and Park Streets. (He later installed his wife and family in a large, limestone manor house – currently the St. Marys Museum.) A century later, the well-respected mayor of St. Marys was David C. White. He was a direct descendant of George Tracy. Did that influence the decision to celebrate the centenary in 1942?

William Johnston calls the settlement both "Little Falls" and "St. Marys" on the same introductory page in the History of Perth County. Little Falls was the unofficial nickname, describing the location of the new settlement at the place on the Thames River where a series of small waterfalls cascaded over limestone shelves on the riverbed. Johnston goes on to recount the well-known story of how the town got its name. In 1844, as the village was growing, "it was decided by the citizens that a more euphonious name than Little Falls should be given to the now important village." Thomas Mercer Jones, Canada Company Commissioner, was paying an official visit to this part of the Huron Tract from his headquarters in Goderich, accompanied by his wife. While in St. Marys, Mrs. Jones subscribed £10 for the building of a new school. "The honour of giving a new name was accorded to Mrs. Jones. …Mrs. Jones, therefore, named Little Falls in honour of herself, calling it St. Marys, her name being Mary."

It's a charming story but there are a few reasons to question its authenticity. There are records that show the name St. Marys had been assigned by surveyors to this potential town site as early as 1839, six years before the famous visit. Also, Mrs. Jones' name was Elizabeth Mary. Although her second name was Mary, her family called her Elizabeth or Lizzie. Considering her background, it is easy to understand the villagers' wish to claim some connection to Elizabeth Mary Strachan Jones (1814-1857.) She was the dearly loved daughter of one of the most powerful men in the Canadian colonies, Bishop John Strachan and his wife, Ann. At a time when many children had precarious and frequently brief lives, she was the only one of their daughters to survive into adulthood.



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

The first school in St. Marys was built on the southwest corner of Queen and James Streets in 1845. During a visit to the village, Elizabeth Mary Strachan Jones donated £10 towards its construction. During World War I, the old school was used as a drill hall for new recruits and was demolished soon after the war.

John Strachan was a powerful cleric, educator and key player in the political maneuverings of the Family Compact, the group of conservative and wealthy men who controlled Upper Canada and worked to maintain this status quo. He eventually became the first Anglican Bishop of Toronto, founding St. James Cathedral and Trinity College in that city. He did have some admirable qualities: he was a dedicated teacher and pastor. During the War of 1812, he was a steadying presence in York (Toronto.) He bravely negotiated with the American invaders who seized the city in 1813, making their occupation as easy as possible on the residents. A consistent factor throughout Bishop Strachan's long life was his love of his family. As a father, he cared about his children's well-being and was anxious for their future. During his first months in York in 1812, to his great sorrow, his third child, a little daughter, Mary Elizabeth, died from a fever, probably malaria. Ann Strachan had a second daughter in 1814. The baby was named after her lost sister but with the names reversed: Elizabeth Mary. The Strachans had five more children, including two more daughters who died in infancy. But Elizabeth grew up and was very close to both her parents all her life.

In 1832, 18-year-old Elizabeth Strachan married Canada Company commissioner, Thomas Mercer Jones. To be close to the development of Huron Tract, he decided to establish his headquarters in Goderich and moved his family there from Toronto in the late 1830s. Their arrival made a huge impact on that isolated settlement. In their entertaining 1896 book, In the Days of the Canada Company, Robina and Kathleen Lizars described the arrival of the Jones family, their servants and 22 wagonloads of household goods to their Goderich residence: "…all sweetly governed and gently presided over by the most gracious lady who ever graced that wilderness of Huron. Church, gaieties, dress all changed" in that community once Mrs. Jones arrived.

In 1845, here was Elizabeth Mary Strachan Jones, now a young mother, age 31, visiting this part of Blanshard Township with her commissioner husband. Her sophistication and fine clothes must have presented a great contrast to the inhabitants with their homespun garments and humble dwellings. But did she actually name St. Marys? If it had been already suggested by the first surveyor, maybe she confirmed it as the official name. It was, after all, one of her two given names and perhaps she knew that the choice of "Mary" would please her father. He had clearly been fond of the name to have used it for two successive daughters. In 1839, had the surveyor also chosen the name to please both the powerful Bishop Strachan and his direct employer, Thomas Mercer Jones? But who came up with the idea to tack on "Saint" in front of "Mary?" That's another question that remains unanswered.

Today, some may wonder whether the name St. Marys is more "euphonious" than Little Falls. But when outsiders question the name of our town – we won't even begin to discuss the apostrophe – real St. Marys folks will always stand together to defend it. (Next week: some more St. Marys firsts.)

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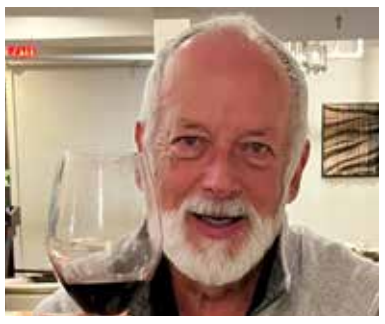


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Solutions on pg. 35

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Visiting three fine wineries in Niagara



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

Every autumn, I organize a coach trip to wine country. Accompanied by 30 or so friends, we visit a Niagara Region winery, have lunch, visit two more wineries and mostly sleep all the way home!

Finding a winery on the Niagara Peninsula is about as easy as finding sand on a beach. There now are well over 90 wineries, divided into two districts – Niagara-on-the-Lake and Area, and Niagara Benchlands and Area.

The rest of southern Ontario boasts an increasing number of wineries, with 22 in Prince Edward County, 13 on Lake Erie's North Shore and 23 lumped together in a category called "emerging regions," which includes wineries from the Ottawa area to the shores of Lake Huron.

But our trip is always to Niagara.

When I plan the tasting trip, I avoid the big brands. Yes, many of them make good wines (a lot of which I have personally consumed), but I find they offer a cookie-cutter, almost industrial visitor experience. So, I like to find smaller wineries, preferably (but not always) independently or family-owned, where they seem genuinely grateful that a group of 30 wine lovers have taken the time to visit them.

And then there is the matter of price point. When you're leading a group of 30 wine drinkers, the assembled multitude will probably include a few who are happy to pay $50 or $100 for a nice bottle of wine, but I promise there will be others for whom $15 is a stretch. But they still want to buy wine.

And also, there is what I would call the "visitor experience." Do the folks at the winery seem to be making an extra effort to make our visit a special event?

My partner and I have the onerous responsibility of driving to Niagara well ahead of the visit to check out potential destinations. The number of wineries that don't qualify is quite surprising for one reason or another. Some have only very pricey wines. Some cannot accommodate a tasting for 30-plus. Some have what I would call a "chilly" atmosphere – and I don't mean room temperature. Wine lovers are great; wine snobs are insufferable.

So, we eliminate some wineries, while a few make it onto our prospective list. Our goal is to always include wineries our group has not visited previously, though we may return to a favourite on occasion.

The 2026 tour visited one of the Niagara-on-the-Lake wineries (Konzelmann) and two Benchlands destinations (Henry of Pelham and The Foreign Affair Winery).

We chose Konzelmann because it has an unusual history and their wines are also unique. This winery, on a property on the shore of Lake Ontario, was actually founded in Germany, well over 130 years ago. Friederich Konzelmann first made wine in the German village of Uhlbach in 1893. Almost 100 years later, Friederich's great-grandson, Herbert Konzelmann, moved the entire operation to Canada, opening Konzelmann here in 1984. The German heritage is still very evident in the wines they make. And surprisingly, though their wines are virtually all made from grapes (of course), their most popular product is their peach wine.

Lunch, by the way, was at the Old Winery restaurant, where we had pre-ordered a pizza buffet. It was terrific.

Our visit to Henry of Pelham, another family-owned winery, was highlighted by the unique and very special location of our wine tasting. When we clambered off the coach, we were ushered to an outdoor gazebo where we enjoyed a welcome drink. However, we were then led down several flights of stairs to Canada's largest underground working barrel cellar, a perfect setting for a wine tasting. In fact, I often wonder if the wines taste as good as they seem, or if I get carried away with the experience. A bit of column A, a bit of column B, I suspect.

Our sommeliers at Henry of Pelham were informative, charming and funny. Everyone in the group was delighted with the experience.

There is history here, too. The Speck brothers who own the winery are the sixth generation to occupy the family farm, and the retail store and restaurant are in an original inn and coach house. It was a lovely visit.

Our final stop was a return visit to the Foreign Affair Winery. The wines here tend to be somewhat more expensive, but most of our group would agree they are worth it. Foreign Affair is one of the best wineries in Canada when it comes to producing Appassimento wines – an Italian style of wine-making that includes drying some or all of the grapes before pressing.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Konzelmann Winery carries on a 130-year-old German winemaking tradition.



Foreign Affair Winery wines are known for their Appassimento style.

A group wine-tasting at Foreign Affair combines elegance with entertainment; the tasting room is beautiful and the four wines are all poured before you are ushered in. Then, a highly qualified staff member leads you through the tastings, pairing insightful comments about the wines with funny anecdotes about the wine business.

There. Three excellent choices for anyone looking to enjoy some wine tastings in the Niagara region. Tell them Paul sent you.

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.



Group tastings at Henry of Pelham take place in Canada's largest underground working barrel cellar.



Cabernet Sauvignon grapes awaiting harvest.



Konzelmann's showroom.

RURAL REFRESH: Outside and our mental health



JACLYN TURPIN

Independent Columnist

Why is it that as soon as we go outside, we instantly feel better? My kids? They do too! I am a firm believer in getting outside every day. I am fortunate that for us at this time of year, that can look like walks to the barn, exploring bugs, sticks used for imaginative play and muddy walks through the field and bush.

For years, psychologists have studied the importance of getting outside for our physical health, our overall wellbeing and especially for our mood, which I find so interesting because is it just me, or has the world shifted to being more indoors?

Historically, we walked to school (uphill both ways, I am told), we grew our own food and met friends to play outside. In many people's world, this is no longer the case. So, it would make sense that some days going outside can feel like an inconvenience. We order our groceries to be delivered, we might work inside from our phone or laptop and we have all the toys and entertainment we need inside.

Many people even park in a garage and then go to work which also has indoor parking. The need to be outside really is changing. But what has stayed the same are the benefits of the outdoors.

So let's not start too drastic. For me, my kids are a motivator. Again, we are all noticeably happier outside. I acknowledge the privilege I have to get outside. Maybe for you, getting outside is an inconvenience, not accessible, or another thing on your to-do list. The colder temperatures are no big motivator either. I get it! Another hurdle. So here are a few ways to start small.

Meeting a friend? How about heading to an outdoor event (lots of holiday things happening), or meet for a walk and then get hot chocolate or coffee? Maybe park further away from where you're going or make an effort to be entertained by the outdoors – this time of year, it could be kids playing or dogs running after leaves.

Are you someone who is often cold? Try wool instead of cotton, mitts instead of gloves and use bread bags in your boots. Okay, maybe not the bread bags, although that trick did seem to work for those who were walking uphill both ways to school.

So why? We know there are benefits, and trust me, if you try to increase your time outside you will feel it, but why do we feel better? Psychologists say that getting outside can restore our ability to concentrate – think recess (outdoor recesses versus indoor recesses, if you know, you know). Emotional regulation is a big one; feeling calmer and less irritable. Another perk is being connected to others or to nature. There are lots of perks; I don't have to convert you! You already know.

Next time you are finding yourself unregulated or getting irritable, take a step outside and be present to the shift in your body and in your mood. Take a moment and really notice.

Jaclyn Turpin is a counsellor at Rural Refresh Counselling, serving St. Marys and area. Reach out to connect by emailing jaclyn.ruralrefresh@gmail.com and follow along on social media (@Rural Refresh).

UNDERSTANDING GEN Z: A reminder to remember



MEREDITH A. STOKES

Independent Columnist

As I am writing this, 81 years, two months and three days have passed since the Second World War ended. It lasted 2,193 days. Seventy- to 80-million people were killed. Forty-thousand to 44,000 Nazi incarceration sites were built. Twenty-five million military personnel were injured. Over one trillion dollars were spent.

That's all World War II is to my generation. Numbers. Vast totals far beyond our comprehension. We can't come close to imagining the things that occurred to people that were no older than we are now.

Most of us have been fortunate enough not to have experienced war firsthand. We haven't gone weeks without food, or crouched in a bomb shelter, or waited months for a letter to come from overseas. We haven't been called to serve our country before we're old enough to drink.

It makes it hard to appreciate the sacrifices made by innocent people who lost their lives to save ours. After all, we weren't born yet. Neither were our parents, or maybe even our grandparents. But if the war had continued, who's to say who it would have claimed next?

Our families. Our friends. The world we know today would never have existed. We may never have existed.

Since we're lucky enough to live in a peaceful part of the world, these things feel lifetimes away from us, but that's exactly why remembering is important. Remembrance Day isn't about the war. It isn't about blazing guns, or bombs, or tanks. We didn't make a holiday to glorify the unjust death that occurred. We did it because we refuse to let it happen again.

We hear the term, "Lest we forget," a lot. So much that I think it has lost its meaning along the way. "Lest we forget" means learning from our mistakes. "Lest we forget" means savouring every bit of life we have. "Lest we forget" means being thankful every day for the country we live in.

So, as Nov. 11 rolls around again, take a moment to reflect on exactly what we are remembering. Wear a poppy. Go to a ceremony. Pray. There is no wrong way to honour those we lost.

Just don't let their sacrifice and what it means disappear.

FROM THE GARDEN: The garden's quiet transition



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

November sits on the threshold between seasons. After the hectic pace of a busy gardening season of planting, weeding, battling heat or torrential rains and then harvesting, November can feel a little glum. The enthusiasm of the gardens has faded along with its colours.

Our gardens are tucked in for the coming winter months as we gave them a blanket of mulch. But many of us find it hard to stop, especially with the bonus of nice weather. There is always one more bulb to plant, more leaves to mulch up, one more pot to empty and tools to clean and store away for next spring.

Spring and summer showcase our gardens' vitality, but November reminds us that rest is part of growth, not its opposite. Nature spends nearly half the year preparing beneath the surface. Roots keep growing and spreading to absorb nutrients, buds on trees and shrubs are already set for spring, and wildlife shelters in garden debris, settling into winter routines. The garden may seem still, yet it is quietly preparing for the next season.

As I look across my garden, I see my garden taking a well-earned breath. Mother Nature in November gives us permission to put away those garden tools and for us, take a breath. The garden teaches us that rest is productive, a lesson that I need to be reminded of. It is also a time for reflection, especially with the past few months still vivid in our memories. Jot down a few notes on what worked this year in your garden. I usually include weather conditions in my notes, especially if there were long bouts of heat and dry spells or major rain events. These contribute and influence which plants survived or thrived in those weather conditions. Perhaps you purchased new perennials for your garden last spring, saving those plant tags and jotting down notes about their performance may be an asset for next year. Regarding diseases, damaging insects and hungry critters, some years are worse than others. Recording what you discovered and learnt will help when you are planning out next year.

And then there are all the happy incidents that you discovered in this year's garden. Perhaps, it was a memorable bloom or a special garden visitor. I am always thrilled when I see more swallowtail butterflies dancing about my flowers. And I have noted down what I can plant to attract more. I only saw a couple of Monarchs this summer, so may want to plant more milkweed. It is these little notes we record from our memories that will make us better gardeners next year.

As an avid garden for decades, every year I learn something new about my garden and about myself. The garden is teaching its final lesson of the year. Rest and reflection. November is not an ending, but a quiet pause between seasons, where both gardens and gardeners can rest, recover and prepare for the seasons yet to come.

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Riddles

**I'm full of keys but can't open a single door.
What am I?
A piano**

**I fly without wings. I cry without eyes. Wherever I go, darkness flies. What am I?
A cloud**

**What has a neck but no head, and often wears a cap?
A bottle**

**I get wetter the more I dry. What am I?
A towel**

**I'm tall when I'm young and short when I'm old.
What am I?
A candle**

**I have a tail and a head, but no body. What am I?
A coin**

**What has many teeth but never bites?
A comb**

**You can catch me but not throw me. What am I?
A cold**

**I'm not alive, but I grow. I don't have lungs, but I need air. I don't have a mouth, but water kills me. What am I?
Fire**

**What building has the most stories?
A library**

- Word Search -

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Lauren Garniss (8)

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PET OF THE WEEK

Don't let cooler weather fool you—fleas and ticks are still active in November!

These pests can spread disease and cause discomfort for your pet. Keep your pet protected with year-round flea and tick prevention. Ask your veterinary team which product is right for your pet.

GREY

Our Pet of the Week is Grey. Grey is a very funny cat who is always getting into trouble. He loves knocking his mom's glasses off the table and will come running to the shake of a whip cream can (he loves whip cream). Although he is an indoor cat, he continues to try to escape and go outside. Every night he will snuggle up to his mom before bed to get his nightly petting. Grey is owned by Laural MacKay of Uniondale.



OBITUARY

Barron



Alfreda Bernice Barron (Nelson) passed away peacefully on her own terms surrounded by the love of Tim, Sherri and Tim at St. Marys Memorial Hospital on November 4, 2026 at the age of 98.

Mom of Dan (Joanna), Sherri Staffen (Tim) and Tim. Proud grandmother of Matt, Danielle, Kyla, Brett, Brittany (1989), Alex and Riley. Loving great-grandmother of Madison and Carter. Aunt Freid is survived by 4 generations of nieces and nephews who were the recipients of her 'made with love' knitted teddy bears, blankets, baby sweater sets and scarves. She was married to Orval Barron and is survived by the Barron extended family. Daughter of the late Alfred and Kate Nelson, Alfreda was the last surviving of six children, Shirley and Reg Hutton, Fern and Lorne Hogg, Francis Nelson and Hannah, Donna and Jim Ney and Darlene Hinge.

Named after her Dad, Alfreda joked that she was supposed to be a boy. The loss of her brother Francis tragically at a young age deeply impacted her. She missed all her sisters immensely and we know that the Nelson family reunion tradition of 51+ years is once again underway with the original founders. She is also reunited with her beloved cat Sabrina.

Alfreda was well-known for her 30 years at the Royal Bank in St. Marys. She was an Avon Lady for many years at the same time, with a work ethic second to none. Over her lifetime, Alfreda was a figure skater, a seamstress, a dancer with the senior's group, an avid reader, gardener and an artist. She played baseball for the Royal Bank team.

Alfreda was a dedicated volunteer at the St. Marys Friendship Centre where she founded the knitting club and acted as a travel tour guide. Her love of knitting took her to a retirement "fun job" at MacPherson's. She contributed knitting projects for the Christmas craft shows and baby items for preemies. Knitting was her love language and she created many legacy pieces for family.

She believed in exercise to stay healthy and never missed her exercise class three times a week at Wildwood Retirement Centre. She lived independently until the age of 97, upon moving to Wildwood where she spent the last 21 months happy, contented and loved. Alfreda travelled with her sisters; she enjoyed casino visits and a good beach or pool day. Hawaii was her happy place.

Cremation to take place. A family interment to take place in St. Marys Cemetery reuniting her with Francis and her parents. Memorial donations may be made to Breakthrough T1D Canada, the St. Marys Friendship Centre or The Angel Tree/ Tree of Remembrance (Bereaved Families of Ontario -Southwest Region).

Online tributes can be made at hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

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OBITUARY

Pickel



Peacefully with his family by his side, George David Pickel passed away from this life at the age of 92 into the presence of His Lord and Saviour.

He is survived by his devoted wife of 69 years, Dorothy (nee Henderson). He is also survived by his family: Bruce and his wife Jane (nee Elliott) of Wellburn, and Joan and her husband Tom Byng of Chatham. His twin grand daughters, Larissa Pickel and Victoria (Taylor) Smith were the apple of his eye. He was the youngest son of Walter and Dora (nee Matthews) Pickel of Wellburn.

George, or "Geordie", was a dairy and cash crop farmer all his life, and he found a true partner in Dorothy as they nurtured their land and raised their family in West Nissouri township. Geordie loved getting on the tractor every spring and the combine every harvest. Once a job was well done, he enjoyed listening to the ballgame, watching a hockey game, or reading about one of the many history topics that fascinated him.

George was active in his community throughout his life. He played baseball as a youngster, served in various roles at Wellburn United Church, exhibited his antique machinery at local fairs and shows, and eagerly shared his love of history at the Civil War Roundtable. Regardless of the endeavour, Geordie always brought diligence, faithfulness, humour and kindness to bear.

He also had a unique ability to remember facts and dates for any topic he took an interest in. Recently, George was a resident at Kingsway Lodge in St. Marys where he received excellent care. Special thanks to the entire staff at Kingsway, as well as Dr. Emma McIvor and the palliative care nurses and personal care workers at St. Marys Memorial Hospital.

A private internment took place in St. Marys Cemetery. A Celebration of Life Open House was held at the farm of Bruce and Jane Pickel on Tuesday, November 10, 2026 In lieu of flowers, donations in George's memory can be directed to St. Marys Healthcare Foundation, Faith Tabernacle (London) or a charity of your choice.

Online tributes can be made at hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16.

CELEBRATION



Happy Heavenly Birthday Mary
November 12
from the Kittmer Clan

OBITUARY

Mills



Nelson Samuel Mills passed away at Victoria Hospital in London on Nov. 6, 2026 with his family at his side at the age of 90. Loved very much and deeply missed by his wife Hazel, married for 69 years.

Nelson was born in Granton, Ontario on April 7, 1936. Father of Shelley Tenner (Ivan), Steve (Anne), and Jeff (Karen). Grandfather of Andrew Tenner (Jenn), Ashley Tenner (Ahmad), Scott Mills (Marie), Jessica Mills (Marc), Sarah Mills, Samantha G.M. Dosumu (Toluwani). Great-grandfather of Julian Tenner, Harris Jaradat, Liam Jaradat, Malik Jaradat and predeceased by Charlie Mills, Theodore Mills and Matteo Mills. Also survived by his sister Donna McRoberts, sisters-in-law Verna Mills, Val Mills, Pat Philip, Peggy Cook and predeceased by Florence Millson (Gerald), Harold, and Ron. Also remembered by many wonderful nieces, nephews and extended family members. Predeceased by his parents Jack and Dorothy.

Nelson worked 34 years at GM Diesel, and in his younger years coached hockey and baseball. Nelson and Hazel spent many winters in Texas. He loved to travel, take many road trips and visit.

Cremation to take place. A Graveside Service will be held at St. Marys Cemetery, 150 Cain St. St. Marys, on Friday, Nov. 13, 2026 at 2 pm. A Celebration of Life Open House will follow at the St. James-Tecumseh Masonic Lodge #73, 45 Thames Rd. N. St. Marys, from 3 - 6 pm. Memorial donations may be made to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation or charity of choice.

Online tributes can be made athodgesfuneralhome.ca.

THANK YOU

Murray Pickel



The family of Murray Pickel thank you for all the kind messages, cards, flowers, generous donations and support you have provided to our family.

We want to sincerely thank Rev. Pam Wilcox for the lovely eulogy, Dr. Gatfield and the wonderful Happy Valley Family Health Team team for years of exceptional care. We also want to acknowledge the entire amazing staff of Kingsway Lodge. A heartfelt thank you to Sarah and crew from River Valley Golf Course, Hodges Funeral Home, the extended Pickel family, the Seiler family, and my Cherry Hill family.

Murray had a wonderful life, and he will always be treasured and remembered.

With gratitude

David, Kelsey, Jeff, Renee, Hannah, Mathew, Kylie, Bree and Sue.

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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 28

FRIDAY, NOV 13

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Chatham Maroons at the PRC – 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, NOV 14

- Kim Atlin art show at River Valley Golf Course – 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- A.N.A.F. dart league – 12:45 p.m.

Royal Canadian Legion meat draw – 5 p.m.

SUNDAY, NOV 15

- Kim Atlin art show at River Valley Golf Course – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Kim Atlin paint workshop at River Valley – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., $125 plus $20 for materials if required
- Christmas fishing sale at 93 King Street South, St. Marys – 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Cash sales only
- A.N.A.F. Fun Day darts – Register at Noon
- London Orchid Society meeting with Dan Doucette presentation on the hidden gems of West Africa. Held at Richards Memorial Church, 360 Edgeworth Ave, London – 2-4 p.m.

MONDAY, NOV 16

- Community Dinner at St. Marys United Church – 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, NOV 17

- St. Marys Legion Buddy Check coffee at the Legion – 10 a.m. to Noon
- St. Marys Legion cribbage – 7 p.m. sharp

WEDNESDAY, NOV 18

- Friends of the Library management committee meeting at the Library – 6-8 p.m.

THURSDAY, NOV 19

- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun – 12-1:30 p.m.
- Nourish Market at St. Marys United Church – 2-4 p.m.
- A.N.A.F. dart league – 6:45 p.m.
- St. Marys Museum speaker series on "Vanishing Villages" at the Museum – 7 p.m.

St. Marys Independent
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CORRECTION:

An advertisement for Teahen Homes that was intended to run over the holiday season was mistakenly run on page 17 of the Nov. 5 edition of the St. Marys Independent in place of the business' Remembrance ad. We regret any confusion this may have caused our readers and we apologize to Teahen Homes for the mix-up.

Looking Back



AMY CUBBERLEY
Independent Columnist

Mailbox mayhem

25 years ago (2001)

Heather O'Neill, 12, of St. Marys, won a bike in a Jr. B. Lincolns' draw last Friday night at the arena. The bike was sponsored by the Canadian Tire Store in St. Marys.

Former Rotary Exchange student Jenny (Hinge) Wiese recently enjoyed a visit to St. Marys. The Australian spent a year here in 1974. Jenny has kept in touch over the years with Bill and Marguerite Douglas, her first host family in St. Marys. The Douglas's even attended her wedding in 1977 in Australia.

50 years ago (1976)

Foundation work is underway on the construction of the new washrooms, clubroom, etc. at the Flats. The new building is a joint project of P.A.R.Q., Bowling Club, and St. Marys Fair Board.

Unofficial word regarding the anticipated new Senior Citizen apartment units along the extension of Jones Street from Warner Street is that plans for the new two-storey, 28-unit building could be ready for Council approval by the end of November.

75 years ago (1951)

Members of the St. Marys Lions Club and their wives braved Tuesday evening's blizzard to drive to Exeter for their annual ladies' night. The evening was pronounced a definite success, for as well as enjoying a wonderful dinner, the Lair and their guests had a program and an orchestra for dancing. The Paul brothers and Shirley of Kirkton were on the program.

According to the local post office, considerable damage has been done to rural mailboxes in recent weeks. In certain cases, mailboxes have been apparently deliberately knocked down and the boxes themselves run over and stamped on. The incidents have been reported to police. It is understood that jail terms have been given to offenders of this type in the past.

100 years ago (1926)

Mr. Ernest Mcaulay Dillon, son of the late R.W. Dillon of St. Marys, is Independent-Prohibitionist candidate in South York in the coming election. Mr. Dillon has been practicing law in Toronto for several years.

A splendid new brass railing has been erected in the centre of the stone steps leading to the Public Library.

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