

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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Oxford County releases more information about plan for YMCA building

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

The county said its goal of “Housing for all” is taking a major step forward with a new Homelessness Support Centre in Woodstock that will offer emergency shelter alongside other services that help transition people out of homelessness and into stable housing.

In a press release, Oxford County said the purchase of the property at 808 Dundas Street in Woodstock is now approaching the community input phase.

“The county now begins the process of consulting with residents and businesses in the area; working with the City of Woodstock and other community partners to plan how the new facility will operate; and tendering for renovations and building system upgrades at the site.”

The release added the support centre, expected to open in spring 2028, will work in partnership with Woodstock’s new Homelessness and Addictions Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub/Wellness Centre to serve residents from across Oxford County who are unhoused or at the risk of becoming homeless. It will offer a single-location 24/7 emergency shelter model offering 55 beds, meal areas, safe storage for personal belongings, on-site laundry, day programs, and on-site security.

“It will also offer on-site professional staff to help unhoused people find employment, mental health and addictions support, permanent housing, and other types of support. Office space will also be made available to other community agencies.”

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3



(LEE GRIFFI PHOTO)

COUNCIL HEARS PUBLIC ON PLANNED HOMELESS SHELTER

Woodstock resident Tracy Sherman gave an emotional presentation to county council and praised elected officials for the purchase of the former YMCA building for a permanent homeless shelter and support centre. Story below.

County council hears from the public on YMCA purchase

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Oxford County councillors heard emotional pleas on both sides of a plan to purchase property in Woodstock to house what is being called a homeless shelter and support centre.

The Echo broke the story of the county purchasing the former YMCA at 808 Dundas Street in Woodstock at a cost of \$4.55 million dollars. Renovations to the property to accommodate the shelter and professional office spaces are budgeted at \$3 million.

The biggest problem one delegation had with the purchase is the absence of any public consultation before the

cheque was written.

“One of our offices has already been the target of a homeless individual threatening to harm everyone inside our facility with a gun. When the possibility of catastrophic failure exists, you owe this community a voice,” said Justin Byer who spoke to council with his wife Tracy. The pair own a business immediately across the street from the Y.

“There is also real concern from the more than 200 people who have signed a petition against this facility that Dundas Street could begin to resemble parts of East London. Why spend all that money revitalizing downtown, only to risk damaging the same corridor 600 meters away,” he added.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



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Emotional support and opposition of shelter and support centre

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

The couple, who are well known for their community engagement and support of causes, said their opposition comes from lack of a clear plan, and lack of communication with stakeholders in the process.

“When I found out that neither the police nor Inn out of the Cold were meaningfully consulted, I knew that we had to speak up. My ask today is simple. Pause and consult this community, especially local stakeholders, before spending another dollar,” said Tracy.

“Right now, a building has already been purchased. And now, the county is asking for \$250,000 for architectural drawings without issuing an RFP to ensure competitive pricing, and without meaningful input from the people most affected. Neighbours, business owners, police, fire, EMS, Inn out of the Cold and Operation Sharing. Where were they in this process?” she added.

“I can’t believe I’m standing up here to be against this,” added Justin. “The process of how you have run this behind closed doors and to find out through a leaked media report is where we’re standing today? It’s ridiculous. Every county person should be embarrassed at how that happened.”

A back and forth between Mr. Byers and Ryan was testy at times, prompting Coun. and Tillsonburg Mayor Deb Gilvesy to comment.

“Quite frankly I’m a little bit disappointed at the tones of the voices I am hearing around council chamber today. I think we can have a civil discussion about this and I think its very important the public is involved.”

She added the concerns raised by the Byers are valid.

“We are here to listen to the public and these processes have to be open. I’m glad people feel free that they can come and speak. That’s what democracy is all about

and that’s what this council should be about.”

Ryan said the only thing council should be held accountable for is the purchase didn’t get done sooner.

“We’ve had upwards of a dozen locations in front of us over the past three and a half years that we were not able to make a decision on. We’ve made one and we need to get this done because there are people who are unrepresented here today that we shouldn’t forget and that’s people sleeping under tarps tonight, people who slept in tents last night in parks.”

Woodstock resident Tracy Sherman, whose son Travis struggles with schizophrenia and homelessness, spoke to council and thanked them for making the move to being a permanent structure on line.

“For years our family has lived with the heartbreaking reality of navigating a system that simply does not have enough support for people struggling with severe mental illness, trauma, homelessness and addiction.”

She added she has watched her son struggle in ways she would never wish on any family.

“I have experienced the fear of not knowing where he is. My son almost froze to death two years ago and a police officer found him outside in a snowbank. I fear the phone call. I fear whether someone vulnerable will survive another night outside.”

Sherman, who struggled to hold back tears for much of her presentation, said the new building gives her hope because people need more than a temporary place to sleep. She also praised council for making a tough decision.

“Leadership is not always about making the easiest decision. Sometimes it is about making the compassionate one and sometimes it means making difficult choices knowing there will be criticism, pushback and political pressure.”

Echo

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Centre will offer emergency shelter alongside other services

CONTINUED FROM FRONT



(LEE GRIFFI PHOTO)

Justin Byers (right) and his wife Tracy addressed councillors and expressed their concern over the absence of any public consultation before deciding to purchase the YMCA. The couple owns a business across the street from the site.

Costs for both the building purchase and renovations are being funded through the county's two housing reserve funds (up to \$5.55 million), a Building Faster Fund contribution from the City of Woodstock (\$2.05 million), and the Federal Safe Restart fund (\$200,000).

"The annual costs of operating the centre, estimated at \$2.4 million per year, will be funded in part through Ontario's Homelessness Prevention Program. Right now, the County allocates approximately \$1.9 million in provincial funding each year for shelter services and homelessness support," added the release.

In June, Oxford County staff will bring forward an explanation of how the community, particularly residents and businesses in the area, will be updated throughout the project from now until its opening and initial stages of operation.

"The public will also have an opportunity to give input on operational plans for the support centre, safety and security, and other considerations. Public consultation will include an in-person public information meeting along with other ways to ask questions and provide feedback. Ongoing updates, and an opportunity to submit feedback at any time, can be found on Speak Up, Oxford! at www.oxfordcounty.ca/speakup."

"The goal of the new centre is to reduce the demand for a shelter, to transition people out of homelessness: anything less than housing for all is just not enough," explained outgoing Warden and Zorra Township Mayor Marcus Ryan. "The centre will make a world of difference to anyone sleeping under a tarp or a bridge and to us all—the entire community will benefit. Thanks to the support and commitment of the City of Woodstock, and partners like Woodstock Hospital and Oxford OHT in getting the HART Hub up and running, we are putting into place a key piece of our response to our housing and

homelessness strategy," he added.

Woodstock Mayor Jerry Acchione said the announcement represents an exciting and meaningful step forward for the community.

"I understand that residents and local businesses may have questions about this project, and that's a good thing. It opens the door for open, constructive, and collaborative conversations as we move through the planning process together."

He added a centralized 24/7 centre will bring critical services together in one place and help our community transition from an emergency response approach to a supportive model focused on helping individuals move out of homelessness and into stable, long-term housing.

"I'm eager to continue working alongside residents, businesses, community partners, and Oxford County to ensure every voice is valued and included as this project moves ahead."

The release stated more than 10 locations were considered for the site beginning in March of 2025 after council approved the Homelessness Response Strategy. In December of this year, council authorizes staff to proceed with an offer to purchase the property at 808 Dundas Street in Woodstock, the site of the former YMCA, pending funding.

From August to October, JPM Architecture Inc. will prepare architectural designs for renovation work to be used for the construction/renovation tender. The company was the recipient of an, up to, \$250,000 single source contract for the work. A tendering contract award for building renovations will be completed in the fall of this year with work beginning during the winter months. A Request for Proposals (RFP) and selection of an agency to operate the Homelessness Support Centre is expected to occur in the winter of 2027 with an opening expected in April of 2028.

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OPSEU workers in Ingersoll locked out

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Developmental service workers are on the picket line in downtown Ingersoll.

Members of OPSEU Local 172 were scheduled to strike but were told by their employer, Ingersoll Support Services Inc. (ISSI), they were locked out.

After not being able to reach a new agreement with their employer, President of OPSEU Local 172 Ange Hutson said a strike date was set for Monday, May 25 at 1 a.m.

"Our employer forced a vote on us for a final offer, which was defeated with 80 percent of the membership voting no. Within a couple of hours of receiving those results, he informed us that we were going to be locked out that night starting Saturday, May 23 at 12:01 a.m."

Hutson said to date, there have been no negotiations and none are scheduled.

"We've had zero communication from them at all. We're out here until we either receive word from them that they'd like to go to the bargaining table or from Premier Doug Ford saying he's going to step up and do the right thing here and make it right."

80 per cent of the union members voted against a final offer from ISSI. The labour disruption is part of a province wide OPSEU campaign called Worth Fighting For campaign. It calls for more provincial funding, fair wages, safe staffing, and stable supports for those with developmental disabilities and their families.

A total of 126 employees are on the picket line in downtown Ingersoll. Hutson explained managers are now working in houses providing 24-hour care and ISSI has also hired scab workers.

"We are severely underpaid. Our funding comes from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. We don't have a central bargaining table. Others, like the LCBO, do and are able to get their remedy from the government."

She explained poor wages and benefits are leading to a revolving door of employees.

"We're finding we have an astounding staff turnover because we are one of the lowest paid agencies around. People are going where the paycheque is higher, where there are benefits or a pension plan, all those things we are missing," she added.

Hutson said something needs to be done to better retain employees.

"I've worked at this agency for 26 years and I have never seen the turnover as bad as it is right now. It hurts the people we support. They have trust issues and can't thrive as well as they should because people are coming and going and don't get to know them well enough."

Ingersoll Support Services Inc. executive director Jayden Nancekivell released a statement after the Echo reached out.

"Throughout this process, (we have) remained focused on reaching a fair and sustainable agreement while ensuring the continuity, stability, and safety of the services it provides. ISSI and the union representing our support staff have been engaged in collective bargaining for the past 14 months. On May 1, the union requested a no board report and triggered the legislative countdown to a legal strike

or lockout beginning as early as May 23."

He added on the afternoon of May 22, the union provided notice that it would begin a strike on May 25.

"However, ISSI had already initiated its contingency plan in preparation for a May 23 labour disruption. ISSI was not able to delay by two days without significant cost to the organization and risk to the health and safety of the people we support. As a result, ISSI finished activating its contingency plan, and the labour disruption began on May 23."

Nancekivell said the organization's priority during the labour disruption remains the health, safety, and well-being of the people who rely on our services.

"Essential services are continuing and we are taking all required steps to minimize disruptions to the day-to-day lives of the people we support. We recognize that this is a difficult situation for everyone involved, including our employees, those we support, their families, and the broader community. We remain committed to working towards a resolution and to doing everything we can to mitigate the impacts of this disruption."

Hutson said her union has tried to meet with Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman but with no success.

"We try but he evades us at all costs. We have been to his office a couple of times but he slips out the back door. He basically will say its not his fight."

ISSI supports people with developmental disabilities in the community. It provides 24-hour residential support, as well as respite and day supports.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SEND YOURS TO INFO@THEECHO.CA

To the Editor,

Oxford County Council deserves credit for wanting to address homelessness. Nobody disputes that vulnerable people need help.

But wanting to help and implementing a strategy that actually works are not necessarily the same thing.

What concerns many residents is not compassion — it is whether Oxford County is committing millions of taxpayer dollars toward a model that may fail both the homeless population and the surrounding community.

The County has already purchased the former YMCA building and is now moving ahead with another \$250,000 in archi-

tectural and planning costs. Yet many residents and nearby business owners feel meaningful public consultation occurred only after major decisions had effectively already been made.

More importantly, where is the evidence that this particular approach will significantly reduce chronic homelessness, addiction, mental illness, and repeat shelter dependency in Oxford County?

Across North America, many leading experts in homelessness and urban policy have warned that shelter-focused approaches, when not paired with strong treatment, recovery, mental-health, and long-term transition strategies, often struggle to produce lasting success.

Dr. Stephen Eide of the Manhattan Institute has written extensively about emergency shelter systems that manage homelessness rather than reduce it long term. Dr. Sam Tsemberis, creator of the Housing First model, has repeatedly emphasized that housing alone is not enough without integrated mental-health and addiction supports. Canadian physician Dr. Jeff Turnbull, founder of Ottawa Inner City Health and former president of the Canadian Medical Association, has long argued that chronic homelessness is deeply tied to complex mental illness and addiction requiring intensive coordinated care — not simply more beds.

These are not ideological opinions. They are warnings from experts who have spent decades working directly in this field.

Oxford County residents deserve answers to some straightforward questions:

What measurable outcomes will define success?

What percentage reduction in chronic homelessness is expected?

What addiction and mental-health treatment capacity will exist on-site or through integrated partnerships?

What protections will be in place for surrounding businesses and neighbourhoods?

What happens if costs continue rising while homelessness itself remains largely unchanged?

Taxpayers are not asking for less compassion. They are asking for more evidence, more transparency, and more accountability before millions more dollars are committed.

Oxford County now faces a critical question: are we investing in a system that truly helps people rebuild their lives — or are we simply expanding an expensive emergency response without clear evidence of long-term success?

Sincerely,
Mark Byers

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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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False shooting report leads to significant police response in Woodstock

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Woodstock Police responded to what they thought was a shooting incident last week. What it actually turned out to be was a false report.

Police responded to the call just after 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 28 after a reported shooting at a residence in the area of Chippewa Avenue and Cree Avenue in Woodstock.

Officers responded and cleared the residence. The nature of the call resulted in a significant police presence. Through the investigation, it was determined the incident had not occurred and was an instance of swatting. Police continue to investigate the source of the false report.

“Swatting is a criminal act in which false or misleading information is provided to police to prompt an emergency response, often to someone’s home, business, or school. These calls divert critical police and emergency resources and place officers and community members at unnecessary risk. Anyone found responsible for swatting incidents can face serious criminal charges,” said a press release.

The release also thanked residents in the area for their patience and cooperation while officers responded to and investigated the incident.

The Echo reached out to Deputy Police Chief Jamie Taylor who said they are continue their investigation into the swatting call.

“Where appropriate, charges will be pursued. This is a criminal offence for public mischief with serious aggravating factors involved, including false reports of weapons, injuries, and significant threats to public safety.”

Taylor said impact on those involved and the people living in the area is not something to be taken lightly.

“I truly believe incidents like this are extremely unsettling for residents and neighbours. Our officers spoke with several neighbours in the area to explain what had occurred and the media release was provided to keep the public informed.”

Taylor added he could not comment on the police tactics or resources deployed during the investigation but added he understands the public’s interest and the force’s commitment to transparency.

“Disclosing operational tactics can place both officers and members of the public at greater risk. On that note, I would also ask the public to reconsider posting live photos or locations of police officers during high-risk incidents. Our priority is public safety, and we need to be able to do our jobs safely and effectively.”

He explained these types of calls are always treated as real until our investigators determine otherwise.



(WPS PHOTO)

Woodstock Police are investigating what they are calling an instance of swatting after a phoney report of a shooting was made on May 18 in the area of Cree Avenue and Chippewa Avenue.

“We cannot assume a situation is a prank when there is the potential for immediate danger to the public and responding officers.”

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Local health unit releases final video on top four issues affecting residents today

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Southwestern Public Health has concluded its multi-year Vital Perspectives series by highlighting a key issue affecting many people in the region - the health impact of household food-insecurity.

The YouTube video series draws on insights from public health staff, community partners, and individuals with lived experience, this final installment centres on food insecurity being driven by inadequate income, not a lack of access to food.

"We decided to do the series to deepen the understanding of complex public health issues," explained Marcia Van Wylie, Manager of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention. "We did it by highlighting local experiences of individuals and public health professionals and then linking those stories to the factors that impact health."

According to local data, more than one in five households (21.3 per cent) in Oxford County, Elgin County, and the City of St. Thomas experienced food insecurity in 2023-2024. This reflects a significant and ongoing challenge tied not to food availability, but to income that falls short of covering basic needs. Household food insecurity is also associated with worse mental health, higher rates of disease and injuries, greater health care utilization and premature mortality.

"Food insecurity is often mistaken for a nutrition or budgeting problem, but the root cause is income that is not able to keep up with average food prices that continue to rise," Van Wylie. "Addressing food insecurity requires solutions that focus on income stability and affordability, ensuring individuals and families have the resources they need to access nutritious food and maintain their health. Meaningful change must focus on aligning in-

come with the true cost of living."

The episode features Liz Windover, a member of the Elgin-St. Thomas Coalition to End Poverty.

"My basics, bread or buns for the lunches, lunch meat and all those perishable things in the last couple have years have doubled (in price). My income isn't any different and not just mine, but most people's income hasn't double in the last two years," said Windover.

The video on food insecurity is the final of a four part storytelling series that began in 2023 to shed light on misunderstood public health topics impacting communities. The other topics are as follows:

- **The Opioid Crisis** – Explores the local impacts of substance use, centring on lived experience and the importance of compassionate, community based responses.
- **Climate Change and Health** – Examines how a changing climate affects physical and mental health, particularly for people most vulnerable to environmental risks.
- **Youth Belonging** – Highlights how social connection, inclusion, and a sense of belonging are essential for mental well being and overall health.

Van Wylie said the goal of the series is to shift how people think about these issues, encourage a collaborative and informed approach towards finding solutions to support healthier and more equitable communities.

"By sharing diverse experiences and perspectives we aim to foster empathy, reduce stigma, and spark meaningful conversations about the root causes to inform local action."

She added having local people with lived experience share their stories as part of the series.

"We did that to show there are people experiencing these challenges and they have a significant impact on health and wellbeing."

One of those people is Patrick McMahon, owner of The Mill restaurant in Tillsonburg, who told his addiction story in the video on the drug crisis facing society today.

"Alcohol, pot, just sort of whatever was available, then I started using it intravenously. Within a year, I was bottom," he said. "People see this very sick person at the side of the road and they think that's a drug addict. That's a drug addict at the bottom with no help up," added McMahon.

He explained the way addicts are treated needs to change.

"At some of the rehabilitation centres in Ontario you're treated like an inmate. You have to cook, you have to clean your toilet. If you had cancer, you would never have to go to the hospital and do these things. There's no dignity right now. I think lining up at a methadone clinic in downtown Woodstock...there's no dignity, there's so much shame involved with that."

Public health's mandate has changes as societal issues have worsened, including being able to afford healthy food as opposed to informing people what the best choices were.

"In the past the conversation was about access food and eating healthy foods," added Van Wylie. Now we know it's important to look at the root causes like income and income stability as it relates to meeting basic needs."

"The Vital Perspectives series gives our community a deeper understanding of the structural factors that shape public health," adds Cynthia St. John, Chief Executive Officer at Southwestern Public Health. "It's clear that meaningful progress is possible when communities, partners, and policy makers work together, and that is the foundation of our work in public health."

All four videos are available on the health unit's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@SouthwesternPublicHealth>.

Echo



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Local Children's Aid Society in need of volunteers and foster caregivers

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

The Children's Aid Society of Oxford County needs foster caregivers and volunteers to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in the county.

The organization is in constant need of foster caregivers who can provide safe, stable, and secure housing for children and youth who are unable to safely stay with their families. Individuals and couples from all backgrounds committed to providing care for children must be 18 years old and older and complete a screening check involving talking to agency staff, home visits, background checks, references, and training.

"The recruitment of foster caregivers within the Oxford County community is important because it helps children and youth remain connected to the people, places, and relationships that are meaningful to them," explained Jaclyn Fekete, child protection worker. "When children are placed within their community, they are more likely to maintain these important relationships and routines. Remaining connected to their schools, peers, cultural traditions, sports teams, faith, communi-

ties and can significantly reduce the trauma and disruption often experienced when coming into care."

The Children's Aid Society of Oxford County is also looking for volunteers who can either provide on-site childcare while their families are in meetings or transportation as a volunteer driver to take clients to parent visits and appointments. Other volunteer opportunities may pop up depending on community needs.

"Every child and youth deserves to feel safe, supported, and connected, and community members play an important role in helping make that possible," Fekete said. "Whether through fostering, volunteering, mentorship, or simply raising awareness, individuals can make a difference in the lives of children and families involved with the Children's Aid Society of Oxford County."

Anyone looking to become a foster caregiver can contact Anna Baik either through email (fosterinquiries@casoxford.on.ca) or by calling 519-539-6176 ext 336. To learn more about volunteering with the Children's Aid Society of Oxford County, contact Alicia Armstrong either by email (info@casoxford.on.ca) or by calling 519-539-6176 ext 387.

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Finch running for Zorra mayor to replace outgoing Ryan

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

With the current township mayor and Oxford County warden taking a step back from politics, Crystal Finch decided to throw her hat in the ring for Zorra's top political job.

"With Mayor Marcus Ryan announcing that he will not be running again, I thought, why not put my name forward? My first term as councillor has been a learning experience all around, with both highs and lows, while learning what my community wants and needs," she explained.

Finch said she has always cared deeply about her community and has a passion for giving back.

"I have served on committees and volunteered at the school with my children's classes and field trips. I believe municipal politics is the level of government closest to the people and helping community groups advocate for what they want to bring to this community is a great way to build engagement and make everyone feel welcome and included."

When asked what the biggest issues for Zorra will be in the next term of council, she explained every issue is important.

"From helping people understand taxes and how municipal funding breaks down to pay for services and infrastructure, to wanting our roads to be safer. Whether that means four-way stops, roundabouts, reducing dust and potholes on gravel roads, or paving roads, these are issues that affect residents every day."

She added it is also important to ensure the township's volunteer fire department is properly trained and equipped with what they need when called out, while also recognizing the mental health impacts that can follow difficult calls.

"Residents also want amenities such as a splash pad, dog park, or more ice time. Offering what the community wants through parks and recreation is important. We also need to ensure our libraries continue to provide programs and services that meet the needs of the



Crystal Finch. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

community."

Finch said she would like to help people better understand how municipal government works, what is important to them, and the cost implications that come with those priorities.

"Working together with residents on needs versus wants is how we can achieve a community where we all want to live, work, and play."

She added she lived in Zorra her entire life and believes she have earned the trust of the community to continue serving and contributing to our township in a positive way for the residents of Zorra Township.

"The residents who know me personally know how passionate I am about keeping our parks and recreation facilities updated and thriving for all the children and families who use them. I also believe in protecting agriculture while supporting growth in a way that works for farmers and the future of our community."

Finch said as the township's villages continue to grow in a healthy and responsible way, every age group needs to be kept in mind and ensure people can live, work, and build a full life.

"We must also remember that farmers feed our communities, and farmland needs to be protected. Residents throughout the township volunteer and contribute to local community groups when they feel involved and included. I want to continue keeping that in mind while working with community groups, because working together always leads to better outcomes than working alone in separate silos."

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Thames Valley District School Board announces new CEO

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

One of Ontario's largest school boards remains under provincial control but has hired a leader to improve both finances and education.

Interim Director of Education Bill Tucker will be retiring soon and the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) has replaced him Kevin Auckland, effective July 1. He will serve as the board's new Chief Executive Officer.

"A highly respected education leader with experience in organizational leadership, fiscal management, operational planning, and advancing student achievement, Auckland has served Thames Valley students, staff, and communities in a variety of leadership roles, most recently as Senior Superintendent of Program and Learning Services," said a board press release.

Bill 101, the Putting Students First legislation, made some changes to the financial, business and governance side of the sector and as a result, the role of a CEO was created. Auckland explained one of his top priorities is to rebuild public trust in the board, and getting back to the business of providing high-quality education for students.

Auckland's connection to the TVDSB is both professional and personal. He attended elementary and secondary schools within the district before beginning his career in education with TVDSB.

"I believe wholeheartedly in public education and I want to support that. It shaped who I am as an educator and that will be a key area for me when we look to achievement and how we can best support all students."

He added top of mind is ensuring strong financial and operational oversight.

One criticism of many school boards with a mix of city and country schools is the lack of services and programs in rural areas where many urban schools have access. Auckland explained he has experience in many geographical areas of the board area and explained he is prepared to consult across the school board area on what people's concerns are.

"There is a uniqueness to every school and area. I do want to take the time to listen to staff, students, parents, and the community, to hear what they are proud of, what are the challenges or barriers, and what their hopes are. What are their aspirations for each area."

Auckland said he plans on going to Woodstock, St. Thomas and London schools but also rural areas.

"I want to make sure I have a good understanding because when I take all that information back, what I hear should shape the decisions we make because it's coming from the voices of the people we serve. There is a uniqueness to each area and a uniqueness to each school."

As of today, the province will be moving forward with trustees as part of October's municipal elections, despite the fact those at the TVDSB currently have no decision-making capacity. Auckland expects the board will continue to be under provincial control for the foreseeable future.

"I'm pretty confident we will be under supervision for the next school year as we work through some of the areas we need to as a board."

He added it is an honour to serve the board as its new CEO.

"This is a system with extraordinary



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Kevin Auckland has been named the new CEO of the Thames Valley District School Board. He previously attended TVDSB schools as a student and began his teaching career with the board.

students, dedicated staff, supportive families, and strong community partners. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to lead alongside such passionate and caring people, and I look forward to listening, learning, and working together to ensure every student feels supported, valued, and inspired to succeed."

Auckland has served the TVDSB in a range of leadership roles, including teacher, vice-principal, principal, Superintendent of Student Achievement, and Senior Superintendent of Program and Learning Services. He has been widely recognized for his commitment to equity, inclusive learning environments, Indigenous education, and collaborative leadership.

"Kevin is an exceptional leader who brings integrity, compassion, strong or-

ganizational leadership, and significant financial and operational experience to this role. Following a rigorous search process, I am confident Kevin is the right person to lead Thames Valley into its next chapter," said TVDSB Supervisor Paul Boniferno.

"I also want to recognize and sincerely thank Interim Director Bill Tucker for his extraordinary leadership and service to Thames Valley," he continued. "Bill returned from retirement in September 2024 at a critical time for the organization and provided steady, thoughtful, and deeply respected leadership. His commitment to students, staff, and public education has left a lasting impact on this system, and Thames Valley is stronger because of his leadership."

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Local food is something worth celebrating

ETHAN WALLACE

Vice President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

This week, June 1 to 7, marks Local Food Week in Ontario — a time to celebrate the incredible diversity of food, fibre, fuel and flowers produced by farmers across our province.

My family and I farm in the Seaforth area near Lake Huron, and for those of us who farm, Local Food Week is an opportunity to reflect on something many Ontarians may not always see: the tremendous pride farmers take in what we do.

Whether it's a field of corn emerging in spring, a herd of healthy sheep grazing in a pasture, a greenhouse full of tomatoes, dairy cows producing milk every day, or the first strawberries or cut flowers of the season arriving at a farm stand, farmers feel a deep sense of satisfaction knowing that our work helps feed families and communities.

I can tell you firsthand that there is a simple but powerful feeling that comes from looking at a crop, an animal or a finished product and being able to say, "I helped produce that."

That pride extends beyond individual farms. It is reflected in the pride many Ontarians feel when they choose food and products grown or raised close to home.

In some ways, supporting local agriculture is a bit like cheering for your favourite sports team. You want to see your community succeed. You want to support local people. And you take pride in knowing the products you're buying were produced right here in Ontario or Canada.

In Ontario, we're lucky to have one of the most diverse agricultural sectors anywhere in the world. Thanks to our climate, productive farmland and innovative farmers, our province produces more than 200 different farm and food products.

From fruits and vegetables to meat, eggs, dairy, grains, flowers, fish, wine, honey and more, Ontario farmers grow and raise an incredible variety of products for local, national and international markets.

At a time when conversations about food security, supply chains and economic uncertainty are becoming more common, supporting local agriculture has never been more important.

Every dollar spent on Ontario food helps support farm families, local businesses, processors, transportation companies and rural communities. It helps strengthen our food system and maintain the capacity to produce food close to home.

The good news is that supporting local has never been easier.

Many grocery stores across Ontario do an excellent job highlighting local products and making them easy to find. Seeing them on store shelves reminds us that behind every local food purchase is a farm family, a processor and a community working together.

Farmers' markets are reopening or ramping up for the season, and roadside stands and on-farm markets are opening their doors, offering consumers an opportunity to meet the people who grow and raise their food.

Right now, Ontarians can already find early-season favourites such as asparagus and



(CONTRIBUTED IMAGE)

rhubarb, with strawberries soon making their much-anticipated appearance. As the growing season progresses, the selection of fresh Ontario fruits and vegetables will continue to expand.

Of course, local food isn't limited to the summer months. Many products are available year-round, so choosing local can be a habit that supports Ontario agriculture every month of the year.

One of the easiest ways consumers can support local food is simply by looking for the logos that identify Ontario and Canadian products. The Foodland Ontario logo, the blue dairy cow symbol, Ontario Corn Fed Beef, the Ontario Pork checkmark or the pickOntario flow-

er symbol are just some examples that help us quickly identify products from close to home.

And if you don't see local options, ask. Ask your grocery store manager where the Ontario products are. Ask restaurants where their ingredients come from. Ask for Ontario and Canadian food.

As farmers, we work hard every day to care for our land, our animals and our crops. We take seriously our responsibility to protect soil, water and air while producing safe, high-quality food for consumers.

Local Food Week is a chance to celebrate those efforts and recognize the people behind the products. It is also a reminder that every purchasing decision can make a difference.

Oxford County council approves single source contract after debate

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Members of Oxford County council approved a single source contract to complete design services related to the planned renovations for the 808 Dundas Street, the future Woodstock Homelessness Support Centre.

\$250,000 was earmarked for the work which will be completed by JPL Architecture Inc. out of Goderich. Approval authority for single source procurement for the value of \$120,000 or greater is subject to council approval under the county's purchasing policy.

The motion was approved by an 8-2 vote with only councillors Deb Tait (Woodstock) and Deb Gilvesy (Tillsonburg) voting against it.

"We have done this based on (JPL's) extensive knowledge of the building, the project goals, their experience with vulnerable sector and homeless support facilities as well as the operational requirements identified by human services staff," explained Melissa Abercrombie, the county's director of public works.

"Continuing with the same consultant helps us create some efficiencies, main-

tains the project's momentum and it helps target the operational readiness for early 2028," she added.

The county paid the company \$30,000 to have a first look at the site before the deal to purchase the former YMCA closed.

Tillsonburg Mayor Deb Gilvesy questioned the need to move forward with design work on the site when there are so many unknowns.

"Why would we be hiring the architect today before going out to the public for consultation, gathering all that information then coming back saying hey, this is what its going to look like. We need fencing and landscaping."

Abercrombie said items like fencing can be easily added to the drawings, but other issues take much more time to complete.

"Other items, such as the building code changes, those are great costs and designs and the architect needs further time to be able to design mechanical systems and things like that. There are also some restrictions from that building as it currently stands."

She added not every wall can be moved and knowing what limitations exist is im-

portant going forward.

Gilvesy also asked how staff could assure taxpayers the price tag is reasonable, considering it is not going out to tender.

"We believe its good value for money. We have had many experiences with this architect and the have done quite a bit of work in this vulnerable sector," said Abercrombie.

Coun. Phil Schaefer asked staff how long it would take for an RFP process to be completed.

"A full, public RFP would add approximately two to three months to the project," explained Abercrombie.

Woodstock Mayor Jerry Acchione said council can't afford to delay the development.

"I am going to support this, knowing the importance of moving this project forward. Knowing the dollar value, though it seems high for \$250,000, in the grand scheme of things...is quite reasonable and to be expected in a project of this scale."

Coun. Deb Tait said approving the sole source contract amounts to rushing the project through and is concerned the price tag could be much higher than what's being budgeted.

"This building has a lot of problems.

Its got asbestos, its got a lot of issues. I think this should be done properly...and its extremely important that we have public input."

Warden Marcus Ryan explained he too wants public input to shape how the project will look but added he is not in support of any delay on moving it forward.

"I am absolutely here to rush this and to shove this through. I am here for that. I want this done and I want it done fast. The one thing that I think the public should hold us accountable for is what we didn't get here much sooner."

A recorded vote was carried out and the motion passed 8-2 with Gilvesy and Coun. Deb Tait voting against it.

A staff report added the firm has successfully worked with the county on past projects including interior renovations to the County Courthouse. They also have experience in design and construction oversight of vulnerable sector/homelessness support facilities such as the County of Wellington's Transitional Housing Project in Guelph last year and Grey County's Supportive Housing Project in Owen Sound in 2024. They also did the conceptual design for the proposed Woodstock City Hall expansion project.

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Turtle Island Public School Celebrates Official Opening

KYRAH SMITH
Echo Correspondent

On May 20, Woodstock's newly completed Turtle Island Public School and Childcare Centre held its official opening ceremony, welcoming students, staff, families, and community members to celebrate the milestone.

Located at 717 Knights Lane, the school first opened its doors on February 17, nearly two years after construction began in May 2024. Designed to accommodate approximately 850 students, the opening marked a significant milestone for the region, drawing attention from local media as well as outlets from surrounding communities, including London.

Turtle Island brings together students and families from Woodstock, Zorra, and East Zorra-Tavistock, creating a diverse and vibrant learning community.

The ceremony began with the singing of O Canada, led by the school's Grade 1 students.

Student co-hosts Mariam Hmeidan and Manahil Ahmad then welcomed guests and introduced Principal Holly Powell, who reflected on the years of planning that led to the school's opening.

"Well, today is a very big day," said Powell. "We have all of our students here and we have some very special adults here. The school started planning a long time ago, with lots of adults sitting around a table and

making sure that we put what students needed first."

Powell went on to thank the staff, teachers, parents, and community members who helped bring the school to life.

"We have the responsibility to make sure that every day we work our hardest and treat each other like others, which is our school mascot," she said. "We treat each other like family. Thank you, everybody."

Home and School Chair Nadine Smith spoke next, highlighting the importance of community involvement and support.

"We have a passionate group of parents and educators who, like me, are dedicated to creating a partnership between home and classroom," said Smith. "But to make magic happen, we need resources."

Smith encouraged those who are able to donate or volunteer, noting that every contribution directly benefits students and the broader school community.

"I'm looking forward to an upcoming school year filled with lots of ideas and excitement," she added.

A representative from the YMCA also shared remarks about their partnership with Turtle Island and the childcare centre located within the school.

Throughout the ceremony, students showcased their talents through a va-



(KYRAH SMITH PHOTO)

Principal Holly Powell, Director of Education Bill Tucker, Mariam Hmeidan & Manahil Ahmad, Mayor of Woodstock Jerry Acchione and staff unveil the Official Opening plaque.

riety of performances, while guests were introduced to the Turtle Island School Song, which students and staff enthusiastically sang together. Director of Education Bill Tucker also taught students the now-famous "Turtle Island Wave," adding a fun and energetic moment to the celebration.

The ceremony also featured a video presentation highlighting the school's first 58 days, including photos of students, staff, and memorable moments from the opening months.

Following the presentation, staff members were invited to the stage to unveil the school's official opening plaque.

Vice-Principal Kristin Methot

closed the ceremony with remarks reflecting on the significance of the day.

"Before I begin, this is truly a moment in history before us," said Methot. "We are the first few people here in this building. What a joy, honour and privilege that is for us."

Methot thanked those who helped make the school possible and spoke of the future that lies ahead for Turtle Island.

"It is the beginning of a shared journey," she said. "This school stands as a space for every child to feel valued and inspired to grow. Together we will honour the past, celebrate the present, and live with hope toward the future. Thank you."



(KYRAH SMITH PHOTO)

On May 20th, Woodstock's Turtle Island Public School and Childcare Centre held its Official Opening Ceremony.



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Oxford County
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Oxford County community theatre sweeps WODL awards

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Oxford County community theatre groups are well-decorated following lots of wins for Theatre Woodstock's Little Women and additional productions in the area.

Theatre Woodstock's production of Little Women earned four awards for its performance at the Western Ontario Drama League (WODL) Awards Gala in Hanover the weekend of May 17.

Rendall Lackenbauer earned the Outstanding Actor in a Major Role Award for his performance as Laurie, both Katie Raymond and Alison Enns won the Outstanding Actor in a Supporting Role Awards for their performances of Amy March and Aunt March, respectively. A Special Adjudicator's Award was granted to the Parrot created by Jeff Major and voiced/operated by Karen Trick.

"It feels really good. We were all pretty excited to win these awards," said Lenore

Butcher, director of Little Women, said of the wins.

The production also earned two additional nominations; Lauren Tucker was nominated for Outstanding Actor in a Major Role for her portrayal of Jo March, and Alyssa Dutton, the original performer for Meg March, was nominated for a Special Adjudicator's Award for Best Newcomer. Dutton was unable to perform in Little Women during the WODL Awards weekend as she's pregnant with twins – much like Meg in the story.

"We all teased her when we found out about it. We were all teasing her about her art imitating her life," Butcher said.

Butcher also said that she's always grateful for those who go out to support community theatre.

"We work really hard to put a show together. We rehearse for months, we're in constant work with our props people and our costumers and hair and makeup consultations and set builders," she said. "To put it all together, it means nothing if

people don't come through the door and watch the show and our cast and crew poured their hearts and souls into this show for the better part of a year, for some of them."

Butcher said she was nervous ahead of the performance in Hanover, but it was well-received.

"After the show so, many people came up to us with tears in their eyes and told us what an amazing show it was and how much they truly enjoyed it, so it's just such a gift that people come to the show and really enjoy it."

Oxford County's theatre players also collected several WODL out-of-season awards. Theatre Woodstock earned the Outstanding Set Design and Execution Award for Pete Dunbar, Michael Henley-Dunbar, and Nelson Simard's work for Jesus Christ Superstar. Thistle Theatre received the Outstanding Cameo Performance Award for Shrirang Raval's performance as Francis Hinckley in The Perils of Persephone.

Theatre Tillsonburg won three WODL awards for 'Twas the Night Before Christmas, including Most Promising Newcomer for Tori Bremner's performance as Emily, Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role for Angela Carvehlo's performance as Calliope and Britannia Seed, and Joe Sheik earned a Special Adjudicator's Award for preshow and intermission musical selections.

One Act Players Community Theatre won the Special Adjudicator's Award for Theatre in Space of Limited Means for Whimsy State.

"We won the Special Adjudicators Award proving that innovation, creativity and cooperation can create award winning theatre in any space," director Ted McLaughlin said to the Echo. "We want to thank our venue partner St. David's United Church and the entire cast and crew of Whimsy State who made it possible."

The next WODL Awards will be held in Woodstock in May 2027 during the long weekend.

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Khanna encourages Canadians to visit Oxford County

STAFF

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

In the House of Commons, Arpan Khanna, Member of Parliament for Oxford, rose to encourage Canadians from across the country to choose Oxford as their summer destination and support local businesses during these challenging times.

“As more Canadians choose to travel within the country rather than heading south, this moment presents a valuable opportunity to strengthen the local economy and highlight to the rest of Canada what makes Oxford truly exceptional,” said a press release.

During his statement, Khanna highlighted Oxford’s proud agricultural and dairy heritage, summer festivals and vibrant small towns. His full statement follows:

“Mr. Speaker, as Canadians plan their summer getaways, I invite them to beautiful Oxford County. Known as the dairy capital of Canada, Oxford is where beautiful farmland, small vibrant towns and unforgettable experiences come together.

“From the famous cheese trails to our



Arpan Khanna. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

farmers' markets, every road leads to something worth discovering. Visitors can stroll historic downtown streets, enjoy incredible restaurants, relax at the local spa and camp under the stars.

“Summers in Oxford come alive with Cowapoolooza, the Highland Games, Pizza Fest, TurtleFest, classic car cruises, tractor pulls, fairs and community celebrations. Families can visit farms, pick delicious berries and even watch the vintage Harvard planes take off into the summer skies. Oxford is a place filled with character, community and memories made to happen.

“This summer, come visit Oxford.”

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Warriors capture WOSSAA AA silver, Red Devils TVRA Southeast title

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

It's a good problem to have.

But if there is one drawback to being a defending Ontario Federation of School Athletics Associations (OFSAA) AA boys soccer champion, it's the bar is set rather high.

And so, while a Western Ontario Secondary Schools Athletic Association (WOSSAA) AA silver medal is a laudable accomplishment, it took the Woodstock St. Mary's Warriors a moment to process an achievement which did not result in the opportunity to defend their 2025 provincial title.

"We knew we were the underdogs for this game," said coach Vanessa Pye, able to put the day in some form of perspective following a loss to London Westminster Wildcats in the WOSSAA AA final Tuesday, May 26 at Stratford's Festival Hydro Park's Cowan field. "I think we showed everyone we are deserving of being here."

It was a hot, humid day, the Warriors battling their share of knocks, cramps and fatigue Pye added.

"But we just kept fighting... gritty."

The Warriors entered the WOSSAA AA draw as Thames Valley Regional Athletics (TVRA) Southeast second seed following a 1-0 loss to Woodstock CI Red Devils in the Tier I championship game, Tuesday, May 19 at Woodstock's Cowan Park. The Red Devils' Oscar Berkeley scored the game's lone goal on a second-half penalty kick, with WCI keeper Brayden Freeman keeping the sheet clean for the duration.

On the same day, the Woodstock College Avenue Knights captured the TVRA

Southeast Tier II title with a 2-1 win over the homefield Woodstock Huron Park Huskies.

St. Mary's opened its WOSSAA AA draw in Stratford with a 4-0 shutout win over Stratford St. Mike's powered offensively by a Kingston McPherson hat trick. That victory set up a finals showdown with Westminster, which qualified for the match with a 3-0 win over the Red Devils.

As suggested by their semi-final success, Westminster was a solid side, quick and talented credited Warriors defender Zehrnick Egan.

"It was a tough game to defend."

"A good offensive team," agreed midfielder Hunter Van den Akker, strong with the ball at their feet. Despite St. Mary's best efforts to lock them down, a pair of early second-half goals gave the Wildcats a comfortable bulge.

"But we pushed to the end."

The Warriors broke through offensively in the game's final minutes, inspiring faint hope for a miracle comeback. Keeper Dominic Cabral pushed forward to set up the goal on a free kick from half, taking his time to read the Westminster defence.

"They just kept giving me space," he said, noticing teammate Lisandra Da Costa inside the 18-yard box. "Just flipped it in."

Reading the long incoming ball, Da Costa determined he'd try and head it onward to a teammate occupying what he considered a better scoring position.

"It just so happened it went into the net."

Energized, St. Mary's redoubled its efforts through the game's final stages, however the referee's trio of whistles



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

WCI goalie Brayden Freeman tracks a Warriors head ball during a 1-0 TVRA Southeast championship victory at Woodstock's Cowan Park.

sounded on a result which if not entirely to the Warriors collective liking, certainly represented a full 90-minute effort.

"I think we definitely left it all out there," said McPherson, citing a slow start to a 2026 season hampered by injuries. "But we came together for WOSSAA and I thought we played great."

The team photo celebrating WCI's TVRA Southeast title, taken at WOSSAA, will also reveal a range of emotions. A 4-0 loss to Westminster in their opener, followed by a 3-0 loss to hometown St. Mike's in the bronze medal game was not

what the Red Devils had hoped for.

"It's tough not to have a bitter taste in your mouth," admitted coach Jason Poole. "But at the end of the day you have to acknowledge the success of our guys going from A to AA and coming away with a Southeast championship."

"It's a monumental accomplishment." Everything the Red Devils boys soccer program achieved at AA this season was historical for their 100-year-old school, their TVRA championship plaque the first to hang in its walls said Poole.

"So that's pretty cool," he concluded.



The 2026 TVRA Southeast boys soccer champion Woodstock CI Red Devils. (JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)



The 2026 WOSSAA AA silver medalist Woodstock St. Mary's Warriors. (JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

'Lights On' Huskies baseball program takes a major step forward

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

The lights did eventually go out on the Woodstock Huron Park Huskies baseball season.

But not before illuminating a program taking a major step forward in 2026 under a collective 'Lights On' approach.

The term speaks to a response when the team's backs were against the wall, in effect flipping a positive switch toward a brighter path.

"We always talk next play," explained coach John Gregus. "The guys have bought into it."

The mantra and mentality paid off in a come-from-behind 9-8 Thames Valley Regional Athletics quarter-final win over the Ingersoll DCI Blue Bombers Tuesday, May 19 at Woodstock's Tip O'Neill Field. The Bombers belied their seventh seed status by taking an 8-4 lead into the sixth inning against the second-seeded Huskies.

"They kick us in the mouth and go up by four," Huron Park's Coen Roode credited of the starting point for a five-run comeback. "That's our guys, keep playing gritty."

"Nothing comes easily, but keep playing gritty, good things happen when you put the bat on the ball."

Grade 9 rookie Ethan Dawson scored the tying run, hustling all the way from second on an Ashton Yallup 'chalk duster' (RBI double) on the left field line. Huron Park's Fyfer MacDonald scored what would stand as the game-winner fielder's choice via a slow Keigan Westra ground ball to second, beating the throw to the plate.

"I just ran," said MacDonald, reading the play off the bat.

Blue Bombers reliever Ethan Stewart



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Huron Park second baseman Ashton Yallup (right) flags down a high throw, but Ingersoll pinch-runner Chase Freelen was able to steal second on the play.

limited the damage from there, exiting the inning down just one run on a 5-2 putout at the plate followed by a swinging strikeout.

MacDonald closed out the one-run win for the Huskies around a one-out base hit to left-centre. Blue Bombers pinch runner Chase Freelen stole second to put himself in scoring position, but MacDonald added a strikeout, Dawson squeezing the game's final out on a towering fly ball to left, up into the wind. It looked anything but routine with the potential tying run bearing down on home

plate, but Dawson displayed no sense of nervousness then or in the game's immediate aftermath.

"It was moving, left to right," he calmly explained.

"Pretty close," assessed Blue Bomber shortstop/pitcher Kolton Cameron, who also suits up with the Ontario Nationals program. He enjoyed playing with an IDCI team featuring 'a great group of guys' who battled through adversity throughout the season. "Played a lot of close games and got more wins than last year," he summed up.

"It's coming along," added coach Tyler Neeb. "We lost, but on a high note, we played our best game of the year, had great attitudes and stayed mentally strong - something we've been working at all season."

The Huskies would run into a dominant left-handed pitcher from St. Thomas St. Joe's that afternoon who kept Huron Park bats quiet throughout, exiting on the wrong end of a 6-0 semi-final decision.

"The Cinderella run felt just short and the slipper didn't fit this year," said Gregus. "But the foundation has been laid."

The Huskies 6-3 record (a first-place 5-2 tie with Tillsonburg Glendale during the regular season) was the strongest in recent memory the coach continued, establishing Huron Park as a legitimate 2026 contender.

"With strong leadership, a competitive culture and a growing belief in the program, the future of Huskies baseball is bright," he concluded.

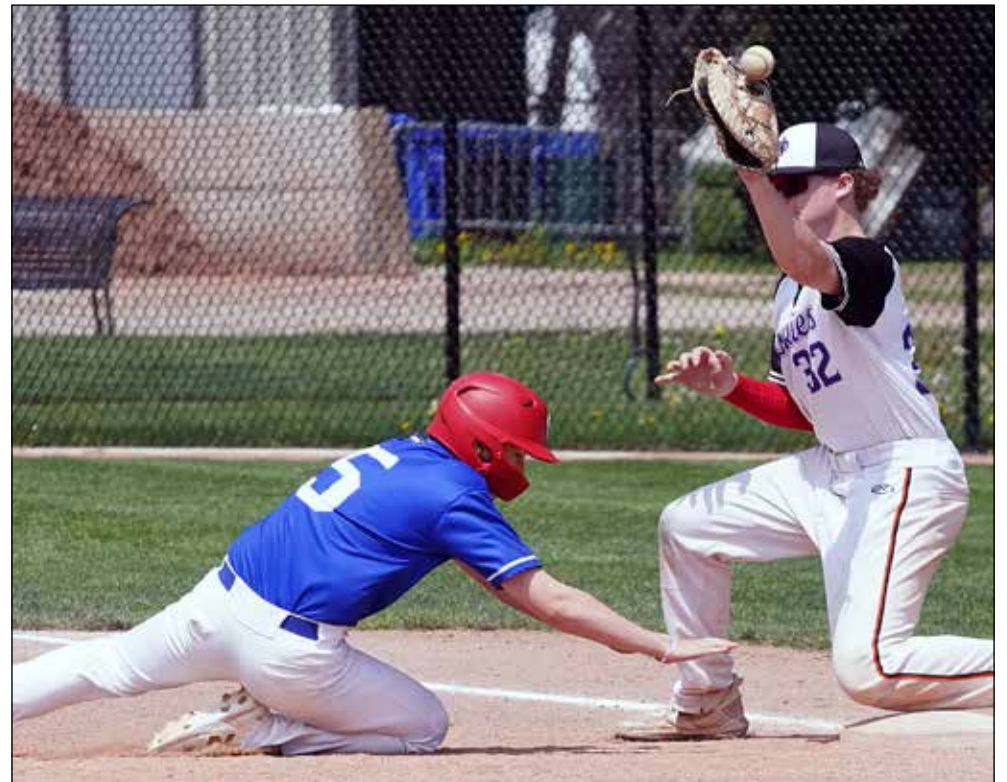
The Woodstock CI Red Devils also celebrated a seasonal highlight on the day, a 16-6 eighth seed quarter-final upset of the number one Glendale Gemini that morning at Dorchester's Royal Field. Pitchers Sully MacDougall, Xeng Ngo-Simmonds and Zack Molinaro shared in the mound victory. WCI would subsequently lose a tight 10-7 semi-final decision to St. Thomas Parkside in their afternoon semi, the excitement of their earlier decision still resonating.

"The win against Glendale was program altering in terms of finally getting a playoff win," said coach Eric Molinaro. "And to do it over the number one seed and defending WOSSAA (Western Ontario Secondary Schools Athletic Association) champs made it that more of a sweet victory."



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Huron Park's Fyfer MacDonald (right) plates the game-winning run ahead of the throw from second base to Blue Bombers catcher Tyson Weber.



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Ingersoll pinch-runner Chase Freelen (left) heads back to the bag as a pickoff attempt goes slightly awry for Huron Park first baseman Keigan Westra.

Knights' McKenzie Howard walkoff home run caps storybook ending

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

A Hollywood screenwriter could not have scripted a more dramatic conclusion to the Thames Valley Regional Athletics Girls fastpitch season.

"Three and two (count), two outs, down 2-1, a runner on third," said Woodstock College Avenue Knights coach Ryan Stafford following McKenzie Howard's Tier I championship two-run walkoff home run on Thursday, May 21 at Woodstock's Southside Park. "You don't get any better than that."

Woodstock CI Red Devils pitcher Lilli Wynberg had gotten ahead of Howard 0-2, but the Knights hitter battled back to full, fouling off a tough 1-2 pitch on the outside corner to stay alive.

"I was thinking hit it hard," Howard recalled of the decisive 3-2 delivery, "but don't try to aim for the fence."

She managed to find it on the roll via the right-centre field gap however, driving the ball between two Red Devils outfielders on the fly. Knights pinch-runner Myla Reissner, who had replaced Sophie White after the former reached on a two-out error, stole second and took third as the throw got past second and into centre field, came home easily with the tying run. Howard followed, running hard out of the box and rounding third with Stafford waving her on, sliding across home plate a

fraction of a second ahead of WCI catcher Lauren Adams' tag.

Even if Stafford had been throwing up the stop sign, Howard admitted she probably would have kept going.

"It was intense," she said of a compressed several-second span which seemed to pass in a flash. "It goes by like that."

"We had the right hitter at the right time," added Stafford of a talented Team Canada U17 roster member, coming to the plate for the Knights with the championship game on the line.

To be fair to Wynberg and the Red Devils, the script could easily have been flipped to an alternate ending. The Red Devils had opened scoring in the top of the third, plating one run with two out and leaving runners at second and third. White scored to tie things at one in the home fourth, courtesy of a Payton Jones RBI. That tie lived into the sixth when Wynberg helped her own cause with a two-out RBI triple off of Howard, her potential insurance run dying on the bag at third.

"I managed to see the ball on that one and it just went," Wynberg recalled.

She worked a one-two-three bottom of the sixth, McKenzie's older sister Morgan coming on to work a four batter, scoreless top of the seventh.

"I've been on both sides," said McKenzie, knowing full well how the other side of the story feels. "It sucks."

Disappointed in the moment, Wynberg could still look back on a graduating year full of fun and development.

"This is an amazing group of girls. Most of them are Grade 9, so they're just going to continue and grow and take the team where we want to be."

The Red Devils moved up from TVRA Tier II to Tier I this year added coach Martha Trepanier, a young, talented group proving they more than belonged.

"We had a fantastic year."

One day earlier, 'Big Red' Wynberg had pitched her team into the final, denying a tenacious Ingersoll DCI Blue Bombers squad through a 6-4 final. IDCI's Erin Plaquet led off the top of the seventh with a triple, plating on a one-out three-bagger over the centre fielder's head. WCI's hurler bore down to deny the comeback however, recording the game's final two outs on a pop up to the catcher and ground ball to second.

"It was close, we almost got it, just a little short," said Bombers catcher McKenna Weber, disappointed with the loss,



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

College Avenue Knight McKenzie Howard slides safely home just ahead of WCI Red Devil catcher Lauren Adams' tag with the TVRA Tier I Girls Fast Pitch championship-winning run.

but taking it in stride. "It was a fun team."

"I'm really, really proud of these kids," added IDCI coach Becky Elliott. "All year long they have fought back."

"A great season. Short, but great."

The Knights got into the final with a 15-14 win over Strathroy DCI, also Wednesday, May 20th, proving sports scripts tend to write themselves, regardless of expectation. CASS got up early said Stafford, who substituted freely, the Knights hanging on for a tight one-run win in an offensive battle featuring home runs from Hannah Rysken (2), Jones and Emma Gear.

"It was a tale of two finals, for sure," said Stafford.

He reiterated his previous contention the level of competition has risen in the TVRA Southeast, a liberal sprinkling of club players throughout the league now including Woodstock Nationals fastpitch representation.

"Ball is going to be better in Woodstock, because of them," Stafford concluded.



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- Free Concert on Broadway

Navy Vets name new bench boss as team cleans house

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

If hockey pedigree counts for anything the Woodstock Navy Vets have made one heck of a move.

The Greater Ontario Hockey League's newest team has hired Andy Bathgate as its new head coach. He is the grandson of one of the top 100 hockey players to ever play the game and will lead the team into its inaugural season in the Greater Ontario Hockey League (GOHL) after moving up from the Provincial Junior Hockey League.

The other Andy Bathgate passed away on February 26, 2016, at the age of 83. He was a Hockey Hall of Fame winger best known for his years with the New York Rangers, though he also played for the Toronto Maple Leafs, Detroit Red Wings, and Pittsburgh Penguins.

Bathgate won the Hart Memorial Trophy in 1959, helped Toronto win the Stanley Cup in 1964, and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1978. His No. 9 jersey was retired by the Rangers in 2009.

"I was blessed to be the first-born in my family so I was given the name," said Bathgate.

"My father's name is Bill so he didn't have that carry on from my grandpa. He's the one who had to deal with all the pressure growing up."

He added when he was growing up, kids didn't really know much about his famous family member, just that he was a big deal.

"I didn't have to deal with much of that. The beautiful thing is he was involved in my hockey career growing up. My dad was my head coach and was grandfather was an assistant on my bench all the way up to my U16 season, my draft year to the Ontario Hockey League (OHL). He wasn't the x's and o's guy, that was more my dad's role, but he was the little things kind of coach."

Bathgate said a dozen players from that U16 team were drafted to the OHL and several of them had professional careers.

"I bet if you asked more than half of them, they would attribute it to my grandfather. He would tell you things that, at the time, didn't really make sense. Then you would go out and try it, and its like, how did he know that? Then you realize he was one of the best players of all time and he knew a lot more

then we did."

The 35-year-old coach runs the family business along with his brothers, a driving range in Mississauga, but lives in Woodstock after marrying a woman from the Friendly City.

"My dad built it with my grandfather. My grandfather worked there until he couldn't any more and then my dad took it over for the last 10 or 15 years and now its my brothers and I."

Bathgate, who spent the past six seasons coaching within the Halton Hurricanes AAA program, explained he is looking to build a team that is successful both on and off the ice.

"Our kids need to be good in the community, not just good hockey players, but good people. We are trying to build a group just like that."

He added he and his wife will be starting a family in a few months and coaching locally was a big part of his decision to accept the role along with the jump to junior from minor hockey.

"Minor hockey brings its own set of challenges. Coaching at the junior level and having the opportunity where every single kid wants to move on to the next level was an opportunity

I couldn't turn down. It's been a great run coaching in Halton and it's a great organization."

Bathgate said he is friends with some of the Navy Vet officials which only made his decision easier. He added he will be in a position to announce the rest of his staff soon.

"The jump to Junior B requires more of a commitment and I am asking my guys to be as committed as me or as close as possible. Just working on the last details here but it should be finalized in the next week or so."

On the ice, he explained there are challenges to being a new team in the GOHL but added there are also some advantages.

"We will be keeping maybe two or three players from last year's team. Everyone who is on the outside looking in knows there will be plenty of opportunity here. We are going to be young because it is going to be tough to trade for a bunch of 19- and 20-year-olds. We can hopefully build an identity that can transfer into the next two or three years."

Bathgate added a few quality players contacted the team out of nowhere which was a pleasant surprise and they were quickly signed.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Woodstock Navy Vets have hired Andy Bathgate as head coach as the team prepares for its inaugural season in the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League

"There is a lot of buzz around the town. The team is doing a good job trying to create excitement. I don't think it will be difficult to ice a team, now are we going to be able to find the right guys, that's the biggest issue. Putting together a squad of 23 new players from U18, a little Junior C, maybe a little Junior B in there, it will be a big-time melting pot. We have plenty of options and hopefully we make the right decisions."

Vets General Manager Darren Young said the team is excited to welcome Bathgate to the team.

"As we continue building our program for the move to the GOHL, it was important for us to find a coach who not only understands the game at a high level, but who also values player development, culture and community. We believe Andy is an outstanding fit for where we are headed as an organization."

Bathgate, a Brampton native, was selected in the third round of the Ontario Hockey League Draft by the Belleville Bulls in 2007 and spent four seasons with the organization before continuing his OHL career with the Plymouth Whalers. During his junior career, Bathgate recorded 180 points in 240 OHL games while competing in two Memorial Cup tournaments. He was later selected 150th overall by the Pittsburgh Penguins in the NHL entry draft.

Following his OHL career, Bathgate played seven seasons professionally with experience in the American Hockey League (AHL), East Coast Hockey League (ECHL) and also played several seasons in Europe.

"With Andy leading our bench, we are confident in the direction of our hockey operations and excited for what lies ahead," added Young.

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June is Seniors Month Ontario Seniors — Let's Get Moving

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Ontario 

Let's Get Moving: Celebrating Seniors Month at South Gate Centre

RYAN MCNAMARA

Echo Contributor

June is Seniors Month across Ontario—a dedicated time to honor the incredible contributions of older adults and support their continued health, happiness, and connection. This year, South Gate Centre is kicking things into high gear with an inspiring invitation to the community: **"Let's Get Moving!"** Life is simply too vibrant to sit on the sidelines. Whether you want to jump into a new hobby, try a unique activity, or reconnect with old friends, June is the perfect time to explore everything our energetic community hub has to offer.

The Power of Staying Active and Connected

Research shows that staying socially and physically active is vital for our mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Regular movement and social connection boost overall health, improve mobility, reduce isolation risks, and increase our sense of purpose.

Transitions like retirement or losing a loved one can make it easy to drift into isolation. That is why South Gate Centre provides an open door to start fresh. Located in the heart of Woodstock, it is far more than a recreation facility—it's a welcoming space where adults aged 50+ truly belong, contribute, and thrive.

Did You Know? Your Grip is a Vital Sign!

Medical professionals recognize grip strength as a

primary marker for overall physical vitality and a key predictor for longevity. A strong grip is associated with lower cardiovascular risks, better cognitive health, and easier everyday function—from carrying groceries to opening jars.

Grip strength reflects your body's total functional power. To keep your hands strong, balance steady, and body moving with confidence, our Functional Movement Class is where you need to be! Unlike workouts that isolate single muscles, Functional Movement trains your body to work as a cohesive team. We focus on real-life motions—bending, lifting, reaching, and gripping—so you stay independent and resilient.

Jump Into Our Packed

June/July Lineup!

To celebrate Seniors Month, South Gate Centre has put together an exciting calendar of special events designed to get everyone involved:

- **Artful Night Out** (Monday, June 1, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. \$45) Unleash your inner artist and jump into a fun, creative evening! This guided session is all about trying something new, laughing with friends, and taking home a masterpiece.
- **FREE Community BBQ** (Friday, June 5 at 12 p.m.) Nothing says summer like a backyard barbecue! Join us for great food, warm sunshine, and even better conversation to celebrate Seniors Month.
- **Witness the Fitness** (Monday, June 8 from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.) Dedicated to movement! Test your grip strength to see where you stand and learn about our independence-building Functional Movement Class.
- **AGM & Strawberry Social** (Wednesday, June 10 at 4 p.m.) Join our Annual General Meeting to hear about the exciting future of the Centre and our expansion. Afterward, enjoy fresh local berries and fantastic company.
- **World Cup Watch Day** (Friday, June 12 at 3 p.m.)



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Members of the South Gate Centre orange ball team share a laugh after a close play at home plate. The local league brings community members together for friendly competition, active living, and team camaraderie."

Bring your team spirit! We are turning on the big screens as Canada takes on Bosnia. Wear red and white and enjoy the game with local fans.

- **Men's Coffee & Fly Fishing** (Thursday, June 18 at 10 a.m.) Swap stories and grab a fresh brew! This month features an engaging guest talk on the art of fly fishing.
- **League Night Showcase** (Friday, June 19 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.) This lively showcase highlights our recreational leagues. See the action, meet players, and discover how easy it is to get involved.
- **Jitterbugs Jazz Afternoon** (Monday, July 1 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. FREE!) Celebrate Canada Day with music and danc-

ing! Dust off your dancing shoes or tap your feet to a spectacular afternoon of live jazz.

A Sneak Peek at Our Amazing New Facility

This Seniors Month carries extra excitement as work progresses on South Gate Centre's massive, state-of-the-art expansion. This landmark project includes a brand-new 12,700-square-foot addition, beautiful renovations, and expansive landscaping designed for socializing, premier fitness programming, and major events.

Everyone is welcome to come and join us! Stay tuned this summer to enjoy delicious food and refreshing beverages outside on our stunning Bob McFarland Terrace, situated right on the edge of beautiful

CONTINUED TO PAGE 19

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Seniors Month at South Gate Centre

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

South Gate Centre recently opened its expansion, allowing it to provide even more services for members and the community.

Southside Park. Planning a stroll through the greenery? Stop into the Centre first to grab a cold ice cream treat, fresh sandwiches, crisp salads, or drinks for the perfect park picnic.

Come on in!

If you've been hesitant to take that first step, our inclusive atmosphere makes it incredibly

easy to jump in. You don't even have to sign up for a program right away to experience the community. Drop by anytime for a warm welcome—the coffee and tea are always free, thanks to our generous sponsor, Wellington Street Denture Clinic. Come for a cup, stay for the conversation, and find out how good it feels to get moving together.

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ADVERTORIAL

Local Couple Finds Peace of Mind Through Downsizing Support

For Jean and Fred, leaving their longtime family home was not an easy decision. After decades in Oxford County, they knew it was time to move into a more supportive living environment, but sorting through a lifetime of memories felt overwhelming.

Their home was filled with family photographs, treasured keepsakes, heirloom furniture, and reminders of the many years they had shared together. With family members living out of town, they weren't sure where to begin.

That's when they reached out to HUGO and Company.

"It honestly felt like someone lifted a huge weight off our shoulders," says Jean.

A Full-Service Approach to Downsizing

"It was actually the retirement residence that suggested we call HUGO and Company," Fred explains. "We had no idea a service like this existed. They took care of everything."

Founded 10 years ago by Monica de Wit, HUGO and Company specializes in downsizing, senior transitions, move management, estate clearing, and designing spaces for older adults.

"What began as helping clients edit their belongings evolved into full-service move management," says de Wit. "Today, we handle every detail — from planning and packing to setting up the new home."

The goal is to remove stress from what can often be an emotional process.

"On moving day, we encourage our clients to enjoy the day," says de Wit. "By the time they return, their new home is completely set up."

One Team, Every Step of the Way

Your Oxford Connection @ The Realty Firm Brokerage, led by Realtors® Jennifer Webb and Marianne Butler, works alongside HUGO and Company to provide a coordinated experience from the decision to sell through moving day.



Above: Seniors can simplify the whole downsizing and move process, including the sale of their home, by connecting with local businesses HUGO and Company and Your Oxford Connection at The Realty Firm Inc.

The real estate team manages pricing, marketing, negotiations, and closing details, while HUGO and Company handles packing, moving, unpacking, home setup, and estate clearing.

For Jean and Fred, having one coordinated team made all the difference.

"We never felt alone during the process," says Jean. "Everyone worked together so seamlessly."

Specialized Support for Seniors

What sets this partnership apart is its commitment to serving seniors with a wide range of needs, including those living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

The HUGO and Company team uses a compassionate approach designed to reduce stress and confusion during a major life transition. Familiar belongings are handled with care, routines are respected, and families remain informed throughout the process.

"Monica really listened to us," says Jean. "She understood which belongings mattered most and made sure our new space still felt familiar."

"We couldn't believe how smoothly everything came together," adds Fred.

We Cover the Cost of Your Move

One of the biggest concerns seniors and their families face is the cost of moving.

Jennifer Webb, an SRES® (Seniors Real Estate Special-

ist) designated Realtor®, is specially trained to help older adults navigate the practical and emotional aspects of downsizing and relocation.

As part of their commitment to making the process easier, Your Oxford Connection @ The Realty Firm covers the cost of HUGO and Company's packing, moving, and unpacking services.*

"We wanted seniors and their families to feel supported every step of the way," says Webb. "Seeing the relief this service brings to families has been incredibly rewarding."

For Jean and Fred, the experience transformed what once felt overwhelming into something manageable and reassuring.

"If we had known it could be this simple," says Fred, "we would have done it sooner."

For more information about senior moving services and home sale support, contact HUGO and Company at 844-511-4846 or Your Oxford Connection @ The Realty Firm at 519-709-6635.

Client names have been changed for privacy.

Moving and transition services are provided as part of qualifying real estate transactions with Your Oxford Connection @ The Realty Firm. Coverage varies based on individual circumstances, property details, and services required. A complimentary consultation will be provided before any commitment, and all details will be confirmed in writing. Jennifer Webb and Marianne Butler are licensed Realtors® with Your Oxford Connection @ The Realty Firm.

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Senior Transition Services

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Ontario 

Seniors in Food Crisis always growing and expanding services

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Jayna Leroux-Hendren, founder of Seniors in Food Crisis, said the initiative

has grown beyond her expectations since starting it about three and a half years ago.

"I thought we'd help a few people. Never thought it would become my life," she said.

Seniors in Food Crisis helps out Oxford County seniors 50-years-old or older facing food insecurity either through delivery or pick-up service free-of-charge. Many of the seniors served are housebound for a variety of reasons including but not limited to illness and cannot leave the house.

"They can't get to places like the food bank or Cycles of Life or places like that," said Leroux-Hendren.

Seniors in Food Crisis serves all of Oxford County and has helped those in Woodstock, Ingersoll, Tillsonburg, Inverkip, and Tavistock. The Facebook group has more than 2,000 members and there are additional seniors not on Facebook who call the organization. The items are either requested or posted to let seniors know what is available.

The organization provides more than food, and have provided hearing aids, wheelchairs, and walkers to clients, as well as helped those moving into an apartment find what they need to start fresh.

There's also a Facebook group auctioning items that are donated to Seniors in Food Crisis with bids starting at around \$3 or \$5. When Seniors in Crisis first started,

it was Leroux-Hendren and a few other volunteers. Now, there are up to 15 regular volunteers packing bags and delivering them to seniors.

"It's just grown beyond what I could have imagined," she said.

Leroux-Hendren encourages anyone looking to help Seniors in Food Crisis to host get-togethers where everyone brings an item to support seniors in need.

"I had a girl who was getting together with the girls that were just getting together for dinner and stuff and she said 'Hey, can everyone bring some cereal,' and she ended up with 21 boxes of cereal for me, so it can be that small," she said.

She's also open to public speaking and spoke at churches, women's groups, and other organizations.

"If people want me to come out and speak to their groups, I can do that and I usually make at least one great connection from when I go out and speak," Leroux-Hendren said.

More information can be found by either joining the Seniors in Food Crisis Oxford County group on Facebook or by calling 519-532-2691.

Happy Seniors' Month!

Let's acknowledge and honour the amazing seniors in our lives this month and all year round.



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Seniors are at increased risk for loneliness and social isolation. Make meaningful connections this week and tell us how it goes at www.LonelinessAwarenessWeek.ca



SENIORS LONELINESS AWARENESS WEEK

Connection matters. Staying socially connected supports mental, emotional, and physical well-being as we age. Take time this week to reach out, check in, and strengthen community connections.

Join Us at an Aging Well Road Show

Learn about local services, supports, and resources for older adults while connecting with community organizations.

Plattsville Lions Community Hall
June 15, 10 AM – 2 PM

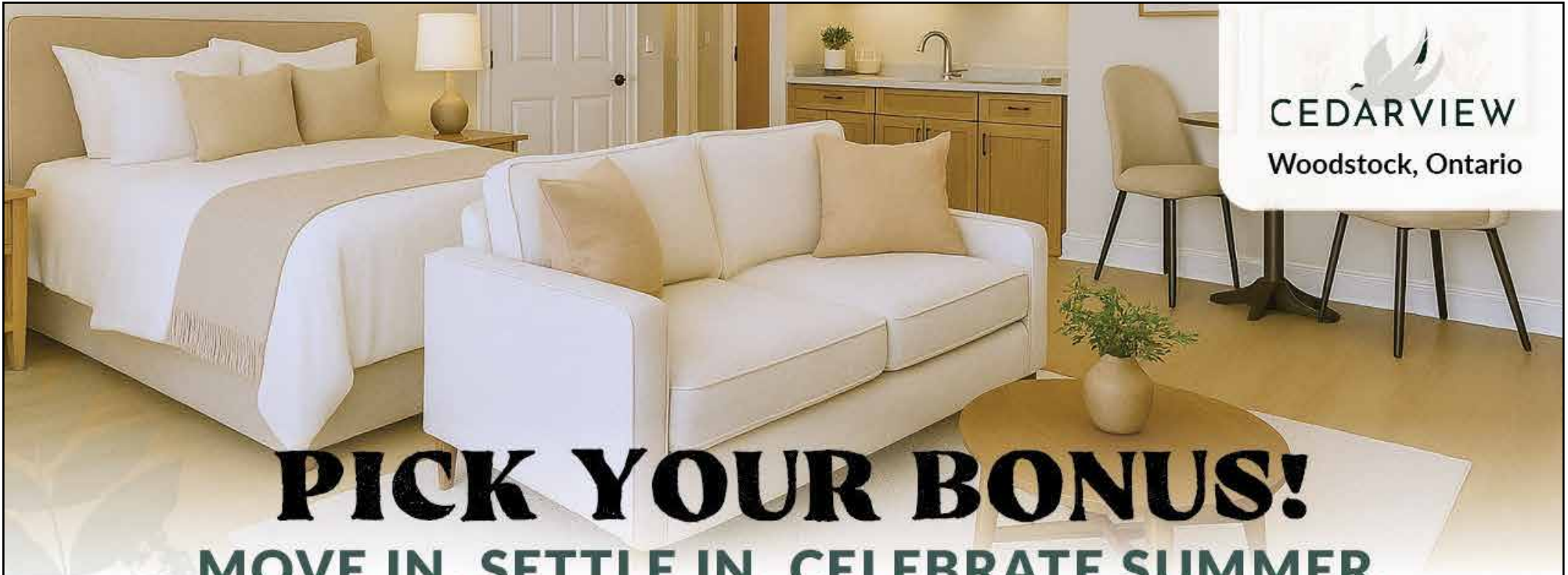
Norwich Community Centre
June 17, 10 AM – 2 PM

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Ontario 

Stitching Together a Legacy: Jean Hillis and the Growth of ICAC

KYRAH SMITH

Echo Correspondent

At 97 years old, Jean Hillis remains one of Canada's most respected quilters and a passionate advocate for the arts. A founding member of both the Canadian Quilters' Association and the Oxford Quilters Guild, Hillis has spent decades helping foster creativity in her community.

Born and raised in Guelph, Hillis began her journey in Ingersoll while teaching at Ingersoll District Collegiate Institute (IDCI). She has been quilting since 1976 and is also one of the charter members of the Ingersoll Creative Arts Centre (ICAC), where she has played a role in the organization's growth since its beginnings in 1972.

The Echo invited Hillis

to take a trip down memory lane and reflect on the early days of the Art Centre.

"It all started when the Ingersoll Recreation Board realized there was more to recreation than just men's sports," Hillis said with a laugh.

She explained that the community lacked a dedicated space for creative pursuits, prompting the Director of Recreation to organize a large craft show. The event proved to be a tremendous success.

"It brought together a lot of people who were all interested in crafts under one roof," she recalled.

The success of the show soon raised an important question: where could local artists and crafters gather on a regular basis?

Hillis remembers that about a year after the initial craft show, the Town

of Ingersoll purchased a house on King Street that was originally intended to serve as a daycare facility.

"The house wasn't adequate for daycare," she explained. "So, all the craft people got together and created a proposal."

The proposal was accepted by the town on a one-year trial basis, and the experiment quickly proved successful.

However, the road was not always easy.

"After three years, the town wanted to get rid of the Art Centre," Hillis recalled.

She remembers the many challenges involved in finding a permanent home for the growing creative community, from structural issues with potential locations to the need for more suitable space.

Then, in 1988, the



(KYRAH SMITH PHOTO)

One of Jean Hillis' gorgeous quilts, featured at her show on May 1st, 2026 in Woodstock. The event featured a wide selection of Hillis' work from her vast artistic career. Picture by the Oxford Quilters' Guild.

group was offered a vacant building in Victoria Park.

"It was originally an office building for the Canada Cement Plant," Hillis explained. "Then

it was given to the Scout and Guide groups, but it was too expensive. That's how we came to be in the park."

Hillis and fellow members worked tirelessly to raise funds for the Art Centre, and with support from the community, the facility continued to grow and expand.

"And it's been growing ever since," she said. "It's been wonderful to be a part of the Centre and watch it flourish. It's a

place where people can come together and show their creative side."

In recognition of her many contributions, Hillis was officially honoured by the Province of Ontario as an Exceptional Senior in 2008.

Even today, she remains a passionate advocate for both quilting and the arts.

"I'm always happy to promote anything quilting or Art Centre related!"



(KYRAH SMITH PHOTO)

Jean Hillis, one of Canada's most respected quilters, at her Woodingford Lodge show in Woodstock. Picture by the Oxford Quilters' Guild.








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Services we provide include but are not limited to:

- Personal grooming and hygiene
- Bathing and washing
- Dressing and undressing
- Transfers, lifts, and other mobility needs
- Meal preparation, serving, and cleanup
- Essential cleaning and laundry
- Shopping
- Escort for appointments and errands
- Range of motion exercises and fitness
- Medication reminders

The Assisted Living program is client-centered and fosters independence, respect, dignity, and autonomy. This is a free program but is based on an assessment by Ontario Health atHome. Please call Henriette for more information at 519-485-2269.

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
1 Popcorn 	2 Total Body Workout Free class	3 Meditation 6:45 - 7:45 Free	4 United Way Day of Caring	5 Treats by SHAR
8 Treats in the Lobby	9 Chat with the REC Coordinators 9:00- 11:00am	10 Chair fitness free class	11 Enjoy some fruit on us 	12 \$10 Friday Lunch and meet some furry friends with Sarah
15 Pickle ball lesson with Norm @ 9:00am Lunch and Learn \$5 @ 12	16 Join us for crafts donated by Home Depot	17 Men's BBQ & Lobby Treats	18 Linda Henderson Healing Frequencies 1:30	19 OsteoFIT Free Class
22 Ice Cream Social	23 Lobby Chat with Board of Directors	24 Outside Games	25 Rosy's Bakery	26 AI session with Dave 2:00pm
29 Popcorn 	30 Home ball Game Free Hotdog BBQ	-Fitness Classes -Educational Programs -Creative Workshops -Bus Trips -Walking and Outdoor Club -Baseball, Golf, Pickleball		-Social Prescribing -Woodshop -Food Socials -Library -Billiards -Card and Table Games

COMMUNITY SERVICES

TRANSPORTATION

Small Fee for Service - Looking for a ride? We provide transportation for older adults to and from errands, appointments, shopping and wherever else you need to go. We have reasonable rates and reliable and friendly drivers. Three days notice is preferred.

ASSISTIVE DEVICE LOAN PROGRAM

FREE - Do you or someone you know require assistive devices? Items include walkers, wheelchairs, bath seats, canes, and more. We welcome donations of used devices for our program.

HOME HELP & MAINTENANCE

Help with daily tasks such as grocery shopping, maintenance, companionship, house cleaning, yardwork, and more. Service providers have completed a vulnerable sector check.

FOOT CARE CLINICS

Join us on Tuesdays between 8:30am and 4pm or Friday mornings between 8:30 and 12pm (30 min appts). \$31.00 for our Centre clinic appointments or \$40.00 for in your own home.

MEALS

Frosty Meals - \$7.50 a meal

These healthy meals use only the best ingredients.

Meals on Wheels - \$7 a meal - Hot meals delivered to your home Monday to Friday at noon.

Tuesday Curbside Pickup and Delivery Lunch - \$10

Call us before Monday at noon to pick up our curbside lunch! Pick up between 11:45 and 12:15.

Friday Take-Out, Delivery, and Dine-In Lunch - \$10

Please call us before noon on Thursday for our hearty lunch, including coffee and dessert. No tip, no tax.

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ontario.ca/SeniorsMonth



Self-Care for Seniors: Supporting Longevity, Mobility and Wellness

REBECCA KITCHEN

Echo Contributor

June is Senior's Month, a time to celebrate the wisdom, strength, and resilience of older adults in our communities. As we age, self-

care becomes even more important, not just for comfort, but for maintaining independence, mobility, mental wellness, and overall longevity. Aging can be enjoyable, after all it is a privilege to live into your senior years.

Taking care of the body and mind does not need to involve anything extreme. Often, it's the small daily habits that make the biggest difference over time.

Keep Moving, Even a Little Movement Matters

Movement is one of the most important things we can do for healthy aging. Regular walks, stretching, gentle exercise, yoga, swimming using bands to stretch at home, using the stairs if you can to practice going up and down, Tai chi, or even simply walking around the block can help improve:

- Circulation
- Joint mobility
- Balance and stability
- Mood and mental clarity
- Muscle strength
- Sleep quality

Heart health

Exercise also helps release endorphins, our body's natural "feel good" chemicals, which can reduce stress and improve mental health.

Just as importantly, movement can become a social activity. Joining walking groups, fitness classes, or community activities helps reduce loneliness and keeps both the body and mind engaged.

Foot Care Matters More Than Most People Realize

Our feet carry us through life, yet they are often overlooked.

Regular medical foot care or even basic pedicures can be extremely beneficial for seniors, especially those dealing with:

- Diabetes
- Neuropathy or neuralgia
- Poor circulation
- Thickened nails
- Balance concerns
- Reduced flexibility
- Ingrown nails or fungus also need to be treated properly

CONTINUED TO PAGE 25

18-HOLE SPECIALS

TUESDAYS (after 12:00pm)
 ● Seniors (60+) @ **\$30** tax inc.

THURSDAYS (after 12:00pm)
 ● 4 Golfers @ **\$128**\$32 per player tax inc.
 ● 3 Golfers @ **\$105**\$35 per player tax inc.

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Self-Care for Seniors: Supporting Longevity, Mobility and Wellness

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

Having another trained practitioner regularly looking at your feet can also help identify new concerns early, including skin issues, wounds, pressure areas, infections, or circulation changes.

Healthy feet support better mobility, reduce infection, increase confidence, and independence.

Exercise Classes for Seniors, Massage Therapy & Reflexology Can Support Circulation and Swelling

Many seniors experience swelling, stiffness, muscle tension, or reduced circulation.

Services such as Registered Massage Therapy and Reflexology may help:

- Encourage circulation
- Reduce tension and discomfort
- Support relaxation
- Decrease stress on the nervous system
- Improve mobility and body awareness

For some individuals, gentle touch therapies also provide emotional comfort, relaxation, and a sense of connection, something that becomes increasingly important as people age.

Hydration Is Essential, Especially in Warm Weather

As we age, our bodies can become more susceptible to dehydration, kidney stones, bladder infections, fatigue, dizziness, and other health concerns.

Many seniors unintentionally drink less water because they may not feel thirsty as often or may assume they do not need as much if they are less active.

Keeping water nearby throughout the day is a simple but important habit.

Adding lemon to water in the morning can provide flavour and encourage hydration while helping many people feel re-

freshed and energized.

Electrolytes Are Important Too

Hydration is not only about drinking water it's also about maintaining proper mineral balance.

If we drink excessive water without proper nutrition or electrolytes, we can actually dilute important minerals in the body.

Electrolytes help support:

- Blood pressure
- Muscle function
- Energy levels
- Organ function
- Hydration balance

While traditional sports drinks can be high in sugar, there are now many healthier electrolyte options available, including Canadian brands like Cira and other low-sugar alternatives. (And it tastes good).

Finding an electrolyte product that works well for you and using it consistently, especially during warm weather or periods of illness can make a significant difference.

Social Wellness Is Just as Important as Physical Health

Loneliness and isolation can affect both physical and mental health.

Senior centres, community programs, walking groups, hobby clubs, fitness classes, and social gatherings all help keep:

- The mind active
- The body moving
- The immune system engaged
- Mental wellness supported

If you have a senior in your life who may not know where to access local resources, helping them find nearby senior cen-

tres or community activities can make a meaningful impact.

Sometimes the greatest form of self-care is simply staying connected.

Healthy Aging Is About Consistency, Not Perfection

Longevity is not about doing everything perfectly. It's about consistently caring for the body, mind, and nervous system in ways that feel manageable and supportive.

Small daily habits, drinking enough water, moving your body, caring for your feet, getting treatment when needed, spending time with others, and listening to your body all add up over time.

Aging well is not just about living longer. It's about maintaining quality of life, connection, comfort, mobility, and joy along the way.

Happy Senior's Month to all of the incredible seniors in our community.



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Ontario 

Seniors continue to be targeted by scammers

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

A recent report from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute has raised concerns about the growing number of fraud incidents targeting Canadian seniors.

According to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, Canadians reported losing a record of more than \$704 million to scams last year, following losses of \$645 million in 2024. Reported fraud losses have exceeded \$2.4 billion since 2022, with seniors twice as likely to fall victim to fraud as Canadians aged 18 to 29.

Much of the increase comes with advances in artificial intelligence, but many fraudsters are believed to be family members.

The Canadian Securities Administrators (CSA) is asking registered financial advisors to request clients provide a Trusted Contact Person (TCP) to contact if they have concerns about a client's ability to make financial decisions or if they suspect a client is being exploited. The CSA has also given advisors the power to place temporary holds on transactions if they suspect a client is suffering from dementia.

There is no minimum age requirement, but it should be someone mature and able to engage in potentially difficult conversations about the client's personal situation. The CSA advises selecting a trusted contact who is not

a beneficiary.

"As part of Oxford OPP's Fight Fraud Presentations, we encourage community members to always seek out someone they can trust when dealing with suspected scams/frauds," said media relations Constable Randi Crawford.

"It is encouraged that if you receive unsolicited contact via text, call, email or social media, that you pause before responding and phone a friend. Having someone you trust to talk situations out with is always a positive at any age, provided they can be trusted," she added.

There are many legitimate financial planners in Oxford County, through banks or private institutes, that are extremely knowledgeable and could be a great asset in assisting with safe, unbiased help with finances.

"People like this are often encouraged as trusted contact people due to their education. If your financial institution does not act as a Trusted Contact Person, they may be able to assist in finding you one," explained Crawford, who added when choosing a TCP, take your time making the decision and choose someone who would notice a change in your physical or mental well-being and who understands your current and future financial goals.

"It is discouraged to have anyone as a trusted contact person who contacts you, unsolicited, offering to be your trusted contact person. Any phone calls, emails or texts offering this service should be flagged as a potential

scam."

The number of different scams and frauds occurring worldwide is on the rise. Some criminals send out mass emails, texts, and phone calls to as many people as they can, hoping those uneducated in scams or at a vulnerable point in their lives would be easy to fool.

"Some red flags to remember are that anyone contacting you who is being relentless and pressuring you for a decision is likely a scammer. Anyone who wants you to send them money, for any reason, through gift cards, cash or bitcoin, is probably a scammer, or anyone who asks you to keep your conversations a secret is likely a scammer," Crawford said.

Police encourage everyone to find a trusted person they can talk to about these topics. The focus should be on having a trusted person in your life who truly has your best interests at heart.

"Whether you choose to have a legitimate trusted contact person through your financial institution or someone you trust to talk to, these are all steps in the right direction to protecting yourself and your hard-earned money against fraud," she added.

Crawford said one great resource the OPP promotes is the Little Black Book of Scams. It can be viewed online or downloaded and printed as a PDF and can be found at <https://competition-bureau.canada.ca/en/little-black-book-scams-2nd-edition>.

Missed an issue? View all past issues online anytime: theecho.ca

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Another Pride flag vandalized in Norwich

STAFF

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

For the third time in just over a year a Pride flag has been burned in Norwich.

Members of the Oxford OPP were notified of an incident of mischief in Norwich on Tuesday after two unknown suspects removed the

rainbow flag from Emily Stover School and lit it on fire.

“The individuals appear to be in their late teens or early twenties. One of them is described as having an average build and was wearing dark pants and a dark-coloured long sleeve hoodie pulled over their head. The second suspect has an average build and was

wearing a dark coloured T-shirt, light coloured pants and a head covering,” said an OPP press release.

The investigation is ongoing and police are reminding the public that theft and vandalism are criminal acts and will not be tolerated.

“Anyone who engages in vandalism or theft may face a criminal charge,” added the release.

Police are asking that anyone with information about this investigation to contact the Oxford OPP at 1-888-310-1122. If you want to remain anonymous, you may call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or submit an online tip at www.oxfordcrimestoppers.com where you may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$2000.

SWOX looks to fill opening on council

DEBBIE KASMAN

Echo Contributor

With the passing of Councillor Valerie Durston, South-West Oxford (SWOX) council declared the Ward 3 seat vacant at its May 5 meeting and is now calling for applications to fill the seat temporarily.

Durston was chair of the township’s Engage and Inform Committee and served on the Salford Community Hall Board, Hilltop Park Mount Elgin, the Environment and Energy Innovation Committee, and the Tillsonburg Regional Airport Advisory Committee. She served two terms in office but announced she would not be seeking re-election in February.

With her recent passing, a by-election is not possible because the deadline in an election year has passed and appointing the next-place finisher from the last vote is not an option, as Durston was acclaimed. Appointing an eligible in-

dividual without an application process is not a supportable option in terms of transparency and democracy. As a result, council is calling for applications.

To be considered, individuals must reside in or be an owner/tenant of land within the township, be an owner’s spouse, a Canadian citizen and at least 18 years of age, and not someone who is disqualified from holding office by any Act.

Interested, eligible candidates are invited to apply to council and must declare their qualifications and participate in an interview/presentation during a public meeting on June 16. The appointed candidate will hold the seat until the upcoming municipal election.

The nomination period to run for mayor or councillor opened on May 1 and closes on Aug. 21. Mayor David Mayberry and Councillor Jim Pickard have announced they will not be seeking re-election.

So far, three candidates have declared

their intention to run for councillor positions SWOX. Pete Ypma for Ward 2, William Van Lagen in Ward 3, and David Mitchell for Ward 6. No one has declared an intention to run in SWOX for

school board trustee.

The township approved new ward boundaries last July, but they will not take effect until the new council is organized after voting day on Oct. 26.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What animal is on the Canadian quarter?
2. What is Lady Gaga’s first name?
3. Which is the only piece of artwork that Michelangelo signed?
4. What type of nut is commonly used to make pesto sauce?
5. How many noses does a slug have?
6. What city would you find the Boboli Gardens?
7. Which rapper set the Guinness World Record for the most words in a single hit?
8. How many continents are there?
9. The festival of lights is called what?
10. How many bones does a shark have?

This week’s answers are found on pg. 35



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ROUTE TO THE PAST

HISTORY

D-Day!

SCOTT GILLIES

Echo Contributor

June 6th of this week marks the 82nd anniversary of D-Day and nothing should detract us from remembering the heroic sacrifices of the young men who fought for and paid the ultimate price for freedom on the occupied shores of Europe. We will forever owe those young men our heartfelt gratitude and we should always feel a sense of awe when considering their incomparable display of courage and fortitude in the face of imminent death.

The recent release of the movie "Pressure", and the upcoming stage version of the same story by Ottawa Little Theatre, offer dramatic insights into the planning of this massive invasion.

In no way do I wish to diminish the sacrifice of those brave airmen, naval crews and land armies who fought over and on the beaches of Normandy. Instead, I want to take a quick look at some of the weaponry and tactics that helped make that first tentative foothold on the European shores a reality.

At the outbreak of any war every nation develops its own system of coded messages, and consequently those nations had teams of people dedicated to breaking each other's codes. Such was the case with Enigma. As early as the 1920s, the Germans had developed a cipher machine for sending encrypted commercial messages. With the Second World War, this machine found new purpose.

Resembling a manual typewriter, the Enigma machine in essence used a series of rotors containing letters of the

alphabet that would rotate in a huge variety of sequences each time a key was pressed. The combination of letters numbered more than 17,500 possibilities before the sequences would be repeated.

In May of 1941, a Kriegsmarine (German Navy) Enigma machine was recovered from a sinking U-boat. Polish and British mathematicians based at Britain's Bletchley Park set about deciphering the codes and were finally able to crack them by using a series of electro-mechanical 'bombs' similar to early computer punch cards. These bombs were nicknamed "Bronze Goddesses".

Nicknames and code words were commonly used throughout the war to prevent secrets from falling into the wrong hands. Hedgehogs, Mulberries and Whales are just a few examples.

Early in 1940, the Admiralty's Department of Miscellaneous Weapons Development, colloquially named the Wheezers and Dodgers, began developing and testing a weapon that could be fired from the deck of almost any ship. Comprised of six rows of four bombs mounted onto steel spikes, "Hedgehog" mortars were used while in pursuit of submarines.

Likewise, "Ash Cans" was the name applied to depth charges which were also fired from the deck of a ship in search of U-boats. The explosive and the propellant both utilized wartime alcohol produced by such Canadian distilleries as Hiram Walker and Gooderham & Worts. Equipped with these devices and employed in conjunction with another early development – "ASDIC" – Allied shipping sunk nearly 250 U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic. Named

after the 1917 Allied Submarine Detection Investigation Committee, ASDIC is more commonly known by its American name, Sonar.

The disastrous pre-invasion attempt made on August 19, 1942, to capture a European port intact taught all the Allied general staff that other provisions would have to be made. What disaster? Dieppe – a name that will forever recall one of the many major sacrifices of Canadian lives to the war effort. Five thousand Canadians, 1000 British and 50 American Rangers attempted to land and capture the French port. More than half of them were either killed or captured.

From this tragedy evolved a stroke of genius. If they couldn't capture a port without damaging it, the Allies would have to bring their own!

What they brought were "Mulberries". Two such artificial ports were created following the initial Normandy landings. The brainchild of Commodore John Hughes-Hallett, Mulberries consisted of a breakwater and outer sea wall constructed three kilometres offshore out of huge hollow concrete caissons. By the time of the invasion more than 200 of these cement blocks were ready to be floated across the English Channel where they were then flooded and sunk. This breakwater created an area of calm water where floating roads known as "Whales" were constructed. Made from articulated sections of steel, these whales led to the permanent piers on shore. Within the first week following the invasion everything was in place and from then on, 6500 vehicles and more than 40,000 tons of supplies were



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

D-Day veteran, Art Presswell of Ingersoll.

being offloaded from ships every week.

"PLUTO" was used to supply fuel to those vehicles. An acronym for "Pipe Line Under The Ocean", Pluto used small diameter pipes to send fuel from a number of British pumping stations along the bottom of the English Channel.

Once ashore, a few of the newfangled vehicles that aided the invading infantrymen were specially equipped tanks. The "DD" was a duplex-drive Sherman tank outfitted with double propellers and a canvas skirt to keep it afloat when launched from offshore. The "Crab" was another Sherman equipped with flails to set off land mines, while a flame-throwing version was appropriately dubbed the "Churchill Crocodile".

Route2thepast@gmail.com

First Ingersoll Market of the Season

KYRAH SMITH

Echo Correspondent

Spring is in full swing as the Town of Ingersoll kicked off the season with its first market of the year.

On May 30, the Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum hosted its brand-new "May Market at the Museum," helping to close out Big Cheese Days, an annual celebration organized by Tourism Oxford.

The event ran from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and offered free admission for visitors. Guests had the opportunity to browse a variety of local vendors, including Rosy's Kitchen, Aftermath Tattoo Studios, Tracy's Craftin' Creations, Wilted Crafts – Curios & Oddities, Maid for Mutts, and many others. Vendors offered everything from handmade artisan goods and baked treats to unique gifts and one-of-a-kind finds. Vintage cars were also on display, giving families another attraction to enjoy throughout the day.

When asked how the museum's first May Market was going, staff were pleased with the turnout.

"It's been pretty steady all day," said Olivia Sidwell, Collections Coordinator at the museum. "We did a Mother's Day market two years ago and it rained, which wasn't super great, but today's been really good! I think we've already had around 250 to 300 people come through."

Sidwell added that interest in the event was apparent even before it officially opened.

"While we were setting up this morning, people were driving by and stopping to ask about it," she said. "We're already talking about doing it again on the same weekend next year."

Local favourites P.B.'s Fries and Beans & Brews also returned to help keep visitors fueled throughout the day.

With sunny skies overhead and plenty to see and do, residents took full advantage of the beautiful weather, spending the day shopping local, exploring the museum grounds, and enjoying the event alongside family, friends, and furry companions.

If you'd like to more information on upcoming events, you can visit the museum's social media pages @ingersollmuseum.



(KYRAH SMITH PHOTO)

Juli Wilts of Wilted Crafts, Curios & Oddities, one of the many local vendors attending the May Market.

Beachville hosts annual dog walk

The 41st annual Pet Valu Walk for Dog Guides brought families, friends, and four legged companions together on Sunday, May 31, for an afternoon of community spirit, sunshine, and purpose at Jakeman's Maple Products in Beachville.

Hosted by the Lions Club, the event once again rallied local residents behind the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides and its mission to provide professionally trained service dogs to Canadians with disabilities at no cost.

The Sweaburg Lions Club kept the atmosphere festive by grilling hotdogs for walkers, volunteers, and families, while Jakeman's Maple Store welcomed visitors throughout the afternoon. The walk followed the scenic Trillium Trail across from Jakeman's Maple Farm, offering a peaceful and picturesque route for supporters and their canine companions.

This year's walk contributed to the national fundraising goal of \$1.4 million, helping to raise, train, and match Dog Guides with individuals who rely on them for independence, mobility, safety, and confidence. With more than 750,000 Canadians living with disabilities that may benefit from a service dog, the need for these highly trained companions continues to grow. The Lions Club welcomed well behaved dogs of all breeds and sizes and even offered "invisible dogs" for participants who wanted to join the fun without a pet of their own.

The event also highlighted the ongoing commitment of local Lions Clubs, whose



Jennifer and Tatum started out on the walk followed by other participants.

volunteers dedicate countless hours to ensuring that Dog Guides remain accessible to Canadians at no cost. Every dollar raised through the walk directly supports breeding, training, veterinary care, and placement of service dogs across seven specialized programs.

The Lions Club extended a special thank you to Jakeman's Maple Products for hosting, the Sweaburg Lions Club for providing food, and the many community members who brought their enthusiasm — and their cameras — to capture the day. Those who were unable to attend can still contribute or learn more by visiting the Walk for Dog Guides website.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

Mother's Day celebrated at Namadwaar Ontario with devotion and community spirit

SKANDHA PRASAD HARIHARAN

Echo Contributor

Namadwaar Ontario marked Mother's Day with a devotional gathering on May 9 in Ingersoll that brought the community together in gratitude and reverence. Women led the celebrations by offering over 100 kirtans dedicated to Smt. Radha Devi, composed by HH Maharanayam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji. The program continued with the offering of flowers by all to the Divine mother and the chanting of the Hanuman Chalisa, creating a serene spiritual atmosphere.

A special youth segment, Inspiring Mothers of Bharat, was presented by the teen girls, highlighting exemplary mothers from ancient, historical, and contemporary eras. The presentation encouraged young women to recognize their potential and aspire to lead with strength and purpose. A quiz based on the segment engaged children and added an interactive element to the event.

As a gesture of appreciation, all the men prepared and served a meal honouring the dedication of women within the community. The celebration concluded with prayers for the continued strength,



Jennifer and Tatum started out on the walk followed by other participants.

humility, and inspiration of all women.

Namadwaar Ontario looks forward to hosting more such satsangs that foster unity, devotion, and collective growth.

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Heritage House Ltd.

Donation leads to installation of wind phone at hospice



A quiet moment was shared as Bill Vink and Brittany Bratt, Manager of Fund Development for VON Oxford & VON Sakura House, examined the Wind Phone up close.

On Thursday May 21, VON Sakura House was pleased to unveil the Bill and Corrie Vink Wind Phone. Bill Vink and his late wife Corrie generously donated \$200,000 in support of end-of-life care at VON Sakura House and made the wind



Attending the unveiling of the Wind Phone were Bill Stephens, Volunteer Chair with VON Oxford Community Corporation, Bill Vink, Janine Jackson, Manager of Home & Community Care at VON Sakura House, and Brittany Bratt, Manager of Fund Development for VON Oxford & VON Sakura House.

phone a reality in Oxford County.

Bill noted that supporting one's community is a value both he and Corrie shared. A wind phone is an unconnected telephone that provides a quiet, symbolic space for people to "call" their loved ones who have passed. The conversations remain private and allow a space for reflection. Wind phones originated in Japan and became a global symbol of remembrance and healing following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Since then, wind phones have begun popping up globally with over 120 existing in Canada. The Bill and Corrie Vink Wind Phone can be found in the back gardens at VON Sakura House.

"The generosity from Bill and Corrie allow us to continue to ensure that end-of-life care is available for those who need it at absolutely no cost to the patients or their family" said Brittany Bratt, Manager of Fund Development, VON Oxford & VON Sakura House. "The wind phone is a symbol of the continuum of care that we offer at VON through our programs and services."

VON Sakura House opened its doors in September 2009 and since then has supported over 3500 patients and their families through the end-of-life journey. For access to supportive care programs, please contact the program coordinator at 519-539-1231 ext. 6299 or email oxford.griefsupport@von.ca.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

Walk raised money for Alzheimer's disease

The spirit of community shone brightly on Saturday, May 30, as residents from across Oxford County gathered at College Avenue Secondary School for the annual IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's.

The event brought together families, caregivers, supporters, and advocates for a morning dedicated to honoring those living with dementia and the loved ones

who walk beside them every day. Registration opened at 9 a.m., with participants arriving steadily—many wearing team shirts, carrying tribute signs, or walking in memory of parents, grandparents, and friends. By the time opening ceremonies began at 10 a.m., the school grounds were filled with a warm, hopeful energy that set the tone for the morning.

Speakers from the Alzheimer Society

Southwest Partners shared stories of resilience and emphasized the importance of community driven support. With more than 750,000 Canadians currently living with dementia, organizers highlighted how essential local programs, education, and caregiver resources are for families navigating the challenges of the disease.

The sense of unity was unmistakable—each step symbolizing hope, remem-

brance, and commitment to ensuring no one faces dementia alone. By the end of the morning, the Walk had once again demonstrated the strength of Woodstock's community spirit and its dedication to supporting families affected by dementia. Organizers expressed deep gratitude to all who attended, donated, and helped make the 2026 event a heartfelt success.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Volunteers Danielle, Cheryl, and Elaine brought extra spirit to the morning as they shook their pom poms in welcome.



A wave of excitement filled the air as walkers gathered at the starting line to begin the event.

Local MS walk a fundraising success



With love and determination, Hannah and Sebastian celebrated finishing the walk dedicated to their mom.

The 2026 Woodstock/Oxford MS Walk brought hundreds of residents together on Sunday, May 31, as the community rallied in support of Canadians living with multiple sclerosis. Held at Unifor Local 636 on Beale Street, the event transformed the neighborhood into a vibrant hub of hope, determination, and shared purpose.

By the end of the morning, the walk had contributed to an impressive \$41,000 raised to date for MS Canada's ongoing research and support programs.

At 11 a.m., walkers set off on the designated route, cheered on by volunteers, families, and supporters lining the sidewalks. Many teams walked in honour of local residents living with MS, while others joined simply to strengthen the cause and uplift their community. This year's walk embraced a hybrid format, allowing supporters to participate either in person at

the Beale Street location or virtually from their own neighborhoods. Virtual walkers shared photos and messages throughout the morning, creating a sense of unity that extended far beyond the event site.

Local teams, individual fundraisers, and returning participants played a major role in the event's success. Many groups used the MS Walk Top Fundraisers Portal to track progress, celebrate milestones, and encourage friendly competition. Donations continued to roll in throughout the weekend as supporters contributed online through the official registration page. Organizers expressed deep gratitude for the generosity shown across Oxford County. They emphasized that the funds raised will directly support MS Canada's mission to improve the lives of people affected by multiple sclerosis through research, advocacy, and community based services.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Team Merry Striders took part in the celebration, sharing the impressive total they had raised for the walk.



A strong generational showing from Team Target joined in the festivities, recognizing the more than \$50,000 their team had contributed over years of dedicated participation.

Drag fundraising in the Friendly City

Downtown Woodstock shimmered with color and charisma on Saturday, May 16, as the Big Drag Brunch Fundraiser transformed Good Times Neighborhood Bar and Restaurant into a stage of glamour, celebration, and unapologetic Pride.

From 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., the venue pulsed with music, applause, and the unmistakable electricity of live drag performance as guests gathered for one of the most anticipated kickoff events of Oxford County Pride 2026.

Presented by Mighty Love Entertainment, the fundraiser delivered a high caliber entertainment experience while raising funds for Oxford County Pride. A portion of all food and drink sales—including a specially curated Pride cocktail menu—was donated to support local 2SLGBTQIA+ programming, advocacy, and community engagement initiatives.

The afternoon's spotlight belonged to Dulce, the breakout star from Season 6 of Canada's Drag Race, who made her

debut appearance in Woodstock. Dulce commanded the room with her signature blend of glamour, sharp humor, and magnetic stage presence, delivering performances that had the audience on their feet.

Sharing the stage was the ever dynamic Richard Hopper, whose comedic timing and bold performance style brought waves of laughter and energy to the crowd. Together, the performers created a seamless blend of artistry and entertainment, elevating the brunch into a full theatrical experience.

Organizers noted that the fundraiser not only exceeded expectations in attendance but also strengthened community connections ahead of the broader Pride festivities. With its blend of star power, community support, and vibrant entertainment, the Big Drag Brunch Fundraiser set a powerful tone for Oxford County Pride 2026—proving once again that Woodstock shows up, speaks up, and celebrates with heart.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



At the Meet and Great table were Dulce, Richard Hopper, Stephen and Katie.

Woodstock Fire Department responds to seven fire calls in two days

STAFF

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

Woodstock Fire Department responded to seven separate fire-related incidents over a two-day period, highlighting the importance of fire prevention and public awareness across the community.

The incidents included a lithium-ion battery fire, house fire, vehicle fire, cigarette discarded in mulch, two unauthorized open-air burning incidents and a cigarette discarded in recycling materials.

No dollar value of the damage in each

fire was provided.

While the causes and circumstances varied, several of these calls were preventable.

“Over just two days, our crews responded to a wide range of fire incidents, from improper disposal of smoking materials to unauthorized burning and a lithium-ion battery fire,” said Fire Chief, Jeff Slager. “These calls are an important reminder that everyday actions can quickly lead to dangerous situations,” he added.

The Woodstock Fire Department is reminding residents to take several pre-

cautions.

“Dispose of smoking materials properly in deep, sturdy ashtrays. Never in planters, mulch, gardens, or recycling containers. Follow local open-air burning rules and never burn without authorization where restrictions are in place. Use caution when charging, storing, and disposing of lithium-ion batteries. Keep combustible materials away from heat sources, vehicles, and structures. Ensure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are installed and working on every level of the home,” said a press release.

Lithium-ion batteries, which are commonly found in phones, tools, e-bikes, and other household devices, can pose a serious fire risk if damaged, over-charged, improperly stored, or disposed of incorrectly. Residents are encouraged to follow manufacturer instructions and use approved chargers.

“Unauthorized open-air burning also continues to create unnecessary risk for neighbouring properties, emergency responders, and the community. Residents are reminded to review and comply with all municipal fire safety requirements,” added the release.

Trucks on display in Burford as money raised for local charities

The Burford Fairgrounds roared to life on May 29 and 30 as the 2026 Woodstock Truck Show brought together truckers, families, and supporters from across Southwestern Ontario for a two day celebration of chrome, competition, and community pride.

The event blended entertainment and philanthropy, raising funds for Special Olympics Ontario and Woodstock and District Developmental Services (WDDS). The fairgrounds were lined with an impressive display of big rigs, each one representing countless hours of craftsmanship and dedication. Spectators spent the weekend admiring custom paintwork, lighting setups, and interior builds while chatting with drivers about the stories behind their rigs.

The show’s welcoming atmosphere made it a standout gathering for both seasoned trucking professionals and first time visitors.

Live concerts added a vibrant soundtrack to the event, drawing crowds to the main stage between competitions. Families enjoyed a variety of activities, food vendors, and merchandise booths, creating a festival-like environment that appealed to all ages.

The truck and tractor pulls served as the weekend’s main attraction, delivering high intensity action as competitors battled for distance, power, and bragging rights. The grandstands remained full throughout the pulls, with spectators cheering on their favorite drivers and celebrating each dramatic run down the track.

Organizers emphasized that community support played a crucial role in raising funds for Special Olympics athletes and WDDS programs, reinforcing the show’s reputation as both an entertainment highlight and a meaningful fundraiser. (RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Rows of big rigs stretched across the fairgrounds, creating a bold and eye catching display.



Doug and Joanne were impressed with the chrome display on this big rig.



Raymond and Ashleigh proudly showed off their farms big rig for hauling produce.

Friendly City gala raises money for the United Way



This group — Pattie, Amanda, Constance, Janahah, Shama, Shaun, Tom, Fadi, Tony, and Derek — settled comfortably at their table as the evening began.

The Great Give Oxford successfully concluded its Casino Royale Gala on Saturday, May 23 at the Oxford Auditorium, marking one of the organization's most impactful fundraising events to date.

The evening brought together donors, partners, and community members for a structured program of dining, entertainment, and charitable gaming, all in support of United Way Oxford's community initiatives.

Attendees were given an overview of the United Way Oxford's current priorities, including investments in local mental health supports, emergency assistance programs, and long term community development strategies. Representatives emphasized the importance of sustained funding to meet rising needs across the region.

Throughout the evening, guests participated in a series of coordinated activities

designed to maximize engagement and fundraising potential. The casino themed gaming floor, featuring blackjack, roulette, and specialty tables, operated on a token based system that encouraged friendly competition while directing all proceeds toward the cause. A professionally curated silent auction and multiple raffle opportunities further contributed to the event's financial success.

Organizers reported consistent participation across all components of the event, noting the combination of structured programming and open format activities created a balanced and accessible experience for guests.

All funds raised will be allocated to United Way Oxford's community impact portfolio, supporting programs that address poverty, housing insecurity, food access, and youth development.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Guests took their time examining the many items displayed for the live auction.



Guests were all smiles as Macy, Jacqueline, and Amanda invited them to try their luck at winning a vintage inspired surprise.

Three local businesses honoured with accessibility awards

On Thursday, May 21, during the 6:30 p.m. City Council meeting at Woodstock City Hall, three local businesses were formally recognized with the Donna Burleigh Accessibility Achievement Award. It celebrated their leadership in reducing barriers and advancing accessibility for residents of all abilities.

This year's honorees included the Crafty Corner Tea Room (represented by Marnie Cuthbert), Woodstock Navy Vets (represented by Karen Schneider and Jim Taylor), and Your Farm Market (represented by Shelby Letang).

The Donna Burleigh Accessibility Achievement Award is presented annually to individuals, groups, and agencies, both private and public, who have made significant strides in reducing or eliminating barriers for people with disabilities. In addition to receiving the award, each recipient's name and a summary of their

achievements are added to the official list of honorees, preserving their contributions within the city's accessibility legacy.

The Crafty Corner Tea Room was celebrated for its ongoing commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive environment for patrons of all abilities. The business has prioritized accessible design, thoughtful customer service, and a culture of hospitality that ensures every visitor feels valued and supported. The Woodstock Navy Vets were recognized for their dedication to improving accessibility within their facility and programming. Their efforts have strengthened community participation, ensuring that veterans, families, and visitors with mobility or sensory needs can fully engage in club activities and events. Your Farm Market received the award for implementing meaningful accessibility improvements that enhance the shopping experience for customers with disabilities.



Outside city hall, the honorees of the Donna Burleigh Accessibility Achievement Awards assembled for a group photo - Crafty Corner Tea Room, Woodstock Navy Vets, and Your Farm Market.

Their work reflects a strong commitment to barrier-free access, customer comfort, and inclusive service. The recognition marked a proud moment for all

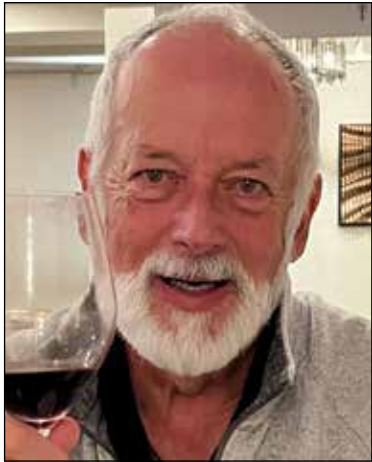
three businesses and reinforced the city's ongoing commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and community well being.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO!

TRAVEL

Tournon steam train takes travellers back in time



PAUL KNOWLES

Echo Contributor

When the Viking company invited us on a Rhône River Cruise, we knew we'd be travelling via airplane and, of course, boat – more specifically, a Viking Longship christened Viking Heimdal.

We hadn't realized that the old cliché, "planes, trains and automobiles," would be true to the max. We flew into Paris, returning post-cruise by air from Marseille to Munich to Toronto.

In Paris, where we stayed for three days, we used automobiles for tours, and added boats to the list, as we took a Seine River cruise. We travelled from Paris to Lyon by high-speed train, and there boarded the longship for our weeklong cruise.

So, we thought we'd pretty much covered the transportation device gamut, but then came the fifth day of the trip, when we found ourselves boarding a much older railway train, a sharp contrast to the rapid ride from Paris. We were spending the morning on a leisurely trip aboard the Tournon Steam Train, riding in heritage carriages, with plenty of steam blowing past as we travelled through a beautiful and unspoiled French river valley.

The official name of the train is

the Chemin de fer du Vivarais. It's in the Ardeche region in the south of France. The full line is 33 kilometres long, running from Tournon in the Rhône Valley to Lamastre in the Doux valley. However, there are also shorter, half-day trips – including the one we took.

It's quaint, authentic and quite wonderful. Riding in these heritage carriages, pulled by a genuine steam locomotive, is a great experience in its own right, but the scenery through the valleys is also spectacular.

There is an intriguing history to the Tournon Steam Train, both as a tourist attraction and prior to that incarnation.

The line was originally built between 1886 and 1890, and it carried freight and passengers until 1968.

Some local enthusiasts believed it was too special to abandon, and so a surprisingly brief, two-year project resulted in the 33-kilometre line being re-opened as a special attraction in 1970. It stayed in service until 2008, when a growing operating deficit and increasing disrepair of the rolling stock forced another closure. But the fans of steam trains are not easily deterred. Although

that hiatus lasted five years, this time, they brought the train back once again. In 2013, they again fired up the steam locomotive, and with that, the current railway service began. All of the rolling stock is authentic, with the locomotives dating back to the beginning of the 20th century.

That's the history of the train as tourism attraction. But the previous life of this railway is much more poignant. During World War II, the Rhône region was a key centre for the French Resistance, as French patriots fought against the Nazis – and against the Nazi-friendly Vichy government. I have written previously about the city of Lyon as an



The steam engine was built in the early 20th century.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

important base for the Resistance. As the war unfolded, the Resistance fighters moved more and more to the forests and mountains of southern France, from where they waged what might be called guerilla warfare against their occupiers.

And we learned that the Tournon Railway, running through the district that was home to plenty of Resistance fighters, was frequently employed to smuggle guns and ammunition for these resistance fighters, with boxes of arms and ammo buried beneath the piles of coal used to fire the engine.

The railway was also used when Jewish children were brought from Paris, where their lives were in immediate danger. They then taken via this local railway to isolated farms where they could hide in relative safety. Thus, these cute little carriages we were riding in were actually important tools in combatting

the horrors of the Holocaust. Many lives were saved from death in the concentration camps because of the Tournon railway. A sobering reality check.

Back to today. The carriages have windows that can be opened, and passengers can also stand on the car's entrance platforms to take in the stunning views of the Doux river gorge, as well as to breathe in the scent of coal fires and to experience the clouds of steam. Your every sense carries you back in time.

And there is an unexpected twist at the farthest point of the excursion we took, from Tournon to the Colombier-le-Vieux-Saint Barthélémy-Plain trip. And no, I am not making up the name of the latter station. The sign fills an entire wall of the old station building.

Because he passengers quite rightly expect to be returned to Tournon, the steam engine has to be dis-

connected from the carriages, and turned 180 degrees to head back the way it came.

This is accomplished by something that looks a little like magic, but is really just good old engineering know-how. The 44-ton locomotive is turned around manually – by one man, who does not even work up a sweat – on a cleverly designed turntable.

Back at the Tournon station, passengers can visit a museum, which includes heritage train cars, plenty of railroading artifacts and – of course – a gift shop.

All in all, a wonderful experience of stepping – actually, riding – back in time.

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.



An aqueduct in the Doux Gorge.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)



The Tournon Railway has a dedicated team of workers, including the engineer.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Riddles

I hold things together without any glue or string.
I can stretch, and I'm often found in offices. What am I?
A rubber band.

I start as a tree but end as something you write on. What am I?
Paper.

I show you yourself but never remember what you look like. What am I?
A mirror.

I'm black when you buy me, red when you use me, and grey when you throw me away. What am I?
Charcoal.

I have four legs, but I never walk anywhere. What am I?
A table.

The more you have of it, the less you see. What is it?
Darkness.

I know a word of letters three. Add two, and fewer there will be!
Few.

I'm all about, but cannot be seen, I have no throat but can be heard.
Wind.

What five-letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?
Short.

How can a man who shaves many times a day still have a long beard?
He's a barber.

What kind of tree can you carry in your hand?
A palm tree.

Sudoku

by PeterS 2026

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

Solution found on page 35

Featured Pet



BUDDY

BUDDY is a loving boy with a kind soul. He's addicted to kisses and hugs!



Nominate your pet to be a Featured Pet by emailing info@theecho.ca

Word Search

MAY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

M	P	K	M	K	V	R	G	D	C	J	X	Q	L	N	D	M	W	V	T
C	O	Z	Q	H	O	N	C	X	E	B	L	D	B	Y	N	B	R	E	O
A	T	N	J	M	K	X	T	U	S	D	Q	D	M	E	C	Q	N	G	R
R	E	H	T	E	T	E	G	F	P	O	B	E	V	J	L	I	X	A	O
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R	R	G	F	M	N	E	K	R	L	U	T	M	W	S	I	K	T	K	O
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UAE LEAVES OPEC
HANTAVIRUS
SPIRIT AIRLINES DONE
LOUISE ARBOUR

MONTREAL VICTOIRE PWHL
EBOLA OUTBREAK
TECHNICAL RECESSION
VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS

CAROLINA HURRICANES
KYLE BUSCH
TORONTO TEMPO WNBA
CLAUDE LEMIEUX

COMING EVENTS

JUNE 5 | 5:30 - 6:30 PM

ROAST BEEF ON A BUN DINNER
Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas St.
Woodstock

Takeout only. Tickets are available by calling 519-537-7698 or the church office. They will also be available at the door. Cost is Age 13 and up \$18.00, Age 6-12 yrs. \$10.00, Ages 5 and under free.

MURDER AT THE DEAD HORSE SALOON
MURDER MYSTERY

JUNE 13 / DOORS OPEN WITH HORS D'OEUVRES
AT 5:45 PM

Old St Paul's Church, 723 Dundas St., Woodstock

Chow down on a delicious TexMex Dinner while you unravel the baffling Murder Mystery. Tickets are \$60.00. Cash bar. Get tickets online at www.oldstpauls.com or by calling (519) 537-3912. Don't delay, seats are limited.

JUNE 28 / 9 AM - 3 PM

OXFORD COUNTY ANNUAL COIN SHOW
Woodstock Coin Club and the Ingersoll
Coin Club

Woodstock Agricultural Society Fairgrounds,
875 Nellis Street, Woodstock, ON, N4S 4C6

Admission: \$4.00. Buy, Sell, Trade & Evaluate!
Kid's Table | Free Parking | Food Booth is open!
Contact: John Tryhub, (519) 608-8446
john@woodstockgoldnsilver.ca

JUNE

JUNE 6 | 9 AM

INGERSOLL DISTRICT NATURE CLUB
LAWSON NATURE RESERVE CLEAN-UP DAY

Meet at the Reserve on McBeth Rd south of Ingersoll to help with trail maintenance, removal of invasive species and painting. This property is solely managed by volunteer hours so helping hands are always appreciated

For more information contact Meg at 519 485 4220 or www.ingersollnatureclub.com

JUNE 6 | REGISTRATION: 10 AM,

WALK STARTS 11 AM

WALK FOR LUPUS

Southside Park in Woodstock

Raffle prizes, 50/50 draws and refreshments! We are walking to raise awareness about Lupus and to raise funds for research and to find a cure for Lupus. Donations also help to provide resources for those living with Lupus.

JUNE 7 | 8 AM - 1 PM

KIDS DU

Southside Park, Woodstock

Kids Du is back for its 9th season. This event is a non-competitive run-bike-run for kids aged 3 to 13 with a focus on participation and having FUN! All courses are geared to the various age groups as set by Triathlon Ontario. Kids Du is held in Southside Park, Woodstock. Register before May 19 to guarantee a tshirt. For information and online registration visit woodstocktriathlonclub.ca

JUNE 6 - SEPT 19 | SATURDAYS | 10 AM - 4 PM

PLATTSVILLE & DISTRICT HERITAGE SOCIETY

Join us for our 2026 exhibit - HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS THAT BRING US TOGETHER at the Archive & Museum at Chesterfield, 816661 Oxford Rd 22, Bright (June 20 - visit us at Plattsville 175). Donations accepted. Refreshments. For private viewing email plattsvilledistrictheritage@gmail.com or call 519.535.1417.

JUNE 8 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM

FOOD TRUCKS AT GRACE UNITED CHURCH
TAVISTOCK

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Berlin 95, Los Rolling Tacos, Born2Eat, Fo Cheezy
Donations to Camp Bimini

JUNE 9 & 23 | 1 PM

SACRED HEART PARISH EUCHRE

Henderson Hall, 133 John Street Ingersoll

We invite everyone to join us for a Euchre afternoon. Refreshments provided.

JUNE 15 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM

FOOD TRUCKS AT GRACE UNITED CHURCH
TAVISTOCK

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Wild Boar, El Milagro, Pablas Street of India, Beavertails
Donations to Grace United Church

JUNE 19 | 7 - 9 PM

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRE

Old St.Paul's Church, Parish Hall, 723 Dundas St Woodstock

Snacks provided. All skill levels welcome. No cost.

JUNE 20 | SATURDAYS | 10 AM - 10 PM

PLATTSVILLE'S 175 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Plattsville Park and Arena

10 am Firefighter Breakfast, Heritage Displays 10-4, Portraits of Honour, 12 noon Parade, 1pm Opening Ceremony, 1-4 Car & Tractor Show, 2 thru 10 pm Live Music & Entertainment, Kids Activities, Vendor Market, Lions BBQ and the grand finale, an 18 minute Drone Show at 9:45 pm. Free admission. Fun for all ages. Thanks to our Platinum Sponsors - Canadian Heritage and North Blenheim Mutual Insurance celebrating 165 years. www.plattsvilledistrictheritagesociety.com

JUNE 22 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM

FOOD TRUCKS AT GRACE UNITED CHURCH
TAVISTOCK

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Berlin 95, Born2Eat, El Milagro, Ish n Chips
Donations to TAP, Tavistock Assistance Program

JUNE 27 | 9 AM - 3 PM

THIRD ANNUAL VILLAGES OF SALLY CREEK
CHARITY CAR SHOW

Community Center -330 Lakeview Rd, Woodstock

Door prizes, Touch A Truck, Todd's Dogs, DJ. All proceeds to Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO). Spectator admission: free, Vehicle admission: \$10 Info: (519) 290-1173, email: larry.e.oliver@gmail.com

JUNE 27 (RAIN DATE: SUNDAY, JUNE 28) | 9 AM - 4 PM

FLY DAY & OPEN HOUSE

Tillsonburg Regional Airport, 244411 Airport Road,
Tillsonburg

FREE Admission. Come fly with us! Join us for our June Open House and Fly Day. We welcome everyone to this FREE-admission, family-friendly outdoor event that offers aviation enthusiasts the opportunity to see our collection of vintage Harvard aircraft up close, tour our hangars, explore our restoration projects, purchase souvenirs, and best of all, go for a flight! (additional cost for flights). Come explore North America's largest fleet of Harvard aircraft and what the volunteers are doing to keep the history and legacy of these Second World War warbirds alive. While pre-booking flight experiences is not necessary, it is recommended. Contact crewflights@harvards.com to ensure your seat! In case of inclement weather, check our Facebook page for RAIN DATE updates.

JUNE 29 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM

FOOD TRUCKS AT GRACE UNITED CHURCH
TAVISTOCK

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Pablas Street of India, Swat, Fo Cheezy
Donations to TAP, Tavistock Assistance Program

JULY

JULY 6 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM

FOOD TRUCKS AT GRACE UNITED CHURCH
TAVISTOCK

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Siggi's, Los Rolling Tacos, Berlin 95
Donations to Camp Bimini

JULY 6-10 | 9 AM - 12:30 PM

BASKETBALL POWER CAMP

Huron Park Baptist Church, 199 Berwick St, Woodstock, ON
N4S 7L6

Ages 5 to 14. Please call 519-421-4722 for more information.

JULY 13 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM

FOOD TRUCKS AT GRACE UNITED CHURCH
TAVISTOCK

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

SWAT, Pablas Street of India, Beavertails
Donations to Grace United Church

ONGOING CLASSES, CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS

EVERY OTHER FRIDAY | 1 - 4 PM

SPRING INTO THE INGERSOLL COUNTRY MUSIC
JAMBOREE

Masonic Hall, 190 Thames St. S. Ingersoll

Join us, walk ins welcome. Qualifications - love 50-70's country music. Perform, listen, dance & enjoy! May 15 & 29, June 5 & 19.

3RD TUE. OF MONTH | 6:30 - 8:30 PM

CAREGIVER CONNECTION

Revel Realty Woodstock, 111 Huron Street (Virtual/hybrid options available)

Are you worried about your child or youth? Parents and Caregivers for Mental Health (PCMH) is here to listen, support, and walk alongside you on this journey. Our free Caregiver Connection peer support groups offer parents and caregivers a community of support. Can't make it in person? Join one of our virtual or hybrid groups! Visit family.cmho.org or email oxfordcounty@pcmh.ca for more information.

EVERY FRIDAY | 1 PM

TILLSONBURG DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB

Tillsonbur Senior Centre, 45 Hardy Ave, Tillsonburg

Don't have a partner? Come anyway and we will match you up with someone. For more information, visit their Facebook page: [TburgBridge](https://www.facebook.com/TburgBridge).

2ND TUES. OF MONTH (SEPT. TO MAY) | 2 - 4 PM

4TH TUES. OF MONTH (SEPT. TO MAY) | 7 - 9 PM

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock
Ontario N4S 1C7

If you have never belonged to a stamp club, now's the time. Meet new friends, grow your knowledge and collection. Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com. Website: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>

LAST TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH | 10 AM - 12 PM

MONTHLY VON BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC

Ingersoll Pharmasave, 19 King St. E., Ingersoll

Last Tuesday of every Month.

3RD WED. OF MONTH

COLOURING THROUGH GRIEF

Caring Hearts Support Network: St. David's United Church,
190 Springbank Ave., Woodstock ON

One time fee of \$15. Registration is required.

Call 519-536-3370. Check out website

www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com

3RD WED. OF MONTH | 6:30 - 8:30 PM

PEER SUPPORT GROUP FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

21 Wellington St., Woodstock
(Virtual options available)

PCMH is a peer support program providing support to parents and caregivers across Ontario with lived experience raising children and youth with mental health challenges. For more information, please visit family.cmho.org or oxfordcounty@pcmh.ca. We are also on Facebook: Parents for Children's Mental Health ~ Oxford County

VON OXFORD SUPPORTIVE CARE PROGRAMS

Navigating any form of grief can feel overwhelming; however, with the right support, guidance, and education, individuals can discover a pathway to healing.

VON Oxford Supportive Care Programs offer assistance for grief stemming from various circumstances, such as the death of someone, caregiving, serious illness diagnoses, and life transitions. Through education, connection, and compassion, our programs create a safe space for individuals to explore their emotions and learn effective coping mechanisms during the grieving process

Contact us today to learn more about VON Oxford Supportive Care Programs. Email: oxford.griefsupport@von.ca, Phone: 1-888-866-7518. All Programs are Free-of-charge.

COMING EVENTS

4TH WED. OF MONTH | 1 - 2:30 PM
GRIEF SUPPORT FOR MAID RELATED LOSS

Thamesford Library, 165 Dundas St., Thamesford
 This monthly in-person grief support group for loss related to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) offers a compassionate, safe space to explore this unique loss. The group will meet the **4th Wednesday of the month from 1 – 2:30 p.m.** at the Thamesford Library, 165 Dundas St., Thamesford. The group is free of charge and pre-registration is requested. To register or inquire about an evening group, contact Deb McKay at 519-866-3016 or email faye@compassionategriefsupport.ca.

OXFORD COUNTY DIABETES EDUCATION PROGRAM

Are you looking for support with your Diabetes? Our Team of Registered Nurses, Registered Dietitians and a Social Worker is here to support YOUR goals. We can help with medication adjustments, lifestyle and diet changes, stress management, weight reduction strategies and more. Appointments are available at Alexandra Hospital Ingersoll and Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital and by phone. **SELF REFERRALS ARE WELCOME.** Please call 519-485-9611 to book an appointment. Let's work together!

THE OPTIMIST CLUB OF OXFORD COUNTY

The Optimists bring out the best in Youth, Community, and Themselves. If anyone is interested in coming out to meet us and learn more about us please email brenda7621@outlook.com

THE LIONS CLUB OF WOODSTOCK

The Lions Club of Woodstock has been serving the community and Oxford County with kindness and generosity since 1931. The Lions always place the needs of neighbours and communities first. Through the dedication and hard work of our volunteer members, we are serving those in need together. If you are interested in becoming a member or simply wish to learn more by attending one of our monthly meetings, please email Steve Iorio at steveiorio4@gmail.com for more information.

OXFORD COUNTY BRANCH OF ONTARIO ANCESTORS

Are you looking to start a summer pastime? Are you interested in your family history? Oxford Branch has an extensive collection of family history and genealogical resources that can help you. **Come visit our Resource Centre at 82 Light Street, Courthouse Square, Woodstock. We are open Tuesdays to Thursdays 10:00 am to 4:00 pm**
 Volunteers are ready to help you get started or help you research for missing information. You can also connect with us on the web at <https://oxford.ogs.on.ca>. We are dedicated to supporting and promoting genealogical research in Oxford County. Hope to see you through the summer!

**BEACHVILLE LEGION EVENTS:
 434852 ZorraLine, Beachville**

WEDNESDAYS | 7-8 PM
GENTLE CHAIR YOGA

WEDNESDAYS | 7:30 PM
HUMP DAY DARTS

THURSDAYS | 7 PM
EUCHRE

JUNE 11 | 7 - 8 PM
LINE DANCING

JUNE 11 | 8:15 - 9:15 PM
WEST COAST SWING DANCING

FRIDAYS | 8 PM (CLOSED MAY 15)

DARTS

JUNE 6 | 1 - 4 PM
THAMES VALLEY BLUEGRASS AND OLD TIME COUNTRY PICKERS
 Open Mic (acoustic only). Come enjoy the music!

JUNE 10 | 4:30 - 6 PM
OX ON THE RUN MOBILE LIBRARY

JUNE 12 | 5:30 PM
CHICKEN PARMESAN WITH PASTA DINNER

**ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 55 EVENTS:
 642 Dundas St, Woodstock, ON**

COME PAINT WITH US!

Our Legion is Celebrating 100 years of Service to our Veterans community and the City of Woodstock. Help us honour them with a community mural project. Anyone interested in participating is welcome. Youth taking part in our community mural project, will be credited with community hours. We are also looking for donations to off-set the of cost to the necessary supplies and equipment required for this community project! For details contact: rcbranch55@rogers.com

MONDAYS CADETS

Ending for the season on June 15th.

JUNE 6 D-DAY

JUNE 6 | 3 PM
MEAT DRAW

JUNE 9 | 7:30 PM
BRANCH GENERAL MEETING

JUNE 13 | 4:30 - 6 PM
WING NIGHT
 One price for wings, different price w/fries per-order and pay by June June 10th.

JUNE 20 | 7 PM - 12 AM
SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER 70S, 80'S, & 90S DANCE

Tickets are available. DJ Wolfeman is the Entertainment. Canteen will be closed after 6:30pm - there will be prizes that evening. For more details contact the Legion.

JUNE 28 | 5 - 6 PM
STEAK BBQ (MUSHROOMS OR ONIONS) WITH POTATO SALAD & DEVIL EGGS & SIDE SALAD

Dessert lemon pie, per-order and pay NO LATER June 20th, NO WALK INS. Contact the Legion for more details.

FRIDAYS | 7 - 9 PM
COUNTRY LINE DANCING

Dessert extra. Pre-order and pay by May 19th. please call the Legion 519-537-3112/519-539-3401 or email rcbranch55@rogers.com to order.

FRIDAYS | 7:30 PM
CRIBBAGE

SATURDAYS | 7 - 11 PM
EVENING ENTERTAINMENT:

JUNE 6 - BACK - TO - BACK

JUNE 13 - DJ KELLY

JUNE 20 - DJ WOLFEMAN
 Until 12 am (must buy a ticket for this)

JUNE 27 - CHUCK MOYER'S 60TH MUSIC ANNIVERSARY
 Open to the public.

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	
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55					56				57			58
59					60				61			
62					63				64			

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Egyptian bull-god
- 5. A young canine
- 8. Cologne
- 11. Fictional British P.I.
- 13. Midway between northeast and east
- 14. A place to shop
- 15. Minneapolis suburb
- 16. Single lens reflex
- 17. NY Mets great Tommie
- 18. Informal loan clubs
- 20. Habitual twitching
- 21. Holm oak
- 22. Willing to consent or submit
- 25. In an early way
- 30. Made possible
- 31. Language in Ghana
- 32. Relating to one's birth
- 33. Deep-bodied fishes
- 38. Defunct European currency
- 41. Small American songbird
- 43. One from L.A.
- 45. After tenth
- 47. Hillside
- 49. Red deer
- 50. Partner to "oohed"
- 55. Indian musical pattern
- 56. Israeli city ___ Aviv
- 57. Golden peas plant
- 59. Breezed through
- 60. Midway between east and southeast
- 61. Frameworks
- 62. Danish krone
- 63. Fall back
- 64. Influential Korean leader

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Bridge building degree
- 2. Expression of sorrow or pity
- 3. Large, stocky lizard
- 4. Turkish leader title
- 5. Nag
- 6. Blank
- 7. Closely woven cotton fabric
- 8. A nice shot in golf
- 9. Away from wind
- 10. Evergreen shrub genus
- 12. Large African antelope
- 14. Something you receive
- 19. Satisfy
- 23. Wet dirt
- 24. No longer here
- 25. Writing utensil
- 26. Ribonucleic acid
- 27. Consume food
- 28. Licensed for Wall Street
- 29. Alternative forms of a gene
- 34. Buddy
- 35. We all do it
- 36. Chicken
- 37. No seats available
- 39. Yearned to possess
- 40. Ineffectual
- 41. Explosive
- 42. Turkish title
- 44. Worn near the foot
- 45. Impatient
- 46. Set an example for others
- 47. Actor Pitt
- 48. Instrument of torture
- 51. Swiss river
- 52. Grayish white
- 53. A way to print
- 54. Storied college hoops program
- 58. Midway between south and southeast

Solution found on page 35

CLASSIFIEDS

YARD SALE

June 6, 2026

YARD SALE AT GRACE UNITED CHURCH
TAVISTOCK

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Dishes, books, jewelry, games, toys, knick-knacks, silverware, craft supplies, lamps, materials, china, decorations, small furniture, vintage and collectibles table, electrical appliances, plants, and garden décor items

GARAGE SALE

June 6 & 7, 8 am - 2 pm

518 John St. Hickson

Signs will be up, street is west side of school.

Huge Garage Sale: Purging - Downsizing : Patio umbrellas, stands, table, smaller furniture(old wood teacher's chairs),household items, antiques puzzles, tools & garden tools & many more items.

HIRING



We are looking to fill
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Email resume- denise@fraserpaving.ca

or call 519-271-5690

www.fraserpaving.ca

TREES

For Sale: Shade Trees; Maples, Oaks, Birch, Beech, Honey Locusts, Elms, Magnolia, Hydrangea Tree, Tulip Tree, Crab apples, Ivory Silk Lilac, Chanticleer Pear, Golden Weeping Willows and more. Apples, Pears, Peaches, Plums, Apricots, Nectarine, Blueberry, Haskap etc. Lots of healthy strong Spruce, Cedars and White Pine for your privacy hedges and windbreaks. Hundred of flowering shrubs.

Reg Hours 7am- 6pm Mon-Sat at Martins Nursery c/o Emanuel Martin. 42661 Orangehill Rd., Wroxeter, ON

WANT TO BUY

Wanting to buy a riding lawnmower

Running or non-running condition

519-495-6676

Echo

OBITUARY

MARLENE (MESSENGER) KENNEDY



With profound love and immeasurable sadness, we announce the peaceful passing of Marlene Kennedy on February 9, surrounded by her family and wrapped in the love she gave so freely throughout her life.

Marlene was a woman of quiet strength, tenacity, and remarkable resilience — the kind of person who met life's challenges with grace and its joys with open arms. An avid crafter, she poured her creativity into everything she touched. Whether she was knitting, sewing, or creating something beautiful from nothing at all, her hands were always busy and her heart always full.

Her sunroom was her sanctuary — a warm, light-filled place where she and Judd watched the birds they adored and found peace in the simple rhythms of nature. She loved camping and fishing, finding joy in the outdoors and in the moments shared with the people she loved most.

Above all, Marlene treasured her life-long love, Judd. Their bond was deep, enduring, and unwavering — a partnership built on devotion, laughter, and a lifetime of shared memories. Judd misses her with a love as profound as the one they built together.

Marlene was endlessly proud of her family and held her grandchildren close to her heart. Wyatt Kennedy, Joe Stinson, and Lilly Stinson brought her joy beyond measure, and she cherished every moment spent with them.

She is survived by her loving husband Judd; her son Bill (April) Kennedy; her daughter Lissa (Stan) Stinson; and her adored grandchildren. Her family will forever carry her strength, her humour, her kindness, and her love within them.

The family extends a heartfelt thank you to sister Pat and Doug Duncan, for their thoughtfulness, compassion, and unwavering support during this time. Also remembered and loved by nieces, Leann and Grace Duncan. Deep gratitude is also extended to the doctors and nurses in palliative care at Four Counties Health Care in Newbury for their care and compassion.

Marlene's legacy lives on in the love she gave, the beauty she created, and the family she shaped. She will be missed beyond words and remembered with every sunrise, every bird song, and every moment of quiet joy she taught us to appreciate.

The Celebration of Life for Marlene is on June 27th from 1-3., at the Rodney Recreation Centre, 135 Queen St., Rodney Ontario. N0L 2C0.

OBITUARY

BRENDA JOYCE PLUMMER - DUIVERMAN



Born May 9, 1942 at Woodstock General Hospital, Woodstock, Ontario to Arthur W. Plummer (Apr. 1948) and Ruby "Tillie" M. Plummer (Cayley) (1992). Brenda passed peacefully with the love of family and a longtime friend by her side, on Saturday May, 16th, 2026 at Woodingford Lodge in Ingersoll.

Attended Broadway Public, Chapel Public, Central Senior Public and Huron Park Secondary School in Woodstock, and Westdale Secondary School in Hamilton before taking the Registered Practical Nurses training and worked at St. Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton.

Married Theodorus (Leo) J. Duiverman of the Hague, Netherlands on October 24, 1964 in Melrose United Church in Hamilton. They lived in Labrador City, Labrador for 19 years before returning to Woodstock ON.

Upon their return, Brenda started volunteering and never stopped. First with VON and then the Woodstock General Hospital in Palliative Care. In 1997 she did the initial leg work, then recruited help and started Comic Relief, the humour program at the hospital. Helped organize Care Clown courses that graduated 107 clowns and Clown Conventions for some 10 years and continued clowning as "Sassy Sunflower" until 2013.

She had a passion for laughter and humour and loved to tell stories. " Her favourites were about some absurd thing she had done herself. One year, her New Years resolution was to, everyday for a year, make whoever, she met from day to day, a relative, friend, or stranger... smile, chuckle, or laugh out loud. In a journal, she indiscreetly kept track and her success rate for the year was over and above 100 %. Obviously, she had been doing this for a very long time, perhaps decades and didn't realize it. "

Cremation has taken place. There will be an interment of Brenda's ashes at Hillview Cemetery in Woodstock on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at 1pm. A Celebration of Brenda's wonderful life will take place at Glendinning Funeral Home – Smith LeRoy Chapel, 69 Wellington St. N., Woodstock at 2pm.

You take yourselves to dinner, a movie or to an event of your choice and have a great time and laugh and be happy in a rainbow of her memories!!! Also, in a light-hearted way, another wish was...and she did...write this tribute herself. She always encouraged everyone to take a good, long look at the first three letters of the word 'FUNeral' and always maintained that we should be pronouncing it accordingly.

"Good night my Dear Family and my Dear Friends and thanks for EVERYTHING!!!

I'll see you in the morning. Miles of smiles, Brenda"

Brenda's family would like to thank the staff at Woodingford Lodge in Ingersoll for the wonderful care that was provided for Brenda.

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR HOUSE IS

Keep your dollars in Canada to strengthen communities and support local businesses, including your local newspaper.

News Media Canada
Medias d'Info Canada



theecho.ca

CLASSIFIEDS

BIRTHDAY

Happy 95th Birthday Reid Chesney



Drop in and say hello as we celebrate on **Sunday June 14th 1:30 to 3:30 pm** Innerkip Community Centre 695566 17 th Line

Come share a smile, a story and help wish Reid, our Dad a very Happy Birthday!

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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Coolhoules@gmail.com

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iron-maiden-weldworks.square.site

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425 Dundas St. Woodstock ON
519-635-8640
carlybrintnell@gmail.com



CROSSWORD SOLUTION

B	A	T	A			P	U	P			E	A	U
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						E	C	U			T	A	N
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						E	L	E	V	E	N	T	H
B	R	A	E			E	L	K			A	A	H
R	A	G	A			T	E	L			A	O	T
A	C	E	D			E	S	E			R	A	C
D	K	R				D	S	T			R	H	E

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Caribou
2. Stefani
3. The Pietà
4. Pine nut
5. Four
6. Florence, Italy
7. Eminem (Rap God)
8. Seven
9. Diwali
10. Zero

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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

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*Limited time finance offer provided through Kia Motors Finance on select new 2026 Sportage models through participating dealers to qualified retail customers, on approved credit, who take delivery from April 1, 2026 to April 30, 2026. Representative finance example based on a new and previously unregistered 2026 Sportage. Selling Price is \$34,545. 1.99% finance APR for 60 months, with a \$0 down payment or equivalent trade-in, equals 60 monthly finance payments of \$161.89 - which includes: \$2,150 delivery and destination fees; \$100 A/C charge (where applicable); regional fees of up to \$59 licensing and \$22 omvic, \$599 dealer administration fee, lien registration fees (up to \$150, including lien registering agent fee); and all other applicable fees and levies (all of which may vary by region and dealer). Cost of borrowing is \$2,032.95 for a total obligation of \$42,091.40. Excludes licensing, registration, insurance and applicable sales taxes. Dealer may sell for less. Dealer order/trade may be required (but may not be available in all cases). Offer ends April 30, 2026 and is subject to change and extension without notice. While supplies last. See your participating Kia dealer or visit www.kia.ca for details. Information in this advertisement is believed to be accurate at the time of printing. International models and features shown. Kia is a trademark of Kia Corporation. X-Line Limited model shown.