

Exeter Examiner

VOL. 3 • ISSUE 3

Thursday, April 9, 2026

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South Huron Community Theatre staging Broadway tribute

SAMANTHA LAWSON

Examiner Reporter

Preparations for the South Huron Community Theatre's latest production are well underway with the first performance date quickly approaching.

The community theatre is presenting "Give Our Regards to Broadway," a cabaret-style show that pays homage to iconic Broadway songs.

The show is being performed at the South Huron Recreation Centre on Friday, April 17, at 7:30 p.m., as well as on Saturday, April 18, at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Director Cheryl Masson said audience members should expect to be taken on a musical journey through the decades.

"We're doing sort of a linear progression of Broadway songs from the '30s onwards," said Masson. "In the first act there's a smattering of Gershwin, Irving Berlin, there's some Rodgers and Hammerstein. And then in the next act, we go from the '70s, Andrew Lloyd Webber to the more modern. We even have a number from 'The Book of Mormon' that we have a couple people performing."

The show is split into two acts with a 20-minute intermission in between and runs for about an hour and a half.

All 25 people involved in the production are lo-

CONTINUED TO PAGE 13



(DAN ROLPH PHOTO)

LOCAL WOMAN SHARES EASTER TRADITION WITH DONATED EGGS

Every year, Maryanne Statton creates Easter eggs made from sugar, donating them to Jessica's House, Ronald McDonald House and the London Children's Hospital.

Handmade sugar Easter eggs turn tradition into generosity

DAN ROLPH

Editor

Holidays like Easter are times when many find joy in the traditions that have been passed down through generations.

Whether it's eating fish and chips on Good Friday, hunting for Easter eggs or getting excited for the Easter Bunny to visit with treats, those traditions can shape

the holiday experience and make it a little more joyful.

Maryanne Statton, 82, is keeping a uniquely delicate and eye-catching Easter tradition alive.

Statton, a retired teacher who grew up on a farm in the Exeter area and now lives in London, creates eggs from sugar every Easter, forming shells out of the sugar and designing intricate scenes within them before sealing them with icing, leaving only a single small hole through which the scenes can be viewed.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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COMMUNITY

Handmade sugar Easter eggs turn tradition into generosity

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Those creations are known as panoramic Easter eggs, a centuries-old tradition that is thought to date back at least to Victorian England, though its origins are still debated today.

For Statton, the exact origins of the craft don't particularly matter. Her love of the craft stems from the Peggy Burrows children's book "The Enchanted Egg," which tells the tale of a yellow duckling who finds a mysterious colourful egg in a meadow. Inside that egg, the duckling discovers a window to a picturesque scene of knights, princesses and castles.

To this day, Statton keeps a copy of that children's book in her home, serving as a reminder of where it all started.

"It's from the heart," said Statton. "That's what's important."

Statton and her mother, Alma Lostell, picked up the craft in the 1970s. While Lostell was teaching crocheting in London, she met a woman who was teaching cake decorating. With Statton's love for "The Enchanted Egg" already deeply set in her heart, Statton asked her mother to learn the craft — and she did.

Statton would watch from the chesterfield as her mother was taught the intricacies of creating the eggs, picking up on the process herself. Though her mother died in 2009 at the age of 100, Statton has continued to keep that tradition alive.

Since picking up the craft about 50 years ago, almost nothing has changed in

Statton's process.

She begins working long before she even starts making the eggs. Using copies of art she has gathered over the years from wrapping paper, greeting cards and stickers, she cuts out each

piece by hand with minuscule scissors, going as far as to create frayed edges that resemble fur on bunnies.

Around Christmas, Statton starts creating the eggs themselves with plastic moulds — ones that she has held onto over the years, unable to find newer ones of such a durable high quality.

After mixing sugar and an egg white together, she packs that mixture into the moulds and allows them to dry for several hours. Once the shells have dried, Statton removes them from the moulds, revealing that they've become hardened shells with a terracotta-like texture and ring.

Using a piping bag and royal icing made with meringue powder and icing sugar, Statton cements the art she's prepared for the inner scenes into each egg, folding them to create a three-dimensional effect and placing each piece into the shells with tweezers.

The beauty of each egg isn't limited to those scenes, as Statton then seals the eggs with the icing, decorating them with flowers and leaves that are also formed from coloured icing.

Despite being made almost entirely of sugar, the eggs can last for decades — Statton herself displays eggs that were made about 50 years ago on the shelves



(DAN ROLPH PHOTO)

Statton's love for the eggs stems from the book "The Enchanted Egg," which she used to read to students when she was a teacher.

of cabinets in her home, nestled next to family photographs and antiques. Though the colours may have faded since those eggs were made, they're otherwise as sturdy as ever.

But creating the eggs isn't Statton's only tradition for Easter. Once they're made, she donates them to London's Children's Hospital, bringing a little extra Easter joy to the children being treated there, just as her mother did before her.

This year, Statton wanted to spread that joy even further, donating many of her

meticulously crafted eggs to Ronald McDonald House in London and Jessica's House in Exeter — a place dear to Statton's heart.

With an eye on the future, Statton said she's passing her craft on to the next generation in her family. She's already taught her niece the basics of creating the eggs, and she plans to continue those lessons.

In every egg she carefully seals, Statton preserves not only a centuries-old craft, but a legacy of kindness, imagination and tradition meant to be shared.

Second annual 'I am Huron' campaign kicks off in Huron County

EXETER EXAMINER STAFF

Staff Contribution

The Huron County Immigration Partnership has launched the second annual "I Am Huron" campaign.

The initiative celebrates the impact immigrants make in Huron County and highlights their contributions to the community.

Nominations are now open for immigrants who have made a difference

through their work, creativity and involvement in the community.

"The 'I Am Huron' campaign celebrates the ways that immigrants and newcomers to Canada enrich our culture in a meaningful way," said immigration partnership co-chair Pam Somers. "We want to highlight how immigrants make a positive impact in Huron County's communities."

Nominations are open until May 15, 2026. A subcommittee will review nominations based on contributions to

the community, business and economic impact, and cultural or artistic contributions. An expected five to 10 individuals will be featured as part of the campaign.

The selected nominees will be highlighted in local print publications, social media and at a special celebration event.

"Last year, the 'I Am Huron' campaign celebrated seven incredible people who moved to Canada and are contributing by owning businesses,

employing others and volunteering in the community," said Somers. "We're hoping in 2026, the community will nominate other outstanding people making an impact locally."

To nominate someone or to learn more about the campaign, visit connectedcountyofhuron.ca/i-am-huron-2026.

For questions, contact immigration partnership outreach officer Emma Hunking at ehunking@huroncounty.ca.


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EDITORIAL

An age of austerity arrives in Huron County



DAN ROLPH

Editor

With Huron County approving its 2026 budget on March 18, it looks like we're entering an age of tightening purse strings and measured spending.

However, I can't help but lament what we're losing in

the process.

The county budget came with a long list of programs and initiatives that have been sacrificed to maintain a levy increase of 4.55 per cent.

That's not to say working to stave off tax increases is a bad thing — it's not, especially as everyday people struggle to make ends meet — but necessity doesn't numb the sting of losing a shockingly long list of community building opportunities, environmental protections and support for many groups in the county that improve the lives of residents.

The Huron Multicultural Festival is a perfect example of what's being lost.

Throughout my career as a

reporter in Huron County, I've covered countless events. The Huron Multicultural Festival was one of those events that never felt like work. Seeing the impressive display of diversity in rural southwestern Ontario was always an uplifting and enjoyable experience.

I believe we too often settle into a mindset of choosing isolation over connection with others who call this area home. That tendency makes opportunities to learn, interact and grow in a setting that is safe and inviting vital to building stronger communities.

The sense of togetherness that is built by events like the Huron Multicultural Festival is difficult to measure on

a spreadsheet, but it's impossible to ignore their impact while you're standing amongst an excited crowd as dancers and musicians hit the stage to share their traditions.

Not all of this year's budget cuts were in events and recreational programming.

The Huron Clean Water Project, which has been around for more than 20 years, was also on the list of programs on the chopping block. The initiative provides funding and assistance to property owners for tree planting, erosion control and forest management projects.

One of the program's most popular funding streams offers applicants as much as \$15

per acre to help in the planting of cover crops, which can protect the health of soil, reduce erosion and improve water quality.

In a region like Huron County where so much of our economy is tied to agriculture, I worry about the impacts we'll see down the road after losing a program that directly benefited the environment and secured the future health of the land we rely on.

I may not have a crystal ball that lets me peer into the future, but I think it's safe to say that life in Huron County will be a little less vibrant, connected and forward-thinking without these programs.

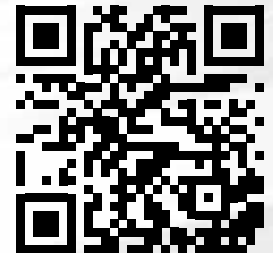
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Funded by the Government of Canada
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada



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say?

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N E W S P A P E R

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Bluewater explores sale of Hensall Heritage Hall

DAN ROLPH

Editor

The fate of Hensall Heritage Hall remains uncertain as Bluewater explores selling the property that once housed the village's council chambers.

The municipality had previously been searching for a long-term tenant for the property's upper hall that municipal staff suggested could be used for housing projects, a creative workspace, offices or community programming.

However, that search ultimately came up short, with the request for expressions of interest failing to attract any submissions.

Without bidders to lease the property, councillors passed a motion during the March 16 council meeting asking for a report outlining what the sale of the property would entail.

Such a sale would need to consider the Huron County Library branch that continues to operate in the building's lower level, as well as the public works equipment depot that would need to be relocated.

The sale of the property is one of six options that were presented to council at the meeting. Other options included continuing the search for long-term leasers, offering bookable space to the community in the upper hall, using the

hall as a meeting space for Bluewater's fire department and operating the space as a small theatre.

Coun. Scott Harris said there are challenges in cementing a solution for the upper hall that is in need of renovations, particularly when it comes to accessibility.

"It's unfortunate that it's really hard to come up with a solution for the upper portion of the heritage hall," he said. "It's bleeding right now."

Though the municipality failed to find an interested bidder to lease the hall, United Housing, a non-profit housing organization affiliated with United Way Perth-Huron, did express interest in purchasing the property to use it for the creation of affordable housing.

According to a report written by Bluewater staff, the library branch in the lower part of the building may be able to continue operating if United Housing decides to push ahead with purchasing the property.

Hensall Heritage Hall has a long history in the community since its construction in 1914. After decades of use as a venue, the upper hall was closed in 1975 as it needed major renovations.

Much of the community's use of the building shifting after the creation of Bluewater in 2001. The Hensall Heritage Hall Society was established in 2016 to take on the operations of the up-



(DAN ROLPH PHOTO)

Hensall Heritage Hall could soon be under new ownership if Bluewater decides to proceed with the historic building's sale. Since its construction in 1914, the hall has served as a council chamber, a library, a performance venue and more.

per hall through a 10-year lease, leading to its restoration and eventual reopening in 2017.

The society continued to host community events and live concerts in the upper hall until its dissolution in 2022 when it was facing financial pressures due to COVID-19 restrictions.

During the March 16 meeting, Blue-

water Mayor Paul Klopp emphasized that the municipality hadn't come to a final decision about the property's future yet.

"It's about exploring this option," he said.

A report outlining a potential sale is expected to come before council at a future meeting.

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Senior of the Week



Our senior of the week is Stanley Fisher. His life journey began in Carshalton, England, eventually crossing the Atlantic to Elmira—which he calls his hometown—and later to Exeter. Now a proud resident of Blue Water Rest Home, he is the devoted husband of Doreen and loving father of Tanya and Grant, and his greatest joy comes from being “Papa” to his grandchildren. As president of Blue Water Rest Home Residents’ Council and the resident representative on the Quality Improvement Committee, he works tirelessly to ensure residents’ voices are heard and respected. His warm presence and welcoming nature have earned him the affectionate “unofficial greeter” title at the rest home.

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

Exeter Examiner
Photo Quiz



Who are you looking at?

By Judy and Barry Johnson



I’m getting tired of following you around checking out nesting sites. You get pickier every year that we do this.

HINT: We’ve got lots to blow our HORNS about! We are elegantly beautiful, massive native American birds.

This week’s answers are found on pg. 26

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

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

This week’s answers are found on pg. 26



I Am Huron

<https://connectedcountyofhuron.ca/i-am-huron-2026>



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Summer Sunset Sounds moves to Thursdays

EXETER EXAMINER STAFF

Staff Contribution

The popular Summer Sunset Sounds concert series in Grand Bend is switching things up for 2026, moving performances to Thursday evenings in an effort to boost midweek energy at the beach.

According to a press release, this year's lineup will feature seven shows, blending returning favourites with new talent. All performers who take to the Rotary Community Stage write their own material.

The season is slated to kick off July 9 with the return of Sarah Smith. Janna Leduc will follow on July 16, and genre-bending group Shebad will perform at the beach on July 30. Opening acts for those performances include Justin Maki, Dave Ward and Gracie Jet.

August will bring a full schedule of shows, beginning with Mudmen on Aug. 6, followed by Brothers Wilde on Aug. 13. The Smoke Wagon Blues Band will perform Aug. 27, and the series wraps up Sept. 3 with Clara Stegall. Supporting acts will include Warren Hargraves, Brad Cousins, Amanda Keeley and Meteor Heist.

More details about the artists, along with a curated Spotify playlist, are available at summersunsetsounds.ca.

Organizer Glen Baillie reflected on the series' humble beginnings 12 years ago, when Sarah Smith headlined the very first concert with Clara Stegall opening.

"We didn't know what to expect," Baillie said. "Sarah set up her own PA on a plywood stage and we attracted a couple hundred people on a lovely night."

"We have had substantial support from Lambton Shores and many businesses in the area who recognize the importance of this series for the attendees and the strong economy that flows from getting a happy crowd of residents and visitors together on the best beach in Ontario."

Summer Sunset Sounds continues to operate as a "pay-what-you-can" event, with donations and sponsorships generating enough funding to present the concerts.

Originally held on Sunday evenings to draw visitors during quieter times, the concerts have since grown in popularity.

"The beach is now busy enough that Sunday shows create parking challenges," Baillie explained. "Moving to Thursdays follows the same thinking as when we started — we want to build energy when it's needed most."

The new direction is captured in this year's theme, "The Weekend Starts Thursday."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Grand Bend's Summer Sunset Sounds is moving to Thursdays, bringing a full slate of performances to the Rotary Community Stage in July and August.

Dave Manders to run for Lucan-Biddulph mayor

EXETER EXAMINER STAFF

Staff Contribution

Dave Manders, deputy mayor of Lucan-Biddulph, will be looking to pick up the gavel and become the municipality's next mayor in the municipal election later this year.

In a press release, Manders said he wants to continue building on the progress made in the community while preparing the municipality for future growth.

Manders said his decision to run came after careful consideration and encouragement both from residents

and his family.

"I care deeply about this community and the people who live here," said Manders. "Serving as deputy mayor has given me the opportunity to work closely with council, staff, and residents to move important projects forward. I believe the experience I've gained has prepared me to lead as mayor."

During his time on council, Manders has been involved in decisions related to infrastructure, community development and supporting local businesses, he said. He plans to focus on responsible growth, strong municipal services and maintaining open communica-

tion with residents.

"Our community is growing and changing," said Manders. "We need leadership that listens to residents, plans carefully for the future and ensures we continue to be a great place to live, work, and raise a family."

Manders said he is looking forward to speaking with residents about their priorities and ideas for the future of Lucan-Biddulph.

Manders' decision comes after the announcement that Lucan-Biddulph Mayor Cathy Burghardt-Jesson won't seek a fourth term in the coming municipal election.



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Infrastructure top priority for mayors

JOHN MINER

Examiner Reporter

The mayors of Bluewater, South Huron and Lambton Shores admit roads, bridges, sewer and water systems might not seem exciting.

Still, that is going to be their top spending priority in the next three to five years, the mayors told the annual Grand Bend Chamber of Commerce Mayor's Breakfast on March 26.

"It is not sexy, but it is infrastructure that needs to be looked at all the time," said South Huron Mayor George Finch.

"It is continually aging, just like all of us are, so let's work on that."

With grants from the province, South Huron completed reconstruction of Main Street from the Ausable River bridge to Walter Street in 2025, replacing water mains, sanitary sewers and storm sewers.

The next project in Exeter is reconstruction of Main Street from the Ausable River bridge to Victoria Street. Involving replacing the existing roadway, sewers and water mains, the project is scheduled to begin after Easter weekend and finish before the end of 2026.

Bluewater Mayor Paul Klopp said a priority for his municipality will be completing the upgrade of sewage capacity in Bayfield. That project will allow for more growth.

Also important will be the continued maintenance of Bluewater's paved and graveled roads.

That may be boring, Klopp said, but necessary.

Lambton Shores Mayor Doug Cook said a highlight in his municipality has been the reconstruction of the bridge in Grand Bend.

That project is scheduled to be completed in May and will add a dedicated right turn lane that should ease traffic congestion heading north.

The infrastructure project that Cook would like to see happen is a community centre for Grand Bend.

Council applied to the province for funding for the project expected to cost about \$20 million, but was turned down. Cook said they have since rejiggered the size of the project, reducing the cost by about \$5 million.

"It's not dead. We are definitely looking for another opportunity to get it," he said.

Mayors Klopp and Finch were asked what their stance would be on helping fund a Grand Bend community centre.

"We have no stance and if somebody asks we will deal with it when it comes," replied Klopp.

Finch said it is too soon to have that discussion.

South Huron residents would definitely benefit from

a Grand Bend community centre the same way Grand Bend residents benefit from facilities in South Huron, he said.

"Let's keep the discussion going," said Finch, adding he is not saying yes or no.

Both Finch and Klopp praised Cook and Lambton Shores for the leadership in bringing bus service to the area through Huron Shores Area Transit.

Klopp said Bluewater council was looking at cutting expenses when the bus proposal came up. Despite the added costs, council voted unanimously to support the service.

"It is going to grow. It is going to get better."

While there is a question if it will always pay for itself, Klopp said Bluewater has arenas, baseball diamonds and parks that don't always pay for themselves but pay dividends by making the community better.

Finch said the Huron Shores Area Transit system has had a direct impact on businesses in South Huron. The availability of transportation for employees has allowed businesses to stay open longer and survive, he said.

The three mayors were asked how they will balance growth with preserving the character of their communities.

Cook said as a municipality Lambton Shores doesn't want to tell people what they can do on their property as long as they are working within the building code.

"We want people to come and invest money here. If you are an investor, or a builder, or someone who wants to change what they see, if it works within our mandate, please come."

Klopp said it is really up to the people what happens in the municipality.

"We are there for everybody and we try to keep options open."

Finch said municipalities have to remember they are creatures of the province. The province sets the rules and the municipalities carry out the rules, he said.

"Some people may not agree with that," he said. "The unfortunate reality is if we don't follow the rules, the policy statements and whatever else, we get ourselves in a lot of trouble."



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Jessica's House receives \$2,000 donation from Greenwood Landscaping



(PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY JESSICA'S HOUSE HOSPICE)

Greenwood Landscaping of London presented a cheque to Jessica's House Hospice in Exeter on March 22 after raising funds through local sales of ice melt. The company has donated \$2 from every 50-pound bag of de-icer sold to charity since launching its fundraising initiative in 2019. From left are Jessica's House fund development and communications co-ordinator Meghan O'Rourke, Craig and Stacey Greenwood.

Eggseter Easter Hunt draws hundreds to Morrison Dam



(MEG PEARSON PHOTO)



(KARLY PINDER PHOTO)

Noah Hockey was another lucky winner who got to take home a new bike.

The annual event also included a bike draw for participating children. Gavin Fisher and Ker- ington Goes were two of the winners of the bike draw.



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(MEG PEARSON PHOTO)

The South Huron Optimist Club's Eggseter Easter Hunt welcomed local children to the Morrison Dam Conservation Area on Sunday, March 29, for another year of Easter fun. The annual event brought together 270 children to search the conservation area grounds for more than 1,500 eggs that they could exchange for treats. Alexa Consitt, 2, was dressed for the occasion as she was on the hunt for colourful Easter eggs.

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Farmland rental rates held steady in Huron

JOHN MINER

Examiner Reporter

Farmland rental rates held steady in Huron County in 2025, while several counties saw drops, according to a University of Guelph report by the department of food, agricultural and resource economics.

Based on an online survey, the report pegged the median cash rent for average quality Huron County cropland at \$350 per tillable acre, the same as in 2024.

That's the highest level reported in the survey, matched by Oxford County and Chatham-Kent.

The median cash rent for neighbouring Perth County in 2025 was \$313 an acre, down from \$350 in 2024.

Middlesex County rental rate in 2025 was also \$313 an acre, down from \$325 in 2024.

Other counties that saw drops in 2025 compared to the year before included Brant at \$215, down from \$250; Elgin at \$300, down from \$350; Lambton \$300, down from \$350; Norfolk \$250, down from \$325;

Leeds and Grenville \$100, down from \$175; Simcoe \$133, down from \$150; and Waterloo at \$243, down from \$250.

Staying unchanged besides Huron included Bruce, Dufferin, Essex, Grey, Niagara, Oxford, Chatham-Kent and Wellington.

The only areas reporting an increase in rental rates in 2025 were Northumberland at \$100 an acre, up from \$75, and Ottawa at \$155, up from \$125.

The lowest median cash rental for average cropland was reported for Lanark County at \$88 an acre.

Conducted between Jan. 6 and Feb. 28, 2026, the survey had 943 respondents.

The report cautions that rental rates and farmland values can vary considerably depending on individual parcel characteristics.

"For this reason, the results will not be useful in assigning a particular rental rate or land value to a specific parcel," the report stated.

In addition to surveying rental rates, the University

of Guelph department asked people for an estimate of the typical price per tillable acre for average quality cropland in their region.

The median estimate for Huron County by 22 respondents was \$30,000, the same as Middlesex, but lower than Perth at \$35,000.

The highest estimate was for land in Oxford at \$37,500. The lowest was Manitoulin at \$3,500.

Asked if they expect farmland values to increase in their region over the next 12 months, 51 per cent replied they expected they would stay the same; 24 per cent anticipate an increase; 18 per cent were unsure and eight per cent expect a drop.

Survey respondents were also asked for their estimate of the farmland purchases by farmers versus non-farmers.

In Huron the estimate was 90 per cent purchased by farmers, while Oxford and Perth put the percentage at 95. For Middlesex, the estimate was 80 per cent.

In the York region the estimate was zero.

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From farm toys to Hot Wheels, Zurich Toy Show and Sale keeps growing

DAN ROLPH
Editor

The Zurich arena will once again be filled with toys and collectors as the Zurich Toy Show and Sale returns.

The annual event will take place April 12 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., bringing more than 50 vendors to the Zurich arena for a day filled with opportunities for finding unique collectibles and interesting toys.

The show may be an opportunity for farm toy enthusiasts to find a range of collectibles, but it has also expanded to include Hot Wheels, diecast trucks, dolls, wooden toys and other items collectors may find interesting.

“It’s not just centred to the farm toy group,” said organizer Chris Finkbeiner. “It’s got a little bit of everything.”

Now entering its fifth year in the

community, the show has substantially grown since it started. Originally hosted in the Zurich arena’s multi-purpose room, 2025 marked the first time the show had more space to grow by moving onto the Hensall arena floor.

“It was a big step,” said Finkbeiner. “We made the big jump when we went to Hensall. It really doubled. I had 88 tables booked over there. This year, I’ve got 92.”

This year’s show is returning to Zurich, with vendors and displays on the arena floor again.

Finkbeiner said the show draws vendors from throughout the region, who come from areas including Cambridge, Lucknow, Chatham, Moorefield and more.

Looking back to the toy show’s creation, Finkbeiner said there are many

shows for collectors in Ontario, but Huron County was somewhat of a desert when it came to toy shows until Zurich established one of its own.

“We had nothing here,” said Finkbeiner. “There is a big demographic right in this area, and we always had to go elsewhere.”

In addition to the many vendors who will be featured at the show, attendees will also be able to view many farm toy displays. Finkbeiner said the show’s display contest will include junior and senior categories, and the Huron 4-H Association’s farm display club will be showing off their creations, all of which will be judged by a panel of the show’s vendors.

The Zurich Toy Show and Sale will also be returning as an event that supports the community, this year continu-

ing to donate proceeds to Blessing Community Store and Food Bank in Zurich.

With the last show raising about \$4,000, Finkbeiner said he hopes to see the community come out again in support of a worthy cause.

“It stays here,” said Finkbeiner. “That’s a no brainer to me. Let’s keep it in the community.”

Also returning to the show this year are the popular tractors that will be parked in front of the arena. The show’s mascot, Moozy the cow, which was introduced to the crowds last year, will also be making a comeback in 2026.

“There’s no other show in Ontario that has a mascot,” said Finkbeiner. “It was a huge hit.”

For more information, visit the Zurich Toy Show and Sale Facebook page.




(DAN ROLPH PHOTO)

The Zurich Toy Show and Sale is returning on April 12 for a day of unique farm toy finds. Organizer Chris Finkbeiner, pictured above, said this year’s show will be the community’s biggest yet.



(PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY CHRIS FINKBEINER)

The annual show will also feature many displays that will be judged in the display contest.



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The young women who roared their way through the 1920s

JUDY FINKBEINER JOHNSON

Examiner Correspondent

Many of the choices and freedoms women have today exist thanks to a group of intrepid young women in 1920s known as “flappers.”

The lifestyle freedoms those young women made possible not only enriched their future, but also the present. The changes were focused on women, but by extension, they also benefited men.

Films such as “The Great Gatsby” with Robert Redford and the remake with Leonardo Di Caprio, both adaptations of the famous F. Scott Fitzgerald novel, can give a glimpse into the iconic era.

As well, “Midnight in Paris” with Owen Wilson depicts a disillusioned screenwriter who takes late night solo walks while visiting Paris, France, entering a taxi several nights that takes him to the 1920s. While there, Wilson’s character meets Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and other Jazz Age luminaries.

“Downton Abbey,” a series that captured the attention and imaginations of many, can also serve as a window into that period, with several episodes set in the 1920s.

The flapper era was born from the First World War, when fathers, husbands and brothers who usually made the decisions for women were absent, so they made their own. They chose not to give up that autonomy after the war ended, refusing to quietly return to the drawing room where young women awaited marriage to a man selected by their parents. Often, they barely knew him even as they took his name.

Flappers heralded the beginning of the modern woman. Demure young women morphed into daring trailblazers who set paths on fire with their spirit, their joy and their courage. They were often painted with a false brush as promiscuous, overindulgent and foolish.

People who think and act “out of the box” can still be publicly tarnished today, especially as they challenge existing norms.

For the first time in modern history, old age ceded to youth for celebration by society and the dominant influence. The old mold was broken by the flappers, a label possibly coined from their affinity to fledgling birds, testing and flapping wings as they were ready to leave the nest to fly.

The pre-flapper young woman was expected to be quiet and not attract attention in any way. Her purpose was to be beautiful by the standards of the day, be obedient and follow all the rigid established rules for her life. Her long hair was shaped into myriad complex and often uncomfortable coiffures that took hours to create. Massive, heavy pantaloons were covered by

long skirts. Her body was restricted from breathing properly by whalebone corsets, cinched painfully to the smallest possible waist measurement.

The faces of women in that era are evidence of their restricted existences. They were painted, drawn and photographed looking down. They pinched their cheeks and bit their lips to provide hints of colour. The flappers were different. They faced the camera in the same way they faced life. Head held high, non-apologetic, boldly and straight on with rouged cheeks and lips stained with red lipstick.

They ditched their pantaloons for step-in panties for ease of movement and comfort. Corsets were replaced by fabric bands across the chest or often by silk bras. Gone were long skirts. Flappers wore about-knee-length skirts that showed legs covered with rolled, not gartered, stockings, and sleeveless dresses bared arms.

The flapper bob haircut was created from cutting long hair short. Max Factor makeup had only been used by movie stars like Clara Bow and Mary Pickford to enhance their features for black and white movies, but Max Factor made their cosmetics available to the public in the 1920s. Flappers embraced those visual aids, highlighting eyes with kohl, mascara, dramat-

ic eyelashes and smoky eye shadow, cheeks accented with rouge. The overall look was matte-finished, with a red lipstick, bow-shaped upper lip mirroring a Clara Bow styled pout.

The establishment was worried about the overt expression of liberation and self-expression, as illustrated by the flappers’ dramatic and daring look and comportment.

Flapper shoes were made from leather, satin and canvas, often featuring cut-outs and intricate designs using embellishments like sequins and beads. Heels were for elegant occasions, sturdy pumps like T-Straps and Mary Janes for comfort and dancing, and Oxfords to complement androgynous-looking casual outfits.

There is no question that the flapper look was fantastic. The “bees’ knees” in flapper jargon.

Scolders called the look “shocking,” and showing skin was cited as sinful. Then, there was the fact that flappers openly drank and smoked and didn’t hide their intelligence or their views.

The music of the 1920s was vastly different from previous eras. Musicians like Scott Joplin made Ragtime music famous. Dances like the Shimmy, the Toddle and the Black Bottom were well suited for showing off fabulous, decorated dresses. There was hot jazz music for dancing the Charleston, a dance labelled scandalous by some at the time, because women were dancing independently of a man, not with his arms around her.

Flappers not only kicked up their legs but performed that iconic knee-opening-and-closing dance move that defines the Charleston. They moved their legs, their arms and their heads.

In spite of the criticism, the flappers went on their way, dancing and shaking the recognizable fringes of the era on their dresses through the decade. They changed their attire in the corset checkrooms that dancing venues provided — off with corsets and restricting garments, on with

the flapper look. Glamorous decorative headpieces and headbands using feathers, lace, beads, and jewels topped off the look. Tightly fitting cloche hats were mood appropriate. The silhouette was boyish, minimizing breasts and ignoring waistlines altogether or using a dropped waist. The look was sleeveless, with a plunging back, a possible low-cut neckline and completed by long necklaces of beads or pearls, often in several layers.

Critics kept pushing that sinful label. From pulpits to press, the jazz and ragtime music of the 1920s was denounced.

In an August 1921 issue of the Ladies’ Home Journal, an article written by Anne Shaw Faulkner was headlined “Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?”

The article goes on to say that some scientific men declared that those exposed very often to the “demoralizing influence of the persistent use of syncopation... are actually incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong.”

The establishment was troubled. What would women want next?

The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920 established the right to vote, saying that the right of U.S. citizens to vote shall not be denied on account of sex. It took years for full enfranchisement.

In Canada, by 1922 all provinces except Quebec granted full suffrage to women. It would be decades before voting rights were expanded widely.

More than 100 years later, echoes of the flapper sub-culture can still be found, including in the highly descriptive slang they coined.

- Beeswax – business as in “That’s none of your beeswax”

- Dough – money

- Frame – set somebody up for something they didn’t do

- Hair of the dog – an antidote of alcohol taken when getting up the morning after the night before when one



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The flappers of the 1920s chose to hold onto the autonomy they gained during the First World War, leading to many of the established rights that exist today.

drank too much

- Handcuff – engagement ring
- John – toilet
- Kisser- lips
- Knock up – impregnate
- Dick – private investigator
- It – sex appeal
- Bump off – murder
- Chicago typewriter – submachine gun
- Fire extinguisher – a chaperone
- Dead soldier – empty beer or whisky bottle

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Cowbell Brewing Co. acquires Dark Horse Estate Winery

EXETER EXAMINER STAFF

Staff Contribution

Cowbell Brewing Co. has purchased the Dark Horse Estate Winery property in Grand Bend, marking the company's first expansion beyond its flagship brewery in Blyth.

Cowbell called the purchase a significant investment in the future of hospitality and tourism in Huron County.

"It's incredibly meaningful for us that our first expansion is right here at home," said Cowbell president Natasha Fritzley. "The Lake Huron region is where we built Cowbell, and we're deeply committed to continuing to invest in this region, its people and its future."

The property will continue to operate as a winery, preserving its role as a destination for both locals and visitors. Plans for the site also include two distinct dining experiences, featuring a broad menu of local fare and Huron County favourites and unique spaces for special events.

Cowbell stated their goal is to create a fun, welcoming, year-round destination that reflects the character, geography and community of the region.

The winery will be renamed in the coming weeks, following the completion of a legal review process. The company emphasized its respect for the legacy of the property and its founders.

"The Rasenberg and Horlor families created something truly special here," Fritzley said. "The Dark Horse story is theirs, and we honour the care, vision and dedication they brought to this property. As we look ahead, the new name will reflect the next chapter of this incredible place, rooted in its history and inspired by its future."

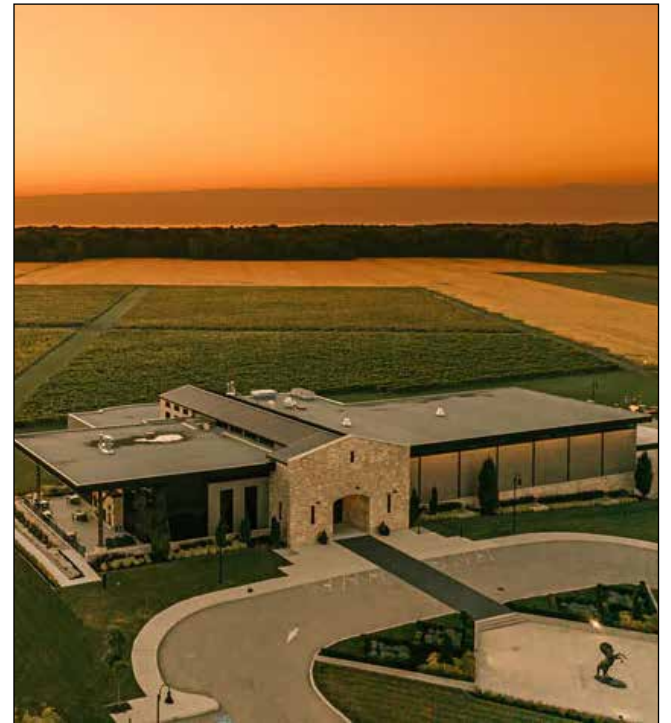
Cowbell's leadership team brings strong local roots and a shared passion for building experiences that celebrate Huron County, the press release stated. The company's board of directors has been a driving force behind the expansion, with a continued commitment to long-term investment in both the business and the broader community.

Cowbell also acknowledged the strength of its hospitality peers across Huron County, noting they look forward to continuing to collaborate in building the region as a premier destination for food, beverage and tourism.

"We've always believed that a rising tide lifts all boats," said Fritzley. "Huron County is home to an incredible network of hospitality operators and craft beverage producers, and we're proud to grow alongside them."

Updates including the announcement of the winery's new name and links to its social channels will be shared through the Cowbell Brewing Co. Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Cowbell is also asking the public for input about what they would like to see from the winery



(PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY COWBELL BREWING CO.)

Dark Horse Estate Winery has been purchased by Blyth's Cowbell Brewing Co.

through an online survey, which can be found at surveymonkey.com/r/YHK5Z3B.

South Huron Community Theatre bringing Broadway tribute to the stage

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

cal community members from South Huron and surrounding municipalities. People of all ages are taking part, with a couple performers being as young as 11 years old.

Masson said she is pleased with the production's progress so far.

"I think it's going really well," she said. "I'm really impressed with our young people. They are all just doing their utmost, they are really giving it their all, so it's really impressive and I'm really happy with them."

This is the community theatre's eighth year of performances. The group usually organizes a spring production early in the year, and then a winter production later.

Masson is the director of the show but also joins in on a few musical numbers herself. She said musical theatre feeds her soul.

"I've loved music since I was a kid," she said. "I've grown up with music and always loved it. I would say it's the thing that just makes me really happy."

"I'm really happy to share (musical theatre) with other people, and to give other people an opportunity to share their talent as well, it's a really gratifying feeling."

Tickets to the show are \$20 per person and are available for purchase at Hansen's Your Independent Grocer in Exeter and at Havasu Coffee Co. in Zurich.



(SAMANTHA LAWSON PHOTO)

Director Cheryl Masson will take to the stage alongside other talented performers.



(SAMANTHA LAWSON PHOTO)

The South Huron Community Theatre is bringing a taste of some of the most famous musicals to the community with "Give Our Regards to Broadway." The group will be holding several performances on April 17 and 18 at the South Huron Recreation Centre.



(SAMANTHA LAWSON PHOTO)

Above is Kate Farwell, who will be one of the many residents who will take part in the South Huron Community Theatre's coming performance.

Murder and mayhem in Usborne Township



BOB HEYWOOD

Examiner Columnist

History, including court records and local newspaper accounts, would lead us to believe that faction fighting and fisticuff brawls were somewhat of a spectator sport to the south of Usborne Township in predominantly Irish Biddulph.

Politics and religion could easily spark a donnybrook in the taverns or the streets of Lucan in the mid to late 1800s. Some of these factions are said to have travelled and survived well on the long Atlantic journey to the New World. Out of this backdrop, the infamous story of the Donnelly family murders emerged, prompting books, plays and songs that have kept the story very prominent in Canadian folklore.

Today, the Roman Line becomes the Elimville Line at the junction of the Whalen Line. Usborne was predominantly settled by English families from Devon, whereas Biddulph was almost 100 per cent Irish. Many Donnelly buffs fail to realize that long before 1880 and the fateful evening when five members of the Donnelly family were brutally murdered by their neighbours and members of the Biddulph Peace Society, a lone Englishman from Usborne was waylaid and murdered on the Roman Line.

Richard Brimmacombe was a Cornish Englishman who settled a few miles south of Elimville

in Usborne Township in 1856. Richard Fazakas in his book "The Donnelly Album" relays the tragic story. Brimmacombe's next door neighbour was Patrick Casey. His sons Tom and William were often in trouble but gained their greatest notoriety in this incident. William Casey attended Brimmacombe's house raising before the snow fell that year and in a fight with some of the Englishmen, Casey was soundly beaten.

He vowed to take revenge.

Returning the next day, Will Casey continued to utter threats to some of the Usborne Englishmen. According to testimony, one of Brimmacombe's hired men was accosted on the road and badly beaten. Another friend of the Englishman was soon after confronted by old Patrick Ryder, the father-in-law of Will Casey. Ryder swore a "terrible oath" and said he would murder Richard Brimmacombe the first time he saw him on the line. Patrick, better known as "Grouchy Ryder," would become a prominent character in the Donnelly saga.

Two weeks later on Friday, Feb. 6, 1857, Brimmacombe was returning home from St. Thomas along with his hired man and a cow tied to his cutter. Testimony recorded that he had briefly stopped at Andy Keefe's tavern across from St. Patrick R.C. Chapel. After a warm beer, the travellers headed north on the Roman Line to their Usborne Township farm.

About 900 feet from the tavern his sleigh upset in a snowbank, hurting Brimmacombe's knee. He instructed his hired man to go on with the sleigh and to wait for him and the cow at the Donnelly schoolhouse. The hired man followed orders but never saw his boss alive again.

Approximately 300 feet from

a great elm tree and not far from the Roman Line house of old Pat Ryder, Richard Brimmacombe was killed by a severe blow to his head. Robbery was not the motive as \$14 in cash and a \$60 note for a horse deal was on his body when discovered still warm.

Although many of the Roman Liners were out on the road that evening, none would admit to any knowledge of the murder.

Jim Donnelly was one of the first to know of the killing. The Casey brothers and old Ryder were prime suspects, but when the constables went to arrest old Ryder, he drove them away from his shanty with a shotgun in one hand and a pistol in the other. Ryder finally gave himself up and the Caseys were also arrested, but the affair dragged on for five years, much to the chagrin of coroner and Exeter doctor John Hyndman, who complained bitterly about the careless manner in which the authorities prepared the case.

During the long delay, both Caseys fled the country by either jumping bail or escaping custody. Finally, Thomas and William Casey, along with the latter's father in law, Patrick Ryder, faced the judge on Nov. 13, 1862. The Roman Line witnesses who were called to testify, out of fear for their lives and property avoided implicating the defendants in the crime. Apparently, they felt they could be next.

The Crown prosecutor eventually threw up his hands in disgust when the witnesses proved too evasive, and he abandoned the case for the Crown. All three men were acquitted of the murder. Chief justice Robinson advised them to return home and lead exemplary lives in the future. No one ever paid for the brutal murder of Usborne farmer Richard Brimmacombe who lies at rest in

the Elimville cemetery.

Something that many do not know is that for a short time in Usborne Township, 16 years after Brimmacombe's murder, a group of Protestant vigilantes was formed. This handful of men was not well organized, but for a brief time devoted themselves to eliminating what they saw as a scourge of false religion that had infiltrated their Methodist community.

It was the Mormons who came under the watchful eye of some of Usborne's defenders of the faith. Many Christians then (and continuing today) saw Joseph Smith's brand of religion as a dangerous cult, inserting this self-proclaimed prophets' visions and experiences into the true gospel story where it did not belong. The Mormons built a church around 1881 on the corner of Lot A Concession 6 on property granted by John Cornish. His great grandson still resides on the farm.

When these missionaries came into the area and began to realize and baptize converts, naturally something needed to be done — at least according to a few Usborne zealots.

According to the Usborne History Book, the Mormons, who had garnered several members from the community, began to run into some very serious opposition.

Feelings ran high, as represented in this account found in the Seaforth Expositor in the early 1880s: "Our readers will remember that during last winter the inhabitants of the Township of Usborne were visited by preachers belonging to the sect known in the world as Mormons, or as they choose to call themselves 'Latter Day Saints.' They will also remember that these above mentioned preachers had a nar-

row escape from a coat of tar and feathers from the Vigilance Committee that was organized for the purpose of ridding the neighbourhood of these imposters.

"The missionaries, however, disregarding the solemn promises that were extorted from them, that they would never again visit the locality for religious purposes, yet again paid a neighbourhood visit of late. This time they succeeded in baptizing half a score of inhabitants into the only 'true faith' as they choose to call it.

"As it is the opinion of most of the neighbourhood that such actions shall not be allowed in a civilized community, they thought that it was time to again call upon the Vigilance Committee to rid them of the so-called 'Saints.' Accordingly, they assembled the evening of the 3rd of June, and went en masse to the assembly brethren and although they met with vigorous resistance from the female part of the assembly, armed with clubs, they succeeded in breaking up the meeting and the preachers were compelled to take up other abode in the neighbouring marshes for the night.

"The 'Saints' however, determining not to abandon their work without an effort on their part, assembled in the next night for the purpose of spending a portion of it in their devotions. Much to their annoyance, the Vigilance Committee paid them another visit after the leaders had retired for the night. Again some fled in their night attire to the marsh and some had their whiskers shaved off.

"Is this Usborne Township, why yes. June 1873."

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BACK IN TIME

30 Years Ago

April 10, 1996 — Only weeks before Lucan Reeve Tom McLaughlin's plans to retire, Deputy Reeve Harry Wraith says he will hand in his registration immediately.

Mary Lou Bilcke has been named Hockey Mom of the Year by the Exeter Minor Hockey Association. The award is dedicated to the memory of Pauline McCann.

40 Years Ago

April 9, 1986 — Dashwood police village trustees honoured the Dashwood fire department recently as the village has given up operation of the fire department. It will now be operated by the townships of Stephen and Hay. Village trustee George Tieman presented a plaque to present fire chief Jim Hoffman to thank all those men who in the

time from 1937 to 1985 served as volunteer firemen in the police village of Dashwood.

Ratepayers in the village of Lucan will be receiving good news when their 1986 tax notices arrive. Council approved the budget and tax rate at Tuesday's meeting which calls for an overall increase of less than one mill.

The Zurich Has Beans brought home gold medals and a trophy after winning the "B" championship in the International Oldtimers Hockey Tournament in Zurich, Switzerland.

55 Years Ago

April 9, 1971 — The Exeter Broncos won the OMHA zone championship over Blenheim. It's the first provincial championship for the town of Exeter. The club sponsored by the Midwestern Rodeo was coached by Ron Bogart and managed by Bob Pooley.

Richard Ottewell, aged 16, a Grade 11 student at SHDHS won Huron County's ninth annual Pilgrimage for Youth speaking contest at Clinton last week, speaking on Canadian Nationalism against five other students from the county. Runner-up was Kathy Simmons, also of Exeter.

65 Years Ago

April 11, 1961 — Don "Boom Boom" Gravett was hired as recreation director by the Exeter Rec Committee at its meeting Monday night.

Exeter merchants have decided to open their stores Friday nights, instead of Saturday nights, during 1961.

70 Years Ago

April 12, 1956 — Jim Etherington, R.R. 1, Hensall won the \$10 first prize in the Times-Advocate competition for

the best story describing the Easter Trip to Washington by SHDHS students.

Greene's Variety Store, newest associate of Steadman brothers in Toronto, plans to open its doors Friday after extensive renovations to its building on Main Street.

Bev Sturgis won the WOSSA Senior "B" boys badminton singles championship for the first time Saturday when he defeated contenders from eight schools in the London area.

80 Years Ago

April 13, 1946 - Mr. Harold Whyte who has been employed with Ontario Hydro in Exeter since 1928 has been appointed superintendent of the Lucan office.

Paint Ontario 2026: A celebration of art by the lake

EXETER EXAMINER STAFF

Staff Contribution

Each spring, Grand Bend comes alive with colour, creativity and community spirit during Paint Ontario, one of the province's most anticipated visual art events.

This year's Paint Ontario will take place from May 2 to 17, 2026, with a special Gala Evening on May 1. Art lovers and curious newcomers alike will be able to experience a creative festival at the Grand Bend Legion's community hall, hosted by the Grand Bend Art Centre.

Paint Ontario is much more than an art show. It is a vibrant celebration of artistic excellence and shared experiences. The annual fundraiser brings together painters and sculptors from across Canada, showcasing a high-cal-

ibre of work that reflects the depth and diversity of artistic talent.

Visitors can expect over 200 juried representational pieces with a mix of figurative works, landscapes, still lifes and sculpture, all curated around the theme of capturing the essence of life in Ontario.

Paint Ontario provides something for everyone, whether they're an avid collector, a casual art enthusiast or simply looking for an engaging outing.

The show features \$14,000 in awards and prizes, underscoring the exceptional quality of the artwork on display.

Throughout the two-week event, visitors can enjoy live art demonstrations, such as SFX, makeup and sculptural artist Koen Martin, as well as special guest artist Kristyn Waterworth.

For the full Paint Ontario calendar and more information, visit PaintOntario.com.



(PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY THE GRAND BEND ART CENTRE)

Paint Ontario 2026, which is hosted by the Grand Bend Art Centre, will take place at the Grand Bend Legion from May 2 to 17.

Sawyer Preservation Woodlot Association hosting walks with local naturalist

EXETER EXAMINER STAFF

Staff Contribution

The Sawyer Preservation Woodlot Association is inviting the community to celebrate Earth Day with a walk in a woodlot.

The association has partnered with local naturalist and educator Denise Iszczuk of C.O.R.E Nature Experiences, to deliver a series of nature-based events in the 28-acre woodlot located at 6100 Line 12 in West Perth, just north of Kirkton.

The four-event series will kick off with the Frogs and Other Amphibians walk on April 18.

Iszczuk described the upcoming one-hour walk as

a fun, family-friendly event where walkers can learn more about the frogs, toads and amphibians that call Sawyer Preservation Woodlot home.

Walkers will be able to hear the unique songs of frogs and toads and uncover some of their fascinating springtime behaviours.

"Amphibians are amazing," said Iszczuk in a press release. "They depend on both land and water habitats to survive, and they are sensitive to environmental changes so they can tell us about the health of the environment."

Attendees will learn about FrogWatch and how to be a community scientist to help track changes in the number of frogs to better understand changes in our

climate and the health of the environment.

Four unique events are being hosted at the woodlot this year, including:

- Frogs and Other Amphibians - April 18 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. (April 19 rain date)

- Wildflower Wonders - May 3 from 1 to 3:15 p.m. (May 10 rain date)

- Autumn in the Woodlot - Oct. 3 from 3 to 4 p.m. (Oct. 4 rain date)

- Owl Prowl - Nov. 28 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. (Nov. 29 rain date)

For more information, contact Denise Iszczuk at deniseoutdoored@gmail.com or 519-200-8862.

Huron County budget significantly scales back and cuts programs

EXETER EXAMINER STAFF

Staff Contribution

With the passing of the 2026 budget in Huron County, a lengthy list of programs and events are being diminished or cancelled entirely.

According to a press release from the county, the cuts were made to maintain a 4.55 per cent tax levy increase.

Huron County Warden Jamie Heffer said the decisions to make cuts in the budget were not made lightly.

“While the tough choices made in this budget will impact some county services, the 2026 budget reflects a responsible, forward-looking approach that will strengthen the County of Huron’s ability to serve our community well into the future,” he said.

The following programs are being

significantly scaled back or cancelled:

- Huron Multicultural Festival
- Main Street Arts Festival
- artLAB programming
- Jane’s Walks
- National Indigenous Peoples Day programming
- Huron County Museum Summer Day Camps
- Cultural Summit
- Limited participation in Treaty Tour to commemorate 200th anniversary of Huron Tract
- Huron Clean Water Project
- Huron County Climate Change Report
- Sustainable Huron Steering Committee
- Sustainable Huron Action Plan
- Water Protection Steering Committee

- Octoberfest on Ontario’s West Coast

- Coordination of Vine and Ale Trails
 - Maple Mania
 - Huron County Community Calendar
 - Supporting Local Economic Development (SLED) Initiative
 - Diminished digital marketing and engagement for Ontario’s West Coast
- As well, the county is no longer participating in the following projects:
- Counties EV Charger Network
 - Huron Stewardship Council
 - Healthy Lake Huron Steering Committee

- County Climate Action Plan
- Reduced support for sector organizations such as Huron Manufacturing Association (HMA)

The county acknowledged the cuts



(HURON COUNTY LOGO)

may impact residents and community partners, noting they remain committed to working collaboratively with partners as the changes take effect.

Highview Residences to open 51-suite home in Lucan

EXETER EXAMINER STAFF

Staff Contribution

Highview Residences will soon be opening the doors of a new facility in Lucan this summer that will house seniors, people living with dementia and adults with developmental disabilities or neurodiversity.

The company that operates private specialized retirement residences in London and Kitchener announced its purchase of the former Jake’s House property on Lucan’s Main Street on March 24.

Highview described the home in a press release as a first-of-its-kind model that will support a diverse community of people living together, including seniors seeking independent supportive retirement living, adults living with cognitive or neurological differences, including individuals on the autism spectrum, those with Down syndrome, developmental or intellectual disabilities, and individuals living with dementia or cognitive decline.

“In this innovative new private model, participants will range in age from young adulthood through later life,

creating an intentionally intergenerational home rooted in mutual respect and shared community,” Highview stated in the press release.

The new facility in Lucan will have 51 private suites on three floors, with a lower level dedicated to sharing life and activities.

“We all want to belong,” said Highview president Joy Birch. “We all want to live in-community, connected to a group of people, participating in meaningful activities that align with our abilities. Highview Lucan is where all this comes together.”

Highview founder and CEO Ross Chapin said the Lucan home will have shaped spaces and daily experiences that will make the home warm, dependable and human.

“One of the beautiful things we see in our homes is how people naturally come alongside one another,” said Chapin. “The more-able helping the less-able is simply part of being human and it happens every day among the people who live here and the people who work here.”

“As with all Highview homes, we look forward to becoming part of the Lucan community in a meaningful



(DAN ROLPH PHOTO)

Highview Residences is opening a private 51-suite home in Lucan this summer.

way,” Birch added. “We are committed to listening, building genuine relationships, and being thoughtful, caring neighbours.”

Renovations on the property are underway, and Highview expects the home to open in July 2026.



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SPORTS

Huron Perth Fastball sees continued growth after more than three decades

DAN ROLPH

Editor

What began more than 30 years ago with a handful of girls' fastball teams in small Huron County communities has grown into a thriving regional league, offering hundreds of young athletes a place to play and thrive.

The local girl's fastball league started with teams in the Exeter, Kirkton, Hensall, Crediton and Lieury areas. But the league has grown over its more than 30 years in the community, seeing substantial growth into the league that exists today.

Director Doug Schade said much of that expansion has come gradually over the years, starting with expansions further into Huron County to areas like Goderich and Brussels, and eventually branching out into areas in Perth County and beyond, reaching as far as Ayr, Cambridge and Ingersoll.

"It's been steady growth," he said. "Whether it's new organizations being created on the girls' side, or on the other side, organizations that are struggling in other leagues looking for a different opportunity, too. We're seeing both.

"It's quite a map." In recent years, the league has continued its trend of growth.

The league had 84 teams across six divisions in 2023, and that number increased to 108 teams in six divisions just two years later in 2025.

Schade said the organization's success comes from a mixture of dedicated volunteers and the league's willingness to branch out.

"We want to make sure any team that needs a place to play can play," he said. "We've sometimes had to make tough decisions based on geography, but for the most part, we want to be inclusive and receptive and make sure teams have a place to play.

"You really have to give the teams the credit," Schade added. "We just offer them a place to play and create those schedules, but you've got to give those local volunteers credit."

Huron Perth Fastball encompasses divisions that go as young as U9 teams, providing a league for players up to its U21 division.

"U21 just gives the girls the opportunity to stay involved a little bit longer, and



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(PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY LORI DIETRICH)

Huron Perth Fastball has been growing for more than 30 years, keeping local baseball thriving in the community. Pictured is the Exeter Extremes U15#2 team in 2023. From left in back are assistant coaches Derek Miles and Karen Geiger, Avah Rutten, Grace Kozachanko, Mia McCann, Cameron Finkbeiner, Quinn Palen and coach Lori Dietrich. In middle from left are Sydney VanDongen Miles, Cadence Bowerman and Bria Passmore. In front are Kami Geiger and Brooklyn Dietrich.

hopefully they'll connect with ladies' intermediate teams after that," said Schade.

While speaking about the benefits of picking up the sport and of volunteering, Schade said getting involved in "the greatest game in the world" has a lot to offer.

"Team sports, I think, are great for everyone," he said. "It's great for the players, who learn so many skills and build friend-

ships. It creates lifetimes of memories.

"For the volunteers, you pour into these kids and you see the fruit of your labour."

With passionate volunteers at its core, Huron Perth Fastball's success is a reminder of what can be accomplished when communities come together around sport.

For more information about Huron Perth Fastball, visit huronperthfastball.ca.

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On behalf of the South Huron Minor Hockey Association, I want to sincerely thank all of our sponsors for your incredible support this season. Your generosity goes far beyond the game, helping to create lasting memories and a strong sense of community for our players and their families. Because of you, our players are able to learn, grow, and develop a lifelong love of hockey. We are truly grateful for your commitment to our community and for the difference you make in our organization.

- Mike McLellan



We acknowledge the number of local businesses who support the South Huron Minor Hockey Association each season! Please support these local businesses whenever you can. Every year their contributions ensure we can host our tournaments, and more importantly, keep our registration fees manageable with the rising costs of running our program. Our community partners are incredible...please help us thank them by shopping.local!

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MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK

(DAN ROLPH PHOTOS)



South Huron was the centre of minor hockey action as teams went head-to-head in the DQ Challenge Cup, capping off the packed calendar of South Huron minor hockey tournaments for the season. The tournament that ran from March 27 to 29 welcomed teams spanning from U9LL to U18LL divisions, coming from communities throughout the region. Teams that took the top spot in this year's tournament included the Dorchester Dragons (U9LL), the Lambton Shores Predators (U11LL), the Central Perth Predators (U13LL), the Mitchell Meteors (U15LL) and the Lambeth Lancers (U18LL). Levi Vandebussche of the Zurich Thunder U11 team scores a goal in the team's March 27 match against South Huron.



James Dewan of the Lucan Irish U13LL Boys White team and Rider Stephenson of the U13LL2 Mid Huron Huskies fight for possession of the puck in their game on March 27 at the Stephen Township Arena.



Archer Farndon of the South Huron Sabres U9LL team pushes with the puck against the Dorchester Dragons on March 27.



Zurich Thunder U11 player Caysen Degroot handles the puck as South Huron's Jamie de-Boer looks to stop him.



Niklaus Cooper of South Huron's U11 LMLL team takes a shot on net.



Carson Klopp of the Zurich Thunder U11 team was on the ice as March 27 when they faced off with South Huron in Exeter.

MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



Lucan Irish U13LL Boys White player Tyler Shea looks for an opportunity for a shot on goal.



Jack Campbell of the U13LL2 Mid Huron Huskies takes the puck in the March 27 game at a Stephen Township Arena.



U13LL2 Mid Huron Husky Liam Kuntz warms up for the match against Lucan.



Goalie Justin Day of the South Huron Sabres U9L team protects the net against Dorchester.



South Huron Sabres U9LL player Ryan Maclean brings the puck toward the Dorchester net.



Parker Thomson was playing for the U9LL South Huron Sabres in their match against Dorchester.

COLUMNS

Mentoring Matters: The importance of traditional mentoring



AMY WILHELM

Examiner Columnist

When people hear Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Huron, their minds often jump straight to our traditional mentoring program. But it's just one of the many ways we support local children and youth.

We're proud to offer a variety of mentoring programs to meet different interests and needs.

Alongside traditional mentoring, we have in-school mentoring, Big Bunch, and our three youth empowerment programs: Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds; Game On! Eat Smart, Play Smart; and DISCOVER: The POWER of Me!

Each program brings its own unique twist to mentoring, creating different ways for young people to connect, grow, and thrive.

This week, we're shining a spotlight on traditional mentoring. At its heart, this program is all about connection. We match children and youth (our "Littles") ages six to 17, with caring, screened and trained adult volunteers (our "Bigs") who become positive, consistent role models in their lives. Together, they build meaningful one-on-

one friendships that can truly make a difference.

Grounded in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Theory of Change, traditional mentoring shows just how powerful a supportive relationship can be. Each match is thoughtfully made based on shared interests. Matches spend time together enjoying everyday activities. Whether that's shooting hoops, baking cookies in the kitchen, creating a masterpiece of art or just hanging out and talking.

These moments may seem simple, but they have a big impact. Littles gain confidence, build resilience, and develop important social and emotional skills — all while having fun. For many, it's an opportunity to have a trusted adult in their corner, cheering them on every

step of the way.

Behind the scenes, our mentoring co-ordinator is there to support each match, offering guidance, check-ins and access to helpful community resources to ensure the relationship thrives. At the end of the day, traditional mentoring is about helping young people discover their strengths, believe in themselves and realize their full potential — with a Big by their side.

To close, a few inspiring words from one of our amazing Big Sisters: "One special part of our match is that Sophie has had the opportunity to meet and spend time with my immediate and extended family. She has joined in with training when I adopted my puppy, we've had visits to my uncle's horses,

family dinners and "sisters" nights with my sister. These experiences have

been meaningful for both of us and have strengthened the relationship we share, while also showing her what positive, healthy connections can look like.

"What I have gained from this experience has been just as impactful as what Sophie gains. Being a Big has helped me be more present, patient and intentional. It has reminded me how powerful it can be to simply show up consistently for someone and offer encouragement and care."

That is the power of mentoring. That is what makes us #BiggerTogether.

Grey Matters: Aging in place vs. moving sooner, what families wish they knew



ANNETTE GERDES

Examiner Contributor

April is often a time of fresh starts. As the snow melts and we open the windows to let in the Spring air, many of us feel the urge to reset, reorganize, and look ahead. It's also a natural time for families to start having important conversations especially when it comes to aging and living arrangements. One of the most common things I hear from residents and families is: "We wish we had made the move sooner." For many older adults, the goal is to stay at home as long

as possible. And that makes sense as home is familiar, comfortable, and filled with memories. This is often referred to as "aging in place," and for some, it can work well for a period of time. But what families often don't realize is how quickly things can change. A small fall, missed medication, increased isolation, or even just the gradual decline in mobility can shift a situation from manageable to concerning overnight. When decisions are made during a crisis, options can feel rushed, stressful, and limited. On the other hand, choosing to move into a retirement community earlier while still independent can completely change the experience. Instead of reacting to a problem, you're planning for the future. Residents who make the move sooner often settle in more easily, build friendships faster, and take full advantage of everything available to them. They're not recovering from a crisis they're starting a new chapter. We see it every day. The residents who come in

earlier tend to:

- Participate more in activities
- Form meaningful social connections
- Maintain their independence longer
- Experience less stress during the transition

And just as importantly, their families feel a sense of relief knowing their loved one is safe, supported, and no longer alone. That's not to say the decision is easy. There are real emotions tied to leaving a home, decades of memories, milestones, and comfort. It's not just a physical move it's an emotional one. But when the decision is made with time, support, and open conversation, it can be a positive and empowering step rather than a difficult last resort. So how do you know when it might be time to start thinking about a change? Some early signs families should pay attention to include:

- Increased difficulty with daily tasks like cooking or housekeeping
- Changes in mobility or bal-

ance

- Missed medications or appointments
- Withdrawal from social activities
- Concerns about safety at home
- Isolation, loneliness, depression or just unable to get out and about in some case loss of their drivers licence. These don't always mean an immediate move is needed but they are signals that it's time to start the conversation. Spring is a perfect opportunity to do just that. Talk openly. Ask questions. Explore options before they're urgently needed. Even just visiting a retirement community, joining for a meal, or attending an event can help take away some of the uncertainty. At the end of the day, it's about making informed choices, ones that support not just safety, but quality of life, connection, and peace of mind. Because sometimes, the best move isn't about leaving something behind... it's about stepping into something better. In my role, As Di-

rector of Care and as General Manager, I've had the privilege of walking alongside many residents and families during this transition. Time and time again, I hear the same words: "We wish we hadn't waited so long." And just as often, I see the relief and renewed energy that comes when the decision is made before a crisis. If this is something you've been thinking about for yourself or a loved one, I encourage you to start the conversation. Ask questions, explore your options, and don't be afraid to reach out or visit a local retirement community to learn more. Even taking that first small step can bring a great sense of clarity and comfort. Wishing you and your loved ones a beautiful spring filled with fresh beginnings, renewed energy, and moments of connection.

Annette Gerdes is the General Manager at the Goderich Place Retirement Residence

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Oh, the Places We'll Go: The silly side of travel writing



PAUL KNOWLES

Examiner Columnist

I get a lot of comments from people who are a bit jealous of my gig as a travel writer. They're right – it's a great job. I will insist that it does involve work – being on a busy, dusk to dawn travel "familiarization tour" can be exhausting. But still fun.

And sometimes, unexpectedly hilarious.

Often, these silly moments involve food. Like in Hong Kong, where I was taken out to breakfast at a congee restaurant. Congee is rice porridge, usually served with tea, and you add meat to the congee. My host recommended that I add... wait for it... bull's penis. I did not, and opted for chicken. At least, I hope it was chicken.

In Locarno, Switzerland, in the Italian canton of this multi-lingual country, I asked my waiter if he spoke English. "Yes," he said, with a vigorous nod of the head. So, I ordered. My meal, when delivered, bore no resemblance to what I had asked for. I explained. He nodded, hopefully, but clearly without comprehending my comment. I asked

again: "Do you speak English?" "Yes!"

I pondered. And then, knowing that French is one of the four official languages of Switzerland, I asked, "Parlez-vous anglais?" He laughed and shook his head. "Non!" Well, that at least explained that.

And speaking of food, there was the time I punched a pigeon. I was in Ottawa, exploring the Byward Market, and decided to have a beaver tail. Yum. I sat down, and was immediately approached by a herd of rather aggressive pigeons. Foolishly, I thought that if I threw a couple of bits of beaver tail well distant from me, they would leave me alone. Wrong. They got more aggressive, and one flew straight at my face. I reached out to defend myself and... yep, I accidentally punched a pigeon.

In Ponce Inlet, Florida, at a diner, I ordered a salad. "We're all out of salads," said the waitress. "Really?" "Yes." "Okay, I have a question," I said. "If I order a hamburger, can I get it with lettuce, tomato and onion?" "Sure."

"That's a salad!" I pointed out with some emphasis. Made no difference, of course. Salads were off.

Occasionally the unreal reality of being a travel writer does lead to amazing things – circumstances you still have to laugh about, because they really are so genuinely unreal.

Like, the time in San Diego when I was supposed to go tandem hang-gliding off the cliffs.

This seemed an ill-conceived idea, so I asked if there might be an alternative activity. "Do you want to play golf?" asked my host, "at Torrey Pines?" Did I want to play golf at one of the most famous golf courses in the world? We arrived. I was escorted to my golf cart, complete with a beautiful set of loner clubs, balls, tees, water, the works. I asked "Am I playing with anyone?"

"No sir," came the answer, "We closed the course for you."

I looked at my host. He quietly said, "I don't know who they think you are, but go with it." So, I did. I played well – about which, I have no proof, and no one believes me.

I have been bit on the lip by a sea turtle in the waters off Barbados; I have kissed a stuffed beaver in New Brunswick; I have marched in two parades in Québec City, once in full, brilliant blue costume as a 16th century seigneur; I have felt my underwear fall off during a walking tour of Lugano; and I have been trussed up like a hippopotamus in bondage gear to go ziplining in the Jamaican rainforest.

But it was in Mexico that two incidents left me laughing and feeling rather humiliated, at the same time.

We went snorkelling; the transportation to the coral reef involved two-person speedboats. Upon arrival at the reefs, they tethered the boats together, and said "Jump in." Jumping in, I could do, but there was no way I was going to be able to



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

A sea turtle, perhaps a relative of the beast that nipped the author on the lip.

haul myself back up and into the boat. I tried to ask, but our guide spoke as much English as my Locarno waiter. What the heck – I jumped in. The snorkelling was great; eventually, we were called back to the boats, and I was first to return. I went to the back, and started to try to board the beast. No luck, of course.

The guide motioned that I should come to the front, which was even farther out of the water. I obeyed. Whereupon he grabbed me by the life jacket, and landed me unceremoniously on the prow. It's hard to laugh hysterically with the breath knocked out of you, but I managed it.

And also, during that visit to

Mexico, I was offered a moment of self-awareness. A small group of media folk went to the amazing attraction called Xcaret, where you can swim in an underground river. You don a life jacket, but it takes some effort to complete the course. When we finished, a much

younger member of the group told me, "If I ever live to be as old as you, I hope I am able to do as well as you just did."

Sigh.

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.



Swimming the underground river at Xcaret, Mexico.



Kissing a stuffed beaver at the Big Fiddle Still in Harvey, New Brunswick.

About Time and Times: Black Forest pretzels



JUDY FINKBEINER JOHNSON

Examiner Columnist

As you read this, the seasons of Lent and Easter are behind us. I am writing this with memories of decades of celebrating those, including making and eating soft pretzels. This Old World Black Forest food tradition in my family arrived with my paternal Finkbeiner ancestors when they crossed the Atlantic Ocean to come to the New World, what we now know as Canada, and settled near Crediton. Ten generations of my family descend from that young pioneer couple, most living in this area, and others farther away.

In our family, pretzels were made only in the period of Lent just before Easter and the last pretzel for that year was eaten at breakfast before we attended the Easter sunrise service at Crediton's Zion Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Those lye-dipped pretzels were multitaskers - part Easter-time treat, part spring tonic and cleanser and totally delicious. I will probably never enjoy them again, because there is no longer a family member specialist for lye-making.

Carrying on the pretzel tradition

My mother Irene (Gower) Finkbeiner had not heard of lye-dipped pretzels before she moved from Manitoba to Crediton but soon learned to make them from her mother-in-law Estrella and two maternal aunts, nee Pfaff. My grandpa Finkbeiner remembered his mother making them.

Usually, two to four people got together to make them because it was a physically demanding and hours-long task. The younger generation learned to make them from the older ones, to pass on the tradition. I have nieces and nephews who helped two of my brothers and me make lye-dipped pretzels; I wouldn't be surprised if someday they experiment with modern baking soda and water recipes.

When we made pretzels, we shared them with other members of our family. Those were gifts from a true labour of love.

History of the pretzel

A widely accepted variation of the pretzel origin is that it was created in a northern Italy monastery around 600 AD. Creative monks used long strips of dough to form the shape of the pretzel, designed to teach children about Christianity and reward their prayers with pretzels, "little rewards" of pretzels.

The crosses on the pretzels mimic arms across the chest, a prayer posture in the past. The three holes represent the Christian Holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The pretzel made its way into the Black Forest in southern Germany. It became known not only as a spiritual food, but also as a symbol of good luck and prosperity. For a time, at some European weddings the bride and groom tugged and tore apart a soft pretzel like a wishbone. The one who got the larger piece would also get their wish granted.

Pretzels were sometimes given to the poor in place of loaves of bread. Street-corner merchants sold pretzels to locals and travelers. Using those handy holes, they were often stacked high on poles, attention-getting point-of-sale displays.

Respect the pretzel

The lye-dipped pretzel demands major respect. As children we were taught not to overindulge. Two were fine, but more than that could be uncomfortable, and soon problematic. It was a lesson easily remembered because when the limit was tested as kids, fast trips to the bathroom inevitably followed.

When friends came to the farm during pretzel weeks, we gave them the warnings and advised the novices to only eat one the first time. Most followed the rules, but some older boys didn't, but they did follow directions to the bathroom.

Our partners-to-be and the next generation usually loved the pretzels from the first bite. I remember the day when my future husband Barry and I were visiting his parents in Niagara Falls and he told them about eating lye-dipped pretzels. The comment from his mom (later my beloved mother-in-law) was, "Are you trying to kill my son?"

If I had intended that, it wouldn't have been an effective method because he's still going

strong, after decades of pretzel-eating.

Honey or maple syrup

Our pretzels were eaten at room temperature. They didn't require refrigeration because no matter how large batches of pretzels were, they quickly disappeared. Then the next batch was made. We spread hard creamed honey on them, on top of butter. We knew good honey. My great-grandfather Michael Finkbeiner Jr. kept many hives of honeybees. That honey was not only used by family and friends, but also sold throughout the area, leading to his nickname, "the honey man."

That tradition passed down for two more generations with my father keeping two to three hives in the family farm bush. He was sometimes called to collect a swarm of bees that was a nuisance. He used his grandfather's bee smoker to calm them. Wearing a mesh veil/head covering attached to a wide brimmed straw hat, gloves and light clothes that bees didn't find as threatening as dark garments, he gathered the swarm, knowing it was essential that the swarm's queen was inside so the bees would stay after being taken to the hives. On occasion, dad brought us fresh honey on the comb straight from the hive, dripping with sweetness and warmth, an amazing gift from industrious honeybees.

Pretzels could also be eaten with maple syrup, a New World treat. European settlers learned how to make it from indigenous peoples, including the Anishinaabe people from the Kettle and Stony Point area. Maple syrup production is limited by the freeze/thaw cycle required. Sap only runs during an above freezing day after a frost the night before. It requires boiling enormous amounts of early spring maple tree sap into maple syrup, and down to maple sugar. We call maple tree deciduous forests sugar bushes. Another of their gifts to us are spectacular fall colours.

Lye caution

The first step for making lye-dipped pretzels began several days ahead, taking great care and precision. My dad, and later my youngest brother, made the lye, using white ash tree hardwood ashes. Drainage holes were made in a large enamel pail that was filled three-quarters full of wood ashes. The pail was set on wood slats across a large stoneware crock, and about two litres (quarts) of very hot water poured into the ashes. This was repeated daily for



(BARRY JOHNSON PHOTO)

Rolled and risen pretzels ready to dip and bake.

several days. After about two days the lye began to drip into the crock.

Lye was poured through a funnel into glass mason jars, careful not to splash any. Touching the very corrosive lye, wet wood ashes, or breathing fumes was dangerous.

Rolling pretzel dough

Pretzel dough is basically a bread dough. The tricky part is the rolling to create the pretzel shape. Using a well-floured rolling board, 175 millilitres (one three-quarter cup) of dough was loosely rolled until it became a thick "rope" over 60 centimetres (one foot) long and thicker in the centre. Its right end was put on the left side near the middle of the dough rope, and the left end up on the right of the middle. It often took lots of practice to master the skills to create the traditional pretzel shape.

The formed pretzels continued to rise while a few more were rolled. They weren't allowed to rise too long, or they got hard on top or cracked, absorbing too much lye when dipped.

Doing the dip and baking

A mixture of one part lye to double or triple amounts of wa-

ter was brought just to a boil in a deep, decades-old cast iron pot. A stainless steel mesh dipper was used to lower a pretzel into the liquid for a very few seconds. The pretzel was picked up by the dipper, drained slightly and placed immediately on baking sheets covered with tin foil and very lightly greased with some shortening.

The unbaked pretzels were then sprinkled with coarse or sea salt. The process continued, one pretzel at a time. As water evaporated from the pot, it was replenished to keep the lye properly diluted. Lots of space was left between pretzels because they got bigger as they baked.

Pretzels were done when the dough was cooked and they became a rich, shiny golden brown. The tin foil was removed before they cooled very much, or it would stick.

Next column

In the April 23 issue, I invite you to come with me along memory lane back to my public school days. True stories are about events that could never happen today, some that make me smile, others laugh, and a few that make me wonder how we came through unscathed.



(BARRY JOHNSON PHOTO)

Baked pretzels ready for tasting.

Rural Roots, Modern Reach: What Google and AI look for — and why it matters



MEG PEARSON

Examiner Columnist

There's a phrase in digital marketing that sounds technical, but once you get it, you see your business and your online presence in a new light.

It's called E-E-A-T. It stands for: Experience, Expertise, Authority and Trust.

This isn't just about trying to impress Google. It's about how real people choose who to work with. Whether someone hears about your business from a friend, drives past your storefront or sees your name online, they usually take the next step. They look you up online. In seconds, they ask themselves: Does this feel legit?

That decision happens faster than ever, and now, it's not just people making that call. Search engines like Google, along with AI tools like ChatGPT, are scanning your online presence to find out: Are you credible?

Are you consistent? Are you worth showing to others?

This is where E-E-A-T comes into play. Let's break it down for local businesses.

Experience is about proof. It's not just what you say you do, but what you can show. This is a huge, missed opportunity I see locally. A contractor may have years of great builds but lacks photos online. A tattoo artist might have amazing work but only a few posts. A local farm may offer beautiful products but lacks a visual story of how it all comes together.

In today's digital world, if people can't see it, it almost doesn't exist. And it doesn't have to be complicated.

- Take photos of your work as you go.

- Share before-and-after images.

- Show the process, not just the end result.

People don't expect perfection. They want authenticity more than ever.

Expertise isn't about sounding smart. It's about making things straightforward. If someone visits your website or social media and feels confused, they'll leave. Think about the common questions you get:

- "How does this work?"

- "What does this cost?"

- "What should I expect?"

That's your content. A local aesthetician could explain the difference between treatments. A mechanic might clarify what a service includes. A restaurant could share where ingredients come from or how dishes are prepared.

When you teach, even in small ways, you position yourself as someone who knows their stuff. More importantly, you become someone people feel comfortable trusting.

Authority doesn't mean being famous online. It means being recognizable and consistent. In a rural community, this is your advantage. Authority can look like:

- Being featured in the local paper (like this one!)

- Collaborating with other businesses.

- Participating in community events.

- Having consistent branding and messaging.

It also appears in how often people see your name. If someone hears about you, then sees your Instagram, then finds your website, that repetition builds confidence. You're no longer a random option. You're a known presence.

Trust ties everything together. At the end of the day, people aren't just buying your service. They're buying certainty. Trust shows up in small but impactful ways:

- Google reviews.

- Testimonials.

- Clear contact information.

- Up-to-date and consistent hours of operation.

- A real photo of you or your team.

- A current website that actually works.

You'd be surprised how many people decide not to reach out simply because something feels unclear or outdated. It's not because you're not good. It's because they're unsure. And when people aren't sure, they don't act.

There was a time when being found online was mainly about keywords. Repeating "Exeter hair salon" enough on your website gave you a decent chance to show up. That's no longer the case. Search engines have evolved, and AI is now involved. Instead of scanning for keywords, platforms are looking for credibility signals.

They're asking:

- Does this business actually do what it claims?

- Is there real proof?

- Do other people trust them?
- Is their information consistent across platforms?

AI tools do the same thing. When someone asks a question, these tools don't pull random answers. They focus on sources that show experience, expertise, authority and trust. If your business has no clear website, limited content, no reviews, or inconsistent information, you're not just harder for people to find; you're less likely to be recommended at all.

The good news is you don't have to do everything at once. Start with what's easiest:

- Add five to 10 real photos of your work online (on your website and Google Business profile).

- Ask a few happy customers for reviews.

- Ensure your contact info and hours are accurate.

- Write a simple explanation of what you do and who you help.

In a small town, your reputation already exists. E-E-A-T simply ensures it shows up when someone looks for you. Today, that moment isn't just happening through word-of-mouth. It's happening online.

Chamber Connect: Labour shortage a barrier in Huron economic growth



COLIN CARMICHAEL

Examiner Columnist

Four recent reports from the Four County Labour Market Planning Board reinforce a point that deserves much more attention in local policy discussions, particularly as we head into municipal elections later this year: the labour market in our region does not behave like the labour market in Toronto, Kitchener or London.

Huron County is part of a region with a distinct demographic and economic profile. We are older than the province as a whole. Our unemployment rate is consistently among the lowest

in the province, often at least 20 per cent lower than the provincial average. Our communities are rural and dispersed, which means transportation, housing and access to services shape workforce participation in ways that are more immediate than they might be in larger centres. Employers here are not just hiring in a market where candidates have more choice, they are hiring in a market where the pool of workers is already extremely limited.

That local reality has major implications. It means labour shortage is not a passing inconvenience or a problem confined to one sector. It is, in my view, the single greatest barrier to economic growth in Huron County.

We can talk about business attraction, expansion, entrepreneurship, downtown development, tourism and investment. All of those are important. But each of them depends, in one way or another, on people. Businesses need workers. Health

care providers need staff. Manufacturers need skilled trades. Main Street employers need reliable employees. Community organizations need talent. Even when demand exists, growth can stall because the people needed to support it are simply not available in sufficient numbers.

That is what makes our situation different from the way labour issues are often discussed across the province. In most parts of Ontario, the conversation centres more on unemployment, underemployment, or how to reconnect people to opportunity. In Huron County, the challenge is often the reverse. Opportunity exists, but labour supply is constrained.

The Four County reports, available to download at planningboard.ca, point to several parts of that story. Youth retention remains a concern. Health human resources are under growing pressure. Newcomers are increasingly important to workforce sustainability, but attracting people is only half

the task if communities do not also offer housing, transportation, inclusion and support systems that make staying realistic. These are not separate issues. They are different expressions of the same core challenge.

This is why workforce development needs to be understood as both an economic development issue and a community development issue. A county cannot grow if employers cannot staff their operations. A community cannot attract young families if childcare is inaccessible. A region cannot solve health care shortages without also thinking about housing, spousal employment and quality of life. When labour supply is tight, every weakness in the broader system becomes more costly.

There is no single fix for this. We need stronger local career pathways, better conditions for youth retention, more housing options, more practical support for newcomers, and continued attention to health workforce recruitment and retention. We

also need more opportunities for local employers and community leaders to think through these issues together.

That is part of why the Huron Chamber continues to convene both the monthly Workforce Roundtable and the monthly HR Peer Network. One is open to employers and interested community members who want to engage in the broader workforce conversation. The other gives chamber members a more practical space to share challenges and ideas related to hiring, retention and human resources.

Huron County has many strengths. Our business community is resilient, our communities are collaborative and there is no shortage of people willing to work on difficult problems. But the starting point has to be a clear-eyed understanding of the issue in front of us.

In this county, labour shortage is not one challenge among many. It is the constraint that shapes almost everything else.

Riddles

What has to be broken before you can use it?
An egg

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

What has a face and two hands, but no arms or legs?
A clock

What gets wetter the more it dries?
A towel

What has one eye but can't see?
A needle

What has many teeth but can't bite?
A comb

What runs but never walks?
Water (or a river)

What has ears but cannot hear?
Corn

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

I fly without wings. I cry without eyes. What am I?
A cloud

Sudoku

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

Solutions on pg. 26

Pet of the Week

TIPS FOR YOUR ANIMAL HEADING INTO SPRING

Keep dogs on leash. In addition to preventing your animal from getting lost, keeping them on a leash will allow you to guide them away from people and other animals. As the snow melts, this also helps you keep an eye on your dog to make sure they don't get into anything they shouldn't that may be surfacing under the snow.



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

COMING EVENTS

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APRIL

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519-235-1890

Special Events:

April 10th - After Hours Nerf Battle

(ages 12-17) [REGISTRATION REQUIRED] (6:00 PM-7:00 PM)

April 15th CanFilmDay - Teen Film Screening of "I Like Movies" (movie rated 14A) - (6:00 PM-8:00 PM)

- Seedy Saturday - Saturday, April 18th (10:00AM-1:00PM)

- PD Day Sprout House Craft - Friday, April 24th (ages 6-12) [REGISTRATION REQUIRED](10:00AM-12:00PM)

Off-Site Events:

- Scrabble Tournament @ Imposter Brewing (19+) [REGISTRATION REQUIRED] - Sunday, April 12th (1:00PM-4:00 PM)

- Spelling Bee @ Imposter Brewing (19+) [REGISTRATION REQUIRED] - Friday, April 17th (7:00 PM-9:00 PM)

Recurring:

- CAD Makers Club (ages 12+) [REGISTRATION REQUIRED] - Tuesdays (3:30PM-4:30PM)

- Teen Advisory Group - Wednesday, April 22nd (3:30 PM-5:00 PM)

KIRKTON LIBRARY BRANCH

kirktonlibrary@huroncounty.ca

519-229-8854

Special Events:

- CanFilmDay - All Ages Film Screening of "The Grand Seduction" (movie rated PG13) - Wednesday, April 15th (4:30 PM- 7:00 PM)

HENSALL LIBRARY BRANCH

hensalllibrary@huroncounty.ca

519-262-2445

Special Events:

- PD Day Sprout House Craft - Friday, April 24th (ages 6-12)[REGISTRATION REQUIRED] (10:00 AM - 11:00 AM)

For a full listing of library programming and events, please visit <https://www.huron-countylibrary.ca/events/>

THURS., APRIL 16 - 10am - Muffin Time with Jill from Bluewater Recycling Association. Thurs., April 16 - 10am. Good Neighbours of Bluewater. 28 Goshen St. N. Zurich. 519-236-7081 / gnob@hay.net. Feel free to bring in a piece of clean garbage to find out if it's recyclable. April 16th 5pm-7pm

THURS, APRIL 16th 2026 Time: 5 pm to 7 pm Lucan Annual Spaghetti Dinner

131 Market Street, Lucan, ON. Support local youth. Fundraiser for The Lucian Guide Scout Hall.

FRI., APRIL 17 & SAT., APRIL 18

South Huron Community Theatre Presents: Give Our Regards to Broadway. Fri., April 17 at 7:30pm; Sat., April 18 at 2pm and 7:30pm. South Huron Rec Centre, 94 Victoria St. E., Exeter.

Doors open 30 minutes before performance. Cabaret-style seating at tables. Tickets available at: Hansen's Courtesy Desk, Exeter and Havasu Coffee Co., Zurich. Tickets \$20 April 18 - 6:30-7:30pm

APRIL 18 - 6:30-7:30pm

You are invited to attend Walks in the Woodlot. Sat., April 18 - 6:30 to 7:30 pm (Raindate April 19). Sawyer Preservation Woodlot outside of Kirkton (6100 Line 12, West Perth). Join local naturalist, Denise Iszczuk for a fun, family-friendly walk to discover frogs and other amazing amphibians that call our area home. For more information 226-880-1466.

TUES., APR. 21 at 7pm

Good Neighbours of Bluewater presents Bakery Bingo. Tues., April 21 at 7 pm. 28 Goshen St. N., Zurich. 519-236-7081, gnob.org. Register by April 14. Admission food and card purchase by donation.

WED., APRIL 22 - 5-7pm

Grand Bend & Area Horticultural Society invites you to its 35th Anniversary High Tea. Wed., April 22 - 5-7pm. Refreshments & Delectables. Grand Bend Legion, Ontario St., Grand Bend. \$5 - Register by April 17. gbahorticalsociety@gmail.com

APRIL 25

Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Huron presents The Little Craft Show. Sat., April 25 - 9am to 3pm

SHOP LOCAL VENDORS AND BAKE SALE. South Huron Recreation Centre ~ 94 Victoria St. E - Exeter. Admission \$3 at the door (12 & under free). To book a table or for more information contact Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Huron at 519-235-1780 ext. 4 or angie.steckle@bigbrothersbigsisters.ca or visit <https://southhuron.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca>

April 25th 10am - 3pm - Save the Earth and Support

131 Market Street, Lucan, ON. Bring your e-waste. Proceeds of recycled materials will be donated to Lucan Scout Guide Hall Committee

students. Tickets at door \$30, free for kids under 10. Tickets available at: Exeter Animal Hospital (519-235-2662); Exeter United Church (519-235-0860); Hansens (519-235-6131); Zurich Pharmacy (519-236-7577); Mary Ann Walper (226-735-7843); April King (519-280-2649) or any choir member.

MAY 2

Mitchell Kin Club Annual Rubber Duck Race. May 2 at 11 a.m. Stacey Brothers Park. Tickets are \$5 each. Tickets available through any Kin member.

FRIDAY, MAY 29 & SATURDAY, MAY 30

South Huron Hospital Auxiliary RUMMAGE SALE. South Huron Recreation Centre. 94 Victoria St. E. Exeter. Friday, May 29 from 2 to 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, May 30 from 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon. Donations accepted Thursday, May 28 - 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the South Huron Recreation Centre. Zamboni entrance. Proceeds going to Patient care needs. All items left over are then donated to local charities in our area.

JUNE

SUNDAY, JUNE 28 - 2-4 P.M.

Crystal Gage and Ryan St Denis, Country and Western. Zion United Church, 6 Victoria Ave W, Crediton. \$25.00/person call Ruth 519-234-6035 or Joan 519-237-3806

MAY

MAY 1 AND 3

South Huron Community Choirs present 'We Are All Family'. A spring concert featuring adult and kids' choirs and handbells! May 1 at 7pm, Exeter United Church; May 3 at 3:30pm at Kingsfield- Zurich Mennonite Church. Advance tickets: \$25 adult, \$15

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9. 9.46 trillion km
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7	5	2	3	6	9	4	1	8
8	6	1	2	4	7	5	9	3
4	3	9	8	1	5	7	2	6
2	8	6	9	7	1	3	5	4
3	7	4	5	2	8	1	6	9
1	9	5	4	3	6	2	8	7
5	1	3	6	9	4	8	7	2
6	2	7	1	8	3	9	4	5
9	4	8	7	5	2	6	3	1

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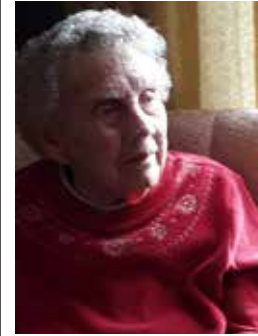
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OBITUARY

Kleinfeldt



Edna passed away peacefully at South Huron Hospital on Thursday, March 19, 2026 at the age of 97. Beloved wife of the late Kenneth Kleinfeldt. Fondly remembered by special friends; Beth and Dave Prouty, Marilyn Waldeck, Laura Mae and Earl Benewies, Susan Handerer, Paul Scott, Susan Smith, Matthew Cooper, and

Fred Miller, along with Anne Marie and Ron Mayer who cared for Edna's cherished cat, Sam. Predeceased by her parents Edwin and Lindsay (Pollen) Coward, sister Jean and her partner Tom Yellow, and her brother Garnet.

Edna enjoyed listening to country music, watching the Toronto Maple Leafs and having her cat Sam by her side.

Visitation was held at Haskett Funeral Home, 456 Main Street South, EXETER on Saturday, March 28th from 10 – 11 AM. Edna's funeral service was held at 11 AM with Rev. Louise von Massow officiating. A luncheon was followed in the funeral home. Interment Exeter Cemetery.

Donations to the South Huron Hospital Foundation or a charity of your choice would be appreciated. Condolences may be forwarded through www.haskettfh.com.

A special thank you to Dr. Jadd and his team, the staff at South Huron Hospital, Huron County Paramedics, Meals on Wheels, One Care, and Ontario Health at Home.

Ask the Arborist



By Joel Hackett • 519.272.5742 • jtsquote@gmail.com

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

Dear Arborist,

My Maple trees last year got this ugly black spots all over the leaves. I am hoping to avoid it this year.

Advice? Thanks Kelly

Dear Kelly

Sounds like a common fungal infection called tar

spot, though it makes the trees appearance unattractive, it is not generally considered a major problem. You can normally manage it by cleaning up all the leaves in the fall, and doing an interior and exterior thin (trimming). Sincerely, The Arborist

Exeter Examiner

SCAN TO READ THE ONLINE PAPER

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White Squirrel Watch



PHOTO BY BRENDA COUCKUYT

PHOTO OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WHITE SQUIRREL WHO HAS BEEN NAMED CASPER. HE HAS BEEN VISITING FOR FIVE YEARS NOW.



Nominate your White Squirrel sightings by emailing info@exeterexaminer.com

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