

# St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1291

Thursday, December 4, 2025

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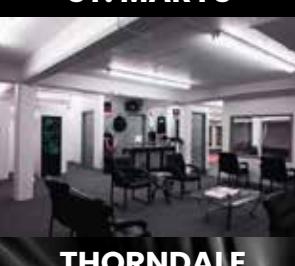
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## NEW CULVERT INSTALLED

A new, larger box culvert was lifted into place by crane along Queen Street West in St. Marys over the weekend. Work continues at the drain, located beside The Beer Store, as the road closure remained in place.

(AL STRATHDEE PHOTO)

## Local historians speak out in favour of retaining West Quarry pillars

St. Marys council to consider whether restoring pillars is feasible

GALEN SIMMONS

*Local Journalism Initiative Reporter*

After hearing from several local historians about the importance of retaining St. Marys' connection to its past as a significant producer of limestone, town council may reconsider a decision to have six large pillars located at the West Quarry demolished as it moves ahead with developing a recreation plan for the site.

At the Nov. 25 St. Marys council meeting,

a delegation of four local historians including Mary Smith of the St. Marys Museum, Lauri Leduc of Stratford Walking Tours, and Larry Pfaff and Paul King, both members of the town's heritage and culture advisory committee, asked council to consider stabilizing the stone pillars as a visual reminder of St. Marys' industrial heritage.

"For 30 years, we've been giving walking tours of the Riverview Walkway, and that is

*CONTINUED TO PAGE 2*

## Town of St. Marys to host grand reopening of PRC pool on Jan. 24, 2026

Pool is filled; inspections, deck cleaning and lifeguard training to commence

GALEN SIMMONS

*Local Journalism Initiative Reporter*

After more than a year, the pool at the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC) in St. Marys will see its reopening to the public next month, and a grand reopening event to mark the occasion on Jan. 24, 2026.

At the Nov. 25 St. Marys council meeting, director of community services Stephanie Ische presented a brief update on the progress of the nearly \$2-million aquatics centre renovation, which saw the pool first close in November 2024 to address safety and structural-degradation issues caused by the use of saltwater early on in the pool's lifespan and the installation of an HVAC system that was later deemed inadequate for a pool this size.

"I know everybody is anticipating the opening of the pool," Ische told council. "To bring everyone up to speed, we do have water in the pool and the (new) ventilation system has been turned on. Things are progressing. The anticipated date for the handover back to the town is to be (Nov. 28), so we're hoping everything goes well; fingers crossed."

Ische told council there are still a few outstanding pieces that need to fall into place before the pool can reopen to the public. They include an inspection by Huron Perth Public Health, the cleaning of the pool deck after construction crews leave and the training of lifeguards, all of which will happen over the next few weeks.

"While we will have a soft launch – I call it that because we don't know the exact date we will re-

*CONTINUED TO PAGE 5*

## Ron Morrison

Broker for Coldwell Banker Homefield Legacy Realty, Brokerage  
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# COMMUNITY

## Local historians speak out in favour of retaining West Quarry pillars

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

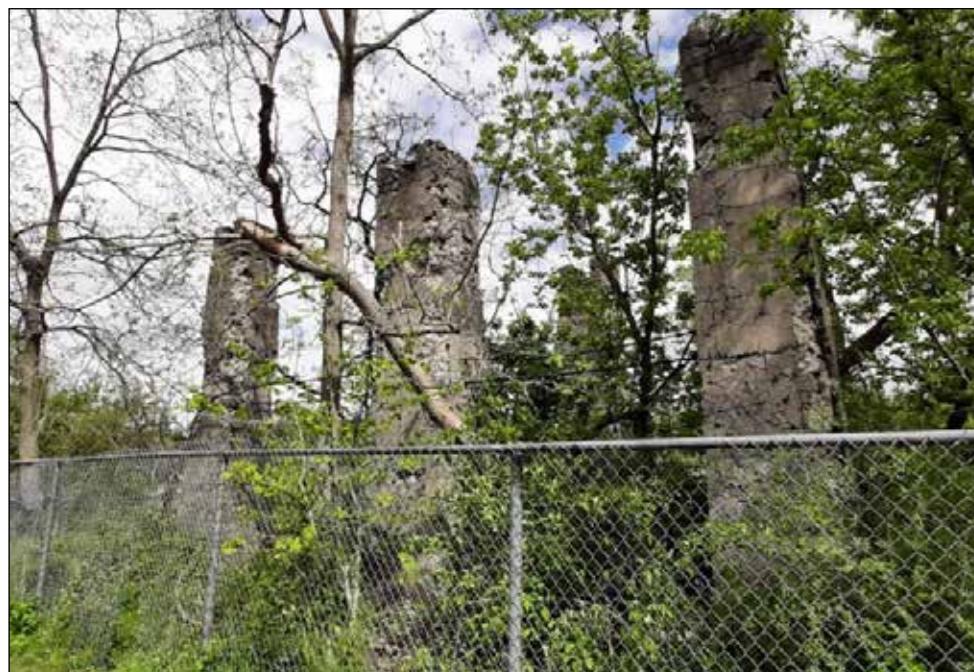
the track bed and essentially, that's all that remains of the CPR line," Pfaff told council. "One of the highlights, believe it or not, has been the six pillars. These are all that remain of an elevating device which brought crushed stone, cut stone and rubble stone from the quarry floor. The crushed stone would come up in buckets, the cut stone would come in carts, and then they were dropped or loaded onto boxcars and, via the CPR, exported not just through St. Marys but all across southwestern Ontario.

"There are churches in Toronto, there's a church in Lucan, there are the armouries in London, and all of them have St. Marys cut stone, in addition to crushed stone, which was essential in the building of roads, particularly from the beginning of the 1900s. As far as rubble stone, there's not a building in St. Marys that was built up to 1914 that did not have St. Marys rubble stone as the foundation, and most of us with older homes know those foundations walls were two feet thick. So, this was a big business."

In their letter to council, the historians highlighted the significance of the local limestone industry, without which, most of Stonetown's heritage buildings and structures would not exist today. The West Quarry with its six standing industrial pillars and associated structures, they explained, played a formative role in the economic and social development of the community, and preserving what is left of this industrial fabric would provide a tangible connection to the past for future generations, serving as an educational resource and cultural landmark.

While those who spoke before council were in favour of cleaning up the West Quarry so it can be used for recreational purposes, similar to the town's Swimming Quarry, they suggested integrating heritage conservation into the town's designs for the site would offer the opportunity for unique programming and serve as a connection between past and present for residents of and visitors to St. Marys.

"One of the best things about the pillars is they engender curiosity, people ask questions, when they ask questions, we have to try to provide the answers, and it was really because of these questions ... we have been, for the past 30 years, trying to solve the question of the pillars," Smith said. "... The link (to St. Marys' history as a



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TOWN OF ST. MARYS)

Pictured are the six, 20-foot-tall concrete pillars along the fence line at the west quarry in St. Marys.

limestone producer) is getting weaker, and with every decade, we lose a little bit more of this personal connection to this very important industry that really helped us establish our town.

"It's not a question of restoring them. ... We really don't know what they looked like at the time. We just want you to leave them, tidy up around the site, certainly, and try and maybe secure it with a fence. Clearly, we don't want lumps of old concrete falling on anybody's head, but I think that could be prevented. Just leave them alone, let people keep asking questions. As long as they're standing, they'll outlast all of us."

Currently at the West Quarry, there are six tall concrete structures approximately 20 feet in height and several shorter structures, roughly four feet high, along the west embankment of the quarry. These supports were originally built as mining infrastructure used by the Thames Quarry Company to support bins that would top load crushed stone into railway cars.

As part of a plan to open up the West Quarry for recreational use, council voted in February to have the six pillars removed, both for safety reasons and because the cost of stabilizing them was deemed cost prohibitive. In September, town staff an-

nounced a potential partnership with the Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation (TOARC) on the cleanup of industrial waste at the West Quarry. While TOARC told staff it likely wouldn't be responsible for removing the pillars, it said it might be able to help the town clean up other industrial waste along the quarry shoreline to make the site safer and more usable.

After the delegates spoke at council's

Nov. 25 meeting, council agreed to have staff present options and costing for stabilizing the quarry pillars or retaining some of the smaller concrete structures at the West Quarry when the town receives an answer as to whether TOARC has agreed to help clean up the site.

"There are smaller components that were not in the scope of the original study because when I asked questions about that ... on Feb. 18, that was noted by staff that those weren't even something that they looked at," Coun. Fern Pridham said. "So, I'd actually like to include that they also do just a quick assessment of what else is there that could be retained."

While council agreed to revisit the notion of stabilizing the pillars or retaining some of the smaller structures as a link to the town's industrial past, several councillors spoke against spending money on the pillars and other structures when there are already so many other visible links to the town's history as a limestone producer like St. Marys town hall, the water tower and other heritage structures and buildings.

"I'm fully supportive of all the work the heritage committee does and all the background," Coun. Jim Craigmile said. "Many years ago, we talked in our strategic plan about how there's so many iconic features within the Town of St. Marys, and how many of them can we financially support? ... It just becomes more and more difficult financially to keep adding onto that list. ... I think we always have to be aware of that."



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### 7 Day Forecast

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The Hitching Post



Wednesday  
Dec-3rd

Thursday  
Dec-4th

Friday  
Dec-5th

Saturday  
Dec-6th

Sunday  
Dec-7th

Monday  
Dec-8th

Tuesday  
Dec-9th

Scattered flurries  
-2°C  
Feels like -9

Few flurries  
-7°C  
Feels like -13

Sun & cloud  
-4°C  
Feels like -9

Mainly cloudy  
-1°C  
Feels like -7

Sun & cloud  
-3°C  
Feels like -5

Mainly cloudy  
-5°C  
Feels like -9

Light snow  
-3°C  
Feels like -8

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# EDITORIAL

## Waiting for 'Superboy'

BRUCE ANDREWS

Contributed Article

My wife, Sheila, has dementia that has been progressing. It's now difficult for her to express herself in phrases, let alone in sentences, especially later in the day.

Occasionally, we like to treat ourselves to French fries from Skippy's restaurant. Last Friday, the night of the Santa Claus parade, was the day for the fries to be the centrepiece of dinner. We parked on the street in front of the restaurant at 5 p.m., before the start of the local Santa Claus parade. All the parking spots on Queen Street were blocked by road cones to keep people from parking on the street while the parade was on, which I explained to

Sheila.

I got the fries and as we were pulling away, out of the blue, she said, "We should be getting ready for Superboy." I asked her if she meant that in light of the Santa Claus parade, it was time to get ready for Christmas, including decorating the house and buying and wrapping presents. She said, "Yes."

I thought that it was great that I understood her and that, to me, it was both profound and sweet that she had just come up with a new way to express the miracle of Christmas.

We are all at the beginning of our Christmas preparations. May you have a thoughtful season of Advent, getting ready for the coming of Jesus, who, in a way, is our Superboy at Christmas.

### Bravo

We have 3 Bravos this week.

1) Bravo to all the gas pumps in town that make me walk inside the store to pay. I could crack walnuts with these gams!

2) Bravo to the St. Marys Lincolns. Prior to practice on Sunday afternoon, the boys made a pit stop at Kingsway, entertaining us with a few friendly competitions. This team of young men proudly represents both the sport of hockey and the community of St. Marys. Go Lincs Go!

3) Bravo to the man who stopped at the corner of Thomas Street and Queen Street this week. He jumped out of his truck and shovelled the sidewalk clean so a mother and her baby carriage could get through.

### Boo

We have 4 Boos this week.

1) Boo to the people wearing dark colours at night and walking on the road. Please be safe and wear something bright or reflective so drivers can see you better.

2) Boo to the electric bike zoomers on the Grand Trunk Trail. It's a no-motor path, not the qualifying lap at the Indy 500! If you're passing hikers so fast they get a new hairstyle from the wind shear, or worse, maybe ease off the turbo.

3) Boo to the businesses treating broken equipment like it's just a prop in the background—slap a sticker on it and call it ambiance! This isn't a movie set. If the machine has been "out of order" since the last solar eclipse, maybe stop decorating it and actually fix it.

4) Boo to NASA. How come I can't get no Tang round here?

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

### Quote of the Week

*"I think they overlooked us, saying they wanted to break the record at home, and I don't think they were ready for what we had in this barn here with the fans, they were electric tonight. All four lines were rolling, so it's a great win."*

**- St. Marys Lincolns' captain Chase MacQueen-Spence talks to 519 Sports after the Lincolns' 9-1 win on Nov. 28, ending the Cambridge Redhawks unbeaten streak to start the season.**

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## Overheard AT THE COFFEE SHOP

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You don't miss the short drive to Rannoch until it's gone!

Christmas, the time of year when your electric bill is more than your mortgage!

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

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at a time!

## St. Marys Independent

### Publisher

Stewart Grant • [stew@granthaven.com](mailto:stew@granthaven.com)

### Regional Editor

Galen Simmons • [galen@granthaven.com](mailto:galen@granthaven.com)

### Graphic Design / Sales Inquiries

Tyler Carruthers • [info@stmarysindependent.com](mailto:info@stmarysindependent.com)

### Business Development

Heather Dunbar • [heather@granthaven.com](mailto:heather@granthaven.com)

### Billing Administrator

Cindy Boakes • [boakescindy1576@gmail.com](mailto:boakescindy1576@gmail.com)

### Administrative Assistant

Wendy Lamond • [wendylamond74@gmail.com](mailto:wendylamond74@gmail.com)

### Contributors

June Grant, Nancy Bickell, Mary Smith, Nancy Abra, Lauren Eedy, Spencer Seymour, Sarah Cairns, Paul Knowles, Jake Grant, Julia Paul, Emily Stewart, McGinny Photography

36 Water St. St. Marys, ON, PO Box 2310 N4X 1A2

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Don't count the  
days, make the days  
count.

Doubt kills more  
dreams than failure  
ever will.

Focus on the step  
in front you, not the  
whole staircase.

Don't be pushed by  
your problems, be  
led by your dreams.

# St. Marys DCVI students giving back through winter clothing drives

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Local high school students are making sure those in the community, including their fellow students, stay warm this winter season.

Students in St. Marys District Collegiate and Vocational Institute's (DCVI) leadership classes are running winter clothing drives. There are two classes and each of them are collecting winter clothing to help people in need.

One of the classes, taught by Tawnya Basisto, is collecting all kinds of winter gear like coats, mittens, hats, scarves, boots, snowpants and other items at the DCVI office for students. Any other donations still there after the Christmas break begins on Dec. 19 will be taken to St. James Anglican Church, which runs free store days for those in need to pick out clothing at no cost to them.

"We discussed the needs of our own community itself, most importantly right here in our school. There was a need for what we thought would be the best thing in coming into November

and December was winter clothing," said Ang March, educational assistant.

The students also designed posters for the clothing drive.

Another leadership class, run by teacher Monica Ryan, will be collecting winter clothing donations door to door on Dec. 12, with flyers going out on Dec. 5 to homes located between the high school and Little Falls Public School. The donations will support those in the community in need, with an organization still to be decided.

Ryan said she is impressed with the generosity of the students in the two leadership classes.

"It's really amazing. They're an incredibly special group of students that are really thoughtful," Ryan said.

United Way Perth-Huron provided \$4,000 in grants for students to run some of the initiatives for their projects, including a mental wellness day for grades seven and eight students, improving the safety and accessibility of basketball courts, providing hot breakfast for students and funding the art club.

## Town of St. Marys to host grand reopening of PRC pool on Jan. 24, 2026

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

open; before the end of the year is what we're hoping for – we are going to schedule a grand opening for Jan. 24," Ische said. "We will have a lot planned and a lot of things we are hoping to do to make it an

exciting unveiling for the community."

Details about the soft launch and the grand reopening event will be shared with the public in this newspaper and through the town's social media channels once they become available.

**FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY (FOL)**

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- > Farmers' Market - Sat. Dec. 6, 8-12pm at the PRC
- > Festive Social - Wed. Dec. 10, 6:30-8pm at the Library
- > Management Committee Meeting - Thurs. Dec. 11, 10am
- > Free Skating for Giving Tuesday - Tues. Dec 23, 3-4:20 pm and - Tues. Dec 30, 3-4:20 at the PRC

**WISHING EVERYONE**  
**A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!**

A huge "Thank you" to all our sponsors, volunteers, donors, members, and friends, for your continued support!





## STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



### SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Stonetown Supports is your connection to local resources for food security, mental health and addiction, financial aid, housing, and more. Learn about all of the support systems available in St. Marys.

[www.townofstmarys.ca/stonetownsupports](http://www.townofstmarys.ca/stonetownsupports)

### ST. MARYS NOURISH MARKET

St. Marys United Church (85 Church St. S)

The St. Marys Nourish Equal Access Food Market takes place on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month from 2 - 4 PM offering fresh local fruit, vegetables and meat available at wholesale prices.

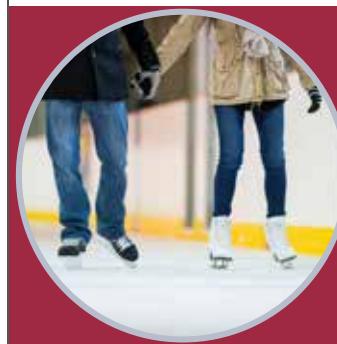
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### FREE FESTIVE SKATES

Pyramid Recreation Centre

Join free festive skate sessions this December at the PRC thanks to Optimists of Downie, Friends of the Library, and Queen St. Dentistry.



For dates and times visit: [www.discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays](http://www.discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays)

### CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON

- WinterLights: Happening now until Jan 1
- Holiday Light Tour: Happening now until Jan 1
- GivingTuesday: Dec 2
- WinterLights Night Market: Dec 5 - 6
- Horse & Wagon Rides: See various dates on website
- Coca-Cola Holiday Caravan: Dec 13

[www.discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays](http://www.discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays)



### SHOWER PROGRAM

Pyramid Recreation Centre

This program provides free showers to those in need. Showers are private, secure and accessible for individuals of all abilities.



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## Senior of the Week



Our senior of the week is Elaine Stephen Miller who is turning 85 on Dec. 8. She has three children, six grandchildren and two great grandchildren with another due in the new year. She was born in Stratford and grew up in Bornholm and Brodhagen area. She loves to knit, crochet, scrapbook, garden, dance and exercise. Elaine has been recognized for many years of volunteering.

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

## WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

**SPONSORED BY:** The Wine Lab  
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- 1) How many times does the International Space Station orbit the Earth each day?
- 2) Which Allied codebreaking center famously cracked the German Enigma cipher during World War II?
- 3) What is Tungsten also known as?
- 4) True or False. Most of the dust in your home is made of human skin.
- 5) "The Mighty Ducks" movie and the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim NHL expansion team, both debuted in what year?
- 6) What is the capital of British Columbia?
- 7) What is currently the safest country in the world?
- 8) Tony the Tiger is featured on what cereal brand?
- 9) How often do your taste buds regenerate on average?
- 10) What is the most flexible muscle in the human body?

This week's answers are found on pg. 35

# Join us for Write for Rights 2025 – the largest letter writing campaign in the world!

ELENA DUMITRU

*Amnesty International St. Marys London Stratford Area Group*

The local Amnesty International St. Marys London Stratford Area Group invites the community to our annual Write for Rights event on Saturday, Dec. 13, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. at the St. Marys Public Library, 15 Church St. N.

Every year on Human Rights Day, millions of people around the world come together to write letters, send messages of solidarity and call for justice. These letters have helped free prisoners of conscience, protect communities in danger and shine light on human rights abuses that often go unseen.

### What are this year's themes?

The 2025-2026 Write for Rights cases highlight some of the most urgent issues of our time, including environmental justice, freedom of expression, Indigenous Rights, access to food, health and more.

### Why participate?

Write for Rights is built on a simple truth: your words can change someone's life. When thousands of letters arrive on the same issue, authorities take notice and real change can happen.

### Join us at the library to:

- Write letters or solidarity cards (materials provided)
- Learn more about the human rights issues behind this year's cases
- Connect with neighbours in a warm, community-minded setting
- Be part of a global movement for dignity, justice and hope

Everyone is welcome – no experience needed. Bring a friend and help send a message the world cannot ignore. Light refreshments; free event; all

welcome.

We would like to thank our local library and the St. Marys Independent newspaper for their support!

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CANADA**  
**ST MARYS LONDON STRATFORD GROUP**

Invites you to our annual  
**WRITE FOR RIGHTS EVENT**  
**YOUR WORDS HAVE POWER!**

**LOCATION**  
St. Marys Public Library, 15 Church St. North

**DATE AND TIME**  
Saturday December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
10:30 am - 12:45 pm  **DROP IN ANYTIME!**

**WHY ATTEND?**  
Write for Rights is the **world's largest** letter-writing campaign  
The goal is to **support activists, individuals and communities** at risk and **whose human rights** have been **violated**  
Thousands of people from around the globe come together to **fight for justice** through letter writing  
Join us in helping build a **stronger, shared future** where we can all live with dignity!

 [discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays](http://discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays) [facebook.com/St.Marys.Ontario](https://www.facebook.com/St.Marys.Ontario)

**Celebrate the Season in St. Marys**

**WINTERLIGHTS**  
Milt Dunnell Field | displays lit until Jan 1, 2026

**HOLIDAY LIGHT TOUR**  
Nov 28, 2025 - Jan 1, 2026  
View map at [discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays](http://discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays)

**HOLIDAY EVENTS AT THE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE**  
Throughout December | Friendship Centre | 519-284-3272

**GIVING TUESDAY**  
Dec 2

**WINTERLIGHTS NIGHT MARKET**  
Dec 5 - 6 | Milt Dunnell Field | 5 - 8 PM

**MUSEUM HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE**  
Dec 7 | St. Marys Museum | 2 - 4 PM

**COCA-COLA HOLIDAY CARAVAN**  
Dec 13 | Milt Dunnell Field | 6 - 9 PM

**FREE FESTIVE SKATES**  
Various dates and times |  
Pyramid Recreation Centre



# Another big step toward paying off the x-ray machine



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. MARYS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION)

Veterinary Purchasing recently contributed \$25,000 to the new x-ray machine at St. Marys Memorial Hospital, an important piece of equipment that is used daily by patients of all ages. The St. Marys Healthcare Foundation (SMHF) has raised just over \$300,000 of its \$650,000 goal. To donate to the x-ray machine, visit [stmaryshealthcare.foundation/](http://stmaryshealthcare.foundation/). Pictured from left to right are Cindy Bilyea (SMHF), Bernice De Decker, Dr. Jeff Buckland, Dr. George Wood (board chairman), Dr. Christine Harron, Pat Hinnegan, Dr. Shanna Perry, Dr. Tim Zaharchuk, Brian De Groote (SMHF), Linda McFadyen (SMHF) and Pam Zabel (SMHF).



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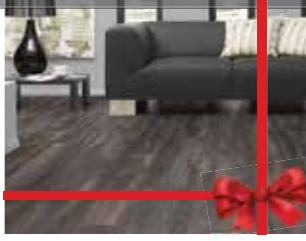
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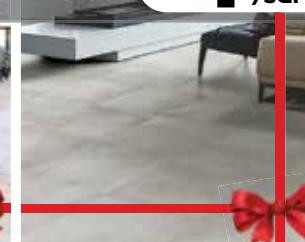
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# Soulstice Winter Market draws crowds, fills donation bins and sells out swag bags in minutes



(JULIA PAUL PHOTO)

**Gayle Bradley receives a fascial stretch from practitioner Darren Smale during the Soulstice Winter Market on Saturday, Nov. 22.**

**JULIA PAUL**

*Independent Reporter*

Sunshine, steady foot traffic and a strong sense of community marked this year's Soulstice Winter Market, where vendors and visitors gathered Nov. 22 for a seasonal celebration organizers say exceeded all expectations.

Organizers Samantha Thompson and Kate Warren said the atmosphere felt "beautiful" from the moment the doors opened, with shoppers arriving early and lining up for the event's signature swag bags — all of which disappeared within the first 15 minutes.

"We felt like the market was amazing for both the vendors and the community," said Thompson. "We gave out all of our swag bags in the first 15 minutes!"

Along with the bustling vendor hall, the market also served a charitable purpose. Attendees were invited to bring non-perishable items to support Stratford House of Blessing, and the response was overwhelming. More than 100 donations were collected throughout the day, filling the bins and highlighting the strong local appetite for giving back during the holiday season.

"Donations will be made to House of Blessing; we had over 100 donations," said Warren.

Among the vendors experiencing the event for the first time was Stratford Tea Leaves owner and tea sommelier Karen Hartwick, who said the energy in the room stood out from the moment she arrived.

"It's amazing. It was super busy this



(JULIA PAUL PHOTO)

**Tea sommelier Karen Hartwick of Stratford Tea Leaves offers tastings and shares her expertise with visitors at the Soulstice Winter Market.**

morning, and setting up was wonderful because of all the beautiful souls who are here," said Hartwick. "People are really enjoying what's being presented. There are a lot of mindful people and really good products."

Despite having been in business for more than two decades, Hartwick said events like the Soulstice Market still offer new opportunities.

"This is my first time at this market," she said. "I've been in business for 22 years, usually supporting others. I think what will happen here is I'll have a few new wholesale clients because I'll create some blends for them to carry on with their businesses as well."

Visitors browsed a curated selection of handmade goods, wellness products, artisanal foods and holiday gifts, while

vendors reported steady sales and warm engagement with shoppers. Many commented that the event stood out for its thoughtful layout, inviting tone and community-focused energy.

For Thompson and Warren, the success of the winter market is a reflection of what they love most: bringing people together.

"We love hosting a community event like this," said Thompson. "We are already planning for our spring wellness market."

As the season continues, the organizers say they hope the momentum from the Soulstice Winter Market inspires residents to keep supporting small businesses and local makers — and to look ahead to what promises to be an equally vibrant spring gathering.

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# Pierce MacNeil returns from Prague a more determined dancer

LISA CHESTER

Independent Reporter

After the opportunity to travel to Prague for international competition with Team Canada Dance, Pierce MacNeil has returned to Stratford Dance Co. a more determined tap dancer who wants nothing more than the opportunity to do it all over again next year. The St. Marys resident and District Collegiate and Vocational Institute (DCVI) student is still grinning greatly for the experience.

The competition lasted for five days, and MacNeil danced three of those days in four events. In total there were 1,692 dancers from 21 countries to compete against. The venue, the UNYP Arena, was a large auditorium style arena with bleachers around the perimeter, seven levels high. The crowd in attendance, made up of family, friends and fans, was the largest to date that MacNeil has danced for.

"I wasn't nervous though. Usually before I go on when I am backstage, I'm a little bit nervous, but not there. The floor was slippery so we had to tape our tap-shoes so we didn't slip. It was still a bit slippery though," said MacNeil.

Despite the challenge, Team Canada Dance did remarkably well. Success was within reach with a fifth-place finish as MacNeil danced in the Trio category to "Meet Me At the Roxy." In the Small Group category MacNeil and her fellow dancers performed to the tune "Get Ready" and came in 11th. In the Formation category the group of 14 performers had a close finish at fourth and finally, in the Production category, the group came in sixth.

"The first one, my trio, was not very good, because it was my first time on stage and I was a bit nervous. I did slip a couple times, but it was fine, we made it through to semis," said MacNeil.

Within each category the dancers would perform their routine, and the teams are narrowed down to twelve. Then they dance the same routine again in

semi-finals where again the teams are narrowed down for finals.

"There was a couple of really good countries: Mexico and the U.S.A. For my age group (the team from) U.S.A. were pretty good. They got first, second and third in the Trio category. Mexico was also really awesome. They don't bring a lot (of people) but they bring good skills," said MacNeil.

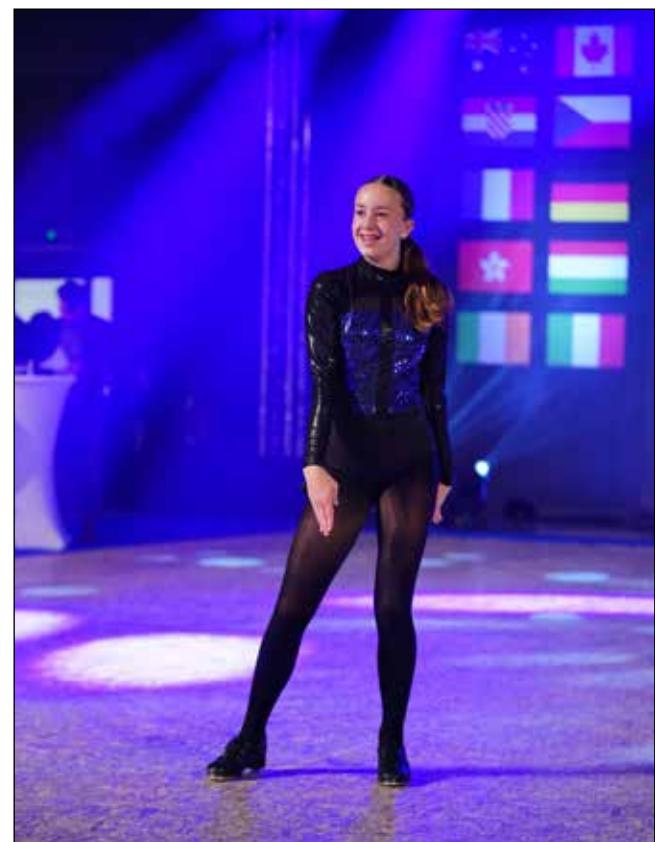
"One of the really cool things for the kids that were in Formation, there was a female soloist and a male soloist from Canada that made it to the finals," added proud mother Stacy MacNeil. "Those two kids also did a duet and made it to the finals, and also Pierce's Trio made it to finals so out of all of the Canadian kids (about 100), those five made it to finals for solo, duet and Trio. So, it was really cool that Pierce was one of them."

Dancing in the finals was a different experience because the arena was packed, but Pierce felt prepared for the competition.

"The studio that we trained at mostly, it is called Access, the one room is really slippery so that helped prepare us for the slippery stage. It was actually less slippery than the floor at Access so it did feel a lot better to dance on," said MacNeil.

The experience performing on the world stage is one that will not soon be forgotten. Her favourite part of the trip, aside from dancing, was having the opportunity to meet so many new people and network. She also enjoyed the sightseeing that she and her family who accompanied her did.

"We did two full days, we went a day early and stayed a day later, two days of just us going sightseeing. We went to the Prague Castle, the John Lennon Wall, the Charleston Bridge, the boat cruise that the majority of the team came on, the astronomical clock which is right in old town Prague. We got to walk along cobblestone streets, it was really beautiful there. Obviously, we went for the dance, but we made it a family vacation too," said Stacey.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pierce MacNeil readies herself to tap-dance her heart out at the World Championships in Prague.

In any experience, there are lessons learned. For Pierce, she knows she has to work hard and practice outside of rehearsal. "You also have to be patient, because when you are learning it, it is really hard as you learn (steps) fast. I learned a lot of new steps which is a lot harder to get into your brain than older steps," said MacNeil.

With the growth that she experienced since the summer and confidence in her improvement, she has stepped up her game. She looks forward to the next year where now she will age into the next group of dancers. There were some on this year's Junior Team that she connected with and looked up to. And now, her little nine-year-old sister Neve, who also dances, wants to compete on the world stage as well.

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# Stratford police investigating overnight vehicle break-ins in St. Marys



A black SUV was captured by a residential security camera following a group of three unknown men police say were allegedly involved in multiple vehicle break-ins.



Security camera footage captured one of three suspects Stratford police say were allegedly involved in vehicle break-ins in the Town of St. Marys overnight Nov. 22.



(PHOTOS COURTESY OF STRATFORD POLICE SERVICE)

Security camera footage shows two suspects check for unlocked vehicles overnight Nov. 22 in St. Marys.

## ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Stratford Police Service (SPS) is currently investigating a series of overnight vehicle break-ins that occurred throughout the Town of St. Marys.

In a press release, police said multiple vehicles were unlawfully entered during the early morning hours of Nov. 22 throughout the Town of St. Marys, resulting in the theft of various items.

The SPS has received reports indicating that three unknown males, dressed in dark clothing, were observed entering unlocked vehicles while being followed by an older-model, black SUV. Photos of the SUV and suspects have been included.

The known locations at this time where the incidents occurred are in the following areas:

- Meadowridge Drive
- Southvale Road

- Birch Creek Crescent  
- Thamsview Crescent

The SPS is requesting that residents in these neighborhoods, and across St. Marys, review any doorbell camera, home security, or surveillance footage captured between the hours of 12 a.m. and 7 a.m. on Nov. 22.

Anyone with footage or information that may assist in the investigation is asked to submit it through the SPS online reporting system.

Anyone who may also have been a victim of theft from a motor vehicle during that timeframe (or otherwise) is encouraged to report that matter to the police, as it is important to capture the entire scope of this incident and to document all items that were stolen.

The SPS thanks the public for their cooperation as this investigation continues.

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# Holiday Light Tour returns with 18 properties participating

EMILY STEWART

*Independent Reporter*

As part of the St. Marys Holiday Light Tour, more houses than ever are getting into the holiday spirit.

The Holiday Light Tour kicked off on Nov. 28 and will run until Jan. 1, 2026. There are 18 houses all decked out for the winter holidays included on the Holiday Light Tour Map. Morgan Easton, tourism and events coordinator for the Town of St. Marys, said this year has the most houses included in the event's history.

"It's fun for families to go out during the holiday season and get to know the community better and see all the different houses lit up," Easton said.

She added the Holiday Light Tour also gathers the St. Marys community together and allows families to express themselves through holiday décor. Out-of-town travellers are also welcome to check out the Holiday Light Tour in St. Marys.

The following are part of the Holiday Light Tour:

1.1 Veterans' Circle  
2.271 Maiden Ln.

3.65 Thames Rd.  
4.342 Jones St. W  
5.42 Wilson Crt.  
6.293 Wellington St. S  
7.2 Meadowridge Rd.  
8.5 Maxwell St.  
9.95 Maxwell St.  
10.263 Southvale Rd.  
11.6 Sparling Cres.  
12.559 Jones St. E  
13.20 James St. N.  
14.226 Widder St. E.  
15.23 Trailside Crt.  
16.32 Trailside Crt.  
17.150 Milson Cres.  
18.144 Milson Cres.

All of the houses will be lit up from 5-11 p.m. and have Holiday Light Tour signs on the front lawn.

Winterlights in Milt Dunnell Field also continues until Jan. 1, 2026, for even more holiday light fun.

Hard copies of the Holiday Light Tour Map can be picked up at the St. Marys Museum, municipal operations centre, Pyramid Recreation Centre, the Friendship Centre and the St. Marys Public Library. For more information about St. Marys holiday events, visit [discoverstmarys.ca/holidays](http://discoverstmarys.ca/holidays).

# St. Marys Kinsmen Club joins the Winter Lights Night Market with treats and smiles

ALEX HUNT

*Independent Reporter*

The St. Marys Kinsmen Club will be accepting donations this weekend to give back to the community.

Kinsmen Club members will take part in the town's Winter Lights Night Market this Friday and Saturday, running from 5-8 p.m. The Kinsmen will accept donations that will be used to give back to the community, as well as give out cotton candy and roasted chestnuts.

"We don't force donations, but we encourage them," said Ken Andren, chairman of the food committee at the Kinsmen Club. "We are always serving the community; there are so many things that we find in this market that have an opportunity for us to get involved and promote the club."

A Santa Shuttle will bring families to Kinsmen vice president Mark King's residence to experience his Christmas light display, visit Santa and write letters to him, as well as have an opportunity to donate toys and food.

"It's all about the kids and the fami-

lies; it's Christmas time and bringing the community together is a wonderful thing," said Andren. "We want to leave everyone with a sense of happiness and joy. It's the gift of giving and we are hoping that people really understand that giving is a gift."

With the launch of their new concert series over the past summer, the Kinsmen are planning to invest in a food truck in the new year. Andren said the club is exploring all options. Once the investment is secured, the Kinsmen will be able to park the food truck at events and deliver catering services to accelerate community fundraising.

"This initiative will be about raising more funds for the community," said Andren.

"The Christmas parade was a great success, and seeing families come together, smiling and enjoying the festivities really shows why our work is so meaningful. It's moments like these that remind me how powerful community spirit can be, and how much joy we can bring when people come together for a common purpose."



The popular King Family Christmas House, at 42 Wilson Crt., is part of the 2025 St. Marys Holiday Light Tour.

(PHOTO COURTESY OF TOWN OF ST. MARYS)

# Upcoming Salvation Army food drive will prioritize bringing Christmas meals to locals in need

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

With demand rising ahead of the holidays, the local Salvation Army is hoping to collect 2,000 pounds of food during this year's community food drives.

The Salvation Army Stratford-St. Marys Regional Community Ministries will host its annual St. Marys Food Drives at Foodland and Your Independent Grocer on Dec. 13 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event will be supported by the Stratford Police Service and St. Marys Fire Department.

Salvation Army community and family services manager Jennifer Morris said the food bank can feed around 120 households during the holiday season. With a drop in donations, Morris hopes the community can raise 2,000 pounds to meet the higher need.

"I like to think that when you donate to food drives or food banks, you're making sure someone doesn't go hungry. No one should have to feel that way, especially at Christmas," said Morris. "This is a time when people should be able to

come together to share a meal."

Items in need are peanut butter, juice, oatmeal, lunch snacks and crackers. The team appreciates anything they receive but kindly asks locals to hold back on donating perishable food items such as milk, cheese and produce.

Morris said community volunteers play a vital role in supporting The Salvation Army's mission by bringing a variety of skillsets and expertise. She said someone could receive a rewarding educational experience by volunteering.

"As a manager, it's really special to see people come together and give back to their community," said Morris. "Some volunteers come in because they want to give back, while others are simply looking to meet people and connect."

"For some families, we are the only Christmas they get. We've noticed that we have been getting a lot of visitors that we don't normally see due to layoffs and other employment challenges. Nobody plans for that, and it's a tight turnaround to make the holiday feel the same, especially for families with young children."



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)  
Jennifer Morris, community and family services manager at The Salvation Army in Stratford.

## St. Marys Kinsmen launch 2025 annual Holiday Fruit Sale: Tradition that supports the community

### KINSMEN CLUB OF ST. MARYS

Contributed Article

The St. Marys Kinsmen are kicking off one of the town's favourite annual traditions, the 2025 Kinsmen Fruit Sale.

Known for its top-quality produce and strong community spirit, the fruit sale has become a signature fundraiser that delivers both flavour and impact across St. Marys and surrounding area.

Each year, residents look forward to stocking up on premium navel oranges, red grapefruit, clementines, and other seasonal favourites. The fruit is shipped directly from trusted growers and arrives fresh, vibrant and packed with the kind of quality that has made the sale popular for years.

But as every Kinsmen member will tell you, the real purpose of the fundraiser isn't just delicious fruit, it's what the proceeds make possible.

Funds raised from the fruit sale go directly back into St. Marys through the Kinsmen's community service projects. Over the years, proceeds have supported everything from youth programs to trail improvements, accessibility upgrades, local events and other important initiatives throughout the town.

The 2025 sale continues that mission.

"Every box of fruit helps us support a stronger, healthier community," says the Kinsmen Club. "People aren't just buying oranges, they're investing in St. Marys."

The Kinsmen Fruit Sale offers simple ordering and pickup options to make supporting the cause as easy as possible. Place an order online at [www.stmaryskinsmen.com](http://www.stmaryskinsmen.com), or by clipping out the order form in this week's paper and returning it to the St. Marys Independent! The online store and acceptance of manual orders will end at 12 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 12; be sure to order now so you don't miss out!

Fruit will be delivered direct to you on Saturday, Dec. 20, starting at 8 a.m. within St. Marys and Stratford city limits just in time for holiday entertaining, gifting and winter wellness. If you are from out of town, you can still support and we can arrange for pickup on this date!

As the 2025 sale gets underway, the Kinsmen encourage residents to support the tradition, enjoy the quality fruit and take pride in knowing their purchase directly strengthens the town they call home.

## 2025 St. Marys Kinsmen Holiday Fruit Sale

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Paper orders can be dropped off at the St. Marys Independent Newspaper (36 Water Street St. in St. Marys) in their mailbox. **Do not place any cash or cheques with the order.** Instead, please indicate payment method on the order form below. Payment will be collected at delivery.

Contact-less porch delivery will be on Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup> starting at 8am.  
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For any questions, please reach out via our website, or, email us at [stmaryskinsmenclub@gmail.com](mailto:stmaryskinsmenclub@gmail.com)

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Grapefruit - Half Case	20 pcs	\$45		\$
Clementines - Full Case	90 pcs	\$60		\$
Clementines - Half Case	45 pcs	\$40		\$
Oranges & Grapefruit - Full Case	30 oranges, 20 grapefruits	\$80		\$
Oranges & Grapefruit - Half Case	15 oranges, 10 grapefruits	\$45		\$
Deluxe Holiday Gift Basket	Approx. 12 lbs. of fruit + syrup!	\$60		\$
Maple Leaf Sugar Bush Maple Syrup	500ml glass bottle	\$25		\$
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# New CAO joins Thames Centre

Jillene Bellchamber-Glazier named as municipality's new chief administrative officer

## ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Municipality of Thames Centre has announced the appointment of Jillene Bellchamber-Glazier as its new chief administrative officer (CAO) effective Dec. 3.

In a press release, the municipality said Bellchamber-Glazier brings a wealth of experience in the municipal sector, having served as a municipal advisor with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and as county clerk at the County of Perth. She has also held leadership roles as CAO at the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex and the Municipality of Kincardine. Bellchamber-Glazier is recognized for her dedication to community advocacy, her strategic advisory capabilities for council and her strong leadership of staff.

"We are pleased to have a candidate with the experience Jillene brings joining the municipality," said Thames Centre Mayor Sharron McMillan in the release. "The municipality conducted a thorough search and the competition for this critical role at Thames Centre

attracted a field of excellent candidates, and we are confident Jillene's expertise will greatly benefit our community."

Bellchamber-Glazier was selected following a competitive hiring process overseen by Waterhouse Executive Search.

As CAO, she will be responsible for overseeing the administration of municipal operations and providing strategic advice to staff and council while working to implement council priorities.

"I am honoured to join this vibrant municipality as chief administrative officer," added Bellchamber-Glazier in the press release. "This is an exciting opportunity to contribute to the continued growth and success of our community. I look forward to working with Thames Centre council, staff and the community. Together, we will build on the strengths of our municipality and foster innovation throughout our operations. My goal is to ensure we deliver excellent services for all residents."

"By maintaining a high standard of service, we can support a welcoming and thriving future for everyone who calls Thames Centre home."



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF THAMES CENTRE)

Jillene Bellchamber-Glazier has been appointed CAO of the Municipality of Thames Centre as of Dec. 3.



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# Resident petition results in town review of James Street North and Widder Street East intersection

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A petition signed by more than 70 residents urging St. Marys council to consider additional traffic and pedestrian safety measures at the intersection of James Street North and Widder Street East has resulted in a review of that intersection by town staff.

At council's Nov. 25 meeting, the petition – which did not include the names and personal information of all residents who signed it – was included under correspondence in the meeting agenda. According to the petition's explanatory page, those who signed are requesting that council consider improving overall safety at the intersection by extending the existing 40 km/hr speed zone on James Street North to include the intersection and continue to Church Street North, and install traffic signs with flashing beacons advising drivers of the James Street North and Widder Street East intersection.

"I was approached during this petition as I live in the area," Coun. Dave Lucas said during the council discussion. "I do strongly agree with the comments in this petition. There have been a number of times where I've gone to cross that intersection on foot and I've had to run to the other side to avoid getting hit."

According to Jo-Anne Lounds, the author of the petition, the recommended intersection improvements would improve safety for pedestrians who regularly cross the intersection of James Street

North and Widder Street East. For many, she said the intersection is the most direct point of access to St. Marys' downtown core, as well as the churches and schools located in the town's north ward.

She also claimed her recommendations would improve safety for drivers travelling westbound on Widder Street East and turning onto James Street North where sightlines are impaired.

"I tend to agree with the petition here, but in all fairness, because we live in a community with lots of hills, we can basically say this about any intersection in the Town of St. Marys," Coun. Jim Craigmile said. "For example, every time I come out of Meadowridge Drive, to try and turn left or right with the hill there, it's just a fact of living in St. Marys. I would hope that maybe staff would be able to help us with some of the driving data that they pick up in town."

"Which area should we concentrating on first instead of just one petition, another petition? They must get a sense from that and, to be quite honest, we're never going to fix bad driving habits and speeders."

Speaking to Craigmile's point and the petition as a whole, Coun. Fern Pridham said she appreciated the petitioners' passion on this issue and concern for safety at the intersection in question, and feedback from residents like this petition is a good way to help staff and council narrow in on intersections and areas in the town of concern.

"Staff is focusing on safety on our streets and this is just highlighting a

concern that is top of mind for a lot of people," she said. "It's nice to have that awareness and I'm sure they'll be working on it and coming back with proposals or solutions."

Council voted unanimously to refer the petition to staff for a report to council on improving safety at the James Street North and Widder Street East intersection.

## Plenty to see and buy at Country Craft Show



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTO)

The annual Country Craft Show was held at Jane Sparling's residence on Saturday, Nov. 29. Many crafts were on display and for sale made the five ladies above. Pictured from left are Ruth Glendon, Jane Sparling, Linda Petrie, Kim Cornwall and Karla Lang.

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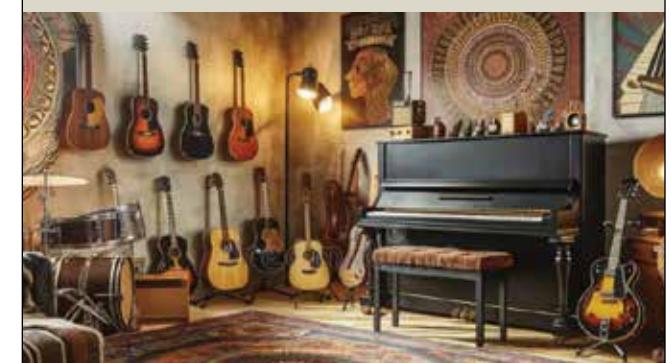
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Susie Chin (Keyboard, Vocals)  
Lee Pickel (Guitar, Vocals)

- with -  
Rowan Pickel (Bass Guitar)  
Eliana Pickel (Drums)

# St. Marys Legion to host Santa Claus Breakfast

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

Santa Claus is set to join the St. Marys Legion for a communal morning of good fun and even better food.

A Santa Claus Breakfast will be hosted at the St. Marys Royal Canadian Legion Branch 236 on Dec. 14 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Locals are invited to join Legion members and Santa Claus for pancakes, sausages, home fries and ham.

“Santa Claus will be sitting in his chair, the kids will come up for pictures and maybe tug on his beard,” said Tom Jenkins, first vice president and the poppy chair for the local Legion.

“We’re fortunate to have a few members helping out with balloon tying, plus there’ll be a face painter and a colouring station with holiday-themed drawings. It worked so well last time that we just had to do it again.”

The event will cost \$15 for adults, \$10 for kids and children two years old and younger will have free entry. The breakfast was established pre-COVID; after making its successful revival last year, the Legion prioritized its return for the 2025 holiday season.

Jenkins said looking after veterans and their families is the Legion’s highest priority, alongside supporting the town’s youth. The Legion makes frequent donations to minor sports such as hockey, ringette and baseball.

Jenkins has been on the executive team since moving to St. Marys in 2009 and explained the Legion has structurally changed over the years, but the mission has always been the same.

“The heart of what we do hasn’t changed; we’ve made improvements to the building and we’re always working to bring it into a new age,” said Jenkins. “There’s always something being repaired or refreshed, but we take pride in that. We’re holding our own, giving back to the community and continuing to move forward together.”

Along with community party bookings in the hall leading to Christmas, proceeds from the Legion’s meat draws are donated to The Salvation Army.



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

Tom Jenkins, first vice president and the poppy chair, at a St. Marys Legion Friday barbecue.

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Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Weight (birth) \_\_\_\_\_ Weight (now) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) Name \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings (Name[s] & Age) \_\_\_\_\_

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# St. Marys Independent SPORTS

## Fairytales becomes reality as Hodkinson, Lincs beat unbeaten Redhawks

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

If someone had said the St. Marys Lincolns would end a team's undefeated streak one game away from tying an all-time record, and that it would only be the second-biggest story of that game, no one would have believed them.

But on Nov. 28, for Ryan Hodkinson, the St. Marys Lincolns and their fans, magic became reality when, in their first home game since the tragic passing of Hodkinson's father, John, who was honoured in a pregame ceremony, the St. Marys native took a starring role in leading the Lincolns to a 9-1 thrashing over the Cambridge Redhawks, becoming the one in the Redhawks' now-24-1 record in one of the most beautiful games ever played at the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

Hodkinson scored two goals and two assists, including the game's first goal just over nine and a half minutes into the first period. The 19-year-old forward talked about the significance of the storybook evening following the game, calling it a "special moment."

"It obviously means a lot to me and for all of our family," Hodkinson told the Independent. "A lot of family travelled down for this weekend, so being able to have them all in the stands and share that opening goal with them was pretty special. Words can't really describe how special that is, with (my dad) watching down and this being the first game at home since (the passing)."

Hodkinson described the moment of scoring the first goal of the contest as being one of pure emotion.

"I blacked out (when the first goal went in)," said Hodkinson. "Obviously, they're a good team on the other side there, and just being able to get the first one, we knew how big it was and being able to score that at home and in the first period was pretty big."

Head coach Jeff Bradley credited Hodkinson with maintaining his high calibre of play despite the emotional pain he and his family are experiencing.

"He played great, but we get that from Ryan (Hodkinson) all the time," said Bradley. "It's just more special when it's hyper-focused on him and his family. Our job as an organization and as friends of Ryan is to help him through a tough time as much as we can. We're never going to be able to do a good enough job; he's gone through



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Ryan Hodkinson celebrates his second goal of the game with linemates Declan Ready and Blake Elzinga skating towards him during the Lincolns' 9-1 victory over the Cambridge Redhawks. The trio was described as the best line of the night for either team in a game where the Lincs ended Cambridge's undefeated streak.

something terrible that nobody his age should have to go through. But we want to make sure he gets the recognition because nobody deserves it more.

"He needs support right now, and he's getting it from everybody. He gets it from his teammates, his coaches and his community with the celebration of life on Saturday. It seemed like the whole town was there, and they're such big fans of his. To see his family and meet his grandparents (on Saturday), they're just very kind people who you can tell are very well-respected and loved in this community."

In a post-game interview with 519 Sports Online, Lincs' captain Chase MacQueen-Spence described the emotions of watching Hodkinson's magical game.

"What an unbelievable night for (the Hodkinson family)," said MacQueen-Spence. "I got shivers when Ryan (Hodkinson) scored that first goal. That was unreal. It's crazy to think about. All of us wanted to rally around Ryan and do this for him, and I'm happy we got it done."

MacQueen-Spence also scored in the opening frame, giving St. Marys a 2-0 lead after one, the first of three points

the captain recorded.

In the second, Hodkinson's linemate, Declan Ready, ripped home his fourth of the season after an incredible set-up pass by Hodkinson. Ready added two assists to his point total in the game, and Blake Elzinga picked up an assist in the game. Bradley credited all three members of the line for turning in stellar performances.

"That line with Ryan (Hodkinson), Declan (Ready) and Blake (Elzinga) was great," Bradley said. "Obviously, Ryan did what he did and it meant a lot to us. Declan was just outstanding and I thought that was Blake's best game he's ever played as a Lincoln. When Blake puts it together for 60 minutes like that, he's quite dominant. They were the best line on the ice for either team."

Bradley also praised two of the team's most experienced defenders for being generals every time they took the ice.

"Jacob (Montesi) and Camden (Kean) were unbelievable on the back end. They are two veteran defencemen, and they both did everything really well. They were physical and smart with the puck. Every time they had the puck, they controlled the game."

Bradley also explained how, after a

few minutes of some cautious play by the Lincolns, the team dominated the high-flying Redhawks for the rest of the game.

"In the first five to 10 minutes, we understood it was a big game, and it was a little bit of a feeling-out process. I thought we were sitting back a little bit, just trying not to make any mistakes, but I thought as soon as we got that first goal and then the second one shortly after, I think we started to realize this is just another team. We play really good teams every night, so we had nothing to be nervous about and nothing to fear, and if we stuck to our gameplan, we knew we could get the job done.

"It reminded me a lot of London a couple of years ago, where every time they get the puck, they're just sending guys up ice and that plays right into our hands," Bradley continued. "We play with three back all the time, so they're just passing it into our coverage, and that didn't give us any trouble. And then, in the offensive zone, our forecheck is our bread and butter when we execute it, and when we're doing that, we pressure so well that the other team has a tough time being efficient with the puck."

Jack Clarke scored late in the game, adding the fifth even-strength goal of the night to the Lincolns' totals, an area the team has struggled with for much of the season. The Lincolns' powerplay also went a perfect four-for-four with a late-game goal by Oliver Lacko, as well as one by Devon Colebrook and a pair by Ethan Weir, both of whom snapped scoring droughts in the process.

Bradley noted the five-on-five scoring and the production from a player with the pedigree of Weir were both things the team had been looking for.

"If you look at the makeup of our team, we've got the lowest goals against per game in our conference. We've got the top powerplay right now. We've got the top penalty kill. But our five-on-five scoring is not good at all, so whether it's Ethan (Weir), Lincoln (Moore), or Owen (Voortman), we need them to start scoring some goals, and if they do, we will really have a lot going for us. They are definitely playing well, they are big parts of us not getting scored on and they're doing well on the powerplay, but we just need to find more five-on-five scoring, and those guys are big parts of that, so hopefully this game woke us up a little bit."

**FOR SPORTS TIPS CONTACT SPENCER SEYMOUR**

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# DCVI senior girls win consolation final at OFSAA

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Basketball team captured the OFSAA consolation title at the provincial high school championship Nov. 20-22.

After two preliminary games established the championship and consolation brackets, the Salukis met E.J. Lajeunesse, a French-Catholic school from Windsor, in their consolation quarter-final.

At the beginning of the third quarter, the Salukis trailed 18-13, but the lead would grow to 35-19 by the end of the third on the backs of 17 straight points by E.J. Lajeunesse. Improbably, however, the Salukis didn't just finally stop their opponents but went on a 26-point run and didn't allow a single point in the fourth quarter to win the game 39-35.

Tim O'Connor, who, along with Brian Chalupka, filled in for head coach Monica Ryan, described the "crazy" comeback as being unlike anything he's seen in over four decades of coaching.

"I've never been in a game like that in my life," said O'Connor. "We hung with them, but they were very aggressive and very athletic, and as hard as we worked to stay with them, we just came out really exhausted. They went on their crazy run and, late in the third quarter, we called a timeout and made a defensive switch and went to a zone defence. The other thing was we hit three buckets to end the third. Then we came out and we scored the first five points, and it's 35-24, and all of a sudden, it doesn't feel impossible anymore. The other team struggled to adapt to our zone defence, their shots weren't falling and we just kept chipping away."

The win advanced the Salukis to a semi-final clash against St. Charles Garnier. DCVI had a slim, one-point lead at the end of the first and second quarters before pulling ahead in the third, after which they led by nine en route to winning by a final score of 53-37.

O'Connor noted the team got some clutch minutes from several players off



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Basketball team earned the consolation championship at OFSAA Nov. 20-22. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Charlotte Richardson and Marin Chateauvert. In the back from, from left, are Tim O'Connor, Brian Chalupka, Lena Thomson, Alanna Saville, Holly Black, Regan Jones, Maeve Wheeler, Valentina Urbano-Martinez, Libby McCurdy and team manager Cammie Lobb.

the bench.

"Valentina Urbano-Martinez gave us some clutch shooting in the semi-final, and she helped us pull away with three late buckets in the fourth quarter," O'Connor said. "We were only up by six with a couple of minutes left, and the shots she made helped us pull away. And we got good depth minutes from Holly (Black), Lena (Thomson) and Maeve (Wheeler), which was especially important after Libby (McCurdy), who plays really well for us, got hurt in the semis."

O'Connor also highlighted four of the team's most influential leaders, Reagan Jones, Alanna Savile, Charlotte Rich-

ardson and Marin Chateauvert.

"Reagan (Jones) plays incredible defence. She's always a solid defensive player who likes to battle with the bigger girls on the other team, and she does a great job of it. She had a great passing game against Whitby, and she hit a couple of free throws in the final, which was huge for her. Alanna (Savile) got better every single game. Her rebounding was tremendous. She plays well in the high post and she battled really hard against some really good post players throughout the weekend."

"Charlotte (Richardson) might be one of the best players I've ever coached," O'Connor continued. "She's just a gam-

er. I think she took six charges over the weekend. She responds well to physical play and she was our best scorer. Marin (Chateauvert) is the captain of the group and she's an excellent leader in terms of keeping the kids together, having everybody on the same page and making those kids who didn't play as much feel valued and important. I can't say enough about how her leadership helps. She really creates the spirit and the vibe we needed."

In the consolation final, the Salukis got into a back-and-forth battle with Rideau District High School, which held narrow leads over St. Marys through each of the first three quarters. However, the Salukis managed to pull ahead by the end of the game, taking a 46-40 nail-biter to capture the consolation prize.

Richardson led St. Marys with 20 points, which included a miraculous half-court shot that saw Richardson, while being guarded tightly in centre-court, let the ball fly before banking in just before the shot clock expired.

According to O'Connor, the team's even-keeled demeanour allowed them to eventually pull the game back in their favour.

"They're coachable and they're calm," O'Connor said. "They have good heads on their shoulders and they are smart enough to understand what they need to do, and they do their best to do it. In the final, we came out a bit flat and were down 9-2, and the girls switched their defensive structure on the floor, all on their own. They remembered how it worked the day before, so they went back to it."

The team's post-game tradition of handing out an MVP shirt continued after the final game, with Emma Hodkinson receiving the MVP shirt. Hodkinson, unfortunately, wasn't able to join the team due to the recent passing of her father, John Hodkinson, and her close friend, Maeve Wheeler, accepted the MVP shirt on her behalf. The team also wore green armbands as a tribute to Emma Hodkinson's father with green symbolizing organ-transplant awareness.

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# FUN3 Snipers (Hibbert) take division title at St. Catharines tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The Cherry Hill Carpentry and McKinley Hatchery FUN3 St. Marys Snipers (Hibbert) won the top prize in the Red division of the St. Catharines Ringette Tournament Nov. 21-23.

Head coach Jamie Hibbert praised her team's effort during the tournament, noting they did a good job pressuring their opposition.

"The team played really well this weekend," Hibbert told the Independent. "We were really trying to focus on putting more pressure on for this tournament. Whether that be getting ahead on the scoreboard, getting lots of shots on net, or making sure the other team was covered and checking a lot when they had the ring, we wanted to put more pressure on our opponents."

After finishing the three-game round-robin undefeated, the Snipers faced the Guelph Predators in the semi-final. The two teams traded goals in the opening period with St. Marys taking a 4-3 lead into the second period. Natalie Hibbert scored the Snipers' first two goals of the game, with Charlotte Holliday and Adrianna Marcaccio also finding the back of the net by the end of the first.

Jamie Hibbert said the team found a way to pull ahead in the second period on the backs of some stronger defensive play.

"The semi-final was a very close game for the first half," said Jamie Hibbert. "Elimination games are always tough; both teams just want it so badly. In the second half of the game, our girls really pushed through early to increase our lead. The defence really stepped it



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Cherry Hill Carpentry and McKinley Hatchery FUN3 St. Marys Snipers (Hibbert) earned the gold medal at the St. Catharines Ringette Tournament Nov. 21-23. Pictured in the front is Mila Vanderpol. In the middle row, from left to right, are Addie Dundas, Charlotte Holliday, Lauren Garniss and coach Kaisu Vanderpol. In the back row, from left, are Lacey Terpstra, Adriana Marcaccio, Noelle McKay, Avynne Blight, Adelia Verbaan, Blake Munro, Sophia Adcock, Natalie Hibbert, coach Jamie Hibbert and coach Carly Dundas.

up in terms of not letting them enter our zone, and our offence got so many more shots on net."

St. Marys outscored Guelph 7-2 in the second period, including two more from Natalie Hibbert, a hat-trick by Adelia Verbaan and individual goals by Marcaccio and Lauren Garniss en route to an 11-5 victory.

The Snipers then turned their attention to the Paris Thunder, eventually coming away with a 10-5 win. However, the game didn't start off in an ideal way

for St. Marys, with Paris scoring just under two minutes into the game.

Jamie Hibbert explained the resilience the Snipers displayed after the early Paris goal set the stage for the win to come.

"Paris was the first team we played in the tournament, and it was a very close 4-3 game, so we knew it would be some tough competition," Jamie Hibbert said. "One of our biggest goals for this game was to get ahead early, but Paris got the first goal in just under two minutes. Our

team pushed back and we scored four goals very quickly after that."

Natalie Hibbert scored the first three goals of the game for the Snipers before individual goals by Garniss and Holliday, the first four of which were scored in the first three minutes and 31 seconds of the opening period. Natalie Hibbert added a fourth goal with three-and-a-half minutes left in the first.

Natalie Hibbert continued her domination, adding three more goals in the second, and Verbaan got on the score-sheet as well.

Jamie Hibbert explained the team's first game of the tournament against Paris set them up for the success to come.

"I think a key moment for us during the tournament was in that first game against Paris," said Jamie Hibbert. "We were down 3-1 with under three and a half minutes left in the game and it looked like it was over and that we were going to lose this first game. These girls just wouldn't give up. They pushed harder than we've seen them push before. They came back and scored the game-winner with 4.6 seconds on the clock. Their determination was incredible."

Jamie Hibbert added the team's development of their ring movement led to some increased scoring at the tournament.

"The team has made some great progress this year so far. We've mastered some plays and have started doing some more complex things like cycling. We've been working on trying to make sure we're getting those passes to open ice instead of into a lot of traffic. This generated some more offence for us through the tournament."



## Photos with Santa

Photos by Jayne Fuller at The Flower Shop and More Ltd.

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# FUN3 Snipers (Vergeer) win gold at St. Catharines tournament

TURNER ROTH

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The Synterra FUN3 St. Marys Snipers (Vergeer) captured gold in the Blue division at the St. Catharines Ringette Tournament Nov. 21-23.

Head coach Kerry Vergeer explained the nuances the team has been trying to develop so far this season, with a team mostly made up of first-year players, and how many of those elements of their game came together in the tournament.

"We are a very young team with a lot of first-year players and a sprinkling of second-year players," said Vergeer. "For us, everything just clicked (at the tournament) in terms of our teamwork and our passing, and seeing that was the most exciting for us as a coaching staff because the jump from FUN2 to FUN3 is a huge difference in the game. It's played more properly with rules and zones. It was the most exciting to see everything click in a time when it felt really important to them."

The teamwork of the Snipers was on full display throughout the weekend with every player on the team recording a point during the tournament.

Vergeer also mentioned several memorable moments throughout the tournament that helped the team come away with the top prize in the end.

"Our goalie, Elizabeth (Robinson), couldn't have played better all weekend; she was unstoppable in net. Ruby (Kissler) could not have played harder in any of the games. She's one of our top defencemen and she hustled to the brink of exhaustion for the final game. She let out all her emotions after laying it all out on the ice. She was crying tears of joy in the dressing room, saying it was the happiest moment of her life."

"Briar (Corneil) had not had a goal yet this season," Vergeer continued. "She scored a hat-trick in one of the round robin games, and that really sparked her to step up. Our wonderful junior coach



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Synterra FUN3 St. Marys Snipers (Vergeer) captured the gold medal at the St. Catharines Ringette Tournament Nov. 21-23. Pictured laying in front is Elizabeth Robinson. In the kneeling row, from left to right, are Natalie Kittmer, Charlie Sharp, Keira Pfister, Ruby Kissler, Lenny Vergeer and Annie Simons. In the back row, from left, are Tanya Buck, Michelle Robinson, Emerson Muir, Jolee Muir, Kinsey Buck, Briar Corneil, Ali Harrigan, Janette Whaling and Kerry Vergeer. Not pictured was junior coach Meredith Stokes.

Meredith (Stokes) got up at 4 a.m. with her parents to drive to a 7 a.m. game, and that gave the players even more drive and push to try their hardest and have fun."

The Snipers dominated the round-robin, winning all but one of their games to advance to the gold-medal game against the St. Catharines Comets, a back-and-forth contest where the two teams traded goals. Jolee Beech opened the scoring for St. Marys before assisting on Emerson Muir's goal later in the first period, after which the Snipers trailed 3-2.

Muir caught fire with three second-period goals, along with a goal by Briar Corneil, and Robinson only surrendered one more goal to backstop the

Snipers to a 6-4 win and the gold medal.

When asked about how the team succeeded during the tournament, Vergeer highlighted the team's uplifting spirit

and confidence throughout the weekend.

"They stayed positive the entire time, and they didn't ever feel like they didn't have it in the bag," Vergeer said. "Every goal that the other team got, our players would encourage each other and say, 'We've got this and we'll get it back.' They would skate by Elizabeth (Robinson), our goalie, and make sure she was in the right mindset after a goal. They really were such a bonded group of players. To have the outcome we did after working so hard was really sweet. They were just so excited, and to have a win at our first tournament was pretty huge."

Vergeer added she hopes the success the team enjoyed sticks with her group for the rest of their lives.

"I hope this is something that they remember forever, especially with it being a huge moment for them at the start of their ringette career," said Vergeer. "I hope it gives them the incentive (to) continue to work as a team and make sure we include everybody in every play. With ringette being such a pass-first sport, it's the only way to play the game. It has to be a game of teamwork, and I hope that seeing this win will drive them to recognize how important it is for everybody to get on that scoring sheet."

## St. Marys Bowling Lanes collect items for Giving Tuesday



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured are many of the St. Marys Bowling Lanes' YBC bowlers and coaches displaying some of the items the local bowling lanes collected as part of Giving Tuesday. The YBC Bowlers collected four boxes of food, snacks, and personal care items for the St. Marys Library Pantry through the Giving Tuesday program.

  
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# U15 B Girls capture gold at Montreal Can-Am Challenge Cup

TURNER ROTH

Independent Sports Reporter

The Sam's Home Hardware U15 B Girls St. Marys Rock took home the gold medal in the Can-Am Challenge Cup tournament in Montreal Nov. 21-23.

They played a series of round-robin games to start the tournament, going 3-1 in four games. The good play in the round-robin, according to head coach Dave Bailey, was highlighted by a strong offensive effort throughout their lineup.

"I really enjoyed the fact that when I go back and look at who scored the goals and collected the assists, it's very balanced," Bailey told the Independent. "We got offence from all three lines and from our defence-men as well. Maeve (Sheldon) scored the game-winning goal against Whitby from the point, so the depth scoring we had was great."

Chloe Phillips led the entire tournament in points and tied for the lead in goals, with four goals and seven points over the team's five games. Bailey praised Phillips for the growth in her all-around game.

"Chloe (Phillips) had an excellent weekend," said Bailey. "When I started coaching her, she was very gifted offensively, but she needed to round out her game more, and she's become a player that I can trust in any situation, to play at both ends of the ice. I'm glad she was rewarded this weekend with the points."

Bailey described the team's third round-robin game, a 4-2 win over the Whitby Wolves, as a big moment in the tournament. After going ahead by a goal, the Rock fell behind 2-1 heading into the third. With six minutes to play, St. Marys erupted for three unanswered goals to secure the victory, with Bailey crediting the team's resolve in finding a way to come back.

"The girls really took it to them, and I loved how resilient they were. It was an unfortunate bounce of the puck to put us behind the eightball. It put us down in a game we probably shouldn't have been trailing, but they never took their foot off the gas. They didn't blink and just came back, and it turned out to be quite huge because of how tough we knew North Andover would be, and we felt, if we wanted to play in the gold-medal game, we needed to win against Whitby."

The Rock defeated the aforementioned North Andover Islanders in their last round-robin game by a score of 1-0 before having a rematch in the gold-medal game. The Islanders, a club team based out of Massachusetts, were described as the best team St. Marys played all season.

The final game was low-scoring like their round-robin clash the day prior, with both teams clawing for the first goal. Finally, Madeleine Jeffreys delivered for the Rock with a beautiful setup play from Hailey Pickel and Paige Johnson. This was the only goal of the game, with netminder Lexi Flax earning another shutout in goal, backstopping the Rock to their second straight 1-0 win and the gold medal.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Sam's Home Hardware U15 B Girls St. Marys Rock won the gold medal at the Can-Am Challenge Cup Nov. 21-23 in Montreal. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are coach Nick Sheldon, manager/trainer Kim Jones, Addi Jones, Chloe Phillips, Maeve Sheldon, Avery Fifield, Tealya Thistle, Tea Walsh, Madeleine Jeffrey, Reese Crawford, Olivia Davis, Charlotte Matheson, Paige Johnson, Lucy MacFarlane, Lexi Flax, Hailey Pickel, assistant coach Sarah Bailey and assistant coach Megan Bailey. Pictured behind Flax is head coach Dave Bailey.

Bailey acknowledged the team's outstanding goaltending and team-wide defence in the championship game.

"Our goaltending was a difference maker; Lexi (Flax) stoned them," Bailey said. "I think she stopped 25 shots in the finals. As a cohesive unit, our commitment to defence was big. Our defensemen collectively had their best set of games so far this season. They all stood out and came together, and our forwards just applied relentless back pressure and back-checking. Our forwards' defensive efforts were stellar, and that was a huge difference."

Bailey elaborated on the team's defenders, explaining why they had success in the final.

"I thought they did really well at moving the puck out of our end and making good choices with the puck. We didn't give them any excessive time in our zone. They worked together and their communication, which we talk a lot about, I thought was much better. They tied up the front of the net, and it was a physical game, but we won a lot of battles when we had to."

When asked about the team's perseverance, Bailey praised the girls' hunger and drive to slug through the tough battles.

"Doing as well as we did tells me a lot about this group. When you start out the season with a new team, you don't know exactly what you've got, but I'm lucky enough to have eight girls back from last

year's team. When people asked me at the beginning of the year, 'How does the team look?' I said, 'I think we'll be pretty good,' but you just never know. It boils down to they have to buy what you're selling, and it takes time to establish that culture and that team work ethic.

"It takes time to learn to become comfortable being uncomfortable," Bailey continued. "You're pushing yourself to places you didn't think you could get to, and doing things that you didn't think you were capable of, and finding that extra energy when you need it. We had a tough few days, getting up at six in the morning to get on our bus and having long days, but I don't think there are any limitations for what this team can do this year after I watched them play in this tournament."

Bailey also noted the value of the trip for the group as a lifelong memory, describing the impact the experience left on the team.

"Our bus driver, Steve, who drives the AHL's Laval Rocket around, was driving us and he fell in love with our team, and on his day off, came to watch us in the finals and brought the girls Timbits. I really wanted to do something for this group that was a bit beyond the ordinary. Something that, win or lose, would be a nice memory for them when hockey is over. And I think we nailed it and it gave them more time to spend with each other."

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# U13 BB Girls take silver at Kitchener Fall Fest tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

*Independent Sports Reporter*

The Cascades U13 BB Girls St. Marys Rock had a hard-fought showing at the Kitchener Fall Fest tournament Nov. 21-23, bringing home the silver medal.

Head coach Jamie Matheson praised the team's compete level, which he said remained high throughout the tournament.

"The girls played hard all weekend long, right from the first puck drop, battling through illness and fatigue as the weekend went on," said Matheson. "The team's theme is always unbelievable hard work and dedication, and all weekend, that was evident as we only allowed three goals."

The Rock finished the four-game round-robin with two wins and two ties, tying the team for first in the division. In the semi-final, the Rock faced Toronto Leaside, and Camille Crummer opened the scoring with six minutes left in the first with a beautiful wrist shot that beat the goalie high. Jaelynn Seok got the eventual game-winning goal shortly after banging in a rebound from a point shot. Charlotte Jeffreys backstopped the Rock to a 2-1 victory and a berth in the gold-medal game.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U13 BB Girls St. Marys Rock captured the silver medal at the Kitchener Fall Fest tournament Nov. 21-23. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Jaynie Johnston, Amelia Falkiner, Cassie Adams, Charlotte Jeffreys and Evelyn McAllister. In the back row, from left, are Kylie Blake, Jaelynn Seok, Lauren Masellis, Cammile Crummer, Jessica Zwambag, Sam Matheson, Emily Chateauvert, Addison Hudson, Charlotte Heinbuck and Alex Hariton.

Matheson noted the team's first goal gave them a confidence boost that propelled them forward for the rest of the game.

"The early goal by Camille (Crummer) built a lot of confidence in the girls, which led to Jaelynn (Seok) scoring the

game-winning goal," Matheson said. "The girls battled through penalty trouble in the second, and they battled the rest of the game to protect the lead."

Though St. Marys came up on the wrong side of a 1-0 shutout in the championship contest against the Woodstock

Wildcats, Matheson was very happy with the team's work ethic in the finals.

"The girls battled and outworked a more physically aggressive Woodstock team, but came up short in the end," said Matheson. "The coaching staff is extremely proud of the way the girls faced adversity and dug deep and outworked every team they faced in the tournament."

Matheson added the team's grit led them to move up a tier coming into this season, a change that has tested the hardnosed squad to continue growing.

"Over the years, we have taught these girls to outwork every team they can, so this year, we decided to move the girls from B to BB, which I don't believe there has been a girls' BB team in St. Marys for many years. The girls are learning to compete with some of these bigger centres and are right there competing game after game."

"Our defensive play was really solid," Matheson continued. "There were lots of good back-checks and blocked shots, which showed everyone has bought into our approach. I hope, with the girls making it to the finals in this tournament, they can build the confidence to keep going in league play and ultimately make it to provincials in April."

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# MINOR SPORTS

## SCRAPBOOK



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Everett Boyer makes a kick save with the pad during the St. Marys Ford U9 LL Boys Blue St. Marys Rock game last Saturday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Myles VanDeWalle lifts the puck into a wrist shot during last Saturday's Stonetown Electric U9 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Finn Aarts stops an incoming shot during the Radar Auto Parts U9 LL Boys White St. Marys Rock game last Saturday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Talan Ward blasts a shot on target during this past Sunday's St. Marys Firefighters U13 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Isabella Feltz fires a shot on goal during last Saturday's Hubbard's Pharmacy-Frayne Custom Cabinets U12 B St. Marys Snipers game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Maeve Wheeler launches the puck from the blueline during the Hubbard Pharmacy U18 B Girls St. Marys Rock game this past Sunday.

# Avonbank holds 19th annual tractor parade



(DJ MOUNTAIN PHOTOS)

Despite Mother Nature's attempt at delays, the 19th annual Avonbank Tractor Parade went ahead as scheduled last Friday Night. The Motherwell Women's Institute hosted hot drinks and goodies for spectators and participants. The parade included 20 decorated tractors and other vehicles along with the "Avonbank Donut Specialist Team" on their specially decorated ATVs!

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# COLUMNS

## UKRAINIAN CORNER:

Pine needles and panicked planning – the universal smell of December stress

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

Ah, December! Can you feel it? Is it the crisp, magical air, or just the frantic, slightly burnt smell of holiday stress mixed with pine needles? I sincerely hope you feel the Christmas spirit! I know I do, especially when the radio finally transitions from pop hits to the comforting jingle of sleigh bells.

Listening to those tunes while meticulously planning family events – it's the calm before the holiday storm, isn't it?

Speaking of Christmas songs...Does anyone else notice literally every single English-speaking holiday jam is contractually obligated to mention mistletoe? Every blessed year, I hear the word and think, "Is that a candy? A reindeer's weird cousin? A small, heavily taxed European village?"

This year, I committed. I did research and let me tell you, the deep dive was shocking. Ready? Mistletoe is a plant. A PLANT! I know! I was expecting something mystical, not something you'd see at a garden centre next to the basil.

Apparently, back in the day, people were just trying to avoid the brutal winter-decor blues, so they dragged all the happy green things inside. But since mistletoe already had a reputation for being the official mascot of "Peace, Love and Awkward Smooches," it was basically a holiday superstar with a pre-written contract.

Our first Canadian Christmas was a dazzling, slightly dizzying experience. Comparing it to Ukrainian traditions was like comparing a cozy campfire to a stadium fireworks show – both beautiful, but very different.

Let's talk about the outdoor decorations. Back in Ukraine, watching Hollywood Christmas movies, I genuinely believed those spectacular house-enveloping light displays were a special effect,



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

**The chaos is universal, but the extension cords are Canadian. A newcomer finds common ground in holiday stress, ugly sweaters and the absolute dread of January.**

exclusively created for the big screen. I thought, "Surely, no real person has the time, patience, or the industrial quantity of extension cords for that!"

I was wrong.

The sheer, blinding reality of Canadian outdoor Christmas lighting is a breathtaking marvel. I honestly admire the patience and vertical courage of every Canadian who tackles this annual, semi-dangerous task. It's like a suburban, frosty version of the Cirque du Soleil involving ladders, hundreds of tiny, tangled bulbs and enough wires to

power a small village. As newcomers, this is definitely a challenging, high-altitude activity! Every time I look at our comparatively modest display, I feel a pang of Christmas-décor inadequacy.

But then, I just put on my coat and go for a relaxing walk. It's truly a gift from your community: a free, stunning light therapy session. Thank you, dedicated Canadians, for sharing your electric magic!

Here's a tradition that truly required a cultural pivot: gift wrapping. In Ukraine, the philosophy was beautifully simple: why complicate things? You either slide the present into a lovely holiday paper bag, or you surrender to the mall island wrapper. This highly trained professional, armed with rolls of shiny paper and dangerous-looking scissors, would do the intricate work for a small fee.

I never imagined that wrapping a gift yourself could hold such special, almost spiritual meaning. But here in Canada, it's a sacred ritual. Three years in and

I'm proud to announce I've leveled up! My corners are crisper, my bows are less crumpled and my tape use is only slightly excessive. I am, dare I say, almost a professional.

Another tradition popular in both countries is the family holiday photo shoot in a studio. I confess, I'm not the biggest fan. I cherish having beautiful family pictures, but I prefer them in a natural environment where faces look, you know, normal.

The moment you tell a kid (or a tired spouse) to hold a forced, 32-teeth-visible grin for the 47th time, the picture instantly shifts from "adorable holiday memory" to "miserable hostage situation." We're supposed to be capturing joy, but it often feels like we're just capturing the moment we ran out of patience and threatened to cancel dessert.

And finally, the ugly Christmas sweater. We don't really have this tradition in Ukraine. I absolutely adore the concept – it's an open license to be festive, bright and wonderfully silly. I've already collected a few, but I'm still hunting for that perfect specimen – the one that manages to be both hilariously hideous and surprisingly adorable.

I suspect that Ukrainians, perhaps due to the strong religious connection to Christmas, are generally a little shy about looking overtly funny during the holiday season. The ugly sweater tradition, when it appears, is mostly confined to children.

But I love that this sweater tradition exists in Canada. It's festive, it's fun and it completely eliminates the exhausting need to stand in front of your closet and wonder, "What do I wear to this party?" The answer is simply: "The sweater with the 3D reindeer nose, of course!"

And now for my weird, final confession; I don't actually anticipate Christmas Day itself as the peak holiday. Why? Because the moment the day arrives, the magic is over. The glittering spell is broken and suddenly, you are faced with the chilling, prospect of January and February.

So, I'm not thinking about those chilly, post-holiday months. I'm busy right now trying to savour every last, hectic, sparkling, slightly overwhelming moment of December. May your lights be untangled, your wrapping paper unwrinkled and your spirit absolutely full of festive fun!

## Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett | 519 272 5742 | [jtsquote@gmail.com](mailto:jtsquote@gmail.com)



**Dear Arborist,**

*The deer are eating all my white cedars. Is there something I can plant that is a privacy screen that will not get eaten?*

**Thanks, Deer Troubles**

**Dear Deer Troubles,**

White cedar is definitely a favourite of deer, making it often difficult to protect. An alternative would be juniper also known as red cedar. It

has a stronger smell and bitter taste. Though deer will eat it if the winter is particularly bad, normally they avoid it.

**Sincerely,**

**The Arborist**

*Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel's Tree Service. For contact call 519 272 5742 or email [jtsquote@gmail.com](mailto:jtsquote@gmail.com)*

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# HISTORIC ST. MARYS: David Howard Harrison (1843-1905)

MARY SMITH

*Independent Columnist*

David Howard Harrison had a fortunate start in life. By the time he was born, his family was well established in the London Township area, successful in farming and in business. His father, Milner Harrison was born in 1816 in Hull, Yorkshire, England, the second eldest of Thomas Harrison and Catherine Milner Harrison's 11 children. When he was still a young boy, his family emigrated to Canada and settled on a farm near Arva, just north of London. Catherine Howard, Milner's mother, had been born in Canada. Her family also farmed in London Township. Milner and Catherine were married ca 1840 and their first son, David Howard, was born in 1843. Milner was not a farmer like his father. Instead, he became a merchant and a businessman.

In 1844, when their son, David, was just a year old, the Harrisons moved to the little village of St. Marys. Milner purchased property on the southwest corner of Queen and Church Streets and built a two-storey, limestone retail block. There he opened one of the village's first general stores. Young David grew up in a stone house beside his father's business on Queen Street as did his two younger sisters – Mary, born in 1853, and Martha, (called Mattie) in 1858. In 1862, Catherine had a second son, Howard, who only lived a year. In 1865, Catherine had her last child. A boy, Thomas Milner Harrison, was born in March of that year. There was a 22-year difference between baby Thomas and the Harrisons' oldest child, David.

By 1860, Milner Harrison had prospered. He gave up shopkeeping and concentrated on other business interests, including private banking. He was involved in municipal politics and served as reeve of the village of St. Marys in 1860. He retained ownership of his Queen Street property and rented out the retail space. An early tenant was Timothy Eaton, who moved from Kirkton to St. Marys, a larger centre. Eaton had a dry goods business in the Harrison Block throughout most of the 1860s before moving on to Toronto. In 1863, Milner and Catherine Harrison left the stone house on Queen Street and moved to a much grander residence, a beautiful brick house on a large lot, overlooking the Thames River. The Harrison home still stands at 322 Emily Street.

By this time, David Harrison had been away at school for several years. When he was about 12, he was sent to the Caradoc Academy, west of London. Founded in 1833, this private boys' school prepared students for university entrance and had an excellent reputation. But the school was destroyed by fire in 1857 and David Harrison transferred to another school in Galt, and then to Toronto. His goal was to become a physician and in 1863, when his family moved to Emily Street, he was part-way through medical studies at McGill in Montreal.

In the early 1860s, McGill's medical school was still



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MCCORD STEWART MUSEUM)

**Dr. David Harrison posed for this 1871 photograph in the Montreal studio of his brother-in-law, William Notman.**

developing, laying the groundwork for its future international reputation. David would have taken courses in science and then learned his practical skills from instructor physicians who had mostly been trained in Edinburgh, Scotland. It wasn't until the late 1860s that Canadian doctors developed formal licensing requirements and procedures. When Ontario's College of Physicians and Surgeons was formed in 1869, David Harrison had been a doctor in St. Marys for five years. That a young man, just 21 years of age, could set up a medical practice seems incredible today. At that time, there were many quacks and frauds who claimed to be doctors, saw patients and took their money. At least David Harrison had received the best training available to him and had successfully completed his studies at a reputable university.

While he was studying at McGill, David Harrison met Maggie Notman, the sister of William Notman, the famous Montreal photographer. They were married in April 1866 in Montreal. David brought Maggie home to St. Marys to a fine, brick house on Church Street South. Located on four town lots bordered by Peel Street to the east and Church Street to the west, it was located just north of St. James Anglican Church. It still stands on its spacious grounds, 51 Church Street South. David and Maggie were an attractive young couple and made an impression on the community. David was encouraged to take part in municipal politics and Maggie became a much-loved Sunday School teacher at the Presbyterian Church. When she died in 1873, she was mourned by all who knew her. David was left with two small children to look after – William, age three, and Maggie, a year-and-a-half. The grandmothers and David's two sisters would have helped as much as they could, and he could afford to hire servants. But none of them could provide a warm, stable home for himself and his children. On September 1, 1874, David married again.

His bride was 24-year-old Katherine (Kate) Stevenson, daughter of George Stevenson, mayor of Sarnia. It is not known how David and Kate met. Perhaps the two families connected through business or may have had mutual friends. In the 1870s, it was an easy trip between Sarnia and St. Marys via the Grand Trunk Railway's Sarnia line. David and Kate's marriage seemed to have been a happy one, although it was touched by sad events. They had two daughters, Alice and Tannis, but both died as children. However, their son, George Stevenson Harrison, born in 1875, grew up strong and healthy along with his older half-brother, William, and half-sister, Maggie.

David Harrison was ambitious. Throughout the 1870s, he seemed to search for something more than the life of a small-town doctor. He invested in the flax industry and in a rope, twine and bag factory. He was elected to town council and encouraged to run for senior levels of government as a Conservative candidate – a challenge that he wasn't ready for yet. His medical practice continued to do well, and he took a partner, Dr. John Hugh Mathieson, who had graduated from McGill in 1872. The partners became brothers-in-law when, in September 1873, Dr. Mathieson married Mary Harrison, David's younger sister. He was appointed county coroner, a sign that he had the confidence of the community.

But it wasn't enough. David had invested in land in Manitoba. In 1881, he turned over his practice to Dr. Mathieson, sold his beautiful house on Church Street, and moved with his family to Manitoba to become a rancher. By the 1891 census, the Harrisons were living in Marquette, a community west of Winnipeg. It wasn't long before David became involved in politics. In 1883, he was elected as a member of the Manitoba legislature and held increasingly important cabinet positions. In December 1887, he served as the premier of Manitoba for about a month. When his party lost power, he withdrew from politics and concentrated on his business concerns. By the time of the 1901 census, he was a semi-retired businessman, living in Vancouver. He died there in 1905. Kate survived him, dying in 1932.

David's two sons, William and George, both went to Vancouver with their father. William eventually returned to Ontario where he worked in insurance. He died in 1928 and is buried in St. Marys. George became a banker and remained in Vancouver, where he married and raised a family. He died in 1943. Maggie Harrison, David's daughter, remained in Manitoba. She married John Wemyss, a lawyer in Neepawa, and they raised three children there. When Maggie died in 1941, she too was buried in the Harrison plot in St. Marys. Her son, Robert Harrison Wemyss, married Verna Jean Simpson. Their daughter, Jean Margaret Wemyss, was born in 1926, in Neepawa. Margaret Wemyss, the great-granddaughter of Margaret Notman Harrison, is best remembered as the celebrated Canadian novelist, Margaret Laurence (1926-1987).

## Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

*St. Marys Public Library*

You are cordially invited to attend the event of the season: "An Evening with Austen", a celebration of Jane Austen on the 250th anniversary of her birth. Join us Tuesday, December 16 at the Friendship Centre from 6-8 p.m. for a night of well-mannered fun and elegance. Activities include a thoughtful discussion lead by Professor Gabrielle Ceraldi, Austen trivia, light refreshments, prizes, and a charming

bookish craft. Costumes and fancy dress are encouraged! Pick up your free ticket at the St. Marys Public Library while supply lasts.

### This Week's Recommendation

Jane Austen's novels have inspired many an adaptation over the centuries, from faithful depictions of her work (like the 1995 film version of "Sense and Sensibility") to more alternative re-tellings (such as Seth Grahame-Smith's novel "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies"). Another type of story includes those about Austen's impact.

A fun example of this is the movie "Austenland", a 2014 film based on Shannon Hale's novel of the same name. In it, Jane Hayes catches a plane to Britain with a ticket to Austenland, an immersive experience for fellow Janeites that plunges participants into an authentic re-creation of the world of "Pride and Prejudice". Copies of all of Jane Austen's works as well as the other titles mentioned above are available to be borrowed from your Library today!

### Up This Week

Fri., Dec. 5: Holiday Wrapping Party

(1-3 p.m.)

Sat., Dec. 6: Edith's Storytime Adventures (10 a.m.)

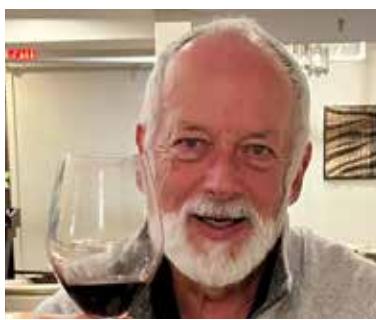
Mon., Dec. 8: Learn to Play Bridge (1-3 p.m.)

Tues., Dec. 9: Write of Way (6:30 p.m.)

Wed., Dec. 10: EarlyON Play & Read (9:30 a.m.), Mahjong! (1-4 p.m.)

Thurs., Dec. 11: Create and Connect – Felt Stars (6-8 p.m.)

# OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: A qualified "yes" on visiting two popular Toronto attractions



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

Their beginnings are almost a century apart, but the Royal Ontario Museum and Ripley's Aquarium of Canada have a lot in common. They are two of the most-visited attractions in Toronto. They both are part of the Toronto CityPASS program that provides some significant discounts on admission prices. And they both offer a blend of entertainment and education to people of all ages.

So, all that being said, should you plan to brave the horrendous traffic and head to Toronto right away to take in these two attractions? My answer would be a qualified "yes."

Why qualified? Different reasons for the two places. Let's start with the ROM. Most of us remember school trips to the ROM in decades past. After all, the Royal Ontario Museum has been open since 1914, so it predates all of us.

If you are like me, your three main memories are of dinosaur skeletons, Egyptian mummies and row after row of jam-packed cases loaded with a mind-boggling assortment of historical artifacts.

That's not the ROM of today – though you can find most of these things in the museum

somewhere. The ROM is modernizing big time and this is actually the reason for my "qualified yes" – because the museum is smack in the middle of a three-year, multi-million-dollar revitalization of the main floor and some of the second floor. The transformation impacts 86,000 square feet on the main floor and creates 6,000 square feet of new gallery space on the second floor. So, lots of the building is closed to visitors.

Change is certainly in the air at the ROM and not only concerning the physical space. After a decade in the position, director and CEO Josh Basseches has resigned and Yoke Chung and Jennifer Wild, already part of the museum's executive leadership team, are becoming co-directors and CEOs as of Jan. 1.

So, the ROM is in transition and visitors need to be aware of this. That does not mean there is nothing to experience here – there is still a lot of the permanent collection on display, there are new innovations to enjoy and there are many current, temporary exhibitions ranging from "Saints, Sinners, Lovers and Fools: 300 years of Flemish masterworks" to "Sharks" to an intriguing exhibition entitled, "Layers in Time," focused on southwestern Ontario's unique, meromictic lake, Crawford Lake.

And, in a slightly obvious segue, thinking of water takes us south from the ROM to Ripley's Aquarium.

It's a much newer part of the Toronto scene, having opened in 2013, 99 years after the ROM welcomed its first visitor. And while the ROM is working to-

ward being a modern, state-of-the-art destination, Ripley's accomplished that goal from the get-go.

So why do I also give the aquarium a "qualified yes." Here, it all depends on when you go. We visited recently, on a Saturday, and the place was jammed wall to wall with family groups. Great for the kids to be there, but a challenge to navigate. So, my qualification is Ripley's Aquarium is a terrific place to visit but do avoid high-volume days. Ripley's recommends avoiding the hours of 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekdays, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends and holidays. I agree!

If you can miss the uber-crowds, there is a lot to love about the place. The moving sidewalk that carries you inside the aquarium where you are surrounded by sharks, sea turtles and dozens of species of fish is amazing. The Ray Bay, which allows visitors to actually touch a ray, is magical. And while the big features draw the most attention, there are marvels in smaller exhibits as well, including sea horses and sea dragons.

Ripley's has also taken their Canadian location seriously with really fine exhibits of Canadian species, both freshwater and ocean. Everyone loves the blue lobsters.

The attraction has, from the beginning, been over-the-top kid friendly. In fact, there are tunnels through water features, viewing areas and other nooks and crannies that are only accessible to children, which I personally think is very unfair. Heck, I'd like to crawl through a school of fish, except I would



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Visitors to Ripley's are always awed by the sight of sea creatures like these rays.

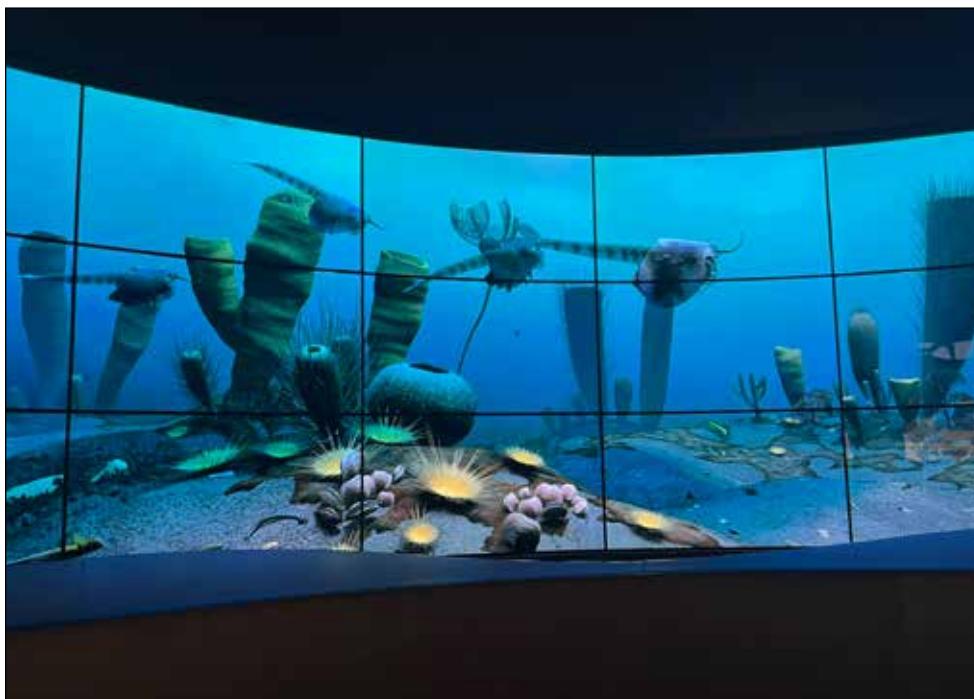
most certainly get stuck. So, let's leave it to the kids who love it.

I mentioned the Toronto CityPASS. Here's the current math for one adult. The CityPASS costs \$129.96 and a child's pass is \$92.92.

That gets you into the CN Tower, Ripley's Aquarium and three other attractions from a list including the ROM, the Toronto Zoo, Casa Loma and more. If you did all five, you would be paying \$182 for an adult. Even visiting just three, you save money with the CityPASS.

Whether you use that pass or simply plan a visit to one or two places, the aquarium is definitely worth a visit – away from peak hours – and the ROM, even under construction, still offers many of the wonders that we remember from when we were school kids, and promises a lot more to come.

*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.*



A new, high-tech feature at the Royal Ontario Museum: a video featuring undersea creatures of the Cambrian period.



Yes, there are still dinosaurs to be found at the ROM.

# FROM THE GARDEN: Winterizing tips for the garden



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

December marks the transition into true winter in our region. So far, we have already received a couple of winter blasts, which makes one wonder what the upcoming winter season will be like.

There are steps we perform for our homes and vehicles to get ready for the cold, wintery weather ahead. Some of these actions may include sealing up any gaps around windows and doors and wrapping exposed pipes to prevent them from freezing. Regular servicing, especially in late fall of our home heating systems is always a good idea to ensure no interruptions during the winter months.

As for our vehicles, installing winter tires and preparing an emergency kit of blanket, water, snacks as well as shovel and snow brush can be reassuring items if you are in a winter storm or stranded somewhere. For ourselves, changing our

outerwear from jackets to winter coats, hats, gloves, scarves and waterproof boots to protect us. These are all good tips to keep ourselves and our families warm and safe for the upcoming winter season.

Like us, our gardens need help to protect them also for the winter.

The couple of bouts of snowy weather may have caught you off guard. It did us. You may still have plants in that you may want to save. Move these to a protected area – porch, garage, between building structures and group them together. Clustered potted plants help protect each other and can be wrapped in burlap, garden cover cloth or old sheets. You can also mound leaves around them. Wrapping these pots or insulating with dried leaves shields them from the 'freeze-thaw' effect during the winter that can damage the root system of the plants inside these containers. Any semi-tropical or tropical potted plants, no matter how well you insulate from the cold, will not survive. Avoid plastic covers as they can trap too much moisture and heat which can cause damage.

Winter burn often affects evergreen plants, including broad-leaf varieties like holly and rhododendron, needle conifers such as hemlock and fir, and scale-like species like false cypress and juniper, especially



when grown in open areas exposed to harsh winter weather. Frigid winter winds can dry out these plants, especially the broad-leaf evergreens. In the spring you may notice foliage browning at the tips of the branches, then progress inward toward the centre. On broad-leaf plants, the leaf edges brown first, followed by the entire leaf affected. In extreme cases of winter burn, the entire plant browns and dies. Also, wrapping evergreens, no matter the species, near major roads will protect them from snow plough and salt sprays.

Shredded leaves or straw make great insulating materials

in the gardens. Apply a thick generous layer around the base of perennials, especially roses. This organic mulch insulates the soil and protects roots from extreme temperature fluctuations that are bound to happen in this region during the winter. An extra layer acts as a buffer against freezing and thawing cycles. As the organic mulch breaks down over time, it will enrich the soil with valuable nutrients.

Pruning or cutting back perennials such as coneflowers and ornamental grasses is not strictly necessary, as these plants can enhance the aesthetic appeal of a garden during the

winter months. Additionally, their seeds provide a valuable food source for non-migratory bird species.

While it might seem counterintuitive, proper watering is essential going into winter, especially if you planted new shrubs, trees, or perennials this year. Plants may not need as much water as they do in the warmer months, but they still require hydration.

Although your garden may be entering its winter dormancy, taking additional steps to properly winterize it will help ensure your plants will survive the cold months and flourish in the following growing season.

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Solutions on pg. 35

# Riddles

What is the richest nut?  
A cash-ew!

Why did the fruit salad skip its own wedding?  
It had a lot of can't-elope!

What kind of beer won't get you tipsy?  
Root beer!

What kind of poultry is always going to the bathroom?  
Chick peas!

Why did the citrus tree go to the hospital?  
Lemon-aid!

You cut me, slice me, dice me, and all the while, you cry. What am I?  
An onion!

What kind of apples do computers prefer?  
Macintosh!

What has many ears but cannot hear?  
Corn!

I'm a bird, a person, and a fruit. What am I?  
A Kiwi!

I'm the father of fruits. What am I?  
A papa-ya!

What vegetable always loses in every competition yet is a terrific rapper?  
Beets!

What vegetable can you use to tie your shoelace?  
A string bean!



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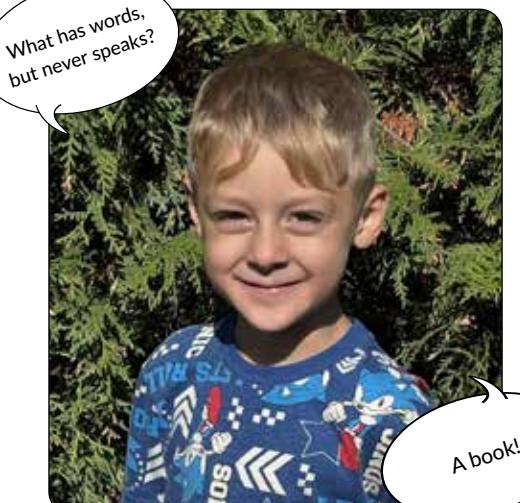
## NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

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

Dodgers beat Jays  
DCVI Cross  
Country  
Sports Wall of Fame  
Rick Fifield  
Mike Craig  
St Marys Lincolns  
Remembrance Day  
Poppy Project  
Town Craft Show  
Merchants Open House  
Winterlights  
Santa Claus Parade  
Snow squalls  
West End Culvert



The **Riddle Kid**  
OF THE WEEK



What has words,  
but never speaks?

A book!

Ethan King (4)

Hey Kids... Every Riddle Kid that appears in the paper gets a FREE MILKSHAKE at the Sunset Diner!

St. Marys Veterinary Clinic is pleased to be the sponsor of the

## PET OF THE WEEK



### KEEP YOUR PETS SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

The holidays are just around the corner! Make sure to keep treats and decorations out of your pet's reach. Secure all decorations, wires, and candles to prevent accidents, and ensure your pets don't chew on tinsel or ornaments. This way, both you and your pets can enjoy a safe and happy holiday season!



### WILLOW & PIPER

Our Pets of the Week are Willow, a two-and-a-half-year-old West Highland terrier and Piper, an eight-year-old Scottish terrier. Even though Willow is the younger of the two, she is rather bossy and controls the sleeping arrangements, toys and eating times. Willow's biggest fans are the McGinnis grandchildren. Both dogs enjoy trips to the cottage - their happy place where Piper teaches Willow how to chase squirrels.



# Thorndale News

*A section within the  
St. Marys Independent*

## Health tips for the upcoming holidays

NANCY ABRA

*Independent Reporter*

With the upcoming holidays, we get busy shopping and preparing for the festivities and family and friend gatherings. We get so involved in making the holidays perfect, we sometimes forget to look after ourselves and the ones we love.

Besides being the holiday season, it is also flu season. The flu vaccine is the best defense against influenza, an illness

caused by a virus infecting a person's respiratory system – the nose, throat and lungs. Staying current with the COVID-19 vaccine is important as well. Both of these vaccines are available at the Thorndale Pharmacy at no cost but do require an appointment.

Holiday gatherings increase the spread of viruses. COVID-19, influenza, RSV and even norovirus tend to spike during the season. Older adults face higher risks as immunity weakens with age, making vaccines and precautions especially

critical. As well, widespread illness can overwhelm clinics and hospitals, so prevention helps protect the system.

The staff at the Thorndale Pharmacy have a collective commitment to the health and wellness of their customers and to the greater community. They offer treatment and prescriptions of medications for common medical ailments, including rashes, pink eye, insect bites, acne and urinary tract infections, along with basic home health-care supplies, as well as a good selection of greeting

cards and gift cards. And they offer free delivery.

Keeping ourselves healthy benefits everyone. Small actions like washing hands after being in stores shopping and before meals, getting vaccinated and masking when in crowded areas protect not just us but neighbours, older family members and family and friends with weaker immune systems. Think of prevention as a gift to family and friends this holiday season.

## What's On at Thorndale Library in December

### MIDDLESEX PUBLIC LIBRARY

*Staff Contribution*

There's plenty to do at the Thorndale Library this holiday season.

#### For young families:

- Thorndale Storytime (Tuesdays,

10:30 a.m.): Join us for stories, songs, rhymes and fun!

- Early ON Play & Learn (Fridays, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.): A free drop-in program designed for families with children aged zero to six.

#### For adults and seniors:

- Stitch 'n Chat (Dec. 17 6-8 p.m.): Bring your current needlecraft project and meet other crafters for some stitching and chatting. Registration required.

#### For all ages:

- Holiday Movie (Tuesday, Dec. 23 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.): Get into the holiday spir

it at the library! Come watch a holiday movie. If you would like, bring a drink and blanket. Popcorn will be provided!

For more information or to register, call 519-461-1150 or email [thorndale\\_staff@middlesex.ca](mailto:thorndale_staff@middlesex.ca).

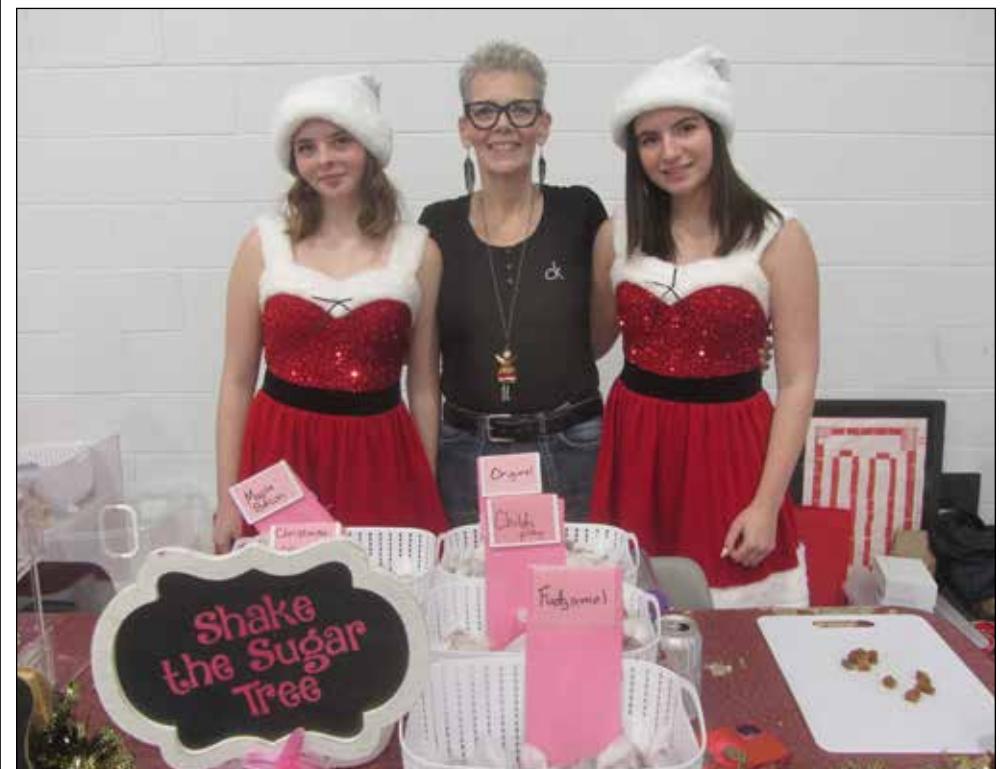
## Thorndale United Church hosts Christmas Hamper collection in support of St. Marys food bank



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THORNDALE UNITED CHURCH)

Last Saturday, Nov. 29, Thorndale United Church held a Christmas Hamper collection in support of the St. Marys food bank. Donations of items such as non-perishable food, essential toiletries as well as new toys and games were dropped off by Thorndale area residents, and their generosity is greatly appreciated.

## Christmas Boutique Market held in Thorndale



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Pictured is Sharyl Vandendries of Shake the Sugar Tree (centre) flanked by her daughter, Victoria Vandendries, on the left and her daughter's friend, Emma Butler, on the right, at the Nov. 15 Christmas Boutique Market held at Thorndale Lions Community Centre, which saw more than 100 local artisans and entrepreneurs selling their wares to the large crowd of Christmas shoppers. The raffle at this Christmas Boutique Market raised \$345 for the West Nissouri Public School Hungry Bear cupboard.

## OBITUARY

## Weersink



Annie Weersink - January 26, 1932 - November 30, 2025

With heavy hearts, we announce the death of Annie Weersink (Weernink) (St. Marys, Ontario), who passed away on November 30, 2025 at the age of 93.

She was predeceased by her partner of 61 years, Harry; her parents, Gerard and Johanna; and her eight sisters and brothers. Even though her family were lucky enough to have her for 93 years, Annie will be missed greatly by: her children, Alfons (Maureen Muller), Gerald (Deborah Pratt), Rosemary (Doug Graham), Robert (Susan Denzel) and Jeff (Janet Maurice), her 17 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren. She will also be missed by her nieces, nephews, and friends.

Born in Rossum, Netherlands, Annie grew up on a farm with her 8 siblings. She and her twin brother were numbers 3 and 4 of the 9 children. Annie married her love, Harry Anthony Weersink and in search of farming opportunities they spent their honeymoon on a ship to Canada, along with Annie's brother Albert. They landed at Pier 21 in Halifax and made their way to St. Marys where Harry worked as a farm hand and Annie cleaned houses in town. Their resilience in starting over in a new country with very little was soon to be rewarded with a family and happy life.

A loving wife, proud mother and sweet Oma, she was a dedicated community member and very proud to be Canadian. It was a very difficult transition moving away from her homeland and family. She spoke fondly of those new friends who made that transition just a little bit easier, teaching her English and a Canadian way of life. Besides working alongside Harry on the farm, she took special pride in her home cleaning, cooking, sewing and making it always a place that many came to understand as *Gezellig*.

There is not a grandchild that won't speak fondly of her brownies and most of her friends and family knew that no matter the time of day or night there was always a coffee, wine, or a dessert to be shared. In later years, Annie enjoyed golfing and quilting and was always up to go shopping. She will be remembered by her family as quietly loving, humble, kind and especially for her dry sense of humour.

As her family says goodbye we will always remember that she never let a departure from her go by without a walk to the door and a wave as you drove away. Heartfelt thanks to the staff at Kingsway Long-term Care where Annie spent the last year and half of her life and where she was treated with kindness and dignity. A private, immediate family funeral will be held at a later date with interment in St. Marys Cemetery. Any memorial donation can be made to: Huntington Society of Canada in Annie's name. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

## OBITUARY

## OBITUARY

## Heimgartner



Cheryl Heimgartner (Swan) passed away suddenly on Nov. 26, 2025 at the age of 69.

Beloved wife of Casey, married in joy of 52 years. Treasured Mother of Robert, Roxanne, Casey and Jason. Mother in law of Steve. Extremely proud Oma to Mason. Whos bond between was deeply profound. And Ashley, whom She loved and Admired fervently. Sister to Richard, Patricia, Dennis and Betty Jean. Joined in afterlife with her Mother and Father Blanche and Sam Swan. Also her brother and sister, David and Sandra. Sister in law to Henriette and Jo-anne. Extended family included John Damen and Willimena Morley.

Cheryl and Casey grew together from small town roots. And as roots in the soil, they twined together to build a foundation for a Marriage in which each were the others world. Two half souls whom found each other beyond chance. To become a single whole Cheryl spent her life tirelessly giving to others. She was a Mother and a Wife and a teacher and a healer. She was the lifeblood and bond that was family.

To know Cheryl, was to know life in its wonder and exuberance. Cheryl saw beauty everywhere, and that is what she reflected. To fall within her orbit, meant to believe in fairy tales come true. She radiated magic and light as she danced through life. Cheryl loved to craft and paint. She was always baking and giving treats to family and friends. Nobody ever left her home without a bag full of love made manifest in delicious goods. She always said there are no bad people, they just needed to be understood.

Her heart was full of love for all. She thrived in the outdoors and planting flowers and all the smells and colours. She was deeply in tune with nature and the earth. She was a fierce negotiator, and could regularly be found enjoying early morning garage sales, where often she would return with the car filled of wonders. Cheryl's favorite time of year was Christmas. She was fanatical about the season. The honest pure joy of the season, and all its facets of love and giving and family and faith; were at Cheryl's core, very much whom she was. She was the essence of Christmas magic. Cheryl was a woman of faith. An unshakable belief in Her God. The Angels She knew were always around. And the mantra of what you put out in the Universe is returned. She wove light constantly with her Faith.

With anguished prayers, we hope that She as an Angel now, adorned with Cardinal wings, will know how loved She was, and how terribly she will be missed. Thank you to everyone who expresses support. As per Cheryls wishes, there will be no funeral service or visitation. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

## OBITUARY

## Bradley



Howard George Bradley, passed away suddenly at the farm on November 30, 2025 in his 85th year.

Survived by his beloved wife Ruth Bradley (Clark) of 62 years. Father of Sherry Bradley (Brent O'Keefe), Steven Bradley, and Daniel Bradley (Laura). Grandpa of Ashley

Drinkwalter (Pablo), Josh Drinkwalter (Madison), Amy Bradley, Andrew Bradley. Great-grandpa of Peyton, Mateo, Isabella, Maeve, and Layla. Brother and brother-in-law of Donna Bradley, Glenn Bradley (Jean), Carl Clark, Linda Galloway (Bob), Gary Clark (Lily), Glenna Holyman (Max), Stan Clark (Darlene), Rhonda Cousins (Daniel), Mark Clark (Nancy).

Howard will also be missed by Jeff Drinkwalter, Elly Kember, Justin Clark and extended family members. Predeceased by his parents Wilbur and Mabel, parents-in-law Wilma and Glen Clark, brother Delmer Bradley, and sister-in-law Donna Jean Bradley.

Howard spent his life farming and operating Transvaal Service Shop. He did exactly what he loved to do. He was a family man and enjoyed hunting for four leaf clovers. Cremation has taken place.

Visitation at the Andrew L. Hodges Funeral Home, 47 Wellington St. S. St. Marys, on Wednesday, Dec. 3, from 7 - 9 pm. The Memorial Service will be conducted at the funeral home on Thursday, Dec. 4, at 2 pm with Pastor Pam Wilcox officiating. Interment in St. Marys Cemetery at a later date. Memorial donations may be made to Sleeping Children Around the World or Canadian Foodgrains. Online tributes at [www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca](http://www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca).

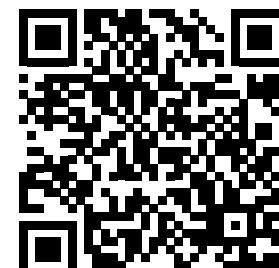
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## St. Marys Independent

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## IN MEMORIAM

*Hughes*

In memory of our parents, Reta Hughes December 3, 2012 and Harry Hughes February 6, 1995.

Though their smiles are gone forever  
And their hands we cannot touch,  
Still we have so many memories  
Of the two we loved so much.  
Their memories are our keepsake  
With which we'll never part,  
God has them in his keeping  
We have them in our heart.  
Forever loved... Your Family

## St. Marys United Church



## Christmas Craft &amp; Bake Sale

SAT. DEC 6TH, 2025

8 A.M. - 12 P.M.

85 Church St. South, St. Marys

Baked Goods, Crafts,  
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## CELEBRATION



YOU'RE INVITED TO AN OPEN HOUSE FOR

*Elaine Stephen Miller's*  
**85TH BIRTHDAY**

**Sat. Dec. 6 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

Thames Valley Community Centre (77 Ann St.)

*Your presence is the best present!*VOTORANTIM  
cimentosst marys  
cement**Community Liaison Committee**

The next Community Liaison Committee Meeting will be held on **Thursday, December 11th** at 6:00pm at the St. Marys Municipal Operations Center. Members of the public who wish to observe are welcome to attend.

Residents who wish to speak in front of the Committee may submit a detailed request in writing to the Committee. The request will be considered by the Committee and approved prior to the meeting.

Please submit all requests, questions, and concerns for the meeting to [kara.pelissero@vcimentos.com](mailto:kara.pelissero@vcimentos.com) by **Tuesday, December 9th at 10am.**

# MUDMEN LIVE IN CONCERT

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**Friday Jan. 9, 2026**  
at the St. Marys Town Hall

**TICKETS \$30**

Doors @ 7:00 pm • Show @ 8:00 pm

Tickets available at The PYRAMID Rec Centre

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All-Ages Mudmen Inc event | [www.mudmen.ca](http://www.mudmen.ca)

# Looking Back

AMY CUBBERLEY

*Independent Columnist***Baby boom****25 years ago (2000)**

John Richardson may have had to take a break from campaigning due to ill health during the federal election campaign, but he was feeling just fine Monday night. The Liberal incumbent for Perth-Middlesex won easily, riding a Liberal wave across Canada which saw John Chretien's party win more of the popular vote than in the last two federal elections.

Former St. Marys Lincoln defenceman Drew Kivell is rated among the top 25 Ontario Hockey League players for the 2001 National Hockey League entry draft. The 18-year-old Lakeside area native is in his sophomore season with the OHL's Sudbury Wolves.

**50 years ago (1975)**

The Lions beard growing contest grows in popularity as winter storms move into the area. At last count, 42 contestants have joined the "no shave till May 22 of 1976" group. Strangely enough, no Women's Libbers have yet entered the contest. Don't chicken out, girls.

Operations at St. Marys Collegiate came to an unscheduled halt last Thursday when the school heating system had a break-down, which resulted in a one-day holiday. All was back to normal for Friday morning.

**75 years ago (1950)**

A new telephone kiosk has been set up at the west end of Victoria Bridge, alongside Graham Motors driveway.

Children have already cleared the snow from an open-air skating surface on Trout Creek between the Water and Wellington Streets bridges.

Since the new St. Marys Memorial Hospital was thrown open for the admission of patients a little over a week ago, there have been thirty-two admissions to date. Three babies have already been born in this new hospital. These are the first babies to be born in St. Marys for more than two years.

**100 years ago (1925)**

Armed with their trusty rifles, Arnold and Clarence Heather secured their first big game on an expedition to the north woods of Ontario. The duo traveled by Chevrolet car, leaving St. Marys at 7 a.m. and arriving in Toronto via mostly paved roads at 7 p.m. From there, the brothers traveled to Whitby where the paved roads ended, arriving in Lindsay at 11:30 p.m. After spending the night in Lindsay, the brothers had a harrowing drive on wet clay and roads made of logs over swamps to their final destination of Kinmount.

St. Andrew's Night was fittingly celebrated by Highland Mary Camp, Sons of Scotland, in their Lodge Rooms on Monday evening. The members of their Camp and their friends, numbering nearly 60, had a jovial time, with euchre, lunch, and dancing being in vogue until the wee hours.

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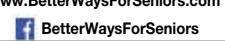
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## Share the Spirit of Christmas with the St. Marys Independent

Get a head start on the season with the **St. Marys Independent's Christmas Greetings**, publishing **December 18** — a great way to wish the community a Merry Christmas and thank your customers for their support.

A portion of proceeds will be **donated to St. Marys Healthcare Foundation**, helping provide care and comfort to local families.

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### QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1) 16 times
- 2) Bletchley Park
- 3) Wolfram
- 4) False
- 5) 1993
- 6) Victoria
- 7) Iceland
- 8) Kellogg's Frosted Flakes
- 9) Every 10 days
- 10) Tongue

### SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

## St. Marys Independent

## THE WEEK AHEAD

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

St. Marys Library events - See Page 27

Thorndale Library events - See Page 31

### Friday, Dec 5

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- WinterLights night market at Milt Dunnell Field - 5-8 p.m.
- A.N.A.F. meat draw - 6 p.m.
- SMCP auditions for "Boeing, Boeing" at St. Marys Presbyterian Church - 6:30 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Chatham Maroons at the PRC - 7:30 p.m.

### Saturday, Dec 6

- St. Marys Farmers Market at the PRC - 8 a.m. to Noon
- St. Marys United Church Christmas craft & bake sale - 8 a.m. to Noon
- First Baptist Church Christmas cookie sale - 10 a.m. to Noon
- McCully's Hill Farm photos with Santa - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., \$15 and food bank donation
- Elaine Stephen Miller's 85th birthday open house at Thames Valley C.C., 77 Ann St. - 1-4 p.m.
- SMCP auditions for "Boeing, Boeing" at St. Marys Presbyterian Church - 1 p.m.
- 'Jorie's Odds & Ends' musical performance at First Baptist Church - 2:30 p.m.
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 p.m.
- WinterLights night market at Milt Dunnell Field - 5-8 p.m.

### Sunday, Dec 7

- McCully's Hill Farm photos with Santa - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., \$15 and food bank donation
- Legion bingo - Doors open 11:30 a.m., Play from 1-4 p.m.
- SMCP auditions for "Boeing, Boeing" at St. Marys Presbyterian Church - 1 p.m.
- St. Marys Museum holiday open house - 2-4 p.m.
- Community dinner at the PRC - 5 p.m., Sponsored by 'To St. Marys with Love'
- St. George's United Church, Thorndale community carol service - 7 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Chatham Maroons at Chatham Memorial Arena - 7 p.m.

### Tuesday, Dec 9

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee - 10 a.m. to Noon
- St. Marys Legion cribbage - Starts 7 p.m. sharp

### Wednesday, Dec 10

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

### Thursday, Dec 11

- Friends of the Library management committee meeting - 10 a.m.
- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun lunch - Noon to 1:30 p.m.
- Flower Shop & More Santa meet-and-greet with photoshoots - 5-7 p.m., \$15
- St. Marys Cement community liaison committee meeting at the MOC - 6 p.m.
- Heeman's carolling in the greenhouse - 6-7 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Stratford Warriors at the PRC - 7:30 p.m.

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