

A COMMEMORATIVE EDITION RECAPPING 2025

St. Marys Independent

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Wishing you a prosperous New Year

Ron Morrison, Owen Lewis-Havard, Julien Polidoro, Emma James, David Forster, Heidi James

2025 TOP STORIES

2025 was a year for Canada

STEWART GRANT

Independent Publisher

One of the biggest challenges in doing a "Year in Review" special is this page 2 article where I try to bring everything together and summarize what made this year unique from the others.

I think that 2025 was a year in which we thought a lot about who we are as Canadians. Over the course of the year, we had many ways to express ourselves as Canadians. We had the chance (twice) to cast our votes through the ballot box - once in the federal election and once provincially. We also had the choice to speak with our wallet, whether it was deciding over items at the grocery store or deciding whether to cross the border for vacation.

The year began turbulently and anxiously, with U.S. President Donald Trump fixing his deranged attention on Canada. Manufacturing ridiculous claims about our country causing America's fentanyl problems, he first threatened us with tariffs and then "joked" about Canada becoming their 51st state.

We didn't treat his comments like a joke. We took it personally.

Pierre Poilievre appeared destined to become Canada's Prime Minister in 2025 until Trump's antics caused many to second-guess who we wanted to go head-to-head against the American President. Instead of a Conservative landslide, the Liberals under Mark Carney won a minority decision.

Provincially, Doug Ford's tough talk (and actions like banning American booze from the liquor stores) was enough to get him re-elected to another majority.

2025 was not an Olympic year but wow

did we ever cheer for Canada when they dropped the gloves (with three fights in the first nine seconds) in the hockey game against the USA. And oh yeah, we beat them in the finals as well to win the Four Nations Cup.

Fortunately, things cooled down by the end of the year. The Blue Jays battled against Los Angeles in the World Series, but this wasn't Canada vs. USA... this was more about cheering for a great bunch of ballplayers. Meanwhile, Trump's short attention span has moved on towards Venezuela, and distracting people from the Epstein files.

In St. Marys, we've got a lot of highlights to go through in the coming pages. I'm amazed and inspired by the sheer number of events that occurred this year that were about people helping other people. I tried to include as many as I reasonably could and if I missed one that you were looking for, I'm sorry!

St. Marys shone in many ways. Musician Max Smith on the cover is a representative of both personal achievement and also community events that we are lucky to have, such as Summerfest and the Heritage Festival. In sports, there were so many successes, from the St. Marys Lincolns to the OFSAA cross-country championship DCVI senior boys.

Our downtown remains relatively strong but small business is never easy so keep supporting local best as you can. It's been good to see some new shops open up this year - keep your eyes open and stop by ones you haven't been in yet.

Uptown, it looks like the renovated swimming pool is finally ready to go, so hopefully that's a good omen as we jump headfirst into 2026.

PRC pool finally re-opens!



(ANDREA SLADE PHOTO)

After more than a year of being closed, the swimming pool at the Pyramid Recreation Centre reopened on Dec. 17, 2025.



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St. Marys Buick GMC wants to thank St. Marys and area communities for your loyalty and support in 2025. We would also like to thank those of you who contributed to our Salvation Army Toy Drive this Christmas - your donations were truly appreciated.

On behalf of our entire sales and service team, we'd like to wish you a healthy and prosperous New Year and look forward to serving you in 2026.

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A New Year's message from Mayor Al Strathdee

Strathdee not running for re-election

AL STRATHDEE

Mayor of St. Marys

As we enter 2026, I remain very optimistic about the future prosperity of our town. We are fortunate to live in a caring community that offers many social supports and recreational activities for young and old. The recent success of Giving Tuesday and the generous support of our local health-care foundation campaign for a new x-ray machine are just two of many examples of how our community cares.

Council remains committed to maintaining the services, amenities and small-town culture that make St. Marys so special, and we continue working to improve the future economic outlook. There continues to be investor interest in our community, new housing development and expansion of existing industry and growing tourism.

The 2026 Town of St. Marys budget sets out several infrastructure projects and strategic initiatives designed to meet our strategic goals and commitment to continuous improvement. This year, we have budgeted for over \$8.3 million in capital-improvement projects. Among those are: equipment for police safety and modernization of technology equipment; roadwork on Jones Street West, Thomas Street and Ontario Street; sidewalk replacement; West Quarry cleanup and rehabilitation; continued improvements at our sewage treatment plant; Friendship Centre upgrades including new furniture; energy efficiency upgrades on lighting and street lights; continued investments and upgrades to our water systems; upgrades to our trail system and the George Street walking bridge; continued stabilization work at 14 Church Street North which will enable library expansion and cultural services enhancements; new turf and maintenance equipment for public works; an emergency generator for the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC); and many more.

With some projects carrying over from the previous year, staff will be working through a capital budget of over \$10 million and over 100 projects. Our operational budget also includes strategic initiatives on housing, transportation and tourism development. Council has



(FILE PHOTO)

Pictured is Mayor Al Strathdee

great confidence in our team of committed and caring staff who continue to work hard to move the town forward and implement the strategic priorities laid out by council.

There are many challenges ahead for our small, separated municipality. We continue to try to work closely with regional partners with mixed results. Unfortunately, there remains unresolved issues of provincial cost downloading with the County of Perth that makes progress difficult. These historic disputes have reached the point of pending litigation between the City of Stratford and the County of Perth. Fortunately, the City of Stratford has continued to be gracious and willing partners in our efforts to move our region forward. We continue to work closely with the City of Stratford and the County of Perth on shared services to create efficiencies in paramedic and emergency services, social services and housing, Spruce Lodge Long Term Care Facility, justice services, and other initiatives such as the PC Connect transportation system.

Given the rapid population growth in our urban areas, our regional rural communities must work closer to ensure better provincial and federal support.

Council is well aware of the continued rise in the cost of living, housing inflation, child-care shortage, concerns in health care, public-transportation challenges, homelessness and mental-health issues facing our community. Council and staff continue to work collaboratively to make plans and improvements to position our community for the future.

The town continues to properly maintain its infrastructure and take on strategic projects all while balancing fiscal responsibility. We have an asset-management plan and a 20-year capital plan designed to catch up and close our infrastructure gap. We remain committed to continuous improvement and are doing better than many communities in our province that have grown too quickly and not planned well for the future.

Taxes and user fees remain relatively stable. This year's budget cycle has been particularly challenging due to the pressures of inflation, continued supply chain issues and the costs of services provided by external agencies such as ambulance, social services, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, policing and Spruce Lodge Long Term Care Facility. These external

costs account for an increase to our base tax levy of 2.5 per cent before we even started on local projects and services.

Downloading by upper levels of government continues to cause stress on municipalities. Municipalities continue to be asked to do more work with less resources, and provide services not intended to be funded through property taxation. Upper levels of government continue to act irresponsibly, running large deficits and downloading services and responsibilities to municipalities that aren't legally allowed to run deficits and whose only sources of revenues are user fees and property taxation. This is a big part of the reason for double-digit tax-levy increases in some municipalities.

Despite these challenges, we are fortunate to live in a caring, prosperous and generous community. Volunteer acts of charity continue to make St. Marys a wonderful place to live. Our town continues to grow, and businesses continue to invest and reinvest in our community. Council remains focused on working together with staff respectfully and collaboratively to close our infrastructure deficit and improve our asset-management plan.

Council continues to support a wellness program for our citizens. More information and the range of services can be found at www.townofstmarys.com/recreation-community-culture/seniors/support-for-seniors/ or by calling 519-284-3272. Our staff continues to work with various social agencies, churches and the St. Marys Ministerial Association to help those who are struggling. We are grateful to partner with the City of Stratford Social Services, the United Way, the St. Marys Presbyterian Church, the United Church and other community donors to support our community outreach worker.

If you are in need of assistance, or know of someone experiencing homelessness or in need of help, please use the following for help: communityoutreachworker@town.stmarys.on.ca or call 226-261-0098.

I also want to take this opportunity to announce publicly that I will not be seeking re-election in 2026. I have been very fortunate to serve as the mayor for 12 years, and I'm grateful for the support given to me by my family, the Town of St. Marys staff, my fellow councilors, our regional partner politicians and last, but certainly not least, the community that has been so kind during the ups and downs of my three terms. It was a very rewarding journey. I was inspired to run for mayor out of a desire for more responsible stewardship of our public resources. After my election, we worked hard to find a simple solution and re-opened the historic green bridge after an unfounded closure decision, avoiding unnecessary, costly new construction, which would also have run counter to our goals of historic preservation.

The residents of St. Marys have supported me through the transition to Stratford Police Services, the COVID period, the downtown reconstruction and many other challenging experiences. I'm very grateful for the opportunity and thankful for the kind support I have received. The election-nomination period will open in May of 2026, and I encourage anyone interested in helping our community to consider a candidacy for mayor or councillor. More information can be found on our town website, or by contacting our clerks office at clerksoffice@town.stmarys.on.ca.

As a council, we are always cognizant of the efforts of the many previous volunteers and employees who have worked so hard to make our town what it is today. We look forward to the challenges of 2026 with optimism and continue our work to make this "The Town Worth Living In." Should you ever need to reach me with any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at astrathdee@town.stmarys.on.ca or call me at 519-284-2340 ext. 246.

I wish everyone all the best for health and happiness in the upcoming year.

Sincerely, Mayor Al Strathdee

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"I'm glad I won't have to look at my neighbour's Trudeau flag anymore." (January 9)

"Due to current food prices, the five second rule is now 15!" (January 16)

"It's going to be a long four years..." (January 23)

"Sometimes I watch American news to remember how lucky we are to live in Canada. (January 30)

"Buy Canadian. Bye American." (February 6)

"The Canada / US hockey game showed there are no tariffs on fists." (February 20)

"Ontarians, upset with the way things are, vote for the same thing again." (March 6)

"How do you control a circus? Get a Carney to run it." (March 13)

"April Fool's Day is canceled. No made up prank can match what is happening right now." (March 27)

"If Rory can win the Masters, maybe the Leafs can win the Cup!" (April 24)

"Ottawa voters must hold a grudge about Pierre siding with the truckers." (May 1)

"It is called May, as there may be rain, snow, wind." (May 1)

"When I die, I want the Leafs as my pallbearers so they can let me down one last time!" (May 22)

"What an awful way to learn that your husband likes Coldplay." (July 24)

"Great to hear the AC flight attendants will start to get paid for all the hours they work!" (August 21)

"The right side of Trump's face was noticeably drooping this week, but he's saying it's the radical left." (September 18)

"Raise your hand if you think the world has gone nuts!" (September 25)

"So sick of Thanksgiving leftovers that I am quitting cold turkey!" (October 16)

"The Blue Jays are going to the World Series!" (October 23)

"You don't miss the short drive to Rannoch until it's gone!" (December 4)

"Amazon driver wished me a Merry Christmas; it's like he thinks he won't see me 10 more times before Christmas!" (December 11)

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

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



GRAND RE-OPENING

January 24, 2026

Make a splash at the Aquatics Centre Grand Re-Opening event! This event will feature a big splash, ribbon cutting, giveaways, free swim times and other celebratory fun! More details will be announced on the Town of St. Marys website.

www.townofstmarys.ca/aquaticscentre



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YEAR IN REAL ESTATE

St. Marys Real Estate market in 2025: A year of adjustment and reflection

TRISTAN DUNDAS

REALTOR® *The Dundas Team*

As 2025 draws to a close, the St. Marys residential real estate market offers a picture of steady recalibration after years of rapid activity. Market activity softened throughout the year, never quite gaining the momentum seen in previous boom periods. A combination of broader economic uncertainty and a noticeable increase in inventory contributed to longer days on market and moderate declines in sale prices. Even with declining interest rates, buyer confidence remained cautious, leaving the market in a measured, watchful state.

Average list prices did see a slight decline from 2024, though they remained within the familiar range observed over the past several years. While national and regional trends provide helpful context, St. Marys' small-town market requires a closer lens: with a smaller pool of sales, even one high-end transaction can significantly influence averages. This makes local data interpretation particularly important for buyers and sellers alike.

One of the standout trends of 2025 was the increase in new listings, returning to levels last seen in 2022 and 2023. With more than 50 additional listings compared to 2024 but only 10 more sales, buyers enjoyed greater choice, while sellers faced the reality of a slow-

er market. Homes lingered longer on the market, often requiring price adjustments and extended negotiations before closing. Average days on market climbed, and the list-to-sale price ratio fell to roughly 96% by year's end, a notable shift from the 126% ratio at the height of the pandemic market in early 2022.

While select properties still attracted multiple offers, the frenzy of the COVID-era market has faded into a distant memory. Many sellers found that achieving over-asking prices or firm, condition-free offers was rare, underscoring the market's ongoing recalibration. The slower pace reflects both buyer caution and sellers' lingering expectations shaped by previous highs, yet the market remained resilient and informative for all participants.

Monetary policy also played a role in shaping the year. The Bank of Canada gradually lowered its target overnight rate by a full percentage point, holding at 2.25% to provide continued economic support. Looking ahead to 2026, analysts predict rates will likely remain in a similar range, though uncertainty persists.

Economic pressures, including rising living costs, grocery inflation, and job market uncertainty, have caused some households to delay major moves. At the same time, more financially motivated sellers are expected to enter the market, particularly those renewing their 5 year mortgages obtained at historically low rates in 2021 and 2022. Strong equity gains over re-

RESIDENTIAL HOUSING STATS ST. MARYS, ONTARIO

	2022	2023	2024	2025 AS OF DECEMBER 17, 2025
Average Sale Price	\$660,402	\$600,890	\$638,702	\$615,776
Number of New Listings	187	180	149	190
Number of Sales	125	132	97	107
Average Days on Market	26	44	49	58

cent years have helped cushion some homeowners, but higher monthly payments may bring additional well-priced properties to market in the coming year.

Despite a slower pace in 2025, there is cautious optimism for 2026. Pent-up demand from buyers who have been on the sidelines could provide a modest boost. With relatively stable interest rates and an increasing pool of motivated sellers, the market may initially favor buyers. External factors, from geopolitical developments to trade decisions in the U.S., remain a wildcard, but St. Marys continues to benefit from strong local fundamentals, preserving its reputation as The Town Worth Living In.



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PREDICTIONS

Revisiting 2025's predictions

STEWART GRANT

Independent Publisher

The reason why I do predictions each year is because it reminds me of the evolving nature of life and it's a way of taking me back to a prior point in time, wondering what the future year might have in store. In reflecting upon predictions gone wrong, it's a demonstration that the future is unwritten.

One year ago, the Liberal Party appeared destined for a major defeat in the upcoming federal election, but we all know how that turned out.

Here's how I fared on all my 2025 Predictions:

1. Justin Trudeau would resign as Prime Minister this year. (*CORRECT*)

2. The ensuing leadership vote results in Mark Carney becoming Canada's 24th Prime Minister. (*CORRECT*)

3. The Conservative Party will cruise to a majority win in the 2025 Federal Election, and Pierre Poilievre will take the reins as Prime Minister. (*WRONG – Poilievre didn't even win his own riding*)

4. Echoing the results of the 1993 federal election where the incumbent party lost most of its seats, the Bloc Quebecois emerge to form the Official Opposition. (*WRONG – the Conservatives formed the opposition while the Bloc finished with the 3rd most seats*)

5. For this first time in 32 years, a Canadian team will host the Stanley Cup. (*WRONG – the Edmonton Oilers lost in 6 games to the Florida Panthers*)

6. Alex Ovechkin will pass Wayne Gretzky to become the NHL's all-time regular season goal scoring leader. (*CORRECT*)

7. The Detroit Lions will win the Super Bowl. (*WRONG – the Philadelphia Eagles won the Super Bowl, while Detroit lost in the Divisional Playoffs*)

8. U.S. President Donald Trump will assist in ending the war between Russia and Ukraine, but the terms favour the Russian side. (*WRONG – While things are trending in this direction, the war is currently ongoing*)

9. A ceasefire is negotiated in the Middle East. (*CORRECT*)

10. The 25% tariff on Canadian goods entering the U.S. fails to materialize. Relations between the U.S. and Canadian governments improve following the 2025 Canadian election. (*WRONG – The U.S. has continued to enforce tariffs though the situation is ever-evolving*)

11. Despite certain achievements, general uncertainty and chaos during the first year of the Trump administration is reflected in a down year for the stock market. (*WRONG – the S&P 500 is up about 16% this year, as of press time*)

12. Just as the 1999 Columbine massacre produced a noted increase in school shootings in the U.S., the 2024 killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson will produce copycat crimes in 2025 by troubled individuals inspired by social or political causes. (*MIXED – see shootings of Charlie Kirk, and Minnesota legislators Melissa Hortman and John Hoffman*)

13. Chinese-owned TikTok will avoid being shutdown in the United States, with Elon Musk assisting by purchasing a significant ownership share of the social media app. (*MIXED – TikTok carries on, and a deal to sell its U.S. operation to an American-controlled joint venture was announced Dec. 18*)

14. The Trump-Musk bromance will have its up and downs, but the working relationship will continue to last throughout the year. (*MIXED – they broke up for awhile but appear to be getting back together*)

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YEAR IN POLITICS

Rae secures another decisive win, locking Perth-Wellington for PCs in Feb. 27 election



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Newly re-elected MPP Matthew Rae walks hand in hand with wife Meghan Thomson into the lounge at the Mitchell Golf and Country Club just minutes after the polls closed at 9 p.m. on Feb. 27.

Nater wins fourth consecutive term as opposition MP for Perth-Wellington



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Flanked by his family, John Nater thanks his campaign volunteers and supporters for helping him win his fourth straight term as Perth-Wellington's member of parliament at the Mitchell Golf and Country Club April 28.

2025 Ontario General Election Results - February 27, 2025

ONTARIO RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes	Seats
Conservative	Doug Ford	2,158,452	43.0%	80
New Democratic	Marit Stiles	931,796	18.6%	27
Liberal	Bonnie Crombie	1,504,688	30.0%	14
Green	Mike Schreiner	242,822	4.8%	2

PERTH-WELLINGTON RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes
Conservative	Matthew Rae	20,752	47.0%
Liberal	Ashley Fox	12,547	28.4%
New Democratic	Jason Davis	5,580	12.6%
Green	Ian Morton	3,299	7.5%
New Blue Party	James Montgomery	1,284	2.9%
Ontario Freedom	Sarah Zenuh	458	1.0%
	Rob Smink	229	0.5%

2025 Canadian Federal Election Results - April 28, 2025

FEDERAL RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes	Seats
Liberal	Mark Carney	8,595,488	43.8%	169
Conservative	Pierre Poilievre	8,113,484	41.3%	144
Bloc Québécois	Yves-Francois Blanchet	1,236,349	6.3%	22
New Democratic	Jagmeet Singh	1,234,673	6.3%	7
Green	Jonathan Pedneault	238,892	1.2%	1
People's	Maxime Bernier	840,993	4.9%	0

PERTH-WELLINGTON RESULTS:

Party	Leader	Votes	% of Votes
Conservative	John Nater	33,972	53.0%
Liberal	David Mackey	26,142	40.8%
New Democratic	Kevin Kruchkywich	2,909	4.5%
People's	Wayne Baker	1,069	1.7%

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St. Marys council unanimously rejects Strong Mayor Powers

Council asks province to remove St. Marys from list of municipalities with strong mayors

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

(Excerpt from June 12, 2025 St. Marys Independent)

In a move intended to remove Strong Mayor Powers as an option for future town mayors to make unilateral decisions without the consent of the majority of council, St. Marys council has passed a motion rejecting the use of Strong Mayor Powers now and asked the province to remove the town from its list of municipalities with those powers.

At council's May 27 meeting, Coun. Marg Luna introduced a resolution for council to oppose Strong Mayor Powers and request the province not include the Town of St. Marys in the province's expansion of those powers to 169 additional municipalities, which came into effect on May 1. In her motion, Luna listed a number of concerns she and

others have with the province's decision to grant heads of councils comprising six or more members with the authority to give direction and make certain decisions without the usual consensus from a majority of elected councillors. The resolution states the legislation undermines the role of council in decision-making, thereby undermining the local-governance model and municipal independence.

Reading from an article written by council educator and local-government consultant Nigel Bellchamber, Luna reiterated that Strong Mayor Powers do not tie in with infrastructure development or growth, and how they could influence who runs for mayor and their motives for running, how they could discourage members of the community from running for council and how they may lead to council and mayoral candidates running as a team to ensure their

agendas are achieved.

Luna also noted Bellchamber's concerns with putting the annual budget in the mayor's control and how giving the mayor the power to hire and fire the CAO and heads of departments could lead to fears among those staff members, particularly the CAO, about speaking against a mayor's personal agenda – something those staff members need to be able to do freely.

"My hope is that all the small municipalities can agree and make the same request to the province. If this request is accepted by the province, the Town of St. Marys will be removed from the list of municipalities that practice the Strong Mayor Powers," Luna said, later noting that a future council could request the town be placed back on the list of municipalities with these powers.

Speaking to Luna's motion, Coun. Jim Craigmire pointed out while he support-

ed it, unless the province accepts St. Marys council's request, Strong Mayor Powers will remain available to any future mayors of St. Marys.

Mayor Al Strathdee also spoke in favour of Luna's motion.

"I was surprised when this legislation came into effect and I agree with Coun. Luna, and I will be supporting this resolution because I don't think it's certainly necessary in our community, and I think the legislation is too broad in perspective," Strathdee said. "I really don't understand all the implications and, certainly, the way this council has functioned, I don't think there's any necessity to have a strong mayor."

Council ultimately voted unanimously in support of Luna's resolution, a copy of which was sent to Ontario Premier Doug Ford, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rob Flack and Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae.

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA		For the historical record, this is the basic layout of the downtown as of December 2025									
		Pass It On	Vacant	TD Canada Trust	St. Marys Lawyers	Avontuur	St. Marys Bowling Lanes	Stonetown Barber	Salon 54	Lind Park	Peel St. N
Water St. N	Bare Roots	Grason Int.	Peak Realty	GC Boyle Law	Mauve & Stone Charm	First Baptist Church	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Heal a Peel	Tim Hortons	Stirring' New Life Tattoos
Water St. N	Quarry's Edge	Vacant	Tuft Co.	Chocolate Factory	Vacant	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Naina's Indian Kitchen	Stonetown Physio	Circle K
Water St. N	Roancroft	Famme & Co.	Hubbards	Queen St. Dentist	O'Grady's Clothing	Hodges Funeral Home	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Stonetown Osteopathy	H&R Block	Benchmark Real Estate
Water St. S	The Flour Mill	Scotiabank	Meridian Credit	Dunny's Sports	Bank of Montreal	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Stonetown Osteopathy	Circle K	Stirring' New Life Tattoos
Water St. S	Betty's Books	Vitality Health	Eclectic Treasure	Heather Ringland	Post Office	First Baptist Church	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Heal a Peel	Tim Hortons	Naina's Indian Kitchen
Water St. S	Her Collab Co.	Vacant	Sukie Lee's	Stonetown Travel	Post Office	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Stonetown Osteopathy	H&R Block	Benchmark Real Estate
Water St. S	Miss Jones	Vacant	World's Contest	Snapping Turtle	Post Office	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Heal a Peel	Tim Hortons	Stirring' New Life Tattoos
Water St. S	Universal Vape	Lyric Flowers	Skippy's Pizza	Coldwell Banker	Post Office	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Naina's Indian Kitchen	Stonetown Physio	Circle K
Water St. S	Barista's	T&C Cheese Shoppe	Uristoff Galloway	Heather Ringland	Post Office	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Stonetown Barber	Salon 54	Avontuur
Water St. S	The Wine Lab	Sensations	Nail Effects	Stonetown Travel	Post Office	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Lind Park	Stonetown Barber	Stirring' New Life Tattoos
Water St. S	Physio Nook	St. Marys Indy	Paint & Palette	Spoiled Petz	Post Office	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Salon 54	Avontuur	Circle K
Water St. S	Angela Dawn	Salvation Army	Salvation Army	Tito's Pizza	Post Office	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Heal a Peel	Tim Hortons	Stirring' New Life Tattoos
Water St. S	Cascade Cleaners			Jackson's Pharmacy	Post Office	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Naina's Indian Kitchen	Stonetown Physio	Circle K
Water St. S	Izzy's Place				Post Office	Post Office	St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Stonetown Osteopathy	H&R Block	Benchmark Real Estate
Water St. S	Alliance Wellness Centre	Synterra Security Solutions	IG Wealth Mgmt.	Hodges Funeral Home			St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Heal a Peel	Tim Hortons	Stirring' New Life Tattoos
Water St. S							St. Marys Public Library	St. Marys Town Hall	Naina's Indian Kitchen	Stonetown Physio	Circle K
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MONTH BY MONTH

2025 Year in Review by month

January:

The first 2025 issue of the Independent noted significant national news, with Justin Trudeau offering his resignation from the Office of Prime Minister on Jan. 6. An excerpt of his resignation speech said, "This country deserves a real choice in the next election, and it has become clear to me that if I'm having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election."

The Municipality of Thames Centre currently has the lowest property taxes in Middlesex County and is projected to remain in that position for 2025 with a 3.9 per cent levy increase.

According to a report presented to the library board at its Jan. 9 meeting, Perth South has agreed to pay St. Marys \$50,000 annually until 2030 for the provision of library services for township residents.

St. Marys residents Lynn Leslie and Deb Hutton are the points of contact for the "St. Marys Poppy Project", whose goal is to cover the railings at the St. Marys Royal Canadian Legion in November with beautiful, red and black, hand-crocheted and knitted poppies. They are looking for anyone with knitting or crocheting skills who is willing to help with this initiative.

Broken Rail Brewing's Bock Buster brand recently won third place in Ontario in the pale malty European lager category at the recent Ontario Brewing Awards.

Thanks to \$200,000 of federal and provincial funding through the Dairy Processors Modernization Initiative, Stonetown Cheese will be able to automate its cheese-washing process this summer. In the past, the job has been done by hand. The upgrades will allow the company to fully use its aging rooms' capacity.

The St. Marys Legion hosted its first-annual Canadian Chili Cookoff on Jan. 18. Chris Campbell took first place in the restaurant category with his Texas chili consisting

of smoked sirloin, brisket and chuck. Jason Firby prevailed in the people's choice category with his Caribbean jerk chicken and pork.

St. Marys TuttCo Queen Street Eatery has rebranded as TuttCo Burger Bar.

The St. Marys Imagination Library's efforts to foster a love of literacy at an early age is once again being recognized at the national level. For the second year in a row, the St. Marys Imagination Library led the nation based on the percentage of children registered.

With temperatures expected to fall to nearly minus 30 degrees Celsius, St. Marys has opened warming centres at the Pyramid Recreation Centre, St. Marys Public Library and St. Marys Museum.

Members of the Parks Lawn Bowling Club in St. Marys could have the opportunity to enjoy alcoholic beverages at their clubhouse in Milt Dunnell Field this year after St. Marys council agreed to provide a letter of consent as part of the club's application for a liquor licence.

Proprietors Shannon Marriott and husband Matthew Powell have opened a new restaurant, Izzy's Place, on the west (river) side of 36 Water Street South.

With the dissolution of the provincial legislature on Jan. 29, a snap election is set for Feb. 27.

Claire Dunbar from St. Marys will be heading to Denmark this summer as part of the Rotary Youth Exchange program.

Quadro Communications Co-operative contributed \$50,000 to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation to support their 'Here for You Today, Building for Tomorrow' campaign.

Dick Nieuwland of Thorndale along with Betty Crockett and Jean Davis of Thames Centre were among those who received the King Charles III Coronation Medal during a ceremony held Jan. 17 in St. Thomas.

February:

Outgoing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addressed the nation on Feb. 1 in response to Donald Trump's proposed tariffs of up to 25 per cent on Canadian exports to the U.S. At the provincial level, Premier Doug Ford announced that the LCBO will strip its shelves of American products in response to US tariffs on imports.

There was a big turnout on Sunday, Feb. 2 for the first monthly bingo of the year at St. Marys Legion Branch 236, with organizer Reg Rumble sharing that 155 participants came out to play.

Jeff Bell is the new Councillor for the Township of Perth South, having been chosen by Council among a group of five Perth South residents who each put their names forward to serve the community. The death of Mayor Jim Aitcheson on Nov. 22, 2024 created a vacancy on Perth South Council. When Acting Mayor Sue Orr was appointed as Mayor, her vacant seat on Council needed to be filled.

Thorndale residents were reminded that while all of Peavey Mart's locations across Canada have been recently closed, they can find their needs met locally at Thorndale Country Mills and Thorndale Hardware.

On Feb. 25, the St. Marys Fire Department practiced ice-water rescue techniques around Milt Dunnell Field and Trout Creek, using specialized personal protective equipment (PPE), ropes, rapid deployment craft (RDC), poles and a Stokes litter basket to simulate ice-water rescue scenarios.

Delta Air Lines flight 4819 crashed upon a hard landing at Pearson Airport on Feb. 17. All 80 people on board survived, with 21 sustaining injuries.

St. Marys Fire Department Capt. Ryan Taylor reached a significant milestone in his career on Feb. 15, marking 30 years of service to his community.

Jacobs Liquidation held a soft opening

Feb. 13 at their new location at 1911 James St. South, with the grand opening and ribbon cutting following on Feb. 21.

The Family Day weekend included lots of snow clearing thanks to the arrival of a huge dump of snow.

The St. Marys Lincolns won their 18th consecutive GOJHL hockey game with a win over St. Thomas on Feb. 21. The streak ended two days later with a shootout loss to the Kitchener-Waterloo Siskins.

The St. Marys Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser saw 145 walkers and 30 teams raise more than \$45,000 for important local causes.

After a long closure that began during the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant step in the rejuvenation of the Stone Willow Inn occurred on Feb. 23 with the re-opening of the hotel's popular restaurant – now known as Hillstone Bar & Grill.

Matthew Rae will once again be heading to Queen's Park as Perth-Wellington's MPP. He secured another decisive victory in the snap provincial election on Feb. 27. The PCs won their third majority government with 80 seats, down slightly from the 83 seats won in the 2022 election.

Part of an effort to clean up the town's west quarry, also known as the fishing quarry, with the goal of opening up recreational opportunities similar to those at the town's swimming quarry, council endorsed a plan on Feb. 25 that includes the removal of the large concrete structures left behind by limestone-mining at the site.

March:

St. Marys Royal Canadian Legion Branch 236 had the honour of hosting 216 cribbage players on Mar. 1 for the Provincial Cribbage Championship.

Following a months-long process that began last fall and involved countless hours of work by staff and auditors, the St. Marys



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Winner of the restaurant category at the St. Marys Legons first-annual Canadian Chili Cookoff was Chris Campbell who took first place with his Texas chili consisting of smoked sirloin, brisket and chuck.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Izzy's Place, opened in January, is owned by Shannon Marriott and husband Matthew Powell. Marriott takes a moment above to show the delicious freshly baked goods.

2025 Year in Review by month

Public Library has officially achieved reaccreditation from the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council with a near-perfect score of 98.75 per cent.

Tyler Smith, one of the 13 survivors of the Humboldt Bronco bus crash of April 6, 2018, and subsequent winner of Amazing Race Canada, visited St. Marys DCVI to share his story of mental health, grief, trauma and PTSD. He is the founding member of Not Alone Co., providing positive messages to help those most vulnerable and in need of support with how to deal with their emotions.

A report shared at the March 6 Perth County council meeting noted that for the first time since 2020, the Perth County Paramedic Service met all its ambulance response-time targets in 2024. In total last year, the paramedic service responded to 11,355 calls for service. Over the past two years, Perth County Paramedic Service has experienced a 6.8 per cent increase in call volume.

Though she says the work she does to benefit St. Marys and the people who live here is often behind the scenes, Rev. Gwen Ament and her tireless community efforts were in the spotlight March 11 as she received a King Charles III Coronation Medal.

Despite a relatively low ridership among St. Marys residents and a price tag of \$207,000 to continue the service until the end of the year, St. Marys council has voted to extend its partnership agreement with the Municipality of North Perth and the City of Stratford to extend the PC Connect transit program after a funding agreement with the province ends on March 31. At the March 11 St. Marys council meeting, the majority of council except for deputy mayor Brogan Aylward voted in favour of extending the PC Connect local partnership agreement to Dec. 31. Since 2020, two PC Connect transit services have been available to area residents thanks to \$1.45 million each in provincial funding through the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's Community Transportation Grant program.

St. Marys area fur farmer Kirk Rankin of R.B.R. Fur Farms is the latest local farmer to be inducted onto the Stratford-Perth Museum's Agriculture Wall of Fame. The Rankin family has been raising mink on their St. Marys area farm since the 1930s. At its peak in the mid-2000s, the farm housed and raised kits from 4,100-4,300 breeding females, along with hundreds of males.

During March Break, Jennifer Dungo moved her expanding business, O'Grady's Clothing and Accessories, across the road to a larger space at 158 Queen Street East. The move has been in the works since last August when Stone Home Creatives owner Sue Griffiths decided to move her business to her home.

On March 23, Prime Minister Mark Carney announced he had asked Governor General Mary Simon to dissolve parliament, instituting a snap election scheduled for April 28.

Stonetown Cheese at 5021 Perth Line 8 hosted an open house on Saturday, March 29 with a record-breaking burnout of 1,400 attendees. The event raised over \$2,500 for St. Marys Healthcare Foundation.

At the United Way Perth-Huron (UWPH)

celebration for the 2024-25 annual fundraising campaign at the Arden Park Hotel on March 27, the organization revealed that donors, volunteers and the community raised \$2,356,497, slightly above last year's record-setting total of \$2,331,057. During the evening, UWPH Executive Director Ryan Erb was surprised onstage with the King Charles III Coronation Medal, one of the greatest honours for community advancement in Canada.

St. Marys filmmaker G-Hey Kim was recognized in March for her work in the film industry, winning best director in the category of featurette movies at the Madrid Independent Film Festival in Spain for her movie, *Tied*. Kim was born in South Korea and officially became a permanent resident of Canada in 2015.

April:

The St. Marys Poetry Circle is celebrating National Poetry Month in April with a number of events and initiatives intended to showcase and inspire creativity for local poets young and old. The theme for this year's National Poetry Month is "family," and using that theme, the local poetry circle has partnered with The Coyote Nature School in St. Marys and Harrington to showcase poems written by the school's students themed around the idea, "family is nature."

Jan Scott, owner of Betty's Bookshelf, is concerned about how proposed tariffs on books published in the United States could impact her business and the entire book publishing industry. In response to tariffs imposed by the United States on Canadian goods, the Government of Canada is imposing 25 per-cent tariffs on imports of certain goods from the U.S., including books, effective April 3. "It would become nearly impossible for a small bookstore to thrive if these prices come into effect," said Scott.

Over 500 attended a spring scrapbooking sale at the Pyramid Recreation Centre on Saturday, April 5. Over 50 vendors participated in the event that raised \$4,300 for St. Marys Senior Services.

Local public-health officials are continuing to do everything they can to curb the spread of measles in Huron and Perth counties as the number of identified cases continues to rise both locally and across the province. More than 70 cases have been identified in Huron-Perth.

Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae has been appointed chief government whip of Ontario and will continue his role as parliamentary assistant to the minister of municipal affairs and housing. At the age of 34, Rae is the second youngest MPP to ever serve in the role of chief government whip.

The Thorndale Lions Club presented a cheque of \$50,000 to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation, in appreciation that approximately 1,000 residents of Thames Centre visit the St. Marys Memorial Hospital each year.

Carson Van Fleet, a St. Marys District Collegiate and Vocational Institute (DCVI) student in Grade 12, placed first overall in the Skills Ontario welding competition qualifying round at Fanshawe College on April 5. Van Fleet earned the top prize for creating a windmill with open-roof plates and open corners. He will be heading to the Skills Ontario provincial competition at the Toronto Congress Centre on May 6.

On Saturday, April 12, 78 volunteers showed up to help with the 26th annual Thames River Cleanup in St. Marys. The event organized by Todd Sleeper has grown to 17 different communities with over 40 cleanup sites.

On April 22, the Cascades St. Marys team partnered with Little Falls Public School to welcome 100 local students to plant 30 native trees behind the factory in recognition of 2025 Earth Day.

The Rotary Club of St. Marys held its 99th annual Rural Urban Night on Thursday eve-

ning, April 24. Over 320 people attended this community event held at the Pyramid Recreation Centre. The guest speaker for the evening was expert gardener, Mark Cullen.

The cast and crew for the St. Marys Community Players' (SCMP) 2025 spring production bought heartfelt laughter and family connections to the stage at St. Marys Town Hall Theatre with Tony Award winning playwright Joe Pietro's *Over the River and Through the Woods*. The production ran from April 25 to May 10.

On Sunday, April 27, the Kirkton



(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

Norm Coulthard and Kenny Hutton of the Town of St. Marys staff installed 12 new Downtown St. Marys banners on Queen Street lampposts on the morning of Tuesday, Feb. 4.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. MARYS FIRE DEPARTMENT)

In February, St. Marys firefighters participated in ice-water rescue training exercises around Milt Dunnell Field and Trout Creek.

2025 Year in Review by month

Woodham Optimist Club held its 42nd annual Fish Fry with over 900 people in attendance. Money raised at the fish fry is used to support local youth programs, including but not limited to 4-H clubs, Scouts and Guides, the Kirkton Woodham Pool and the annual Kirkton Fall Fair.

Conservative incumbent John Nater has been elected member of parliament for Perth-Wellington and will serve his fourth consecutive term as a member of the opposition party. With a more than 70 per cent voter turnout in the riding – 63,683 of 90,016 registered electors – Nater received 33,850 votes or roughly 53 per cent. Liberal candidate David Mackey trailed with 25,892 votes or nearly 41 per cent of the total turnout, and the NDP's Kevin Kruchkywich had 2,875 votes or 4.5 per cent of the vote by Tuesday morning. People's Party of Canada candidate Wayne Baker rounded out the pack with 1,066 votes or 1.7 per cent of the vote by Tuesday morning.

While the town is doing everything it can to address the ever-growing waitlist for child care in St. Marys, those efforts simply can't keep up with demand, in part, because of a lack of registered early childhood educators (RECE) across the province and in Perth County. While presenting an update on the child-care situation in St. Marys at the April 22 council meeting, town director of community services Stphanie Ische acknowledged the frustration many parents in St. Marys are feeling as they continue to seek affordable child care. While the town has 72 licensed childcare spaces at Holy Name of Mary School and 112 spaces in the town's before- and after-school program, as of April 9, there were 634 children on the town's waiting list for child care. Over the past five years, town staff have been able to move 25-30 children off that waiting list annually.

May:

St. Marys council is speaking out against a provincial plan to bolster mayoral decision-making powers across the province. Following an announcement by the province earlier this month that St. Marys, along with

168 other Ontario municipalities, would be granted strong mayor powers effective May 1, Mayor Al Strathdee and the rest of council have expressed serious concerns with the new legislation aimed at bolstering the unilateral decision-making power of heads of council and the impact that could have on the town after the next municipal election in 2026.

On Sunday, May 4, the St. Marys Fire Department held its annual breakfast raising funds for Muscular Dystrophy Canada, local sports teams and other charities. Always a popular event, the volunteers start planning weeks before and many present and past firefighters step up to feed over 1,000 people.

Red Dress Day was acknowledged in St. Marys on Monday May 5th with a commemoration service at the library with words by Patsy-Ann Day and a poem written and read by Stratford Poet Laureate David Stones followed by drumming and singing by Melissa Stevens and Sylvia Harvey.

St. Marys cheesemaker Stonetown Artisan Cheese won the top prize in an international cheese competition for the second time in a row. Stonetown Artisan Cheese won the grand champion prize at SIAL Canada's International Cheese Competition for their Grand Trunk Gruyere-style cheese. Stonetown's Wildwood cheese also earned the firm-cheese-category champion title and a special award from Dairy Farmers of Canada for Best Canadian Cow's Milk Cheese.

It is with heavy heart and much consideration that Richard "Andy" Anderson has decided to leave his position as the director of emergency services/fire chief after serving more than nine years of dedicated service to the Town of St. Marys. He is taking the position of deputy fire chief/VCEMC with the City of Stratford effective May 20. Anderson has been with the town since 2016 and he was hired with a mandate of modernizing the fire department. In his time here, he has navigated new legislation requiring the uptraining of all the town's firefighters, he helped construct the town's state-of-the-art fire hall and he has administered the replace-

ment of aging equipment to ensure volunteer firefighters are safe and can provide the absolute best service to the public.

Thorndale Fire Station 2 officially welcomed a new firetruck into their fleet with the time-honoured "push-in" ceremony.

"Avontuur" is the Dutch word for Adventure and now the name of the new store in town located at 11 Church St. S. Owner Kyle Sietzema started his outdoor-lifestyle shop online in 2020 with inventory to promote an adventurous lifestyle with items for golf, pickleball, camping and outdoor gear, outdoor games and, most recently, apparel. Sietzema has a history in sales, marketing and logistics and has used those skills in building his current business. Due to the rise in shipping costs, Sietzema decided to open his own brick-and-mortar shop and chose St. Marys because of the beauty of the town.

A change has taken place at our local Canadian Tire store. Previous associate dealers Angie and Matt Miskuski have moved on to the Paris, Ontario location, opening a spot for new dealers to take over. Justin and Jayme Lamoreux, the store's new dealers, recently made the move to St. Marys. Justin Lamoreux is a third-generation Canadian Tire dealer with many other family members involved.

The St. Marys Healthcare Foundation is ecstatic to announce this year's Tim Hortons Smile Cookie campaign has raised an impressive \$19,764 in support of new ultrasound probe units for the medical imaging department at St. Marys Memorial Hospital.

At the St. Marys Minor Hockey Association's (SMMHA) annual general meeting May 15, Katharine Found was elected as the organization's new president for the 2025-2026 season.

Members of the Rotary Club of St. Marys joined St. Marys council for a flag-raising May 20 in honour of 100 years of Rotary in St. Marys.

Staff and students at Walkerton District Community School (WDCS) and members of the surrounding community are in mourning after an assistant softball coach and four

students were killed in a multivehicle collision near Thorndale on Friday, May 23. Ontario Provincial Police say it was about 4:30 p.m. on Friday when the collision happened at the rural intersection of Thorndale Road and Cobble Hills Road. Five people died after the SUV they were travelling in collided with a transport truck and a second SUV. Two 17-year-old girls and a 16-year-old girl were pronounced dead at the scene. A 33-year-old man was taken to hospital and later died, while a 16-year-old girl flown to hospital by helicopter also died.

Over 60 people took part in the IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's on May 24 at Milt Dunnell Field, with over \$15,000 being raised to support local programs for people living with dementia.

At the May 27 St. Marys council meeting, Mayor Al Strathdee and councillors celebrated the commitment to community of Marie Stevens, Alizon Sharun, and Stephanie Metcalfe through the town's annual Strong As Stone recognition program. The program allows people to nominate those whose volunteer acts benefit the community.

In a move intended to remove Strong Mayor Powers as an option for future town mayors to make unilateral decisions without the consent of the majority of council, St. Marys council has passed a motion rejecting the use of Strong Mayor Powers now and asked the province to remove the town from its list of municipalities with those powers. At council's May 27 meeting, Coun. Marg Luna introduced a resolution for council to oppose Strong Mayor Powers and request the province not include the Town of St. Marys in the province's expansion of those powers to 169 additional municipalities, which came into effect on May 1.

Riverwalk Commons held its first Community Garden Planting Party on May 28. The planting party included digging up weeds such as the dog strangling vine to tidy up the garden beds, and to plant, fertilize, and water the plants in the garden. The event's participants worked as a team to put the garden together and share knowledge about planting and native species.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Jan Westman and Jennifer Dungo show the sitting area outside the changerooms at the new location of O'Grady's Clothing and Accessories at 158 Queen Street East.



(JULIE PHILLIPS PHOTO)

St. Marys Community Players' spring 2025 production of Over the River and Through the Woods hit the stage at St. Marys Town Hall Theatre from April 25 to May 10.

2025 Year in Review by month

On May 30, the St. Marys Poetry Circle members marked the group's 15th anniversary at the home of poetry circle founder Ione Grover. The meeting was special not only for the group as a whole but also for Grover, who hasn't been able to make it out to regular poetry circle meetings lately because of her mobility issues.

On Saturday, May 31, St. Marys Lions held their annual Toll Bridge fundraiser, helping to continue the organization's work in the community.

June:

On Sunday, June 1 the 21st annual "Create a Smile" walkathon was held at Milt Dunnell Field. Over \$28,695 was raised through donations and the sale of auction items.

On Sunday, June 1, Zion-West United Church in Granton celebrated their 160th anniversary with a homecoming service attended by over 100 people. Pastor Paul Vollick was the guest speaker, Margaret Hern played piano for an early hymn sing and Sandra Hern welcomed everyone and presided over the program.

On Thursday night, June 5, many families and teachers gathered at Holy Name of Mary School to take part in the 7th annual Warrior Will Fun Fair in memory of Will Simons. Holy Name of Mary School wishes to thank all the organizations, businesses and families that donated to the online auctions, which brought in over \$18,000. The money will be used to provide learning opportunities for the students. As well, the school will be making a donation in Will's name to Sick Kids Hospital and Ronald McDonald House.

The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum (CBHM) inducted its six-person class of 2025 on June 7. Former Toronto Blue Jays slugger Jose Bautista was inducted alongside ex big-league left-hander Erik Bédard (Navan, Ont.) while Canadian Junior National Team head coach Greg Hamilton (Toronto, Ont.) was inducted in the Coaches/Officials category. Longtime Women's National Team star Amanda Asay (Prince George, B.C.) was posthumously inducted. The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame's Veterans Committee has also elected former All-American Girls Professional Baseball League legend Arlene Noga (Ogema, Sask.) and Gerry Snyder, the Montreal

city councillor who played a crucial role in bringing Major League Baseball to Canada. Both Noga and Snyder were inducted posthumously.

The St. Marys Horticultural Society held its 25th annual Garden Fair at Milt Dunnell Field on June 7. The event featured a bake sale for the first time, plants to purchase, as well as other plant-forward products like garden stones and pressed-flower prints. The horticultural society sold seven different kinds of heritage tomato plants at their tent and had 60 tomato plants available to represent 60 years.

On Saturday, June 7, the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation hosted the Building for Tomorrow Gala at the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC). The entertainment this year was comedian Brent Butt of Corner Gas fame. Butt met with the foundation directors for a meet and greet prior to performing on stage where he entertained 350 guests with his comedy act. Thanks to all the event sponsors, guests and community members, \$40,000 was raised in support of the new x-ray machine at the hospital.

Normally held on Father's Day, this year's Brews and Food Fest put on by the Rotary Club of St. Marys was held on Sunday, June 8 to coincide with the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame Induction Weekend, which had moved up to accommodate Jose Bautista's travel schedule. The change in date seemed to hurt attendance levels this year, but those who were there enjoyed fantastic sunny weather, a selection of excellent craft-brewed beverages along with tasty options from five different food trucks. Money raised by the Rotary Club helped fund Rotary's ongoing commitment to All Wheel Skatepark.

The Creamery Juniors recently held a reunion at River Valley G&CC. The Juniors fielded five teams from 1985 to 1989 and enjoyed a lot of success over that period when men's fastball was a hotbed in St. Marys. The Juniors, coached by Brian Dundas, brought home the Canadian championship in that memorable summer of 1988.

University of Western Ontario student Colin Poulton had a very exciting day at graduation on Monday, June 9. Poulton was graduating with an honours specialization in pure mathematics and a minor in computer

science. He was awarded the Gordon, Miriam and Pater Magee Gold Medal and Scroll, which is awarded for having the highest standing in Western's undergraduate mathematics program.

Downtown St. Marys will soon be a little more colourful after St. Marys council approved several artistic concepts by two local artists that will be used to create art wraps for four utility boxes in the downtown core. After the project was presented to the town's heritage and culture advisory committee for its approval last August, general themes of nature and heritage were decided on for the art, and the BIA put out a call for submissions from artists. The BIA selected the submissions of two artists – Heather Poechman of St. Marys and Liz Emirzian of Stratford – and, in May, the advisory committee recommended council approve their designs for the utility box art wraps at the June 10 council meeting.

The Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance

(HPHA) marked the completion of its Patient Room Rebuild Project at St. Marys Memorial Hospital with a grand-opening celebration on June 11. The multi-year project has transformed patient-care areas with a strong focus on accessibility, infection control, safety and overall patient experience. Upgrades include barrier-free washrooms, wider doorways, improved lighting with patient-controlled options and enhanced heating and cooling systems.

Domino's Pizza opened for business at 162 James St. S on Thursday, June 12. During their Grand Opening event on June 21, General Manager Abhishek Salian told the Independent that over 900 free pizzas were distributed and that a fun atmosphere was enjoyed despite the periodic rainfall.

Students from Holy Name of Mary Catholic School got to plant corn, bean, and squash seeds for a Three Sisters Garden at Riverwalk Commons on June 13. Indigenous elder and educator Patsy Anne Day



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

St. Marys fire chief Richard "Andy" Anderson announced he is leaving his post as of May 19 after taking a job as deputy fire chief with the City of Stratford.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ROTARY CLUB OF ST. MARYS)

Guest speaker and gardening expert Mark Cullen discusses his career and environmental activism in front of those in attendance at the Rotary Club of St. Marys' 99th annual Rural Urban Night at the Pyramid Recreation Centre April 24.



2025 Year in Review by month

taught the students about Haudenosaunee planting methods in the region.

On Saturday June 14, Happy Hills Resort held their annual 'Brews, Bites and Tunes' in the orchard. St. Marys' local Broken Rail Brewery provided beverages for the day.

At its June 18 meeting, the St. Marys community policing advisory committee recommended St. Marys council approve a total budget of \$1,518,345 for the Stratford Police Service to provide policing services for the town this year.

A historic piece of the downtown got a fresh coat of paint this past week. The Weir fountain, which is located at the corner of Wellington and Queen streets, is maintained by the McConnell Club. However, Matt Brenner has graciously been volunteering his time for approximately seven years to keep the Weir fountain looking in tip-top shape.

June 20 was the last day of regular classes for students at DCVI and for the last number of years has been designated "Tractor Day." Students were invited to bring their tractors to put on display in the parking lot. The last day of regular classes was also celebrated with a baseball game between staff and graduating students, lunch (prepared by the staff) of hamburgers and hotdogs was provided for all DCVI students, and snacks of cotton candy and popcorn were also available in the afternoon.

The St. James-Tecumseh Masonic Lodge in St. Marys celebrated two milestone anniversaries for its members recently. Don Stewart received his 50-year Masonic pin and Doug Richardson received his 60-year Masonic pin. St. James-Tecumseh Lodge No. 73 has been operating in St. Marys since Oct. 26, 1858.

Connie Douglas was recognized with the

provincial 2025 Senior of the Year award at the regular council meeting on June 24. The award gives each municipality in Ontario the chance to honour one outstanding community member who plays a vital role in shaping our town by volunteering countless hours of their time and by making our community better for all. Douglas, along with her husband, Harold, started the Towne and Country Cheese Shoppe in 1990. Since the sale of their business 10 years ago, she has spent many days volunteering at the Friendship Centre.

A well-used section of St. Marys' Grand Trunk Trail from Ingersoll Street to the Sarnia Bridge will soon be better lit thanks to an anonymous donation of \$60,000. At the June 24 St. Marys council meeting, council approved a new capital project to be completed later this year that will see the installation of 13 new LED streetlights and poles along that section of trail west of the Thames River.

The Town of St. Marys has announced the promotion of deputy fire chief Phil West to the position of fire chief and director of emergency services for the town effective June 30. Since joining the department in 1995, West has held leadership positions at every level. Beginning his career as a firefighter, he advanced to fire lieutenant in 2019, fire captain in 2022 and deputy fire chief in 2024, demonstrating his unwavering dedication to the community and expertise in the field.

The Town of St. Marys will not provide local landfill space to help the City of Toronto dispose of residual waste as it deals with impending landfill-capacity issues. At the June 24 St. Marys council meeting, councilors voted to have staff submit a response to the City of Toronto's request for expression of interest indicating the Town of St. Marys is not interested in accepting, selling or partnering with the City of Toronto for their residual waste management services.

The St. Marys Kinette Club hosted their last meeting of the year June 25, during which they handed out year-end awards. The winner of the Kinette of the Year was Wanda Mossey.

Trevor Richardson delivered the St. Marys DCVI 2024/2025 valedictorian address at the school's commencement ceremony hosted at the Pyramid Recreation Centre on June 26. The Ring and Cane Awards this year were presented to Sydney Grant and Elissa Gammon. Abigail Martin was recognized with the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Service Award for being the student with the greatest number of volunteer-service hours. Graysen Porter won the Governor General's Medal, which goes to the graduating student with the highest academic standing in the school. In total, 97 graduating students plus five previous graduates were recognized during the ceremony.

One of St. Marys DCVI's longest-tenured teachers and coaches, Ian Moore, announced that this past school year would be his last, with Moore retiring from the school after over two decades.

On June 27 and 28, Jacobs Liquidation held their first annual Vendfest, showcasing local vendors with items from handmade crafts and gifts to an assortment of yummy treats.

Thorndale fire captain Blair Stevens is

hanging up his helmet for good after a 35-year career with the Thorndale Fire Department.

As wildfires continue to force the evacuation of residents of northern, eastern and western Manitoba to southern cities like Brandon and Winnipeg, one St. Marys resident was on the ground in Brandon assisting evacuees as part of the Red Cross response. At the end of June, St. Marys' Gillian Martinez returned home after nearly a month's stay in Brandon, where she was part of the frontline effort to keep track of and rehouse those displaced by the fires. Though she's volunteered with the Canadian Red Cross locally for the past 15 years, the trip out west was Martinez's first out-of-province mission with the charity.

July:

Ione Grover held a book launch and signing on July 6 at Riverwalk Commons for her book, *A Different Joy: Transformation through Poetry*. The poetry book includes works about nature and life stages, as well as questions of reflection to accompany each poem.

Kinsmen Summerfest 2025 was a big success, reported co-chairs Mark King and Ryan Leaman. The weekend was highlighted by musical performances from Darcy John and Max Smith.

Athletes from across Ontario visited St. Marys on July 6 for the Stonetown Triathlon. The event was the second consecutive year St. Marys has hosted such an event after hosting the triathlon event of the 2024 Ontario Summer Games.

A large crowd turned out for this year's Wellspring Stratford annual BBQ Fundraiser, held at the country home of David and Lenore Mountain, R.R. 7, St. Marys. The event raised more than \$16,000 in support of free cancer-support programs.

On Sunday July 6, fresh off a remarkable, successful weekend, the Kinsmen presented their yearly awards. Kinsmen of the year award was won by Mark King and the Rookie of the Year award was won by Akshay Kumar.

Stonetown Heritage Festival was held during the weekend of July 11-13, with the heat failing to deter visitors who enjoyed a variety of activities. Local musician Max Smith rocked the crowd as the headline musical act of the Festival, performing on the stage set up at the intersection of Queen Street and Water Street. The Rotary Fireworks display was a big hit. The Heritage Festival Art Show featured 34 local artists and their creations on July 12, in a vacant building at the corner of Queen and Water streets.

During the Heritage Festival, six-year-old Myla Petrie and her grandma set up a lemonade stand to keep people hydrated during the hot weather. Myla made \$75 from the stand which she has generously donated to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation.

The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame diamonds hosted 52 teams for the Jim Lutton House League tournament from July 18-20, with players and their families enjoying the Stonetown's offerings which included the exhibits and history housed inside the Hall of Fame's Museum.

As the town works to take ownership of the properties known collectively today as



Jose Bautista gave a heartfelt, appreciative speech during the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame's Induction Ceremony on June 7.



Musicians Janna Leduc and Colt McLauchlin entertained the crowd during Country night, held on the Friday of Kinsmen Summerfest.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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East Ward Park, the land's former purpose as three of the town's earliest settler cemeteries is coming back to haunt current park users. East Ward Park, once known as the Elgin Street Cemeteries or The Old Cemetery, has long been registered as three separate parcels, with St. Marys' Anglican, Presbyterian United and Wesleyan Methodist churches each owning a parcel. Now, as the town works to take ownership of the land, staff brought in the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO), a government-delegated authority and not-for-profit corporation administering provisions of the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act. As part of the process for taking ownership of the properties, the town had to inform BAO that the land was being used for active recreational purposes, including St. Marys Minor Baseball's use of the two small ball diamonds at the park and the children's play structure. BAO then opted to inspect the site and notified the town that "active use of a cemetery is in violation of the 'quiet dignity' the souls resting at the property are legally expected to enjoy."

Construction work began the week of July 14 on a new pocket ("tiny") home in the backyard of a Millson Crescent property. The structure is being built thanks to a charitable organization called Home Suite Home Affordable Housing, founded in 2024 by Jeff Murton and Vicky Devocht, who were later joined by Bernie Vandonk. Paige Noel received her key to the 6 x 6 metre home on Oct. 3.

The parking lot of Little Falls Public School was transformed into a showcase of automotive history on Saturday, July 19, as the Lions Club of St. Marys hosted its popular Annual Car Show, drawing the attention of many spectators and around 100 classic and custom vehicles.

Tragedy struck on the evening of Sunday, July 20 when a 13-year-old resident of Hamilton drowned while visiting the Wildwood Conservation Area with family.

Despite receiving applications from coast to coast to fill the vacant top staffer position, the City of Stratford's next chief administrative officer (CAO) won't have to be flown in from far away. On July 21, during a special Stratford council meeting, Stratford councillors unanimously voted to appoint Stratford resident André Morin as its next CAO,

which means St. Marys' current director of corporate services and treasurer will be moving on to the Festival City.

Council has agreed to adjust the Town of St. Marys' 2025 capital plan to help pay for the urgent replacement of a Queen Street West culvert after it was found to be undersized, a factor that has led to its deterioration and, if left as is, could have serious consequences related to traffic movement in town. At the July 22 St. Marys council meeting, council approved the addition of the \$602,500 replacement of a 1.8-metre corrugated steel culvert, part of the Bolton Municipal Drain that collects water in a tributary northwest of St. Marys and crosses the west end of town before discharging into the Thames River.

In June, the Town of St. Marys officially purchased 16.67 acres of land at 90 Carling St., a move that will allow for the establishment of a light industrial park and improve vehicular access to Widder Street East. At the July 22 council meeting, the town officially informed the public of its \$1.5-million purchase of the land and council approved a staff recommendation to finance \$1.2 million of that cost through a 10-year debt with annual payments of approximately \$150,000.

According to a recent report, for every dollar spent by the Town of St. Marys on the town's library, users of the library saw \$4.50 in social benefits last year and the library generated more than \$2.7 million in economic benefits for the town and the surrounding area.

On Wednesday, July 23, the St. Marys Library held their annual summer event and barbecue sponsored by the Friends of the Library. Each year, this event attracts over 300 people.

There is a new business in Thorndale, as 23-year-old barber Khaled Mefalani has brought his mobile grooming service to the village.

The Back40 Bash is a fundraiser organized jointly by and for the Thorndale Agricultural Society and I Love Thorndale each year since 2018. This age-of-majority event includes backyard games, live music and socializing with friends and neighbours. In the past, this event has been held on the Thorndale fairgrounds by the open pavilion but this year on Saturday, July 26, with the extreme heat and forecast of severe storms,

the organizing committee moved the event indoors to the Thorndale Lions Community Centre for everyone's safety.

On July 28, Meadowridge Variety's long-time store owners Mariam and RT Ryu announced they were retiring and stepping down as the business owners. The variety store's new owner is Dhruv Patel.

August:

A helicopter pilot is in hospital with what police described as non-life-threatening injuries after the crop-dusting helicopter he was operating crashed in a wheat field off Cobble Hills Road, south of Thorndale Road and east of the Village of Thorndale, on Aug. 1. According to media reports, the helicopter's lone male operator, a 21-year-old from Bracebridge, was pulled from the wreckage by two passers-by travelling along Cobble Hills Road. Middlesex OPP say they and members of the Thames Centre and Zorra Township fire departments responded to the crash at around 12:30 p.m. Friday.

On August 2, the Parks Lawn Bowling Club in St. Marys invited the community to help celebrate 100 years of lawn bowling at the Flats with an Open House at the Club's greens, located at Milt Dunnell Field.

Stonetown Artisan Cheese's Grand Trunk cheese is an award winner once again. The St. Marys based cheesemaker earned accolades for its Grand Trunk cheese during the American Cheese Society competition in Sacramento, Calif., including first prize for Open Category – Washed Rind Cheeses – Made from Cow's Milk.

As of midnight on Aug. 6, all open-air fires

are prohibited in Perth County, the Town of St. Marys and the City of Stratford, due to the extreme dryness of all vegetation in the area. The ban stayed in place until noon on Aug. 25.

For the 12th year, Melodies at the Museum ran every Wednesday night of August, offering a relaxed donation-based concert for all where music lovers of all ages can gather to enjoy live performances and support the community museum. This year's entertainers are Andrew and Jess Damen in week one, Megan Brady in week two, Jassm@x in week three, and York Street Thought Process during the final week of the month.

On Saturday, Aug. 9, visitors explored several historic buildings in St. Marys, with fifteen locations welcoming visitors as part of Doors Open St. Marys. Doors Open is a provincewide event that encourages people to visit places off the beaten path and highlights Ontario's unique architectural and natural treasures. John and Marie Stevens opened up their historic home, Riverside, in recognition of the building's 150 year anniversary and arranged for a full day of activities celebrating the local arts scene. Residents of and visitors to St. Marys also had their first opportunity during Doors Open to explore first-hand the town's plans for the former Mercury Theatre building at 14 Church St. N. now that initial renovations are complete.

St. Marys residents enjoyed a pancake breakfast for a good cause while visiting the farmers' market this past weekend. Tri-County Food Grains served pancakes, breakfast sandwiches and other goodies at a



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pancake breakfast fundraiser at Milt Dunnell Field on Aug. 9. Proceeds from the fundraiser went towards Canadian Food Grains, which is a Christian-based charity involving 15 churches and church-based agencies partnering up to end world hunger.

On Sunday, August 17, the 38th annual Teddy Bear Reunion took place at Lions Park in Milt Dunnell Field. The popular event had to be moved as the town works with the BAO (Bereavement Authority of Ontario) on purchasing East Ward Park. The parade made its way from the gate at Milt Dunnell Field to the Lions Park where the event was being held. Organizer Marlene Forman was very happy with the turnout and how things went.

The St. Marys Healthcare Foundation had 140 golfers competing in their 32nd annual golf tournament, hosted at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club (SMGCC) on Aug. 21 in support of the foundation and the local hospital. The proceeds from the tournament will go towards a new x-ray machine at the St. Marys Memorial Hospital.

St. Marys musician Max Smith and his band played one of his favourite summer festivals, Lucknow's Music in the Fields, on Aug. 25. Lucknow's Music in the Fields is a non-profit music festival raising money for charity with musicians like the Washboard Union, Sass Jordan, Josh Ross and Owen Riegling on the lineup for 2025. Smith was selected as the runner-up in the Emerging Artists showdown for the 2025 edition of Music in the Fields.

St. Marys council has put its stamp of approval on a master plan that will see the town spend an estimated \$4.06 million to renovate the former Mercury Theatre building at 14 Church St. N into what staff are calling a multi-generational community hub. During a marathon council and committee of whole meeting Aug. 26, councillors had the op-

portunity to tour the building and hear from staff and consultants about how the building would be used, what it would look like when finished, how much construction would cost and what it would cost to operate the building annually. Following nearly two-and-a-half hours of presentations, councillors voted to approve the master plan without any changes or additions and gave staff the green light to begin packaging the project up so it can be presented to senior levels of government for potential grant funding.

St. Marys and area residents who look forward each summer to buying fresh corn from Graham's Sweet Corn stand, a seasonal staple in the Stonetown for more than 60 years, may soon need to look elsewhere after traffic and parking complaints will force the stand to either close permanently or find another location after this season ends.

Jay and Angela MacPherson recently opened pürpour Refillery & Boutique on Water Street. The new business gives customers the opportunity to reduce their single-use plastics by offering refills of household and personal-care products in reusable containers.

August 31st is the annual International Overdose Awareness Day. Mayor Al Strathdee and outreach worker Jade Orquin were on hand as a moment of silence was observed and a flag was raised to remember those that we have lost to overdose. The event was organized by Anna Maria Iredale who lost her son Matthew in 2017. She was joined by some other moms that bravely shared their stories, each with their own unique history but forever joined through grief and support.

September:

This month, Stratford Walking Tours owner and St. Marys resident Lauri Leduc is launching her Spirits of St. Marys Walk, which features tales of local history with a

touch of the macabre told by Leduc along a two-kilometre path beside the Thames River.

It was a full-on '70s theme as Science Hill Country Club celebrated its 50th anniversary with a retro golf scramble tournament on Saturday, Sept. 6.

Little Falls Public School welcomes Kristin Frank as its new principal. At South Perth Centennial School Principal, Julie Hohner started at South Perth in February, so this was her first September start and she was very excited to welcome all the students back to class. Jennifer Keane returned as principal at Holy Name of Mary. At St. Marys DCVI, Principal Petra Goetz told the Independent the school's numbers are comparable to last year. The elementary classes have 132 registered with approximately 400 in the secondary grades.

Peace of mind and quality care close to home. That's what the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation hopes to deliver with its \$650,000 x-ray campaign.

On Sept. 13, volunteers from Purolator delivered red bags to the front doors of households in Stratford, St. Marys, Mitchell and Tavistock. These were to be filled with non-perishable items to be picked up by Purolator on Sept. 20. A total of 8,500 pounds was donated to the food banks in these communities. In St. Marys alone, 4,180 pounds was collected.

With perfect September weather, the 45th annual Terry Fox Run, held on Sept. 14, was a "fantastic day," according to co-organizer Anna Doupe. A successful event requires an incredible number of hours of planning and organizing in the months that lead up, and St. Marys' Terry Fox Run team has been able to grow the local event steadily year after year. The 2025 run appeared to have the largest turnout in recent memory.

To address the ongoing removal of historic farm and village buildings, a group of local citizens started the Motherwell Heritage Committee in 2019 to preserve the history of Motherwell. On Monday, Sept. 15, a large stone delivered by Mclean Taylor Construction was placed on a former bowling green owned by the Municipality of West Perth as the start of a meaningful tribute to the village.

A Thorndale mainstay is once again returning to the community. The Thorndale Train Station, built around 1912, has been absent from this community since it was moved to a private property in 1968. On Thursday, Sept. 18, the historic move of approximately 2.8km from one caretaker to another took over six hours, navigating hydro lines, tree branches, corners and a small hill. Once on the property of Morris Insurance, the train station was placed on a proper cement foundation.

On Saturday, Sept. 20, volunteers with the United Way Perth-Huron were at the St. Marys Farmers' Market at Milt Dunnell Field to kick off their annual fundraising campaign and unveil a 2025-2026 campaign goal of \$2,529,770.

More than 80 people gathered under bluebird skies on Saturday, Sept. 20 at River Valley Golf Course for the Rotary Club of St. Marys' Fun Golf & Kenyan BBQ. Funds raised at the event will be directed toward Rotary's upcoming centennial international project in Kenya.

The 168th Thorndale Fall Fair held on the weekend was true to its theme – "where farm meets fun." With the exceptional warm weather, crowds of people came out to enjoy the rest of the weekend, which included midway rides, participating in the various planned activities, viewing the agricultural exhibits and witnessing the many agricultural and race competitions. Beth McCallum,



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Miriam and RT Ryu have retired as the owners of Meadowridge Variety in St. Marys.

(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

2025 Year in Review by month

age 18 of Thorndale, was the 2025 Thorndale Fair Ambassador.

As work continues on the nearly \$2-million renovation of the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC) aquatics centre that began last fall, St. Marys council has approved an additional \$13,336 in contingency funding to address some recently discovered deficiencies in the pool-wall tiles. Last September, council awarded a \$1.75-million contract to Elgin Contracting and Restoration Ltd. for renovations intended to address early onset structural degradation caused by the use of saltwater and insufficient HVAC capacity at the aquatics centre. At the time, those renovations were expected to close the pool from November 2024 to May 2025, but in May of this year, St. Marys council learned the extent of the pool's structural degradation meant the pool likely would not re-open until later in the fall.

On Sept. 27, Dr. Carol Venn held the Grand Opening celebration at her new location for St. Marys Optometry at 766 Queen Street East.

On Saturday, Sept. 27, the Friendship Centre held its Fall Scrapathon fundraiser. The day consisted of scrapbooking, great giveaways, a silent auction, a continental breakfast, lunch and dinner. The funds raised support St. Marys senior services.

The annual Legion Veteran Banner program will start at the end of the month. Over 200 banners sponsored by friends and relatives of veterans will be displayed throughout St. Marys to honour those who have fought and are still fighting for our freedom.

October:

When customers pop in to the Towne and Country Cheese Shoppe on Queen Street, not only will they be able to buy lunch, cheese, prepared meals and deli meats, but they can now purchase beer, craft beer, ciders, coolers and wine.

With plenty to gain from a revitalized 14 Church St. N for library patrons and staff, the St. Marys library board has committed to supporting a community capital campaign that could help raise the \$4 million needed to transform the former Mercury Theatre building into a multi-generational community hub. At the library board's Oct. 2 meeting, members voted to establish an ad-hoc committee that would act as a liaison between the library board and a capital campaign team comprising members of the community and other stakeholders in this project.

The Multicultural Association of Perth Huron (MAPH) recently announced it has begun collecting sleeping bags, blankets and financial donations to help keep unhoused residents of Stratford and St. Marys warm over the winter in lieu of a permanent homeless shelter. Following an unsuc-

cessful bid by MAPH executive director and Stratford city Coun. Geza Wordofa to have the City of Stratford establish a permanent homeless shelter for men either at the Stratford Rotary Complex or another location in the city, Wordofa announced on Oct. 3 that the multicultural association and its volunteers – many of whom are newcomers – would be making this small effort to support those at their most vulnerable as the weather turns colder.

The Salvation Army Stratford-St. Marys chapter was collecting food and monetary donations for their annual Thanksgiving Food Drive at the Foodland and Your Independent Grocer in St. Marys on Oct. 4.

The St. Marys Fire Fighters Association held an open house at its station on Oct. 11 for Fire Prevention Week. The event featured demonstrations, displays of fire trucks and fire safety education. Perth County Paramedic Service and Stratford police were also present at the event.

The Town of St. Marys is hoping to better leverage its promotional efforts and partnerships with local organizations and service clubs by consolidating a number of beloved summer events, including the Stonetown Heritage Festival, into one, month-long Stonetown Heritage Summer Series next year. At the Oct. 14 St. Marys council meeting, tourism and economic development manager Kelly Deeks-Johnson presented a brand-new approach to the planning of summer events in St. Marys next July. While she said this year's Stonetown Heritage Festival on July 12 was a success with plenty of positive feedback from attendees and vendors alike, there have been issues that make the one-day festival traditionally held on the third weekend in July difficult to plan.

For a century, the Rotary Club of St. Marys has been shaping the town's community spirit, from building local landmarks to supporting global causes. On Oct. 15, the Rotary Club of St. Marys hosted its 100th Anniversary Centennial Dinner at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club.

St. Marys Community Players' (SMCP) production of Hilda's Yard by Canadian playwright legend Norm Foster was held at the Town Hall Theatre between Oct. 16 to Nov. 2. Hilda's Yard, which premiered in 2012 at Theatre New Brunswick, takes the audience to 1956 and follows Sam and Hilda Fluck, two empty nesters looking forward to the next stage of their life.

As of Oct. 16, more St. Marys residents will be able to purchase fresh, local and affordable food from the twice-monthly Nourish Equal Access Market than ever before thanks to the launch of a new transportation pilot in partnership with St. Marys and Area Mobility Service. Thanks to grant funding from the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation, the Local Community Food Centre has partnered with St. Marys and

Area Mobility service on a six-month pilot program that will see the town's mobility bus drive town residents to and from the market at St. Marys United Church, which runs from 2-4 p.m. on the first and third Thursday of every month.

Mauve & Stone Charm Boutique was recently opened at 16 Church St. S by young entrepreneur Mackenzie Fierling.

On Tuesday, Oct. 21, the Thorndale United Church hosted its annual Beef Supper, selling an impressive 875 tickets. Held at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre, the event welcomed both dine-in guests and busy families who opted for takeout.

What do a local cemetery, a centenarian born in the 1700s and the Titanic have in common? They all have ties to St. Marys, and these fascinating stories were shared when the St. Marys Museum ran its fifth annual cemetery walking tour on Oct. 25.

The streets of downtown St. Marys were flooded with trick-or-treaters dressed in their costume, just six days before Halloween. Scaretacular St. Marys took over the town's core on Oct. 25, with participating local businesses handing out treats to eager trick-or-treaters. The Howl-O-Ween Pet Parade and Costume Contest, sponsored by the local Pet Valu and Kristine Tanner: Real Estate Broker, followed the trick-or-treating. The St. Marys Museum also held cemetery walking tours.

St. Marys is getting swept up in Blue Jays fever. Town employees John Hahn and Jed Kelly were the masterminds who worked with Forman Electric to get the Go Blue Jays sign put up on the Town Hall as the Jays prepare to play in the World Series for the first time in 32 years against the L.A. Dodgers.

The St. Marys Memorial Auxiliary raised \$7,000 through three separate fundraising events in October, enabling them to fulfill their commitments for 2025 which include



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Dr. Carol Venn and staff welcomed the community to their new St. Marys Optometry location at 766 Queen Street East during the Grand Opening held on Saturday, Sept. 27.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Sydney Grant (left) and Elissa Gammon (right) were the 2025 winners of the "Ring and Cane Awards", sponsored by Human Synergistics. These awards were presented to "two graduating students that other students look up to. These students set an example in the way they encourage others to get involved and be part of the school. They understand that learning is a two-way street and that school life is multi-dimensional requiring student involvement. They understand that their effort counts." Sydney and Elissa are pictured with DCVI principal Petra Goetz and Human Synergistics president Allan Stewart.

2025 Year in Review by month

a revamped gazebo and a piece of new hospital equipment called a negative pressure wound vac. The Auxiliary ran a bake sale, The Stitch Market, and a Bingo during the month.

November:

United Way Perth-Huron's Ultimate Burger Battle kicks off Nov. 1 and will run for the full month. Participating local restaurants will create a new burger for the event and \$2 in proceeds from the sale of the burger creations will support local United Way programming. Both Gilly's locations in Stratford and St. Marys, Demetre's Family Eatery, Bentley's, 53 North Restaurant, Foster's Inn, Romeo's Corner Café and Best Western Plus the Arden Park Hotel will be participating.

On Nov. 3 the community dinner was held at the St. Marys United Church with Mayor Al Strathdee and the town councillors providing a lovely meal assisted by volunteers.

Stonetown Cheese won the Grand Champion prize at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair for its Wildwood cheese in the firm and hard – surface ripened, natural or brush rind category. The St. Marys based cheese producer also took home the top prize in the semi-soft, interior ripened cheese category for its Farmstead Fontina.

On Saturday, Nov. 8, the St. Marys Legion and Army and Navy hosted Veterans' Decoration Day at the St. Marys Cemetery, where loved ones of veterans interred at St. Marys Cemetery were invited to place complimentary flags at veterans' graves. On Sunday, Nov. 9, the Royal Canadian Legion held a Remembrance Day parade followed by a ceremony at the town's cenotaph. Despite the snow, there was a good turnout to remember those that served and are still serving for our freedom.

On Nov. 11 at 10:45 a.m., Mayor Al Strathdee led a Remembrance Day ceremony at the town hall cenotaph. Following the ceremony, the St. Marys Museum opened their new exhibit, "Between the Lines: Stories & Signals of World War I." The exhibit examines different methods of communications during the First World War, including letters and postcards sent home from St. Marys soldiers and cryptography on the front lines. "Between the Lines" will be available for viewing during the museum's regular hours until November 2026.

With blustery, winter-like weather, there were still over 100 people who gathered at the Thorndale Cenotaph on Re-

membrance Day morning for the town's annual ceremony. Les Youngson led the service of reflection, prayer and song with the poignant bugle call of "The Last Post," highlighting the reverence of this gathering.

The Optimist Club of Kirkton-Woodham presented its annual community service award to Cindy Bilyea on Friday, Nov. 7 at the Kirkton-Woodham Community Centre. Cindy has volunteered and served in many ways over the years. Some of the groups that have benefited from this are St. Marys Minor Hockey, the Kirkton Horticultural Society, St. Marys Health Care Foundation, Quadro Communications, Villages United Church and South Perth Centennial School.

The cost of housing and a lack of affordable options for residents of Perth-Huron across the income spectrum are primary drivers for the recently announced increase to the area's living wage, which rose from \$23.05 per hour in 2024 to \$24.60 this year. Announced by the United Way Perth-Huron and the Ontario Living Wage Network during Living Wage Week Nov. 10-14, a living wage shows how much a worker must earn to make ends meet and enjoy modest participation in the community.

The glow from more than 100 dazzling WinterLights displays at Milt Dunnell Field began on Friday, Nov. 14 and continued nightly from 5-11 p.m. until Jan. 1, 2026.

Though, under the newly expanded Strong Mayor Powers granted to St. Marys by the province earlier this year, there was no passing of an official budget bylaw as there has been in years past, the Town of St. Marys has officially adopted its 2026 budget with 3.88 per-cent levy increase, inclusive of growth.

On Saturday, Nov. 15 the Salvation Army, in collaboration with the Stratford Police Service, held its annual toy drive at the Canadian Tire in St. Marys.

The St. Marys Craft Show was held on Nov. 15 with over 60 local and regional artisans participating. Many people from the Friendship Centre spend their time knitting, crocheting, and making crafts to put in this show. All the proceeds are donated back to the Friendship Centre to provide for the various programs they have.

The hour-long Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade on Friday, Nov. 21 was a huge success with people lining the route along James Street South and into the downtown area. The parade was preceded by the Merchants' Open House.

Stonetown Arts hosted the opening reception for its 14th Annual Art Show & Sale Nov. 21.

Sunshine, steady foot traffic and a strong sense of community marked this year's Soulstice Collective Fall Market, where vendors and visitors gathered Nov. 22 at St. Marys Golf & Country Club. 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.

The talent of St. Marys and area artists was on full dis-

play across two weekends at the end of November during the 14th annual Stonetown Arts Show and Sale. Works by 24 local artists and members of the Stonetown Arts group were displayed at Riverwalk Commons.

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.

After more than a year, the pool at the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC) in St. Marys will see its reopening to the public in January, 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.

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.

Despite Mother Nature's attempt at delays, the 19th annual Avonbank Tractor Parade went ahead as scheduled on Friday, Nov. 28. 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.

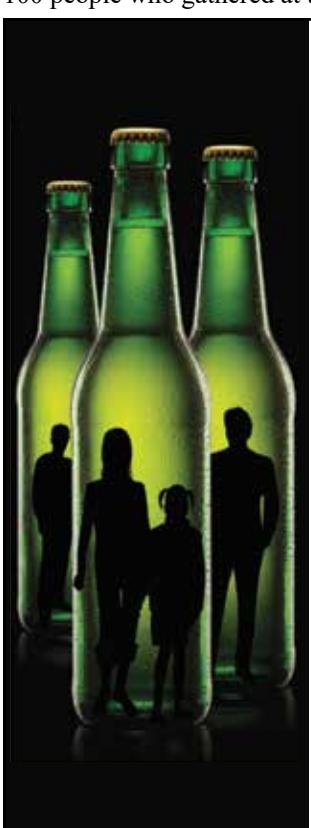
Curator and director at the St. Marys Station Gallery Duncan MacDonald is excited to bring "A Light in the Dark," a new exhibit featuring the works of London-based artist Paul Nicholson. The exhibit will run from Nov. 29 to Jan. 17, 2026, giving locals a chance to explore Nicholson's trademark style of colour, nature and beauty.

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.

December:

Town council declared Tuesday, Dec. 2, as Giving Tuesday, a day that encourages people to do a good deed and to help others. Many businesses, service clubs and individuals have joined in the initiative of giving back. In the ninth year of St. Marys' participation, there were over 70 initiatives by businesses and groups that benefited over 30 charities, organizations and individuals.

Teenagers Porter Huffman and Colton Lawrence are holding their eighth and final toy drive. Over the years, Porter and Colton have raised over \$40,000, providing Christmas gifts, food support and gift cards to families throughout Lukan, St. Marys, Ailsa Craig and the surrounding areas. Their



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efforts even appearance at the Night of Heroes earned them a place on the 2024 Town of Lucan Biddulph Mayor's Honour Roll.

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.

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

The work to help the Town of St. Marys raise funds in support of the New Community Commons revitalization of 14 Church St. N, the former Mercury Theatre, has officially begun after an ad-hoc fundraising advisory committee held its first meeting Dec. 3.

The 2025 deputy warden and deputy mayor of West Perth, Dean Trentowsky, has officially accepted the gavel and chain of office as Perth County's 2026 warden. At the annual Perth County warden's election at the Arden Park Hotel in Stratford Dec. 4, Trentowsky – the only county councillor who put their name forward for warden – was officially acclaimed as the top elected official and CEO of the county.

On Dec. 5 and 6, the Town of St. Marys held a Winter Lights Night Market at Milt Dunnell Field.

The busy event was fun for all ages, including free horse-and-wagon rides, a firepit with free s'mores, food trucks and shopping from local vendors and artisans.

The St. Marys with Love community dinner was held at the Pyramid Recreation Centre on Sunday, Dec. 7. Over 400 people attended to enjoy the excellent food and entertainment. Special thanks go to Rev. Gwen Ament and Dave Steward along with the 80

volunteers who made this event such a success.

Local Rotarians arrived back in Canada recently after a successful Kits for Kenya project. Kits for Kenya is an international Rotary Club of St. Marys initiative where local Rotarians travel to Mugoroi Secondary School, located north of Nairobi, Kenya. Departing early last month, six Rotarians and four of their spouses flew across the world to improve the school's bathroom, paint classrooms, set up a computer lab and distribute laptops as well as feminine hygiene products. The project was pitched by longtime Rotarian and project leader Andrew Middleton, who saw a need to improve the quality of life for the 450 students between the ages of 12 and 16 of Mugoroi Secondary School.

For the third year in a row, St. Marys council has appointed Coun. Brogan Aylward – the youngest member of council – as deputy mayor.

The combination of significant snowfall and mechanical breakdowns led the Town of St. Marys to declare a significant weather event on Dec. 11. Declared over roughly 24 hours later, the declaration of a significant weather event was made in accordance with provincial law, stating a municipality must declare a significant weather event when it is unable to meet the minimum requirements for clearing snow from roads and sidewalks.

At the St. Marys Rotary Club's last meeting of 2025, members welcomed inbound exchange student Samir Zogbi, who delivered a presentation about his home country, Argentina.

St. Marys' Gilly's Pubhouse has won the People's Choice Award for Best Burger in the United Way Perth-Huron's (UWPH) Ultimate Burger Battle fundraiser competition. Gilly's Pubhouse brought their sweet and salty Lincoln Burger to customers throughout November in support of United Way

Perth-Huron's fundraising contest. Patrons were able to vote online on which restaurant made the best burger.

The Thorndale Santa Claus Parade, a longstanding Christmas tradition hosted by the Thorndale Lions Club since 2002, was held last Friday evening, Dec. 12. The cold, wintery evening was the perfect setting for this festive procession, consisting of 24 creative and brightly illuminated floats with many entries from Thorndale's commercial sector, adding to the lively cavalcade. The streets were lined with hundreds of people of all ages who waved and cheered, while

some enjoyed the parade from the comfort of their warm homes.

The Town of St. Marys has announced the renovations at the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC) aquatics centre are finished, and the facility will once again open to visitors. The town will re-open the doors to the aquatics centre on Wednesday, Dec. 17 with a grand-opening event to follow on Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026. The December soft-opening date will be the launch of all regular programming including aquafit, lane swims, open swims and rentals.



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTO)

Two horse-drawn wagon rides were touring around the flats during the Winter Lights Night Market.

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YEAR IN SPORTS

SMMHA honours graduating players, award winners at year-end ceremony



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Rory Brockman, Sophia Smith, Kiersyn Wood, and Delanie McKay. The quartet are four of the St. Marys Minor Hockey Association's (SMMHA) graduating OWHA players who were honoured as part of the association's end-of-year awards banquet on April 28. Along with the major award winners, every SMMHA team honoured their players with Unsung Hero, Coach's Choice, and Player's Choice awards, and Linley Porter earned a Resiliency Award after returning to hockey after a severe back injury.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured in the front row, from left, are Trevor Richardson, Connor Hall, Adam Turner, Griffen McGregor, and Hayden Brintnell. In the back row, from left, are Trevor Aarts, Brody Tubman, Jordan Wiles, Callum McIntosh, Brier Freyne, Grayson Boreham, Colton Henderson, Cole Jones, and Thijs Paulin. U16 A Boys St. Marys Rock coach Bob Davis, who retired after 30 years of coaching at the end of the 2024-25 season, was honoured with the Ferris Stewart Memorial Award as SMMHA coach of the year.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left are U18 C Girls St. Marys Rock coach Nathan Brown, along with the SMMHA's OWHA major award winners Sophia Smith, Madeleine Monisit Brown, Sophie Richardson, Delanie McKay, and Rory Brockman. Smith won the Ernie Little Award for outstanding female goalie. Brown earned the Doug Hicks Memorial Award for outstanding female leadership. Richardson and McKay were co-winners of the Dixies Award for most skillful and hardest-working female players. Brockman took the Lindsay Atkinson Memorial Award for most sportsmanlike female player.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left are Colton Henderson, Grayson Boreham, Luke Binning, Trevor Richardson, Griffen McGregor, and U18 A Boys St. Marys Rock coach Gord Cookson. Henderson was named to the International Silver Stick All-Star team. Boreham captured the Mike Mattiusi Award as most sportsmanlike male player. Binning claimed the Donald K. Mossip Memorial Award for outstanding male goalie. Richardson earned the Terry Crisp Award as the most colourful and hard-working player. McGregor won the Bob Searles Award as the SMMHA's most outstanding male player.

U16 A Boys defeat Strathroy 5-2 to win Shamrock League Championship



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys Legion U16 A Boys St. Marys Rock earned their Shamrock League Championship with a 5-2 win over the Strathroy Junior Rockets on March 29. Pictured in the bottom row, from left to right, are Jaxen Brown, Cash Flannery, Cainan O'Doherty, Brody Cox, Zach Larmer, Ethan Henderson, Ethan Culling, Hayden Wright and Jack Turner. In the top row, from left, are Mark Brintnell, Andrew Davis, Nic Brintnell, Kolton McCallister, Ben Ewing, Don McGregor, Peyton Wynands, Grayson Gerber, Zach Matheson, Hunter Pickel, Michael Davis and Bob Davis.

'Crazy work ethic' leads U9 MD Boys to Shamrock title



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Finnbilt Construction U9 M Boys St. Marys Rock, on the backs of their "crazy work ethic," captured the Shamrock League Championship at the U9 Shamrock Year-End Championship tournament April 3-6 in Mount Brydges. Pictured in the first row, from left to right, are Jack Becker and Everett Douglas. In the second row, from left, are Brody Pearson and Jackson Monisit-Brown. In the third row, from left, are Jacob Zwambag, Landon McIntosh, Ryker Harrison, Max Bilyea, Maclean Ross, Carter Van Wieren, Zac Bes, Callum Palmer and Ben Hemstock. In the back row, from left, are Mark Ross, Rod Harrison, Ben Douglas, Drew Pearson and Dan McIntosh.

St. Marys' Vaughn Barr drafted by OHL's Erie Otters



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

St. Marys native Vaughn Barr holds his Erie Otters' jersey bearing his last name after being drafted by the Otters in the 10th round of the 2025 OHL Priority Selection earlier this year.

U13 A Boys take home gold at Collingwood Silverstick



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys Firefighters U13 A Boys St. Marys Rock took the championship banner at the Collingwood Regional Silver Stick Nov. 13-16. Pictured laying on the ice, from left to right, are Matthew McCarty and Luke Savile. Pictured kneeling, from left, are assistant coach Deon Keller, Myles Havens, Gavin Santagapita, Theo Keller, Joey Brown, Attley Ehgoetz and Talon Nov. In the third row, from left, are goalie coach Harper Murrell, Jax Parsons, Nick Simons, Talan Ward, Owen Robertson, Emmett Parkinson, Keaton Ward, Liam Showers, Charles Coppins, Hudson Monteith, assistant coach Jonathan Ward and trainer Jeremy Savile. In the back row, from left, are assistant coach Mark Monteith and head coach Merlin Malinowski.

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



(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.

'Driven, determined' U11 B Girls claim WOGHL title



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys Landscaping U11 B St. Marys Girls Rock shutout the North Middlesex Jr. Stars by a score of 2-0 on April 5 to win the Western Ontario Girls Hockey League (WOGHL) Division One Championship. Pictured from left to right are Audrey Parsons, Brynlee Pickel, Addison Hudson, Mya Grose, Alex Hartlon, Jessica Zwambag, Samantha Matheson, Jaynie Johnston, Emily Chateauvert, Ellie McDonald, Amelia Falkiner, Emily Ewing, and Kylie Blake.

U14 Snipers strike gold at regional tournament



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U14 St. Marys Snipers (Habermehl) won the gold medal at the Lower Ontario Ringette League Regional Championships March 21-23, hosted in Dorchester and London. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are trainer Laurie McCutcheon, Maelle Hachler, Regan Smith, Mikayla Ford, Madi McCutcheon and coach Rebecca Taylor. In the back row, from left, are coach Jim Burlingham, Mary McCutcheon, Peyton Van Straaten, Lilly Murphy, Brenna Bearss, Lyla Habermehl, Amara Grant, and head coach Evan Habermehl.

U12 Snipers claim silver at regional championship



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U12 St. Marys Snipers earned the silver medal at the Provincial Championship held in Markham and Thornhill April 3-6. Pictured in the front row, from left, are Jordyn Rasenberg, Courtney Beech, Eleanor Beech, Peyton Foley, Vaida Graham and Suzie McCutcheon. In the middle row, from left, are Hannah Pickel, Natalie McCorqudale, Briella Graham, Paisley Allen, Lily Garniss, Chelsea Hughes, Harper Buck and Liv McCutcheon. In the back row, from left, are Brent Foley, Tanya Buck, Bria Henderson and Kelsey Pickel.

DCVI Senior Boys win OFSAA cross-country gold



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Marcel Scheele and Alan Mazur. In the back row, from left, are Abe Bender, Zach Matheson, Nic Brintnell, Charlie Bender, Kaleb Dingman, and Myles Clinton. The St. Marys DCVI senior boys won the OFSAA cross-country championship in their division.

DCVI nordic ski team has strong OFSAA showing



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Hayden Brintnell, Owen Littlejohn, Myles Clinton and Griffin McGregor. The four, along with Nate Schiedel, made up the St. Marys DCVI senior boys' relay team that finished sixth at the Feb. 20-21 OFSAA Nordic-skiing event in Sudbury. Schiedel captured fifth in the senior boys' individual race, while Littlejohn took eighth.

DCVI hosts annual athletic awards banquet



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Pictured from left are Oliver Black, Graham Rae, and Abby Martin. All three received the Colin Hood Award. The Colin Hood Award is given out annually to one graduating male, one graduating female, and one coach in every school in Ontario who, throughout their high school career, have been committed to the success of sport at their school.

DCVI ultimate frisbee team claims WOSSAA title



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys DCVI ultimate frisbee team captured the WOSSAA title on May 21. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Luke Binning, Hayden Brintnell, Adam Turner, Griffin McGregor, Olive Aarts, Marin Chateauvert, Kiara McGregor, Harvest Elliot and coach Chris Marcou. In the back row, from left, are Myles Clinton, Trevor Richardson, Colton Henderson, Trey Taylor, Grayson Boreham, Trevor Aarts, Guin Jester, Charlee Pickering, Charlotte Richardson and Regan Jones. Not pictured were Carter Phillips and Andrew Brunton.

DCVI senior girls win consolation final at OFSAA



(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.

DCVI hosts annual athletic awards banquet



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Pictured is Kiara McGregor, who won DCVI's Graduating Athlete Award. McGregor has been a consistent and versatile member of many sports teams in her five-year high school tenure at DCVI. Pictured on the right is Trevor Richardson, who earned the Bill Salter Award, presented annually to one male and one female student in the entire WOSSAA conference.

Banner year for St. Louis rink at St. Marys Curling Club



(ANDREW ZWAMBAG PHOTO)

This year's "A" champions in the St. Marys Curling Club's Competitive League were Brady St. Louis (skip), Jason Clarke (vice), Aaron Waugh (second), and Mark King (lead). The St. Louis team edged the rink of Morris Vandewalle by a 6-3 score on Wednesday, March 26. This season was particularly special for this foursome of curlers because earlier in the winter, they won the Everest Cup qualifier (over Vandewalle, who again was the finalist) to earn the right to represent the St. Marys Curling Club in a provincial club championship in the fall.



(ANDREW ZWAMBAG PHOTO)

Aaron Waugh and Victoria Wierenga are this year's Monday Night Doubles Champions. They are pictured above with finalists Russ Mitchell and George White. Waugh and Wierenga saved their best curling for when it counted the most. After finishing 6th place (of 11) in the regular season, they went undefeated in the double elimination playoff tournament to win the Championship. They played five outstanding games, defeating the top three teams in the league.

Men's bowling league hosts year-end awards banquet



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Scott Jackson, Scott Fairbrother, Derek King, and Mike Kuzia. Not pictured were Steph Audet, John McKinnon, and Jamie Rankin. The team won the regular season championship at the St. Marys Bowling Lanes' Men's League awards banquet hosted on April 25 at the St. Marys Legion. In the individual awards section of the banquet, King claimed the High Average award. Other individual award winners included Troy Stevens, who took the prize for High Triple, while Jason Firby captured the High Single award. The men's league competed every Thursday at the local bowling lanes.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured sitting in front from left are Levi Coleman and Chris Collins. In the back row, from left, are Devin Vossen, Chris Bond, Matt Dezan, Gerald Mason, Jase Doucette, and Josh Drinkwater. Not pictured was Shaene Yates. The team won the playoff championship. Rogers won the Playoff MVP award, while Doucette also added an individual award by claiming the Most Improved Player honours. The individual awards were rounded out by John McKinnon taking the High Triple with Handicap prize, while Johnny Spackman won the award for High Single with Handicap.

Four STK athletes capture medals at World Karate Championships



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Lisa Sheldon, Shannon Campbell, Marieke Van Lierop and Jalyne Lorentz. The four Stonetown Karate Centre competitors combined for 13 medals, including eight golds, at the World Karate Championships on Oct. 25-31 in Niagara Falls, N.Y.

Four SKC students win medals at provincial champs



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Geoff Holdsworth, Shannon Campbell, Marieke Van Lierop and Sensei Jalyne Lorentz. The four Stonetown Karate Centre (SKC) students combined for seven medals at the Ontario Provincial Martial Arts Championships on Feb. 22 in Burlington.

Lincs host year-end awards banquet



(MCGINN PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

Pictured from left are Jacques Cousineau and Ryan Hodkinson. Hodkinson earned the Jacques Cousineau Award as the Lincolns' Playoff MVP. Hodkinson led the Lincolns in points in the postseason, registering 11 goals and 23 points in 19 playoff games.



(MCGINN PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

Pictured from left are Frank Edye, Jack Hemstock, Luca Spagnolo, and Jaden Lee. Spagnolo and Lee were co-winners of the Frank Edye Award for regular season MVP. Lee also won the Harold Maxwell Award as the team's leading scorer in the regular season and the Fan Appreciation Award. Both Lee and Spagnolo were part of a ceremony honouring the team's graduating players, which also recognized Ethan Coups, Ryder Livermore, and Jacob McLellan. Lee had 29 goals and 77 points in 50 regular-season games to lead the team in points, while Spagnolo led the Lincolns in goals with 35.

Foran, McVittie, Parsons win SMGCC Club Championship



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Jeremy Foran, shooting a gross score of 147, captured the men's division title at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club's (SMGCC) two-day Club Championship tournament Aug. 16-17.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Rich Parsons added yet another nameplate to the senior men's plaque, scoring a 153 gross at the Aug. 16-17 SMGCC Club Championship.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Cheryl McVittie won her fourth straight ladies' title with a gross score of 175 at the SMGCC's Club Championship Aug. 16-17.

DCVI golf team wins Huron-Perth tournament



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Chris Marcou, Myles Clinton, Simon Greig, Nathan Wolfkamp and Donovan McGregor. Clinton, Greig, McGregor and Wolfkamp were part of the Huron-Perth Championship-winning St. Marys DCVI golf team, coached by Marcou.

Mike Hitchcock captures SOO silver in Brantford



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Pictured is Mike Hitchcock with the silver medal he won at the Special Olympics Ontario (SOO) Provincial Summer Games' golf competition, hosted July 11-12 at the Wayne Gretzky Municipal Golf Course in Brantford.

U18-GT3 Storm dominant in winning District Cup gold



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U18 Girls Tier Three St. Marys Storm ended an undefeated season with a District Cup Championship and league title. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Vienna Beckett, Madeleine Monisit Brown, Marin Chateauvert, Isla Unich, Rowan Aitken, Libby McCurdy and Harvest Elliott. In the back row, from left, are coach Gord Aitken, Carlie Muir, Regan Jones, Charlotte Richardson, Olive Aarts, Abby Martin, Guin Jester, Sydney Grant, Erin Green, Leighton Lichten, Laura King, coach Mark Muir and head coach Nathan Brown.

U14-BT3 Storm earn gold at District Cup championship



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U14 Boys Tier Three St. Marys Storm captured the gold medal at the District Cup final Aug. 16-17 in London. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Ayden Eidt, Santiago Tierra, Ahmad Ajjan Al Hadid, Daniel Fontes, Colton Cubberley, Lexxandre Nieto Estepan, Tyler McDonald and Cohen McKichan. In the back row, from left, are Matt Simons, Fin McCuthcheon, Isiah Omel, Braydon Wheeler, Elliott Hudson, Jack Wilkinson, Luke Simons, Bryce Blight, Cole McIntosh, Jack Brockman, Jonathan Buckland and Jon McDonald. Not pictured are Alex Peacheay and Will Richardson.

U9 OBA Rockies earn gold medal at year-end tournament



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured in the front, from left to right, are Ryan Spearin, Will Graham, Kash Hylton, Max Bilyea, Mitchell Grant, Emerson Muir, Bryson Nairn, Jack Becker, Ryker Harrison, Landon Macintosh, Carter Van Wieren and Maclean Ross. In the back row, from left, are Tanya Hylton, David Grant, Chris Van Wieren and Dan Macintosh. The St. Marys Firefighters U9 OBA St. Marys Rockies captured the gold medal at the U9 Year-End Tournament Aug. 8-10.

U13 Rockies win gold at year-end tournament



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Forman Electric U13 St. Marys Rockies won the gold medal at the Year-End Tournament Aug. 22-24 in Listowel. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are James Holliday, Ben Becker, Lachlann Thistle, Derek Vernooy and Jim Holliday. In the back row, from left, are Zach Rooney, Sawyer Hayes, Elliot Wilhelm, Briland Cunningham, Hudson Monteith, Luke Savile, Ryder Boemer, Mark Richardson, Cam Hughes, Jayden Rooney and Myles Newton.

Six St. Marys athletes compete at OVA Championships



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

On the left is Parker Levy. On the right are Marin Chateauvert and Katie Namink. All three St. Marys athletes won gold medals at the OVA Championships this past April. Gracy Schlotzauer of St. Marys also helped her team win gold at the provincial championship, while Charlotte Johnson and Lena Thompson's teams each finished fourth in their respective divisions.

St. Marys pickleball players compete at Sudbury provincials



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured are Angela Martin and Merlin Leis. Leis, a member of the St. Marys Pickleball Club, teamed up with Martin to win the gold medal in the mixed 3.5 skill level doubles competition at the Sudbury Senior Provincial Pickleball Championship on Aug. 5-7.

2025 ST. MARYS LINCOLNS

Lincs enjoy story-filled year for the ages in 2025

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Decades from now, a lot of the moments and memories that people recount about the St. Marys Lincolns will be from 2025.

The Lincolns picked up the 2025 portion of the 2024-25 season in the early stages of a winning streak. Little did anyone know, not only would this new winning streak surpass the 11-game winning streak they opened the season with, but it would surpass an all-time franchise record, becoming the longest winning streak in the team's history. The Lincs managed to win 18 in a row as part of a monstrous 42-win season that also went down as being tied for the winningest season in the team's existence.

That incredible regular season set the Lincolns up for another deep playoff run, and for the third consecutive year, the Lincolns advanced to the Western Conference Final. While they didn't come away with their second conference title in as many years, the squad proved themselves to be one of the most resilient groups to ever wear a Lincolns' jersey, coming back from being down three games to one against the uber-competitive and hyper-talented Chatham Maroons to force a Game Seven, one of the most well-played games by both teams of the entire season.

While the heartbreak of their Game Seven defeat stung for quite some time,



it also gave the Lincolns the chance to learn more about what it takes to reach the summit in the playoffs, and with a strong core of veterans to return, those lessons were invaluable. The evolution of players like Blake Elzinga and Chase McDougall; the steadiness of four-year veterans Chase MacQueen-Spence, Jacob Montesi, and Owen Voortman; the introduction and reintroduction of experienced talents like Brogan Colquhoun, Callum McAuley, and Ethan Weir; the dynamic ability of Lincoln

Moore; it all combined for a team built on the foundations of how to win when it matters most.

The first half of the 2025-26 season has seen some truly special moments for the ages. Think back to Pink in the Rink night, a night very important to Lincs' defenceman Owen Kalp due to his mom being afflicted with cancer. Kalp went out and didn't just play a good game; he played the game of his life. Kalp, who has typically averaged around a half a point a game, scored a hat-trick from

the blueline and added three assists for a six-point game that was as unexpected as it was heart-warming.

You can't talk about special moments without talking about the most beautiful night in the history of the PRC. Ryan Hodkinson, in the hometown boy's first game for his hometown team in front of his hometown fans since the tragic passing of his beloved father John, scored two goals and four points, including the first goal of the game, after which he pointed to the heavens as if to signify, 'That one's for you, Dad.' It was a fairytale come to life before your very eyes.

The Lincolns have also provided the first glimpse at a crop of new, hungry stars of tomorrow, who are quickly blossoming into the stars of today. James MacGregor and Luke McMillan have revealed themselves to have the potential to be this team's defensive backbones for years to come. Devun Colebrook and Declan Ready have gone from unknown entities to vital parts of a tenaciousness amongst the forward group seldom seen before. Even a newcomer like Oliver Lacko has established himself as a massive piece to the Lincolns' success.

You add all that up, and you've seen one of the most story-filled calendar years of hockey in St. Marys Lincolns hockey, and hopefully, a year that has laid the most vital groundwork for the greatest chapter of this era of the Lincolns yet.

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YEAR IN ARTS

Lines and Stitches exhibition opens at St. Marys Station Gallery



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Local textile artist Maggie Jorna stood with her favourite piece, *Fledglings*, on display now as part of the Lines and Stitches exhibition at St. Marys Station Gallery.

St. Marys Community Players delivers extraordinary events in an ordinary backyard with *Hilda's Yard*



(PHOTO COURTESY OF GREGORY GEORGE)

Pictured from left, Derek Roberts, Matt Schell, Alex Pedersen, Don Van Galen, Edie Pedersen and Sarah Nixon star in St. Marys Community Players' production of *Hilda's Yard*, a Norm Foster comedy promising a mix of moments that tug at the heartstrings and produce belly laughs.

Hidden in Plain View searches for the beauty beyond the surface



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

The St. Marys Station Gallery held an opening reception for their Hidden in Plain View exhibition on April 19. Pictured, artist Annette Goodale poses with some of her art featured in the exhibition.



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

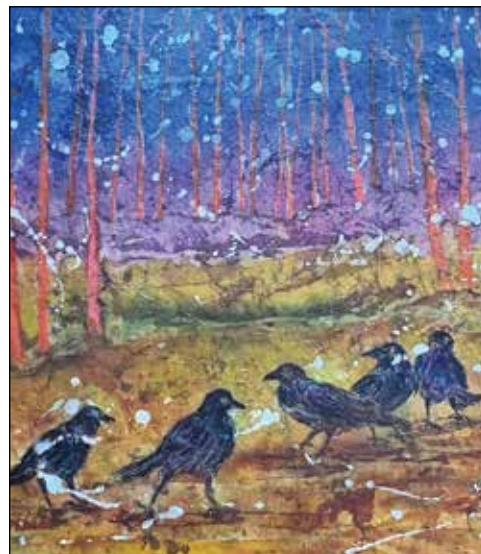
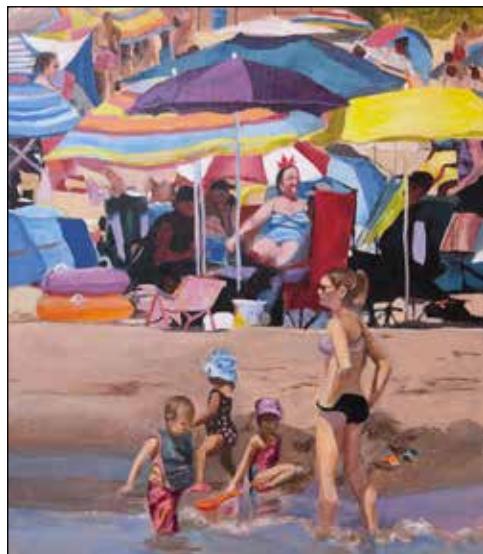
Artist Chantelle Marshall poses her piece, "Unexpected Lace," featured in the Hidden in Plain View exhibition at St. Marys Station Gallery.



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Watercolour artist Krista Beckette is pictured here with her piece, "Almost Home," during the opening reception of the Hidden in Plain View exhibition at St. Marys Station Gallery April 19.

Port Stanley artists featured in Station Gallery's Portside artists exhibition



(PHOTOS COURTESY OF ST. MARYS STATION GALLERY)

St. Marys residents had a chance to view a variety of artwork by Port Stanley artists in the Portside Artists exhibition held from May 31 to July 12. Pictured are the pieces, "And so they Gathered" by Patti Fisher and "Beach" by Kit Cutting.

Paul Nicholson's lifelong dialogue with colour, nature and the human impulse to create



(DUNCAN MACDONALD PHOTO)

London Artist Paul Nicholson opens his "A Light in the Dark" exhibition at St. Marys Station Gallery Nov. 29.



Leonard (Lenny) George Mills

Date of Birth: July 30th, 2025
Place of Birth: Stratford General Hospital
Birth Weight: 7.6 lbs
Weight Now: 15.7 lbs
Parents Names: Ryan and Makayla Mills
Siblings: Willa (6)
Grandparents: Bruce and Shirley Mills, Ron Lewis and Suzy McKay
What I liked best about 2025: Watching the Blue Jays in the World Series!



Luke and Owen Balfour

Date of Birth: August 2, 2025
Place of Birth: Victoria Hospital, London
Birth Weight: 6 lbs 3 oz and 6 lbs 13 oz
Weight Now: 14 lbs
Parents Names: Elizabeth and Ryan Balfour
Siblings: Lydia (5) and Benjamin (2)
Grandparents: Tammy and Barry Hawkins Debbie and Brian Balfour
What I liked best about 2025: Being born on big brother Benjamin's birthday!



Harvey Douglas Sadler

Date of Birth: September 1, 2025
Place of Birth: Stratford General Hospital
Birth Weight: 9 lbs 7 oz
Weight Now: 15 lbs
Parents Names: Jason and Stacey Sadler
Siblings: Leona (22 mo)
Grandparents: Chris Sadler, Allan and Paula Sheldon
What I liked best about 2025: Surviving my older sister!

Sudoku

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Solutions on pg. 31

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WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

- What popular numeric-based phrase annoyed parents and teachers alike in 2025?
- Who led the Toronto Blue Jays in postseason hits and batting average?
- What movie won "Best Picture" at the 2025 Oscars?
- Canadian Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led what pro sports team to a championship in 2025?
- The G7 Summit in June was held where in Canada?
- Who is Robert Francis Prevost better known as?
- Who was elected as Mayor of New York City in November?
- What AI chip maker is the world's most valuable company at year end?
- What is the most populated country in the world as of year end?
- What was the name of the hero who tackled and disarmed one of the gunmen at Bondi Beach, Australia on Dec. 14?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

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2	8	1	6	7	5	9	4	3
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