

# Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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## Two assaults at Woodstock high schools

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A pair of disturbing assaults at two Woodstock high schools has led to charges against two teenagers and serious injuries for two victims.

A young offender has been charged with assault as the result of an incident at Huron Park Secondary School where a student was attacked and received serious but non-life-threatening injuries.

“There was an attack with a pipe and a charge of aggregated assault with a weapon laid. The suspect is in custody but I can’t release the name as it is protected under the Youth Criminal Justice Act,” explained Woodstock Police Detective Jamie Taylor.

Sources tell the Echo the assault was a case of student-on-student and the injuries were very serious and extensive. A video of the incident was also circulating on social media.

The Criminal Code of Canada describes aggravated assault as “someone who wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life of the complainant. Every one who commits an aggravated assault is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years.”

A minor could potentially be tried as an adult and face the same sentence.

The Echo reached out to the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) and asked to interview someone regarding the two disturbing acts of violence in Woodstock. Instead, a very brief statement was provided.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 7



### WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF OXFORD

(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Alisha Wilson, Kirsten Young, Carole Eriksson, and Jennifer Peace-Hall joined moderator Janet Wakutz to discuss collaboration, partnerships, and the many women-owned businesses of Oxford County. Story on page 14.

## Oxford County digging out from snowfall not seen in years

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The most consistent volatile winter weather we have seen in years led to most of us staying home all weekend and early into this week. At the same time, it meant long hours for area municipal staff who were plowing streets and roadways despite not being able to keep up at times.

While Woodstock and Ingersoll did not declare Significant Weather Events like the rural townships in Oxford, staff were working hard to keep up with dozens of centimetres of snow over a short period.

Alex Laros is Acting Director of Public Works in Woodstock and said this is the most snow he has seen in 20 years in the public works business. He added it was a challenge for the city to keep up.

“For my guys, the two biggest conflicts they ran into were parked cars in their way and getting close to their hours of service. They can only operate the heavy equipment for 70 hours in a full week then they need to take time off.”

There are always complaints when we have such large snow events that pile up the snow for several days at a time. Laros explained he was extremely pleased with how the city dealt with it.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



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# Woodstock and Ingersoll applaud staff efforts

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

“Our snowplow drivers are also the sidewalk clearing staff who are also our garbage guys for an extra day since we had to pick up Monday’s garbage on Tuesday. Our staff had to have that event cleared up by Tuesday morning so we could then flip over to waste collectors and get garbage off the streets.”

Laros said he thanked his team several times in recent days for their efforts and he added people forget city staff have families just like everyone else.

“They’ll be in a truck for a 14-hour shift and they go home and spend two to three hours clearing out their own driveway”

Woodstock does require homeowners to remove snow on city sidewalks in front of their properties and the expectation is for people to at least make an effort to do so.

“I know it’s a never-ending battle of us pushing back to the curb but ultimately we need to clear the catch basins so once it warms up and the snow starts melting the water has

somewhere to go and doesn’t flood the streets which then poses a hazard if it freezes,” he explained.

Laros added the city would look at by-law measures only in extreme circumstances.

“If it’s a case where the snow is just too much and the resident shovelled but the plow came back and filled it in again, that’s a spot where we realize someone tried. What we are doing now is removing snowbanks on the congested roads so residents can be ready for the next snow event.”

Rich Fleming is Ingersoll’s public works boss and said the ten staff members of his team also ran into the same issue Woodstock did with hours of service limitations. He added once the main roads are cleared, they will head into subdivisions.

“We didn’t get a lot of complaints, maybe 10 emails and phone calls. The team did a great job of keeping up. We had to use the snowblowers on the sidewalks which is time-con-

suming so some of the sidewalks took two days.”

The Town of Ingersoll takes care of snow and ice on its sidewalks once six centimetres have fallen. Staff will then spring into action on weekends to clear them. Unlike Woodstock, there is no by-law for residents to clear their own sidewalks.

Fleming said the town has used a good chunk of the snow removal budget but as long as the fall is light in terms of snowfall, they should stay in the black.

“I know we aren’t over it yet but it has to go into the fall. Hopefully, we don’t get much snow and we should be ok.”

Another challenge for area municipalities of late is a shortage of salt for the roads. Fleming is hoping a shipment will be coming soon.

“We have been told we are in line to get an order and they are pulling it out of the mine (in Goderich) now. We are trying to use what we have left sparingly which we always do.

You never know when you are going to run out.”

He added the town could lay a mix of salt and sand or straight sand but that creates more work with street cleaning in the spring.

Oxford County declared a Significant Weather Event Monday at 1:30 p.m. Frank Gross is the County’s Manager of Transportation and said it was a tough few days for county staff. “The crews worked hard all weekend and have been working hard for most of the winter. Just based on the conditions in the rural areas with the high winds it was a losing battle as they made a path through an area that quickly drifted in behind them. It was a challenge for them to keep up in those conditions.”

Gross added the lower-tier municipalities, including East Zorra-Tavistock, also made declarations and were focusing on their busiest roads which meant they weren’t able to get to some of the lower volume roads.

## London developer unhappy with Woodstock council rejecting development plans

LEE GRIFFI

*Local Journalism Initiative Reporter*

Woodstock City Council recently turned down a development known as 401 Lakeview Drive in the north end of the city, but the developer is vowing to use any and all available tools to see the proposal built.

“Farhi Holdings Corporation (FHC) submitted a redevelopment proposal at our site after over three years of technical studies, consultation with staff and neighbours and support from councillors and provincial partners who wished to see increased density on this site,” explained Jim Bujouves, President of the London-based company.

“Understanding the close proximity to an existing neighbourhood, FHC made several changes in a resubmitted application that among other things: added underground parking for the mid-rise buildings, increased the park space, increased the tree protection area, had independent peer reviews of our traffic study and rearticulated density to County Road 59 away from the lower density units. These changes not only met the demands of the opposing neighbours at the time but also received full staff support and led to their recommendation to approve our development.”

Bujouves added that unfortunately, Woodstock City Council chose to deny staff’s recommendation and put loud NIMBYism ahead of rationale planning practice and meeting Provincial housing targets that the Mayor and Council personally signed on to meet.

“It is detrimental to the housing crisis and our younger generations when we gatekeep exclusively single-family housing and actively have local councillors facilitating clear NIMBYism from those who already enjoy owning and affording a home.”

He said his company finds this decision by council hypocritical as the city is currently investigating annexing valuable farmland from East Zorra-Tavistock, a move only delayed because EZT’s Secondary Plan approval has not been approved by the province.

“Their own studies show they are out of developable land. We believe that council cannot deny intensification projects supported by their own staff while looking to expand their municipal boundaries. We are hopeful that our application will receive Oxford County Council support and if not, FHC is prepared to use the full rights afforded to us by the Planning Act to ensure Provincial housing targets are met.”

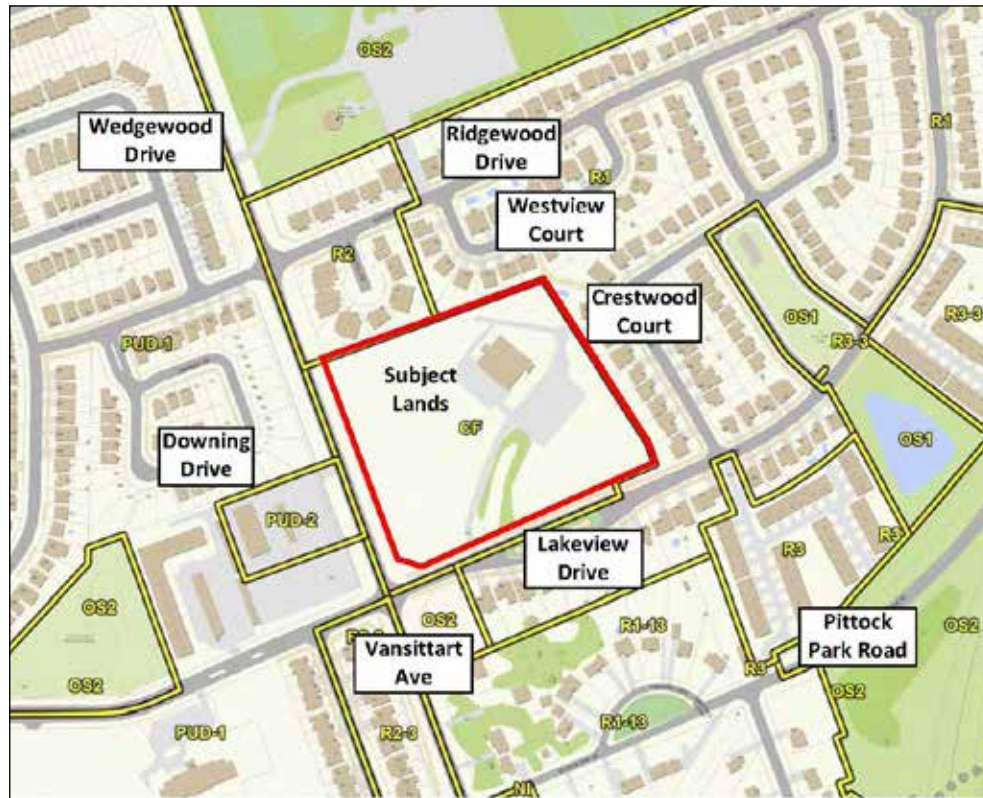
Those rights include an appeal at the Ontario Land Tribunal, a provincial body which hears and adjudicates matters related to land use planning, environmental and natural features, heritage protection, land valuation, land compensation, municipal finance, and related matters.

Council voted unanimously against the development although Bernia Martin was absent as she was campaigning as the Liberal candidate in the provincial election. Council’s main beef with the project, along with a number of area residents, is that it is simply too dense and doesn’t fit in well with the current makeup of the neighbourhood.

The motion to turn down the development was made by Coun. Deb Tait.

“This is way too dense for this community. As for the traffic study, I live a block from the (Vansittart) bridge. Yesterday I went to cross the street, Vansittart across from Vincent, and there was a lineup of at least five or six blocks. The cars had to wait four lights to get through and that’s with one lane closed.”

She added she can’t imagine the amount of traffic the area would see with



(CITY OF WOODSTOCK IMAGE)

**Woodstock councillors recently turned down a proposed development in the city’s north end.**

the amount of housing in the Farhi proposal.

“We don’t have the infrastructure for it, we aren’t ready for it,” she added.

Tait also thanked residents for their hard work and presentations speaking against the residential development but she is fully aware of what is likely coming next.

“I think your biggest issue going forward is going to be the appeal process and you’re going to have to yell and scream to the press and hopefully get some kind of awareness of what’s going on and how important this is for our community that this does not move forward.”

Tait has said many times during her

tenure on council that residential developments do not pay their way.

“Current taxpayers are going to bear the burden of all this development. We are going to need more police and more emergency services. We don’t even have a fire department on that side of the city which we have required for years. I can not imagine having to get vehicles over there. You are going to have to do whatever you can to motivate and get the press to pay attention because I think this is very important to our municipality.”

There is no word yet when Farhi will present its plan to Oxford County Council.



# Former Norwich retirement home worker charged with fraud

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Oxford Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) has arrested and charged a Tillsonburg woman after a fraud investigation that stemmed from multiple incidents at a retirement home in Norwich.

Last August, members of the OPP Oxford detachment were notified of a reported fraud at a retirement home in Norwich.

The initial investigation determined there were several victims with an estimated loss of over \$50,000. Police say the amount of missing money has now reached more than \$190,000. The investigation is ongoing.

A 50-year-old woman has been charged with one count of fraud over \$5,000. The name of the charged party is not being released due to concerns for their well-being, according to police. The London Free Press recently talked to the woman who was charged. She told the newspaper she feared for her safety.

"I've been getting threatening messages, and my family's been getting threatening messages. People want to see me destroyed and want to hurt me."

While police have not released her name, the investigation centred around Julie Vitias who was employed at the home before being let go by ownership once details of the investigation emerged. The Echo has reached out to Vitias several times but has not received a response.

"I'm glad it is kind of over with and I am glad for the families. They know who is really responsible for everything," said a former coworker who did not want her identity revealed and is

being called Jane.

Despite just one count of fraud, Jane said she was told the penalty would be the same if multiple fraud charges were laid.

"I just hope she gets over a year because if she gets a year less a day she only has to go to a local jail. If she gets over a year she goes to prison."

Jane said five former employees have remained close friends even after the closure of the home and the loss of their jobs. She added staff likely won't be called to testify because they had no idea about the alleged financial abuse.

"We were calling the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA) and Ana, the home's general manager, about the treatment of the residents, and the treatment of staff, we thought that's all it was about but then I found about the rooms they thought were empty."

Jane said Trillium's ownership likely had no idea those rooms did, in fact, have residents in them. She added some residents were also being charged for services they shouldn't have to pay for.

"She was charging residents for things she had no right to like ambulances. If anyone had to go in an ambulance there is no charge when the home calls."

The accused has been released from custody and is scheduled to appear before an Ontario Court of Justice at a later date, likely in March.

If you suspect someone you know may be a victim of these frauds, contact the Oxford OPP.

Should you wish to remain anonymous, you may call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or submit an online tip at [www.oxfordcrimestoppers.com](http://www.oxfordcrimestoppers.com) where you may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$2000.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

## Echo

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# Grant Haven Media partners with Paris Independent

## Paris' online newspaper will launch print edition in March



STEWART GRANT

Publisher

“Start the Presses!” was the big headline in the Saturday, Feb. 15 online edition of The Paris Independent, as managing editor Casandra Turnbull broke the exciting news to her hometown that their newspaper would be available for the first time in print format on Wednesday, Mar. 19.

Effective Mar. 1, the Paris Independent becomes the 11th newspaper under our Grant Haven Media banner as we continue to follow our mandate of “restoring local journalism, one community at a time.”

I have admired the work of the Paris Independent for over a year; ever since our company expanded into Brant County in January

2024 with the purchase of the Brant Farms publication. The Paris Independent, like the St. Marys Independent in my hometown, developed locally in response to failures of the media conglomerates to safeguard local news reporting. Three years after St. Marys saw the closure of its Journal-Argus, Paris lost its Star.

Paris Independent founder Chris Whelan wrote in his history column this week about the rich history of journalism in Paris. “The Paris Star, a stalwart publication, stood as a testament to the town’s commitment to news dissemination ... Had fate been kinder, the Paris Star would have celebrated its 175th anniversary in 2025. Alas, the echoes of its presses fell silent in 2020, hushed by the hand of Postmedia.”

Though Postmedia had closed the Paris Star during the pandemic, along with 14 other community newspapers, a grassroots campaign began the following year to fill this void. “Throughout the majority of 2021, our community endured a notable absence of a vital communication

channel precisely when it was most needed,” recalled Whelan, who put a call on social media hoping to find like-minded people to help launch a new digital publication. “The outpouring of support was truly overwhelming, notably from key figures such as Casandra, the former editor of The Paris Star until 2011.”

The first edition of the online Paris Independent was launched in September of 2021. For each of the last 180 weeks, Whelan, Turnbull, and the rest of their Paris-based team have put out a digital newspaper, building up a loyal following of over 2,000 readers. Still, an online paper has its limitations. It’s not something that you can see or be aware of when you are walking the streets of Paris and visiting the stores, restaurants, or coffee shops.

Last month, I met with Chris for lunch at the Cobblestone Public House in Paris and suggested that we establish a partnership with the goal of converting the Paris Independent into a print publication so that it may make an even greater impact to its community, with a more visible pres-



(CINDY WHELAN PHOTO)

Some of the Paris Independent team got together at the Paris Inn recently to plan for the first print edition and beyond. Pictured from left to right: George Le Gresley (Sports Reporter), Michelle Malvaso (Photographer), Stewart Grant (Publisher), Casandra Turnbull (Managing Editor), and Chris Whelan (Editor).

ence and a powerful new distribution model.

Following our meeting, Chris, who I’ve found quickly to be a kindred spirit, consulted with Casandra who agreed that this was the perfect time to take their newspaper in this direction.

“This was always our end goal,” said Casandra of a print edition. “When we started the Paris Indepen-

dent, we promised the community that if it was viable, one day we would roll out a print edition. With a strong online presence and digital footprint, it’s only natural that we take that next step in growth and publish a weekly edition that will reach stores, businesses and community centres across Paris. Even as the community has adjusted to digital news, we still get the occa-

sional question, ‘where can I pick up a copy?’ There will always be a longing for a print edition, something tangible to hold in your hands and flip the pages as you digest what is happening in your own backyard.”

The presses will begin to roll soon, with the first print edition being delivered to Paris on Mar. 19, while also being available online at [www.granthaven.com](http://www.granthaven.com).

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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

Guiding Principles

1. Everyone has a story

2. The news should be free for all to enjoy

3. Good news beats bad news

4. A Newspaper should be a community effort (contribute to your local paper!)

5. Newspapers document history

6. Newspapers strengthen communities

7. Advertisers, big or small, should profit from their ads (meaning sensible ad rates)

8. Newspapers should be locally-owned and operated



# After three years of Russian occupation, the Ukrainian Community of Woodstock remembers with rally in the Friendly City

CONNOR LUCZKA

*Echo Correspondent*

On Feb. 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of eastern Ukraine, marking the beginning of a war that has altered the state of Europe and the world.

On Feb. 22, 2025, to commemorate the third anniversary of the war, residents across Woodstock adorned their cars with the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag, proudly displaying them as they took to the streets.

The car rally was organized by the Ukrainian Community of Woodstock (UCW). In written correspondence, Yevhen Koshulko, UCW president, said about 20 cars joined the rally that Saturday and travelled the breadth of Woodstock.

“Everyone who joined the rally tried to convey to everyone who watched it that the war in Ukraine is ongoing and the whole world must help stop the enemy, the Russian Federation,” Koshulko said. “When the convoy of cars drove through the streets of Woodstock, many people reacted positively to it, which made us understand that they support us too. This is very nice. Because every time we hold any event in support of Ukraine, we aim to draw attention to the great grief that exists in Ukraine.”

He added the war has taken many Ukrainian lives, destroyed cities, many children have been orphaned, and this can go on and on.

The UCW was organized in February 2024, after which it became a member of the Ontario Provincial Council of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. The Saturday rally was the second hosted



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Participants of the Ukrainian Community of Woodstock's car rally on Feb. 22 gather in front of Bethany Lutheran Church. The rally was to commemorate the third anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which was on Feb. 24.

by the UCW. In 2024, it marked the second anniversary with its first car rally. Additionally, it has hosted a number of events, such as a presentation on child abduction and celebrations for Vyshyvanka Day (an international celebration honouring the embroidered clothing of the same name).

Koshulko is originally from the Poltava region, in the central part of Ukraine. In June 2022, he came to

Canada with his wife and daughter. He said that Canada has done a lot for Ukrainians in the country and abroad, thanking Canadians for their continued support.

Just recently, news regarding accelerated peace talks between Russia and the U.S. broke, though the negotiations drew heavy criticism across the world due to the lack of Ukraine being at the table – something Koshulko reiterated.

“Peace negotiations are important, but on Ukraine's terms. Peace must be fair. That is, the most important thing is security guarantees for Ukraine in the future. Otherwise, after the ceasefire, there may be another attempt by the Russian Federation to seize Ukraine, but with more powerful pressure.”

Still, Koshulko remains hopeful. “We believe that the whole world will be able to unite and stop the enemy.”

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### Woodstock Horticultural Society Announces a new location

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Answer: Teeth

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French: Dentaire  
German: Zahn

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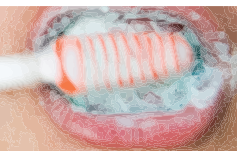
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Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

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## CONTINUED FROM FRONT



(TVDSB PHOTO)

We followed up with the TVDSB's communications department and board chair Beth Mai after a report of the

ever, we feel like a policing program is a band-aid and it's a blame on students, although ultimately, they are or should be responsible for their actions. The grassroots underlying issues cannot be fixed with policing. It can only be fixed with proper funding, proper programming, resources and adequate staffing."

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Oxford OPP Briefs

LEE GRIFFI  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Norwich man faces long list of charges

Police have arrested and charged a teenager with multiple offences after being dispatched to a disturbance in the Township of Norwich.

On Feb. 19 at approximately 5:45 a.m., police were called to a disturbance and learned that an assault had taken place. A suspect was located but

several OPP officers were assaulted in the process but no serious injuries were sustained.

A 19-year-old from the Township of Norwich has been charged with two counts of assault with a weapon, two counts of assaulting a peace officer, resisting arrest, uttering threats, taking a motor vehicle without consent and failing to comply with a release order.

The accused was held for a bail hearing and was remanded into custody.

Woodstock Police Briefs

LEE GRIFFI  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Hamilton woman arrested in connect to Woodstock vehicle thefts

On Feb. 14, a two-week operation led to the arrest of a 28-year-old woman from Hamilton involved in vehicle thefts. Woodstock police say she was arrested and charged with possession of stolen property, dangerous driving, flight from police, prohibited driving and breach of probation. She was held in custody pending a bail hearing.

In 2024, 113 vehicles were reported stolen in Woodstock, highlighting a growing issue across the province. In response, the Woodstock Police

Service have initiated some proactive approaches to fighting auto theft. Last year, police recovered 46 stolen vehicles and arrested 12 people for possession of stolen property.

The most common vehicles stolen in Woodstock are GMC Sierra, Chevrolet Silverado, Dodge Ram, and Toyota Tundra pickup trucks. Police recommend owners of these models take extra precautions such as using steering wheel locks, parking in well-lit areas, key fob signal blocking devices (faraday box/bag), installing video surveillance, and using garage parking.

The Woodstock Police Service urges the public to report any suspicious activity or individuals.

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# Route to the Past – Ingersoll – a Town Built on Cheese

SCOTT GILLIES

Contributor

Imagine a wheel of cheese which weighed 7,300 pounds. That 3300 kilogram single cylinder of pressed cheese curds did more to impact the growth of Ingersoll, Oxford County, Ontario and even Canada than most other commodities of the mid to late 19th century. And here is why.

In 1866, a handful of Ingersoll-area cheesemakers came up with a way to promote their product to foreign markets. The mammoth cheese was made at the site of the Elm Hurst Inn, then travelled to the New York State Fair, then to Liverpool where it garnered such attention as to capture the British market for Canadian-made cheese. The success of this one marketing gimmick led to the establishment of some 100 different cheese factories in Oxford County and more across southern Ontario. The Canadian cheese industry was established. It also led to the development of the Canadian Dairymen's Association – an agency to promote self-improvement amongst cheesemakers by way of annual conventions, guest speakers and instructors. The first meeting took place in 1867, in Ingersoll.

This town grew to become the market town for all the small factories in the region and all the wooden boxes of cheese shipped overseas to England all bore the name "Ingersoll". In time, Ingersoll became synonymous with cheese, and vice versa.

The success of the Canadian cheese industry triggered industrial growth as other entrepreneurs vied for a slice of the profits by supplying dairy equipment like metal pails and milk cans, cheese vats and presses. Along the way, people needed repairs to their machinery, or they needed to drill a hole to assemble parts together. Hence John Morrow established the Screw & Nut Company on the north side of the Thames River, and E.A. Wilson established Ingersoll Machine & Tool on the south.

The shipment of tons of cheese required improvements in provincial transportation. Farmers originally delivered their raw milk to the nearest factory, then shippers began picking up the milk at the farm gate. Dirt paths became gravel and then were Macadamized. Railroads began to

branch out across the province. Refriger-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

ated railroad cars were invented so that cheese could be shipped to Atlantic harbours for export.

As the dividend cheques started to grow in value, so too did farmsteads. Farmers took more care in their crops and cattle. Purebred cattle, offering increased production, were introduced in the 1880s. The first Holsteins in Canada originated with a herd from Cassell in Oxford County. The Dairymen's Association helped to promote these farm improvements. They wanted to see an increase in cheese production so they encouraged farmers to make their own improvements as well.

Mechanization on the farm began to change as a result of this increased demand for cheese and milk production. Locally, the Noxon Brothers foundry became one of the largest manufacturers of farm implements in the country. Not only did they sell equipment locally and across the nation, but also internationally with markets in Europe, Russia and Australia.

The success of the cheese industry triggered others to go into business selling other agricultural products including apples, turkeys and pork. Again, the Dairymen's Association helped with the production of pork by encouraging farmers to breed 200-pound hogs. Lean hams and bacon were what the English market wanted and so Canadian farmers began to raise

uct of cheese, farmers profited and Ingersoll became site of the one of the largest pork processing plants in North America.

Being the Dairy Capital of Canada, Oxford County attracted the attention of American investors in the late 1800s, in particular representatives of the Gail Borden Company. In 1899, the first Canadian operation of this condensed milk company accepted delivery of milk to their factory in Ingersoll (site of the grocery store on King St. W.).

All these various factories needed employees. There was a surge in immigration from Britain in the opening decade of the 20th century. Several people of English and Scottish decent came to town for work.

Coincidental to the growth in population was the growth of churches and other forms of social welfare, community service and entertainment. The Salvation Army for example started one of their earliest citadels

in Canada in Ingersoll. It would branch out to Woodstock within a few months. Church groups provided an outlet for the ladies of the house. They were busy fundraising for a wide variety of projects by such means as social teas, strawberry socials, etc. The Lady Dufferin chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) in Ingersoll was one of the first established in Canada. Meanwhile the men were kept off the streets by joining fraternal organizations like the Sons of England, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Freemasonry, and the Caledonian Society. Many of these organizations worked together to host parades and celebrations in town. They saw to the establishment of public parks for sporting and leisure events. This spirit of public pride and support was most obvious during the First World War when the town of Ingersoll raised over \$1 million for the Victory Loan campaign of 1919 – the most of any town of its size in Canada.

Of course, the growth in population demanded goods and services and products to consume. Small Mom and Pop shops dotted the downtown core. There were several shopkeepers who sold groceries, some specialized in fruit and candies, while others ran newspaper and tobacco shops.

People needed places to stay. There were hotels in town for travelling salesmen, and apartments over every storefront downtown. Families lived together, either as multi-generational units or as new-found friends. Many of the finer homes on Oxford Street were constructed by the farmers who were able to retire and live off the profits of their labours.

The combined efforts of everyone working in Ingersoll by the turn of the 20th century allowed Ingersoll to boast that they were in the top 10 percent of exports in the entire country. Not bad for a little town built on cheese!

*Route2thepast@gmail.com*

## Weekend Quiz

by Jake Grant

1. What mathematical holiday is celebrated annually on March 14th?
2. What is generally more powerful: a 12-gauge shotgun or a 20-gauge shotgun?
3. What is the northernmost country capital in the world?
4. What is the currency of Japan?
5. Who played Amanda Woodward on the TV show Melrose Place?
6. What version of the iPhone is being released this week?
7. How many U.S. states start with the letter A?
8. What Canadian female singer hit the music charts with a cover of John Denver's hit song "Leaving on a Jet Plane"?
9. What element on the periodic table is represented by the letter K?
10. Who scored the winning goal for Canada at the recent 4 Nations Face-Off final?

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# Counting birds in the backyard and beyond a valuable scientific tool

JEFF TRIBE

*Echo Correspondent*

Sharron and Richard Skevington find every day a great one to count birds in around their six backyard feeders, whether or not it's an 'officially' sanctioned global event.

"The snow came and the birds came with it," said Richard, noting a high level of activity, Sharron recording around 10 different species daily. "It's really been great."

The couple, which has been going through 40 kilograms of mixed, sunflower and Niger seed and suet every two weeks, receives considerable enjoyment viewing a list including blue jays, cowbirds, mourning doves - and the predatory Cooper's hawk the latter have attracted.

What happens in their suburban Hickson backyard is certainly of interest to the Skevingtons. However, when results from like-minded citizen scientists across the globe are recorded, submitted and compiled, a valuable research data bank is created, and population trends are revealed along with potential environmental concerns.

Data is submitted in many ways, at any time through portals including eBird Canada, a collaborative project managed by Birds Canada. There are also special events and concentrated efforts bringing the birding community together for the equivalent of an e-blast of information.

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC, <https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/great-backyard-bird-count>) is a global initiative launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society and supported by Birds Canada. Coinciding with Family Day Weekend in Ontario, participants are asked to record birds seen in their backyard or other locations during a minimum 15-minute period between February 14-17th, although many - most in fact - go well past that baseline.

In 2024, an estimated 624,000 participants in 210 countries or subregions submitted 384,416 eBird checklists identifying 7,920 species of birds. Canada ranks third

in the world behind The United States and India, with 31,151 checklists and 261 species reported.

The GBBC is an important tool in a kit which features many avenues. Richard filled in for his son Jeff this year as compiler for the Woodstock Christmas Bird Count (WCBC). Held Saturday, December 14th, the WCCB is one of many annual holiday events held between that day and January 5th, a time when a majority of north-south migration has ceased. Participants count birds in a consistent 25-kilometre radius around a designated point, locally, the bridge over Pittock Lake along Innerkip Road. Twenty-three birders in nine parties recorded 62 species between 6 a.m. and a 5:30 p.m. potluck, close to the annual average and ten below a historical high of 72.

Notable species included the first Gadwall duck of the Woodstock count, on Pittock which was just starting to ice up. A high number of bald eagles (16) indicates their rebound in numbers. There were also signs of climate change said Skevington, including 98 sandhill cranes and a crow count of 49,673, the latter reduced from normals of between 70,000 and 80,000, indicating more birds are comfortable staying in the Ottawa area than previously thought.

"They're not having to move down."

It was also a good day for owls, the second Northern Sawwhet and Short-Eared owls identified in the count, along with two Great Horned and 15 Eastern Screech owls.

"That's not bad," said Skevington, adding 21 American Robins also were recorded.

"That shows there was still some food out there."

Hawk eyes

Woodstock resident Chad Cornish recorded 34 raptors during his Winter Raptor Survey Sunday, December 22, in conjunction with the Hawk Migration Association of North America (<https://www.hawkmigration.org>). Similar to Christmas bird counts, Cornish follows a consistent timeline and route annually, taking in var-



This blue jay popped by one of six Skevington feeders.

(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

ied agricultural, lakefront, commercial and urban habitat.

He and wife Kim travel from Woodstock to Pt. Burwell, Port Bruce, Hawk Cliff, St. Thomas' outskirts, Dorchester, Belmont, Beachville and back home, recording species and habitat details along with GPS coordinates for each sighting.

"And you just keep doing that until your route is finished," said Chad.

A North American initiative, theirs was the only Canadian route this year, down from three in 2024. They saw six species including 18 Red-tailed Hawks, which Cornish calls the 'Swiss army knife' of raptors.

"They can do it all, they can glide, they can soar, they can hover, they take all kinds of different prey... and they are truly magnificent to watch."

They also recorded nine bald eagles, two rough-legged hawks, two Cooper's hawks and two American Kestrels, a species of interest due to falling numbers.

"Scientists are not sure why."

They also spotted a Peregrine falcon upon their return.

"Downtown Woodstock," said Cornish, of a bird that can often be seen perching on the church steeple at Dundas and Mill

Streets. "We've got one wintering here."

Raptors are an important part of the eco-system, and populations are generally on the rise following a DDT ban. Some species are struggling due to factors including urban sprawl and habitat loss. They have a hard life, 50 per cent not making it to their second year.

"The number one reason is starvation," says Cornish.

He also participates in an annual raptor migration site count at Holiday Beach in Amherstburg, one of 300 in North America, as well as other bird counts.

"There are lots of different projects to get involved in if anyone is interested," Cornish said, citing Project Feeder Watch (<https://feederwatch.org>) through Birds Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Services Breeding Bird Survey (<https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/breeding-bird-survey>) as two additional examples.

His involvement reflects personal interest and the fact bird population trends can be, quite literally the canary in the coal mine in terms of an environmental warning.

"If something is missing out of the eco-system, then something else is going to be missing - and where does it end?"



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Chad Cornish participates in several bird counting events, including the Hawk Migration Association of North America's Raptor Migration Survey.



Richard Skevington is a passionate birder/enthusiastic citizen scientist. (JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)



# United Way Oxford has ribbon-cutting at Ingersoll Light House



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Left to right: Zach Hollingham (Oxford County Community Health Centre), Jade Davies (OC-CHC), Rebecca Smith (Oxford County), Erica Unger (United Way Oxford), Mayor Brian Petrie (Town of Ingersoll), Cody Groat (Ingersoll Community Foundation), Kelly Gilson (UWO), Murray Borndahl (ICF), Brad Hammond (OCCHC), Ian Robertson (ICF).

## STAFF

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

The United Way Oxford staff, board and volunteers had full hearts on Valentine's Day as they welcomed elected officials, partners, funders, volunteers and community members to celebrate the official ribbon cutting for the opening of the Ingersoll Light House.

The house, currently under renovations, is expected to open to residents early in March. The name 'Light House,' initially selected for a Tillsonburg Transitional Housing project that opened in May 2023, was chosen as it is there to provide a beacon of light and hope, to guide residents to safety, and to help people find their way. The Ingersoll Light House will provide much-needed service with on-site wrap-around supports to help move participants toward a better future story.

"Valentine's Day was the perfect day to celebrate – after all, this Ingersoll Light House is an example of the house that Local Love built. From a significant funding grant provided by Oxford County to the financing assistance of the Ingersoll Community Foundation to the staffing commitment of our partner the Oxford County Community Health Centre through to project leadership of Chuck Louttet from Vienwood Inc., and the incredible generosity and support of so many local businesses, we have seen a community come together to make a difference to directly fund affordable, safe and supportive housing in Ingersoll," said Kelly Gilson, Executive Director, United Way Oxford.

"We know that the ultimate solution to the homelessness crisis is housing, and United Way Oxford is so proud to

expand our transitional housing program to offer a 6-bedroom home to better meet the housing needs in Ingersoll," she added.

The need for supportive transitional housing in Oxford County has been identified as a priority by a variety of local working committees and government. United Way's new addition of a six-bedroom fully renovated, fully furnished home will provide much-needed space to support our Ingersoll and Oxford County citizens who are coping with homelessness or housing insecurity. Oxford Board and staff are committed to action and to moving services forward, which led to our Tillsonburg Light House, and it continues to inspire us to act because we see the impact on people's lives.

"Oxford County's commitment has made this new Ingersoll initiative possible. They understand that there is a need for housing, but also for the support to be there to ensure residents receive the assistance required to meet their individual needs that will allow them to get back on their feet and move forward to a better future," said Gilson.

Together, United Way Oxford, Oxford County, the Oxford County Community Health Centre, and the Ingersoll Community Foundation are creating a future where everyone has a place to call home.

For those interested in making a financial donation to support the new Ingersoll Light House, your gift can be directly allocated to help with United Way's ongoing capital, renovation and operational expenses. If you would like additional information, or to learn of ways to get involved, reach out to Kelly Gilson.



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Susan Veenstra  
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# Another successful CNOTY held in Woodstock

Community members gathered at College Avenue Church, Coats for Kids, the Sharing Table, The Christmas Place, and many other essential services provided by the organization.

The annual fundraiser for Operation Sharing helped raise critical funds for programs that support individuals facing hurt, hunger, and homelessness in the community. Participants braved the cold to walk in solidarity with those who rely on The Inn all-night shelter at Old St. Paul's Church, the day space at Col-

lege Avenue Church, Coats for Kids, the Sharing Table, The Christmas Place, and many other essential services provided by the organization.

The walk brought together families, friends and local supporters, all committed to making a difference. For those who could not attend but still wish to contribute, donations can be made at <https://bit.ly/4laxeBA>. Together, the Woodstock community proved that even on the coldest night, compassion and generosity can bring warmth to those in need.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Large turnout in support Coldest Night of The Year Fundraiser and walk. Together, they have raised over \$146,000, surpassing their goal by 104%!



Dignitaries attending were Woodstock Police Chief Rod Wilkinson, Scott McKague, Woodstock Deputy Police Chief, Nick Novacich, Woodstock Mayor Jerry Acchione, top fundraiser Sylvia Kiers, Woodstock Police Inspector Jamie Taylor, number two fundraiser David Mair, and Operation Sharing ED Tim Dukes.



Artwork created at the event was displayed with Haden, Amanda and Tim Pattison, Daniel, Elia, Leah and James for Do Good Oxford County.

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# ISAN Oxford's CommUNITY gathering highlights social issues ahead of election

EMILY STEWART

*Echo Correspondent*

Ahead of the 2025 Ontario Provincial Election, community leaders and Oxford County citizens gathered online to discuss social issues of concern.

ISAN (Indigenous Solidarity Awareness Network) Oxford held a CommUNITY gathering on Feb. 16 via Zoom. Environmental and human rights advocates shared their thoughts and concerns over issues such as colonialism, human trafficking, discrimination towards the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, intimate partner violence, and the environment. The event was to be in-person at Museum Square but became virtual due to winter storms. MPP candidates for the Oxford riding - Liberal Bernia Martin and NDP Kadijah Haru - were in attendance and received several questions about how they will tackle a variety of issues if elected.

Patricia Marshal-Desutter, director of ISAN, told the Echo that she was pleased with the discussion and learning opportunity. Marshal-Desutter, who is Two-Spirit and uses she/they pronouns, added that the online gathering brought together several organizations.

"With the way our society is shaped, and funding is distributed, often times organizations and institutions end up operating in silos which ultimately create gaps," they said. "When we facilitate cross sector communication, we can illuminate those gaps and find ways to work together and value the intersections of our work in order to help our communities thrive and move forward towards positive social change."

tal change."

Voter turnout and political apathy was often brought up during the gathering. The 2022 Ontario Provincial Election had just over 44 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballot - which set a record for the lowest turnout in Ontario Election history.

"When over half the voting population isn't using their voice for a multitude of reasons then this means our political representation is actually the result of the wishes of the few instead of the intended majority," Marshal-Desutter said. "This is not to say that I think it would drastically change results, I just believe that the results are not truly representative of our provinces wishes and population if less than half of the voting population is casting their ballots."

They added that after the election, regardless of the results, networking and gathering must continue to foster social change.

"We all have the power to create change by our actions and the conversations we choose to have," she said. "Be it a conversation with a neighbour colleague or loved one about an issue that matters to you, joining a local committee working on an issue close to your heart, donating to organizations that matter to you and advocating to your local government to give adequate supports to services and organizations. Truly there are so many ways in which we can make an impact."

Marshal-Desutter plans to use the lessons learned from hosting the CommUNITY gathering ahead of the Ontario Provincial Election towards hosting another event when a Federal Election happens.

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# Community Futures Oxford celebrates International Women's Day a little early

CONNOR LUCZKA

*Echo Correspondent*

Carole Eriksson of Oxford Women in Networking told the audience at Community Futures (CF) Oxford's annual International Women's Day event that success doesn't need to be overnight – it could be achieved one day at a time.

"We work for a one per cent improvement a week, and if you can improve one percent a week it's more than 50 per cent a year," Eriksson shared. "Even if you do one per cent a month, how many people improve more than 12 per cent a year?"

On Feb. 25, Eriksson joined Alisha Wilson of Transitions Equine Assisted Encompassing Wellness, Kirsten Young of Heart of Oxford, and Jennifer Peace-Hall of Finkle Street Tap and Grill at the Elm Hurst Inn and Spa in Ingersoll to explore collaboration, partnerships, and the many women-owned businesses of the county in a panel discussion.

All four women are business-leaders in the region and spoke about the success the supportive ecosystem that they and other leaders foster in Oxford County has had.

Peace-Hall, for instance, came to the panel with her perspective on the hospitality industry. Once, competing restaurants were just that, competition, but now the industry is more supportive.

"I think kindness and courage and fostering a great environment is key – and again, if we start with ourselves and build it out collectively, we can build a better place for everyone based on community collaboration and cooperation," she said. "Gone are the times of competition. Like the restaurant before was so cutthroat. I support every other establishment in the area. I want everyone to do well. We all need to understand we're all connected, right? So, if we're doing well for one another, we're doing well for ourselves."

Eriksson, Wilson, Young, and Peace-Hall also



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Alisha Wilson of Transitions Equine Assisted Encompassing Wellness, Kirsten Young of Heart of Oxford, Carole Eriksson of Oxford Women in Networking, and Jennifer Peace-Hall of Finkle Street Tap and Grill were the panelists for Community Futures (CF) Oxford's International Women's Day celebration at the Elm Hurst Inn and Spa on Feb. 25.

agreed on some of the key tenets to success in collaboration: trust, integrity, and truly listening, among others.

"Today was all about gathering women entrepreneurs together in one place so they can provide some inspiration to others around the benefits of collaboration and partnerships to build their businesses, to build our community," Janet Wakutz, moderator and CED program coordinator at CF Oxford, told the Echo after the panel concluded. "I think it went better than I expected. I think our panelists were very engaging. I think they demonstrated courage

in sharing their experiences, and I think they really demonstrated collaboration and partnership just in the way they conducted themselves."

Wakutz thanked those who came and the sponsor, Libro Credit Union, for their role in making the day a success.

CF Oxford hosts an International Women's Day event each February, along with an event in the fall for Business Week. They are planning a renovation at its building in the next month or two, Wakutz shared, and plan on hosting more events once the space is more suitable.

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# OAP Community Theatre recruiting year-round participants

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

The newest local community theatre organization is dedicated to one-act productions and building community.

One Act Players (OAP) Community Theatre is the first new community theatre organization in Oxford County in three decades. Before OAP Community Theatre, Embro's Thistle Theatre was the newest in the county when it was founded in 1994.

"This is a new thing and we're walking out on a limb to do this, but we're excited about the process of doing what we're doing," said Ted McLauchlin, executive producer.

OAP Community Theatre held the Festival of One Act Plays (FOAP) in Ingersoll and with Theatre Woodstock before it branched out into its own organization. OAP Community Theatre will focus on one-act plays and will present Lights, Camera, Murder in June.

"We are sticking to a one-act format, so our plays are generally going to be shorter, more fringe style, skit style, maybe a little bit of alternative theatre as opposed to traditional, two-act plays," explained artistic director Kim DiLello.

DiLello said the shorter theatre productions are welcomed by audiences. With short-form content like TikTok videos and Instagram Reels being pop-



(TED MCLAUCHLIN PHOTO)

**OAP Community Theatre, known for featuring one-act play productions, is hoping to gather new members to be part of the group in one way or another.**

ular, there's more need for short-form theatre pieces.

"We're used to scrolling and seeing TikTok videos and so the shorter plays. People are busy, they want to come in,

see a show and be out in an hour," she said.

Throughout the year, OAP Community Theatre wants to reach out to adults who haven't dipped their toes into com-

munity theatre and offer various opportunities such as table reads and workshops.

"In a normal community theatre, you come out and do the play and you do the play for three months and the play would happen and that would be the end of that," McLauchlin said. "What we're trying to do in terms of engagement is have a membership that can be involved in community theatre in some aspect."

OAP Community Theatre had 25 people participate in a previous table read and the group discussed it after doing a cold read.

"It was wonderful, and we want to do more things like that," he added.

OAP Community Theatre always opened its doors to those who are interested in trying theatre but felt too intimidated to participate in a multi-act play or musical. The group also wants to bring together a community for people to be creative and get together throughout the year.

"This is what people are looking for as a creative outlet and at the end of the day, the bottom line is we're putting on great theatre as well," McLauchlin said. "Just because the people are new it doesn't mean our standard of theatre is any less."

More information about OAP Community Theatre can be found by visiting online via [www.oapcommunitytheatre.com](http://www.oapcommunitytheatre.com) or through Facebook or Instagram.



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# Woodstock Ingersoll Echo SPORTS

## Ward's Automotive U11 Storm captures International Silver Stick title

JEFF TRIBE

*Echo Correspondent*

The Ward's Automotive U11 South Oxford Storm's coaching staff was thrilled with a 7-1 International Silver Stick championship victory over the host Sarnia Junior Sting. The players were pretty happy too.

"The craziest thing is, they didn't realize how big of a tournament that is to win," laughed head coach Devin Homick, admitting he never got out of regionals. "To pull it off is a pretty big deal."

The Storm saved its best hockey for last in the Jan. 19 final, leading 3-1 after a period and never looking back.

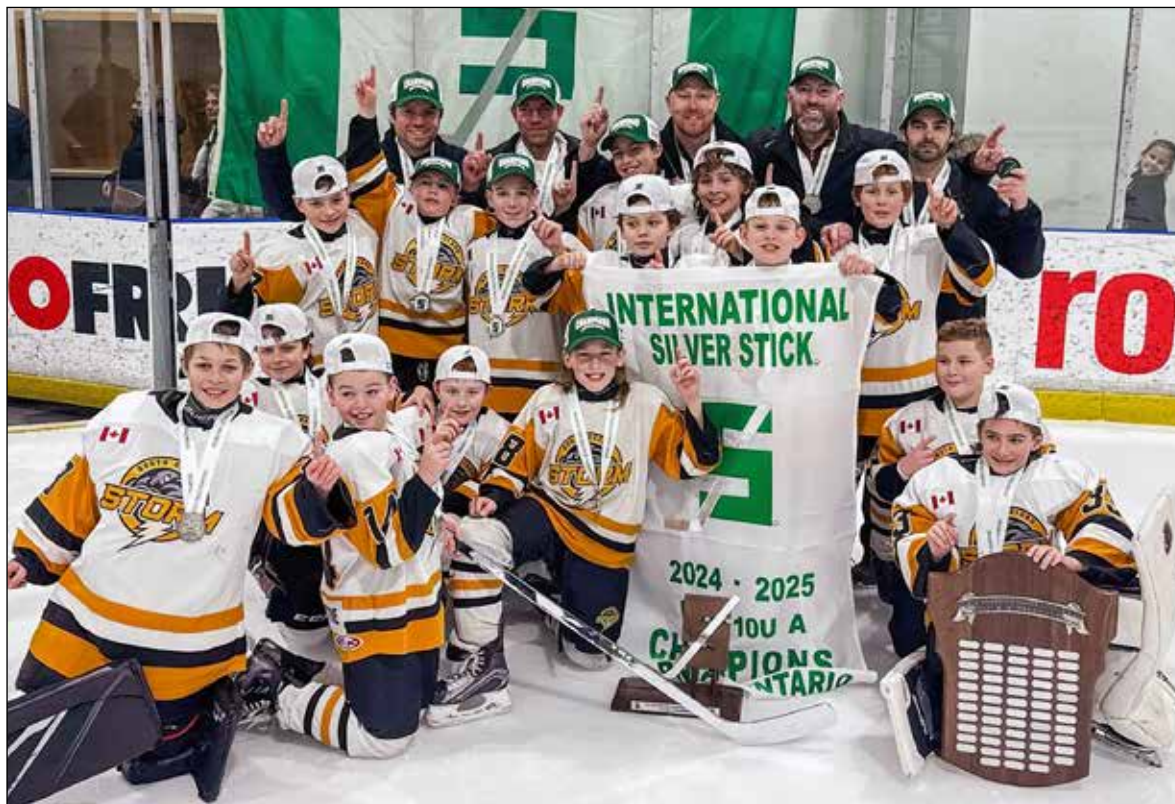
"Our kids came out and played almost a perfect game," said Homick. "As good as they can play."

Carter Balcomb paced the attack with a hat-trick and two assists, Emerson Adam added two goals and three assists, Clark Whatley and Carter Smith a goal each and Brody Biloski two assists.

The morning's semi-final was a much more closely contested outing, in which South Oxford found itself trailing 3-0 early. "We clawed our way back against a good Nebraska team," said Homick.

Of interest was the fact Nebraska was coached by two ex-NHL players, head coach Warren Peters of the Calgary Flames, Dallas Stars, Minnesota Wild and Pittsburgh Penguins, and assistant Jed Ortmeyer, who played with the New York Rangers, Nashville Predators, San Jose Sharks and Minnesota Wild.

The Ward's Automotive U11s scored late in the first period to tie the game at three before the end of the second. Carter



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

**The Ward's Automotive U11 Storm captured the International Silver Stick A title with a 7-1 victory over the host Sarnia Junior Sting.**

Balcomb scored what would stand as the game-winner in the third, rounding a hat-trick into an empty net.

Adam added a goal and two assists, Owen Sazatzky his team's first goal, and Biloski, Max Prouse and Lincoln Whittington a helper apiece.

"No panic, we just got back into playing our game and clawed our way back," said Homick. "That was our biggest challenge."

The Sarnia A draw featured 15 teams, seven American and eight from Ontario. They were divided into three pools of five, with the winners of each pool plus one wild card advancing to the semi-final round.

"To guarantee your spot, you had to win your pool," said Homick. "Every game was important."

The Storm opened against the Vaughan Rangers, scoring 16 seconds into the game en route to a 4-2 win. The game was tied at two after the first period, with South Oxford notching two unanswered markers in the second.

"And held them in the third," said Homick.

Adam figured in on all his team's scoring with two goals and two assists, Biloski added one of each, Balcomb a goal and Tommy Thomson and Whatley each an assist.

The Ward Automotive U11s had an easier time of it in their second outing, skating to a comfortable 10-3 decision over the Traverse City, Michigan North Stars.

"Lots of scoring from lots of kids."

Balcomb finished with four

goals and an assist, Adam a hat-trick and a helper, Carter Smith a goal, with assists to Whatley (2), Biloski (2), Perry Homick (2), Thomson and Matthew Monsere.

Patrick Marleau's son's presence on the San Jose Junior Sharks did not help turn the tide in the Storm's third round-robin game, a 6-3 win that pushed their won-lost record to 3-0.

Adam finished with a hat-trick and an assist, Carter Smith and Balcomb a goal and assist apiece, Biloski a goal and Sazatzky and Brayden Bartram an assist each.

South Oxford closed out pool play with a perfect 4-0 mark and berth in the semi-final with a 6-2 victory over the Mississippi Thunder Kings from Carlton Place, Ontario. Both

teams entered the game undefeated, although the Thunder Kings had a tie in their record. South Oxford built a commanding 6-0 lead before giving up two late goals.

"Overall, our kids just played good hockey," Homick summed up.

Adam finished with a hat-trick and an assist, Smith a goal and an assist, Balcomb and Biloski a goal apiece, and Smith, Thomson and Whatley one helper each.

The team got to carry the tournament's namesake around the ice in celebration, each player receiving a representative pin made of sterling silver, as well as a team banner in recognition of their achievement, and official mention in Hockey Hall of Fame records.

"They were pretty fired up," said Homick, again, almost as much as the coaching staff. "I think we get more worked up than the kids do," he laughed.

The Ward Automotive U11s closed out their regular season undefeated, a 23-0-1 record including a tie against Strathroy in their second-last game. Their 'road to the red hats' (OMHA A tournament April 14-16 in Whitby) will pass through a Shamrock League two-pool round-robin qualifier. South Oxford is in an eight-game home-and-home series with the fourth, fifth, eighth and ninth-place teams, while second, third, sixth and seventh will play a corresponding six-game set. The top two teams from these pools play best-of-three semis, with the two winners advancing to a best-of-three league final for the single OMHA berth.

"You have to run the gauntlet," a cautiously optimistic Homick concluded. "Hopefully our kids are up to it."

# Echo

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# Senior WCI Red Devils battle back to secure OFSAA A volleyball berth

JEFF TRIBE

*Echo Correspondent*

The Woodstock CI Red Devil senior girls rose both to the occasion and an elevated level of play at the Western Ontario Secondary Schools Athletic Association (WOSSAA) A championship on Feb. 21 in their home gym.

“Ecstatic. This was our goal all season,” said coach Pauline Schubert following a 3-1 match victory over a tenacious West Elgin Wildcats squad.

The WOSSAA title and attendant Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) A qualification didn’t come easily. To earn their provincial tournament berth, the Red Devils were forced to meet a two-match challenge beginning with a dramatic come-from-behind semi-final win over the London Christian Lynx that morning.

“And they did,” Schubert smiled. “Absolutely.”

The Red Devils eked out a narrow victory in the first set of the best-of-five final, dropping the second. WCI middle Aurora House, a focal point of the Red Devils’ attack throughout, broke a 13-13 tie with a massive centre kill, blocked out of bounds by the Wildcats. A wide West Elgin kill attempt upped the advantage to 21-19, Ava Bickell coming off a Wildcats timeout with a service ace extending the lead to 23-19. The visitors got it back within a point on a pass off the ceiling and block at the net, however, gave service and a 23-21 lead back to the Red Devils with a serve into the net.

Bolstered by House’s powerful jump serves, WCI closed out the set on a West Elgin kill attempt sail-



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

**WCI middle Aurora House powers home a crucial kill to give her squad a 14-13 lead in the pivotal third set of the WOSSAA A championship match.**

ing wide, left, and an offensive crosscourt volley also touching down just wide.

The Wildcats responded in the fourth set, taking a 19-15 lead on a powerful backline kill courtesy of Taytem Lamb. However, a subsequent serve into the net passed the ball over to the Red Devils. With Bickell again serving, a wide kill attempt followed by an errant set attempt on a pass near the net, along with back-to-back aces lifted WCI into a 20-19 lead.

“I just tried to get my first one in because we were losing,” Bickell recalled, encouraged by the swing in both score and momentum. “That just gave me confidence to keep going.”

A Wildcats kill attempt into the net, a ball off the antenna and a House scoring tip off a scramble drill pushed WCI within two points of victory. Bickell’s seven-point run was broken with an errant serve, however after a Wildcats kill, West Elgin returned the favour, bringing the Red Devils to set and match point. Chloe Melanson finished a 25-21 victory from there, powering a WOSSAA A gold medal-clinching kill home to the back corner.

“Every single point was a fight, that’s for sure,” said Melanson of a day that had been a battle throughout.

“The semis were even better honestly,” added Sammi Grevers. “They were both really tough games.”

In their morning semi-final match, the Red Devils had taken the first set, dropped a marathon second

by a heart-breaking 32-30 score, and then the third to trail 2-1.

In between the third and fourth sets, coach Schubert asked her girls to respond to the deep hole they found themselves in.

“Are we ready to play our game and dig deep?”

With no room for error, WCI took the fourth set, winning the fifth and final to complete a gut-check comeback.

“I think we all had to lean on each other and trust that we had each other’s backs,” said House. “I think we all did really well.”

WOSSAA had presented an extremely high level of competition said House, the team’s performance there an encouraging sign for the upcoming provincial championship draw March 3-5th in Toronto. The Red Devils qualified for last year’s OFSAA final said House, although not performing as well as they had hoped.

“That’s the goal, to get to OFSAA and then bring this energy there.”

While thoroughly enjoying a season coaching players who are good people as well as athletes, coach Schubert would not be averse to making a little noise at OFSAA.

“Hopefully we can...” she concluded, pausing to consider her response, “play well in quarter-finals - that’s going to be our goal.”



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

**Woodstock CI Red Devil Chloe Melanson powers home the set and match-winning point as teammate Ava Bickell looks on.**

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# Red Devil senior boys preparing for hometown OFSAA A draw

JEFF TRIBE

*Echo Correspondent*

The Woodstock CI Red Devils already have an Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) A senior boys' basketball berth.

But they want to come into the Woodstock-based event as Western Ontario Secondary Schools Athletic Association (WOSSAA) A champions, not simply because WCI is hosting.

"That's the goal," said Will Halward following a 68-51 WOSSAA-opening victory over the Goderich Vikings on Friday, Feb. 21 at London Monsignor Bruyere. "Catch fire for OFSAA... because we can't go in playing the way we did today," he added.

"You don't want to lose WOSSAA and get in," agreed point guard Zack Molinaro.

A 20-team OFSAA A draw will be contested in Woodstock from March 3 to March 5 on courts at WCI, E.S. Notre Dame, College Avenue and St. Mary's CHS, who will host the medal round. Success at WOSSAA is important for both momentum and seeding says Red Devils head coach Eric Molinaro, who looks to be more than simply 'competitive' among the province's best A teams.

"We want to go and win gold in our home community."

'Five Diamond' sponsors for the event include Fowler-Ken-

nedy Sports Clinic, Oxford Attack basketball, Maglin, Confident Sports and Camp Celtic. Although challenged by dual responsibilities of OFSAA A convenor and coach and facing weather-related delays in regional tournaments including WOSSAA, Molinaro anticipates provincial tournament seeding and scheduling to be available via the OFSAA website's Boys A Basketball portal (<https://www.ofsaa.on.ca/championship/basketball-boys-a/>) later Feb. 27 or early Feb. 28. The information is also accessible through the OFSAA home page ([ofsaa.on.ca](https://ofsaa.on.ca)) and its 'Championships and Festivals' button at the top left.

Tournament passes will be available for \$20, day passes for \$10, with student rates of \$10 and \$5 respectively, and kids 13 and under, free.

The second high school sports season is already a fractured one, given interruptions by Christmas holidays and exams, exacerbated this year by multiple snow days and travel challenges for teams in even heavier snow to the north. WCI's schedule is further limited by a dearth of 'A' competitors, meaning direct entry into WOSSAA, but also, a lack of competition en route.

As Molinaro pointed out, it had been a month since the Red Devils last played a game.

"A month since we beat (St.

Thomas) St. Joe's by 30," Halward interjected.

WCI worked some rust off its game during their return to the court in London, showing flashes of brilliance rather than 32 consistent minutes. Leading 18-11 after a quarter, the Red Devils saw that lead close to four, extending it to 11 (31-20) by halftime. With Molinaro slashing along the baseline, Halward working a nifty give-and-go to the low post, and Deer Gravel dropping a three-point field goal and success with full-court pressure, WCI extended its advantage to 17 through the third quarter. Up by 14 at its close, the Red Devils saw Goderich hang around until the latter stages, before recording the 'W.'

"We did not play our best," admitted Gravel, citing silly mistakes and turnovers.

"Not pretty," in the words of coach Eric Molinaro, but getting the job done.

"The coaches are content," he smiled.

The outing was a product of not playing for an extended period he theorized, combined with the psychological challenge presented by the fact an OFSAA berth is guaranteed.

WCI's return to action continued that afternoon with a 3 p.m. tipoff against familiar rival Mitchell DHS. Having been upset by the home team that morning, Mitchell faced a

must-win against a Red Devils team it had lost to twice this season.

Coach Molinaro's pre-game message focussed on the difficulty of beating a good team three times in a single season, however, a better team getting the job done.

"They took that bull by the horns," he credited of an explosive start seeing Gravel hit six or seven threes in the first half and WCI leading (unofficially) 31-7 after the opening eight minutes en route to a 17-point (also unofficial) victory (71-54).

"It was crazy," said Zack Molinaro. "The best game we've played all year."

The WOSSAA A championship game was scheduled for Feb. 24, tipping off at 9:30 a.m. at Monsignor Bruyere.

## TVRA South East Junior Boys Basketball A Final

Feb. 11 at WCI

Woodstock CI 52, St. Thomas Arthur Voaden 32

## WOSSAA AA

The Woodstock St. Mary's Warriors cruised to a comfortable 64-30 victory over Listowel in the junior boys' bronze medal game on Feb. 20 at St. Thomas St. Joe's.

The home-court Rams had beaten the Warriors 64-49 in their semi-final matchup but lost to London Regina Mundi College 78-71 in the gold medal final. Regina Mundi had opened the draw with a 59-37 win over Listowel.

The Warriors entered the AA draw as the second Thames Valley Regional Athletics seed, following a 57-47 TVRA South East championship loss to the Rams in St. Thomas on Feb. 14. They would again meet to open WOSSAA.

St. Mary's advanced to the TVRA South East final with a 60-49 semi-final win over Tillsonburg Glendale on Feb. 11, while the Rams eliminated the Woodstock Huron Park Huskies juniors 65-45.



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Woodstock CI shooting guard Derek Gravel (centre) cuts to a loose ball during WOSSAA A action against Goderich.



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

WCI point guard Zack Molinaro has his head up looking for an open teammate as he penetrates the key against the Goderich Vikings.



# WCI puts the hammer 'down', still comes up with TVRA South East title

JEFF TRIBE

*Echo Correspondent*

The hammer in curling can present something of a double-edged sword.

Having last shot or the hammer, is definitely perceived as an advantage. But it also often indicates the other team has scored, and additionally, adds encouragement to respond.

"I kind of like not having the hammer," said Woodstock CI Red Devils girls' skip Alexis Schaeffer.

In the first place, she has confidence in her team's ability to steal, and secondly, it tends to come with a measure of additional if self-inflicted pressure.

"It's like we've got to get points because they're ahead."

Schaeffer began with the only hammer she would have or need on Feb. 20 at the Woodstock Curling Centre, opening with a score of three in the first end. She would add steals of one, one, two, one and one en route to a 9-0 Thames Valley Regional Athletics (TVRA) South East championship victory over the Ingersoll DCI Blue Bombers.

"It was kind of a chill game," Schaeffer added of an outing in which both teams had their moments and struggles. "But we were able to stick with the win."

The score was 'clean' on the Blue Bombers' side of the ledger, but an at times 'messy' house had provided opportunity IDCI was unable to capitalize on said coach Mike Bryson, particularly in the second and fourth ends.

"We missed a few opportunities to close the gap and that's what it came down to."

Although preferring a different outcome on this day, the Blue Bombers coaching staff was very pleased with a squad featuring fifth Addison Husband, lead Jaelynn MacLeod, second Ana Potter, vice Marley Papais and skip Taylor Posthumus. They exceeded their coaches' seasonal goal of making the playoffs. Not only had they done that said Bryson, but they had made the half-page playoff opener, and following a loss there, won their way back around with a 5-4 semi-final win over St. Thomas Parkside for a rematch in the final.

"So, we're really happy with how everyone played." He and the rest of the staff was also appreciative of the positive attitude and respect shown not only by their squad, but curling competitors throughout the league.

"It makes it very easy for us to volunteer our time."

With the win, WCI's focus shifts to the four-team Western Ontario Secondary Schools Association (WOSSAA) draw on March 4 at the London Curling Club. As TVRA South East champion, the Red Devils will open with the TVRA Central (London) second entry at 8:15 a.m. Gold and bronze medal games are scheduled to follow at 11:30 a.m.

Although her goal remains an Ontario Federation of Secondary School Athletics berth - 'and a medal of course', heading into a draw facing unknown opponents, Schaeffer's pre-event focus is more on WCI playing the best it can, both winning and losing as a team.

"That's all that really matters," she concluded. "If we play our best, I'm OK with the outcome."

TVRA South East Boys

The final score was not one which St. Mary's Warriors boys' coach Richard Murphy would have chosen.

But he could not have asked anything more from his team.

"They played amazing," he said following a season-ending 9-8 loss to the Aylmer East Elgin Eagles in the TVRA South East championship game.



Ingersoll skip Taylor Posthumus comes out of the hack during TVRA South East championships.

(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

The Warriors had faced adversity during the season Murphy continued but came together as it progressed. Skip Carter Skevington's game also matured, 'growing significantly' in terms of execution as well as strategy and tactics.

"And I'm extremely proud of the way they all played in the end, especially in that game - especially in that game."

The outcome was decided in the final end, East Elgin's skip scoring the deciding point there.

"Their skip made an amazing shot to get the point," credited Murphy.

The Warriors were understandably disappointed, he added. But already looking forward to next year,

Murphy remains 'very proud' of how the 2024/25 team played and developed through not only this year but in past campaigns.

"It was a really, really good season. It's just too bad it didn't flop the other way."



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Woodstock CI Red Devils skip Alexis Schaeffer directs her sweepers during TVRA South East final play at the Woodstock Curling Centre.



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

St. Mary's Warrior Killeen Coghlan keeps his eye on the broom as he releases a stone.



# Young Red Devils boys' hockey team takes a step forward

JEFF TRIBE

*Echo Correspondent*

Stepping back from the disappointment of a 4-1 season-ending TVRA South East quarter-final playoff loss to the St. Thomas St. Joe's Rams Feb. 12 in St. Thomas, it was easier to see a young Woodstock CI Red Devils boys' hockey team had taken a step forward over the Thames Valley Regional Athletics campaign.

"Definitely building for the future," said Red Devil and Brantford 99'er Aiden Silos, one of the squad's Grade 9 rookies, a contingent he estimates makes up 'half the team.'

Silos scored his team's lone goal, picking up a loose puck along the wall and cutting toward the St. Joe's net.

"Shot short side, low glove and it trickled in," he reported.

WCI goalie Thijs Van Haeren had a busier day between the pipes, making several quality saves to keep the score close.

"They're pretty good," he said. "Just give them what we've got."

It had been hard to get their game going against a physically larger, more mature team admitted WCI's Quinn Roberts.

"Battled hard though."

Red Devils captain Everett Carne, one of the squad's senior students, said the Rams had won OFSAA the previous season, and while losing a few players, were still a solid unit.

"Not disappointed, a good effort," he said, a statement applying to both this game and a 3-5-1 regular season. "A lot of games were winnable."

"We were in every single game," agreed coach Mike Hall, pleased with his young team's development and how



Ingersoll DCI Blue Bombers K. Winkworth (left) and B. Randall (right) separate Dorchester's Sheldon Gaerts from the puck. (JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

things had played out through a competitive TVRA South East campaign, with the notable exception of an injury suffered in the game's final five minutes.

"No complaints, it was a pretty good season, minus that."

## TVRA South East Quarterfinals

Lord Dorchester 4, Ingersoll DCI 2

"Tough game," summed up Ingersoll DCI Blue Bomber Josh Robles following a one-goal loss in what the squad felt was a winnable game.

"One hundred per cent," Robles continued. "Lots of opportunities."

Ingersoll's K. Whetstone opened scoring at the 8:16 mark of the first period, assisted by B. Randall. Dorchester's Sheldon Gaerts squared accounts at one 5:42 into the second frame, Blue Bomber R. Gregg restoring IDCI's one-goal lead two-and-a-half minutes later, with help from Robles.

Gaerts' second of the game tied things up with 37 seconds left in the second. His teammate Emerson Monk would score the eventual game-winner with 5:03 left in regulation. A cross-checking minor penalty to Dorchester gave the Blue Bombers a power play with 47 seconds

remaining, their best chance coming off a cross-ice pass from Jeremy Stiles from the right-wing boards.

"Just missed it," said Stiles.

Gaerts locked up both the win and a hat-trick with an empty netter seven seconds before the final buzzer.

The season had been enjoyable said Robles, competing with a 'good group of guys.'

"We played pretty good," concluded Stiles, whose focus, with the loss, turns to Shamrock League playoffs with the South Oxford Storm.

"On a wagon right now."

## TVRA South East Boys' Hockey Quarterfinals

St. Joe's 4, Woodstock CI 1

Dorchester 4, Ingersoll DCI 2

St. Thomas Parkside 4, Woodstock St. Mary's 1

Tillsonburg Glendale 5, Aylmer East Elgin 0

## TVRA South East Girls' Hockey Playoffs

Pool A Best-of-Three Semifinals

Feb. 12

Woodstock CI 4, St. Thomas St. Joe's 2

Feb. 14

St. Joe's 4, WCI 3

Feb. 24

WCI at St. Joe's, 12 p.m.

## Pool B Semifinals

Feb. 12

Aylmer East Elgin 7, Woodstock Huron Park 2

Feb. 20

Ingersoll DCI at Glendale, Score Pending



IDCI's P. Cook (foreground) and K. Winkworth (rear) keep a wary eye on Dorchester's Jacob McIntyre in front of goalie R. Vyse. (JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)



Red Devils' goalie Thijs Van Haeren flashes the leather to prevent a goal. (JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)



# Five crucial points stand out in IDCI Blue Bombers TVRA AA South East championship

JEFF TRIBE

*Echo Correspondent*

The Ingersoll DCI Blue Bombers senior girls' volleyball team's Thames Valley Regional Athletics South East championship was built on countless hours of tryouts, practices, exhibition, tournament, league and playoff games, ultimately leading to one best-of-five-set final.

But amongst the literally thousands of points contested during that run, five from the TVRA AA semi-final match Feb. 12 at St. Thomas Parkside against the Aylmer East Elgin Eagles will stand out.

Athletic pursuits months in the making can be decided in a few brief moments, victory and defeat separated by the sharpest of razor's edge.

That magic doesn't always happen, rarely so. Often, one team is dominant, outcomes predictable. The right combination of balanced competition and build-up is a thing which can't be manufactured or controlled, no matter how much one tweets. And whether it plays out in overtime in front of millions of viewers or in a high school gym populated by friends and family members, it's truly special.

A big part of the 'why' we play, watch and celebrate.

It's dangerous to put too much emphasis only on who won or lost, given it took equally matched partners to create this intricate dance. A lot has gone down both on the court and in terms of support from the bench to get to this crucial nexus point. And one can celebrate an 0-fer season rich with growth, development and enjoyment. However, victory and loss do help define athletic pursuit, inherent to its combined beauty and cruelty - who bends but does not break an element of fairness in outcomes often also containing fortuitous circumstance.

With two 25-point set victories apiece, the score in the fifth and deciding set to 15 stood at 10-10. In general terms, Aylmer had built on early five and seven-point advantages courtesy of strong serving from its talented setter Sophie Nagelhout in winning the first and third



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

**Blue Bombers Femke Opden-Keider (left) and Katie Lindsay (right) double-team on a block attempt.**



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

**Blue Bombers Femke Opden-Keider (left) and Charlotte De Wit hit the deck in pursuit of an East Elgin serve.**

sets, displaying tenacious defence throughout.

"Great rallies," said IDCI Grade 11 starter Charlotte De Wit, whose power from that designated position was a factor in the outcome. "They're a great team, really good hitters.

"Their defence is definitely their strong suit," added De Wit, who more than once, figured Ingersoll had won the point. "And all of a sudden, they've got it up."

A comparatively young and inexperienced Bombers lineup answered with two set victories, staving off elimination in the fourth, featuring a strong shared presence at the middle of the net along with an aggressive attack from both the power position and consistency from the off side. Setting the table fell to Kate-Lynn Morin, who tried to keep everyone involved.

"Which was enough I guess," she smiled.

Naghout was next in rotation to serve for the Eagles when De Wit, IDCI's answer to her serving prowess, stepped to the line. Her strong first serve provided an advantage capitalized on with an Eagles kill attempt into the net. On De Wit's second serve, a subsequent kill from teammate Femke Opden-Keider was dug up with difficulty, creating a free ball, Bombers killed and a 12-10 lead resulting in an East Elgin time-out.

It did not stem the IDCI tide, the Bombers taking a 13-10 advantage on an Eagles kill into the net. Ingersoll middle Katie Pilkey pushed the Eagles to the brink and into a second time out with a block on a tip attempt. Janelle Boyse, the definition of power both at the net and with a jump service, threw in an unexpected deep tip that dropped for set and match point.

"I try to mix it up a bit," she smiled, 'still shaky' from the dramatic finish.

"It was like the best we've ever played, probably," added Abby Greenwood.

East Elgin is always a tough opponent credited Bombers coach Sean Pellow, a Level IV 'coach of coaches' who also mentors the London Fanshawe College women's team. The semi-final win included a Western Ontario Secondary Schools Athletic Association (WOSSAA AA) berth.

"We're there and that was step one," said Pellow. "And that was not an easy match."

The Bombers played the host Parkside Stampeders in the TVRA South East final, defeating them in front of their home crowd in a second five-set match.

"We just played more consistent than they did, made less errors down the stretch," said Pellow of an effort

putting the Blue Bombers in a position to compete at the end. "And we held it together."

East Elgin and Parkside had both beaten IDCI during the regular season said the coach, opportunity to 'right the ship a little' and take the TVRA crown both appreciated.

The Bombers opened with a 25-13 win over Parkside at WOSSAA AA on Feb. 20 at Stratford St. Mike's, but eventually fell to a more experienced team 3-1, set scores of 25-13, 25-12, 25-11. Although swept in the bronze medal final (25-18, 28-26, 26-24) by host Stratford St. Mike's, the scores indicate the closeness of play. London Oakridge took the gold final over Parkside by scores of 25-18, 23-12, 25-13.

"Super proud of how they competed," Pellow summed up in conclusion. "And that they were able to see some success at the end, given the work they put in."

## TVRA AA Junior Girls Volleyball

The Ingersoll DCI junior Blue Bombers went down swinging against the homecourt Parkside Stampeders in TVRA AA South East semi-final playoff action Feb. 12.

"This was our peak, we worked for this moment," said Bomber Willow Kraft. "I think we played great, we just didn't take it."

IDCI took a 25-22 decision in the third set, before the Stampeders closed out a 3-1 match victory with a 25-12 win in the fourth. Parkside would go on to take the TVRA South East title with a 25-23, 25-13, 25-21 win over St. Thomas St. Joe's.

"It didn't come out how we wanted it to, but we pushed really hard and that's what matters," said IDCI's Avery Phillips.

Regular season losses early in the campaign dropped the Bombers into fourth place said coach Mike Pelton, meaning they opened against the number one Stampeders, rather than a 2-3 matchup which he felt could have led to a WOSSAA AA berth. But Pelton was pleased with a season in which he and co-coach Maggie Carter worked with 14 roster members, striving to find the balance between winning and development.

"I think we found it and you're going to see the payoff in coming seasons because more kids got better."

The coaching staff also enjoyed working with athletes displaying a high level of character quality.

"All great players, we were confident in anyone to go on-court and do a job," Pelton concluded. "You're going to want to look out for our girls in two years."



# WCI junior volleyball girls' serve up happy WOSSAA A ending

JEFF TRIBE

*Echo Correspondent*

The Woodstock CI (WCI) Junior Red Devils served up a happier ending in the Western Ontario Secondary Schools Athletic Association (WOSSAA) A girls' volleyball championship.

"A nice little redemption story," said coach Jeff Melanson following a 3-1 match victory over the London Christian Lynx on Feb. 21 at the WCI Devildome.

Last year, continued Melanson, the Red Devils had lost to the Lynx, as well as the year previous.

"And we rewrote the story."

The first set of the final followed the earlier storyline, the Red Devils leading late, but unable to close out the win. The script went from bad to worse early in the second set, WCI trailing 8-5 when Melanson, who typically prefers to let his team play through adversity, called time out.

"At that point, it was just communication," he said. "We came out silent."

Technically, his advice was to space out and 'call their seams.' But at its heart, Melanson's messaging focussed on 'talking' and enjoying the moment.

"Play loose - keep smiling."

The script began to flip on a series of jump services courtesy of Red Devils Natalie Parsons and Lily Melanson, momentum building into a 17-13 lead.

"You can't think it's going into the net, that you're going to doubt yourself," said Parsons of the need to keep pushing through nervousness and the odd error, rewarded when a couple of serves went in. "Then you're like you've got momentum, continue to do it."



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

The WOSSAA A junior girls' volleyball champion Woodstock CI Red Devils feature: (front row, left to right) Gabby Clarke, Hope McMichael, Lily Melanson, Natalie Parsons, M.J. Rabe, Alison VanDerWyngaard, and Avery Molinaro. In the back row, are Hannah Thistlewaite, Brooke Halward, coach Jeff Melanson, coach Colin Maltby, Avery Banbury, Charly Banbury, Makene Barron, Ivy Caskanette and coach Crystal Eberhardt-Gwynne.

"I think you just have to go all in," agreed Lily Melanson. "You can't let it get in your head because volleyball is a very mental game."

London Christian called time out at 22-18 and got serve back, however, a Charly Banbury kill tipped out and a M.J. Rabe off-speed mishit which confused the Lynx defence, upped the advantage to 24-20. London Christian got service back, however a subsequent serve into the net squared the match at 1-1.

A series of Banbury serves, non-jump, but strategic, broke open the third set, contributing to a Red Devils an early

advantage (12-5) they would never relinquish.

"It's about consistency and placing a serve," said Banbury, who in the midst of her run, responded to the opposing coach's warning she was 'serving short' to drop one in along the back line. "I was thinking 'go deep.'"

Woodstock CI took the third set 25-11, capped again by a Rabe 'knuckleball' from the left side, a mishit which surprised the Lynx defence and fell for set point.

"Not a plan, but it worked in our favour," she smiled.

"We'll take it," added Lily Melanson.

The fourth and final set was a far-closer affair, WCI trailing 7-2 early before clawing back even at 14 as setter Hope McMichael volleyed a first pass to an open corner. The Red Devils' ongoing advantage from the service line played out in the set's break point, a London Christian serve just past the rear boundary giving WCI an 18-17 lead. A strong Parsons serve resulted in a free ball and scoring tip to the back corner, followed by an ace and 20-17 lead. The Lynx closed to 22-20 on a powerful kill, but Rabe responded, picking her spot for a 23-20 advantage.

She followed up at the service line, gaining advantage finished with a McMichael kill through the net. London Christian closed within two points (24-22) on a long WCI kill attempt and ace. Lily Melanson, resisting an understandable tendency to play it safer when the game gets tighter, closed it out with a kill, the Lynx dig attempt bumped into the roof for set and match point.

"Awesome year, definitely what we wanted," the Grade 10 Rabe summed up, recalling the previous season's defeat to London Christian, at London Christian.

"This was a big comeback," Parsons agreed. "Big redemption."

The Red Devils opened their WOSSAA quest with a three-set sweep of Wingham F.E. Madill that morning at WCI. London Christian defeated Mitchell DHS inside the Woodstock E.S. Notre Dame gym to set up a championship rematch, a chapter closed this season in the Red Devils' favour.

"We ended how we wanted to," coach Melanson concluded. "Mission accomplished."



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Despite the skeptical look on teammate Ivy Caskanette's face, M.J. Rabe (foreground) did manage to dig this ball up Friday during WOSSAA A final play.



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Woodstock CI libero Avery Molinaro, a stalwart defender throughout WOSSAA A championships, gets low in pursuit after a London Christian shot.

## Visit us online at [theecho.ca](http://theecho.ca)



# Nordic Skiers have successful return to OFSAA



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

## CONTRIBUTED

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

The temperatures were freezing with morning lows in the minus-20s but warmed up to a balmy minus-14 for the start of racing in Sudbury at the OFSAA Nordic Ski Championships from Feb. 20 to 21. Ten Thames Valley Skiers qualified from WOSSAA, four of them from Woodstock Collegiate Institute (WCI), two weeks ago to earn the privilege of representing their schools at OFSAA.

At WOSSAA on Feb. 6 at

Sawmill Trails in Hepworth, near Owen Sound, the trails were fantastic with all the snow they had and groomed to perfection. WCI skiers all qualified for OFSAA with the following results. In Junior Girls on the challenging hilly course, Emily Dix was seventh with a time of 25:33 minutes. Rookie Vesper Martin placed ninth in 29:27 and Grace Piper eleventh in 31:27. All three were thrilled to qualify. Sofiya Ohloblya, a rookie Senior Girl raced as a beginner as she had joined the team late and was just learning to ski. Her progress is excellent

and her attention to technique will make her an excellent member of the senior team next year. All girls will join Kathleen at the senior level next year and plan to be a force to contend with.

Kathleen McCreery, the only Senior Girl, won bronze with a time of 27:29 minutes, just eight seconds behind silver, and 14 seconds behind first. An awesome race Kathleen!

Woodstock C.I.'s Junior Girls had excellent results for their first time at OFSAA. Emily Dix showed continuing improvement, beating two more of her

WOSSAA rivals with a time of 24:40 minutes over the five-kilometre, two-lap course. Rookie Vesper Martin, who placed seventy-fourth, continued to progress through her first season of Nordic skiing, achieving personal bests with each race. Grace Piper was ninety-second and had a strong.

Kathleen McCreery placed forty-seventh in the Senior Girl competition with a solid ski over the seven-kilometre course. The girls were excited to have their team reinstated after a year's hiatus. They would like to thank acting Principal Mr. White with the blessing of Ms. Emke and Mr. B Windsor for stepping up as coach.

Vesper said, "participating at OFSAA was a wonderful experience that I know we will all cherish for a very long time. Our hard work paid off and provided us with a gratifying competition, fun memories, and a new perspective on sporting potential."

"Congratulations to all of the skiers on a fine performance," said coach McEvoy of Beal, responsible for Laurier and WCI skiers.

"All of the skiers did very well and have improved so much over the season. I think everyone appreciated being able to compete in a tournament this important for the honour of their school. And everyone was so positive and pleased with their individual successes. I am happy with all of their performances."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



# Navy Vets take commanding series lead



(BILL POLZIN PHOTO)

Navy Vets goalie Tyler Bouck reached a milestone after Woodstock's win in Paris on Saturday night as he earned his 50th win as a member of the team.

LEE GRIFFI

Editor

Woodstock may have lost game one in its Provincial Junior Hockey League series with Paris, but they roared back with three straight wins to set up a potential series win on home ice Friday.

Tate McKenna, Logan Pace-Roth, and Brodie Kearns each scored and Tyler Bouck made 30 saves as the Vets beat Paris 3-1 at Southwood Arena on Tuesday night to take a 3-1 series lead in their Doherty Division quarterfinal. Davin Gray didn't hit the scoresheet but played in his 150th game as a Navy Vet as Wood-



(BILL POLZIN PHOTO)

Woodstock can clinch the first-round series with a win on home ice Friday.

stock built a 3-0 lead after 40 minutes.

Tyler Bouck made 37 saves for his 50th career win in Paris on Saturday night in a 4-1 Navy Vets win. Woodstock led 4-0 after two periods on goals from Charley Barnes, Chris Coulter, Lucas Balanca and Diego Sabino. The Vets were 2 for 7 on the powerplay while the Titans went 0 for 9 with the man advantage.

Woodstock won game two in the series by a 4-1 count after dropping game one 6-5 in overtime, a game where they blew a 5-1 lead. Paris rallied back with four goals in a 12-minute span of the third period.

The Vets can wrap up the series on Friday night when they host the Titans at Southwood Arena. Game time is 7:45.

## Zorra Township News

### Road safety top of mind around the Zorra Township horseshoe

CONNOR LUCZKA

Echo Correspondent

For Zorra Township Coun. Crystal Finch, road safety is a personal issue. At the Feb. 19 council meeting, she shared that a very close friend passed away in a vehicle collision at Punkeydoodles Corners in 2022.

Just last year, she suffered another harrowing loss.

"On Sept. 1, 2024, my niece, my daughter and her friend had just finished work and were en route to meet us at the Paris fair," Finch shared. "They never made it to the fair. We wound up at the hospital with only my daughter and her friend making it (there). My 17-year-old niece passed away. She was to start Grade 12 in just a few days, get back to her rugby practice and teammates she loved so much."

Finch added her niece was going to decide what college she wanted to attend.

"point to telling you this is we have all seen or have been affected by collisions, speeding, distracted driving and fatalities on our roads. We sit in these seats and sometimes wonder how we can make change happen. This motion is the beginning to make these real, lasting changes happen."

The motion in question came from Finch and Coun. Katie Grigg. It calls upon upper levels of government to "do everything in their power to limit speeding, distracted driving, and impaired driving," and that the province implements the Good Roads rural road safety program.

On the Good Roads' website, under the rural roads safety initiative, the organization states that "simply put, rural roads are more dangerous than other roads. In 2019 there were 428 traffic fatalities on municipal



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Coun. Crystal Finch of Zorra Township tells her colleagues why road safety is so important to her at its meeting on Feb. 19, sharing some of the personal loss she has had.

roads, of which 205 occurred in rural municipalities. The unfortunate reality is that with only 13.3 per cent of the provincial population, rural Ontario accounted for 48 per cent of traffic fatalities on municipal roads."

It lists replacing legacy assets, installing absent road

fixtures, and upgrading to more modern assets with innovative safety functions as possible actions through a partnership with the provincial government.

However, as Grigg explained, the motion goes beyond just those actions.

"This motion came from a series of conversations that happened with colleagues from across the county," Grigg explained. "And I'll borrow from Mayor Ryan, who, in these conversations will say you know, if I don't buckle my seat belt, my car starts beeping at me. But I have a vehicle that I can drive 200 kilometres an hour, where we don't have any speed limits that permit that. That's where we need to look to other levels of government to really step in and help address this issue."

Coun. Paul Mitchell thanked Finch for her personal comments, adding the three components to safe roads - design, enforcement, and behaviour - are all tied together yet are all separated when it comes to what level of government oversees them. Ryan agreed with Mitchell, pointing out that even the component that the municipality does oversee, design and engineering, is not the complete picture. A municipality only oversees road design and not vehicle design, which, as he argued, would be the most effective way to tackle road safety.

"And it's a good time for us to step up as well, given the fact that there's some large growth coming to our own municipality in the upcoming years," Coun. Kevin Stewart added.

Before the motion was passed unanimously, Ryan added that the township has worked with other municipalities in the region. He believes the sentiment will get broad support at the county level and the region will have the proper collaboration to advocate effectively to the provincial and federal governments.



# THE LOST TRIBE: Overnight ice cabins an experience - with fishing benefits



JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

Ask not for whom the bell tolls. Just get there before the fish is gone.

"Tristan!" I hissed as the pole nearest his bunk jangled connection 30 feet below. "Go!"

Lake Nipissing holds a year-round fishery popular as an ice-fishing destination. Introduced during our son's five-year educational sojourn in North Bay, we joined those celebrating rather than suffering through extended winter months.

Anglers venture offshore from regions including North and Calendar Bays and along Nipissing's south shore from January 1st to March 15th. Some hike out pulling sleds with pop-up tents and small heaters, others drive ATVs, snow machines and road-legal vehicles to homemade huts of every description. There's also a wide selection of day and overnight rental huts or cabin outfitters providing recreational opportunities for locals and visitors alike.

Amy Craft of Craft's Ice Cabins (249-591-4887), or via their Facebook page, officially joined the latter in January of last year. She, her husband Harvey Hughes and Amy's stepson Jesse Hughes were

involved in the industry years before purchasing the Bear Creek Cottages ice-fishing operation from Terra and Shawn Degagne. The newly branded Craft's Ice Cabins continues from the Bear Creek property as a co-operative family enterprise with additional employees. In broad terms, Amy oversees bookings and the business side, Harvey sources lifelong knowledge of the lake in constantly moving cabins to keep clients on fish, and Jesse takes point on day-to-day operations.

A lot of work goes in that people may not see says Amy, whose goal is for clients to be comfortable, on fish and have a great experience. Their customers include families and experienced anglers but are mostly people seeking a peaceful getaway in a beautiful location.

"And if they catch fish, it's a bonus."

Nipissing holds a mixed bag, pickerel topping the list for many, however also featuring pike, muskie, bass, lake herring and growing perch potential. Tactically, Jesse prefers to let live minnows suspended off the bottom do the work.

"I dead-stick (stationary presentation) everything and every once in a while give it a couple jigs."

Freshwater ling or burbot have comparatively recently gained a higher profile in Nipissing. Historically, people considered fish resembling a large - some very large - smooth-bodied mud puppy a 'trash' species. That is until anglers noticed one person gathering up discards and discovered flavour akin to lobster.

Jesse suspends bait six inches above the bottom, out of the reach of mud puppies when targeting the nocturnal feeders, warning of a tendency to spin when hooked, tangling lines around them, and curling up at the hole.

"You don't know how to get

them out because they're slippery and don't have scales."

Smaller burbot fillets are lightly floured, fried with salt and pepper and dipped in butter. Those from fish over five pounds are poached in salt water and then dipped in butter, or alternatively, poached, battered and fried like any other fish.

"It's turned into a big thing," said Jesse.

Our crew was a similarly mixed bag, accomplished angler and nephew Bryan Sweazey, unbridled enthusiasm and hope for 'at least three fish' in grandsons Sebastian and Tristan, and someone intrigued by the overnight cabin concept.

The thought of extending Nipissing's night bite as late as one chose, hitting the morning bite as early as one wished had always been attractive. Doing so within family-friendly heated creature comfort complete with cooking and restroom facilities, without the hassle of dragging, setting up and breaking down gear a mile or two onto the ice and returning in the coldest of cold, sounded like next-level.

And so, it would prove. Howie shuttled us a trio of kilometres or so out onto 24 inches of frozen Nipissing surface inside an enclosed trailer, depositing us at Cabin 12 around 1 p.m. It featured inside fishing holes with covers for when they weren't in use, six sleeping bunks (Craft's also has eight-person overnight cabins, slightly roomier and more modern), a propane stove, battery-powered electric lights, table, chairs and our own 'ensuite.' Jesse dropped by, introducing himself, freshening and drilling holes for those who wished to try their luck outside the cabin.

Getting lines in the water we lunched, opened with a jumbo



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Anglers including, from left, Sebastian and Tristan, come to Lake Nipissing in search of pickerel, but may also catch pike, muskie, lake herring and burbot and perch like this one.

perch and from 3 p.m. onward, enjoyed steady action in gentle waves. Tristan latched onto Uncle Bryan's electronics, the two of them working the cabin's interior holes while I happily followed Sebastian outside - space to warm up rather than simply thaw out a few steps away. As darkness descended, we joined ranks in the cabin, a pair of tip-ups with warning bells attached to the poles a popular and productive diversion well past a young person's civilized bedtime.

"If you want a good night's sleep, you'd better reel up your lines and take your bells off," Amy smiled.

As the temperature dropped to minus 20, wind howling, Sebastian complained about being too hot in his upper bunk. Mother Nature hadn't offered up a classic Nipissing sunset, but North Bay's lights provided a nostalgic tour down memory lane. Wind subsiding, a nearly full orange moon descending in the northwest as the eastern horizon crimsoned announced a productive morning bite.

We had come for an experience and got every bit of that. We caught some, missed some, lost some, notably Sebastian the biggest fish of the trip that morning right at the hole. But we smashed through the boys' pre-trip projection with a feisty pike, double digits of jumbo perch and over twice that many pickerel.

Fully respecting Nipissing's slot size, we also enjoyed a delicious late-night fish fry, the morning's planned pancake fest was postponed for the simple reason we were too busy fishing to cook.

In the end, Billy or Betty burbot didn't show up. However, rather than a disappointment, clearly, that represents an undeniable argument to return. In closing, the kids had a ton of fun - and Sebastian and Tristan did too.

For a related video, search YouTube for Lost Tribe Ice Cabin Adventure or cut and paste the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdhSpf2OkK4&t=6s>



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

From left, Amy Craft and her 'main man' Jesse Hughes of Craft's Ice Cabins.

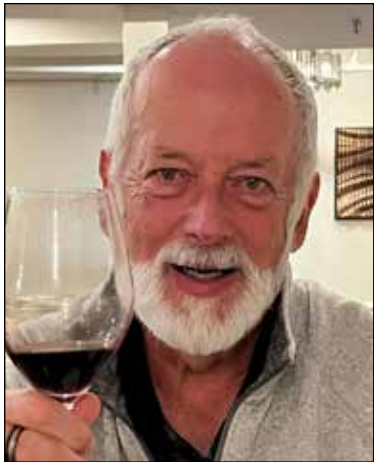


(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Bryan Sweazey checks his electronics while jigging from the comfort of his bunk.



# OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Exploring the history of boating in the Thousand Islands



**PAUL KNOWLES**

*Echo Contributor*

There are lots of popular attractions in the town of Gananoque – a fine summer theatre, good restaurants, museums and spectacular helicopter rides, among others – but there is no doubt the town they call “Gan” is really all about the water, specifically the waters of the St. Lawrence River.

Gananoque is near the headwaters of the St. Lawrence. I say near because it’s not entirely clear where Lake Ontario ends and the river begins – somewhere near Kingston and Wolfe Island, according to the experts.

Gan is about 30 kilometres from Kingston, so we know for sure the waters flowing beside Gananoque are the mighty St. Lawrence and Gan is one of the key launch points for exploration of the Thousand Islands, the world-famous aquatic region that stretches through about 130 kilometres of the St. Lawrence, spanning the international border between Canada and the United States.

So, it’s very appropriate that two of the premier attractions in Gananoque take place on the river: the Thousand Island boat cruises offered by City Cruises and the Thousand Islands Boat Museum.

For any fan of boating or history, the Boat Museum is not to be missed. Located right on the Gananoque waterfront, it’s a relatively new attraction. The museum opened only ten years ago, and its most intriguing feature – a Thousand Islands boat tour on a classic heritage motorboat – has only been happening for three years.

The museum has four buildings including a boatbuilding shop, a children’s activity centre and exhibit galleries, but the highlight is the boat house, which opened in 2023, the result of a five-year, \$5-million project. In the boat house are dozens of historic boats, all afloat at docks where visitors can get up close and personal with nautical heritage.

The Thousand Islands Boat Museum, a non-profit organization, has a full-time staff of two as well as a part-time facilities manager and summer students. But the facility is a labour of love for a lot of volunteers, from the 14 members of the board of directors to an army of hands-on fans of the project.

The current collection of antique boats includes three-dozen heritage craft, from the 52-foot Windswept III (built by Muskoka-based Ditchburn in 1935) to the 12-foot Jelly Roll, a 1936 lapstrake sailing dinghy built by Hans Nichol森 in Kingston. Heritage boats are on display both at the docks and in an exhibition building.

There is a special emphasis on local boat-builders, of which there were quite a few in Gananoque. Currently on display are five boats built by Charlie Cliffe, whose company, Cliffe Craft, has built over 2,500 watercraft during his 67-year career.

The museum plans to feature other local boat-builders in future exhibitions – names like Andress, Malette, Gerrard and Gilbert.

There are several unique boats on display, including one commissioned by a man named Gerrard who wanted a boat that could easily be driven by his wife. The boat on display, the Ribuki, is one of only seven built to those specifications.

But while the boats on display make for a fascinating visit, the highlight for many is undoubtedly the opportunity to get out on the water in a heritage boat. One option is a cruise on the Little Toot, the museum’s steel tugboat. This cruise carries passengers along the waterfront, passing under a historic swing bridge into the mouth of the Gananoque River (the second river that touches the town), and also circling some nearby islands.

Our 30-minute cruise was aboard the Limit Up, a stunningly beautiful, classic, polished-mahogany motorboat. We boated around several privately held islands of the Thousand Islands, getting a first-hand look at the old-style luxury of these historic vacation retreats. Limit Up cruises carry only about six passengers.

By the way, are there really 1,000 islands in the Thousand Islands? Well, the folks at the muse-



(PHOTOS BY PAUL KNOWLES)

**Summer student Hannah Arsenault, whose great grandmother, Avis Bateman, owned the boat shown, dubbed the Ribuki.**

um will tell you there are actually more – 1,864 to be exact. That’s based on one of several differing definitions of an island – the Gan museum people use the criteria that an island has to have two living trees growing on it, and has to have at least one square foot of land that remains above water year-round. Therefore, they admit the actual total could change.

An internet search yields the same number from most sites, though the Canadian Encyclopedia’s total is significantly lower at 1,149. So, even by the most conservative estimate, there are more than a thousand islands in the Thousand Islands.

But nobody is lobbying to change the name, and local attractions – like the Thousand Islands Boat Museum – are sticking with

the underestimate.

The Thousand Islands Boat Museum is open from the long weekend in May through Thanksgiving. Admission – amazingly – is by donation, although there is, of course, a charge for the boat cruises; the Limit Up cruise costs \$60 per person and Little Toot, a more leisurely 30-minute ride, costs \$25 or \$20 for children.

Both provide a unique way to experience the unique community that is Gananoque and the Thousand Islands, the gateway to the St. Lawrence.

*Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer, and President of the Travel Media Association of Canada. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email [pknowles@golden.net](mailto:pknowles@golden.net).*



**A small shop and exhibition space that is part of the four-building museum site.**



**The Limit Up tour includes great views of classic Thousand Islands cottages.**



# Four decades of highlighting the dairy industry in Ontario

The South Western Ontario Dairy Symposium marked its 40th anniversary on Feb. 20 at the Woodstock Fairgrounds.

The event brought dairy producers, industry experts, and exhibitors together for a day of learning and networking. Organized by Dairy Farmers of Ontario in collaboration with its regional Dairy Producer Committees and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, the day featured an informative speaker program that addressed key topics and challenges facing Ontario's dairy industry.

Attendees also had the opportunity to explore a diverse tradeshow showcasing the latest advancements in dairy farming technology and innovations. A catered lunch highlighted new and innovative Canadian dairy products, giving participants a taste of the industry's evolving offerings.

Over the past four decades, the symposium has turned into a premier event for dairy producers across South Western Ontario, fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the agricultural community. (RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Representing Gay Lea, a farmer co-op of 1400 producers were Julia Rondinone, Lauren Beerman, Lisa Wormshecher and Wendy Hasson.



There was a lot to see at the South Western Dairy Symposium including a diverse tradeshow showcasing the latest advancements in dairy farming technology and innovations.

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# SWO Square and Round Dance event held in Woodstock

IAN AND DEBBIE HULLEY

*Echo Contributors*

Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Woodstock was the site of the monthly Southwestern Ontario Square and Round Dance Association dance on Saturday, Feb. 22. The Thames Valley Dance Club hosted the event.

Vice President couple John Stemmler and Norma Khan welcomed 53 dancers, then the event began with the host caller Ed Dolson. A wonderful afternoon was followed with a great variety of music and dancing levels to include everyone. The association's round dancers (choreographed ballroom) also enjoyed dancing between the square dance tips.

The association greatly appreciates

the donation of time and talent by all callers and cuers for Saturday's dance, and thanks were extended to Ed And Nancy Dolson, Jeff and Andrea Priest, Merv and Janice Reid, Doug and Lois Turvey, and Ian and Debbie Hulley.

A wonderful lunch of delicious cookies, squares, coffee, and tea were provided by the Thames Valley Dance Club.

The dance closed with a moment of silence in memory of Fred Joyner, with sympathies to his loving wife Dianne. Fred will be greatly missed.

For those interested, there are opportunities to learn to square dance at one of the many clubs in Southwestern Ontario. Visit [www.SWOSDA.ca](http://www.SWOSDA.ca) for more information.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Visit us online at  
[theecho.ca](http://theecho.ca)

**Woodstock Ingersoll Echo**

The Woodstock Ingersoll Echo is seeking an

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CORRESPONDENT**

We are looking to hire a **part-time journalist**, based out of Ingersoll, to report regularly on a variety of local happenings within our Woodstock Ingersoll Echo newspaper.

Please send resume to the attention of  
Lee Griffi at [info@theecho.ca](mailto:info@theecho.ca).



# Riddles

I have hands but no fingers. I show the time but never tick. What am I?  
*A Clock.*

The more you use me, the more you leave behind. What am I?  
*An Eraser.*

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

I have cities but no houses, mountains but no trees, and water but no fish. What am I?  
*A Map.*

What has an endless supply of letters but starts empty?  
*A Mailbox.*

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

The more of me you have, the less you see. What am I?  
*Darkness.*

What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but never in a thousand years?  
*The letter 'M'.*

I have many needles, but I never sew. What am I?  
*A Pine tree.*

# Sudoku

by PeterS 2025

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

Solutions on page 30

Simple (0)

# PET OF THE WEEK



## ROSIE

Rosie is cute 7 year old Brussels Griffon. Loves to explore the backyard. Plays with very small toys. With her Ewok charm, people adore her.

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Published pets will get a free goodie bag from Barkin Boujee!**

# Word Search

## SPACE AND ASTRONOMY

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- GALAXY
- NEBULA
- PLANET
- ASTEROID
- COMET
- METEOR
- SATELLITE
- ORBIT
- TELESCOPE
- COSMOS
- SUPERNOVA
- BLACKHOLE
- GRAVITY
- ECLIPSE
- STARLIGHT



# CLASSIFIEDS

## OBITUARY

### RUDY: Ronald Clifford "Ron"



It is with profound sadness that the family of retired Senior Constable Ronald Clifford Rudy, announce his passing on the 10th day of February, 2025, at Stratford General Hospital in his 86th year. Born in Woodstock, Ontario, to the late Dorothy (Webb) Hutchison and Clifford Rudy.

Survived by his true love and best friend, Donna (McGregor) Rudy. Married for 66 years, together they raised four children, Debbie (Murray Paton), Jeff Rudy (Nancy Watts) both of Woodstock, Karen Rudy-Tuffnail and Tracy Lynne Rudy-Petrie (Steve Teixeira), both of London. Extremely proud grandpa to Geoff Paton (Shaughna) of Woodstock, Kelly Paton of Waterloo, Corey Tuffnail (Breanne) of Stratford, Julia Petrie (Brody Roote) of New Hamburg, and Kate Petrie of London. Adoring great grandfather to Brooke and Cole Paton and Colter Tuffnail. Also survived by his sisters-in-law, Pat Rudy and Joyce Wilker.

Predeceased by his parents, as well as brothers Bob Rudy, Harold Rudy, step-father, Elgin Hutchison and brother-in-law, Don Wilker.

Faithful to his God, he served his family, friends and community with pride.

Ron began his career in Embro as an automobile mechanic as well as being a member of the Embro and West Zorra School Board during the time when Zorra Highland Park School was built. Ron was also a volunteer firefighter with the Embro West Zorra department, receiving his 25 year service medal. Intrigued by a career in law enforcement, Ron joined the Woodstock OPP detachment as an Auxiliary Officer, before joining the Tavistock Police Force as a Constable. Never wavering in his service to his community, he stayed with Tavistock Police up to the amalgamation with Oxford Community Police Service where he continued working and ended his 36 year career with the Woodstock Police Service.

A familiar face around the community, Ron was also the Community Service Officer and met many local residents who became life-long friends. Ron's career was only a small scope of his life. He enjoyed travelling, be it one of he and Donna's eastern Canadian road trips, their trips with their friends to Barbados, traveling there 25 times and of course, spending time with his family.

Often shy at first, he would quickly warm up with a smile or quiet joke under his breath. Even as he aged, he made connections with those around him. His time at the Maples Home for Seniors enhanced his life in many ways. Always listening, he was close with the staff and at the age of 85, was consistently in the know of the happenings in Tavistock.

The family wishes to extend their deepest gratitude to Dr. Narayan and his team at Stratford General Hospital, and to the caring and compassionate staff at the Maples Home for Seniors.

Should you wish to make an expression of sympathy, Parkinson's Research Canada or Maples Home for Seniors Resident Council would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be posted at [www.francisfh.ca](http://www.francisfh.ca)

## TREES

Shade trees, Fruit trees, Apple, Pears, Peaches, Plums, Sweet and Sour Cherries, Apricot, Nectarines, Blueberry, Haskopp, Black Chokeberry, Grapes etc. Lots of Spruce, Pine, Cedars for windbreaks and privacy hedges, Sizes 1 to 6+. Flowering shrubs and much more. Come check us out Mon-Sat 7:00am - 6:00pm

Martin's Nursery, 42661 Orangehill Road, Wroxeter (1 concession north of Wroxeter on Belmore Line)

## SERVICES

Have you been affected by someone else's drinking? Al-Anon Family Groups could help YOU! Call for time and place. 1-800-706-9833 or App Available

## YOUR CLASSIFIED

If you want to advertise in the Echo, send us an e-mail at [info@theecho.ca](mailto:info@theecho.ca) for more information on how to get your classified, service directory listing, or display ad in our paper!

## SUDOKU

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## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Pi Day
2. 12-gauge
3. Reykjavik, Iceland
4. Japanese yen
5. Heather Locklear
6. iPhone 16e
7. 4 – Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas
8. Chantal Kreviazuk
9. Potassium
10. Connor McDavid

# BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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## INSURANCE

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# COMING EVENTS

**POINT THE WAY - BEST U HEALTH EXPO 2025**

**Monday, March 10: 11 am to 3 pm**  
**Reeves Community Complex, Woodstock**  
Everyone welcome. 30 exhibitors, health, wellness & safety presentations, \$10 lunch. Free Admission. The Seniors Active Living Fair is being hosted by South Gate Centre in partnership with the Older Adult Centres’ Association of Ontario with funding provided by the Government of Ontario.

**OXFORD BRANCH OF ONTARIO ANCESTORS VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Monday, March 10, 2025 at 7pm on Zoom**  
The Devon Elliotts: The Stories of Those Who Came, Those Who Stayed and Those Who Left Presented by Glenn Elliott. Please visit our website at <https://oxford.ogs.on.ca> to register for this free event. All are Welcome.

**ARE YOU IN A JAM?**

**March 7 & 21, April 4 & 11, May 2 & 23, June 6 & 20 from 1-4p.m.**  
**Masonic Hall, 190 Thames St S, Ingersoll.**  
Ingersoll's Country Music Jamboree Club is celebrating 40 years. New members wanted. Qualifications - love 50-70's country music. Listen, dance, enjoy! The club welcomes walk-ins at the door.

**WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2025**

**March 7, 2 p.m.**  
**The Church of Epiphany**  
**560 Dundas St., Woodstock**

**SACRED HEART PARISH EUCHRE**

**Tuesday's March 11 and 25 start at 1:00 pm**  
We invite everyone to join us for a euchre afternoon in **Henderson Hall 133 John Street Ingersoll**. Refreshments provided. For more info call or text Martha at 519-320-0785

**OLD ST PAUL'S CHURCH IS FLIPPIN' THE BEST PANCAKES IN TOWN ON PANCAKE DAY (SHROVE TUESDAY)**

**March 4th from 5pm to 7pm**  
**Join us at 723 Dundas St Woodstock, Ontario**  
Supper includes pancakes and syrup, sausages, fruit salad and beverages. All are welcome. Free will offering. (Give only what you can).

**UNITED WAY OXFORD’S COMMUNITY CELEBRATION**

**March 26 at 5pm at Sally Creek Community Centre, Woodstock.**  
Register: [<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/1207466718459?aff=oddttdtcreator>]

**8TH ANNUAL TAMPON TUESDAY**

**March 4, 2025, from 5-7pm at Kelsey’s Roadhouse (Woodstock/Tillsonburg) and Scotch & Ponder (Ingersoll).**  
Donate menstrual products to fight period poverty. Drop off at local Shoppers Drug Marts before or bring donations March 4.

**GATHER25**

**March 1st**  
**St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church**  
**56 Thames St. S., Ingersoll**  
Join us for a live stream of followers of Jesus Christ worshiping together around the world! Everyone is welcome and there is no charge for the event. We will be live streaming this event from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. You can drop in at a time that works for you or join us for the day. This promises to be an incredible and inspiring moment in our community. At a time when so many of us are struggling to find hope, this event will shine the light on the hope and possibilities that only Jesus Christ offers us. We know you will be so glad you did. <https://www.gather25.com/>

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**March 7th 2:30-3:30pm**  
Entertainment by Celina on the Fiddle. Please bring a non perishable food item for the food bank. Call Cedarview at 519-602-0282, RSVP with Lisa

**OPEN HOUSE**

**April 30th 2-3pm**  
Edward on the harp. Please bring a nonperishable food item for the food bank. Call Cedarview at 519-602-0282, RSVP with Lisa

**TILLSONBURG DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB**

**Interested in Bridge? Join us every Friday at the Tillsonburg Duplicate Bridge Club at 1 p.m. at The Senior Centre.** Don’t have a partner? Come anyway and we will match you up with someone. For more information, visit their Facebook page: TburgBridge.

**WOMEN UNITED PRESENTS: TAMPON TUESDAY**

**Tuesday, March 4, 2025 from 5pm to 7pm**  
**At Kelsey’s in Woodstock (525 Norwich Ave.) and Tillsonburg (247 Broadway St.. Ingersoll location TBD.**  
**Drop off locations leading up to the event are at all local Shoppers Drug Mart’s (Woodstock, Ingersoll, Tillsonburg, and Norwich)**  
Help end PERIOD poverty! Join us for an evening of networking, socializing, and making a difference. Bring your donation of menstrual hygiene products to be donated to individuals in need in our community. Period poverty is real and it’s a problem across Canada and locally. For more information reach out to Amanda at [amanda@unitedwayoxford.ca](mailto:amanda@unitedwayoxford.ca)

**WHAT MAKES WINTER SHORTER?**

Listening, dancing and enjoying 50’s-70’s country music at the Ingersoll Jamboree, **every other Friday afternoon from 1-4 p.m. at the Masonic Hall, 190 Thames St S, Ingersoll.** February 21 & March 7, walk ins welcome at the door.

**HOMEMADE FREEZER MEALS**

St. Paul’s Church, Ingersoll, has been busy making meals that you can simply pull out of the freezer. We’d love to make life easier for you this winter. For more details, please call our church office at 519-485-3390 or by email: [stpauls@execulink.com](mailto:stpauls@execulink.com).

**THE OPTIMIST CLUB OF OXFORD COUNTY**

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

**PROJECT EMPOWER WOMENS COMMUNITY GROUP**

**Every Monday in Woodstock**  
**Until Mar 3; 6:30-8:30 pm**  
**Pay What You Can**  
Whether you want to make a friend, find support, or just be a better version of you, join this community! [myprojectempower@gmail.com](mailto:myprojectempower@gmail.com) for more info.

**REPAIR CAFÉ**

**4th Saturday of each month; 9:00 a.m. - Noon**  
**Hosted by East Oxford 403 Anglican Churches**  
**St. John’s Church, 685860 Oxford Rd. 2, Woodstock**  
Repairs to clothing, textiles, minor non-electrical household items, and stringed musical instruments, by donation. Also offered: learn how to make your own repairs.

**PEER SUPPORT GROUP FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS**

**Third Wednesday of each month; 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**

**21 Wellington St., Woodstock**  
**(Virtual options available)**  
PCMH is a peer support program providing support to parents and caregivers across Ontario with lived experience raising children and youth with mental health challenges. For more information, please visit [family.cmho.org](http://family.cmho.org) or [oxfordcounty@pcmh.ca](mailto:oxfordcounty@pcmh.ca). We are also on Facebook: Parents for Children's Mental Health ~ Oxford County

**LIVING WITH LOSS:**

**A SIX-WEEK GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP**  
**Caring Hearts Support Network: St. David's United Church, 190 Springbank Ave., Woodstock ON**  
A safe and supportive space to explore your grief, with the guidance of trained facilitators. Please contact for upcoming dates. No cost to attend. To register or for more information call or text 519-536-3370. [www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com](http://www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com). One-on-one grief support is also available.

**GRIEF SUPPORT FOR MAID RELATED LOSS**

**4th Wednesday of the month from 1 – 2:30 p.m.**  
**at the Thamesford Library, 165 Dundas St., Thamesford**  
This monthly in-person grief support group for loss related to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) offers a compassionate, safe space to explore this unique loss. The group will meet the 4th Wednesday of the month from 1 – 2:30 p.m. at the Thamesford Library, 165 Dundas St., Thamesford. The group is free of charge and pre-registration is requested. The next meeting is Wednesday, February 26th. To register or inquire about an evening group, contact Deb McKay at 519-866-3016 or email [faye@compassionategriefsupport.ca](mailto:faye@compassionategriefsupport.ca).

**VON OXFORD GRIEF CARE: FREE MONTHLY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP**  
**Register at: [oxford.griefsupport@von.ca](mailto:oxford.griefsupport@von.ca) or 519-539-1231 Ext 6299 or 6296**

**TILLSONBURG**

**WHEN:** 2nd Tuesday of every month  
**WHERE:** VON Oxford Office 24 Brock St. W., Tillsonburg  
**TIME:** 6:30PM-8:00PM  
**INGERSOLL**  
**WHEN:** 4th Tuesday of every month  
**WHERE:** Ingersoll Public Library 130 Oxford St., Ingersoll  
**TIME:** 10:30AM –12:00Noon  
**WOODSTOCK**  
**WHEN:** 3rd Saturday of every month  
**WHERE:** Sakura House Hospice 715180 Oxford Rd.4, Woodstock  
**TIME:** 10:30AM-12:00Noon

**ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION EVENTS: 642 Dundas Street, Woodstock**

**NEW MEMBER WELCOME**  
**March 1st at 11:30am**

**EXECUTIVE MEETING**  
**March 4th at 7pm**

**GENERAL BRANCH MEETING**  
**March 11th at 7:30pm**  
Nomination Night.

**SHUFFLEBOARD**  
**every Thursday at 1:30pm**

**DARTS**

**Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings.**

**CADETS**  
**Monday evenings.**

**MEAT DRAW**  
**March 15th at 3pm.**

**SOUP N SANDWICH**  
**March 6th 11:30-12:45pm.**

**CORN BEEF & CABBAGE WITH POTATOES VEGGIES & COLESLAW MEAL**

**March 21st from 5-6pm**  
For more information, please call 519-537-3112 or 519-539-3401.

**SATURDAY EVENING ENTERTAINMENT**

**March 1st** - DJ Kelly 7-11pm  
**March 8th** - DJ Wolfeman Randy Wolfe  
**March 15th** - Linda Lee  
**March 22nd** - 2 for the Road  
**March 29th** - Steve Beach & Larry Fuedo.

**SPRING EASTER BAKE SALE-VENDOR MARKET/CRAFT SALE**  
**April 12th 9am-1pm**

**HURON PARK BAPTIST CHURCH EVENTS:**  
**199 Berwick St, Woodstock**

**SUMMER BASKET BALL CAMP**  
**August 8 – 11**  
More details to follow.

**MEN’S WOODWORKING EVENT**

**Saturday, March 16 – 9:00 AM**  
Free training with rotary and woodburning tools provided by Brett Schultz. Register by March 9 by calling the church office 519-421-4722

**LADIES EVENT**

**Friday, March 21, 7:00 PM**  
Decluttering Tips with Hannah from Everyday Organized – Get practical tips and encouragement to bring peace and order to your home. Please register in advance by calling the church office 519-421-4722.

**SENIORS LUNCH - 65+**

**Thursday, March 27 – noon**  
Presentation – to be determined. Please call the church office to register. 519-421-4722.

**BEACHVILLE LEGION EVENTS:**  
**434852 Zorra Line, Beachville**

**LINE DANCING**  
**Thursdays, March 6-April 3: 7-8 pm**

**EUCHRE - Thursdays 7 pm**  
**DARTS - Fridays 8 pm**  
**FREE POOL**

**OXFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS:**  
**[oxhs.ca](http://oxhs.ca)**  
**[info@oxhs.ca](mailto:info@oxhs.ca) or 226-242-4772**

**THE HISTORY OF THE EMBRO HIGHLAND GAMES**  
**Wednesday March 26, 2025 @ 6:30 PM**  
Zorra Caledonian Society – Steve MacDonald Vice President and local historian.

**SAVING THE TITANIC**  
**Wednesday April 30, 2025 @ 6:30 PM**  
Thomas Ryerson, Author and grandson of William Edwy Ryerson. A true story about William Edwy Ryerson who survived the sinking of the Titanic.





WOODSTOCK  
ART GALLERY

# 2025 WINTER EXHIBITIONS

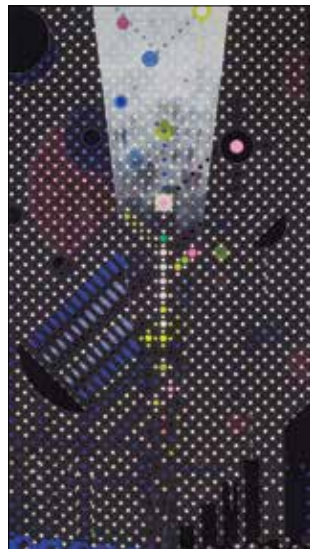
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City of  
Woodstock



## GATHERING FICTIONS

A Dialogue on Painting  
Michel Daigneault + Janet Jones

On view until June 21, 2025

Curator: Anik Glaude

Organized by



Janet Jones, *Voices of Love*, 2021; Michel Daigneault, *Rose*, 2023



## BETTY McARTHUR

Present in the Moment

On view until July 5, 2025

Curator: Danielle Hoevenaars

Betty McArthur, *Four Geese with Heads Up*, 1987



Chapbook with  
foreword and poetry  
by Emily De Angelis  
available in the  
gift shop

## FLORENCE CARLYLE

In the Space Between

On view until July 5, 2025

Curator: Danielle Hoevenaars

Florence Carlyle, *Motherhood* (detail), 1910



ON VIEW UNTIL  
APRIL 5, 2025



KODANSHA



Naoko Takeuchi, *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*, kanzen-ban cover / volume 1, Release  
Date: September 22, 2003

KODANSHA  
COMICS  
MANGA  
GALLERY