

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1281

Thursday, September 25, 2025

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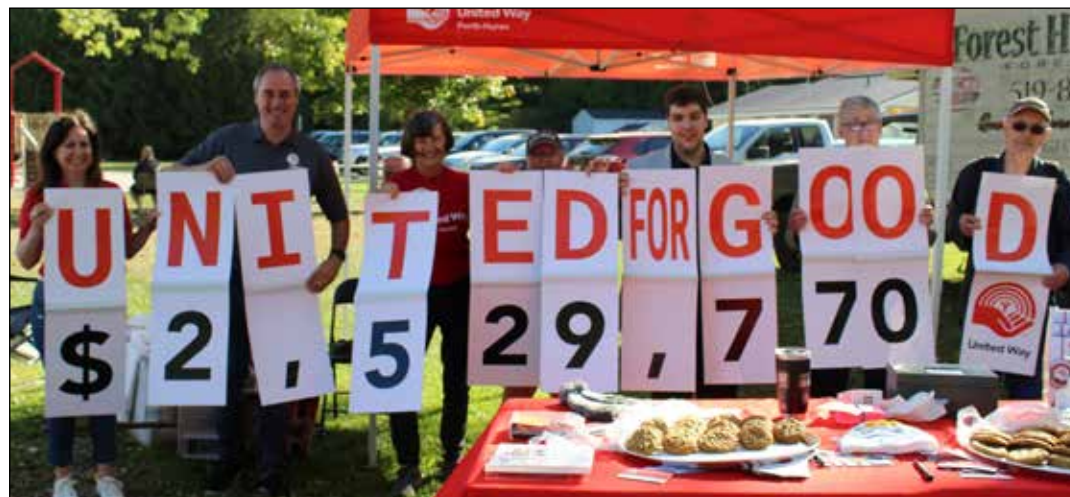
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United Way Perth-Huron officially kicks off 2025-2026 fundraising campaign



UNITED FOR GOOD WITH A \$2.5-MILLION GOAL (WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)
The United Way Perth-Huron unveiled a 2025-2026 campaign goal of \$2,529,770 at the St. Marys Farmers' Market on Saturday. Pictured from left are campaign co-chair Kristin Sainsbury, co-chair John Wolfe, Pam Zabel, Gwen Bradley, deputy mayor Brogan Alyward, Paul Williams and Al Slater.

St. Marys looks to partner with Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation on cleanup of west quarry

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Town of St. Marys is working toward a potential partnership with the Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation (TOARC) on the cleanup of industrial waste at the town's west quarry, part of an overall effort to rehabilitate the site for recreational use.

At the town's special priorities committee meeting, director of public works Jed Kelly and infrastructure services manager Jeff Wolfe presented an update to council on the

progress made at the west quarry, also known as the fishing quarry. The plan to clean up the quarry was approved by council back in February and includes the removal of large concrete pillars and other waste and debris left behind by limestone mining at a cost estimated at nearly \$70,000.

"One of the big concerns we had was the estimated cost of the rehabilitation of the waste material at the site," Wolfe said. "We were able to find an industry partner, they're called TOARC. ... They're a trustee of the Ontario

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

On Saturday, Sept. 20, volunteers with the United Way Perth-Huron were at the St. Marys Farmers' Market at Milt Dunnell Field to kick off their annual fundraising campaign and unveil a 2025-2026 campaign goal of just over \$2.5 million.

Campaign co-chairs Kristin Sainsbury and John Wolfe and United Way volunteers were onsite giving away cookies and sharing information before the big reveal. This chapter of the United Way has been helping people in our area since it was established in 1959 and, for years, has lived by its mission statement to improve lives and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action.

"The United Way assists over 40 organizations in Huron and Perth counties," Wolfe said. "While our goal is ambitious, it is one that helps us fulfil the mandate to help those who need a hand up. We thank all those that have supported and continue to support. Every dollar helps."

Some of the issues the United Way aims to address with the funds it raises each year are discrimination, intimate partner violence, access to service, low income, lack of housing and social isolation.

The stats in our area are nothing short of astounding. Last year alone, 190 families and individuals in St. Marys and the surrounding area received counselling, and one in three Ontario children lived in a household that struggled to put food on the table. Rising prices and tariffs have put an increased need and stress on the community and support is needed now more than ever.

There is currently an online 50/50 fundraiser with tickets available until Oct. 31. Tickets can be purchased at <https://perthhuron.unitedway.ca/50-50-draw/>.

The funds raised through the annual campaign stay local and help reduce poverty, help with housing solutions and support mental health through over 30 programs and services.

For more information on the United Way Perth-Huron, the research it conducts, volunteer opportunities and upcoming fundraising events, visit perthhuron.unitedway.ca.

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COMMUNITY

St. Marys looks to partner with Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation on cleanup of west quarry

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Resource Trust that is used to help abandoned sites restore their site. Typically, they're working on agricultural sites, they're restoring embankments, rehabilitating grasslands and things like that.

"So, this project is a little bit different than what they're typically used to doing, but they said it could potentially be a good candidate."

This year, town staff have been collecting data at the west quarry that will allow the TOARC board of directors to make a decision at its meeting in December as to whether the organization will partner with the town and spend a portion of its annual budget to help clean up the site. Previous and ongoing data collection this year includes water sampling to determine water quality, a land survey to determine the extent of the waste and debris on land and depth scanning to identify underwater hazards and conditions.

"It's not necessarily a funding opportunity; it is more of a partnership," Wolfe said. "If we are successful and they were to come in and do the removals of the existing waste, we would essentially hand the site over to them for a period of time, they would have their contractors doing the work, removing the waste. We would give them an opportunity to probably dispose of the concrete material and the steel at our (landfill), where we would then recycle it into aggregate. That would probably allow us to accomplish more work with them than if they had to pay for disposal at a site further away."

Due to high traffic in the area of the west quarry during the summer, Wolfe said the work would likely be done in the spring or fall. The work would involve removing the fencing along the trail side of the quarry and replacing any removed waste material with fill, which would then be seeded with grasses and other native plants, something Wolfe said has been requested by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) because the site is in a flood plain.

In early conversations with the UTRCA, Wolfe said conservation authority staff are tentatively on board with the project and are excited about the removal of the chain-link fence because it collects branches and other debris during flooding of the adjacent Thames River.

"Eventually, there will be a fence there, will there not?" Coun. Marg Luna asked. "There would have to be for safety rea-



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF ST. MARYS)

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

sons."

"Our expectation is that the chain-link fence will be removed," Wolfe responded. "The site is 300 metres long; there are different opportunities along that 300 metres where there's the potential for a gradual slope down to the water in some spots, and then in other areas, there's a sheer face where there's less opportunity for those at-water improvements. So, we expect there could potentially be a mixture of improvements that you make along the side of the water. Some could include handrails very similar to the outlook one of the community groups built that the fishermen fish off of. We could have more aspects like that along sections of the water, and we may look at potentially naturalizing some areas with shrubbery people don't like to walk through like buckthorn or something."

While Wolfe said TOARC is considering removing the waste and debris along the shores of the quarry and restoring those areas, he told council there was some hesitancy about removing the concrete pillars because of the public controversy around council's decision to have them removed.

"That was just an off-the-cuff comment where they said, 'Oh, we saw that in the paper,' or whatever," Wolfe said. "They weren't sure exactly which direction they wanted to go with that, so we'll explore that further. It could potentially be where

we do it immediately following; we have them do their work, we clean up all around them and then we contract ourselves, maybe, to do some of that if they're not willing to do it. Or it could potentially be where we phase that in when we're doing work sort of in that area. ... When we go to tackle those improvements, we would potentially do that work at that time.

"There's a couple different options that we don't have good detail on yet, but I can probably bring that back to you early in the new year after we hear back from

(TOARC)."

While town staff await a response from TOARC, the town will continue collecting data on the property and begin work on a landscape design. Assuming restoration work can be completed next year, Kelly said the actual landscape work and construction of amenities at the quarry could begin in 2027, though he suggested the potential for building amenities as they're requested and the funding is in place to make the project more manageable from a financial standpoint.



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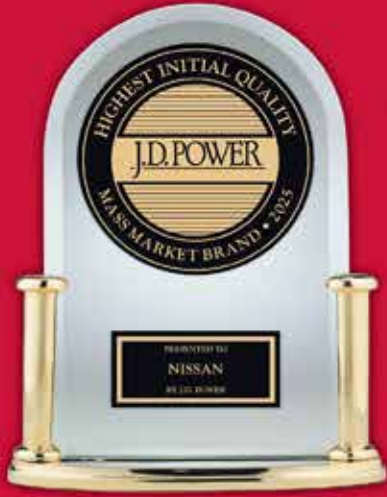
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St. Marys Gives 2025

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Here is how you can win... from September 15 to 25 donate 10 non-perishable food items or grocery cards at St. Marys Ford (555 Queen Street West) and FILL A FORD!

All donations go to the Salvation Army Foodbank in St. Marys.

Draw will be held Friday, September 26th!

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Bravo

We have 2 Bravos this week.

- 1) Bravo to Christopher Doyle, son of the late Frank and Margaret Doyle, from St. Marys. Now a resident of Whitby, Ont., he was featured in the business section of Saturday's Toronto Star as the managing director of Nextdoor Canada, a social platform that builds community. Christopher Doyle was inspired to make a career in journalism by his father, the founder of the St. Marys Independent.
- 2) Bravo goes to St. Marys Hospital and Happy Valley Health Team for your excellent, prompt, caring and very personal support that was given to me while undergoing a very trying time. I appreciate everything you have done and the ongoing support that was given to me.

*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered.

Boo

We have no Boos this week.

Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.

Quote of the Week

"Canada recognizes the State of Palestine and offers our partnership in building the promise of a peaceful future for both the State of Palestine and the State of Isreal."

- Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney

Overheard at the Coffee Shop

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Raise your hand if you think the world has gone nuts!

First day of fall and I have already bought and eaten Halloween candy!

Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others? Either email them to us at info@stmarysindependent.com with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519-284-0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

Reality check

Canadian newspapers are powered by journalists, not AI. They check the facts so you can trust what you're reading. That's why 4 in 5 people in Canada come back each week for more. Thanks for keeping it real with us.

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St. Marys Independent

Thoughts of the Week
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Fall is proof that change is beautiful.



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STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



ROAD SAFETY MONTH

Safe Roads Don't Happen by Accident: St. Marys Residents Reminded to Put Safety First

The Town of St. Marys is reminding seniors to stay safe on local roads by renewing driver's licences, getting regular eye exams, and using crosswalks while walking. Simple safety precautions, such as wearing reflective clothing and taking extra time, help protect everyone in the community.

townofstmarys.com/roadsafety



RECREATION FAIR

October 17 | 5 - 7 PM | PRC

This event will feature booths and interactive demos from local sports groups, wellness centres, and senior programs to promote community engagement and healthy living. It's a free, drop-in event open to all, with vendor applications due by October 3 at 12 PM.

townofstmarys.com/recreationfair



COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION

We can help your community project grow! The Community Grant Program applications are now live. This program provides funding for programs, projects, activities and events that enrich the community and advance Council's strategic goals.

Apply by November 30: townofstmarys.com/grants



TEST YOUR SMOKE ALARM

September 28

Ensure your safety by testing your smoke alarms on 'Test Your Smoke Alarm Day'. A working smoke alarm can save lives by providing early warning in case of a fire. Take a few minutes to test your alarms and protect yourself and your loved ones.

www.savedbythebeep.ca



SHOWER PROGRAM

Pyramid Recreation Centre

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Seniors of the Week



Our seniors of the week are Harold and Connie Douglas. They will be celebrating 55 years of marriage on Sept. 25. They were married at the Atwood United Church in 1970. They have three children and five grandchildren. Both were born in Listowel but moved to the St. Marys area in 1982 when Harold started working at the Wellburn Cheese Factory. Harold works a few days a week at Finnie Distributing and Connie spends many hours volunteering. Cheers to 55 years!

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519-284-0041 or info@stmarysindependent.com.

St. Marys support's Ontario's Test Your Smoke Alarm Day



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TOWN OF ST. MARYS)

From left to right, St. Marys fire prevention officer Chris St. Clair, firefighter Mark Manzano, firefighter Mike McKone and Fire Chief Phil West encourage everyone to test their smoke alarms on Sept 28.

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys is a proud supporter of Ontario's Test Your Smoke Alarm Day on Sept. 28.

This annual initiative serves as an important reminder of the critical role working smoke alarms play in saving lives, along with the need for fire safety awareness and home fire escape planning.

Every home in Ontario is required by law to have working smoke alarms on every storey and outside all sleeping areas. For added protection, alarms should also be installed inside bedrooms. Homeowners are responsible for installation and maintenance, while

tenants must promptly notify landlords of any issues.

"Smoke alarms save lives. In a fire, you may have less than 60 seconds to escape safely, and working smoke alarms give you those vital seconds," said St. Marys Fire Chief Phil West in a press release. "This day is about turning awareness into action. Test your alarms, talk with your family about escape planning and make fire safety part of your routine."

Residents are encouraged to test alarms by pressing the test button monthly, replacing batteries annually and replacing entire alarms every 10 years or as directed by the manufacturer.

To learn more about smoke alarm safety and how to protect your family, visit www.savedbythebeep.ca.

Weekend Quiz

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1. What is the capital of China?
2. Which TV show follows the lives of the Bluth family?
3. What device uses sunlight to tell time?
4. What kind of food is an olive?
5. What is the outer layer of a tooth called?
6. What is Beyoncé's last name?
7. Where does "the Muffin Man" live, according to the nursery rhyme?
8. When the stock market is performing well, it's called a ____ market?
9. Charlie Kirk was assassinated in what state?
10. Who does Meghan Markle play in "Suits"?

By Jake Grant

This week's answers are found on pg. 35



St. Marys Fire Department

PIGTAIL & RIB DINNER

Thursday, October 9th

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Stratford police report on a busy summer in St. Marys

Frauds still impacting local residents

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After a two-month summer break, the St. Marys community police advisory committee held its September meeting last week, during which the Stratford Police Service presented its monthly crime statistics for St. Marys from June, July and August.

Police Chief Greg Skinner guided committee members through each month's statistics, touching briefly on points of interest raised. Reports of fraud, of which there were five in June, six in July and three in August, were a particular point of interest for members.

"In reviewing the frauds, we've had some significant losses by people in St. Marys," Skinner said. "So, I think there needs to be some more public education around protecting oneself and one's information on the internet. We had one individual who has lost millions and that is really tough to see when you have somebody who is in the twilight of their life and their life savings is being stolen from them."

"That investigation is still underway. Any amount is terrible, but when I see that kind of amount, that is extremely worrisome."

Skinner said the man who lost millions to fraudsters fell victim to an online scam involving crypto currency. Stratford police are planning another public education session about how seniors can protect themselves from fraud, both online and over the phone, at the Pyramid Recreation Centre next month.

In June, police responded to a total of

213 calls for service in St. Marys, which rose to 220 in July and fell drastically to 161 in August. Police laid a total of 53 charges in St. Marys in June, 60 in July and just 48 in August.

In June, police responded to eight calls related to mental health in St. Marys, including one attempted suicide, and responded to eight calls involving domestic violence, three of which resulted in charges. The following month, police responded to four calls related to mental health and seven calls involving domestic violence, with one domestic-related charge being laid. In August, the number of mental-health calls rose to six and the number of domestic calls rose to 10, with three domestic charges being laid.

St. Marys saw no reports of violent crime in either July or August, however one assault was reported to police in June. Police did not receive any calls related to drug or alcohol consumption in August, they responded to one call involving impairment by alcohol in July and two drug-related offences in June.

Across June, July and August, police responded to a total of 10 mischief calls, two thefts from motor vehicles and nine thefts under \$5,000.

In St. Marys, police responded to seven motor-vehicle collisions in June – six involving property damage only and one resulting in personal injury. In July, the number of collisions rose to nine – eight involving property damage and one hit-and-run – and in August, police again responded to seven collisions – five involving property damage and two hit-and-runs.



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St. Marys Independent

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Legion Veterans' Banners to go up Sept. 28

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

As summer ends and fall begins, one thing we all start to think about is Remembrance Day and everyone who fought for our freedom and are still fighting for us today.

In St. Marys every year, we remember and honour our veterans and those actively serving with the St. Marys Legion's banner program. This program was launched by Perth Regiment Veteran's Branch 236 St. Marys in 2020. When it started, there were approximately 50 banners hung. Fast forward to 2025 when there will be 220 banners proudly hanging in our beautiful town.

Each banner has a photo of a veteran and indicates which unit they served in.

The St. Marys Firefighters are assisting the Legion in hanging the banners this year. For banner locations that require a bucket truck, Forman Electric will be helping.

To purchase a banner, there is a one-time fee of \$200. Each year, that banner is put up again at no extra charge. Legion members shared that, to date, all original banners have withstood the



(INDEPENDENT FILE PHOTO)

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

weather and will all be put up again five years later. They are locally produced at Gerber's Graphics.

However, as the program continues

to gain popularity, so does the cost of running it. The cost, which includes new banners, brackets, associated hardware and poles, cost the Legion approximate-

ly \$13,000 in 2024.

Though the deadline for new banners has passed for this year, the Legion will be accepting new applications next summer for anyone looking to purchase one.

Donations towards this ongoing tribute can be made by visiting the St. Marys Legion at 66 Church St. N during normal business hours, Tuesday through Thursday from 3-5 p.m., Friday from 12-5 p.m., and Saturday from 12-7 p.m.

The primary role of the Royal Canadian Legion is to assist veterans and their families and to promote remembrance. The banner program is a great way to inspire remembrance by seeing the faces and the names of those who unselfishly put their country first.

Once the banners are all in place, there will be a posted list of where to find each veteran. It will be posted on the St. Marys Legion Facebook page; St. Marys Life and a hard copy will be available at the local Legion.

The banner program is organized by Legion branches in many towns and cities across the country. Being able to see the faces of the veterans ensures they are respected, remembered and honoured by future generations.

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Local Community Food Centre offers budgeting workshop to help residents save amid rising costs

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

After positive feedback from the first “Honest Budget” session, the Local Community Food Centre is hosting another workshop to help residents better understand and manage their finances.

The Honest Budget workshop returns Sept. 29 at the Local Community Food Centre (612 Erie St., Stratford). The event is free for all attendees and will run for an hour starting at 3:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 4 p.m.

“This is meant to be in a non-judgmental way while we assess what we spend our money on,” said Jen Vredevelde, financial literacy and tax clinic coordinator at The Local Community Food Centre. “Let’s be real, I don’t care where your income comes from, I just want to help people budget.”

“I want to help people see where the money is going when they work hard for that paycheck that they receive. I want this program to teach something that attendees may have not learned before and to feel more confident in making decisions with their money.”

Vredevelde says people often slip into a restrictive mindset, cutting out all spending to save. She hopes the workshop will show participants how to



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

The Local Community Food Centre is holding a free tax and budgeting workshop in Stratford. The second Honest Budget workshop will take place on Sept. 29. Pictured is Jen Vredevelde, financial literacy and tax clinic coordinator at The Local Community Food Centre in Stratford.

strike a balance between setting money aside and still enjoying life, while exploring ways to feel financially secure and reach their goals.

“I want to give people a sense of re-

liability. There was a time when I was only making \$500 a month and rent was \$500,” said Vredevelde. “I know what you have to do to get your rent paid and I haven’t forgotten that. It’s really im-

portant to remember that people are not choosing to live in poverty and have no money.”

Vredevelde said many systemic programs end up supporting poverty rather than solving it. She hopes the workshop will help shift the conversation toward long-term solutions, adding the Local is an ideal place to host it.

“Last time we did this in July, we had 10 people. I want to do this event on a quarterly basis. People are requesting help,” Vredevelde said. “If people don’t know where to start, we take a deep dive on what people are spending, how much they’re making and what’s getting them jammed up from a financial standpoint.”

“Once people see what’s going on, something clicks. They become honest about it and then reflect on what they should be spending on. It’s to give people more decision-making confidence.”

Vredevelde said the program has launched a new service to help residents file back taxes from 2017 to the present, something not currently offered in town. While tax clinics in the community typically only go back two years, this service will run year-round to help people catch up outside of tax season. All services are free.

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St. Marys' Donna Fawcett's 'The Healing Hand of God' reprinted in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Hope, Faith, and Miracles*

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Local author Donna Fawcett's story of hope and miracles inspired so many *Chicken Soup for the Soul* readers, it's being published again in a new anthology.

Fawcett, a retired creative writing instructor from Fanshawe College, freelance writer and award-winning novelist, will have her story, "The Healing Hand of God," featured in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Hope, Faith, and Miracles*.

"The Healing Hand of God" is about Fawcett's youngest daughter's recovery from second- and third-degree burns resulting from a fall into a campfire. The family asked their friends to pray and a group on a ladies retreat prayed for a miracle.

"The same time they were praying, the doctor was unbandaging her feet to change the bandage and they were healed, and he couldn't explain it," Fawcett said.

Now an adult, her daughter shares her story to inspire others.

"It's been one of those stories that just

gives people hope," Fawcett said.

The author has been published with *Chicken Soup for the Soul* nine times in total and recently learned a few more of her stories have been approved for their 10th time being published. Fawcett enjoys sending stories into the publishing company.

"They try to reach the reader where they're at. They're not trying to make lofty stories," she said. "It's just everyday life that they're publishing, so it's not really hard to come up with a story because I live everyday life and I've connected with some of the readers and

they are everyday people like me," the author said.

Fawcett also encourages anyone who has a story to tell to submit it to *Chicken Soup for the Soul*.

"If a person has the inclination to write and they have a story that they know will give other people hope, then I think they should write it and I think they should contact *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and submit it," she said.

Chicken Soup for the Soul: Hope, Faith, and Miracles can be found wherever books are sold.

Anything goes in the Knick Knack Beanie Shack

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

The Knick Knack Beanie Shack on Wellington Street is like a little free library, but for any object.

St. Marys resident Tina Brenner-Ritu started up the Knick Knack Beanie Shack in the summer after the idea rattled in her mind for a couple of years. She was first inspired after coming across a TikTok video of someone showcasing a little free library for keychains.

"We always have libraries for books, but I want to do something fun for the kids or anybody, really," Brenner-Ritu said.

So far, running the Knick Knack Beanie Shack has been mostly positive. Brenner-Ritu looks forward to seeing what residents drop off and likened it to experiencing Christmas every day.

"I've had some people drop some stuff off for me, like a few people have donated things for the shack and when I have my windows open, I can sometimes hear

kids stopping by and I can hear them being all excited swapping out their stuff," said Brenner-Ritu.

Before running the Knick Knack Beanie Shack, Brenner-Ritu and her daughters ran the handmade trinket business, Bitsy and Bean, for about eight years. The family will put out stuff they no longer use, such as school supplies, craft materials and toys.

Brenner-Ritu likes to create keychains out of small plastic toys, like plastic animals, that are left in the Knick Knack

Beanie Shack. People of all ages can donate any item of their choosing towards the shack.

"If you have, like, I don't know, an old mug or something that you don't want anymore, you can put that in there," she said.

The Knick Knack Beanie Shack is slightly seasonal, as Brenner-Ritu plans to take down the shack in the winter. More information can be found online by visiting Knick Knack Beanie Shack's Facebook page.



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Forest City Film Festival celebrates 10 years of community, creativity and cinema in southwestern Ontario

BRITTANY WHELAN

Forest City Film Festival

Picture this; I was eight years old when a major movie production rolled into my small town in southwestern Ontario. The downtown transformed into a film set and I can remember my mother dragging me by hand to a gleaming white limousine.

Security moved to stop us, but Julianne Moore said it was okay and signed my scrap of paper. I didn't know it then, but that brief exchange was the spark that led me to study film and pursue a career in the industry because film doesn't just entertain, it inspires, connects people and fuels local economies.

Now, I work for the Forest City Film Festival, where we help champion the next generation of regional storytellers.

For the past decade, the Forest City Film Festival (FCFF) has celebrated the stories and talent of southwestern Ontario, uniting movie lovers, empowering creators and contributing to a \$30-million regional film industry.

And the inspiration doesn't stop with film. This year, we're honouring London native David Shore, creator of House M.D. and The Good Doctor whose work has influenced not only storytellers, but a generation of doctors and health-care professionals.

That spark I felt as a kid was the same kind of magic our founder and executive director, Dorothy Downs, wanted to share when she launched the FCFF in 2015. A year later, her vision came to life at the Wolf Performance Hall with a three-day event showcasing 25 regionally connected films, capped by a sold-out gala featuring local screenwriter Emma Donoghue. By 2017,



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Forest City Music Festival is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

FCFF had nearly doubled its programming, introducing an animation category, an international screening and extending the festival to five days.

The year 2018 brought a dose of nostalgia with a screening of *The Breakfast Club* and a live Q&A with London-born actor John Kapelos, plus the launch of the Short Film Pitch Competition, which gave emerging creators the chance to bring their ideas to life. In 2019, the inaugural Forest City Youth Film Festival took centerstage, spotlighting the voices of high school filmmakers from across the region.

When the world went online in 2020, FCFF adapted with a fully digital festival, introducing a music video category, virtual Q&As and on-demand access that connected audiences across Canada. The year 2021 marked the rebrand of our industry programming into the Ontario Screen Creators Conference, complete with

a national-scale Project Pitch competition offering a \$60,000 prize package. In 2022, we expanded our lens with curated Indigenous programming and "Best of the World Fest" (BOWF), bringing highlights from Cannes, TIFF, Sundance and Berlinale to our local audiences.

By 2024, London's designation as a UNESCO City of Music inspired an electrifying opening night of live performances, music videos and a world premiere. We also introduced our Lifetime Achievement in Entertainment Award, honouring London-born Victor Garber in a star-studded celebration with surprise appearances from Jennifer Garner, Eugene Levy and Martin Short.

This year, as we mark our 10th anniversary, we invite you to be part of 10 unforgettable days with more than 100 films, more than 60 events and experiences that celebrate the power of storytelling. From our high-energy music video opening night to a haunting Halloween screening and the very best in regional cinema in between, the Forest City Film Festival is where culture, creativity and community meet on the big screen.

Audiences will enjoy stories from across Southwestern Ontario, featuring films from Stratford, Cambridge, Hamilton and beyond, showcasing the region's richness and diversity. Hollywood comes to London with our Lifetime Achievement Award Reception, where Emmy-winning creator David Shore will be honoured in a glamorous evening of signature drinks, generous hors d'oeuvres and an exciting silent auction. Attendees can also explore the best international films or cheer on the next generation of filmmakers. With so much to see and do, there's truly something for everyone at this year's festival.

Visit fcff.ca to explore the full program and join the celebration.



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Trying the new McVeggie Burger from McDonalds



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Emily from McDonalds St. Marys was travelling around St. Marys and handing out the new McVeggie Burger to try. The McVeggie burger is a breaded veggie patty made with a blend of vegetables (including carrots, green beans, zucchini, peas, soybeans, broccoli and corn) and seasoning, topped with shredded lettuce and creamy mayo-style sauce, served on a toasted sesame bun. Accepting one to try was Cindy Boakes from the St. Marys Independent Newspaper.

Swedish Kubb Champions



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Gerald DeVries and Wayne Sterkenburg (aka "Dutch Wood") hold the St. Marys Swedish Kubb League ("SMSKL") trophy after defeating Rob Schubsole and Mike Morning (aka "Boyz in the Kubb") in the finals of Super Kubb Sunday held on Sunday, Sept. 14 at Broken Rail Brewing.



For more than 160 years, Indigenous children were forced into Indian Residential Schools.

September 30 is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day to learn about the 150,000 childhoods lost to Canada's Indian Residential School system.

More than \$13.3 million in infrastructure funding announced for Perth-Wellington

St. Marys to receive more than \$500,000

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT
Staff Contribution

Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae recently announced municipalities across Perth-Wellington would be receiving \$13.3 million in infrastructure funding through the 2026 Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF). Included in the list of 11 municipalities receiving funding through OCIF are St. Marys, which is receiving \$502,284, and Perth South, which will get \$434,389.

“We continue to support our small and rural municipalities to build and maintain critical infrastructure,” Rae said in a press release. “Our rural communities are getting shovels in the ground on important infrastructure projects, and our provincial government will be there to support their future growth and prosperity.”

In 2026, Ontario will allocate \$400 million in OCIF funding to help 423 small, rural and northern communities address critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water and wastewater systems. The minimum grant amount for municipalities will increase to \$125,000 from \$100,000. Funding allocations are based on a formula that accounts for the different needs and economic conditions of each community. Communities may accumulate funding for up to five years to address larger infrastructure projects.

“Small, rural and northern communities are essential to the

growth and prosperity of Ontario,” said Ontario Minister of Infrastructure Kinga Surma in the press release. “That is why we’re increasing the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund’s minimum grant amount to provide predictability and stability for these communities and ensure they have the resources they need to thrive. With our record investments across all infrastructure programs, we’re driving an unprecedented wave of construction – highways, transit, hospitals, schools and more – to make communities stronger, keep workers on the job and drive economic growth for generations to come.”

OCIF provides funding for local infrastructure projects in municipalities with populations under 100,000, rural and northern municipalities, as well as for local services boards that own water or wastewater systems.

Since 2018, \$2.8 billion has been allocated across Ontario through OCIF, \$102.9 million of which has come directly to municipalities in Perth-Wellington.

OCIF funding as provided by the Ministry of Infrastructure in 2026 are as follows:

Municipality	2026 Funding
Mapleton	\$ 1,180,220
Minto	\$ 1,360,917
North Perth	\$ 1,128,233
Perth East	\$ 373,247
Perth South	\$ 434,389
Perth County	\$ 537,802
St. Marys	\$ 502,284
Stratford	\$ 3,224,624
Wellington North	\$ 1,286,956
West Perth	\$ 1,246,949
Wellington County	\$ 2,115,126
Total	\$ 13,390,747

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SPOTLIGHT ON ARTS & CULTURE

Turning on the stars: Cameron Porteous reflects on a life in the theatre

DAN WELCHER

Contributed Article

There was a spectacular theatre in Toronto called the Runnymede, which opened in 1927 with silent movies and vaudeville shows. One of its many innovations was a projected “sky,” with clouds and stars, in the ceiling. On the lighting board backstage was a large electrical switch with a sign on it: “Turn Out The Stars Before Leaving.”

Born 10 years later in Rosetown, Sask., Cameron Porteous has spent his life designing magical stage sets and costumes all over the world. In a way, he has been turning on the stars, as well as the clouds, fires, floods and the smoke of battle for most of his life.

John Cameron Porteous is known to most of us as the man who started an art gallery inside the Via Rail Station, but that’s been a retirement job for a man who was head of production design for the Shaw Festival from 1980-1997 and who had also been a production designer for CBC television, HBO films, the Stratford Festival and numerous stage and opera companies in North America and Europe.

Having a conversation with Porteous about theatre is like talking with Mozart about opera; his eyes twinkle, his irrepressible smile deepens and the pure love he feels for theatre just flows out of him.

“When I designed *Peter Pan* for the Shaw Festival, we decided to make all three of the children’s beds fly up in that London bedroom scene – not just the children,” he recalled. “The problem, as you can imagine, was what to do with those beds once they got up above the stage. The next scene is in a magical clearing in Neverland. Two of the beds could be left hanging above the set, out of sight, but there was no space in the flies to deal with the third bed. So, we simply had it land on the ground in Neverland, where the Indians discovered it and marveled at this flying bed from the sky.”

Like so many other Canadian artists, Porteous brought his small-town sense of wonder into his mature work. Raised in Saskatchewan, he was introduced to theatre in high school in Vancouver, where he won a prize for acting. He soon realized that his real love was not acting, but in art direction and set design. His trajectory – from King Edward High School in Vancouver to the University of British Columbia, designing for television and movies at the CBC and CTV for five years, and then to England for serious study at the



(DAN WELCHER PHOTO)

Cameron Porteous, the now retired curator and founder of St. Marys Station Gallery, has a rich background in theatrical set and costume design some may not know about.

Wimbledon College of Art and entering the world of live theatre and opera – has been a non-stop ride on the wild horse that is theatre. And that ride has been exhilarating, if sometimes taxing.

Designing Christopher Plummer’s one-man show *Barrymore*, Porteous was faced with finding the perfect top hat for a scene in which Lionel Barrymore looks in a mirror and sees his grandfather. He had lined up four hats for Plummer to choose from, one of which Porteous had silently decided upon already. Plummer’s reaction was that of a roaring theatrical lion: “This is the best you can do? I need many more to choose from! Call me when you have a whole table full of hats.”

So, Porteous rounded up about 20 top hats from thrift stores and prop shelves, and called Plummer back.

“That’s more like it,” exulted the star, who then

chose the very same hat Porteous had already selected at that first fitting.

Porteous achieved international renown during his 17 years at the Shaw Festival in Niagara-On-The-Lake, designing some of the biggest and most successful productions the festival had mounted. In addition to plays of George Bernard Shaw and a host of other playwrights, he designed *Cavalcade* by Noel Coward, with director Christopher Newton. This now legendary production, which has 40 scenes, hundreds of characters and countless costume changes, could not have been done without Porteous’ turntable design. This allowed lightning-fast scene changes, keeping the show moving in an adrenaline high. The Shaw Festival is also where he met his wife-to-be, wardrobe mistress Tracy Fulton, who now works at the Stratford Festival in the wardrobe department.

The Station Gallery in St. Marys was Porteous’ baby from its inception in 2017, when he (along with Charles Sharun and Reed Needles) persuaded St. Marys town council to allow a small art gallery to be set up inside the vintage, turn-of-the-century building, a local treasure that was underappreciated. There are new installations every six weeks, with prominent and emerging Canadian artists displaying and selling their work.

Some of the artists, like Lionel Venne, achieve sudden local fame. Venne’s northern Ontario paintings were such a sensation last year that Naina’s Restaurant in St. Marys now has more than a dozen of his paintings adorning its walls.

Asked how he would describe his own art, Porteous offers these words.

“Art is the excess beyond basic requirement, which is, of course, the most essential requirement of all.”



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Motherwell, a small, beautiful village with tons of history and a caring, tight community



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Staff from McLean Taylor Construction delivered to a West Perth property as a tribute to the beautiful village of Motherwell.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

A local heritage committee has recently taken a big step toward preserving the history of the Village of Motherwell.

To address the ongoing removal of historic farm and village buildings, a group of local citizens started the Motherwell Heritage Committee in 2019 to preserve

the history of Motherwell. On Monday, Sept. 15, a large stone delivered by McLean Taylor Construction was placed on a former bowling green owned by the Municipality of West Perth as the start of a meaningful tribute to the village.

The commemorative granite rock weighs between 12 and 14 tonnes and comes from the farm of local resident, Rudy McIntosh. The stone will be en-

graved as a memorial and will have the Motherwell Women's Institute crest on it.

There will also be a story board put in place at the stone with information about the settlers and the history of the village.

In the spring, the committee will host a ceremony and unveiling after the engraving of the rock is complete. The

heritage committee members put together a booklet on the history of Motherwell, and a copy can be purchased for \$10 from Lois McIntosh, who can be reached at loismcintosh84@gmail.com.

Committee members would like to express their appreciation of McLean Taylor for their generous assistance.

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St. Marys Independent SPORTS

Lincolns stumble in two straight losses; Hodkinson, Weir return

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

In the span of a week, the St. Marys Lincolns went from a lofty peak to a frustrating valley.

Just days after their strong start to the year, which saw the Lincs win back-to-back games, the good news kept coming as the team reacquired forwards Ryan Hodkinson and Ethan Weir.

Lincolns' general manager Pat Powers noted the additions instantly made the Lincolns a much stronger team.

"Adding these two elite players definitely makes us more difficult to play against," said Powers. "We never want to look forward to the playoffs before we make it, but when the playoffs start, if we're in it, this makes us extremely hard for a team to match up with us defensively in a line-matching scenario. Ethan (Weir) will be one of the premier scorers in the league this year and Ryan (Hodkinson) will be one of the top faceoff men who can play in all situations."

Unfortunately for the Lincolns, the additions were where the recent good news ended as they suffered two straight losses, first at the hands of the LaSalle Vipers, and then with a loss to the reigning Sutherland Cup Champion Chatham Maroons.

The first loss came on Sept. 19 when the Lincolns fell to the Vipers. After a strong start to the game, the visitors from LaSalle found their footing approximately halfway through the period, to which the Lincolns struggled to respond. Ultimately, St. Marys dropped the contest by a score of 2-1, lacking the intensity displayed in their first two games.

According to head coach Jeff Bradley, the team didn't display the mental fortitude needed to overcome LaSalle once they got into the game.

"I didn't think it was very good," Bradley said of his team's performance. "In the first five minutes, we showed up and had a lot of scoring chances, and then, it seemed as though we thought maybe it would be easy. I think once LaSalle got settled in, it was clear they had a gameplan that they were going to make us work to get pucks and battle to get through them. We just weren't willing to do that enough to win."

Bradley added his team wasn't pushing back hard enough to break through the Vipers' defensive presence at centre ice.

"LaSalle seemed to be content with sitting back in the neutral zone a little bit and then forcing us to get pucks behind them and make us try to retrieve them. Instead of doing that, we tried to go through them and it caused turnovers and some big mistakes where we didn't do some fundamental things. As a whole, there was more we didn't like than what we liked."



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Chase MacQueen-Spence scores the lone St. Marys Lincolns' goal in their 2-1 loss to the LaSalle Vipers on Sept. 19. The Lincolns also fell to the Chatham Maroons on Sept. 21 by a score of 5-2.

Despite the disappointing performance, Bradley noted there was one bright spot – goaltender Vaughn Barr, appearing in his first game of his junior career, who Bradley said gave his team a chance to win.

"Vaughn played really well. It's unfortunate that the team in front of him didn't show up enough to get that win for him. It could have been a really good experience for our team and a really good experience for Vaughn, but unfortunately, we weren't there to help him out. That was his first junior game; he got to do it in front of his home crowd as a 16-year-old against 19- and 20-year-olds, and he played amazing."

Chase MacQueen-Spence scored the lone St. Marys goal just 59 seconds into the first period, but from there, the Vipers neutralized the Lincolns. Second-period goals by Ian Inskip and Kieran McNally along with a 40-save effort by goaltender Adam Bartel lifted LaSalle to victory.

While acknowledging the disappointing showing, Bradley kept in perspective the youth of the team and the season.

"We've got young guys who are still growing and learning how to play in this league. Even our older guys are in roles they haven't necessarily been in in the past. There are ebbs and flows to that growth. We were feeling really good after the Caledonia game (on Sept. 13) and then got Ryan (Hodkinson) and Ethan (Weir) coming back, and we were all excited. Then, having a gut punch like that, it's just a reminder that we're still in that learning process."

Inexperience costs Lincs against wily Maroons

Though they plugged the intensity leak 48 hours later in their trip to Chatham, the Lincolns' youth ended up biting them as inexperienced mistakes led to a 5-2 loss to the Maroons.

powerplay, tied the game at one apiece, but Chatham restored their one-goal lead with a powerplay marker of their own from Alexander Lisi.

Jaxon Priddle potted another powerplay goal for Chatham in the second, but Lincoln Moore responded two minutes and 11 seconds later with a blistering deke through two Maroons before ripping a shot from a tight angle up and over the shoulder of Samuel DiBlasi.

Herman noted Moore as being the team's offensive catalyst through the first four games of the regular season, and praised several other returning players for their performances on Sept. 21.

"Lincoln (Moore) has been that guy since the beginning of the season. It's unbelievable how much he's dominating out there physically in every way, but I would say Chase (McDougall) has had a couple of really good games. He's played with energy and he's used that energy really effectively. He's been handling the puck well and making plays. And on the back end, Owen (Kalp) and (Jacob) Montesi have been so rock solid."

In the third period, Lisi scored his second of the night before Priddle did the same with an empty netter, sealing a 5-2 win for the Maroons.

With several defensive errors leading to Chatham goals, along with several more that were denied as part of Brogan Colquhoun's 39-save effort, Herman said the mistakes are part of the team's growing phase.

"We're still figuring it out," said Herman. "We're still in that stage of everyone getting on the same page, and we've had some roster changes. We had long stretches where we did really well, and while there were things to correct, I think we came out of that game believing we could play with those guys and beat them. We still have to try to win games, obviously, but we have to be patient and keep teaching."



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Mogky's Pals wins SMGCC Ladies' Scramble

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Peggy Connors, Janis Kerrigan, Janet Mogk and Liz Pede won the Ladies' Scramble tournament at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club (SMGCC) on Sept. 11.

The team, named Mogky's Pals, won with a score of 64, eight under par, with retrogression. The team's day was highlighted with four consecutive birdies. According to Kerrigan, the team managed strong shots all over the course as part of their winning round.

"I believe a lot of our success was due to not having any expectations and going in relaxed and just wanting to play well," said Kerrigan. "We got off to a great start with great scoring on the front nine, aided by a very timely chip-in for birdie by Peg (Connors), our fearless leader, and that set the tone for the rest of the round. We managed to stay out of trouble on our drives for the most part, and some strong putting made for a very successful round."

Mogky's Pals also finished first in the A division, with the Ridge Girls, which included Lori Graves, Heather McAuliffe, Cindy Dunham and Cheryl Ferguson, taking second place in the same division.

The team of Cherie Dolmage, Tracey Denstedt-Gunn, Susan Widmeyer and Janet Klemp took the top spot in the B division, shooting 66. Chicks of the Sands, made up of Wendy Reed, Sandi Pitcairn, Sophie Protopapas and Dianne Marchand, shot 68 to take second.

In the C division, the Golden Putters, including Ann Griffith, Lynn Taylor, Chris Shoemaker and Cyndie Hughes, edged out the Others, Marg Traxler, Connie Frank, Joan Butler and Diana Gamble, to win, both shooting 70.

The D division was won by the Sassy Slicers, comprising Sarah Taylor, Carly Bucholtz, Brit Hartfiel and Mary Lou Jones, who posted a score of 70. Laurie Higginbotham, Cindy Jeans, Lisa Skinner and Wendy Sinden, who made up KW Chicks with Sticks, shot 75 to place second.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Janet Mogk, Janis Kerrigan, Liz Pede and Peggy Connors, who shot an eight-under-par score of 64 and won based on retrogression at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club's Ladies Scramble tournament on Sept. 11.

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MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Lenny Vergeer throws the ball from the outfield during a Royal Canadian Legion U9 HP Red St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Grayson Gilbert springs into the air as he reaches first base during a U11 WOBA St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Maksym Zabihailo loads up a shot on net during a U10 Boys Tier Two St. Marys Storm game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Clara Feeney launches the ball through the midfield during a U14 Girls Tier Three St. Marys Storm game earlier this season.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)
Julian Walsh whips a pitch from the mound during a Social Thirty-One U18 OBA St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Reese Crawford swings at the ball during a Wildwood Care Centre U15 HP St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.

MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Cohen McKichan plays the ball up the field from the defensive end during a U14 Boys Tier Three St. Marys Storm game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Mitchell Grant makes a throw to first base during a St. Marys Firefighters U9 OBA St. Marys Rockies game earlier this year.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Kenzie Shackleton hits the ball into the infield during a Stonetown Electric U13 HP St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Remco Wynands tosses the ball from his position in the outfield during a Veterinary Purchasing U15 WOBA St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Pryce Miller boots a shot on goal from outside the box during a U12 Boys Tier Three St. Marys Storm game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Leah Hachler steps into a kick from the wing during a U18 Girls Tier Three St. Marys Storm game earlier this season.

MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Ivy Smith dashes to first base after getting a hit during a St. Marys Cement U9 HP Blue St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Jack McArthur cracks the ball up into the air while on the field for the Happy Valley Family Health Team U11 EB St. Marys Rockies.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Nick Simons swings at an incoming pitch during a St. Marys Building Centre U13 EB St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Hayden Wright launches a heavy pitch during a Red Rock Construction U16 OBA St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)
Landyn Harrigan winds up to kick the ball towards the net during a U10 Boys Tier Three St. Marys Storm game earlier this season.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)
Harper Graves advances the ball through the centre field during a U11 Boys Tier Two St. Marys Storm game earlier this season.

MINOR SPORTS **SCRAPBOOK**



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Brody Pearson gets a sharp hit during a Dunny’s Source For Sports U9 WOBA Blue St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Hannah Schmidt swings for a hit during a McLean Taylor Construction U11 HP St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Elliot Wilhelm sprints to first base after getting a hit during a Forman Electric U13 OBA St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Jude Schlotzhauer unloads a pitch during a Cubberley Plumbing and Heating U14 OBA St. Marys Rockies game earlier this season.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Lilian Garniss kicks the ball back into play from the corner during a U12 Girls Tier Two St. Marys Storm game earlier this season.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Lena Thompson blasts a shot on target during a U16 Girls Tier Three St. Marys Storm game earlier this season.

Rotary Club of St. Marys hosts Fun Golf & Kenyan BBQ on a beautiful day



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF ST. MARYS)

Attendees gathered in the outdoor pavilion at River Valley Golf Course for a Kenyan barbecue dinner.

ROTARY CLUB OF ST. MARYS

Contributed Article

More than 80 people gathered under bluebird skies on Saturday, Sept. 20 at River Valley Golf Course for the Rotary Club of St. Marys' Fun Golf & Kenyan BBQ.

Funds raised at the event will be directed toward Rotary's upcoming centennial international project in Kenya.

"Today we excelled in the three F's: Friend-raising, fun-raising and fund-raising," event organizer Andrew Middleton said. "We all met new friends, we had a fabulous time and we

raised money for a great cause."

Attendees could choose between nine holes of golf and the Kenyan barbecue or just the barbecue dinner. The staff at River Valley outdid themselves preparing a beautiful, multi-course Kenyan barbecue meal. Samosas were served as appetizers, seasoned, barbequed steak, chicken and sausage anchored the main course, and side dishes included the potato dish, Irio, and the bean dish, Akara. No one went home hungry.

Muguori High School is located approximately 100 kilometres northeast of Nairobi, Kenya's capital. The school's more than 400 students and staff rely on



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF ST. MARYS)

The foursome of Josh Hartwick, George Layland, Murray Richardson and Brian Hartwick won the tournament with a score of four under par. Hartwick is absent from the photo.

multiple outhouses. There are no proper washrooms with running water and toilets. As a result, urinary tract infections (UTIs) are common among the school's female students. When girls go home to recover, they are unlikely to return to the school, resulting in unfinished education.

The Rotary Club of St. Marys is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. In early 2024, the club designated Muguori High School as their centennial international project. In November 2025, 14 people will travel to Kenya to complete the project. In addition to the new washrooms, volunteers will refresh

the classrooms and teach keyboarding skills to the students. Each volunteer is paying their own way to Kenya. None of the funds raised are being used for travel costs.

The Rotary Club of St. Marys thanks the many tournament sponsors for their generosity. The club would also like to thank River Valley Golf Course for being such a great event host.

Members of the public who feel encouraged by this project in Kenya and want to donate may do so at rotaryst-marys.ca/donations.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF ST. MARYS)

Josh Hartwick "putts" with a hockey stick at Rotary's Fun Golf and Kenyan BBQ at River Valley Golf Course.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF ST. MARYS)

Chef Michael Tkaczuk barbecues steak for the Kenyan dinner.

St. Marys wins Battle of Highway 7 match



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Team St. Marys repeated as champions in the third annual “Battle of Highway 7” friendly golf competition last weekend. St. Marys team captain led his team to a 16-5 victory in matches that included a Chapman format (with scramble at the end) on the front nine and Singles matches on the back nine. Pictured above, top row: Greg Wolfkamp, Scott Rinn, Jason Firby, Bo Jackson, Jimmy Craigmile, Rich Parsons, Mike Gregory and Andy Cunningham. Front row: Graham Glousher, Brian Humphreys, Troy Carter, Scott Kemp, and Kenny Hutton

Parks Lawn Bowling Club hosts mixed/women’s pairs tournament



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Pictured from left to right are Andy Davis, Chris Collins, and Len Boreham, as Collins presents the pair with the first-place prize at the Parks Lawn Bowling Club’s mixed/ women’s pairs tournament on Sept. 21, sponsored by Tye’s Detailing and the Collins family. Boreham substituted for Debbie Davis due to illness. Placing second was the team of David Bell and Sandy Ronson. Chris and Dawn Collins took third place. Gail and Wayne Christie finished fourth. Alexis Fares and Dianne Trask came in fifth, and sixth place went to Kay Johns and Rick Wood. The tournament saw 14 teams compete in four 10-end games.

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Eedy, McLellan win at Parks Lawn Bowling Club's Presidential Invitational



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Pictured on the left are Edith Eedy and Chris Collins. On the right are Larry McLellan and Collins. Eedy was awarded the first-place honours in the novice division of the Parks Lawn Bowling Club's Presidential Invitational tournament on Sept. 11. Ena Kearney finished second among the novice bowlers, while Marjie Westerveld took third. McLellan finished first in the non-novice group, with Bill Dupuis placed second, and Kaitlyn Fares came in third. The club noted it was a very successful tournament, and hopefully one that becomes an annual tradition. The tournament saw 12 novice bowlers paired with 12 non-novice bowlers in a 3-8 end tournament, where, each game, the non-novice drew for a different partner. The club also issued a special thanks to John and Sherry Queenan for providing the delicious corn for the players to enjoy after the tournament.

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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: More than a move - the habits that really change us

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

When I first came across James Clear's book, "Atomic Habits," its central idea struck a chord with me: small, consistent habits compound into remarkable results. As I've gotten older, this concept has become more than just an idea – it's a guiding principle. My focus has shifted from seeking immediate success to prioritizing long-term wellbeing.

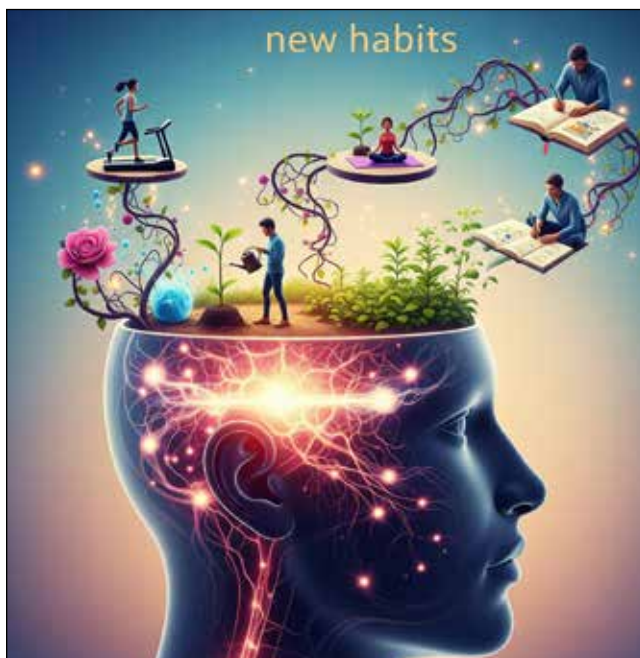
One of the most transformative lessons was understanding that habits aren't just actions; they're reflections of our identity. When we change our habits, we're not just doing something different, we're becoming someone new.

Our habits forge a powerful cycle of behavior and belief that defines how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us. As an immigrant, one might be tempted to believe that moving to a new country offers a chance to shed old habits and start anew. However, the reality is that our personal identities and ingrained patterns of behaviour travel with us. True change comes not from a new location, but from a deliberate cultivation of new habits.

Our environment plays a critical role in shaping our habits. Even for a mindful individual, the influence of marketing and societal trends is pervasive. A prime example is the current "protein" trend, which has led to junk foods being misleadingly labeled as healthy. Similarly, the strategic layout of stores, with products like soda placed more prominently than water, subtly guides consumer choices.

My personal journey reflects a shift from seeking quick results – such as my younger self's desire for flat abs – to prioritizing overall wellbeing. Today, my focus is on building small, healthy habits for long-term health, understanding that consistency is far more valuable than instant gratification.

I have observed fascinating differences in daily habits between Canada and my native Ukraine. In Canadian restaurants, for instance, patrons are routinely served iced water, whereas I prefer warm or room-temperature



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

An immigrant's perspective on the Canadian health-care system, contrasting it with the one they left behind in Ukraine.

water for digestive health, a practice valued in many cultures, including Chinese traditions.

A habit I have joyfully embraced in Canada is the annual making of homemade sauerkraut, a tradition that is common in Ukraine and provides a comforting taste of home. The store-bought versions here often contain vinegar and lack the authentic flavour.

My obsession with bread has found a creative outlet: I've started a new routine of making homemade rye sourdough. It's a simple pleasure that I'm happy to have in my life.

I've also embraced a very different rhythm when it comes to sleep. My favourite habit is going to bed early and waking up at 5 a.m. My friends used to tease me about it, and I'll admit I was a little embarrassed at first. I had this idea that staying up late was a sign you were

still exciting, and that going to bed early meant you were boring. Now, I can't imagine what kind of party would be worth giving up my precious mornings.

That time alone with my thoughts in the early morning while the rest of my family is still asleep is a feeling that's completely different from being alone late at night when you're exhausted from the day.

While I've found success with these routines, one habit I've consistently failed at is running. I've tried to make it a part of my daily life for almost a decade, but I've always given up. This time, living in Canada, I've finally realized it's just not for me. Instead, I've found that fast walking is much more enjoyable and feels more grounding.

Another notable contrast is the approach to retirement. While many seniors in Ukraine may focus on gardening and caring for grandchildren, I see Canadian seniors leading active, engaged lives, participating in fitness classes, social clubs and extensive volunteer work. This habit of volunteering in particular allows them to remain an integral part of their community.

Perhaps the most impactful habit I have adopted in Canada is the simple act of smiling at strangers. In Ukraine, this is often perceived as insincere. However, I have come to see a friendly smile as a powerful tool for positivity. It not only brightens another person's day but also serves to program my own mindset in a positive direction. Coupled with a quick "sorry," it has become a go-to combination for navigating daily interactions.

I was also inspired by a habit introduced in my son's classroom: each morning, students are asked to write down one thing they are grateful for. This practice is a wonderful way to begin the day with gratitude and a positive outlook.

My journey has proven that a new country won't change you, but your daily habits will. The true transformation wasn't in the move, but in the small, consistent actions – the simple smile, the daily gratitude – that rewrote my identity. I learned that a better life isn't found in a new place, but is quietly built, one small habit at a time, creating a powerful legacy of long-term change.

Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

Inspired by the 2025 Perth County Reads selection, "Finding Larkspur", the Satin Ribbon Showcase invites artisans of all ages and skill levels to share their creations with the community.

Here are the categories waiting for your incredible submissions!

- Preschool (0-5): beaded bracelet, farm colouring page, leaf rubbing art, pinecone animal

- Youth (6-9): beaded necklace, book-mark, LEGO barn, painted rock, Rice Krispie

- Teen (10-15): beaded necklace, bird feeder, clay sculpture, wearable knit item, cookie

- Adult (16+): beaded earrings, embroidery, quilt square, small painting, 3D crocheted animal, cookies, corn bread, fruit preserve, fruit tart, muffins

Each participant needs to fill out the online form (tinyurl.com/Satin-Ribbon-Showcase) before October 7. This

form is valid for all entries (drop off at the Library is on October 14 and 15). View all entries upstairs October 17 and 18 and see what has been awarded a Satin Ribbon!

For detailed submission requirements, please pick up a copy of the Submission Guidelines booklet at the Library, or check out our Facebook page.

Up This Week

Fri., Sept. 26: Fun with Watercolour (1-3 p.m.)

Sat., Sept. 27: Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Mon., Sept. 29: Euchre Mondays (10:30 a.m.)

Tues., Sept. 30: Tuesday Book Club* (11 a.m.), National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Live Stream (1 p.m.), Tween Book Club* (6 p.m.), Micro-Learning Film Series – Truth and Reconciliation (6:30 -7:30 p.m.)

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

Thurs., Oct. 2: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

*Registration Required

Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett | 519 272 5742 | jtsquote@gmail.com**Dear Arborist,**

I am taking an educational course. In one of the books, it says in regard to harborage (hollows or holes). Quote, "Fill tree holes with cement to fill the prime harborage area."

I'm wondering if this is an actual practice or if the course is out of date? P.S., one other question what's the best way to get walnut stains off cement?

Thanks, S**Dear S,**

Unfortunately, it sounds like your educational course is out of date. In the past, it was recommended to fill hollows in trees with cement. But, this is a really bad idea for the following reasons: One, it attracts more water to the area,

hastening decay; Two, the cement is impossible to remove. Nothing annoys an Arborist more than having a brand new chain on the chainsaw and hitting cement. If someone feels the need to fill the hollows, spray foam and a type of hard sealant on the entrance of the hollow is the way to go.

As for your second question, TSP or powdered dish soap normally works, obviously follow instructions and use at your own risk.

Sincerely,**The Arborist**

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

HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Can we afford it?

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

Sometimes a municipal government will make a decision that not all taxpayers agree with, especially if it involves spending money. The larger the expenditure, the greater the controversy is likely to be. The history of St. Marys has included many moments when the elected officials' decisions had an impact on the future well-being of the town. Some of these are within the memory of many Independent readers. But others go back to the town's early years. An example is the building of the St. Marys Town Hall.

In September 1890, a fire destroyed the rather shabby frame building that had served since 1857 as a town hall, public auditorium, and market building. Of course, it had to be replaced – no one questioned that. Insurance would cover a modest frame structure, like the one that had burned. That would have been the simplest and least costly solution. But Dr. John Hugh Mathieson, a member of town council, had a better idea. As head of the building committee, he suggested to his fellow councillors that the fire had given them an opportunity to do something special. St. Marys was growing in importance in southern Ontario. It deserved a distinctive town hall.

Dr. Mathieson overcame council opposition and persuaded the town to hire a promising, 29-year-old Toronto architect, George Wallace Gouinlock. When Gouinlock showed his plans and specification to council, they were convinced. As the new municipal building took shape through 1891, taxpayers must have agreed that it was money well spent. With a bell tower and turrets, the new town hall was solidly built of locally quarried limestone, with contrasting red sandstone for window arches and checkerboard effects on the façade. The overall effect was imposing, suggesting stability and permanence. The structure was officially completed at the cost of approximately \$15,000 in 1891, although the interior was not ready for occupancy until early 1892. Conscientiously maintained using taxpayers' money for more than 130 years, the building remains a source of local pride and the town's way of making a good first impression on visitors.

The next major municipal project occurred in 1899. It was the installation of the waterworks system throughout the town – well head, pumphouse, water tower, underground pipes and fire hydrants – the works! Again, this was a big expenditure, but this project had no opposition. After several serious fires in the 1890s, the town couldn't afford NOT to do it. In late 1899, there was a celebration when the water pressure in the new system was tested. Larry Pfaff's 1981 book *Early St. Marys* contains a photograph of water from hoses



(PHOTO COURTESY OF R. LORNE EEDY ARCHIVES, ST. MARYS MUSEUM)

St. Marys town hall in the 1970s. It is remarkable how little the exterior of our municipal building has changed over the years. Its construction in 1891 was taxpayers' money well spent.

playing all over the limestone exterior of the eight-year-old town hall.

In 1903-1904, when town council was considering the first significant investment in a cultural facility, there was considerable resistance to spending money "frivolously." At issue was the decision to construct a stand-alone building, a public library for the town. There were no objections to St. Marys having a library. Ever since the days of the Mechanics Institute's reading rooms, there had been books that patrons could borrow to read for instruction and pleasure. The Institute had existed in rented rooms, usually on the second floor above a downtown business. By 1895, the situation had changed somewhat. In response to provincial legislation, the Mechanics Institute became a free public library and had moved into two rooms in the new St. Marys town hall.

At first this worked well, but the town's administrative needs grew and as library usage increased, overcrowding became a major problem. A solution was found in a grant from the Scots American philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, who was funding public libraries all over Scotland, the United States, Canada and beyond. In a split vote, town council decided to apply for a grant from the Carnegie Foundation to build a public library in St. Marys. Then debate erupted! Among concerns

was the town's obligation – if awarded the grant – to find a site where a new library could be built. The town would also have to guarantee a basic annual sum for the library's maintenance. More dramatic critics claimed that Carnegie was an evil, strike-breaking industrialist. His great wealth was nothing but blood money and it would be immoral to accept it. Then there were objections to the chosen site that continued through the construction period. But the library opened in 1905 despite ongoing criticism. Today our library seems to be going from strength to strength. We couldn't imagine our town without it!

Through the years, various councils have offered financial incentives to attract new industries to the town. A century or so ago, if the town had to issue debentures for large sums of money, a municipal referendum was held to get taxpayers' approval. In the lead up to the referendum, the local newspapers usually presented the pros and cons for voters' consideration, and the results were published, ward by ward. Incentives were offered to David Maxwell when he moved his farm implement manufacturing company to St. Marys in 1888. Two decades later, taxpayers also voted to offer considerations to the St. Marys Cement Company when they learned that this company would bring a large, stable industry to town. These

two companies gave the municipality great returns on the initial investments.

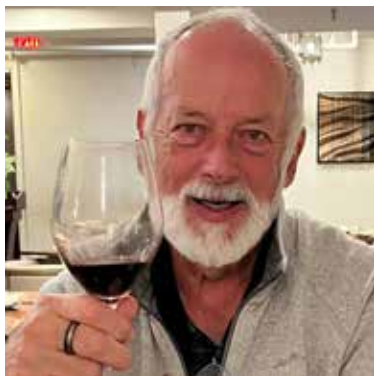
But incentives didn't always pay off. In 1908, a group of businessmen decided to create a new railway line in competition to the Grand Trunk Railway. The St. Marys and Western Ontario Railway Company got off to a strong start, attracting investors from Perth and Oxford Counties. Assured that another rail line would be good for local industry, the town of St. Marys contributed toward its completion. But the venture failed and eventually Canadian Pacific Railway bought the line for much less than the stakeholders had invested. The town remembered this failed enterprise. In 1913, one of the major proponents of the railway project, Henry Lincoln Rice, owner of the St. Marys Milling Company, asked for debenture support from the town to upgrade his milling business, promising increased employment for local workers. He had strong supporters but also strong detractors who reminded voters of the disastrous losses of the St. Marys and Western Ontario Railway. The debenture bylaw was defeated by a small margin, and the town gave no support to the mill project. Eventually through a combination of bad luck and poor management, Rice lost his business. The flour mill did continue under new ownership.

Subsequent councils continued to support many capital projects they believed were in the town's interest. Among these were the acquisition of the quarry property in the 1940s to create a supervised swimming area, the building of two arenas – one in the early 1950s and when it was condemned, another one in 1977. Other infrastructure projects included the sanitary sewer system, and the rebuilding of major roads and bridges to bring them up to modern standards. Culture and recreation are represented in the town's trail system and additions to both the public library and the community museum. The municipal operations centre (formerly called public works) was relocated to new headquarters on James Street South and, most ambitious of all, in 2008 the Pyramid Recreation Centre with the indoor swimming pool was opened.

There are critics of a current municipal project – the purchase and rehabilitation of 14 Church Street North. But when considered in comparison with many previous town projects, this seems a safe and sensible investment. As the population grows so does the need for additional programs. The library is already desperate for more space and so are the services that help the most vulnerable in our community. Since initiatives are being developed to ensure that the activities in this building will not impose a burden on local taxpayers in the future, 14 Church Street North will eventually serve the community well.

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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: History, hurting and healing



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

As soon as I was born, I was taken from my birth mother and put into foster care. Three months after I was born, I was taken to the home of Rose and Ralph Knowles, who adopted me.

And right now, I can hear you ask, “What the heck does this have to do with travel?”

My answer: I have always known those facts about my life – although only in the past few years have I discovered the identity of my birth mother and met seven siblings I never knew about. But knowing that I had been given up for adoption has always been part of my life, and has shaped who I am.

“But,” you say, “remember the travel part?”

Yes. One of the most impactful destinations I have ever visited is the National Indigenous Residential School Museum of Canada, in Portage la Prairie, Man. This is not a destination that entertains; it’s one that informs, educates, enlightens and changes you from the inside out.

I have often heard people wonder why Indigenous people seem so focused on residential

schools. It is not rare to hear the phrase, “That was in the past. Can we just move on?”

And that’s where my birth story connects, for me, at least, because those circumstances have been a real, living part of me all my life and my story of loss is pretty insignificant compared to the tragedies that residential schools brought upon thousands of Indigenous Canadians.

And their story is not ancient history. Touring the Residential School Museum, we were reminded the last residential school closed only 29 years ago! Most of you reading this were adults while the government of Canada and a number of churches were still operating institutions that were founded, according to the deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, “to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada.” Residential schools were intended as a means to steal the identity of all Indigenous Canadians to “assimilate” each and every one, in the words of Prime Minister Sir John A. McDonald.

Compare those stated intentions with the mission statement of today’s Residential School Museum: “A place where people can learn, share, heal and move forward.” The museum and its staff are committed to that process.

Our guide was Farah Houle. She led us through small rooms in the museum – which was once the Portage la Prairie Indian Residential School founded in 1916 and in operation until 1988. Each room contains exhibits that reveal the unfolding history – often synonymous

with “unfolding tragedy” – of the people of the First Nations.

I learned that from the 1800s until 1951, residents on reserves were required to have an official government permit simply to leave the reserve. I learned that the massacre of buffalo was not just a ridiculous blood sport, but an organized effort to cause the extinction of native people.

I saw pictures of kids being transported in cattle trucks from their homes to residential schools. Houle described the rounding up of native kids as “pick and go.”

One display case held three straps of different weights, all used to administer punishment by school officials. The least heavy was for children eight years and younger. The many reasons for such punishment included speaking their native language or talking to a sibling. In fact, our guide said, “If you spoke your language, you got a pin through your tongue.”

“They were taught not to love each other,” Houle said, which laid the foundation for very troubled lives.

A very telling display is found in the dining room exhibit, where the table for priests and nuns was laden with fish, meat, fruit and vegetables, while the children got oatmeal and, added Houle, “They had to eat it even if there were bugs in it.”

Perhaps the most shocking exhibit is a simple, empty baby’s crib. Houle explained this exhibit is in memory of babies born to young girls in the school, babies fathered by priests and teachers, babies who were then murdered to hide the evidence and whose



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Farah Houle, our guide at the National Indigenous Residential School Museum of Canada.

bodies were incinerated.

What is truly amazing about the museum is, in spite of the horrors on display, there is an overriding invitation to find hope. But first, we need to learn, then to heal, only then to move forward. The exhibits include artworks that capture both suffering and joy.

We thought the best example of the need to know the past to move to a positive present was our guide herself.

“I was raised by a residential school survivor and I wondered why he didn’t say, ‘I love you,’” she said. “Now, I know why.”

“People need to know what happened. I’m going to continue to tell the story of those who never made it home alive.”

And while Houle said that part of the story is “how religion

was forced on the children,” she also shared that she continues to be a practicing Christian – to me, an incredible, living example of forgiveness and faith.

Clearly, the Residential School Museum is not a destination you will visit if you’re looking for entertainment, but this is a place that will change your life more than a thousand visits to Canada’s Wonderland. And, as a guy who has discovered how one’s personal, childhood history impacts the rest of your life, I could not recommend it more highly.

Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer, and Past-President of the Travel Media Association of Canada. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email pknowles@golden.net.



The empty baby crib is in memory of all of the babies born – and disposed of – in Canadian residential schools.



The sculpture “Healing Shoes” by Genevieve Lavasseur features ceramic shoes made from mud from four residential school sites in Manitoba. There are 152 shoes – one for every year from the signing of the first treaty to the year the artist created the work, intended “to honour lives lost and lived” at the institutions.

FROM THE GARDEN: Saving seeds



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

Gardening is not limited just to the summer months. During the season of planting, weeding, watering, we are the most active in our gardens. But our hobby extends into the fall with harvest and cleaning up and in the winter as we reflect and plan for the next gardening season.

On a cold January day, as I sip a cup of my herbal tea, I review my notes and photos of last year's garden. With memory refreshed, I methodically leaf through seed catalogues and eagerly plan and select seeds I want to grow in the coming summer. Sometimes my wish and want list extends my garden's capacity and gets expensive, especially with added shipping costs. I am always looking for ways to save money in my gardening obsession and saving seeds from the previous season is one way.

So why save seeds? One obvious answer is it's cost effective, reducing the necessity to purchase new seeds every sea-

son. Saving seeds from plants in your garden reduces reliance on commercial seed producers, packaging waste, and shipping costs. Even though this may be the driving force to save seeds from certain plants in your garden, there are other significant aspects.

Saving seeds from healthy, vigorous plants are more likely to produce robust offspring. It also promotes sustainability, encourages local adaptation and resilience in plants, especially in changing climates. Over time, saved seeds adapt to our garden's micro-conditions, becoming more disease resistant and productive.

Saving seeds is also important to preserve rare or unique varieties. Some plants are no longer commercially available. Saving seeds from those unique heirloom varieties keeps them alive. Seed saving also fosters a deeper understanding of plant life cycles. It is a direct, rewarding way to engage and stay connected with what we grow. As well, your saved seeds are perfect to swap at seed exchanges and share with fellow gardeners.

Choosing the right plants for saving their seeds is essential. Open pollinated and heirloom varieties are best for this as they reliably produce true-to-type seeds, meaning the plants grown from them will be like their parents. This "breeding true" means they are pollinated



by nature and not as a result of controlled hybridization. Hybrid (F1) plants are the result from a controlled cross between two different parent plants and seeds saved from these plants will produce unpredictable offspring.

For the novice 'seed saver' like myself, start with some distinct examples. Zinnias for one. I have a patch of giant mixed zinnia varieties with a couple of stunning multi-petal colourful zinnia flowers as big as my fist. I want to save their seeds.

So, a couple of weeks ago, I marked these flowers with a small ribbon tied on the stem to remember which ones I wanted. Once these flower heads dried on the plant, and became brown and papery, I harvested them. I clipped back some of the petals and placed them in an open envelope and labelled the colour. When it is fully dried, I will remove the seeds and put them in a small paper package, label the variety, colour, and date.

For vegetables, such as beans and peas, they should dry in

their pods on the plant. Once completely dry, they can be removed from the pods and stored in a small, labelled jar or paper envelope. Basil, dill, and fennel are easy to save also. Just snip the seed heads once dry and store them also in a labelled jar or envelope.

Saving seeds from your garden is a rewarding practice with benefits that go beyond being cost effective. It promotes sustainability, preserves heirloom varieties, and deepens our connection to gardening.

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Riddles

What is the richest nut?
A cash-ew!

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

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

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

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

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

What kind of apples do computers prefer?
Macintosh!

What has many ears but cannot hear?
Corn!

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

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

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

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

- Word Search -



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- Saturday
- Sunday
- October
- Barn tours
- Animals
- Wagon rides
- Corn maze
- Pumpkin catapult
- Sand mountain
- Pick pumpkins
- Farm fresh market
- Local food
- Straw fort
- Family fun



The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK



Declan Leaman (3)

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

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PET OF THE WEEK



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MILES

Our Pet of the Week is Miles, a nine-year-old shih tzu/cairn terrier. His birthday is Dec 16. Miles can sit, roll over, shake a paw, "talk" (bark), and sneeze on command but only if he gets a treat for it.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent



The Thorndale Fall Fair was where farm met fun over the weekend

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The 168th Thorndale Fall Fair held last weekend was true to its theme – “where farm meets fun.”

It began with the official opening ceremonies on Friday evening. Emcee Will Heeman kept the evening light and entertaining with his witty humour as he introduced the various dignitaries and itinerary.

Opening remarks were delivered by Connie Bontje, president of the Thorndale Agricultural Society Bridget Heeman, Thames Centre Mayor Sharron McMillian, Middlesex County Warden Brian Ropp and MP Lianne Rood, all of whom praised the many dedicated volunteers, the strong agriculture roots and the great community spirit in Thorndale that makes the fall fair a success each year.

Also part of Friday’s events were awards recognizing the spirit, years of service and contribution to the community of Thorndale, along with the announcing of the School Fair champions, Field Crops awards and the Homecraft



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

2025 Thorndale Fair Ambassador Beth McCallum of Thorndale with her parents Michael and Carol McCallum.

champion, Monica Speziale, and runner up Marylou Bontje, both of Thorndale.

Beth McCallum, age 18 of Thorndale, is the 2025 Thorndale Fair Ambassador. She was sponsored by the Thorndale Optimist Club, providing a bursary to this year’s winner. McCallum is the daughter of Carol and Michael Mc-

Callum of Thorndale and is currently studying educational support at St. Clair College in Windsor. As ambassador, McCallum will represent the Thorndale Agricultural Society at various events throughout the coming year, including district meetings, the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies (OAAS)

convention and at the CNE Ambassador of the Fairs Competition next August in Toronto.

The evening ended with the exceedingly popular and entertaining pie auction. Heath Taylor of Taylor Auctions auctioned off 18 prize-winning pies and the top butter tarts from the Homecraft entries before a crowd of about 200. In the engaging bidding, these various pies garnered between \$400 and \$700, netting a healthy amount for the Thorndale Agricultural Society by the end of the evening.

With the exceptional warm weather, crowds of people came out to enjoy the rest of the weekend, which included midway rides, participating in the various planned activities, viewing the agricultural exhibits and witnessing the many agricultural and race competitions.

The Thorndale Fall Fair has grown from a modest beginning from the early days to today’s robust, fun community event enjoyed by families of the municipality and beyond, maintaining its valued agricultural roots and rural family community spirit.

Unsolved but not forgotten: A detective’s legacy relayed at presentation in Thorndale

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Many people would wonder why Barb Dorrington, author of *The Trauma Monster*, chose Thorndale instead of London to host a presentation by Dennis Alsop Jr., son of famed Detective Alsop.

“Thorndale is important to me and my connections to Scott Leishman, who disappeared from his home outside of Thorndale in March 1968,” Dorrington said in her opening remarks. “He then was found dead two months later in Port Burwell Harbour. Scott was part of my innocent years and shaped my life; probably why I became a trauma social worker. Near Scott’s home, a

month after he went missing, Frankie Jensen’s body was discovered in the Thames River, and I uncovered through interviewing many people, this was the same area where a couple of young boys were taken and sexually molested.”

Det. Dennis Alsop was central to the murder investigations that occurred in the 1960s and ‘70s in the London area. He kept countless diaries and files of documented interviews and notes. These records were inherited by his son, Alsop Jr. In his presentation to the large gathering, Alsop Jr. relayed his dad’s interesting police career, from 1948 in the OPP, through the years and ranks in London, then in Toronto and back in London. He said his dad “loved being boots on the ground solving cas-

es, but there were many unsolved cases of disappearance and murders in London that he wanted to get the answers for the victims’ families.”

What stands out is not only Detective Alsop’s stamina, but his compassion for the families. At that time, many reports dismissed witnesses with labels like “unreliable” or “low level of society.” Alsop’s files never demeaned. Every life mattered, every lead was logged and every voice was heard.

Also in attendance was Dr. Michael Arntfield, former London police detective, author of *Murder City* and other true-crime books as well as a criminologist and professor at Western University. Arntfield briefly spoke about a few of these historical murder cases. Vanes-

sa Brown, London-based historian, researcher and author of *The Forest City Killer*, led the question-and-answer period following Alsop Jr. presentation.

As a follow up to this historical presentation, Dorrington and Brown will be at the Thorndale Library on Saturday, Oct. 18 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for people of the community to come and shared their stories and memories. Even though it has been over five decades since the traumatic deaths of Jensen and Leishman, and many others in the London area, Dorrington says “there could be one clue that will connect the dots in these unsolved mysteries.”

OBITUARY

Williams



Trevor George Williams, traveled the long journey from Bridgewater, England at the age of 7, passed away suddenly, but peacefully in his La-Z-Boy chair, at his home on September 2, 2025 at the age of 75.

Predeceased by his parents Alfred and Hilda and

brother Lester. Father of Vicki Payne (Kevin) and Mandie Williams (Rob McKnight). Survived by many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Brother of Brenda Mulligan (Jerry) and remembered by many nieces, nephews and great nieces and nephews. Trevor will be greatly missed by many neighbours, friends and co-workers and grand dog Gibby.

A life-long truck driver with a passion for the road, he drove from the age 16 to 75. Cremation to take place with private burial in Woodland Cemetery, London.

A Celebration of Life Open House will be held at the SUNSET DINER, 343 Queen St W, St. Marys, on September 27, 2025 from 1 - 3 pm. Memorial donations may be made to Ronald McDonald House. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

IN MEMORIAM

Watkins

In memory of our loving mother Ivy who we lost 27 years ago on Sept. 24, 1998

When God created Mums

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We'd need the loving thoughtful things

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Yes, God knew all the thoughtful things

That only mums will do

And that's exactly why he made

a mum who's just like you.

Remembering you always

All six of us

THANK YOU

Cookson

The family of Stephen Cookson wish to extend our thanks to family and friends who reached out to us with condolences for our brother.

We are thankful for all the cards, messages and kind words after his passing.

We are grateful for your support during this difficult time and there are not enough words in this world to express how thankful we are during our time of grief.

We would also like to thank Dr. Hepburn and the staff of Wildwood Care Centre as well as the Nurses at St. Marys Memorial Hospital.

Vicki Barber, Tom, Barry and Gord Cookson

THANK YOU

The St. Marys Kinsmen, St. Marys Lions and two of Stratford's Rotary Clubs and the Optimist Club of Downie would like to thank all of the businesses that sponsored and donated to our third car, truck, motorcycle, and tractor show in St. Pauls on Saturday, September 13, 2025. It turned out to be a gloomy day, but we still had over 62 cars, 18 tractors, 12 trucks, and one motorcycle. We raised over \$800 for the Rotary Aqua box program, \$172.00 for the St. Marys Youth Center, and a table full of food for two food banks.

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CELEBRATION

Celebrating Allan Slater's 90th Birthday

WITH AN OPEN HOUSE

on Sunday, October 5 from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Pyramid Recreation Centre, 317 James St. S., St. Marys (1/3 Hall in the Community Centre)

Please no gifts or cards. Sign the Guest Book. The Tri-County Foodgrains Bank Project will be accepting donations by cash or cheque. A light lunch, coffee, tea and cake will be available.

OPEN HOUSE



The family of Charlie Near, who passed away on July 31, 2025, will host a Memorial Open House at the St. Marys Legion, 66 Church St. N. St. Marys, on Oct. 4, 2025 from 2 - 4 pm. Memorial donations may be made to the St. Marys Legion. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

CELEBRATION

Happy 65th Anniversary Reg and Lucille McCurdy

September 24th, 1960 - September 24th, 2025



Love from your family Jason, Tammy, Jack, Sarah, Austin and Hazel Jeff, Amanda, Emily and Libby

OPEN HOUSE

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Verna Davis' 90th Birthday

at the Thorndale Community Center

Sunday October 5th from 1:30 - 3:30

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Looking Back



AMY CUBBERLEY
Independent Columnist

The Human Fly

25 years ago (2000)
The owner of a St. Marys trucking company has been ordered to remove all transport trucks and other vehicles from a property at 752 Queen Street East, near Industrial Road. Town Solicitor Mike Mitchell informed Terry Smith of Stonetown Developments Inc. that use of the property at a parking area for trucks and other vehicles is contrary to the Town’s zoning by-law. Smith has applied for the zoning to be changed.

There will be no more hand-stamping and index card cataloguing at the St. Marys Public Library - they’re going high tech! Chief Librarian Barb Taylor confirmed Friday that both cataloguing and circulation will be fully automated by the end of the year.

50 years ago (1975)
A new taxi business began this past Monday. According to proprietors Jamie Hahn and Mike Brodgen, business was great. Driver Joe Walsh had favourable comments about his first day on the job.

An ancient willow which fell into the Thames River early this summer is still lying half in and half out of the water. Removal of this debris would considerably help the appearance of the otherwise scenic west bank of the Thames.

75 years ago (1950)
The introduction of membership and admission charges for use of the quarry swimming pool and the operation of a refreshment booth has brought in almost one thousand dollars this summer. This was enough to pay lifeguards and attendants and still make a profit on operations at the quarry.

Fires were lit in the steam boilers at the St. Marys Memorial Hospital on Tuesday for the first time. This was for testing purposes.

C. Odbert, local hardware merchant, had a peculiar species of snake in a jar at his store this week. The wiggler looked like a fat horsehair when placed in the jar straightened out, but when placed on dry land, it writhed and coiled itself into knots in a peculiar manner. The animated specimen was found in a pool of water near Mr. Odbert’s home by the children.

100 years ago (1925)
Jerry Hudson, known all over America as the “Human Fly” was in town to give people an insight into the method he used in scaling a 52-storey building in New York City. On Saturday night, after collecting a curious crowd of about 2,000 people in front of the Windsor Hotel, he took up a collection and then climbed up the northwest corner of the building. After gaining this vantage point, he went up onto the cupola on top of the roof where he stood on his head and later climbed the flagpole from which he hung by his teeth. Hudson first began his aerial career with the flying corps of the American Legion. During a period of service in France, he gained many honours through his daring exploits. He was shot down by German airplanes and spent four months as a prisoner in Germany, escaping one night by stealing an airplane from a German hangar and making his way to safely back to the allied lines.



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Thorndale United Church

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Potato, gravy, vegetables, salad,
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Tuesday, October 21, 2025
Thorndale Community Centre
4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Adults: \$25 | 6-14: \$10 | 5 & Under: FREE

For tickets call 519.461.0463
LAST DAY TO BUY TICKETS: OCT. 12



Browns School Car Show

Saturday, September 27 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Hamburgers, hot dogs, coffee and cold drinks
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shed across the road



Browns School is south of St. Marys, West of Medina on Road 92
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Solutions on pg. 35

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

St. Marys Independent

THE WEEK AHEAD

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

St. Marys Public Library events – See Page 26

FRIDAY, SEPT 26

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.
- Record Works presents Pretzel Logic at Market Centre Theatre, 22 Reeve St, Woodstock. Doors open 6:30 p.m., show starts 7:30 p.m., Tickets \$39.50

SATURDAY, SEPT 27

- St. Marys Farmers Market at Milt Dunnell Field – 8 a.m. to Noon. Pick up your apples for Apple Pie Day baking contest
- Browns School car show – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Love Essential Life retreat at 5846 Cobble Hills Rd – 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- A.N.A.F. Bob Lince Memorial Golf Tourney at River Valley – 10 a.m. shotgun start
- Queensview Retirement Community open house at 70 King Edward St, Paris – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- St. Marys Optometry grand opening at 766 Queen St E – 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Trevor Williams celebration of life at Sunset Diner – 1-3 p.m.
- Naina's Indian Kitchen evening of art and flavours – 5-9 p.m.
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw – 5 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Port Colborne Sailors at the PRC – 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, SEPT 28

- Test Your Smoke Alarm Day
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Elmira Sugar Kings at Day Snyder Memorial Arena – 7 p.m.

MONDAY, SEPT 29

- Local Community Food Centre honest budget workshop at 612 Erie St, Stratford – 3:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPT 30

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee – 10 a.m. to Noon

WEDNESDAY, OCT 1

- Purpour grand opening at 21 Water St S – 4:30-6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, OCT 2

- St. Marys Nourish Market at St. Marys United Church parking lot – 2-4 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs St. Catharines Falcons at Seymour-Hannah Sports Centre – 7 p.m.



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Beginning Tuesday Nov. 14

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1. Beijing

2. Arrested Development

3. Sundial

4. A fruit

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6. Knowles-Carter

7. Drury Lane

8. Bull

9. Utah

10. Rachel Zane



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