

STRATFORD TIMES

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Stakeholders react to Pride flag vandalism

LEE GRIFFI

Times Reporter

Provincial police in Perth County are asking for the public's help after four flagpoles in the county were cut down over the weekend. All four were flying the Pride flag.

In Perth East, poles were cut at Central Perth Elementary, Mornington Central and North Easthope public schools. Elma Township public school in North Perth was also hit.

"These incidents occurred between June 13 and 14 in the areas of Perth Line 72, Perth Road 131, Perth Line 43, and Perth Road 135. Police are seeking to identify two persons of interest who are both described as male, wearing all black clothing and face coverings, and were in possession of a saw," said a Perth OPP news release.

"The persons of interest were observed in the area of these mischiefs operating an all-terrain vehicle (ATV)," it added.

"Over the weekend, several school communities were victims of targeted acts of property damage," the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) stated in a release on June 15. "Multiple flagpoles, which were flying both the Canadian flag and the Pride flag, were deliberately cut down. Let us be clear: this was not a simple act of mischief. This was a targeted, costly, and hateful act of vandalism."

The statement added the school board continues to support 2SLGBTQIA+ students, staff and families.

"We stand with you. This act does not change our commitment to you, nor does it diminish your right

CONTINUED TO PAGE 4



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Walkers lead the charge, banner and all, at the ONE CARE Steps for Seniors event on June 13. As of press time, \$22,431 has been raised for the regional organization. For more on the walk, see our story on page 3.

From homelessness to hope

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Just six months ago, Tobi Lawrance was living in a tent in London, unsure of what the future might hold.

Today, he has a full-time job, his G2 driver's licence, financing for his first vehicle and a renewed sense of purpose thanks to the support of an old friend, the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron and a willingness to embrace change.

Lawrance, 46, recently shared his story alongside Mul-

ticultural Association of Perth-Huron founder and executive director Geza Wordofa and board member Kelly McGarrell.

The transformation began late last year when McGarrell, a former high school classmate, came across a Facebook post Lawrance made around his birthday.

"I thought I'd have more than this at 46," Lawrance recalled posting alongside a photo of the tent where he was living.

McGarrell reached out.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



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SKIP THE DISHES

From homelessness to hope: Stratford man rebuilding his life with help from community

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"When you see somebody that's like one of your own struggling, I just thought maybe there's something we can do to help Tobi," she said.

The two met for coffee in London and spent the afternoon catching up on decades of life experiences.

"It was really like catching up with an old friend," McGarrell said.

At the time, Lawrance's situation had become dire. He said he had been living in a tent for months, weighed only about 120 pounds and was struggling physically and emotionally.

"I was pretty bad," he said.

A week after that first meeting, McGarrell invited him for dinner. A snowstorm prevented him from returning to his tent and she offered him a place to stay.

"In the morning she said, 'You don't ever have to go back there if you don't want to,'" Lawrance said.

What followed was a period of recovery.

For weeks, he focused on little more than eating, sleeping and regaining his strength. With support from McGarrell and the multicultural association, he began taking steps toward rebuilding his life.

"There were no conditions," Lawrance said. "They were just there to help."

Wordofa said that trust was key.

"Anybody can change," he said. "We are



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

With the help of an old friend and the Multicultural Association of Perth Huron, Tobi Lawrance (centre) has gone from living on the streets to working full-time, getting his driver's license and purchasing his first car in the span of just six months. Pictured from left are multicultural association board member Kelly McGarrell, Lawrance and association founder Geza Wordofa.

ready now to support people who want to change their lives."

Lawrance soon found work and now holds a full-time manufacturing position in Stratford with benefits. He has begun accessing counselling services, recently earned his G2 licence and has been approved to finance a vehicle.

More importantly, he said he has regained confidence and stability.

"It's not that Kelly made me be better. She allowed me to be better," Lawrance said.

Today, Lawrance volunteers with the multicultural association and is helping the organization connect with others experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

Having spent decades living on the margins, he understands the barriers many people face.

"We're all individuals," he said. "You've got to listen. You've got to figure out what they want and what drives them."

The association hopes to build on Lawrance's success by offering one-on-one support, life-skills coaching and practical assistance to people who are ready to make positive changes in their lives.

Rather than simply providing emergency supplies, Wordofa said the goal is to help people develop the skills, confidence and support networks needed for long-term success.

"We don't want to just give people fish," he said. "We want to show them how to get fish."

For McGarrell, the experience has reinforced the power of simple human connection.

"You just have to care about someone's life," she said.

Lawrance agrees.

"We all deserve safety," he said. "One bad thing can happen to anybody. We're all just one bad day away."

Now looking ahead, Lawrance hopes to secure permanent housing in Stratford and eventually help his adult son overcome some of the same struggles he has faced.

"It's ongoing," he said. "You have to wake up every day knowing this is the life you want."

Six months after accepting a helping hand from an old friend, Lawrance is proving that sometimes a single act of kindness can change the course of a life.

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ONE CARE raises over \$22K during Steps for Seniors

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

ONE CARE Home & Community Support Services held their annual walkathon on Sat. June 13 at Market Square.

The family fun event brought together participants of all ages to walk in support of the organization's Driven to Care Campaign.

Together, the community raised \$22,431 (as of press time). Funds raised through the event will help support transportation services for older adults and people living with health challenges across Huron and Perth Counties.

Through the Driven to Care Campaign, ONE CARE is able to continue to support and advocate for the growing need for accessible and reliable transportation throughout the region by purchasing more vehicles for their every changing fleet.

With the upgrade in transportation, they can continue to help clients attend medical appointments, access essential services, and remaining connected to their communities.

"Transportation is more than simply getting from one place to another – it's about autonomy, dignity and connection," said Stephanie Ellens-Clark, executive director of ONE CARE. "Every step taken during these walkathons helps ensure older adults within our neighbourhoods can continue to live safely and independently."

ONE CARE's goal is to raise \$500,000 through the campaign, which launched in March 2025, and Ellens-Clark says the community's support is crucial if they want to reach that goal.

"We do receive contract funding from the government, which we are very grateful for, but that only covers part of our costs," she said. "Otherwise, we have to

fundraise. We also have some fees for services like meals on wheels and transportation, but several of our clients can't afford the service fees, so we also can use some of the funding for that."

The organization has already purchased three vehicles and aims to buy more, including a large bus. They also collaborate with other agencies for easy ride transportation.

"We're figuring it's going to take another year or so to get to our goal, but it's just been amazing that we've gotten this far," said Ellens-Clark. "The community has really responded, and for that, we're so thankful."

ONE CARE continues to support local communities by providing vital transportation and services to older adults across the region and is always focused on working with clients and the community to combat loneliness and continue to provide vital services.

"ONE CARE is a vital support and service," said Ellens-Clark. "When you think of all those amazing community members who would prefer to stay in their own homes for as long as they can, it really means independence and dignity. If you can stay in your own home and still have those supports, or if you can come out to wellness programs that keep you healthy, or social programs that also keep you healthy – because we know social isolation is rampant and can be devastating for people – it really improves your quality of life. It gives us the opportunity to support our community and wrap around those folks when they need that support."

Donations for the Steps for Seniors event will be accepted until the end of June. To donate, visit <https://steps-for-seniors.raise-lysite.com/donate>.

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Stakeholders react to Pride flag vandalism

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

to feel safe, valued, and celebrated in our schools. Our mental health and well-being team is available should any students or staff need support."

The board added desecrating flag poles carrying the Canadian flag is extremely disrespectful to the country and the freedoms it represents.

"Replacing these poles is very costly, re-allocating taxpayer dollars that should be going directly into our classrooms to support student learning. It is shameful that community resources must now be diverted to repair the damage caused by this act."

The AMDSB vowed to replace the poles as soon as possible.

"The flags will fly again. Our schools will remain safe spaces for everyone,

and our resolve to foster an inclusive environment is only strengthened by this incident."

Stratford Perth-Pride (SPP) was also quick to condemn the acts of vandalism.

"We are heartbroken by the recent events in Perth County and the pain they have caused within our community," A.J. Ashley, a member of SPP. "To every young person and community member in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community: you are seen, you are valued and you deserve to feel safe and supported. We are deeply sorry for the impact this has had and stand in solidarity with you."

"As a parent of a queer teenager in this community, I am furious – and I think we all should be," expressed Fox Johnston, the vendor manager for SPP. "Cutting down flagpoles in the middle of the

night isn't a prank. It's a message. And that message is: you don't belong here. To every 2SLGBTQIA+ kid who walks into an AMDSB school and looks for that flag as a small sign that they are safe – that act was directed at them. That's not something I'm going to minimize or ignore. I am grateful to AMDSB for their swift and unequivocal response and to Perth OPP for investigating. Those responsible need to be held accountable. The flags will fly again. They always do. That's what our community is all about."

Schools, businesses and residences in the Town of Norwich have also been targeted over the past two weeks. Flags have been stolen and burned, and a school also had a pole cut down. Gunn's Hill Cheese, which took to social media

to speak out against the vandalism, had its store sign cut down on Friday night.

Local mental health resources are available and ready for any students who need it from the following organizations:

AMDSB, <https://www.amdsb.ca/apps/pages/mentalhealth>.

Youth Line, via text message at 647-694-4275.

Kids Help Phone, by calling 1-800-668-6868 and via text by messaging CONNECT to 686868, or by emailing them at info@kidshelpphone.ca.

Huron-Perth Centre for Children and Youth, by emailing hpcentre.on.ca or calling 1-888-260-3924.

With files from Sydney Boyle, Times correspondent/ Stratford-Perth Pride program coordinator.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured is one of the flagpoles cut down by two suspects in Perth County over the weekend. Poles in Perth East and North Perth were damaged.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Perth OPP have released an image of two suspects after four flagpoles on Avon Maitland District School Board property were cut down over the weekend.

SEED Co. celebrates year of growth

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation (SEED Co.), otherwise known as investStratford, welcomed community partners, business leaders and the general public to its 12th annual general meeting held at the Stratford Festival.

In addition to reflecting on 2025, the meeting featured special guest speaker Jonathan Church, the Stratford Festival artistic director designate, who highlighted the role art and cultural investment play in attracting talent, fostering innovation and building vibrant communities.

"What has struck me most about Stratford is how closely connected the festival and the community are – it feels less like six degrees of separation and more like one," Church said. "I believe in evolution, not revolution, and in building on the incredible strengths, talents and partnerships that already exist. By linking the past to the present and preparing for the future, we can continue to strengthen those relationships and contribute to a vibrant, innovative and thriving community."

The SEED Co. 2025 Year in Review also highlighted a year marked by business expansion, entrepreneurship and regional collaboration. It showcased major indus-

trial investments from local employers including Aisin Canada, CleanFix, Magest, Tri-Mach, Accumetal, and Trillium Hatchery. The Stratford Perth Centre for Business supported the launch of 43 new businesses, assisted 48 existing businesses and helped create more than 123 jobs. More than \$120,000 was invested directly into entrepreneurs through provincial business programs, including support for 18 new ventures through Starter Company Plus and 10 student-run businesses through Summer Company.

The year also saw the successful launch of two seasons of the Evolving Entrepreneurship podcast and sold-out educational

events focused on artificial intelligence, industry awareness and business innovation.

"2025 demonstrated the strength of Stratford's diverse economy and the power of partnership," said Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford. "Despite ongoing economic uncertainty, including the impacts of tariffs and changing global markets, our community continues to invest, innovate and grow. From business expansion and entrepreneurship to housing and cultural development, I believe strongly we are a community committed to working together to build a resilient and prosperous future."

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Your Library Corner: A slower, simpler summer starts at the library

BRANDI GILLET

Stratford Public Library

Planning your summer getaway, or staying close to home? The Stratford Public Library invites you to enjoy a summer that feels a little slower, simpler and full of small moments worth remembering. Your library card is your invitation to rediscover familiar pleasures including long days outdoors, quiet afternoons, shared experiences and screen-free fun.

Unplug and slow down

Craving a more nostalgic summer? The library makes it easy to step away from screens. Borrow board games, puzzles and family activity kits for rainy afternoons or evenings with friends. Pick up a book for the park, porch or beach, and enjoy the quiet rhythm of reading in the sunshine. You can also borrow Ontario Parks and local conservation area passes for easy outdoor adventures, whether it's a day trip or a spontaneous walk.

Stay local, explore more

Some of the best summer memories are made close to home. Discover local attractions with passes to places like Gallery Stratford, Stratford Perth Museum, Lions Pool, Stratford Festival, the London Children's Museum and the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. It's a simple way to explore your community at a relaxed pace.

Make home feel special

Turn an ordinary evening into something memorable. Borrow a DVD player, films or even a digital projector to create your own movie night. No subscriptions



(SARA BRADFORD PHOTO)

Summer is in full bloom at the Stratford Public Library.

required, just popcorn and good company.

Hit the road prepared

Heading out on a road trip? Plan your route with road trip guides, then pack travel-friendly options like Yoto Mini Player kits, card games, activity kits and books to keep everyone entertained, no screens necessary.

Take the library with you

When you need it, the library is still

at your fingertips. With PressReader, browse newspapers and magazines from around the world. Explore new skills with Learning Express Library Canada, learn a language with Pronunciator or unwind with films and documentaries on Kanopy.

Make this a summer that sticks

However you spend it, summer doesn't have to feel rushed. Slow down. Leave space for unplanned afternoons, shared

stories and simple routines that bring people together. The Stratford Public Library is here to help you trade a little screen time for connection, curiosity and creativity. Stop by to explore what's available – including programs for all ages – and let this be the summer where small moments matter most, and where a visit to the library becomes the start of something meaningful.

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Stratford Public Library

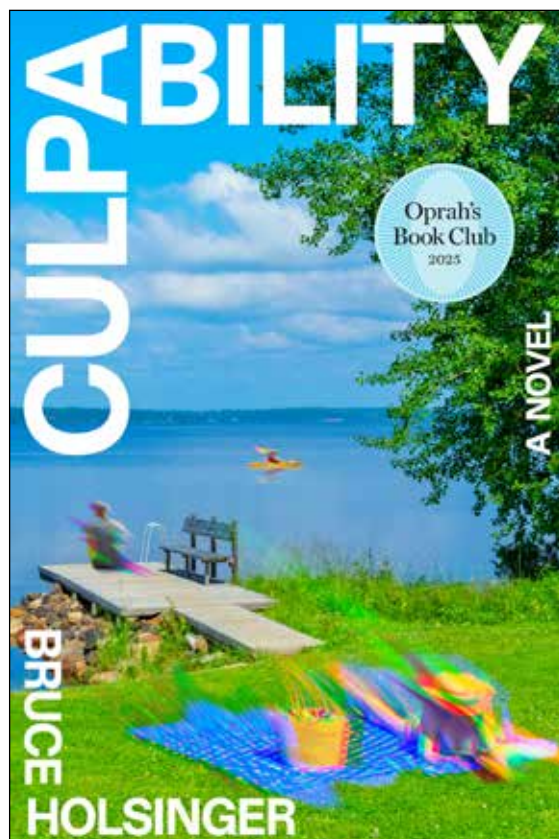
Culpability

@SPL: FIC HOL

By Bruce Holsinger

The Cassidy-Shaw family is on the road when their self-driving van collides with another car tragically killing an elderly couple. Seventeen-year-old Charlie is in the drivers' seat "driving", but was he really? Cue suspense and legal mess. Reeling from the accident, the shattered family of five retreats to a house on the Chesapeake Bay intended as a time for healing that quickly turns into a tense week filled with secrets, a romance next door and AI level drama. As the week goes on, the guilt of each family member increases and each must confront their role in the accident as all of them in some way hold a thread of culpability.

On the surface, *Culpability* reads as a compulsive and fast-paced beach read that explores the everyday use of AI within a family drama. Delving deeper into the novel, Holsinger raises thought-provoking philosophical questions relating to moral responsibility and the ethical consequences of the use of AI technologies. This novel is well suited for book clubs and for anyone wishing to dip their toes into understanding the role and uses that AI plays in our world, in a more approachable format.



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Jun 9	Jim McCann, Stratford	\$50.00
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International Graphics to host first Printapoolooza in support of Stratford House of Blessing

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

International Graphics in Stratford is hosting its first Printapoolooza, a community event in support of the Stratford House of Blessing Food Bank.

The event takes place Saturday, June 20 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 505 Douro St., Stratford.

The family-friendly celebration will feature food trucks, a kids' zone with face painting and a bouncy castle, and live music throughout the day.

Entertainment includes performances by Rusted Rebels, Tourniquet and

headlining Juno-nominated artist Glenn Marais.

Guests will also have the opportunity to tour the 60,000-square-foot International Graphics facility and go behind the scenes at one of North America's leading printing companies.

"We're honestly a hidden little gem here in Stratford and we wanted to invite the community to have a peek at what we do here at International Graphics," said Michelle Wright, sales executive.

Another highlight of the day will be a car show featuring the Corvette Club of Ontario and the Stratford Cruisers.

"We will have over 20 Corvettes on

display, as well as the Stratford Cruisers," said Wright.

International Graphics moved to Stratford in 1929 and has since expanded across North America. What began as a company printing wedding invitations has grown into a business focused on custom printing, communications, marketing technology and interactive solutions.

"Back in the 1970s and 1980s, wedding invitations were quite popular and if you lived anywhere in Canada, your invitations were most likely coming from International Graphics," said Wright. "But now we literally do almost everything.

We print over a million business cards a year. We make letterhead, envelopes, marketing materials, mailing programs, promotional items, branded attire, signage and so much more. We're kind of a one-stop shop."

The Stratford House of Blessing Food Bank will be on site collecting non-perishable food donations, as well as cash and card donations to support local families in need. Anyone who donates will have the opportunity to fill out a ballot to win a prize at the end of the day.

For more information, visit www.internationalgraphics.ca.

Knowledge Carrier Christin Dennis to lead Indigenous arts and cultural learning series

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Community members are invited to participate in a unique three-part Indigenous arts and cultural learning series facilitated by Kaswentha Two Row Now and made possible through funding support from United Way Perth-Huron. The series will be led by Christin Dennis, a Knowledge Carrier from Aamjiwnaang First Nation (Chippewas of Sarnia First Nation), also known by his traditional name Gzhiiquot (Fast Moving Cloud).

Hosted at the Gathering Place at the Falstaff Family Centre, the series will offer participants hands-on opportunities to explore Indigenous artistic traditions and cultural teachings through three interactive workshops:

- June 24, 6-9 p.m. – Dream Catcher Making Workshop
- July 1, 6-9 p.m. – Bone Choker Workshop
- July 15, 6-9 p.m. – Painting Workshop

Dennis is a member of Kaswentha Two Row Now, a Stratford-area collec-

tive comprised of Indigenous educators, local businesses, health agencies, social service organizations and community members committed to advancing learning, understanding and reconciliation.

An accomplished visual artist, Dennis describes his work as a reflection on contemporary Indigenous culture and the ongoing importance of traditional teachings.

"My art reflects our current era in Aboriginal culture, focusing on the sweat lodge and carrying on the traditions of old into the contemporary world. I tell the story of our heritage and the importance of preserving traditional values. I use mixed media with photography as a visual demonstration of the blending of traditional images with 21st century technology. By understanding and embracing our ancestral past, we can use those teachings to preserve a way of life, document its core values, and build a vision for our future."

The workshops are designed to foster learning, creativity, and cultural understanding while providing participants with the opportunity to learn directly



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Christin Dennis of Kaswentha Two Row Now is leading three workshops offering hands-on opportunities to explore Indigenous artistic traditions and cultural teachings.

from a First Nations Knowledge Carrier and artist.

Advance registration is required and

space is limited to 20 people per session. For registration information and event details, visit tworownow.ca/events.

City responds to encampment concerns

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

As Stratford residents began noticing and posting on community social media pages about homeless encampments on public property, including the site near the Downie Street parking lot, the City of Stratford wants to ensure its residents that it is devoted to supporting unhoused individuals.

As the city's lead for housing and homelessness services, its social services department continues to work directly with individuals at these locations to sup-

port their immediate safety and well-being, while also helping them move toward permanent, appropriate housing.

This work is supported through the city's encampment response process, which brings together many municipal departments, including social services, police, fire, infrastructure and development services, community services and building and planning. The city said in a statement on its Facebook page that this coordinated approach is essential in helping it respond thoughtfully and responsibly to a complex issue that affects both vulnerable individuals and the broader

community.

"Each department has an important role to play," the statement read. "Together, we are working to balance compassion with public safety, service access with site considerations, and immediate response with longer-term housing goals. This collaboration allows us to better assess needs, coordinate actions and connect individuals with the services and supports that may help stabilize their situation.

"We also continue to work closely with community agency partners that bring specialized expertise such as community

paramedicine and mental health and addiction supports."

The city further noted that homelessness is a complex issue facing municipalities across the country, and there is no single solution or single organization that can address it alone. Progress depends on strong partnerships, coordinated responses and a shared commitment to supporting people with dignity and respect.

"Our collective goal remains clear: to reduce chronic homelessness in Stratford and to help ensure that more people have access to safe, supportive, stable and appropriate housing."

Through Those Doors
(for Stratford Chefs School: Class of 2026)

Through those doors
you entered

most of you raw,
a few of you al dente,
apron strings attached
but not yet bound,
flavours undefined and resting
on expectant tongues,
knives encased
and eager for a honing.

Randi, Mike, Eli, Neil,
Conor and Melissa
Alex, Erin, Leah, Mark,
Christopher and Theresa

reviewed the novice recruits
with the scrutiny
of a shopping list,
the scrupulous dissection
of a new recipe:

are the ingredients here
for success,

can we tenderize and brine
these pieces into
a pureed whole,

produce from these sow's ears
the nuance and balance
of a tenderloin,

the emulsified perfection
of a finished chef?

And so the work began,
the mise en place
so parfaitement en place,
the knives unsheathed,
the burners turned to flame,

some of you requiring
a little simmer or a dredge,
others a severe deglaze or blanché,
a reduction here to bring
your talents out,
a chiffonade there
to lace an ego into ribbons,
a poke, a poach, a dice,
a braise, a whip, a sift,
a roux, a steep, a melt, a fold,
and sometimes a skewer
for those of you caught drifting
off in class, or the disgrace
of public spatchcock for those
showing up half-stewed.
But what a masterpiece
of culinary art has been produced,
the ten of you now,
the perfectly seasoned
harmonic melange
of experience and skill.

Antonio, Caden, Ciara,
Jon and Jenna
the sweet, the salty
and enticingly bitter,
Felix, Fidel, Sharon,

Rose and Lia,
the richness of sour
and that umami panacea.

You stand at the threshold
now of a world
anxious for your flavour.

You've learned how
to make butter sing,
how souffles rise like prayers
(and often on them),

how things get charred
and sometimes blister,
the true meaning
of the word "congeal,"
and not just as it
applies to food.

You've learned technique but
it is the nuance of your culinary
soul that will be your signature,
your blessing personalized
and sealed within each dish
you bring to table.

So go forth now
you culinary queens and kings,
you cultural cross-overs,
you grandiose gourmets
with your knives shining.

Go forth now
and show us all how
food connects,
how your talents
might bless our tables,
placate our palates and
make those aromatic choirs
sing upon the tongue.

Yes, through those doors
you entered,
but a different person leaves.
And in that leaving
there is a sadness, too.

Perhaps that hang-dog
balladeer, Leonard Cohen,
says it best,
"They're stackin' up the chairs now,
they're wipin' down the bar,
I never got to tell you
how beautiful you are."

So let us not today
be guilty of that same
and grievous sin
of radiance unacknowledged.

Through those doors you entered
nervous buds about to bloom
and through those doors
you'll soon depart
a seasoned and most wondrous dish
for our nation to consume.

Yes, they're stackin' up the chairs now,
they're wipin' down the bar,
and we're all here to tell you
how beautiful you are.

David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate

AMDSB encourages
residents to run for
trustee

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) is providing information to the public in an effort to encourage Huron-Perth residents to run for school board trustee. Trustees will be elected on Oct. 26, 2026 during the municipal election.

According to the director of education Graham Shantz: "Our trustees play a vital role in overseeing the focus in our education system as related to our strategic plan. They are passionate about public education and they advocate for student achievement and well-being."

There are nine trustees for AMDSB, representing a geographical portion of the district and the schools within. The areas include: Southwest Huron, Central East Huron, Northwest Huron, North

Huron/Morris Turnberry/Howick, St. Marys/Perth South/West Perth, North Perth, Perth East and two positions in Stratford.

"We are hopeful that any residents interested in student achievement and well-being come forward. We particularly encourage diverse community members to run so that voices of equity-seeking groups are better represented," said Shantz.

For information about the current board of trustees and the list of schools that they represent, visit "Meet our Trustees" on the AMDSB website. For more information about the role of the trustee and how to run in the upcoming municipal election on Oct. 26, AMDSB has created a one-page summary of the details. It can be viewed at amdsb.ca/trusteerecruitment.

STRATFORDTIMES

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25 years of wagging tails, smiling faces and happy tummies at the Barkery

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The Barkery is celebrating 25 years of providing homemade dog treats made with natural ingredients.

"I think it's a great accomplishment for a small business anywhere but especially Stratford. I think it feels great to offer the healthiest treats around for dogs in our area," said Heidi Rolleman, owner of the Barkery, of the anniversary.

Rolleman said that one of her favourite parts of running her business is meeting lots of happy and fluffy customers, including visiting dogs who pull their owners to the store to indulge in the smell of treats. The Barkery's social media is filled with pictures of dogs who stop by to have a treat, whether that's for their birthday or just because.

The Barkery's snaps come in a large variety of flavours such as apple carrot zucchini, pumpkin, blueberry barley and cheese and bacon. There are also seasonally decorated cookies and even birthday cakes. The treats found at the Barkery have no colours or additives that are unsafe for dogs.

"You can read and understand our ingredients and even try them yourself," Rolleman said to the Times. "It's not always



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

The Barkery reached its 25th year business anniversary and will host a celebration on July 4.

easy being a small business owner, but it is very rewarding when you see those happy tails wagging in our store and the happy pet parents that know we are providing the best treats."

The Barkery is situated on 130 Down-

ie St., right downtown. The Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) held four Dog Days of Summer events over the past few years promoting the area as a pet-friendly place.

"We love that the BIA took the initiative

to create a more dog-friendly downtown," Rolleman said. "Tourists and local people love to be able to take their dogs downtown and enjoy patios and other stores without having to leave their furry companions at home."

Rolleman is immensely grateful for the support from her customers.

"We wouldn't be here this long if it wasn't for their support," she said. "We also thank our wholesale customers that order from us from coast to coast. They are an important cog in this running wheel."

The Barkery will have a 25th birthday bash on July 4 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will feature cupcakes for humans from Cakes by Julie, cupcakes for dogs made by the Barkery, a prize wheel, a raffle, music and free samples of beer for dogs. The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth (HSKWSP) will bring some of their dogs available for adoption and accept financial donations. Other Downtown Stratford businesses like Taylor's Deli, Chocolate Barr's Candies, Black Swan Brewing Co., Poppin Kettle Corn, Revel and the Livery Yard will be celebrating the anniversary with special goodies for the occasion.

More information and updates about the Barkery can be found online by visiting thebarkery.ca, Facebook, or Instagram.

Garden Tour to feature eight unique gardens of private homes open to the public

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Garden Stratford and the Stratford and District Horticultural Society invites the public into private spaces to tour how others have approached their garden. This year, on Sunday July 5, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., eight gardens are featured, each with their own spin on the approach to gardening.

There are manicured gardens, natural pollinators, those that incorporate hardscape and those that beg for dinner parties and entertainment. The Garden Stratford's Garden Tour Committee goes to great lengths to ensure that each year there are new and interesting gardens to tour. In fact, once featured, a garden is ineligible to participate again for 10 years.

Two gardens participating in the tour are different from each other, but both are inviting and appealing. First is 56 Church St. owned by Barb Shaughnessy and Tim Forster and the second is 103 Lightbourne Ave. owned by Debbie and Tim Cunningham.

In 2020, Shaughnessy and Forster moved into 56 Church St. and began renovations in the 1867 house and overgrown garden in 2022. The house renovation provided hardscape that was repurposed into the garden giving points of interest. As much of what was in the yard that could be saved

was also incorporated into the garden.

"We got to pay homage to what was here and at the same time support the contemporary addition to the house. There was almost no back yard, it was mostly cedars and stuff that had grown up over about 40 years," said Shaughnessy.

Now, as you come around to the right side of the house and follow the path to the back yard, the expansive yard opens with a water feature, seating areas to relax, a dining area, grass and gardens of soft lines.

Coming from the country, they have had to adjust to a city-sized lot but are coping tremendously. The garden started with some plants that were transplanted from the old country home to Church Street. Look for the phlox, Stella D'oro, black eyed Susans and perennial geranium that have travelled.

"So we have a little bit of Caledon here and things that make me happy and it's been done very much to correspond to the contemporary back of the house. There are little hydrangeas that only grow 30 inches high. It's very regimented but when we got to the back we thought let's have some fun and let's put in there what makes us happy. I'm not going to say it's a perennial garden, it's a modified perennial garden," said Shaughnessy.

The fun is in the shaded corner of the yard with seating and a table for a bottle



(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

When coming around the corner of 56 Church St the whole backyard opens to reveal a peaceful and inviting area that is meant for private relaxation.

of wine to share surrounded by perennials overlooking the house from a different perspective.

On to 103 Lightbourne Ave., Debbie and Tim are pleased to welcome the public to their garden that has been in development since Tim was reassigned to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The front of the house was redesigned

with a stamped concrete driveway and path to the front door. Raised beds of perennials and annuals border the path to the beautifully tiled front porch that must be seen as part of the tour.

The path on the right of the house, bordered by another raised bed, leads to the sectional backyard opening with a dining

CONTINUED TO PAGE 9

World in a Weekend returning for fifth year

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

World in a Weekend (WIAW) returns to Stratford July 30 to Aug. 3 across eight venues with fun and wonder for patrons of all ages. This family-friendly international puppet festival always delights with many free and ticketed events challenging our perception of storytelling with programming that pushes boundaries.

"It's an opportunity for community and connection and people coming together so we're inviting people who could be interested in ticketed programming while we are also offering a bunch of free events," said Eileen Smith, artistic producer.

With returning favourites and new international artists, there will be something for everyone; young children, friend groups, multi-generational families alike. By popular demand is returning the Garden for Little Souls and the massively tall stilt walkers who will traipse throughout the downtown core and along the Avon River at Veteran's Drive Park.

"So you can come upon it by surprise, or you can come last minute and be a part of the free programming we have, or you can plan and buy tickets for programming," said Smith.

The Voyageurs, 12-foot stilt walkers by KAOSO will also tell the tale of two travellers separated by a chasm who attempt to reunite in a ticketed event. Puppetry through a marionette will tell the story of an inept bellhop in a grand hotel in this by donation performance under a tent at Veterans Drive Park. There will be a second tent this year for protection from the elements and lots of family activities. Don't forget this is the season ideal for Stratford's Al Fresco program for picnicking in the park.

Grayson Mills will host a Canadian double bill with *Dance of Shadows* by



(MARTIN FRICK PHOTO)

Experience the puppet performance of *The Bellhop* by Spanish puppetry group Hilarilar Marionetas. Follow the hilarious antics of an inept bellhop in a grand hotel, to be found under the tent along the Avon River in this by donation event.

Catherine Gignac and the hilarious *Fair Queen* by Joanne O'Sullivan Productions. Following the performances will be a silent dance party to rock out to your favourite playlist on supplied headphones and dance the night away.

Other ticketed events include *You Have Arrived* by Syrian puppeteer Rim Mohammed, *Mwana and the Turtle's Secret*, the African tale about a young Congolese girl who takes on a giant, Papa about an overwhelmed dad who is moving houses, and Orphan Circus where a troupe of misfit puppets entertain.

"Once one is invited into this amazing, rich and complicated world of puppets all you want to do is share the magic," said Smith.

There are also several workshops for

all ages that complement the WIAW programming such as the storytelling workshop, mask making, pop-up storybook making and the always popular sock puppet making workshop.

New this year is the Puppet Table Talk Roundtable featuring the puppeteers that have come to perform from around the world to talk about their techniques, their artistic culture and the touring circuit. This deep dive will be fascinating to all aged 10 and over.

Finally, this is the year of the big reveal as Stratford continues to cement itself as a member of AVIAMA, the international association of puppet-friendly cities of which this city is the only English-speaking member in the world.

For the past year, a com-

munity of artisans both local and international have been working on the project code named The Phoenix.

"We are building a truly magical giant parade puppet that will be an emblematic entity, Stratford's very own," said Smith. "We are excited to embed aspects of Stratford's identity into this 'being' – resonances of history and dreams for the future."

The worldwide debut of this giant transforming puppet conceived here in town by Smith will take place and make appearances in Market Square and along Veteran's Drive. She will travel along the street in her first transformation of a locomotive engine operated by trained puppeteers then in an engineering feat will magically transform into The Phoenix, a beautiful colourful character to amaze and delight onlookers.

"She is made possible by funding from RTO4 and from generous donations in the community both near and far. This is about different communities, a world community, a puppeteer, the theatrical community in Shaw that donated thousands of dollars in fabric. We've been gifted steel and the scooter and other kinds of materials as well as different versions of volunteer assistance of highly skilled people," said Smith.

The Phoenix will be able to be deployed to other international puppet festivals to represent Stratford and provide a return on investment.

For a full calendar of events for World in a Weekend, or to buy tickets visit spring-worksfestival.ca, where there is also the facility to donate to the festival to support the ongoing programming and the construction of the Phoenix.

Garden Tour to feature eight unique gardens of private homes open to the public

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

area placed on repurposed interlocking brick that used to surround the pool but is now stamped concrete.

"We have lived here 17 years. The pool was here, but we have done everything else. When we first moved in, they had a lot of trees and bushes that were overgrown, so we've sort of been transitioning into things that are not so high maintenance," said Debbie.

It's clear by all the garden renovations that the Cunninghams love to entertain. Their huge gazebo accommodates a sectional sofa in addition to other seating and a TV. It's begging for a party back there.

"Our focus is to entertain. Tim built this gazebo last year, he designed and built this," said Debbie.

"That was my first attempt at a structure and I'm happy

to say it looks pretty much like it did in my head. I had to adjust a few things as I went along, but I got to buy new tools," smiled Tim.

Their gardening style is all about colour and pollinating flowers to attract fauna and hope for hummingbirds. It was a hard winter but luckily, they didn't lose anything, though things have been slow to come back this year. Low maintenance is their goal and have incorporated hard scape stone and mulch to achieve this.

The garden tour featuring not only these two gardens but six others takes place July 5 and tickets are \$15 each. Tickets can be purchased for cash only at Cozyn's Garden Gallery, Klomps Home and Garden and Sebringville Garden Centre. On the day of the tour, tickets are available at Cozyn's until 1 p.m.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. Who won the 2025-2026 Stanley Cup?
2. Who recently became the world's first trillionaire?
3. What is the first stage of the rain/water cycle?
4. In *v*, what character did Robert De Niro portray?
5. The thistle is the national flower of what country?
6. How did Oliver Tree die?
7. What is Duolingo's mascot?
8. Which dog breed was the first to have its evidence legally admitted in court?
9. In health, what does HDL stand for?
10. In what year did the first FIFA World Cup take place?

This week's answers are found on pg. 27

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Rave Reviews

Hit All The Right Notes



GUYS AND DOLLS



(out of 4)

“A jackpot winner”

TORONTO STAR

Critic's Pick
“A masterpiece”

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

“An instant hit”

BROADWAYWORLD

MARK UHRE AND JENNIFER RIDER-SHAW. PHOTO: ANN BAGGLEY.

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A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM | OTHELLO | THE TAO OF THE WORLD | THE KING JAMES BIBLE PLAY

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Two years in, Salt Cabin continues to grow grow and expand in community

CONNOR LUCZKA

Times Correspondent

Wellness, just like mental and physical health, isn't innate. It's something to be fostered – and the Salt Cabin, a Stratford-based wellness spa, is here to help locals and visitors on that journey.

"Wellness is not a one and done thing," Elizabeth Smith, owner of the Salt Cabin, told the Times. "You take care of your body by going to the gym, you need to take care of your wellness by coming to the Salt Cabin, and you don't go to the gym and expect miraculous results from going once, so the same thing applies with your wellness."

Located at 71 Albert St. in downtown Stratford, the spa has been operating for over two years now. As Smith explained, it is not a traditional spa experience. Instead, it focuses on wellness, providing a host of services that support both mental and physical wellbeing – from hand and foot salt detoxes and AI-driven massage chairs to a 16-scent oxygen bar.

"We started with a core," Smith explained. "It all originated around the salt cabin itself, the Halotherapy room was our first thought in putting this whole space together. ... At the time we were just coming out of COVID and I was looking at services that people really needed. People were still emerging from the isolation of COVID and weren't necessarily ready for highly

interactive wellness experiences. That's why many of our original services were intentionally designed to be largely hands-off while still providing meaningful wellness benefits."

As the Salt Cabin continues to grow, it is expanding its wellness offerings. Starting June 19, it will introduce three new skincare facials to its repertoire. The Nourish Ritual, the Radiance Ritual and the Lift and Glow Ritual use Riman Korean skincare, giving the users' skin focused care that supports how it looks, feels and is cared for. The esthetician providing the facials is also trained in facial massage, so a massage is incorporated into the service as well.

After two years, Smith said that in another two she hopes the Salt Cabin is in a place financially where they can start franchising in other communities. More than anything, however, she hopes it continues to be an option Stratforders use for their wellbeing.

"I hope that the Salt Cabin will become a place that people go to for relaxation and their mental wellness," Smith said. "I hope it becomes a place that when life has gotten heavy, and it's just too much, that they know that the Salt Cabin is here to help get them through those tough times, that they can come in here, leave the outside world outside, and come in and just breathe and take some time to reset."

For more information, visit <https://thesaltcabin.ca/>.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)
Elizabeth Smith, owner of the Salt Cabin, sits in the foyer of its Albert Street location.

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STRATFORD *TIMES* SPORTS

Ethan Bridges, Sully Kipfer selected in OHL U16 draft

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

Ethan Bridges of Stratford and Sully Kipfer of Milverton were drafted in the OHL Priority Selection June 13, with Bridges being chosen in the sixth round by the North Bay Battalion and Kipfer getting selected in the 15th round by the Sarnia Sting.

Bridges, who attended the first in-person Priority Selection hosted by the OHL since 2001 in Kingston, described the experience at the draft.

"It was very cool," said Bridges. "They hyped up every person getting picked, and everyone was clapping. It was just a great experience. It's very special. It's a goal that I've always had until now, so to accomplish that goal, it's just a weight off my shoulders, and now I can get to work for my next goal of actually playing for the team and getting in the starting lineup."

As he waited to hear his name called, Bridges noted he felt plenty of nerves.

"Before the draft, I was nervous, just because I didn't know where I was going to get picked or what team I was going to go to," Bridges recounted. "So, when the guy went up there and said my name, it was just unreal. I've been waiting for this moment to get drafted for the last three years playing triple-A."

Being picked by the Battalion wasn't a big shock to the Stratford native, as he had engaged in conversations with North Bay before the event.

"I talked to North Bay before and after the draft. Before, it was a 30-minute phone call about who I was as a person and as a hockey player. And then, after I was drafted, I went down to their table and talked to the staff and shook all their hands. I feel great about getting picked there. They said they care about their players' development. They try to give everybody a chance to play with their organization. It just seems like a great place to be."

Bridges, who scored 16 goals and 46 points in 30 games



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Pictured on the left is Stratford native Ethan Bridges, and on the right is Milverton native Sully Kipfer. Bridges was drafted in the sixth round of the OHL Priority Selection June 13 by the North Bay Battalion, while Kipfer went to the Sarnia Sting in the 15th round.

with the U16 Huron-Perth Lakers this past season, is currently slated to play with his hometown Stratford Warriors of the GOHL if he doesn't make the Battalion out of training camp, with his goal no matter where he spends the 2026-27 campaign being to bulk up physically.

"I just want to get stronger and faster, which I think comes with playing with older guys and going into junior hockey as opposed to U16," Bridges stated. "I think I have the skills and the hockey IQ to make that jump to the next level. I think I can be a forward who the coach relies on and can contribute to the success of the team, but getting stronger is the next big thing for me."

Kipfer, a teammate of Bridges on the U16 Lakers, was drafted in the 15th round by the Sting, and described the relief he felt when he found out he had finally been selected, which happened while he was at work.

"It was a long day. I expected to go more towards the eighth round to 10th round range, so I started following it more intensely around the seventh round or so, and I didn't expect it to go as late as it did in the day. I actually had to go to work at 2 (p.m.). I work with my teammate Declan McCotter, who also got picked, so I left, and I was feeling a bit nervous around that point, just not really knowing what was going to happen."

"After I got to work and about 30 minutes into my shift, my head coach from last year, Jason Brooks, who is on the Sarnia Sting staff, was actually the one who called me, which was a pretty cool experience," continued Kipfer. "It was definitely an emotional call, and a big relief to finally get picked, and special to be with Declan and get the call from my head coach."

The call from Brooks, according to Kipfer, made the experience of getting drafted all the more sentimental.

"It started off just being a gut feeling when the phone rang," said Kipfer. "I knew he was affiliated with Sarnia, and I knew Sarnia was on the clock for the pick, so as soon as I saw his name pop up, I had a gut feeling that it was going to be about the draft. And then he said that he was going to make me a Sarnia Sting."

"Me and Jason (Brooks) have known each other for seven years. We've gotten very close and had quite a special bond over the past couple of years, so just having him be the one to tell me was special. And then he told me that he started tearing up at the draft, and he knew he wanted to take me, and then I started tearing up, and it was just a really special moment between the two of us."

Kipfer also explained his excitement to continue progressing as a player.

"It's just nothing but excitement. The Sting's camp is this weekend, so I'm just really excited to get up there and meet all the staff and meet all the other drafted players. I'm just absolutely excited for the opportunity and so grateful that I have this opportunity. Obviously, I was a bit nervous when you see the rounds going by, and you start thinking, 'Maybe I'm not going to get drafted.' But as soon as I got that call, it was just immediate excitement. I think that I'm ready to make the most of this opportunity, and I just can't wait to get up there."

When looking ahead to this coming season, Kipfer said he wanted to become more fleet of foot on the ice.

"I'd say right now, just my speed and my skating ability are probably my biggest weak points," admitted Kipfer.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 13



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U18 Strikers Boys dominate HEADS United, Cambridge United and GPF Eagles

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

Coming off winning the Graham Bunting Classic, the Stratford U18 Strikers looked to continue their surge as they returned to the Southwestern District Soccer League regular season campaign this week.

On June 8 at Barbour Field in Hillsburgh, the Strikers faced the Hillsburgh Erin and District (HEADS) United. A brace from William Pepper and goals from Piers Murray, Pierce Macdonald and Rogan Catalan gave the Strikers a convincing 5-1 win.

Two days later, on June 10, Strikers travelled to Cambridge for their matchup with Cambridge United. Catalan and Murray's

brace led Stratford to a convincing 8-1 win over Cambridge. Pepper, Nicholas Brintnell, Ype Zeilstra and MacDonald also scored in the rout.

With the two wins, the Strikers have a record of 3-1-1, good for fourth place heading into the June 15 matchup with the last-place Global Premier Futbol (GPF) Eagles at Stratford's Cowan Field at Festival Hydro Park.

Caden Ollson scored a hat trick for the Strikers, while MacDonald provided a brace in a 10-0 blowout win. Murray, Catalan, Jelle Zeilstra, Jack Haines, and Greyson Roth run out the scoring downpour while goalkeeper Owen Blackburn got the clean sheet for Stratford.

In the three wins, the Strikers outscored their opponents 23-2 and improved their

record to 4-1-1, earning 14 of the possible 18 points to start the regular season.

Strikers head coach Steve Ollson liked what he saw from the team against the Eagles.

"I thought all the boys played really well there. We stuck together as a team and played our game plan, which allowed us to really take it to the other team for the whole game," Ollson said.

With the season well underway, Ollson says the team's focus is to win the SWDSL League Cup and have a successful season overall.

"We always want to make sure that we do as well as we can in all the tournaments we play in the League Cup. So far this year, we lost in the finals of our first tournament (Hamilton Sparta Cup) at the

beginning of the year, and won the second tournament, the Graham Bunting," Ollson said.

"We got our first League Cup game on Friday, so the goal is to win that and go as far as we can, hopefully win the (Northers Youth) League Cup. Then we'll just get one more tournament at the end of the year to make sure that we finish off the year strong, not only in the league but also in that final tournament."

The Strikers' upcoming schedule includes a trip to Kitchener for the North Youth Cup opening round against Kitchener TFC on June 19. Their next regular-season game is scheduled for June 22 against Blue Mountains United at Cowan Field in Festival Hydro Park.



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Stratford goalkeeper Owen Blackburn makes the goal kick against the GPF Eagles at Cowan Field on June 15.



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Stratford midfielder Jack Haines battles for possession against the GPF Eagles at Cowan Field on June 15.

Ethan Bridges, Sully Kipfer selected in OHL U16 draft

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

fer. "I've got the defensive ability down, and I have the strength, and obviously, you always want to build on the strength and keep that up. I've always been big on developing that in the gym three times a week down in Waterloo with a training facility called Depth, and then just at home, doing agility drills, sprints, running and footwork training. I work with Luke Israel, who really helps me with my skating ability."

Kipfer said he believes, with improvements to his skating, he could blossom into a reliable stay-at-home blueliner at the OHL level.

"I think I can definitely be a good third or fourth defenseman on the roster who shuts down guys and plays with a very specific defensive defenseman role on that team who just shuts down guys using my strength. I don't let guys get around me. I'm not on for many goals. And then, a big ability of mine is my penalty kill ability."

Along with Bridges and Kipfer, six other U16 Lakers were chosen, including leading scorer Declan McCotter, who was picked in the fourth round, 77th overall, by the Flint Firebirds, while defenceman Wyatt Finch was selected 100th overall by the Sting in the fifth round.

In the sixth round, forward Evan Miller was drafted 113th overall by the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds. Defenceman Colton Van Geffen at 188th overall was selected by the Guelph Storm in round 10. Goaltender Rylan Da Costa (226th overall) went to the Sudbury Wolves in round 12

at 226th overall. Luke McLean was picked 247th overall by the Saginaw Spirit in the 13th round.

On June 8, the OHL held its Under-18 Draft on the league website. Guelph Storm selected U18 Lakers forward Maddyx Chaput with the 27th overall pick.

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15U Nationals struggle against Waterloo and Guelph, stampede past Clinton in exhibition play

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

Like their 18U contemporaries, the Stratford 15U Nationals hit a bump, dropping two games on the road to the Waterloo Tigers and at Stratford National Stadium to the Guelph Royals last week.

On June 10 against the Tigers, Stratford took an early 3-0 lead after Dexter Powell drove in two runs with a two-out single. Waterloo answered in the bottom of the second with two runs, narrowing the gap to 3-2. Powell's third RBI of the game then pushed the Nationals ahead 4-2 by the end of the third inning.

After a scoreless fourth inning, the Nationals extended their three-run lead in the top of the fifth when Jake Price hit an RBI single to score Jackson Goebel. However, the Tigers countered with a four-run inning in the bottom half, taking a 6-5 lead.

Stratford evened the score in the following inning when Landon McCann scored on a stolen base at home. The Tigers took the lead with a home run, making it 7-6 as they headed into the final inning. However, Stratford went down in order, ending the game.

Starting pitcher Cole Morris pitched into the fifth inning before being relieved by Powell with one out. Morris threw 88 pitch-

es over four and a third innings, striking out two, allowing five earned runs on two walks and seven hits. Powell pitched one and two-thirds innings in relief and gave up the winning run in the sixth inning.

Morris led the Nationals with two runs, and players McCann, James Antonio, Goebel and Price also contributed by scoring for Stratford.

The Nationals returned home to Stratford National Stadium to face the Guelph Royals Team 1 on June 11.

Guelph pounded Stratford's starting pitcher Price for four runs in the first inning, but Powell's RBI triple and an RBI single from Goebel cut the Nationals to 4-2 heading into the second. After the Royals scored on a sacrifice fly put the visitors back up by three runs in the third.

Stratford re-entered the game in the bottom of the fifth after Powell's second RBI of the game, and Goebel's two-run double tied the score at 5-5. Guelph answered with runs in the fourth and fifth innings before scoring seven runs in the sixth to secure the win. Although the Nationals mounted an offensive push in the final two innings, they ultimately lost 15-11.

Powell, Goebel and McCann combined for seven hits and six RBI for Stratford. The top of Stratford's batting order, Will Molenhuis, Morris and Powell, combined



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Stratford shortstop Landon McCann patrols the infield against the Guelph Royals at Stratford National Stadium on June 11.

for eight of the team's 11 runs.

With the losses, Stratford is tied for fifth in the Inter County Baseball Association (ICBA)'s 15U standings with a 5-4 record with the Ancaster Angels.

On June 15, the Nationals travelled to Clinton for an exhibition game against the Mustangs.

Led by Morris's two home runs and four runs scored, the Nationals defeated the home team 19-3. All ten starters on the

Stratford roster scored at least one run. Max Barter led the team with three hits, while Blake Mogk and Morris each had three RBIs.

The Nationals would like to continue their momentum as they resume their ICBA regular season play on June 16 in Simcoe against the Giants. Stratford's next home game is on June 18, after press time, at National Stadium against Guelph Royals Team 2.

U16 Strikers Boys get shut out in Guelph

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

For the fourth straight match in SWDSL regular-season play, the Stratford U16 Boys Strikers failed to produce a winning result. On June 9, the Strikers faced the Guelph Jr. Gryphons at the University of Guelph.

The Strikers were defeated 4-0 by the

Gryphons and will be down two players for the next game at Puslinch on June 16, as Thomas Mott and Ashton Van Kooten both received red cards during the match. This is the second straight match the Strikers have gone scoreless and lost 4-0.

With the loss, Stratford is tied for seventh with Huron Perth United and Owen Sound United with four points.

18U Nationals lose their seventh straight

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford 18U Nationals' losing streak extended to eight games following an 8-3 loss to the Kitchener Hassan Panthers, who are last in the Inter County Baseball Association (ICBA)'s 18U T1 division, at Stratford National Stadium on June 15.

After a scoreless first inning, the Panthers scored five runs off Stratford's starting pitcher Owen Brooks in the second inning. Brooks then contributed offensively for the Nationals in their half of the inning with an RBI single, reducing the score to 5-1.

Kitchener extended their five-run lead in the bottom of the third, but the Nationals narrowed

the gap in the fourth when Finley Newton hit a 2-run RBI single bringing in Daniel Hovius and Colin Priestap. The Panthers added an extra run in both the seventh and ninth innings, while the Nationals' offense remained silent after the third inning, resulting in an 8-3 defeat.

Dawson Davidson led the Nationals with two hits, while Hovius, Colin and Ethan Priestap scored the only runs for the home team.

Following their loss, the Nationals' record fell to 3-7, placing them third from last in the eleven-team division. They aimed to turn things around on June 17 in Ancaster against the Angels (after press time), and planned to host the Guelph Royals on June 19 and the Cambridge Cubs on June 22 at National Stadium.

U15 Strikers Girls dominate in Kitchener and Guelph, fall short in London tournament

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

After their Graham Bunting Classic win, there was no rest for the Stratford U15 Strikers Girls as they resumed their Southwest District Soccer League regular season play, as they travelled to Kitchener for their matchup with the FFTW Academy on June 8.

Led by the hat trick from team captain Peyton Ward, Stratford pounced on FFTW Academy 8-2. Elena Hogger, Payton Herman, Peyton Van Straaten, Reese Campbell and Kinsley McIntosh also scored for Stratford in the rout.

With the win, the Strikers are tied with the Guelph Jr. Gryphons with a 4-0 record, but in first place in goal differential of +16 compared to Guelph's +14.

From June 12-14, the Strikers participated in the Shine The Light Tournament, hosted by the London Whitecaps. Playing in Pool A with Port Colborne, Guelph,

Goderich and London, the Strikers shut out the Gryphons 1-0 on June 12.

On June 13, Stratford beat the tournament host Whitecaps 3-1, but on the final round-robin matchup on the morning of June 14, the Strikers settled on a 1-1 draw with Port Colborne, and finished with a record with a 2-0-1 record and five points, second place and one point behind the 3-0-0 Caboto Lightning.

In the tournament semi-final, the Strikers dropped their first result in the season with a 4-1 loss to the London Alliance FC Mustangs.

On June 15, Stratford travelled to Guelph for a key match against the Gryphons. With Herman leading the way, the Strikers secured a 6-1 victory, taking sole possession of first place in the SWDSL U15 League. They now lead Guelph and Waterloo by three points.

Next, the Strikers will host Rockwood FC on June 22 at Cowan Field in Festival Hydro Park. The game kicks off at 7 p.m.

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Stratford Festival review: *Something Rotten!* is back and just as good as the first time I saw it

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

What can I write about a production I've seen and reviewed before?

This season at the Stratford Festival marked the return of the hilarious musical, *Something Rotten!*, to the Festival Theatre stage. Helmed once again by director-choreographer Donna Feore, the production is almost entirely identical to the production of the same musical created for the festival's 2024 season.

To refresh my memory of the original festival production before I began writing this review, I revisited my first review, reminding myself what I thought back in 2024. What follows is a few excerpts from my original review accompanied by my comments about the same aspects of this year's production.

"I don't think I've ever related so strongly to a character in a theatrical production as I did Nick Bottom (Mark Uhre). Perhaps it's because we share the opinion that Shakespeare's writing is overrated and overly ornate, but Uhre's performance as the jealous, jilted playwright trying to find success and fame in the Bard's shadow and doing anything and everything to produce that next big hit is at once hilarious, relatable and packed with talent on the song-and-dance front."

Unsurprisingly, Uhre is still phenomenal as Nick Bottom. As the elder of the two Bottom brothers, Uhre ably portrays a blind ambition driven both by professional jealousy and a deep desire to make a name for himself as a playwright. With more experience under his belt as Bottom, Uhre's song-and-dance performances are even more on point than when he performed them in 2024, and his onstage chemistry with his brother, Nigel Bottom (Henry Firmston), and his



(ANN BAGGLEY PHOTO)

Jeff Lillico as Shakespeare (centre) with members of the company, *Something Rotten!* Stratford Festival 2026.

wife, Bea Bottom (Starr Domingue), truly grounds this year's production and his character's success-at-all-costs mentality with a believable emotional core.

"Henry Firmston's Nigel Bottom, Nick's younger brother and writing partner with actual writing talent, grounds his brother's blind ambition and jealousy with his own heartfelt journey of self discovery and remaining true to himself – a true fan of Shakespeare's work – thanks to the love and guidance of Portia (Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane) – the daughter of a strictly anti-theatre puritan, Brother Jeremiah (Juan Chioran) – and a secret lover of prose and poetry herself."

The love story between Nigel and Portia in this year's production is once again an emotional high point. The sometimes-awkward budding love between these two star-crossed lovers, fueled

by their matching passions for Shakespeare's works and the written word, gives Nigel the motivation he needs to stand up for what he believes in and write what's in his heart.

One minor change I noticed in this year's production is how Chioran approaches his portrayal of Brother Jeremiah. While it was clear in the 2024 production that Brother Jeremiah had some not-so-secret desires, offering a humorous and hypocritical contrast to his unceasing puritanical campaign to punish the sins of the theatrical world, Chioran really leans into the closeted gay jokes in this season's production, both physically and in how he delivers his character's tongue-in-cheek humour.

Personally, I think the extra emphasis Chioran puts on his character's homo-erotic predilections works perfectly

and provides a hint as to why Brother Jeremiah is so bent on abolishing theatre beyond his religious beliefs – he hasn't yet come to terms with who he really is.

"While (William Shakespeare understudy Gabriel) Antonacci's performance as the 16th-century rockstar playwright certainly hit hard – I can't say how it compares to (Jeff) Lillico's, but I did enjoy it – the supporting cast, the impeccably timed choreography of each of the song-and-dance numbers and the comedic timing of everyone on stage truly made this production shine."

In 2024, my review was based on a performance of the musical featuring Antonacci as Shakespeare. This year, I got the opportunity to see Lillico in the role. Both actors are excellent as Shakespeare, and I can now confidently say Lillico truly brings that much needed rockstar quality to his performance as the Bard.

Antonacci, meanwhile, sings and dances in this year's production as a member of the Bard Boys, a chef, Renaissance writer, astrologer, townsman, Puritan, egg and an omelette. Having now reviewed this production for a second time, I paid close attention to the astounding talents of each and every performer who takes the stage. While the main actors may drive the plot forward, it's the dancers and the singers, as well as the musicians offstage, who truly make this production so much fun to watch and sing along to.

While this season's production of *Something Rotten!* is a true recreation of the 2024 rendition with a few minor polishes here and there, and a cast and crew with even more experience staging this musical under their belt, seeing it for a second time was just as fun, if not more so, than the first time around.

Something Rotten! runs at the Festival Theatre until Oct. 31.

Here for Now Theatre's *Love Us Most* shines spotlight on women behind the curtain

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

From June 17-28, Stratford's Here For Now Theatre will present the world premiere of *Love Us Most*, a sharp and darkly funny new play by Stratford Festival favourite Sara Farb.

While Stratford audiences know Farb for her acclaimed work as an actor, she is also an accomplished writer, having previously written the books for musicals including *Kelly vs. Kelly* and *Way Out There*.

Love Us Most offers audiences an opportunity to engage with a different aspect of her artistic practice through a play that draws on her years of experience in the theatre industry.

Director and friend Sabryn Rock, who worked with Farb and shared a dressing

room early in her career during her time at the Stratford Festival, said she is excited to bring the production to Stratford and shine a light on the behind-the-scenes experiences of female actors in theatre.

"It's unique and feels like a full-circle moment because she's written a play that takes place entirely in the dressing room of a prestigious fictional theatre institution," she said. "They're performing *King Lear*, but the focus is on the three women who share the dressing room, playing *Lear*'s three daughters."

The play follows three actresses navigating ambition, power and survival in a system that wasn't built for them.

"You get the backstage view of what might happen in one of those dressing rooms," said Rock. "Two of the characters are more seasoned actresses who've been there for many years, and then the actress

playing Cordelia, or the one we call C in the play, it's her first season. She's a Black woman, so as the play unfolds, it starts to look at the dynamics and politics of being a woman and being a Black woman in a predominantly male space."

Although the setting is fictional, Rock said her time in theatre has shown her there are still misogynistic undercurrents in the male-dominated industry.

"There were times when I felt like my voice didn't matter in the same way and felt like I had to stifle my Blackness in order to fit in with this vision because it's classical theatre," she said.

As always, Here For Now Theatre's production of *Love Us Most* aims to leave audiences with a lasting impression. Alongside misogyny within the arts, the play explores the experiences of women of colour, as well as ageism in the industry.

"I know people understand that these imbalances still exist in theatre," said Rock. "The patriarchy is still a thing, but this play really puts into perspective that this is still happening in these institutions. Being able to see it from a new perspective, if you're not a person of colour, and gain a better understanding of how difficult it can be for someone to come to a place like this, fit in and not feel like they're compromising important parts of themselves, is huge."

Funny, insightful and especially resonant in a theatre town like Stratford, *Love Us Most* offers an insider's perspective on the realities of working in the arts.

"Sometimes we shift and change to fit into a box society wants us to be in, but I don't think that serves anybody," said Rock. "I think the play really highlights that and offers a new perspective."

Stratford Festival review: Paul Gross and Tom McCamus excel amid the absurdist humour of *Waiting for Godot*

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Are they alive or dead; on Earth or in Hell? Why can't they remember anything from one day to the next? Who is Godot and why are they waiting for him?

Those questions and more are never answered in director Molly Atkinson's production of Irish playwright Samuel Beckett's absurdist play, *Waiting for Godot*, at the Stratford Festival. While we don't get a lot of answers, we do get a lot of questions – many philosophical, some more practical – asked and then quickly forgotten by the play's two main characters, Estragon (Tom McCamus) and Vladimir (Paul Gross).

Set on a stage that feels like a vast, empty desert with a single dead tree in the middle, this production relies entirely on an unending conversation between Estragon and Vladimir, with a couple welcome interruptions from the strange Pozzo (Jonathan Goad) and his captive servant on a rope, Lucky (David W. Keeley).

Thanks to the considerable talents of both McCamus and Gross – and their on-stage chemistry – the 50-year friendship between Estragon and Vladimir is readily apparent. While they occasionally bicker and Estragon threatens to leave Vladimir altogether, any animosity is overshadowed by the love, banter and a codependency the pair clearly relies on to get through the boredom, physical discomfort, hunger, frustration and just plain bizarreness they experience as



(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

From left, Tom McCamus as Estragon and Paul Gross as Vladimir, *Waiting for Godot*. Stratford Festival 2026.

they wait for Godot.

Though the banter between Estragon and Vladimir – and Pozzo when he is onstage – is at once entertaining, deeply thought-provoking and humorous, it's the physical humour that really keeps this production on a good pace. From punches thrown and Lucky stepping on Estragon's already painful feet to myriad hat-switching, the pulling of Lucky's rope and an outright dogpile in the second act, the way each character moves

and staggers about the stage seems both hilariously unintentional and immaculately choreographed.

The costume design is also quite intriguing. The ragged, ill-fitting clothes worn by Estragon, Vladimir and Lucky are contrasted somewhat by Pozzo's all-red getup – a dress coat, checkered suit, bowler hat, leather gloves and sunglasses. Though Pozzo is better dressed than the other characters, Goad's portrayal of the character, while also

funny, gives the impression that while he may have once been well-to-do, he has since fallen on hard times as he now finds himself dragging Lucky by a rope through the desert – apparently to sell him at the fair.

The impression I got from the costume and set design in this production was that the characters were in some reimagining of the Depression-era Dust Bowl, where nothing grows and everyone is waiting for something or someone to show them the way out of their purgatorial prison.

Adding to all the strangeness in this play is the music. In my notes from opening night, I describe the music as brief, upbeat and somewhat electronic in nature. The production begins with that not-quite-discordant music, which includes some kind of choir singing, and it abruptly stops right before the stage lights come up and we first see Estragon and Vladimir.

Almost equally as abruptly with more of a fade-to-black feel, the music returns at the end of the production to close out the play. It doesn't really make a lot of sense, which is good because the play as a whole doesn't really make a lot of sense, and it's not supposed to.

I really enjoyed the Stratford Festival's 2026 production of *Waiting for Godot*. If, like me, you enjoy absurdist humour and plots that don't really go anywhere, you'll probably enjoy it too.

Waiting for Godot runs at the Festival Theatre until July 31.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

For three days in June (from June 9-11 this year), students from across Perth County come to the iFarm education program to learn where their food comes from. Pictured here at the chicken farming station are Jan O'Rourke from Dublin, Henry Koskamp from Sebringville and Chris Wood from Mitchell, explaining to students what feed a chicken eats every day and how much water they will consume to have a healthy diet.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The Perth County Choir sings "for the joy of it" at Avondale United Church on June 3. The choir performed a medley of beloved Canadian music, including songs from Ann Murray, Gordon Lightfoot, the Tragically Hip, Ian Tyson, Neil Young and Stratford's own Justin Bieber.

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Editorial

My first mammogram — and why it mattered



AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

I'll be honest: I was nervous about my first mammogram.

Booking the appointment wasn't the problem. Actually showing up was. Nearly every woman I spoke with had warned me it would be uncomfortable, and some described it as downright painful. By the time my appointment arrived, I had built it up in my head far more than I probably should have.

But when I walked into Stratford General Hospital, met the friendly technologist and sat in a waiting room filled with women wearing matching pink gowns, I felt surprisingly at ease. More than anything, I felt grateful to live in a country where preventative screening like this is available at no cost.

There's something about the



word "screening" that makes it sound passive, like you're simply being checked over and sent on your way. In reality, it feels much more personal than that.

The Ontario Breast Screening Program provides publicly funded mammograms for eligible people across the province. One of the biggest recent changes is

that people aged 40 to 74 can now self-refer, meaning they no longer need a doctor's referral to book a screening mammogram. The province estimates that change alone could connect approximately one million additional Ontarians to breast cancer screening.

It's a significant public health

step, especially when you consider how common breast cancer is. It remains one of the most frequently diagnosed cancers among Canadian women, and early detection can dramatically improve outcomes.

According to Cancer Care Ontario, when breast cancer is detected at Stage 1, the five-year relative survival rate is nearly 100 per cent. That number drops significantly when cancer is found in later stages, making early detection one of the most powerful tools available.

Across Ontario, approximately 700,000 screening mammograms are performed each year through the Ontario Breast Screening Program at more than 240 screening locations. Those sites include hospitals and community imaging centres serving Stratford and communities throughout Perth, Huron and Waterloo Region.

For decades, screening programs focused primarily on people over 50 because the majority of breast cancers are diagnosed in that age group. But the conversation around screening is evolving, and, according to ontario.ca, lowering the self-referral age to 40 removes an important barrier for many women who previously needed to navigate the healthcare

system to access screening.

Sitting in that waiting room, I thought about how many women I know who have postponed this appointment for years. Not because they don't care about their health, but because life gets busy and screening doesn't feel urgent until suddenly it does.

I also thought about how little we talk about what the experience is actually like. The vulnerability, anticipation and the anxiety that creeps in while you're waiting for your name to be called.

What surprised me most wasn't the mammogram itself. It was realizing that screening isn't just about finding disease early. It's about making a conscious decision to participate in your own health before something goes wrong.

You're not waiting for symptoms. You're not hoping for the best. You're choosing to look when nothing feels wrong.

In a health-care system built around early detection, the hardest step is often the first: booking the appointment, but once you do, you're taking the first step in managing your own health.

To learn more about early detection, visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/breast-cancer-testing-and-prevention>.

Quote of the Week

"It's amazing. This is something I have been going after since I got the first one. You want to win again, and again and again. What a feeling and what a battle. It's been an amazing ride."

– Canadian Jordan Staal, captain of the Carolina Hurricanes after winning the Stanley Cup against Las Vegas on June 14.

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Opinions

Designing a life that fits your energy



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

Living with a chronic illness often means learning a language that much of the world does not speak. It is the language of fluctuating symptoms, invisible limitations and difficult choices about where to invest limited energy. In a society that frequently celebrates busyness and productivity, those living with chronic conditions may feel pressure to keep up with expectations that no longer fit their reality.

Yet there is another way forward. Rather than continually forcing ourselves into lifestyles

that leave us depleted, we can begin to design lives that fit the energy we actually have.

This shift starts with acceptance – not resignation, but recognition. Acceptance means acknowledging that our bodies have changed and that pretending otherwise often comes at a cost. It involves moving away from the constant question, "Why can't I do what I used to do?" toward a gentler inquiry: "What helps me live well within the circumstances I have today?"

For many people with chronic illness, energy is not a predictable resource. Some mornings begin with strength and clarity, while others require slower movement and greater rest. Learning to work with these natural fluctuations rather than against them can reduce frustration and prevent unnecessary setbacks.

One of the most helpful strategies is identifying what truly matters. When energy is limited, priorities become clearer. Relationships, meaningful

work, creativity, spiritual practices and moments of joy often rise to the surface. At the same time, some obligations and expectations may need to be reconsidered.

Designing a life that fits your energy means giving yourself permission to let go of what no longer serves you. This might involve simplifying routines, asking for help, reducing commitments, or redefining what productivity looks like. It is not about giving up. It is about making thoughtful choices that honour both your values and your well-being.

Pacing is another important aspect of energy-conscious living. Many people with chronic illness are familiar with the cycle of doing too much on a "good day" only to pay for it with increased symptoms afterward. Building rest into the rhythm of daily life can help create greater consistency.

Rest, however, is often misunderstood. It is not laziness or weakness. Rest is a form of care. It is a way of supporting the

body and nervous system so that we can participate more fully in the activities that matter to us.

Designing a life around your energy also means creating environments that support your needs. This might involve organizing your home to reduce physical strain, scheduling important tasks during times of peak energy, or setting boundaries around social engagements. Small adjustments can make a significant difference over time.

Equally important is cultivating self-compassion. Chronic illness can bring feelings of guilt, grief and self-criticism. We may compare ourselves to who we once were or to those around us who seem able to do more with ease. Yet comparison rarely serves us well.

Self-compassion invites us to respond differently. It encourages us to acknowledge the challenges we face while offering ourselves understanding rather than judgment. It reminds us that our worth is not determined by how much we accomplish in a day.

Perhaps the greatest gift of designing a life that fits your energy is the opportunity to discover what truly nourishes you. Slower mornings, meaningful conversations, creative projects, time in nature, reading, journaling or moments of quiet reflection may become sources of deep fulfillment.

Living with chronic illness often requires adaptation. While that reality is not one most people would choose, it can lead to a more intentional way of living. We become more aware of our limits, but also of our values. We learn to protect our energy for the people, activities, and experiences that bring meaning to our lives.

A well-designed life is not necessarily the busiest one. It is the one that reflects who we are, honours what our bodies need and allows us to participate in life with greater authenticity and peace. When we begin to work with our energy rather than against it, we create space not only for survival, but also for joy, purpose and hope.

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: WHY NOT WONDERMENT?



STUART LENDER

Times Columnist

In the lobby of the Tom Patterson Theatre in Stratford, Ont. there are photographs of historical moments that have occurred on stage. Around these memories there is a painted frame by Les Harper, an Indigenous artist, and a quote that says: "I had this dream, that I was born with a set of glasses on. I realized one day that these weren't my glasses, and that I could have my own pair."

Obviously, that quote comes from someone who was told at one time, how to view his world and specifically himself in it. Seeing in a particular way can be a prison we make for ourselves; but also, seeing can be freeing. The oddly wonderful thing about observation is that as soon as we see the thing, we think ev-

eryone else is seeing the exact same thing, and they're not. In a mere fraction of a second the thing seen becomes painted in the colours of our disposition, shaped to fit the contours of our mind and then experienced based upon our conditioning. I never see what you see. You never see what I see. Our perception of that thing presented to us will be different.

Likewise, this is quite evident in the creative spaces of visual art, music, theatre and the written and spoken word. Creation is an expression of a need and never is the product of that need or the action in carrying it out, seen or appreciated in the same way by everyone experiencing it. Most often when it comes to artistic expression, we talk about it and share ideas – but not so much in social circles concerning ways of being or lifestyles? I suppose the thing apart from us, the thing created, feels more like neutral territory. It isn't us – and so, easier to ask questions about or discuss an opinion over.

We don't, however, merely create in artistic circles. Expression of oneself is a brave endeavor in any regard, and we express ourselves on so many levels, often without giving much thought (beyond how we dress) about what we are doing.

What we think, how we act, how we use language, how we perceive the world around us. We "create" ourselves and then, instead of wonderment, questions and discovery – perceptions are hung on our names freely like garments – by ourselves – based upon how we would like others to see us – or by others – based upon their perception of us. This is inescapable. We want to be recognized. But rarely do we ask and want to discover about the other. We become the art objects that we create – the surface appearance – but without conversation and curiosity no one knows the depths of us and even more regrettably, neither, at times, do we.

At the intersection of perception and what is seen – where we recognize that we are making a judgement about another or even a judgement concerning ourselves, usually the place where our uneasiness shows – this is where the door should open. But often we set up a kind of us and them scenario. We start to feel disenfranchised. We might become fearful, threatened, confused, doubtful or angry, but nothing has been done to us. And our uncomfortable feelings allow us to blame or ridicule the other, or ourselves. Sometimes we simply shrug off that sense

of discomfort. But there are moments where it might be best to convert that apprehension into curiosity if the situation allows.

A child is often unafraid to ask someone in a wheelchair why they are in the chair, opening conversation. The child is in that space of wonder and curiosity. But the adult has been conditioned not to be disrespectful or what they deem as inappropriate. In the adult world, it is often not what is said that offends, but how it is said. Most often, I find, a genuine curiosity comes through in the voice and questions are then welcome and understanding might ensue. People love to explain the "why" of themselves.

Likewise, with so many things in life, there are areas where there is room for further consideration – the homeless we might abhor, the sexuality we don't understand, the faith that is unlike our faith. Most often we react to these differences in ways that illustrate our anxiety and shut off avenues of compassion that could make us understand each other a little more or learn something new. And certainly, if we react to these gaps between us, or within ourselves, with antagonism, simply through what we perceive to be the truth – all we are doing is skirting around our

own fear and our own weaknesses.

I try to live openly, but gently. Like anyone, I have had unfounded opinions about many things growing up – but as we grow in age and wisdom, hopefully, we loosen the things that keep us tethered and recognize these beliefs of ours and the restrictions they place on ourselves and others. Harmful to the general peacefulness within.

The face of wonder, curiosity and creativity is a good thing, and in a world that is moving towards greater diversity it would be silly to think that confrontation rather than curiosity is the way to go. It doesn't mean we need to agree – but starting from wonder is a space where harmony can grow – with the things and the people seemingly so different from ourselves. Until this is realized, like the pappus of a dandelion – our unfounded judgements concerning us and them are blowing in the wind and setting seeds on the ignorance of the world.

Stuart is a celebrant and the manager of Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services. It is his privilege to serve, dispel myths, and give information concerning his field of compassionate service.

At the festival: Choosing actors from a galaxy of stars



JULIA SCHNEIDER

Times Columnist

Do you ever wonder how the Stratford Festival chooses actors for the casts of its plays?

In its program there is a photo of a dapper-looking individual who is described as the casting director. As such, I expect this man, Ari Weinberg, is responsible for the final assembly of casts, but what role do the directors of individual plays have in this process? I am sure that many have specific actors in mind for parts in their productions – and at Stratford there are many to choose from. Veterans like Seana McKenna, Sean Arbuckle and Lucy Peacock, are forever fresh, and more recent additions such as

Jessica B. Hill, André Sills and Jordin Hall are becoming mainstays as well.

Then there are the many graduates of Canadian theatre school programs like the ones at George Brown and Sheridan Colleges, universities like Queen's and the long-standing National Theatre School, founded in 1960, to draw on. Those aspiring to act at Stratford likely look for casting calls for the next season early so as to be considered. Perhaps those involved in the two-year program at Stratford's Birmingham Conservatory, established by former artistic director Richard Monette in 1998 as a sort of professional finishing school, might have a slight edge, but I do not know that for sure.

None of these schools existed in their current form back at the beginning of the festival in 1953. How did actors find their way to the Stratford stage back in the early days? And what was their background? I have looked at the histories and stories of three of them – Tony Van Bridge, Christopher Plummer and Maggie Smith -- to find out and will tell you in Stratford Times to come.

Stay curious!

I have another question. It may seem unrelated to the above but really isn't: Is there anyone out there who still thinks the Stratford Public Library doesn't need more space?

I ask this after my experience there in recent months. On one visit I stopped at the book sale trolley and came away with three books in a bag, for which I paid ONE dollar. The three books were Tony Van Bridge's memoir *Also in the Cast*, John Gielgud's *Acting Shakespeare*, and a book of essays about acting Shakespeare by famous actors including Festival actors William Hutt, Martha Henry and Nicholas Pennell. All had book plates showing they came from the Library's Chalmers Public Theatre Resource Collection – and what was that?

Floyd Chalmers, for whom the bookplates were named, was born in Chicago in 1898 but came to Canada early in his life. After a career in banking and journalism he became the head of Maclean-Hunter Publishing and was a major supporter of the arts in Canada; for a time in the 1960s he was the president of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada. He died in 1993.

The Chalmers Public Theatre Resource Collection was set up in a room on the first floor of the library in the late 1980s after the Chalmers family foundation donated \$100,000 directly to the library to set up a dedicated resource for students, researchers and theatre enthusiasts to study the dramatic arts. In the 2000s it was disbanded, and the books dispersed, because there was no room for them.

According to a Report by the Ventim Architects Group in Cambridge published in 2008, shortage of space at the library was dire even then:

It is not possible both to update the collection and keep books, because there is no room. Opportunities are being wasted because the community has grown and the library can no longer provide the services needed. This affects attendance, it affects readership, it affects efficient and enjoyable use of the library. Space is dictating the purchase and the release of stock. The library is hampered by space in what it can buy; it has the budget, but no where to put the desired acquisitions.

I first became aware of the end of the Chalmers Public Theatre

Resource Collection at the library roughly at the time it happened and was shocked; I had used the collection and found most everything I looked for about the theatre in it. Most of the collection was given to the Professional Arts Lodge (PAL) house on Brunswick Street: I offered to help catalogue it but a member of PAL took on this extensive work.

And so, I surmise that the three books I bought at the library recently were all part of the original Chalmers Public Theatre Resource Collection and were somehow kept in the library collection for another 20 odd years after it was dispersed. Was it because they were deemed especially significant? I do not know. But I do know that I now own them and feel sad when I look at them: my gain is certainly Stratford, and the library's, loss.

So, to end, I'll tie in the Chalmers Public Theatre Resource Collection to the beginning part of this article. Tony Van Bridge's *Also in the Cast*, in which he talks about being in the cast, is one of the books I bought for a song at the space-challenged Stratford library, and is now in mine.

Thank you, India

PAUL MITCHELL

Guest Columnist

India is not the easiest of places to reach from Canada.

And so it was that I, along with business colleagues, arrived in Mumbai airport at 2:30 a.m. having flown in from Munich in Germany, where we had connected from Toronto.

I knew we were in for trouble, as our flight from Toronto to Munich had been very late, giving us only mere minutes to connect in Munich.

We watched as the baggage belt ground to a halt. A perplexed airline representative gleefully announced, "Your luggage is

not here." We knew that part. A true performance followed, worthy of a summer season at Stratford, as the baggage agent went through his well-rehearsed procedures. But wait – not so fast. Would any of us happen to have a piece of carbon copy paper on us? Err, surprisingly no. He only needed one piece to complete the paperwork. Surely, he could do the needful on the computer? Out of the question. A finger was wagged in my direction. Every document in India needs an official stamp.

It was getting on for 4 a.m. when he finally completed the lost luggage report, in duplicate, and had it stamped by a large,

formidable customs lady. The airline had a gift for each of us – an "emergency kit."

Finally at the hotel, sleep was pointless. It was nearly breakfast time.

Having travelled for over 24 hours in the same clothing, we were keen to see what was inside our kits. It was a paper suit, styled in the Indian tradition of a long shirt / tunic and the baggy pants, nothing else. It had the feel and look of blotting paper, and everything was a matching white. We had no choice – we had to wear this; our clothes from the previous long hours of travel were a far greater disaster.

We were not a pretty sight, and

just a tad conspicuous, so thought we had better grab a table outside and prepare for the day as we awaited delivery of our lost luggage. It was already hot ... and humid. It did not help that as we were sat close to the pool, the odd splash of water would further test our blotting paper attire.

A few hours of this, and it was too hot. A nap in the room was needed. I stood up from my seat at the poolside, and the left sleeve of my paper tunic departed from the rest of the garment. As I rushed to retrieve it, I sensed a slight ripping noise from the pant area. Oh no. I turned around to explain the matter to my colleagues, just as the right arm

fell off and landed in the pool, partly smothering a small child. Clutching what remained of my paper suit, I made a mad dash through the lobby and to the lifts, just as the left trouser leg gave way. I doubled over pretending to be violently ill so that nobody would venture forth into my lift. It worked! Back in the room, I napped well, though the Alanis Morissette song "Thank U" crept in to mind – a song Alanis had written as a thank you to India following a "self-revealing" trip there. I felt I had revealed a little too much of myself to India, but I could see where Alanis was coming from. Thank you India! I think.

Letter to the editor: Regarding "Webcrawling through GDP"

The opinion piece, urging us to move beyond GDP, recollected one of my first university courses in economics.

In the midst of the Cold War the textbook purported "there was no such thing as capitalist economics or socialist (Marxist) economics – only economics." Both Cold War systems, it argued, had an income statement and balance sheet that worked exactly the same way: pro-

duce and put into your pantry roughly as much as you need to take from it, and you survive; put away less, either you starve or start borrowing to buy food until you eventually go bankrupt, and then you starve; but, put away more than you need, then you flourish, and have extra to share. GDP becomes a mere statistical figment, therefore: not an object in its own right, but a "canary in the mineshaft" sig-

nalling whether the pantry is restocking sufficiently to meet its needs.

Well, the Soviet Union did eventually go bankrupt, and today's advanced capitalist economies do borrow unduly to replenish their pantry shelves.

So, to the opinion-piece writer, this bet: even in the post-capitalist / post-corporate world she anticipates, there would still exist a pantry, of necessity, and the

same income statement and balance sheet would apply nonetheless, also of necessity. Moreover, the figurative canary would still chirp or croak accordingly. To quote Albert Einstein: "The true definition of madness is repeating the same action, over and over again, hoping for a different result."

*L.W. Naylor,
Stratford*



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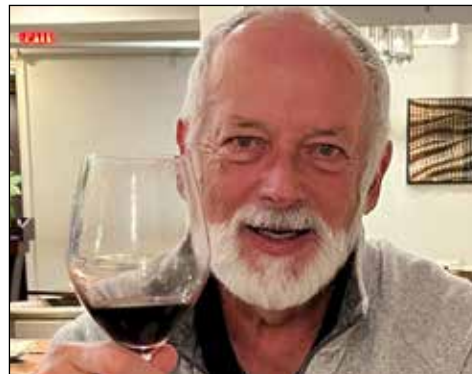


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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: The unusual contrasts in Monaco



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

The Principality of Monaco is truly a country of contrasts. But those contrasts don't fit into the usual categories implied by that cliché. This is not a place of disparity between rich and poor, nor a country with a variety of striking landscapes.

The contrasts here are perhaps unique to this tiny nation. We encountered them as we were hosted on a Mediterranean Sea cruise aboard the Viking Sea, one of Viking's small, ocean-going vessels.

First of all, there is no contrast between rich and poor here because to live in Monaco, you have to be rich. Our guide simply stated, "So many millionaires and billionaires are living here!"

As we explored Monaco on foot, our guide explained that virtually all the workers commute from somewhere else. About 40,000 arrive each morning and return home outside the tiny nation's borders each night.

That number of commuters presents one of the contrasts because the out-of-country workers slightly outnumber the people who actually live in Monaco, a nation with a total population of only 39,000.

It gets odder; of those 39,000 people, only 9,000 are passport-carrying citizens. The rest are "residents," people who have demonstrated they have sufficient financial assets to live in this country.

This is an independent nation with a population only slightly larger than the city of Stratford, Ont. To carry on that comparison for a minute, Stratford, an important Canadian tourist destination, draws about 600,000 visitors a year. Monaco's annual visitor count reaches seven million.

Some of those visitors arrive on mega-yachts. Others arrive in the kinds of automobiles that cause gearheads to do triple-takes. Many are taxied in – but by helicopter – from nearby Nice airport. Nice, of course, is in France, but that's not surprising because Monaco covers only 2.2 square kilometres. So, if you are standing anywhere in Monaco and looking up at the hillsides above the country, you are looking at France or, to the immediate east, at Italy.

Monaco is the second-smallest independent nation in the world (only the Vatican is smaller), but there are four administrative districts in this 2.2-square-kilometre place. The most famous of which is Monte Carlo, home to the Monte Carlo Casino, which draws heavy duty gamblers from all over the world, and features

in many movies, including James Bond epics.

But here's another unique thing in this country of contrasts; while the 30,000 "residents" are welcome to gamble in the casino, the 9,000 citizens are forbidden to do so, which seems to suggest there may be an inherent caution about gambling in this country which is built on that very thing.

And that is the truth; there is no income tax in Monaco. The country runs on the income from the casino, as well as value-added tax (a hefty number when visitors number in the millions).

That hasn't always been the case. Monaco has been ruled for seven centuries by the Grimaldi family. They conquered it and have run the nation ever since. At times during those centuries, the country verged on bankruptcy, but in 1865, the royal family founded the casino and in doing so, solved the nation's money problems in perpetuity.

Today's ruler is Prince Albert II. And therein lies another intriguing contrast. Albert and virtually all Monégasques (the name for citizens) are devoutly Roman Catholic. In the heart of the community – discreetly distant from the casino but near the royal palace – is the modern Cathedral of Our Lady Immaculate. Pope Leo XIV made an apostolic visit to Monaco earlier this year. So, Monaco is Catholic to its core.

And yet it is common knowledge that while Albert and his wife, Charlene, Princess of Monaco, have twin children, he is also the admitted father of two other children, born to two other women.

And when it comes to the twins, another contrast is apparent. This apparently modern country, which hosts Formula One race cars and sundry state-of-the-art mega-yachts, is run on rules that date back to the Middle Ages. The twins are Alexandre Grimaldi and Jazmin Grace Grimaldi, but the heir to the throne is inevitably Alexandre, because when it comes to royalty in Monaco, males rule. And neither of Albert's other two children should even dream about inheriting the throne because in this uber-conservative Roman Catholic nation, that is unthinkable.

Let's go back to the cathedral and to Albert's daughter for a moment. The girl's middle name is no accident – her grandmother was the legendary Hollywood star Grace Kelly, who left her thriving acting career while still in her 20s to marry Prince Ranier III. They were Albert's parents.

Both are buried in the cathedral. Visitors can stroll behind the high altar to view a semi-circle of Grimaldi family tombs, the latest being those of Grace, who died in a car crash in 1982, and Ranier, who passed away in 2005.

We pondered, for a moment, this contrast between the glamour of Hollywood and the antiquated medieval reality of this unusual country. And then we strolled to a scenic lookout to view \$500-million yachts and the route of the Monaco Grand Prix. And we quickly realized there is no other nation like this on the face of the earth.

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.

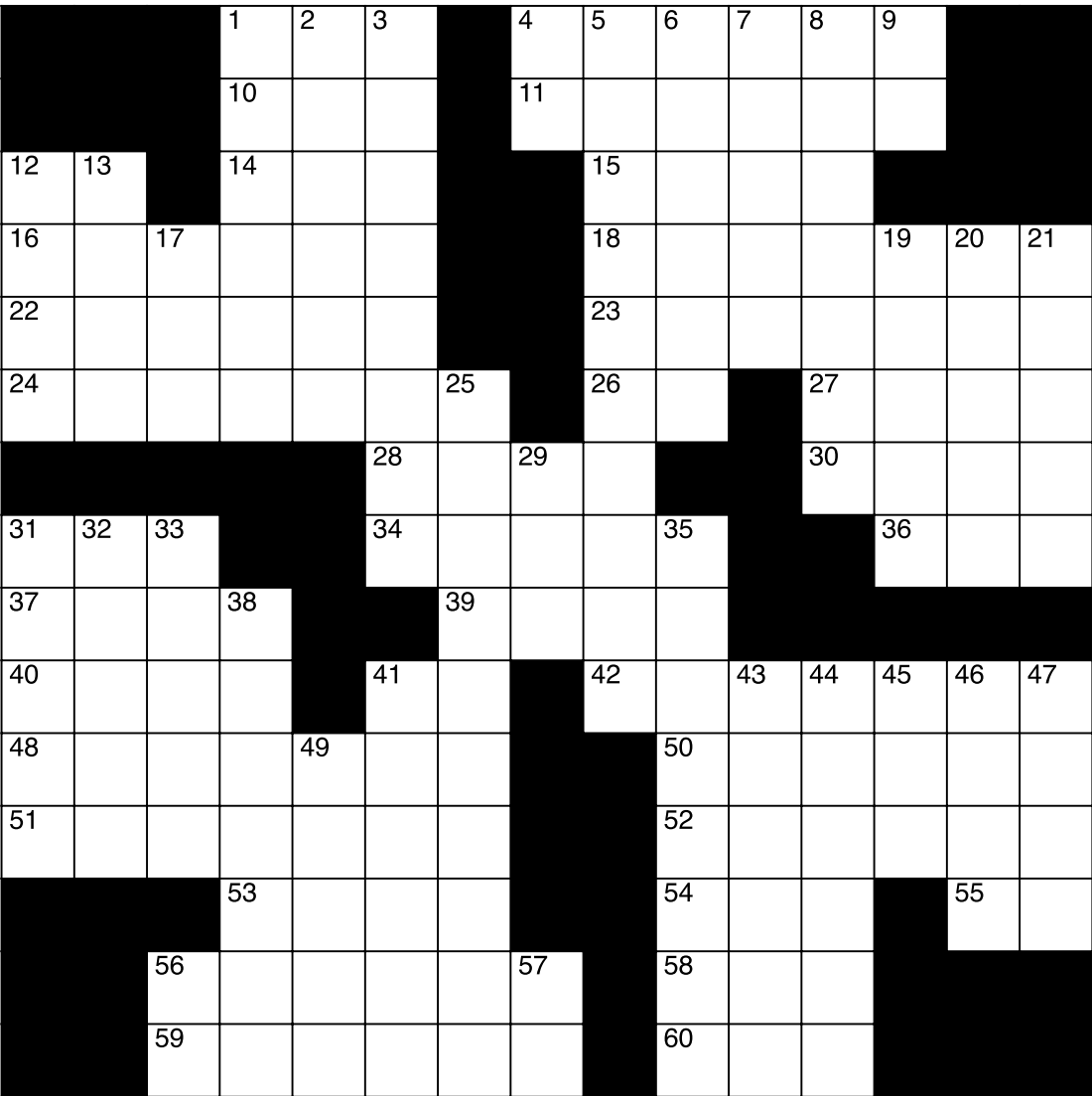
Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Similar
- 4. Have an ambitious plan or a lofty goal
- 10. No (Scottish)
- 11. ___ Aires, city
- 12. Morning
- 14. Senior's son (abbr.)
- 15. A notable achievement
- 16. European nation
- 18. Endings
- 22. Puts into place
- 23. Former
- 24. Grenadier
- 26. Sea patrol
- 27. Algerian port
- 28. Norwegian river
- 30. Precipitation
- 31. Sunscreen rating
- 34. New York is one
- 36. Patti Hearst's captors
- 37. Soft mineral with greasy feel
- 39. Retired Brazilian footballer
- 40. An Indian nursemaid
- 41. Atomic #24
- 42. Immobile
- 48. Insignia of royalty
- 50. Seeds from which chocolate is made
- 51. Begin again
- 52. Round root
- 53. Beginning to end (alt. sp.)
- 54. What newlyweds just said
- 55. Empire State
- 56. Give back
- 58. College hoops tournament
- 59. Unstable situations
- 60. Young women's association

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Administer a drug
- 2. Holy places
- 3. Contrary opinions
- 4. Blood type
- 5. Gags
- 6. Micturating
- 7. Silly
- 8. A type of "cuff"
- 9. Spanish be
- 12. Austrian river
- 13. Messenger ribonucleic acid
- 17. Consume food
- 19. California supermarket
- 20. Electronic communication
- 21. Cassia tree
- 25. Written works
- 29. Cool!
- 31. Noteworthy 90s lawyer Kenneth
- 32. One who was compensated
- 33. National symbols
- 35. Raising
- 38. A type of talk
- 41. Cloud
- 43. Middle Eastern peoples
- 44. Pouches
- 45. 007's creator
- 46. A cut of meat
- 47. Sports entertainment award
- 49. Christine ___, actress
- 56. Relief organization (abbr.)
- 57. Canadian province (abbr.)



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

Solutions on page 27

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Saturday, June 20; 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

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116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

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FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, June 29; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Pablas Street of India, Swat, Fo Cheezy

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FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, July 6; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

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Monday, July 13; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

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SWAT, Pablas Street of India, Beavertails

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G	R	E	E	C	E			F	I	N	A	L	E	S			
E	N	A	C	T	S			O	N	E	T	I	M	E			
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							E	I	R	A			R	A	I	N	
S	P	F					S	T	A	T	E			S	L	A	
T	A	L	C				E	D	E	R							
A	Y	A	H			C	R			S	E	S	S	I	L	E	
R	E	G	A	L	I	A				C	A	C	A	O	S		
R	E	S	T	A	R	T				T	U	R	N	I	P		
							T	H	R	U			I	D	O	N	Y
							R	E	T	U	R	N		N	I	T	
							C	R	I	S	E	S		G	S	A	

SUDOKU

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

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