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HPPH annual report highlights local challenges

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) has released its 2025 annual report, highlighting programs and services delivered throughout the year to prevent disease, protect health and promote well-being across Huron and Perth.

The report highlights efforts in infectious disease control, vaccination, health promotion, health equity and community engagement.

Key achievements include managing Ontario's largest measles outbreak, which included 297 probable or confirmed cases in the region, the highest number seen in three decades.

"For most of my public health career, I haven't seen one case of measles; there would be a handful across all of Ontario every year, so this was a considerably large outbreak," said Dr. Miriam Klassen, HPPH's medical officer of health. "There were 35 hospitalizations, and one of those was in the ICU. Fortunately, there were no deaths."

As measles cases increased, HPPH expanded measles vaccine eligibility to individuals six months of age and older who live, work, play, travel to or worship within the Huron Perth Public Health region.

HPPH distributed 10,532 doses of measles-containing vaccine (MMR/MMRV) to primary-care providers in 2025, compared to 4,800 doses in 2024 and administered 1,251 doses in 2025, compared to 549 in 2024.

"The biggest challenges were misinformation, both about measles and misinformation about the vaccine,"

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Heather McLeod with her pooch Benson at the Dog Days of Summer event on June 4.

New tiny homes are by the community, for the community

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Early on in Lisa Wilde's career at the Emily Murphy Centre, she sat in a playroom in their Barron Street location, watching a young toddler play.

"And she's going from bin to bin and shelf to shelf, touching things ... and I said, 'Hey, what's your favourite thing?' She walked over to the door, and she pointed at the block, and she said - three years old - 'I'm safe here.' ... She knew, in that room, in that building, she was safe."

Wilde, now the executive director of the centre, told that story to a packed barn on Kelly's Lane, as part of the centre's Tiny Homes ... Big Impact fundraising event on June 4. Among other things, Wilde and the campaign co-chairs were asking for the community's help in giving more families and more children that same feeling of safety.

The Tiny Homes ... Big Impact campaign is a community-driven initiative with the goal of building five new tiny homes on the centre's existing land: safe, private

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HPPH annual report highlights measles outbreak, growing public health challenges

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

said Klassen. “Rumours say that measles is a very minor illness and a routine childhood illness, and that it's better to acquire immunity by becoming infected. That's absolutely not true. If you develop a measles infection, you have a much higher risk of severe illness, including hospitalization or death, or even a complication that can happen years later called subacute sclerosing panencephalitis, which is a fatal brain illness. Measles is not a minor illness; it's a very serious one.”

Klassen said HPPH saw a decrease in vaccination rates following the pandemic, which she believes contributed to the rise in measles throughout the region.

“Because vaccination rates dropped, that's why measles was able to spread so effectively,” she said. “Although rates are still generally high in Ontario and Huron-Perth, there are communities whose vaccination rates are not high enough to stop transmission. If the infection enters that community, it can spread very effectively.”

“We repeated it over and over: measles is one of the most infectious pathogens that we know about. It spreads very easily through the air.”

HPPH continues to educate families about the importance of vaccines, and the number of vaccinated children has risen since 2020.

“Collective trauma and the challenge of the pandemic impacted all of us, and certainly during that time, a lot of misinformation about vaccination spread, as well as people's responses to public health measures that were intended to break chains of transmission, keep people safe and help



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Representatives from Huron Perth Public Health say the organization's 2025 annual report highlights efforts in infectious disease control, vaccination, health promotion and community health initiatives across Huron and Perth counties.

support health-care systems,” said Klassen. “It was a difficult time, and because of that, people's attitudes did change. However, we've seen an improvement and continue to find that if we can talk to people about their specific concerns, the majority of people vaccinate.”

Aside from the measles outbreak, Klassen said global challenges and technology have affected how HPPH operates on a daily basis.

“The global context has never been as important,” she said. “Normally, what the president of the United States is doing,

or what's happening in other countries, doesn't really impact us on this large a scale, but right now the uncertainty due to everything happening globally does impact budgets and plans in Canada and Ontario.

“There's a lot of uncertainty, and that impacts our organization,” she continued. “And, again, misinformation. Misinformation is nothing new; it's always been a challenge for medicine and public health, but now technology has enabled it to spread. It's a different challenge, and we have to respond differently.”

Klassen

said that in 2026, HPPH will continue to focus on education and building public trust through outreach and technology. She said ongoing challenges related to global politics and climate change will continue to affect communities across Ontario.

“Emergency preparedness with climate change – we're going to see more heat events, winter storms and poor air quality,” she said. “We're going to see new infectious disease risks. You're hearing in the news about Ebola virus. I've mentioned vector-borne diseases like anaplasmosis, Powassan virus and babesiosis. These are new and emerging.”

“Tuberculosis around the world is still continuing and rising in some areas. We need to keep doing our core public health functions. I think some of what we need to do is leverage technology, leverage partnerships and focus on health equity because a lot of people aren't seeing these things because they are very well-resourced and privileged. But some people are being left behind, and we want to make sure that everyone benefits from public health work.”

The report also highlights HPPH's continued focus on health equity, accessibility and inclusion, including efforts to strengthen social connections, advance anti-racism initiatives and support community partnerships.

The 2025 report marks the fifth anniversary of Huron Perth Public Health, which was formed in 2020. HPPH said it continues to build on its work through community partnerships, evidence-informed programs and services aimed at improving population health across Huron and Perth counties.

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Pool time, Pilates and more fun with pups at fourth annual Dog Days of Summer

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Stratford's dogs participated in contests, tried Pilates and cooled off in the rainbow sprinkler and wading pool in Market Square for the unofficial start to summer.

The Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) held its fourth annual Dog Days of Summer event featuring the dog show. Local pups competed in categories such as most unique trick, smiliest dog, best dressed, waggiest tail and most like its owner.

Pet-forward businesses like Paws on Patrol and the Barkery, as well as the

Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth (HSKWSP) had booths with information for dog owners. The BIA also gave out new Sniffari maps highlighting businesses that welcome dogs, washroom spots for humans and for dogs, and places for dogs to enjoy a good sniff.

"It was amazing. We had more vendors out than we ever had. I think we've done a lot better job raising some money for the humane society and as you can see, everybody had a good time," said Jamie Pritchard, general manager of the Downtown Stratford BIA.

Donations could be made to the local humane society at the Dog Days of Summer.

Victor Dinh, the manager of events and partnerships for the HSKWSP, also felt the event was successful.

"It grows every single year and we're happy to see so many members of the community and local businesses come together to support the humane society," he said.

New to the Dog Days of Summer this year was the Pilates with your Pup event.

"We had a few people doing that. I think next year we'll expand on that," Pritchard said.

Sniffari maps can either be viewed online by visiting <https://downtownstratford.ca/whats-on/sniffari-map>, picked up at the Destination Stratford Office or

picked up at one of the locations of the following sponsors:

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- The Queen's Cue
- The Barkery
- Stratford Dog Walkers
- Pure Pets
- Ruffins
- Black Swan Brewing Co.
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Community foundation awards more than \$78,000 in scholarships to Perth County students

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Thirty-four graduating high-school students from across Perth County are receiving a helping hand as they prepare for the next chapter of their education.

The Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation (SPCCF) will award more than \$78,000 in scholarships this spring through 14 scholarship funds established by local families, organizations and community leaders to support post-secondary students pursuing a wide range of careers and educational pathways. According to SPCCF executive director Rachel Smith, the scholarships are funded through endowed funds created by donors who want to invest in local youth while often honouring the legacy of a loved one. "We have scholarships that come from industry leaders and we have families that

want to remember the legacy of a loved one," Smith said. "It's a way to support students and keep those memories alive in the community."

Among the scholarships awarded this year are trades-focused awards funded by local businesses and memorial scholarships established in honour of community members. One example is the Peter Donaldson Memorial Scholarship, which supports students pursuing studies in television and film.

This year's awards include the foundation's newest and largest scholarship initiative, the Joyce Dalgleish Parkview United Scholarship Fund. The fund will provide six four-year scholarships worth \$3,000 annually and six two-year scholarships worth \$1,500 annually, creating long-term support for students as they move through post-secondary education.

Unlike many traditional scholarships

that focus primarily on academic achievement, the Joyce Dalgleish Parkview United fund places a strong emphasis on financial need.

"There are a lot of scholarships out there for the best marks," Smith said. "They really wanted this one to go to students who may not have the opportunity (to attend post-secondary school) otherwise without that extra boost."

The foundation works closely with local secondary schools, which review applications and select recipients based on criteria established by donors. Those criteria can include financial need, intended field of study, community involvement or other factors important to the family or organization that established the fund.

This year, scholarship recipients came from secondary schools across the county, including four awards at Listowel District Secondary School, three at Mitchell

District High School, one at South Huron District High School, three at St. Marys DCVI, 17 at Stratford District Secondary School and eight at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School.

Smith said community-funded scholarships are becoming increasingly important as families face rising post-secondary education costs.

"Education changes lives," she said. "These scholarships are more than financial assistance. They're a vote of confidence from the community that says we believe in these students, their goals and their potential."

She added scholarship funds also provide donors with an opportunity to create a lasting legacy, helping local students for generations to come.

To learn more about establishing a scholarship fund or supporting local students, visit www.spccf.ca.

New dispatch system to prioritize most serious medical emergencies in Perth County

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

A new emergency medical dispatch system coming to Perth County later this year will help ensure ambulances and other emergency resources are sent to the patients who need them most while reducing unnecessary emergency responses.

At its June 4 meeting, Perth County council received reports from paramedic chief Mike Adair and deputy chief of operations Tristan Barter outlining the implementation of the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) and new tiered-response agreements between Perth County Paramedic Services and local fire departments in Stratford, St. Marys, North Perth, Perth East and West Perth. The changes are scheduled to take effect when MPDS is rolled out through the London Central Ambulance Communications Centre in November.

"At its core, MPDS is a modernized, emergency medical dispatch system that is already widely used across Ontario and North America," Barter said. "The goal of this system is really straightforward; making sure the right resources get to the right patient at the right time."

The new dispatch system replaces the current two-tiered ambulance dispatch model with a five-level priority framework designed to better match emergency responses to a patient's condition. Under the system, call-takers use a structured se-

ries of questions to determine the severity of an incident and assign the most appropriate response.

According to Adair's report, the internationally recognized, evidence-based system is intended to improve dispatch accuracy, enhance patient care and ensure life-threatening emergencies receive the fastest response possible.

One of the most significant changes residents may notice is that lower-acuity calls will no longer receive the same response priority as life-threatening emergencies.

"Life-threatening emergencies will continue to receive the fastest response possible, while lower-acuity calls may receive a response that is clinically appropriate based on a patient's condition," Barter said.

"... Another significant benefit of MPDS is it should reduce unnecessary lights-and-sirens responses within the county. Emergency driving carries a risk for not only paramedics but for the public. By reserving lights and sirens for truly timely, critical emergencies, we improve safety while ensuring patients receive appropriate care."

The report notes that during periods when ambulance resources are limited – defined as three or fewer ambulances available in the system – some lower-acuity calls may be held for a defined period under guidance from base hospital physicians to ensure ambulances remain available for higher-priority emergencies.

Those situations are expected to be rare and will be closely monitored.

The goal, according to the report, is to preserve resources for patients experiencing serious medical emergencies while ensuring lower-acuity patients continue to receive care within clinically appropriate timeframes.

"There really is no difference for the end user in terms of when you call 911," Adair said. "It will feel exactly the same. They might ask you a few more questions, but if you've called 911 before, that system will remain the same. This is all the process behind the scenes that will change the way that we're dispatched."

"What will feel different is in certain circumstances, we may be responding at a slower rate because it's more appropriate to that call and we want to always have resources available for those higher-acuity calls."

To support the transition, Perth County Paramedic Services is renewing tiered-response memorandums of understanding with the fire departments serving Stratford, St. Marys, North Perth, Perth East and West Perth. Adair told council the updated agreements have the support of all local fire chiefs.

The agreements establish when and how fire services may be dispatched to medical emergencies alongside paramedics. Under MPDS, fire departments will generally be sent to calls where their involvement provides clear clinical or operational value,

such as cardiac arrests, unconscious or unresponsive patients, respiratory emergencies, motor-vehicle collisions, farm and industrial incidents and remote-access rescues.

The new agreements are intended to reduce fire-department responses to lower-acuity medical calls while ensuring firefighters remain available for serious emergencies and situations where additional personnel or specialized equipment may be required.

"This (memorandum of understanding) establishes a process for fire services to bring forward either any kind of concerns or requests to make changes in terms of how they're responding to calls," Adair said, noting the new agreements will be flexible in nature so changes and improvements can be made over time, when necessary.

Adair's report notes MPDS will not increase call volume. Instead, it is designed to ensure the right resources are dispatched at the right time based on real-time clinical information received through the 911 system.

Perth County Paramedic Services is working with the Ministry of Health, local fire departments and other emergency-service partners to prepare for the transition. A public-awareness campaign is also planned before the system goes live to help residents understand how calls will be prioritized and what they can expect when they call 911 for medical assistance.

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Perth County awards \$1.3-million tender for ambulances and patient-handling equipment

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Perth County council has approved the purchase of four new ambulances and associated patient-handling equipment as part of the county's ongoing effort to keep its frontline paramedic fleet up to date and in compliance with provincial standards.

At its June 4 meeting, council awarded a tender for four replacement ambulances to Tri-Star Industries Ltd. and approved the purchase of four Stryker Power Cot stretchers and four Stryker PowerLOAD systems from Stryker Canada. Together, the purchases total approximately \$1.35 million before HST and remain within the county's approved 2027 capital budget.

"We put a tender out for the purchase of four ambulances next year," Perth County Paramedic Services chief Mike Adair told councillors. "During COVID, we ended up receiving four in one year and our replacement cycle is every seven years,

which is why we're purchasing four and hoping we can enjoy some of the economies of scale for purchasing four ambulances at once."

According to a report prepared by deputy chief of operations Tristan Barter and reviewed by Adair, Perth County Paramedic Services replaces ambulances and stretcher systems on a seven-year life-cycle to ensure vehicles and equipment continue to meet Ministry of Health standards, manufacturer requirements and operational needs.

The replacement program is designed to support safe and effective patient care while reducing maintenance costs and minimizing service disruptions caused by aging equipment.

Perth County issued a request for tender earlier this year for the supply and conversion of four ambulances, including all emergency-vehicle modifications and certifications required before they can be placed into frontline service. Tri-Star In-

dustries was the sole compliant bidder.

"We only had one bidder. At the time, we were very surprised both (ambulance manufacturers in Ontario) didn't bid, but it turns out that one of the organizations missed a deadline," Adair said.

Following negotiations permitted under the county's procurement bylaw, the company reduced its pricing below the originally approved project budget while continuing to meet all operational and Ministry of Health requirements.

The negotiated price for the four ambulances is \$1.061 million, excluding HST. The agreement also includes access to local onsite warranty and non-warranty service support, which staff say will help reduce vehicle downtime and improve fleet-maintenance turnover.

The county also completed a competitive procurement process for four replacement Stryker Power Cot stretchers and four Stryker PowerLOAD systems. Stryker Canada was identified as the low-

est compliant bidder meeting all tender specifications and operational requirements, with a bid of \$293,829.59.

"These systems are an important part of our staff-safety and patient-handling program and align directly with our seven-year replacement cycle," Barter said.

The powered stretchers and loading systems are designed to reduce the physical strain on paramedics when lifting and transporting patients, while improving safety and efficiency during emergency responses.

Staff noted replacing the equipment at the same time as the ambulances aligns with the county's established fleet-replacement strategy and ensures continued compliance with manufacturer and Ministry of Health requirements for patient-handling systems.

Funding for the project will come from Perth County's fleet and medical-equipment reserves, as previously approved by council.

Car Free Friday returns to downtown Stratford, promoting alternative transportation

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Car Free Friday, run by the Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA), returned to Market Square on June 5 to promote active transportation like walking and cycling as well as taking public transit rather than driving.

"I think this has been a tremendous success, I think partly because of weather and partly because we have partnered with a lot of different groups today," said Kim Griffiths, member liaison of the Downtown Stratford BIA.

Car Free Friday came after World Cycling Day, which was on June 3. Attendees could register their bikes with the Stratford Police Service, get tune ups on their bike done by Ross' Bike Works, and speak to representatives from the City of Stratford, Cycle Stratford and Stratford Walking Tours.

Griffiths said Car Free Friday encourages other modes of transportation to decrease traffic congestion during a busy summer season with lots of tourists coming to Stratford.

"With the festival ramping up, we have



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma, Ross Taylor and Brad Baker of Ross' Bike Works at Car Free Friday. Ross' Bike Works provided free bicycle tune-ups.

more and more cars visiting so it's just nicer to try to get downtown without having to worry about your car and parking spaces and things like that but also just to keep our residents healthy," she said.

Nathaniel Smith, transit supervisor, spoke about the two new mobility buses.

ford Transit mobility buses to six.

"It's our opportunity to provide more service to our community," Smith said. Updating the fleet ensures safe travels for the transit riders.

"When we're out on the road and we have passengers on board, no matter whether that's accessible passengers or otherwise, we don't want to risk breakdowns," Smith said. "So, if a lift goes down with somebody on a walker or a wheelchair on that lift, that could cause major issues and safety concerns as to how do we get this person off that lift. When we keep things up to date and in good condition, it prevents a lot of the mechanical issues that we may have."

Previously, the Downtown Stratford BIA held multiple Car Free Fridays in the summer months. However, the organization decided to run just one Car Free Friday this year.

"We felt that the last couple of Car Free Fridays in the summer are less attended I think due to vacations and school schedules, and we thought that we would do a bigger bang one and I think it's been successful," Griffiths said.

SIU concludes investigation in Stratford arrest

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

After a three-months-long investigation, the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) has concluded an investigation into a Stratford arrest that ended with the "serious injury" of a 57-year-old man, finding there were no reasonable grounds that the arresting officer committed a crime.

In the afternoon of March 3, 2026, a Stratford Police Service officer observed a man – who was subject to a warrant for his arrest – in the area of Downie Street and Whitelock Street. The officer contacted uniformed personnel to respond to the area. Shortly after, as an officer in a police cruiser pulled up to the man, the man commenced running in the reverse direction. The initial officer ran across the

street and tackled the man to the ground. A struggle ensued. With the assistance of additional officers arriving on scene, the man was arrested.

The 57-year-old was transported to hospital where he was diagnosed with a right orbital bone fracture. On his assessment of the evidence, SIU director Joseph Martino determined there were no reasonable grounds to believe that an officer commit-

ted a criminal offence in connection with the man's arrest and injury.

The SIU is a civilian law enforcement agency in Ontario that has jurisdiction over municipal, regional and provincial police officers, investigating incidents involving officials in the event of the death, serious injury, sexual assault of a person, or if a firearm is discharged at a person.

Accessibility committee meets with residents during National AccessAbility Week in Stratford

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

On June 4, during National AccessAbility Week, the City of Stratford's accessibility advisory committee (AAC) was available to meet with and answer questions from residents interested in learning more about accessibility throughout the city.

The AAC recommends and advises city council on matters that improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and support the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to full participation in the community.

Bonnie Henderson, a Stratford city councillor and member of the accessibility committee, was available to chat and said disabilities can affect anyone at any time. She noted that some disabilities may go unnoticed, making an accessible city vital to the overall health of a community.

"At any point in your life, you could trip and fall or develop arthritis or even have a family member affected by a disability," she said. "There are all kinds of disabilities and it's not just someone in a wheelchair, so it's so important for people to think, when they're building or renovating, to keep this in mind and be sure to



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Members of the City of Stratford's accessibility advisory committee (AAC) gathered downtown on June 4 during National AccessAbility Week to speak with residents about accessibility challenges and initiatives in the city. The committee works to advise city council on identifying, removing and preventing barriers for people with disabilities.

consider accessibility because 10 to 15 per cent of the population has a disability of some kind."

Henderson said everyone can advocate for those with disabilities by speaking up if they see something that may be an ob-

stacle for someone.

"If you're out and about and you notice something, like a step or narrow doorway, it never hurts to talk to the business to let them know," she said. "I went to Greenwood Court the other day and met with someone who is having trouble getting into some stores and restaurants downtown because her wheelchair is 32 inches wide. I went and measured my doorway at home, and it's only 33 inches, so it makes you think about how inaccessible places are for some people."

Although Stratford has come a long way and many downtown restaurants and businesses have renovated to improve accessibility, Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach said there is still work to be done.

"We have a big challenge because of the older buildings in downtown Stratford," she said. "It would be great if everywhere were accessible, and seeing it through that lens and continuing to advocate and build with accessibility in mind can help reduce barriers so everyone has an equal chance of accessibility."

On June 30 at 1 p.m., the disability pride flag will be raised at city hall. All are welcome to attend.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Steve Zubrigg and Linda Hunter of the Stratford Legion Branch 8 hand out a certificate for essay writing to Mackenzie Brown (centre) at an awards night at the legion on June 9. Along with Brown, 43 other area students received awards for their art and essays that evening. The local legion is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, and leadership is encouraging everyone to keep an eye out this fall for their celebrations.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What zodiac signs fall in June?
2. What important historical event occurred on June 6, 1944?
3. What is the oldest national park in Canada?
4. What was Blackbeard's real name?
5. In what Canadian town is the World Crokinole Championships held?
6. When did the Peasants' Revolt take place?
7. Who is the film *The Social Network* about?
8. What boarding device was used by ancient Roman ships?
9. Canada uses what measurement system?
10. What is Moscow's famed opera house?

This week's answers are found on pg. 27

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Stratford sisters launch the Nurture Duo to support connection-centred parenting

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

After welcoming their sons four years ago, twins Erin Ryan and Hayley Chenard found themselves overwhelmed by the endless stream of sleep-training advice available online.

The conflicting information, coupled with recommendations from some sleep-training experts to let babies "cry it out," left them questioning whether there was a more responsive approach to supporting both infants and their families.

"In our society, we felt pressured to sleep train, and we just didn't feel comfortable with it for some reason," said Ryan. "Then we stumbled upon a holistic sleep consultant who taught us ways to get better sleep without sleep training, and from there, we found a book called The Nurture Revolution by Dr. Greer Kirshenbaum. We learned the science behind responding to infants and how important that is."

That experience led them to launch the Nurture Duo, a Stratford-based business focused on connection-centred parenting. Their goal is to provide caregivers with support rooted in neuroscience, child development and responsive parenting practices.

Ryan and Chenard are certified Nurture Neuroscience Practitioners, a designation

based on the principles outlined in The Nurture Revolution. The training focuses on early brain development and responsive caregiving for children from birth to age three.

"Traditionally, families slept together; it was a survival thing," said Chenard. "But now, there is just so much noise online, it's robbing people of their intuition. It's making parents second-guess and compare, and we really want to empower parents to understand their babies' unique needs."

The sisters say their interest in nurturing early brain development is also rooted in their own family experiences. Ryan and Chenard have a family history that includes mental illness, anxiety, depression and homelessness, experiences they say inspired them to learn more about the brain and the impact of early childhood development on long-term well-being.

"We didn't come from a wealth of high nurture, and we kind of made the decision around the same time to start our journey. Our friends weren't choosing that route either, so we felt isolated," said Ryan. "So we did our certifications and moved to Stratford, and about a year ago, we started our nurture circles, and now we have over 40 moms we keep in contact with."

Ryan and Chenard work with families during the early months and years of parenting, helping them navigate challenges



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Erin Ryan, with her 11-month-old son, Harvey Ryan, and her twin sister, Hayley Chenard, with her one-year-old daughter, Makenna Chenard, are the founders of Stratford-based business the Nurture Duo. The pair work with families through sleep consultations, clarity calls and group nurture circles, focusing on responsive, neuroscience-informed parenting.

support among parents. New courses are now available for purchase on their website, and will also be included at no additional cost for members inside their paid online community.

"Education is a big part of what we do," said Chenard. "Babies are just wired to wake up in the night, so we aim to educate moms, dads and caregivers to understand their babies' needs. Their brains are immature between the ages of zero and three. They can't self-soothe, but what they really need is your presence and co-regulation."

The pair offer services both in person and online, supporting families locally and internationally.

Their services include clarity calls, which provide parents with an opportunity to discuss concerns and explore support options; sleep consultations that examine a child's sleep patterns and developmental needs; and Nurture Circles, guided group sessions designed to foster connection and

support among parents.

New courses are now available for purchase on their website, and will also be included at no additional cost for members inside their paid online community.

"We've been working on a mini-course series that will be launching this summer," said Ryan. "There will be five small, digestible courses designed to help families better understand infant sleep through a biological and developmental lens."

Their approach is grounded in neuroscience and developmental research, emphasizing responsive, attachment-focused strategies that align with infant development and emotional well-being.

Their work encourages parents to recognize and respond to infant cues, strengthen the parent-child bond, support healthy sleep habits and promote emotional well-being for the entire family.

To find out more, visit www.thenurtureduo.com.

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Can a price-tag be put on a family's safety? If it can, fundraisers say it equals the cost of the whole community's wellbeing

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

and supportive housing that will act just as all of the centre's spaces do, providing counselling, safety planning, life-skills development and connections to community resources that support women as they rebuild confidence and move toward long-term stability.

The campaign responds to a growing need for second stage housing for women who have experienced violence, with or without children, in Stratford and Perth County. As noted by Wilde that evening, the centre's waitlist has continued to grow since its inception in 1988, reaching a critical point during the COVID-19 pandemic where there were 83 area families looking for a safe refuge.

"Do you know that one in three women in Canada will have experienced some sort of violence in their lifetime?" Wilde asked. "One in four girls by the age of 16 have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lives. ... The impacts are far-reaching. They affect physical safety, mental health, housing stability, economic security and overall community well-being. What we do is put that all back together again.

"... These homes will mean stability and safety for at least five more families a

year," Wilde summed up.

The cost for the tiny home project is expected to be \$1.2 million. The materials and construction were donated by Blue Branch and NOW Housing, leaving the remaining \$600,000 needed from the community to be raised through the campaign led by Wilde and co-chairs Natalie Moore, founder of Moore Creative, and Martin Ritsma, mayor of the City of Stratford.

Another aspect of the campaign is the construction of the homes themselves, as explained by Matt Lubberts, president of NOW Housing.

Through a government grant and their partners, Blue Branch, NOW Housing was able to bring in youth struggling in school and the justice system, giving them training in construction in exchange for high school credits.

"We ended up getting, over the course of two years, 95 kids their high school diplomas," Lubberts explained. "... We had our guys in the factory direct them, and ... they literally did it from start to finish. We're fully CSA approved, so it went through our quality control process, and they were certified from what the students did themselves.

"So what was done with these from



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Emily Murphy Centre executive director Lisa Wilde addresses a crowd of supporters at the Tiny Homes ... Big Impact campaign event at co-chair Martin Ritsma's barn on Kelly's Lane. The June 4 celebration brought people from across Ontario to Stratford to raise \$600,000 for new tiny homes on the centre's property.

the get-go, from the very scratch of these ideas, was a total volunteer or a giving process, and these units were built by people who live in these types of projects, or in these types of subsidized communities, and that's the get-go of this."



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

An example of the tiny homes which will be installed near the Emily Murphy Centre. This home is nearly identical, save for the dimensions (the tiny homes which will be installed at the centre will be double the length). One will even be quadruple the size, a two-bedroom unit.

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May unemployment rises to 5.9% in economic region

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

In May, the unemployment rate in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula economic region increased by 0.7 percentage points to 5.9 per cent, the largest percentage increase of all economic regions in the province yet continues to hold steady as the lowest unemployment rate in the province.

The provincial unemployment rate decreased by 0.1 percentage points to 7.4 per cent this month, both unadjusted for seasonality. Employment in the region decreased by 100 in May, with losses in part-time employment (-8.2 per cent; -3,000) offset by gains in full-time employment (+2.2 per cent; +2,900).

In May, the region's overall population aged 15 or older increased by 300 whereas the labour force size increased by 1,100 people. The number of people not in the labour force in the region decreased by 800. This in turn increased the region's participation rate by 0.3 percentage points to 60.4 per cent. Employment in the region increased in the goods-producing sector (+6.1 per cent; +3,600) yet decreased in the services-producing sector (-3.3 per cent; -3,600).

The goods-producing sector saw an increase in overall employment numbers in May (+6.1 per cent; +3,600). Gains were experienced in manufacturing (+10.4 per cent, +1,900), agriculture (+8.5 per cent, +600), utilities (+2.2 per cent, +300) and construction (+2 per cent, +400).

Overall employment in the services-producing sector saw a decrease

of -3.3 per cent (-3,600 people) in May. Business, building and other support services experienced the largest percentage decrease in employment (-19.1 per cent, -900), followed by other services except public administration (-11.3 per cent, -800) and health care and social assistance (-10.1 per cent, -2,200). On the other hand, transportation and warehousing experienced the largest percentage increase in employment (+17.3 per cent, +900), followed by accommodation and food services (+10 per cent, +800) and public administration (+2.9 per cent, +100).

"This month's statistics provided us with some very positive signs for our region's workforce" said Dana Soucie, chief executive officer for the Four County Labour Market Planning Board, in a media release. "Increases in full-time employment, an increase in labour force size, a decrease in those not in the labour force and gains in some sectors we have been previously seeing declines show promising changes."

Current job postings for the Bruce, Grey, Huron, Perth region have increased overtime since the pandemic and can be found at www.connect2JOBS.ca. The current number of job postings currently exceeds 1,500.





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Razzamajazz gears up for new season featuring matinees for first time

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

A new season of music along the Avon River performed on a pontoon boat will be soon underway, with new and returning musicians, matinee shows, live streams and even silent discos.

The Razzamajazz's 36th season will run from July 1 to Aug. 29. Musicians will perform on the Razzamajazz pontoon boat from Lower Queens Park to the Boathouse and back during the evenings from Tuesdays to Fridays from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

"This year, we're looking forward to go up and down the Avon and entertaining all the people that are walking along the walking paths," said skipper Dan Scarborough.

The Razzamajazz will kick off its 36th season on Canada Day with a matinee performance from crowd favourite Chuckee Zehr from 2:30-4 p.m. at the

Boathouse.

"She's been part of the Razzamajazz probably for about five years now and she's wonderful and the crowds just love her," Scarborough said.

Each of the 13 different musical acts, including Highway 19, Jana Leduc, Conn Smith, River Rock and Trish and Slim, will have three performances throughout the season. All entertainment part of the Razzamajazz resides within 30 minutes from Stratford, with 80 per cent of the performers Stratford-based.

The Razzamajazz will also have some performances livestreamed by Ballinran Entertainment, to be announced, and will be part of the Silent Discos run by Destination Stratford in conjunction with Light Up the Night Kayaking including the Canada Day paddle on June 27.

For the first time in its history, the Razzamajazz will have five matinee performances at the Boathouse on Saturdays from 2:30-4 p.m. The matinee perfor-

mances came after a pivot for both the Razzamajazz and the Boathouse when the Lake Victoria drainage event caused lower water levels in the summer of 2025. The Razzamajazz couldn't perform while cruising the river and the Boathouse couldn't rent out its boats nor run the boat tours, so Scarborough suggested to have performances at the Boathouse docks.

"We formed such a wonderful friendship over that summer and last summer ended up one negative after another turned into a whole bunch of positives and they did a survey and the crowds liked the music the best out of the stuff," he said.

It's hard to estimate how many people are watching the Razzamajazz, but Scarborough said there are lots of fans who either stay still and wait for the boat or follow it. The Razzamajazz will also stop cruising and perform for theatre-goers and other tourists.

"Every time we go up and down the river, we have people that will follow the Razzamajazz down the lake to the far end and they'll follow us all the way back. We've got a bunch of people that are walkers that come out and jog alongside us, so that's kind of cool," Scarborough said.

The Razzamajazz has a variety of sponsors including, but not limited to Destination Stratford, the Relic Lobby Bar, the City of Stratford and GoTech Computer Sales and Support as well as donors. All donations to the Razzamajazz are part of a fundraiser to pay the performers. The city has a donation-match-

ing grant where the Razzamajazz can receive \$4,000 if there is \$4,000 raised. Donations can either be made via e-transfer to razzamajazz1992@gmail.com or by cheques mailed attn: Skipper Dan payable to The Razzamajazz, 136 Ontario St., Unit 204, Stratford, ON, N5A 7Y4. To arrange a cheque pickup, send an email to skipperdan65@gmail.com.

More information can be found online by either visiting <https://www.stratfordrazzamajazz.ca> or by following @StratfordRazzamajazz on Facebook and Instagram.



(RAZZAMAJAZZ ON FACEBOOK PHOTO)

The Razzamajazz will begin its 36th season on Canada Day and will have matinee performances for the first time.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Noah Richards, Evan Richards, Cole Richards and Graycen McCrackin get in an airplane, with some assistance from Nigel McCrackin, for an after-breakfast flight from the Stratford Municipal Airport on June 7. The Richards and McCrackins were at the local airport for the annual Fly-in Breakfast this past weekend, which saw 60 planes touch down and over \$8,000 raised for the Stratford General Hospital Foundation.

How to Speak Poetry

(on the occasion of hosting Stratford's annual Summertime Poetry Soiree, June 6th, 2026)

Climb inside it.

Inhale the thing.

Pull it over you
like a famous shawl.

Sense its gizzards,
the infinite machines
of its body workings
fermenting on your tongue
like a meaning.

Listen to what
the poem tells you,
how it wants to unfold,
the studied unwrap
of itself, how it
dreams of luminescence,
like a chrysalis.

The poem is milkweed.
It knows no logic or tether.
Blow it from your lips
and it will tell you
its own pace,
like a commandment
ready for the stone,
the flight path of metaphor
through the blue ethers.

And do not chase
beauty or silence.

They will find you.
Beauty always does.
Both will explore the
limitations of your tongue
until you bleed.

This is the discovery
of speaking poetry.

You do not speak it.

You never do.

Poetry speaks you.

David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate

The Story Behind the Poem: "Schrödinger's Caterpillar" by Alex Oeming

MARK HERTZBERGER

Times Correspondent

It's hard to imagine a more fertile ground for stories and poetry than Alex Oeming's childhood. He and his twin sister grew up in rural Alberta on a private zoo run by his father, a zoologist. Not just a petting zoo or hobby farm but a collection of well over a thousand species, many exotic.

"As there were few other children around outside of school, much of my early life was spent exploring and adventuring on my own," he said. "I didn't watch much television. Instead I spent time around animals and adults, wandering through this strange world that seemed completely normal to me at the time. Looking back, I realize how unusual it was. Not everyone grows up with a cheetah!"

Oeming's father was also a gifted storyteller and public speaker and would recite poetry from memory while they worked around the zoo. That exposure gave Alex an early appreciation for rhythm, language and a good turn of phrase.

At first he focused on storytelling, studying playwriting and screenwriting at the National Theatre School of Canada and the Canadian Film Centre. He worked in radio and film for many years focusing on longer narrative forms. Poetry came later:

"It wasn't until midlife that I found myself drawn back to poetry as a way of paying closer attention. I had reached a point where I was looking more carefully at the world around me, at history, landscape, family, memory and the passage of time and poetry seemed uniquely suited to exploring and expressing those things."

"Over the last few years I've been writing poems primarily for myself without any intention of publication.



Stratford poet Alex Oeming, author of "Schrödinger's Caterpillar."

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Entering the (Every Voice) contest was the first time I decided to share any of them publicly."

For Oeming, there is nothing complicated about writing poetry. It's simply something he's experienced that sud-

denly takes on a new meaning:

"To be honest, I wasn't thinking about readers when I wrote the poem. It wasn't written for an audience or with a particular message in mind. I was simply trying to follow an idea that interested me and see where it led. If readers can connect with that, then I am happy. I've always been a little suspicious of art that sets out to tell people what to think or feel."

"In the case of 'Schrödinger's Caterpillar,'" said Oeming, "it was literally a caterpillar. The title is a playful reference to Schrödinger's famous thought experiment. In my case the question wasn't whether there was a cat in a box but whether there was still a caterpillar inside the chrysalis. As long as I didn't look, both possibilities remained alive. The caterpillar eventually became a symbol of hope, transformation and possibility. More than anything the poem is interested in what happens when we choose not to seek certainty.

"For me the job is to explore something honestly and let the work stand on its own. That said, the poem does circle around ideas of hope, transformation and possibility. The final stanza exists in that space between despair and optimism, certainty and uncertainty. The poem was submitted for a contest about resilience and I suppose resilience for me often comes down to choosing hope over despair, even when the outcome is unknown."

The Story Behind the Poem is an ongoing series by Mark Hertzberger featuring conversations with poets recognized in this year's Every Voice Poetry Contest and published in the anthology, Roots Through Stone: Poems of Strength and Resilience. Copies of the anthology are available for purchase at Fanfare Books in Stratford.

Schrödinger's Caterpillar

By Alex Oeming

On weekends with the kids
we still check the chrysalis
hanging under the dash of the old
Accord
their mother and I trade
in the arena parking lot every week
same exchange, different weather
same half-smiles through the window.
It started as a kind of science project
a striped monarch caterpillar
crawling across the hood
while we fished with plastic lures
that caught nothing
but sunlight and impermanence.
The kids wanted to save it from the
birds
so we put it in the glove box

closed the door
and forgot.
By morning it had hung itself
beneath the heater vent
a little green lantern
swaying as I braked.
We looked it up on Google
three weeks it said
or maybe three years
if conditions aren't right.
The kids liked that
that time could stretch
for miracles.
And I liked it too
though knew better.
Green turned brown then black
and their mother said it was creepy
asked to take it down.
I said I would
but didn't.
As I said I'd change
but didn't
or haven't
not yet.

Seasons turned like the key in the
ignition.
The kids changed grades
lost teeth
learned to try again and again.
The car was all mine then
too far gone to fix
and I oiled the rust and kept looking
just a glance starting the engine
pretending it was for them
when really
it was for me.
Now winter's got its hand on
everything.
The Accord coughs at stoplights
burns oil
groans in reverse.
The cocoon hasn't moved in years.
Still I don't touch it.
A quick pinch and wipe
that hollow crunch
would tell me what I already know
or don't want to admit.

Today the car goes for scrap.
The kids don't ask anymore.
They're older now
learning other sciences
where faith is smaller
and harder to find.
Still it hangs there
black perfect mute
a relic of small belief.
I imagine myself inside it
wrapped tight
half awake
while the crane hooks the bumper
the chains lift metal shifts
the sky turning in the windshield
and just before
the great grinding of gears
the impossible thought
that I might still
break open,
into light.

Creators of the Classic City: John Whyte

PAUL WILKER

Times Correspondent

The founder of the Whyte Packing Co., John Whyte Sr. was born in 1822 in Ardlui, a tiny hamlet at the north end of Scotland's famous Loch Lomond.

He grew to be a strapping big fellow of six foot five. Family lore has it that in his late teens he left Ardlui and walked to Glasgow, where he apprenticed to become a stone cutter and mason.

He immigrated to Canada in 1849. He came first and then Margaret, his wife, followed with their two children and her mother in 1850. They settled on a farm in Hibbert Township where they lived in a single-storey log house. In the next 14 years, the family grew by six more children.

Farming was difficult in those years, but John was able to supplement the family's income by taking commissions for stone cutting and masonry work. He was particularly in demand for stonework on bridges throughout the county and beyond. On one commission, he worked in Stratford on the construction of the Huron Street bridge.

Taking advantage of favourable agricultural prices in the global market, John Sr. succeeded well enough to diversify into the barrelled pork business. In 1859, this business was a one-man operation. He ran it in a log building from his farm near

Cromarty, in Hibbert Township. He salted the pork, packed it in brine in wooden barrels and transported it to remote logging camps by horse and wagon or horse and sleigh. In 1870, the Whytes moved their family business to Mitchell. There he built a larger operation where there were rail connections and easier access to growing markets.

John Jr. managed the business while his father travelled by train and boat to logging camps and sawmills in the Gravenhurst-Muskoka area, which he supplied with his pork products.

In the late 1890s, the Whyte Packing Co. was one of the largest such companies in Canada. After John Jr. went to England and established a network for their products there, he convinced his father to move their operations to Stratford, which had better and more diversified rail links. In Stratford, they hired some of the best architects and engineers from Chicago, the hog processing capital of the United States, to design and build the largest and most modern processing plant in Canada. It was located on a six-and-a-half-acre site on Linden Street, just west of Erie Street; the plant opened on July 1, 1900. The Whytes also built a plant in Brockville and established retail stores in Toronto, Montreal, Mitchell, St. Marys and two in Stratford – one at 42 Downie St., the other at 174 Queen St., to serve the expanding



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

east end of the city.

Facing bankruptcy, the company was sold in 1966. When the plant was demolished in the 1970s, the property was purchased by the City of Stratford. The last vestige of the Whyte Packing Co. in Stratford is the building that once housed its butcher shop, at 174 Queen St.

Linden Street was changed to Whyte Avenue in honour of the historic company

and its namesakes.

This article is taken from Creators of the Classic City: www.streetsofstratford.ca.

"Creators of the Classic City" is an ongoing Times series written by Paul Wilker, co-author of the e-book of the same name by him and Gord Conroy. Interested readers can find the free book online at <https://online.fliphtml5.com/ypken/pqiv/>.

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Lady Glaze Doughnuts makes sweet return to Stratford

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Lady Glaze Doughnuts' first day back in Stratford had customers waiting at the door upon re-opening.

"It was a good sign," said Mark Brown, co-founder of Lady Glaze Doughnuts.

The hand-crafted old-fashioned doughnut shop re-opened in Stratford on June 5, which also happened to be National Doughnut Day. Dessert enthusiasts can swing by the new location on 96 Downie St.

Lady Glaze Doughnut used to be in Stratford up until summer 2023 when the lease at the previous location expired.

"We never wanted to leave," Brown said.

"There were things outside of our control, but I teach at the Chef School here in town so being back in the community that I'm teaching culinary in, is perfect."

Lady Glaze Doughnut first opened in Kitchener's Belmont Village in 2019, focusing on using local ingredients and real food. There are gluten-free and vegan options also available, as well as custom orders.

"One of the things that we did when we opened Lady Glaze was to ensure that we were putting in as much care into pastry as chefs put into their menus in terms of how they're sourcing and try to use local and quality ingredients and so we avoid any dough conditioners or preservatives



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Mark Brown, co-founder of Lady Glaze Doughnuts, is excited to bring back the artisanal doughnut shop back to Stratford.

or things like that to make sure our product is a clean label product," Brown said. "So that way it's a treat but it can still be made from real food ingredients, being

good for you in that regard." Lady Glaze Doughnuts' Stratford location is open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and on

Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information and to pre-order online, visit <https://ladyglazedoughnuts.com>.

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STRATFORD **TIMES** SPORTS

Lariviere wins OFSAA bronze; St. Michael students compete at OFSAA West

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

Jonah Lariviere, Abby Van Bakel, Thomas Mott and Dominic Peterson headlined the St. Michael Catholic Secondary School's contingent of athletes who competed at the OFSAA Track and Field Championship June 4-6 in St. Catharines.

Lariviere earned a bronze medal in the 800-metre run, and the graduating student described the bronze as a great punctuation mark on his high school track and field career.

"This medal is the culmination of all my training, mental preparation, lifestyle habits and so much more," said Lariviere. "OFSAA was the pinnacle of my high school athletic career, and I'm so glad it could end on such a high note. It feels like everything I've been working for has just been achieved, and now I can set my sights on the next goal."

"This past season, I've seen a lot of improvement regarding my pre-race routine, with a lot more emphasis on eating the right things, drinking ideal fluids and visualizing the race before it even starts. Mental preparation has been key for walking into a competition feeling relaxed, even when there's as much pressure as in an OFSAA final. I'd like to thank my coaches and parents for their continued support as well, because I could never do this without them."

Karli Parks, Lariviere's track and field coach at St. Michael Catholic Secondary, credited the soon-to-be Western Mustang for his ability to perform in high-pressure moments.

"Jonah (Lariviere) has come a long way as an athlete during his time at St. Michael," Parks noted. "His success at OFSAA came from his ability to stay focused under pressure and compete with maturity. A lot of his development also comes from the dedication he shows with his track club outside of school, and it's been great to see that commitment translate into success at the high school level. He will be competing as a Western Mustang next



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

year, and his Warriors coaching team couldn't be more proud of his accomplishments."

Lariviere detailed how he came away with the bronze in the 800-metre run.

"It was a really hot day, and most of the other boys had already raced a few times in other events, so I knew it

would be a slow, strategic final. Being only my second race of the weekend, I was confident I had an advantage in the kick. Stepping onto the track to start the race, I felt ready for however it would play out. As the gun fired and the group settled into our pace, I was prepared to run exactly how the leaders would.

"With about 250 meters to go, two boys broke away from the pack, and I knew it was my signal to surge ahead with them," Lariviere continued. "Keeping my eyes on second place and trying to close the gap between us was my only focus for the rest of the race."

Van Bakel came in fourth in the senior girls' javelin event and Thomas Mott placed eighth in the 3,000-metre run. Dominic Peterson took 12th place in the novice boys' long jump. The three qualified for the provincial final after securing top-four finishes at the regional OFSAA West event May 28-29 in Cambridge.

In Cambridge, Van Bakel took first in the javelin throw, while Mott finished second in the 3,000-metre and third in the 1,500-metre events. Peterson earned a fourth-place finish in the long jump competition to earn his spot at OFSAA.

Although Isabella Mills didn't qualify for OFSAA, finishing eighth in the 100-metre hurdles and fifth in long jump at OFSAA West, earlier this season, Mills did set a new WOSSAA long jump record.

Other notable OFSAA West results from St. Michael Catholic Secondary students included:

- Caleb Hurley - sixth in 3000-metre race and 11th in 1,500-metre race
- Alexis Lealess - sixth in 100-metre hurdles
- Elena Hogger - eighth in javelin
- Colton Campbell - ninth in javelin and 15th in 300-metre hurdles
- Johnathan Dapaah - ninth in 100-metre para dash
- Dana Poppe - 13th in javelin
- Lydia Pyzowski - 13th in 400-metre race
- Lucas De Wit - 14th in 3000-metre race
- Tyler Davis - 15th in triple jump

Opportunistic U15 Nationals beat lowly Cubs

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The core motto of the world-famous reality show *Survivor* is "Outwit, Outplay, Outlast."

On June 4, the Stratford U15 Nationals lived up to that classic motto by defeating the Cambridge Cubs 16-7 at Stratford National Stadium.

Blake Mogk started on the mound for the Nationals and faced a tough go through over two-plus innings. Cambridge got off to a 5-1 lead heading into the bottom of the third inning when the Nationals' offence took advantage of two Cambridge defensive errors and scored three runs to cut the lead to a run heading into the fourth inning.

With the bases loaded and no outs in the Cubs' half of the inning, Mogk was relieved by Carter Cook. Despite a two-out walk to generate the run to increase the

visitors' lead to 6-4, Cook and the Nationals escaped further damage.

In their half of the inning, the Nationals pulled ahead for the first time with three runs to lead 7-6. After the Cubs tied the game at seven apiece in the next inning, the Nationals continued to pour on the offence and took advantage of the defensive miscues committed by the Cubs with four runs in their half to lead 10-7 through four innings.

Cook and the Nationals' defence settled down and kept the Cubs scoreless in the remaining innings, and the offence made the Cubs pay with opportunistic baseball and six more in the final two innings to put the game out of reach. Max Barter pitched a clean seventh and final inning to seal the win for the home side. In total, Cambridge committed nine errors while allowing 12 hits and 16 runs.

Jackson Goebel led the team with three hits and co-led the Nationals with two

RBI's each with Cook and Will Molenhuis. Nine of the 10 members of the starting lineup crossed home plate, with Quintin Parr the only starter to not score a run.

After the game, Stratford coach Rick Boon remarked that the team showed resilience by overcoming a tough start, despite playing only four games in the past three weeks, to secure a convincing win.

"We came back and missed the first couple of weeks to give us a bit, but we were trying to preach the fact that we're never over in a game, we got to keep battling through everything, and we put two and three hits together, and then good things came," Boon said.

"I think it was just good pitch selection. The pitcher was throwing the ball in spots where we didn't swing at bad pitches tonight, unlike last week. We swung at good pitches, and we put the contact on and put two and three hits together and start piling up runs, so that's how we get

them."

Next week, the Nationals face two crucial games: an away game on June 10 against the top-ranked Waterloo Tigers Team 1, and a home game on June 11 against the Guelph Royals Team 1. Currently, Guelph trails Stratford by four points in the standings, while Waterloo remains undefeated in the Intercounty Baseball Association league with an 8-0 record, six points clear of third-place Stratford.

Boon understands that the team requires more practice and fewer errors in its upcoming matches against Waterloo and Guelph.

"Tough week, we have practice on more practice one day, and then we gotta knock it back in like Waterloo and Guelph. There'll be tough games, so we're gonna have to come ready to play and cut down on the little mistakes that we made tonight. We just can't make those mistakes," Boon said.

18U Nationals' downward spiral continues for six games

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford 18U Nationals kept pushing this week to get closer to winning but couldn't overcome their mistakes, resulting in six consecutive losses. Five of these losses occurred during the Intercounty Baseball Association regular season, including all three games on June 7 and 8.

Stratford's recent losses began with a doubleheader against the Simcoe Giants at Stratford National Stadium on June 7. In the afternoon game, the Nationals led by one run twice, but a five-run seventh inning collapse led to their defeat.

Despite a spirited effort to cut the deficit to one with four runs on their own half of the final inning, and with the bases loaded and one out, Daniel Hovius struck out, and Owen Brooks grounded out to a fielder's choice to seal the loss. Dawson Davidson led the Nationals with two RBI's, while

James Robinson led the team with a pair of runs.

Stratford's starting pitcher Robinson went five-and-two-thirds innings, allowing three earned runs on seven hits and five walks, while tallying three strikeouts. Hovius pitched the rest of the game for the Nationals, but gave up four earned runs on one hit and five walks, while striking out two.

In the evening game of the doubleheader, the Nationals again lost an early lead, then re-took the lead by one late in the game, but ultimately lost a close contest, 9-6. Davidson contributed two RBIs for the Nationals in this game. Cole Morris, called up from the 15U Nationals, also recorded an RBI for Stratford.

Stratford hosted the Guelph Royals on June 8 at the warm National Stadium. Unlike most of their previous five games, this game wasn't down to the wire. Guelph scored four runs in the first three innings

before eventually pulling away with a five-run fifth inning to seal the game en route to the Nationals losing 11-2 after the game was called after the seventh inning.

Hovius and Brooks scored the lone runs for the Nationals in the seventh, averting the mercy rule after the team had been trailing by more than the league minimum of ten runs before the bottom of the inning. Jackson Goebel, a call-up from the 15U Nationals, picked up an RBI on a single.

Following the game, Stratford assistant coach Carter Koch addressed the team's state after the latest slate of losses and what it would take for the team to get back to their winning ways.

"We're just missing a couple of people. We've had to call up some players. We were in a double header yesterday, so we're short pitching tonight, got what we could, what we had, and we didn't really hit the ball tonight," Koch said.

"They just gotta be ready to come to the ballpark every day, they got to show ready every game, so everybody's gonna have to come together as a collective and get it done as a team."

According to the Game Changer app, during the losing streak, the Nationals' offence has been underwhelming, posting a .202 batting average, a .346 on-base percentage, and a .232 slugging percentage. The pitching and defence have been equally ineffective, with a 6.03 earned-run average and a .887 fielding percentage.

In comparison to the first four completed games (3-1 record), the Nationals' offence had a respectable .242 batting average and .312 slugging percentage. Pitching and defence were the key factors in the promising start, with a 3.81 earned-run-average and a fielding percentage of .914.

Stratford's next game is on June 15 against the Kitchener Hassan Panthers at National Stadium.

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U15 Girls Strikers golden in Graham Bunting Classic

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

Over the weekend of June 6-7, the Stratford U15 Girls Strikers participated in the annual weekend-long Graham Bunting Classic. Stratford was placed in Pool A with Kitchener TFC, Ilderton Ignite and St. Columban. All their round robin games took place at Stratford's Festival Hydro Community Centre.

In the early morning match, the Strikers defeated the Ignite 3-0 at VFG Wealth Field (formerly Vancea Financial Group Field). Later, Stratford hosted Kitchener KTFC at the GRIT Engineering Field during the early afternoon. The Strikers dominated the first half, scoring three goals and ultimately winning 5-0 to improve their record to 2-0.

In the final round robin game, the Strikers defeated St. Columban 4-0 with goals from Danica Voros, Peyton Herman, Reese Campbell and Riley Munford. The Strikers finished atop the pool with a perfect 3-0 record and outscoring opponents 12-0. Goalkeeper Grace Elliott kept clean sheets in all three matches.

Head coach Scott Herman praised the team's performance in the round-robin, emphasizing their teamwork and effective gameplay. Moving into the semifinals, they aim to maintain their momentum, build on their success and strive to finish the tournament as champions.

"Very satisfied. Girls are working well, playing as a team, moving the ball and



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

U15 Stratford Strikers win the gold medal at the Graham Bunting Classic. Team roster: Grace Elliott, Ava Langis, Edie Murray, Hazel Walsh, Ashley Van Straaten, Elena Hogger, Payton Herman, Peyton Van Straaten, Ruby Munford, Peyton Ward, Lilly Harrigan, Danica Voros, Madison Brisbois, Jessica Blake and Kinsley McIntosh, as well as Scott Herman, head coach, and Ian Murray, assistant coach.

putting pressure where we need it," Herman said.

"We're going to come in strong, keep doing what we're doing, build on our momentum and hopefully have a good day tomorrow."

Team captain Peyton Ward likes what the team has delivered during the round robin and emphasized the importance of

continuing to play cohesively, work hard and support each other to achieve success in the tournament and reach the finals.

"We played well, we had a lot of possession, we did well moving the ball and worked as a team," Ward said.

"We just keep playing as we play, play as a team and work hard, use each other and

we'll come out with the win."

Stratford hosted Pool B runner-up Waterloo United at the Stratford Intermediate School Field in the semi-finals on June 7. The Strikers continued their hot streak as they blanked Waterloo United 3-0 to advance to the final in the afternoon.

At the finals, the Strikers completed their mission as goals from Campbell and Andie Spicer gave the team the elusive gold medal in front of family at Bentley's Field in the Festival Hydro Community Park.

Coach Herman praised his players for their dedication and performance during the tournament, which led to winning the gold medal.

"The girls earned it this weekend, and we're very happy as coaches. The girls performed very well. They've done everything we've asked, everything we've worked on. They went out there and put in the hard work, and the results showed," Herman said.

After the rest of the day celebrating and recuperating, the Strikers returned to SDSL regular-season play on June 8 against the FFTW Academy at Kitchener. At press time, Stratford is in second place with a perfect 3-0 record.

Their next tournament is in London next weekend, as they participate in the Shine the Light All-Girls Soccer Tournament. The weekend-long event showcases girls from U14 through U18 and addresses the sensitive topics of abuse against women.

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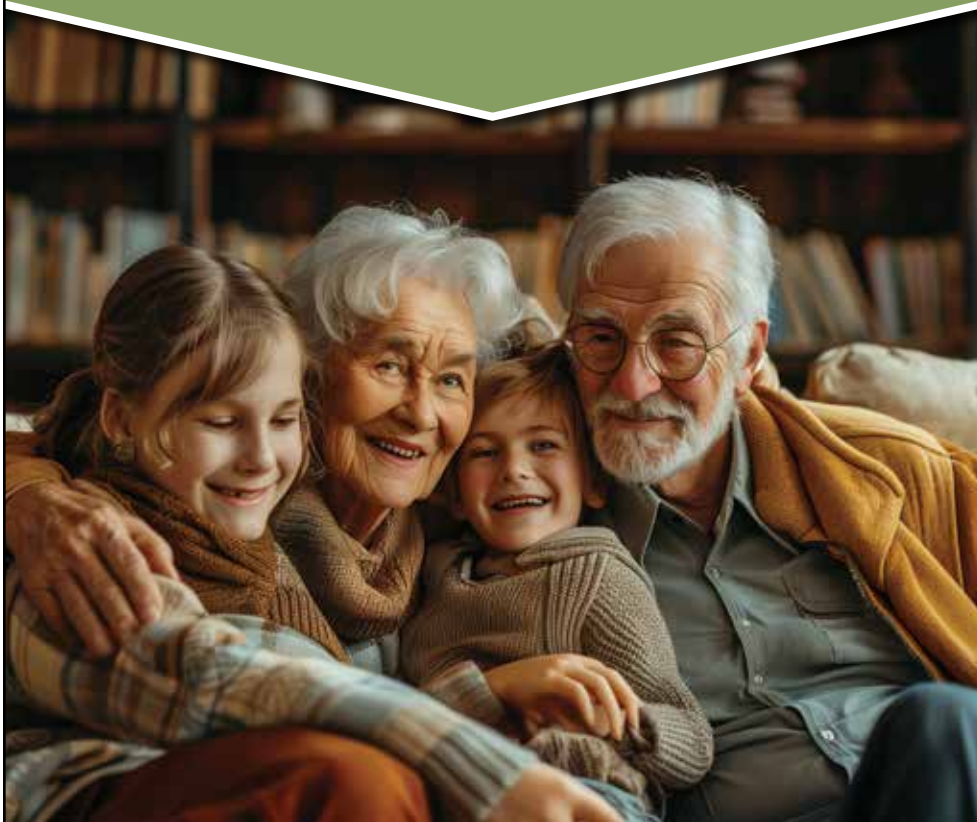


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Camp Out RV team wins Chamber of Commerce scramble



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right: Justin Lingard, Matt Staffen, Aaron Langille and Jonathan Allum recorded a score of 15-under-par 57 to win the Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce golf tournament held on June 3 at St. Marys Golf & Country Club.



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U18 Boys Strikers win Graham Bunting Classic for third consecutive year

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

On June 7, the Stratford U18 Strikers secured their third consecutive victory as Graham Bunting Classic Tournament champions, following their U15 title in 2024 and U16 title in 2025.

Stratford began their round-robin schedule on June 7 with a 1-0 win against London's Southend United-Blue. They then drew 2-2 with Kitchener TFC, defeated St. Marys Storm 3-0, and beat FDSC Fury 1-0 to advance to the final. In the tournament final, goals from striker Caden Ollson and fullback Simon Taylor secured a 2-1 victory over Kitchener, earning the gold medal.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Stratford U18 Boys Strikers wins their third consecutive gold medal at the Graham Bunting Classic Tournament on June 7. Team roster: Rogan Catalan, Ype Zellstra, Greg McMullen, Greyson Roth, Owen Blackburn, Owen Blain, Caden Ollson, Simon Taylor, Nic Brintell, Kieran Johnson, Austin McGurgin, Piers Murray, Jelle Zellstra, Sebastian Voros, Jack Haines, MJ White, Pierce MacDonald and Will Pepper, as well as Steve Ollson, head coach, and Matt Johnson, assistant coach.



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U16 Stratford Strikers Boys fell short at Graham Bunting Classic

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

Going into the 2026 Graham Bunting Classic, the Stratford Strikers want to win the gold medal after falling short last season, competing in U15. So far this season, the U16 squad won a silver medal at First On The Turf in Guelph last month.

Head coach Sean Brooks says the team aims to reach the finals in the upcoming tournament, motivated by a previous loss in a penalty shootout in last season's classic.

"The expectation is we'd like to make it to the finals. In almost every tournament we've entered, both last year and this year, we've made it to the finals. We're a very competitive team," Brooks said.

"We played a tournament in April in Guelph, the First On The Turf at the end of April, and we ended up making it to the finals there, and we lost in a nail-biter of a penalty shootout. So we're all still feeling the sting of that one a little bit, and we're looking for an opportunity for some redemption here."

Stratford opened their round-robin play against Paris, Ontario's Paris FC, at the SERC Park in an early morning match. Both sides settled to a scoreless draw as the teams weathered the high winds and humidity.

Brooks liked how the team performed in the opener, particularly the new addition



Stratford's Cole Weyers (16) attempts to score with the header against Paris FC at the Graham Bunting Classic on June 6.

to the team after an injury to their regular before the tournament.

"Yeah, I thought overall we put in a great performance. We've been struggling over the recent weeks just with injury problems and stuff like that, and we've been struggling at the start of this season to kind of find our form and find our rhythm, but I thought throughout the whole game we did an excellent job of keeping our shape

and keeping our structure, and they're a very strong team that plays in a very strong league in a different geographical region to us," Brooks said.

"So to be able to go out and hold them to nil-nil, and to actually create more chances and opportunities than they did throughout the entirety of the game, while recognizing that we had our goalie, who is not our normal goalie, as our goalie got

hurt on Tuesday in our league game, so we had to put a goalie in who's never played before, and he did a fantastic job, and everybody worked well together and communicated really well together to secure a good result, and hopefully in our next games we can put the ball in the back of the net to set us up for more success moving forward."

In the afternoon, Stratford faced Owen Sound United at a humid Queens Park in downtown Stratford. The Strikers lost a key match 2-0, bringing their tournament record to 0-1-1.

In their final round-robin game of the day, they responded with a 1-0 win over Byron Yellow, raising their overall record to 1-1-1. This victory keeps their hopes of reaching the finals alive, with the last round-robin match set for June 7 against the last-place Oakridge Rangers at the SERC Track Field.

In their tournament finale, the Strikers ended their run on a positive note, winning 4-0 over Oakridge to finish second in Pool B behind tournament champions Paris FC.

Stratford resumes their regular-season schedule in Guelph on June 9, facing the Jr. Gryphons. After opening the season with a 3-1 victory over Owen Sound United on May 12, the team has earned just one point in their last three games, placing them eighth with a record of 1-1-2.

U16 Girls fall in classic heartbreaker

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The U16 Stratford Strikers were looking to finally reach the top of the mountain in this year's rendition of the Graham Bunting Classic during the weekend of June 6 to 7.

Head coach Ashley Vito says the team is hungry to win the tournament this year after falling short in the gold medal game as the then-U14 team.

"Well, we got silver last year, so the goal for this tournament is gold this year. But ultimately, my goal is for us to improve in every game. I tell them this every time we're in a tournament, 25 per cent every game," Vito said.

"So, if we're starting at 100, I want us to be at 125 the next time, and I just want us to keep it hot and half-fast the whole game, because 50 minutes is draining even in this heat."

Placed in Pool B with the Sarnia Spirit, Oriental SC and Whitby WFC, the Strikers braved the warm weather and went undefeated with a 3-0 record, winning all three games 1-0. Vittoria Brander recorded all three shutouts in goal for the Strikers.

On June 7, the Strikers went to St. Marys for their semi-final match with Pool A runner-up St. Thomas Reds.

After a scoreless game through regular and extra time, Niamh Appel scored the match-clinching goal on penalty kicks to send the Strikers to the tournament final.



The 2026 Graham Bunting Classic Silver Medalists. Team Roster - Vittoria Brander, Linley Porter, Mya Meyer, Myra Wood, Olivia Horenberg, Claire Donnelly, Pippa Nyehuis, Niamh Appel, Haley Hummell, Emerie Smith, Edyn Grimwood, Avery Bruinsma, Arabelle Garland, Rosie Sauder, Leighton Nickel, Everly Durst, Tasha Cooley. Head Coach - Ashley Vito, Assistant Coach - Nicolle Meyer.

The U16 Girls final featured the top two teams in the age group, with the LaSalle Stompers and the Strikers battling for the championship at GRIT Engineering Field at Stratford's Festival Hydro Community Park.

For the second straight match, the Strikers went to penalty kicks after full and extra time resulted in a scoreless draw.

Unfortunately for the Strikers, this penalty kick session delivered a cruel fate as the final kick of the penalty shootout struck the

lower part of the crossbar and post before crossing the goal line, resulting in a 3-1 loss in the extra session.

After the match, Vito expresses immense pride in her team, highlighting their grace, class and exceptional teamwork at the tournament.

"I've never been more proud of this team. They walked through this tournament with grace, being classy, working together and honestly, I'm gonna wrap this up as a tie, as opposed to a loss," Vito said.

"They haven't lost their shutout streak. They are working together so well. I couldn't be prouder. That's what I've been telling them all day. Shut out, really, or a shootout at the end of the game truly doesn't determine the best team. They're 90 per cent possession. I'm very proud of them."

Despite the loss, the Strikers did not concede any goals during regulation in the tournament. Since the first three matches of the SDSL regular season, Stratford has remained unbeaten in terms of regulation goals in their last seven matches, with goalkeeper Vittoria Brander, who has allowed only four goals in the regular season, leading the league.

Stratford returns to regular-season play on June 11, after press time, as they host Oriental SC at Cowan Field in Festival Hydro Community Park.

Vito states that the team is eager to continue their tournament momentum and aim for a successful season in the Southwest District Soccer League. The Strikers are currently in second place with two wins, two draws and no losses.

"I was saying to them that if we can move forward the way that we played in the semi-final game, and even I'd say about 80 per cent of this game, then we have the league. I think we have the league in the bag. I'm really proud of them moving forward. We're going to work on moving the ball around and continuing all the good work that we've done this weekend," Vito said.

Stratford Festival review: *The Hobbit* brings Middle-earth to Avon Theatre stage for fans young and old

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

As an avid Tolkien fan, when I first heard the Stratford Festival would be mounting a production of *The Hobbit* on the Avon Theatre stage, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't picture how the production team would bring the vast expanses of Middle-earth and its dwarves, elves, goblins and hobbits to life in such a confined space.

Then, when the festival announced it would be telling this story, which prominently features 13 dwarves, a wizard and a hobbit, with a cast of only nine actors, my bewilderment only intensified. Either the production would need to rely on audiences' imaginations to fill in the blanks, or there was to be some very clever stagecraft (magic?) at work.

To my absolute delight, the latter is true and, in my professional opinion, director Pablo Felices-Luna, his cast and crew successfully transported me and my fellow audience members to the Shire, the Woodland Realm of the elves, Lake-town and the Lonely Mountain.

And not only did they do that, but the production manages to populate a whole world and tell the story with some well-placed and very quick costume changes without taking anything away from the action onstage. In fact, it's the more chaotic scenes, like when Bilbo (Richard Lee) and the dwarves are trying to escape from the stone trolls or when Gandalf (Tim Campbell), Thorin (Aaron Krohn) and his company are fighting the goblins when those quick changes from one character to another are nearly unnoticeable and actually make it seem as though there



(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

Members of the company, *The Hobbit*. Stratford Festival 2026.

are more characters onstage than there are actors.

The set in this production looks like it came straight from one of Peter Jackson's films. Designed to look almost like two stone rings, one in front of the other, with lighting around the inside of each ring, the set pieces are constantly shifting, splitting in half and being moved around to look at one moment like the dense Mirkwood Forest, and at another, the vast halls of Erebor in the Lonely Mountain.

Combined with what looks like long stone platforms – often slanted at a slight angle – which, like the rings, are also on tracks so they can be moved in and out of the au-

dience's frame of view, the illusion that the characters are walking great distances, up mountains and down into mines, is simply perfect.

And the lighting on the inside of the giant stone rings changes with the mood of each scene. When Bilbo puts on the one ring, for example, the lighting immediately changes to a fiery orange, reminiscent of the colour of the Eye of Sauron in the *Lord of the Rings* films. That lighting change also helps the audience understand that the little Hobbit has partially shifted into the Unseen World, invisible to his friends and enemies alike – a handy trick when facing down goblins or a dragon.

The performances in this play are excellent. Lee is wonderful as the reluctant yet brave and loyal Bilbo, Krohn delivers a strong performance as Thorin, the rightful dwarven king bent on reclaiming his former home at all costs, and each of the actors who play multiple parts are fantastic, somehow giving each of their characters the right amount of care and attention – something that isn't easy when every character you play is a dwarf.

I was particularly impressed with the versatility of Michael Man, who played Gollum, Elrond and Bard among other characters; Campbell, who played both Gandalf and the terrifyingly awesome Smaug; and Sara-Jeanne Hosie, who embodied Belladonna Took, Bilbo's adventurous ancestor and the narrator of the play, as well as Lord Eagle and the Thrush – the semi-magical songbird who shows Bilbo and the dwarves the secret entrance to Erebor.

Could I write more about how much I loved this production – from the design of the life-size troll and dragon puppets and the goblin and elven costumes to the beautiful Middle Earth soundscape and the choreography involved in each of the battles? I absolutely could, but I believe I've run out of both room on this page and time.

Instead, I'll just tell you to go see this play. If you're like me and you've been a fan of Tolkien's work for a long time, you'll love it. And if you're only just discovering Middle-earth and all its fantastical characters and creatures now, you'll also love it.

The Hobbit plays at the Avon Theatre until Oct. 23.

Stratford Festival review: *Death of a Salesman* delivers heartbreaking distance between father and son

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

After I watched Leanna Brodie and Giovanni Sy's *Salesman in China* a few seasons ago at the Stratford Festival, that notion that the universally understood message in playwright Arthur Miller's most renowned work isn't necessarily about the pressures of capitalism but about a strained relationship between father and son has stayed with me ever since.

If you didn't see *Salesman in China*, it was based on Miller's efforts to produce his famed play for Chinese audiences after the U.S. and China opened up formal diplomatic relations in the '70s. In a nutshell, Miller had to find a way for the story's message to be relatable to people who did not share the same culture, history or economic systems as his American audiences. The result was a production focused more on the strained relationship between Willy Loman and his son, Biff Loman, than a man being crushed by the nature of capitalism after spending his whole life on the road, trying to get ahead and provide for his family.

So that was the context I brought to the Avon Theatre on opening night of this season's production of *Death of a Salesman*, directed by Dean Gabourie, and I was not disappointed.

While the story centres around Willy Loman (Tom McCamus) as he's forced to consider hanging up his hat as a travelling salesman as a result of his failing memory and vivid flashbacks to when he and his wife, Linda Loman (Lucy Peacock), were raising their boys – Biff Loman (Joe Perry) and Happy Loman (Josh Johnston) – it's the relationship between Willy and Biff that really forms the emotional core of this production.

Between flashbacks to happier and more financially stable times for the Loman family and the family struggling in the play's present-day timeline to support Willy as his dementia worsens and he's forced to plead for a job that doesn't involve so much traveling, Biff is forced to reckon with his father's disappointment that he hadn't yet lived up to the potential Willy saw in his eldest son when he was younger.

Supported beautifully by both Peacock

and Johnston, whose characters seem to be driven by a well-intentioned but somewhat misguided desire to protect Willy and keep him from getting angry – a trigger for his flashbacks – McCamus and Perry do a remarkable job depicting that all-important strife between father and son while demonstrating at least the baseline level of love and support for each other one might expect from such a relationship.

Though Perry as Biff finds it near impossible to have even the most basic of conversations with his father without it turning into a fight, he ultimately understands his father's desire to see him succeed in life, even if he feels he's falling short of that expectation and chooses to remove his father from his life altogether.

McCamus as Willy, meanwhile, finds joy in supporting his son – the best way he knows how with an unending stream of unsolicited advice from his life on the road – but he almost immediately and predictably loses his temper every time his son fails to achieve the dreams he has for him.

In the end, the American Dream seems

almost impossible for both Willy and Biff at this stage in their lives – something they actually have in common – and it leads to Willy making the ultimate sacrifice, which he believes will secure his son's future success in business.

The design for this production is beautiful in its simplicity, from Stanley, the lone on-stage trumpet player (Michael Lousi Johnson), who provides the hauntingly classic score, to the set – an apartment complex courtyard surrounded on three sides by towering buildings and apartment windows lit in different colours to portray the mood of each scene.

The use of lighting and practical effects to depict flashbacks and set the stage for Willy's hallucinated conversations with his estranged and long-dead brother, Ben (David W. Keeley), to whom Willy sees as a prime example of someone who achieved success in his life, also adds to the surreal blending of past and present in this production.

Death of a Salesman is a must-see at the Stratford Festival this season. It runs at the Avon Theatre until Oct. 24.

Editorial

A midnight beeping



GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Late one night as I was sleeping, I woke to the sound of an alarm a-beeping.

My sleep disturbed, I rolled out of bed, I looked around and scratched my head. The beep I heard was not alarming, A battery dying is what it's warning. Between the sounds of Julia snoring, I stood and listened, not ignoring. Chirping once every 30 seconds, I focused on from whence it beckoned. From in the basement, I heard that beep, And toward it softly, I did creep. Though still plugged in, a detec-

tor was dying; Remove the battery, I started trying. I pulled it out and to my relief, The sound had stopped, I could finally sleep. Back in bed, all snug and warm, A thought intruded in full form. Why had the detector suddenly died, when power should have been well-supplied? With dawning horror, I opened my eyes, A crisis was brewing, I hadn't realized. Just one week ago, we had contractors in,

They'd shut off the power so work could begin. This house is old, its wiring confusing, The upstairs lights weren't all we were losing. A pit in my stomach, I walked back downstairs, To see the freezer sitting silently there. I opened the lid, afraid what I'd find, Hopes of still-frozen food I had in mind. But up from the freezer a smell did arise, So putrid and pungent, it brought a tear to my eye.

Meat, veggies and fruit long forgotten Had, over a week, all gone rotten. Lightly sighing, trying not to gag, I knew all was lost and doomed to a bag. At three in the morning, I closed the lid, Went back upstairs – beneath the covers I hid. A problem for tomorrow, I closed my eyes, And worried about the food we'd need to buy.

As I See It From America: Thank you Stratford



PATRICK D. BURK

Times Columnist

What a time to be alive. It is a time of wonderment and a time

of concern. It is a time for growth and for some of us it is a time to pull back. It certainly is a time to learn, to prepare and for others to understand what we can do to be involved in our election process. Today, In the United States this dichotomy exists for us all as our mid-term elections draw near and as we continue with this long, drawn-out American election procedure. There are already polls and meetings, deals and discussions and mentions and decisions being made on who is going to be a part of the daily slog of presidential politics. The current occupant does

not help with this procedure as he becomes increasingly more erratic and provides continuous fodder for those that want him out and for those that think he is bringing on the "second coming." Yeah, there is a significant amount of the population that believes that he has an honest biblical connection.

In amongst all that, my wife and I took some time to be a part of your wonderful community for a few days last week. I am always grateful to be a part of your wonderful city on a regular basis. In the past I have explained that

Stratford is somewhat of a "safe haven" for me, with all that is happening down here in the states. Every week something happens that tightens that feeling in my chest and prods me to look at moving myself and my family to Canada. It is amazing. It is an incredibly weird feeling. It is sometimes scary. It seems to be happening increasingly often. Oh, to be on a coffee break in Stratford or to wander the sheep laden fields out by the Wild Hog.

I do have to thank you for our second foray to Stratford this past

week. From the opening performances at the theatre, to shopping and finding many favourite things and meeting more friends – Hello Rose Napoli! – I know you are going to be wonderful in Saturday, Sunday, Monday later this season. It was a wonderful time that provided us with a major host of entertainment, some personal enrichment and learning as well as engagement with our fellow supporters of the Festival Theatre. How special to chat with our in-town friends Dr. Tom and

CONTINUED TO PAGE 25

Quote of the Week

"As Canadians, we have the extraordinary privilege of living in a mature democracy. We benefit from strong institutions that allow different views to be expressed. We must continue to protect the public space in which our national debates take place."

– Former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour who is now the 31st Governor General of Canada after being sworn in during a ceremony in Ottawa on Monday.

STRATFORD TIMES

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Opinions

WEB-CRAWLING THROUGH GDP



SHEILA CLARKE

Times Columnist

"Today's news, which may be yesterday's anyway, will be eclipsed tomorrow." — Graham Swift.

Remember when climate change was hot news? That is rapidly becoming yesterday's news. Countries and businesses are rapidly retreating from climate goals. It seems to have something to do with corporate and national growth, defined by GDP.

So what's GDP? It's defined as Gross Domestic Product, the total monetary value of all finished goods and services produced within a country's borders during a specific period. It's also defined as an important measure of the economy, whether we are doing well – or not. I've heard a great deal about GDP lately, and how we need to raise it to emerge from the technical recession.

It's a business measure, a profit measure, a growth measure, sounding suspiciously like the

Trickle-Down Theory. It involves tax breaks and deregulation for business. If the businesses and the wage earners at the top end are doing well, they will invest in the economy, and then the profits will trickle down to the rest of the populace. That has been disproven; profit seems to stay locked at the top and doesn't enhance the status or survival of those at the bottom of the pyramid.

Measures of GDP are almost entirely corporation/business centred, and heavily weighted by consumption (55-60 per cent). The Bank of Canada formula is (GDP=C+G+I+NX):

- C (consumption): Money spent by households on everyday goods and services (for example, groceries, clothing, haircuts and home repairs).

- G (government spending): Expenditures made by all levels of government on public goods and services (infrastructure, health care and defence).

- I (business investment): The amount businesses spend on their operations, growth and assets (machinery, buildings, technology and inventory).

- NX (net exports): The total value of a country's exports minus its imports.

A continual focus of increasing GDP is a dead-end street. The planet resources and climate will simply not sustain that approach.

In researching GDP, I found major flaws in making GDP the

whole story of the health of our economy – and our society.

GDP:

- Ignores inequality: GDP measures the size of an economy's output, not how it is distributed. A rising GDP can mask growing wealth gaps, meaning the "average" income per person doesn't reflect what typical citizens actually earn.

- Excludes non-market activities: Unpaid caregiving, volunteer work, DIY home repairs and domestic labour significantly boost quality of life but are excluded from GDP because no money changes hands.

- Ignores environmental damage: GDP counts production and consumption as pure positives, even if they deplete natural resources or cause severe pollution.

- Counts negative events as Growth: Disasters, crimes and accidents can artificially inflate GDP through emergency spending and reconstruction costs, despite an overall decline it misses the underground economy. Black-market transactions and cash-only informal economies are omitted from official GDP calculations because they aren't reported to the government.

- Is not a measure of happiness: GDP calculates output, not life satisfaction, leisure time, health or social cohesion.

- Does not measure societal well-being.

At COP 21 in Paris, a commitment was made to keep global

temperature rise this century well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. In 2023, at COP 28, nearly 200 nations agreed to "transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems." Most indicators suggest our current rise is 1.2 to 1.4 degrees Celsius and I humbly suggest that limiting fossil fuel production is not happening in Canada.

Fossil fuel production and emissions are what drive global warming. Carbon Dioxide and methane particles in the air do not allow the heat from the sun to escape. Atmospheric carbon dioxide has surged to over 432 parts per million, driven by fossil fuel burning, land-use changes and warfare. While Earth historically experienced much higher carbon dioxide levels, modern concentrations are rising 100 to 200 times faster than natural shifts at the end of the last ice age.

The UN has just released a report titled "Counting What Counts: A Compass of Progress for People and Planet." The report responds to a mandate from UN member states to develop a limited number of country-owned, universally applicable indicators that complement and go beyond GDP.

- First, we must move beyond GDP to measure current material well-being more accurately.

- Second, we need to go beyond income to capture all aspects of well-being.

- Third, we must look beyond averages to address inequality and exclusion.

- Fourth, we need to think beyond today to ensure economic, environmental, social and institutional sustainability for future generations.

- Finally, we also need to account for well-being interconnectedness across countries.

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." — Albert Einstein.

UPDATES:

Carbon parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere as of June 12, 2026: 431.83 ppm.

Change from previous year: 2.37 ppm increase (0.55 per cent)

Don't forget the Tri-County Master Gardeners Native Plant Sale on Saturday June 13 at Avondale Church! Awesome!

Save the birds with dotted window and glass railings tape, available at the Split Rail Country Store, or use an oil-based white marker to make your own dots (one-and-a-half inches apart) available at Blowes Stationery.

Sheila Clarke is a Stratford advocate for the environment, of our community and of our planet. She is a member of CFUW Stratford, Stratford Climate Momentum, and the Perth County Sustainability Hub.

As I See It From America: Thank you Stratford

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

his wonderful wife Linda and Dennis and Dorothea, our former Stratford neighbours for five years. We were able to meet new people, both at the theatre, as well as residents of Stratford. I had a fantastic talk with the house manager to end all house managers at the Avon Theatre, Scott Beaudin – himself a very talented musician. He is always so kind to us and so helpful and we cannot forget our friends at the Suburban Motel, Mike and Mandy.

This year we have had a great

time planning our visits and what theatre shows we are going to see and when. While I would not want to think that I am the best person to evaluate the shows at hand this year, I do think that it is a monumental undertaking with some very difficult work. Some of the work I am familiar with and some I am not. Many of the shows I had a preconceived notion about and this year, some of that certainly changed. While not a reviewer per se, I thoroughly enjoyed the magic of Midsummer. In that show alone we were treated to the beauty of

Hippolyta and Titania and the mischievousness of Puck while feasting on the love of Demetrius, Hermia, Lysander and Helena. All the while riotously laughing at the travelling band of performers. Jordan Hall (Lysander) and Jessica B. Hill (Helena) were a bounty of joy, so full of antics and entertaining. Sarah-Jean Hossie is a rip, and I will never look at a garden wall any other way. She was incredible.

My favourite performance of the opening week was the transcendent Lucy Peacock in Death of a Salesman. I have admired

much of her work in the past, but I am certain that this is her best performance ever. She was intoxicating in her delve from hope to grief. Other favourites of opening week were Jonathan Goad in Godot, Mark Uhre in Something Rotten! as well as the multi-talented bard himself – Jeff Lillo. I happen to think that Lillo, like Shakespeare, is a rock star and we are looking forward to more fantastic performances later this year.

As a theatre person, it is sometimes hard not to review and compare. That is true in life as well

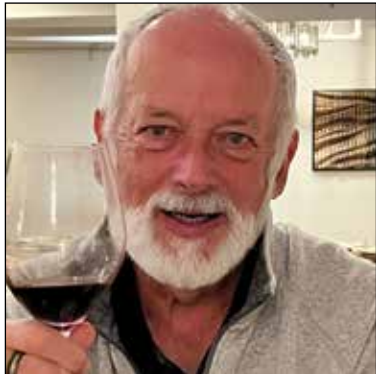
as on the stage. We are all lucky that as a part of today's world we can see and dream, that is the best thing that we have. In this day of age when world leaders just shake their heads at the United States, it is totally out of our grasp and control of what happens on a day-to-day basis, but we still have the ability to laugh at the humorous, cry at the tragic and marvel at the magic. Thanks, Stratford, for making that happen.

Please let me know how you feel about this article. Contact me at burk.patrick1956@gmail.com.

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO US

CALL 519.622.2341 OR EMAIL STRATFORDTIMES@GMAIL.COM

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: An award-winning distillery arises from initial failures



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

"I failed." What a depressing idea! But there are some great thoughts about failure that put it in an entirely different perspective. For example, Thomas Edison said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." And my literary hero, C.S. Lewis, wrote, "Failures are finger posts on the road to achievement."

And what, you may ask, does this have to do with travel? Come with me to Saskatchewan to meet a feisty woman named Barb Stefanyshyn-Cote. Barb and her husband, John Cote, are the founders and co-owners of Black Fox Distillery, located just outside Saskatoon.

Barb will tell you, with lots of witty anecdotes to prove the point, that Black Fox, now a notable success, was born out of a whole series of failures, mistakes and missteps.

Today, locals and visitors alike enjoy the ambience, the events and the products of Black Fox, but it took a while to get here.

John and Barb are fifth-generation farmers. Their "roots" go back for generations and they continue to be deeply committed to agriculture in Saskatchewan. Both have studied and consulted on agricultural practices worldwide and are recognized



Black Fox Distillery co-owner Barb Stefanyshyn-Cote.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

nationally and internationally for their industry leadership.

Once upon a time, they were grain farmers, but – and this where an Ontario perspective on agriculture may cause some bafflement – they only had 5,000 acres of land, and that was not enough for a sustainable operation.

So, they pivoted, sold the 5,000 acres to a much bigger operator and bought the property that is now home to Black Fox Distillery.

But they didn't come there with any thought of creating an award-winning distillery. Barb explains that they tried growing vegetables, but that was not a success. They tried fruit, planting acres of orchards, but that, too, was a commercial failure.

Barb says they then thought of creating a winery, but there was one hitch: "We don't like wine."

And thus, through trial and error, they arrived at the idea of creating a distillery. It's named for a real black

fox, one that took up residence one season on their original grain farm.

And although the idea of a distillery was new, their agricultural philosophy was bred in their bones.

"We are proud to be part of a movement of pioneering craft distillers who advocate for terroir, believe in the provenance of place and understand the ways in which soil, climate and topography influence the bounty a land bears."

They also argue that "ecology and economy can live in harmony."

"Through incorporating environmentally conscious, efficient systems across our business we pledge ourselves to a more sustainable way of life. From ingredient production to distillation, transportation, packaging and water conservation, our agronomic practices emphasize environmental stewardship and a love of the land. As its current custodians, we take seriously our responsibility to leave it better than when it came

into our care.

"We recognize that each step of the production process has an impact on the land and those who work it. Better soil management leads to more fertile soil, better crops, increased biodiversity and improved climate regulation."

The couple brought all of their experience, their education and what they learned from their initial failures to the development of Black Fox Distillery. And, Barb explains, this worked almost too well. When they began to produce their whisky, and to win awards, they were accused of being "charlatans." They are one of only two distilleries in the province making craft whisky from scratch, and some of the "experts" felt their product was simply too good to come from a fledgling operation.

Barb says there were two keys to the exceptional quality of their whiskies. First, they used a unique rye-wheat blend, producing an unusually

dark whisky. Second, even in Saskatchewan's climate, the whisky is aged in barrels kept outdoors. The changes in weather actually promote the development of flavours. No one else is doing this.

The couple grows most of their source products right on the property, and uses them for their whiskies, gins and cocktails. They still have fruit, though they don't grow fruit as an end product. They have a haskap orchard, rhubarb gardens and are in the process of converting apple orchards into elderflower patches.

When we visited Black Fox, we tasted three excellent whiskies and enjoyed an unexpectedly tasty haskap gin cocktail. We were certainly not the only visitors – the outdoor patio had welcomed a fair number of drop-in customers, including some who clearly knew and loved the place.

Black Fox offers a full menu of ways people can enjoy the place. Of course, you can simply drop in, but there are also organized tours, mixology classes, organized tastings and unusual "u-pick" opportunities – not apples or pears, but flowers (peonies, gladioli and others) and, in mid-September, a u-pick pumpkin patch.

You're probably not going to travel to Saskatchewan simply to visit a distillery, no matter how much you enjoy whisky. But when you do visit the province – and there are an incredible number of reasons why you should – be sure to include a visit to Black Fox Distillery on your itinerary.

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.



Remembering the original black fox, which inspired the name of the distillery.



Black Fox staffers ready to make some whisky-loving customers very happy.

Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

1. Sealed with a kiss
5. Large sandwich
8. Swiss city
12. Japanese persimmons
14. When you hope to get somewhere
15. Wings
16. A name of God
18. Elected official (informal)
19. Abnormal breathing
20. "Seinfeld" character
21. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
22. Something for sale
23. Gets rid of
26. One who touts
30. Blemished
31. Less than exciting
32. Born of
33. N. German town
34. Notes
39. Move away from land
42. Vulcanite
44. More ignoble
46. Child actor Kirk
47. Written works
49. Sea vessel
50. Residue
51. Engraved
56. Having sufficient skill
57. One and only
58. Erase
59. Broad inlets
60. Nightmarish street
61. Play again
62. Formerly (archaic)
63. Add a color to change the color
64. Move swiftly and lightly

CLUES DOWN

1. Scottish island
2. River in the Netherlands
3. Asian people
4. Fuzzy fruit
5. Ninth month (abbr.)
6. An idealistic social reformer
7. What you owe
8. Colorless mineral
9. Overjoyed
10. Rattling breaths
11. Tropical Old World tree
13. A citizen of Senegal
17. Greek mythological beauty
24. Wrath
25. Instrument to measure wind speed
26. Luxury carmaker
27. Bitterly regret
28. Not or
29. Google certification
35. Midway between northeast and east
36. Space station
37. Relating to the ears
38. Congressman
40. Yelled at
41. Rudely assertive
42. Defunct European money
43. Shared one's soul
44. Onion rolls
45. A way to state clearly
47. Relating to a lobe
48. Underlying message
49. Hollywood pig
52. Indicates pitch
53. Filament of a feather
54. Small ornamental ladies' bag for small articles
55. Diminish

1	2	3	4			5	6	7		8	9	10	11	
12				13		14				15				
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Pet of the week



TIGGER

Meet Tigger, our cute resident grump with a big personality. A professional huffer and expert side-eyer, he's made it clear he values his space. His hobbies include dramatic sighs, the occasional hiss, and keeping a watchful eye on everything around him.

But beneath that spicy exterior is a cat who's simply overwhelmed. Tigger isn't a lap cat, at least not yet. He's looking for a calm, patient, cat-savvy home where trust can grow at his pace. With time, understanding, and a few lickable treats (his favourite!), we believe there's a softer side just waiting to shine through. Over his time here, he's noticeably making progress. He's less hissy, his glare has softened, and he's begun taking treats from staff, and venturing out to observe the world around him.

If you believe the best bonds are built slowly, and you have a soft spot for a little sass, Tigger could be your perfect match. Could you be the one to give this grumpy gentleman his forever home? Tigger can be found at our Stratford Centre.



Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 27

COMING EVENTS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

Anne Hathaway Residence 480 Downie St., Stratford
Meets every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. for 3 games.
Check our website for further details stratfordscrabble.ca

STRATFORD ASTRONOMY GROUP MEETINGS

St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, 240 Oakdale Avenue, Stratford

Rear parking lot off Matilda. Room # 1104 - 1st Tuesday of each month from September to June. 7-9 p.m.

We are night sky enthusiasts. Everyone is welcome to attend. See our website at <https://stratfordastronomy.com/> or call 519-275-4472 for more information

JESUS IS COMING SOON! COME AND LEARN THE TRUTH FROM THE BIBLE

June 16 to 20; 7:30 p.m.

St. Marys Gospel Hall, 632 Jones Street East, St. Marys

Speaker: Scott MacLeod

These meetings are hosted by Christians gathered in His Name at St. Marys Gospel Hall.

For more information email fullerglenj@gmail.com or mobile: 519 703 9453

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, June 15; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Wild Boar, El Milagro, Pablas Street of India, Beavertails
Donations to Grace United Church

TEDDY BEAR PICNIC

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

Brocksden Country School Museum 2719 Line 37 (Vivian Street) between Road 110 and Road 109 just

northeast of Stratford

Free event ideal for families with young children! Today's the day when the teddy bears have their picnic! Grab your teddy bear, blanket and snack and head down to the Old Schoolhouse for face painting, scavenger hunt, Grandma's Storytime and more! Brocksden Country School Museum 2719 Line 37 (Vivian Street) between Road 110 and Road 109 just northeast of Stratford.

PRINTAPOOLOOZA!

Saturday, June 20; 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

505 Douro Street, Stratford

Join us for a FREE fun-filled community in support of The Stratford House of Blessing Food Bank. This fun celebration will be featuring food trucks, a kids' zone with face painting and a bouncy castle, a car show featuring the Corvette Club of Ontario and the Stratford Cruisers, and live music throughout the day. Entertainment includes performances by Rusted Rebels, Tourniquet, and our headlining act, Juno-nominated artist Glenn Marais.

Guests will also have the opportunity to tour International Graphics and see behind the scenes of one of North America's leading printing companies. The Stratford House of Blessing Food Bank will be onsite collecting non-perishable food donations, as well as cash and card donations to support local families in need.

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, June 22; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Berlin 95, Born2Eat, El Milagro, Ish n Chips
Donations to TAP, Tavistock Assistance Program

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
Donations to TAP, Tavistock Assistance Program

FOOD TRUCKS

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

Grace United Church Tavistock

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

Siggi's, Los Rolling Tacos, Berlin 95
Donations to Camp Bimini

FOOD TRUCKS

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

Grace United Church Tavistock

116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock

SWAT, Pablas Street of India, Beavertails
Donations to Grace United Church

STRATFORD CATCH THE ACE LOTTERY

Kinsmen Club of Stratford, Knights of Columbus Stratford and the Army Navy and Airforce Veterans in Canada Unit 261

Buy tickets online at <https://stratfordcatchtheace.ca>

Draw at ANAF Unit 261 on Friday, June 12th at 11:30 a.m. during the luncheon.

QUILTERS ESTATE GARAGE SALE

All Proceeds to Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth
Saturday June 20 8 a.m.

Shakespeare Presbyterian Church (located at the lights in Shakespeare)

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WANTED

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

SUDOKU

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

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