

STRATFORD TIMES

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Family, friends, colleagues remember Dave Gaffney

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Tom Clifford served on Stratford city council for 25 years. In that time, he had never met another councillor as dedicated as Dave Gaffney.

"He was the most informed. He read every bit of material," Clifford told the Times. "In my opinion, he was one of the best councillors, and I was on council 25 years and worked with, I can't tell you how many councillors.... If anyone was dedicated to the city of Stratford, it was Dave."

Gaffney, 63, passed away on June 3 after a brief illness. As Clifford said, he was earnestly committed to his home city and devoted his working life to it. He was a long-time volunteer at the YMCA of Stratford-Perth (now known as the YMCA of Three Rivers), the Stratford & District Agricultural Society, the Bard of Avon Housing Co-operative, Heritage Stratford, the City of Stratford's board of park management, communities in bloom advisory committee, the energy and environment advisory committee and the Stratford Police Services board.

Perhaps Gaffney's biggest accomplishments come from the two terms he served as a city councillor. He was elected in 2006 and in 2018.

Describing Gaffney as a "little brother," Clifford was something of a mentor to him, sitting next to him around the horseshoe at city hall and sharing many discussions over the years, whether they were political or personal. Eventually, a working relationship evolved into a genuine friendship. Clifford recalled that when his own wife passed away this year, Gaffney was one of the first people to reach out to him.

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Happy Pride! Huge crowds gathered in the Festival City on June 1 for the annual Pride parade, hosted by Stratford-Perth Pride. Read more about it on page 9.

FRED GONDER PHOTO

Stratford citizens express concern over recently passed Bill 5

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, passed its third reading and received royal assent at the Ontario legislature this month. Although much of the discourse surrounding it has been focused on communities in northern Ontario, some in Stratford believe that it has far reaching consequences – and that Stratford citizens should be concerned.

"There are elements of the act that dismantle environmental protection," Bill James-Abra of Climate Momentum said. "That is part of it. The other part was the whole tone of the act is part of this process the government's doing of ... dismantling local decision-making power and dismantling the voice of local communities to have some say in how development happens."

mantling local decision-making power and dismantling the voice of local communities to have some say in how development happens.

"If this law had been in place, I'm fairly confident when the Xinyi glass plant was proposed for Stratford, we wouldn't have had any say ... it sounds over dramatic, but the law makes it possible for things like our Cooper site to be effectively taken over by the cabinet in Toronto for their hand picked developers to do what they please. It's offensive and it's wrong."

As James-Abra indicated, Bill 5 amends and replaces the Endangered Species Act (once touted as the gold standard of conservation legislation) with the Species Conservation

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Family, friends, colleagues remember Dave Gaffney

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Remembering Gaffney, Clifford said that compassion he had was noticeable to anyone.

"He always had a kind word for people," Clifford said. "I very, very seldom heard Dave say anything bad about anyone. When you're in council, we have (people on the) left, right, centre. We don't always agree with what each person thinks, but he always liked the person regardless. He was likeable and people liked him."

Clifford added that Gaffney's legacy was one of selflessness. Despite being of means himself, he said that Gaffney was always concerned about taxes and the pressure those less fortunate faced each year when the budget was debated.

"And I think that's his legacy, is looking after the ordinary people in Stratford. And he did that for many years, both on and off council."

Mayor Martin Ritsma, then a councillor, sat on the other side of Gaffney around the horseshoe. Like Clifford, he described Gaffney as selfless.

"He didn't think do things to advance himself," Ritsma said. "He did things to advance the residents of Stratford and our municipality, and you know that kind of leadership needs to be respected, especially in times like we have now, where frequently people are doing things in the political realm to advance themselves. So



Dave Gaffney, 63, passed away on June 3 after a brief illness. Selfless, affable, dedicated, and deeply humble are just some of the qualities that family, friends, and colleagues are remembering the former Stratford city councillor for.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

utmost respect for David, both as a civic leader, and equally, if not more important, as a friend.

"Dave wasn't one for the limelight. He wasn't one for the spotlight. Dave used his voice sparingly but effectively, if I could put it that way ... He was very open minded. He was a good communicator when neces-

sary. But the aspect of communication that he shone in, in my opinion, was listening."

Like Clifford and Ritsma, other colleagues in the political world have shared their condolences and memories of Gaffney.

"It was an honour to serve with Dave. A true gentleman who loved the City of Stratford. He will be missed," Coun. Brad Beatty, who served with Gaffney from 2018-2022, wrote in a Facebook post.

Likewise, Perth-Wellington MP John Nater memorialized Gaffney as well.

"He had an unwavering concern for others," Nater wrote in his own social media post. "Without fail, the first words out of his mouth would be: 'Hi John, how's Justine doing?'"

For the Gaffney family, above all his community and political work, he was simply a big brother.

Described as an affable and popular man around town, with a fierce work ethic, his brother Dominic Gaffney said he might have picked up those traits from their father, Oliver Gaffney, who likewise was committed to Stratford. Although Dominic didn't remember him always being so politically active, in recent days he remembered that he served on "the mayor's committee for youth" when he was in high school – indicative of a lifetime of stalwart dedication to Stratford.

"We'll miss him and the city will miss him," Dominic said.

Visitations for Gaffney were held on Sunday, June 8. He was laid to rest the following Monday.

Those wishing to express their sympathy and condolences are asked to make memorial donations to either the Stratford & District Agricultural Society or the Stratford General Hospital Foundation.

The Gaffney family is inviting the public to a celebration of life for Dave on Sunday July 27, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., at the Stratford Country Club.

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Stratford citizens express concern over recently passed Bill 5

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Act, but it also gives the province the special power to establish "special economic zones." These zones can be designated anywhere in Ontario and can exempt a company, referred to in the legislation as a "trusted proponent," or project from complying with provincial laws, regulations or municipal bylaws, as determined by the province.

The Province of Ontario proposed the bill in the first place to "cut red tape and duplicative processes that have held back major infrastructure, mining and resource development projects." It is intended to make the province more competitive on the global stage, streamlining processes, lowering costs, and shortening review times.

In a previous discussion on the 2025 provincial budget, Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae reiterated his party's stance on the bill and said it is necessitated by the uncertain times Ontario and Canada is in.

"Some have described it as an economic war with our U.S. colleagues, and we really need to get things built quickly in a timely manner," Rae said. "Bill 5 in particular is looking at mines in northern Ontario. It takes 15 years on average in Ontario to build a mine. That takes five to seven years in the E.U. or Australia."

Rae further said that every U.S. state has a version of a special economic zone and many countries use them as a planning tool.

"If you want investment to happen in the province, you need to facilitate investment ... no argument here on that," James-Abra said in response. "But it seems the government can't conceive of the possibility that

you could do that collaboratively."

Before the bill was officially adopted, Climate Momentum held a "postcard party" where they invited those interested to a drop-in party at the Falstaff Family Centre. There, they could write or sign custom postcards to be hand delivered to provincial representatives.

"We were really pleased," James-Abra said about the turnout. "We ended up with more than 125 handwritten postcards. We had moms and dads coming in with their school-aged kids to write cards together. We had high school students dropping in. We had university students home for the summer break and everything from grandparents to grandkids writing cards."

On May 30, Climate Momentum delivered those letters to Rae's Stratford office. On Monday, after representatives partook in the Pride parade over the weekend, a few more were delivered as well.

Now that the bill has received royal assent, keeping focus on it will be more difficult, James-Abra acknowledged, but his organization will consult with other larger advocacy groups to see what could be done moving forward.

On whether or not he has hope that the province will listen to criticism on the bill's measures, he had his doubts – but he still had hope.

"There's an old proverb about how paths are made by walking," he said. "There are places where today there are no paths, and in time there will be a path. And it will be made because people walked it. ... I'm hopeful. I wouldn't be doing this work if I wasn't."



Representatives from Climate Momentum drop off handwritten postcards detailing Stratford residents' opposition to Bill 5, the recently passed Protecting Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, at Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae's Stratford office on May 30. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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Editorial

Tourists are good, but locals are great

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE
Times Reporter

“Tourists are good, but locals are great.” It’s a phrase I’ve heard countless times in my role as a local news reporter. I used to think Stratford was sustained mostly by tourists, with the Stratford Festival serving as the main attraction that drove downtown’s economy. But I was wrong. After speaking with hundreds of people across Stratford over the past two years, I truly believe the heart of downtown is the locals.

I recently spoke with Lee Cooney, a business owner and local artist who runs The Little Prince Theatre. Though the theatre has gained international recognition and several awards for its petite size, Cooney shared that its most loyal visitors are the locals. He even joked that when he’s seen around town by young kids who’ve visited the theatre, he’s recognized frequently and finds the attention pretty funny.

Restaurants like Mercer, Pazzo, or Fellini’s are considered upscale, yet when you visit, you’re bound to run into familiar faces — locals enjoying lunch or dinner, support-

ing their friends and neighbourhood business owners. At the Local Community Food Centre, Lucas Tingle works hard as the garden educator, helping to grow sustainable food to support locals in need. His work goes beyond the garden — Tingle is striving to create a bigger picture of sustainability that’s beginning to catch on across Ontario.

Illume Wellness Spa is another community hotspot where you’re almost guaranteed to run into friends. Elsa Fahraeus Seigner, the owner, is well known as a local advocate. She regularly uses her large social media platform to help boost donations for non-profits, like Rotary Hospice.

Stratford’s own Dayna Manning is using her talent and voice to produce another Market Square Music event, which happens every year with support from the City of Stratford. Her dedication to community-driven music has created a sense of pride among locals.

Local farmers across Huron Perth are also widely supported. When Perth County Tourism launched its hop-on-hop-off farm tours, it sold out within a couple of days, driven mostly by local interest. That kind of enthusiasm

wasn’t just welcomed — it was unexpected. And of course, you’re always bound to run into familiar faces in our downtown cafés. Who needs Starbucks or Tim Hortons when you have places like Balzac’s, the Livery Yard, Brch and Wyn or Ashbourne Café? These are more than coffee shops — they’re community hubs where meetings happen, friendships grow and local news is shared.

I know from experience that local advertising makes a huge impact. Even here at the Times, we rely on local businesses to advertise. It’s how we keep the paper running and continue to deliver news to you, our readers, bi-weekly (and soon to be weekly).

When I approach someone about advertising with us, I’m always struck by their reaction. Not only are they thrilled by the idea of attracting new customers through the paper, but they’re also excited to know that by advertising they’re helping support a small, local business — us!

Stratford may welcome visitors from all over the world, but it’s the locals who truly make it thrive. From the faces you see in the cafés to the hands that grow our food, Stratford’s spirit is unmistakably rooted in community.

Proposed changes to Perth County forestry conservation bylaw to be brought to lower tiers and public before approval

GALEN SIMMONS
Regional Editor

Amid rumours about how proposed updates to Perth County’s forestry conservation bylaw will affect farmers and the use of their land, county staff will soon be taking those changes on the road to educate lower-tier councils and staff, as well as the public, on the soon-to-be updated

bylaw. Representing the county’s agricultural working group – an advisory committee representing the interests of Perth County’s farming community, industry and commodity groups – deputy warden and working group chair Dean Trentowsky presented the updated bylaw to county council at its June 5 meeting.

“Council direction was given in March 2024 to review the existing forest conservation bylaw,” he said, noting the agricultural working group was tasked with reviewing the bylaw and comparing it with those of other nearby counties including Oxford, Huron, Wellington and Chatham-Kent.

“... Having secured all the information and having had that April meeting with the recommendations, the ag. working group submits a report to council with proposed bylaw updates including clarified definitions for the existing forest conservation bylaw, the addition of a windbreak definition, amendments previously passed by council and a proposed committee exemption process.”

The committee exemption/appeal process, Trentowsky

explained, is based on the process included in Oxford County’s forestry conservation bylaw. It allows applicants who have issued a notice of intent to injure or destroy trees in accordance with the forestry bylaw who are not satisfied with the expert opinion of the county forestry inspector to appeal their decision and have it reviewed by the county’s land-division committee. A fee of \$200 would be charged before the inspector’s decision is referred to the committee.

A number of terms within the bylaw have also been clarified or added through the proposed updates including Christmas tree plantation, cultivated fruit or nut orchard, windbreak and woodlot. According to Perth County forestry inspector and bylaw officer Marvin Smith, the definition for windbreak and woodlot has led to some concern among councillors and landowners in the county as their sizes relate to those set out in provincial legislation.

According to the proposed updates, a woodlot in Perth County is land at least 0.2 hectares in area and no greater

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STRATFORDTIMES

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Two paws up for Downtown Stratford BIA's third annual Dog Days of Summer

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Market Square was filled with lots of tail-wagging fun for Stratford's furriest residents.

The Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) held their Dog Days of Summer event on June 5 in Market Square. There were prizes awarded to the smilliest dog, most unusual trick, most like their owner, among other categories in the third-annual Dog Days Dog Show. Attendees could also learn more about pet forward organizations and businesses like the Barkery, Stratford Dog Walkers, Pawsitive Difference Professional Pet Care, and the Humane Society of Kitchener-Waterloo and Stratford Perth.

"To have so many wonderful pets out of all sizes, of all shapes, I mean, that's why we do this," said general manager Jamie Pritchard, who brought his own dogs, keeshonds Nova Knight and Tarry Garcia to the event. "This isn't the professional dog show. It's the fun family dog show and that's who we get out and it's just an amazing afternoon."

Downtown Stratford Sniffari Maps were available to pick up. The Snif-

fari Map has a list of places for dogs to sniff around the downtown core, such as Shakespearean Gardens, Studio Theatre Garden, Armories Garden, and the mulch in front of the corner of the Alley Cat Café.

The Downtown Stratford BIA has a list of businesses where dogs are welcome in the store, as well as restaurants that allow dogs on the outdoor dining areas and/or offer treats for the dogs.

"Many of the patios downtown allow dogs on them, so you can come down and have dinner with your dogs or just stop for a drink. Just get out there and enjoy it," Pritchard said.

Pritchard added that the Dog Days of Summer campaign's mandate showcases how Stratford is a pet-friendly city for residents and tourists alike.

"When tourists come, a lot of them travel with their animals and it allows them to take them with them and just really enjoy our time there," he said. "It's part of our initiative to make sure we're more welcoming and we include our four-legged furry friends with that."

All pet-friendly Downtown Stratford businesses can be found online by visiting <https://downtownstratford.ca>.



Tarry Garcia and Nova Knight, Downtown Stratford BIA general manager Jamie Pritchard's beloved companions.

(EMILY STEWART PHOTOS)



She was a skater dog! Zola's skateboarding earned her the prize for Most Unusual Trick.

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World Refugee Day recognized across Stratford

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

As communities around the globe mark World Refugee Day on June 20, residents in Stratford are also taking time to recognize the resilience, courage and contributions of those who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict or persecution.

"The City of Stratford is proud to recognize and celebrate World Refugee Day," said Mayor Martin Ritsma, "We are fortunate to have refugees from many countries choose Stratford as their new home. In my personal meetings with our newcomers, I encourage them to share their life story and to be proud of their history, life experiences and culture. Let's continue to walk in solidarity with the refugees in our local communities."

The United Nations established World Refugee Day in 2001 to honour the strength and perseverance of millions of displaced people around the world. It's also a call to action — for governments, communities and individuals — to offer protection and support to those who seek safety.

Sibomana Bujambi (John), a man now living in Stratford shared his story of survival — a story that includes years spent fleeing violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and life in a refugee camp before arriving in Canada.

"Sometimes we were obliged to go and hide ourselves in the forest," he told the Times. "That was necessary when they at-

tacked us during the night without warning. This happened many, many times."

One memory that stands out is the night his group was fleeing and had to descend from a high ledge with children and a pregnant woman in tow.

"The kids were being lifted from on top to the ground below," he said. "We were with a pregnant young woman whose mother was crying, telling those helping us to hold her gently."

In another instance, his elderly grandfather had to be left behind in a small prayer house deep in the bush as he was too weak to run.

"It was in the night, and we were afraid they could burn him in the house," he said. "He didn't die that night, but I remember feeling badly leaving him there."

During one escape, he was separated from his family and fled with strangers. In his panic, he crossed a river on foot, despite not knowing how to swim.

"Because of fear, I was able to walk through a river and cross over," he said. "These three experiences are especially difficult times that I will not forget."

Eventually, he and his sister reached a refugee camp in Burundi, joining other siblings who had already fled there. Life in the camp brought its own struggles — food, shelter and a sense of the future were hard to come by.

"Thankfully, God also has his own way," he said. "He sees where we can't see. He knows what our future looks like."

Over time, some family members were

able to immigrate to countries such as Canada and the United States. Financial support from those abroad began trickling back to those still in the camp. In 2023, he and his family finally arrived in Canada, and for the first time in years, their questions about the future began to be answered.

"We hope it will be great," he said. "Because we are safe and treated equally here."

Despite the safety and opportunities he's found in Canada, he said his heart remains heavy for the community he left behind. He hopes for recognition and peace for the Banyamulenge people — a Congolese minority group that continues to face violence in South Kivu.

"We are blessed to be in Canada," he said. "But sometimes we are sad because our community is still not recognized as Congolese. We still regularly hear stories of family and friends being killed."

As we observe World Refugee Day this year, his story reminds us of the strength it takes to start over — and the role we can play in welcoming those in search of peace in their new home here in Canada.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

World Refugee Day is on June 20. Pictured is Sibomana Bujambi (John), who shared his story with the Times about how he fled violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with his family to come to Canada.



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Funding for living snow fences to be made available through Perth County stewardship program

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

To improve safety on county roads in the winter, Perth County will fully fund the planting of living snow fences on private properties through its annual stewardship program.

Though some of the details still need to be worked out by staff and reviewed by councillors, county council approved the new funding stream in principle at its June 5 meeting. According to county resiliency and stewardship coordinator Hannah Cann, encouraging local farmers and landowners to plant living snow fences along road-facing sections of their properties can have a number of benefits.

“Living snow fences are rows of trees, shrubs or standing crop oriented in a strip parallel to the roadway with the primary purpose of reducing snow drifting and visibility concerns during winter months,” Cann said. “There are several other benefits of living snow fences including lowering operational expenses related to treatment materials like sand and salt. Other benefits of living snow fences include increased safety for the road user and meeting several goals within our county and local agencies including addressing winter hazards.”

Living snow fences also have environmental benefits including increasing biodiversity by adding new habitat for pollinator species, thereby potentially improving crop production, improving soil conservation through the nat-

ural stabilization of soil by the trees or shrubs’ root systems and increasing carbon sequestration.

The county’s public works department maintains an inventory of areas within the county road network that are more susceptible to drifting and blowing snow conditions. Most of the roads are oriented in the north-south direction and experience northwesterly winds, which often carry lake-effect snow from Lake Huron. However, other roads of concern oriented on more of an east-west tangent also experience drifting under certain conditions. Wind direction and wind speed can vary considerably during winter storms, so drifting and blowing snow can occur in any area.

The general best practice for placement of living snow fencing is 35 metres from the road edge. This distance provides a sufficient offset from the travelled portion of the road to allow for snow to accumulate as it falls. For many county roads, and most local municipal roads, this offset is beyond the limits of the public road allowance and falls on adjacent private property, necessitating the need to work with and incentivize private landowners to plant these snow fences.

According to Cann, living snow fences can take some time to grow; they can offer some protective benefit within about five years, with full benefits between eight and 10 years after planting.

“I think this is a great program. I’ve been hoping to see something like this

for a number of years now,” Coun. Matt Duncan said. “... It’s going to take buy-in, there’s no doubt about it, but when we allocate tax dollars to this, this is a benefit to everybody that lives here. It’s not just a benefit to that landowner; it’s a benefit to everyone who drives down that road and I think this is a really good allocation of tax dollars to try and make our roads safer through natural means.

“I received a number of communications this year, definitely about (Perth Line) 86, about drifting snow over the winter and I think the more these living snow fences we can put up along our county and municipal roads, it’s going to save a lot of winter maintenance and possible accidents in the future.”

According to Cann’s report to council, the county’s agriculture working group recommended Perth County implement a funding stream specific to living snow fences under the stewardship program and that successful applications made to that funding stream be fully funded to cover the cost for the planting and maintenance of a treed living snow fence under a 20-year agreement with the landowner. In doing so, Cann said the landowner is incentivized to plant this type of wind break while the respective municipality receives the future benefit of mitigating drifting hazards on the adjacent county or local road.

Other county councillors, however, were left with questions they wanted answers to before this funding stream opens for applications. Those questions

included what would happen if a property with a living snow fence changed ownership during the 20-year agreement with the county; whether farmers would be compensated for the loss of productive farmland; how the snow fence would affect access for large equipment to the farmland between the snow fence and the roadway; and who would be responsible for replacing snow-fence trees if they were to die.

While the next application-intake period for the 2025 stewardship program is set to open on July 2, council voted to have staff bring back more details about the 20-year agreement at its July 3 meeting, during which councillors will review those details, make any changes and approve the agreement before staff begin accepting applications for that particular funding stream.

During this discussion, councillors also asked John McClelland, the county’s executive director of public works, whether staff was also looking at asking farmers to leave up some of their crops to serve as living snow fences through the winter. McClelland said staff are looking into that this year and noted it would require a strip of roughly 12 rows of corn located 35 metres back from the road to serve as an effective snow fence.

McClelland said the county would likely need to compensate farmers for leaving those crops unharvested through the winter and said he’d bring a report back to council later in the year with more information.

Kinsmen Club of Stratford marks 80 years of community service

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Kinsmen Club of Stratford celebrated its 80th anniversary on May 31 with a public gathering at the Stratford Perth Museum.

Friends of the Kinsmen enjoyed a free afternoon of entertainment, refreshments, and access to Kinsmen archives, along with complimentary admission to the museum. Public transportation was provided by the City of Stratford.

The local service club was officially chartered on May 16, 1945 — just days after Victory in Europe Day marked the end of the Second World War in Europe. The Stratford Kinsmen’s formation coincided with the height of the Kinsmen’s largest national humanitarian campaign to date: Milk for Britain.

That effort began after Kinsmen founder Hal Rogers responded to a radio appeal for powdered milk for British children. The goal was to raise enough money to buy one million quarts in nine months. Stratford’s newly formed club raised \$525 for the cause, their first fundraising project, which translated into 26,000 glasses of milk for children overseas.

By the end of the campaign, Kin members across Canada raised nearly \$3 million, sending 50 million

quarts of milk to the U.K. for \$2.6 million. The national project also spurred the creation of 41 new Kinsmen clubs and helped launch the Kinettes, the organization’s women’s division.

In the decades that followed, the Stratford Kinsmen lived up to their motto: “Serving the community’s greatest need.” In the 1960s, the club helped build the Britannia Street Apartments for developmentally challenged adults. In the 1970s, members constructed Camp Tanner in Harrington, a day camp operated for over 50 years in partnership with the YW-YMCA and the United Church.

Since then, the club has taken on major community projects, including the Stratford Blues and Ribfest and local high school bursaries. Their long-standing support for Cystic Fibrosis research remains a cornerstone of the organization’s charitable work.

The Kinsmen have also hosted or helped organize events like the Stratford Antique Show, Millionaires’ Night, the Winter Carnival, and continue to host Canada Day festivities and fireworks each summer.

More recently, the club has made financial contributions to the Stratford General Hospital Foundation, Wellspring for Cancer, Rotary Aquabox, Stratford Public Library, and the Connections Centre. They also funded outdoor gym equipment near the local skate park.

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Despite some surprises, Queen's Inn renovation continues unfettered and optimistic

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Queen's Inn, located on the corner of Ontario Street and Waterloo Street, has been shuttered for nearly a year now. While from the outside it may look like the same building as always, on the inside it has taken on a new life of its own.

Corey Durst, site superintendent for the Queen's Inn renovation, has been working in construction for 27 years and has been involved with six major commercial renovations from coast to coast. As he said, some of what they uncovered in the bones of the downtown Stratford inn were a first for him.

Walking through the project with the Times, Durst pointed out some extensive challenges and surprises, from severely undulating floorboards and joists to eight inches of concrete in the bathroom floors on the second floor, bizarrely.

"You can see over the years how many layers of renovations they've had," Durst said, pointing to an overhang from the second floor, where layers of different flooring stacked upon one another stick out. "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Nine layers of renovations. One of the biggest challenges of this project has been, they never did any demolition. They just kept gluing on top, on top, and everything fell apart."



The Queen's Inn, located on the corner of Waterloo Street and Ontario Street, has been shuttered for a major renovation for nearly a year. As complications pop-up and the team continue their work, its expected to be closed for another 16 months. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTOS)

Durst explained that BMI Group, the organization overseeing the project, expected to be surprised – given that it's an old building with a storied past; however, what they found was truly startling. That being said,

for Durst and the team, the hurdles are not project-ending and structurally the building was still okay. Despite the building's quirks, they are continuing forward with the renovation, expecting to create a truly great fin-

ished project once complete.

The Queen's Inn, when it is all said and done, will be reimagined as the Queen's Cue, a 31-room hotel in the Marriott Tribute line that will pay homage to the queens of Shakespeare's plays. As always, the Boar's Head Pub will be nestled beside it, open and renovated alongside the hotel.

Originally, it was expected to open this summer; however, once the team got the Marriott spec book, a set of specifications for all Marriott hotels, they knew it would take much longer as they would have to replace all the plumbing, redo the mechanical systems, and gut every inch of drywall, lath and plaster in the building. The exterior, protected as a heritage feature, will remain the same but the interior, barring a few features like the grand staircase, will be completely new.

Now, Durst estimates that the project will take 16 months to complete.

When announced, Dan Mathieson of the BMI Group estimated the project would cost \$5 million all said and done. With the deadline pushed back and problems popping up, BMI Group is not further commenting on the cost.

Built in 1858 and rebuilt in 1905 after a major fire, the Queen's Inn and its iconic downtown dome has been a Stratford icon for nearly two centuries – and will continue to be once it opens its doors again.



The iconic grand staircase will remain – one of the only interior features that will survive the gut-job. Due to its age and some quirks, most of the interior needed to be completely replaced.



Above: Not unlike the Grand Canyon, where the Earth's history can be seen in layers, the overhang from the second floor shows the building's history and the layer upon layer of renovations that occurred throughout the years.

Left: A construction worker measures a section in what will one day be one of the 31 rooms in the boutique hotel.

Right: A plumber cuts a section of pipe. All of the building's aged plumbing had to be ripped out and is currently being replaced.



High winds blew in a successful Pride

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

Whipping winds did not dampen the high moods of those at Upper Queen's Park this past Sunday.

Volunteers and Pride workers gathered together on June 1 at 9 a.m. to prepare for this year's annual Stratford Pride parade. Tasks were quickly given out and everyone was sent to work, putting together what was going to become Stratford-Perth Pride's most successful Pride festival to date. The goal of this year's festival was clear; as a community, we are strong.

This year, the march began at the Tom Paterson theatre, with important words from the vice chairperson, Melissa Marcelissen.

"Pride is not just a march. It started as a riot. We walk today in honour of those who came before us, those who risked everything, so we could live more freely," Marcelissen said. "We walk for those who can't be here today, and we walk for every queer kid in rural Ontario who needs to know that you're not alone; you are seen, you are loved, and you belong. I want to speak directly to the queer folks here with us, if this year feels different, if it feels harder, heavier, scarier, you're not imagining it, and your feelings are valid. To every member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community who showed up here today, whether you're out loud, out quietly, or not out yet, I want you to hear this. I'm so proud of you. We are all so proud of you."

Marcelissen stressed just how important events like the Pride festival are, especial-



Members of Stratford-Perth Pride celebrating a beautiful day.

(AJ ASHLEY PHOTO)

ly now in our current climate, to stand together and stand tall, to show that the 2SLGBTQIA+ community will not be ignored.

Marcelissen then introduced Mayor Ritsma to say a few words. "Some students were in council chamber, and one young lady said to me 'What's the most important job of being a mayor?' And I said the three words that I always come to. One, the importance of safety. Be sure there's safety for all your residents. Number two, having a voice, and this is part of the voice here today. And number three, is a feeling of belonging," Ritsma explained, talking about how vital safety, voice and belonging are to creating a community that is trusting and supportive.

Marcelissen returned onto the mic to give some final words before starting the march. "Stratford-Perth Pride has been able to make this event bigger and more impact-

ful because of you, and because of our incredible sponsors and supporters. After we march, we invite you to join us at Upper Queen's Park for the Stratford Pride Festival. Thank you for being here, thank you for marching, and let's go take up some space! Happy Pride everybody!"

With the welcoming speeches concluded, the eighth annual Pride march commenced. The excited crowd began walking along the river towards Upper Queen's Park, flags held high, and Pride on everyone's faces.

This year's festival had the highest turnout rate to date, with nearly 1,000 attendees celebrating Pride. A turnout as large as this helps ensure that Pride visibility in Stratford is growing ever stronger.

The march concluded at the top of Upper Queen's Park, leading the marchers through the vendors, welcoming them into the festival. Participants got to enjoy a wide array of activities and attractions at this

year's festival. From a wonderful live performance from Gravity Junky, captivating performances from Cirquesmith, On Stage Dance Studio, as well as yoga in the park with the third space. A kids zone was set up with fun games and face painting for all ages to enjoy, and ally alley concluded the space, with plenty of resources, and information for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and allies alike. Food trucks were available at the festival for participants to grab something to eat, whether it was fish and chips from Annie's, gourmet grilled cheese from Fo'cheezy, fries from Ken's or some popcorn from Poppin Kettle Corn.

None of the festival would be possible were it not for the sponsors of the Stratford Pride Festival; Home & Company, Paws on Patrol, Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society, Audio Guy, RE/MAX, On Stage dance studio, Good Vibrations Rock shop and Scotiabank – as well as the event sponsors, TD Bank and the City of Stratford. The Stratford-Perth Pride team also wanted to express their deepest thanks and gratitude towards the community of Stratford-Perth; if it weren't for the participants, this festival couldn't get as successful as it is.

If you would like to learn more about the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, or have any questions in regard to Pride, Stratford-Perth Pride can be reached on their website at stratfordpride.com, or on Instagram and Facebook under the name stratfordperthpride.

Editor's note: Sydney Goodwin is the program coordinator with the Stratford-Perth Pride.

Proposed changes to Perth County forestry conservation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

than one hectare in area, with at least 200 trees of any size per 0.2 hectares; 150 trees measuring over five centimetres in diameter per 0.2 hectares; 100 trees measuring over 12 centimetres in diameter per 0.2 hectares; or 50 trees measuring over 20 centimetres in diameter per 0.2 hectares, but does not include a cultivated fruit or nut orchard, a windbreak or a plantation established for the purpose of producing Christmas trees or nursery stock.

A windbreak, meanwhile, is a linear treed area consisting of one to three rows of planted trees less than 0.2 hectares in size.

"Starting with the size of woodlands defined in The Municipal Act, there is not a conflict between the two," Smith said. "The Municipal Act actually gives opportunity for a very restrictive definition for what can be protected as far as trees and what can't. ... It distinguishes between which level of government has the authority to (enforce) the restriction. It sets out that the minimum size for an upper-tier municipality size limit is one hectare, but the size limit for lower-tier municipalities is not given as minimum. In other words, lower-tier municipalities could regulate individual trees.

"So, the way that the forest conservation bylaw in Perth County operates is, for decades, the minimum size was set at one half-acre or 0.2 hectares. When The Municipal Act became the provincial legislation that oversaw forest conservation bylaws in 2001, that's when the change occurred for the County of Perth to continue with its same minimum size limit of one half-acre or 0.2 hectares. The county needed to get the delegation of authority from the lower-tier municipalities to allow it to do that, and that process is set out in The Municipal Act. The bottom line is there's no conflict with how The Municipal Act does it, it's just a change in what the process is."

While Smith noted there is very little the county can

change in the updated forestry conservation bylaw, county councillors said they've continued to receive questions and concerns from residents about what they can and can't do when it comes to removing or injuring trees on their properties and how the proposed changes to the bylaw might impact that.

Expanding on a public communications plan for the bylaw update proposed by the agricultural working group, council ultimately voted to have staff present the bylaw changes to Perth County's lower-tier municipal councils and staff, and the general public at an open house or public meeting, to provide information and education on the changes before county council considers approval.

"(The lower tiers) can make recommendations ... for something they want in (the bylaw) or something they want taken out; is that not the idea of going to lower tiers if more recommendations come forward?" Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz asked.

"Going to the lower tiers, as I understand it, is part of the educational aspect," Smith said. "There are many things in the bylaw that can't be touched because they're set out in The Municipal Act. One is the one you'd mentioned earlier about the authority of municipal governments to do certain things when private landowners can't. ... You can't take that out. There's a whole string of things there. The wording in the forest conservation bylaw was not dependent on a group of people at some time in the past set out by the County of Perth to come up with. There's a lot of it that's word for word what's in The Municipal Act, and so there are limits there as to what you can change.

"Certainly, I think the county, in going to the lower-tier municipalities, is quite open to any feedback. I think part of it is an educational aspect as to why certain things are set out the way they are. ... Obviously, there's a need for that kind of education. ... There's a lot of rumour and what I call rural myths that go on about forest conservation bylaws."

Perth County staff will work to set out a schedule for lower-tier presentations and public meetings or open houses, which the public and the local farming community will be made aware of.

Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

May 04	Adrian Baldwin, Woodstock	\$50.00
May 05	Jackie Quipp, Stratford	\$50.00
May 06	Scott & Jessie Nyenhuis, Durham	\$50.00
May 07	Bowen Koert, St. Pauls	\$50.00
May 08	Marg Illman, Stratford	\$50.00
May 09	Anne Van Niekerk, New Hamburg	\$50.00
May 10	Tracey & Jared Hope, St. Davids	\$200.00
May 11	D. Sweete, St. Marys	\$50.00
May 12	Melisa Clark, St. Marys	\$50.00
May 13	Mary Ash c/o Paula Taylor, St. Pauls	\$50.00
May 14	Mike & Janet Whaling, St. Pauls	\$50.00
May 15	Amber Lavkka, St. Marys	\$50.00
May 16	Judy & Cory Phillips, Stratford	\$50.00
May 17	Pauline Linton, Mitchell	\$200.00



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Perth County's 2025 Explore brochure emphasizes more interactive adventures and strong agricultural roots

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Perth County's new tourism brochure is filled with lots of adventures, just in time for local food week.

The 2025 Explore Perth County brochure was released by the county ahead of local food week, which is between June 2 and 8. Ricky Zhao, tourism officer with the county, told the Times that the new brochure has more interactive and immersive stops than ever, including bonbon making workshops, birding tours, alpaca walks and farm-to-table dinners. Family friendly activities are also included, like visits to West Perth Animal Park, Goats on 86, the Stratford Perth Museum, and River Valley Tube Slide, as well as pick-your-own bouquet and berries at local farms.

"Celebrating both established staples and new ventures ensures Perth County continues to thrive as a tourism destination. It supports local economic growth, encourages community pride, and provides visitors with a dynamic range of

experiences," Zhao said. "Whether it's revisiting a favourite bakery or discovering a new farm tour, showcasing the full spectrum of offerings keeps the region vibrant and top-of-mind for travellers year-round."

In honour of local food week, the brochure highlights the county's strong agricultural scene. The guide features 13 stops on its bakery trail, such as McCully's Hill Farm, Anna Mae's Bakery, Shakespeare Pies, and Gourmandise. Restaurants, farms and food producers are also featured.

"These tourism experiences put a spotlight on the local food producers and culinary artisans who make Perth County a standout rural destination, helping visitors connect directly with the region's agricultural roots," Zhao said.

The 2025 Explore Perth County brochure can be picked up in municipal offices, local businesses, visitor centres and the county's top tourism spots. The brochure can also be viewed online via <https://www.perthcounty.ca/en/discover>.



The 2025 Explore Perth County brochure is filled with lots of ideas for any kind of adventure, from family outings to foodie stops to date nights. (RICKY ZHAO PHOTO)

From side hustle to local hub: Worth Beauty Collective celebrates one year

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

What started as a small side hustle has grown into a local community hub that not only supports women on their health and beauty journeys but also stands as a space founded on female entrepreneurship.

Becky Worth of Worth Beauty Collective recently celebrated the business's one-year anniversary at its new location at 170 Ontario St. She credits her success to the many women who have surrounded and supported her along the way.

"Even though I started small, I always wanted to make a point of supporting other businesses — and more specifically, other women in business," she said. "It means a lot to me that I surround myself with other like-minded women in business."

Worth worked as a nurse for several years before returning to school to complete training in injectables, with the long-term goal of running her own business. She said she saw a gap in Stratford's beauty market and knew the transition wouldn't be easy, but she was ready for the challenge.

"I started small and would see my own clients after my hospital job ended," she said. "I slowly built up a clientele until the business grew enough that I could leave my full-time job and move into business ownership full time."

Worth Beauty Collective now works with clients looking to enhance the quality

and integrity of their skin. Worth says her focus is always on helping people enhance their natural look — never to overdo it.

"To me, less is always more when it comes to filler and Botox. We can always add more if we need to, but nobody wants to look overdone."

When asked what advice she'd offer other entrepreneurs, Worth emphasized the importance of mindset and commitment.

"Understand what you're getting into," she said. "Sometimes entrepreneurship looks fun, but there's a lot of work that goes into running and growing a business on your own. If you're not committed to your ideas or business, it will be hard."

"You have to be willing to put in the work. It takes time to build a clientele, and it takes time to build your business — but it's worth it."

Worth Beauty Collective offers a variety of services, including injectables (Botox and lip filler), microneedling, RF microneedling, laser hair removal, SculpSure treatments, facials, waxing, lash lifts and tints and medical-grade skincare consultations.

Worth also rents space to other like-minded female entrepreneurs. Jessica Guy of Green Beauty provides professional hair care services without the use of harsh chemicals, and Shelby Marchand offers natural hair removal and body sugaring.

To learn more, visit www.worthbeautycollective.com.



Worth Beauty Collective celebrates one year of female-led entrepreneurship at its new location. Pictured from left are Jill Matthew and Cindy Walker, employees; and Becky Worth, owner of Worth Beauty Collective. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

STRATFORD TIMES

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L'Arche Stratford announces \$2M of support from feds, as community gathers to break ground on new home

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

It was with great anticipation that the community gathered for the long-awaited groundbreaking of the new L'Arche Stratford building that will house offices, eight living suites and two activity rooms. Over one hundred people came together for the ceremony followed by a lunch at Community of Christ Church.

The \$6.5 million, 15,000 square foot building to be located at 426 Britannia St. is supported by the Be, Belong, Become campaign and has been planned for years but was stymied over the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the day has arrived and construction began June 2.

Executive director Stephanie Calma greeted the crowd and welcomed them to the ceremony.

"This is a really important day for our community, not only the community of Stratford but also the community of L'Arche Stratford," said Calma. "We are building something truly special here. It is our first major capital project in our fifty-year history. Together we are laying the foundation for a brighter future and we are all extremely excited and happy about the journey ahead for us today."

The project began as a dream in 2017 with the vision of core members for welcoming more people to L'Arche Stratford. When construction is complete, and the doors open in October 2026, the facility and services provided will increase capacity



Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma, campaign ambassador Cory Maschke, L'Arche Stratford executive director Stephanie Calma, L'Arche Stratford interim board president Martin Kern, Feltz Design Build project manager Iain Reynolds gather for the groundbreaking of L'Arche Stratford's new home. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

by 65 per cent, dramatically reducing the waitlist. The building will be fully accessible and inclusive.

Mayor Martin Ritsma was also on hand to provide remarks. For him, three words came to mind: milestone, community, and

inclusion.

"This is a milestone. Since 1973 L'Arche Stratford has served the community. To see the sea of people in front of me, volunteers, people that serve our community everyday in your work, people that are

donors and will be donors in the future, you are all becoming part of the L'Arche community as L'Arche has become part of ours. The other piece I want to talk about is inclusion. A big part of my journey as a student at North Western, then as an educator and administrator, was about inclusion. We need to continue to have that in our community, and thank you for doing that," said Mayor Ritsma.

Following the speeches, the crowd gathered at Community of Christ Church for a light lunch served by Black Angus Bakery & Catering. There was one more speech that day, by Be, Belong, Become campaign co-chair Elaine Clarke-Siberry. To the surprise of many in the crowd, she announced one more donation had been realized.

"And now, I am able to share a special announcement. We are deeply grateful to the Federal Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund for giving us a grant of just under \$2 million. We still have a way to go before we reach our campaign goal of \$6.5 million. If we can still raise some more funds to reach that goal of \$6.5 million then we will be mortgage free, and we will be able to use that equity to acquire more homes to help ease the very long waiting list that people with developmental disabilities face. The waiting list is so huge. With the amazing support of the people of Stratford and area, I am confident that we will reach that goal and fulfill the desire of the core members to welcome new people to the life of L'Arche," said Clarke-Siberry.

Queer Book of the Month Club

ALIDA LEMIEUX

Stratford Public Library

Tales From Beyond the Rainbow collected and adapted by Pete Jordi Wood

@SPL: J FIC Wood

Tales From Beyond the Rainbow is a collection of ten folk and fairy tales celebrating 2SLGBTQIA+ "heroes, sheroes, theyroes, and queeroes." Collected from countries around the world, including Benin, China, Russia, India and even Canada, these epic stories include talking animals, witches, sorcerers, peasants and royalty, just as you'd expect. Refreshingly, they also feature trans princes and princesses, gay ghosts and spinsters who subvert the patriarchy!

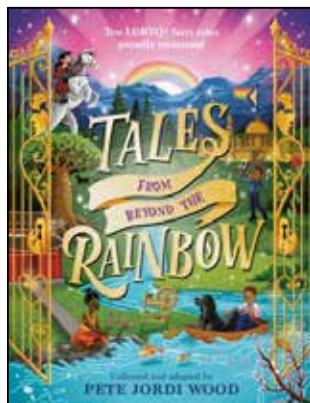
In many of the stories, the main characters are loved and accepted by most, but the hatred or jealousy of a few leads to conflict. "The Girl in the Market" is the rags-to-riches story of Dausi, a young trans woman who sells peanut sauce in the market and captures the heart of the king. A jealous woman in the

king's court tries to sabotage their wedding by spreading gossip about Dausi's gender. In "The Ivory City," the fairy princess Gulizar tries to poison her fiancé's best friend out of jealousy. The stories have outlandish details and are occasionally violent, but ultimately, they are tales of "love in its many forms, transformation, identity and gender, hope, survival and living life as your true self."

Anthologist Pete Jordi Wood paid great attention to selecting illustrators connected to the cultures represented in the stories and/or with queer identities. However, the illustrations are sparse and printed in black-and-white. I would have loved if this anthology was larger and glossy-paged, with full-colour illustrations to really bring these fantastical stories to life.

This is a refreshing collection for anyone who loves folk and fairy tales, particularly

readers who have never seen themselves reflected in tales of Prince Charmings and happily ever afters. *Tales from Beyond the Rainbow* would make for a good family read-aloud at bedtime or around the campfire.



Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. Who won the 2025 RBC Canadian Open?
2. What is the population of Canada?
3. How do butterflies taste their food?
4. How many ounces are in a cup?
5. Which U.S. president delivered the Gettysburg Address?
6. What gives plants their green color?
7. What is the title of the final Harry Potter book in the series?
8. What type of bean is used for making miso?
9. What is the mascot of the Walt Disney company?
10. What is Spain's busiest cruise port?

This week's answers are found on pg. 34

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High school students in Stratford unite for historic United Nations simulation

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

In a first-of-its-kind event, students from all three Stratford high schools, Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS), St. Michael Catholic Secondary School and Nancy Campbell Academy, gathered to participate in a collaborative United Nations simulation, aimed at fostering global thinking, diplomatic skills and leadership among youth.

The full-day session on May 30, chaired by Courtney Pearce, a Grade 12 student at St. Mike's, brought together student delegates representing 19 countries. Discussions focused on pressing global issues, most notably the potential of universal basic income (UBI) as a response to increasing automation, rising income inequality and poverty.

"This is the first time all Stratford high schools have come together under one model UN (MUN) simulation," said Mark Boersen, organizer and teacher at St. Mike's in his opening remarks. "It's not just about representing countries — it is about understanding perspectives, resolving conflict, promoting global cooperation and promoting human rights."

The meeting began with a roll call of nations, confirming the presence of the required two-thirds majority (12 nations) to proceed with voting and resolution-building. Participants were reminded of the UN's guiding principles and the importance of respectful, constructive debate.

Throughout the morning, delegates engaged in moderated and unmoderated caucuses, with a further 25-minute unmoderated session dedicated to refining and finalizing draft resolutions. Dossiers were provided for UBI research and support, and additional materials were made



(VICTOR EMMANUEL GUTIERREZ PHOTOS)

Students showed focus and determination during the breakout session deliberation

available upon request.

A powerful moment came during a breakout session when a female delegate stood to address a noticeable gender imbalance in the discussion group.

"All of the girls here noticed that it was just men at the table," said Ameilya Shuglo, a St. Mike's student. "We were all talking about it on our own, and I just wanted to bring it up to everybody. I wanted women at that table. I wanted to stand up on behalf of everybody and be brave and ask for a seat."

Her statement was met with four male peers removing themselves and allowing four of the female students to have a seat and voice their opinions. This was just one of the many highlights of the one of the many teachable moments—not only about international affairs, but also about equality, inclusion and the courage to speak up.

UBI, the theme of the day, was explored

in depth. Draft Resolution 1-1, submitted before the 1:50 p.m. deadline, aimed to address economic instability. The resolution proposed the creation of a UN UBI research and policy platform, the formation of regional working groups, and the implementation of joint pilot programs in partnership with willing member states.

Although the resolution passed with 13 votes in favour and five against, it was not without critique. The U.K. delegation voiced concern about the cost-effectiveness of UBI, calling for more robust data on funding mechanisms and long-term sustainability.

Mayor Martin Ritsma, honorary co-chair for the afternoon session, made a few stops in to speak to students during the day and also addressed the student assembly, offering his congratulations to participants and organizers.

"Engaging youth in local democracy is so important, but you took it one step fur-

ther by taking it to a global level," said Ritsma. "In these times where we see a lot of siloing of nations, your involvement is incredibly important. I compliment you for thinking beyond yourselves, beyond your community — you're thinking globally, and that's invaluable."

Throughout the session, delegates were reminded that this was more than just an academic exercise.

"Diplomacy still remains critically important today, because it is the primary tool for managing international relations, resolving conflicts, fostering cooperation on global issues and promoting human rights," Boersen told the group.

"You are not just students in the simulation. You are the voices of the future — learning to listen, to lead and to build bridges where there may be walls. I encourage you to participate fully in collaborative, respectful and constructive debate to help this UN committee determine bold decisions to better the lives of the people you represent."

"Your ideas matter. Your voice matters. Your participation today sets the foundation for the leaders you are becoming."

By 2:30 p.m., the delegates had voted, passed a resolution and adjourned — a full day of diplomacy and deliberation in the books.

As the meeting concluded, many students lingered in discussion, energized by the experience and the knowledge that they had taken part in something new, meaningful and global.

Boersen and other teaching staff who attended are hopeful that this marks the beginning of an annual tradition in Stratford, where the next generation of leaders will continue to think critically, speak bravely and lead with empathy — on the world stage and beyond.



All students from Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS), St. Michael Catholic Secondary School and Nancy Campbell Academy, who participated in the event, were invited into the council chambers by Mayor Martin Ritsma to get a feel of how the local council runs.



St. Mike's teacher Steven Postma, Mark Boersen, organizer and teacher at St. Mike's, Courtney Pearce, a Grade 12 student at St. Mike's and Mayor Martin Ritsma, honorary co-chair, listen in as students discuss universal basic income (UBI)

How Stratford's United Nations simulation came to life

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

What started as an idea in a high school classroom has grown into a city-wide initiative connecting students across Stratford in global dialogue.

The United Nations simulation held on May 30 was months in the making, spearheaded by St. Michael Catholic Secondary School teacher Mark Boersen and brought to life with the help of senior students and staff from Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) and Nancy Campbell Academy.

Boersen, a longtime advocate for global education, said the goal was to unite students from across the city and give them a platform to engage in real-world issues through the lens of diplomacy.

"We talk a lot about helping students think globally and act locally," Boersen said. "This was an opportunity to put that into practice."

Boersen credits Grade 12 student Courtney Pierce, who chaired the event, with helping to organize key parts of the day and build enthusiasm among her peers.

The idea gained traction quickly, with teachers at all three high schools agree-

ing that the simulation offered a unique chance for students to step outside the classroom and into roles that challenged their perspectives.

In the weeks leading up to the event, students were assigned countries, studied dossiers, and prepared their stances on universal basic income (UBI), the central topic of debate. Workshops were held to help participants understand UN protocols and strengthen their public speaking and negotiation skills.

What made the day truly historic was the collaboration between schools — something that hadn't been done before in Stratford's history when it came to a shared, city-wide simulation of this scale.

"We often see these kinds of activities happening in isolated classrooms," said Boersen. "But to bring together three schools, to bring together different voices, that's what made this really special."

Organizers hope to make the model UN an annual event, expanding its reach and continuing to build on the foundation laid by this year's inaugural session.

"It's about planting the seeds," Boersen said. "Today's students are tomorrow's leaders, and this is one of the many ways we can help them get there."

New show at Gallery Stratford

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

After decades in the making, the gallery's latest exhibition invites visitors on a journey through time, accompanied along with a slice of strawberry shortcake and a refreshing beverage.

Gallery Stratford's Strawberry Social fundraiser will kick off the debut of their newest exhibition "And yet...here we are: Permanent Collection/Constant Change" on June 22. The exhibition is set to run through until Oct. 5 and will feature decades worth of archival images chronicling the gallery's transformation over the years.

"My focus for the selection of photographs was the role of community and participation, I didn't want to document exhibitions," said Robert Windrum, curator and director at Gallery Stratford. "While going through the records it dawned on me that the images over time went to formal gatherings with cigarettes and cocktails, to children, education and participation."

Windrum explained that as economics and society evolved over time the gallery would transform to be a community funded gallery, focussing less on government support and fancy formals, now prioritizing family programming and community engagement.

The showing will utilize three gallery spaces, with each room dedicated to a different era in time dating back from 1967 until present day. Funded and equipped from Destination Stratford, visitors will be provided headsets with three channel options covering tracks from the 60s up to the present day to enhance

the exhibit's visual immersion.

"Music is always the soundtrack of our lives, and you hear a song, and it can provide most nostalgic memory," said Windrum. "It's part of the time travel that I want people to experience when they are going through the exhibition."

Tickets that are only sold online will cost \$35 per person for an exhibition viewing and to participate in the Strawberry Social fundraiser. Attendees will also be able to enjoy strawberry shortcake and prosecco, with all proceeds donated towards supporting future gallery operations and programming.

Windrum said that donations received from the fundraiser are vital towards supporting gallery operations, as the gallery has shifted from government support into an entrepreneurial model. Windrum also shares his excitement for visitors to experience the extraordinary presence the gallery has had on the community over the decades.

"We call it a permanent collection, but how can we have something permanent in an organization that's shifting constantly? I wouldn't say there is a threat to our existence but never say never," said Windrum.

"It is a little bit of a sense of false permanence to think that this permanent collection sits untouched, in an organization that is constantly shifting, in a community that's changing as well as a society. If the foundation is always in flux, how permanent can you be?"

Gallery Stratford's latest exhibition challenges the notion of permanence in a world of constant change. Through memory, music and community, it invites visitors to reflect on its revolving legacy.

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Ontario retables legislation to support seniors and their caregivers

LEE GRIFFI

Times Correspondent

The Ontario government recently re-introduced legislation to protect and support seniors and the people who care for them.

The Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, if passed, would better connect seniors and their caregivers to complex care, according to a news release. It is backed by \$114 million in investments to increase access to community and social programs that help seniors stay fit, active and healthy in their communities.

"As Ontario's population continues to grow, it is critical to build for the future so we can support some of the most vulnerable members of our community," said Paul Calandra, acting Minister of Long-Term Care. "That's why our government is investing in new programs to improve quality and access to care while strengthening protections for seniors and their families."

The proposed legislation would amend the Fixing Long-Term Care Act and the Retirement Homes Act. Several changes would be made and make several changes the government feels will make a huge difference:

- Protect residents with dementia by requiring all long-term care homes in Ontario to have an organized program for dementia care and services.

- Support seniors and their families by strengthening residents' rights to ongoing support from family or friends who provide care.

- Broaden requirements for long-term care homes to recognize and respect the cultural, linguistic, religious and spiritual needs of residents. This includes new regulations that require long-term care homes to increase information available in French.

- Introduce new offences related to the abuse or neglect of a long-term care home resident and enhance the ability to investigate and prosecute offences.

Other initiatives complementing the legislation include:

- Investing almost \$80 million over three years to improve and expand dementia care and supports.

- Expanding community programming and resources for seniors living in their own homes.

- Developing a provincial approach for using artificial intelligence for the early detection of osteoporosis, responsible for 80 per cent of all

fractures in older adults.

"Our government is continuing to take action to ensure that Ontarians have access to the health care and services they need, at every stage of life," said Health Minister Sylvia Jones. "This investment will improve access to high-quality dementia care across the province, allowing more seniors and their loved ones to connect to the compassionate services and supports they need, in their community."

Donna Duncan is the CEO of the Ontario Long-Term Care Association, a group representing the majority of homes in the province, mainly the for-profit sector.

"Long-term care homes play a vital role in enabling seniors with high care needs to age in their communities when staying at home is no longer possible. The government's historic levels of investment in long-term care staffing, program and capital have enabled critical innovation and improvements in care."

She added as Ontario's long-term care homes continue a transformation to provide innovative, resident-focused models of care, the association thanks the government for its continued commitment to supporting and strengthening long-term care across the province.

The Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario has thrown its support behind the proposed legislation. The CEO of the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario explained the government's recognition of nurse practitioners (NPs) as clinicians and leaders.

"We deliver high-quality, compassionate care in long-term care homes, ensuring Ontario's seniors receive the support they deserve to maintain their health and well-being," explained Dr. Michelle Acorn. "This is a necessary step in leveraging the full extent of NPs' training and expertise, and we look forward to continuing our work with the Government of Ontario and the Ministry of Long-Term Care to improve resident outcomes across the province."

Seniors, designated as those 65 and older, make up the fastest growing age group in the province, and over 60 per cent of long-term care residents have a dementia diagnosis. Ontario is in the process of building 58,000 new and upgraded long-term care beds.

Incentives up to \$35,400 are also being offered to personal support worker students and eligible personal support workers to launch careers in long-term care homes and in the home and community care sector.



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Caring for our community: Memorable Moments Senior Care Services

DIANE DANEN

Times Contributor

Memorable Moments Senior Care Services was created with a clear mission: to provide compassionate care for seniors in a supportive environment in Stratford and area.

The team at Memorable Moments is guided by values that focus on promoting independence, encouraging creativity, providing meaningful activities, and ensuring care is delivered by knowledgeable, caring staff.

They offer a wide range of non-medical home care services, tailored to meet the evolving needs of seniors. These include recreation therapy, companionship, respite for caregivers, transportation to errands or appointments, meal preparation, assistance with daily activities, medication reminders,

light housekeeping, gentle exercise, and even virtual reality therapy, a unique tool that brings joy and engagement to older adults in new ways. If a needed service isn't listed, the team is always happy to help connect families with other trusted providers.

At the heart of Memorable Moments is founder Erin Koot, a skilled professional with over a decade of experience in senior care. Erin holds a bachelor's degree in therapeutic recreation and sport business from the University of Waterloo and is a certified personal support worker (PSW) through Conestoga College. She also completed the geriatric certificate program at McMaster University. Her continued education includes specialized training in dementia care, palliative care, Parkinson's disease, and more. Her broad range of certifications and her deep understanding of aging care allow her to lead with both knowledge and

compassion.

A core part of Memorable Moments' approach to care is recreation therapy. This method focuses on helping seniors stay strong in body and mind by keeping them engaged in meaningful and enjoyable activities. It supports their independence, encourages social time with others, and helps them stay connected to the community. Most importantly, it helps them stay active and happy while making each day purposeful.

Memorable Moments also offers a community dementia program specifically designed for individuals living with dementia. This engaging program offers a welcoming supportive environment and features live music performed by local artists, flexible meal options, chair exercises, interactive games and a small group setting that encourages meaningful social interaction. No referral is needed to join and a free one-day

trial is available for those interested in seeing if the program is the right fit. Transportation can be arranged through One Care's easy ride program.

Home care services will continue as usual, but behind the scenes, important developments are in motion. Erin is working to transition the current programs to a not-for-profit model, a move that would make them eligible for grant funding. The goal is to make these valuable services more affordable and accessible for the community. If interest and demand continue to grow, Erin also hopes to expand the range of programs available. She's optimistic that these changes will begin taking shape soon.

For more information about services and programs contact Erin at memorableseniorcare@outlook.com For updates and more information about the programs, visit memorableconnections.ca or call 519-275-4902.



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Seniors remember taking flight during weekend “fly in” breakfast

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

According to two local seniors, there is nothing more invigorating than flying high in the sky over Stratford, Perth County and beyond.

Rodney Bell, 84, from Shakespeare, and Tony Brown, 87, from Stratford, reminisced about their early days of flying and enjoying their time at the Stratford Municipal Airport on May 31, when the airport and Canadian Owners and Pilots Association Flight 69 hosted the annual Family Pancake Breakfast. Commonly called the “fly in breakfast,” it is a fundraiser for the Stratford General Hospital Foundation.

Although Bell and Brown met special for the breakfast that Sunday, they regularly join a group of flying enthusiasts for coffee most weekday mornings at the airport lounge.

Orval Gerber, himself in his 70s, is a retired commercial pilot from Shakespeare who also usually joins the group. Without fail, the discussions can always turn from regular catching up to airplanes – and Gerber added that his son Jason has followed in his footsteps and is now a commercial pilot with Air Canada.

The breakfast featured a fly-in of more than 50 aircraft and a display of classic vehicles by the Stratford Cruisers. Organizers say that more than 670 people gathered for the event and that the final tally has yet to be released but donations on the day exceeded \$7,800 cash and \$900

CONTINUED TO PAGE 17



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Ontario

Seniors remember taking flight during weekend “fly in” breakfast



On May 31, Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma and senior pilots Tony Brown and Rodney Bell were at the Stratford Municipal Airport, talking shop and joining other area pilots for the Family Pancake Breakfast.

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

directly donated to the foundation online.

Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma was also in attendance. Although not a pilot himself, he hasn't ruled out the possibility of joining the airport's flying school and learning how to fly – if he gets time that is.

The mayor commented that if he has his way, the airport will always remain under

the ownership of the City of Stratford, since now and in the future, it makes a big difference in bringing business to the city and continues to be part of the fabric of Stratford and area.

And it gives Bell, Brown, and other flying enthusiasts a place to talk shop.

With files from Amanda Mordaragam-age, Times Reporter.



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Sports that can compel seniors to get up and move

Discussions about the benefits of sports participation are often rooted in how much young people can gain from playing a team sport. Older adults have much to gain from playing sports as well, and that's something retirees can keep in mind as they look for activities to fill their time.

A 2018 study published in the journal *Biochemistry Research International* found that physical activity can be a protective factor for noncommunicable diseases, including heart disease and diabetes, and can even help to delay the onset of dementia. The study also linked physical activity to improved quality of life and mental health. Sports require players to be physically active, so seniors who decide to dust off their athletic gear and play the following sports can reap all the rewards that getting up and moving has to offer.

• **Pickleball:** The popularity of pickleball has skyrocketed in recent years, with the Sports & Fitness Industry Association estimating there are now roughly nine million pickleball players in the United States. The organization Pickleball Canada reports that nearly 1.4 million Canadians played pickleball at least once per month in 2023, proving that this popu-



lar sport transcends borders and offers a great way to socialize with fellow seniors.

• **Walking:** Accessibility is one of the major benefits of walking. Even seniors with limited mobility can look to walking as a less demanding physical activity that compels them to get out of the house. And the benefits of walking may be more profound than people realize. Preliminary research presented at an American Heart Association gathering in 2023 estimated that walking an additional 500 steps

per day, which is equivalent to roughly a quarter of a mile, was associated with a 14 per cent lower risk for heart disease, stroke or heart failure.

• **Softball:** Baseball was the first love of many a sports fan over the years, and senior softball provides a way to maintain or even reignite that passion, all the while reaping the health benefits of sports play. Softball can help seniors maintain their hand-eye coordination and improve their flexibility. But perhaps the most notable

benefit of playing senior softball involves socialization. Senior softball requires being on a team, and the benefits of socialization for seniors are numerous, particularly when they play in leagues featuring players from outside their immediate social circle. A 2019 study published in *The Journals of Gerontology* found that older adults who socialize with people outside their typical social circle were more likely to have higher levels of physical activity and a more positive mood. Such individuals also had fewer negative feelings.

• **Golf:** Golf provides a range of health benefits that committed players are well aware of. Seniors who play golf, particularly those who walk the course instead of using a cart to get around, can reap the rewards of walking, including improved cardiovascular health, and even the benefits of strength-training, as carrying a golf bag around nine or 18 holes can build strength that protects bones and reduces the risk of fractures. Traversing a course also helps to burn calories, which can help seniors maintain a healthy weight.

The benefits of sports participation apply to people of all ages, including seniors.



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– Wes Reinhardt, ONE CARE Client



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Ontario 

Supporting seniors, one step at a time: ONE CARE holds first Steps for Seniors

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The first-annual Steps for Seniors Walk had enthusiastic walkers looking to support the seniors in their community.

Hosted by ONE CARE Home and Community Support Services, Steps for Seniors' walking route began at Market Square on June 7. Attendees heard a poem and rap performance by local poet Heidi Sander and rapper Azmatic and did some chair yoga and stretching with Moda Yoga before embarking on the walk. Ken's Fries and Annie's Seafood food trucks, which were at the event, donated 10 per cent of their sales from that day towards ONE CARE.

ONE CARE serves seniors and adults with health challenges in Perth and Huron Counties with programs such as personal support, home support, Meals on Wheels, assisted living/supportive housing, and adult day programs.

Stephanie Ellens-Clark, executive director of ONE CARE, said that the first Steps for Seniors event was a success.

"We had amazing weather, lots of people out, community spirit, and so many businesses involved and community members really having a chance to donate and share their time," she said.

ONE CARE held Steps for Seniors to coincide with Seniors Month in June. As of June 9, more than \$36,000 was raised to support the purchase of new "easy ride" vehicles. Easy ride vehicles provide transportation for clients so they can attend appointments, activities, shopping and other errands seven days a week. ONE CARE has 16 vehicles in the fleet and most of them need to be replaced as they were purchased in 2018.

"We've had to have some of them off the roads because of repairs and different things so we need to purchase some new vehicles," Ellens-Clark said.

ONE CARE will have another Steps for Seniors walkathon event in Clinton on June 14. The organization's 50/50 draw for the Driven to Care campaign will continue to run, with the draw date on July 2. ONE CARE will also have an open house on June 25 at their new Stratford location on 90 Greenwood Dr.

Otherwise, Ellens-Clarke said ONE CARE will continue to serve seniors in a variety of ways.

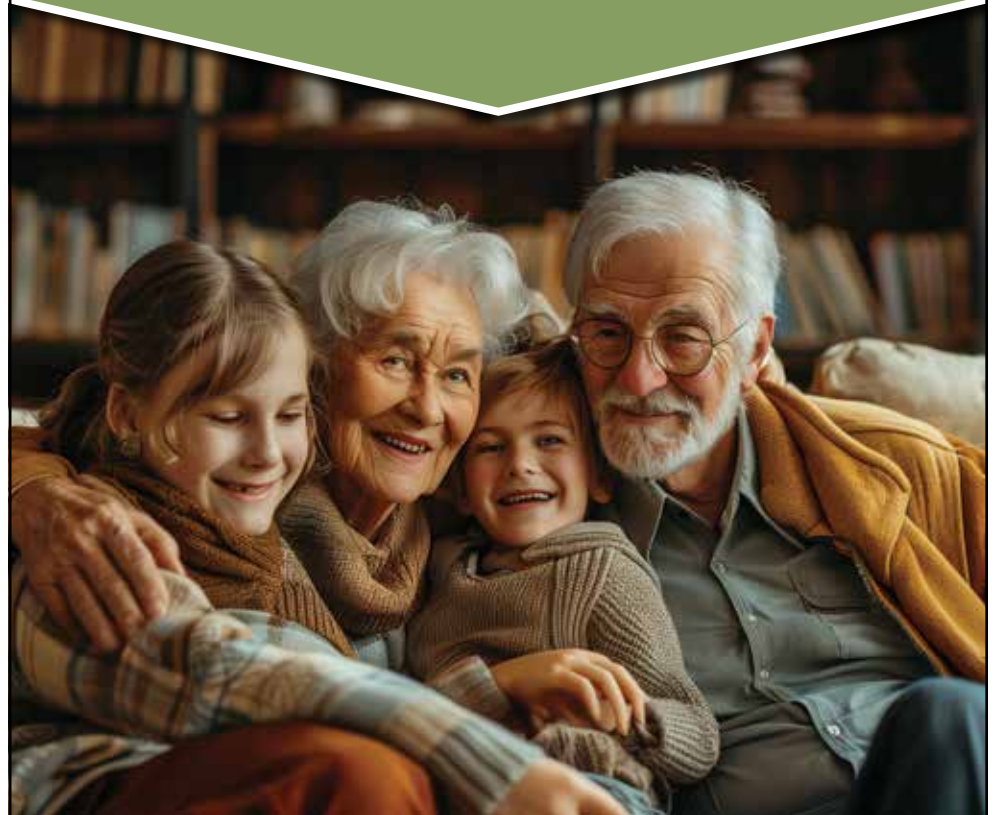
"We'll be out and about in the community. We always are doing fitness programs and doing all kinds of different classes and offering our services as normal," she said.

To donate to Steps for Seniors, visit www.stepsforseniors.ca.



ONE CARE held its first-ever Steps for Seniors Walk in Stratford's Market Square on June 7. The organization hosted the walkathon in honour of Seniors Month. (EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

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STRATFORD *TIMES* SPORTS

Stratford Flames burn bright at Mitchell Fastball Tournament

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The U15 Stratford Flames Huron Perth (Himburg) squad brought the heat to the diamond on May 30-June 1, delivering an impressive showing at the Mitchell Fastball Tournament.

Kicking off the action on May 30, the Flames powered past the Clinton Mustangs with a commanding 14-5 victory. The bats came alive early, setting the tone for the weekend. A standout moment came from Hailey Oswald, who made a stellar catch in right field and followed it up with a gutsy slide at home plate to beat the tag.

Stratford maintained their momentum on May 31 with back-to-back wins that secured the top spot in their pool. They edged Sweaburg 4-3 in a nail-biter, with Ava Culligan going a perfect three-for-three at the plate, notching two singles, a double and scoring twice. On the mound, Serina Proctor was dominant, fanning a tournament-high 16 batters over six innings.

Later that day, the Flames outlasted the Goderich Seahawks (Squire) 9-7 in a high-energy match-up. Isla Ritchie sparked the offence with a lead-off triple, setting the

tone for the game. Aubrey Schenk followed with another flawless performance at the plate, going three-for-three to help secure the win.

The team's winning streak continued into the quarter-final game on June 1 with a decisive 11-2 win over Goderich Seahawks (Collins). Maddie McKenzie led the offensive charge, going three-for-three, while every player in the lineup reached base in a true team effort.

Despite their hot streak, the Flames fell just short of the finals, suffering a tough 11-1 loss to Elma. Abby Hurley managed a solid hit up the middle, but a difficult first inning left the team with too much ground to make up.

Pitcher Serina Proctor was the team MVP, racking up a staggering 54 strikeouts over five games in a performance that turned heads throughout the weekend.

While they didn't take home the championship, the Flames certainly proved they're a force to be reckoned with on the fastball circuit.

The team would like to thank their sponsors: Crabby Joe's, Ironworkers Local Union 834, Hunter Steel, Optimist Club of Stratford, Food Basics, Joe's Variety and Casey Himburg.



Fighting Irish to join the NPHL

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Bentley's Fighting Irish is leaving the Ontario Super Hockey League (OSHL) for the Northern Premier Hockey League (NPHL) before the 2025-26 season.

"We want to take a moment to thank the OSHL for the past four seasons. A lot of great memories, great rivalries, and we're thankful for the opportunity to have competed there," according to the official statement from the team's Facebook page.

"However, due to the major upheaval within the OSHL, we decided to step back and put some serious thought and planning following our championship win. We're proud to officially announce that the Stratford Fighting Irish are joining the Northern Premier Hockey League."

Stratford will be part of the league's brand-new metropolitan division, which includes Six Nations, Strathroy, Woodstock, Orangeville, Alvinston and Tilbury.

On May 7, the team announced Mike Finlay as director of player personnel and scouting operations.

"This is a perfect opportunity for Mike to show the hockey world what he's capable of," said Marco Alexander, owner of the Fighting Irish, in a statement from the team's Facebook page.

"We're delighted to have Mike come on board as we take this next step, not only by joining the NPHL, but into a new chapter filled with exciting developments we'll be announcing soon. We believe Mike will play a key role in helping us bring another championship back to Stratford."



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Stratford Tennis Club hosts Super Set Doubles tournament

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Tennis Club held its annual Super Set Doubles tournament on June 7, a beautiful day for the 21-team tennis competition.

The ladies 'A' final was a battle between the mother/daughter team of Kim and Ab-

bie Straus and the upset queens of the day, Lindsay Murray and Jess Lawson. Murray and Lawson knocked off two higher-seeded teams to reach the final in their first tournament together. Team Straus had dominated their way to their first final. The championship match was more of the same. Kim and Abbie were on their game from the opening point. Murray and Law-

son had run out of gas and couldn't keep up with the pace of the Straus duo. Kim and Abbie Straus were crowned champions with an 8-0 victory. This is the first Super Set title for Kim and Abbie Straus.

The ladies 'B' final was the best ladies' match of the day. Michelle Thomson and Sadie Ennett faced off against Marta Andrekovic and Sarah Heaton. In a match that saw many long rallies and some impressive defense, Thompson and Ennett outlasted their opponents to take the title with an 8-6 victory.

The men's 'A' final was a battle of the top two seeds. The first seed, Mark Barton and Liam Benton, advanced to the final with an 8-3 win over David Nickel and Joey Hishon in their semi-final. Their championship opponents and number two seeds, Matt Furlong and Kent McPherson, took out Rob Mumford and Tony Stanic 8-4 in their semi-final to set up the final showdown. Barton and Benton showed off their experience in the final. After an impressive couple of high school tournaments, where they won both Huron-Perth and WOSSAA doubles, Barton and Benton added their first Super Set title to their haul with an 8-2 win.

The men's 'A' consolation final was one of the matches of the day. Bob Tamblyn (who was playing left-handed due to a shoulder injury) and longtime partner Ja-

son Erb faced off against another experienced team in Pat McCarroll and Murray Schiedel. At the end of a long day, they went the distance, needing a tiebreaker to decide the title. In the tiebreaker, Tamblyn and Erb prevailed by a score of 7-5 to win the match 8-7.

The men's 'B' final was a battle between first-time teammates. Sri Dugalan and Michael de Anglis faced off against John McCarroll and Ron Zehnal. Both teams had won matches in tiebreakers to advance in the 'B' draw. The final saw the consistency of Dugalan and de Anglis be the difference as they took the title with a well-deserved 8-3 win.

The men's 'B' consolation final saw another parent-child team achieve success. Neil Cave and his 11-year-old son Liam took out Jared Smith and Kevin Vogt in their semi to advance to the final. Their opponents would be teenage brothers Josh and Will Heaton, who edged out Stuart Arkett and Brian Arens in their semifinal. The final had multiple momentum swings and saw team Cave make a comeback against team Heaton to force a tiebreaker that would decide the title. Neil and Liam Cave won the tiebreaker 7-3 to secure the 8-7 match win and take the championship. At 11 years old, Liam Cave becomes the youngest Super Set champion in the tournament's history.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Pictured from left to right are Mark Barton, Liam Benton, Matt Furlong, and Kent McPherson. Barton and Benton, who have won Huron-Perth and WOSSAA doubles' titles in high school, added the men's 'A' Super Set championship to their trophy case with an 8-2 victory over Furlong and McPherson. The Super Set tournament featured 21 teams.



Pictured from left to right are Abbie Straus, Kim Straus, Jess Lawson, and Lindsay Murray. The Straus duo, who were dominant throughout the day, defeated Lawson and Murray, who reached the finals with a pair of upset wins, by a score of 8-0 to win the ladies 'A' title at the Stratford Tennis Club's Super Set Doubles tournament on June 7.

Send in your sports reports

Coaches and/or parents are invited to send in your sports reports and pictures to the Stratford Times to let Stratford and area know how your teams are doing throughout the new 2025-26 season (and to create some great scrapbook material to be reflected upon in future years).

Game reports should be kept to a

maximum of 100 words. Please include a brief description of what happened during your games, including the names of those who scored and any special efforts made by your players.

Please have all reports and pictures in by the end of the month by emailing stratfordtimes@gmail.com.

Stratford Branch 008

COMING EVENTS

August 9	Yard and Bake Sale, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm, items for everyone
September 14	Chicken Parmesan Dinner \$25 per plate. Complete details available in August and September Coming Events
September 17	Ladies' Auxiliary Luncheon, \$16 per plate. Complete details available in August and September Coming Events
October 4	Bus Trip to the Toronto Argonauts vs Hamilton Tiger Cats, BMO Field. Tickets are \$95 per person. Call Dean Listman 519-273-4463 to book your seat.

Tuesday Morning Buddy Check, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. OPEN to all Veterans Widows and First Responders

Friday Afternoon Weekly Social 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Saturday Afternoon Meat Draw doors open at 2:00 p.m., meat draw starts at 4:00 p.m.

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stratfordlegion008@gmail.com

U22 Nationals finishes fifth in the OBA MSBA tournament, rain cancels third straight season game

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

On the final weekend of May, the Stratford U22 Nationals competed in their first Ontario Baseball Association (OBA) tournament of the year in Mississauga, hosted by the Mississauga South Baseball Association, from May 30 to June 1.

Placed in the division three preliminary round, Stratford began their tournament play with a 5-3 win against the WOBA Bulls on May 30. On Saturday, May 31, the Nationals beat the Mississauga North Tigers in the morning game but lost to the Milton Mets 19-4 in the evening.

Despite the 2-1 record, the Nationals failed to advance to the semifinals due to the OBA-mandated run differential

tiebreaker.

Manager Brian Hawley praised the team for their performance in the tournament.

"It was a very good weekend. Two of our pitchers, Will (Zurell) and Matt Lazenby, trying to throw a no hitter Friday night, striking out 18 players. It was a masterful performance. Saturday morning, we had another good game where we hit really well, (had) runners in scoring position, which has not been a strength of ours so far this year," Hawley said.

"However, one of the top teams snuck into the tournament somehow and beat us up pretty good on Saturday night, which caused us to lose the tiebreaker to get into Sunday semifinals. So, unfortunately, it ended there."

Stratford was scheduled to resume reg-

ular season play on June 5 against the Hamilton Jr. Cardinals at National Stadium, but the game was cancelled due to rain. This marked the third straight home game cancelled this season.

Hawley is trying to remain optimistic as the regular season progresses despite the cancellations and the winless start to the campaign.

"Well, we've had some really bad luck with three straight Thursdays rained out, and that's frustrating, but that's part of the deal when you when you coach baseball, that you sometimes lose some games you're subject to adverse weather," Hawley said.

"So right now, we're just trying to get some games in and get some pitchers some action, and just keep moving for-

ward to our expectations in the regular season. It's the same as always, where we're just trying to, you know, get better every day. That's the general rule, get a little bit better every time we take the field and go from there."

Next up for the Nationals is against the London Badgers at National Stadium on June 12, then travel to Welland for a single-day doubleheader against the Jackfish on June 14.

The Nationals have a home-and-home series against the Waterloo Tigers at Betchel Park on June 18 and again at National Stadium on June 19 before playing their last regular season game in London on June 21. They will then compete at the Mitchell tournament from June 27 to 30.

Spring into Savings" @ Stratford Nissan

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2022 Nissan Rogue SV AWD



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LOW KMS - 18,975 KM

2024 Toyota Camry SE AWD



\$36,495 OR \$262 B/W
LOW KMS - 21,231 KM

2022 Ford F-150 XLT SUPER CAB 4X4



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2022 Toyota RAV4 Hybrid SE AWD



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STRATFORD NISSAN



Family breakfast fundraiser draws crowd at Stratford Municipal Airport

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

More than 670 people gathered at the Stratford Municipal Airport over the weekend for the annual family pancake breakfast, hosted by the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA) Flight 69.

The event, which featured a fly-in of more than 50 aircraft and a display of classic vehicles by the Stratford Cruisers, was held in support of the Stratford General Hospital Foundation's In Our Hands campaign.

The final tally has yet to be released, but donations on the day exceeded \$7,800 cash and \$900 directly donated

to the foundation online.

Bill Verellen, head of COPA Flight 69, extended his gratitude to the many volunteers, pilots and local businesses that helped make the fundraiser possible.

Verellen notes his thanks to the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association, Edenvale Classic Aircraft and all participating pilots. Special appreciation

also went out to airport manager Andy Woodham, Jay Ford of the WORK Pub, John Strickland Automart, Hyde Construction, Bob Allan of Accumetal Manufacturing, Mathieson & Associates Insurance, Gus and Clara of Gusair Photography, the Blue Team aircraft marshalling crew and the Stratford General Hospital Foundation.



Service was quick and consistent at the annual Airport Family Breakfast Fundraiser, where community members gathered to support the Stratford General Hospital Foundation's In Our Hands campaign.



Chris Borutskie, Waterloo pilot, and Rudy Hane, Bresau pilot, were two of the many airport members who showed up to support the cause.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTOS)



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STRATFORD NISSAN



Olive Your Favourites moves into new home during 13-year business anniversary

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Olive Your Favourites owner Aaron Bayer enjoys running the speciality olive oil and balsamic vinegar store.

Speaking with the Times, Bayer said he worked 36 out of 37 days in a row. Not once did he think about how he had to go to work.

"Every day, I'm excited to come to work and that's probably the richest part of this job and the most value I get out of this — is loving what I do now," he said.

Bayer took over about three years ago after the retirement of previous owner and Bayer's mother Michelle Hern, but he's been part of the business since the beginning. His passion for Olive Your Favourites reflects Hern's vision when she first opened the store 13 years ago to provide high-quality olive oil to customers.

"She found a product that she loved and believed in and wanted to share it with more people and the residual was that she could make a career out of it," Bayer said. "For me, it's something that I looked to do when I took over the business and took



Olive Your Favourites owner Aaron Bayer is continuing his mother's passionate legacy of quality products to use in cooking. The speciality shop moved into its new location on 22 Wellington St. (EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

to move it forward, is not to forget where the business started and it's not just about profits. It's about education and exposing the people to a more pure product, a healthier option when it comes to what's available to them."

Olive Your Favourites moved into its new home on 22 Wellington St. after previously residing on York Street. The store now has a larger capacity, so Bayer is looking to host guided tastings and other private events.

"You can get a little bit of education behind your olive oil, as well as do some tastings. A little bit more in-depth to what we do for the general public in the store on a day-to-day," he said.

Bayer also wants to partner with professionals focused on health and wellness like chefs, home chefs, nutritionists and chiropractors.

With the new store, Olive Your Favourites can carry a variety of flavours throughout the year, rather than rotating between a selection of flavours every couple of months. Olive Your Favourites added Ginger Goat Hot Sauce, made by a husband-and-wife duo from Kitchener who was featured on the TV show Hot Ones, to the inventory. Ginger Goat Hot Sauce, like all other vendors featured at Olive Your Favourites, features quality ingredients.

"Every ingredient in their hot sauce can be purchased at the grocery store. There isn't any preservatives or anything that can't be pronounced" Bayer said.

Olive Your Favourites held its soft opening on June 7. The grand opening will be on June 21 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Stratford Festival review: *Anne of Green Gables* brings the fandom on stage in hilarious production

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

When my partner, Julia, and I sat down in the Avon Theatre on opening day of director Kat Sandler's new adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables* – the classic Canadian story by Lucy Maud Montgomery told countless times before – I wasn't sure what to expect.

Unlike Julia, who first watched the 1985 miniseries of the same name when she was in school, I had never read the original book or seen a rendition on stage or screen before. I was tangentially familiar with the story through pop-culture references, but I soon found I knew a lot less than I thought. Julia, meanwhile, struck up a conversation with the two women seated beside us, who turned out to be *Anne of Green Gables* podcasters from Los Angeles who travelled to Stratford specifically for the play's opening.

As they talked excitedly about the show and reminisced about their experiences with the story, I watched with amusement as Maev Beaty, who plays both Penelope – the superfan-president of an *Anne of Green Gables* book club and a pseudo narrator for the play – as well as Rachel Lynde from the story itself, nervously flitted across the stage, speaking with a stagehand and ensuring everything was just right for whatever production of the story she was about to



Tim Campbell as Matthew Cuthbert and Caroline Toal as Anne Shirley in *Anne of Green Gables*. Stratford Festival 2025. (DAVID HOU PHOTO)

introduce.

As she addressed the audience and other members her book club joined her onstage – as well as a hilariously confused member of the audience (Steven Hao) who decided he, too, was going to help tell the story – it became quite clear this production would be unlike any other that came before.

As the book club members helped Penelope imagine the play, its characters and settings into being, many of those

same people, as well as the somewhat bemused stagehand, stepped in themselves to perform as characters from the story, bringing their own commentary and comedy to the events unfolding onstage.

Once Anne Shirley (Caroline Toal) was imagined into life onstage, it was obvious she would steal the show, just as anyone playing Anne should. Her quick wit, exhaustive lexicon, relentless optimism and flair for the dramatic were on full display from the very first scene at the

train station until she decided to remain at Green Gables instead of leaving for school at the play's end.

And while Anne was undoubtedly the star of the show, its heart and soul came from those around her, most notably the soft-spoken-yet-kind Matthew Cuthbert (Tim Campbell) and the shrewd-yet-loving Marilla Cuthbert (Sarah Dodd) – the aging siblings who adopted Anne – and Anne's eternal bosom buddy, Diana Barry (Julie Lumsden). Campbell's onstage chemistry with Toal was particularly moving, making his sudden death near the play's end all that more impactful.

Just as the actors in this production brought Anne's story to life, so too did the set design. From the Green Gables dollhouse turned two-storey, life-sized set-piece to the decorative tree stumps, floral arrangements and other vegetation used to depict the picturesque PEI countryside, the stage felts as if it were lifted from a storybook, even after the time period in which the story is set is bumped up to modern day.

Overall, this production of *Anne of Green Gables* was not only an excellent introduction to the story for someone like myself, but it also served as a celebration of the source material for fans who have cherished Montgomery's words for most of their lives.

Anne of Green Gables runs at the Avon Theatre until Oct. 31.

Stratford Festival review: *Annie* wows with talented kids and a cast to back them up

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

What more could one ask for in a musical than a group of talented kids, a stellar cast to back them up and a very well-trained dog? (He's a good boy! Yes, he is!)

With all these elements and so much more, director-choreographer Donna Feore has everything she needs for yet another smash hit with her 2025 production of *Annie*.

The musical starts on its strongest note as it transitions from Annie's (Harper Rae Asch) heartfelt performance of "Maybe" – setting the stage for the iconic, redheaded orphan's search for her parents – to the gravity defying performance of "Hard Knock Life" by all 11 child actors in the cast.

Let me just take a moment to express how blown away I was by that song alone. It was choreographed perfectly, complete with jumps and rolls and prop tosses and beds on wheels, while the timing of each of the young actors was impeccable. Beyond being stunned by the sheer talent on stage during that number, I had two thoughts. How much time and patience did it take to teach these kids to perform this number; and, if I were to try some of those onstage stunts, especially those in-



From front-left, Jennifer Rider Shaw as Grace Farrell, Harper Rae Asch as Annie and Dan Chameroy as Oliver Warbucks with members of the company in *Annie*. Stratford Festival 2025. (DAVID HOU PHOTO)

volving the beds, the crew would probably need to roll me offstage on one of those beds afterward because I would not be able to stand up again.

An uproarious standing ovation was really the least the audience could offer after a number like that one.

Beyond the extraordinary talent of the young actors – and Clue the foxhound-poodle cross, who played Sandy – this production hit all the right notes I was hoping for, having only just watched the 1982 film based on the musical for the first time a few weeks prior to seeing it.

While a few plot points differ slightly – mostly due to the logistics of producing it for the stage instead of film – I found the chemistry onstage between Annie, Oliver Warbucks (Dan Chameroy) and Grace Farrell (Jennifer Rider-Shaw) made this production more enjoyable and emotionally rewarding in the end.

Laura Condlin as Miss Hannigan is another brilliant casting choice as she once again shows her penchant for physical comedy in this production. Her haphazard disregard for Annie and the other orphans, and her drunken drive to partner with her brother, Rooster Hannigan (Mark Uhre), and his girlfriend, Lily St. Regis (Amanda Lundgren), to dupe Warbucks out of his money and Annie out of her new family gives the audience a detestable villain to root against.

There is so much good in this production, from the ensemble to the set design to the choreography and, of course, the orchestra, it's hard to do justice to this wonderful production in just 500 words.

If you're anything like me and you see this musical, you'll be humming "Tomorrow" and "Hard Knock Life" for days if not weeks. Personally, I'm on my second week for both.

Annie runs at the Festival Theatre until Nov. 2.

Stratford Festival review: *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* offers plenty of dirty rotten fun

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Sophistication and class versus low-brow simplicity. There are many ways to trick someone out of their money, as long as you remember one rule: give them what they want.

The cast and crew of director Tracey Flye's 2025 Stratford Festival production of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* did just that, delivering a fast-paced, highly comedic adaptation of the multi-Tony Award winning musical film of the same name for the stage at the Avon Theatre.

For my money, the stage was set impeccably, whether it was for a posh nightclub from some past decade, or a highly appointed, five-star hotel somewhere along the French Riviera. The costumes, too, added to that sense of wealth and mystique, be it Lawrence Jameson's (Jonathan Goad) carefully tailored tuxedos, or the flowing, iridescent evening gowns worn by Muriel Eubanks (Sara-Jeanne Hosie) and the other women tricked into handing over their cash, gold and jewels during the musical's opening numbers.

This, I believe, is why the crass humour delivered by the inelegant American conman, Freddy Benson (Liam Tobin), with perfect timing and the physical comedy



Jonathan Goad as Lawrence Jameson and Liam Tobin as Freddy Benson in *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. Stratford Festival 2025.

(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

chops to match hits so hard in this production. The onstage comedic chemistry between Goad and Tobin rivals that of Steve Martin and Michael Caine in the original film and perhaps hits its highest point – at least in my opinion – in the second act beginning with the number, “Ruffhousin’ With Shüffhausen.”

And none of that comedic chemistry would be possible without Shakura Dickson's Christine Colgate, the object of the protagonists' desires – be they financial or romantic – who ultimately turns the con on the conmen. What appears to be Colgate's innocence coupled with her hilarious penchant for

clumsiness – delivered adeptly by Dickson without any hint of her underlying machinations – makes for the perfect foil to Jameson and Benson's competing schemes.

In a musical rife with comedic chemistry, one other onstage duo has stuck in my mind. Derek Kwan's French police chief and conman sidekick to Jameson, Andre Thibault, and Hosie's Muriel Eubanks, the would-be benefactor and oblivious stalker to one of Jameson's alter-egos, unexpectedly find a sexual attraction in one another so animalistic in nature, one can't help but laugh. In a story focused around lies and deception, the pair finds a love so authentic, it offers a wonderful contrast to the main plot.

I can't conclude a critique of this production without a nod to the choreography. Throughout the musical, the actors' use of space, interaction with props and set pieces, and their seamless incorporation of hilarious physical comedy hit every note and every joke without distracting from the story. The musicians, too, should be credited for their commitment and dedication to hitting the right note for the right joke.

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels runs at the Avon Theatre until Oct. 25.

Killoran Crescent gardeners exhibit diverse styles for Horticultural Society Garden Tour

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The upcoming Stratford and District Horticultural Society garden tour on Sunday, July 6, promises to be as interesting as ever with seven gardens featured. Take this opportunity to visit different private residential gardens that showcase different styles, species and features.

The Killoran Crescent gardens are great examples of different approaches to small spaces that maximize what can be incorporated into the gardens. Darlene and Andre Attinger at 30 Killoran Cres. and Pam Maten at 36 Killoran Cres. are next door neighbours that are both featured in this year's tour.

Both gardens utilize container gardening with cloth pots and raised beds as a means to maximize the space available. They are easy to maintain, you can't over water and the air helps the root base.

Going through the gate to the left of 30 Killoran Cres. takes you through a climbing clematis before a welcoming flagstone path winds through the yard. The Attinger's labour of love began 22 years ago with a blank slate, there were no fences, trees, or gardens to speak of. She got into container gardening because of the ease with which she could tend to her plants.

“I love gardening. Originally, years ago, my husband built me this container box because we had so many bunnies and no



The container space at 30 Killoran Cres. is new this year and filled with produce that can be moved around as needed to maximize yield.

(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

fences. When we moved here, we had this one tree (in the back yard) and it was five feet tall. That's it. Looking straight down there were no fences all the way down to the corner. I think my soil was too rich and my veggies didn't work back here, and I gave up. Then I discovered the fabric pots last year and loved it. They are so easy to

maintain and to keep watered. So easy that we created this year ... a space for containers,” explained Darlene Attinger.

Anything can be grown in the pots, they have handles so that they can easily be moved into or out of the sun, no longer is being root bound an issue and watering is a breeze. She grew her own veggie

seeds, tomatoes, peppers and nasturtiums, among others. They have also focused on perennials in beds for an array of colour and beauty. There are birds, bees and butterflies that find a home in the organic garden.

Next door, at 36 Killoran Cres. is an entirely different approach with no grass at all. Pam Maten has created a wonderful space using trees, perennials, raised beds and containers. For the past ten years the property has been transformed from predominately turf to an ecosystem sustaining life.

By the time the tour occurs, guests can expect to see many flowers out front, from daisies to grasses, milkweed and hybrid trees that are keystone species.

“My focus in my garden is trying to incorporate native species; not everything in my garden is native by any means but I'm trying as much as possible to do natives. There is a bush honeysuckle and some grasses like little blue stem. It is well-behaved and gives a nice little plume and some winter interest, and there are some birds that will eat the little seeds in the wintertime. I'm trying to create some habitat for the birds and the insects,” said Maten.

Care and consideration of the birds is evident in plant choice, bird baths and the expansive front window is covered in dots to discourage bird collisions, which had

CONTINUED TO PAGE 32

The truth is not enough

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

A dystopian future full of corrupt government, disinformation and polarized political unrest, where random acts of violence and environmental catastrophes have become the norm, and where the powers that be try to impose law and order by means of brain chip implants. Someone or something needs to stand up against the uncertainty of the world, and who should that be? None other than the Horseheads.

Ron Finch returns with his 17th novel *Devolution: 2036 - The Truth is Not Enough*, a dystopian novel set in the near-future. Finch takes all of the uncertainty and corruption that has been prevalent in this current day and age and ramps it up to twelve. Taking those fears of the future and making it reality, Finch creates a world eerily like our own.

"This book takes a look at where current trends are taking us as a society and how some particularly bold and brave individuals may stand against them. A dystopian future that could very well become a reality if we don't change course."

Finch explains about the crux of his newest book, taking themes that are defining our current age and showing what could happen when everything goes wrong. "I wrote this book a year ago, long before the current American president became president again. Maybe it's a coincidence. If I really could see into the future I'd be rich," Finch joked in regard to the corrupted government within his novel, and the current state of certain government officials.

The Horseheads is an armature activist group that very much represent activists who are desperate for change from corruption in the world today. An important aspect of Finch's novel is how creating a community with a sim-

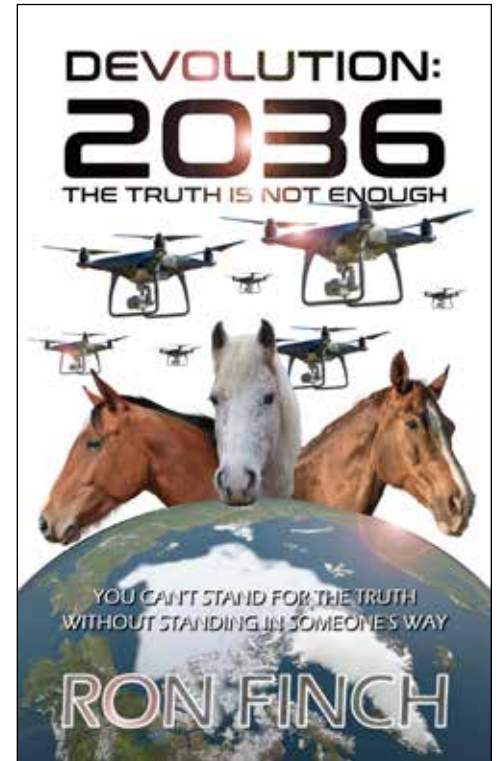
ilar cause is how a rebellion either succeeds or fades into oblivion. In *Devolution: 2036 - The Truth is Not Enough*, the Horseheads team up with a brilliant trillionaire recluse who had recently moved to Greenland in order to set up the TRUTH institute, an organization bringing together the world's best and brightest, but only those who are dedicated to the truth.

In *Devolution: 2036 - The Truth is Not Enough*, Finch takes a step away from the Joel Franklin Mystery series. This book offers a humorous and cautious look at what could be in our not so distant future.

If this book sounds intriguing, *Devolution: 2036 - The Truth is Not Enough* can be purchased on Amazon or directly from Finch. To contact Finch for more information, he can be reached at ronfinch@gmail.com.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Cover art for *Devolution: 2036 - The Truth is Not Enough*.



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Students help city's energy and environment committee install new boardwalks at T.J. Dolan

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The trails at T.J. Dolan Natural Area are now more accessible, and the surrounding natural habitat and plant life is better protected, thanks to a recent partnership between Stratford's energy and environment committee and local high-school students.

Last month, committee members worked with Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) construction-engineering technology teacher Greg Judge and his Grade 11 and Grade 12 students to install a large section of boardwalk built by the

students over the winter along a traditionally muddy section of the T.J. Dolan trail.

"The energy and environment committee is trying to protect the ecology of the T.J. Dolan area, and one of the issues we have identified down here is the cutting of side trails," said committee member Craig Merkley. "There's main trails along here and the if it's muddy, people will cut a side trail to get around (the mud). Over time, those add up to damaging effect and impact on the species that are in here."

As part of a plan that included the placement of signs asking trail users to stay on the main trails, as well as the potential future construction of additional sections of

boardwalk along the trail, the committee provided the funding for the students to build this first section of boardwalk.

For Judge, the project was a great way to teach construction skills while fostering community connection in his students.

"We got involved because it was something I knew would help reinforce some construction skills required for the course," Judge said. "It's also good to make community connections and give students a sense of pride and belonging in their community. It also ties to our Specialist High Skills Major in energy here at SDSS."

Throughout the winter, the students built four 16-foot sections of boardwalk and two ramps. Last month, they spent an hour installing them on the trail with the assistance of Judge and Merkley.

"The goal is to, over time, add to it as funding becomes available and completely eliminate the muddy areas of the trail so people will stay on the boardwalk instead of cutting a side trail," Merkley said. "It can't be understated the value of partnering with the local students to give them exposure to see where their efforts go, and there's a product at the end they can appreciate."

"It works out for both parties."



Left: A boardwalk built by construction students at Stratford District Secondary School was recently installed by those students along a traditionally muddy section of trail in the T.J. Dolan Natural Area. (CRAIG MERKLEY PHOTOS)

Above: The students, with their teacher Greg Judge and energy and environment committee member Craig Merkley, show off their finished boardwalk at T.J. Dolan Natural Area.

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MUSINGS: Transition to Self



MARK HERTZBERGER

Times Freelance Columnist

Here's a thought exercise: Imagine waking up one morning feeling a bit strange. You can't figure out why until you realize that you now inhabit a body that is the opposite of your gender. If you had a female body, you now have a male one. If you had a male body, it is now female. And there is no going back. As you navigate the world cloaked in your new physiology, you reach out to your friends. They advise you to accept it, dress appropriately and get on with your life "You'll get used to it," they say.

This story is, of course, an oversimplification. Those whose gender or spirit does not match their body undergo a lifetime of self-reflection and turmoil until this dichotomy is somehow reconciled. Sometimes it is never resolved.

Jennifer Wenn has undergone the painful but liberating transition from male to female. Jen-

nifer, a London-based poet and member of the Poetry Stratford group, says there was no one moment when she recognized that her essence was female. She just knew something wasn't right. When she was nine years old, she attempted self-surgery. At that age, of course, she could have no insight into her actions.

By the age of 18, Jennifer was in therapy. During one session she realized her body was foreign to her, that she should have been born a woman. But she quickly buried the thought. It wasn't until she was 53 that the walls came down. By that time, she was married and had two children.

Jennifer says that fully realizing her true gender was like being hit by lightning. She tried cross dressing and found she liked it. What her spirit had always said was finally something you could see. She began seeing another psychologist, joined support groups, and began her journey to full transition.

In the summer of 2013, Jennifer came out to her parents. As you can imagine, they initially had a great deal of difficulty understanding and accepting what she told them – but they both came a long way.

Her kids were savvier. Long before she came out, Jennifer's daughter had told her: "I know you're transgender, Dad."

In 2014, she began hormone therapy. It turned her inner land-



scape upside down. "It was as if I was experiencing puberty and menopause simultaneously." As she transitioned socially and hormonally, her emotions were all over the map.

On May 19, 2016, at the age of 56, Jennifer came to the end of her physical life as a male. On that date, she had surgery to completely physically affirm her female gender. Her kids were supportive, her son volunteering to be Jennifer's surgery buddy. Of the surgery itself, Jennifer says, "It was physically difficult and logistically challenging. You go to sleep in one configuration and wake up in another."

Why go through all this then? "Being a trans person is hell on wheels, something I wouldn't wish on anybody," says Jennifer, "but it was something I needed, not just wanted. I was at a fork in the road and the other path led nowhere or possibly to death."

Now Jennifer is an advocate for the trans population, speaking to

medical students and community groups to foster understanding and acceptance. She was on the London Pride board for over three years and was the MC and stage manager for the Trans Day of Remembrance ceremony. She is also a published author, including three books of poetry and numerous poems published in journals. Quite a journey for an IT business systems analyst.

Jennifer says that before her transition she could never have imagined speaking in public and writing poetry. She had been a high school teacher for six years and had made work-related presentations but had never been able to speak about herself in front of an audience.

Along the way Jennifer was subjected to abuse, from bullying at school to a physical assault after she came out in public. The most horrific incident occurred when she made a comment on a CBC commentator's blog. Someone replied, saying they hoped to see Jennifer's skin made into lamp shades someday.

These days, Jennifer doesn't have as many negative experiences. She thinks it's because she now projects confidence in who she is. People tend to target those they think are weak or uncertain, or who stand out in some way. "To be fair though, while I am an advocate I am not out there as much as some in the Queer community are and ... I am simply luckier." Lucky too, to be living

north of the border. She no longer travels to the United States and feels that, generally, society's attitudes are going in the wrong direction.

She tries to help people navigate the tangle of confusing terminology: sexual identity, physical manifestation, gender identity, gender expression. When she participated in a "human library" seminar, a Grade 8 student told her he had a trans friend. "Without education", says Jennifer, "how does that kid understand his friend?"

Jennifer tries to put her truth out there and educate. The simple act of being open normalizes the reality. Her goal is for people to treat her and others with dignity and respect: "I'm not an ideology or a theory. I'm a whole person whose body now matches her spirit. I can see my true self in the most intimate way possible." How many of us can say the same thing about ourselves?

You can find out more about Jenn at <https://jenniferwennpoet.wixsite.com/home>.

Mark Hertzberger is a former social services supervisor, human resources manager, conflict mediator, and literacy practitioner. He has since freed his mind and now writes poetry and occasional opinionated columns. Mark has lived in Perth County for 27 years, the last 12 of which have been in Stratford where he resides with his wife, novelist Yvonne Hertzberger.

Information/media literacy: A failing grade?

JULIA SCHNEIDER

Stratford Times Correspondent

It has been said that information is power, but I would qualify that statement: information is power if it is correct. Incorrect information will lead to erroneous conclusions, just as misleading directions will send you to the wrong location.

Getting it right may seem easy, but it is not. The means of getting information have increased but their quality has not. Ask yourself where people get their news and views these days. Is it through verifiable sources, or is it through social media, "substacks" and other biased sources? Do you consider the reliability of your sources and the information they provide? Do you trust others to think for you?

As a librarian and teacher who has taught students about information/media literacy in Ontario and elsewhere, this is not what I would choose to worry about. I would prefer to continue believing that people know the basics of being informed, how to assess information sources critically, and how to choose which ones to trust for their research, life and election choices.

Ideally, that's the way it used to work. But in the few years since I was in the

classroom/library, things have changed – a lot. Now many people, not just students, are turning to social media for their information. Do they check other sources? It seems they don't or, if they do, it is to go to similarly biased sources.

In the United States, the situation has been exacerbated by President Donald Trump, a master of misinformation. He has turned to a biased source, Fox News, to propagate his messages, derided journalists who do not agree with him, and cut funds to schools and libraries that try to keep news, views and conversations civil, open and diverse. In the latest issue of American Libraries, the official publication of the American Library Association, there is an article about misinformation escape rooms as an antidote to this. In these rooms individuals play games modelled on far-out scenarios similar to ones Musk and Trump might have devised (when they still worked together!) in order to hone their critical thinking skills. I worry: will this help? Is it enough?

What about in Canada?

Consider the recent federal election. Before the election I listened to a friend complain that she was frustrated. She had not seen anywhere how the parties stood on issues and had heard about nothing ex-

cept tariffs.

"Where have you looked?" I asked her.

She told me she got most of her information from her Facebook group. People on it had changed during the pandemic, she continued, because it seemed to make them angry and their posts divisive. Things got back to "normal" later, but now they were bad again because of the election.

"Have you looked on the CBC?" I asked her.

"What's the CBC?" she said.

When I told her it was Canada's national public broadcaster and that it had the positions of political parties on its website, she said she'd check it out.

Shortly after this, I listened to Matt Galloway on CBC's The Current talk to three Gen-Zers about who they would vote for in the April 28 federal election. Galloway asked the one who chose the Conservatives where he got his information. He said he avoided social media and instead looked at reliable sources, like the CBC. This surprised me; didn't he know that Pierre Poilievre had said he'd defund the CBC because it was no longer relevant?

Following these conversations, I listened with special attention to another CBC program, this one featuring an in-

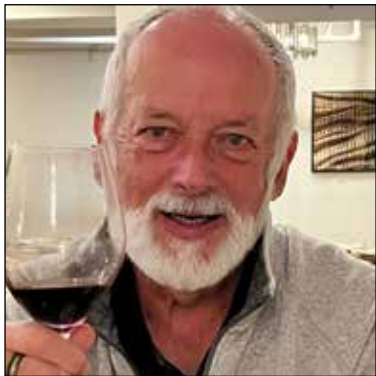
terview with Aengus Bridgman, from McGill University. Bridgman is deeply involved in research about how AI is being used to disseminate misinformation and disinformation from bad actors in order to influence elections. He said that malevolent agents are so proficient in creating "news-like" ads and features that it is very difficult to tell what is real online any more.

His advice: ask yourself whether information comes from a credible source. Did it come from a Canadian source? Does it seem balanced? If not, ignore it.

I am worried. Unlike some people, however, it is not because reliable sources of news and views do not exist. They do. Instead, I worry because they are in front of us and are being ignored. Ensure our identity, our heritage, and our democracy will prevail by checking out our public broadcaster, the CBC, which is devoted to telling differing stories and presenting diverse views in a civil, non-confrontational and unbiased way. The CBC was established in 1936 to "inform, enlighten and entertain." It still aims to do this. Tune in and listen.

Julia Schneider, B.Ed., M.L.S. has been a librarian and teacher in China, Ecuador, Mongolia, the U.S. and Canada.

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Regensburg: a well-preserved Medieval gem



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

It's not a challenge to find something old when you are walking around the cities and towns of Europe. The history here goes deep, but it is also frequently on display all around you.

And in a city like Regensburg, Germany, the place is not just old, it's special – as acknowledged when Regensburg's Old Town was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Ironically, while the designation honours the city's Medieval architecture (the Middle Ages lasted a long time, from the fifth century to the 15th), the actual UNESCO recognition is only two decades old – it happened in 2006.

A walking tour of Regensburg (and it is very walkable) will take visitors through many centuries of history and many architectural eras. But perhaps the most striking thing about Regensburg is something that has not changed since before the Romans came here in the first century, the Danube River.

The Danube flows right through the city and at the time of our visit, the mighty river was on full, powerful display. It's one of the remarkable things about Regensburg and other communities along the Danube that they have withstood the onslaught of the river in flood for many centuries.



A typical, historic street in Regensburg, with the modern touch of a helicopter flying overhead.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

You can't help but be aware of the river during your visit because one of the highlights of any tour is the Old Stone Bridge, an engineering masterpiece constructed between 1135 and 1146. During the second and third crusades, knights crossed this bridge. Today, it is used by tourists and residents alike, but by very few soldiers in chain-link armour.

The ancient bridge is, itself, the subject of some great local stories. One that is certainly true is the project included impressive towers. There is one fewer today because a failed effort to blow up an ice jam on the Danube blew up one of the towers instead. It was never replaced.

A less-certain account involves a competition between the builder of the bridge and the builder of a cathedral, now replaced but under construction at the same time. The

story is the bridge-builder made a deal with the devil to guarantee finishing first; he promised the devil the souls of the first three to cross the bridge when it was completed as long as that happened before the completion of the cathedral. He won and offered up the souls of the first three to cross the bridge, which happened to be a dog and two chickens. There is no report of the devil's reaction.

Perhaps the most striking ancient building in Regensburg is Dom St. Peter (Regensburg Cathedral). Founded on the site of much earlier churches (dating back to about 700 AD), construction on this magnificent church started after fire destroyed previous churches. Work on the present version began in 1275 and the cathedral was completed in 1320 – sort of. In fact, work continued for centuries with the cathedral's towers (which mea-

sure about 106 meters in height) only finished in 1869. And as any visitor will notice, a view of the cathedral includes serious scaffolding, which has been in place for 20 years and which residents suspect to be permanent. As with almost every European cathedral, expensive, ongoing restoration work is an omnipresent reality.

In total, there are nearly 1,500 listed heritage buildings in Regensburg, dating from the Roman period on.

As in many heritage cities in Europe, there are interesting examples of art, both ancient and modern, throughout the city. One very striking example is the mural on The Goliath House, a 16th-century work depicting David's defeat of the giant. The house itself is several centuries older.

I was also struck by a back-alley mural portraying artist Pablo Pi-

casso, there for no apparent reason but a really well-executed painting (except for the random branch of ivy that appears to be running up his nose).

There is more to do in Regensburg that wandering around looking at buildings – although that can take quite a while. The city is home to Germany's oldest bratwurst restaurant, the Alte Würstküche (Old Sausage Kitchen), and a number of breweries. Personally, I enjoyed a Gluck's Pils at Jolie's Café.

Not enjoyable, but more essential, is the part of any tour of Regensburg that involves the history of the Jewish residents of the city. As is frequently the case, this is a story of persecution, betrayal and eventual genocide. In the late Medieval period, Jews were protected in Regensburg, but when a recession hit in 1500, the Christian leaders realized they could solve their financial problems by driving the Jews – to whom they owed money – out of the city.

By the 20th century, the Jewish population had recovered but, in 1938, the Nazis destroyed the synagogue and several Jewish-owned homes and stores. During World War II, hundreds of Jews were deported, many to their death at the Dachau concentration camp.

Today, a newly created architectural/artistic work commemorates the location of the synagogue and honours the memories of the Jews who died in the persecutions over the centuries.

It's a sobering stop on a fascinating tour of one of Germany's best-preserved Medieval cities.

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



Dom St. Peter has been fronted by scaffolding for at least 20 years.



Regensburg is located at the northern-most point of the Danube River. This photo was taken when the Danube was in flood – a continual challenge to riverfront towns.

Eleven ways to cultivate inner thriving



IRENE ROTH

Times Freelance Columnist

In a world that celebrates hustle, achievement and external validation, it's easy to overlook the quieter, deeper experience of inner thriving. We're often taught that success comes from pushing harder, doing more, and constantly improving ourselves. But true thriving doesn't come from checking off boxes or climbing ladders – it comes from within. It's about how we feel in our own skin, how at peace we are with ourselves, and how aligned we are with what matters most.

Inner thriving is the feeling of being grounded and fulfilled, regardless of what's happening around us. It's the ability

to weather life's storms with grace and to savor the small, beautiful moments that often go unnoticed. It's not a destination we arrive at, but a practice — a way of living and relating to ourselves with kindness, presence, and purpose. When we begin to shift our focus inward and tend to the soil of our inner lives, we can grow resilience, joy and authentic self-trust.

The following 11 practices are simple, soulful ways to begin that journey.

Prioritize restorative rest

Thriving starts with honoring your need for rest. This isn't just about sleep, though that's essential. It's also about creating regular moments of pause, stillness and quiet. Rest replenishes our nervous system and gives us the clarity to hear our inner voice.

Embrace imperfection

We often equate thriving with perfection. But the truth is, thriving is messy, beautiful and human. Give yourself permission to be a work in progress. Growth comes when we let go of unrealistic standards and meet ourselves with compassion.

Nourish with intentional

choices

What you consume — physically, emotionally and mentally — shapes your inner world. Choose nourishing foods, uplifting media and soul-enriching conversations. Fill your days with things that spark joy and connection rather than drain your spirit.

Practice mindful presence

Inner thriving lives in the present moment. So often we dwell in the past or worry about the future. But right here — this breath, this feeling, this moment — is where life happens. Mindfulness, even in small doses, helps ground us in what's real and true.

Align with your values

When you live in alignment with your values, you create a strong foundation for inner thriving. Know what matters to you, such as kindness, creativity, faith or freedom. Then make choices that reflect those priorities. Alignment brings integrity, and integrity brings peace.

Cultivate curiosity over judgment

When things go wrong, or we fall short, it's easy to become self-critical. Thriving begins when we trade judgment for

curiosity. Instead of asking, "What's wrong with me?" ask, "What is this trying to teach me?" Compassionate inquiry opens the door to transformation.

Connect with nature regularly

Nature grounds and soothes us in ways we can't always explain. A walk in the woods, sunlight on your face, the scent of blooming flowers — all these things remind us we are part of something greater. Nature offers perspective, serenity and renewal.

Honour your emotions

Inner thriving doesn't mean always being happy. It means being emotionally honest. Allow yourself to feel the full range of your emotions without suppressing or judging them. Emotions are messengers and thriving comes from listening to what they're trying to say.

Practice gratitude, even with the small things

Gratitude shifts our attention from lack to abundance. Even on hard days, there's something to be thankful for, such as a kind word, a hot cup of tea, a moment of laughter. Regular gratitude rewires your brain for

resilience and contentment.

Seek growth, not perfection

Thriving is an ongoing journey, not a destination. Let your goal be to grow, but not necessarily to arrive at some fixed version of better. Be curious about how you can expand, learn and evolve in your own time, on your own path.

Surround yourself with uplifting energy

You can't thrive in a toxic environment. Be intentional about who you spend time with. Choose people who support your growth, respect your boundaries and see your potential. When you surround yourself with love and encouragement, thriving becomes contagious.

Inner thriving is a deeply personal journey. It's not about achieving a certain lifestyle, but about how you feel on the inside. It's a gentle unfolding into who you are and what you need to be your best. By integrating these practices into your life slowly, with intention and care, you can begin to nurture a version of yourself that feels fully alive.

You deserve to thrive, not someday, but now.

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 LAWN BOWLING CLUB OPEN HOUSE

Saturday June 14 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Stratford Municipal Golf Course

No experience or equipment needed. Instruction and equipment provided. Wear comfortable clothes and flat shoes/sandals. (And no, you don't have to wear white!!)

FOOD TRUCKS

Grace United Church. Tavistock

June 16, 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Frying Dutchman, SWAT, El Milagro, Moreish Ice Cream
Proceeds go to Camp Bimini

FOOD TRUCKS

Grace United Church. Tavistock

June 23, 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Serial Griller, Pablas Street of India, Ish n chips, Beavertails
Proceeds go to Grace United Church

FOOD TRUCKS

Grace United Church. Tavistock

June 30 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Wild Boar, Berlin95, Los Rolling Tacos, Moreish Ice Cream

Proceeds go to Agricultural Society

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34 Church Street South

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Available at Lyric Flowers, St. Marys
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STRATFORD TIMES

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.
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- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, you have the following options:
 - Coming Events Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
 - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$15 + hst
 - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a classified business card size for \$35 + hst

Killoran Cres. Gardeners exhibit diverse styles for Horticultural Society Garden Tour

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

been an issue. Going through the gate at the left of the house, guests will encounter an abundantly diverse and lush ecosystem. When the Matens moved in ten years prior, there weren't any trees and it was all lawn. The first thing done was to remove the grass, make pathways, add the raised bed and finally build the gardens.

There are a number of native Keystone species, those which support life. Goldenrod, black-eyed susans, ostrich fern and sensitive fern in the front. For shady groundcover there is wild ginger and starting to bloom at the time of writing was a snowflake viburnum. The zinnia bed will be delightful for the garden tour.

The Stratford and District Horticultural Society is an organized charity founded in

1878 to beautify Stratford, protect the environment, and educate the public. The society, as Garden Stratford, plant and maintain eight public gardens around the city. The annual garden tour allows the public the opportunity to stroll through private gardens. One does not need to be a Horticultural Society member to be featured in the tour.

The tickets for the tour are \$15 each and can be purchased for cash at Cozyns, Klomps and Sebringville garden centre. The tour takes place Sunday, July 6.

(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

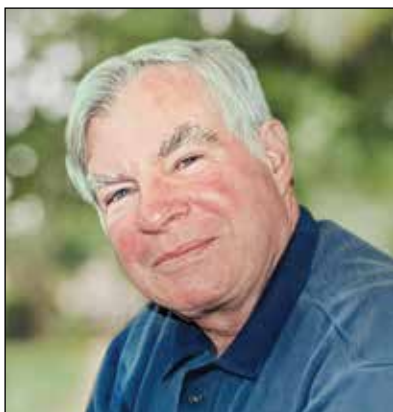
The no grass approach to the backyard at 36 Killoran Cres. is low maintenance with containers, raised beds and lush gardens of native pollinator keystone plants.



CLASSIFIEDS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

OBITUARY



PETER DUNCAN MCCOLL

Peter McColl died Tuesday, May 27th at age 91, after a short illness. Beloved husband for 52 years of Louise (Lishman), he leaves behind his brother, Rod (Liz), nephews and nieces: Matt, Chris, Alicia, Zilla, Gwyneth, Aaron, Geordie, and Carmen and their families, and many friends, including Bill Wilson (35 years).

Peter was a complex man, a deep thinker (he read philosophy and quantum physics), a consummate gentleman, a lover of singing (in two choirs), of canoe tripping, the theatre, working on art and he adored all five of our collies. His kindness, generosity, integrity, innate feminism, and strong social conscience were examples to all, but he will be most remembered for his brilliant sense of humour.

The family is thankful for the support of neighbours, friends (especially Al and Janine Voort) and the very kind nursing care that Peter received in hospital.

The funeral will be held at St. James' Anglican Church, 41 Mornington St., Stratford on Saturday, June 14, 2025 at 2:00 pm with visitation from 1:00 pm. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. James' Anglican Church or to Stratford General Hospital. www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com

WANTED

\$ Cash Paid \$ for your RECORDS and LPs. Jazz, Blues, Rock, Pop, Folk, Soundtracks, and more. Selectively buying CDs, Cassettes, Turntables, and Stereo Equipment. For more information: **DIAMOND DOGS MUSIC** 114 Ontario St. Stratford / 226-972-5750

WANTING TO BUY – All collectibles including sports cards, beanie babies, Funko pops and stamps. Highest prices paid. Free appraisals. Are you downsizing or need an estate clean out? We can help. We are at the Pinery Market at Grand Bend every Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call or text Stan anytime 519-868-3814.

Fair value offered for your vinyl records, cassette tapes & hifi components. Please contact **Sound Fixation, 519-801-5421, 4 George St. W, Stratford.**

I WILL PAY CASH FOR ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES – Coca Cola Pepsi any pop company, Brewery items Kuntz, Huether Labatts etc. Old radios and gramophones, Wristwatches and pocket watches, Old fruit jars Beaver Star Bee Hive etc. Any old oil cans and signs Red Indian Supertest etc. Any small furniture.

If you are moving or cleaning out stuff please contact me - 519-570-6920.

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Looking for Employment in Stratford or surrounding area. Hard working, reliable, with full G driver's license. Randy 519-271-8137.

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Riddles

Why did June bring a ladder to the beach?
Because it wanted to climb to the high tide!

What's June's favorite music?
Anything with a good summer beat!

Why is June always so happy?
Because school's out and the sun's out!

Why did the calendar get a sunburn in June?
It forgot to mark sunscreen day!

What's June's favorite subject in school?
Summer-y (summary)!

Why don't June flowers get into arguments?
They always turn the other petal.

What did June say to July?
"You're up next—don't mess it up!"

Why did the ice cream truck go broke in June?
It couldn't cone-trol its spending!

What's a June bug's favorite sport?
Cricket, of course!

What did the beach towel say in June?
"I'm feeling laid out!"

Why was June bad at secrets?
Because it always lets things slip into summer!

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 34



Pet of the Month



OAKLEY

Meet Oakley! A vibrant, smart, and endlessly entertaining large-breed pup who's been patiently waiting over 200 days for her forever home. This high-energy girl is full of promise and looking for an experienced, active adopter who understands working or guardian breeds.

Oakley loves long walks, and cuddling on the couch after a busy day. She's still mastering her manners, but with structure, training, and enrichment, she'll shine.

Come meet Oakley at the Humane Society's Adoption Event June 14th & 15th! She just might be the adventure buddy you've been waiting for.



Word Search

ICE CREAM FLAVOURS

U	Z	D	Y	H	H	P	C	B	K	G	T	W	F	C	S	V	B	O	P
T	S	M	O	E	H	S	K	A	T	X	R	V	S	M	H	N	I	N	K
Z	R	F	I	M	O	O	S	E	T	R	A	C	K	S	N	H	R	L	Z
J	D	I	X	N	T	G	A	V	B	K	S	H	R	V	C	Q	T	T	B
K	D	G	S	C	T	A	J	X	H	F	A	A	R	A	I	R	H	K	U
H	N	N	K	A	O	C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E	U	R	D	U	B
V	K	C	Z	B	L	O	H	Z	Z	R	D	S	Q	R	R	H	A	R	B
G	A	E	P	C	M	T	K	O	N	L	I	D	L	J	N	Z	Y	O	L
R	K	N	U	U	U	L	E	I	C	P	D	E	Q	O	C	H	C	C	E
M	D	D	I	S	N	G	V	D	E	O	U	M	D	C	M	Q	A	K	G
H	I	E	J	L	V	H	Z	D	C	S	L	Z	B	K	X	Y	K	Y	U
D	K	G	A	D	L	S	M	B	Z	A	A	A	E	L	B	B	E	R	M
X	E	H	F	O	A	A	F	J	B	Q	R	N	T	F	B	P	K	O	E
K	C	O	T	T	O	N	C	A	N	D	Y	A	D	E	F	I	O	A	J
V	Q	Z	H	Y	D	I	Z	C	G	D	G	R	M	C	C	Z	V	D	S
L	L	R	E	A	Y	W	G	L	C	F	G	M	S	E	R	H	C	A	S
O	I	K	R	X	D	R	U	K	K	H	H	H	I	A	L	E	I	H	R
U	B	E	S	T	R	A	W	B	E	R	R	Y	X	O	G	J	A	P	T
F	T	D	A	F	Q	L	I	A	Y	O	H	R	E	O	I	P	S	M	L
B	N	Q	L	Z	E	T	M	Q	E	Z	P	P	D	T	W	R	I	Z	O

- Vanilla
- Chocolate
- Strawberry
- Mint Chocolate
- Chip
- Cookies and Cream
- Rocky Road
- Birthday Cake
- Salted Caramel
- Pistachio
- Cotton Candy
- Moose Tracks
- Bubble Gum

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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Ryan Fox
2. 40.1 million
3. With their feet
4. Eight
5. Abraham Lincoln
6. Chlorophyll
7. Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows
8. Soybeans
9. Mickey Mouse
10. Barcelona

SUDOKU

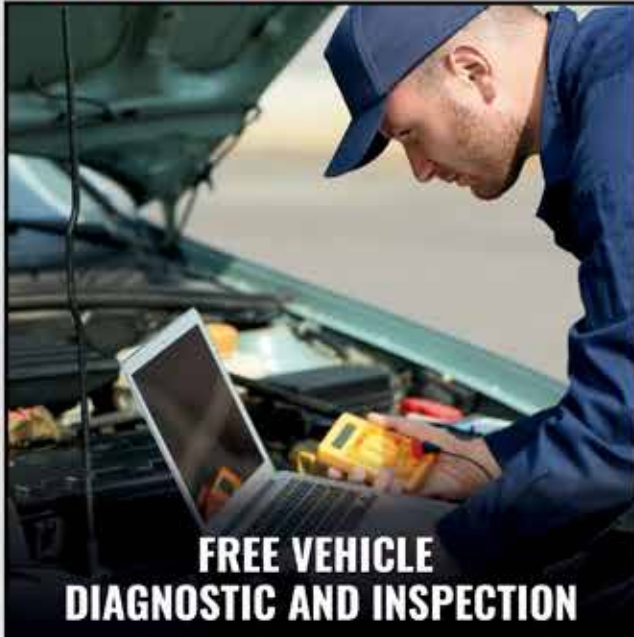
3	7	6	4	9	8	2	5	1
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2	1	9	6	7	5	4	8	3
7	6	8	5	1	2	3	4	9
9	3	4	8	6	7	5	1	2
1	5	2	3	4	9	7	6	8
6	8	1	7	5	3	9	2	4
4	9	7	1	2	6	8	3	5
5	2	3	9	8	4	1	7	6

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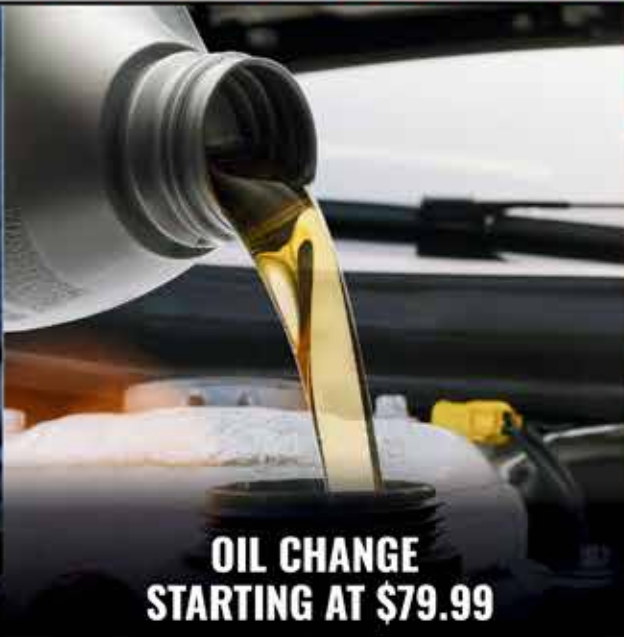
Contact:
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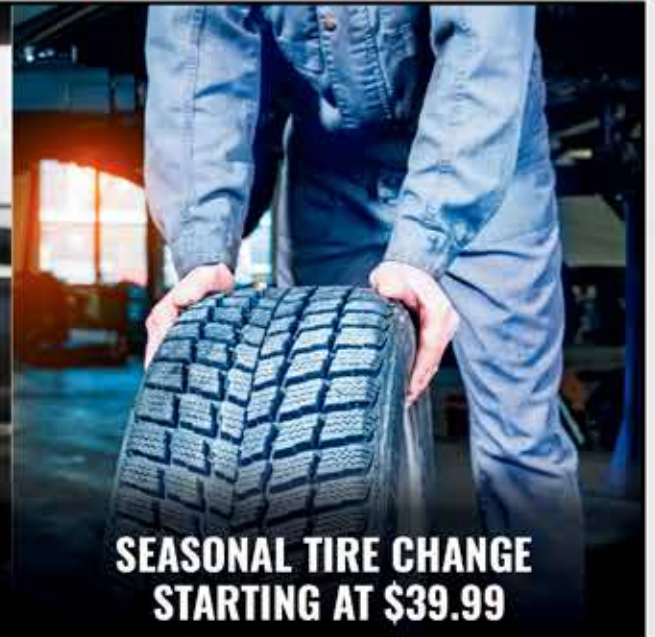
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