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March weather swings from spring warmth to winter blast

(NANCY COGHLIN PHOTOS)

One day it looked like spring. The next, winter had returned. A dramatic shift in weather last week across southern Ontario saw temperatures reach about 18 degrees Celsius under clear skies before plunging within hours as heavy snow and strong winds swept through the region, creating near zero visibility for drivers. These photos captured by Perth County farmers Nancy and Allan Coghlin north of Milverton show the striking contrast. One image features a fiery orange sunset under warm March skies, while the next morning reveals the same landscape blanketed in fresh snow – a reminder of just how quickly conditions can change in southern Ontario this time of year.

School boards and stakeholders call for provincewide governance consultation

TVDSB trustee will not run for re-election

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

A dozen Ontario education groups recently held a press conference to express their concerns about comments from the province's education minister on the

future of elected school board trustees.

Education Minister Paul Calandra has hinted the current system could be wiped out. The 12 organizations said the move would eliminate one of the most important ways families and communities have a say in how their schools are governed.

They add important decisions about education could be made without appropriate public discussion, debate and awareness.

Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) trustee Dave Cripps said the number one takeaway was the number of

Continued on page 2

School boards, police launch new partnership to combat human trafficking in Waterloo Region

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

A new partnership between Waterloo Region's two school boards, local police and a national advocacy organization intends to tackle what officials say is one of the fastest-growing – and often hidden – crimes affecting local youth.

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) and Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) have joined forces with Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) and #NotInMyCity to raise awareness of human trafficking and equip students, staff and families with the tools to recognize and respond to it.

The initiative comes as Waterloo Region continues to report some of the highest rates of human-trafficking victimization in Ontario. In 2024, the local rate was approximately 3.4 victims per 100,000 people – about 70 per cent higher than the provincial average and 178 per cent higher than the national rate.

For police, the decision to partner with schools is rooted in the demographics of those most at risk.

“Between the two school boards, there are thousands of young people who are at the

Continued on page 3



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Education groups push back as province considers scrapping elected school trustees

Continued from page 1

groups standing together.

“There was representation from principals, teachers, parents, special needs students and the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA). This is galvanizing people regarding the change the minister may be making.”

The groups are united in calling for the government to undertake broad consultations with education partners before advancing any legislative reforms to school board governance. They say it should include the voices and perspectives of students and parents – including parents of students with disabilities, school boards, education staff and subject matter experts.

“It should be even deeper. There has been no mention of rural consultations at all. If you are going to make a structural change, some discussions would be good, and I agree with the message that was delivered.”

Nominations for the 2026 municipal elections for mayors and councillors, as well as trustees, open on Friday, May 1. The deadline is in late August with election day set for Oct. 26.

Cripps said his understanding is Catholic trustee elections will go ahead as planned since their existence is enshrined in legislation. His biggest worry is the uncertainty surrounding public boards.

“It’s a struggle for municipal clerks to get the election in order, and we already

face a lot of voter apathy when it comes to municipal elections. This isn’t encouraging people to run or necessarily to vote.”

Cripps, who represents Oxford County, added he likely won’t be putting his name on the ballot.

“I don’t believe I will run as a school board trustee. I don’t think the TVDSB will be out of supervision by September. The lack of difference I can make in the role as it is currently configured tells me not to invest my time there.”

When asked if he had any other political aspirations, the Ingersoll business owner said anything is possible.

“I am always open to opportunities as they crop up, but nothing solid right now.”

The Gazette also quizzed Cripps on what he would say to Calandra and Premier Doug Ford if he had the opportunity.

“Change is often warranted but supporting it and doing change the right way is key to getting the ultimate goals you are looking for. Yes, the public school board system and students could benefit from a change in governance style. Still, we need to focus on consultation, the students, parents, teachers and principals to make sure we are delivering the best system we can.”

He added his constituents are realizing there is a governance gap without functional trustees at the TVDSB, particularly at the municipal level, as a school near Norwich undergoes a boundary adjustment process.

“When decisions are being made about our children and their education, they must be made in public, open to public scrutiny,” said OPSBA president Kathleen Woodcock, also a trustee with the Waterloo Region District School Board. “The people making these decisions should be directly accountable to you, the public.”

Trustees have a key role in Ontario’s four publicly funded education systems. Without elected trustees, decisions about school closures, special education priorities, student supports and the use or sale of public-school land would be made behind closed doors, further away from the communities they affect.

For example, in school boards currently under supervision, important decisions are regularly being made by a provincially appointed supervisor, who is accountable only to a minister at Queen’s Park, not to local families.

Public education shapes Ontario’s economy, communities and future. Decisions about curriculum priorities, equity policies, mental health supports, and long-term capital planning require democratic oversight.

The Ontario government is launching the Classroom Supplies Fund to provide elementary school homeroom teachers with direct access to \$750 in funding each school year for classroom supplies. The initiative will be launched as part of the province’s 2026 budget.



(FACEBOOK PHOTO)

Thames Valley District School Board trustee Dave Cripps is raising concerns about potential changes to Ontario’s school board governance, urging greater consultation and public input before any decisions are made.

Cripps said any money invested in education and directly into the classroom is a positive, but he is still skeptical of the province’s motives.

“With everything going on, maybe that wasn’t the change I would focus on immediately. But, overall, I have to support that. It is better to put supplies in the classroom directly and empower teachers. Lots of them spend ridiculous amounts of money out of pocket to support their classrooms,” he said.

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Schools, police unite to combat rising human trafficking in Waterloo Region

Continued from page 1

same age as many victims and survivors of human trafficking,” said Cheri Greeno, director of corporate affairs with WRPS. “To have them educated on how to recognize signs of human trafficking can be very helpful in terms of helping someone they may know or suspect is in trouble.”

Greeno said the region’s location along the Highway 401 corridor between the Greater Toronto Area and southwestern Ontario may also contribute to higher rates of trafficking, making awareness efforts even more critical.

The campaign builds on existing work already underway in local schools. Both boards have implemented professional development for staff and awareness initiatives for students in grades seven to 12 as part of the Ministry of Education’s Keeping Students Safe policy.

WRDSB director of education Scott Miller said the partnership strengthens those efforts and reinforces the importance of early intervention.

“This partnership further enhances our ability to recognize the signs of human trafficking early and empowers school communities to take meaningful action to better protect young people,” he said.

Staff training focuses on identifying indicators of exploitation, understanding how grooming can occur and knowing how to connect students with appropriate supports – including the R.E.S.E.T. curriculum for grades seven to nine – help students understand the risks and where to turn for help.

Awareness materials such as “Know the Signs” posters are also displayed in schools, while information is shared with parents and caregivers to extend that awareness beyond the classroom.

For #NotInMyCity founder Paul Brandt, education is the cornerstone of prevention.

“Human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing crimes in Canada but remains largely invisible,” Brandt said. “By spreading awareness in schools, we help students and staff recognize the signs of grooming and exploitation early, creating safer environments where everyone knows what to

watch for and where to turn for help.”

Brandt said the campaign grew from grassroots efforts to bring together schools, police, governments and community organizations with a shared goal of protecting youth and disrupting exploitation.

“Our messaging centres on igniting awareness, empowering everyone and knowing where to get help,” he said. “When we ignite that awareness, we make it harder for traffickers to prosper in secrecy.”

The campaign will deliver that message through school-based education, practical resources and information tailored to students, staff and families, all aimed at breaking down the secrecy that allows trafficking to thrive.

While education plays a key role, police emphasize it is just one piece of a broader, coordinated response.

“Addressing human trafficking requires more than just policing – it requires partnership,” Greeno said. “Through this campaign, we are coming together and committing to strengthening education, collaboration and proactive enforcement efforts to ensure those affected are supported and those responsible are brought to justice.”

Organizers hope the initiative will not only raise awareness among youth, but also inspire wider community involvement.

“We hope more organizations join us in support of #NotInMyCity so we can truly say we will not tolerate this in our community,” Greeno said.

For Brandt, that collective approach is essential.

“When communities come together – schools, families, police and local groups – we create places where exploitation can’t hide and survivors get the support they need,” he said. “We are stronger together.”

To learn more about spotting the signs of human trafficking, visit www.ontario.ca/page/recognizing-human-trafficking#section-5. For more information about talking with children about human trafficking, visit www.ontario.ca/page/talking-children-about-human-trafficking. For more on #NotInMyCity and to take the organization’s interactive e-learning course, visit notinmycity.ca/learn/.



(NIMCALLY INSTAGRAM PHOTO)

Local education leaders and Waterloo Regional Police representatives gathered to announce a new partnership aimed at raising awareness of human trafficking and better protecting youth across Waterloo Region. From left, Chief Mark Crowell, Deputy Chief John Goodman, Scott Miller, Director of the Waterloo District School Board, Annalisa Varano, Director of the Waterloo Catholic School Board, Deputy Chief Jen Davis and Deputy Chief Eugene Fenton

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Wellesley council approves vehicle camera policy with staff-requested changes

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Wellesley township council has approved a new policy dictating the use of onboard surveillance cameras in municipal fleet vehicles after incorporating changes requested by unionized township staff.

At its March 10 meeting, council voted to amend and adopt the township's on-board mobile surveillance systems policy, clearing the way for the installation of front-facing and driver-facing cameras in all enclosed-cab township vehicles. The policy formalizes how the cameras will be used, accessed and monitored as part of the township's broader risk-management strategy for its fleet.

"At the (Feb. 24) committee (of the whole) meeting, we discussed the on-board mobile surveillance system policy, and it was approved by committee at that time, and it would be up for ratification tonight," CAO Rik Louwagie told councillors March 10. "Following that meeting, a couple of union members did approach the director of public works and asked for clarification and some potential amendments to that policy.

"What we're recommending is two changes that are minor in nature but important to the operators."

One amendment addresses the potential use of audio recording. While the surveillance equipment has the capability to record audio, the revised policy states the



(VECTEEZY PHOTO)

New township policy will see dash cameras installed in municipal fleet vehicles, with footage used only for incidents such as collisions, complaints or investigations.

municipality will not use audio recording unless it is deemed beneficial and the vehicle operator is informed and provides consent prior to any recording taking place.

Staff also removed language referencing

sun visors from the disciplinary section of the policy after determining the wording could create confusion about normal vehicle operation.

"Sun visors was written in there, in that

section, as 'operators are not to move the sun visors in a way to block the camera.' Obviously, they need to be able to use those sun visors still for the purpose they're intended. We're proposing to take sun visors out," Louwagie said. "The reason it was in originally; it was a cut and paste from a template we had. I believe the intent of that was to say the operator shall not twist and turn that sun visor in such a way that it would block it, but we can definitely take it out of the policy with no recourse."

According to the policy, the cameras may capture both forward-facing and driver-facing video in fleet vehicles. However, recordings will not be monitored on a regular basis and will only be reviewed in specific circumstances such as collisions, complaints, claims or investigations related to fleet operations.

The footage may also be used for staff training or to investigate incidents involving personal injury or other legal matters.

Township officials say the policy is intended to help improve accountability, support incident investigations and protect both employees and the municipality in the event of disputes or claims related to vehicle operation.

Installation of the cameras has already begun in some municipal vehicles, including public works, recreation and building department fleets, though data will not be accessed or collected until the amended policy is fully implemented and staff have been informed of its requirements.

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Why does it flood so often in New Hamburg?

GRCA releases statement on most recent provincial update to decrease conservation authorities

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

Anyone who lives in the New Hamburg area is well aware of the continuous flooding problem. The questions are why it happens and what, if anything, can be done about it?

New Hamburg is one of many communities known to be flood-damage centres in the Grand River watershed. A significant portion of the downtown core lies within the Nith River floodplain, making it susceptible to frequent flooding.

Communities along the Nith are more vulnerable in comparison to other communities within the Grand River watershed, in part because there is no multipurpose reservoir upstream to regulate flows like in other areas of the watershed.

“The GRCA (Grand River Conservation Authority) maintains the dike in New Hamburg, which provides flood reduction during more frequent, smaller events. Maintenance of this dike is part of the GRCA’s water-control structures program,” said Serena Catania, GRCA’s supervisor of communications and marketing.

“That said, it’s important to note that while the GRCA’s dikes and dams help manage river flows and reduce the impacts of flooding for downstream communities, this flood-management infrastructure cannot eliminate the risk of flooding.”

There are different causes of riverine flooding. A rapid rise in temperatures or rainfall, or a combination of the two, can generate runoff and cause riverine flooding. Ice in a river or stream can also pile up in a location and create an ice jam, which can cause flooding.

The GRCA manages the risk of flooding by monitoring weather conditions and river flows to know when flooding is possible, issuing flood messages to alert municipal flood coordinators and the public about coming high water, and operating



(MIKE GRUMMETT PHOTO)

A park gazebo in downtown New Hamburg is seen here under water when the Nith River flooded its banks recently following heavy rain and rapid snowmelt.

seven multipurpose dams and reservoirs to hold water and reduce flood peaks.

“We own and maintain dikes to protect low-lying areas in Kitchener (Bridgeport), Cambridge (Galt) and Brantford, and we regulate development in flood-prone areas to reduce potential property damage,” Catania said.

The GRCA completed a flood mitigation study for New Hamburg in 2019 and 2020. The project provided an updated estimate of average annual flood damage, a preliminary review of options to reduce flood risk, and an initial cost-benefit analysis to determine the feasibility of potential options.

“One of the low-cost options identified included vegetation removal in the floodplain to improve the passage of water during a flood event. (We) have been completing this work over the past few years, and updated floodplain modelling and mapping for the Nith River was also completed as part of the study,” said Catania, who added public consultation took place at that time.

On Monday, the province provided an update on its plan to reduce the number of

conservation authorities from 36 to nine regional groups. The plan follows consultations on how conservation authorities can help get shovels in the ground faster on housing and other local infrastructure projects, while strengthening their role in managing watersheds and protecting communities from flooding and natural hazards.

The province says the regional approach will reduce administrative duplication, redirect resources to frontline conservation and modernize permitting. If amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act are approved, the transition is expected to be completed early next year.

The chair of the GRCA was quick to provide a statement.

“The Ontario government has announced the next step in its plan to reform the province’s conservation authority system and its intention to create nine regional conservation authorities. Based on the extensive feedback received, the province has amended the boundaries that were proposed in the ERO posting in 2025,” said GRCA chair John Challinor II.

“Under the revised plan released on March 10, the Grand River Conservation Authority will be part of the Eastern Lake Erie Region Conservation Authority. We appreciate that the province considered the GRCA board’s feedback in proposing a more balanced, rightsized model that includes the GRCA.”

Challinor II explained the GRCA will continue to review provincial information as it becomes available, and updates will be provided on its website. A preliminary report will be included in the March 27 board meeting agenda.

“The (board) supports the government’s goals of modernizing the conservation authority system by enhancing consistency, efficiency and technical capacity across Ontario’s conservation authority system. We remain committed to working collaboratively with the province, the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency and our municipal partners, while maintaining our focus to protect people and property from floods and other natural hazards, improve the health of the Grand River watershed, and connect people with the environment.”

Residents of New Hamburg are encouraged to refer to a guide on the GRCA’s website for information regarding flood preparedness, flood warning zones and what to do when flooding is imminent or occurring.

“Homeowners and businesses can prepare for and mitigate flood impacts on their property by flood-proofing their properties, leaving basements unfinished, bringing belongings up to main floors and having an emergency plan.”

The GRCA manages flood risk in the area by monitoring weather conditions and river flows in the Nith, and we use this information to issue flood messages to the Waterloo Regional Police and the Wilmot Township flood coordinator.

More information can be found at www.grandriver.ca/our-watershed/flooding/flood-warning-system/.

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Linwood health centre project moves forward with Wellesley Township agreement

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

A long-planned expansion of health services in Linwood took another step forward recently after Wellesley township council approved a construction and funding agreement that will allow a new medical facility to be built at the Linwood Community Centre.

At its March 10 meeting, council authorized township staff to enter into a construction and funding agreement with the Woolwich Community Health Centre (WCHC) for the development of a new health-centre addition at the community centre on Ament Line.

“We’ve been working with Woolwich Community Health Centre to construct a medical facility on the end of the Linwood Community Centre,” Wellesley CAO Rik Louwagie said. “They are at the point now where they’re very nearly ready for construction to begin, at least on the foundation. For that to happen, for us to give permission to the health centre to do that on their own rather than the township take on that contract, we need this agreement in place with them.”

The agreement will allow WCHC to move ahead with permit applications and begin construction planning for the facility, which is intended to expand access to health services for residents in Linwood and surrounding rural communities.

Currently, WCHC provides services in Wellesley Township through the Linwood Nurse Practitioner’s Office, located in privately owned leased space, and through the Wellesley Health Clinic at the township’s recreation complex.

According to a report to council, the existing Linwood clinic space is no longer large enough to meet the needs of the growing community and also presents accessibility challenges for patients.

Under the approved agreement, the township will provide space on the Linwood Community Centre property for



(LINWOOD RECREATION COMMITTEE FACEBOOK PHOTO)

The Linwood Community Centre is set to become home to a new medical clinic addition, as Wellesley council moves forward with plans to expand local health services.

the health-centre addition, while WCHC will be responsible for the design, construction and operating costs associated with the facility.

“I just wondered if, aesthetically speaking, somehow the windows could be moved up at the end,” Coun. Lori Sebben asked. “It’s just a minor thing and I know ... because of the drop down (in elevation), it makes sense that the windows have to be lower, but I think, aesthetically speaking, it would probably look a little nicer if all the windows were at the same level.”

“This is a township building in the end and we do need to approve of the drawings and of how the building will look,” Louwagie responded. “So, if that’s what council would like to see is those two windows in the front be raised up higher,

I would recommend we only raise the top and keep the window sill at the same elevation that it’s currently drawn, or else they wouldn’t be able to see out of those windows because they would be five to six feet off the floor because this floor will be three feet lower than the library and community centre floor.”

The project follows a memorandum of understanding approved by council in September 2025 that allowed both parties to begin design work and explore the feasibility of adding a clinic to the community-centre site.

Based on the proposed design drawings, the medical-centre addition would be built on the east side of the community centre, and it would be 2,092 square feet in size with an additional parking area established

directly adjacent to the northeast. The proposed drawings include a reception area and waiting room, three exam rooms, a lab, a pharmacy, office space and a staff room.

The new space will operate independently from the rest of the community centre and library, and will not include an internal connection to those facilities.

Design work for the project is already well underway, and WCHC is preparing to apply for building permits. Township staff indicated drawings are nearing completion, with an application for a foundation permit expected as part of the next stage of the project.

The project will also include several site improvements around the community centre property. Plans include paving the existing gravel parking area and opening Lin Dunn Lane to provide a second entrance to the recreation facility site.

Township staff have also secured approval from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for upgrades to the onsite sewage system required to support the addition.

While WCHC will be responsible for the cost of constructing and operating the health centre, the township will incur some costs related to legal review and portions of the sewage-system upgrades required to accommodate the new facility.

In response to a question about the cost of building permits from Coun. Claude Hergott, Louwagie said the township has agreed to reduce permit fees by about 65 per cent.

“We anticipate that a building permit will be issued very shortly for a foundation as well as relocating the door in the library from the east wall to the north wall; that needs to happen to maintain that second exit for the library,” Louwagie said. “... Weather permitting, we expect to see something start there in the next few weeks.”



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
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Repair Café returns to New Hamburg March 28

AMANDA NELSON
Gazette Reporter

After two successful Repair Cafés in November and January, the Nith Valley Ecoboosters (NVEB) will host another on March 28 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Zion United Church fellowship hall, 215 Peel St., New Hamburg.

Repair Cafés are open to community members looking to bring in small household mechanical and woodworking repairs, mending for clothing, knit and crochet items, jewellery and book repairs. Most materials, tools and safety items will be provided.

Volunteer “fixers” will be able to repair broken items to give them a new lease on life. Those who bring in items will also work with the fixers to learn how to mend and repair items themselves.

Not only is the Repair Café aimed at helping to fix used household items, it’s also a way to collaborate and connect with the community, says Ashley Ropp, NVEB volunteer.

“It’s also supposed to be more of a way to connect to each other, too,” she said. “We’re teaching people how to fix their

broken items, but we’re also creating community, getting to have conversations and getting to pass on these skills.”

This free, in-person community event is intended to reduce waste, pass on valuable skills and foster community.

“We’re coming at it from the environmental perspective, specifically something like a coffee maker, for instance,” said Ropp. “Instead of throwing it out and buying a new one, when the hinge breaks, you first consider if the coffee maker can be fixed, and most of the time it can. This way, there is less waste and you’re also not giving money to some of these big corporations that are more often than not very unethical and unsustainable.”

There will be refreshments and resources on repairs and sustainability. Most tools are provided; however, if attendees have an item requiring specialized materials or tools, NVEB encourages people to bring them along.

The Repair Café movement, which started in Amsterdam and has spread globally, is gaining traction across Ontario. NVEB will continue to host events throughout the year. For more information, visit www.nvecoboosters.com



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Grace Locke works on sewing repairs during a recent Repair Café event.



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Growing stronger together



Optimist Club supports Waterloo Regional Health Network



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Optimist Club of Petersburg recently contributed \$2,000 to the Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN) Foundation in support of youth programs. Pictured are Optimist Club president Warren Bechthold alongside Zoe Channer and Trevor Eaton from the WRHN Foundation. The WRHN Foundation, launched June 1, 2025, is a non-profit supporting local health care by funding equipment, programs and local health-care needs. For information about the Optimist Club of Petersburg, call 519-465-1157 or email petersburgoptimists@outlook.com.

Multiple injuries following EZT collision

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE STAFF

thewgazette@gmail.com

A two-vehicle collision in the township sent four people to hospital.

Provincial police along with members of Oxford County Fire Services and Oxford County Paramedic Services responded to a collision at the intersection of Oxford Road 8 and 16th Line at 3:30 on Tuesday afternoon.

Two passenger vehicles collided and two people have non-life-threatening injuries, one has serious but non-life-threatening

injuries, and one victim is in critical condition.

Police say the investigation is ongoing with the help of the OPP's Traffic Incident Management Enforcement Team. Police have not said if any charges will be laid.

Oxford Road 8 was closed between 15th Line and 17th Line along with the 16th Line at Braemar Sideroad and Oxford Road 5.

Traffic in the area of the collision is busier than usual as a result of culvert replacements occurring on Highway 59 between Huntingford and Hickson.

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W-O drama club hosting spring bazaar fundraiser for upcoming national competition

AMANDA NELSON

Gazette Reporter

Students in the Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School (W-ODSS) drama club are inviting the community to a spring bazaar fundraiser later this month to help them reach the national stage.

The fundraiser will take place Sunday, March 29, from 1-4 p.m. in the school gym. Tickets are \$5 per-person or \$20 for families of five, with proceeds helping students travel to the STARFEST national competition in Ottawa in May.

The afternoon will feature a spring bazaar with activities including ring toss, photo booths, a scavenger hunt and children's shows performed by members of the drama club. Attendees can also take part in a dance party during the event.

Organizers say the event is open to everyone, though they are particularly hoping to attract younger families.

In addition to games and entertainment, the club will host a silent auction and is currently seeking donations from local businesses to support the effort.

Funds raised will help offset travel costs for the 18 students who qualified

at STARFEST regionals in Waterloo earlier this year. It will be the first time W-ODSS students have attended the national competition.

Students will be competing with a one-act play that was written and is being directed by students, something teachers say is unique for the competition.

"Our play piece that we're taking is actually purely student run," said Heather Lamont, teacher and staff supervisor. "It was written by one of our students. It's being directed by one of the students. So, they've really taken this full throttle, and this is very student driven, which I think adds to the excitement of it. They take a lot more ownership in the production."

Along with performing their own play, the group will also represent the Waterloo Region District School Board at the competition.

"Interesting enough, we are the only school in this school board that has actually competed in this competition, so we are representing the Waterloo school board," said Alecia Sparks, drama teacher and staff supervisor. "I think that carries a little bit more weight for the students who are really representing

the entire area."

Sparks said the fundraiser will help ease financial pressure on students as they prepare for the trip.

"Being in a small town, they don't get a lot of these opportunities that students in the cities may have. These students have put in a lot of effort and a lot of rehearsal for this. I think they're all really excited and also a bit anxious. I think the biggest thing they're worried about is cost, so we really want people to come out and support the fundraiser so that it can help bring the costs down as much as possible," said Sparks.

Lamont said one of the unique aspects of the competition is its focus on performance rather than production budgets.

"What we really like about this competition is that it's not about which school has the most money for the best costumes. Student actors wear all black, show their piece, present their piece and get judged on that," said Lamont.

In addition to the competition opportunity, students can also pursue scholarships connected to the program to support post-secondary education.

For more information, email Sparks at alecia_sparks@wrdsb.ca.



(CONTRIBUTED IMAGE)

The W-ODSS drama club is inviting the community to a spring bazaar fundraiser on March 29, with proceeds supporting students as they head to Ottawa for the STARFEST national competition.

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Optimist Mini Olympics brings clubs together in St. Pauls

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Seven area Optimist clubs gathered in St. Pauls last week for a night of friendly competition and community connection during the Downie Optimist Club's annual Mini Olympics.

Clubs from Kirkton-Woodham, Ellice, Mornington, Tavistock, Mitchell, Shakespeare and the host club, Downie, took part in the event, which drew a large crowd to the Optimist Hall.

Downie Optimist Club president Manny Puetz, along with fellow members, organized a variety of games for the evening, including tractor pulls on a string, plunger plop, rolling cup drop, dart toss, Downie optiputt and the frog game.

Beyond the competition, the event also offered an opportunity for members from across the region to connect, share ideas and discuss the many ways their clubs support youth in their communities.

The evening highlighted the strong spirit of volunteerism within the Optimist movement and the importance of collaboration between clubs.

Organizers say the Mini Olympics continues to be a popular event that combines fun, fellowship and a shared commitment to community service.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

See more photos on page 13

Members of seven area Optimist clubs gather at the Optimist Hall in St. Pauls for the Downie Optimist Club's annual Mini Olympics.

Next exit: Big night out

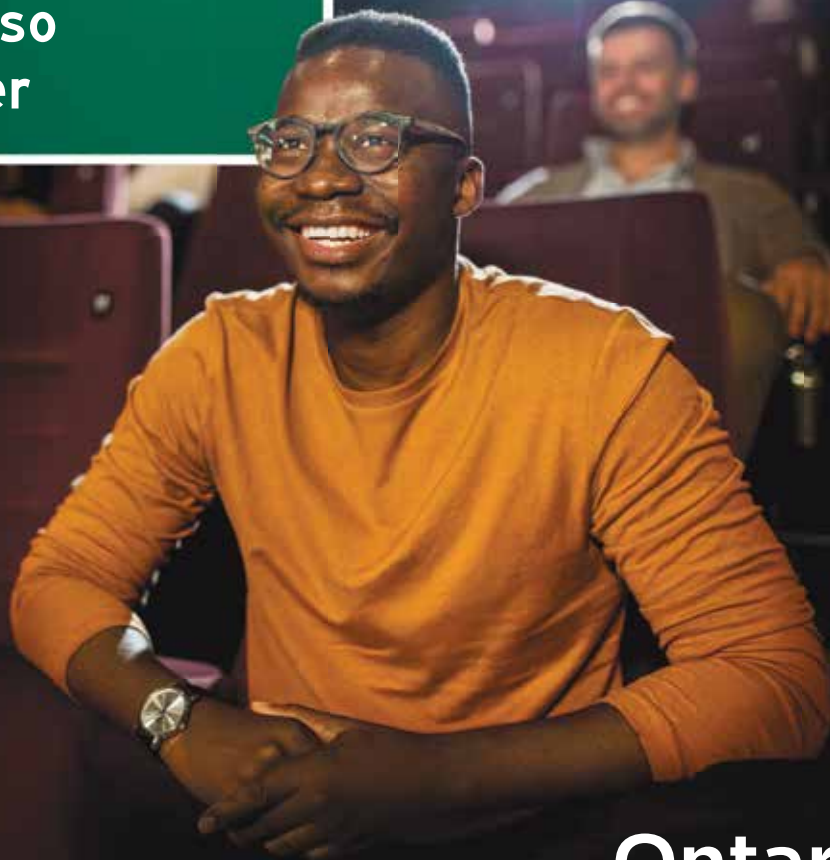
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Downie Optimist Club president Manny Puetz presents long-time Mitchell Optimist Sharon Flanagan with the President's Inspiration Award in recognition of her many years of volunteer service.

Medal winners at the Mini Olympics include (from left) silver medallists Kirkton-Woodham, represented by Barry Miller; gold medallists Shakespeare, accepted by Buck Mathieson; and bronze medallists Downie, represented by president Manny Puetz.

Rachel Braden, a facility dog handler with the Stratford Police Service, speaks about her work alongside her trained golden retriever, Dusty, who helps provide a calming presence in sensitive situations.

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South Easthope Mutual reports strong year, announces 15% premium refund

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

South Easthope Mutual Insurance Company reported another successful year during its 154th annual meeting held last week in Tavistock.

Ken Yeoman, chair of the board of directors, addressed a large gathering of members and highlighted the company's strong financial performance in 2025. As a result, the board has approved a 15 percent premium refund on property policies that were in force as of Dec. 31, 2025.

To qualify for the refund, policies must be in good standing on the day the refund is issued. Refund cheques are expected to be mailed to eligible members in April.

In his remarks, Yeoman noted severe weather events throughout the year led to increased claims in 2025.

"However, we were fortunate to avoid the worst weather events that impacted those around us," he said.

Yeoman added the company remains focused on maintaining strong underwriting practices and promoting risk management and loss prevention among its members.

"Global climate patterns continue to shift, and we recognize that severe weather is not a matter of if, but when our membership areas will be impacted," he said.

The chair also highlighted the long history of the company, noting South Easthope Mutual has been serving members in the region since 1871 and remains one of the

strongest mutual insurance companies in Ontario.

He said 2025 marked another period of positive performance for the company, with steady premium growth in both the property and automobile sectors. Investment income was also strengthened, largely due to favourable market conditions throughout the year.

During the meeting, the company also announced a \$1,500 donation to the muscular dystrophy campaign. Since beginning its annual support in 1998, South Easthope Mutual's total contributions to the cause have now reached \$40,000.

Insurance member Phil Schaefer chaired the latter portion of the meeting and conducted several items of board business. With a smile, he noted the historical connection between the company's earliest meeting and the present-day gathering.

The first meeting of South Easthope Mutual took place in 1871 at Kaufman's Tavern in Sebastopol. Schaefer joked it was somewhat ironic the annual meeting in 2026 was held in a church – Grace United Church in Tavistock.

The first member to sign up with the company was John Klein, whose descendants remain members of South Easthope Mutual today.

Guest speaker John Taylor, president and CEO of the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association in Cambridge, delivered an informative presentation on the



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The incoming board of directors and senior management team for South Easthope Mutual Insurance Company in Tavistock. In the front row, from left, are Jeffrey Schultz, Lindsay Zehr (treasurer and CFO), Marianne Cook (first vice president), Jennifer Kearsey (president and CEO) and Michael Munro. In the back row, from left, are Paul Heinbuch, Darryl Stevenson, David Crane (newly elected president), Peter Thompson (second vice president), Glen Blair, Ken Yeoman (past president) and Rachel Stewart (corporate secretary).

history of Ontario's farm mutual insurance companies.

Taylor noted the first mutual insurer in Ontario was Gore Mutual, established in Cambridge in 1839. Today, he said there are 33 mutual insurance companies

operating across the province.

Together, those companies process approximately 97,000 claims annually, representing about \$960 million in payouts from roughly \$1.5 billion in premiums collected in 2025.

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OBITUARY

SCRIVER: Alvin



On March 6, 2026, Alvin Scriver passed away peacefully at Parkwood Institute in London, Ontario, at the age of 100.

Alvin will be dearly missed and fondly remembered by his daughters, Diane Houghton (Vern) and Kathy Davis (Bob). He was the proud and loving grandfather of Jim Houghton (Kaitlyn),

Jennifer Davis (Josh), and Andrew Davis, and great-grandfather to Jack and Logan Houghton. Alvin was predeceased by his beloved wife of many years, Nancy Scriver, whose devoted care and companionship were an important part of his long and happy life.

Alvin was born in 1925 in Tiny Township, Ontario, and later moved with his family to Eastwood. He enjoyed a long and dedicated 41-year career at Firestone Textiles in Woodstock.

Alvin was proud to have served as a Signaller near the end of the Second World War and remained grateful throughout his life for the care and support provided by Veterans services.

Alvin enjoyed an active life and was an avid golfer, proudly recording five holes-in-one at Craigowan Golf Club. He also enjoyed fishing and curling and treasured time spent with family and friends.

In his last months, Alvin received exceptional care through the Veterans Care Program at Parkwood Institute in London. The family is deeply grateful to the many doctors, nurses, and staff whose professionalism, kindness, and compassion made his time there comfortable and meaningful. He especially enjoyed the simple pleasures of daily life — good meals, ice cream, bingo, and the company of those who cared for him so well.

A private family service will be held, and there will be no visitation.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Royal Canadian Legion or other Veterans organizations would be appreciated and may be arranged through the Smith-LeRoy Chapel of the Glendinning Funeral Home, 69 Wellington St. North, Woodstock, ON (519-537-3611). Personal condolences may be shared online at www.smithleroy.com.

OBITUARY

ELZINGA: Wilton Richard "Willy"



Passed away peacefully at his residence the Maples Home for Seniors, Tavistock. Willy Elzinga of Tavistock in his 69th year.

Willy will be missed by his sister Jane Elzinga (Ken Meadows) of Harmony and by his many nieces and nephews. Willy was well known in Tavistock and will be missed by the whole community, he was a joy to so many.

Predeceased by his parents John & Betty (Hoekstra) Elzinga, his sister Hilda and brothers Jasper, John, Gary and Lenny.

Relatives and friends will be received in the Francis Chapel of the Glendinning Funeral Home, 77 Woodstock St. N. Tavistock on Saturday from 2-4 and 6-8pm. Funeral service will be conducted from the Tavistock Mennonite Church on Sunday March 22, 2026 at 2:30pm. Interment to follow in Grace United Church Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers donations to the Tavistock Optimist Park Improvement Fund or the Tavistock Mennonite Church and would be appreciated by the family. Personal condolences can be shared at www.gffh.ca

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.



QUIZ TIME

BY JAKE GRANT

1. What plant is traditionally worn on St. Patrick's Day to represent Irish heritage?
2. What animal is known to eat magic mushrooms?
3. According to legend, what did St. Patrick drive out of Ireland?
4. Claude AI was created by what company?
5. What city dyes its river green every year for St. Patrick's Day?
6. What historic protest in Boston Harbor became a key symbol of colonial resistance to British taxation?
7. What Irish rock band released the famous album The Joshua Tree?
8. Who won best actor at the 2026 Oscars?
9. What Irish musical instrument is considered a national symbol?
10. What might you find at the end of a rainbow?

Answers found on the classified page



by PeterS 2026

			8	5		
7	5	3		6		1
					8	6
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The Old Gazettes

By Sydney Grant

Slowly but surely, I'm reading through the past pages of the Tavistock Gazette (est. 1895). Within this weekly column I'd like to share with you some of my findings.

March 17-24, 2021, Edition (5 years ago)

As of March 1, students at Sprucedale Public School in Shakespeare have a new principal. Her name is Andrea Poetkau and she took over from Don Rausser, who has moved on to be principal at Milverton Public School. In a recent interview with the Gazette, she said that she is a believer in the notion that the "student drives the learning" and therefore needs to understand the students' strengths and needs. She took the years between 2018 and 2020 to spend time in Sao Paulo, Brazil, as an educator in an international school to gain a better knowledge of how schools work in other countries.

What does it take to become the Holstein Canada 2020 Cow of the Year? How about being the 13th generation of a proven cow family bred only in Canada and classified as VG or EX. Walnutlawn McCutchen Summer, who just marked her eighth birthday, is a product of Walnutlawn Farms Limited of RR1, Tavistock, and the Zehr family, and was just named one of the top-four finalists in the Holstein Canada Cow of the Year competition.

March 16-23, 2011, Edition (15 years ago)

The Tavistock Assistance Program (TAP) motto is "Neighbours helping neighbours," but a recent donation by five-year-old Matthew Romano has focussed that thought on "Children helping children." For Matthew's fifth birthday party (March 6), he asked six friends to attend and bring a donation for TAP in lieu of gifts. When all the cards were opened with funds included from others wanting to donate, Matthew had collected \$140. He sealed it in an envelope, wrote TAP on the outside and presented it to program director Sharon Walkom.

Thumping sounds of the musical hits echoed through the Tavistock and District Recreation Centre on Sunday afternoon and evening as members of the

Tavistock and District Skating Club presented their biennial carnival, Rock the Rink. From modern tunes such as Lady Gaga's "Just Dance" and Rihanna's "Only Girl," to the classic Kink's tune, "You Really Got Me" and Michael Jackson's "Thriller" (in black light), there was a colourful, sometimes comical and always entertaining program of skaters and performers.

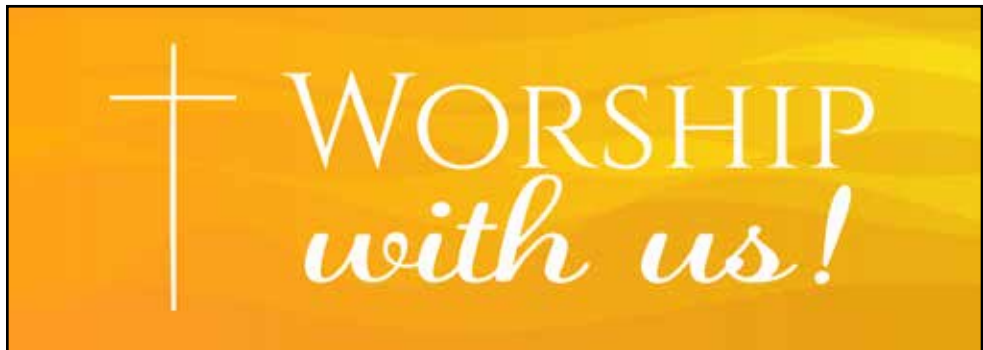
March 13-20, 1996, Edition (30 years ago)

The concept of Community Oriented Problem Solving (COPS) was introduced to Hickson and area residents in October 1995 and last week, the Hickson COPS committee kicked off their new, proactive program by installing a suggestion box at Todd's Place. Sgt. Sam Horton of the Woodstock detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police originally met with community members last fall. He explained that for non-life threatening, routine problems, the new, proactive program called COPS is being implemented in communities such as Innerkip and Hickson.

A crew from Joe Leyser Demolition, Stratford, was on hand Monday, March 11, to begin the dismantling of the Tavistock Arena. Nearly a dozen waste containers were placed in the parking lot to receive used building materials. On the roof of the arena, workers operated a type of forklift-style truck which removed the old shingles from the structure. A layer of snow made the job a little trickier than expected.

March 16-23, 1966, Edition (60 years ago)

The contract for the construction of a new bridge at lot 25-26 Concession 15, over the Thames River, was awarded by the East Zorra Township council at its session Monday afternoon. Two tenders were received for the project, and that of McLean-Foster, St. Marys, was accepted at \$35,878, and that of J. Harris and Sons for the steel at \$1,933 was accepted. Reeve Percy J. Wettlaufer conducted the session. Council was advised by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority that direct levy for the Gordon Pittock Dam would be \$825, and the usual levy would be \$779. The Grand Valley Authority advised its levy for the year would be \$265.



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April 5 Easter Service

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The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette **SPORTS**

PJHL roundup: Braves complete sweep and will battle Navy Vets

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

The Tavistock Braves have moved on to the Provincial Junior Hockey League's (PJHL) Doherty Division final.

Blake Richard stopped all 34 shots he faced and Kegan Metcalf scored his eighth goal of the postseason as the Braves completed a four-game sweep of Wellesley last Wednesday night with a 1-0 road victory.

Metcalf scored the game-winning goal at the 3:46 mark of the first period from Ethan Stover and Yann Raskin. Braves netminder Blake Richard shut the door the rest of the way, stopping all 34 shots he faced.

Metcalf scored six times in the series, including three game-winners, and added three assists. His 14 playoff points put him eighth in the league. Stover leads the Braves with six goals and 10 assists. Richard has played seven of the Braves eight postseason games and has a goals-against average of 2.14 with a save percentage of .924 and a pair of shutouts.

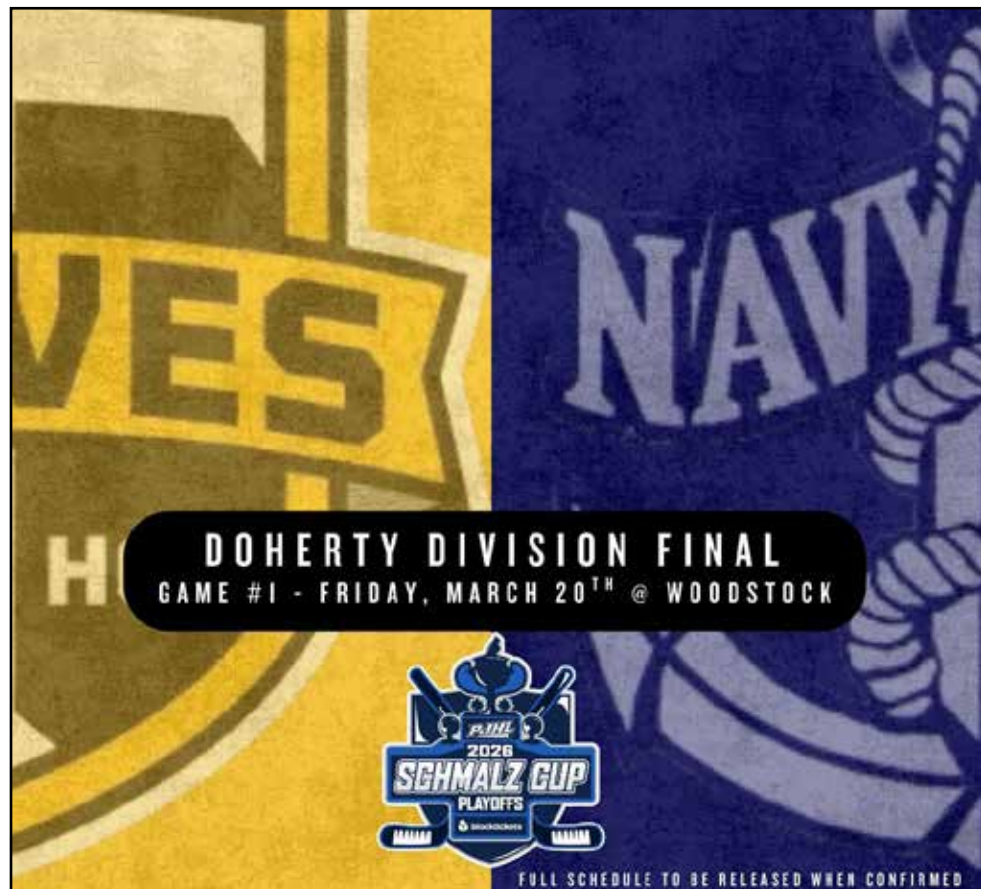
Metcalf, who played three and a half seasons in New Hamburg before being acquired by Tavistock this season, said the transition to his new team wasn't difficult.

"I went to school with a bunch of the guys, grew up playing with some of them. Palubeski I played with my whole life and played against Stover. All the local guys from Tavistock I grew up with and went to high school with (at Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School). Knowing a good portion of the team before I came in definitely helped."

He added the new teammates he didn't know welcomed him with open arms.

"It's a great locker room and it's such a close-knit group. I don't think I have been part of a team like this. It feels like we really have something special here."

The Braves are one of just four undefeated teams in the PJHL playoffs and have lost just one of their last 20 games. Metcalf said it hasn't been hard to get to the rink



(TAVISTOCK BRAVES FACEBOOK IMAGE)

for practices or games.

"I don't think anyone has any weight on their shoulders. We are showing up at the arena loose and clicking on all cylinders. We have been down during some games during the streak but battled our way back. The guys have complete trust in each other and don't give up."

One example of the team's grit is how they battled back from a 5-2 deficit in Game 1 with Wellesley, an effort resulting in a 9-6 victory.

Metcalf, who has never been a point-per-game scorer during his career, was quick to credit his teammates for his recent success.

"I just happen to be in the right spot at the right time. On almost all of my goals,

my linemates have made some incredible plays. I had two in Game 3 against Wellesley, thanks to two of the most insane passes I have ever seen – a behind-the-back and a no-look. I've been working hard and putting the pucks in when I have chances."

The 21-year-old is an apprentice with LH and W Plumbing in Tavistock and has been a part of some deep runs in the PJHL postseason, including a final-four appearance last season when the Firebirds were able to squeak by the Braves in a seven-game thriller. Metcalf feels his experience is making a difference.

"I know what it's going to take and I am just trying to do my part. Right now, it's

scoring, but maybe next game it'll be doing other things. Whatever the team needs from me, that's what I'm going to bring."

The Braves will take on the Woodstock, who defeated the Norwich Merchants in six games, capped off by a convincing 10-5 road win on Tuesday night.

The Navy Vets feature a big three of offence made up of Owen Ireton, Cooper Vickerman and Charley Barnes. The trio have combined for 50 points in 10 playoff games. Tavistock Head Coach Zac Berg said despite Woodstock's explosiveness, his team matches up well with Woodstock.

"We are deep enough to make up for their top three guys, and I think we have the players who can shut them down. We take pride in our defence, and if we defend their top three like we always do, we'll have success."

Woodstock won the first four meetings in dominating fashion, outscoring Tavistock 20-6. The last two matchups were a different story as the Braves earned 5-2 and 3-2 victories. The Braves rolled four lines regularly throughout the first two rounds and Berg expects the strategy to continue.

"I believe it takes a whole team to win and everyone has to be involved. We'll keep everyone going all game long and that's how we can beat Woodstock."

The Navy Vets averaged over 1,000 fans for each home game against the Merchants in the battle of 59, as it's called. The second 59 fight is something Metcalf is looking forward to.

"They pack the rink and it's going to be a good series. They definitely have the high-end talent, just like we do. We are a deeper team and can play all four lines and I don't know if their four lines can keep up with ours."

He added special teams play will play a large role in the series.

As of press time, the schedule had not been released but the series is expected to kick off Friday or Saturday night in Woodstock.

Royals OEHL season comes to an end

LEE GRIFFI

Gazette Reporter

The Tavistock Royals 2025-2026 Ontario Elite Hockey League (OEHL) season came to an end Tuesday night with a 3-1 loss in Seaforth.

The Centenaires will move on to the Southern Division championship series against the Elora Rock, which dispatched Petrolia in five games.

After a scoreless first period, Jarrett Bogdon gave Seaforth a 1-0 lead early in the second. His goal was followed by Camden Daigle's penalty shot marker about eight minutes later. Both players are Stratford natives.

Matt Zilke scored his first of the playoffs

with six and a half minutes remaining in the third, but the Centenaires added an empty net goal with 74 seconds remaining to seal the win.

"The men on our team are unbelievable. I couldn't ask for a greater group of guys to be coaching and to be a part of. They're not just incredible hockey players, they're incredible people," said assistant coach Derek Wagler.

He added Seaforth is definitely a tough rink to play in.

"It's small, and they're used to that. Their structure plays well on the small ice. We were also a very fast team, so I think the smaller ice doesn't allow us to use our speed to its full potential."

Wagler said he was impressed by the

support from Royals faithful, particularly since Game 7 was on a Tuesday night and on the road.

"Seaforth usually has good support. I was really impressed by the number of people from Tavistock and our fans as a whole. A lot of people made the trip to Seaforth to come cheer us on."

He said the team took the loss hard and it was a sombre room after the game.

"These guys aren't pros getting paid big bucks. They're doing for the love of the game and because they are competitors. Winning is our only reward. It's really tough after a loss like that, I think, especially when we felt we really had a championship-calibre team."

Though the loss was hard to take, team

president Kyle Wynette said he was incredibly proud of the players, the Royals executive and the community for their commitment to the club.

"Knowing we were heading into a hostile environment for Game 7, we offered one of our old blue championship sweaters to any fan who made the trip. It was amazing to see how many people from our community answered the call. I shared some photos on Facebook showing all the Tavi fans lined up along the glass behind our goalie during warmups – he definitely felt their support," Wynette said.

Wynette said he and goalie Andrew Masters were chatting before the game, and the goalie mentioned an episode of

Perth County farm girls repeat as WOSSAA curling champions, bound for OFSAA

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Four Perth County farm girls from Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) are heading back to the provincial stage after another dominant high school curling season.

The SDSS Golden Bears girls curling team captured gold at the Western Ontario Secondary School Athletic Association (WOSSAA) championship earlier this month, earning a return trip to the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) provincial championship in

Thunder Bay.

It marks the team's third consecutive appearance at OFSAA.

The Bears put together a perfect performance at the WOSSAA tournament, beginning with a commanding 13-0 semifinal win over London Catholic Central at the Listowel Curling Club. In the gold-medal game, the Stratford squad edged Saunders Secondary School of London 7-6 in a tightly contested match.

With the win, SDSS finished the high school season with a perfect 13-0 record and secured its third straight WOSSAA title.

The team is made up of players with strong ties to Perth County's farming community. Skip Addison Hyatt, a Grade 12 student, leads the rink alongside her sister, vice-skip Brooklyn Hyatt, a Grade 10 student. Second Deanna Halls and lead Hailey Peters, both Grade 11 students, round out the team.

The four curlers come from dairy farm families in South Easthope and Mornington townships.

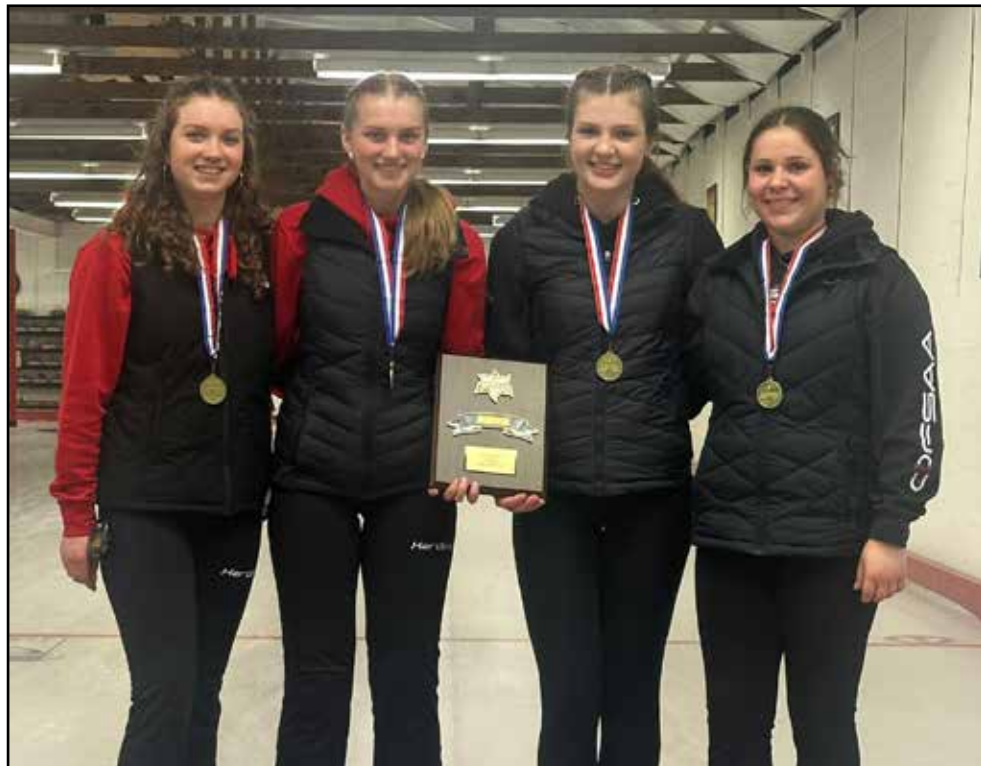
Coaching the team are Brian Anderson, a dairy farmer from near Tavistock, and Paul Hyatt, a dairy farmer from near Brunner – both of whom have close family

connections to the players.

The team primarily curls out of the Stratford Country Club, while also receiving strong support from the Tavistock and Milverton curling clubs.

SDSS teacher Shane Restall has also played a key role in organizing and supporting the team over the years.

Now, with another WOSSAA title in hand, the Golden Bears will look to carry their success to Thunder Bay as they compete for an OFSAA provincial championship.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The Stratford District Secondary School girls curling team is heading back to OFSAA for the third straight year. From left are skip Addison Hyatt, vice-skip Brooklyn Hyatt, lead Hailey Peters and second Deanna Halls.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The four SDSS curlers also share success in the show ring, pictured here at the Stratford Fall Fair during the Western Ontario 4-H Championship Show. From left are Addison Hyatt, Brooklyn Hyatt, Hailey Peters and Deanna Halls.

Continued from page 18

Shoresy where they recognize all the behind-the-scenes volunteers who make hockey possible.

"He said that's the reason we're here, this is why we do it. That really stuck with me," Wynette said.

He explained after a tough loss, he looked around the locker room and saw how close the group is.

"It may sound cliché, but it truly is a second family for all of us. We had guys playing through all kinds of injuries simply because they didn't want to let a teammate down. It's hard to put into words, but when you go through that roller coaster of emotions together year after year, you build a special bond."

Wynette added he's incredibly proud of the work the team's executive does behind the scenes to enhance the experience, both for the players and the fans who come out to support the Royals.

"As the saying goes, planning for next season starts today. We're already counting down the days until next fall."

The Royals forced a Game 7 thanks to a 3-1 home-ice win on Saturday night. Masters stopped 33 of 34 shots, including all 14 he faced in the third period. Mitch Atkins opened the scoring 13 minutes into the first period and added the game-winner nine and a half minutes later.

The Centenaires pulled to within one after a second-period goal, but Deven Kropf's marker with 21 seconds left in the game sealed the victory.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A large number of area fans travelled to Seaforth on Tuesday night to cheer for Tavistock in Game 7 of their Ontario Elite Hockey League (OEHL) South Division semi-final series. The Royals dropped a 3-1 decision.

Premier Equipment gearing up for busy spring season near Tavistock

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

With spring just around the corner, local farm-equipment dealers are already seeing increased activity as area farmers prepare for the 2026 growing season.

Travelling south of Tavistock on Highway 59, it's hard to miss the lineup of green machinery at Premier Equipment, located just outside of town. The dealership, built on the legacy of several former John Deere dealers in the region, is now part of a larger network of 20 Premier locations across southwestern, central and eastern Ontario.

The Tavistock branch serves customers throughout Perth, Oxford and Waterloo counties, providing a full range of agricultural equipment, as well as lawn and turf, commercial grounds care and compact construction machinery.

In addition to John Deere products, the dealership also carries Stihl and Honda power equipment, along with a wide selection of parts, accessories and even toys and gift items in its showroom.

Premier Equipment employs 22 full-time staff at its Tavistock location, contributing to the local economy while supporting farmers and rural residents with equipment sales and service.

Company representatives say their goal is to support customers by helping improve efficiency and productivity on the farm and beyond.

Branch manager Scott Cassells and sales manager Bryan Long note the area's connection to John Deere equipment dates back to the early 1950s, with early dealerships located east of New Dundee and in Shakespeare.

While spring sales activity is ramping up, the dealership remains busy year-round. Its service department and fleet of service vehicles are regularly on the road maintaining equipment used across the region, including machinery from a variety of manufacturers.

As planting season approaches, staff say they are seeing strong demand for both new equipment and seasonal maintenance, with farmers preparing their machinery for the busy months ahead.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

A Premier Equipment service truck travels through Tavistock, part of the dealership's fleet supporting farmers across the region.



Pictured are Premier Equipment service coordinators Samy Hopkins and Rhiannon Millie-Auger, and sales representatives Chase Becker and Bill Toms. Staff say spring preparations are already underway as farmers gear up for planting season.



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MARCH
28**

After 38 years of serving the local equestrian community, we have finally moved into town and we are so excited to welcome you into our new space!

*Join us for the ultimate community celebration! We're officially opening our doors and pulling out all the stops. Satisfy your cravings with world-class eats from **BeaverTails** and **Berlin95** food trucks while you explore everything we have to offer.*



**9:30 AM -
5:00 PM**

The day will be packed with interactive games, giveaways, and a Grand Raffle featuring incredible prizes. Best of all? Take advantage of exclusive savings on every single purchase all day long! We have something for everyone, not just equestrians, including denim, cowboy boots, Rayban and Oakley sunglasses, pet supplies and much more!

Bring your family and your friends—let's celebrate new beginnings together!

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(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SHOW US YOUR WILMOT FACEBOOK PAGE)

A sign of spring emerges through the snow! Linda Roth captured this photo of Lenten rose blooms and shared it on the Show Us Your Wilmot Facebook page on March 18.

Perth County Breeders Cup showcases top Holsteins through in-barn judging

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

Perth County Holstein breeders gathered last week at Kinkora Hall in Perth East to celebrate another successful year of the county's "in-barn" judging competition, known as the Breeders Cup.

Organized by the Perth County Holstein Breeders' Association, the long-running competition offers local dairy producers an alternative to the traditional show circuit, allowing them to have their animals judged right on their home farms.

The Breeders Cup was created years ago by Holstein directors who recognized not all farmers have the time or interest to transport cattle to fairs and competitions throughout the year.

Instead, a qualified judge travels from barn to barn across Perth County to evaluate animals entered by their owners.

The competition features multiple classes based on age and stage of lactation, giving breeders the opportunity to showcase animals at different points in their development.

Over the years, the Breeders Cup has grown in popularity among Perth County dairy farmers. Entries are submitted in advance to club secretary Emma Payne, after which participating farms are scheduled for judging on a predetermined date.

Winners were recently announced following this year's round of judging, highlighting the strength and quality of Holstein breeding across the county.

See photos on page 23

Next stop: Making the meeting

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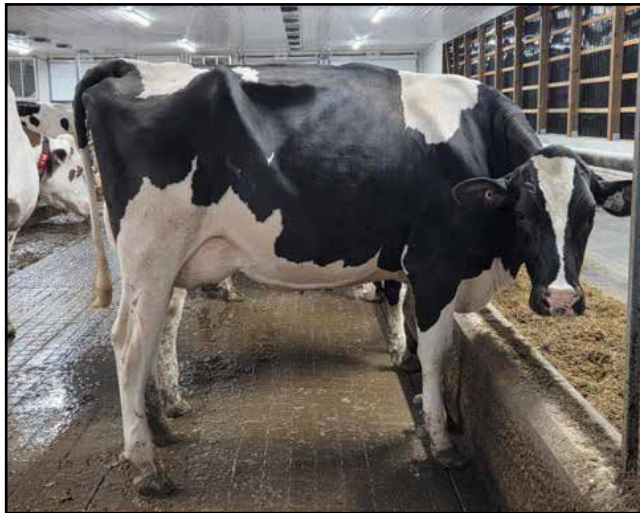
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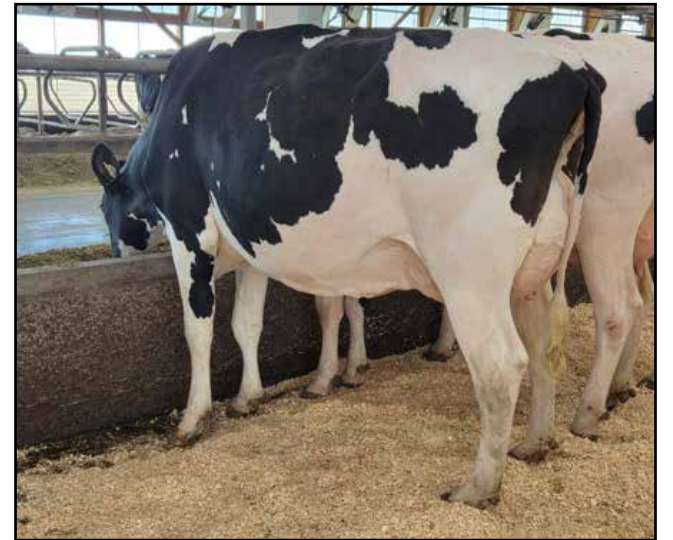


(EMMA PAYNE PHOTOS)

First place in the first-lactation class went to Crossoome Doc Nuclear, bred and owned by Symen and Andrea Cnossen of Brunner.



Second place in the first-lactation class was awarded to Ulmar Sidekick Wiggle, owned by Ashley and Marco Pfister of Mitchell.



Third place in the first-lactation class went to Terrylea Lambda Borabora, owned by Trevor Willows of St. Pauls.



The Breeders Cup grand champion was Spruceafton Sidekick Roxanne, owned by Corey Nafziger of Brunner.



Reserve champion honours went to Terrylea Legend Bravo, owned by Trevor Willows of St. Pauls.



Honourable mention was awarded to Maplevue Barolo Peach, owned by Doug and Dave Johnston of Listowel.



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OPEN HOUSES

THURSDAY, MARCH 19 • 6:00-7:30 PM Hosted by Lucie Stephens Sales Representative
AND SATURDAY, MARCH 21 • 10:30-12:30 PM Hosted by Tanya Wilhelm Sales Representative



30 ARTHUR STREET, STRATFORD
 MLS#X12883474 • PRICE \$524,900

NEW LISTING - Welcome to 30 Arthur Street in the lovely city of Stratford. Located in a desirable neighborhood on a large lot 50 X 110 ft lot there is potential to build a garage (with city approval). This lovely starter or family home is ideal if you are wanting to downsize or looking for your first home. Features of this home include 3 bedrooms, 1.5 baths, an updated kitchen with a man door to a deck and rear yard, living and dining area with hardwood flooring,, finished family room in the basement for extra living space, great front covered porch for drinking your morning coffee, newer water softener, gutter guards, and so much more. Be sure to call to view this lovely home today, you will not be disappointed.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21 • 11:00 AM-1:00 PM Hosted by Lucie Stephens Sales Representative



316489 31ST LINE UNIT#933 EMBRO
 (HAPPY HILLS RETIREMENT RESORT)
 MLS#X12881428 • PRICE \$429,000

NEW LISTING - Enjoy a more relaxed lifestyle at the lovely Happy Hills Retirement Resort. Located in a gated community this lovely 2 or 3 bedroom home offers approximately 1366 square feet of living space with 2 full baths, a spacious eat in kitchen, a large living room, primary bedroom with a cheater ensuite and built in closet with dresser drawers. The back room could be either a 3 rd bedroom or office or family room. The rear yard offers a wood deck, a closed in insulated gazebo great for entertaining or those rainy nights, and extra storage with the garden shed with hydro and additional storage located under the unit and worry no more about the hydro going off, this unit offers a Generlink generator, also included for this unit is a pop up carport great for the winter months. Owning a home in this resort you have access to the community clubhouse with indoor pool, social events, and access to the trailer park amenities during the summer season. Call today for more information or your own private viewing on this great home, it might be just what you have been looking for.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21 • 11:00 AM-1:00 PM



316489 31ST LINE UNIT#959 EMBRO
 (HAPPY HILLS RETIREMENT RESORT)
 MLS#X12406378 • NEW PRICE- \$465,900

Welcome to this lovely 2 bedroom, 1.5 bath home backing onto farmland and offers, open-concept, hardwood floors, a spacious kitchen with ample cabinetry, approx. 1400 square feet of living space, plus a bright sunroom, Quadro fiber optics. Enjoy outdoor living on the private back deck, complete with hot tub hookup. This home also offers generous storage space beneath the home and in the shed complete with hydro hookup. Happy Hills offers resort-style amenities, including controlled gate entry, a recreation hall, indoor heated pool, and golf facilities, providing a vibrant and secure lifestyle. Note with owning a property in the retirement all year living side, you have full access to the facilities on the camp ground side during the camping season, which is ideal for your grand children. Some additional up grades to this lovely home include - a new steel roof installed October 2025, 4, a generator that can power the entire house, the 20' cable that goes from the generator to the power meter Installed 3 years ago and can run approximately 20 hrs. Call to day to view or for more information or be sure to view through the open house.

SATURDAY MARCH 21 • 2:00-4:00 PM



199 LIEBLER STREET, TAVISTOCK
 MLS#X12778842 • PRICE \$884,900

Dare to dream to own this lovely custom built 2 + 1 bedroom brick bungalow built in 2015 , backing onto farmland. This stunning home is move in ready and offers an open concept main floor with cathedral ceiling in the living room, a spacious eat in kitchen with pantry and sliders to a 3 season sunroom- gazebo, and deck and the lovely view of the farmland. The fully finished basement offers a spacious family room with a gas fireplace great for those relaxing evening, a 3 rd bedroom with a cheater ensuite and walk in closet, upgraded Kinetico water softener. For the hobbyist or the car person this home offers 2- 9 foot garage doors, lots of space to store that special car or work shop area. One added bonus to this lovely home is an extra monthly income from the solar panels. This is one home you do not want to miss viewing, be sure to call to view today and own this great home today or view through the open house, you will not be disappointed.

SUNDAY, MARCH 22 • 10:30-12:00 NOON Hosted by Lucie Stephens Sales Representative



48 WELLINGTON STREET, TAVISTOCK
 MLS#X12547948 • NEW PRICE -\$624,900

Are you tired of mowing that big yard and cleaning all those flower beds? If so, this is one home you do not want to miss viewing. Located in a quiet neighbourhood on a low maintenance yard and is with in a few minute walk to the local public school, park and arena and shopping. This lovely well kept 3 bedroom two storey home offers a nice size living room with sliders to a side yard deck, a spacious eat in kitchen, and a 2 piece bath on the main floor. The 2nd level offers 3 good size bedrooms, and a 4 pc bath, and for additional living space the basement offers a finished family room, 2 pc bath, laundry room and a large cold-room. Also a great feature to this home is the double Exposed Aggregate double driveway. Get out of the city and enjoy small town living, this home is within commuting distance to the Kitchener Waterloo area, Stratford, Woodstock and London. Whether you are a first time home buyer or a family looking for a 3 bedroom home, this is one home you do not want to miss viewing, call today or view at the open house.

SUNDAY MARCH 22 • 1:00-3:00 PM



29 DUNSFORD CRESCENT, ST. MARYS
 MLS#X12840536 • PRICE \$684,900

NEW LISTING - Welcome to the perfect family neighbourhood just a couple of blocks from the Pyramid Centre and Little Falls Public School. This welcoming 3-bedroom bungalow has been lovingly updated with family comfort in mind. If you love to cook, you'll love this kitchen! From the custom-built island, gas range and upgraded finishes to the trash compactor, every detail was designed for entertaining friends and family. The open concept living space means no one is left out of the fun. The main floor is rounded out by 3 generous bedrooms and a renovated cheater ensuite. The lower level is a welcome surprise. With natural light pouring in from the large above-ground windows, it offers a large family room, full bathroom and 2 additional rooms for your home office, gym, hobby room or just extra space for storage. The many updates making this home move-in ready include new siding (2023), new front door and garage door (2024), a stamped concrete pad ready with a hot tub hook up (2024), truscure in the garage (2025) and new flooring throughout the foyer, down to the family room and throughout the basement (2025). The list continues, so please reach out for more! This home is a delight for any family and is ready to become your new home. Call for your private tour today.

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Goat transport gets creative near Hickson

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

A trip to Hickson last week offered a lighthearted reminder of the ingenuity found on local farms.

Travelling along a rural road, this writer spotted a retired mini school bus that had been repurposed by a local goat farmer – a unique alternative to the usual livestock trailer or pickup setup.

The bus, now painted and adapted for farm use, belongs to the Harm Voster family, who raises goats a couple of concessions east of Hickson.

It's a fitting example of the familiar message seen on roadside signs and in agricultural campaigns: "Farmers feed cities." Another nearby sign west of New Hamburg puts it a bit more bluntly: "Don't complain about farmers with your mouth full."

Today's farmers continue to find creative ways to operate efficiently while also showcasing their work to the public, and this one-of-a-kind goat transport is a perfect example.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

A retired mini school bus has found new life transporting goats for the Harm Voster family near Hickson. Once used to carry students, the bus now carries livestock of all sizes and was recently spotted at Kaufman Service and Supply in Hickson for a tune-up.

Bickle's Apples welcomes new four-legged mascot



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Longtime apple-farm helper Joanne Sauder holds the Bickle family's newest addition, Gracie, a 13-week-old English bulldog, alongside Bickle's Apples owner Kathy Bickle.

GARY WEST

Gazette Correspondent

The newest member of the Bickle family is already winning hearts at Bickle's Apples south of Tavistock.

Gracie, a 13-week-old English bulldog, has become the latest addition to the well-known apple farm located along Highway 59 between Tavistock and Hickson.

By the time readers see this, the Bickle family's popular apple destination will have closed for the season. As usual, the farm retail store will reopen in September around the time of the Tavistock Fall Fair, when apple harvest begins. Watch the Gazette for details.

During a visit to the farm last week, visitors were introduced to Gracie, who is quickly settling into her role as the newest mascot for the busy farm market.

Kathy Bickle said the family's former bulldog, Morty, lived a long and happy life on the farm.

Morty is buried in the orchard where he loved to roam and remains fondly remembered by the Bickle family and the many visitors who stop by the farm each year.

Bringing Gracie home, Kathy Bickle said, is much like welcoming a new baby into the family.

Grandma Kaye Bickle, who still lives on the farm, is especially excited about the new arrival.

Kathy and Tom Bickle, along with the rest of the family, also want to thank their many customers for visiting the farm market over the past year. In addition to apples, the family's retail store offers a variety of other products for customers throughout the season.

They look forward to welcoming everyone back again in the fall when another apple season begins.

By then, Gracie will have grown a little, and the Bickle family is sure she will be ready to greet the many visitors who stop by the orchard each year.

Gazette Puzzles

EARLY SIGNS OF SPRING

H S C S R G M G L A D W W G B D F Y O P
 W P T P P C N Q S N M O G C F R N L Y C
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 Z N C I H Y F P I T L J R X C S S H P B
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Pet of the Week

RUSSELL

Russell is a happy-go-lucky young pup who approaches life with enthusiasm and a wagging tail. Full of energy and curiosity, he's always ready for fun and loves being part of whatever is going on around him.

Like many young dogs, Russell is still working on his manners and learning the ropes, but he's eager, playful, and ready to grow with a family who will guide him along the way. With a little patience and training, this cheerful boy has all the makings of an amazing companion.

If you're looking for a fun-loving pup who will keep you smiling and bring plenty of personality into your life, Russell might be your perfect match! Learn more at kwsphumane.ca/adopt/dogs



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Why isn't cutting out the sugar helping with my weight loss goals?

HEAPS OF HEALTHY TIPS

By Mercedes Kay Gold



Question: I am trying to eat healthier. I understand healthy fats can't make me fat. Sugar is the problem and I cut it out, but the weight is not moving. I am tired physically and mentally. Please help.

Yes, sugar is the root of all evil. Sugar creates cravings, the roller-coaster effect leads to mood swings and dysregulated sleep. Over time, the outcome is overall inflammation. Cellular inflammation leads to disease and there's no shortage of diseases.

There's no safe amount of sugar. Where to start? As soon as you get up tomorrow, pick a healthier path. It's time to get your java jolt without spoonfuls or pumps of poison with a side of baked goods. These are obvious offenders, but sugar is hidden in plain sight.

What do I mean?

Let's start with popular breakfast options. A typical muffin at your favourite grab-and-go spot contains between 23 and 40 grams of sugar. A croissant may seem like a better option with just three to four grams, but there's roughly 30 grams of carbohydrates coming from overprocessed, bleached white flour. The fibreless French crescent-moon pastry acts like sugar in the body.

This java junkie would love to indulge in a piece of iced lemon loaf but with almost 40 grams of sugar, but skipping the Starbucks slice is savvy. Breakfast at home? Individual-sized flavoured oatmeal packets contain 12 to 13 grams of sugar, the equivalent of almost three teaspoons of sugar. Jam on toast? Slathering

strawberry jam on bread contains a whopping 10 grams in a tablespoon.

Prepping homemade smoothies is a nutrient-dense, better option to start the day. The fibre in fruit offsets natural sugar for body-boosting benefits. All add-ins, from nut and seed butters to protein powders, should be sugar-free as well. The easiest way to cut sugar is eating eggs, nature's nutritionally complete superfood.

Let's look at lunch and dinner. We are not all home chefs and time-sensitive cooking is a top priority for piles of people. Protein is a powerhouse and vegetables are vital. The trick is to tantalize the taste buds without sugar-stocked sauces.

There's no shortage of sweet and sour, sesame, General Tso and fabulous fruity jarred options, but sugar is often the first ingredient. Conventional store-bought teriyaki sauce contains four to 10 grams of sugar per tablespoon. Popular Indian cuisine falls into the same category. A small jar of mango chicken sauce, butter chicken, vindaloo and all the others use heaps of sugar to enhance flavour and balance the acidity of tomatoes.

The biggest sugar add-on



(VECTEEZY PHOTO)

Choosing fresh, nutrient-rich foods over sugary temptations is a simple but powerful step toward better energy, improved health and lasting weight loss.

is ketchup. One tablespoon of ketchup contains one-third of sugar. Scary for all those obsessed with dipping French fries. Marinades, mayonnaise, salsa, pasta sauces and barbecue sauces are five more failures. Nothing says stay on track and success like a huge salad, so why sabotage the garden goodness with sugar?

From the dried raisins to cranberries and candied pecans, the worst may be the sugar hidden in plain sight. Salad dressings are the downfall of those with the

best intentions.

Sugar in all forms is simply not healthy. Back to basics means heaps of herbs, making your own sauces or learning to love the magic of mustard. Clients often ask about Sriracha sauce, and with just one gram per tablespoon, it's an awesome alternative depending on how much you use!

Sorry to be the bearer of bad news but there is no safe amount. Sugar is modern-day smoking! Skip sugar and pave the road to a long and vibrant life.

Now that we're ready to travel, where in the world should we go?

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Galen Simmons



Though the world seems to be crumbling around us, Julia and I are finally in a position where we can afford to go on a trip somewhere beyond our relatively safe borders.

While there are plenty of good reasons to stay closer to home, we've both talked about traveling together for almost as long as we've been a couple. Sure, we've taken weekend getaways to places like Algonquin Park and The Blue Mountains, but we've never travelled internationally together

— other things like buying a house and redoing our kitchen always got in the way.

Personally, I haven't crossed the Canadian border for more than a decade and the last real trip I went on was back in high school when I had the opportunity to take two historical tours through parts of Europe. While I enjoyed those trips, Julia and I are both looking for something that will give us the freedom to explore new cultures, foods, histories and experiences on our own schedule with plenty

of time to relax in between.

Every week, I edit the pieces submitted by our travel columnist, Paul Knowles. From European river cruises to golf and fishing getaways — always with a unique tidbit of local history thrown in — Paul's columns tend to get me daydreaming about where in the world we could go to find the travel experience we're looking for.

But I'm an anxious person and there is just so much to be anxious about in the world these days. Mexico — a country with food, culture and history I can't get enough of — is off the list of potential destinations at the moment, at least until the violence between the drug cartels and the government subsides. Similarly, a visit to Cuba is a no-go as that country and its people struggle to survive amid the oil shortage that resulted from the Venezuelan overthrow of

the subsequent blockade.

Speaking of oil shortages, the United States' current war with Iran could throw all sorts of complications into the mix as roughly 20 per cent of world's oil supply continues to be held up at the Strait of Hormuz. The cost of literally everything travel related (and non-travel related) could soon skyrocket beyond anything we might afford.

I'm not super comfortable visiting Eastern Europe as Russia continues its full-scale war with Ukraine. While I'm sure there are plenty of destinations in the region safe enough to visit, there are simply too many unknowns I'm not willing to gamble on.

And while there are plenty of destinations in the U.S. I'd love to visit and explore, neither Julia or I feel comfortable visiting a country that is actively engaged in persecuting immigrants and foreigners, both for our safety and

because supporting such a regime is something we can't bring ourselves to do.

So, what's left? Maybe somewhere in western Europe or Africa or South America?

Luckily, my boss and the publisher of this newspaper, Stewart Grant, also owns a travel agency, Stonetown Travel, and he's offered to sit down with Julia and I, listen to our hopes and dreams — and my fears — and help us find somewhere we can enjoy with a relatively low risk of finding ourselves in the middle of another global conflict.

I recognize complaining about not having anywhere safe to travel is a first-world problem — something so many people around the globe and here at home don't have the luxury of worrying about — but these opportunities come around so rarely for Julia and I, we'd have regrets if we didn't take this chance.

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A bridge to nowhere and a palace bereft of popes

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO

By Paul Knowles



Anyone who got anywhere near a French class in school remembers the song, “Sur le pont d'Avignon l'on y danse, l'on y danse.” (“On the bridge of Avignon, they are dancing”). We probably learned it right after “Frère Jacques.”

Turns out, we were badly misled, as we learned during a fascinating tour of the southern French city of Avignon.

Oh, there is a bridge all right. Or part of one. While it once spanned the Rhône River, most of it is gone. It was built in the 1100s with 22 spans connecting the west and east banks, but most of it was destroyed by floods in the 17th century, and today, only four spans remain.

But that's not the problem with the song. The problem is, they didn't dance on (“sur”) the bridge – they danced “sous” (under) and the prepositions got switched in the centuries since the song was first sung. So, if you go to Avignon and want to be historically accurate, dance under the remaining bits of the bridge, not on top.

Although, frankly, the broken bridge is not close to being the most interesting thing about Avignon. This ancient city can date its founding to the Neolithic period (the “New Stone Age”, from 10,000 to 2,000 B.C.). Artifacts from those dates have been found in Avignon, and there are a lot of archaeological ruins from the Greek and Roman periods of the city.

But two features stand out above all others: the 14th century city walls, which still completely enclose the old city, and the Pope's Palace.

These two outstanding examples of architectural heritage are related since the walls were built by order of Pope Innocent VI.

The walls run for 4.3 kilometres. They enclose 151 hectares – the entire old city, including the Pope's Palace. And therein lies a story.

Though we think of Rome – or more properly, the independent city state of the Vatican – as the historic seat of the papacy, this was not always the case. In 1309, Rome was a hotbed of political intrigue and Pope Clement V moved the Papal Court to Avignon

in France where it remained until 1376. By then, the Avignon Papal Palace had housed seven popes. The last of those, Gregory XI, returned to Rome in 1376.

But it didn't end there. Even while popes reigned in Rome, several other papal wannabes were elected pope in France; they're now referred to as “anti-popes.” Two of them were also based in Avignon. The second of these, Benedict XII, was eventually kicked out of Avignon.

And by the way, in 1409, an effort was made to solve the dispute when a third pope was elected at a council in Pisa, intended to replace the two other claimants. This didn't work, so now there were three “popes.”

It wasn't until 1417 that the schism ended and only one pope was again recognized by the entire Roman church. And you thought church history was boring.

All of this comes to life when you visit the sprawling, soaring Pope's Palace in the heights of historic Avignon. We toured the site as part of our terrific Viking River Cruise on the Rhône River.

The Palais des Papes is one of the largest and most important medieval gothic buildings in Europe. Much of it is open for tours – including the rooftop, which provides amazing views of the city of Avignon.

Construction of the palace began in 1252, half a century before it became the sole residence of a pope. But when the Papal Court was moved to Avignon, successive popes devised increasingly

grand additions and alterations, including several extra towers, a grand chapel and adjoining buildings. Eventually, the size grew to encompass 16,500 square metres. The medieval popes were determined to build monuments, perhaps to God, but more likely to their own memories.

After the pope moved back to Rome, and the messy business of competing popes was resolved, the palace remained as property of the church but was largely ignored for about 350 years. Things got worse during the French Revolution when it was seized by revolutionary forces. In 1790, it was the site of a massacre of counter-revolutionaries and then became a prison.

Finally, in 1906, it was named a national museum. Our tour guide pointed out “there is no link with the church anymore.” Restoration work started on building, and that has continued ever since. Tour leaders guide you carefully around scaffolding and across temporary bridges.

Most of the rooms continue to be unfurnished, so the architecture is the star of the show, though during our visit, several of the rooms were adorned with incongruously modern art installations by sculptor Jean-Michel Othoniel. We saw a few rooms where the walls still carry original murals from the 13th and 14th centuries, an intriguing juxtaposition the with ultra-modern art in neighbouring halls.

Perhaps the most impressive sight on the tour comes as you stand on the rooftop and peer through the castellations; at that moment, you are looking at 12,000 or so years of human history. And later, if you wish, you can dance under (or on) a bridge.

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



A view of Avignon, from the ramparts of the Pope's Palace, with the Rhône River in the distance.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Only a small section of the Avignon bridge remains, but it's enough to dance on – or more properly, under.



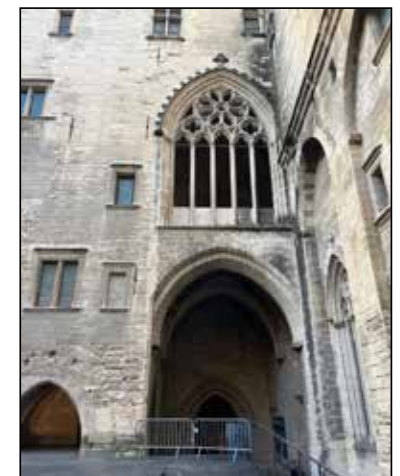
The walls of the ancient French city of Avignon still surround the entire old city.



The Pope's Palace.



There are a very few original murals still to be seen in the Pope's Palace.



The pope's viewing window in the Avignon Palace.

The heritage of Hickson Central Public School

MARILYN PEARSON

Tavistock and District Historical Society

The Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS) in partnership with the Hickson 4-H Club has set up a Heritage of Hickson Central Public School Display in the lobby of the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock (EZT) administration building, 89 Loveys St. E, Hickson, open for viewing Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

A one-room school was built in 1885 at 75 Loveys St. E. The building was 24 by 32 feet and built of white brick. Mr. Hendry, the first teacher, was responsible for 30-60 students. In 1919, the first school fair was held. Hickson captured first in the parade, first in Strathcona Drill and second in stock judging. In November 1919, the school was closed for seven days for measles, and in 1920, influenza closed the school for nine days. In 1919, the school was becoming overcrowded.

In 1922, a larger red-brick, two-room school building was built at the same location with two doors, the west side labelled "boys," and the east side labelled "girls." There were two classrooms on the main floor with a play area in the basement used in inclement weather with two toilets.

Having indoor toilets was a luxury!

In 1928, The Hickson's Women's Institute paid to have the school wired for electricity. In September 1937, the school was closed for 10 days due to infantile paralysis (polio). In 1940, the school fair was cancelled, resulting in the Hickson Women's Institute sponsoring vegetable gardens for the school pupils. The Tweedsmuir Women's Institute books provided information on the curriculum.

In 1925 in the junior room, phonics, reading and Spelling started with the Modern Phonic Primer Part 1 Series followed by the Ontario Readers for each grade level. Each week, students were given a list of spelling words. During the week, students looked up the meaning of the words and wrote sentences using them. If a mistake was made when they had their weekly spelling test, the students had to write it out a number of times.

Memory work started in the junior room. Practicing the verse with the class and writing out the verse with correct punctuation prepared each student to recite the verse to their teacher on Friday.

Arithmetic was well drilled and woe to anyone who didn't know their facts and tables as well as to add, subtract, divide

and multiply by the time they reached the senior room.

For geography in the junior room, students had to know their continents and oceans and also had to define seas, rivers, archipelagos etc. In the senior room, students covered all the world, being able to draw maps from memory.

Both English and British History was stressed. Teachers wrote the lessons on the blackboard. Students then transcribed the lesson into their notebook, adding maps and drawings.

Art was a large part of the curriculum. A special thanks to Mrs. Frank Bickle (Wittig), a former school teacher who made this display possible with the loaned series of textbooks, report cards and the "A" for excellent school and artwork work completed in 1940 at the age of 13 by her late husband, Frank H. Bickle. Bickles Orchard Park Farms is still in business on Highway 59 south of Tavistock.

The New Hickson School – 161 Loveys Street East

In 1959, the new school was opened and named East Zorra Senior Public School (EZSPS). The building had three classrooms and modern washrooms.

In 1965, an addition was built with eight

more classrooms, including a science lab, two more washrooms, a Gymnasium and updated HVAC including a boiler. The building, now known as Hickson Central School, received two more additions in 1968, adding more classrooms including modern kindergarten rooms, a woodshop, home-economics room and two more student washrooms on the west end of the building, as well as a new library and a hexagonal learning pod composed of six wedge-shaped rooms with modular retractable walls.

In 2008, an addition comprising a new larger gymnasium, including a stage and retrofitted change-rooms, was built.

In 2026, student enrollment is 321 with two portables and eight buses. Grade 8 students look forward to their class trip to Camp Celtic each spring. The school boasts a caring, collaborative and motivated staff and a wonderfully supportive community.

Over the years, many changes in the curriculum and advanced technology have significantly changed the way students learn their ABCs. Take a step back in time with a visit to the Heritage of Hickson Central Public School Display. There is lots to learn and reminisce about.



(MARILYN PEARSON PHOTO)

The Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS), in partnership with the Hickson 4-H Club, has set up a Heritage of Hickson Central Public School display in the lobby of the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock administration building.



(MARILYN PEARSON PHOTO)

This handcrafted model airplane was a World War II school project made by Frank Bickle during a manual training class. Bickle's model airplane was put on display in the front window of the bank in Hickson during the Second World War to promote the sale of war bonds and certificates.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF GORD LOVEYS)

Hickson School – S.S. No. 6 East Zorra was a two-room, red-brick schoolhouse built in 1922 at 75 Loveys E. Hickson.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TDHS)

Hickson School – S.S. No. 6 East Zorra was a one-room white brick schoolhouse built in 1885 at 75 Lovey's St. E., Hickson. The building was 24 by 32 feet in size and built of white brick. Mr. Hendry, the first teacher, was responsible for 30-60 students.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR - MARCH/APRIL 2026

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

Oxford Philatelic Society OXPEX & OTEX 2026 Stamp Show

9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Free admission and parking. Framed and Judged exhibits, Stamp dealers, youth gift bags, Sales Circuit, draw prizes. Contact: dhfe@silomail.com Web: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford> St. Mary's Catholic High School, 431 Juliana Drive, Woodstock

Pruning Workshop with Mike Yost 1-3 p.m.

Free event. All aspects of tree pruning - equipment, safety, when & how to prune various tree species to be covered (no fruit trees). Details and registration: <https://letstrecwilmot.ca/events/> Mannheim Community Centre, 1467 Mannheim Road, Wilmot

MONDAY, MARCH 23

Wilmot Council meeting

7-10 p.m.

Council chambers
60 Snyder's Road W., Baden

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

"LIFE WORTH LIVING"

7 p.m.

The one-hour film was produced by Woodstock native, Alex Schadenberg, Executive Director of Euthanasia Prevention Coalition and will be followed by a Q & A session with Alex. Admission is free. For more information, please email info@oxfordcountyrighdtolife.com Woodstock Polish Hall, 878 Dufferin Street, Woodstock

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

Community Care Concepts Lunch and Fellowship

12 p.m.

Please register by Mar 20 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900. Linwood Community Centre, 5279 Ament Line, Linwood

Community Solar Forum

6:30 - 9 p.m.

A collaborative discussion featuring local stakeholders & experts. Free admission. Wilmot Recreation Complex, 1291 Nafziger Rd, Baden

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

The Nith Valley EcoBoosters are hosting another Repair Café

9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Skilled volunteer fixers will be on hand for mechanical, woodworking, sewing, mending, knitting, crocheting, jewelry and book repairs. Contact us at: nvebrepaircafe@gmail.com or check out www.nvecoboosters.com Zion United Church, 215 Peel St., New Hamburg

Optimist Club of Wilmot's Easter Egg Hunt Registration starts at 10:30 a.m.

Hunt starts at 11 a.m.

Beck Park
215 Snyder's Rd E, Baden

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

East Zorra-Tavistock Council meeting

9 a.m.

Council Chambers
89 Loveys Street East, Hickson

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

Shakespeare Optimist Club's Rib, Sauerkraut and Pig tail Stag

Take out: 6 p.m. Dinner: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

For tickets call Murray Schlotzhauer at 271-3330 or Gary West at 272-9140. Shakespeare & District Optimist Hall Galt St Shakespeare

TUESDAY, APRIL 7

Ostomy Support Group Meeting

7 p.m.

Speaker - Denise Strasser from Action Health Care. She will update us on assistive devices, mobility aids, other home health products, and the Assistive Devices Program, (ADP) Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome. For more information call (519)273-4327. 93 Morgan St., Stratford

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

Community Care Concepts Lunch and Fellowship

12 p.m.

Please register by April 3 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900 Wellesley Recreation Complex, 1401 Queen's Bush Rd., Wellesley

Tavistock Community Health (T.C.H.I.) annual meeting

7 p.m.

Guest speakers are Ron Harrison and Barb Myer, talking about Ron's ongoing battle with Parkinson's Disease. New board members are needed. Please Contact Frank Meconi at 519-655-2178 or email fameconi@rogers.com. Everyone welcome. Tavistock Men's Club Hall 78 Woodstock St N, Tavistock

Perth East council meeting

7 p.m.

Council chambers
25 Mill Street East, Milverton

SATURDAY, APRIL 11

Swing into Spring - Craft Sale

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Free admission Morningside Adult Community Off Hwy 8 at Bleams & Bergy, New Hamburg

TUESDAY, APRIL 14

Wellesley Council meeting

6:45 p.m.

Council chambers
4805 William Hastings Line, Crosshill

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

Community Care Concepts Lunch and Fellowship

12 p.m.

Please register by April 10 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900 Wilmot Rec Complex, 1291 Nafziger Rd, Baden

TUESDAY, APRIL 21

Our Water - Challenges & Solutions

7-9 p.m.

Guest speaker - expert hydrologist, Dr. Hugh Simpson, followed by a Q&A. Free online and in-person event. Register at nvecoboosters.com under upcoming events. Questions? Contact nvecoboosters@gmail.com Zion United Church, 215 Peel St., New Hamburg

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

Community Care Concepts Lunch and Fellowship

12 p.m.

Please register by April 17 by calling 519-664-1900 or Toll Free: 1-855-664-1900 Linwood Community Centre, 5279 Ament Line, Linwood

MORNING & EVENING BIBLE READING

Read the Bible in a Year in Community

Morning meeting 6:00 a.m. daily

Evening meeting 6:00 p.m. daily

Contact Arthur Rosh if interested.

Phone number: 226-899-1551

Email address: arthur.rosh@gmail.com

Location to be determined in New Hamburg, Tavistock, Baden, Wellesley, New Dundee, St. Agatha, Shakespeare, Petersburg, Hickson, Punkeydoodle's Corner and area

EVERY WEDNESDAY

TOPS - Taking off Pounds Sensibly

Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

TOPS is a non-judgmental weight loss support group. Need help on your weight loss journey. For info call Cathie 519-662-9273. St James Church, Baden

Wednesday Night Euchre at the New

Hamburg Legion

Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

65 Woodlee St., New Hamburg

3RD THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH

TAVISTOCK MENS CLUB MEETINGS

Dinner at 6.15

No meetings in July and August

Welcome to attend. Phone: 519-655-3573

Website: tavistockmensclub.ca

78 Woodstock St N

STAMP CLUB

Oxford Philatelic Society

Meetings: 2nd Tuesday (2-4 p.m.) and 4th

Tuesday (7 to 9 p.m.)

September to May

If you have never belonged to a stamp club, now's the time. Meet new friends, grow your knowledge and collection.

Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com

Website: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>

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FREE SENIORS ACTIVITIES

Tavistock Seniors Activities @ Tavistock Memorial Hall, 1 Adam St. Tavistock ON, except Shuffleboard

Pickleball Monday, Wednesday and Friday

afternoon, 12-4 p.m. Contact: Don Junker

519-535-7052

Cards Monday, Wednesday afternoon 1-4 p.m., euchre, crib (bring board), etc. Just drop in to play, good to bring someone. Contact: Bob Routly 519-301-2118

Inside walking Monday & Wednesday morning 8.30 a.m. - 12 p.m. Contact: Larry Brown 519-240-6715

Crokinole Monday, Wednesday morning 8.30 a.m. - 12 p.m., just drop in to play, good to bring someone. Contact: John Schultz 519-655-2346

FREE SENIORS ACTIVITIES CONT

Shuffleboard @ arena, Wednesday 12:30-4 and Thursday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Contact: Don Junker 519-535-7052.

VON Smart Seniors Exercise, Tuesday and Thursday morning 9 - 10 a.m.; Village Manor 10:25 - 11:25 a.m. Contact: 519-539-1231 x 6285

TAVISTOCK & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Museum Hours: Third Saturday of each Month 1-4 p.m. (other times by appointment)

Email: info@tavistockhistory.ca or call

519-655-3334

Travelling Museum Display: The theme is "Heritage of Hickson Public Central School" - history of School from 1885 to present along with photos, artifacts, school and art work.

TDHS partnered with the Hickson 4-H Club for this display that runs until April 27, 2026.

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 am-4:30 pm

Location: EZT Township Administration

Building (lobby), 89 Loveys Street, Hickson

Travelling Museum Display: "Easter Traditions & Egg Business in Tavistock" - history of the 1919 Tavistock Egg Circle and 1946 Tavistock Produce along with advertisements, artifacts & Easter decor. This display runs until April 27, 2026.

Hours: Open 7 days a week

Location: Tavistock & District Recreation Centre (arena lobby), 2 Adam Street, Tavistock

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OR call: 519-655-2341 with credit card details

OR e-transfer:

granthavenmedia@gmail.com

The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette COMMUNITY CALENDAR
DEADLINE: TUESDAY PRIOR TO 3 P.M. CONTACT: THEWTGAZETTE@GMAIL.COM

Optimist Club supports Baden School LEGO Team



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Optimist Club of Petersburg recently donated \$650 to support the LEGO team at Baden Public School. Pictured with members of the LEGO team are, from left to right, Optimist Mike Taylor, Jacob Bretz, chair of the Baden Public School council and Optimist Club member, Optimists Steve Malleck and John Gutscher, teacher Michelle McDonnell and principal Jeff Brown.

Quiz Time Answers

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Shamrock | 6. The Boston Tea Party |
| 2. Reindeer | 7. U2 |
| 3. All of the snakes | 8. Michael B Jordan |
| 4. Anthropic | 9. The harp |
| 5. Chicago, Illinois | 10. A pot of gold |

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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

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