

STRATFORD *TIMES*

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2026 community grants open up

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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What could your organization do with up to \$25,000 to make a difference in Perth County?

The Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation (SPCCF) is inviting local organizations to apply for its 2026 Community Grant Opportunities, with funding available for everything from grassroots projects that strengthen everyday community life to larger initiatives addressing some of the region's most pressing challenges.

Two funding streams are available: Community Spark Grants, which grant up to \$5,000 for projects and programs that respond to local needs and strengthen everyday community life, and Community Impact Grants, which grant of up to \$25,000 for initiatives that address shared community priorities and create meaningful community impact.

The 2026 grant opportunities reflect what SPCCF heard through conversations with local organizations, municipal partners and community members, as well as community research. Those conversations reinforced the importance of flexible funding while highlighting opportunities for deeper investment and collaboration around some of the challenges facing our communities.

"Organizations across every charitable sector are doing important work in Perth County, and we want to make sure there are opportunities to support that work," said Rachel Smith, executive director of SPCCF. "At the same time, we heard clearly that there are some challenges that require us to think bigger and work together. These two grant streams give us the op-

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Zachary Williams, Christine Desjardins, Brian Ross, Jacqueline Bartney and Anthony MacPherson, the swing team for this year's Stratford Festival production of *Guys and Dolls*, pose on a rehearsal stage at the Festival Theatre.

Swing Nation: The epitome of 'the show must go on'

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On one unassuming Tuesday morning, Stratford Festival swing performer Zachary Williams was sleeping on a bus coming back into town from Toronto for a performance of *Guys and Dolls*. When he woke up, the bus wasn't in Stratford – it was broken down on the side of the highway.

As it happened, festival alum Steve Ross, who plays Nicely-Nicely Johnson in the musical, and Jeremy Carv-

er-James, who plays Calvin, were also on the bus. Without many options, and with a show all three of them were supposed to be in, Steve suggested calling an Uber from the side of the 401.

"We're shaking JCJ (Carver-James) up because he just won't wake up," Williams shared. "... We get in the Uber, and we're like, 'Okay, great!' because Steve Ross had to go on because his understudy was sick. Anthony (MacPherson, another swing) was on, and if Steve Ross didn't make it to the performance, it would have been

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Swing Nation: The epitome of 'the show must go on'

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

cancelled. And the only person who covers JCJ is me."

Scheduled to arrive in Stratford at 1:30 p.m., stage manager Cynthia Toushan called Williams en route and informed him that *another* performer was sick. Toushan asked him if he could step in.

"Yes, it's my job," Williams responded – and true to his word, within a half hour of showtime, Williams had his wig and costume on and was on stage at the Festival Theatre. None of the audience members in the 1,833-seat theatre would have known just what it took to get all three actors on stage that afternoon.

That anecdote is but one of the many break-neck stories the festival's swing performers have from behind the curtain. As Williams said, a swing's job is to learn multiple ensemble parts (called tracks) and replace cast members who cannot perform – be it a pre-determined date known far in advance or mid-show due to an injury or illness. Swings need to know the choreography, singing and acting of each track, waiting in the theatre wings at every performance, just in case they are needed.

At the festival, there are two teams of performing swings this year – though each department at the festival has their version of a swing or understudy.

For *Guys and Dolls*, Williams joins Jacqueline Burtney, Christine Desjardins, Anthony MacPherson and Brian Ross (no relation). Wade Pierre Buller, Jarret Cody, Josh Doig, Alexandra Gratton and Ali Powell form the swing team for *Something Rotten!*

Speaking with the Times, they all espoused just how integral rehearsing is to what they do.

Stratford has a long rehearsal process compared to other domestic theatre companies, a necessity for how complicated, large and long the productions typically are. For instance, the choreography team and dancers for *Guys and Dolls* started pre-production in January this year, with the swing team starting in February for an end-of-May opening.

"Once we start, especially the first four, five, six weeks of the rehearsal process, it's just homework city," Powell said. "... The details we know are so much smaller than (what) most people would expect. It

isn't just 'know the steps.' It's 'know the steps, the traffic, the spacing, the costume, the order, the backstage traffic, all of it.'

"... Because, for us, we have to be six times more comfortable with everything, so that we can do it six different ways."

All of the swings were quick to add that teamwork is incredibly important. As the rehearsal process goes on, they all need to work with one another to make sure everyone is performing at their best, which means leaving ego at the door and being honest, professional and compassionate.

"This is a team sport," shared Cody. "There's no way the five of us could do what we could do alone, and it's wild because often, when you swing on in a show, you're by yourself. You're the one person swinging on in that show, and it's no one else's responsibility. The rest of the ensemble are going to do their show. It's your job to fill in the blank. No one can help you do that. But the only way that you get to a place where you can do it, is because you have people who are doing (the work with you)."

"Having a group of people that you know are there to help you is really awesome about swinging here specifically," Brian said, who has been the sole swing in other productions and companies in the past. "... Getting the chance to be able to go in and just focus on one track and know that you have support is really wonderful."

"But don't count your chickens," Desjardins added, explaining how a cascading effect can cause chaos as multiple tracks need to be filled. "I had to go on for three people here once (during a production of *Rent*). ... I'm on one side of the stage, but another character over there had to say a line and I'm just yelling it from across the room because something else over on this side had to be done, words needed to be said. It was exciting. The stage manager and I were trying to map it out in advance because so many people were ill or injured – but the show had to go on."

"To create that vision, to still portray the story as best as we could, is another exciting and 'adrenaline junkie' element of what we do."

To keep on top of everything they need to know, the swings keep detailed notes listing everything from blocking to small character beats and prop handling, though the format and organization of these notes naturally differs from person to person. They can be handwritten, highlighted and tabbed in journals, taken through digital apps that allow for no-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

The *Guys and Dolls* swing team: Christine Desjardins, Anthony MacPherson, Brian Ross, Zachary Williams and Jacqueline Bartney.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

The *Something Rotten!* swing team: Ali Powell, Jarret Cody, Josh Doig, Alex Gratton and Wade Pierre Buller.

tation, or a combination of the two.

Keeping a calm, ordered routine and having strong separation between their work and personal lives are also strategies the swings employ to keep up with such high-pressure jobs.

As Cody said, the job is to prepare for an exam they never know is coming, comparing swinging to showing up at school on the first day of class with teachers warning you of the final exam.

"They just start hurling information at you. And it's not that the exam is in December, or it's not that the exam is in June. The exam is at 10 a.m., when you get a text message that says, 'Today's the final exam,' and you go, 'Okay, I hope I (prepared enough).'"

"That final exam could be stepping in in a rehearsal," Doig added. "It could be, 'Hey, we're in the middle of tech, we need

you to jump in for this person because their child is sick.' It's opening night and so-and-so has the flu. You have to perform their entire track, having never rehearsed it."

"You're in a three-piece suit in the theatre because you thought you were going to enjoy the show, but you're actually on," Cody laughed. "... Our job is the epitome of 'the show must go on' ... If we didn't know what we're doing, or if we weren't competent, or if we didn't relay confidence to the people around us, it would not happen."

"That's how I approach everything – that idea of 'what can I do to make sure that the show is seamless, that people don't know (that a swing is on).' For all the work that we do, the biggest compliment I've ever received is 'I didn't even know you were on today.'"

 Franklin E. Hinz



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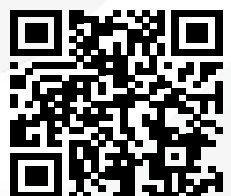
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2026 community grants open up

CONTINUED FROM FRONT
portunity to do both.”

Community Impact Grants will focus on four priority areas identified through community engagement: housing and affordability, food security, mental health and well-being and access to services in rural communities.

The 2026 Regional Grants will support Community Impact Grants within their respective regions, helping ensure that local priorities and community voices continue to guide investment decisions across Perth County.

“Our role as a community foundation is

to listen, bring people together, and invest in the future of our communities,” said Smith. “These grant opportunities allow us to continue supporting the incredible work happening every day while responding to the opportunities and challenges identified through community conversations.”

Applications for both Community Spark Grants and Community Impact Grants will open Sept. 1 and close Oct. 1.

Organizations are encouraged to visit www.spcf.ca/grants to explore the funding opportunities, learn more about eligibility and determine which grant is the best fit for their work.

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Stratford Christian Reformed Church celebrates 75 years of service and community

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

Christian Reformed Church (CRC) of Stratford is celebrating 75 years of service and local impact this November, and they're inviting the community to look back.

On Saturday, Nov. 21, the church will hold a public open house from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 190 Athlone Cres., Stratford.

The open house will include a building tour, photos and information about the church and congregation's history. A private dinner for current and former members will take place later that evening.

On Sunday, Nov. 22, CRC will hold a special anniversary worship service, followed by a soup lunch, coffee and cake. All are welcome to attend.

The church was founded on Nov. 25, 1951, and initially had 77 members meet-

ing at the YMCA on the corner of Waterloo and Coburg streets. Over the decades, the congregation has grown, worshipping at locations on Church Street and Easson Street before moving to its current home on Athlone Crescent in 2005.

Today, the church serves a vibrant community of about 500 members, including several generational families, such as Betty DeWeerd, who also serves as the church's office administrator.

"I've been with the church for 46 years," she said. "I started coming here in 1979. I met my husband here, and we've grown alongside the church. My husband's parents went here, and so did his brothers; three of them stayed and are also married. They have children and grandchildren who are all a part of this building. For me, this just shows the closeness of this community."

DeWeerd says CRC has a long-stand-

ing commitment to spiritual growth and community care and often focuses on community connection through adult programs such as GriefShare and Alpha. The church also supports children and youth through ministries including GEMS, Cadets, Youth Group and Vacation Bible School.

Alongside their internal programs, CRC hosts community meals throughout the winter and opens its doors for OneCare exercise programs multiple days each week. The congregation actively supports local initiatives, including the House of Blessing and participation in Ride for Refuge.

Although the church has a small team of two pastors, a treasurer, an admin staff member and a custodian, DeWeerd says it runs smoothly because of loyal volunteers.

"I love this church," said DeWeerd. "All of the volunteers and people who make it

what it is today are so special. We have a small staff, but the volunteers are what make the church run, and that's so special."

This anniversary is centered on the theme "God is Faithful," inspired by Deuteronomy 7:9 and drawn from Psalm 100:5: "His faithfulness continues through all generations."

"I wonder if the first congregation in Stratford realized what they were building," said DeWeerd. "I wonder if they realized how great their legacy of faith would be for us. With God's help, we are celebrating 75 years. And now, as we take a look back, we also look forward to what the Lord has in store for Stratford CRC beyond 2026."

Community members are invited to join in celebrating this historic occasion and to learn more about the church's ongoing role in Stratford.

20 years of community growth with Wellspring Stratford

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Wellspring Stratford is proudly celebrating its 20th anniversary and the growth in community support in membership over time.

"It's amazing. I've been with the organization for almost 15 years so it's really great to see how much we've grown in the last 20 years in the community," said Lisa Stacey, executive director of Wellspring Stratford.

Wellspring provides a supportive environment and a variety of enrichment programs for those living with cancer and their loved ones. Stratford House is part of Wellspring London and Region, with

any money raised for Wellspring Stratford staying in Stratford.

When Stacey started working for Wellspring Stratford, there was a small group of volunteers operating out of London, Ont. Now, there are more than 20 volunteers part of Wellspring Stratford, including some who have been there since the start.

"We're more like a family. It's a really strong group of people with huge hearts that make this organization happen and it extends out to the people that come in to take our services that become part of this family," she said.

As Wellspring Stratford doesn't receive any government, nor United Way funding, financial support from the community is

vital.

"All of our fundraisers and our donors are what keeps our doors open for people in the community that need our services and those people that need our services are those that are navigating their cancer journey," Stacey said.

The organization will host a casual drop-in event to commemorate the monumental celebration on Oct. 15 at the Army and Navy between 4-7 p.m. The event will feature speeches from Wellspring members, donors and volunteers, live music from Celtic folk duo Heron Bridge, and catering from Black Angus Bakery and Catering.

"I have to give a huge shoutout to the Black Angus because they have been an incredible supporter of our events where

they do incredible catering jobs and they donate all of it for free," Stacey said.

All are welcome to celebrate Wellspring Stratford's 20th anniversary.

"This is open to people that have been members, donors, community support, but also maybe there's people in the community that don't really know what Wellspring's and this would be a great opportunity to just step in the door and meet members, meet our volunteers, and get a better understanding of the different programs that Wellspring offers to the community," Stacey said.

More information about the organization can be found online by visiting <https://wellspring.ca/london-region/locations/stratford>.

Active living fair returns to Stratford this fall

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association (SLAAA) is once again hosting its active living fair and open house this fall on Sept. 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. upstairs at the Agriplex Community Hall, located at 357 McCarthy Rd. W. in Stratford.

Alongside more than 50 vendors, speakers this year include Dr. Krista Lounghead, naturopathic practitioner and professor at the University of Windsor, and Dr. Todd Loughead, kinesiologist, who will discuss healthy living, supplements and staying active after retirement. Speakers will take the stage from 10:30-11 a.m.

The goal of the open house and fair is to bring together programs and businesses from across the region that promote and foster a sense of healthy aging after retirement, something that is a passion of Trudy Jonkman, event organizer and vol-

unteer.

"One of the significant challenges facing our society today is social isolation," she said. "By bringing organizations together, we can help people discover the many opportunities available to them – opportunities that may spark an interest, provide a sense of purpose, create meaningful connections or simply encourage them to get involved."

She continued to say that no single organization can meet the needs of everyone and by working together as a community, SLAAA aims to provide a broader range of choices and make it easier for individuals to find the programs, activities, services and relationships that are right for them.

All attendees will talk to vendors, connect with others and listen to speakers to help them navigate aging with optimism by finding purpose within their community, maintaining a positive outlook, building meaningful connections, stay-

ing healthy and active well into retirement and finding healthy ways to manage stress.

SLAAA aims to challenge stereotypes about aging and prove that living a full, healthy and meaningful life into your 90s or beyond is possible.

"Aging does not mean becoming invisible, irrelevant or disconnected," said Jonkman. "We can challenge negative stereotypes about aging – whether they come from society, from others or from within ourselves."

Jonkman, who recently lost her 97-year-old mother, said she wants to continue to live a full, nourishing life, just like her mother did, and that means continuing to learn, adapt and support her community.

"My working career has always been working with older adults in the community, and I am so passionate about not only helping others to age well, but to live well, like my mother did," she said. "She lived well until she was 97. I want to com-

bat the idea that, as we age, there is no option but to decline, which is not true. We have lots of things to be involved with, whether we find purpose in our lives through volunteering or working or being involved with different organizations; that's the way I want to live my life."

The event is partly funded by the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, which helps identify the importance of improving the lives of seniors and people with disabilities by changing perceptions and promoting the benefits of an age-diverse and accessible workplace and community.

The ministry is also committed to addressing social isolation and helping older adults remain healthy, safe and active in their communities.

Admission is free, and all are welcome to attend this event focused on active, healthy living after retirement.

To learn more, please visit www.stratford.ca/active55.

The Story Behind the Poem: “About My Big Brother Ben” by Michael Smith

MARK HERTZBERGER

Times Correspondent

Stratford-based poet Michael Smith lives with his cerebral palsy in a remarkably accepting and optimistic way, expressing gratitude for all those who love and care for him. These include many aunts, uncles, cousins and friends, including his aunt Sue Mavity and friend Lesley Walker-Fitzpatrick. His poetry reflects that optimism.

Smith cites his friendship with the late poet and children’s author John C. Walker, who also lived with cerebral palsy and was quadriplegic and mute, as his first time being inspired by poetry. Described as “an inspiring man of rare courage and determination,” it is easy to see the influence Walker had on Smith’s outlook from an early age.

It was through Walker that Smith met Walker-Fitzpatrick, Walker’s sister, who now transcribes Smith’s poetry and encourages him to write. It wasn’t until March of 2025, though, that Smith decided he was ready to write seriously. He surprised his family with a chapbook of his poems and this year has added the feather of “Judges Choice Award” to his bard’s cap.

“About My Great Brother Ben” was inspired by Smith’s immense grief over the untimely passing of Ben in 2023. Smith describes Ben as a gentle, caring man with a mischievous sense of humour – “He was gorgeous in every way.” On what would have been Ben’s thirty-ninth birthday, Michael realized he had a poem that needed to be written: “On this day my great angel, Ben, would have sung....in my life, his record plays on and on...”

But Smith doesn’t indulge in self-pity or pessimism. His full schedule doesn’t allow him time for it. In addition to his Tuesday poetry writing session with Walker-Fitzpatrick, he is a volunteer with Friends of the Festival, attends the Community Outreach group at Avondale United Church (where he met fellow poet and award winner, Aleah Graff), and attends Bethel Pentecostal Church on Sundays. He is a Warriors fan and in hockey season attends games with good friends Nate West and Luke



Cowell. In winter you can also find him volunteering at one of the Salvation Army Christmas Kettle locations.

This summer, Smith and his cousin April were instrumental in advocating for much needed sidewalks around his residence to increase accessibility. The sidewalks were installed this summer and came complete with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by Mayor Martin Ritsma.

Smith hopes that readers of his poetry will be inspired by his passion to live, his courage and his piety: “I thought it was the right time to get my thoughts out there in case there is a time I can’t.”

“The Story Behind the Poem” is an ongoing series featuring poets recognized in this year’s Every Voice community poetry contest and published in the Roots Through Stone anthology. Both are joint projects of Stratford’s Poet Laureate, the Stratford Public Library and Destination Stratford. Copies of the anthology are available at Fanfare Books in Stratford.

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My Hummingbird

(third place prize poem, Lawrence House
Centre for the Arts, Carmen Ziolkowski Poetry
Prize
Contest, awarded August 7th, 2026)

My hummingbird does not arrive,
it materializes, like an answer,
suddenly not there and then is,
an invention on emerald fly wheels,
a drone-whirring of liquid engines
suspended among the blooms
on threads of wind and magic.
What force each morning
commands him to my garden?
What bottle green and flaring fuse
holds him in the air like that,
doing his work like a good soldier?
Growing older, I see lessons
in everything. We fret and frenzy
our way among the islands
of our lives, afraid to touch, seldom
bending with an open heart
to the love that kneels before us.
My hummingbird takes it one
blossom at a time, balanced and
alive in every moment, remembering
always that there is only one way
to kiss a bloom, and that is full,
on the mouth, like you mean it.

David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate

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About My Great Brother Ben

how bright people are
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how they shine their bright soul
through music

music always tells a story
searching the classic hits
like Randy Travis’
‘Digging Up Bones’,
my brother Ben
really liked that song,
in school classes
Ben always made people laugh

how people sing
of the things in their emotions
physical, emotional or from their
heart
music can really tell a life story

it’s like a life record,
you change the record every day
and every year
more and more always happens

on your music record
everyone has their own
music record
but we all get to the same place
in life
we all go to the other side
that’s the magic in life
but I hope I have many years
left on my record

I’m always shining

I heard some throat singers
and that’s me singing every day
I am a throat singer

dream on Mike
on this day my great angel Ben
would have sung his 39th tune,
if he was still alive
September 11, 1986 he was born
to play
but his record ended on April 26,
2023

In my life
his record plays on and on

whenever I see a cardinal

I know it’s here for Ben
the cardinal sings
about Ben for me

what great care they gave me at
home
my angels sing every day
by how wonderful I am doing now
down here
how great my life road is

peace to my wonderful angels,
they set me up for my great life
you don’t realize till people are
gone
how they sacrifice for you
all my surgeries and everything
I thank them every day

in song I sing to them,
instead of cry

Michael Smith
September 8, 2025



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Creatives at Stratford Comicon happy to share work with attendees

EMILY STEWART
Times Correspondent

Artisans and pop culture enthusiasts of all kinds gathered at the Best Western Arden Park hotel for Stratford Comicon on Aug. 22.

Stratford Comicon, hosted by Pop Culture Canada, featured a variety of vendors offering prints, stickers, bookmarks, plush toys, trading cards, collectibles and books. WWE Hall of Famer Brutus “The Barber” Beefeater was also at the event for a meet-and-greet.

Regan W.H. MacAuley and Tamara Botting, authors with Pandamonium Publishing House, were there with lots of their books.

“We ourselves are into nerdy stuff so we write about some nerdy stuff too and genre. In particular for me, I have some horror-comedy novels for adult readers so I thought Comicon would be a particularly good fit for those but wanted to bring other books for the full age range from zero to 100 basically, so that everybody has a little something here,” said MacAuley.

“I think also with Comicon, so much of

what brings people here is their love of the stories and their love of the characters, the different issues that are touched on and just how personal it is,” Botting added. “For us as authors, we really love to share the stories that we’ve come up with as well, so it’s just another opportunity for us to share our voices.”

Jason Neal of ArtRed Shop, selling handmade and hand-painted items like keychains and rubber ducks of characters from Hazbin Hotel, K-Pop Demon Hunters, and the Disney universe, among others, has been part of Stratford Comic Con for nearly six years.

“What makes me come back is meeting all the awesome people, all the cosplayers that are committed to the bit,” Neal said. “Also, just the little light that I see on people’s faces when they get so excited, like seeing your favourite fandom and seeing that someone takes the time and the passion to recreate it in a way that you could physically have it instead of just seeing it on your favourite show or in your favourite book all the time.”

Guests also dropped off food bank donations at the event.

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Hypothetical Baby brings deeply personal conversation about abortion, parenthood to Here For Now

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

For playwright and performer Rachel Cairns, the idea for *Hypothetical Baby* began with a deeply personal experience and a question she thought would have a relatively straightforward answer.

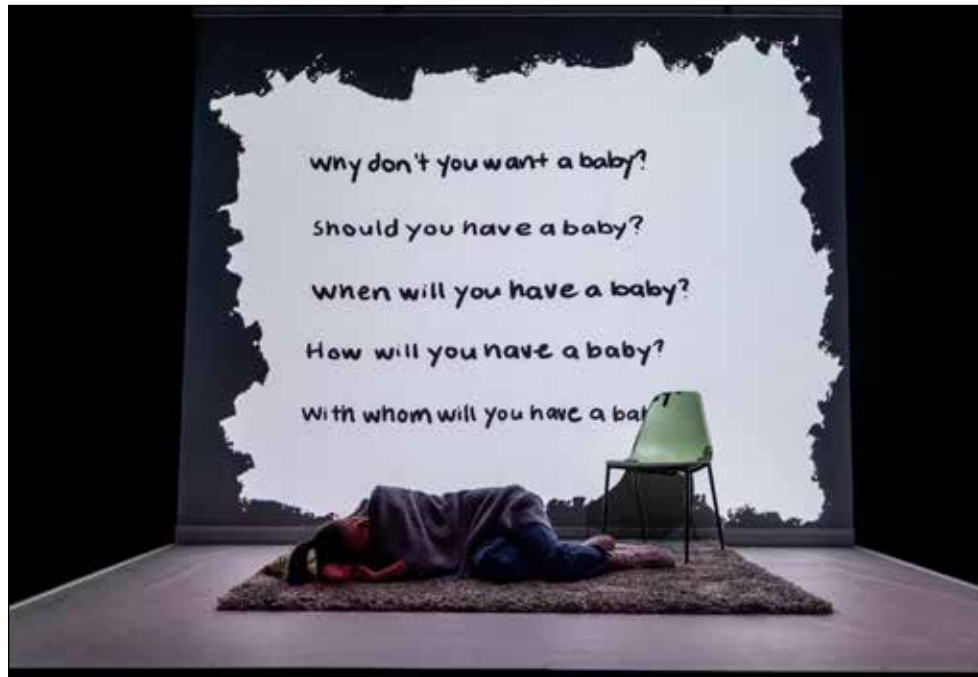
After becoming pregnant and deciding she wanted an abortion, Cairns went to her doctor to ask how she could access one. Instead of leaving with an answer, she said she was questioned extensively about her decision.

"I basically was like, 'How do I get an abortion?' And then he kind of turned around and interrogated me about my choice with a litany of questions," Cairns said. "I left the office actually not with an answer to my original question."

That encounter became the opening scene of *Hypothetical Baby*, Cairns' autobiographical, one-woman play coming to Here For Now Theatre in Stratford Sept. 2-13.

Written and performed by Cairns and directed by Courtney Ch'ng Lancaster, the approximately 80-minute production combines data and drama with humour and frank storytelling to explore abortion, reproductive choice, parenthood and the social and economic circumstances that influence those decisions.

As Cairns went through her own abortion experience, she found herself considering how much more difficult navigating the process could have been without her supportive family and ability to find information herself.



(DAHLIA KATZ PHOTO)

Rachel Cairns in *Hypothetical Baby*.

"What if I was in an abusive relationship? What if I had been sexually assaulted? What if English wasn't my first language?" she recalled wondering. "There were so many qualities or circumstances to a person around the choices of pregnancy."

Hypothetical Baby premiered in Toronto in late 2023 with the Howland Company and was remounted by Nightwood Theatre in early 2025. Stratford will mark the production's first run outside Toronto.

Cairns said one of the most common responses following those earlier productions was audience members sharing their

own abortion experiences with her.

While abortion provides the narrative through-line, Cairns said the play ultimately asks a broader question about what it means to consider having children in Canada today.

"It also kind of has this sneaky other thing that it's actually about, which is the question of how do we have children in today's world," Cairns said.

That aspect of the play has taken on new meaning since Cairns became a mother herself. She has rewritten the ending for the Stratford production to reflect how parenthood has changed her perspective

on the story.

Cairns said becoming a parent reinforced many of her concerns about whether Canadian society provides enough support for parents, children and caregivers.

"I long for a world where children are not luxury items," she said, adding she hopes audiences leave thinking about the social infrastructure – from health care and education to economic security – required to allow families and children to flourish.

Cairns said Here For Now was particularly receptive when she was looking for another home for the production, something she appreciates given what she sees as a continuing reluctance among some theatres to put abortion openly onstage.

"I do think this is an under-told story," Cairns said.

More than anything, she hopes bringing *Hypothetical Baby* beyond Toronto will encourage conversations that extend beyond abortion itself to reproductive choice, parenthood and the responsibilities people have to one another.

"I really think that we live collectively and we live in community," Cairns said. "I want people to think about kind of what we owe each other."

Hypothetical Baby runs Sept. 2-13 at Here For Now Theatre, 24 St. Andrew St., Stratford. Tickets range from \$33.90 to \$41.24, plus applicable fees. The production is recommended for audiences 16 and older and contains mature subject matter.

Tickets and more information are available at www.herefornowtheatre.com.

Shelf Help: *The Future Book*

TAZIAH FIOZE-BOOKER

Stratford Public Library

The Future Book, by Mac Barnett
@SPL: JP Barne

Every book you've ever read was written in the past. But this picture book is from the future. And, as we will learn, things in the future are a little bit different. For example, people in the future no longer refer to cats as "cats." In the future they call them "meowing life forms." What we call "bananas" are referred to as "apples," and what we call "apples" no longer exist. Instead of saying goodbye, people in the future say "you smell like a baby!" And they even have a brand new colour in the future – blorange!

In this seriously silly story, author Mac Barnett has fun playing around

with language. He introduces readers to a series of nonsensical neologisms, brought to life in bold, vivid colour by Shawn Harris's accompanying illustrations.



The story concludes by putting all of these futuristic phrases together into one extremely goofy conversation – one that requires a bit of brainpower from readers as they recall what the terms mean! The humour and playfulness of this story are perfect for reading aloud and Harris's lively illustrations will draw readers in. The holographic details on the cover add a cool, futuristic touch.

The Future Book is certain to elicit giggles – not only from young readers, but from their grownups as well. Do you ever wonder how things will be different in the future? Well, here is your chance to find out!

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What bird is a universal symbol of peace?
2. Who invented the airplane?
3. Which body part has the most bones?
4. What is the square root of 49?
5. How many legs does a crab have?
6. What three colors are on Estonia's flag?
7. Which gas do plants absorb from the atmosphere?
8. Who wrote *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*?
9. What are the five stages of grief?
10. Who sings the 1998 song Closing Time?

This week's answers are found on pg. 19

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STRATFORD **TIMES** SPORTS

Warriors begin training camp, preseason against Woodstock

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

At the Stratford Rotary Complex, the Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors began their preparations for the 2026-2027 GOHL season during the weekend of Aug. 22 and 23, followed by their first preseason game versus the league's newest team – the Woodstock Navy Vets on Aug. 24.

Despite the limited practice time, the Warriors outmatched the Navy Vets in a 4-1 win. Coen Galbraith opened the scoring for Stratford with the assists from Owen Misener and Seth Montgomery at the 9:03 mark of the first period.

The game remained 1-0 for the home

side until Woodstock tied the game with a powerplay goal early in the third period. But the Warriors retook the lead with two goals in nine seconds from Luke Minard and Dominic Marshall. Joshua Lawrance sealed the Warriors' win with an empty-net goal with under 90 seconds left.

Montgomery led the Warriors with two points, while Keaton Niereisel, Drew Hodge, Grady Murphy and Colin Slattery each tallied an assist in the victory. Stratford's goaltending tandem of Tyler Wilkinson and Travis Vanderzwaag combined for 20 saves out of 21 Woodstock shots on goal.

Following the game, head coach Dave Williams was impressed with the team's performance given the limited prepara-

tion.

"Yeah, I liked how we played. You know, we've only had a couple days of practice, but it was good to see us. You know, go out and do some of the things that we've been practicing in the first couple days. There was a lot of positive energy on the bench, and I think anytime you can win, it's just a really good feeling early in camp," Williams said.

Regarding the first weekend of training camp, Williams feels optimistic about the current group but cites the need for the team to gel in time for the regular season.

"I really like the group. I think we've returned some really good hockey players, and not only good players, but really

good people and humans, and the other guys we brought in. I think so far it's been a really positive experience with camp," Williams said.

"We're a little disrupted right now with guys going off to OHL camps, and with some of that, just looking forward to getting maybe a few more days behind us when we can get the full group back, and I think once we get the full group back, we'll continue to make some really good progress."

The Warriors continue their training camp over the next couple of weeks at the Rotary Complex, with preseason road games against the Lincolns at St. Marys on Aug. 28, followed by Aug. 30 at Woodstock against the Navy Vets.

Stratford Summer Leagues is fun for everyone

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

It was another exciting year at the Stratford Summer Leagues. Held at the Stratford Rotary Complex and the Agriplex, the summer-long sports competitions included hockey and, for the first time this year, basketball, with hockey run by Nick McCabe and basketball by Dirk Sybersma.

Players, both men and women aged 18 to 25 from Stratford and nearby areas, many with Junior Hockey and varsity basketball backgrounds, took part in the three-month season from May 20 to Aug. 18.

The Stratford Summer Leagues are unique because they allow anyone to join, stay active and connect with others, regardless of skill level.

McCabe, founder and commissioner of the Stratford Summer Leagues, described to the Times how the leagues came to be.

"After I came home from school in the summers, there wasn't a hockey or basketball league for me to play in, and I've always loved playing, and I wanted to continue to play, especially with my friends," McCabe said.

"So, when there weren't any leagues to play in, I kind of decided to look into building my own league so others could also play, get exercise and play with their friends."

This season, McCabe secured sponsorships from Dairy Queen, Dunny's Source for Sports, Recovery Hub and Windsor Hospitality Group.

The Stratford Basketball Summer League featured four teams – Dairy

Queen, Alley Oopsies, Fast Breakers and Brick Layers.

Basketball League head Sybersma expresses the joy of playing basketball with friends and the league's sense of community. The focus for future seasons is to increase participation and make new friends.

"It's great. A lot of the guys playing have gone to high school together. Maybe some of them are a little bit older, a little bit younger. A lot of these guys you've seen around," Sybersma said.

"You may not know them, or they may be your friends, but it's great. It gets everyone out. It's a weekly thing, something to look forward to, and get to be active, burn some calories and have some fun doing it."

Evan Heinbuch, part of the 2024 22U Provincials-winning Stratford Nationals team, participated in the inaugural basketball season. Heinbuch valued the league mainly for its social opportunities, exercise and the chance to compete in basketball once more and reacquaint with familiar faces.

"Well, it's been an enjoyable experience to this point. To be quite honest, it's been a great time to come after work and get to see some faces that I haven't seen in a long time. And yeah, it's good to get out and get some exercise and keep everything going," Heinbuch said.

"There was a lot of interest from a lot of mutual people that I know, and it was just a good way to get back into the competitive spirit of things and keep playing basketball. I grew up playing a lot of competitive basketball, and it was just a fun time to get back out there."

Bo Anderson, member of the Stratford Warriors equipment staff, decided to give basketball a try despite having no prior experience. Reflecting on the season, Anderson now has a great interest in the sport.

"I really like it here, and also the atmosphere is good, and all the friends are really nice," Anderson said. "I really like it. I've never played basketball in my life, but I know now how to play it."

This year's summer hockey league had six teams with equally memorable names. The teams were known as Bach Tuahs, Mid Ice Crisis, Butter Stick Bandits, Ice Holes, Meat Missiles and Dunny's Source for Sports.

Current member of the Stratford Warriors, Colin Slattery, and former Warrior Carter Petrie, now a member of the OJHL's Cobourg Cougars, both agree the league is a fun opportunity for friends to play hockey, especially for those who haven't played in a while.

"I think it's just a great opportunity for some guys to get out with their friends, play some hockey. You know, a bunch of guys out here haven't played in a while, so it's just a good time to have some fun with some friends," Slattery said.

"It's awesome to play with some buddies that you haven't played with in a long time that you don't get to play with during the season. So it's always fun to play with the players that you miss playing with," Petrie said.

The last two weeks showcased the top-tier competition and enthusiasm of the Stratford Summer Leagues.

In the hockey semifinals on Aug. 11, third-seed Mid Ice Crisis beat sec-

ond-seed Butter Stick Bandits 4-3, while fourth-seed Ice Holes beat top-ranked Bach Tuahs 5-4. On the hardwood, the winless Dairy Queen edged Alley Oopsies in a 67-64 semifinal win, while Fast Breakers beat Brick Layers 64-55 in the other semifinal game.

In the hockey final on Aug. 18, the first-year Mid Ice Crisis defeated Ice Holes 5-4 in overtime. Malcolm McLeod earned the finals' Most Valuable Player award. In the basketball championship final, Dairy Queen completed the Cinderella story of the year, defeating Fast Breakers. Peyton Lobb won Finals MVP honours for his performance.

Looking ahead, McCabe and Sybersma want to see more participants and broader reach to the local sports scene.

"Future years ahead, it would just be looking to keep getting kids out. You know, bring your friends. If you don't have anyone you know that wants to sign up with you, sign up. We'll get you on a team, and it's a great opportunity to make some new friends," Sybersma said.

"But again, just trying to get more people playing, more people out, so we can expand the league, have more teams and just come out and compete."

McCabe and Anderson offered encouraging advice to the future Stratford Summer League players.

"It's a great place to come meet people, get some exercise in. It's only once a week. It's not a huge time commitment. But it's definitely a fun time getting out there, getting back on skates or playing basketball," McCabe said.

"Be brave, be loyal and just keep shooting," Anderson said.

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Keating, Flanagan qualify for 2027 International Junior Optimists Championship

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

Braden Keating and Henry Flanagan of Stratford both qualified for the 2027 International Junior Optimists Championship, to be held in Miami, Fla., next year, after strong finishes at the Midwestern Ontario Junior Optimists District tournament in St. Marys Aug. 11.

Keating, competing in the Boys' 12-13 division, finished first to be crowned the Midwestern Ontario District Champion. Keating shot a score of 76 to claim his bracket's top spot.

According to Keating, he was able to finish atop his division thanks to some steady chips and drives throughout the day.

"My irons and wedges were dialled in for the entire round," Keating said. "The reason that I won is because of the consistency of my game and my confidence going into the tournament. I would say that the highlight of my day was my third shot on the par-five sixth hole. I was under a tree and flighted my 52-degree wedge to within three feet and converted it into a birdie."

Keating added the opportunity to compete on the global stage is one he is ecstatic to have.

"It means the world to me that I get to travel to Florida and play some amazing golf there against competition from all over the world," exclaimed Keating. "I spend a lot of time practicing and playing golf. You will find me at the golf course most days in the summer. I am excited for the opportunity, to say the least."

In the Boys' 16-18 group, Flanagan shot 75 to finish second and qualify for the international event next summer. Flanagan told the Times he was getting to the green very well and, once there, made some important shots from distance.

"I felt really good about the way I was playing throughout the tournament," Flanagan remarked. "My approach shots from around 100 yards were particularly strong. I hit three shots that finished within five feet of the hole, which gave me some great opportunities to score. My putting was also a big part of my round. I made several difficult putts, including two 30-foot putts that were really important in keeping my round going and helping me finish with a 75."

Flanagan also detailed a dramatic finish to his round that led to him earning his spot in Florida.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Braden Keating putts on hole six during the Midwestern Ontario Junior Optimists District Championship Aug. 11 at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club.

"The most memorable moment for me was definitely my final hole," said Flanagan. "I had 115 yards to the pin and hit my approach shot to within a foot of the hole. I knew I needed a good finish because I was trying to qualify for the opportunity to play in Florida, and that shot ended up being the difference. I finished with a 75 and qualified by just one stroke, so it was a pretty exciting way to finish the tournament."

Flanagan also explained how important the spot at the International Championship is to him.

"Qualifying for the international event in Florida means everything to me. I have been golfing since I was three years old, so having an opportunity like this is something I am extremely proud of and excited about."



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Henry Flanagan chips towards the green on hole six during the Aug. 11 Midwestern Ontario Junior Optimists District Championship Aug. 11 at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club.

Golf has been a huge part of my life, and I have worked hard over many years to improve my game and reach this level. I also work as a groundskeeper at the Stratford Municipal Golf Course, where I have been working since I was 13 years old.

"Being able to work at a golf course has given me an even greater appreciation for the game and for everything that goes into maintaining a course," Flanagan continued. "To have the chance to compete internationally is a dream come true, and I am very grateful for the opportunity. I'm looking forward to representing Stratford and making the most of this experience."

Strikers Weekly Recap: U16 Strikers compete for Nothers Cup Finals Berth, U15 Girls in action, U18 wraps up season

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The 2026 soccer season has reached its twilight, but there will still be plenty of matches for the Stratford Strikers.

For the U16 Boys, the team played against Guelph in both matches last week. In their Southwest District Soccer League (SWDSL) regular season matchup at Stratford VFG Financial Field, both teams settled for a 1-1 draw, with Maelaf Haile scoring for Stratford.

The two sides played again on Aug. 21, this time at Guelph with a berth in the 2026 Nothers U16 Youth Cup Finals at stake. Dominic McGurgin scored for Stratford, but the team dropped a 6-1 decision in the semifinals.

Stratford wraps up their home portion of

the season against FEDS United on Aug. 25 at VFG Financial Field. The final result will be shown in next week's edition of the Times.

On Aug. 18, the U16 Girls ended their unbeaten regular-season run with a 3-2 loss to the Puslinch Predators at the Puslinch Community Centre. Arabelle Garland and Everly Durst scored for the Strikers.

The Strikers competed in the Nothers U16 Youth Cup Semifinals at Victoria Park in Fergus against FEDS United on Aug. 21. Led by Garland's brace, Stratford advanced to the finals with a 6-0 win. Mya Meyer, Olivia Horenberg, Niamh Appel and Emerie Smith also scored for the Strikers.

With this victory, the Strikers will compete in the Nothers Cup Final at the University of Guelph on Sept. 19, facing the

winner of the Puslinch Predators/Oriental SC match.

Stratford has another chance to secure the SWDSL U16 Girls League title when they host Oriental SC at VFG Financial Field on Aug. 25. The game recap will appear in next week's Times.

With the SWDSL league title secured, the U15 Strikers continued to wind down their regular season play with a road matchup against Waterloo United at RIM Park on Aug. 24. Goals from Peyton Ward and Peyton Herman gave the Strikers a 2-1 win, improving their unbeaten record to 12-1-0 through 13 matches.

Stratford can punch their ticket to the Nothers U15 Girls Youth Cup Finals on Aug. 28 at SERC Tennis Field against Kitchener U14/15 TFC.

The U18 Strikers officially closed out

their 2026 campaign by participating in the Thornhill Challenge Cup and Festival at Markham during the weekend of Aug. 22 and 23.

Playing in Group A, the Strikers opened their tournament play with a 1-1 draw against U17 Thornhill Bolts, with Yeil Zeilstra scoring for Stratford, then followed by a scoreless draw against SSC.

On Aug/ 23, the Strikers achieved their only victory in the round robin, defeating Southend United 3-1. Simon Taylor, Kieren Johnson and Piers Murray scored for Stratford, earning them a semifinal match against Thornhill.

The Strikers' season, highlighted by their tournament victory at the 2026 Graham Bunting Classic, concluded with a narrow 3-2 defeat to the Bolts in the tournament semifinals.

Summer's Surest Bet!



GUYS AND DOLLS



(out of 4)

“Jackpot”

Toronto Star

**CRITIC’S PICK
“A masterpiece”**

The Globe and Mail

**STRATFORD
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DEVON MICHAEL BROWN, PHOTO: DAVID HOU.

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Stratford Festival review: *The Tao of the World* brings restoration comedy into modern Singapore

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Complete with stylishly elegant costumes and a set that brings audiences into the heart of the daily lives of the Singaporean elite during the COVID-19 pandemic, playwright and director Jovanni Sy presents his modern take on restoration comedy with his production of *The Tao of the World* for the Stratford Festival's 2026 season.

Referring to a period after King Charles II took the throne and ended an 18-year puritanical ban on theatrical performances in the late 17th century, restoration comedy tends to satirize the lives of the wealthy elite, portraying them as obsessed with fashion, gossip and romance. This style of play also rejects the strict moral rules of the puritans with the inclusion of lewd jokes and loose social behaviour.

While Sy certainly mirrors restoration comedy in *The Tao of the World*, especially at the beginning, he peels back that surface layer of romantic scheming and self-obsession to reveal a strong emotional core and social commentary on what restoration means, not just to the wealthy, but to those who serve them as well.

Setting this play during the pandemic was a stroke of genius as it highlights the disparity between the better world we all dreamed would emerge on the other side and what the world actually was – those with power and privilege waited out the



(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

From left, Michael Man as Dr. Wilson Wong, Karthik Kadam as Devan Pillay and Agnes Tong as Arabella Flynn, *The Tao of the World*, Stratford Festival 2026.

virus in relative comfort and safety while the working class risked their lives to provide for them.

Arabella Flynn (Agnes Tong), a wealthy heiress and the play's chief narrator who schemes to steal renowned cricketer, model and movie star Edward Lim (Angus Yam) from her sex-starved cousin, Millicent Tan (Heidi Sy Damayo), learns this lesson firsthand as her scheming brings her face to face with that

socio-economic inequity.

Devan Pillay (Karthik Kadam), Arabella's childhood best friend and the son of her exacting, ultra-wealthy mother, Lady Helena Yu's (Manami Hara) maid and servants Kamila (Nadine Villasin) and Toto (Nestor Lozano Jr.) show the young heiress that while she and her wealthy friends are enjoying weekly spa visits and lavish parties, the people who make those luxuries reality are risking illness

and even death.

And somehow, while the play makes an important statement about what "returning to normal" actually means for those without privilege, it manages to keep the laughs coming.

And that comedy keeps the audience engaged throughout, from Hara's hilariously demanding performance as Lady Helena to Michael Man's Dr. Wilson Wong, who stops hiding his true self after falling head over heels in lust with Devan, a man already engaged to Edward Lim's best friend, Jackson Lee (Derek Kwan). Adding to the chaos is Eleanor Marwood (Sara-Jeanne Hosie), Lady Helena's lackey, who hatches a dastardly plot to steal her business with the help of her secret beau, Trevor Flynn – the husband Arabella would rather forget.

Set in a country – and a time not so long ago – where the simple act of being gay is illegal, this play gives theatregoers so many reasons to see it unfold, not the least of which is the fact many of the actors perform beautiful song-and-dance numbers almost entirely in Mandarin Chinese. Though I couldn't understand the lyrics, the context from the story and beautifully performed music and dance was more than enough to integrate these musical interludes into the story without feeling out of place.

The Tao of the World runs at the Stratford Festival's Tom Patterson Theatre until Sept. 26.

Small-Town Strip Club to play Tailgate Music Festival ahead of the Trews

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Stratford's Small-Town Strip Club will be opening for a big-name Canadian rock band.

Small-Town Strip Club will perform at the Tailgate Music Festival in Mitchell, Ont. On Sept. 25 ahead of The Trews. The Tailgate Music Festival, hosted by Spot-Dawg Productions, is a two-day music festival with a rock music night and a country music night on Sept. 26.

"It feels unbelievable," said Johann Yundt, lead singer of Small-Town Strip Club. "We've been a fan of the Trews for a really, really long time and actually more recently we got to record with a couple of the members of the Glorious Sons who recorded the Trews' last album, so we've been kind of on their radar and kind of on the vision board to hop on a show with the Trews for a while. So it's cool that it's coming to fruition and especially near our hometown, too."

The upcoming performance at Tailgate will be the first time Yundt and the band



(JOHANN YUNDT PHOTO)

Small-Town Strip Club of Stratford will be performing on Rock Night of the Tailgate Music Festival on Sept. 25, opening for the iconic Canadian rock band The Trews.

will be attending.

"It's been very well anticipated," he said.

"I heard it's a really cool thing for Mitchell so we're excited to both perform and just attend the festival too. Even for the country night, we're really pumped to see the James Barker Band."

Feral Minks, an Ontario rock band who opened for the Glorious Sons multiple times, and Andy Colonico, who collaborated with Small-Town Strip Club on the song "'Can't Put a Price on a Good Time'" will also perform on the Rock Night. Colonico also recently won the Lucknow Music in the Fields Emerging Artist honour, which Small-Town Strip Club won years ago.

"The rock night is certainly stacked with a bunch of up-and-coming rock and even bands with a little bit of country flavour. We have a couple of acts that we're actually pretty close with," Yundt said.

Tickets for the Tailgate Music Festival are \$59.99 for the Rock Night, \$69.99 for the Country Night and \$109.99 for the full weekend, plus fees and tax. To purchase tickets online, visit <https://tailgatemusicfestival.com>.

Editorial

Letters to the editor: When and where to use AI

As someone who has been using computers since the days of mainframes only (no screens, laptops, cell phones, etc.) not much has really changed. Whether it is the latest cell phone, large screen TV, tablets, laptops, etc., they still all work by manipulating 1 and 0. The only thing that has really changed is the amount of 1s and 0s. The more you have, the more you can do. It's the same with AI technology, it can be used for good or bad purposes. And Julia Schneider's April 14, 2026 Stratford Times article is quite correct that large numbers of large AI data centres are really unnecessary. They are simply corporate attempts at more and more control and manipulation of data, for both good and bad purposes.

Recently, I spent several hours fixing errors in a computer program on my laptop. As soon as I corrected one error, a new one appeared. Eventually, I woke up and fed the program to the AI on my laptop (affectionately known as 'Jarvis,' named after the AI in the Ironman movies). It analyzed the program, made suggestions for improvements, corrected all errors, and provided a working program. In seconds. This is the real skill needed to adapt to the future: How to use an AI well and for beneficial purposes, as opposed to weaponization of AI, etc. If interested, and you have a sufficiently powerful enough laptop, you can have an AI assistant on your laptop. For example, have a look at ollama.com. Have fun!

*Ed Montgomery,
Stratford*

GTR should be top priority for voters this election

Architect (and mayoral candidate) Robert Ritz has invited people to compare his proposed development of the GTR site to that of the city. I have done so, and the differences between the two are striking. Mr. Ritz presents a comprehensive vision for the redevelopment of the whole site with numerous public uses and illustrates his vision with detailed renderings. The city presents three options for a single facility (one option is outside the GTR area), shown as several rectangles on a plan of the site, and another three options for the existing structure. I think Mr. Ritz wins.

This difference is not surprising. From my experience, an architect sees a proposed development as a challenge to create a design that fits the site, meets the requirements of the client and is visually appealing. A government, in contrast, is project focused, and starts with a plan of options, processes and "next steps."

Although I prefer Mr. Ritz's proposal, I see flaws in both his and the city's. Both proposals contemplate public funding, whether through tax increases for the city, or public fundraising. The amounts are considerable, up to \$100 million based on preliminary estimates. From my experience, projects of this nature frequently, perhaps even invariably, go over budget. I have serious concerns about the ability of Stratford residents to absorb these costs and believe any viable proposal must include a large component of private sector involvement to offset the burden on residents.

Both proposals include a new and larger library, with the current building sold. I take no issue with the view that the current building is too small in relation to Stratford's growing population. But I question whether a new

downtown facility is the best answer. Most of Stratford's new housing is on the outskirts of the city, particularly in the West End. A satellite facility outside the city core seems a better way to serve these new residents, rather than require them to travel downtown.

The future of the GTR site has been at issue for well over a dozen years and will fall on the lap of the new council and mayor elected in October. I urge citizens to ask candidates their views on the future of the site and to consider the response when voting.

*Patrick O'Rourke,
Stratford*

Dirty, unsightly

My daughter and I love coming to Stratford. We picnic beside the Avon River but it is so dirty and unsightly.

She was recently dragon boat racing on the river and hadn't seen any other river like it. It was not pleasant.

Your beautiful place has so many wonderful features but why has this problem not been addressed?

*Marion Sneyd,
Perth, Ont.*



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Photographer Linde Fraser snapped this photo of a great white egret this week, which makes its home along the Avon River for three seasons.

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Opinion

The gentle wisdom of August



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

There is something quietly beautiful about August. It doesn't arrive with the excitement of June, when summer stretches endlessly before us with promises of vacations, gardens and long evenings outdoors. Nor does it carry the anticipation of September, when routines return and many of us begin looking toward autumn. Instead, August settles gently between the two, inviting us to pause and appreciate the season

before it quietly slips away.

Perhaps that is why August feels like one of the wisest months of the year. It doesn't demand our attention with celebrations or dramatic changes. Instead, it reminds us that life is not only about beginnings or endings. There is beauty in the middle of the journey, where growth has taken place, memories have been made and there is still time to enjoy what remains.

By the time August arrives, nature has settled into itself. Gardens are overflowing with vegetables, flowers are blooming in rich colours and trees stand proudly beneath warm skies. There is no urgency in the landscape. Everything seems content simply to be what it was meant to become, offering us a gentle reminder that we, too, can stop striving for a little while and simply enjoy the present moment.

Many of us spend our lives looking ahead. We count down to vacations, birthdays, retire-

ment or the next milestone that promises happiness. While there is nothing wrong with planning for the future, we sometimes become so focused on tomorrow that we overlook today's quiet gifts. August encourages us to notice that this very moment is part of the life we once hoped for.

Our culture rarely encourages us to slow down. We are praised for being productive, staying busy, and filling every spare moment with activity. Even our leisure can become another item on a checklist as we try to squeeze every possible experience into the remaining weeks of summer. Before we know it, the season has passed, leaving us wondering where the time went.

August offers another way of living. It invites us to sit on the porch after dinner, walk through a park without checking the time, read beneath the shade of a favourite tree or simply watch the colours of the sky change as evening settles in. These moments may seem ordinary, yet

they often become the memories we treasure most because they remind us that joy is usually found in life's simplest experiences.

This month also teaches us the quiet practice of gratitude. Gratitude is more than saying thank you when life is going well. It is learning to recognize goodness even when life remains imperfect. Every one of us carries burdens that others may never see, yet moments of beauty continue to exist alongside those challenges if we are willing to notice them.

Life rarely unfolds exactly as we planned. There are disappointments, health concerns, financial worries, losses and uncertainties that accompany us through different seasons. Yet there are also sunsets that leave us speechless, conversations that lift our spirits, gardens that continue to bloom and laughter that reminds us hope is never completely absent. Gratitude does not erase hardship, but it

helps us remember that hardship is not the whole story.

As August slowly gives way to autumn, it also invites us to reflect. The changing light reminds us that every season has its purpose and that change is a natural part of life. Rather than resisting what lies ahead, we can prepare ourselves by considering what these summer months have taught us. Reflection allows us to appreciate not only what we have done but also who we are becoming.

Soon calendars will fill, routines will return and life will gather speed once again. Before that happens, let August linger a little longer. Watch one more sunset, enjoy one more walk, share one more conversation and breathe deeply of these warm summer days. The gentle wisdom of August reminds us that while we cannot hold on to summer forever, we can carry its lessons of gratitude, presence and quiet joy with us into every season that follows.

Stratford's next mayor



BRUCE WHITAKER

Times Columnist

As election season approaches, Stratford faces a familiar checklist of challenges – too little affordable housing, a narrow economic base, climate pressures, an aging population and outdated infrastructure. Beyond the problems lies a more promising question: can our next mayor offer a unifying vision that actually excites residents and gets things done?

We don't need a laundry list of public promises. We need a leader who picks a few transformative priorities, uses the tools of the office creatively and is willing to take political risks for long-term payoff. Most importantly, the

mayor must build public support early because durable change depends on people believing it's worth the short-term disruption.

Great municipal leadership is three things at once: storyteller, coalition-builder and delivery machine. Anyone can promise "more housing." Fewer can speed up permitting, increase starts of affordable units and make transit reliable. Those concrete outcomes are what convince citizens that government is improving daily life.

Stratford has shown it can think big. Several years ago, the city expanded municipal broadband, nurtured digital media partnerships and used infrastructure to spark economic activity. Those moves helped put Stratford on the map as an intelligent community and raised our cultural and economic profile. The mayor needs to aim just as high, if not higher.

Consider the GTR lands as a flagship project. We certainly have enough feedback to move forward. Picture a progressive, mixed-use neighbourhood – higher-density, mixed housing alongside amenities that attract a diverse mix of residents. Nes-

tled in the heart of a strong agricultural region, an agricultural innovation centre, within the existing building, makes sense to help diversify the economy and contribute positively to the city's finances. Technology firms already come here for the successful Dairy XPO. Let's invite them to locate, invest and create local jobs. The GTR lands as a revenue positive initiative should be embraced.

Adding a new YMCA (as part of the approved community-style hub), grocery store, green space, car-sharing, parking, community garden and a heritage interpretation centre will create an authentic live-work-play community. With thoughtful planning, expedited but transparent approvals, and clearly defined public benefits, the GTR lands can become a model for smart redevelopment across small cities.

A vision for Stratford needs managerial backbone. With tight budgets and soaring expectations, cities that invest in management capacity, tighten budgeting and prioritize delivery are best positioned to absorb shocks and serve residents. That starts with hiring leaders who

solve problems, build teams and choose Stratford to live in. Hire fewer consultants and empower city managers to make decisions.

Budget discipline must come from the top. The mayor should lead budget strategy with council deciding what the community can afford. That might mean a "no-increase" year if justified – or it might mean targeted investments in housing, transit or climate resiliency. Staff should prepare draft budgets aligned to council's targets, clearly flagging service impacts of cuts so tradeoffs are transparent.

Rebuilding trust is urgent. Controversies around secrecy, like the Xinyi glass plant debate, left scars. The next mayor should commit to publishing performance data, commissioning independent audits, and enforcing clear procurement and conflict-of-interest rules. Transparency is the quickest way to restore confidence.

Indicators to determine the success of city performance should be defined, measured and shared with residents on a regular basis, establishing accountability. Potential measures include: response time for core services;

percentage of roads rated fair or better; percentage of commercial floor space vacant; number of homeless residents; and surplus or deficit as a percentage of budget.

It would be wise for the mayor to engage our greatest untapped resource: residents. Many newcomers and long-time locals bring professional skills and deep experience. It would be wise to build a database of resident competencies, match people to board and committee needs and broaden participation. Invite residents by random draw from the taxpayer roll to produce more representative input. Civic life will be stronger if more people feel they have a stake.

With stronger mayoral powers now on the table, this election matters even more. Voters should favour candidates who combine a practical, measurable vision with the capacity to deliver and a genuine commitment to inclusive, transparent leadership. A mayor who focuses on a few clear priorities, builds strong management, insists on equity and delivers visible improvements can turn Stratford's challenges into real momentum.

Opinion

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: MUSIC FOR A REVOLUTION



STUART LENDER

Times Columnist

Expressing a desire to be overwhelmed by music, Duke Orsino utters the famous line from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: If music be the food of love, play on.

That's a huge understatement for me. Throughout the decades of my youth and still today, music wasn't merely the food of love but a virtual smorgasbord of inspiration for every emotion under the sun. I would use it, knowingly, to lift my melancholic moods, provide ideas for artistic expression, create peace within a troubled soul and fuel a rage against an injustice.

I was six years old at the height of the "hippie" movement in 1967 and there are recurring social themes today (sadly) that were prevalent then, swimming around in my head: war, racism, sexism, power and wealth. And while these things were largely on the periphery of my aware-

ness then, the countercultural expressionistic style of peace, love and community extended itself outward and saturated my thinking as I grew. Despite the manner of my dress and hair and the free opinions I expounded later in my teenage years – I was a good student, received A-level grades, was not into drugs and had a great relationship with my parents.

Looking back on that time within a historical context, I can see how the "hippies," of which I considered myself at least a member in the values of the culture, was a force to be reckoned with. And nowhere was that force more overwhelming than in the music of the time. And just as the music of the '60s spilled out of my speakers, so the sounds of the '70s, '80s and '90s crossed my cassette deck, turntable, CD player respectively – the music of those decades kept informing me. If you want to see the direction the cultural milieu within a society is headed, listen to the most popular music of the time. The values are most often in the lyrics.

It turns out, now that we are in the 21st century, I have been reminded of and have looked back on the music of the 20th century, particularly the 1960s/1970s most often – not with a nostalgia for my youth necessarily, but for the content of protest that mirrors the issues of today as it revealed them back then. Sad

to say that so many of those anthems for social change could be trumpeted verbatim from the rooftops of this decade, since many of the lessons learned back then are lessons forgotten today. The music of socially relevant singers and songwriters became the backbone of the hippie movement because of the political climate. The musicians illustrated the populace desire for social awareness, became the spark of social unrest, became the harbinger of change. That pattern of change was illustrated again in the 1992 song lyrics of Peter Gabriel entitled "Fourteen Black Paintings": From the pain come the dream / From the dream come the vision / From the vision come the people / From the people come the power / From this power comes the change.

It has always been so. The music of the generation feeds the heads of the people – fuels and fortifies. And what is illustrated through music and lyrics is the will of the people and the desire for a better way. A better way is often a radically different way – and the choice of that way, in today's melting pot of information and accessibility, is clearly the same as it was back in the heyday of social change, even without all that technology – inclusion and loving kindness, or conflict and a lifetime of struggle. The compass needle has not rested long enough,

pointing toward the pathway for compassionate understanding and discovery. Conflict is never an enduring option. The human species knows very well how to exclude and how to hurt. We're good at that. But both inclusion and exclusion are practices. It is perhaps easier to insulate and ignore rather than step out and discover truths of which one was unaware, but that is not a step forward. Most often, it's a step back or not a step at all. Stupid is as stupid does, as they say. Humanity has shown that skill set repeatedly, until it becomes time again for a revolution – always a revolution it seems – and music might still lead the charge.

So many other competing technologies, however, are perhaps diluting the ability of the music to spread, creating a cacophony of sound through which the clear and brilliant note is diffuse and with no clear direction. Or perhaps it's a lack of musical purpose. At certain junctures in the symphony of sound, one needs to regroup and allow the music you want to hear, to rise above. If it's revolutionary and speaks to you as the music of the '60s spoke to a generation of youth, it needs to sink into the sinews of the body and fortify the soul. It needs to be used.

Music is still the first and foremost universal language. It can be anything one wants it to be and most certainly a scaffolding for inspiration and change.

It has been a formidable force in changing the views of many throughout its long and turbulent history – holding firm as the background hum of protest or as the front-line bang of a drum, as we sadly, in the 21st century, watch decades of advancements that feel as though they are eroding into the dirt of our own ignorance and fear, and back to the stone age of our evolutionary journey. Alas. I need to spin some tunes.

Here are but a few songs of defiance to pry open the heart and stir the soul free of any lingering apathy:

Black Man (Stevie Wonder) / Ohio (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young) / For What It's Worth (Buffalo Springfield) / Fortunate Son (Creedence Clearwater Revival) / I'd Love to Change the World (Ten Years After) / Won't Get Fooled Again (The Who) / Driven to Tears (The Police) / Mercy Mercy Me, The Ecology (Marvin Gaye) / Call It Democracy (Bruce Cockburn) / I Can't Breathe (H.E.R.) / The Times They Are a-Changin' (Bob Dylan) / Respect (Aretha Franklin) / Bullet The Blue Sky (U2) / Get Together (The Youngbloods)

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

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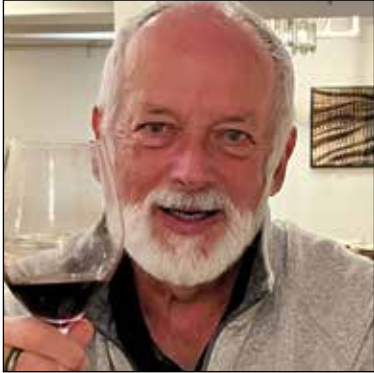
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Following Richmond's Dumpling Trail



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

I grew up in a traditional, rural, Canadian family with roots in the United Kingdom and all of its traditions. So, when I hear the word “dumpling,” I first think of those balls of dough (flour, suet and water) usually cooked on top of a stew.

They can be a treat – although one suspects that the flavour comes almost entirely from the juice of the stew.

They are not, however, what you are going to find if you follow the Dumpling Trail in Richmond, B.C. These dumplings are the Chinese variety – a dough or starch wrapper filled with sundry delicious things. And you will find almost limitless variations on the theme in the 16 eateries that are officially included in the Dumpling Trail. This is the trail's 10th anniversary, says Nancy Small, the delightful CEO of Tourism Richmond.

It's not surprising that Richmond – the city immediately adjacent to Vancouver – is home to the world's only Dumpling Trail because Richmond is the city with the highest population of folks who identify as Asian at 74 per cent.

I was more than intrigued by the culture and cuisine in the city, which certainly reflects this de-



David Chung, owner of Jade Seafood Restaurant, one of 16 eateries that are part of the Dumpling Trail in Richmond, B.C.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

mographic. Hosted by Tourism Richmond, I was part of a small group of travel journalists who spent a few days exploring – well, honestly, mostly eating – our way through the community. We were taken to a food court in a mall, which I thought was a bit weird, except it was a truly unique experience because every food booth in the extensive court offered some kind of Asian food. There wasn't a McDonalds or a Timmies in sight.

We also visited the Richmond Night Market, a multi-coloured mash-up of carnival, flea-market and Asian street food convention. Sadly, according to reports online, the night market may be closing, permanently, because the leased site has been sold. I hope they find a solution to this because, while I don't care a bit about the flea market or carnival games, I was blown away by the variety and excellence of the food on offer.

There was Chinese food, Korean food, Japanese food and more. I feasted on squid, dim sum and, finally, a huge serving of bao buns topped with ice cream and sauce. It bordered on sinful and it was delicious; and also entertaining as the guys in the booth could have starred in a Vaudeville revue!

But back to the Dumpling Trail. This is more traditional dining in actual restaurants, not food booths.

And while they all serve Chinese dumplings, their menus are really quite different, one from the other. And dumplings are simply a few of the many dishes on offer.

This, by the way, is real Chinese food. Not the fare offered by the “Chinese” restaurants in every Canadian small town featuring sweet and sour chicken balls and egg fried rice. Most of the items in these local restaurants have been created to match North Ameri-

can tastes and usually bear little resemblance to anything authentically Asian.

Compare that to a few of the items at the Jade Seafood Restaurant in Richmond, where owner David Chung joined us for a feast of epic proportions. The dumpling choices include Guo Tie (potstickers – Chinese fried pork and cabbage); Ham Sui Gok (glutinous rice stuffed with pork, mushrooms and shrimp); and Har Gow (prawn and bamboo filling).

But the meal went galaxies beyond dumplings. We had king crab, wagyu steak, rock cod, roasted rock salt chicken, squid and much, much more.

The previous evening, we had dined at the Dinesty Dumpling House, where we enjoyed soup dumplings, where somehow, hot soup is trapped inside the dumpling. Delicious!

We ate lunch at the Empire Seafood Restaurant, where tradition-

al dim sum is served from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. only. It was a Monday, when many restaurants simply close for lack of business. The Empire – a big space, by the way – was jammed. And dumplings? Of course! They are always part of dim sum, but the other options (there were 45 menu items just for dim sum) far outnumbered the dumpling varieties. By the way, the regular menu at the Empire runs to hundreds of options.

Vegetables – varieties usually found on Canadian tables, such as asparagus and beans, and others that we may never have encountered like Gai Lan or Lotus Root – are common on these menus. Desserts are unlike anything we're used to. At the Empire, you could (I didn't) order double boiled bird's nest soup with sweet almond cream. At Jade, we had delicious coconut milk taro sago dessert. At Dinesty, I loved the mango pudding.

If you are food lover and planning to visit British Columbia, I can honestly recommend that you plan to have two or three meals in the Dumpling Trail restaurants of Richmond.

One caution. A surprising number of these eateries are not licensed. I was told, unofficially, that this is because many of the owners are fundamentalist Christians who frown on the consumption of alcohol. So, be prepared.

Or, be sure you include Jade Seafood in your itinerary, where David Chung happily poured glass after glass of excellent wine for his feasting friends.

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.



Dumplings and other dim sum delights at the Richmond Night Market.



The energetic purveyor of Bao Bun desserts at the Richmond Night Market.

COMING EVENTS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

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

STRATFORD ASTRONOMY GROUP MEETINGS

St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, 240 Oakdale Avenue, Stratford
Rear parking lot off Matilda. Room #1104 - 1st Tuesday of each month from September to June. 7-9 p.m.

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

JOIN US FOR SUMMER AT KNOX

Knox Presbyterian Church
142 Ontario St., Stratford

August events include Book Club on Tuesdays, drop in watercolour painting on Wednesdays, Stained Glass Tours on Thursday - all starting at 10:30 a.m. Free community dinner on August 19 at 5 p.m! Visit <https://pccweb.ca/knoxstratford/> or call 519-271-0373 for more details! Everyone welcome!

BLACKSMITH DEMONSTRATION

On Saturday, August 29, starting at 10 a.m., come to the Brocksden Country School Museum for an incredible demonstration of how a blacksmith used his forge!

YOUTH HIKING TRIP

Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Friday, August 28; 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Ages 12-18

Meet at Bethel Pentecostal Church for transportation. Hiking roughly 9.5 KM around Rattlesnake Point & Crawford Lake Conservation Area (near Milton). Enjoy amazing views, a replica Iroquoian village, and a picnic lunch together. Questions & Sign-Up (Required to come!): www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, August 31; 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Grace United Church Tavistock

Born2Eat, Los Rolling Tacos, Fo'Cheezy
Donations to Tavistock Agricultural Society
OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING
Tuesday, September 1; 7:00 p.m.

93 Morgan St., Stratford

Speaker – Paul D'Souza from Coloplast

Learn about ostomy products and services from Coloplast
Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome.
519-273-4327

WHATEVER WEDNESDAYS!

Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Wednesday, September 2; 1-3 p.m.

Memorial Baptist Church - 113 Bruce Street, Stratford
A youth (12-18) drop-in program for... Whatever! Check out activities like giant soccer, tie-dye, basketball, and more. Run indoors or outdoors depending on weather. Questions? www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

YOUTH CAMPFIRE NIGHT

Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Thursday, September 3; 7-10 p.m., Ages 12-18
80 East Perth Road 130, Sebringville

We're wrapping up our summer with a chill hangout by a campfire, making s'mores and other campfire cuisine. Questions & Sign-Up (Required to come!): www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRES

Friday, September 11; 6 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Sign up your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540, Dave at 519-703-6544 or Anne at 519-301-0914. Doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 6:30 p.m.

YOUTH AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

Hosted by Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Mondays, 3:00-4:45 p.m., September 14/26-June 21/27
382 Britannia Street, Stratford

Free drop-in for students aged 11-18. Join us for snacks, board games, video games, and connection! Questions? www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

GRIEF SHARE

Stratford Christian Reformed Church, 190 Athone Crescent (parking on the upper level)
September 14 - December 14

Monday 1:00-2:30pm

When a loved one dies, it can feel like you're alone. Few people understand how painful & isolating your grief can be. At GriefShare, you'll find a safe, comforting place where you can talk with others about your grief. Contact: griefstratfordcrgroup2627@gmail.com
Register: griefshare.org/findagroup

EDMONTON ELKS VS TORONTO ARGONAUTS

Saturday, September 19

The Stratford Legion is hosting a bus trip to see the Edmonton Elks vs Toronto Argonauts football game. It is a 3 p.m. game and the Badder bus leaves from the Cooper Lot at 12 noon. The cost is \$105 p.p. Contact Dean at 273-4463 to reserve and pay for your spot. Tickets are selling fast!

STRATFORD MISSION DEPOT WITH FOUNDER JEAN AITCHESON

Wednesday, September 2; 2 p.m.

Christ Church, 595815 Oxford 59 Huntingford

This Reaching Ontario Sharing Education (ROSE) program is co-hosted by the Braemar W.I. and the ACW of Christ Church. It is a wheelchair accessible building and all are welcome. Refreshments will be served. questions lauragreen77@gmail.com

THE SECOND HAND BOOK NOOK SALE

Tavistock Fall Fair, in the arena

Friday, Sept. 11; 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 12; 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 13; 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Lots of books, magazines and puzzles for sale

For more information, call 519-590-1617

GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING

Monday September 14; 7:15 – 9:00 p.m.

Army Navy Hall, 151 Lorne Ave. E., Stratford

Featured Presentation: "Flower Shows in UK - Harrogate Show in England/ Castle and Gardens", Roland Craig
Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

YOUTH UNLIMITED YFC STRATFORD GOLF TOURNAMENT FUNDRAISER

Wednesday, September 23

Stratford Golf & Country Club

Golfer sign-in: 3:00 PM, Shotgun Start: 4:00 PM

9-hole, best-ball tournament. \$300 fee per golfer, or \$1000 per team of 4.

Contests, prizes, and giveaways! Registration required to participate. Questions & Sign-Up (Required to Participate): www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

FALL BBQ

Thursday, September 24; 5:30 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Wild Hog Oktoberfest Sausage on a bun with sauerkraut and fresh cut fries, all for \$15 per person. There is not ticket needed. For take out call by September 22 at 519-271-4540 or 519-703-6544

YOUTH LUNCH PERIOD PROGRAM

Hosted by Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., September 30/26-June 16/27

382 Britannia Street, Stratford

Free drop-in for high school students. Join us for snacks, games, connection (and occasional pizza parties!). Questions? www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

PURE HEART PROGRAM

Hosted by Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Wednesdays, 3:00-4:30 p.m., September 30/26-June 16/27

382 Britannia Street, Stratford

Free art program for students aged 11-18. Join us for discussions, guest artists, art instruction, and more! Questions? www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY CIRCUIT BOOK (STAMP) FAIR

Saturday, October 24, 2026

Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock

10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Free Admission & Parking
Stop in and buy some stamps and meet fellow stamp collectors.

About 8 participating stamp clubs.

Contact: dheaton3e3@gmail.com

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

STRATFORD TIMES

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.
Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com

PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

- The Community Calendar is for non-profit organizations to promote their free admission events at no charge. Event listings can include your event name, date, time and location as well as a phone number, email address or website.
- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, you have the following options:
 - Coming Events Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
 - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$15 + hst
 - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a classified business card size for \$35 + hst

Crossword

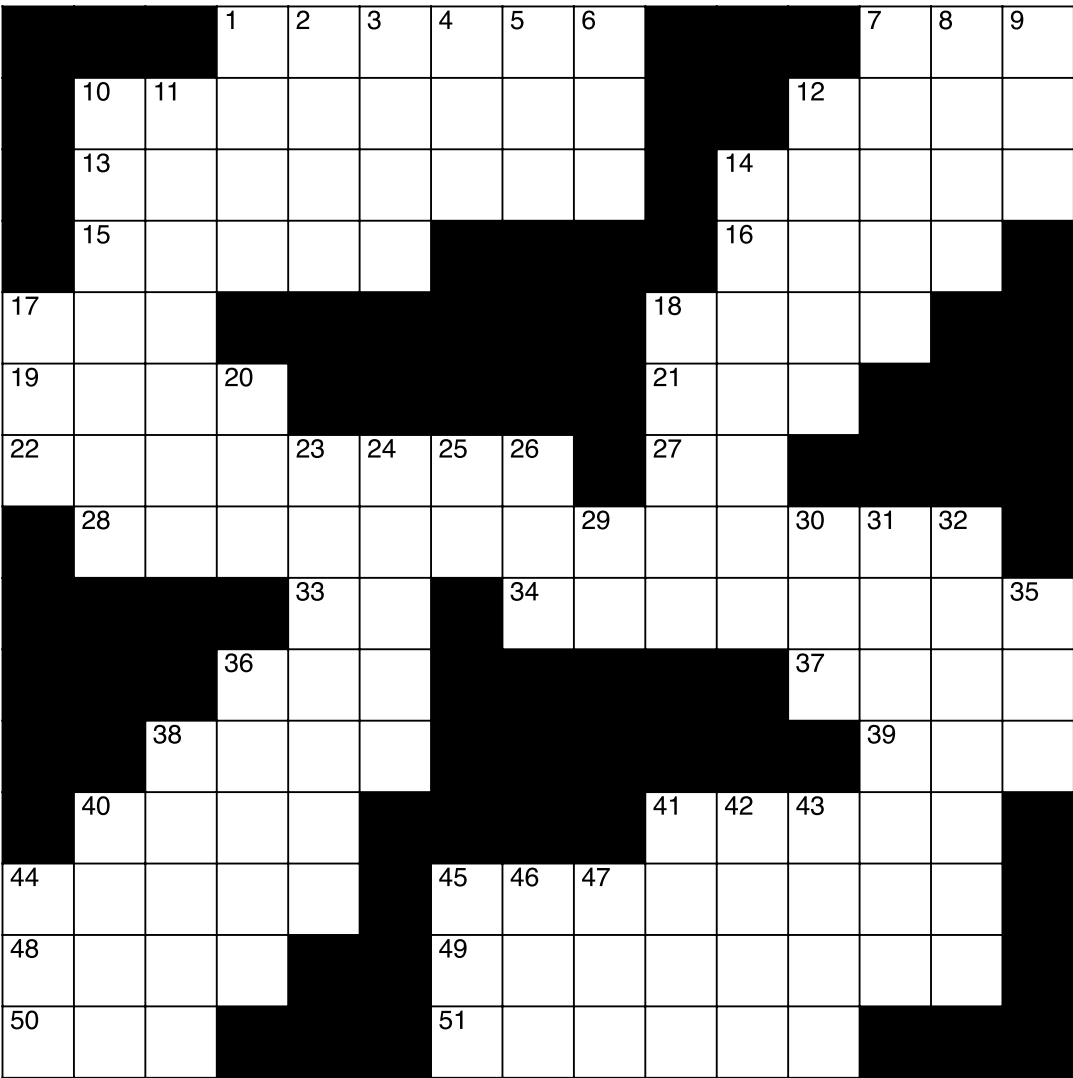
CLUES ACROSS

- 1. A vast desert in Africa
- 7. Reciprocal of a sine
- 10. Type of phone
- 12. Biblical figure
- 13. One who renounces a religious belief
- 14. Warren and Monroe are two
- 15. Wild ox
- 16. Dismounted a horse
- 17. Cave dweller
- 18. Where infants sleep
- 19. Popular type of shoe
- 21. Clumsy large person
- 22. Evil-like
- 27. Integrated circuit
- 28. Austin-based athlete
- 33. Postscript
- 34. Follows 18
- 36. People of Gambia
- 37. Popular actor Nicolas
- 38. Platform for a lectern
- 39. Taxi
- 40. American songwriter Sammy
- 41. Iranian city
- 44. Heavy clubs
- 45. One who is expelled
- 48. In bed
- 49. Lifelessness
- 50. Former CIA
- 51. Most slick

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Slovenly person
- 2. In addition
- 3. Hovels

- 4. Pie ___ mode
- 5. Subway rodent
- 6. They ___
- 7. Indigenous S. American people
- 8. Fine sand
- 9. Central nervous system
- 10. Nightclub entertainment
- 11. The perfect example of something
- 12. Supreme Islamic leader
- 14. Pain
- 17. Binary-coded decimal
- 18. Projecting corner of an angle
- 20. "Succession" actor Brian
- 23. Dinner table decor
- 24. Ancient settlement in modern Turkey
- 25. You can call Paul Simon this
- 26. Opposite of a pro
- 29. Atomic #28
- 30. Type of drug (abbr.)
- 31. Arrives at
- 32. Nullifies
- 35. Bird's beak
- 36. Partner to "oohed"
- 38. Ray-finned fishes
- 40. Taxis
- 41. Sat on and controlled
- 42. Sea eagles
- 43. Remain as-is
- 44. Chinese revolutionary
- 45. Tooth caregiver
- 46. Snakelike fish
- 47. Compensate



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Facebook: @AdultLearningProgramsofPerth



Pet of the week



PLUM

Meet Plum, a gentle 1-year-old sweetheart who is looking for a quiet, loving home to help her blossom. She's on the shy side, but once she warms up, she is ready to melt into your lap or enjoy some play time.

Though she can be shy, she is full of energy and loves to explore. Plum can be quite vocal as well as food motivated, and her foster describes her as sweet but slightly mischievous. She'll do great with a family who understands cat body language and accepts her playful nature.

If you are looking for a sweet, chatty cat, Plum may just be the purrrfect fit! You can meet Plum by contacting our Stratford Centre or visiting our website at kwsphumane.ca/adopt/cats



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OBITUARY



WENDY DIANE O'BRIEN

Wendy Diane O'Brien (nee Ball, October 31, 1951 - August 24, 2026) passed away peacefully at Rotary Hospice, Stratford Ontario in the early morning hours of August 24, 2026. After courageously battling cancer for 15 years, she can now peacefully close her sketchbook and lay down her paintbrushes, sewing and felting needles.

Wendy has been reunited with her loving parents Marguerite and John Ball (2005). Wendy is survived by Chris O'Brien; dear son Quinn (Rachel); cherished grandson Seamus; her brother, David (Rita), sister Marilyn; nephews, Stephen, Jeremy (Laura) Peter (Brittany), Sean, Dillon (Rosalind) and adored great nieces Lila and Leah. She is also survived by her sister-in-law Patricia (Bruce).

Wendy was born in Montreal, Quebec, but spent her childhood in Toronto before graduating in fashion design from Sheridan College. After an early career in theatre costume and set designing along with teaching, Wendy became a mother who enjoyed sharing her love of the arts with her son, then later teaching art in schools and the broader community. Her medium of choice changed frequently with her ever expanding imagination and talent for experimentation. Later in life, as a member of Connections Fibre Artists, Wendy truly found the licence to explore and exhibit work inspired by the natural world, history and theatre.

Wendy fought so hard not to leave this world as there was so much still to be done. It was the exuberance for life, deep connection and shared passions of grandson Seamus that certainly lessened her pain and extended her time with us. Wendy also leaves behind so many supportive and wonderful friends that showed their love to the end.

A special thank you to the residents and staff of Anne Hathaway Retirement Residence and the Rotary Hospice for their care. A private Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. Donations to Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth in Wendy's name are appreciated through the W. G. Young Funeral Home, 430 Huron St, Stratford, ON. www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com

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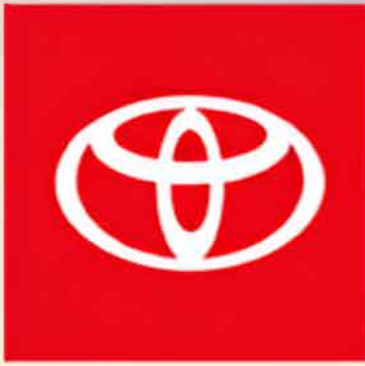
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