

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1333

Thursday, October 1, 2026

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SCAN TO BOOK

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APPLE PIE DAY

(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

Last Saturday's Farmers' Market was extra special as the organization hosted their annual Apple Pie Day fundraiser. This year, eleven different pies were submitted for the contest, judged by presentation, taste, and pastry. The winning entry came from Judy & Mac Crummer of S.H.E. Creates. Councillor Rob Edney, Farmers' Market board member Andrea Macko, and Mac Crummer are pictured above with the first-place apple pie entry. The pie was auctioned off for \$60. A total of \$671 was raised during the event to support the operations of the St. Marys Farmers' Market.

Council backs away from Water Street racquet court expansion; looks to explore possible Baseball Hall of Fame site

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

St. Marys Town Council has backed away from plans to expand the existing pickleball courts at the Water Street site, instead directing staff to return to the longer-term approach outlined in the town's Recreation, Culture and Leisure Master Plan.

Council made the decision Sept. 22 after

reconsidering a resolution passed earlier this year that had directed staff to continue pursuing an expansion at the Water Street South site.

The decision also includes a new direction for staff to investigate whether town-owned land within or around the existing Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame property could provide a potential location for racquet courts.

The issue has been under discussion for sev-

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

Candidates Q&A Session set for Saturday

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

This Saturday night, various municipal election candidates will make their case to constituents of the Town of St. Marys through an event organized by Perth-Huron Builders Association, Grant Haven Media, and The Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce.

Mayoral candidates Brogan Aylward and Don Van Galen along with Councillor candidates Jim Craigmile, Marg Luna, Andrea Macko, Ryan Lush, Ryan Leaman, and Bill Pickering are expected to attend.

Stephen V. Hearn contacted the Independent to provide the following note: "To all constituents of the town: Please accept my apologies as I will not be able to attend the candidate's debate scheduled for October 3rd. I made a commitment in July for the same weekend which includes flights and accommodations. This does not diminish my commitment to being a representative on council should you see you way clear to support my candidacy."

Fern Pridham also sends her regrets to constituents due to a trip that was previously planned. She wrote: "Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend the Candidates Event on October 3rd. I try to get out to see my son, Mason, in Kamloops, BC, at least once a year. This time, I waited to go just after his birthday. I purchased plane tickets and made plans long before the event was scheduled. That's the luck of the draw. Hopefully, luck will be on my side on Election Day!"

Saturday's event will begin at 6 p.m. with a social hour for residents to engage with candidates, followed by a moderated Question & Answer session that will run from 7-9 p.m. For those unable to attend in person, the event will be livestreamed.

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COMMUNITY

Council backs away from Water Street racquet court expansion

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

eral years as the town has considered how best to accommodate pickleball and tennis facilities.

According to Chief Administrative Officer Brent Kittmer, the Recreation, Culture and Leisure Master Plan originally recommended developing shared courts. An ad hoc committee subsequently reviewed the issue and recommended shared courts while also considering an expansion at the Water Street site.

In February, council directed staff to continue with that Water Street option.

However, members of the local pickleball community subsequently raised concerns about the proposed expansion. During a June delegation to council, representatives indicated they were satisfied with the current facilities and preferred that the town consider a longer-term solution.

Director of Community Services Stephanie Ische told council that the town had increased the capacity of the existing courts by adding pickleball lines on the north side. The pickleball community has been

able to continue its activities throughout the summer and, according to Ische, representatives indicated they were comfortable with the current situation.

“They’re saying right now, we are fine with what we currently have,” Ische told council. “We would rather put our resources into saving and investing long term.”

Ische presented three options to council. The first was to stop the Water Street South review, maintain the existing shared courts and follow the master plan’s long-term approach toward a permanent dedicated facility.

The second was to investigate another town-owned site that could accommodate up to six pickleball courts.

The third was to continue with the Water Street South option and include preliminary costs in the town’s 2027-28 budget planning, including studies and design followed by construction costs in 2028.

Coun. Marg Luna asked whether the town could instead investigate other locations for tennis courts while leaving the Water Street location for pickleball.

Ische said staff could explore that pos-

sibility but suggested it would be better to consider racquet courts more generally before determining which sports should be located where.

“I would rather keep all racquet sports away from residential,” Ische said.

Coun. Fern Pridham then proposed investigating a potential location around the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. She suggested there may be town-owned land within or near the Hall’s existing property that could potentially accommodate the courts.

Pridham said she did not believe the possibility had previously been explored in enough depth to determine whether an agreement with the Baseball Hall of Fame could be reached.

Coun. Brogan Aylward said he supported returning to the master plan’s long-term approach.

“I think no matter what, we should just return to option one,” Aylward said. “That’s not an immediate need, in my opinion.”

Mayor Al Strathdee also supported option one, noting that both the tennis and pickleball communities had been reasonable in recent discussions.

Strathdee said the town’s previous push toward an expansion had been based partly on the belief that pickleball users wanted a more immediate solution.

“Upon hearing from the group, they were satisfied with what they had, and status quo was good,” he said.

Strathdee added that he no longer saw a need to spend additional money expanding the existing courts if the pickleball community did not believe an expansion

was necessary at this time.

Before council could change its previous direction, however, it first had to formally reconsider the February resolution. The reconsideration motion required a two-thirds vote and was approved.

Council then unanimously approved a motion to abandon the review of an expansion at the Water Street site and direct staff to proceed according to the short- and long-term recommendations of the Recreation, Culture and Leisure Master Plan.

The motion also directs staff to investigate and report back to council on pursuing a consensus or tentative agreement with the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame regarding potential locations for racquet courts on town-owned land within or around the Hall’s current land envelope.

The decision does not provide an immediate new location for tennis or pickleball courts.

Instead, it returns the town to a longer-term planning process while giving staff another potential location to investigate.

Strathdee acknowledged that the issue has been a longstanding one for council.

“If I ever write a book, it’ll be pickleball and trees in the Town of St. Marys,” he joked during the discussion.

He said the latest discussions between representatives of tennis and pickleball had been encouraging, with both groups recognizing that a solution may not come quickly.

“I think every party realizes that now, which is something that wasn’t the case five years ago,” Strathdee said.

A fresh spot for the Independent



(LAURIE GRANT PHOTO)

There’s a new place to pick up your St. Marys Independent downtown! Publisher Stewart Grant is pictured above with the classic newspaper box recently installed at the entrance to Grant Haven Media’s new location at 143 Queen Street East. The metallic box will house the latest copies of the St. Marys Independent on the top shelf, while the lower shelf will hold recent editions of other Grant Haven publications such as the Exeter Examiner, Stratford Times, Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette, and Woodstock Ingersoll Echo.

7 Day Forecast

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Wednesday Sept-30th	Thursday Oct-1st	Friday Oct-2nd	Saturday Oct-3rd	Sunday Oct-4th	Monday Oct-5th	Tuesday Oct-6th
Sun & cloud	Light rain	Cloudy showers	Sunny	Mainly sunny	Mainly sunny	Mainly sunny
23 OC	24 OC	16 OC	17 OC	19 OC	14 OC	13 OC
Feels like 27	Feels like 28	Feels like 15	Feels like 17	Feels like 19	Feels like 13	Feels like 14



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United Way kicks off \$2.6M campaign

CONNOR LUCZKA

Independent Reporter

Every year, thousands of people across the region benefit from services supported by United Way Perth-Huron thanks to the generosity of local donors. On Sept. 18, United Way launched its 2026 fundraising campaign in Stratford with a lunchtime event in Market Square behind city hall.

There the organization announced its \$2,682,720 goal for this year.

“According to a United Way survey, 60 per cent of us are feeling anxiety about our finances,” United Way Perth-Huron CEO Ryan Erb said prior to the goal announcement. “You know of somebody that’s feeling a bit of anxiety these days about paying their bills or challenges that they’re facing? I’m sure you do. According to that same survey, 40 per cent of us would say if we lost our jobs today, we couldn’t pay our bills next month. So when we think about that and we understand that so many people are living on the very edge, struggling to survive, whether they’re on government support or whether they have a job or three, it is really hard for so many people in our community right now. Almost every social issue that we face is somehow connected with the amount of income that people have ... We’re going to work together as a community to address that.”

“I’d like us to take a moment to reflect on what the number really does represent,” June Leitch, Stratford-Perth campaign co-chair, said. “It represents the dollars needed to support vital programs that help thousands of people right here in Perth-Huron. ... These dollars help support people experiencing homelessness through organizations like the Connection Centre and Shelterlink. They provide access to professional counselling through Family Services Perth Huron, helping people improve



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

This year, the annual United for Good capital campaign aims to raise over \$2.6 million for the United Way Perth-Huron.

their mental health and well-being. It also promotes inclusion, belonging and awareness through organizations such as Stratford Perth Pride and Kaswentha-Two Row Now, and those are only a few examples.

“Through over 30 funded partners and programs, your generosity creates real change throughout our communities. Every gift helps ensure that help is available when local people need it the most.”

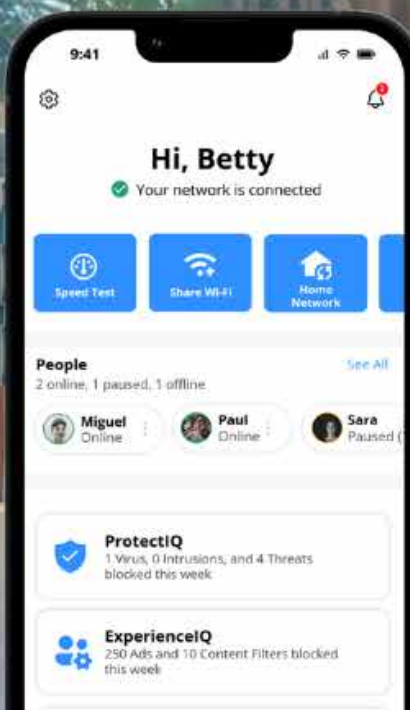
The \$2.6 million goal is larger than last year’s goal (which was \$2.5 million) and more than what was raised last year as well. Another record-setting year, \$2.56 million was raised for the 2025/26 campaign, continuing a trend of breaking records year after year.

All of the money raised for the United for Good campaign stays in the Perth-Huron region, going towards

the many services supported by the organization. Aside from government, the United Way is the largest funder of social services in the region.

“Think of someone that you know who is struggling,” Marian deWever, this campaign’s other co-chair, said. “Someone who has been renovicted, someone who needs counselling but can’t afford it, a young person whose home life is unsafe, a senior who needs support filing their taxes, a single mom struggling to make ends meet. Now imagine the impact of knowing that help is available. Let’s come together to ensure programs are there for the people we care about and the people that we’ve never met. So, what are we united for? We are united for good.”

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EDITORIAL

Reflections from the editor's chair



STEWART GRANT

Publisher

In addition to moving into our new office space this month at 143 Queen St. E., September was also noteworthy for me because I had the chance to perform the duties of editor for three weeks out of four.

Like many local businesses, ours understands the importance of family moments, and we pick up for each other when needed. In this case, I was pleased to step in as editor while Galen Sim-

mons got married and then set off with his bride, Julia, to enjoy a wonderful honeymoon in Quebec and the Maritimes.

The week was less chaotic than I remember from my days of editing the paper in the past. Some of Galen's organizational procedures had rubbed off on me, and I think the value of my own general experience played a part as well.

My lead story last week was about the near tragedy that occurred on Samuel Street, where a VIA train struck a tractor that was on its way to Robson Scrap Metal. Tying the incident to the start of Rail Safety Week, I was satisfied with how I covered it – including the photos I took that weekend of the crossing itself.

However, I subsequently learned of an error with my front-page photo.

Before I had taken the picture, VIA Rail had been in the area trimming back trees to improve

the sightline at the crossing. According to the owner of the tractor, whom I spoke with, my front-page photo was therefore misleading because it suggested that the view of the tracks was far better than it had been on Sept. 18, when the collision occurred.

"If you look at that photo in last week's paper and hold up two fingers along the right side of it, that's how far the brush was sticking out before they trimmed it back," he told me.

I wanted to make sure that I acknowledged my mistake in this week's issue so that readers of the newspaper have an accurate view of what happened. The branches at the Samuel Street crossing had not been trimmed in quite some time and had grown to the point where they created an unsafe situation at this passive crossing, which has no gates or flashing lights.

Another aspect of being an

editor is facing the difficulties of editing your own stories. It's always hard to see the mistakes in your own work because, in your mind, you know what you are trying to say, even if all the words aren't actually there.

This time around, I tried to utilize technology to assist – with some impressive results.

I know and appreciate that there is a stigma surrounding artificial intelligence in the news business, but in certain aspects, it can make a positive contribution. For example, I wrote this editorial just as I always would have, but before sending it to press, I ran it through ChatGPT with the instructions: "Please review this column, looking for any grammatical errors and make any suggested edits."

The answer came back in seconds, led by the following observation:

"I would also lean into the photo mistake a little more, be-

cause that's actually the most interesting part of the editorial: even with experience and technology, editorial judgment still matters."

That's exactly what I had been thinking. ChatGPT wasn't going to tell me what the story should be, but it did help me recognize where I could make my own writing clearer.

I went through my column and the suggested edits one by one, learning along the way. I felt good about the fact that 99 per cent of my column was untouched by ChatGPT. But that remaining 1 per cent provided a chance to learn something and become a better writer in the future.

Perhaps that's the best way to think about AI in journalism: not as a replacement for the writer or editor, but as another tool that can help us become better at what we do.

Bravo

We have 3 Bravos this week

1) I am so impressed how beautiful St. Marys is. Thanks to all that help to make it that way like St. Marys Landscaping, the town for all the new lights, flowers and now the fall arrangements and the new painting that has been going on downtown to name a few. The sidewalks and all the trails are so wonderful to walk and ride bikes on and are kept up well. Let's all help to keep it attractive!

2) Bravo to the gentleman who came to my aid after I stumbled and fell while out on a walk on Thomas St. Your kindness and concern was very much appreciated.

3) Bravo to LF on Widder St. West for bringing our four month runaway pup back to us. Thank you!

Boo

We have 1 Boo this week

1) Boo to those who are tossing garbage on the ground outside Dollarama. When you throw garbage on the ground it becomes litter and you are the trash.

*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered. Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.

Quote of the Week

"I told Max on the mound when he was coming out, thank you for letting me be part of your unbelievable career, and I wouldn't want any other 42-year-old psychopath on my team other than you."

- Toronto Blue Jays Manager John Schneider on taking Max Scherzer out of the game on his last outing as a Blue Jay

**GRANT
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at a time!

St. Marys Independent

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Overheard

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Maybe Vladdy should be paid for what he is supposed to do, not just for what he did.

Spooky season has arrived. Time to buy Halloween candy just to eat it and buy more.

Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others? Either email them to us at info@stmarysindependent.com with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519.284.0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

Happy retirement Valerie!

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

One of the first orders of business during the Sept. 22 meeting of St. Marys Town Council was to recognize Valerie McRae Goad for her 35 years of service in child-care. Goad, who is retiring from her position with the town, served as an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) throughout her career, working with every age group from infants to preschoolers. In many cases, she even had the chance to teach the children of children she once taught.

Jen Lewis, Director of the St. Marys Early Learning Centre, made a beautiful presentation which recalled Val's ability to connect with youngsters, including her mastery of felt boards and circle time.

In her final year with the Early Learning Centre, she had the opportunity to work in the role of floater, which Lewis described as perfect because "Val had the opportunity to spend time with everyone, sharing her knowledge, mentoring educators, offering guidance, and passing along wisdom that she has gained over her 35 years."

Lewis concluded by saying, "You have a wonderful legacy that you have left behind in the Town of St. Marys, and you will certainly be missed."

Goad reflected on her career, "It has been such an important part of my life, and I'm incredibly grateful for all of the people I've had the opportunity to work with, and all of the families and children who have been part of my journey."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Members of St. Marys Town Council made a special presentation to retiring Valerie McRae Goad in appreciation of her 35 years of service with St. Marys Child Care Centre.

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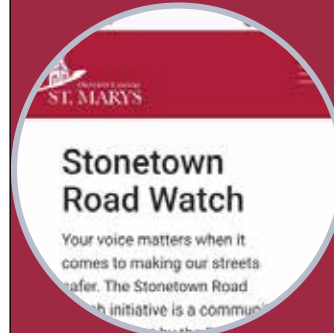
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STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news
from the Town of St. Marys



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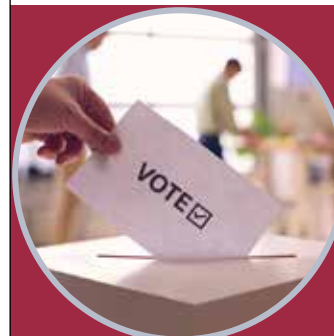
Visit townofstmarys.com/RoadSafety

FAMILY FUN CONCERT & FUNDRAISER

In support of the Community Commons Project featuring live music from beloved children's performers Sonshine & Broccoli! Saturday, October 3rd from 1:30 to 3:30pm Pyramid Recreation Centre

Tickets are available at the Library by donation

Visit townofstmarys.com/CommunityCommons



CHECK YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION

If you've recently moved, changed your name, or aren't sure your voter information is up to date, now is the time to check.

Confirm, update, or add your information to the voters' list by visiting Town Hall (175 Queen Street East), or contacting 519-284-2340 ext. 241 during regular business hours.

BUDGET ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Engage today to help shape tomorrow!

This survey provides the opportunity to give feedback on the 2027 budget, asset management, housing, property taxes and more within the community. Survey closes October 16.

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Senior of the Week



Our senior of the week is Janet Quinn who celebrated her 90th birthday on Sunday, Sept. 20. Born in Westminster township, Janet married George on Oct. 20, 1956. They farmed south of Kintore.

Janet is retired from nursing at St. Marys hospital. They have four children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Happy Birthday Janet!

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519.284.0041 or info@stmarysindependent.com.

Celebrating the Creative Spirit of St. Marys

SHARON BARFOOT

St. Marys Creative Retreat

Take a walk around your community and you will see the fingerprint of a creative maker everywhere.

A garden you admire may have been planted by someone who imagined colour, shape, and life where there was once only bare ground. A mural on the side of a building or in our local hospital waiting room can turn an ordinary wall into a place with a story. A hand-painted sign, a shop window, a bench, a carved stone, or a beautiful front porch all began with someone deciding that usefulness could also be lovely.

Our Stonetown buildings have many stories. Someone chose the shape of the roof, the curve of the archway, and the details around the windows and especially the shape of the stone, which was evidently very plentiful when the historic buildings were constructed. These artistic choices create the character of the town. They help us recognize where we are and give us a sense of belonging to this particular place.

Architects, designers, tradespeople, landscape artists, graphic designers do much more than simply build a town. These creative makers help to build community. They make the spaces welcoming. They create gathering places, give us things to notice, and remind us that care has been taken. A flower-filled garden, a handmade sign, or a piece of public art quietly says: someone was

here, someone cared, and this place matters.

Creativity matters. Art matters. Makers gather, share ideas, stories, feelings and hopes. Architects share historical stories about buildings. Landscape architects help to instill a love of nature. That painting at your local gallery may give us pause to question how and why.

At its heart, creativity reminds us that we are not alone. When people make, imagine, and respond together, they begin to see themselves as part of something larger.

Creativity is innate in all of us. It is not limited to painters, writers, musicians, or people who call themselves artists. It appears whenever we imagine, solve a problem, tell a story, arrange a room, grow a garden, cook a meal, mend something, or find a new way forward.

We are born curious. As children, we build, draw, ask questions, make up games, and turn ordinary things into possibilities. That creative spark does not disappear as we grow older; sometimes it simply gets buried beneath busyness, self-doubt, or the belief that we must be “good” at something before we are allowed to enjoy it.

Creativity is a human way of paying attention and responding to the world. It helps us express who we are, connect with others, and imagine what might be possible.

Sharon Barfoot is a local artist and organizing committee member for the St. Marys Creative Retreat (coming to downtown St. Marys this Oct. 20-22nd).



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- ♥ Creates jobs
- ♥ Ensures our Downtown thrives

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. What is the traditional birthstone of October?
2. Who bet Eddie Murphy \$100,000 he couldn't make a hit song?
3. Who was selected 1st overall in the 2026 NFL draft?
4. What is the name of the famous clock tower in Ottawa?
5. In what year did ABBA win Eurovision?
6. What disease used to be called consumption?
7. What brand introduced the first-ever fully automatic drip coffee maker in the 1970s?
8. What is the color of an emerald?
9. The offspring of a polar bear and a grizzly is a what?
10. Montana shares a northern border with which 3 Canadian provinces?

This week's answers are found on pg. 35



St. Marys Independent

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**GRANT
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Stonetown Arts mural brings colour and creativity to hospital patient lounge

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

The patient lounge in the west wing of St. Marys Memorial Hospital has received a cheerful facelift, thanks to the St. Marys Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

The Auxiliary commissioned a mural for the lounge, giving patients, visitors and staff a colourful new scene to enjoy. Created and painted by local artists from Stonetown Arts, the mural depicts the north side of Queen Street East in downtown St. Marys.

Members of Stonetown Arts began work on the mural on Sept. 11, bringing the streetscape to life with bright colours and plenty of details to discover.

Auxiliary member Janis Fread was thrilled with the result.

"We are thrilled with how it turned out, and it has kept some patients busy being

able to watch it come to life," she said.

The mural was designed by Stonetown Arts member Nancy Plummer, with fellow member Chantelle Marshall organizing the project.

One of the mural's most thoughtful features is the inclusion of small details throughout the scene, including cats, dogs and colourful clothing. These provide things for patients, particularly those living with dementia, to look for and discover.

The Auxiliary is also planning a contest through the hospital boutique, inviting people to identify and name the buildings depicted in the mural.

The result is a bright, cheerful addition to the patient lounge, one designed not only to beautify the space, but also to provide patients and visitors with something to look at, talk about and enjoy.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Stonetown Arts members who helped create the mural, from left, Elizabeth Layng, Diana McQuirk and Chantelle Marshall.



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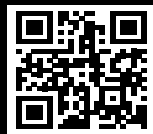


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Jaron Camp to preview new album at St. Marys vinyl listening parties

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

St. Marys singer-songwriter and one half of the folk duo York Street Thought Process, Jaron Camp is looking forward to sharing new music with the community.

His new album, *All I Did Was Listen*, which will be released on Oct. 7, will have two vinyl listening parties ahead of the release on Oct. 2 and 3 at the Lucid Musings Photography Space at 95 Queen St. E. Camp will perform his original music with a house band playing drums and upright bass. Rachael Frankruyter of York Street Thought Process and Stratford's Earl Filsinger will also accompany Camp on stage.

Guests will also have a chance to purchase vinyl copies of *All I Did Was Listen* at the shows. The record was pressed on lavender-coloured vinyl by Precision Pressing.

"Creating vinyl was a special experience as a lover of the medium," he told the St. Marys Independent. "I was honoured to commission and feature artwork by my grandfather, Bev Camp, on the front cover."

Bev Camp, aka "The Dancing Cowboy," is a legend in London's music scene and is often seen dancing at local shows in the city.

Jaron wrote the songs in 2024 as part of his application to FACTOR's Artist Development grant. He describes the album as "an incredible experience to release such a personal album that pulls together so many musicians throughout my life in music," as it features Dan Stacey, Emm Gryner and Leah Holtom. *All I Did Was Listen* reflects on the act of listening, is driven by lyrics and features a variety of instruments.

"Listeners can look forward to hearing upright bass, pedal steel, drums, fiddle, mandolin and various other



(PHOTO COURTESY OF LUCID MUSINGS PHOTOGRAPHY)

St. Marys singer-songwriter Jaron Camp, one half of folk duo York Street Thought Process, has a new solo album coming out called *All I Did Was Listen*. Lucid Musings Photography will host the vinyl release shows in its studio on Oct. 2 and 3.

instruments," Camp said.

York Street Thought Process will perform at London's Aeolian Hall on Oct. 6 as part of the venue's Tunes at Noon series.

In addition to the vinyl release shows, Camp will attend the Folk Canada Conference, which runs from Oct. 14 to 18, as part of York Street Thought Process. He will also tour with Maggie's Wake in the spring across West-

ern Canada and sub in the pit orchestra for the *Something Rotten!* production in Stratford.

Each vinyl release show starts at 7:30 p.m., with doors opening half an hour earlier. Tickets for the vinyl release shows are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door. Advance tickets can be purchased by emailing jaroncampmusic@gmail.com or by calling Lucid Musings Photography at 519-284-0858.



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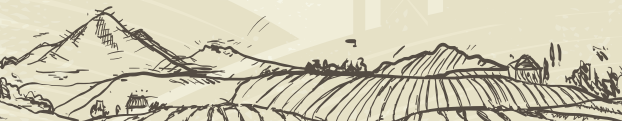
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Lyric Flowers and Pet Valu team up for National Dog Day



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Lyric Flowers and Pet Valu joined together for a National Dog Day draw. Pictured is Spencer Ferguson with winning lab, Lucy, Lyric Flowers co-owner Jay Harrison, Pet Valu manager Julia, and Sue Waymouth with winning yorkie, Arty.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Lanny Hoare and Jay Harrison, owners of Lyric Flowers, own two Cavalier King Charles Spaniels named Kerry and Spencer. The pups are part of the reason why Lanny and Jay wanted to collaborate with Pet Valu.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Allison (owner of Pet Valu) happily agreed to join up with Lyric Flowers for the draw.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Every year on Aug. 26, National Dog Day is recognized and celebrated to honor your adored dogs and to also promote pet adoption which is so important in saving the lives of pets, reducing overcrowding at shelters, and fighting unethical breeding mills.

This year, Lyric Flowers joined up with

Pet Valu to create a fun and festive way for some local furry friends to win a prize. Jay and Lanny of Lyric Flowers, who own two Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, approached Pet Valu to promote local businesses with community involvement. Their spaniels are with them daily and are a part of their business so even though the flower shop and pet supply store combination seemed like a stretch, two local businesses coming together for the love

of fur babies is great.

Owners were asked to post a picture and name of their dog on the Lyric Flowers' Instagram and Facebook page. All the names that were submitted went into a draw for two great prizes: one for small dogs, and one for larger dogs. In just three days, over 240 entries were posted. The small dog winner was five-year-old teacup Yorkie Arty, entered by Sue Waymouth, and the larger dog winner was

six-year-old lab Lucy, entered by Spencer Ferguson.

The winners each received a prize supplied by both businesses valued upwards of \$100 each.

Jay from Lyric Flowers said, "We would like to say a huge thank you to the community and Pet Valu for joining us. We are thinking this will be an annual event."

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Stratford Takes Back the Night



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

The Take Back the Night community march on Sept. 18 displayed solidarity with survivors of sexual assault, gender-based violence, and intimate partner violence and a call for change to ensure safety for all.

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

The Take Back the Night rally and march in Stratford had people of all ages and genders marching around the Downtown Core advocating against gender-based violence, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence.

The Stop Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee of Perth County hosted Take Back the Night on Sept. 18. Take Back the Night is a global movement addressing the right to feel safe walking outside at night without fear of

violence.

“For many of us, our streets feel welcoming and safe, but for survivors of sexual assault, stalking, violence, and harassment these same streets can look and feel very different. They can be scary and threatening with too few supports and places of safety too far between,” said Julia Church, manager of programs and services at the Emily Murphy Centre. “Tonight, we say it’s time for a change. It’s time for our city to grow and evolve so that everyone in our community can experience it in the same safe way.”

Attendees gathered at Market Square



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Local singer-songwriter Nora Joy performed some songs ahead of the Take Back the Night community march.

to make signs and buttons ahead of the protest, as well as learn more about local organizations providing support services including the Emily Murphy Centre, Optimism Place, the Children’s Aid Society, Huron Perth Public Health, Family Services Perth Huron, Victim Services Perth Huron and the Stratford Police Service. There was also a set of visual art and poetry created by survivors as part of the No More Silence Art Display.

Those part of Take Back the Night in Stratford marched in solidarity with survivors from Market Square and down St. Patrick and Downie Streets before head-

ing back.

“We march for everyone who has held their keys between their fingers walking home at night, who has asked their friend to text or call me when you’re home safe, or has worried that they will lose a best friend or the support of their community if they share their story,” Church said ahead of the March. “Violence grows in silence. When we gather visibly, loudly, together, we break that silence and we start a new narrative. We tell survivors we believe you, we stand with you, and you are not alone.”



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Local author, Jackie Cousins, releases new children's book



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

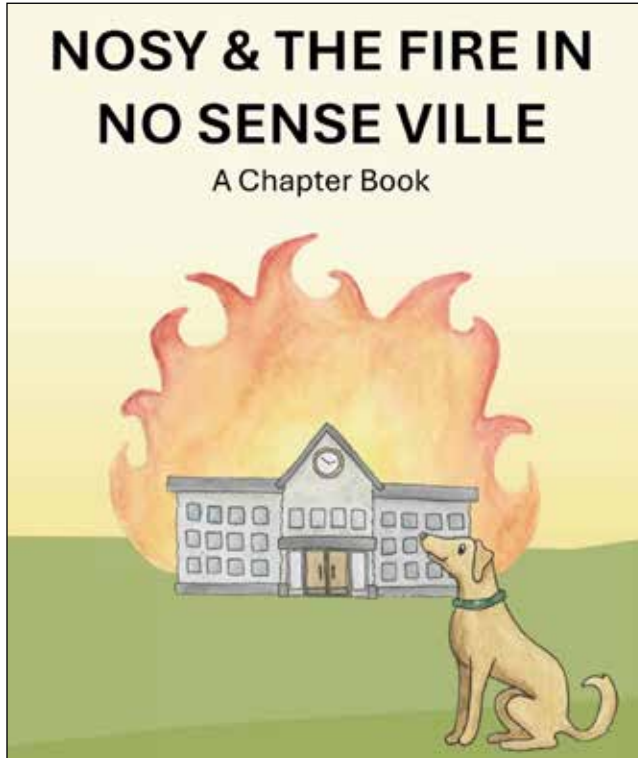
Jackie Cousins, local author, released the next adventure book on the dog named Nosy. Cousins' next book will be coming out at Christmas.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Local author, Jackie Cousins, has released a new book following the adventures of Nosy the hero dog. The book is called Nosy & the Fire in No Sense Ville and is perfect for kids from ages six to ten. The book is intended to inspire courage, kindness and hope through the acts of an extraordinary dog in the heart of No Sense Ville. The book is also great for those that love animal adventure books that teach valuable life lessons while adding excitement and emotion.

Cousins' book is available for purchase at Lyric Flow-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Jackie Cousins' new children's book can be purchased at Lyric Flowers, Amazon and Volumes Publishing. This is number 12 for the local author.

ers for \$10 with all proceeds going to the Food Bank in St. Marys.

This newest release is number 12 for Cousins who has been writing for approximately four years. She has written two for adults that include one of wedding poems and one for celebration of life ceremonies. Based on her experience as an elementary school teacher, the rest of Cousins books are geared towards primary students and include funny poems and short chapter books. She loves to write for the fun of it and publishes on her own.

Cousins' illustrator, Danielle Stephen, grew up in St. Marys and now lives in Calgary. Stephen has worked with Cousins on about seven of her books. She attended



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Danielle Stephen, illustrator for Nosy & the Fire in No Sense Ville, has worked with Cousins on some of her other books and grew up in St. Marys.

school at South Perth and DCVI and has her diploma in Interior Design from Georgian College and a degree from Fanshawe's Bachelor of Interior Design Program.

Cousins' website is mjcousinsauthor.com where all her books are listed and can also be purchased. They are on Amazon and the Canadian company, Volumes Publishing.

What is next for Cousins? She is working on another book called Lull-a-Baby Poems which she hopes will be out by Christmas.

For more information she can be reached at jackie-cousins56@gmail.com

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5th Annual Browns School Car Show



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

It was a beautiful day on Saturday, Sept. 26 for the 5th Annual Browns School Car Show. More than 60 cars and trucks were on display by their proud owners. This show was started by Max Muir and Dave Shepley, members of the Browns School Coffee Talk group. Dave has since passed away but his memory lives on with the show each year. We thank everyone who came out with their vehicle and those who came to have a look at them. We also want to thank everyone for the donations received that will go towards the upkeep of the Browns School on Line 13 at Road 92 across from Browns United Church.



NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of The Corporation of the Town of St. Marys intends to designate the Water Street Bridge as a property of cultural historical value or interest under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.O.18, as amended.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The subject property is described as PT LOT 17 CONCESSION 17 BLANSHARD AS IN STM15932 BETWEEN WATER ST & WELLINGTON ST PLAN 225 ; ST MARYS

DESCRIPTION OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES

- The location and orientation of the bridge spanning Trout Creek at Water Street North.
- The steel, seven-panel, pin-connected Pratt through-truss superstructure.
- The steel truss members, including chords, vertical members, diagonal members, pin connections, portal bracing, and v-lacing.
- The cantilevered pedestrian sidewalk and lattice railings.
- The limestone abutments and associated stonework.
- The bridge's visual relationship to Trout Creek, the Water Street corridor, the downtown, the former industrial landscape, and nearby historic bridge crossings.
- The open views to and from the bridge within the Trout Creek valley.

NOTICE OF OBJECTION

Any person may serve their notice of objection to the proposed designation to the Town Clerk within 30 days of the date of this notice, and no later than 4:30 pm on Friday, October 30, 2026. Objections should be directed to the Town of St. Marys, P.O. Box 998, St. Marys, ON N4X 1B6, Attention: Jenna McCartney, Clerk, or by email to clerksoffice@town.stmarys.on.ca

A notice of objection must set out the reason(s) for the objection and all relevant facts



WELCOME TO THE TEAM

St. Marys Insurance Group Inc. is pleased to welcome **Derek Galloway** and his valued clients to our office.

Beginning October 1, 2026, Derek will be operating from our office located at **199 Elgin Street East, St. Marys**.

Clients are welcome to visit Derek at our location or contact him through our office at 519-284-1900 or inquiries@stmarysinsurance.ca

We look forward to serving Derek's clients on January 1st, 2027 and encourage everyone to stop by, meet our team, and see our office space. We are excited to welcome you and assist with your insurance needs.



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Bake Sale showcases Auxiliary members' culinary talents

JANIS FREAD

St. Marys Memorial Hospital Auxiliary

Auxiliary members are known for their culinary talents, so be sure to visit our bake sale on Saturday, Oct. 10 downtown at Troyer's Spices, where you'll find a selection of delectable home-baked treats for your Thanksgiving table! The sale, which runs from 9 a.m. to noon, will also include our squishy, knitted and crocheted pumpkins that are fun additions to your seasonal decor.

Sometimes a patient can feel vulnerable and stressed when experiencing their first bath in a hospital environment, which is why the nursing staff requested a waterproof portable speaker for the hospital's bathroom. The Auxiliary was happy to provide this item, which will allow the nursing staff to provide soothing music to help the patients feel more comfortable.

Fundraising events like our very successful

Bingo night enable the Auxiliary to purchase not only needed hospital equipment such as the over-the-bed tables we have committed to fund from the capital list, but also these little things that make a difference to both staff and patients.

We were especially pleased to partner with the artists from Stonetown Arts to complete the whimsically cheerful mural in the patient lounge. Special thanks are extended to Nancy Plummer who designed the mural and Chantelle Marshall who co-ordinated, painted and supervised the artists during the week it took to complete the project. Watch for the Mural Contest that will be announced on our Facebook page.

The Boutique is open Monday to Friday, noon to 4:00 p.m.

Follow the Auxiliary on Facebook at "The Boutique at St. Marys Memorial Hospital" or contact us via email at smmhauxiliary@gmail.com.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Colourful knitted and crocheted pumpkins, available at the hospital Boutique, make a creative addition to fall decor.

St. Marys Independent Shorts

St. Marys Healthcare Foundation announces Sept. 50/50 winner

Congratulations to Krishna Patel of London, who took home \$3,690 in St. Marys Healthcare Foundations' September 50/50 draw. Her lucky ticket, rt-D-18898, was drawn on Thursday, Sept. 24.

As they wrap up the 50/50 lottery, the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has purchased a ticket and supported over the past six years.

St. Marys Fire Prevention Week returns

Firefighter Visit and Swag Bag Booth

Saturday, Oct. 3 | 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

St. Marys Fire Prevention Week campaign returns Oct. 4 to 10. Residents are invited to visit firefighters and members of the Stratford Police at Your Independent Grocer in St. Marys. Visitors can pick up a reusable fire safety bag filled with important fire prevention information and promotional items, and take photos with a St. Marys fire truck.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton Day (9/25) last week provides an ideal opportunity for a progress update towards our local Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Following the success of recent fundraising efforts, we are just \$25,000 short of reaching the \$300,000 goal that would make the Imagination Library indefinitely sustaining for the current and future children of St. Marys. To donate or learn more, please visit www.stmarysimaginationlibrary.com.

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Firefighter Visit and Swag Bag Booth: October 3

Stop by and see our firefighters and the Stratford Police at Your Independent Grocer St. Marys from approximately 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Get a St. Marys Fire Department reusable bag (with important fire safety information and swag) and a photo with one of the St. Marys fire trucks!

St. Marys Fire Department Open House: October 10

The St. Marys Fire Department is excited to host the entire community for an open house event! Visit us between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Enjoy station tours, fire truck demonstrations, inflatable fire safety house, fire prevention display, the Stratford Police, three delicious food vendors (Campbells Canteen, Sunset Shack and Brannigans Fish & Chips), and a chance to meet the local firefighters, Sparky too!

More Fire Prevention Week Activities!

To learn more about Fire Prevention Week and this year's theme, "Charge into Fire Safety: Safe Charging Is a Superpower." visit fpw.org. Additional Fire Prevention Week resources for children, caregivers, and educators can be found at sparky.org and sparkyschoolhouse.org.

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- Unplug devices once fully charged to reduce battery stress and heat buildup.
- Charge e-bikes, scooters, and power tools outside and away from exits whenever possible.
- On a plane, keep charging devices visible and never charge e-cigarettes or vapes.



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Chris St. Clair
Chief Fire Prevention Officer
Started Apr 2025



Ryan Taylor
Deputy Fire Chief
Started Feb 1995



Greg St. Clair
Captain
Started Aug 2021



Josh Becker
Captain
Started Sep 2013



Jim Burlingham
Captain
Started Jan 2006



Chris Primeau
Lieutenant
Started Nov 2015



Darcy Robinson
Lieutenant
Started Nov 2015



Brandon Dundas
Lieutenant
Started Jul 2012



Jeff Sass
Firefighter
Started Oct 2001



Josh McKay
Firefighter
Started Dec 2018



Curtis Downham
Firefighter
Started Dec 2018



Ryan Hartsell
Firefighter
Started Sep 2020



Neil Lippert
Firefighter
Started Sep 2021



Connor Byers
Firefighter
Started Sep 2021



Mike McKone
Firefighter
Started April 2022



Kruz Dumontier
Firefighter
Started May 2022



Mackenzie Forman
Firefighter
Started Oct 2023



Gibson Merkel
Firefighter
Started Oct 2023



Devin Oliver
Firefighter
Started May 2024



Kristian Pusey
Firefighter
Started Feb 2025



Curtis Taylor
Firefighter
Started Feb 2025



Mark Manzano
Firefighter
Started May 2025



Matt Welsh
Firefighter
Started Nov 2025



Michael Lynch
Firefighter
Started Aug 2026



Ethan Brine
Firefighter
Started Aug 2026



Kirk Boreham
Firefighter
Started Aug 2026



Jeff Sager
Chaplain
Started Sep 2022

St. Marys Independent SPORTS

PART ONE: Tim O'Connor leaving St. Marys Minor Basketball in a great place

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

St. Marys Minor Basketball founder, coach, and legendary leader Tim O'Connor is stepping back from the youth basketball program after more than two decades.

O'Connor emphasized the people running the program now allow him to feel comfortable not being as heavily involved.

"I will still be dabbling with a little basketball, but I think I felt my age a little bit the last couple of years," said O'Connor. "I still really enjoy being with the kids and coming out to the gym, but I do a lot more describing than demonstrating, and it feels like a good time to pass the baton. The other piece is there is a really good group who have dialled into Minor Basketball."

Steve Reid, O'Connor's successor as the program's president, detailed O'Connor's incredible legacy.

"Without Tim O'Connor, there is no St. Marys Basketball," Reid remarked. "Over 20 years ago, Tim and Gregg (Blackler) started St. Marys Basketball from nothing. Throughout those 20 years, Tim has been the guiding light and passion behind the program."

That legacy, Reid further stated, also extends outside of St. Marys as well.

"Tim (O'Connor) also helped to create the Huron-Perth Basketball League, which has grown to over 15 teams playing in the grade 7/8 boys, grade 7/8 girls, and Grade 5/6 boys divisions. The league has grown as far as Port Elgin, with new teams eager to join the league."

"I teach and coach through Huron and Perth County," added Reid. "Everyone knows Tim. Everyone loves Tim. You cannot walk into a gym and find a basketball coach that doesn't know and respect Tim O'Connor. His passion and dedication to youth sports have left a lasting impression across Southwestern Ontario."

Kylie Monteith agreed with Reid, calling O'Connor the embodiment of the program.

"Tim (O'Connor) is St. Marys Basketball. Over 20 years ago, there wasn't a program here. There was Tim, Gregg Blackler, a few basketballs, and a belief that kids in this town deserved a place to play. Everything we have today grew out of that. Tim and Gregg built it from nothing and never asked for credit. His legacy isn't a trophy or a banner; it's the hundreds of kids who learned the game because he gave them a chance to."

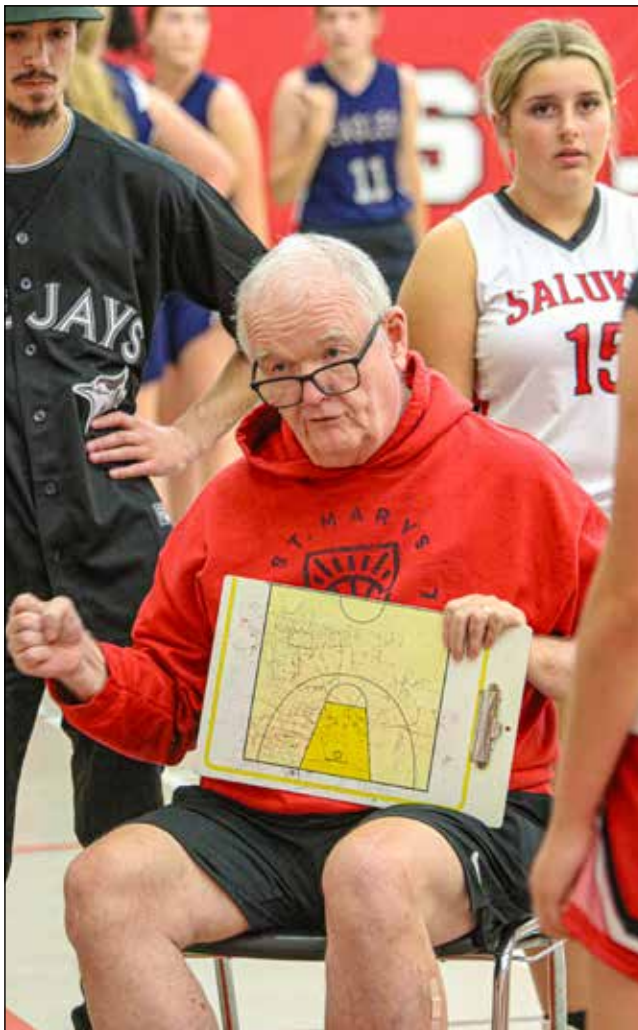
Reid noted today's volunteers were inspired by O'Connor.

"Many hands make light work," Reid told the Independent. "As you may imagine, when a titan like Tim O'Connor leaves a program, it leaves a massive hole. Luckily for St. Marys Basketball, there is an extremely strong core of volunteers on the board and in the gym all working together to keep the program strong."

O'Connor echoed Reid's sentiments about the communal approach to running the program.

"Each individual has their own strengths, but I think what you see in the Minor Basketball group are good community-minded people who want what's best for the kids," O'Connored noted. "They know that kids have fun when they come and play basketball, and they're willing to do what they can to make that happen. It's very much what I would describe as a 'many hands make light work' type of approach."

The influx of new leaders, according to O'Connor, came after the program resumed following the pandemic.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Tim O'Connor, pictured, is stepping back from his day-to-day role within St. Marys Minor Basketball, leaving an incredible legacy as one of its founders and lead executives for more than two decades.

"When we came back out of COVID, it was Gregg (Blackler) and I at that point, and we put out the S.O.S. and said, 'We can't do this on our own,' and we had a great response. There's a core of about seven or eight people who were happy to get involved, and under Steve (Reid), the organization is in really good shape with some fantastic people involved."

"These are amazing people, including Rachel Mahaffy, Cherie Thompson, Devin Arn, Ken French, Andrea Richardson, Kylie Monteith, and Jack Taylor, and they'll do fantastic," O'Connor continued. "I'll probably help with little things here and there, but the week-to-week running of the program, I do feel it's a good time to step back from that."

O'Connor also raved about the job Reid has done as the association's president.

"Steve (Reid) has been terrific," O'Connor said. "I was happy to ask Steve if he'd be willing to step in and be the president. He's done it for four or five years now. He's had quite the run, and he's been excellent. He's just a very easy-going, fun guy. He has a great basketball background himself. He has a very fun-oriented approach to working with kids."

Reid, meanwhile, explained how he was fortunate to step into a position to build off of what O'Connor had already established.

"I was lucky enough to become the President of St.

Marys Basketball after Tim (O'Connor)," Reid said. "Big shoes to fill, yes, but Tim's leadership of the program never wavered in 20 years. He always led with the clear vision of what St. Marys Basketball was and should be – kids and basketball, first. This clear vision always allowed Tim to make the best decisions for the players in the program. It's not always easy starting a basketball program in a hockey town, but not only has Tim succeeded, the program has never been more successful and popular."

Monteith, one of the many people who have stepped up to run the program, explained what she and the other volunteers have learned from O'Connor.

"More than anything, Tim (O'Connor) taught us patience. He never rushed a kid or made anyone feel like they weren't good enough to be on the court. He showed us that the point isn't to develop the next star; it's to make sure every kid leaves practice wanting to come back," Monteith began.

"He also taught us that the program only works when it's fun. Tim always kept it light, kept the kids laughing, and somehow, they'd be learning the whole time without realizing it. We've tried to carry that into everything we run, especially on the girls' side, where he really set the tone for making the game welcoming to everyone."

O'Connor's inclusive vision has led to all-time highs in participation and success for girls' basketball in St. Marys, both at the minor basketball level and in guiding the junior girls' team at DCVI to multiple Huron-Perth, WOISSA, and OFSAA banners in recent years.

"The last three seasons of St. Marys Basketball have seen the highest membership ever," said Reid. "The travel teams have expanded to include a grade 5/6 boys team in addition to the grade 7/8 teams. Tim has left a community where more and more girls are playing basketball. The recent success at DCVI is proof of Tim's hard work in promoting and supporting girls basketball in the St. Marys."

St. Marys Basketball begins another season Nov. 5. Registration is open now on the Town of St. Marys' ActiveNet site. There are spaces still available, but registration closes October 14th. For \$75, kids enjoy 18 weeks of action at St. Marys DCVI every Thursday night. Beyond that, members in grades 5-8 can play on travel teams that travel Huron-Perth and beyond into April.

This year, St. Marys Basketball has partnered with the Toronto Raptors to secure a block of tickets for sale exclusively to St. Marys Basketball, including early access to shootaround.

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U12 A Boys win gold at the London Early Bird tourney

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The McKinley Hatchery U12 A Boys St. Marys Rock won the gold at the London Jr. Mustangs Early Bird tournament Sept. 18-20.

Head coach Mike Johnson was proud of how quickly the team came together.

"I was really impressed," said Johnson. "This year felt like we had a little less time getting into the tournament, so I really didn't know what to expect. We knew there were two or three other highly ranked teams from the tournament last year, so it wasn't like we went in expecting to win. We didn't know what we were going to look like on the ice."

Johnson noted the moment when the team started clicking in the round-robin.

"The kids hadn't been on the ice together a whole lot. We had a couple of additions to the roster, and we juggled things up and made three totally new line combinations, so we just weren't sure when the chemistry would come, but it clicked quickly," Johnson began.

"It was halfway through that first game when I saw the way the kids were clicking together in their new lines. We had three lines that all really seemed to grab some chemistry pretty quickly. They all play a little bit differently, so they were hard to match up against. We got a 5-0 lead on a strong team, and it was a good way to kick off the tournament."

Johnson was also thrilled with the play of his entire defence corps.

"I knew the offence was going to be there and then, with the defencemen, those kids have been working so hard on what we've been challenging them with, as far as being aggressive and being puck-movers. That can be risky at a young age, but we're challenging these kids to be up in the play with tight gaps and be creative every time they get the puck on their stick, and they're just running with it. Kai (Sherwood), Myles (Avey), Warren (Atwell), Logan (Masellis), and Jack (Anderson) have just been doing an amazing job back there, and they're going to drive a lot of play for us."

After winning all four round-robin games, St. Marys met the South Simcoe Storm in the semi-final and, according to Johnson, had an impressive start to the game, leading 3-0 at the end of the first period.

"We just played four games in two days, and we had a quick turnaround," Johnson explained. "They got an early start in the morning there in the semis, and the kids came out flying. They jumped right on them. Ryan (Pickel) was huge for us. He made a couple big saves early, and then we got rolling, and the team just started clicking."

Kyle Johnson scored the first goal with 5:41 remaining in the first period. Everett Crummer scored just 58 seconds later, assisted by Nico Thompson. Kyle Johnson scored his second goal of the game at the 2:23 mark of the first period.

With just over seven-and-a-half minutes remaining in the second period, South Simcoe scored, but Kyle Johnson completed his hat-trick just 33 seconds later. A goal by Thompson with 5:46 left in the second made it 5-1, the eventual final score.

Mike Johnson praised his goalie, Ryan Pickel, for his stellar saves throughout the tournament.

"Ryan (Pickel) was huge for us all weekend," raved Mike Johnson. "He's an absolute anchor back there. The boys know that he's always got their back. He's one of the best goalies in pretty much every game we play. He's just always steady, calm, and rock-solid, and that's



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The McKinley Hatchery U12 A Boys St. Marys Rock took home the gold medal at the London Jr. Mustangs Early Bird tournament Sept. 18-20. Pictured in front is Ryan Pickel. In the second row, from left, are Myles Avey, Nico Thompson, Warren Attwel, Harlan Attwel, Lincoln Jennings, Bode Keller, Everett Crummer, and Jack Anderson. In the third row, from left, are Kai Sherwood, Kyle Johnson, Rhett Parkinson, Cameron Smith, Ashton Ropp, and Logan Masselis. In the fourth row, from left, are coach Scott Crummer, coach Mark Jennings, head coach Mike Johnson, coach Jaden Ropp, and coach Mitch Watt.

always nice to see. It's nice to play in front of somebody like that."

Mike Johnson also highlighted the offensive play of two lines as being particularly impressive in the semis.

"Kyle's (Johnson) line with Harlan (Atwell) and Cam (Smith) generated quite a bit of offence that game. They were flying. They had a really good game that day and generated three or four goals, which was big. And then the other line that was really hard to play against that game was Bode (Keller), Ashton (Ropp), and Lincoln (Jennings). They're just a beast of a line down low. They get the puck down below the other team's goal line and cycle it really well, and they made a couple of really nice plays, kicking the puck out front and generating a couple of goals."

In the final, St. Marys came out on top by a score of 5-0. In the first period, they generated a lot of chances in the offensive zone, but finished scoreless.

"Ryan (Pickel) made a couple big saves early that settled everything down," Mike Johnson noted. "We were generating a lot of offence in the first period, but we couldn't get one by them. We finished the first period tied 0-0, but we carried a lot of the play though. But it was one of those games where a bad bounce could turn the momentum pretty quickly, but Ryan was there when we needed him."

In the second, Thompson scored the first goal of the game unassisted with 10:23 left. Roughly two minutes later, Jack Anderson scored, assisted by Rhett Parkinson and Crummer. A minute and 30 seconds later, Lincoln Jennings scored, with assists going to Logan Masselis and Myles Avey. A minute and 16 seconds later, Cam Smith scored, assisted by Kyle Johnson and Harlan

Atwell.

With 3:57 left in the third period, Sherwood scored, with assists by Warren Atwell and Kyle Johnson.

Coach Mike Johnson remarked how, once their momentum started, the line of Crummer, Parkinson, and Thompson kept moving forward.

"We had a really big game from Rhett (Parkinson), Nico (Thompson), and Everett (Crummer). The three of them were really breaking the puck out of their zone well and making some great plays in the neutral zone. Nico potted a couple beautiful goals on some great passing plays from Rhett and Everett, and once those went in the net, it was just downhill for the other team the rest of the game. They couldn't keep up with us, and our kids just steamrolled right into the final buzzer."

The head coach stated the gold medal gave a big boost to the team's belief in themselves.

"Confidence is huge, and a weekend like this gives the kids that reassurance that what we're working on works. We constantly challenge them with concepts to attack the puck from the defensive side and don't cheat on plays, and for younger hockey players who want to always be scoring goals and doing the fun stuff, they see that playing hockey the right way generates results too."

"They're starting to really buy into that concept of a team effort that relies on play without the puck and supporting each other," Johnson continued. "The other thing that we're starting to really see is they're starting to get a little jam in them. When teams come out and try to push us around, they're not going to get away with that either. The kids are starting to have each other's backs and stand up for one another, and the camaraderie coming out of a weekend like this is exciting."

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U18 B Girls strike gold at St. Thomas preseason tourney

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The U18 B Girls St. Marys Rock earned the top prize at the Big Cat Preseason Showdown tournament in St. Thomas Sept. 18-20.

Head coach Kelly Linton told the Independent the team's strong showing was especially impressive given how little they've played together up to this point.

"I was really impressed, considering we have eight girls who weren't part of the U18 'B' team last year and this was only the third time the team had been on the ice together," said Linton. "I would say the overarching theme for the weekend was that everyone contributed. Every win was a team effort. We had 10 different goal scorers, everyone was solid in the defensive end, and our goalie, Aubrey (Cousineau), was lights-out good all weekend, only letting one puck get past her. Our forecheck was relentless, and our penalty killing was perfect."

The Rock went a perfect three-for-three in round-robin play, earning them the top spot in their pool and setting up a semi-final clash against the Stoney Creek Sabres. During the round-robin, St. Marys defeated Stoney Creek 3-0, and in the semis, once again, the Rock blanked the Sabres, this time winning 1-0, with some late-game heroics from Emma Groenestege in the dying moments of regulation to pot the game's only goal.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U18 B Girls St. Marys Rock won the gold medal at the Sept. 18-20 Big Cat Preseason Showdown tournament in St. Thomas. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Marci Linton, Emma Carradine, Lydia McLaughlin, Maeve Wheeler, Macie Russworm, McKenna Ross, and Aubrey Cousineau. In the back row from left, are coach Bob Wheeler, trainer Jensen Dundas, Kayla Visneskie, Linley Porter, Ellie MacArthur, Brooklynn Roth, Maeve Sheldon, Emma Hodgkinson, Aryn Sheldon, Tealya Thistle, Emma Groenestege, coach Stacy Grownestege, head coach Kelly Linton, and coach Mike Carradine.

Linton referred to the semi-final as a "nail-biter."

"After beating Stoney Creek in the round-robin 3-0, we knew we were coming into a game that we could win, but also knew we would still have to earn it. We outplayed them the entire game, but ran into a hot goalie. With 2:10 left on the clock and still tied 0-0, we got a penalty. With overtime and possibly shootouts looming, we knew we had to kill it off," Linton explained.

"The girls did a fantastic job killing it off, and just as the penalized player returned to the ice, Emma (Groenestege) carried the puck into the Sabres' end and ripped one top shelf with just 1.5 seconds left in regulation to send us to the final. You don't see many goals like that, and the bench just erupted. We won that one because the girls never stopped pushing, right to the last second."

In the gold medal game, St. Marys came up against the tournament hosts, the St. Thomas Panthers, and for the second straight game, a single goal proved to be the difference.

"Coming into the game, we knew it was going to be a tough battle," Linton stated. "St. Thomas came into the game with the same record as us, 5-0. They were a

faster, more skilled team than the ones we faced earlier in the tournament. The game went back and forth until early in the third period when Lydia McLaughlin blocked a shot and took off down the ice."

McLaughlin carried the puck the other way and fired a bullet just under the bar to put St. Marys up 1-0. With little time left in the game and St. Marys having a player in the box, St. Thomas pulled their goalie and put a ton of pressure on the Rock in their end. With seconds left, the Panthers created a grade-A scoring chance and even celebrated, thinking they had scored, only to realize goaltender Aubrey Cousineau had the puck in her glove, having made a brilliant game-saving stop.

According to Linton, Cousineau's spectacular play in goal was one of several standout performances from the tournament.

"Aubrey (Cousineau) was the story of the weekend," exclaimed Linton. "She only allowed one goal the entire tournament and posted five shutouts. Emma (Groenestege) set the tone right away with two goals in our first game. I also want to recognize our three first-year players, McKenna (Ross), Maeve (Sheldon), and Tealya (Thistle). It was their first tournament with us and they played with real confidence."

Linton added he sees the girls getting a confidence boost from the early-season tournament victory.

"It shows the girls what they're capable of when they commit, play for each other and work together as a team," Linton said. "Winning this early builds trust and chemistry that usually takes months, and it gives us a foundation to build on. We've got a great group of girls and are very excited for the rest of the season."



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The Provincial Service Officer, Rebecca Hyndman, will be visiting the Perth Regiment Veterans Branch 236 St Marys during the week of Oct. 27-29. Her job is to use a variety of resources to assist veterans in obtaining all awards they are eligible for. Anyone who would like to discuss a possible claim with her is urged to call the Branch no later than Oct 1 2026 to set up an appointment.

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U13 A Boys score silver at London preseason tourney

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The McKinley Hatchery U13 A Boys St. Marys Rock brought home a silver medal after a strong, eye-opening performance at the Sept. 18-20 London Jr. Mustangs Early Bird tournament.

Head coach Brent Kittmer said the team far surpassed what the coaching staff expected to see so early in the year.

"We went in with realistic expectations that it's a pre-season tournament," Kittmer told the Independent. "You just want the boys to knock off the rust and develop a bit of chemistry, and I have to say that we were more than thrilled with how they played. They played like they're in mid-season form."

Having such a strong performance and capturing a silver medal, Kittmer explained, alters what the coaches plan to work on with the group in a positive way.

"I think it changes our expectations a little bit," said Kittmer. "We are now going into the season knowing that we're going to compete in a very tough league and that the boys want to do more. For us as a coaching staff, it means that we're able to jump ahead in our playbook right away and start teaching them a few things that are a bit more advanced and complex. I think as a coaching staff, our challenge is we know that their compete is already high, and we have to make sure they maintain it all year and push them the rest of the year as well, so that's a really good challenge as a coaching staff to have."

Kittmer added, from a broad viewpoint, the most impressive element of their game during the weekend was their intensity.

"For us, what really stood out as a coaching staff was how well everybody moved the puck," Kittmer remarked. "They really understood that team play was going to make them successful, and then, just the level and pace of play they played at. They were gritty, they were fast, they were hungry for the puck, and their compete level was higher than I've ever seen it before. It was just amazing to watch them all weekend."

The Rock won three of their four



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The McKinley Hatchery U13 A Boys earned the silver medal at the London Jr. Mustangs Early Bird tournament Sept. 18-20. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Anderson Murray, Kane Douglas, and Nate Walt. In the middle row, from left, are Rylan Lord, Henry Kahnert, Finnley Harburn, Leo Furtney, Jaxon Wittig, Denver Verberne, and Dean Feeney. In the back row, from left, are trainer Mark Feeney, assistant coach Brayden Lord, Jakob Kittmer, Greyson Eeley, Marcus Stuckless, Tristin Vallance, Cameryn Stokes, Oliver Stewart, head coach Brent Kittmer, and assistant coach Jared Stokes.

round-robin games, with the fourth result being a tie, to finish first in their pool. This set up a semi-final clash against the Niagara Falls Flying Aces, a game that was spoken about in high regard by the head coach.

"I've coached for almost 20 years, and that was 100 percent my favourite game I've ever coached in my career. They're a team that plays in a triple-A loop, so we knew they were going to be really tough. They pushed Niagara hard, and we got up early, and then in the second period, Niagara Falls got a powerplay and they had a very strong powerplay. They scored, and then they scored right away again."

Oliver Stewart scored the game's first goal for St. Marys with just 59 seconds gone in the opening period, assisted by Kane Douglas and Tristin Vallance. In the second period, Niagara Falls potted two quick goals in the span of just 21 seconds, but merely six seconds after the Flying

Aces made it 3-1, the Rock answered back with an unassisted goal from Vallance.

Niagara Falls restored a two-goal lead with just over 10 minutes left in the third period, but St. Marys showed no quit, storming back to score two goals in just 28 seconds to take a 4-3 lead, a deficit that they were able to protect the rest of the game. Jaxon Wittig scored first for the Rock, assisted by Cameryn Stokes and Greyson Eeley, followed by Stokes netting the eventual game-winner, with assists going to Wittig and Dean Feeney.

Kittmer further credited the group for playing with no fear, especially as they trailed in the semis.

"The boys' resilience and compete showed through. They never played like they were afraid to lose. They just kept pushing and pushing, to the point that Niagara Falls couldn't even pull their goalie. It was incredible to watch how

fast they were, how quick they were on the puck, and how, as Niagara Falls was coming up the ice, they would grab the puck and transition back into offence. It was just incredible.

Following the game, Kittmer described hearing the opposition heaping praise on the Rock.

"Afterwards, we heard the Niagara Falls coaches talking to their parents about the game and saying, 'There was just nothing we could do against that team,'" Kittmer recounted. "They were so fast. They competed so hard. That's a very good St. Marys team.' That was just a moment of pure pride for our coaching staff."

Although the Rock fell short of capturing the top prize in the final against the Brantford 99ers, Kittmer still called it a very positive experience playing for the gold.

"What we talked to the guys afterwards was that it was a really good learning experience for us," Kittmer noted. "We saw that we were a really good team in the tournament and we saw another really good team who plays at a bit higher level than we do. We can learn things from them about how they play, and then we can translate that into our game and hopefully improve going forward."

Perhaps one of the best signs for the team's potential success to come this season was how well-rounded the team's production was, and how much every player pushed one another to be better.

"There really weren't any individuals who stood out above the rest. We had guys who scored in critical moments, but when we looked at the scoresheets after the weekend, through the first four games, we had everybody on the team scoring or contributing a point in some way, and our scoring was spread throughout the lineup," stated Kittmer.

"Everybody seemed to step up when we needed it most, and the boys fed off each other. One guy went out and had a hard shift and did something great, the bench went crazy, and the next line wanted to go do more, and they would do it. They just really built off each other. It really was a complete team effort."



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U11 C Girls claim silver at St. Thomas preseason tourney

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Core Fuels U11 C Girls St. Marys Rock earned a silver medal at the Big Cat Preseason Showdown, held Sept. 18–20 in St. Thomas.

Head coach Bryan Foley said the group delivered a complete, teamfirst effort throughout the weekend.

“They played as a team,” Foley told the Independent. “There wasn’t one line stronger than another that carried the group. Every game, the first line set the tone — that was intentional — but all three lines scored and played well. It was truly a team effort. They went out and played as if it was their last game, and they didn’t hold back.”

Foley highlighted several details the team executed at a high level.

“I’ll give kudos to the staff last year who coached some of these girls. Their faceoffs — the number we won and how they handled each draw — were really good,” he said. “They had good structure. Their breakouts were strong. They had enough awareness of where to be and when to move the puck.”

He added that the team’s commitment to structure was evident from the opening game.

“We’ve said it since day one: win the first three seconds of every shift,” Foley explained. “And we want position before possession. If you’re not going to win the foot race to the puck, you can still be in the right spot to make the next play or angle a player out.”

Throughout the tournament, Foley said the girls consistently applied what the coaching staff emphasized.

“From the first game to the last, they took what we were telling them on the bench and showing them on the whiteboards, and they started implementing it,” said Foley. “Even though they’re fairly fundamental concepts, you still have to



(PHOTO COURTESY OF BEYOND SNAPSHOTS ACTION PHOTOGRAPHY)

The Core Fuels U11 C Girls St. Marys Rock took home the silver medal from the Sept. 18-20 Big Cat Preseason Showdown tournament in St. Thomas. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Hannah Hodgson, Jillian Davies, Leah Jones, Blair Foley, and Grace McLean. In the middle row, from left, are Natalie Hibbert, Avery Juliao, Haylee Garrett, Kira Henderson, Scarlett Maddock, Maisy Moir, Alice Hinz, and Ivy Smith. In the back row, from left, are coach Jamie Hibbert, head coach Bryan Foley, coach Rob Davies, and coach Ben Hinz.

be aware of each play and react to how unique it is.”

That willingness to learn has been a defining trait of the group.

“Even back in U9, these girls were eager to learn,” Foley noted. “On the bench, they’re looking for that next step. They want to know what could have been different or what they could do from a different perspective.”

St. Marys finished the round robin with a 3–1 record, including two shutout victories backstopped by goaltender Hannah Hodgson, who earned praise for her rebound control.

“Hannah (Hodgson) made some very good glove saves,” Foley said. “She faced some strong shots and handled them well, but her control of rebounds was excellent. She really limited second chances, which

was great to see and something our goalie coach has been working on with her.”

Foley said the tournament also showcased leadership and strong decisionmaking across the roster.

“Jillian Davies had some great reads throughout the weekend,” Foley said. “She showed strong awareness of when to support the play and how to stay connected to the structure. It was a good example for the rest of the team.”

Foley added that the defensive group as a whole played a key role, showing steady structure and confidence in all situations. Several moments stood out, including the composed blueline work of Maisy Moir and the positive communication from Grace McLean, both of which helped anchor the group.

“Maisy (Moir) made good decisions

on when to step up or angle players, and Grace (McLean) brought great leadership with her communication and encouragement,” Foley said. “But overall, the entire defensive unit contributed to our success. Each of them had important moments, and they worked together really well.”

Their secondplace roundrobin finish set up a semifinal against the host St. Thomas Panthers. Scarlett Maddock opened the scoring, assisted by Kira Henderson, with 4:18 left in the first period. Natalie Hibbert doubled the lead in the final minute of the frame.

Maddock added her second of the game midway through the second, assisted by Haylee Garrett. Maddock and Garrett then set up Henderson for a 4-0 lead. St. Thomas scored late in the period, their only goal of the game.

In the third, Henderson scored unassisted, followed by Hibbert less than a minute later, assisted by Avery Juliao. With one second remaining, Blair Foley added the final tally in a 7–1 victory.

Although the Rock fell just short in a tight goldmedal game against the Sarnia Lady Sting, taking them into overtime, Foley said the silver medal was a major step forward for the group.

“We’ve been talking about being confident in your play and your skating, and this really highlights that,” he said. “It brought the team together. We had a little party on Friday to get the parents and team together, which created a fun atmosphere.”

Foley added that earning silver while competing in the U11 B division of the tournament was an important earlyseason accomplishment for the U11 C Girls.

“It showed the girls that when they trust their structure and work hard, they can compete with anyone,” he said. “We just want them to keep learning, keep growing, and play to the best of their ability every time they’re on the ice.”

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U13 B Girls take silver at St. Thomas preseason tourney

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The McKinley Hatchery U13 B Girls St. Marys Rock returned home from the Big Cat Preseason Showdown tournament, held Sept. 18-20 in St. Thomas, with the silver medals hanging off their necks.

Head coach Dave Blake said strong defence was expected of the group heading into the tournament, and they delivered.

"We knew coming into the season the team was going to be very strong on defence, and this weekend only confirmed that thought," Blake told the Independent. "Other teams were kept to the outside and caught on the backcheck all weekend, which helped limit chances against."

The Rock finished their three-game round-robin with two wins and a tie, good for first in their pool. Blake highlighted their second game of the round-robin as a galvanizing moment for the squad.

"We teach a high-paced, aggressive and relentless style of hockey, and we felt that our second game of the tournament against a strong team from Burlington was one of the most positive performances of the weekend. It was our second game of the day on Friday, when the legs get a little tired and teaching this style of play to a lot of new players can definitely take some time.

"However, the girls played a fantastic game," Blake continued. "You could tell they were starting to buy into this approach and really had a strong forecheck all game long that trapped the other team and allowed them to really control the game from start to finish, leading to a decisive 4-1 win."

Waiting for St. Marys in the semi-final



(PHOTO COURTESY OF BEYOND SNAPSHOTS ACTION PHOTOGRAPHY)

The McKinley Hatchery U13 B Girls St. Marys Rock claimed the silver medal at the Sept. 18-20 Big Cat Preseason Showdown in St. Thomas. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Mya Grose, Jessica Zwambag, Kylie Blake, and Hailey Wilson. In the middle row, from left, are Addison Poetker, Harper Hillman, Alex Seivert, Sam Matheson, Addison Hudson, Emily Chateauvert, Jackie Kittmer, Grace Gallman, Lexie Sammut, and Adelyn Laidlaw. In the back row, from left, are coach Jamie Matheson, head coach Dave Blake, and coach Jessica Chateauvert.

were the host St. Thomas Panthers, and after a slightly sluggish start, the Rock picked up as the contest went along, leading to a 2-0 win to punch their ticket to the finals.

"The semi-final game was a bright and early 8:00 a.m. start on a Sunday morning and, as expected, was a little bit of a slow start," noted Blake. "The girls were able to control the play throughout the major-

ity of the game. A goal by Kylie (Blake) early in the second period let them settle into the game, and an insurance goal by Addison (Hudson) shortly after sealed the deal. Strong defence throughout the game kept chances to a minimum, but when needed, goalie Mya Grose made a couple of key saves on her way to a shutout."

Scoring from all throughout the lineup was another big theme of the weekend.

"We saw a bunch of different girls get their feet wet and get their names on the scoresheet this weekend," Blake said. "A gritty goal by Alex Seivert started the tournament off on a good note, with two goals also coming from Grace Gallman, two from Jess Zwambag, two from Kylie Blake, four from Addison Hudson, and two from Sam Matheson, which really spread the scoring around and made for an offensive attack that was hard to contain throughout the tournament."

Despite being edged out in the gold medal game 2-1 by the Lambeth Lancers, Blake is optimistic for what the future holds for his team.

"The reason we decided to go into a pre-season tournament this season was there are a lot of new faces on the team that have never played together before, and we felt it was important to bring the team together quickly, get everyone to know each other a little better and really focus on that team mentality and approach. Having a successful tournament hopefully brings them together just that much quicker by giving them that sense of belief and that feeling of knowing they can be successful throughout the season."

Blake added the number of new bodies on the team made their successful result even more impressive.

"With all the new faces on the team, we were not really sure what to expect, to be honest, and went into the tournament having had only two ice times before the tournament started," said Blake. "Effort, determination and compete are our overarching motto this season, and I felt they did that very well over the weekend and that it can only be a sign of positive things to come."



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DCVI field hockey team impresses with win, tie at home

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys DCVI field hockey team had two strong showings Sept. 21, resulting in a win over Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) and a tie against St. Anne's.

Coach Bob Ellison said the story of the day was the team settling into their own as a group.

"It was about the players discovering a way to come into their own," noted Ellison. "No matter what their experience level, each player found a way to contribute to the team effort. The fourth-year leaders on the team led, directed, and, most importantly, supported and encouraged those who were less experienced. They were truly a team out there."

Ellison added he saw the largely young team still new to the game gaining more belief in themselves throughout the day.

"Field Hockey has some very unique rules that seem to run contrary to other sports. As a result, players have to attack and defend. They have to move and play in very specific ways. Playing with right-handed sticks only, and only being able to play with that side of the stick, is an example. With 10 out of 17 players brand new to the sport and some of them having just one practice under their belts before being put into the game, on a regular shift, I witnessed incredible growth in their individual skills, positional play and



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Tealya Thistle fires home one of her two goals during the St. Marys DCVI field hockey team's two games Sept. 21. Thistle scored both St. Marys goals as the Salukis defeated SDSS 1-0, before tying St. Anne's 1-1.

their confidence."

Tealya Thistle scored the only goal of the game in the Salukis' 1-0 victory over SDSS in their first game of the day. Thistle then scored DCVI's lone goal in a 1-1 draw against St. Anne's.

According to Ellison, the Salukis showed a much stronger offensive attack.

"All that was asked of each player was to have a positive attitude, put in the effort, and put energy into their play. Each one did exactly that. Trusting in each other and believing in themselves led to their

victory. Last week, the games were decidedly defensive, but (against SDSS and St. Anne's), they created opportunities to go on the attack and, with each offensive effort, their confidence grew, both individually and as a team."

During the two games, Ellison saw numerous players display some great skills and characteristics.

"I can honestly say that each player had their 'magic moment' on the field. Certainly, Tealya Thistle's determination and skill in scoring goals against both Strat-

ford and St. Anne's is a prime example. Watching Cora Weber's quiet leadership in directing and determining the play was amazing. The defensive first-year trio of Mary McCutcheon, Violet Holliday and Eleanor Froud showed both patience and well-timed assertiveness in their play. Paula Black, who, in her first year, is already a dominant force on the field. As I said, each player had their well-deserved moment."

Looking ahead to the rest of the season, Ellison saw the win and the tie as a platform for the team to continue laying a strong foundation for DCVI's field hockey program for years to come.

"I always have the goal of wanting each player to become a better player and for the team to become a better team. I want our leaders to experience and learn to be effective leaders. I want each of them to fall in love with the game, as it is somewhat unique. This year, we are also focusing on being the best teammate that you can be. Just because you are on the team doesn't make you a teammate; it makes you a player."

"Being a teammate takes effort," Ellison continued. "It takes specific action. It takes heart. That is just what this team has. With the team sporting so many new players, we're looking ahead. This season will be what it will be, but this is a varsity sport, and we are building towards a strong and proud future."

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Lincs narrowly avoid disaster against Generals; rebound in Elmira

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Seldom does a team win a game during which they played near-perfect for 40 minutes, and there is almost a referendum on the team coming out of that game.

It takes a truly cataclysmic period to do that.

Unfortunately, that is what the St. Marys Lincolns endured Sept. 25 in the 6-5 white-knuckled win over the Stoney Creek Generals, where, after two periods, St. Marys led 6-1, with shots being 44-7.

While the game took a sharp turn in the third, head coach Jeff Bradley admitted he saw virtually nothing wrong with his team's play during the first two frames.

"I liked everything in the first and second periods," said Bradley. "We did a different approach to our team meeting. We ended up actually doing team video to correct a couple of things. We reviewed defensive zone and neutral zone coverages. I thought there was a lack of communication that was causing us to run around not knowing who had which responsibility.

"I thought we saw immediate change in those areas in the first and second period. We started communicating a bit better. We were physical and right on top of them. Our powerplay was good, and seeing yourself do some things, I think it helps, especially being able to practice it right after. I had zero complaints with our first two periods."

The strong play was kicked off by a line featuring two forwards making their Lincolns' debuts in Campbell Lehto, a 17-year-old Los Angeles, Calif., native who scored 33 goals and 62 points in 41 games with the U16 Epic Sports Academy last year, and Jack Taylor, who posted 12 goals and 27 points in 42 games with the PJHL's Exeter Hawks.

"We wanted to make sure we were setting the tone physically, and I thought starting that line of Campbell (Lehto), Chase (McDougall), and Jack (Taylor) certainly got us on that track," Bradley noted. "We've been searching for each line to have an identity, and those

three players are hungry, they're physical, they have skill, and they are also intelligent. It was a good mix."

Taylor scored his first goal as a Lincoln in his debut, while Oliver Lacko chipped in a pair, and David Heath and James MacGregor also scored. Mikey Pope also finally found his first goal of the season after some tremendous play in his first four games of the year went unrewarded.

"I was really happy for him," said Bradley. "Mikey (Pope) could be the most skilled player we have, and sometimes, those guys lack physicality or a drive, but Mikey is a skilled player who is incredibly physical, works very hard, and just wants to learn and be a better player. Even when he wasn't scoring, he was doing a lot of good things to give himself some chances, and it was nice to see him get one."

Then, the third period hit, and after nothing went wrong for 40 minutes, nothing went right for the Lincolns in the final 20. The Generals scored four unanswered goals to make it a one-goal game, and came within inches of tying it when they hit a post in the dying moments on a point shot that goaltender Kobe Nadalin couldn't see through a maze of bodies.

"It was honestly one of the most embarrassing displays of hockey I've ever been a part of," said Bradley. "I think we should be incredibly embarrassed and ashamed of the way we played. It was definitely something mentally wrong. They just decided they didn't want to play anymore. They thought the game was over and they quit."

Lincs respond with 5-2 win in Elmira

As a result of their disastrous third period, the Lincolns walked into Elmira Sept. 27 with a point to prove, and thankfully, for them, according to assistant coach Brian Dobbin, they proved it.

"It was a good team effort," Dobbin stated. "Everyone showed up ready to play. They were just consistent. They followed the gameplan. They didn't deviate from it. They wanted to play the right way and knew they were up against a very good team, and they just went



about their business, and it never altered from that. We wanted to prove that we could play a full 60 minutes, and the guys really came prepared and ready to play."

One of the most impressive aspects of the Lincolns' performance in Elmira was the shutting down of Brendan Gerber who, aside from scoring on a fluke mis-play of the puck by goaltender Brogan Colquhoun, was wholly neutralized by the Lincs' defence.

Dobbin explained the keys the team outlined for shutting down Gerber, who entered the game with goals in all but one of his first five games.

"It's just about making sure we're good in the neutral zone, making sure there are no turnovers in the neutral zone, and making sure we had tight coverage in the defensive end. With certain players that have a high skill level like (Brendan) Gerber has, you want to make sure you're paying attention and playing the right way, and we did against Gerber. We know the type of player he is, and we just made sure that we were ready and played a good defensive team game against him."

David Heath scored twice, making it three straight games with a goal for the Kingston Frontenacs' 2025 10th-round pick, while McDougall, Tyson Cartier, and Devun Colebrook also chipped in goals.

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St. Marys Pickleball hosts Terry Fox Fundraiser



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)

The St. Marys Pickleball Association (SMPA) hosted a special fundraising day Sept. 27 in support of the Terry Fox Foundation. The day featured several hours of pickleball games involving the many members of all ages of the association, with a potluck at 12:00 noon. The SMPA raised \$600 from the event in support of Terry Fox Day. The SMPA is partnering with the Stratford Pickleball Association for another fundraiser for Terry Fox Foundation Oct. 4.

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(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Jacob Hahn catches an incoming pitch during a Canadian Tire U13 WOBA Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Zoe Smith swings and records a hit during a Wildwood Care Centre U15 HPFL Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Dan Dittmer rockets a pitch towards the plate during a Red Rock Construction U18 WOBA Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Kyla Graham steps into a long-range shot on target during a U15 Girls Tier Three St. Marys Storm game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Logan Oke blasts a shot on goal from just outside the box during a U18 Boys Tier Three St. Marys Storm game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Libby McCurdy fires a shot on net from just inside the box during a U18 Girls Tier One St. Marys Storm game.

COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER:

How Canadian Fall Decor Saved My Mom's Sanity—and Made Me Happily Lazy

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

Seasonal decorating in Canada is seriously catching. My mom lived with us here for a year and got totally hooked on the whole concept. When she moved back to Ukraine, she took this habit right along with her. Now, whenever the news gets scary or the situation gets heavy, she doesn't panic—she goes on a wild decorating spree across her porch and living room.

She swears this Canadian tradition is better than any therapy. While you're busy moving pumpkins around, fixing fake leaves, and arranging candles, your brain completely turns off. You get a much-needed break from overthinking everything. I'm just happy she found such a simple, beautiful way to slow down her mind, distract herself, and take a deep breath.

And right now, that mental break is more precious than ever. The situation back home in Ukraine is still so tense, with regular drone and missile attacks targeting cities, infrastructure, and everyday life. Whenever the news turns particularly heavy, it's terrifying to watch from afar. That is why I'm so relieved my mom found this little sanctuary in decorating—because when the world outside feels completely unpredictable, focusing on your immediate space is sometimes the only way to stay sane and grounded.

As for me, fall is mostly an official excuse to spy on my neighbors. My absolute favorite thing to do right now is walk around the neighborhood on a crisp afternoon, stare at everyone's front yards, and shamelessly steal their best decorating ideas.

I'm definitely at a point in my life where I love looking at fancy fall porches, but I'm far too lazy to actually build one myself. My motivation to drag heavy hay bales, tie up cornstalks, and line up fifty different gourds is at a solid absolute zero. Two solid pumpkins plopped on the front step and a couple of potted mums—that is where my seasonal enthusiasm begins and ends.

While I keep things strictly low-maintenance outside, I'm trying to bring that same easy lifestyle into the kitchen. My big fall mission right now is finding a good, reliable crock pot, because nothing feels more comforting



(PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALONA VASYLIEVA)

When the world gets heavy, sometimes two pumpkins and a walk around the block are the only therapy you need.

than coming home to a warm meal that cooked itself while you were out.

Growing up in Ukraine, fall was never about buying decorative pumpkins. Fall meant massive canning marathons. As a kid, I actually loved helping my mom with this whole ritual. There was something so satisfying about washing mountains of fresh veggies, sterilizing clean glass jars, and filling up the pantry with colorful preserves to get us through the long winter ahead.

But looking back at those days, I suddenly realized something that makes me pause: I don't remember my grandmother ever sitting down on the porch just to admire the colorful leaves or think about decorating the yard. Life for her generation was all about hard physical labor, practicality, and sheer survival. Everything revolved around harvesting, preserving, and prepping for

the cold months ahead.

My grandmother always used to say that she only felt truly happy and satisfied when she was completely exhausted from physical work. In her mind, rest wasn't just a natural part of life—it was something you had to earn by working yourself to the bone first.

It makes me a little sad to think about that now, knowing how much energy her generation spent just trying to keep going. But it also makes me deeply appreciate life here. In Canada, I see retired neighbors going for slow, peaceful morning walks, carefully picking out bright mums for their steps, and simply enjoying their days without feeling a shred of guilt. It turns out you don't have to work yourself to death just to earn the right to sit back and enjoy a beautiful autumn afternoon.

Straight From The Shelves

By Laura McAsh, St. Marys Public Library

You voted and Heather Marshall's "Liberty Street" is Perth County Reads' 2026 title! This historical novel follows Emily, an editorial assistant at Chatelaine in Toronto, as she goes undercover at a notorious women's prison in 1961. It also follows Rachel, a small-town cemetery worker in 1996 Huron County who becomes involved with the mystery of a woman buried in a prison uniform in an unmarked grave.

Step into one of the real-life buildings that inspired this fictional story with "BOOKED: Behind Bars at the Huron Historic Gaol." This free tour, covering both the Historic Gaol and the Huron County Museum, is on October 17 at 2 p.m. in Goderich. For more information and to register for this exciting opportunity to get up close to local history, visit tinyurl.com/PC-Reads-Gaol-Tour.

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Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett • 519.272.5742 • jtsquote@gmail.com

Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel's Tree Service. For contact call 519.272.5742 or email jtsquote@gmail.com



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Sincerely, The Arborist

HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Jack and Flossie Sgariglia's Trip to Italy

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

When Attilio (Jack) Sgariglia and Florence (Flossie) Switzer were married in June 1924, their first home was an apartment above Jack's grocery store on the north side of Queen near Water Street. Flossie became an active partner in Jack's business and was an asset. She had previous experience working as a clerk in a local dry goods store, White & May, and probably knew all the grocery store customers by name. The business prospered. Jack's weekly advertisement in the St. Marys Journal Argus promoted his stock of seasonal fruits and vegetables as well as regular groceries. He had a special oven behind the store where he roasted peanuts and made popcorn. He also sold ice cream. These treats were especially popular with children. The business was sufficiently successful that, three years after they were married, Jack and Flossie planned a trip to Europe.

The trip took place in the summer of 1927, but not until after a major event in St. Marys. In honour of Canada's Jubilee Year – the 60th anniversary of Confederation – the town held an Old Boys (and Old Girls) Reunion – a Homecoming. The event took place from Wednesday, July 28, to Sunday, July 31, and included parades, a street dance, tours of new parks, including Cadzow's playground and brand-new swimming pool, and many personal reunions with old friends. Flossie would never miss such a social occasion, and, for Jack, the event was good for business.

On their honeymoon in 1924, Flossie and Jack had cruised down the St. Lawrence and enjoyed seeing the Thousand Islands. But a trip to Europe was a much greater adventure. In 1927, overseas travel was not uncommon. After all, many young St. Marys men had served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War I. Wealthy people, such as Mina Hutton McKay, travelled frequently and shipped home paintings, furniture, fine china – souvenirs of their travels. Flossie as a young girl growing up on the farm, might have dreamed of touring Europe. When she and Jack got the chance to do so, she enjoyed it all enormously. The Sgariglias couldn't afford expensive souvenirs, but Flossie had a flair for writing entertaining and chatty descriptions of her experiences. During the three months that they were away, she sent regular dispatches back to the Journal Argus. Because this newspaper is preserved in the R. Lorne Eedy Archives at the St. Marys Museum, Flossie's impressions of her trip can be read today.

The Sgariglias left St. Marys on August 11 and arrived at Union Station in Toronto. The landmark beaux-arts building had been officially opened only five days earlier by Edward, Prince of Wales. In fact, August 11 was the first day that the station was used for regular passenger trains. Flossie wrote: "It is a large and very beautiful new station, but we found it was quite difficult finding our way around as there are so many corridors and ways,



(PHOTO COURTESY OF SGARIGLIA DONATION, R. LORNE EEDY ARCHIVES, ST. MARYS MUSEUM)

Jack Sgariglia in his fruit and grocery store, the west half of 99 Queen Street East. Note the tables at the back for his small ice cream parlour and the old-fashioned cash register on the right.

even with the arrows pointing in different directions." They did manage to catch the train to Montreal where they boarded the R.M.S. Antonia, a Cunard ocean liner, and had a very pleasant Atlantic crossing. They disembarked at Cherbourg, France, on August 21. Flossie remarked that the fortifications around the harbour bore marks of shell damage from the war. They took a fast train to Paris, arriving at 11 p.m. – "We kept our heads going from side to side, hoping not to miss anything." This stop in Paris was brief, just long enough to check into a hotel and get some sleep. At 5:30 a.m., August 22, they were on another train bound for Modane on the border between France and Italy. Their first stop in Italy was Turin where they spent August 23 sightseeing before catching an overnight train across Italy to Ancona on the Adriatic coast. They then took a local train north to Porto S. Elpidio.

How did Jack feel about his first trip home since 1910? Flossie wrote that when they changed trains at Ancona, at the bottom of the mountains, they were too excited to take notes. However, Flossie's description of reaching Porto S. Elpidio is conventional: "We arrived here at 9:40 a.m. and found everybody well." Further descriptions get better: "Mr. Sgariglia's father lives up a mountain, three-quarters of a mile, and the only way is by walking. We can't keep near up to the bare-footed girls and women. Some are 77 years old and carry the large full water pots on their heads. We have the sea on the south and the east side of the house just below the mountain, and it is wonderful to see the boats out fishing. The sun rising or the moon on the water is past describing. And the sun setting – well, we never saw such colours and shapes as the clouds take here."

Because she was a farm girl, Flossie was interested in what she saw growing and compared the field crops to those in

Ontario. "Wheat and corn are the main grains grown. The wheat is planted in October and harvested in June. The corn is planted in the last of March or the first of April and harvested generally in August, but this year in July because it has been so dry and the sun so hot. When we arrived, they had it all hulled." She particularly noticed fruits and vegetables because she and Jack sold this produce in their store. "The lemon trees are all the time blossoming and bearing. They have a high brick wall around the lemon trees as a protection in the colder weather. The olive tree, for which Italy is noted, is everywhere. The olives will be picked in November." She admired the grapes and the varieties of tomatoes, but one other crop was all too familiar: "The potatoes are planted in March and picked up, the early ones in May and the later ones in June. So, I got out of the job of picking potatoes, as it wasn't my favourite when I was on the farm."

Flossie wrote very little about how she

got along with her in-laws. There must have been some challenges. They didn't speak English and she would have understood only the most basic Italian. But Jack was on hand to translate when necessary. He would want his family to like Flossie and Flossie to like his family. Flossie reported: "Everyone is very sociable here and try very hard to make one feel at ease. You are not allowed to get out of any home without the social drink of wine." Using Porto S. Elpidio as their base, Jack and Flossie took side trips to see all the tourist attractions in Rome and then in Venice. Of course, Flossie loved the canals, the gondolas and "the dexterity of the gondoliers who single-handed manage their 30-foot boats with wondrous ease."

The Sgariglias spent two months in Italy, but their holiday had to come to an end. They left Porto S. Elpidio on October 24 and took the train trip back the way they had come – Turin to Modane and on to Paris. This time, they stayed two days to be tourists, visiting places such as the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower. They couldn't speak French and found everything expensive. Flossie suspected it would have been the same in Italy if Jack had not been able to speak the language. They sailed on October 29 from Cherbourg on the R.M.S. Ascania. After "a rather rough passage," they landed in Montreal on November 9. They had been away for three full months.

The Journal Argus asked Jack how he found his native country. Jack replied that he would like to live there if he was well-off, but he would not care to go back to try to make a living. When questioned about the controversial prime minister, Benito Mussolini, Jack said that he seemed to be good for Italy. His government had restored order and stability – a relief for many from the political chaos that had followed the war. (He had a very different opinion a decade later.) Jack and Flossie agreed that, although they had enjoyed the trip very much, they were glad to be back in their hometown again. It was time to return to their grocery store and to new family responsibilities.

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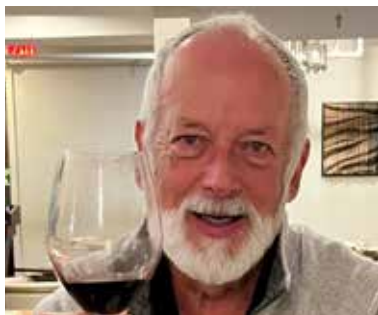
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: “Forest bathing” is a great experience, but not what you think



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

One key difference between travelling as a tourist, and travelling as a travel journalist, is that as a tourist, you get to choose your own activities. As a travel journalist, I do get to consult with my hosts, but usually the itinerary will include a number of destinations or activities that are not my idea.

And that's how we ended up “forest bathing.”

When I tell friends that we went “forest bathing,” I'm usually met with a combination of bafflement and false assumptions. Many of which, I must confess, we shared before we headed out on this newest adventure.

We were staying at Le Baluchon Eco-Resort, a terrific getaway in the Mauricie region of Québec. We were hosted by “Québecauthentique,” the regional tourism association that represents Mauricie and the neighbouring region of Lanaudière.

I will write more about Le Baluchon in a future feature because this is a hidden gem, easily accessible from southern Ontario,

and a fabulous destination for a couples' getaway or a family holiday.

But for this week... back to the forest.

Our “forest bathing” guide began our experience by noting all of the misconceptions the term engenders.

There is no actual “bathing.” You don't get wet. You don't wear a bathing suit. You don't need a towel.

Instead, forest bathing is a rough – and admittedly confusing – translation of a Japanese term, “Shinrin-yoku”, which can also mean “forest therapy.”

The concept is participants take time to immerse ourselves in the atmosphere of the forest. Guides will suggest activities that will help us to focus on our immediate surroundings, thus leaving stresses of the outside world behind, at least for an hour or two.

“Sure,” I thought, with considerable skepticism. As is not uncommon, I was wrong. It was a wonderful experience.

The first bit of our slow stroll along a river and through the woods took us across a wooden bridge that spans the Rivière du Loup (an ancient name for the local waterway, unrelated to the Québec city of the same name). Our guide invited us to cross the river, one at a time, taking all the time we wanted to take in the view.

That was a good hint of what was to come. Forest bathing is anything but rushed. And honestly, as I stood in the middle of the bridge, gazing at the river, I

could already feel a sense of relaxation.

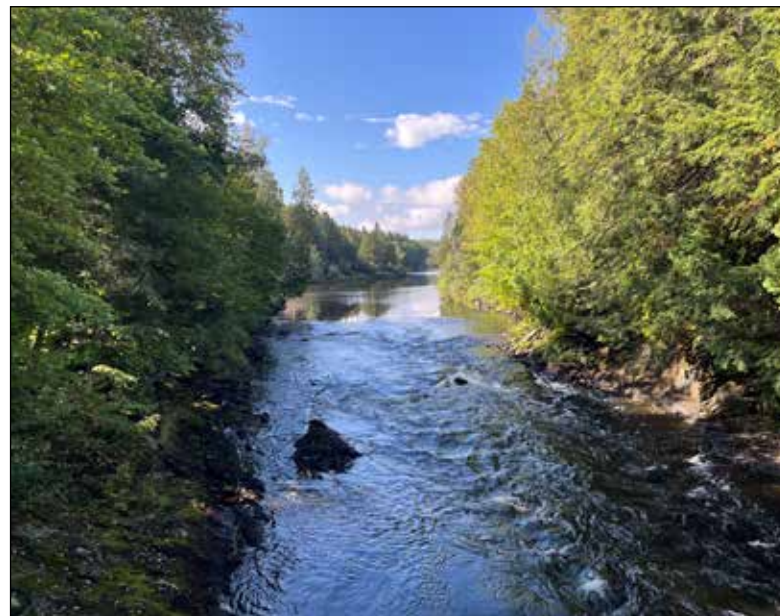
We then were directed through a series of voluntary exercises. They're voluntary, because being forced to do something would be antithetical to the purpose of the whole thing, right? But we did them all.

We walked slowly down a path in the forest simply observing the trees, plants, and occasional birds around us. Then our guide stopped, produced some padded mats, and invited us to sit on rocks beside the river and, simply, be. It was incredibly peaceful.

That lasted a while, and then we resumed our stroll. A few minutes on, she reached into her back pack and pulled out magnifying glasses. That exercise involved looking closely at whatever we chose to observe: flowers, leaves, insects, anything that drew our attention.

I have to tell you, you cannot be focused on a tiny green spider, almost invisible to the naked eye, as it explores a flower, and still think about your job, your to-do list, or anything else. You are truly immersed in the moment. I could have carried on with this exercise for a long time, flower to flower, bug to bug. It was lovely.

After our guide collected the magnifiers she produced blindfolds. We took turns – my partner was blindfolded, and I led her to touch plants, even a clump of soil. Then she led me on the same adventure, and the impact of being denied sight while experiencing sound, touch, and



A view of the Rivière du Loup.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

smell was very powerful.

Finally, we were invited to collect something – a flower, a twig, a pebble, anything that caught our attention – and then we sat on logs and had a form of tea ceremony, during which we shared our reactions to the experience.

I know – this may sound very airy-fairy. But we found it to be a clearly practical way to de-stress.

Turns out, there are plenty of credible medical and psychological studies that attribute significant benefits to forest bathing. They have found that the experience can help relieve high blood pressure, heart conditions, skin conditions and asthma. There is no doubt that it alleviates stress.

The technique was developed in Japan in the 1980s and is

widely practiced there, today. And it is more common in Canada than I had imagined. As just one example, the Ontario Parks website has a section on forest bathing.

If you think this is something you could do on your own, without a guide, you are probably right. But I believe a guided experience, like ours at le Baluchon, is better – because your guide has the experience and the means to draw you away from your own daily concerns, and give you an hour or two of stress-free peace. What a gift!

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.



Forest bathing is essentially a directed stroll through nature... and a terrific stress reliever.



Our guide, seated beside the Rivière du Loup as it passes through the le Baluchon Eco-Resort.



Participants in forest bathing are encouraged to focus on the details of the natural setting.

RURAL REFRESH: Finding Routine



JACLYN TURPIN

Independent Columnist

It likely comes as no surprise that when we have a predictable routine we are often met with lower stress. Our bodies and minds have less surprises for what to expect.

For some, the sadness of summer ending brings with it some more predictability and a greater sense of structure and sequencing in time. Our minds are forev-

er making decisions. Do I need groceries? When can I get them? What meals do I need to make? Will my kids eat that? You know! All these decisions are really exhausting. I wish I had a better cure for that! But what I will offer is that routine can take some of these decisions out of the equation. If you are someone that eats the same meals on a cycle and buys groceries every Saturday morning you know what I am talking about.

Routine can exist in the schedules we hold. This can't be the first time you have heard of the suggestion to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. This too if an example of bringing our biology into the equation and using our internal clock to help cue our body for what is about to happen (i.e. starting the day or quieting down at the end

of the day). In my practice, I talk a lot with clients about coping skills and nervous system regulation or what others might refer to as "winding down". Anything from deep breathing to toe tapping to 80s easy listening.

Think of when you get nervous. What is often the situation? For lots of people it is the unpredictability of what is coming. Kids headed back to school and aren't sure who is in their class. We start a new job or end one. We might be nervous because we are questioning what the future will look like or how things might unfold. It puts our nervous system into a position where we are on edge. Of course we can't bring routine into every part of our lives. For most, we live with a degree of uncertainty every day.

Outside of seeking profession-

al supports, there are things we can do day to day to find routine, feel ease in scheduling, and decrease the decision fatigue.

- Build rituals into your transitions, such as listening to a podcast on the way home from work or brushing your teeth first thing in the morning. It doesn't have to be big - just a cue that there is something else to follow.

- Eating meals in a cycle. Do you follow a routine of Taco Tuesdays? That is predictability! On Tuesdays, you take the decision out of dinner. Perhaps you can think of other meals for other days of the week or cycle through 8-10 of the same meals.

- Waking up within a window of time. There is no perfect test here, but our bodies often meet us in the rhythm. If you already do this, you get it! People who wake up at 6:00 every morning

don't think it sounds crazy because they always do it and their body has created that routine. It is the switch from 10 a.m. to 6 a.m. that is really tough because that is not consistent with what our bodies are expecting.

Building a routine can help reduce stress with a sense of stability in what to expect. Nervous system regulation can be a big outcome of routine. Things can change and shift. Find what works for you. There is nothing perfect about it, but you might just see that finding predictability is a positive.

Jaclyn Turpin, Rural Refresh Counselling. Jaclyn encourages people to book appointments ahead, schedule in supports, and build a routine of predictability in tending to your mental health.

UNDERSTANDING GEN Z: Color



MEREDITH A. STOKES

Independent Columnist

A maple leaf. Hockey. Tim Hortons. Geese. Beavers. Inukshuks. What do all of these things have in common?

Follow up question: what's missing from the list?

Really, there are several ways to answer that question. I wasn't about to take up three pages with Canadian things. However, I'm willing to bet that you aren't thinking what I am, simply because a few too many people turned a blind eye. What is this problem I speak of? In fact, it's that you didn't even notice that I spelled the title of this column wrong.

Color. Lacking a U. Lacking the letter that labels us as Canadian. So much of what we read now - in the news, books, reci-

pes, shopping, and at work - is written in American English, and as a result we've become completely accustomed to the absence in our daily life.

Of course, "colour" isn't the only word we have with the added U. Favour, labour, honour, and neighbour are only a few examples. It wasn't until very recently that I discovered "glamour" is supposed to have a U as well.

The fact is that if I submitted this article to my teacher, they would almost certainly mark it as right. They would skim right over the misspelled word. I'm

not sure if this is because they feel bad considering it wrong or if they genuinely don't recognise it. Either way, the result is that most children (and some adults) don't know the difference between saviour and savior.

What am I getting at here? Well, basically, I'm asking the world, why? We all go out of our way to correct kindergartners when they finish the song with zee instead of zed, or call a goal a "score." "Colour" is just as much a part of our Canadian heritage, yet still we choose to overlook it.

Am I being dramatic? Is it pet-

ty to throw up a fuss over one little letter? Certainly no less petty than bringing an "Is the net loose?" sign to every game the rest of the Western Conference finals series (recall the 23/24 season, Lincolns vs London Nationals. As the saying goes, if you know you know). The point is, Canadians freak out over smaller things, usually because of a certain ice sport.

So come on, Canada! Maybe it is just a letter, but it's still ours. Let's put "favourite" next to Celsius and litres! Let's be proud of our quirks, and keep our beautiful Canadian culture alive.

FROM THE GARDEN: Heighten concern



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

Gardeners inevitably face challenges, from aggressive weeds and raiding rodents to severe rain events and invasive species. As a long-time avid gardener, I am deeply concerned about the invasive plants, diseases and insects entering our area. According to the Ontario

government, an invasive species is one that has spread beyond its native habitat and threatens our environment, economy and/or society by disrupting local ecosystems.

Recent news reports confirm that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has officially detected the spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) in Windsor. Although the adult insect is visually striking, it could devastate local horticulture and agriculture if it becomes established. It feeds on more than one hundred tree and plant species; however, significant feeding damage has so far been observed only on grapes.

Spotted lanternfly adults are approximately 2.5cm in length with greyish-pink forewings

featuring black spots and striking bright red underwings with black spots. The nymphs' early stage is black and white, then later develops red patches alongside black and white. In late summer, the adults lay masses of eggs. These egg masses look like smooth, greyish-brown mud smears or rows of covered seed-like formations on the barks of trees. They can also be found on trailers, vehicles, and outdoor furniture. These egg masses can survive winter temperatures and hatch in the spring.

Why the spotted lanternfly is a threat? The damage to our agriculture could be devastating. It feeds aggressively on commercial crops, particularly destroying grapevines in vineyards and impacting apple and stone fruit

orchards. As it feeds, it excretes a sugary waste called honeydew that coats plants and fosters black sooty mold, blocking sunlight for photosynthesis and thus, reducing plant health.

How it spreads? The spotted lanternfly are hitchhikers, with the adults and egg masses attaching themselves to various vehicles and equipment. Unknowingly, humans assist in the spread of the spotted lanternfly on trucks, cars, trailers, cargo containers, camping gear, outdoor equipment, patio furniture and through the movement of plants and plant materials, including nursery plants and firewood. That is why it is important to check vehicles and equipment for the egg masses or the insect itself if you are travelling to infested ar-

reas, especially the United States. Inspect items stored outside for egg masses, including your vehicle and patio furniture. Look closely at things like tarps, yard and garden items and sports equipment. Check your yard as well, as the spotted lanternfly could be on your trees and plant containers.

Report a spotted lanternfly sighting. If you think you have seen the spotted lanternfly or its egg masses, take a photo or video, catch the insect or scrape the egg masses and put it into a sealable container and report it to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/plant-health/invasive-pests-and-plants/insects/spotted-lanternfly>

Riddles

- What has four legs and a back but can't walk?
A chair!
- I'm a mammal with a long trunk. What am I?
An elephant!
- What is black and white and read all over?
A newspaper!
- I'm tall when I'm young, and I'm short when I'm old. What am I?
A candle!
- I can sizzle like bacon, I am made with an egg, and I have plenty of backbone but lack a good leg. What am I?
A snake!
- I fly without wings, I cry without eyes. Whenever I go, darkness flies. What am I?
A cloud!
- I have stripes, but I'm not a barber. I run fast, but I'm not a car. What am I?
A zebra!
- I am an odd number. Take away a letter, and I become even. What number am I?
Seven (remove the 's')!
- I can live in water or on land. I have a shell, but I am not a car; I move very slowly, but I carry my home on my back. What am I?
A turtle!

- Word Search -



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SEPTEMBER NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

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- Equal Earth map
Alice Weidel
Trade war
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AI warnings
Canada and EU
Ed Sheeran
Macklemore
Trump media ban
Greenland deal
Meta Muse
No hurricanes



The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK

Why did the golfer bring an extra pair of pants?



In case he got a hole in one!

Wylde William Carr (9)

Hey Kids... Every Riddle Kid that appears in the paper gets a FREE MILKSHAKE at the Sunset Diner!

St. Marys Veterinary Clinic is pleased to be the sponsor of the

PET OF THE WEEK



On September 30, we honour survivors, remember those who never returned home, and reflect on the importance of truth, reconciliation, and compassion. As you spend time with loved ones—including your pets—our team wishes you a safe and peaceful day.



BAILEY

Our Pet of the Week is five-year-old Bailey. She is a Bernedoodle who lives with her family, the Goughs. Bailey gets showered with treats and affection. She enjoys camping and likes to retrieve her frisbee when it's thrown out into the water.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent



Thorndale Fall Fair – tractors, tailgates and tunes and family fun



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

'Tractors, Tailgates & Tunes', the theme of this years fair, displayed at the home of Teresa & Tim Walker, of Thorndale.

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The weather couldn't have been better last weekend for the 169th Thorndale Fall Fair. With its theme of 'tractors, tailgates, and tunes', thousands of people came out to enjoy all the many activities and exhibits.

The Thorndale Fall Fair officially opened Friday evening, with MC Norma Poel welcoming attendees and introducing the dignitaries and program. Ian Ferguson, past president of the Thorndale

Agricultural Society, delivered the opening address, followed by remarks from Agricultural Society president Patrick Duffin, Thames Centre Deputy Mayor Michelle Smibert, and Homecraft president Carolyn teBokkel. Each praised Thorndale's dedicated volunteers, strong agricultural roots, and vibrant community spirit.

Friday evening also featured awards recognizing community spirit, years of service, and contributions to Thorndale. School Fair champions and Field Crops award winners were announced, along



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Pictured is the 2026 Thorndale Fair Ambassador, Samantha Julich of Thorndale.

with Homecraft champion Marylou Bontje and runner-up Sue Major, both from the Thorndale area. Samantha Julich of Thorndale was named the 2026-27 Thorndale Ambassador. She is a fourth-year Political Science student at King's University. The evening concluded with the popular Quilt & Pie auction. Lively bidding on a handmade quilt generously donated by Vera VandenNieuwelaar and the Homecraft Division's winning pies raised more than \$9,000 for the Thorndale Agricultural Society.

The rest of the weekend offered activi-

ties for all ages, including midway rides, live entertainment, agricultural exhibits, livestock shows, children foot and snowmobile races, Farm Olympics, ending with the popular demolition derby on Sunday afternoon.

From its modest beginning of the early years to today's robust fun community event enjoyed by families of the municipality and beyond, maintains its valued agricultural roots and rural family community spirit.

Why participate in the upcoming election

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The upcoming municipal election is an important opportunity for residents and property owners of Thames Centre to have a direct say in the future of their community. Municipal governments make decisions that affect our daily lives, including roads, parks, recreation programs, community services, development, and local taxes. By voting, residents help choose the leaders who will make these decisions on behalf of the community.

Voting is both a right and a civic responsibility. Many people around the world do not have the opportunity to freely choose their local representatives. In Canada, we are fortunate to live in a democracy where every eligible voter can make their voice heard. When residents participate in elections, council decisions are more reflective of the community's needs, priorities, and values.

The Municipality of Thames Centre has made voting more accessible by offering online and telephone voting for the 2026 Municipal Election, allowing eligible

voters to cast their ballots conveniently from almost anywhere. Voting will be available from 19 October to 26 October 2026. <https://www.thamescentre.on.ca/council-and-administration/2026-municipal-election/>

Whether your concerns are growth and development, infrastructure, public services, or the overall direction of Thames Centre, your vote matters. A strong voter turnout helps strengthen local democracy and ensures that elected officials have a clear mandate from the people they serve. By taking a few minutes to vote, you con-

tribute to building a stronger and more representative community for everyone. In this election, make your voice count. Participate, vote, and help shape the future of Thames Centre.

A list of the candidates and their contact information can be found at <https://www.thamescentre.on.ca/council-and-administration/2026-municipal-election/candidate-information/>. Also, there will be a 'All Candidates Night' on Monday, October 5th, 7pm at the Lions Senior Active Living Centre, 2066 Dorchester Road, Dorchester.

OBITUARY

Hiuser



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the peaceful passing of Marie (Doyle) Hiuser, age 94, of St Marys, at Hillside Manor on September 20, 2026. Predeceased by her husbands, Leo Doyle and Len Hiuser, her son Jerrie, her son-in-Law Lawrence Titus, and her 7 brothers.

Survived by her 2 sisters, Shirley Heisler and Lynda Hall, her children, Jim Doyle (Martusha), Jean Andrews (Fred), Michael John Doyle (Peggy), Joe Doyle, Jaye Titus, Jody Doyle (Sue) and George Levitt.

Also survived by her Grandchildren and their families Jamie, Kate, Robyn, Brandon, Darren, Bonnie, Patrick, Jason, Josh, SammyJo, Calvin, Adam, Cait, Jenn, Greg and Deb and her many Great Grandchildren as well as her Great, Great Grandchildren.

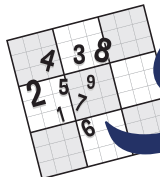
Her family would like to express their thanks to the wonderful staff at Hillside Manor for taking such great care of Mom for the past 2 years.

Marie loved her family. She will be missed by many family members, friends and neighbours.

A private family burial will take place at 12:00 at Vining Cemetery, 22157 Purple Hill Road, Concession 5, Lot18/19, West Nissouri Township, and family and friends are invited to celebrate Marie's life at 156 Glass Street, St Marys on Saturday, October 10th, 2026 from 1-4 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her memory to Heart & Stroke Foundation

Arrangements entrusted to W.G. Young Funeral Home, 430 Huron St. Stratford. www.wgfuneralhome.com



Sudoku

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Solutions on pg. 35

THANK YOU

Ballantyne

The family of Mabel Ballantyne wish to express their sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone for their support and acts of kindness following her passing. Thank you to everyone that attended the Celebration of Life, the Habermehl family for musical entertainment and Reverend Jeff Lackie for presenting the family tribute. For the many cards, shared memories, tributes and memorial donations our heartfelt thanks to all.

Barry, Dale, Brenda and families

THANK YOU

Brandt

Thanks to all who attended our recent birthday celebrations.

It was a humbling and overwhelming experience and it will not be forgotten.

In Gratitude

Clair and Mary Brandt



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St. Marys Independent



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Dolly Parton Day held at Kingsway Lodge



(ROB EDNEY PHOTO)

Kingsway Lodge celebrated Dolly Parton Day with a lively performance from the aptly named trio, "The 9 to 5 band". Aarthi Aruliah, Leslie Edney and Jodi Foster presented Parton classics *Jolene*, *9 to 5*, and *I Will Always Love You* for an audience that knew all the words. The trio often performs at The World's Coolest Tribute Shows under the name "The Mom Band", with other moms rounding out the band. Missy Little organized the very special day at Kingsway Lodge to celebrate the music and life of a true icon and humanitarian.

Fall Scrapathon held at St. Marys Friendship Centre



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTO)

The fall scrapathon was held at the Friendship Centre on Saturday, Sept 26. 105 ladies were registered for this event. Fun, food and friendship were enjoyed by all. The next spring scrapathon will be held on Saturday, April 24, 2027. Proceeds from these events support the St. Marys Senior Services. Left to right are the volunteers that made this event worth attending: Laura Good, Carol Ledgley, Joan Doupe, Colleen Bryant, Anita Landon & Ruth Robinson

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Sept 23 - Roy Bissonette, Lucan	\$50.00
Sept 24 - Ryan Seaton, Woodstock	\$50.00
Sept 25 - Michelle & Craig Campbell, Embro	\$50.00
Sept 26 - Ken Smale, St. Marys	\$200.00

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THE WEEK AHEAD

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PRC & Friendship Centre events – See the Stonetown Crier on Page 5

St. Marys Public Library events – See Page 26

FRIDAY, OCT 2

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Strathroy Rockets at the PRC – 7:30 p.m.
- Jaron Camp vinyl release show at Lucid Musings Photography – 7:30 p.m., \$25 advance, \$30 at the door

SATURDAY, OCT 3

- St. Marys Farmers Market at Milt Dunnell Field - 8 a.m. to Noon, Thanksgiving prep
- McCully's Hill Farm Fall Harvest Festival – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Firefighter visit at Your Independent Grocer – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- George & Janet Quinn's birthday & anniversary celebration at St. James Lodge – 1-4 p.m.
- Family concert & fundraiser for the Community Commons at the PRC – 1:30-3:30 p.m.
- Royal Canadian Legion all turkey meat draw – 5 p.m.
- Municipal candidates question & answer session at the PRC – 6-9 p.m.
- Jaron Camp vinyl release show at Lucid Musings Photography – 7:30 p.m., \$25 advance, \$30 at the door

SUNDAY, OCT 4

- McCully's Hill Farm Fall Harvest Festival – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- St. Marys Legion bingo – Doors open 11:30 a.m., Early bird 12:45 p.m., Game time 1-4 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Komoka Kings at Komoka Wellness Centre – 4:45 p.m.

MONDAY, OCT 5

- Darrell “Darry” Baechler celebration of life at the Goderich Legion – 1-4 p.m.
- Community Dinner at St. Marys United Church – 5 p.m., Sponsored by Pickleball Association
- Thorndale Lions Club Thanksgiving Bingo & 50/50 at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre – 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCT 6

- St. Marys Legion Buddy Check coffee at the Legion – 10 a.m. to Noon
- St. Marys Legion cribbage – 7 p.m. sharp

WEDNESDAY, OCT 7

- Kingsway Lodge, Fairhill Lounge come and shop fall & winter clothing – 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs LaSalle Vipers at Vollmer Culture & Rec Complex – 7 p.m.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Opal
2. Richard Pryor
3. Fernando Mendoza
4. Peace Tower
5. 1974
6. Tuberculosis
7. Mr. Coffee
8. Green
9. Groaler or a pizzly bear
10. BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

Looking Back

AMY CUBBERLEY

Independent Columnist



Bun bedded wieners

25 years ago (2001)

The St. Marys Golf and Country Club has planned a special event to help victims of the September 11 terrorist attack in the US. A “Help Heal America” fundraiser is being held this Friday. Golf and Country Club co-owner Sharon Staffen came up with the idea with employees Marie Bickell and Lorna Arnold. A minimum \$35 donation entitles golfers to 18 holes and a sausage on a bun with a Coke at lunch.

Perth County’s twelfth annual Take Back the Night March, originally scheduled for tomorrow night in St. Marys, has been revised to allow for public discussion about the event and women’s issues. Organizers were told that the march was unpopular and that there may be St. Marys citizens on the street to protest the march.

50 years ago (1976)

For those interested, an artist’s conception plus a site plan of the proposed new James Street South Arena and Community Hall have now been pinned to the main corridor walls at Town Hall.

An additional half-time teacher will be hired at St. Marys Central School. A proposal that Perth County Board of Education transfer the two kindergarten classes from St. Marys Central to Downie Central was not adopted by the Board. Phew, what a bomb that would have set off!

75 years ago (1951)

The corn picking season is in the offing. We hope it will not produce the series of maiming accidents to corn picker operators which occurred last year.

Although several towns and cities in Ontario are having trouble annexing surrounding township lands to provide room for more housing, etc. St. Marys has no such problem. This town’s area, set seventy years ago, is ample for a city the size of Stratford.

At the Collegiate field on Friday, hot dogs at 15 cents each were moving rather slowly, but when it was announced over the PA system during mid-afternoon that the dogs had been reduced to 10 cents the grandstand was almost left bare in a rush for the remaining bun bedded wieners.

100 years ago (1926)

Again, for the second year, the weather played havoc with the attendance at the South Perth Agricultural Society’s fair on Thursday and Friday. Patronage was decidedly good taking into account the weather.

Mampre Shirinian arrived in St. Marys on Monday from Georgetown. He will make his home with Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Smith and attend Central School. This fine boy is only one of the thousands of fatherless, motherless, homeless Armenian children that the people of St. Marys have helped to rescue by their support of the splendid piece of Christian work that is being done at the farm-home for Armenian boys in Georgetown. Get acquainted with Mampre. He should meet with much kindness and friendliness.

Just Extended! Lucky You.

GUYS AND DOLLS

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