

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1329

Thursday, September 3, 2026

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THE BURGINS AGAINST THE WORLD!

(PHOTO COURTESY OF JILL BURGIN)

Aileen and Harold Burgin arrive at Daegu Stadium in Daegu, South Korea, for the World Masters Athletics Track and Field Championship, hosted Aug. 22 to Sept. 3. See the full story on page 20.

St. Marys shifts economic development focus toward tourism under new action plan

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

St. Marys will put a greater emphasis on attracting visitors and promoting events as an economic driver under a new tourism action plan approved by town council Aug. 25.

The Tourism Action Plan, which runs from September 2026 through December 2027, re-focuses staff time and resources within the town's tourism and economic development portfolio on visitor attraction, tourism mar-

keting, events and partnerships intended to increase traffic to local businesses. Director of culture, tourism and engagement Amy Cubberley told council the plan brings together recommendations made by council in June, priorities from the town's 2024 Tourism Marketing Strategy and council's 2026 strategic priorities.

"The plan really focuses on making tourism the primary focus of economic development," Cubberley said. "We're shifting more

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

St. Marys staff use delegated authority to award \$300,000 Milt Dunnell pavilion project

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

With St. Marys council now restricted from making certain financial decisions ahead of the Oct. 26 municipal election, town staff have used delegated authority to move forward with the construction of a new pavilion at Milt Dunnell Field.

At council's Aug. 25 meeting, CAO Brent Kittmer informed council he would direct staff to award the pavilion contract to Chad Hartman Construction Inc. for a total project cost of \$300,265.31, approximately \$80,000 over the town's approved \$220,000 budget.

The town entered a restricted acts period, commonly referred to as a "lame duck" period, following nomination day Aug. 21 because fewer than three-quarters of the current council members are seeking re-election. Under the Municipal Act, council cannot approve expenditures that exceed amounts already included in the 2026 budget during this period.

"Although this project was budgeted for, the tender and the award will be over budget, so it's going to take new budget money," Kittmer said.

To allow municipal business to continue, council previously delegated certain authorities to the CAO during the restricted acts period. Kittmer is required to report to council whenever that au-

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

Heidi James

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COMMUNITY

St. Marys staff use delegated authority to award \$300,000 Milt Dunnell pavilion project

CONTINUED FROM FRONT
thority is used.

The town received eight bids for the pavilion project, with Chad Hartman Construction submitting the lowest compliant bid at \$286,861.44 after the HST rebate. That put the tender itself \$66,861.44 over budget. An additional \$10,000 is being added for an accessible concrete parking space and walkway recommended through an accessibility audit, while a designated substance survey cost \$3,403.87.

Facilities manager Ray Cousineau said the tender also includes a \$30,000 contingency, meaning the final overage could be lower if that money is not required. Staff considered scaling back the project but determined potential savings would come at the expense of amenities the town would likely regret removing. “What we found was that any of the cuts we would have made to the budget, in five years from now, we would have been frustrated by those cuts,” Kittmer said.

Despite the overage, Kittmer said other 2026 facilities capital projects have collectively come in under budget, leaving the town approximately \$216,000 ahead across the portfolio. The additional pavilion funding will come from the general capital reserve. Coun. Jim Craigmile questioned why the pavilion bids came in significantly higher than anticipated. Director of building and development Grant Brouwer said discussions with one

bidder suggested timing may have contributed, with contractors already busy and pricing late-season projects higher to fit them into existing schedules. “The best time to bid a project is in the spring,” Brouwer said. The project includes demolition of the existing pavilion and construction of its replacement. Work is expected to begin Oct. 5 and take approximately five weeks, with staff aiming to have it completed before WinterLights in December.

St. Marys shifts economic development focus toward tourism under new action plan

CONTINUED FROM FRONT
of a staff focus onto bringing visitors to St. Marys with the hope that is what drives economic development in our community.”

The plan does not call for additional staff or an increase to the tourism and events budget. Instead, Cubberley said existing resources will be reallocated to reflect the new priorities. The department currently has two permanent full-time staff, tourism and events manager Kelly Deeks-Johnson and a tourism and events coordinator, along with seasonal support. Among the first steps will be devel-

oping consistent tourism messaging and seasonal campaigns, reviewing gaps in the town’s tourism photography and website, and potentially rebranding the town’s existing Instagram account as Discover St. Marys while establishing a separate tourism-focused Facebook page. “I think this is one of those we just need to kind of rip the Band-Aid situations,” Cubberley said of the social-media change, noting the town would retain its Instagram followers despite losing some existing tags. Longer-term initiatives include promoting St. Marys to Stratford Festival

visitors, developing tourism itineraries, attracting bus tours, converting St. Marys Quarry visitors into downtown visitors, strengthening tourism support at sporting events and using town events as gateways to other local attractions and businesses. Coun. Jim Craigmile praised how quickly staff developed the plan following council’s June discussion and suggested the town also capitalize on visitors staying at accommodations near the golf course. “I think those are all very positive,” Craigmile said. Deputy Mayor Brogan Aylward was similarly supportive, saying staff had

incorporated what council previously requested. “This is excellent, by the way,” Aylward said. “You guys have adapted essentially exactly what we discussed previously with regards to this plan and I’m very impressed by that.” Director of community services Stephanie Ische also confirmed the Stonetown Triathlon will continue annually after participation increased this year. “We do expect to see numbers double again next year,” she said. Council unanimously approved the action plan as presented.

Labour Day

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46th annual St. Marys Terry Fox Run set for Sunday, Sept. 20

ANNA DOUPE

Contributed Article

On Sept. 20, St. Marys will take part in the 46th Terry Fox Run. The fundraiser continues Terry Fox's dream of raising vital funds to advance cancer research in Canada.

The event starts at the local YMCA and participants can enjoy a lovely run, walk, or bike along the beautiful Grand Trunk Trail to the Broken Rail Brewery and back.

For those who prefer to only walk a little bit, we encourage participants to complete whatever they feel comfortable with. The total route is about five kilometres round trip.

Bring family, friends, neighbours or a local fundraising team and join us for a morning of fun and community. Everyone is touched by cancer in some way.

Last year, our community event raised just over \$18,760 with more than 100 participants.

Registration starts at 8:30 a.m. with an official start at 9 a.m. The event is open to participate anytime until 12 p.m.

To learn more, sponsor a participant, form a team, or register to fundraise,



please visit the St. Marys Terry Fox Registration site at <https://run.terryfox.ca/129749> or visit <https://terryfox.org/> and search for St. Marys under the "Find A Run" section.

About the Terry Fox Foundation

The Terry Fox Foundation honours the vision and spirit of Terry Fox while raising critical funds for cancer research. As a leading national charitable organization, the foundation engages more than 20,000 passionate volunteers and 3.5 million students in nearly 10,000 annual fundraising events across the country.

In February 2026, the foundation surpassed \$1 billion raised for cancer research – a historic milestone made possible by decades of support from millions of Canadians. Visit terryfox.org for more information and to learn how to help take Terry's Marathon of Hope across the finish line.



FAMILY CONCERT & FUNDRAISER

For the Community Commons

**SATURDAY,
OCTOBER 3RD**

1:30-3:30PM

**PYRAMID
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Join us for a fun-filled family event featuring live music from beloved children's performers Sonshine & Broccoli! Bring the whole family for an afternoon of singing, dancing, and community spirit while supporting the Community Commons Project.



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Find out more about the Community Commons Project.

St. Marys Public Library
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Website: stmaryspubliclibrary.ca
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EDITORIAL

My dad can fix anything



AMANDA NELSON
Independent Reporter

I grew up on a farm and, to this day, as a 40-year-old woman who lives in a high-rise apartment in the city, I still refer to myself as a farm girl.

Growing up as a farm kid, we didn't get new things all the time. Toys were handed down, along with clothes and shoes and everything in between. I grew up with a fix-it attitude that very much came from both of my parents, which I really loved, but also sometimes wished I could just get something new instead of wearing my sister's

old clothes.

But one thing I always knew was that if something big was broken, ripped or needed to be repaired, one of my parents could fix it.

My dad, especially, could fix anything.

Recently, I moved to Guelph and, along with the expenses of moving, my car decided to break down. Now, I'm not saying it wasn't going to happen. My 2018 Volkswagen Tiguan has over 270,000 kilometres on it, I drive it like it's an off-road tractor and sometimes I forget to top up the oil. But this beast has been with me through everything, and I'll be damned if I let it go now.

The thing barely has a speck of rust on it. Everything else works fine. So, when the AC went, I wasn't overly concerned — until a very loud screeching sound started coming from the left side, under the hood. Although I tried my best, the radio just wasn't loud enough to cover it up anymore, so I caved and brought it into Volkswagen.

When I was there, they broke the news that the part, along with the repair, would cost more than

\$3,000. And because my car, in the condition it was in, was only worth maybe \$2,000 — according to Volkswagen, because to me, she's priceless — it just wasn't worth it.

They sat me down with a salesperson and went through the loyalty pricing on a new one, along with the great interest rates I could get because I'm a loyal customer.

But I just knew, in the back of my head, that whatever they said wouldn't fly because my dad was going to get this thing running again if it was the last thing I did.

So, I called my dad.

He told me to lift the hood, look on the left side and asked me if the "belt thingy" was running or wiggling. I gave him my honest and most specific review of what was happening to all the things under my hood. I wiggled the hose, tried to pull on the belt and checked to see if the metal piece was hot.

Somehow, I answered enough of his questions that he had a pretty good idea of what was happening and decided to order all the parts based on my perfect assessment.

Dad always has "a guy."

Luckily, Car Guy number 1 could

order the right part from Car Guy number 2, who could get it delivered quickly to mom and dad's house out in Chesley.

From there, I brought my car to him.

My dad has a magical shop that would make anyone in the car business jealous. He fixed what was making my AC, heat and coolant not work. He replaced a ball joint, topped up my windshield washer fluid that had been empty for months and ordered another part he noticed was broken.

After that, we brought it to Car Guy number 3, who charged my AC, and I drove home with a quick hug and a thank you.

It wasn't until later that I really thought about how lucky I am; not just because my dad saved me thousands of dollars, not just because he could look under the hood of my 270,000-kilometre Volkswagen and somehow know what was wrong with it after asking me a few questions, but because I grew up knowing that if something broke, Dad would figure it out.

There was never really a question of whether something could be

fixed. The question was how.

Sometimes I wonder what happens to all those people in the world who don't have family members who can do everything.

My dad can fix anything. My brother-in-law is a plumber. I have a nursing background and am always the go-to for those "could this be cancer" spots on people's skin. My sister, Katie, knows everything about animals, literally, and is my go-to for all things pets. My mom can sew, cook and bake anything from scratch. I have a niece who's a hairdresser, and she even gives me a discount.

I'm lucky. I have a person in my family for almost everything.

And sometimes I don't even realize how lucky I am.

But as I drove my old Tiguan home, with the AC blowing cold air again, I thought about my dad.

The same dad who taught me that you don't necessarily need something new just because the old thing is broken.

Sometimes, you just need someone who knows how to fix it. And I'm pretty lucky that I have him.

Bravo	Boo
We have 3 Bravos this week 1) Bravo to our local EMT service for their prompt response and calm and professional care during a health emergency on Sunday. They were kind and personable and got the situation under control quickly. We are fortunate to have their service in our town. Keep up the good work! 2) Bravo to Lochi Sterling and the other gentleman that helped my husband get me to my truck after a fall by the town hall steps. 3) Bravo to Heather who saw me drop a \$5 bill in front of the paint store and picked it up to return to me! Thank you	We have no Boos this week
*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.	

Overheard

AT THE COFFEE SHOP

Sponsored by: *Tim Hortons.*

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That's fine. We still have Lake Superior named after us.

September seems like a great time for some Vladdy home runs.

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!

Quote of the Week

"We know that America is changing. Their trading relationships, their foreign policies, their national monuments, their hydronyms. Canadians also know that naming reality means calling it Lake Ontario – then, now and always."

- Prime Minister Mark Carney, in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's Aug. 27 Executive Order

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA

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St. Marys Independent

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Thoughts OF THE WEEK

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Your life is as good as your mindset.

Listen with the intent to understand, not the intent to reply.

Life is better when you are laughing.

Everything you ever wanted is just on the other side of fear.

Melodies at the Museum presents last performance of the season with The Gee Gees



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTOS)

A large crowd turned out to hear the very popular trio of ladies called The Gee Gees at the final concert of the season in the Melodies at the Museum series on Wednesday, Aug. 26. Pictured from left to right are members of The Gee Gees Heather McKay (St. Marys), Karen Richardson (St. Marys) and Lana Coghill (Embro). The Gee Gees are three moms who love to play, sing, laugh and have fun. They play a variety of instruments including the bass guitar, banjo, ukulele, harmonica, drums, violin, bagpipes and more.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY (FOL)

FOL Social: second floor of the library

Wed. Sept. 9, 2026 - 6:30 - 8 pm

Management Committee Meeting:

Wed. Sept. 16th, 6:00 - 8:00 PM

second floor of the library

Book Sale: Lind Sportsplex (Quarry)

Wed. Sept. 23 - Fri. Sept. 25

10 AM - 6 PM

Sat. Sept. 26 - 10 AM - 4 PM*

We need donations of books, music, DVDs, and puzzles for our book sale. Drop them off at the library or contact us to arrange pickup.

FriendsofStMarysPublicLibrary@gmail.com
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 Find us at [@StMarysFOL](#) on Facebook

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news
from the Town of St. Marys



SCHOOL'S BACK. SLOW DOWN. Road Safety Month Reminder

Children are returning to school, bus stops, and crosswalks. Watch for crossing guards, stop for school buses, and obey the 40 km/h speed limit in Community Safety Zones.

Visit townofstmarys.com/RoadSafety

ST. MARYS NOURISH MARKET

St. Marys United Church (85 Church St. S)

The St. Marys Nourish Equal Access Food Market takes place on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month from 2 - 4 PM offering fresh local fruit, vegetables and meat available at wholesale prices.

519-508-3663



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Did you know you can submit your community event to the Town's online Community Calendar? It's a great way to help residents and visitors discover what's happening in our community! Events must take place in St. Marys and be open to the public.

Submit an Event: calendar.townofstmarys.com

FALL BOOK SALE

The Friends of the St. Marys Public Library are hosting their bi-annual book sale. Browse books, puzzles, DVDs and more. Items are for sale by donation. Hours include September 23-25, 10 AM - 6 PM and September 26, 10 AM - 4 PM.

Learn more: facebook.com/stmarysFOL



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Senior of the Week



Our senior of the week is Jane Cousineau, who just celebrated her 80th birthday on Aug. 30. She was born and raised in St. Marys and attended Western University. Jane had a lengthy career as a Science teacher in Stratford until retirement. In 1967 she married Jaques Cousineau. She has 4 children, 9 grandchildren, 1 great grandchild and 1 fur baby dog named Expo. She loves living on the farm with Jacques!

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

St. Marys Imagination Library requests donations for Literacy Day and Dolly Parton's legacy

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

The St. Marys Imagination Library is encouraging residents to donate to the organization in honour of Literacy Day on Sept. 8 and for one of Dolly Parton's biggest hit songs.

The Imagination Library, founded by the late iconic country singer and philanthropist, is a global movement that sends books to the youngest readers up to five years old to promote literacy. In addition to donating money on Literacy Day, Imagination Library chapters around the world are asking for donations on Sept. 25 as the date reads "9/25" on the calendar, inspired by Parton's song and movie "9 to 5."

The announcement of Parton's death at 80 years old on Aug. 25 had fans around the world and fellow musicians mourning the loss. Chantal Lynch, partner of the St. Marys Imagination Library, wrote a tribute to Parton.

"How do you say goodbye to someone who felt like a piece of home? Dolly Parton wasn't just a megastar; she was a fixture of our childhoods, softly humming in the background between 9 to 5, big hair and cassette tapes playing on loop," she wrote. "Her songs held our memories, but her true greatness extended far beyond music."

"Among all her gifts, Dolly's most profound legacy lies in her crusade for children and literacy through her Imagination Library. Inspired by her own father, who never had the chance to learn to read or write, Dolly set out to ensure no child felt the shame or limitation of illiteracy – delivering a free, high-quality book every month from birth to age five."

The St. Marys chapter has provided 15,711 books to 621 children since it launched in 2021, with 310 kids currently receiving books in the mail monthly and 311 children graduated from the program. Anyone with a child under five and living within the N4X postal code

area can sign up to receive books through the St. Marys Imagination Library. Each child will receive The Little Engine that Could as their first book and then age-appropriate books up until age five.

"We started this during COVID when people were losing their jobs, libraries were closed, schools were closed and some people couldn't afford to buy the books, and this just really resonated with us at that time, and so we thought, 'Let's do this,'" Lynch said. "The more I learned about Dolly Parton and what she has been doing all this time, the more I went, 'Wow, this is an amazing woman,' and when you talk to educators, they can tell which children have had lots of reading opportunities at home, versus those who haven't."

The day the books come into St. Marys is an exciting one for the community.

"When we talk to the people at the post office, because so many of us get our mail at the post office, they love Book Day," Lynch said. "People coming in, they're bringing their kids and the kids are so excited. It's just a good thing."

The St. Marys Imagination Library is funded by donations, with a long-term endowment fund from the Stratford Perth Community Foundation. The local chapter aims to reach its \$300,000 fundraising goal so the program can continue to fund itself. The endowment fund currently sits at \$246,000 and \$26,000 has been raised in 2026 so far.

"The gap is getting shorter and shorter and I think we can do it over the next little bit and there's now been so much out there about Dolly Parton, but also the program and how important it is and what we can do, and every little bit helps, right?" Lynch said. "Whether you donate \$9.25 or if you donate \$9,250, it's a good thing."

To donate, enroll a child, or for more information, visit www.stmarysimaginationlibrary.com.

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. Who plays the piano in Charlie Brown?
2. What is the birthstone for September?
3. How many equinoxes are there in a year?
4. What's the name for the science of growing apples?
5. What does AKA mean?
6. What dog breed was traditionally kept by monks in the Swiss Alps to find lost travelers?
7. How many members does the South Korean band BTS have?
8. What are baby goats called?
9. What ball has 32 panels?
10. A pantheon is a temple dedicated to who?

This week's answers are found on pg. 35

Country Pride, Counties Wide KIRKTON FALL FAIR



SEPTEMBER 11-13, 2026

FRIDAY, SEPT 11

★ GATES OPEN AT 6:00 PM



FOOD TRUCKS



EXHIBIT HALL OPEN



FARMERS OLYMPICS

7:00 PM



INFLATABLES



FIREWORKS

DUSK

SATURDAY, SEPT 12

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

FAMILY FUN ALL DAY LONG!



PARADE 10:00 AM



BABY SHOW



INFLATABLES



PIG RACES



LIVE MUSIC

TRUCK & TRACTOR PULL 3:00 PM START
BEER GARDEN & FOOD TRUCKS



MULLET COMPETITION



4-H/OPEN DAIRY SHOW



PONY RIDES



AG EDUCATION TENT



ZUCCHINI RACES

SUNDAY, SEPT 13



FAIR BREAKFAST &
EXHIBIT HALL OPEN



COMMUNITY CHURCH
SERVICE 10:00 AM



CLASSIC CAR SHOW



DEMOLITION DERBY
1:00 PM START



FOOD TRUCKS

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Every choice counts on St. Marys roads as students return to school

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

As students prepare to head back to school next week, the Town of St. Marys is reminding residents that road safety starts with each of us.

September has once again been declared Road Safety Month in St. Marys, bringing renewed attention to the shared responsibility of keeping our streets safe for drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.

September is an important time to refocus on safe travel habits and look out for one another. With an increase in school buses, pedestrian traffic and busy community spaces on the roads and sidewalks, road-safety awareness is in high demand.

Throughout the month, the town will share information, safety reminders and resources aimed at helping all road users make informed choices and prevent incidents before they happen.

Back-to-school and community safety zones

The return to school means more children walking, cycling and waiting for buses throughout the community. Drivers are reminded to slow down, stay alert, watch for crossing guards, obey school bus signals and stop for pedestrians at designated crossovers.

St. Marys is home to five community safety zones where speed limits are reduced to 40 km/hr. Located near schools, playgrounds, the Quarry and senior residences, these zones are designed to protect some of the community's most vulnerable residents and visitors.

Road watch

Community members can help improve road safety by reporting concerns through the Town's Stonetown Road Watch online reporting form. Whether it's speeding, visibility issues, near misses, or pedestrian hazards, resident feedback helps iden-

tify problem areas and develop future improvements.

Traffic bylaws matter

Speed remains one of the leading factors in serious collisions. Even a small reduction in speed can significantly reduce the risk of severe injury or death in a crash.

Residents are reminded to follow posted speed limits, respect bus loading zones and obey all traffic-control devices. Traffic bylaws exist to protect everyone who uses St. Marys roads, sidewalks and trails.

Supporting senior road safety

Older adults may face unique challenges when navigating roadways, intersections and transportation services. St. Marys offers several supports to help seniors travel safely and confidently, including the Mobility Bus, pedestrian push buttons located throughout the downtown and resources available through Service-Ontario for licence renewals and driver support.

"Road safety is about protecting people," said St. Marys public works coordinator Thomas Redman in a press release. "As we head into a busy fall season and welcome students back to school, we're reminding everyone to take that extra moment to slow down and pay attention. Whether it's a child crossing the street, a senior navigating an intersection, or a cyclist sharing the road, the choices we make behind the wheel can have a lasting impact."

Residents are encouraged to follow the Town of St. Marys on Facebook throughout September for road safety tips, reminders and information on how to help make local streets safer for everyone.

For more information about road safety in St. Marys, visit townofstmarys.com/RoadSafety or contact the public works department at 519-284-2340 ext. 213 or publicworks@town.stmarys.on.ca.



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Kinsmen bringing back Duck Race

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

After about a decade of absence, racing rubber ducks will return to the Flats this September.

The Kinsmen Club of St. Marys will host the Duck Race on Sept. 12 at Milt Dunnell Field starting at 11 a.m. Anyone looking to participate in the race can purchase a \$5 ticket for a rubber duck. Up to 2,500 ducks will float on the river towards the finish line and the first duck to make it will win \$2,000. There will also be a \$750 second-place prize, a \$250 third-place prize and \$100 for the last duck to

complete the race.

“Our hope is that there will be a lot of people attending the race on the day of as well as just the spectacle of having all those ducks race across the river; that’s going to be something fun that people can watch from the banks and attend with their families,” said Akshay Kumar, vice president of the local Kinsmen Club.

All proceeds from the Duck Race will support Kinsmen’s community outreach efforts, including supporting the Nourish Market run by Stratford’s Local Food Community Centre. The Nourish Market is a low-cost market that provides fresh produce, unprocessed meats and pantry

items, and runs every third Thursday afternoon from 2-4 p.m. at St. Marys United Church.

“Everyone in the community needs support from time to time and our basic mission to serve the greatest need in the community,” Kumar said. “The use of the food banks has gone up significantly, not just in St. Marys but also in Ontario as well as Canada.”

Though the Duck Race had been a popular St. Marys Kinsmen event in the past, this is the first one in about 10 years.

“This used to be a popular event back in the day and with COVID, with economic pressures, a decline in general volunteer

participation across St. Marys, it wasn’t held for the last decade, but we’re happy to bring it back with more volunteers,” Kumar said.

Tickets can be purchased at either Troyer’s Spices, MacPherson’s Barber Shop, Domino’s Pizza, Broken Rail Brewing, Angela Dawn Aesthetics and MediSpa, and Jacob’s Liquidation, as well as at the pop-up outside of Your Independent Grocer on weekends leading up to the race.

The Kinsmen Club of St. Marys will host a social on Sept. 11 at Broken Rail Brewing from 6-8 p.m. for anyone looking to volunteer with the organization.

Community Commons fundraising campaign officially underway

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The vision for a vibrant new community gathering place in downtown St. Marys is moving forward, and residents are invited to help make it a reality.

The Community Commons at 14 Church St. N will transform a historic downtown building into a welcoming, multi-generational hub where residents can connect, learn, create and access valuable programs and services. Planned spaces will support programming for the St. Marys Public Library, EarlyON, the Friendship Centre and museum, provide a collaboration space for community organizations and social service agencies,

and create flexible gathering areas for residents of all ages.

While significant planning and community consultation have taken place to shape the project, fundraising efforts are now underway to help bring the vision to life. Community donations and grants will play an important role in the future redevelopment of the property. A fundraising goal of \$1 million has been established to support the project.

“This project is about creating space for people to come together,” said Sarah Andrews, CEO of St. Marys Public Library. “The Community Commons will help meet growing community needs while preserving an important downtown landmark for future generations.”

To help build excitement and raise funds, the Community Commons capital campaign committee is hosting a Community Concert and Family Fun Event on Saturday, Oct. 3, at the Pyramid Recreation Centre. Admission is by donation with all proceeds supporting the Community Commons project. The fun-filled family event will feature live music from beloved children’s performers Sonshine & Broccoli, along with opportunities for families to gather, connect and celebrate community. Residents are encouraged to bring the whole family for an afternoon of singing, dancing and community spirit while supporting the future of the Community Commons.

The town purchased 14 Church St. N in

2022 with a vision to create a campus of services and programs in the downtown core. Through a public-led planning process, the Community Commons concept was developed to address growing needs for programming and community space while supporting the town’s long-term growth plans.

Residents can support the project by attending the Oct. 3 fundraiser, making a donation, or learning more about the vision for the Community Commons at 14 Church St. N.

For more information about the project or donation opportunities, visit www.townofstmarys.com/community-commons

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Ghost Tours come back to St. Marys this October

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Stratford Walking Tours will continue the popular Ghost Walks in St. Marys during the fall season, starting Oct. 9. There will be two more walks on Oct. 17 and 30.

Each two-kilometre walk will be about an hour strolling along the river path at The Falls as Lauri Leduc, Stratford Walking Tours founder and resident of St. Marys, talks about the early history of St. Marys, some darker stories from the town's history and ghost stories with alleged hauntings.

"For a small town, we have a lot of interesting history," said Leduc. "We have the early foundation of the town with the importance of the river and the mills and the quarrying industry, and then our beautiful buildings, our stone buildings that we have just makes

it such a unique place for people who live there to explore the stories but also for visitors to the area as well. I think it's an interesting mix of history and geography that makes it really popular."

Leduc's walks are always popular and selling out. There are up to 20 walkers maximum for each event.

"It's just a good size for travelling for them and for hearing and seeing me, and it does fill up quickly so it's been a positive response in both Stratford and St. Marys," she said.

Leduc first started the history walks in Stratford and then St. Marys after feeling inspired by living abroad in the United Kingdom for 18 months.

Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased online via stratfordwalkingtours.ca/#get-tickets.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF STRATFORD WALKING TOURS)

Those who participate in Stratford Walking Tours' Ghost Walk in St. Marys will hear about early town history and alleged hauntings while walking along the river path this October.

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Pickering looks to bring business experience, collaborative approach to St. Marys council

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Bill Pickering says a desire to give back to the community he and his wife now call home is behind his decision to seek a seat on St. Marys council in the Oct. 26 municipal election.

Pickering and his wife, Linda, moved to St. Marys from Stratford in February 2019 and have since become active participants in the community. With his career nearing its end, Pickering said serving on council would provide another opportunity to contribute.

"For me, it is not just about running for council, it is about being able to add value and meet the expectations of those I serve and represent," he said. "I want to work hard for the community that Linda and I call home."

Before filing his nomination papers, Pickering said he met with current council members and town staff to ask questions and better understand the role.

Professionally, Pickering works as a business lead for a large, nationally operated Canadian company. Supported by a direct team of 83 people and an extended team of roughly 400, he said his work has included developing and managing multimillion-dollar capital and operating budgets while meeting the needs of customers at the national, regional and local levels.

He believes that experience in budgeting, collaboration and process-driven decision making would translate well to council, particularly as municipalities contend with economic uncertainty and increas-

ing financial pressures.

Pickering identified licensed child care, affordable housing, infrastructure, economic growth, health care and the downloading of costs from senior levels of government as among the issues facing St. Marys.

He said there are no easy solutions, and his first priority, if elected, would be educating himself on the town's existing priorities and strategic plans before working with council, staff, community members and subject-matter experts to identify solutions.

"We must be motivated by fact-based decisions that support cost management and drive economic growth," he said, adding the town must also ensure municipal staff have the skills and tools necessary to take advantage of emerging technologies.

Pickering said responsible use of taxpayer dollars and collaboration should be central to the role of councillor. He is also opposed to Ontario's strong-mayor legislation.

"Residents deserve a councillor who listens carefully, asks direct, respectful questions and works collaboratively with council, municipal staff, local business and community groups," he said.

During the campaign, Pickering plans to attend local events and meetings, and connect with residents and businesses to hear their priorities.

"If elected, I promise to be accessible and listen intently without judgment," he said. "I promise to be open and honest, treating you in the same manner that I wish to be treated."

Pickering can be reached at 519-476-3855 or bill-pickering247@gmail.com.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL PICKERING)

Bill Pickering has thrown his hat in the race for a seat on St. Marys council in the upcoming municipal election.



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E-scooters prohibited in St. Marys, Perth South and Stratford

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

In November 2019, the Ontario Government introduced a regulation under the Highway Traffic Act regarding a pilot project to evaluate the use and operation of Electric Kick-Scooters.

Electric Kick-Scooters are defined as a vehicle that has two wheels, with one be-

ing at the front and the other at the back of a platform that is designed to stand upon; a steering handlebar that controls the front, steerable wheel; and an electric motor not exceeding 500 watts that provides a maximum speed of 24 km/hr.

Within the regulation, the Ontario Government prohibits the use of Electric-Kick Scooters on all highways, sidewalks, trails, paths or walkways in a public park

unless the municipality governing those areas creates a bylaw permitting the use of Electric-Kick Scooters.

At this time, the City of Stratford, the Town of St Marys and the Township of Perth South have not created a bylaw permitting the use of Electric Kick-Scooters, making them prohibited to use in our communities.

The Stratford Police Service says it's

important to make community members aware of this prohibition as officers have seen an increased use of Electric Kick-Scooters within our communities. The police service asks everyone to avoid the use of Electric Kick-Scooters until the proper bylaws can be established in the City of Stratford, Town of St Marys and Township of Perth South.

Museum's popular speaker series returns Sept. 17

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The popular St. Marys Museum Speaker Series returns for its 14th season this fall with a variety of engaging evening presentations.

Postcards | Sept. 17

On Thursday, Sept. 17, the museum will hold a presentation about postcards. Larry Pfaff, author and local historian, will share information about the importance of the postcard collections preserved in the museum's archives and what these collections can teach us about local built

heritage. Abigail Parsons, assistant curator, will provide important context on the history of postcards in Canada.

British Home Children | Oct. 17

For a special Saturday presentation, Lori Oschefske, founder and president of Home Children Canada, will share the stories of British Home Children on Oct. 17. The insightful presentation will explore the challenges these child migrants faced, the hardships of indentured service and the resilience that led to their success. Through compelling stories and historical insights, this presentation sheds light on an overlooked chapter of Canadian

history and honours the legacy of more than 100,000 British Home Children who helped shape the nation.

Vanishing Villages | Nov. 19

On Thursday, Nov. 19, Janis Fread and special guests will share personal tales of nearby villages that are now just road signs. Sometimes referred to as paper towns, this presentation on vanishing villages explores a selection of settlements in this area that have either disappeared completely or remain as a suggestion of what once was. Presenters will also share the many ways local community members are working to preserve the history

of these villages.

Thursday evening presentations will take place at 7 p.m. at the St. Marys Museum. The Saturday, Oct. 17 presentation will take place at 2 p.m. at the St. Marys Friendship Centre. The speaker series is a fundraiser for the museum. The cost per person is \$12 or \$10 for museum members. Space is limited, and therefore pre-registration is required via ActiveNet. For more information or to register, call 519-284-3556 or email museum@town.stmarys.on.ca.



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Avonbank Church hosts annual cemetery decoration service



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

From left, longtime Avonbank Cemetery caretaker John McIntosh, Warren and Gaye Lamb, and Wayne and Wendy Lamb gather following the Aug. 23 cemetery decoration service. McIntosh and his wife, Mary, have cared for the cemetery and church grounds for decades, while Warren and Wayne Lamb, who grew up in the Avonbank area, returned with their wives to recognize the final resting places of family members.

GARY WEST

Independent Reporter

Avonbank Church welcomed area residents on Aug. 23 for its annual cemetery decoration service, offering an opportunity to remember and honour family mem-

bers and friends laid to rest in the neighbouring cemetery.

Decoration services are a longstanding tradition at many area churches, bringing families together for worship and reflection while recognizing those who have passed away.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Musician Angus Sinclair and Rev. Marion Jackson Tyler helped lead the congregation in music, prayer and reflection during the annual cemetery decoration service at Avonbank Church Aug. 23.

John McIntosh welcomed those gathered at Avonbank Church before introducing Rev. Marion Jackson Tyler, who led the congregation in prayer and meditation.

Angus Sinclair provided piano accompaniment and led the congregation in

music, while Julie McIntosh performed a solo that was warmly received by those in attendance.

Following the service, families had an opportunity to visit the cemetery and pay their respects at the gravesites of loved ones.



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Voters List: Check the Voters List before Voting Day. The Voters List is available Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Town Hall (lower level, 175 Queen St. E). If you are not on the Voters List or the information on the list is incorrect, you may complete a Revision Form EL15 prior to Voting Day.

Proxy Voting Applications: Proxy voting application forms can be picked up Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Town Hall (lower level, 175 Queen St. E) or on the days of the Advance Vote between the hours of 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at the Pyramid Recreation Centre. Applications will be received until 4:30 p.m. on Friday, October 23, 2026.

Additional Information

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The St. Marys Public Library is bigger than one might think

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

From bestselling novels and children's books to newspapers, magazines, genealogy resources and digital collections, the St. Marys Public Library helps residents access a world of information and entertainment, both within the library and across Perth County.

While many people think of the library as a place to borrow books, a free library card provides access to thousands of additional materials through the Perth County library network. Cardholders can borrow items from participating libraries throughout the county and have them delivered to the St. Marys Public Library for convenient pickup at no additional cost.

"If you're looking for a specific title, there's a good chance we can find it for you," said Sarah Andrews, CEO of the St. Marys Public Library, in a press release. "Our staff can help residents search the catalogue, place holds and access materials from libraries across Perth

County, giving them access to a much larger collection than what's available on our shelves."

Library staff are available to assist patrons with every step of the process, from searching the online catalogue and placing holds to discovering new authors and resources based on individual interests.

For residents who enjoy keeping up with current events, the library's Reading Room offers access to daily and weekly newspapers and periodicals in a comfortable setting. Library cardholders can also access hundreds of newspapers and magazines digitally, with content available from around the world in a wide range of languages.

The library's digital collection extends beyond reading materials. Cardholders can access genealogy tools, language-learning platforms, consumer information resources, health information databases and other online services from home or on the go.

The St. Marys Public Library is committed to ensuring that everyone can access library services. Residents who are temporarily or permanently unable to visit the library

due to illness, injury, mobility challenges, or transportation barriers may be eligible for home delivery service. Library staff can provide more information about available options and eligibility requirements.

Whether patrons are searching for a new favourite author, researching a topic of interest, reading today's news, or exploring online learning opportunities, the St. Marys Public Library makes it easy to discover resources that match everyone's interests.

Residents are also encouraged to stay connected by visiting the library website and following the St. Marys Public Library on Facebook and Instagram for the latest news, programs and events.

Visit the St. Marys Public Library at 15 Church St. N or learn more online at www.townofstmarys.com/library, call 519-284-2340, or email library@townofstmarys.on.ca. The friendly library team is ready to help patrons discover everything a free library card can do.



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SEPTEMBER IS WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

Changing the Narrative on Suicide

Breaking the silence: Agriculture Wellness Ontario works to prevent suicide in farming communities

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

For farmers, the pressures of work and home are often impossible to separate.

Weather, commodity prices, livestock health and finances can all weigh heavily on a farm family, while long hours and geographic isolation can make it difficult to connect with others or seek help when those pressures become overwhelming.

Agriculture Wellness Ontario (AgWO) is working to change that by providing mental-health education, counselling and community support designed specifically for Ontario's agricultural community.

"Our programs and services are not only ag-informed, they've been co-constructed with actual farmers and industry partners to ensure that we're actually providing mental-health education and support that is accessible, relevant and applicable to those who we are aiming to serve," said Avery Dixon, program outreach coordinator for AgWO's Guardian

Network.

That agricultural focus is particularly important when it comes to suicide prevention.

Dixon said research shows farmers are twice as likely as the general, non-farming population to experience suicidal thoughts or die by suicide. At the same time, stigma can prevent people from acknowledging they are struggling or asking for help.

According to Dixon, the 2021 National Survey of Farmer Mental Health out of the University of Guelph found 40 per cent of Canadian farmers and producers would not be comfortable seeking professional help, largely because of concerns about judgement from others.

"I think there's often this perception in farming that your worth as a person is tied to the productivity of your farm," Dixon said. "So, it's a really vulnerable thing to say to someone, 'Hey, I'm not doing well. I'm struggling to keep up with chores, I'm struggling financially, I'm going through family difficulties,' whatever that situation might be."

Instead of inviting others in, Dixon said farmers may keep those struggles to themselves, compounding feelings of isolation and burdensomeness.

Through the Guardian Network, AgWO is attempting to build supports directly into agricultural communities. More than 500 Guardians have been trained across Ontario through a full-day, farmer-focused suicide-prevention program.

Those volunteers learn to recognize signs someone may be struggling, start difficult conversations and encourage that person to seek professional support.

"Guardians are the bridge between a farmer or an ag community member who is struggling and professional support," Dixon said.

One place that bridge can lead is AgWO's Farmer Wellness Initiative, which provides farmers, farm workers and their families – including international agricultural workers living in Ontario – with free, unlimited counselling 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Counselling is available in English, French and Spanish by phone, virtually and, when available, in person. The professionals providing the service receive specialized training to understand the pressures and realities of agriculture.

That means a farmer doesn't necessarily have to sacrifice several hours during a busy planting or harvest season to travel to and from an appointment.

"It's about meeting farmers where they're at," Dixon said. "Most farmers don't have that potentially up to two hours a day to drive to an appointment, attend the appointment and drive back. So, calling from your tractor can make all the difference in the world for some people."

AgWO also offers education through In the Know, a four-hour mental-health literacy workshop developed specifically for agriculture, and shorter Growth Workshops covering subjects including mental health and agriculture, preparing for uncertainty and navigating stress.

While those programs can give farmers tools to look after their own mental health, Dixon said education can also prepare neighbours, friends, relatives and other members of agricultural communities to recognize when somebody else needs support.

"If you notice a community member doesn't seem like themselves for whatever reason, don't shy away from having those hard conversations," Dixon said. "For a lot of people, it can be lifesaving."

Sometimes that support can be as simple as checking in or stopping by to lend a hand with chores.

For AgWO, breaking down stigma means making conversations about mental health as acceptable in agriculture as conversations about weather, crops, livestock or equipment.

"Normalizing that experiencing a mental-health concern doesn't make you weak, it doesn't make you a bad farmer, and teaching people what supports are available to them is so important," Dixon said. "The better we get at understanding, as a community, mental health, having candid, open conversations about it and recognizing when someone needs support, I think the healthier and more prosperous our industry will become as a whole."

More information on AgWO, its Farmer Wellness Initiative and upcoming workshops is available through the organization's website.

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Agriculture Wellness Ontario

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SEPTEMBER IS WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

Changing the Narrative on Suicide

Where to find mental health support in Huron and Perth

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

There are a wide range of services and resources available to those struggling with mental health in our region, ranging from group supports and education to crisis supports and short-term stabilization options.

These programs are available for people experiencing ongoing mental health challenges, those facing an immediate crisis, and families or friends looking for guidance on how to support someone in need.

If you or someone you know is struggling, these are some of the resources in our community that are there to help. Supports are available for different ages, needs and circumstances, whether someone is looking for counselling, peer support, crisis response, treatment referrals or information about where to turn next.

St. Marys community outreach worker

The community outreach worker position offers facilitation, education and referrals for residents who require socio-economic support.

Duties of the community outreach worker include, but are not limited to:

- Contact community outreach worker directly if you know someone that is experiencing homelessness, at risk of homelessness and/or to report an encampment within the Town of St. Marys limits.
- Supporting residents through sensitive issues such as life skills, mental health, homelessness, addictions, legal matters, etc.
- Providing short-term support and facilitating community members' connections to life stability services
- Acting as a primary resource to educate council, staff and the community regarding social issues and supports that exist in the community
- Delivering community education and outreach, including neighbourhood mediation

Contact: Call 519-284-2340

Huron Perth Helpline and Crisis Response Team

The Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance offers the Huron Perth Helpline and Crisis Response Team to all residents of Huron and Perth Counties who are experiencing a mental health crisis, providing crisis assessments, brief crisis therapy, mental health education,

addiction services and treatment referrals.

The service is offered 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Face-to-face assessments are offered in hospital emergency departments including the South Huron Hospital. Contact: 1-888-829-7484

Transition Bed Program

The Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance's transition bed program supports adults experiencing a mental health crisis in Huron and Perth counties. The program makes available short-term crisis support beds at the Stratford General Hospital site, as well as access to mental health professionals who help to create and implement a plan for enhanced stability to meet urgent needs in a safe, therapeutic environment. Contact: 519-482-3440 ext. 6296

Huron-Perth Centre

The Huron Perth Centre for Children and Youth is an accredited community-based children's mental health centre, offering support to children and youth under the age of 18.

Based in Stratford, the centre's services include counselling and therapy, intensive services, crisis support, specialized consultation and assessment services and more. Contact: Call 519-273-3373

Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Huron Perth Addiction and Mental Health Services is a local mental health and addictions agency which provides a variety of services, including addiction counselling for youth and adults, mental health case management, peer support, court support, counselling for problem gambling/behavioural change, supportive housing, community withdrawal management and more.

Contact: Call 519-271-6819 or email support@cmhahuronperth.com



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SEPTEMBER IS WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

Changing the Narrative on Suicide

RURAL REFRESH: Suicide in small towns



JACLYN TURPIN

Independent Columnist

September is Suicide Prevention Month, a time to be reminded there are a variety of options available for help, a time to share resources that could save someone's life and a reminder that in tough times, we don't have to go it alone.

There is a uniqueness in small towns; oftentimes, you can't make it to the store without running into someone you know, you know who owns the local

businesses and neighbourhoods are called by a different name than the street. You might even recognize the vehicles that park next door and you notice when your neighbours get another delivery. But the reality is we often don't know the stories that are untold and the difficult truths that may stay silenced.

Suicide rates in rural areas are often much higher than those in larger urban areas. Despite the idea of knowing your neighbours, stigma is still very present. Unfortunately, we live in a culture and a time of burying our struggles. The "buck-up attitude" often keeps people from seeking support or reaching out, even to a neighbour or friend. People are left to quietly struggle.

A death by suicide can leave many people grieving. In smaller areas, people are often connected and know the individual

or have ties to the loss in some way. The unfortunate unfolding of a suicide death is also often a grief that is met with silence. Many people aren't sure what to say and choose to say nothing instead. For those left grieving a suicide loss, there may be shame, guilt and so many questions left unanswered.

On the contrary, in some cases, communities with closer ties can also have a stronger sense of support. People have already formed connections and struggles can sometimes bring a community together to offer practical supports and kindness.

That's the important piece in supporting mental health. When we get more comfortable with asking for help, sharing resources, or discussing difficult times, we are inviting opportunities for support, and standing up against the silence. Encouraging conversations about suicide can

help people to feel validated and less alone.

Be aware of what you can look for with your neighbours and friends, and notice who may be at risk for suicide. Are they talking about wanting to die or ending their life? Do they seem closed off from people or withdrawn from usual activities? Are they giving away belongings or seeming to plan for a time that they are no longer here?

When you do reach out, approach, or check in, be direct.

"I noticed you have been really withdrawn lately and haven't been answering my calls. Have you been thinking about suicide?"

Then just listen. Don't rush in, regardless of the answer. Let them talk and be heard. Try to really focus on listening and being attentive, saying things like, "please don't say that" or "try to stay positive" are not neces-

sarily helpful. We want them to feel heard and comfortable to respond to what you have asked.

Next is the time to support them in seeking help. Here, you may need to decide if it is an immediate need, like helping them to call 911 or attend the emergency room. Or, is there a crisis line you can call together? Maybe scheduling a counselling appointment would be a good first step.

Reach out for yourself. Reach out to others.

Suicide Crisis Helpline – Call or Text 9-8-8 for 24-hour support

Huron Perth Helpline and Crisis Response Team: 1-888-829-7484 provides 24/7 crisis support, education, resources and referrals.

Jaclyn Turpin is a social workers and owner of Rural Refresh Counselling, supporting St. Marys and area.

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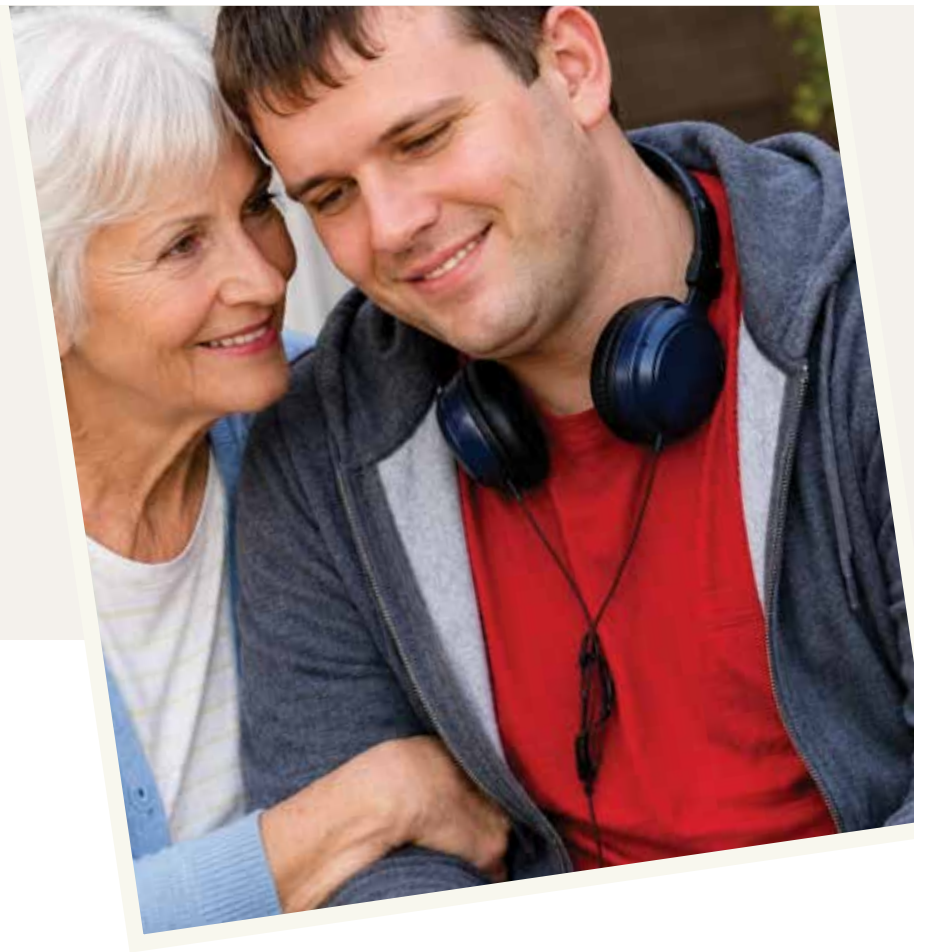


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St. Marys Independent SPORTS

Aileen and Harold Burgin shine at world track and field championships

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Aileen and Harold Burgin of Kirkton competed at the World Masters Athletics Track and Field Championship, held Aug. 22 to Sept. 3 in Daegu, South Korea.

Aileen Burgin won a gold medal in the Women's 85+ 100-metre sprint with a time of 23.58 seconds, while also adding a silver medal in the 200-metre run, recording a time of 52.03 seconds.

The 85-year-old described what was going through her mind as she ran the 100-metre event.

"I got a quick start in comparison to the other four runners," Aileen Burgin said, who ran in a heat of four in her division and one running in the 90-94 age bracket. "I couldn't see anybody. It felt like a dream. I couldn't hear anything. It was so weird. I just kept running and thinking, 'I don't want to trip. I don't want to catch my toe. I just want to finish. Where's that finish line?'"

The sportsmanship and camaraderie of Masters Athletics were on display in the moments following the race, according to Aileen Burgin.

"Everybody came running up behind me, and I'm thinking, 'I think I finished ahead of everybody.' I didn't know the woman who finished number two, yet she came running up behind me, and there were hugs and all that stuff because it's a great sport for all of us who compete in it. It's quite an experience. It's very warm. It was 29 degrees and felt like 34. Sure, we're competing against each other, but we're really competing with each other. It was pretty unreal. It seemed much like the dreams I've had."

The newly minted global gold medalist credited her husband Harold Burgin with driving the pair to compete at such a high level and overseeing their training regimens. Harold had solid results in a long slate of events, including a fourth-place finish in the 100-metre dash, coming just half a second away from the bronze medal. He also placed fifth in the 200-metre run as well as the shotput and javelin events, while taking seventh in the discus throw.

"Our twice-weekly falls prevention class, under the auspices of the St. Marys Friendship Centre, gives us a base for cardio, strength training, balance and stretching," Harold Burgin said. "So, Mondays and Wednesdays, we go to our one-hour class in Kirkton's community centre. Then we come home, we're well warmed up and we do high-intensity interval training. And that usually lasts up to 20 or 30 minutes."

They also run on their property as part of their training.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF JILL BURGIN)

Aileen Burgin won a gold and silver medal at the World Masters Athletics Track and Field Championship, held Aug. 22 to Sept. 3 in Daegu, South Korea.

While in South Korea, Aileen Burgin explained how she couldn't help but think about the support she received from her husband in attempting such a feat.

"I wouldn't venture on something like that or even think of doing it if it wasn't at his suggestion and cooperation," said Aileen Burgin.

Daughter Jill, who accompanied them on their adventure, was the key player in managing all the details of world travel and sport competition.

"I was also looking at who the other helpers are that get us to where we're hoping to go. Everybody was helpful, kind and generous there, especially the Korean volunteers when you ask, 'How do I get here? Where is this? Is the way to this place?'"

However, those weren't the only "helpers."

"I got thinking, 'Getting there is the result of a series of things that have happened already.' As a child, we

were wartime babies. We were raised in a time when nobody did anything that I could see that was extraordinary. We were all ordinary people, poor people, hard-working people. But there were all kinds of helpers. Cousins, friends, neighbours helped us get through those times because we were together."

The list of helpers, she continued, extends throughout her life, including a chance encounter at TD Bank where Aileen worked after graduating high school. Every pivotal step led her to where she is now, and she is a product of the people who took the time to help her along the way.

"Bert Harris came into the bank around the end of August," Aileen Burgin recalled. "He had the electric store just down from the bank in St. Marys at the time, and he asked what I was doing there. I said, 'I'm going to work here for a year while I figure out where to go next.' And he said, 'You can get into Brescia (College); they're still taking girls.'"

"That triggered the idea that I could go to college – more likely, though, Macdonald College in the city of Guelph. My employer, Mr. (Tom) Scholte, said, 'I can't keep you here for the year. I know you signed on for a year, but you need to go where you want to go.' Bert, Mr. Scholte, the high school secretaries and teachers who found the scholarships and bursaries that funded my first two years of college; these were the helpers then."

Aileen Burgin said those who support her and follow her journey are the latest in the long line of those who have helped her along the way.

"There are still helpers at work in my life," Aileen Burgin said. "All the warm congratulations and words of praise are so encouraging. Thanks to the power of today's media, CBC's The National spread the news worldwide."

Now, in a position to be able to compete at a world track and field event and win a gold and a silver medal at the age of 85, Aileen Burgin hopes her example can give to others the motivation to search out the activity that brightens their day.

"When people say, 'I could never run,' they need encouragement," Aileen Burgin said. "You don't have to run. Nothing has happened to me that has destroyed my ability to run. I run because I can. You just need to be somehow active, however you can, because sitting there twiddling your thumbs is no way to spend the rest of your life. Have fun. Experiment. Ask questions. 'Where did you learn to do that? Can you show me how to do that?' There is someone out there who is ready to help. Just do it."

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U18-GT1 Storm cap historic season with league title win

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Kirkton Veterinary Clinic U18 Girls Tier One St. Marys Storm were not content simply being the first girls' minor soccer team in St. Marys to play tier-one soccer. They had to make it a year to remember, which they did by winning their league title.

The Storm emerged as Elgin-Middlesex District Soccer League (EMDSL) U18-GT1 league champions with a 4-2 win over Oakridge Aug. 26, ending the year with 21 wins, three losses and two ties, along with 87 goals for and just 20 goals against.

Head coach Nathan Brown told the Independent as strong as Oakridge was, the Storm came into their final game on a mission and wouldn't be denied.

"Oakridge was sitting in third place, and our girls didn't have an easy road for their last four or five games of the season," said Brown. "It was all teams in the top half of the league. We went into Oakridge and took control right away. A lot of defences try to push players to their left-hand side because there's not a lot of left-handed shooters in the league. So, if you force them to the left, they're not comfortable taking that shot with their non-dominant foot. But Maddie (Monisit Brown) got one off because she can shoot with her left foot, and she tucked it in the bottom right corner of the net."

Richardson scored another goal less than 10 minutes later to put the Storm ahead 2-0.

Monisit Brown sent a corner kick from the left-hand side that bounced on the ground in front of the Oakridge goalkeeper before bending in and lifting into the top left corner of the net. Richardson also netted her third of the game after dashing through seven Oakridge players.

"You could see that excitement start to build with them," Brown said. "But Oakridge didn't quit. They kept coming at us and they ended up getting two really good goals, one off of a corner that one of their strikers put in and then another one that one of their midfielders sent in from outside the 18-yard box on a rope. They were both really good goals."

Brown credited his team with displaying incredible sportsmanship in the moment of victory.

"By the time they came off the field, it was like it was any other Wednesday," Brown said. "There were a couple of girls who ran at our goalie doing a bit of a cheer. They all knew what was at stake, but they've also always played with manners and respect for the other team, so they weren't yelling and screaming and jumping up and down."

"There were a few girls just casually walking back to the group. We shook hands with Oakridge and the referee, and went over to the bench, and Mark (Muir) and I looked at each other, and he said, 'Do they even realize what happened?' So, Mark asked them, 'What's going on here? Do you girls not have any idea what just happened?' And Charlotte (Richardson) goes, 'Yeah, tier-one league champs,' and they had a little bit of a cheer together, and then they got changed and they walked across the field as a team one last time."

One of the biggest factors in the team's success, per coach Brown, was their excellent defensive prowess.

"I am super proud of our defence as they just absolutely stopped everyone," Brown said. "It just came down to being aggressive, putting pressure on the ball, making sure that there's always somebody on the ball, and not waiting for the other team to come to you. Our defence dictated pace and outran their strikers, sent the ball the other way to the midfielders, and we were gone the other way."

Brown detailed how the loss in the district cup, as well as a draw earlier in the year that could have been a victory, drove the team for the back half of the year.

"When they lost district cup finals, you could see they were visibly upset; no one said a word. They don't like



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Kirkton Veterinary Clinic U18 Girls Tier One St. Marys Storm walk off the pitch one final time together after winning the Elgin-Middlesex District Soccer League's U18-GT1 league title Aug. 26 with a 4-2 win over Oakridge.

to lose. They're very competitive. Their goal was not to win the league championship; their goal was to compete. We hadn't gone tier one before and started the first two games of the year a little slow and a little rusty.

"We had a bad game against Dorchester that we tied 0-0, where Dorchester brought eight players," continued Brown. "I think that was the turning point of the season where they knew they had to go every single game because, in tier one, anybody can win or lose at any stage of the season. They knew they had to play as hard as they could every single minute."

With a notable contingent of young players who could have played in the U16 age bracket, there were lessons to be passed down from the 2008- and 2009-born veterans to those born in 2010, with Brown calling the most important attribute the team's veterans had to offer being the level of unity amongst the group.

"They learned what team actually means," Brown said. "They learned how you have to play for each other. It's hard to explain; you just have to be around them. They don't take themselves too seriously. We asked them to come to the field 45 minutes to an hour early just so they can get their little yap session out of them. Then, 30 minutes before the game, it's time to focus and they jump into their warm-up, still yapping."

That camaraderie, said Brown, translated into a ceaselessly positive atmosphere when the whistle sounded and the game commenced.

"They pump each other's tires during the game on the field. Somebody makes a good play, and one of their teammates is yelling at them, always pumping each other's tires. There was absolutely zero negativity in these girls, and for a team to be successful, they have to have that positivity. They have to have that sense of fun. You win some, you lose some, you just do your best and have fun doing it."

However, while the older players on the team had wisdom to pass along, the 2010-born athletes also brought an added spark of energy to the squad's veterans.

"The 2010s brought a sense of playfulness, I think," Brown said. "They were already having fun, and they adapted to how we play. In the 2010s, there is a lot of grit and snarl to their game. They're all high-compete. All of our 2010s, it took them time to adjust the first couple games of the year. But then they realized what they were good at and totally executed on that."

With the team's eldest leaders, meanwhile, Brown said they were tasked with setting an example for not just their teammates but also the young members of St. Marys Minor Soccer.

"For us, the most important part with the 2008s was leadership," said Brown. "We brought all five of them aside and said, 'It's your job to make sure that the rest of these girls stay here at tier one. It's your responsibility to make sure the younger girls, the U16s, U14s, U12s, U11s and the U9s see what is possible and see how you carry yourself.'"

"We had a little partnership with the U9 competitive girls. They came out and did our warm-up with us a couple of times. They were sweating when they were leaving and saying, 'Holy smokes, that was hard.' Yes, it's hard, but championships are what it gets you. It's just finding that fine line between being competitive and having fun and doing both at the same time, and the girls were able to do both. That's what I hope comes to fruition where the rest of these little girls look up at this team and go, 'You know what? I can be that too.'"

Having gone on a near-decade-long journey together, Brown called it "bittersweet" to end his run coaching this group as Monisit Brown, Vienna Beckett, Marin Chateauvert, Bronwyn Hawkins and Libby McCurdy all graduate out of St. Marys Minor Soccer.

"Maddie (Monisit Brown) and I age out this year, along with Vienna (Beckett), Libby (McCurdy), Bronwyn (Hawkins) and Marin (Chateauvert), so it was bittersweet to leave at the top of the mountain. That's how we tried to word it to the girls. 'You came in not knowing how you were going to do at tier one, and you scaled the mountain, and you're leaving on top of the mountain.' And it leaves 13 girls behind who now know what it takes to win at a tier-one level, so the future is bright for that group."

Looking ahead, however, Brown doesn't foresee any drop-off in how the U18 Girls' team is run, thanks to the capable leadership of coaches Mark Muir and Andrea Thompson.

"They are in good hands with Mark (Muir) and Andrea (Thompson)," Brown said. "Mark and I have coached together on a couple of other teams that accomplished a lot. It has been truly special sharing the bench with him over the last four years. I have to say though, Andrea was a game changer for us this year. I, personally, promote female leadership at every single level in sports, and having Andrea with us on the bench, driving, motivating and being that female voice that played at a very high level at Queens and still plays for our women's Chargers team was refreshing. I've had these girls for nine years, and they had a new voice this year, and they were absolutely dialled in on Andrea and what she had to say."

Reflecting on how his approach to coaching has evolved over the years, Brown said it became important to him to ensure his players felt seen and understood.

"It's a constant drive of having fun, but also saying, 'This is how you have to play the game.' All of your players are individuals and you need to treat them as such and treat them all with the same amount of respect, but everybody's got a button, and everybody's got a lightbulb moment. Everybody's got something that, when you push that button, they understand that you understand them. You just have to be aware of who you're dealing with and understand they're still kids, they don't know who they are yet, and you've just got to support them in whatever way they need."

U18 OBA Blue Rockies capture LDBA championship

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Red Rock Construction U18 OBA Blue St. Marys Rockies won the London District Baseball Association's (LDBA) Playoff Championship, going undefeated in four games Aug. 21-25.

Head coach Justin Ewing told the Independent the victory was cathartic and special for the group after coming so close several times this season to closing out a big-game win.

"It means a lot because this group has had some tough luck in the bigger games all year, but they stayed with it," Ewing said. "To finish the season by winning four straight playoff games and capturing the LDBA title says a lot about their character. They kept believing in each other, they kept showing up and they played their best baseball when it mattered most. For a group like this, ending the year with a championship gives them something they can always be proud of."

The Rockies' run to the league title began Aug. 21 with a 9-5 win over the Strathroy Royals. Harper Murrell started on the mound and turned in a solid outing, striking out five. Donovan McGregor had a standout game, going three-for-three at the plate, and Simon Greig and Justin Ropp each drove in two runs.

Ewing cited the team's hot start as being vital to their eventual win.

"We set the tone early," said Ewing. "The offence came out aggressive, with Evan (Ballantyne), Donovan (McGregor), Julian (Walsh) and Justin (Ropp) all contributing in a strong first inning. The boys were able to put pressure on Strathroy right away and never really let up. We got the win because the lineup produced from multiple spots, and the pitching gave us a chance to stay in control."

While offence was in no short supply against Strathroy, things tightened up significantly in St. Marys' second playoff game on Aug. 23 against the London Talons. Once again, Murrell played a starring role, hitting a single that brought home the only run of the contest. Ballantyne delivered a masterful performance on the mound, pitching the entire game and blanking the Talons for a 1-0 victory.

Coach Ewing called the victory "a grind."

"A 1-0 win always comes down to execution, pitching and defence. Evan (Ballantyne) was outstanding on the mound, throwing a complete-game shutout and giving us exactly what we needed in a tight playoff game. The boys found a way to manufacture the one run we needed, with Harper (Murrell) coming through with the RBI single. In a game like that, every pitch and every defensive play matters, and our guys stayed locked in from start to finish."

Just one day later, the Rockies took on the London West Tincaps and, per Ewing, big plays in clutch moments from numerous members of their squad led the Rockies to a 5-3 victory.

"The story (against the Tincaps) was our ability to respond and create momentum," Ewing said. "Parker (Levy) came up with a huge homerun to left field that scored two and gave us the lead, and Julian (Walsh) added an important RBI single. We got big swings in key moments and had strong relief pitching from Isaac (Cousineau). Isaac came in and did a great job settling the game down, throwing strikes and not giving free passes."

Parker Levy and Julian Walsh each drove in two runs, and Ropp led the way with two hits.

This set the Rockies up for a final clash Aug. 25 against the Wyoming Wranglers, a game that more than delivered on the hype of a league final. The two heavy hitting teams delivered an excellent final clash, but in the end, the Rockies edged out the Wranglers for a 6-5 win and the LDBA playoff crown.

"We found ways to score in different ways – hit-bypitches, walks, productive outs and then a big triple from



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Red Rock Construction U18 OBA Blue St. Marys Rockies went undefeated in four playoff games Aug. 21-25 to win the London District Baseball Association (LDBA) Playoff Championship. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Donovan McGregor, Hayden Wright, Parker Levy, Zach Larmer and Harper Murrell. In the back row, from left, are Ray Cousineau, Dale Levy, Owen Dittmer, Jared Ballantyne, Michael Ewing, Isaac Cousineau, Evan Ballantyne, Julian Walsh, Brody Higham, Justin Ropp, Simon Greig and Justin Ewing.

Simon (Greig) that helped open things up," said Ewing. "It was not just one big inning from one player; it was a full team effort. Justin (Ropp) gave us a strong start on the mound and earned the win, and Parker (Levy) came in and closed it out with no-run relief. Harper (Murrell) led us with two hits, and guys like Owen (Dittmer) and Brody Higham showed great discipline by working walks. That game really showed how deep and balanced our team was."

Ewing further described the feeling on the field after sealing their 6-5 win over Wyoming.

"It was a pretty special feeling," Ewing said. "There was a lot of excitement, but also a lot of pride and relief. You could see how much it meant to the players because they knew how hard they had worked to get there. For me personally, I was just proud of the boys. To watch them put everything together in those final four games and finish the job was a great moment. As a team, I think everyone felt that they had earned it."

Throughout the season, the Rockies found themselves in several big games, including various tournament finals, but struggled to close things out. According to Ewing, finally doing that came down to little moments during the game that made a big difference.

"The biggest thing (that went right in their last four playoff games compared to other big games earlier in the season) was execution in big moments. Earlier in the year, there were times where we might not get the key hit, make the key pitch, or finish an inning the way we needed to. In these last four games, those things started to come together."

"The boys played with confidence," Ewing added. "They got timely hits, made pitches under pressure, ran the bases well and trusted each other defensively. They also did a better job staying calm in tight situations, especially in the 1-0 win over Talons. That game showed a lot of growth."

As Ewing reflected on the season, he praised the group for always fighting back when they faced adversity.

"What stands out most about this season is the growth and resilience of our team. Competing against strong op-

ponents all year, the players finished with an impressive 30-15 record, reached four tournament championship games and captured the LDBA Playoff Championship. What makes those accomplishments even more meaningful is the dedication these athletes showed while balancing baseball with school, work and other commitments.

"They faced challenges throughout the season, but they never stopped learning, improving and supporting one another," continued Ewing. "Time and time again, different players stepped up in big moments, reflecting the depth, character and selflessness of the group."

That resilience, Ewing said, made them deserving of the LDBA post-season championship.

"While the wins and championship are certainly memorable, what I'll remember most from my time with this group is the culture this team built. Watching them grow as players and as young adults was incredibly rewarding, and those lessons will stay with them. In the end, they became the team we believed they could be. Winning the LDBA playoffs was a great reward for the work they put in all season."



Community Liaison Committee

The next Community Liaison Committee Meeting will be held on **Thursday, September 10th at 6 p.m.** at the St. Marys Municipal Operations Center. Members of the public who wish to observe are welcome to attend.

Residents who wish to speak in front of the Committee may submit a detailed request in writing to the Committee. The request will be considered by the Committee and approved prior to the meeting.

Please submit all requests, questions, and concerns for the meeting to kara.pelissero@vcimentos.com by

Tuesday, September 8 at 12 p.m.

MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



(CHARIS MUHTAR PHOTO)

Finn Aarts sends the ball sailing into the air during a Veterinary Purchasing Ltd. U9 WOBA Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Mitchell Grant throws the ball from the outfield during a St. Marys Firefighters U11 OBA Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Violet Holliday pitches the ball towards home plate during a Wildwood Care Centre U15 HPFL Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Addison (Candy) Poetker wires a shot on goal from along the wing during a U11 Girls Tier Two St. Marys Storm game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Ava Hansford passes the ball up through the midfield during a U15 Girls Tier Three St. Marys Storm game.



(CHARIS MUHTAR PHOTO)

Macklin Hern boots the ball towards the middle of the field during a U18 Boys Tier Three St. Marys Storm game.

MINOR SPORTS **SCRAPBOOK**



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Tessa Benny makes a throw to second base during a Hubbard Pharmacy Ltd. U9 HPFL Blue St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Bryson Nairn whacks the ball into play during a Happy Valley Family Health Team U11 HL Grey St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Makeda Campbell Cuero blasts the ball off the bat during a St. Marys Kinsmen U13 HPFL Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Hank McArthur stretches out for a catch during a St. Marys Optometry U15 HL Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Dean Feeney blasts home a long-range goal from the midfield during a U12 Boys Tier Two St. Marys Storm game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Andrea Dingman fires a shot towards the opposition's net during a U17 Girls Tier Three St. Marys Storm game.

MINOR SPORTS **SCRAPBOOK**



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Cohen Davies tosses the ball towards home plate during a Social Thirty-One U9 WOBA Blue St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Scarlett Maddock makes a throw to first base during a Dunny’s Source For Sports U11 HPFL Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Shea McCutcheon loads up a throw from the outfield during a Gray Ridge Eggs U13 HL Blue St. Marys Rockies game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Brady Stacey registers a hit during a McLean Taylor Construction U15 WOBA Red St. Marys Rockies game.



(CHARIS MUHTAR PHOTO)
Pierce Bennett fires the ball up the midfield during a U12 Boys Tier Three St. Marys Storm game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)
Ayden Eidt wires a shot towards the opposing team’s goal during a U15 Boys Tier Three St. Marys Storm game.

COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Whispers of September – finding joy in autumn rhythms

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

Ready or not, the start of another school year is just around the corner. With classes starting next week, children across town are busily speculating about who will share their classroom this year, while parents brace themselves for the return of structured mornings – early alarm clocks, packing endless lunchboxes and mapping out the puzzle of after-school schedules.

Yet, as chaotic as it all sounds, I caught myself feeling a sudden wave of nostalgia recently. I realized I actually missed that morning drive to school and the grounding rhythm it brings to our days. There is a quiet excitement in these new beginnings – meeting Alex's new teacher, stepping back into the school halls and welcoming the crisp turn of the season.

Every year, like clockwork, I find myself singing a song of admiration to Canadian fall. This year is no exception. Even though the calendar tells us it is still technically summer, these cool early mornings are already hinting at fall. The weather is still perfect for my 5 a.m. walks, and I can barely describe the pure magic of downtown St. Marys and the riverbank right before sunrise.

There is a powerful contrast between the surrounding stillness and the quiet inspiration floating in the air. In those moments, the world feels completely empty – a calm, open canvas waiting to be filled with my own thoughts and morning phone calls home to my mother in Ukraine. It is a wonderfully different feeling from daytime walks, when the streets come alive and you stop to greet neighbors and friends.

It is the season of cinnamon rolls, steaming mugs of spicy tea and the nostalgic magic of fall fairs. There is a comforting rhythm to this time of year that makes the quiet shift in the weather feel like a celebration rather than a farewell to summer.

We are lucky to live close to the school here in St.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ALONA VASYLIEVA)

From sunrise strolls along the river to after-school routines; embracing the sweet, crisp transition into September.

Marys, which saves us from the hustle of a long morning bus commute. There is absolute bliss in dropping Alex off early, right before the energetic rush and morning noise begin. We even have our own little morning routine on the road – a favourite playlist for our short drive, even if the trip is just long enough for a single song. I cherish those few precious minutes together, listening to

him share his plans, ideas and quiet thoughts for the day ahead. It is a simple habit, but one that grounds us both before the world speeds up.

With September, a renewed sense of adulthood always seems to return. I feel a strong wave of responsibility and even a hint of anxiety about keeping up with the new schedule, but, honestly, I love that feeling. It pushes us to reset and build better routines.

Right now, I am on a hunt for comforting, easy week-night dinner recipes to keep our evenings running smoothly. In fact, I am finally considering buying a crockpot, which feels like a major milestone in my journey to becoming fully Canadian! There is something wonderfully reassuring about prepping a warm meal in the morning and coming home to a cozy house filled with the smell of home-cooked food.

And then, of course, comes the hunt for extracurriculars. Parents suddenly find themselves piecing together schedules to keep kids active and entertained. In many ways, it feels just like summer, except now, the action shifts entirely indoors.

This school year feels especially exciting because Alex is now eligible for after-school fun at the Youth Centre at the Pyramid Recreation Centre, designed for kids starting in Grade 3. He is thrilled to hang out with his friends after class, and I feel so thankful and relieved not to have to rely on friends for after-school pickups while I am at work. Having access to great community resources like this is truly a blessing.

As fall arrives, I find myself cherishing the simple things: that one favourite song on the school run with Alex, a warm cup of tea and the calm rhythm of a regular day. September reminds us that every fresh start brings its own quiet joy.

To every parent currently navigating the back-to-school puzzle, may your mornings run smoothly, your coffee stay hot and your heart be full as a new chapter begins. Wishing all our local families a gentle, joy-filled transition into the new school year!

Andrew L. Hodges

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We are writing to share that effective **August 31, 2026** **DR Robinson Fabricating Ltd.** is embarking on a new chapter; part of this change is moving to a new facility that offers continued customer support.

Our physical location change will be combined with Ryan Smith owner of **Harviv Welding Ltd.**

Going forward please continue to contact DR Robinson using the current phone number **519.284.3351** and email address dr.robinsonfab@gmail.com

Thank you for your continued support as we move forward.

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Chautauqua

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

The front page of the St. Marys Journal on June 27, 1918, reflected the community's concerns at that time. The Great War in Europe had lasted almost four full years and, although some gains were being made on the front lines, an end to the devastating conflict was not yet in sight. Many residents had husbands, sons, brothers, friends serving with the Canadian armed forces and there was constant anxiety about their wellbeing. The main local news items concerned rationing and the sale of Victory Bonds. Among letters from subscribers – given front page status – an Usborne farmer complained about Daylight Saving. Miss Dawson, a member of the Kirkton "Help-a-Bit" club, shared letters from two Canadian soldiers, thanking her for the packages of socks and maple sugar they had received. They briefly described life in the trenches. By 1918, St. Marys folks had some idea of how terrible those conditions were. Rationing and conscription were in force at home. People were still fiercely patriotic but weary and anxious for peace.

On the same front page, prominent in the top righthand corner, was a more cheerful news item. Chautauqua was coming to St. Marys for the week beginning July 31. Chautauqua was the name given to travelling tent shows that originated in the United States and spread into Canada. The Chautauqua Institution was established in 1874 on the shores of Lake Chautauqua in New York State. It was a summer school combining adult education in arts and culture with "morally uplifting" recreation. To make their programs more accessible, by 1904, travelling Chautauqua troupes who performed in large tents were sent on the road throughout the United States. By 1917, Chautauquas were visiting many towns in Canada's western provinces with a few also crossing Lake Ontario from New York. In the summer of 1918, St. Marys was hosting a Chautauqua for the very first time.

The six-week lead time before Chautauqua arrived was needed. An advance team had visited to organize a local committee, explaining that Chautauqua was a business with travel expenses and performers' wages to be paid. The committee first had to find guarantors, backers to underwrite Chautauqua week. The article in the St. Marys Journal gave the names of 20 local business and professional men who contributed money (perhaps \$20 or \$25 each) as surety for a profitable venture. On the local committee, J. K. Richardson was in charge of ticket sales; Dr. Knox and W. N. Harrison were team captains organizing the ticket sales drive. Adult tickets, entitling the holders to the entire week's afternoon and evening performances were \$2.00, \$1.00 for children from six to 14 years of age. There were also special free children's programs each morning.

The Journal provided other details: The Chautauqua tent would be large enough to accommodate the "great crowds expected from the neighbouring communities" and the committee planned to find space "for the parking of up to 1,000 automobiles." There would be food and drink available, non-alcoholic, of course – in 1918, Prohibition was in effect. The article stated: "The young ladies from the McConnell Club and the Rumsey Chapter IODE will serve refreshments from booths on the grounds....The town will be beautifully decorated for the entire week, and the hospitality committee will do their utmost to make you welcome." Some regular newspaper advertisers promoted the special event. W. N. Harrison, who sold insurance, placed a display ad, stating: "You have always intended taking out a Life Policy, so do it Chautauqua Week. You will always remember what Chautauqua did for you." St. Marys Hardware was advertising "Hay Forks, Hay Fork Rope, Hay Fork Pulleys," but also seemed to suggest that farm families should take a break from haying: "Don't Forget July 31st to August 6th Chautauqua Week!"

On July 11, a large display ad provided more details about the event, explaining: "What Chautauqua Week



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

This view from the west ward across the Thames River shows tents set up on the Flats for the touring Chautauqua, in 1918.

Means." During the week, "the citizens of St. Marys and vicinity will have the opportunity of listening to some of the best Lecturers, Singers, Violinists, etc. what we have on the American Continent." Was it religious – like revival meetings, also held in tents? The answer to that question was: "No, it is inspirational education. The speakers are non-denominational in their addresses." If the event made a profit, the local committee would "turn it over entirely to Patriotic purposes." Ticket holders received a program giving each session's speakers and performing artists."

Although the St. Marys Museum has several Chautauqua programs from the 1920s, unfortunately, the 1918 program is not in the archives. The Journal reported that the event was successful, with "Some 1,500 people from St. Marys and surrounding country attending the evening entertainments in the Chautauqua tent and possibly 1,000 to 1,200 each afternoon." On Sunday evening, there was "a sacred patriotic concert given by local talent and Chautauqua talent. The chair was ably filled by Dr. Knox, and readings were given by Agnes Knox Black, who so generously assists her native town during the summer while she and Professor Black are holidaying here." The "Chautauqua talent" included "Miss Farner, soloist, and the Tchaikovsky Quartet."

W. A. McIntyre's pharmacy also sold "The New Edison – the Phonograph with a Soul!" According to his large ad in the Journal on July 25, this record-player had been "selected to re-create musical programs at the Chautauqua in St. Marys." It would be used every morning during the Junior Chautauqua sessions. At the special concert on the last evening, "Willard Osborne, the phenomenal young violinist, will play in union with the New Edison Phonograph. It will here be shown that Thomas A. Edison's wonderful invention actually RECREATES music and so truthfully that no human ear can detect a shade of difference!"

Chautauqua returned to St. Marys every summer throughout the 1920s. The seniors interviewed for Bruce Hicks' 1984 book, *Reflections*, had very positive memories of these occasions. The programs expanded after the war ended, including three-act plays – some that were later made into movies – and exotic performers such as Hawaiian dancers and Russian Cossacks. Lecturers spoke about India, China and Arabia. Other topics included Modern Canadian Poets" and "The Dominion and its Destiny." Lawrence May recalled that his introduction to Shakespeare was at Chautauqua.

Frances Dale remembered, "Chautauqua, yes, a big, khaki-coloured tent down on the Flats. The common way of getting in was under the flaps! We tried! I remember a play, *The Seven Keys to Baldpate*, a mystery

play. It was terribly exciting." Helen Mills Wilson also remembered that play, especially its handsome lead actor, Percival Vivian. "I was enthralled at that age." Helen took part in a tableau on a very hot summer afternoon session that included local talent. "It was a tableau of the different countries and I was Britannia. Here I was laden with all this drapery stuff and a crown and a tripod and shield. I don't know why I didn't melt right on the spot."

The touring Chautauquas did not survive the hard economic times and changing trends in family entertainment of the 1930s. The tented productions had stopped long before the outbreak of World War II. The original Chautauqua Institution in New York is still active, offering rich and varied summer programs. But for small Ontario communities such as St. Marys, the talent and excitement the touring Chautauquas delivered was not surpassed until 1953 when the Stratford Shakespearean Festival raised another large tent in Queen's Park overlooking the Avon River.

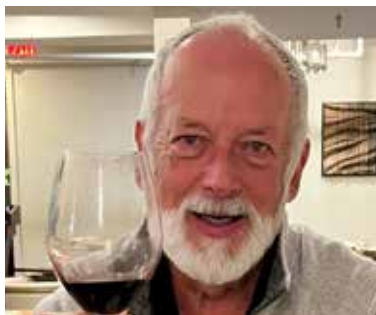
SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS FOR ST. MARYS COUNCIL CANDIDATES!

With the municipal election on Oct. 26 just around the corner, the St. Marys Independent is asking you, our readers, to submit the questions you'd like the candidates to answer.

Send us your most pressing questions to info@stmarysindependent.com and we'll send them to the candidates and then we'll print their answers in an upcoming edition of the St. Marys Independent.



OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Canada's biggest hotel gets a full re-fresh



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

For many of us, simply planning to renovate a bathroom or a kitchen is an almost mind-boggling challenge. Now, imagine the full-scale renovation project involving the largest hotel in the country.

But that's what they have accomplished at Toronto's Chelsea Hotel. And this is, indeed, the largest hotel in Canada, stretching up 24 floors and including 1,588 guest rooms, plus all of the amenities you would expect at a popular downtown Toronto hotel.

Tracy Ford is director of public relations at the Chelsea. She's also a friend and a colleague – Tracy was president of the Travel Media Association for two years and I was her vice president, eventually succeeding her in that role. I have nothing but admiration for this woman, and when she told me her hotel was doing something special, I believed her.

And then she invited us to stay at the Chelsea for a couple of nights, which happily coincided with our tickets to a Blue Jays game.

This gave me the chance to check out the new and improved Chelsea for myself. And yes, it is

new and improved.

The rooms have always been comfortable, and that has not changed, though the décor in all 1,588 rooms has been refreshed. But the most dramatic features of the hotel are found in the shared spaces.

For instance, the Chelsea has two indoor pools, one in an adults-only area, and the other featuring a waterslide.

The latter, branded as The Cove, is one of three recreation spaces designed for children and families. Tracy explained this area – collectively known as “The Hive” – is intended “to inspire curiosity, creativity and connection.” The Hive includes The Workshop, which offers hands-on, play-based activities for kids; The Studio, offering creative content, digital play and social connection for older kids; and The Cove, with Toronto's only 130-corkscrew waterslide.

The Chelsea used to have two restaurants – one a casual, breakfast and lunch kind of place, and the other a smaller bar and restaurant. Those are gone. The main dining establishment is now known as The Elm Tavern, much expanded from the earlier pub but still featuring the excellent service I remember from my previous, pre-renovation stays at the Chelsea. The new pub offers a feature I don't recall from earlier days – live entertainment. A solo guitarist/singer performed while we enjoyed an excellent dining experience.

Adults looking for recreation and relaxation away from a family atmosphere enjoy The Heights, the hotel's adults-only retreat on the 24th floor. The Heights includes cardio and

strength-training equipment and the heated, indoor “Skyline Pool.” In fine weather, comfortable chaise longues are located on the outdoor Horizon Deck, where visitors can enjoy a birds-eye view of Canada's largest city.

I am intrigued that the new version of the Chelsea includes a feature I have never encountered in a hotel – Escape Room experiences. And no, I don't mean a struggle to exit your hotel room. The hotel is now home to “Time Zone Escapes” – two private, 60-minute escape rooms, one called “The Curse of the Evil Genie” and the other, “Blackbeard's Brig.” Full disclosure: I have personally experienced escape rooms, and it turns out, I am terrible at them. Doomed from the start. But I know many people who love the experience, and I find it fascinating it is now available on the lobby level of a hotel. I suspect Time Zone Escapes will be one of the most popular features of the Chelsea.

The Chelsea also has an event space branded as “Monarch's,” which features live music and other entertainment, usually with a cover charge discounted for Chelsea guests.

The Chelsea, now part of the Langham Group (although not branded as such), first opened in 1975. Rumour had it in recent years that the downtown property was going to be converted into condominiums. But that concept was abandoned, and the ownership devoted a lot of time and effort to recreating a hotel whose welcome is as large as its footprint in the city.

That footprint is not only related to its size and location.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHELSEA)

Toronto's Chelsea hotel is the largest hotel in Canada.

The Chelsea has long been committed to good corporate citizenship. The hotel partners with local charities including the Daily Bread Food Bank, “Ask for Angela” Safe Space program (protecting people facing gender-based violence); and SickKids Hospital, which has received well over \$1 million in charitable donations from the Chelsea.

A unique element of the SickKids program involves the bee hives on the Chelsea roof. The Chelsea sells honey from those hives to benefit the Hospital for Sick Children.

The Chelsea is also committed to sustainable operations. Tracy told me “the hotel has achieved the coveted EarthCheck Gold Certification, which recognizes eight consecutive years of

commitment to environmental and social responsibility. This places the hotel as a leader in the unique worldwide group of sustainable tourism operators that are certified to the internationally recognized EarthCheck Company Standard.”

Of course, there are a number of fine hotels in downtown Toronto, but I am happy to feature the Chelsea this week, both because of the impressive renovation program just completed and because of the hotel's commitment to giving back to its community.

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.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

The new Elm Tavern.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHELSEA)

The Heights, the 24th-floor adults-only relaxation spot.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Brewery equipment evokes the atmosphere of a tavern.

FROM THE GARDEN: The garden's daily rhythm



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

We all know someone who is a 'morning person'. That early riser who enjoys the first light of day, has eaten their breakfast and has accomplished a couple of tasks before the rest of us have rolled out of bed. And then there are the 'night owls'. They start or continue to work on projects well into the night after everyone has gone to bed.

There are flowering plants in our gardens that also fall into a daily rhythm or pattern. Morning bloomers and evening blooming flowers open according to light intensity, temperature shifts, and their internal circadian clocks.

The circadian clock in plants

is a self-sustaining, 24-hour biological timer driven by genetic feedback. Unlike animals with a central brain clock, most individual plant cells possess their own timing mechanism. It allows plants to anticipate dawn, optimize photosynthesis, respond to pollinators, and coordinate seasonal growth. The rise and fall levels of specific proteins and genes activate or repress one another in a continuous cycle. Sugars produced during photosynthesis feed back into the system to help fine-tune the timing of the clock. As well, sunlight and temperature shifts function as cues to re-sync the internal rhythm to the exact 24-hour external day. (<https://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/learning/trails/plant-rhythms/>)

Morning Glories (*Ipomoea purpurea*), native to Central and South America, have made themselves at home in our gardens. They unfurl their petals when daylight reaches a threshold intensity, typically open between 5-7 a.m., triggering their internal circadian mechanism, and close by midday. The light

intensity is their main cue with the bright morning sun. Cooler temperatures or cloudy mornings delay their opening. Morning Glories also synchronize with pollinators that are most active in the morning.

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) is a low-growing succulent weed/garden plant with tiny yellow flowers open only during the morning hours. Ontario native spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohien-sis*) is another early bloomer. Its purple blue or violet flowers open in the cool of the morning and typically close by midday or early afternoon.

As for the late bloomers, the Four O'Clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*) open when light intensity drops and temperatures decrease, typically between 4-8 p.m. Cooler late afternoon air is the main signal for the petals to expand as well as lower light initiates the flower's opening. They have evolved to attract hawkmoths, which are active at dusk and night. Normally they stay open for 16 to 18 hours and close the following morning as the temperature rises.



Evening Primrose (*Oenothera*), hence its name, opens at sunset or dusk and closes by late morning the following day. Individual blooms typically last just a single day or night. Nicotiana or flowering tobacco is another night bloomer, flowering at dusk and releasing its fragrance at night. Moonflower (*Ipomoea*

alba) is a night blooming cousin of the Morning Glory, opening its flowers at twilight.

The plants in our gardens have a daily rhythm, much like us. Our gardens are a 24-hour theatre with different botanical performers taking the stage displaying their beauty and versatility at contrasting times of the day.

UNDERSTANDING GEN Z: Frindle



MEREDITH A. STOKES

Independent Columnist

In fifth grade, my class read Frindle by Andrew Clement. The book follows a middle-school boy named Nick Allen who starts replacing the word "pen" with "frindle," starting a school war and sparking a worldwide obsession with what words actually mean. The result is "frindle" is entered into a college dictionary 10 years later, when Nick is 21 years old.

Back then, this book

was just a fun story for us. We really didn't get that it was supposed to mean something. However, now that I listen to the kids around me saying things like "Chat, you been pulling the huzz lately," "She was gonna to cook up, but the other team ate and left no crumbs," "The fit is fitting, it's giving cute-sy," and "He was rizzing, lowkey I ship," I'm definitely understanding the concept of our influence on language.

For most of my life, I was as baffled by modern slang and brainrot as adults were. I really didn't understand why there was a need to invent our own words when there were already roughly one million available to get our point across. Younger me would be disgusted by the amount of times I have said the words "lowkey"

and "huzz" in the last week.

So, what's the point of all this gibberish? According to Google, it's about "belonging, fast communication, generation gap and internet culture." Actually, that's mostly right. Our wonky language is basically one big inside joke, and the adults are the punch line. After a while though, we just get so used to these words that they become a part of our vocabulary. The Oxford Dictionary has actually entered words such as "mansplaining" into its ranks and named "rizz" word of the year in 2023. According to Dictionary.com, "six seven" was the word of the year in 2025.

It makes you wonder if language really exists. You can't say that there's set-in-stone rules to follow, then change them ev-

ery decade. It's interesting to think that probably every word originates from one person like Nick Allen that just started using it. It catches on and centuries later, the world doesn't know the difference. It's not just our generation. It's every generation.

So maybe you can't understand what your kid is

saying most of the time, but rest assured that is how it has always been and how it probably will be until the end of humanity. It's our way of fitting in with the crowd even if everything else about us screams, "I'm different." You may not realize it, but the way a person talks is a big part of first impres-

sions.

Next time someone tells you you're "capping frfr," just remember that you're not actually supposed to know what it means. Laugh and smile and, just for fun, pull out a bit of slang from your childhood. That'll mess with their heads.

Straight From The Shelves

By Laura McAsh, St. Marys Public Library

Looking for a fun night out with friends? Look no further than the St. Marys Public Library's next Make and Take! Join us Wednesday, September 23 from 6 to 8 p.m. for our "Mandala Mug" craft! Participants will unwind and get creative as they use colourful paint and dotting tools to decorate a mug. This event is for patrons over 18 and there is a recommended donation of \$20 on the night of the program. To register, please visit this link: tinyurl.com/Make-and-Take-Mandala-Mugs.

Up This Week

Fri., Sept. 4: Open 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sat., Sept. 5: Dungeons & Dragons (10 a.m.)

Mon., Sept. 7: CLOSED

Tues., Sept. 8: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Wed., Sept. 9: EarlyON Play & Read (9:30 - 10:30 a.m.), Mahjong (1-4 p.m.), FOL Social (6:30-8 p.m.)

Thurs., Sept. 10: Library Board Meeting (6:45 p.m.)

A flag raising at St. Marys town hall in honour of Overdose Awareness Day on Aug. 31 was rescheduled to Sept. 5 at 9 a.m. due to rain. All are welcome.

Riddles

I fly without wings, I cry without eyes. Whenever I go, darkness flies. What am I?
A cloud.

The more you take, the more you leave behind. What am I?
Footsteps.

I'm full of keys but can't open any doors. What am I?
A piano.

I'm tall when I'm young, and short when I'm old. What am I?
A candle.

I can be cracked, made, told, and played. What am I?
A joke.

I'm not alive, but I can grow. I don't have lungs, but I need air. What am I?
A fire.

I'm round and bright and seen at night, but sometimes I'm gone from sight. What am I?
The moon.

I can run but never walk, I have a bed but never sleep. What am I?
A river.

I shine bright in the sky, but I'm not the sun. Kids wish on me when the day is done. What am I?
A star.

You can hear me and feel me, but you can't see me. I make trees dance. What am I?
The wind.

- Word Search -



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AUGUST 2026 NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

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P U C Z E Q D X M W G P C B D K O K R F

- Lloyd Robertson
- Bad lettuce
- Natalie Harp
- US Trade War
- Mark Carney
- Lake Ontario
- Angry toddler
- Google Maps
- Dolly Parton
- Nepal flash flood
- Lindsay Clancy



The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK



Amelia Silcox (3)

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



Celebrating the long weekend? Keep pets away from barbecue foods, alcohol, and corn cobs, ensure they have plenty of fresh water, and never leave them in a parked vehicle.

Have a safe and happy Labour Day weekend with your furry family members!



NUGGET

Our pet of the week is Nugget, a bichon/shih tzu/toy poodle. Nugget is 12 weeks old and at eight weeks he was only 0.68 lbs. He loves playing with the kittens. Precious puppy of Trevor and Robin Esau.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent



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Thorndale's Fall Fair Ambassador program

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Thorndale Fall Fair is the community highlight of the year. Besides the midway fun and interesting exhibits, it is also a showcase of agriculture, talent and pride.

People of all ages enter in the various competition categories, one of which is the Thorndale Fall Fair Ambassador program, open to anyone aged 17 to 24 years who resides in the Thorndale Fair area.

The Thorndale fair ambassador contestants are judged on their community knowledge and involvement, knowledge of agriculture, their personality and an oral presentation. The selected 2026 Thorndale fair ambassador will spend one year representing the Thorndale Agricultural Society at various events, attending leadership training opportunities and two overnight trips to Toronto. They will also receive a \$1,000 scholarship presented at the society's annual meeting.

The 2025-2026 Thorndale fair ambassador, Beth McCallum, participated in last year's fair activities, attended the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies District 13 meeting last fall and the convention last February in Toronto. Recently, she represented the Thorndale Fair

at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) Ambassador of Fairs Leadership Program in Toronto.

"The CNE was an amazing opportunity to meet other young adult ambassador leaders from across Ontario," said McCallum. "The CNE put on many amazing seminars to help the ambassadors prepare for the Ambassador of the Fairs Competition as well as skills that can be transferred into the workplace. One of the seminars was about composing ourselves in a personal setting where we learned about posture and body language. We had the opportunity to talk about our fairs and communities, and exchange ideas. Sharing those ideas at our fair board meetings helps with becoming a better leader.

"This ambassador program has given me so much more confidence in my public speaking. If you are passionate about agriculture or just love your community and want to represent them, the ambassador program is perfect. You will learn life skills that you will bring with you throughout your life."

For more information on the Thorndale Fall Fair Ambassador program, contact Laura Langford at 519-319-0214 or lj.langford@gmail.com, or visit www.thorndalefair.com/ambassador-program/.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF BETH MCCALLUM)

Thorndale Fall Fair Ambassador Beth McCallum at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto for the Ambassador of the Fairs Leadership Program.

Country Mills celebrates student employees with appreciation barbecue



(PEGGY SEGEREN PHOTO)

Country Mills in Thorndale celebrated its student employees with a Student Appreciation BBQ Aug. 26, recognizing their hard work and dedication throughout the summer. Pictured from left are Jack Ciufo, Tyler Clark, Cooper Clark, Riley Chowen and Faith Farquhar. Cooper, Faith and Riley will return to university next month, while Jack and Tyler will head back to high school. The students work throughout the business in the warehouse, customer service, mill office and retail store.

Community Live Auction set for Sept. 5 in Thorndale

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Live farm auctions were once a mainstay of rural Ontario life, serving as both an economic engine and a social gathering place.

In the 1800s, auctions were essential for settlers who needed to redistribute tools, livestock and seed when families arrived to homestead or moved on. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, dedicated sales barns emerged along railway lines, selling and moving horses and cattle to markets across the province.

For generations, these auctions functioned as a social gathering, a community marketplace and news exchange network. But the rise of online bidding platforms, higher operating costs and the consolidation of family farms have led to fewer local estate and farm live auctions.

George Taylor of Purple Hill Auction & Country Music Hall remembers the era well.

"We built our hall in 1992 for auctions of cattle, machinery, household estates. We would also go out to the farms when needed," he said. "A live auction was the community coming together. It was entertainment and the thrill of getting a bargain all at once."

Taylor says he is excited to bring that experience back.

"We're thrilled to be hosting a live auction again featuring unique antiques any road show would be proud to sell, plus trailers, ATVs and so much more," he said.

The auction takes place Saturday, Sept. 5, at 11 a.m. at Purple Hill Country Hall, 20903 Purple Hill Road, Thorndale, and the public is welcome.

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OBITUARY

Van der Spank



We are heartbroken to announce the sudden passing of Paul Van der Spank, a beloved husband, devoted father, and cherished Papa, who passed away peacefully at home in his sleep on August 24, 2026, two weeks before his 70th birthday.

He will be forever missed by his wife and best friend Debbie (nee Johnson), his children Dana (Jason), Michele (Sam), Mark (Stevie) and his grandchildren Raelyn and Bryson, McKinley, Presley, Lennox and Louella, Adrienne and Stanley. He will be fondly remembered by his siblings Rob, Liz Murray (Rob), Karen Findlater (Dave), Fran Rowse, Brien (Linda), Bruce, Chris (Jessica), and Steve (Kim), his mother-in-law Jean Johnson, brother-in-law Bob Johnson, sister-in-law Jane Johnson, and his many nieces and nephews. Paul was predeceased by his parents Gil and Ria Van der Spank, father-in-law Ray Johnson, and sister-in-law Judy Johnson.

As the eldest of nine, Paul was an incredible brother and role model to his siblings. His early years in Belmont were filled with family and friendships that would last a lifetime, where he was one of the ‘Belmont Boys’. Here he began playing minor hockey and developed his love of the game that would become such an important part of his life.

Paul went on to play Junior B hockey with the St. Mary’s Lincolns, where he became captain and proudly led the team to a Sutherland Cup championship in 1976. Some of his fondest memories were made during his time with the Lincolns, where he formed many lifelong friendships. He was honoured in 2020 with a banner on the wall of fame, a fitting tribute to his years with the team.

It was also through playing for the Lincolns that Paul met the love of his life, Debbie, and they shared more than 50 wonderful years together. They built a beautiful life on the farm, where they raised their three children and created a home filled with love, laughter and countless memories. Through all of life’s joys and challenges, Paul and Debbie were devoted partners and best friends, always by each other’s side.

Paul worked tirelessly throughout his life, dedicating himself to his career in sales, the family farm, and raising his family. Paul was a strong, loving and supportive father. He always encouraged his children, taught them the value of hard work, and led by example. Above all, he instilled in them a strong sense of family and how important it is to be there for one another.

As a Papa, nothing brought him more joy than watching his grandchildren grow. He adored them and loved being involved in their lives, rarely missing any event or milestone they were a part of. Paul leaves a tremendous hole in the lives of all who knew and loved him. His love, laughter, kindness and the countless memories he created with his family and friends will live on forever in our hearts and in the hearts of everyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

The family invites you to celebrate Paul’s life on Wednesday, September 2, 2026, from 2:00-5:00 p.m. at the Dorchester Christian Family Centre. 1256 Cromarty Dr, Dorchester. Speeches and sharing of memories will take place at 4:00 p.m.

Donations in Paul’s memory may be made to your local minor sports association, in support of the youth and communities that meant so much to him.

Online condolences may be made at www.forestlawnmemorial.ca

THANK YOU

Craig

The family of Florence Grace Craig would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who helped us honour and celebrate the life of our beloved mother.

We extend our sincere thanks to Andrew Hodges Funeral Home for their compassionate care, guidance and support throughout this difficult time, and to Lyric Flowers for the beautiful floral arrangements that helped make Mom’s celebration so special. We are grateful to the Royal Canadian Legion for providing the luncheon and creating a warm gathering place for family and friends following the service.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to Rev. Pirrie Mitchell for the beautiful and meaningful sermon, to St. Marys United Church for providing such a beautiful setting, and to the organist for the beautiful music that added so much meaning to the service. Our sincere thanks also go to the Eastern Star for leading the service and helping us honour Mom in such a special and meaningful way, as well as to everyone who participated in the service and interment. Our deepest appreciation goes to the staff at Stratford Rotary Hospice for the exceptional care, compassion, dignity and kindness they gave Mom during her final days. The love and support shown to Mom and to our family brought comfort during a very difficult time, and we will carry that gratitude with us always.

We would also like to thank our family, friends and community for the many thoughtful donations made in Mom’s memory to the Canadian Cancer Society, Stratford Rotary Hospice, My Sister’s Place, and Stratford Perth OSNP. Your generosity is a wonderful reflection of the caring spirit Mom carried throughout her life.

To the many family members and friends who helped plan, organize and prepare the details of Mom’s celebration of life, we cannot thank you enough. Your time, energy, creativity and love helped create a day that was truly reflective of Mom and the life she lived. You helped turn what could have been a day filled only with sadness into a beautiful celebration of her life, her relationships and the legacy she leaves behind.

We are also deeply grateful to everyone who attended the visitation, service and interment, sent flowers, cards and messages, shared stories and memories, offered prayers, brought food, made donations, or simply reached out to let us know you were thinking of us. Every gesture, no matter how big or small, brought comfort to our family and reminded us how many lives Mom touched. It was a beautiful day filled with love, laughter, memories and celebration—a day that truly honoured our mother and the remarkable legacy she left behind.

Mom was the light and love of our family. She was the heart that brought us together, the person whose love made our family feel like home, and the one who found joy in caring for the people around her. Her love was present in the little things, in the memories she created, in the traditions she cherished, and in the countless ways she cared for her children, grandchildren, family and friends. Although our hearts are heavy with her loss, we are grateful for the extraordinary gift of having had her in our lives. Her love will continue to guide us, her memories will continue to bring us together, and her legacy will live on through all of us who were fortunate enough to love her.

Thank you for helping us celebrate not only the life of our mother, but the beautiful light she brought into all of our lives.

With heartfelt gratitude and love,
The Family of Florence Grace Craig

THANK YOU

McKenny

The family of the late Mark McKenny would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for all the support given to us during this difficult time. A sincere thank you for the excellent care, Mark received from Dr. Gatfield, Dr. Haffner, Dr. Peel and all the doctors, nurses and staff of the St Marys Memorial Hospital, Happy Valley Family Health Team and Hubbard Pharmacy. To Heather and the amazing team at the VON Adult Day Program for their compassionate care. Our thanks to Andrew Hodges for his guidance during this time. To Rev Diana Bowland and our friends at St James Anglican Church and members of the St Marys Legion Br. 236 and Ladies Auxiliary for their wonderful contributions and tributes.

The many phone calls, messages, cards, visits, food and flowers were all appreciated and brought great comfort.

Marlene & Andrea
Janice, Laurie & Families

IN MEMORIAM



IN LOVING MEMORY OF

A loving Mother, Grandmother, Great-Grandmother
and Great Great Grandmother

Maria A. Megens

who passed away Sept. 6, 1985

Though her smile is gone forever,
And her hands we cannot touch,
Still we have so many memories,
Of the one we loved so much.
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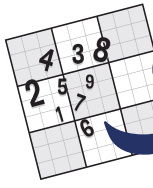
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4		1			5	9		

Solutions on pg. 35

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CLASSIFIED ADS

WANTED TO BUY

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

WANTED

I will pay cash for antiques and collectibles. Coca Cola, Pepsi or any pop company. Brewery items - Kuntz, Huether Labatts, etc. Old radios and gramophones, wristwatches, pocket watches, old fruit jars - Beaver Star, Bee Hive etc. Any old oil cans and signs - Red Indian, Supertest etc. Any small furniture. If you are moving or cleaning out stuff please contact me at 519-570-6920.

FOR SALE

Shade Trees; Maples, Oaks, Birch, Beech, Honey Locusts, Elms, Magnolia, Hydrangea Tree, Tulip Tree, Crab apples, Ivory Silk Lilac, Chanticleer Pear, Golden Weeping Willows and more. Apples, Pears, Peaches, Plums, Apricots, Nectarine, Blueberry, Haskap etc. Lots of healthy strong Spruce, Cedars and White Pine for your privacy hedges and windbreaks. Hundrceds of flowering shrubs. Reg Hours: 7am- 6pm Mon-Sat at Martins Nursery c/o Emanuel Martin. 42661 Orangehill Rd., Wroxeter, ON

WANTED

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

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Junk Removal - Garbage, Basements, Yards, Dump Runs Call Mike 519-276-7766

FOR RENT

Ground level, new studio apartment. 5 appliances, spacious walk in shower. Outdoor patio area. Small and efficient. Infloor heating and water included. 3 blocks from downtown St Marys. Available after Aug 31st. References required. Call 519-697-1925.

FOR SALE

AFG treadmill for sale, new running belt, \$550. Call 226 301 4442.

FOR RENT

Ideal for seniors, spacious 1 bedroom apt, ground level access, walk in shower, wood floors , high ceilings, eat in kitchen, large outdoor deck area. Close to downtown, available Oct 1st. References required. Call 519-697-1925

FOR SALE

Craftex Table Saw CX201, Power Fist 6 inch Bench Grinder, King Variable Speed 16 inch Scroll Saw, Table Router, Busy Bee 6 inch Belt and 9 inch Disc Sander Unit, Busy Bee Rex-Cut 6 inch Jointer. Call 519-461-0705

LEAF MULCHING

Have your leaves mulched, no raking or bagging required. Fully insured, reasonable rates.. Call 519-933-8636

FOR SALE

Upright Freezer 6.5 Cubic FT- 3 years old. Please call 519-284-1326

WANTED

Needed 1 Bedroom Apartment and parking around St. Marys. Please call 519-284-1326

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Schroeder

2. Sapphire

3. Two

4. Pomology

5. Also known as

6. St. Bernard

7. Seven

8. Kid

9. Soccer Ball

10. All gods

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

CELEBRATION

TIME: OPENHOUSE 1 - 4PM

DATES: SEPTEMBER 5TH

Gail Thomson's 90th

BIRTHDAY GATHERING

RSVP AT +519-301-8443

St. James Masonic Hall
45 Thames Rd. North
St. Marys, ON

THE WEEK AHEAD

SPONSORED BY: McDonald's St. Marys
752 Queen St. E., St. Marys
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PRC & Friendship Centre events – See the Stonetown Crier on Page 5

St. Marys Public Library events – See Page 29

FRIDAY, SEPT 4

- A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Stratford Warriors at Stratford Rotary Complex – 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, SEPT 5

- St. Marys Farmers Market at Milt Dunnell Field – 8 a.m. to Noon, St. Marys Scouts breakfast
- Coffee and a cookie with Ryan Lush at Milt Dunnell Field – 8 a.m. to Noon
- Halloween garage sale at 220 Elgin Street East – 8 a.m.
- Taylor Auction Centre antique estate auction, 20903 Purple Hill Road – 11 a.m.
- Gail Thomson's 90th birthday gathering at St. James Masonic Hall – 1-4 p.m.
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw – 5 p.m.
- A.N.A.F. Bavarian Garden – 4 to 7 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Komoka Kings at Komoka Wellness Centre – 7:15 p.m.

SUNDAY, SEPT 6

- Vining Cemetery decoration day, 22157 Purple Hill Road – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Windmill Family Campground classic & antique car show – Noon to 4 p.m.

MONDAY, SEPT 7

- Labour Day

TUESDAY, SEPT 8

- St. Marys Horticultural Society flower show and meeting at the Legion Hall – 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT 9

- Friends of the Library social at the library – 6:30-8 p.m.

THURSDAY, SEPT 10

- St. Marys Cement Community Liaison Committee meeting at the MOC – 6 p.m.

Looking Back

AMY CUBBERLEY

Independent Columnist



Dana and Solis

25 years ago (2001)

DCVI Principal Andy Marquette is upset about vandalism on school property. Last week a plate-glass window in the cafeteria was smashed, costing \$1,000 to replace, and there was damage to two picnic tables outside the cafeteria.

St. Marys’ CAO was pleased to announce the sale of land to both Dana Canada and Solis Mexican Foods during last night’s Town Council meeting. The Town purchased the land specifically to sell to the two corporations. Mayor Jamie Hahn says he’s thrilled the town was able to put the land deal together and enable two companies to expand.

50 years ago (1976)

The work of rebuilding the chimney at the Memorial Hospital was completed recently by Bastien Contracting of Stratford. The chimney had to have about 30 feet of its brickwork rebuilt after it was shattered by lightning which struck the steel interior core about two months ago.

According to Emily Street resident Jack McKillop, there was frost visible on both his newly cut lawn and that of his neighbour, Dr. Ellis Scott. The frosted areas were at the lower levels of their properties along the riverbank on Monday, August 30.

75 years ago (1951)

For this year’s public school students, the job of buying textbooks is a thing of the past. The Department is supplying all such books, but not pens, pencils, etc.

St. Marys stores will be open until 9 pm this Saturday evening, but 6:30 pm closing will begin next Saturday, according to the retail section of the Chamber of Commerce.

This week, the bottom of the tank began to leak within the historic water tower. It was drained on Wednesday to allow an inspection to be carried out.

100 years ago (1926)

The St. Marys Fair Prize List is now being distributed to those interested and it is receiving commendation on all sides as a most attractive booklet. The entire list has been revised with the cooperation and advice of the Department of Agriculture in Toronto. Prizes totaling \$2,000 are offered.

Isabelle Chesterfield, 11-year-old daughter of Mrs. J.A. Chesterfield, narrowly escaped drowning in the river below the dam last week. Due to rain, the water was coming over the dam at a good clip and Isabelle, who was bathing with a friend, got caught in the current and swept off her feet. Hearing the child’s cries, Jack Gregory, who was crossing the bridge at the time, jumped in the river from the west bank and saved the girl in the nick of time.

HALLOWEEN GARAGE SALE

Saturday, September 5th at 8am
220 Elgin St. E. St. Marys

Props, old costumes, frames, dishware, mannequins, witches, masks, tankards, swords, steam punk, skeletons, silver, furniture, Tesla Ball, blk light, smoke machine, rear projector +

SATURDAY, SUNDAY, MONDAY

Indulge in a delicious comedy serving up big laughs and family drama!

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production”**

Toronto Star

**“Rich drama
with flavourful
characters”**

The Globe and Mail

**“Soul-stirring
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Intermission

STRATFORD
FESTIVAL

Savour Every Show

THE TEMPEST | GUYS AND DOLLS | SOMETHING ROTTEN! | DEATH OF A SALESMAN | THE HOBBIT
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST | SATURDAY, SUNDAY, MONDAY | A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
OTHELLO | THE TAO OF THE WORLD | THE KING JAMES BIBLE PLAY

SATURDAY, SUNDAY, MONDAY BY EDUARDO DE FILIPPO | IN A NEW ENGLISH VERSION BY DONATO SANTERAMO AND ANTONI CIMOLINO

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