

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1285

Thursday, October 23, 2025

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ROTARY PROMOTING PEACE FOR ANOTHER CENTURY (ALEX HUNT PHOTO)
Past Rotary International president Jennifer Jones and Samir Zogbi, inbound Rotary Exchange student from Argentina, were on hand for the unveiling of the Rotary Peace Pole at the north end of the old quarry.

Rotary Club of St. Marys unveils Peace Pole to mark centennial celebration

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

The Rotary Club of St. Marys recently unveiled a Peace Pole installed in St. Marys soil to kick off the club's celebration of a century of service.

On Oct. 14, The Rotary Club of St. Marys installed a Peace Pole in the Horticultural Society Garden at the north end of the old quarry. The unveiling signified the beginning of the next 100 years for the Rotary Club of St. Marys.

"This was just one of the projects we did this year to celebrate the centennial," said Mark Oliver, past president of the Rotary Club of St. Marys "That was really the inspiration behind it."

The evening featured speeches from several current and past Rotarians, including the first Rotary International female president, Jennifer Jones.

Jones made history as the first female president of Rotary International, breaking a century-old tradition in one of the world's most prominent service organizations. Her election marked a milestone for gender equality within Rotary.

"A lot of them tend to look like this," said Oliver. "It became a bit of a collaboration, the town helped, they came and dug the hole, put the post in. It was really a joint effort between the town, the Rotary Club, and the horticultural team. The idea has actually been in discussion since February."

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Town of St. Marys to test out new model for 2026 Stonetown Heritage Festival

2026 Stonetown Heritage Summer Series aimed at consolidating beloved summer events

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Town of St. Marys is hoping to better leverage its promotional efforts and partnerships with local organizations and service clubs by consolidating a number of beloved summer events, including the Stonetown Heritage Festival, into one, month-long Stonetown Heritage Summer Series next year.

At the Oct. 14 St. Marys council meeting,

tourism and economic development manager Kelly Deeks-Johnson presented a brand-new approach to the planning of summer events in St. Marys next July. While she said this year's Stonetown Heritage Festival on July 12 was a success with plenty of positive feedback from attendees and vendors alike, there have been issues that make the one-day festival traditionally held on the third weekend in July difficult to plan.

"Some of the observations that we've had

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MLS

COMMUNITY

Kinsmen honour decades of service at Past Presidents' Night

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

Past and present members of the Kinsmen Club of St. Marys gathered Oct. 16 to celebrate decades of service, leadership and community spirit during the club's annual Past Presidents' Night.

"If you go back far enough, it was actually the Kinsmen who numbered the streets and houses in St. Marys. We were the ones who did that; I even have a copy of the original map myself. The museum has the other one," said Wayne Barber, executive committee member with the St. Marys Kinsmen.

Around 30 people attended the event at Barber's residence. Past presidents as well as former and current members gathered and discussed old memories and past triumphs. Chris Swarthout, who served as past president in 2016-2017, said being in the club is another way for him to connect with the community and that's the best part about it.

He said it's rewarding to know their efforts make a difference. The money raised goes toward local improvements like trail upgrades and new lighting, projects he said show how much can be achieved when the community comes together.

"It's amazing what we can accomplish with the effort we put in. That's why I'm here. We've raised \$100,000 for the (Pyramid Recreation Centre) and \$5,000 for the tennis court refurbishment," said Swarthout. "Our biggest fundraiser is the fruit sale and Summerfest. This year, we changed things up and added a concert series with the new carnival company coming in, and it's been a huge success."

Each November, the Kinsmen Club of St. Marys helps usher in the holiday season by organizing the town's annual Santa Claus Parade. The festive event brings the community together with colourful floats, cheerful crowds and the highly anticipated arrival of Santa himself.

As part of St. Marys' winter celebrations, the club also supports the Winter Lights display at Milt Dunnell Field, where more than 100 light installations are on display with wagon rides and free family activities to light up the season and show the Kinsmen's continued community commitment.

Though the club works hard to provide for the community, members make sure



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

The Kinsmen Club of St. Marys celebrated legacy and fellowship at the annual Past Presidents' Night, honouring longtime members and sharing memories. Pictured are attendees at the presidents' night dinner in St. Marys.

they have a good time doing it.

"There was a year when we were all at the convention in Sarnia, which was always so much fun. We took a big group down and set up a motorhome in the parking lot. It felt almost like a tailgate," said Mayor Al Strathdee, past president from 1998-1999. "We wheeled the tables out and had a big party. As president, I loved balancing fellowship with service. We raised money for cystic fibrosis, worked on the Grand Trunk Trail over two seasons and even applied for national recognition for our efforts, though we didn't get it."

Strathdee said back then, meetings were always a memorable affair where members showed up in full suit and tie with a strong sense of family and fellowship. The club also dedicated time to working with the cadets, building connections and supporting youth development.

Barber said fellowship is just as important as service, and past presidents provide invaluable insight into what has worked before and what the club should focus on in the future.

"One of our upcoming projects is extending the Grand Trunk Trail with new lighting toward the nursing home. Another thing to mention is our annual Christmas tree pickup which is a great

community service project that's also a social event and that draws a great turnout, helping members make lasting friendships.

"The most rewarding part for me is knowing that we're doing community service and raising money for the town. We sponsor minor hockey, minor soccer and even the Baseball Hall of Fame," said Barber. "We respond to so many needs, and honestly, some of these programs might not exist if we didn't step

up. During COVID, we were down to just 13 members, but we kept going."

Barber explained that joining the club is simple and worthwhile. In the first year, there's no obligation. Members can try it out and see if it's a fit. By the second year, there is a small membership fee that helps cover costs since Kinsmen International charges \$250 per member. It's an easy way to get involved and support the club.



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The Flats finally on track for further improvements after a year pause

Improvements slated for Milt Dunnell Field next year could include a new pavilion

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Following the improvements made to Milt Dunnell Field in 2024, which included washroom renovations, an accessible dock, paving the Farmers' Market area and playground enhancements, the picturesque St. Marys park could see additional improvements intended to improve the user experience beginning next year.

At the Oct. 14 St. Marys council meeting, councillors agreed to include a number of priority improvements for the park known locally at The Flats in the draft 2026 capital and operating budgets. Subject to budget approval, those improvements include a new pavilion, improving accessibility at the playground, new covered dugouts and repairs to the bleachers at the ball diamonds, and the cutting of grass and trimming of shrubs and weeds closer to the riverbanks to improve sightlines and use of the river, among others.

"It's been since August 2023 since we had a touchpoint and discussed the Milt Dunnell Field project," CAO Brent Kittmer told councillors. "Since then,

the project has sat in abeyance as we waited for the recreation (and leisure) master plan, and the primary purpose of putting it on hiatus is we were expecting there to be recommendations in the recreation master plan as it related to the baseball diamonds down at Milt Dunnell Field.

"At that point in time, we weren't certain there would be recommendations in the rec master plan that we'd keep them in Milt Dunnell Field, and we felt we needed to have that information before we moved forward in developing ideas on how we might implement council's direction for future visions of the park."

With what appears to be a permanent relocation of minor baseball from East Ward Park to Milt Dunnell Field, Kittmer said the baseball diamonds will be staying at The Flats, so staff began brainstorming park improvements both for next year and in the longer term.

As proposed by town staff, longer-term projects could include improved drainage, the provision of WiFi at the pavilion, enhanced lighting, additional seating along the river, preventative measures to combat shoreline erosion, improving signage, increasing

the tree canopy, establishing a walking path around the ring road and relocating parking away from the river to elsewhere in or around the park to reduce impediments to river viewing.

"Through the public consultation two years ago, we certainly had a mixed message in that in-person consultation led us to believe that the public was willing to see some change down at the park, but the overwhelming response in correspondence after those visions were put forward that showed the ring road changing was that the public really liked the park the way it was," Kittmer said. "They felt it was functioning, and we shouldn't see significant change at the park. ... We believe the park is functioning well and it's well-used, so we really wanted to develop a list of ideas for how we might make incremental improvements to the park."

According to Kittmer, the construction of a new pavilion, which could cost as much as \$250,000, is necessary as the current pavilion was not built to code and needs to be torn down and rebuilt. Kittmer said users of the pavilion have complained about a lack of wind screening and hard surfaces, as well as

birds roosting in the rafters. Though a new pavilion hasn't been designed yet, Kittmer said council could consider improvements and new amenities like having it face west towards the river, updated electrical and water hookups, having it able to host film screenings, and the installation of WiFi.

Similarly, Kittmer said the baseball diamonds' covered dugouts need to be rebuilt and the bleachers require a refresh using the existing metal framework before reinstalling them onto a hard surface.

In their discussion, councillors added a few more park improvements to the list including solar lighting along the ring road, an information sign or centre for tourists and a basketball court.

"The feedback from the community has been the improvements have been really awesome and well-received," Coun. Dave Lucas said before council voted unanimously to include the priority improvements in next year's budget. "So, I think we're definitely on the right path and I like the thought of small, incremental changes, but they're definitely noticeable and appreciated by the town."

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EDITORIAL

Size matters in the bedroom

GALEN SIMMONS
Regional Editor

I could always sleep in any bed; it didn't matter where, when or on what I was sleeping, catching just the right number of Z's every night was never a problem of mine.

From soft mattresses to those that feel more like a sheet of plywood, and couches that are either too narrow or too short to a sleeping bag on the floor, I've always found my way to a deep, restful sleep. Or at least that was the case until Julia and I decided it was finally time to upgrade to a king bed.

After more than a year sleeping in a queen bed with a dog that likes to carve out a space in between us and a cat that spends the night perched up near my head, and having moved into a home that has the space upstairs for the most luxurious of sleeping accommodations, we felt we deserved a little more space to roll around.

After purchasing our home and planning out our kitchen renovations, we knew we couldn't spend a lot on our dozy dream. So, we bought a modestly priced king bed on Amazon and one of those mattresses that's delivered to your door vacuum-sealed in plastic. To make that mattress a little more comfortable, we splurged and bought a nice, memory foam mattress topper and a couple of those osteo-cervical pillows that help with neck and shoulder pain.

And boy, did it ever make a difference. At first, being accustomed to lesser mattresses for most of my life, I thought it was too much. Why should I need all this space and comfort? But then, within maybe a week, I grew to love our new bed, so much so that sleeping anywhere else began to seem unreasonable and what once might have been an overnight trip became much-longer, late-night drives just so I could make it home to my own bed.

I can't count how many times someone has invited me to stay overnight, and I've come up with an excuse that allowed me to come home to my big, beautiful bed instead.

It's actually becoming a bit of a problem.

Recently, our new puppy, Piper, decided she would start going to the bathroom in our bed. The first time it happened, we hadn't yet purchased a second set of king-sized sheets, so we figured we'd just sleep in the old queen bed – which also has a mattress topper I once considered comfortable – in the spare room and clean the sheets in the morning.

Big mistake. Neither Julia or I slept more than 20 minutes at a time that night. Toss and turn for half an hour, fall asleep for 20 minutes, wake up in pain or numbness, roll over, rinse and repeat. It was so bad, Julia even opted to trade the bed for our couch, which tells you everything you need to know.

You can rest assured we ordered a second set of sheets for our king bed the very next day.

And then, just this past weekend, Julia and I stayed at my mom's for a belated Thanksgiving celebration. While my sister slept upstairs on the pullout, we opted to take the double bed in the basement (I actually thought it would be more comfortable).

Of course, it wasn't. All night, it was the same story. We rolled into one another, accidentally kicked the dog, nearly fell off the edge of the bed and woke up with sore backs, hips and necks. Three days later, I still feel sleep-deprived from that bed.

And it's not just the size of the bed that matters to me anymore. We've slept in king-sized beds where the mattress was either too firm or too soft. I guess I'm starting to understand how Goldilocks felt; the only bed that's just right is the one we have right here at home.

Bravo	Boo
We have 3 Bravos this week. 1) Bravo to our weekly Ukrainian columnist Alona for her insight and humour about Canadian living. Her article on coffee was most telling on how the two countries differ in coffee culture. 2) Bravo to the St. Marys McDonalds for finding my wallet on Wednesday night. I truly appreciate them taking care of it until I came and got it the next day. 3) Bravo to the fabulous cast and crew of SMCPs latest production of 'Hilda's Yard' by Norm Foster! Everyone did an excellent job with this delightful comedy! It's on until Nov. 2. Need a laugh? Check it out.	We have 1 Boo this week. 1) Boo to people letting their cats run wild in neighbours' yards. At minimum, put a collar and bell on them to warn birds.
*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered.	Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.

Quote of the Week

"I love this team. I'll do anything for these guys," Springer said with the stadium celebrating around him. "I'll do anything to try to play. I love this place."

- Toronto Blue Jays star George Springer after hitting a seventh-inning, three-run homerun to send the Blue Jays to the World Series for the first time since 1993.

Overheard at the Coffee Shop

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The Blue Jays are going to the World Series!

Can anyone recommend a wine that pairs well with Halloween Candy?

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!



Restoring small-town journalism, one community at a time!

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St. Marys Independent
Thoughts of the Week
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Patience is the best remedy for every trouble.

Problem with putting others first is that you taught them that you are second.

Happiness is not by chance, but by choice.

If my life is going to mean anything, I have to live it myself.



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St. Marys Gives 2025

Won't You Be My Neighbour?



Country Roots Fresh Market at 1971 Perth Road 163, St. Marys is donating all proceeds of the sale of their Pink Cookies and Boobylicious Snack Mix to the Cancer Clinic to pay for parking passes for those who need them. "Won't You Be My Neighbour".....

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STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys





COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION

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SCARETACULAR ST. MARYS

October 25

Get ready for fang-tastic fun!

- Dress up and trick-or-treat through Downtown St. Marys
- Howl-O-Ween Pet Parade & Costume Contest
- Cemetery Walking Tours by St. Marys Museum



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townofstmarys.com/flushing

SPORTS WALL OF FAME

2025 Induction Ceremony | Nov 1 | 2 PM

Join us as we showcase and celebrate the three selected 2025 inductees and their outstanding sports achievements in the community at the Pyramid Recreation Centre. 2025 inductees include Mike Craig, Rick Fifield and the St. Marys Junior B Lincolns (1962-1963)

townofstmarys.com/sportswall





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Senior of the Week



Our senior of the week is Jayne Fuller. Jayne was born in Toronto and grew up there. She moved to St. Marys over 20 years ago after meeting her husband Rick. They have been married for 19 years. She has three daughters and one son, five grandkids and a grand puppy. Jayne loves doing photography and is well known in town for her talented work. She has come out of retirement and is now working at the Flower Shop and More.

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519-284-0041 or info@stmarysindependent.com.

Veterans to be recognized at three events for 2025 Remembrance Week

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

St. Marys will mark Remembrance Week 2025 with three events.

On Saturday, Nov. 8 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., the St. Marys Legion and Army and Navy will host Veterans' Decoration Day at the St. Marys Cemetery (150 Cain St.). Formerly known as the Veterans' Flag Planting Ceremony, loved ones of veterans interred at St. Marys Cemetery are invited to receive complimentary flags to place at veterans' graves. Flags can be picked up at the cemetery chapel on Nov. 8.

On Sunday, Nov. 9, the Royal Canadian Legion will hold a ceremony and parade. The parade will march from the St. Marys Legion to the town hall cenotaph at 12:30 p.m. A service of remembrance will follow. Church Street will be closed between Station Street and Queen Street from 12-2 p.m. Queen Street will also be closed between Peel Street and Church Street at this time.

Mayor Al Strathdee will lead a Remembrance Day ceremony at the town hall cenotaph on Tuesday, Nov. 11 at 10:45 a.m. Queen Street will be closed between Peel Street and Church Street from 10:30-11:30 a.m. for the event.

Following the ceremony, residents are encouraged to visit the St. Marys Museum exhibit, "Between the Lines: Stories & Signals of World War I," beginning on Tuesday, Nov. 11. The exhibit examines different methods of communications during the First World War, including letters and postcards sent home from St. Marys soldiers and cryptography on the front lines. "Between the Lines" will be available for viewing during the museum's regular hours until November 2026.

New this year is an interactive map the community can use to explore all the banners around town; a searchable list is also available so locals can quickly locate a loved one's banner. The interactive map can be viewed at rcl-236stmarys.ca/banners. Any questions about the banners can be directed to the St. Marys Legion.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Town of St. Marys will recognize veterans at three events for 2025 Remembrance Week.

Weekend Quiz

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- What does the abbreviation USB stand for?
- Mace is the outer covering of which common spice?
- Which writer adapted his own book for the 1989 film "Pet Sematary"?
- The study of human behaviour and mind is called what?
- What kind of animal is raised in a warren?
- Who released the 1988 album "Look Sharp!"?
- What is the most frequent number in the bible?
- Which element has the atomic number 1?
- What K-Pop group sings "Dynamite" & "Butter"?
- The Gulf War involved the liberation of what country?

By Jake Grant

This week's answers are found on pg. 35

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Think pink orthotics this October: Foot by Foot Orthotics donating to breast cancer research



EMILY STEWART
Independent Reporter

Foot by Foot Orthotics in St. Marys is giving its clients a chance to support breast cancer research with pink orthotics.

The clinic at 194 Queen St. W will be donating a portion of the sales from custom-orthotic shoes in the colour pink towards breast-cancer research organizations.

“Whether they chose to or not, it’s our donation,” said Courtney Aubin, primary practitioner. “They don’t have to pay any more for it. It’s the same amount either way.”

The donation through sale of pink orthotics has gone on for a few years and was started by one of Aubin’s co-workers.

“Everyone has had family members that have gone through it, including my

(IMAGE COURTESY OF COURTNEY AUBIN PHOTO)

co-worker; it was her mom. I had my aunt go through breast cancer,” she said. “I had lots of patients that have gone through it or are survivors of breast cancer, which is awesome, and we’re a company of women and we feel strongly about empowering women so that’s our goal.”

Many of Aubin’s clients have picked the pink this October. However, she hasn’t seen much reception since posting about it on the St. Marys Life Facebook group and would like to see more interest.

“The people I have seen or have booked, a lot of people have chosen the pink,” she said. “But other than that, it hasn’t been all that great in terms of people reaching out about it.”

For more information, either call 519-900-7080 or send an email to courtney@footbyfoot.ca.

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Town of St. Marys to test out new model for 2026 Stonetown Heritage Festival

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

over the last couple of years – I would say since the pandemic – have been that the festival is obviously very dependent on weather and it's a one-day event. We have had that disappointment of weather postponing events and cancelling activities due to thunderstorms. We've also dealt with extreme heat now for two years in a row, which has shortened some of the vendor stays that we've had out on the street for the festival. So, it's definitely been a challenge for us.

"This past year, one of the challenges we also faced was a lack of volunteer recruitment. We had quite a few events take place in St. Marys at the end of June and in early July this past year due to some changes with the Baseball Hall of Fame (induction weekend and) the hospital foundation gala was held this past year, which is held every other year. We had the Canada Day festivities, the first-ever Stonetown Triathlon was held and the Kinsmen Summerfest was moved forward this past year due to their midway contracts. So, we basically had all summer events wrapped up by July 12."

To help mitigate that volunteer fatigue and ensure there are events going on throughout the month of July, Deeks-Johnson and events coordinator Morgan Easton have begun conversations with the Kinsmen Club, BIA and Rotary Club to develop a new vision for the Stonetown Heritage Festival in 2026.

Based on recommendations from a report on this year's festival by Bannikan Travel and Tourism, the new vision is for a more collaborative approach to the Stonetown Heritage Festival by having the event collaborate with other community events. Under this approach, there will be an increase in smaller events and activations throughout July to enhance the town's summer offerings for visitors and residents.

The plan is to develop a festival brand, such as "Stonetown Heritage Summer Series," setting a seasonal and cultural tone for the month-long celebration. The series for July 2026 would encompass a diverse array of events and activities aimed at celebrating local heritage and fostering community spirit throughout the month. The program will culminate in the traditional annual summer festival event.

Planned components could include regular Heritage Bus Tours and walking tours during July, as well as a downtown musical performer series, smaller events, pop-up music performances, summer picnics with live music and the inclusion and joint promotion of pre-existing annual events like the Rotary Brews and Food Fest and the Lions Car Show.

The traditional heritage festival event will conclude the month-long series and would be planned in collaboration with the Kinsmen Club. Summerfest is scheduled for the end of July, and the



Local musician Max Smith rocked the crowd as the headline musical act of the Stonetown Heritage Festival this year, performing on the stage set up at the intersection of Queen Street and Water Street.

(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

town and St. Marys BIA will hold the annual Stonetown Heritage Festival Day on July 25 during Summerfest celebrations.

The Stonetown Heritage Festival Day will follow a similar format to past years, with the addition of activities at Milt Dunnell Field and evening music organized by the Kinsmen. Discussed activities for the day include a pancake breakfast during the Farmers Market, the Art Walk relocated to Milt Dunnell Field, a midway starting at noon and a street closure downtown during the day to facilitate merchant involvement, a kid's zone, food trucks, a vendor marketplace and live music throughout the day.

The possibility of reinstating a trolley train service shuttle to connect Milt Dunnell Field and downtown is being considered, and a shuttle bus will operate from the Pyramid Recreation Centre and the west end of town to bring attendees downtown. Evening events would feature music at Milt Dunnell Field.

"The Rotary Club has typically done the fireworks. I will say there hasn't been a full agreement amongst the club over their interest in fireworks," Deeks-Johnson said. "So, I'm not sure if that's going to be 100 per cent sponsored by them next year. What my proposal to them was that if they want to stick with fireworks, we would look at doing Canada Day fireworks instead because we wouldn't be able to let off fireworks with the Kinsmen Summerfest going on in (Milt Dunnell Field) after the (Stonetown Heritage) Festival. So ... if the community felt strongly about fireworks, we would do them at another time, and ... I've given other options (to Rotary) for potential partnerships and engagement with the festival, including things like the trolley."

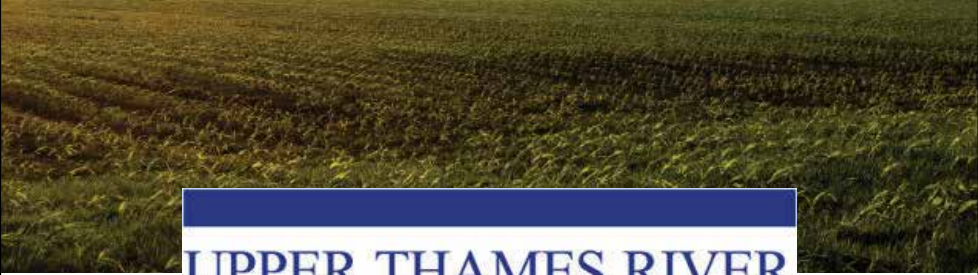
With evening festivities happening at Milt Dunnell Field, one piece of the

cause the Street Dance is viewed as sort of a family event," Mayor Al Strathee said. "So ... I understand we're maybe going to enhance some of the children's activities, but there will be no 6 p.m. or 8 p.m. Street Dance. I mean, the fireworks are disappearing. ... There could be some disappointment in the community because ... I'd take my kids to the Street Dance; I wouldn't take them to the Kinsmen beer tent. ... My concern is going to be raised because it's viewed as a non-drinking family event and by eliminating it, it's a big change."

Just prior to council voting to approve the Stonetown Heritage Summer Series in principle, Coun. Rob Edney suggested the addition of a 90-minute magic show inside the Town Hall Theatre as a family friendly replacement for the Street Dance.

"A 90-minute magic show upstairs would be incredible," Edney said. "They're usually extremely well attended. Many of the festivals that I've played at, they've had that element to it instead of the dance."

Council vote unanimously in favour of testing out the Stonetown Heritage Summer Series in 2026 with the intention of securing joint financial support from all involved parties as well as traditional sponsorship for each of the events in the series.



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Rotary Club of St. Marys unveils Peace Pole to mark centennial celebration

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"If you want to put up a Peace Pole, nothing's stopping you. You don't have to belong to a service club or anything like that."

The Peace Pole initiative isn't limited to Rotary members. Oliver said the poles are tied directly into Rotary's values, promoting peace, unity and a stronger sense of community, while encouraging residents to make their surroundings a better place for everyone.

In Stratford, there are three poles installed on the grounds of Gallery Stratford by local Rotary clubs, illustrating how the initiative can inspire collaboration and civic engagement.

Oliver says Rotary International focuses on seven key areas, one of which is world peace. Each year, the organization hosts a Presidential Peace Summit, bringing together Rotarians from around the globe. Rotary holds a unique position among service clubs, as it has a seat at the United Nations.

The organization has a long history of involvement in global affairs, having played vital roles in establishing the League of Nations after World War I and consulting on the creation of the United

Nations following World War II. While Rotary does not hold a voting seat, its presence and influence at the UN continue to reflect its longstanding commitment to promoting peace worldwide.

Coming up in November, 14 members of the Rotary Club of St. Marys are set to travel to Kenya as part of an international initiative focused on improving educational facilities. The group will visit a girls' high school with 400 students and staff, where the current washrooms are limited to a cluster of outhouses.

"It's really the realization of a project that we, as a club, dreamed up and wanted to make sure we completed. It feels amazing to see it come together," said Oliver of the Peace Pole. "I'm proud to give this as a gift to the town, and I hope everyone enjoys it."

The Peace Pole Project is a global initiative that spreads a message of peace and unity by placing monuments engraved with "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in different languages. With over 250,000 poles installed worldwide, each serves as a symbol of hope, encouraging compassion, understanding and connection across communities and cultures.

St. Marys council commences 2026 budget deliberations

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

St. Marys council is hosting meetings to review the draft 2026 municipal budget.

Residents are welcome to attend in-person at town hall council chambers. The meetings will also be posted to the Town of St. Marys YouTube channel.

The preliminary budget is currently available on town's website and proposes a total operating budget of \$31.6 million and a capital budget of \$8.3 million. This translates into a 3.94 per-cent increase on the municipal net tax levy and adds approximately \$164 in additional property taxes to a typical residential property.

The first budget meeting was held on Tuesday, Oct. 21 at 9 a.m. The meeting will start with an overview of the town's capital budget, which includes major projects and one-time expenditures. The second half of the meeting will cover the town's operational budget, which includes the day-to-day costs of running the mu-

nicipality.

Read next week's St. Marys Independent for full coverage of the town's first budget meeting.

The second meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 18 at 9 a.m. and will commence with the completion of any operating or capital budgets and a review of external funding requests. This will be followed by a further discussion of any outstanding budget matters.

The public is encouraged to attend in-person or watch on the town's YouTube channel. Council is expected to pass the 2026 budget in December.

Any changes to the meeting schedule will be posted on the Town website (www.townofstmarys.com), Facebook page (www.facebook.com/stmarysontario) and Twitter/X account (www.twitter.com/townofstmarys).

A copy of the draft 2026 municipal budget is available online at www.townofstmarys.com/budget and in print (for viewing only) at the municipal operations centre (408 James St. S).

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100 years strong: Rotary Club of St. Marys reflects on a century of community impact

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

The Rotary Club of St. Marys recently celebrated 100 years of service to the community with its 100th anniversary dinner.

On Oct. 15, past and current Rotarians, and community members gathered at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club to celebrate the impact of the club since its inauguration in 1925 with a 100th anniversary Centennial Dinner. Celebrating 100 years of service, the St. Marys Rotary Club reflected on a century of community impact, global initiatives and lasting connections. Members, past and present, gathered to honour their legacy, inspire future leaders and reaffirm their commitment to service above self for the next hundred years.

The evening began with a dinner for all those in attendance and a commemorative photo. Greetings were delivered by current Rotary St. Marys president Ed Parkinson, Mayor Al Strathdee, Rotary district governor Jeffery Ferweda and Rotary Club of Stratford president Dan Kane.

After the greetings, St. Marys Museum curator assistant Emily Taylor shared some of the Rotary artifacts on display as part of the exhibit, 100 Years of Rotary in St. Marys. Other guest speakers included past district governor Katherine Hahn, past Rotary International president Jennifer Jones and local Rotarians Doug Fread and Diane O'Shea.

"I had a wonderful opportunity to spend time with members of the Rotary Club of St. Marys, touring the community and seeing the impact of 100 years of service," said Jennifer Jones, who served as the first female president of Rotary International.

"Even in a small town, the Rotary's presence is everywhere and everywhere I looked, the Rotary wheel was visible. Over the past century, members have made it a priority to take on projects



(JAYNE FULLER PHOTO)

Local Rotarians attended their 100th anniversary dinner at the St. Marys Golf & Country Club. Pictured is a group of attendees including keynote speaker and past Rotary International president Jennifer Jones and her husband, Nick Krayacich, past district governor Katherine Hahn, and assistant governor Kirk Riehl.

both large and small, leaving a lasting mark on the community."

Locally, the Rotary Club of St. Marys has contributed to the town by supporting Cadzow Park and local Rotary parks, youth sports programs, Camp Woodeden, life lease housing for seniors, and the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Community events and literacy initiatives have further strengthened local connections.

Globally, the club has supported education and hygiene projects in Colombia, Kenya and Uganda, while environmental work in Sparling Bush and COVID-19 relief efforts showcase a commitment to service that spans both local and international communities.

One of the Rotary Club of St. Marys' most significant contributions is the creation of Parkview West, an apart-

ment-style life lease community for older adults. Developed entirely by Rotary, the project provides secure, independent living while providing a strong sense of community. Decades later, ongoing Rotary involvement ensures residents continue to benefit.

"One of the key lessons observed early on was the power of a small Rotary club. Unlike larger clubs, where members can sometimes stay in the background, a smaller club of 25-40 members requires everyone to participate," said Jones. "In a close-knit community like St. Marys, members know each other well, support one another through tough days and lift each other up. This dynamic reflects the origins of Rotary 100 years ago, when four men started meeting weekly to foster fellowship and support each other's businesses. That spirit remains alive and

strong in St. Marys today."

Jones says sharing the value of Rotary membership with the community can be transformative. Being part of a Rotary Club offers far more than one might expect. It allows members to do meaningful work, connect with local leaders and engage in a culture of mentorship. Every member is considered a leader at different stages of their journey, creating opportunities to guide younger members, who in turn pass those lessons on to the next generation.

"I'm amazed that so many Rotary clubs around the world are now celebrating their 100-year anniversaries," said Jones. "Thinking back to when we started in 1905, it's incredible to see how far we've come. I'm just so happy to be here in St. Marys, less than two hours from

CONTINUED TO PAGE 11

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100 years strong: Rotary Club of St. Marys reflects on a century of community impact



(JAYNE FULLER PHOTO)

Past Rotary International president Jennifer Jones and her husband, Nick Krayacich.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

my home in Windsor, to say thank you to every member, past, present and future, for all that they do and for being part of this amazing community.”

Jones became the first woman to lead

Rotary International; her presidency focused on empowering women, promoting diversity and expanding opportunities for those who might have felt excluded.

“Serving as Rotary’s first internation-



(JAYNE FULLER PHOTO)

The Rotary Club of St. Marys’ centennial logo displayed at the 100th anniversary dinner.

al female president was such an honour and a privilege for me. It truly opened doors not just for women, but for others who may have felt marginalized or unseen within the organization,” said Jones. “Wherever I went, people, men

too, would come up and say, “My gosh, I just told my granddaughter about you,” or my own daughter would say, “You showed me I can do this.” Knowing that my role has created opportunities for others makes me very glad.”



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Dryer fire closes Little Falls Laundromat for upwards of two months

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A local laundromat owned by St. Marys Mayor Al Stratthdee and his wife, Gloria Stratthdee, will remain closed for as long as two months following a dryer fire in the building on Oct. 16.

According to St. Marys Fire Chief Phil West, a customer at the Little Falls Car Wash – also owned by the Stratthdees as part of Little Falls Car and Pet Wash and Laundromat – noticed smoke coming from the laundromat building shortly after 10 a.m. Oct. 16 and called 911. Prior to the arrival of firefighters, West said two people used fire extinguishers to prevent the fire from spreading faster.

“Due to the brave actions of local residents Mark Shen and Anthony Rooney, the fire was contained,” Al Stratthdee wrote in a letter to the editor published in this edition of the St. Marys Independent. “The speedy response of the St. Marys Fire Department and their professionalism meant that the fire was able to be contained and isolated in the Laundromat unit. We are very grateful to the Stratford police, Mr. Shen and Mr. Rooney, and the volunteers of the St. Marys Fire Department. Thank you. We are lucky to live in such a great community where people care so much.”

“(The St. Marys Fire Department) would like to extend our thanks to the quick call and reaction of those involved,” West told the Independent. “If they did not

call 911 right away, there would have been a lot more damage.”

Upon arrival, West said fire crews noticed smoke coming from the building. Firefighters promptly extinguished the fire, turned off gas and electrical services on the dryers affected by the fire, checked for fire extension, blew smoke out of building, and sampled the air quality to ensure it was safe to go back into the building.

According to both West and Al Stratthdee, the cause of the fire was oily rags in one of the dryers. West said there was minimal damage to the building itself – just one piece of drywall – but two dryers will need to be replaced. There were no injuries associated with this fire.

“Thank you to Stratford police for traffic-control assistance and Perth County EMS for standing by in case they were required,” West said. “Our firefighters did a great job controlling the fire quickly and removing the risk of fire spreading.”

“The St. Marys Fire Department is happy to report there were no injuries and would like to remind everyone that smoke alarms save lives. Please test your smoke alarms, check expiry dates and test if they are working properly. Replace your alarm when needed with a Canadian approved smoke alarm.”

There was no damage to either the car wash or pet wash, and both will continue operating as normal.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF AL STRATHDEE)

A dryer fire caused by oily rags has closed the Little Falls Laundromat owned by St. Marys Mayor Al Stratthdee and his wife, Gloria Stratthdee, for what could be as long as two months, fire officials say.



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St. Marys council approves water-leak forgiveness program

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

St. Marys council has approved a policy that could help residents cover the costs of unexpectedly high water bills resulting from a leak.

At the Oct. 14 St. Marys council meeting, councillors voted to approve a water-leak forgiveness policy aimed at offering financial support for those who incur excess water and wastewater charges of at least \$250, with funding of 50 per cent of the excess water charges available up to a maximum of \$1,000.

"This report is a report back to council from (a strategic priorities committee meeting) earlier this year where we had discussed general policy framework for a water-leak forgiveness program that would provide some level of financial consideration or compensation to residents when they experience that unforeseen or unanticipated large water bill that can come from a water leak," said St. Marys environmental services manager Dave Blake.

"At that time ... we looked at a bunch of program-eligibility requirements, program-ineligibility requirements and kind of some thresholds for minimum bills, maximum bills, so on and so forth, and how all that could formulate into a policy that would work for St. Marys. ... We've taken that feedback away and, since that time, we've researched similar programs that other municipalities offer to their residents and then drafted the policy that's presented tonight."

According to the policy document, the purpose of the policy is to provide limited financial relief to eligible customers to address abnormally high water and wastewater bills associated with accidental plumbing failures. By offering a structured framework for adjustments to water bills, the policy aims to mitigate the financial burden caused by such incidents while upholding the accuracy and transparency of billing practices to maintain trust in the systems serving the community.

Financial relief will be issued only after all leaks have been repaired and verified by a water-meter read conducted by the town or a water-billing contractor. Reasonable efforts, including hiring a plumber, to locate the leak and initiate repairs must be taken by or on behalf of the customer within seven days after receiving the water bill indicating the leak or through initial notification of increased water usage provided to the customer by the billing contractor.

The customer must fill out a water leak forgiveness form and provide documentation of repairs made prior to being approved for a reimbursement within 120 calendar days after the date of final repairs. There is no extension of the due date for paying water and wastewater bills because of a pending request through this program. Customers should pay the entire amount due within the normal payment period or arrange a payment arrangement with the billing contractor for the excessive amount to remain in good standing on all current bills. Reimbursements will only occur when a leak forgiveness request is granted and they will be issued as a credit to the account in question.

According to the program eligibility requirements, the plumbing failure and leak must have occurred and been repaired within the last 90 days; applicants have to demonstrate their water usage has decreased after repairs were made; the property where the leak occurred must be a residential dwelling or a not-for-profit property; and the applicant must not have received reimbursement through the water-leak forgiveness program within the last five years. Water leaks in vacant or unattended properties and those caused by outdoor usage, neglect or unexplained damage are disqualified from this program, as are leaks where costs are covered by a third party (i.e. insurance or another reimbursement program).

"The program would operate basically as a budget line item from the water system accounts," Blake said in response to a question from Mayor Al Strathdee about how the program will be funded. "Every year, we generate a reserve contribution that goes into the reserve for the water system. This would show up as a budget line item under the operations and maintenance budget that would be utilized as requests come in throughout the year.

"So basically, if it went over-budget or under-budget, it just impacts the transfer to reserve at the end of the year. Instead of having a stand-alone reserve account for water leaks that is collected specifically for that, it just operates out of the general reserve for the water system."

In response to question about customer notification from Coun. Fern Pridham, Blake said Festival Hydro works to notify customers as soon as possible when increased water usage is identified and, if customers cannot be contacted, will work with the town to deliver a notice to their home or property.

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Town of St. Marys hosts annual Recreation Fair



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Nancy Riddell from the YMCA manned the booth and was sharing information on an upcoming event taking place at the YMCA on Oct. 25 from 1-4 p.m. as they celebrate the fifth anniversary of the local YMCA's unification. There will be family games, fitness classes, programs, prizes, giveaways and it is free to attend.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

On Friday, Oct. 17, the Town of St. Marys held its annual Recreation Fair at the Pyramid Recreation Centre. The event ran from 5-7 p.m. and was a free, drop-in format. The purpose of the fair was to promote all recreation and leisure activities that are available

in our town. Some of the organizations that attended included minor sports organizations, service clubs, private recreation service providers, exercise and wellness centres and organizations that offer adult and senior recreation opportunities. Some booths had interactive demonstrations. There was a total of 24 vendors who took part this year, showcasing their



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

St. Marys Royal Canadian Legion Branch 236 had a very informative display including a few of the 8,000 crocheted poppies that will be displayed in town at the end of the month.

activities and providing information for all ages. The town will be hosting this event again in the future and would like to build upon the success and continue to promote all local opportunities. "We are very pleased with the event this year," said St. Marys recreation manager Joannah Campbell. "The Recreation Fair participation and attendance has grown since our first itera-

tion in spring of 2024. It is so important that residents and visitors are aware of the multitude of sports, recreation, leisure and wellness opportunities that are available in and around St. Marys. There is truly something for everyone regardless of age, stage, interest, or ability." For more information on local recreation opportunities, contact Campbell at 519-284-2160 x 626.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Sensei Jeremy Lorentz from Stonetown Karate Centre showed off some beautiful trophies at the karate centre's booth. Stonetown Karate Centre has approximately 100 members and it has recently opened a new location in Thorndale.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Colton Cruz took part in the puck-shooting activity at the St. Marys Minor Hockey booth at Friday's Recreation Fair.



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St. Marys Public Library offers free seed program to encourage community gardening

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

St. Marys residents can grow their gardens for free this spring thanks to the St. Marys Public Library's seed program, which offers packets of flower, vegetable and fruit seeds to anyone in the community.

The St. Marys library collects a variety of seeds each fall, packages them and distributes them to the community in the spring. Residents can plant flowers, vegetables, or fruits wherever they choose.

"Some years, community members also contribute baby plants they have propagated, which are added to the program," said St. Marys Public Library CEO Sarah Andrews. "The library's seed initiative operates like a lending library for plants and has been running for three to four years.

"I've noticed that once people use the seed library, they're often eager to give back in the fall, donating seeds or plants of their own. It really helps the program sustain itself. I also think the process of planting and handling seeds can be a peaceful, hands-on activity. In today's go-go-go world, it's nice to slow down and do something with your hands. Being outside doing something tangible gives people a break from screens and even readers need a break from reading sometimes. It's fun, it's relaxing and it's another healthy activity we like to encourage here at the library."

Andrews said library staff keep a close eye on heritage seeds, encouraging community members to drop them off for redistribution.

Some of these seeds, especially the heritage flower varieties, could disappear if the community doesn't

continue to collect them. The program draws participants of all ages, from children to senior gardeners, who contribute their own, ensuring these seeds continue to grow throughout St. Marys.

"We want the library to be a safe space in the community, a place where people can step outside their homes and workplaces and feel connected," said Andrews. "We work hard to make sure visitors feel welcome, that there are programs and activities for them, and that our collection offers things they want to borrow and use."

Andrews added the library continues to serve residents who can't afford digital downloads or lack home internet and WiFi. It provides free access to these resources, ensuring everyone in the community can use them.

"National Library Week runs from Oct. 20-25, and this year, I'm encouraging everyone to connect with and support their local library in whatever way they can," said Andrews. "That might mean simply keeping your library card renewed so we can count you as an active member, signing out a few items, or even telling friends and family to visit and get involved. Every bit of engagement helps keep the library strong."

Andrews says the library promotes a healthy and active lifestyle through a range of community programs and resources. Alongside traditional materials, patrons can now borrow items like bocce ball sets, tennis rackets and pickleball gear, encouraging residents to get outside and stay active.

The addition of gardening initiatives further supports this goal, offering opportunities for people to connect with nature, spend time outdoors and embrace a balanced lifestyle.



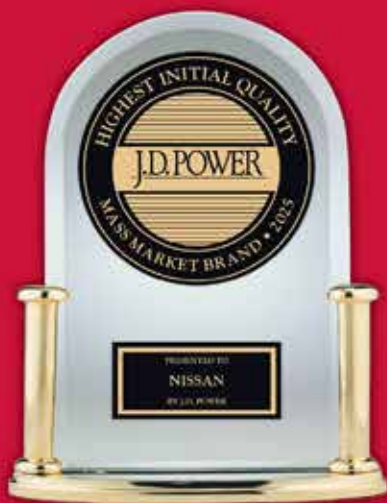
(ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT FILE PHOTO)

The St. Marys Public Library's seed program not only helps gardeners get started free of charge each spring, but it also helps preserve heritage varieties of flowers, fruits and vegetables specific to St. Marys for future generations.



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STRATFORD NISSAN



Kinsmen Club looking for musicians to join Santa Claus Parade

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

Organizers of the St. Marys Santa Claus Parade are calling on musicians to help bring the sound of the season downtown when the annual event returns on Nov. 21.

"We've struggled to get bands because there are competitions in other cities, but we still do pretty well," said parade co-chair Wayne Barber. "It's a tough gig, but we're always trying to bring in more bands each year."

"We do the fundraising to help cover the costs of the musicians, and then we coordinate the floats and registrations," he said. "You don't want two big bands beside each other, and you've got to keep the horses away from the noise. There's a lot to juggle and we try to space the music so everything can be heard clearly."

Barber said The Kinsmen Club of St. Marys has been organizing the annual Santa Claus parade for around 50 years and shows no signs of slowing down. Planning begins in August and now the club is on the search for additional bands or individual musicians to join the march.

The parade will happen on Nov. 21 at 7 p.m., starting at the Pyramid Recreation Centre and proceeding through the downtown area.

I think music enhances every experi-

ence; it's what gets everyone in the festive spirit," Barber said. "One of the new things this year is that the Downtown St. Marys BIA has decided to (have businesses) stay open during the parade, which is great. We're hoping people take advantage of that, visit the merchants and support the community."

Barber said he is continually impressed by the creativity and talent participants bring to the parade each year. He said the floats and performances light up the streets, with participants finding new ways to add their own flair annually.

He added one of the most rewarding parts for musicians is seeing the joy on children's faces as the parade makes its way through town, calling it a truly special moment.

"We're open to all genres and styles; we like to have a variety," Barber said. "I think the parade is mainly for the children, but it's for adults too, and it really brings out the festive spirit."

"We normally get about five bands, but this year we're looking for more. I've seen some pretty good performances over the years, and for myself, I like seeing all the colourful floats and the community having fun. We accept participants of all ages, and individual performers can join as well."

Registration is available on the Kinsmen Club of St. Marys website at stmaryskinsmen.com and on the club's Facebook page.



(ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT FILE PHOTO)

Santa and Mrs. Claus wave to all the kids at last year's St. Marys Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade.



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A charming new business opens on Church Street South

WENDY LAMOND
Independent Reporter

Mauve & Stone Charm Boutique was recently opened at 16 Church St. S by young entrepreneur Mackenzie Fierling. Fierling, who has lived in St. Marys most of her life, is a kind person who likes to help people. She has been practicing reflexology at Alliance Wellness Centre and Deep Head Massage for over a year but still felt like something was missing. One to always listen to her dreams, Fierling was looking for something else and dreamed one day of owning a jewellery store that helps people feel good about themselves. With some encouragement from her family, she decided to pursue that dream.

The process of trying to find a perfect space with the right price and size, and finding suppliers started in January. Eight months later, the charm boutique opened its doors.

“There is nothing like it in this area that is similar. This is just a different way of helping people,” Fierling said.

Fierling decided to use Mauve in the business name as there are so many shades, just like there are so many different charms. With almost 200 charms available, all are unique. The word stone was used in reference to Stonetown.

Anyone who comes to the boutique can find a necklace or bracelet and whatever charms speak to them. Customers can then sit at one of the tray stations and put it all together. The setup is perfect for birthday parties, girls’ nights and mother/daughter trips, but it is also perfect for those out shopping who want to pop in and treat themselves.

Business hours are currently Wednesday to Friday, 12-6 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., but Fierling is flexible if a group requires a time outside of those hours.

The pricing is consistent as necklaces and bracelets are the same price, and all the charms are the same price.

It is a lovely spot and a great addition to our town. Go check it out and see what charms catch the eye.



Mauve & Stone Charm Boutique owner Mackenzie Fierling. (WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

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IT expert urging Canadians to focus on cybersecurity 12 months of the year

October is Cyber Security Month in Canada

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

October is Cyber Security Month across Canada and this year's theme is "Get cyber safe – for future you."

The federal government's campaign aims to set Canadians up for a safer and easier future by shedding light on the practical benefits of cybersecurity that can prevent people from becoming victims. Carmi Levy is a leading IT expert and said setting aside 30 days to highlight safety in the cyber world is great, but it isn't enough.

"What do we do for the other 11? The reality is cybersecurity awareness needs to become not just something we do once a year, but something we incorporate into our habits every single day of the year. We have to shift from awareness to accountability."

He added accountability means people being responsible for their own digital security 365 days a year.

"Once you do that, make it part of your daily routine and it becomes a lot easier to ensure those lessons from Cyber Se-

curity Month aren't forgotten."

Those lessons include securing online accounts, educating ourselves about current cyber threats and ensuring our devices have the latest security and software updates. Levy explained human error is almost always involved in successful attacks.

"We're not going to solve this by installing new technology. We are going to fix this by changing behaviours, and we do that by exposing people to resources, raising their training level. The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, for example, is great for learning how to recognize threats when we see them in our inbox or when we are online."

It can be overwhelming for the general public to decide what supports to purchase. There are VPNs and anti-virus and security platforms. Levy said they do serve a purpose but added everyone needs to do more.

"We can reduce the risk by going into our settings and turning on features that aren't normally activated by default; things like dual-factor or two-factor authentication, sometimes known as

multi-factor authentication. That adds an additional lock on the door in addition to your password. You can use a fingerprint, voice authentication or a PIN, so even if your password is compromised, the bad guys aren't getting into your account."

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre advises people to implement strong passwords that don't come from a pet or family member's name. Levy said the best course of action is to have different passwords or passphrases unique to each system and changed at least once every three months.

"Ideally, once a month. If that's too difficult, use a password management app like One Password to manage those passwords in one central place."

Levy added it's also a good idea to share less personal information on social media as it is harvested by criminals and used against people in targeted attacks.

"Look at your online activity and ask yourself if you are oversharing. If the answer is yes, you are putting ammunition into the hands of cybercriminals to

use against you."

Municipalities also need to be prepared for attacks as they are constantly targeted by cybercriminals. Experts like Levy say it isn't a matter of if, but when.

"It has taken these institutions months, if not years, to recover from attacks, and in many cases, they may never recover and the cost to taxpayers is significant. We are already seeing the victims list pile up, and no one wants to be the next one."

Stratford and St. Marys have both been victims of ransomware attacks in recent years. The Festival City was attacked in April of 2019 when several of its servers became unresponsive and unavailable. The city shut down its servers' internet connections and disconnected computers, laptops and printers from the network to contain the damage.

The attacker demanded 10 Bitcoins as ransom. At that time, each Bitcoin was worth about \$7,500 Canadian, making the demand total roughly \$75,000. The city complied and paid the ransom in exchange for decryption keys.

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St. Marys Independent SPORTS

Lincs keep finding ways to win with strong back-to-back efforts



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

Chase MacQueen-Spence celebrates scoring one of his two goals during the St. Marys Lincolns' 4-3 shootout win on Oct. 17 over the St. Thomas Stars.

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Truly great teams don't play perfectly every night, but they still find ways to win.

That is precisely what the St. Marys Lincolns did on Oct. 17 against the St. Thomas Stars and Oct. 18 versus the Komoka Kings.

In the first half of their back-to-back, the Lincolns had a rare series of defensive miscues leading to a handful of first-period breakaways and odd-man rushes. Head coach Jeff Bradley noted he was happy with the team's ability to squeak out the two points despite a flawed execution.

"I thought we were just okay," said Bradley. "We gave up a lot of chances that we don't normally do, and chances we don't want to be giving the other team. I don't think that was our absolute best. Having almost a full week between games, it can be hard to be sharp at all times, so I think it's just a matter of getting a little bit more in sync and continuing to create the chances we did, and it will be sorted out. It was one of those games where you have to gut out a win, and we did that."

One of those high-danger chances was snuck past goaltender Brogan Col-

quhoun by Stars' forward Myles Dunn for the first goal of the game, seven minutes and nine seconds into the opening period.

"When you're not sharp, speed can kill, and St. Thomas is very fast," Bradley said. "They are good with the puck and those elements gave us a couple of problems. But I think we gave them more problems than they gave us. We were a little out of sync, but we outshot them, we out-chanced them and we ended up winning the game, so that's definitely a silver lining."

The Lincolns found the equalizer 10 and a half minutes later with the first goal in the (Greater Ontario Hockey League) GOHL career of James MacGregor, with the lone assist going to his defence partner, Luke McMillan. MacGregor, who scored the goal against Dylan Durno, a goalie he played with last year, expressed relief about finally getting his first career goal.

"It was so nice to get it out of the way," MacGregor told the Independent post-game. "I've gotten a lot of good chances so far and just haven't been able to capitalize yet, but now, finally scoring my first against my old goalie, that was awesome and definitely special. I didn't get the opportunity to say something to him on the ice, but I'll definitely send him a



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

James MacGregor fires his first GOHL goal during the St. Marys Lincolns' 4-3 victory against the St. Thomas Stars on Oct. 17.

text tonight."

MacGregor described the play that culminated with him firing home his first goal.

"As I was coming up the ice, I kind of lost the puck. But I got it back and I knew there was a guy on my back, so I knew kicking it out wasn't going to be the play. I kept taking it into the offensive zone, and I saw the defender take a

step wide, and I took a step to the middle on him and ripped it, and luckily it went in."

In the second frame, Chase MacQueen-Spence made it two straight games with a goal when he blasted home a powerplay marker just over eight and a half minutes into the period. The Stars responded two minutes later with Cade

CONTINUED TO PAGE 21

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Lincs keep finding ways to win with strong back-to-back efforts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

Kinnear burning the Lincolns off an errant turnover by Ethan Weir in the St. Marys end.

The Lincolns' captain found his second of the period, once again on a Lincolns' man advantage – MacQueen-Spence's fifth of the season – at the 13:10 mark of the second, putting the Lincolns back ahead by one heading into the final period of regulation.

Despite controlling the game for the majority of the night, the Lincolns couldn't find more breathing room, which came back to haunt them when a pass by Tyran Lawson bounced off a body right back to him, before getting shot into the back of the Lincolns' net.

After overtime solved nothing, the game went to a shootout, during which Lincoln Moore scored the only goal and Colquhoun turned away three St. Thom-

as shooters to secure the 4-3 victory.

When asked what it says about the team that they found a way to win in spite of their execution being far from perfect, Bradley credited the Lincs for their work ethic and resilience.

"It says they compete hard, even when we don't quite have our absolute best," Bradley said. "We didn't fold, our want to win was there and you need that when your execution isn't perfect at every moment. We did what we needed to do, and that to me is a nice sign for the future."

Lincs dominate high-octane Kings

One night later, against another team like the Stars playing far better hockey this year than last, the Lincolns carried over their consistent compete level and improved their overall play to earn a 2-0 win over the Komoka Kings.

Bradley said he was very happy with his team's performance in Komoka.

"Aside from a couple of breakdowns in the neutral zone, we handled that game and were in control for a lot of it," said Bradley. "Their goaltender played really well and, without him, the score could have been quite a bit lopsided. Komoka plays really hard and they play with pace, and it's nice to have those games because they harden you a little bit more each time. We showed, especially late in the game when we locked it down, we're not a fragile team."

Kings' netminder Brock Lane single-handedly held Komoka in the game, ending the night with 30 saves, most of which were very difficult.

The Lincolns finally broke through with six minutes to go in the middle stanza when Devun Colebrook, who continues to prove himself as an emerging young star for the Lincs, created a shorthanded breakaway off of a success-

ful poke-check, firing it past Lane to give St. Marys the icebreaker.

In the third, Jack Clarke managed to get all alone in the slot and pounded a slapshot past Lane to extend the Lincolns' lead to two.

Goaltender Vaughn Barr earned his first career GOHL shutout, making 23 saves in the Lincolns' crease. Bradley was thrilled to sing the praises of both Barr and Colquhoun for their consistently strong play in between the pipes.

"I was happy for Vaughn (Barr) to get that shutout. He has given us some really great minutes. He's come in and given us a chance to win every night. Having two goaltenders is a real luxury in this league, and we have two really good guys who we can put in and feel confident in, so we're very fortunate for both Vaughn and Brogan (Colquhoun)."

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Parks Lawn Bowling Club receives federal grant



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Perth-Wellington MP John Nater is joined by members of the Parks Lawn Bowling Club for a cheque presentation. The club received \$24,974 through the federal New Horizons for Seniors program, which supports projects designed by seniors for seniors and is community-based. The money will be put towards upgrading the club's materials, including building shelters and the purchase of 10 sets of lawn bowls, rake holders and furniture, as well as supporting efforts to grow and retain membership.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Perth-Wellington MP John Nater, Parks Lawn Bowling Club treasurer Bill Dupuis and club president Larry McLellan. Nater presented Dupuis and McLellan a certificate of recognition in honour of the club's 100th anniversary during a ceremony on Oct. 14 where Nater also presented the club with a cheque from the Canadian government's New Horizons for Seniors program.

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(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Natalie Kittmer releases a quick shot on target during the FUN3 St. Marys Snipers (Vergeer) game last Saturday.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Eleanor Beech drives the offensive zone for a scoring chance during last Saturday's U12 B St. Marys Snipers game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Vaida Graham flings the ring through the offensive zone during the U14 B St. Marys Snipers game last Saturday.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Hugh Munro launches a shot towards the opposing goal during this past Sunday's U11 LL Blue Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Ava Anderson steps into a shot from outside the faceoff circle during the U15 C Girls St. Marys Rock game this past Sunday.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Cortney Linton unloads a heavy shot on net during this past Sunday's U18 C Girls St. Marys Rock game.

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St. Marys DCVI hosts Post-Secondary Fair

WENDY LAMOND
Independent Reporter

On Tuesday, Oct. 28, St. Marys DCVI will once again host a Post-Secondary Fair with representatives from over 30 different post-secondary pathway options providing students with information on educational and training opportunities after high school.

The fair, which will run from 6:30-8 p.m., will be in a trade-fair format so students can visit whichever station they choose. There will also be short presentations for the students throughout the night showing how to apply for university and college. They will also learn about admission requirements, student life and much more.

The fair is geared toward any secondary student who is looking for information on the next step and what options are available. Besides university and college stations, there will also be information on apprenticeships, the Centre for Education & Learning and dual credit programs.

Parking is available in the James Street parking lot.

Over 30 pathway options will be represented, including:

- Apprenticeship (Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program)

- Brock University
- Canadian Armed Forces
- Carleton University
- Centre for Employment and Learning
- Conestoga University
- Dual Credit
- Fanshawe College
- Fleming College
- Georgian College
- Humber College
- Huron University/College at Western
- Kings University/ College at Western
- Lakehead University
- Lambton College
- Laurentian
- McMaster University
- Niagara College
- Ontario Tech University
- Partners in Employment
- Queens University
- Sault College
- Sheridan College
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Friendship Centre to host annual Craft Show



ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Friendship Centre's St. Marys Craft Show annually attracts hundreds of local and area shoppers seeking unique, handmade items.

Last year's Craft Show was an incredible success, and the Friendship Centre is eager to welcome shoppers back for another creative showcase! The Craft Show will take place at the Pyramid Recreation Centre on Saturday, Nov. 15 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"There's something for everyone at this year's Craft Show," said St. Marys

senior services program coordinator Sarah Jones in a press release. "We're thrilled to feature over 60 skilled vendors showcasing nearly 100 tables of handcrafted items. This is the perfect opportunity to start your holiday shopping."

Admission to the Craft Show is by donation. Additionally, there will be an opportunity to donate to the food bank. A light lunch will be available to purchase onsite with proceeds benefitting seniors' programs in St. Marys.

Questions about the event can be directed to Jones at 519-284-2340 ext. 621 or sjones@town.stmarys.on.ca.

Elvis is in the building!



(JUNE GRANT PHOTO)

A near-capacity crowd at the St. Marys United Church thoroughly enjoyed the music provided by Roy LeBlanc and the Royal Tribute Band. It was a trip down memory lane when LeBlanc performed his show "One Man, Three Legends" in which he recreated the performances of Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison and of course, Elvis. Here he is looking and sounding very much like Elvis.

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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: The urgent push for a CUAET permanent residency pathway

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

As newcomers, Canada has effectively challenged us to think bigger and to be open to new possibilities and adventures. I mean “bigger” in every sense of the word – both conceptually and physically. Three years in, I’m still adjusting to the large scale of things here: the long distances between places, the massive trucks on the roads and the expansive homes.

The houses are spacious, the distances are vast and it’s a wonderful, mind-expanding adjustment. It’s definitely not a bad thing, but it does make my old life feel a little like it was in miniature.

This “wider thinking” extends to the entrepreneurial spirit. It’s no secret that many Ukrainians come here, roll up their sleeves and aim to start their own businesses. And they are often very successful! But here’s where the Canadian dream meets the Canadian bureaucracy, and it’s a bit of a comedic tragedy.

You see, while we’re waiting for a decision on our Permanent Residence

(PR) status – a process the government website recently suggested might take “more than 10 years” (hopefully a hilarious little system glitch, because yikes) – we are trapped in a cycle of work-permit extensions.

To get that extension, you need to prove you’re employed. You can’t just be happily self-employed and thriving, because your application will be denied. So, imagine pouring your heart into launching a new venture in a new country, navigating unfamiliar rules, all while working a 12-hour shift at the factory just to have the paperwork to stay. Talk about a side hustle!

This is why getting PR isn’t just a change of status; it’s a declaration of freedom – freedom to pursue goals and dreams without fear of a visa denial or a decade-long wait.

Right now, many Ukrainians who arrived under the Canadian-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) measures have an incredibly helpful open-work permit. You can work for anyone, anywhere. It’s flexible! It’s Canadian!

But next year, that open-door policy

will begin to close. To stay, we’ll have to apply for a closed work permit. This means two things:

- We have to convince an employer to submit a massive, complex package of documents proving we are so reliable and essential that the company simply couldn’t survive without us.

- Once you get it, you are officially stuck with that employer.

This is why you see Ukrainians thinking even wider than before, desperately trying to map out a backup plan. Some are moving provinces, others are considering packing up for a new country in Europe and a few are even thinking about returning home to Ukraine. There’s no right or wrong path, just a lot of very tough, emotionally taxing decisions. The distance only compounds the challenge, making it a multi-day “quest” to travel back to Ukraine for a family emergency – often leading to terrible frustration and anger.

Canadians are wonderfully kind. They often ask us what they can do and what help we need. But here’s a little secret: Ukrainians are hesitant to ask for help. We figure we’ve been here long enough to sort things out ourselves, and frankly, we don’t want to bother you. It feels like the news is already saturated with immigrant stories and we worry about adding to any “immigrant fatigue” among native Canadians. Psychologically, it takes real courage to ask for a favour.

But sometimes, you have to be brave.

So, this is my moment of courage. I am daring to ask the St. Marys community to consider signing an official, registered e-petition: e-6866.

This petition asks the government for a one-time permanent residency route for Ukrainians under CUAET. It’s a chance to create a fair, humane and transparent path for people who have



(IMAGE COURTESY OF ALONA VASYLIEVA)

The e-petition, e-6866, gathered 10,800 signatures in a single day – a fantastic start! Let’s keep the momentum going and get even more.

already proven their commitment to Canada.

Petitions don’t have a mandate, but they are crucial for raising important issues. If this one gets 500 signatures or more, it will be submitted to the House of Commons for consideration.

If you are open to the idea, please consider signing. It is open from Oct. 15 to Feb. 12, 2026.

Thank you so much to everyone who will even consider the thought of signing it. It’s a small act that could grant a lot of people the freedom to truly make Canada home, and to finally ditch the 12-hour shift for that entrepreneurial dream.

Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

It’s Ontario Public Library Week! Celebrate your Library tomorrow (Oct. 24) at 2 p.m. by stopping into the St. Marys Public Library for cake, PLINKO, and prizes! Love your Library? You can show your support in many ways. Please keep your Library card active and use the Library regularly. Stop in and see what we’ve been up to and consider donating time, energy, or funds.

Join us at the Pyramid Recreation Centre on Saturday (Oct. 25) at 2 p.m. for the author talk with Dan Needles! Author of the insightful 2025 Perth County Reads title “Finding Larkspur”, Dan Needles is also known for his laugh-out-loud “Wingfield Farm Series”, a popular

seven-part series of one-man plays. Saturday’s author talk is free to attend, and no registration is required.

Up This Week

Fri., Oct. 24: Ontario Public Library Week Celebration (2 p.m.)

Sat., Oct. 25: Dan Needles Author Talk^ (2 p.m.)

Mon., Oct. 27: Euchre Mondays (10:30 a.m.), Learn to Play Bridge (1-3 p.m.)

Tues., Oct. 28: Tuesday Book Club* (11 a.m.), Tween Book Club* (6 p.m.)

Wed., Oct. 29: EarlyON Play and Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong! (1-4 p.m.)

Thurs., Oct. 30: Create and Connect (6:30-8 p.m.)

*Registration Required

^Pyramid Recreation Centre, 2/3 Hall (317 James St. S)

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Margaret A. A. Hutton (1860-1948)

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

Margaret Anne Austin Hutton was born in St. Marys in the earliest years of the village's history. Her family, the prosperous Huttons, were early builders of the community. In her almost nine decades of life, she saw many changes not only to St. Marys but also to Canada and this country's place in the world. Annie (as her family called her) lived through Confederation, the building of transcontinental railways, the First World War, the Great Depression and World War II. During her lifetime, the village of St. Marys became an incorporated town and the population doubled. Her life was a secure one. She had the means to live comfortably and to travel extensively. She was able to be generous to her church and other worthy causes. Eventually, she outlived most of her friends and close relatives. When she died in 1948, she was the last of her family of Huttons in St. Marys.

George Martin Hutton, Annie's grandfather, arrived in Canada from Hampshire, England, in 1850 with his wife, Ann Veal Hutton and three of their six sons, William Veal and Joseph Osman, both adults in their 20s, and Albert, the youngest, just 15 years old. The Hutton family went first to London to join the oldest brother, George Frederick Hutton, who had come to Canada with his family in 1845. Now 30 years old, he and his wife, Temperance, had several children and he had established himself as a merchant in the city. For George Hutton Senior in his late 50s, it must have been quite an undertaking to leave England and relocate to a new country. No record exists to explain why he decided to do so. Many of his countrymen left because of economic necessity but this was not the case for the Huttons. They arrived in Canada with resources to invest in the development of their new home.

According to a family story recounted years later in one of the son's obituaries, the newly arrived Huttons hired a carriage and spent several weeks driving through the countryside surrounding London. They were on the lookout for a promising village, suitable for the capital investments they had in mind. They were attracted to the small hamlet of St. Marys. "They found a spot whose pristine charms of woodland, fertile field and falling waters far surpassed even the rosiest picture written home by George of London." More important, this entrepreneurial family saw business potential. When his parents decided to stay in St. Marys, George Hutton Junior, Temperance, and their children moved here as well. The two remaining brothers, Theodore, who later became Annie's father, and his younger brother, Willoughby, also left England to join their family in the village.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS MUSEUM DIGITAL COLLECTION OF HISTORIC IMAGES)

Margaret Ann Austin Hutton, a member of the prosperous Hutton family, before her marriage in 1882.

The Hutton brothers were not members of the leisure class. They were ambitious, hard-working businessmen who knew how to get things done and how to succeed. They soon were an important part of the small community. William Veal Hutton purchased the Ingersoll family's mill, enlarged it, and became a prosperous miller. Joseph invested in property within the village and sold building lots to newcomers. In the 1851 census, George and Theodore were both listed as merchants and Willoughby was a draper. In 1855, when St. Marys became an official village, W. V. Hutton was a member of the first village council. In 1865, soon after the village was raised to the status of town, he served a term as mayor. The oldest brother, George Hutton Junior, died in 1862 at the age of 42, a sad set-back. But the close-knit Hutton family made sure that his widow, Temperance, and her children were well cared for.

Theodore Hutton established a general store on Queen Street in St. Marys in the early 1850s. At the age of 28, in November 1858, he married Sarah Hannah Edmison in Peterborough, Ontario. He brought her home to St. Marys where she encouraged him to continue not only as a retail merchant but also as a private banker. Their daughter, Margaret Anne

Austin, was born in October 1860. In 1868 Theodore Hutton hired contractor/architect Robert Barbour to design and build a three-storey limestone commercial block with a gabled roof, still standing as 26 Water Street South. He called it Hutton House. The ground floor was retail; the two upper floors were his family residence and offices for his banking business. When she was eight years old, Annie moved with her parents into this spacious apartment, overlooking the Thames River to the west and the hustle and bustle of Water Street to the east. In 1870, Frederick Willoughby Hutton was born and Annie, now ten, had a brother.

Annie was educated first in St. Marys elementary schools and then was sent to Bute House in Montreal, an exclusive girls' boarding school. But she may have been unhappy so far from home because she withdrew from that school and switched to Sacred Heart Academy in London, Ontario, with several St. Marys contemporaries, including Julia Ford, Dr. Adam Ford's clever daughter. Julia was Annie's life-long friend as was her first cousin, Mina Hutton, George and Temperance's youngest daughter. This week's undated photograph shows Margaret Anne Hutton when she was about 20 years of age. Her formal education finished, she was ready for her

future. She was a short young woman, a bit bow-legged. Her quiet features are almost overpowered by the elaborate dressing of her hair and her long, dangling earrings. A few years after the photograph was taken, she found herself married to a bank manager, C. S. Rumsey, a widower twice her age with a seven-year-old son.

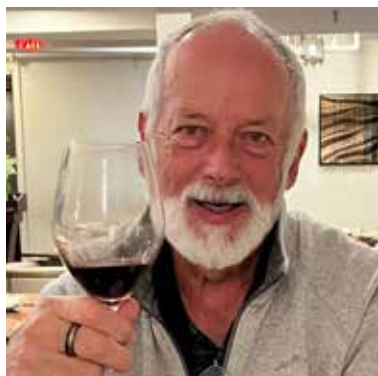
Charles Stockman Rumsey was born in 1838 in Ingersoll, Ontario. His parents, William and Harriet Rumsey, came to Canada from New York State in 1837, with a baby son, William Junior. After they arrived in Canada, they had five more children, including Charles. William Rumsey owned a prosperous foundry in Ingersoll and was able to give his children a good education. Young Charles attended school in Caradoc, Guelph, and Toronto. In 1856, he came home to take a position with his father who was opening a branch of the Commercial Bank in Ingersoll. Charles worked in various branches of this bank for the next ten years but took time off for an extended trip to England, France, and Scotland in 1867. The bank then placed him in Belleville, Kingston, and Montreal. He and a partner had a private bank in Montreal for several years, but Charles decided he preferred working in a chartered bank and joined the Bank of Toronto and then the Canadian Bank of Commerce.

C. S. Rumsey, age 35, was the manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce in Dundas, Ontario, at the time of his first marriage to 22-year-old Sarah Katharine Canfield of Ingersoll in November 1873. Very soon after their marriage, Charles was offered the management of a branch of the Federal Bank in St. Marys. He opened the branch on January 1, 1875. Four weeks later, on January 30, Charles and Katharine's son, Reginald Arthur, was born in St. Marys. Katharine died in September 1877 when Reginald was only two-and-a-half years old and was buried in the Rumsey plot in the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery. The 1881 census shows Charles and his six-year-old son living in St. Marys. A 55-year-old housekeeper and a young female servant were also part of the household. Following her marriage on July 5, 1882, the Rumsey household was Annie's to manage.

Was a mutual attraction the basis for the marriage of young Annie to this much older, well-travelled, sophisticated man? In some ways it seems the union was managed by family members. Rather than having a female friend as her attendant, two of Annie's uncles were witnesses at the ceremony and another uncle, the Reverend Henry Edmison, performed the ceremony. The Huttons may have seen marriage to a prosperous banker as a great opportunity for a young woman who may not have had any serious suitors her own age. But did it work out for Annie? To be continued.

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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: An unexpected delight in downtown Toronto



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

When you put the two words, “Toronto” and “Gardiner” together in the same sentence, the reaction is probably not all that positive because it conjures up very familiar images of sitting motionless in your car on the Gardiner Expressway – an experience even more likely this year because of all the construction on the notorious lake-shore highway.

But there is another “Gardiner” in Toronto, and it offers a much more pleasant experience. The expressway was named for Fred Gardiner, a Toronto politician, but The Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art carries the same moniker because of founders George and Helen Gardiner (no close relation to Fred that I can find).

The Gardiner Museum is, frankly, an unexpected delight. I have written from time to time about attractions that seem less than inspiring in my uninformed opinion, where I anticipate a 20-minute visit, which then turns into a number of intriguing hours. That was certainly the case with the Gardiner Museum.

The institution is located at 111 Queen’s Park, directly

across from the main entrance of the Royal Ontario Museum. Once managed by the ROM, the Gardiner gained operational and financial independence about 30 years ago and has thrived ever since.

But what is it?

The Gardiner was founded by George and Helen Gardiner to house their collection of ancient American artifacts and European pottery and porcelain. As a former chair of the Toronto Stock Exchange, George Gardiner was free to indulge in a whimsical hobby, and so, began collecting ceramic art. That collection formed the foundation for what is now an ever-growing inventory of important ceramic pieces.

George Gardiner passed away in 1997 and Helen Gardiner in 2008, but their vision – and their continued philanthropy – has sparked two significant expansions to the museum and its collections. One such program, in 2004, saw the museum close for two years to allow a major expansion. A second is ongoing on the ground floor this year. The current \$15.5-million project is described as “the full-scale reimagining of our ground floor (which) will include the construction of a new, fully equipped makerspace, a Community Learning Centre and an Indigenous gallery space.”

But even with the ground floor closed for reconstruction, there is still a lot in the open exhibits to intrigue visitors to the gallery.

Now, let’s be honest here. We visited the Gardiner as complete novices, knowing virtually nothing about ceramics, and not sure we really cared. But the exhibitions, the information

and the sheer quirkiness of the art and artifacts on display absolutely captured our attention.

For instance, soon after beginning our visit, we spotted some outrageously bold images on what were apparently dinner plates. The accompanying information told us these were original creations of Pablo Picasso.

Nearby was something completely different – a life-size, bright blue, ceramic chainsaw, the creation of Native Canadian artist Mary Anne Barkhouse.

You might not immediately associate ceramics and porcelain with humour, but to my surprise, we found a great deal to smile about in the pieces on display at the museum. An English piece created in Staffordshire in the 1830s is simply labelled “The Ale Bench,” but there’s a lot going on in the work – a full-on dust-up between a drunken man and a rather aggressive female opponent! It made me laugh – still does, when I look at the photo – and honestly, I think that is as positive a recommendation as I can make for any tourist attraction.

And we also laughed at the highly detailed, admittedly weird, 19-character “Monkey Orchestra,” from the Meissen factory, around 1750.

Like many hobbies over the centuries, the creation and collecting of porcelain has inspired huge excess, and such extravagance is certainly on display here. There is, for example, a 31-piece gold tea and coffee service made in Vienna in 1788.

Many of the pieces in the Gardiner collection have historical significance, such as the group



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The Gardiner Museum featuring ceramics and porcelain in Toronto.

of three Sevres vases once owned by French King Louis XVIII.

But one of my biggest surprises came from much closer to home – right here in Canada. I am a bit of a collector of Inuit sculpture, but all of my pieces are soapstone or serpentine or bone. At the Gardiner, I found a wonderful ceramic piece, “Man Skinning Walrus,” by Roger Aksadjuak (1972-2014), a Nunavut artist.

Unlike many such institutions, the Gardiner is open seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (until 5 p.m. on weekends and holiday Mondays). The admission fee is very reasonable – what is suggested is \$15 for adults, \$11 for seniors, and free for 18 and under. However, during the current construction project, admission is actual-

ly by donation of a Loonie or more. And every Wednesday, the museum is open until 9 p.m., and admission is free after 4 p.m.

One highlight of the museum is the Clay restaurant, open every day except Saturday for lunch. The food is really good. It is also not inexpensive.

So, I highly recommend that if you know little or nothing about ceramics, you set your skepticism aside and visit the Gardiner Museum. I’m confident it will be a pleasant surprise.

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.



The jovial staff at Clay restaurant at the Gardiner Museum.



Pablo Picasso brought his unique artistic vision to dinner plates.

FROM THE GARDEN: Luffa - is it a vegetable or sponge?



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist

In the world of gardening, few plants bridge the gap between utility and beauty. Luffa (*Luffa aegyptiaca* or *Luffa cylindrica*) and sometimes spelt loofah, is known for its dual purpose as both a vegetable and natural sponge. This plant is a tropical vine, a member of the gourd family and for patient gardeners is surprisingly versatile.

The origin of luffa stems back to the ancient tropics of Southern Asia, particularly in the areas that now encompasses India and China. Archaeological evidence suggests that luffa was cultivated as early as 7,000 years ago, making it one of the oldest domesticated plants in history.

Over millennia, with its discovery by botanists in Egypt and Southern Asia centuries ago, luffa has spread across the continents, adapting to various climates and cultures. Today it grows worldwide, in backyard gardens in North America to farms in tropical Asia.

Luffa thrives in warm climates and demands a long growing season, ideally 150 to 200 frost-free days. In cooler regions like Ontario, starting seeds indoors in early spring is essential. Then luffa with at least five or six full leaves are transplanted out in the garden, after the risk of frost has passed. Luffa needs rich, well drained soil with full sun exposure. It produces a large, five-petal, open lemon-yellow flower that bees love. Its vines can reach nine metres or thirty feet and grows best on a strong trellis or fence so the fruit, as it develops, can hang down. It also needs regular watering and it is important to keep the soil evenly moist, especially during the flowering and fruiting stages. With every plant there are challenges, so watch for pests such as aphids, cucumber beetles and squash bugs. As for diseases, powdery mildew and downy mildew can affect the foliage. Avoid overhead watering and good air circulation is the key to lessen these diseases.

When the luffa fruit is young, under 15 cm, it can be harvested and eaten in dishes such as soups, stir-fries and curries or prepared similarly to other squashes and cucumbers. Culinary uses in countries and regions throughout the world vary. In parts of India, it is called torai and cooked as a vegetable. In Nepal, it is usually cooked with tomatoes and



potatoes and served with rice. In Sri Lanka, it is a common ingredient in curries. In Vietnamese cuisine, it is used in soups and stir-fried dishes. In China, it is referred to as silk melon or Chinese okra and is primarily used in stir-fries with garlic and eggs or in stews with seafood or tofu.

Left on the plant and the luffa fruit grown to maturity, it will dry on the vine until the skin turns from green to brown and become brittle. Sometimes this can challenge gardeners espe-

cially if the fall turns wet and cold. Therefore, the luffa fruit should be harvested and put in a warm place to dry out naturally. Once totally dry, you can hear the seeds rattle inside when the fruit is shaken. They can be peeled to reveal a fibrous interior, cleaned by rinsing and sliced to use as a biodegradable sponge or scrubby.

Along with the luffa's cultural dishes, the matured fruit is also valued in different countries. In China, luffa is linked to cleansing and renewal. In In-

dia, it is praised for its colling and detoxifying properties. In rural communities in parts of Africa, luffa is used as a natural filter and rudimentary water purifier.

Whether you grow luffa for its culinary appeal or its hygiene cleansing properties, this plant offers a unique blend of sustainability, old traditions, and garden intrigue. It is a reminder that some plants are intriguingly a challenge to grow but also offer us surprising treasures.

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Riddles

What has four legs and a back but can't walk?
A chair!

I'm a mammal with a long trunk. What am I?
An elephant!

What is black and white and read all over?
A newspaper!

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

I can sizzle like bacon, I am made with an egg, and I have plenty of backbone but lack a good leg. What am I?
A snake!

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

I have stripes, but I'm not a barber. I run fast, but I'm not a car. What am I?
A zebra!

I am an odd number. Take away a letter, and I become even. What number am I?
Seven (remove the 's')!

I can live in water or on land. I have a shell, but I am not a car; I move very slowly, but I carry my home on my back. What am I?
A turtle!

- Word Search -



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- Saturday
- Spooktacular
- Spirits of St Marys
- Ghost walk
- Crime stories
- Spine tingling
- Trick or treat
- Howl O Ween
- Pet parade
- Photo booth
- Costume contest
- Public library
- Cemetery tour



The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK



What did the mama bison say to the baby bison when he went off to school?

Bye-son!

Teagan Warren (4)

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



IT'S VET TECH APPRECIATION WEEK!

A huge thank-you to our amazing vet techs—Lisa, Katty, Katie and Laura—for your expertise, dedication, and the compassion you show every animal who comes through our doors. From assisting in surgeries to calming anxious pets (and their people), your hard work shines. We're so grateful to have you as part of the St. Marys Vet Clinic family.



LEROY

Our Pet of the Week is Leroy, a 12-year-old Havapoo. A Havapoo is a small-to-medium-sized "designer dog" mix of a Havanese and a Poodle. Leroy loves everybody, both people and other dogs. He is also a fan of table scraps. Leroy is a member of the Connolly family.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent



Support
Local
Businesses



Check out our website for business and community info at ilovethorndale.ca

Revealing stories of the haunting 1960s in Thorndale

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Barb Dorrington, author of *The Trauma Monster* has been a familiar figure in Thorndale in recent weeks.

Her book delves into the disappearances, assaults and murders of children and young people in the 1960s and early '70s in the London area. These homicides have also had a haunting effect on the community of Thorndale, especially with the discovery of Frankie Jensen's body and the disappearance of Scott Leishman.

In September, Dorrington organized an event at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre inviting author Michael Arntfield, who wrote *Murder City*, Vanessa Brown, author of *The Forest City Killer*, and Dennis Alsop Jr., son of Det. Dennis Alsop, lead investigator in most of the murder cases, to speak in front of a capacity audience.

Last Thursday afternoon, Dorrington was a guest speaker at the Thorndale Active Living Centre program as she talked about her journey writing *The Trauma Monster*, her interviews, her research into assaults and murders in the London area, and especially the ties to



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

A group of Thorndale residents sit around a table with Barb Dorrington, author of *Trauma Monster*, at the Thorndale Library.

the community of Thorndale. Last Saturday, Oct. 18, both Dorrington and Brown were at the Thorndale Library to

chat with anyone interested in learning more about their books.

"We thought it would be just a few

people dropping in to chat with us," Dorrington said, "but it was much more than that. It was a very powerful session. People came, stayed and sat around the large table and shared their memories and stories."

"I was probably the last person to see Scott Leishman alive," said Dave Dawson, a London resident, formerly of Thorndale. "We played floor hockey with a couple of other boys that afternoon, on our Spring Break, in the hall behind St. George's Anglican Church. After we finished and cleaned up, I sat on the church's front steps talking with Scott as he was at the road, thumb up to get a ride home. A white car stopped and Scott got into the back seat. That was the last time I saw my friend Scott."

"Strangely, I was never interviewed by the police."

"It was my dad, who was canoeing on the Thames River north of the Thorndale bridge who discovered Frankie's body," said Kathy, another Thorndale resident who attended the library event.

"I am grateful that people came to share their stories" Dorrington said, "and perhaps there may be a conclusion to these mysteries."

I Love Thorndale business network hosts get-together

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Directors of I Love Thorndale (ILT) invited businesses listed on the ILT business directory to a social networking gathering last Thursday evening, Oct 16.

This get-together was the opportunity to celebrate our local businesses and entrepreneurs for Small Business Week Oct. 19-25. But it was also important to thank them for their contributions to the community of Thorndale.

Also invited to this business-networking get-together was Graeme Lyons, general manager of Community Futures Middlesex, as well as Susan Judd, a member of the board of directors from Thorndale who represents the Municipality of Thames Centre. Community Futures

Middlesex is a business help centre that provides financial assistance, planning and advisory services to entrepreneurs, small businesses and social enterprises in this region.

Mamta Patel from St. Marys Independent also attended, enlightening business owners on the advertising opportunities for the Thorndale News page.

Business owners enjoyed meeting and getting to know what they have to offer to each other. We not only recognize our local businesses' achievements, but also that supporting them has a domino effect in our community's economic progress and our social wellbeing and vitality.

For the listing of small businesses in the community of Thorndale, check out www.ilovethorndale.ca/businesses/.



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

James Weedmark of Weedmark Construction in Thorndale and Thorndale realtor Garan Stevens talk with Susan Judd, board member for Community Futures Middlesex, about the opportunities and services they offer at a recent I Love Thorndale business networking get-together.

IN MEMORIAM

Lind

In loving memory of Barbara Lind
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absent from our hearts.
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You are loved beyond words
and missed beyond measure.
With lots of love always
Your family
XO

CELEBRATION

Happy 60th Anniversary
Marg and Len Boreham



Love from Rob & Connie, Paul & Tara, Brian & Casey
and families.

OBITUARY

Thompson



Delmer Gerald Thompson, passed away peacefully at the Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth on Oct. 16, 2026 at the age of 85. Survived by his two children, four nieces and nephews. Cremation has taken place with interment in Dorchester Union Cemetery. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca

THANK YOU

McCurdy

We would like to thank everyone for the beautiful cards that we received, the emails, ecards, phone calls and text messages for our 65th anniversary. Thank you for the flowers and treats. A special thank you to our families for treating us to meals out. We really feel blessed to be able to celebrate this wonderful milestone in our lives.

Reg and Lucille

IN MEMORIAM

Petrie

In loving memory of Manfred Raymond Petrie
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Edythe, Raymond, Roberta, John and Jim

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Entertainment: Jessica Damen & Co.
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THURSDAYS FROM 12 - 1:30
Sausage on a Bun \$4.00

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are that of their authors and do not reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent or Grant Haven Media.

Thankful after weekend laundromat fire

Dear Editor,
On Thursday Oct. 16, we received a call that no business owners want to answer. There had been a dryer fire at Little Falls Laundromat on Queen Street West. Due to the brave actions of local residents Mark

Shen and Anthony Rooney, the fire was contained. The speedy response of the St. Marys Fire Department and their professionalism meant that the fire was able to be contained and isolated in the Laundromat unit. We are very grateful to the Stratford police, Mr. Shen

and Mr. Rooney, and the volunteers of the St. Marys Fire Department. Thank you. We are lucky to live in such a great community where people care so much.
*Sincerely,
Al and Gloria Strathdee*



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Thur. Oct. 16 - Alan Cinnamon, Sebringville	\$50.00
Fri. Oct. 17 - Cole Merkel, St. Pauls	\$50.00
Sat. Oct. 18 - Chris Rekker, Stratford	\$200.00

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Ticket #432 350th	\$50	Jeff Inch
Ticket #525 400th	\$200	Kerry Vergeer
Ticket #191 450th	\$50	Corrine Rumble
Ticket #101 500th	\$200	Mary Jane Marcaccio
Ticket # 128 550th	\$100	Bob Mossey
Ticket # 476 598th	\$250	Jill Lind
Ticket #068 599th	\$300	Gerry Brickman
Ticket #502 600th	\$2,000	Marilynn Vandenborre

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9		7					

Solutions on pg. 35

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CLARIFICATION:

A photo that appeared with the story, "From yoga studio to country daycare: How a St. Marys mother found her calling," on page two of the Oct. 16 edition of the St. Marys Independent was improperly attributed. While the photo was attributed as a contributed photo, the photographer was, in fact, Leanne Murray of IntuitionPhotography. We regret this oversight and extend all credit for the photo to Leanne.

St. Marys Independent
THE WEEK AHEAD

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

St. Marys Public Library events – See Page 26

Friday, Oct 24

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.
- The Stitch Market sale of fabric, yarn, etc at St. Marys United Church – 6 to 8 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Strathroy Rockets at the PRC – 7:30 p.m.
- SMCP presents “Hilda’s Yard” at the Town Hall theatre – 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Oct 25

- St. Marys Farmers Market at Milt Dunnell Field – 8 a.m. to Noon
- Scaretacular St. Marys – 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pet parade & costume contest
- The Stitch Market sale of fabric, yarn, etc at St. Marys United Church – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- McCully’s fall harvest festival – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Price range \$6.25 to \$7.50
- St. Marys Museum cemetery walking tour, Pre-register at 519-284-3556, Tickets \$10 – 2 p.m.
- SMCP presents “Hilda’s Yard” at the Town Hall theatre – 2 p.m.
- A.N.A.F. fish fry – 5-7 p.m., Tickets \$25
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw – 5 p.m.
- Halloween haunted house at Thorndale Community Centre – 6-8:30 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs London Nationals at Western Fair Sports Centre – 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, Oct 26

- McCully’s fall harvest festival – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Price range \$6.25 go \$7.50
- SMCP presents “Hilda’s Yard” at the Town Hall theatre – 2 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct 28

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee – 10 a.m. to Noon
- DCVI post-secondary fair at DCVI – 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- St. Marys Legion cribbage – Starts 7 p.m. sharp

Wednesday, Oct 29

- St. Marys Hospital Auxiliary Bingo Night at the PRC – 7-10 p.m.

Thursday, Oct 30

- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun lunch – 12 to 1:30 p.m.

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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Looking
Back



AMY CUBBERLEY

Independent Columnist

Lost ladder

25 years ago (2000)
St. Marys OPP are investigating damage on the Sarnia Bridge. Police say boards have been lifted off the bridge and a fort has been built underneath the Grand Trunk Trail. Police have no suspects yet and are increasing patrols in the area.

October 26th marks the 31st year of the Volunteer of the Year program in St. Marys. Four very worthy candidates have been nominated this year: John Harlton, Reg Near, Don Gibson, and Elsie Witteveen.

50 years ago (1975)
According to parking meter man Frank Reid, a few local motorists are forgetting that metered parking is in force on Mondays, except legal holidays.

St. Marys Town Council gave its official stamp of approval to the establishment of a day care centre here at its regular meeting on Tuesday night. The by-law now goes to Toronto for final approval and sets out that control and management of such a day care centre shall rest with Council and shall be administered by a Committee of Council consisting of three or more persons.

75 years ago (1950)
The St. Marys Memorial Hospital is complete! It will be open to the public on Friday and Saturday. Its telephone number is 830.

Ray Bondy is looking for an extension ladder he loaned to someone whose identity he has forgotten. He is advertising it as “strayed” in the classified columns. Ray says he can’t put the storm windows on his second storey apartment without the trusty ladder.

100 years ago (1925)
Mrs. A.E. Kennedy and two sons Stewart and Finlay will leave St. Marys next week to make their home in Detroit where the eldest boy Mason now has a position in the Dime Savings Bank. Mrs. Kennedy has lived in St. Marys for nearly fifteen years and is highly esteemed. Her many friends will regret her departure.

John H. Brown, a former resident of St. Marys and popularly known as “Stoney” Brown was killed, together with a friend, at Fletchers crossing near Tilbury. The car in which the two men were riding was struck by an express train. Mr. Brown was formerly a stone cutter at Elliott’s quarry.

QUIZ ANSWERS

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Universal Serial Bus | 6. Roxette |
| 2. Nutmeg | 7. Seven |
| 3. Stephen King | 8. Hydrogen |
| 4. Psychology | 9. BTS |
| 5. Rabbits | 10. Kuwait |



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