

STRATFORD *TIMES*

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Fire Chief Anderson says final goodbye

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

On June 26, Stratford Fire Chief Neil Anderson hung up his helmet for the last time and celebrated with local firefighters, whom he said are friends, not co-workers.

"This has been an experience, and it's impacted me considerably," he said. "I see friends here, not co-workers. It's been an experience. It's been an honour and a pleasure."

Anderson, Stratford's Director of Emergency Services and fire chief, joined Stratford Fire Services in 2017 after his military career. He is known for making a true impact and leading with his heart, as Mayor Martin Ritsma said at the fire station last Friday in his address to Anderson.

"The sincerity of how you handle your job is one of a kind," said Ritsma. "I know you look out, and you're seeing your guys that play that part of the team, but sometimes we don't have that balance. We have somebody who's pretty warm and emotional, or somebody who's really cold and professional, and, as I've said many times, you have an amazing combination of both the caring and the professional pieces that make you one of a kind."

The fire chief has been vocal about the mental health impact of the position, noting that this is a long-awaited mental health break and a time when he plans to catch up on caring for his physical and mental health. He also said that he's looking forward to getting some rest and spending time with his family.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Happy Canada Day! The SDSS Jazz Combo were on stage at Market Square July 1 to kick off this year's festivities. For more, see next week's edition on July 10.

Summer Company program launches 11 new entrepreneurs

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

Last week, 11 student start-ups launched in Stratford and Perth County through the annual Summer Company program, in partnership with investStratford and the Stratford Perth Centre for Business.

This year's cohort of young, local entrepreneurs across Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County is backed by a powerful combination of intensive mentorship and \$33,000 in provincial and regional partnership support.

Funded by the Province of Ontario and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, the Summer Company program provides participants with hands-on business training, expert mentorship and a \$3,000 micro-grant.

"I want to give all of you a shout-out because you have put your foot forward or decided to raise your hand to do this program and to put yourself out there and sell a business or a service," said Matthew Rae, MPP. "It's great to see the entrepreneurial spirit locally here in Stratford, St."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



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SKIP THE DISHES

Summer Company program launches 11 new entrepreneurs in Stratford and Perth County

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Marys and across Perth County."

Mayor Martin Ritsma spoke to students about the importance and impact that small businesses have in Stratford and Perth County and wished them all well on their journey.

"This program is neat because it gives you practical experience before going off to post-secondary education," said Ritsma. "We all know the importance of small businesses in our community and the impact they have. It's hard to believe you're going to have an impact on our local community right now, and that's a beautiful thing."

Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford, spoke to students and thanked the Ontario government for its ongoing contributions to supporting students in their entrepreneurial journeys.

"Every year, the sheer energy and creativity of these young entrepreneurs completely blows me away," she said. "The funding provided by the Province of Ontario allows us to build the vital bedrock that makes this program possible. Thanks to Ontario's commitment – and the incredible way our regional partners stepped up to expand it – we are giving these students the ultimate platform to test their ideas, build real-world skills and invest directly in the future of our local economy."

Program graduates:

Lucy Webster, Art-to-Heart, is located in Stratford and offers personalized art lessons, portfolio prep, academic tutoring and creative respite programming for all ages. Webster is a post-secondary student and can be reached via email at art.to.heart.stratford@gmail.com or on Instagram @art_to_heart_stratford.



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)
Matthew Rae, MPP for Perth-Wellington, speaks to students during the Summer Company program launch in Stratford last week, where 11 student entrepreneurs were recognized for launching their new businesses.

Vincent Macisaac, Stratford Green Scapes, is a full-service lawn maintenance company located in Stratford that provides professional mowing, weed trimming, core aeration and seasonal yard cleanups. Macisaac is available for quotes at stratfordgreenscapes@gmail.com or 519-801-6608.

Mandy Cacic, Miscellaneous Art, is a service where Cacic turns her creative passion into vibrant, custom merchandise. She creates and sells original paintings and highly detailed, handmade custom pins featuring unique illustrations and animal designs. You can get in contact with her through Instagram @misc.art_.

Oliver Johnstone, On-Deck Marine Care, provides premium, recurring dock-

side cleaning services designed to keep boats clean, protected and ready to use all season long. Servicing boats directly at a local marina with no hauling or prep required. He can be reached via his website at www.ondeckmarine.com or at ondeckmarine.contact@gmail.com.

Kieran Johnson, Green Side Lawn Care, is located in Stratford and offers a wide selection of property care to keep your yard looking its best. Services include routine mowing and trimming, extensive yard cleanups, seeding and precise mulch installation. Johnson can be reached by email at kieran@greensidelawncafe.ca for quotes.

Cindy Yuan, Portraits by Cindy, is located in Stratford and specializes in high-quality visual art. Yuan offers custom commissioned artwork tailored to your vision using graphite, watercolours and acrylics, perfect for meaningful gifts

or statement home decor. She can be reached via cindyuan@cystudio.art or at www.cystudio.art. You can also follow and connect on Instagram and Facebook at @c.y.studios.

Ben Ewing, besportsp photography, is located in St. Marys, where Ewing captures high-energy action shots for local athletes, parents and community leagues. Ewing is a high school student and specializes in professional sports photography, regularly covering local baseball games and sporting events.

Ryan Clark, Ryan's Lawn Care, is located in St. Marys and provides dependable, routine residential lawn maintenance right across the community. Reach out to secure your spot on his route for prompt service and consistent lawn care.

Nathan Preston, Green Productions, is located in St. Marys, helping businesses across the area and neighbouring communities elevate their digital presence with custom video production. Preston creates professional promotional videos. He can be reached at nathan.greenthehl@gmail.com or find him on YouTube at @Green_the_H1.

Jayda Houben, Grounded Firewood Supply Co., is located in Wartburg and takes an eco-conscious approach to campfires. Houben is a high school student who supplies premium firewood, kindling and fire starters entirely reclaimed from fallen trees and local storm debris. She can be reached at jaydahouben09@gmail.com or on Instagram at @groundedfirewoodsupply.

Logan Bajtos of LB Custom 3D Parts is based in Atwood and operates a high-precision 3D printing business specializing in durable automotive components, custom prototypes and personalized printed products. Bajtos is a high school student and can be reached at loganbajtos@gmail.com. You can also connect via Instagram @lbcustom3d or Facebook at LB Custom 3D Parts.



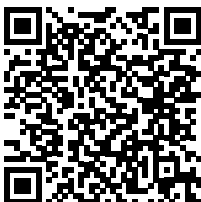
REQUEST FOR TENDER FOR RENTAL OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) welcomes tenders for the Agriculture Leases for the 2027-2031 period.

A list of the properties as well as tender applications are available online at: <https://thamesriver.on.ca/about-us/contact-us/bid-opportunities/>. Hard copies can be picked up at: Watershed Conservation Centre, 1424 Clarke Road, London, ON N5A 5B9

Tender applications must be submitted online, dropped off in person or delivered and received by regular mail to the Watershed Conservation Centre by 3:30 p.m. on Friday, July 31, 2026. In fairness to all applicants, late applications will not be opened or considered.

If any questions should arise, please contact Jason Belfry, Land Management Supervisor Jason Belfry at: 519.451.2800 ext. 280 or belfryj@thamesriver.ca.



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Fire Chief Anderson says final goodbye

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"Twenty-one years with two phones, that's one thing I'm not going to miss," said Anderson. "A couple of weeks ago, it was getting to the point where anxiety would slip in when I checked the work phone on weekends or evenings. Now I've got one phone, I don't even have to answer it. That's good news."

Acting Fire Chief Richard "Andy" Anderson (no relation) presented Anderson with mementos of his time at the fire station, including a plaque made from his helmet and a picture taken during his service. He spoke about Anderson's accomplishments and leadership capabilities.

"Chief Anderson wasn't just a boss; he was a mentor, a confidant and an advocate for every man and woman in uniform," Andy said. "You, sir, have fostered a culture of brotherhood, sisterhood and excellence. We'll all deeply miss you."

As the final sign-off rang through the fire station, tears welled in the eyes of many, including Anderson, as he said his final goodbye to the men and women of Stratford Fire Services.

"Chief, you've answered your last official alarm," said Andy. "Your legacy is permanently etched in the history of this department and the safety of this community. You have earned every bit of this chapter on behalf of the City of Stratford, the officers, the firefighters and the citizens you swore to protect. Thank you for your proud service, your sacrifice and your friendship. Congratulations on your retirement, and enjoy a long, peaceful and well-deserved rest."

Acting Deputy Fire Chief Andy Anderson has been named interim chief, but the city is searching for a new chief and aims to find and name Anderson's replacement in the next couple of months.



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Acting Deputy Fire Chief Richard "Andy" Anderson presents Chief Neil Anderson (no relation) with a picture taken on scene, along with the quote, "We accept the reality of the world which we are presented," a phrase Anderson often used throughout his service.

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Cruisers raise \$13K for Emily Murphy Centre in Sunday ride

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

With sunny weather, dry roads and a beautiful route, hundreds of motorcycle riders from across the province flocked to Perth County this June for an annual ride for charity.

The result was nothing short of “absolutely amazing,” according to Lisa Wilde, executive director of the Emily Murphy Centre. Through that Sunday ride on June 13, over \$13,000 was raised for the centre’s Tiny Homes ... Big Impact fundraising campaign.

The campaign is a community-driven initiative with the goal of building five new tiny homes on the centre’s existing land: safe, private and supportive housing that will act just as all of the centre’s spaces do, providing counselling, safety planning, life-skills development and connections to community resources that support women and children who have experienced violence.

Every year the Southern Cruisers Riding Club (SCRC) of Canada hosts a Ride of the Year, which all members are encouraged to attend, raising money for one chosen charity. This year, the Stratford Chapter 726 hosted it.

“It’s picked two years ahead, and we knew two years ago we were getting it,” said Randy Zettler, first officer of the Stratford chapter. “This has been our charity for a number of years now.

“We had 25 chapters ... and 245 people,” Zettler continued. “... We had them come



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Members of the Southern Cruisers Riding Club (SCRC) of Canada line up behind first officer Randy Zettler of the Stratford chapter and Lisa Wilde, executive director of the Emily Murphy Centre, on June 24. That evening, Zettler presented Wilde with a cheque for \$13,840 for the centre’s Tiny Homes ... Big Impact fundraiser.

from as far as Timmins. We had nine from Timmins, I think 19 from Windsor ... it was a really good turnout.”

With a final total of \$13,840 raised for the centre, this year’s Ride of the Year total was about on par compared to prior years, Zettler said, just over last year’s \$12,000 raised in Barrie.

“We’re close to halfway to our mark,” Wilde told the Times after the donation. “I’m thrilled with that result four weeks after the kickoff, and here we are. I’m

more than overjoyed.”

Wilde explained that she met a former member of the Stratford chapter a few years ago and explained what the centre does. After taking it back to the club, she was informed that the centre would be the club’s charity of choice moving forward.

“For many years they have supported us,” Wilde said. “They’ve done drives at Christmas time and stuff like that, which is incredible. And then Randy showed up at my door last fall and said, ‘Look, we

want to do this for you. Is that okay?’ And I went, ‘Are you kidding me? Yes, it’s okay!’

“... First of all, riders are the most generous group of people,” she continued. “Any cause is an excuse to get on their bikes and raise money, and so this time, because it’s Ontario-wide, he said, ‘Yeah, we’re going to go with the Emily Murphy Centre,’ and I was overjoyed ... It’s been a long relationship, but this is the biggest, grandest show of their support.”

Stratford recognizes Disability Pride Month

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

For the first time in its history, the Disability Pride flag will be flowing at Stratford City Hall.

Mayor Martin Ritsma raised the Disability Pride Flag on June 30, one day before Disability Pride Month began in July. Disability Pride Month honours people with disabilities and is celebrated every July because then-U.S. president George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law on July 26, 1990.

“My heart is full seeing the Disability Pride flag for the first time in Stratford and we will have a whole month of Disability Pride Month to talk about the colours, what they represent and how accessibility for everybody is so important here in Stratford,” said Kat Barry, a member of the City of Stratford accessi-

bility advisory committee (AAC). Barry brought forward the idea to raise the Disability Pride flag.

She also handed out Disability Pride flag buttons and sheets explaining the five different colours on the flag, the design and what it all represents:

Green: represents sensory disabilities.

Blue: represents psychiatric disabilities.

White: represents invisible and undiagnosed disabilities.

Gold: represents neurodivergence, cognitive and intellectual disabilities.

Red: represents physical disabilities.

Grey: represents the mourning of people with disabilities affected by ableism.

Parallel lines: representing solidarity.

Diagonal band: representing cutting across barriers.

“As a minority, we just want to live our lives just like everybody else and every day we seem to find a barrier of some kind,” Barry said.



(JULIA PAUL PHOTO)

Kids run past Geza Wordofa, founder of the Multicultural Association of Perth Huron, at a garden party fundraiser hosted at the Falstaff Family Centre on June 26. The afternoon raised funds for the organization’s mobile food bank and homeless outreach work.

WWW.STRATFORDTIMES.COM

Stratford ANAF celebrates completion of \$192K Trillium-funded upgrades

AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

Last Friday, Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae, Mayor Martin Ritsma and Bob Parker met with representatives from the Stratford Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans Unit 261 (ANAF) to celebrate the completion of upgrades funded by a \$192,100 capital grant from the provincial government's Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF).

"Our government is proud to support local veteran organizations that make a difference in people's lives," said Rae. "This \$192,100 Ontario Trillium Foundation capital grant will improve accessibility and increase the use of the ANAF building, ensuring it can continue to serve the growing needs of our community for years to come."

The grant, awarded last summer, was used to replace the building's aging HVAC (heating and cooling) systems, purchase a new LED sign, replace and install a new dividing wall in the hall and install a state-of-the-art audio/video system with hearing-aid accessibility and assistance functionality.

"These types of improvements matter," said Patterson. "They help create more accessible, functional and energy-efficient spaces for everyone who walks through your doors for events, activities and meetings. This grant is more than just dollars – it's an investment in your ongoing work, your members and everyone in the community who uses this site."

The Stratford ANAF upgrades are now complete, allowing the organization to continue directing funds toward support-



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Murray Patterson, president of Stratford ANAF; Bob Parker, grant review team member for the Grey, Bruce, Huron and Perth Ontario Trillium Foundation; Stephen Cooper, past president of Stratford ANAF; Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae; and Mayor Martin Ritsma stand beside the new LED sign outside the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans Unit 261 at 151 Lorne Ave. E.

ing local organizations rather than building improvements.

"The completion of this project ensures the army, navy and air force veterans at Unit 261 will be able to continue to provide improved services and help meet the needs within the Stratford community,"

said Murray Patterson, president of Stratford ANAF.

Patterson said the organization supports youth sports, local charities, the Stratford House of Blessing, the Salvation Army, the Stratford Hospital Foundation and many other community organizations. It also

provides bursaries to local high school students and supports veterans through Parkwood Veterans Hospital in London.

"Once again, I would like to thank Matthew and Bob for your support and help in awarding the Army Navy this Trillium Grant," he said.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Well Within, a dental hygiene clinic, is the newest business open in downtown Stratford. Owner Keenan Harrup has been a registered dental hygienist for 20 years and recently took the leap and ventured out with her own independent practice.

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St. Marys to provide building-inspection services to Stratford under temporary agreement

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

St. Marys will temporarily lend its building-services expertise to the City of Stratford after council approved an agreement to help its neighbouring municipality address a staffing shortage.

At its June 23 regular meeting, St. Marys council approved a building-services agreement that will see qualified St. Marys building officials assist Stratford with building-permit reviews, inspections and enforcement-related matters on a cost-recovery basis. The agreement comes after Stratford approached St. Marys seeking assistance in maintaining building-services operations while addressing a gap in staffing.

“We’re basically looking at shared services for building inspection from the Town of St. Marys to the City of Stratford,” St. Marys director of building and development Grant Brouwer told council. “The backstory is they’re having some personnel challenges. ... They asked for support for roughly three

months.”

Under the arrangement, St. Marys employees will remain employed by the town while carrying out building-related duties within Stratford under the authority of the Ontario Building Code and Stratford's local requirements. Stratford will appoint the St. Marys officials by bylaw so they can perform the required duties within the city.

Town staff said the agreement has been structured to ensure there is no impact on service delivery for St. Marys residents.

Building officials will provide up to eight hours of service per week in Stratford, with scheduling remaining flexible and coordinated between the two municipalities based on operational needs. If workloads increase in St. Marys, the town's own building services will continue to take priority.

“If we’re going to have challenges on our side, we’re not getting things done on our side, we have the ability to cancel the contract,” Brouwer said. “Even though we think we can help them out

... we do have the ability to withdraw if it’s not working out.”

The agreement is structured on a full cost-recovery basis, with Stratford responsible for reimbursing St. Marys for staff wages, employment-related costs, mileage, overtime and other eligible expenses associated with providing the service. According to the report, the arrangement will have no financial impact on the Town of St. Marys.

Council approved the agreement as a short-term arrangement intended to help Stratford while allowing both municipalities to evaluate how well the partnership works.

According to Stratford director of building and planning Adam Betteridge, the city’s building department has two staff members on parental leave – one short term and the other long term.

“The long-term leave was backfilled with a contract position, and the individual who took that position found permanent employment with another municipality,” Betteridge said. “Refilling through another contract would likely

not have been realized given only a few months remain until the employee returns from parental leave, so an arrangement with St. Marys was pursued.

“Their building officials are experienced and knowledgeable, so they can hit the ground running.”

The agreement takes effect in June and runs through Dec. 17, with provisions allowing either municipality to terminate it with 30 days' written notice. It also includes an automatic six-month renewal unless either municipality chooses to end the arrangement.

According to the report, the agreement provides an opportunity for St. Marys to support a neighbouring municipality while making efficient use of existing staff expertise without compromising local service levels.

Both Betteridge and Brouwer said the two municipalities are open to a more permanent agreement in the future that would provide backup building-department staff to help fill full-time staff absences resulting from illness or vacations in either municipality.

Long time Romeo Public School secretary retires after 35 years

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Even though she loves her front office job at Romeo Public School in Stratford, there came a time when retirement became something Denise Kane looked forward to – and something she now gets to experience firsthand.

Kane has spent 35 years in education with a career rooted in community. During a recent meeting, she said she is turning a new page on a remarkable career, after making connections and caring for students and families for generations.

Kane was raised on a dairy and beef farm in South Easthope Township, where she learned the values of hard work, commitment and service from her rural family roots.

Those early lessons would remain with her throughout her life and career. After marrying her husband Dan, the couple made their home in Stratford, where they raised their son and became active members of the community they cherish.

Kane began her career in education in 1990 as an elementary school secretary with the Perth County Board of Education. Over the years, she says she witnessed significant changes in Ontario’s education landscape, including the amalgamation of the Perth County and Huron County boards to form what is now known as the Avon Maitland School

Board.

Throughout her career, Kane’s journey took her through many schools and offices, including Avon, Portia, Juliet, the Perth County Board of Education office on Water Street, Northwestern Secondary School, Sprucedale in Shakespeare, Bedford and, for the past 11 years, Romeo Public School.

While the locations changed what remained constant was Kane’s passion for supporting students, families and colleagues. She fondly recalls working alongside dedicated and supportive staff members who made each day meaningful for their students.

“I always look forward to coming to work,” Kane said. “And the relationships built over the years with colleagues, families and students made everyday rewarding.”

Among her favourite memories are the countless interactions with students and the opportunity to celebrate their achievements and successes.

Whether helping families navigate school life, assisting staff or offering a welcoming smile in the office, Kane became a familiar and trusted presence within every school community she served.

As retirement begins, Kane is looking forward to embracing a new chapter filled with opportunities for rest, volunteering and spending more time in her garden. While she is eager for the adven-



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Long time school secretary Denise Kane stands in front of Romeo Public School on her last day on Friday, before retiring after 35 years of working in education throughout Perth County.

tures ahead, she leaves her career with deep gratitude for the experiences she has shared, and the people she has met along the way.

Reflecting on her years in education, Kane says the greatest gift has been the lifelong friendships and memories made throughout her journey.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church looking better than ever

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

After years of hard work and dedication by all those involved, construction on the grounds of St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Huron Street in Stratford has officially come to an end, with the recent installation of new sod.

According to Father Don Pumputis, construction officially started in July 2024, with the removal of the steps and plaza area at the front of the church. Initially, the project was to be completed in the fall of 2024 but, unfortunately, weather construction delays and some deficiencies required additional remediation, forcing the project to remain unfinished and sitting idle over that winter.

"In the spring of 2025, construction was delayed once again due to wet weather, and the removal of some deficient work," Pumputis said. "When the work resumed, the stairs quickly took shape and the vision was becoming a reality."

Work continued on the front stairs while the sidewalk from the plaza area to the parking lot was also removed. This also included the walk to the side entrance and the ramp sidewalk to the accessible entrance.

In November 2025, the final pour of concrete was put in place.

Pumputis emphasized the sheer amount of the substance used in the project.

"The amount of concrete poured is quite significant and what you see is only a fraction of the total amount. Footings



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

A look from the front of one of Stratford's most iconic buildings, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, built in 1867.

and walls go down almost 10 feet in sections to ensure the structure will be secure and safe, for generations to come."

In December 2025, a new LED sign was installed at the base of the stairs

and the new custom railings were also installed.

The church received the occupancy permit from the City of Stratford on Dec. 18 and a special stair opening and bless-

ing mass was planned and held on Dec. 20 late last year.

The only remaining piece was laying of the sod which took place in May of this year.

The funding for the project has come from many caring parishioners' donations.

There was a large fundraising gala held in February 2024 to kick off the campaign and in the spring of 2025 the church hosted a fundraising concert by world-renowned musician John McDermott, and in the fall of 2025 a trivia night was also held. These events, in addition to the ongoing donations that came in, have helped the congregation reach over 80 per cent of its goal already.

The new stairs and sidewalks are heated with approximately seven kilometres of piping used to eliminate the use of chemicals and damage during Stratford's winter months. This system will prolong the life of the stairs for generations to come, while maintaining the iconic façade that everyone driving along Huron Street has grown accustomed to for generations.

The statue of St. Joseph and a young Jesus Christ were also restored as part of the project.

Pumputis said they have a loan with the Diocese of London for the balance remaining, but donations are still graciously accepted by calling the parish office or simply mailing in donations marked "Stepping up for St. Joseph's" – email to dpumputis@dol.ca or mlynch@dol.ca.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Wellspring Stratford recently welcomed a large crowd to the annual Mountain Family BBQ, north of St. Marys, to raise funds to help those in need suffering from cancer. From left, Robin Mountain, Jane Landreth, Heather Galloway, Pat Turnbull, Julia Elliot, Lisa Stacey, Bonnie Hueston, Karen Barter, Kathy Blake and Joan Seftel, with Samm Simon knelling in front. For those who would like to donate email lisa@wellspringstratford.ca or call 519-271-2232.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the birthstone of July?
2. What is the fictional island in *Mamma Mia* called?
3. What is the capital city of Australia?
4. What do you call a beginner surfer?
5. What is the Italian name for ice cream?
6. What '80s girl band sang "Cruel Summer?"
7. What summer seafood is now a delicacy but was once considered "poor man's protein?"
8. Which Harry Potter character died on the beach?
9. The person in charge of officiating a baseball game is called what?
10. What is the standard distance for Olympic target archery?

This week's answers are found on pg. 27

Stratford Festival Theatre inspired Little Library unveiled on Ballantyne Avenue

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

A gathering of neighbours and friends helped celebrate the unveiling of the newest little library on Ballantyne Avenue on the last Sunday in June. The library was conceived, designed and constructed by Jeff Stacey fulfilling the years' long promise to Angie Dornai that he would make one for her.

This special addition to the front yard began construction while Stacey was enrolled in the artistic welding workshop hosted by Off the Wall Stratford Artist Alliance as part of the Theatre Production Arts program.

Since 2005, Off the Wall has served as the bridge between the professional artistry of the Stratford Festival and the next wave of theatre creators.

"The design was brought to life through his work with a man named Frank Holt," said Dornai in a greeting to guests. "Frank was the teacher from Off the Wall who also made the sculpture at the festival of William Shakespeare. Jeff took the welding course and that is how he came up with the idea to create the base a couple years ago. Then he looked for opportunities to come up with the next big inspiration."

As an engineer by trade with a bit of an artistic side enough to bring him to Stratford, Stacey was inspired to sign up for the artistic welding workshop because of the enthusiasm and inspiration of Michele Boniface, who serves as the board chair of Off the Wall.

"You see lots of examples of things around town, a lot of lawn sculptures. Our neighbour built a mobile sculpture that he built in Off the Wall, I met him during my course, but mostly it was Michele and Ted saying come on out and spread your wings, do something fun in the town," said Stacey.

Knowing that he didn't want a wooden post, he pondered making it from metal. Before starting the class, each student needs a rough sketch of what they want to build in order for the instructor to order

the correct amount of metal.

"We're close to the Festival Theatre so I thought I better come up with something that looks like Shakespeare. Also, it's the love of Stratford. Someone joked already that with all the books we are going to have to build another one and that will have to be the other theatres," laughed Stacey.

The metal base created in the artistic welding workshop is adorned with the silhouette of Shakespeare, masks of comedy and tragedy and in tribute to any number of kings celebrated in plays, there are crowns. The wooden box atop the post has been repurposed, with two large plexiglass doors upon which sits the roof, fashioned after the Festival Theatre that at night lights up with sparkly lights powered by solar energy.

Guests on hand filled the newest little library on Ballantyne Avenue with books they loved or were meaningful to them. David Stones, Stratford's Poet Laureate, recited his poem "Redaction" written in honour of the compelling documentary *The Librarians*, screened at the Stratford Film Festival earlier this year.

"That film is about book banning and the removal of books from our libraries and specifically the persecution and arrest of librarians for having the audacity to and exercising of freedom of speech. This is happening through the bible belt of the United States, but you can also see it happening in Alberta now and even in Ontario. It was a very powerful film, and I called my poem 'Redaction' dedicating it to librarians everywhere," said Stones.

Stacey hopes there will be a massive surge of books going in and out of the little library. There is a lot of foot traffic on the street of people going to the theatre and kids like to check it out as well as adults.

"I'm hoping there's more going out than coming in and then we can just stock it. Amongst our friends that bring out their own books it can become a hub. There are lots of other lovely little libraries around here too, and we'll sort of share with them too," Stacey said.

For more information about Off The Wall, visit stratfordoffthewall.com.



(CLAIRE BICKLEY PHOTO)

Jeff Stacey poses with his creation, the newest little library inspired by the Festival Theatre located in front of 176 Ballantyne Ave.

MPP Rae announces over \$6.2M for local hospitals

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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The Ontario government is investing over \$6.2 million to support improved operations and reduced wait times at the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance, Listowel Memorial Hospital and the North Wellington Health Care Corporation. This funding is part of a \$1.1 billion investment into Ontario's hospital sector as part of Budget 2026, A Plan to Protect Ontario, which represents a four per cent increase in annual hospital support for the fourth year in a row.

"Our local hospitals play a vital role in providing high-quality care to residents

across Perth and Wellington Counties, and this funding will help support the important work they do every day," said MPP of Perth-Wellington Matthew Rae. "Our government is investing in hospitals and frontline healthcare services so that patients can access the care they need closer to home. By working alongside local health-care partners, we are helping strengthen care for patients and families across our riding."

This investment will support the operation of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance, Listowel Memorial Hospital and the North Wellington Health Care Corporation's core clinical services so they

can better meet patient needs and connect people to care faster.

"Our government is making historic investments to protect Ontario's health-care system, ensuring that more people in Perth-Wellington can connect to the care they need, where and when they need it," said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "This investment will allow the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance, Listowel Memorial Hospital and the North Wellington Health Care Corporation to continue delivering the highest standard of care while reducing wait lists and wait times for patients and families, for generations to come."

Ontario continues to make historic investments in health care. Over the next 10 years, Ontario is investing approximately \$64 billion in major health infrastructure. This is part of the government's plan to get shovels in the ground on more than 50 major hospital projects across the province, which will deliver approximately 3,000 new hospital beds to enhance access to quality care and build a connected, people-first health-care system.

Through Your Health: A Plan For Connected and Convenient Care, the Ontario government is expanding access to key services to provide people with the right care, in the right place, close to home.

HPHA net additional \$4.3 million in operating funding

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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As part of its plan to protect Ontario's health-care system, the Ontario government is providing an additional \$4,323,200 in operating funding to the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA) for the 2026-27 fiscal year.

This investment is part of the government's commitment to increasing hospital funding across Ontario, including an up to four per cent increase in base and targeted hospital funding to support high-quality care, improve access to life saving treatments and strengthen health-care services for patients and families. The additional funding builds on Ontario's ongoing investments in local health care and will

help the HPHA continue delivering essential services throughout the region.

In addition to this investment, the Ontario government also announced on April 17 a \$4.324 million investment in the Huron Perth and Area Ontario Health Team (OHT) to support integrated health-care services across the region. A portion of this funding is supporting the Huron Community Family Health Team in Seaforth, helping expand access to team-based primary care and ensuring more residents can connect with the healthcare services they need closer to home.

"Our government is continuing to make historic investments to strengthen Ontario's healthcare system and ensure people in Huron-Bruce have access to the care they need, closer to home," said Lisa

Thompson, MPP for Huron-Bruce. "This additional funding for the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance, along with our recent investment supporting the Huron Perth and Area Ontario Health Team and the Huron Community Family Health Team in Seaforth, will help our local healthcare partners deliver high-quality, connected services for patients, families and communities across the Clinton, Seaforth and Perth County region."

"The Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance plays a vital role in delivering high-quality care to residents across Huron and Perth Counties, and it is great to see their work supported through this funding," said MPP Matthew Rae of Perth-Wellington. "Our government is investing in hospitals and healthcare services so that

patients can continue to access the care they need, close to home. By working with local health-care partners, we are helping strengthen health-care services for communities across our region."

"Today's announcement is yet another reminder of the outstanding and important partnership that exists between the HPHA and the Government of Ontario," said Andrew Williams, president and CEO of the HPHA. "These funds reinforce our ability to continue to provide the high-quality care people have come to expect from the HPHA Team. MPP's Thompson and Rae are thanked for continuously and tirelessly advocating on our behalf and it is not lost on us that their leadership and support are instrumental to our success."

July First

When I left your house this morning,
Was a quarter after nine.
Someone launches a canoe,
just to see whether the lake
can still remember the sky.

The loons refuse interviews.

Mosquitoes, tiny fighter pilots,
declare victory over everyone's ankles.

A paper plate escapes the picnic,
crosses three blankets,
dodges a golden retriever
and begins a new life in the wind.

The barbecue smokes like an old locomotive,
someone swears they can cook better,
someone else insists the burgers are perfect,
and no one is entirely wrong.

We watched the constellations reveal themselves,
one children's sparkler at a time.

The trees lean closer.

The water keeps every secret.

Then—
the first firework.
not an explosion,
but an argument
between darkness
and colour.

The lake applauds in ripples.

Dogs remain unconvinced.

Somewhere a teenager falls in love
for exactly the length of one Tragically
Hip song
playing from a radio
whose batteries should have died an
hour ago.

Midnight arrives quietly,
finding forgotten lawn chairs,
empty lemonade glasses,
and smoke drifting lazily through the
pines.

Tomorrow
the flags will come down,
the roads will empty,
and someone will discover
half a watermelon
still resting in the cooler.

But tonight—

the country disappears,

leaving only summer,

warm enough
that even the stars
stay out later than they planned.

It was in Bobcaygeon,
where July refused to die.
Where every Canada Day
still coloured up the sky.

Tomorrow comes for everyone,
and carries us away.
But somewhere on that little lake,
it's always July's First day.

Arlo Dunnem, Stratford Youth Poet Laureate

On Route

We were searching for something,
I guess, although I was never
sure what it was.

But the rain in dark pistons
over that endless highway,
the wind tearing at the pines,
the On Route service centre
suddenly there like a lantern,
laid out their plans for us.

And there we were, drop in guests
at yet another all-Canadian
roadside coffee klatsch,
elbows up among the truckers
and pipefitters, parents with prams,
farmers on coffee break,
preening poets and tyrannical
tourists, lovers all dreamy and
staring doe-eyed and dewy
over their frosted Timbits.

In this country, our highways both
divide and join, bunch us together
like disparate blooms in a vase,
bursting and beautiful unto ourselves,
yet wondrous as a bouquet,
distant lives meshed into a twine,
from wheat fields stroked by
prairie wind, to the bobbing boats
of Lunenburg and the lumber roads
carved like fossils through the spruce.

So we sat there that night,
neighbouring tables at a highway stop
in the middle of nowhere,

swapping tales of weather reports,
cities loved and now departed,
relatives remembered and friends
forgotten, tariffs despised and
how the Blues Jays prosper, and how
maybe, just maybe, this might be
the year for our beloved Maple Leafs.

So many tales and languages tangled
in this microcosmic republic of infinite
kindness, this little highway village
in the rain
where all the gleaming humans
of this remarkable country gather
and share their hearts so freely.

Frankly, we sat there beaming,
knowing that here within the joy
of others we had found ourselves,
treasuring that though we may travel
different roads we depart with a small
and golden fragment of each other
tucked safely like a locket inside our
souls.

Yeh, we were searching for something,
I guess, although I was never
sure what it was.

I just know that on that night,
at that On Route, with the rain
blowing across the highway and the
pines bent with the wind,

I found it.

I found it.

David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate

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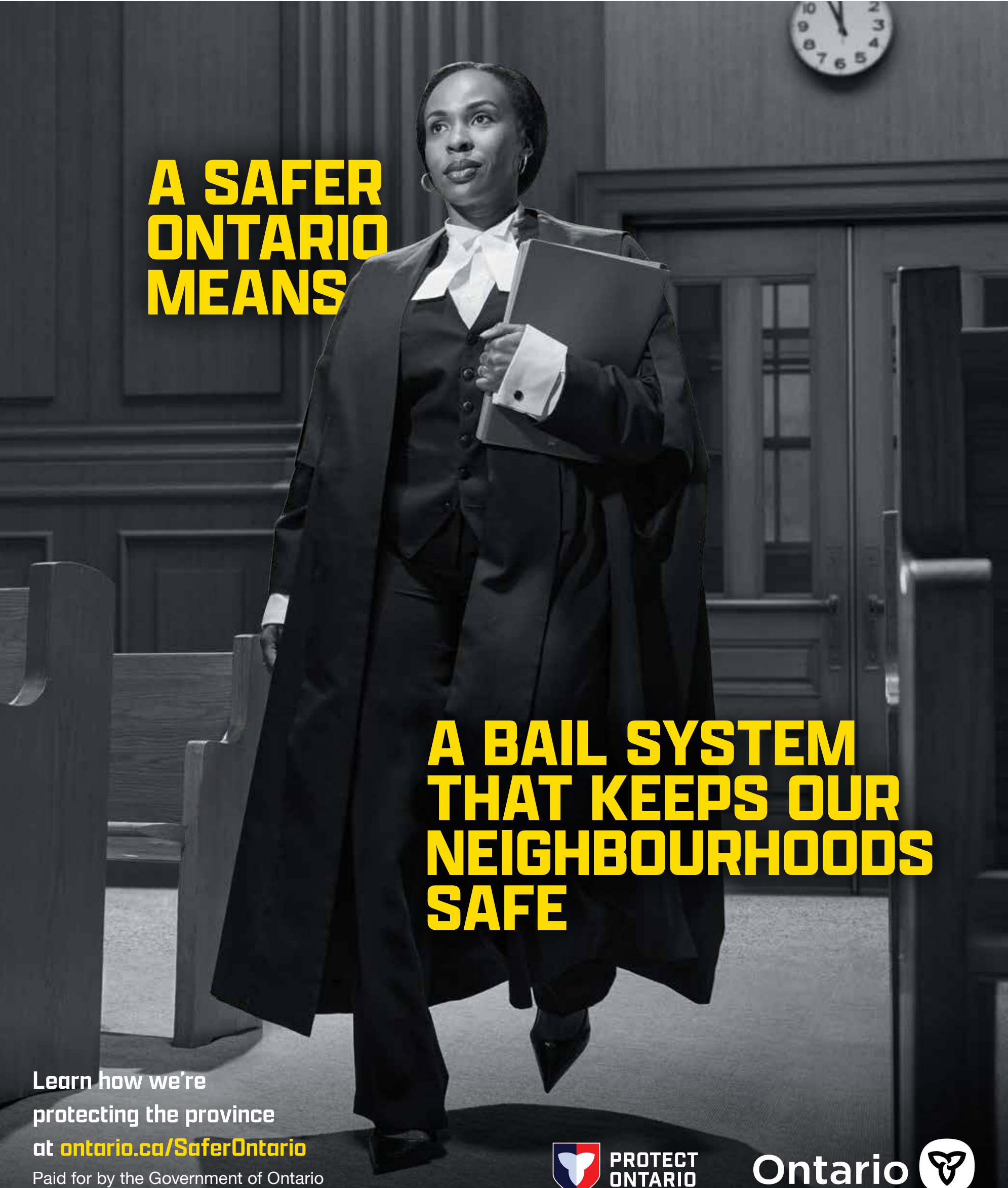
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A Black woman in a judge's robe is walking through a courtroom. She is holding a folder and looking towards the camera. The background shows a clock on the wall and wooden paneling.

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McKennitt appointed officer of Order of Canada

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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Canadian singer/songwriter and local resident Loreena McKennitt has been appointed to Officer of the Order of Canada, announced last week by Louise Arbour, Canada's new Governor General. McKennitt was appointed as a member of the Order of Canada in 2004 and this new title represents a promotion.

A media release from Rideau Hall reads: "Loreena McKennitt has enriched and represented Canadian culture at home and abroad through her music. She has championed artists, supported military families as an honorary colonel, and fostered community through the Falstaff Family Centre and Wise Communities Stratford. Her leadership in public dialogue, reconciliation efforts and civic engagement have strengthened Canada."

In all, 61 new appointments to the Order of Canada were announced, five of which represent promotions.

"The Order of Canada recognizes those whose contributions help us see our coun-

try and our place in the world with greater clarity and purpose. These appointees, from diverse backgrounds and fields, reflect the talent and determination that shape Canada's future," said Gov. Gen. Arbour in the release. "At a time of profound global change, their achievements highlight the strength of Canadians and the values we represent to the world."

"I am humbled by this honour," said McKennitt in a media release. "Over the years, it has become unmistakably clear how much our communities and our nation rely on volunteerism, advocacy and service to others. We've all been the beneficiaries of the work done by those who have filled these roles before us and I'm grateful to be able to offer some small measure of that tradition of service in the work that I do."

The Order of Canada is one of the country's highest honours. It recognizes people across all sectors of society who have made extraordinary and sustained contributions to the nation. Anyone can nominate a person for the Order of Canada.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Loreena McKennitt has been promoted in the Order of Canada, from member to officer, one of 61 new appointments from Gov. Gen. Louise Arbour.

Pets compete for top spot in online photo contest in support of humane society

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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For the month of July, local pets from across Waterloo Region and Perth County will have the chance to be featured in the Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth's 2027 Calendar. Pet owners can enter in the sixth annual calendar contest, presented by Fish Lake Road, and help raise much-needed funds to support local animals.

Starting July 1, contestants can submit their favourite photo of their pet and a short bio for a \$10 contest entry fee. Families are encouraged to submit their entry early, as every pet entered prior to July 5 will be eligible to win an early-bird Pet Prize Pack from Pawz-N-Dogz.

"We saw over 100 participants and raised more than \$31,000 last year," said Rachael Kuntz, coordinator of events and fundraising at the humane society. "This annual contest continues to grow and highlights the incredible impact that comes out of our community."

The top eight dogs, three cats and one other animal will receive a professional pet photoshoot with the award-winning local studio Victor Rose Photography and be featured in the 2027 calendar, which will also help commemorate the humane society's 100th anniversary.

"With this new approach,

we're hoping owners of all different kinds of animals will feel encouraged to enter their pet," added Kuntz.

Each entry will be open to votes from the public until July 31. The community will determine the 12 total winners by voting for their favourite entry. Voters will receive one vote for every dollar donated to support the animal of their choice, and contribute to the funds raised for the humane society.

The top three pets with the most votes across all categories will also receive extra prizes, with first place winning the spot on the calendar cover. Rankings will be available for contestants to check throughout the month, as some owners campaign on social media for votes for their pet.

For more information on the contest, adopting a pet, or supporting other initiatives of the humane society, visit kwsphumane.ca.



New grants for local senior programs given out

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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Three senior programs in Perth-Wellington will receive Seniors Community Grants, totalling \$75,000 in funding to help bring seniors together, according to a provincial media release.

"As more residents enter their golden years, it is important that they have access to programs, services, and community spaces that help them stay active, connected, and engaged," said Matthew Rae, MPP of Perth-Wellington. "Throughout Seniors Month, it has been a pleasure to recognize the organizations and volunteers who support seniors across our communities and to highlight our government's investments in programs that help improve their quality of life."

The Ontario government is investing close to \$7 million for more than 320 Seniors Community Grants helping seniors stay fit, active, healthy and socially connected, close to home and in their communities.

"The Seniors Community Grants Program is a great example of how our government is working for local communities,"

said Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. "We are pleased to provide investments for so many services and activities that bring seniors together, learn new skills, get fit and stay connected to their neighbours and friends."

Across Perth-Wellington, three organizations are receiving \$25,000 each to support their programs. Hermione Presents will be running Puppets, People and Play: Skills and Connections in Stratford, the Township of Wellington North will be offering Treks and Ties: Social Journeys for Older Adults across the municipality and Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth will be running the Community Caregiver Connection Program.

Each of these local programs have the goal of providing seniors with opportunities for greater social inclusion, volunteerism and community engagement. The Seniors Community Grant is a unique Ontario government grant designed to reduce social isolation, fight ageism and create positive connections.

Since 2018, Ontario has invested more than \$40 million dollars in over 2,100 Seniors Community Grants.

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VALEDICTORIAN SPEECH: St. Michael Catholic Secondary School

VINCENT MACISAAC

St. Michael Catholic Secondary School

Good evening, honoured guests: Father Don, Huron Perth chair of the board, director Ms. Tigani, superintendent Ms. Devereaux, our principal Ms. Bell, our vice principal Ms. Hastings, our teachers and support staff, and our families and guardians who have sacrificed so much for us to be able to receive our diplomas tonight. Finally, let's not forget our honourable graduates, who have dedicated so many years to get to where they are now. Tonight, we treasure the final moments that we will all be gathered together as one.

My name is Vincent MacIsaac, and I am the valedictorian for St. Michael Catholic Secondary School's graduating class of 2026.

I am more than grateful to be standing here in a room full of people with whom I have spent just under a quarter of my life. To our teachers: thank you for being encouraging, understanding, supportive and, most importantly, patient. And in my case, to the French teachers – *j'en peux plus!* Thank you for surviving us.

To the graduates: there is no other group of people I would rather graduate with than the Warriors in this room.

To an outsider, what it means to be a St. Michael Warrior is simply to act justly, love kindly and walk humbly with our God. While that is true, as a student here, I can tell you it means so much more. To be a St. Michael Warrior means doing your best, even when you are still half-frozen from your morning walk to school. To be a St. Michael Warrior means always having school spirit, even if your team didn't win a single game the entire year. It means graduating with a class of 164 students and realizing you are more like a family than a room of individuals.

We are gathered here today to celebrate graduation and to reflect on the bittersweet reality of change. As noted by the Nobel Prize-winning French philosopher Henri Bergson:

"Pour un être conscient, exister consiste à changer, changer à se mûrir, se mûrir à se

créer indéfiniment soi-même."

"To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly."

But as beautiful as change is, it can also be painful. With every step we take forward, we leave something behind. Change can be a scary thing to think about. There is risk involved: Risk of failing; risk of being cut from the team; risk of finishing last. There is a risk in meeting new people and maybe not being liked by them. It is so much easier to say "No," "I don't think I can do it," or "That's not for me." Avoiding change feels safe. It keeps things predictable. It keeps things the same ... and keeps us the same. Imagine if we had all gone through high school avoiding change, too afraid to take a risk. Imagine four years where we just came into this building every day, went to class and then went home. No risks ... no change.

But that is not us. That is not who we are. We were faced with change over and over again, and we embraced it. We took risks, and we succeeded! We made the most of the opportunities at St. Michael, and now that we are at the end of Grade 12, we see there is so much to celebrate! The Warriors who walked through the doors four years ago in Grade 9 have changed emotionally, physically and spiritually.

In Grade 9, we were timid, utterly shocked by the confidence and sheer size of the Grade 12s. The workload seemed daunting, the hallways felt endless, and our lockers seemed impossible to open. Our singular goal was to survive the first year of high school, and we did. However, as scary as it was, we learned to integrate into the St. Michael culture, grow into more mature students and lay the foundations for lifelong friendships.

In Grade 10, we started to find our footing. We got more involved in sports and clubs, continuing to carve out our own identities. For some, it brought international travel and exposure to new cultures, such as the trip to Spain, where we got to see some of our teachers finally come out of their shells! For others, it brought HP soccer championships, provincial champs at the NTS Drama Festival and Music Nationals. We were just re-

lieved that we were no longer the youngest students in the building.

In Grade 11, we started to narrow our paths, selecting courses that represented our unique interests and future goals. The Grade 9s had EQAO, the Grade 10s had the OSSLT, the Grade 12s had graduation and we had ... nothing. We were too old for someone to hold our hands, yet too young to be treated like adults. We resembled the "middle child," like me, often forgotten about and overlooked, yet quietly growing in our independence. But we made our mark. We had more HP wins with senior girls' volleyball, we brought back the student newspaper, Girls Hockey won OFSAA and our school began the Multicultural Club. I was fortunate to be a part of the first-ever successful launch of our Model United Nations Club, adding to our school's athletic, artistic and humanities successes.

Finally, Grade 12, the ultimate Warrior year. We realized now that we were the big kids and desperately wished we were back in Grade 11 with fewer responsibilities. We tried to participate in everything we could, as we knew it might be our last chance. As our year flew by, we began to grow closer to our peers as we knew the time to say goodbye was near.

The Grade 12 year is the biggest period of change a Warrior will experience. It is a year full of "lasts." The last prom, the last high school retreat, the last lunch with our friends and the last detention! I don't think we ever actually realized they were the last while they were happening; we just pretended that tomorrow would look exactly the same. But time moves on, and it still feels completely surreal.

As the saying goes, all good things must come to an end – and that brevity is exactly what made it so special. But ending does not mean forgetting. I encourage all of you to hold onto the memories, the photos and the mementos that transformed us from scared Grade 9s into the confident graduates sitting here today.

Change is bittersweet. Everything from school mass to our success at Skills, to our Road Hockey tournament, to our award winning Law Society, to our sold out pro-

duction of Grease, to March for Mikes, to the Big Day Out would never have been so memorable if not for the incredible people I thanked at the beginning of this speech – our dedicated staff and this amazing student body. The second half of this year saw big changes. Prom, which felt so far away for so long, came and went in a flash; and our Grade 9 selves would never have believed how fancy we could look! For many, wrapping up our final year of extracurriculars meant enjoying not just the activities, but the friendships we made within them.

In an ever-changing world, where we often can feel helpless, it is important for us as the younger generation to be the positive shift in the world. Although this year may be filled with lasts, it is also the beginning of exciting new changes. Some of us will go off to travel the world, some will work in buildings that touch the sky, some will be the ones who design those buildings, and others will be the ones who build them. Maybe, even one of us will be Prime Minister working in one of those buildings. Regardless of our different paths in life, we will always share being a part of St. Michael Warriors' class of 2026.

As we cherish these final moments together, I challenge my fellow graduates to reflect on how their time at St. Michael has shaped them. The memories and bonds we made here will always live within us. Saying goodbye to friends who mean the world to us is never easy, but the Holy Spirit that dwells in them and in us will be with us forever.

Warriors, remember this as you step out into the world:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."
– Joshua 1:9

I hope this is not the last time our paths cross. Be resilient, be open to change, be quick to forgive and always aspire to do good in the world.

And to the Frenchies: *Bonne chance, et merci pour tout.*

Stay golden, Warriors.

This is the Class of 2026, signing out.

VALEDICTORIAN SPEECH: Stratford District Secondary School

TESS WEYERS

Stratford District Secondary School

Good evening everyone, for those of you who don't know me my name is Tess Weyers, and I am truly honoured to stand in front of you as we celebrate the achievements, memories and journey that brought us here today.

I wanted to begin by thanking all of the parents and guardians of the graduating class, but more specifically my mom and dad, for your unwavering support, your sacrifices, and your constant belief in my capabilities. I wanted to also thank Ms. Shaw, Ms. Stone, Mr. Hoyles, Mr. Bond and Ms. Hillery for igniting the passion for learning that is guiding my future, and thank all of the teachers and staff that have supported my peers find their paths as well. Finally thank you to the class of 2026 for choosing me to represent you all tonight. From my friends I have grown up with, to those who

smile at me in the hall, and my classmates who have been by my side while taking tests that I swear I'm going to fail. Thank you for building a community that is so incredibly hard to leave.

It is surreal to be standing before you all at our graduation ceremony, knowing that our high school journey has come to an end. This day that felt so far away has suddenly crept up so quickly, and is yet another reminder that time doesn't slow down. When I reflect on this past year I was often juggling a lot, constantly looking forward to the end of the day, or end of the week, or the next big event. It's hard to believe we have arrived at the final milestone, and senior sunset is over, I was brutally eliminated from senior assassin, I missed my own prom award (I'm sorry Charlotte) and it turns out missing calculus for senior skip day wasn't the end of the world.

While pushing through the chaos that is senior year, so many of our "lasts" passed by

us without us even realizing. Our last time representing SDSS in sports, our last traffic jam in the hallways and our last time stressing about finding a parking spot. At the time, those moments felt ordinary. Looking back, they were a part of this experience that has been anything but that.

As we step into this next chapter, I want to remind you to pay attention to the moments that seem small. Like laughing with your friends, or just going out for lunch. They are often the ones that become the memories we cherish most. Don't just rush through it, but try to be present. This very moment is precious – I mean, how rare and beautiful is it that we got to experience this beside one another?

Before we sprint toward the future, take a moment to not only appreciate the memories, but also how far you've come. Remember this version of yourself, the one who faced challenges, made mistakes, kept going even when things felt difficult. Appreciate

who you have become and continue to be curious, kind and hardworking.

The future outside of SDSS is bright, exciting and uncertain, and while that can feel overwhelming, I think our time here as Golden Bears has prepared us well for whatever comes next. Before I finish, I just wanted to remind you all what it means to be a Bear as we move into this new chapter – Be brave enough to embrace new opportunities and pursue your ambitions. Hold high expectations for yourself and what you can achieve no matter what path you choose. Stay accountable and be someone others can depend on, and above all remember to show respect.

More than anything, I hope each of us finds happiness – not just in our accomplishments, but in the simple beauty of living in the moment, the lives we build and the people we become along the way.

Congratulations class of 2026!

Games, sporting equipment, jewellery and more to be found at Avondale Garage Sale

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Lots of bargains will be available at Avondale United Church's annual garage sale.

Avondale United Church will host their annual garage sale on July 11 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Leading up to the garage sale, Avondale will be collecting donated items from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. between July 7 and 10 at the church on 194 Avondale Ave. Volunteers will accept items such as jewelry, accessories, books, toys, luggage, linens, games, puzzles, sporting equipment, housewares like kitchen items and some out-

door furniture.

"Last year there were two fabulous lounge chairs that people donated. You never know what is going to be donated, so you don't want to miss coming because it's always a surprise," said congregation member Cathy Whelan.

Proceeds from the garage sale will support the church's outreach programs, which support organizations such as the Stratford House of Blessing, Emily Murphy Centre and the Connection Centre. For example, congregation members buy ingredients and make sandwiches for the Connection Centre.

Clothing will not be sold at the garage sale but instead will be collected for a

clothing drive to be sold by weight to Value Village, where proceeds will also support the church's ministries.

Whelan said the annual garage sale is great for the community.

"Everything is so reasonably priced and when I'm working an area, if somebody can't afford it, we help them out – we just let them have it," Whelan said. "It's really good. You can get really good items for a very reasonable, inexpensive price, so it helps those that don't have a lot of money to have some nice things."

Aleah Graff, Avondale's community engagement coordinator, also enjoyed the atmosphere of previous garage sales run by the church.

"It's nice and accessible for anybody to join and for anybody to come in and just the atmosphere too, I've noticed is a lot of our customers love engaging in banter with our volunteers who sell things," Graff said.

"Also (Rev. Keith Reynolds) is always there, our wonderful minister, and he loves to chat people up and they love to chat with him," Whelan added. "It's a warm and inviting atmosphere. It really is."

After 11:30 a.m., anyone shopping at the garage sale is encouraged to fill a bag of items for \$2, excluding jewellery.

Anyone looking for more information can call the church at 519-271-7946.

PRINTAPALOOZA: A whole lotta fun for good cause



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Seated, from left, Amy Polson of International Graphics, Aaron Balzer, resource coordinator with the Stratford House of Blessing Food Bank, and Joanne DiGiovanni-Lakin, volunteer coordinator with the Stratford House of Blessing Food Bank, pose with donations collected during PRINTAPOOLOOZA. The community event featured live music, facility tours, family activities, a car show and food trucks in support of the Stratford House of Blessing Food Bank.

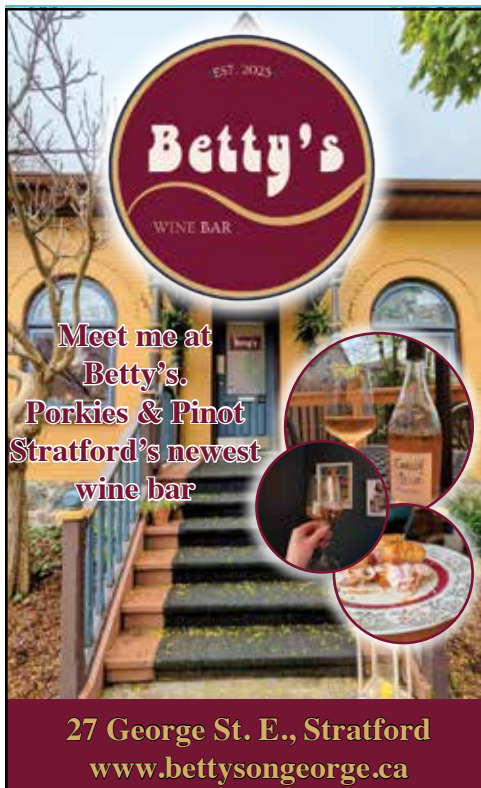


(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Ashley Norman, general manager of International Graphics, presents a cheque for \$1,153 to Joanne DiGiovanni-Lakin, volunteer coordinator with the Stratford House of Blessing Food Bank, following the company's PRINTAPOOLOOZA fundraiser. The event also collected enough non-perishable food donations to fill the food bank's van.

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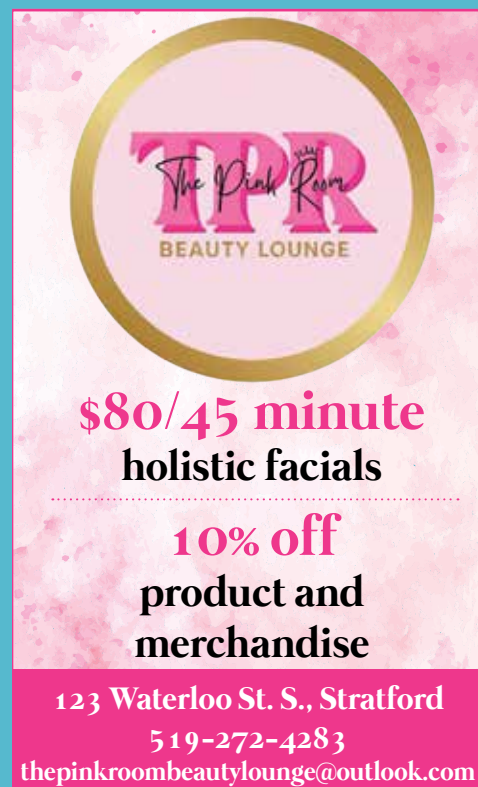
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STRATFORD *TIMES* SPORTS

18U Nationals showing progress in weekend split

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford 18U Nationals continued to show promise following a split in the doubleheader against the Hamilton Jr. Cardinals at Stratford National Stadium on June 27.

In the early afternoon game, the Nationals rallied for three runs in the sixth inning to win the game 4-2.

Hamilton got on the board on the wild pitch off Stratford starting pitcher Nolan Miller in the second inning, but the Nationals tied the game in the bottom half of the inning after a one-out wild pitch allowed Dawson Davidson to score from third base.

The score remained one apiece until the Cardinals broke the deadlock on a one-out double in the top of the sixth. In the bottom of the sixth inning, a two-run RBI double from Cooper Yantzi put the Nationals ahead.

Miller pitched five and a third innings, allowed five hits and one earned run

while walking out four and recorded six strikeouts. Alex Everett got the final five outs to secure the win for Stratford.

In the latter half of the doubleheader, Hamilton capitalized on Stratford's defensive miscues with a three-run third inning en route to the Nationals' 9-4 loss.

The Cardinals took a 2-0 lead through the first two innings of play, but Stratford responded in the third inning with three unanswered runs to take the lead courtesy of Yantzi's RBI single, Logan MacMillan scored on a passed ball, and Yantzi stole home from third base.

Hamilton scored four in the third, one in the fourth, to take a 7-3 lead. In the sixth, Everett's RBI single put the Nationals within three. During the same inning, the Nationals had the opportunity to close the deficit with Owen Brooks at second and Everett in third, but Finley Newton lined out to a double play, ending the comeback effort.

With time permitting, the Cardinals scored two more in their half of the sixth, and the game was called after six

innings.

In the last four games since the seven-game losing streak, the Nationals have a 2-2 record, outscoring their opposition 11-4 in the two wins.

After the game, Nationals head coach Mud Grasby discussed the turnaround but pointed out defensive errors in the second game of the doubleheader and expressed concerns about the shortage of players due to injury, which has been impacting the team's performance recently.

"Yeah, they're playing well. We seemed first game today we played flawless defence, and it showed with our win. We had clutch hitting at the right time. In the second game, we had one bad inning, where we made three errors, and it just festered from there, like we were in that ball game," Grasby said.

"I know the score says we lost by five, but it wasn't a five-run ball game. We got four in one inning. We're coming around; we just have to get guys to come to the ballpark. When they come to the

park, they're playing well, but the matter is getting everybody here. Having only 10 ball players today in this heat makes a big difference. It would've been nice if we got 13 or 14, but I got three guys hurt, so it is what it is."

The Nationals will play against the Cambridge Cubs on June 30 at National Stadium (after press time), followed by hosting the 18U SMBA 2026 Tournament from July 3 to 5. Stratford is assigned to Group A with the Barrie Baycats, Kingston Thunder and Mitchell Astros. The four highest-ranked teams in the preliminary round will progress to the semifinals on the morning of July 5, with the championship game scheduled at the same venue later that morning.

Stratford Nationals Round Robin Group A Schedule

July 3 - Kingston (National Stadium, 6 p.m.)

July 4 - Barrie (National Stadium, 1:30 p.m.)

July 4 - Mitchell (National Stadium, 6:30 p.m.)



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Stratford's James Robinson throws the pitch against the Hamilton Jr. Cardinals at Stratford National Stadium on June 27.



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Finley Newton crosses home plate to score the Nationals' first run of the game against the Hamilton Jr. Cardinals at Stratford National Stadium on June 27.



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Remember when **Facebook** bought a case of Girl Guide cookies to support your daughter?



Remember when **Google** provided free pizza to your child's soccer team when they won the championship?

Stratford Strikers Soccer Weekly Recap: U16 Girls double up Oriental SC, U15 Girls shutout Waterloo, U18 Boys extend unbeaten streak

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

A pair of Stratford Strikers girls squads came out of their respective games with a positive result this past week on home turf.

On June 25, the U16 Strikers hosted Cambridge's Oriental SC in a redo of the June 11 contest, which ended in a no contest due to a power failure at Cowan Field. Played at SERC Tennis Field, Reese Campbell, Niamh Appel and Arabelle Garland combined for six goals as Stratford cruised to an 8-3 win. Mya Meyer and Leighton Nickel scored the first and the final goals for the Strikers in the match.

The win keeps the Strikers within reach of first place with an unbeaten record of 4-2-0, earning a point in every match in the regular season to date and 14 of 18 possible points. As of press time, Puslinch Predators lead the Southwest District Soccer League U16 Division with 19 points and a record of 6-1-0.

Stratford U16's next game is on June 30 against last-place Cambridge United. The recap of the match will be featured in next week's edition of the Times.

On June 29, the U15 Girls Strikers host-



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Stratford's Lilly Harrigan tosses the ball near the corner in the first half against Waterloo United at Cowan Field on June 29.

ed Waterloo United in a battle for first place in the Southwest District Soccer League U15 Division at Cowan Field.

Goals from team captain Peyton Ward

and Reese Campbell, and a fifth shutout of the season from goalkeeper Grace Elliott, put the Strikers past Waterloo with a 2-0 win. The win puts the Strikers at a

flawless record of 7-0-0, maintaining first place by a goal differential tiebreaker over the Guelph Jr. Gryphons.

Following the match, Stratford head coach Scott Herman reflected on the team's performance and looks forward to carrying that momentum into next week's slate of matches, including their Noters Youth Cup second-round matchup against Guelph on July 10.

"Performance was good. I thought the girls moved the ball very well tonight. Played good. Yeah, good job out there tonight. We played as a team," Herman said.

"We're gonna keep going the way we're going. We're gonna fine-tune a couple of things at practice, but other than that, we're gonna keep going the way we're going."

Stratford's next match takes place at the VFG Field at Festival Hydro Park on July 6 against Kitchener TFC U14/U15.

Also on June 29, the U18 Stratford Strikers Boys defeated Oriental SC 5-1 to extend their unbeaten streak to eight games in regular-season play. Rogan Catalan and Caden Ollson each had a brace, while Greyson Roth scored the fifth goal for Stratford in the win.

15U Nationals offence comes alive in weekend split

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

On June 28 at Stratford National Stadium, during a doubleheader against the Simcoe Giants, the Stratford 15U Nationals braved the heat and delivered a scorching offensive performance, scoring 17 runs over the two games but ultimately splitting the series. Including their 16-7 defeat on June 23 to Guelph Royals Team 2 on the road, the Nationals secured just one win out of three games for the week.

In the midday game, the Nationals opened the scoring on an RBI single from Dexter Powell in the bottom of the first inning. Simcoe tied the game at one apiece in the next inning and had the bases loaded with one out, but starting pitcher Cole Morris and the defence thwarted further disaster and got out of the inning. In the third inning, Stratford put on their offensive downpour with six runs in the inning, en route to a 7-2 win over the Giants.

Powell led the Nationals with three RBIs and two hits in the win, while Morris gutted out six innings, gave up one run, two hits and four walks, but recorded five strikeouts. Reid Musselman gave up a run of his own, but prevented further damage and sealed the win for Stratford.

The team had a barbecue after game one and had a well-deserved rest in time for game two of the series.

In game two, the Nationals got on the board first on a sacrifice fly from Powell,

allowing Jackson Goebel to score from third in the first inning. In the latter half of the inning, the Giants tied the game and took the lead with three runs, all scored with two outs, off starter Jake Price.

The next inning saw the Nationals pour on six runs for the second straight game, all of those runs came with two outs as well. Max Barter, Goebel (2x) and Morris recorded the RBIs for Stratford, while the other two runs came off Simcoe defensive errors. Simcoe closed the Stratford lead to two in their half of the inning, but Barter's two-out RBI single in the next inning put the Nationals ahead 8-5.

Morris' home run and Musselman's RBI double gave the Nationals a five-run lead in the fourth inning. Simcoe gradually narrowed the gap in the following innings and ultimately completed the comeback in the sixth off reliever Jake Mogk, taking the lead before the final inning.

Stratford tried to mount a comeback when Quintin Parr singled and advanced to second on an error. Marek Brander also singled, but Parr's aggressive attempt to score was unsuccessful, as he was tagged out at home, ending the game.

Price pitched five innings, gave up four runs on four walks and four hits, and struck out one on the mound for Stratford. Mogk was credited with one earned run allowed in relief, as two of Stratford's defensive errors contributed to the other five runs in the sixth.



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Stratford's Cole Morris throws the pitch, with James Antonio (10) looking on from first base against the Simcoe Giants at Stratford National Stadium on June 28.

Goebel and Barter led the Nationals with two RBIs. Nine of the ten members of the Nationals' starting lineup reached first base in the game.

After the game, Nationals coach Rick Boon expressed his satisfaction with the team's overall performance. He also highlighted the difficulty of playing a doubleheader in hot weather, stressing the necessity of proper hydration and rest.

"I'm very happy with our batch. We're choosing better pitches to hit, and we're making better choices of the play. So, we're hitting the ball really well in the

last two or three games. I'm really quite happy with that," Boon said.

"It's good to give them a break in between, because it is a hot day, and they've got to keep hydrating and make sure they've got lots of fluids. It's important to have a break in between, kind of regroup, and then refocus, which I thought we did a decent job of for the first part of that game."

Next up for the Nationals is a July 2 game against Waterloo Tigers Team 1 at the National Stadium and a July 3 road game against the Ancaster Angels.

Here For Now Theatre review: *Love Us Most* offers a behind-the-scenes look at sexism, ageism and racism in theatre

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

There are more than a few hard truths in playwright Sara Farb and director Sabryn Rock's world-premiere production of *Love Us Most* at Here For Now Theatre this season.

Set in 2016, before the Me Too movement, this play takes place behind the scenes in the women's dressing room for actors performing in a production of *King Lear*. Though it's not expressly said, the Stratford Festival posters on the wall, amid hanging costumes and a large mirror, and behind a long makeup table set up with makeup and the requisite tools by each of the three women in the play, makes it clear the events onstage are inspired by real-life experiences of those who have worked at the festival.

But the story told could have taken place at any large theatre company across the country or around the world.

It follows the three women, named in the play's program only as The One Who Plays Regan (Zara Jestadt), The One Who Plays Cordelia (Jasmine Case) and The One Who Plays Goneril (Shannon Taylor). The story unfolds before the play, during intermission and after the final curtain. While getting ready to perform, each woman reveals through natural conversation with their colleagues that they're struggling with some aspect of their life and work in the theatre.

The One Who Plays Goneril is the oldest and most experienced actor of the three, managing her body insecurities as she



(HERE FOR NOW THEATRE PHOTO)

Shannon Taylor, Jasmine Case and Zara Jestadt in *Love Us Most*. Here For Now Theatre 2026.

prepares to audition for the role of Isabella in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. Though the role was promised to her by the artistic director, she soon learns The One Who Plays Cordelia, a much-younger, less-experienced actor, is also auditioning for the role.

Over time, it becomes clear The One Who Plays Cordelia has been recommended for the role by Julian Jeffrey (Kevin Bund) – a veteran male actor whose status in the company allows him to do and get whatever he wants – because “a Black Isabella” would draw attention to the show.

While The One Who Plays Goneril frustratingly comes to terms with this reality,

The One Who Plays Cordelia is reeling from a frightening and sexually charged encounter with Julian in his dressing room. The male actor has been struggling with his lines recently, possibly an early sign of dementia, so The One Who Plays Cordelia is unsure as to whether the encounter was a symptom of his memory loss or if she should report him, and to whom.

The One Who Plays Regan convinces The One Who Plays Cordelia to let it go, suggesting the very act of telling someone could have a negative impact on her career trajectory – and it does, much later in the story. As it turns out, The One Who Plays

Regan has been in a relationship with Julian, on and off for over a year, and her advice to The One Who Plays Cordelia is driven by a desire to protect the man she loves and respects.

Throughout the play, it is clear the three women are treated as second class compared to their male counterparts. While Julian gets a dressing room to himself with a shower and a working bathroom, the women are forced to share a dressing room with a bathroom and a toilet in desperate need of repair – something all three women have complained about that has never been addressed.

Though the drama in this play causes tension and mistrust between the women, they are not the cause. It is the institutionalized sexism, ageism and racism the women deal with on a daily basis that pits them against each other.

Though this play had moments of humour, the discomfort we felt as an audience through the phenomenal and entirely believable performances of Jestadt, Case and Taylor put us right in the middle of the toxic workplace many women in theatre – and other professions – have experienced.

This is not a play that leaves you feeling good at the end. It does, however, remind us of the importance these kinds of stories have in continuing to create and promote equitable and safe workplaces for everyone.

Personally, I enjoyed this behind-the-scenes look into the theatre world and I appreciate the courage it takes to put these women's stories on stage.

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Queer Book of the month: *Godkiller* by Hannah Kaner

SYDNEY BOYLE

Stratford Perth Pride

In Middren, gods have long been forbidden. Many formed by human desires and fed on the constant worship; there were more gods than there are stars in the sky. But after a long and grueling war, the king outlawed gods and now pays people to destroy the ones who try to rise up from the shadow – these people are called Godkillers.

Kaner created a world of harsh truths, harsher lies, and what it truly means to stand for what you believe in. This novel conveys the inner turmoil of finding out things really aren't as black and white as they appear to be, that – much like the rest of the world – situations are complex and don't have as straightforward of an answer as we'd wish there to be.



Godkiller provides a refreshing break from typical faraway fantasy novels, by displaying queer relationships not as a spectacle, but by simply being a part of the narrative, they are not there as plot devices, there is no big, life changing revelations

in regards to the genders of who the characters fall in love with, they fall in love because they felt the desire to. This approach to having queer relationships in a story feels like a breath of fresh air as a reader, seeing them displayed so normally and plainly as a heterosexual couple. The narrative instead follows the inner turmoil of the characters, rather than their attraction to one another. *Godkiller* is number one in the *Fallen Gods* trilogy.

If you are interested in reading *Godkiller*, it is available at the Stratford Public Library. You can also purchase the book at Fanfare Bookstore.

Stratford Festival review: Strong acting brings *Othello* to life on the Tom Patterson Theatre stage

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

There is no shortage of strong performances in director Haysam Kadri's production of the Shakespearean tragedy, *Othello*, this season at the Stratford Festival.

This production's cast is anchored by the remarkable talents of André Sills as the titular character.

Sills is a powerhouse when it comes to portraying raw emotion and authority, two traits his character has in spades. His ability to take *Othello* from moments of joy in his love for Desdemona (Krystin Pellerin) and triumph in beating back the Turks on Cypress to suspicion, madness, cruelty, rage and finally anguish as he falls for Iago's (Evan Buliung) deception is on full display in this performance – and it is truly something to behold.

Buliung's portrayal of Iago is equally moving, only in different ways. The actor's ability to deliver Iago's secret grudge and his deep desire for money and power as he conspires to turn *Othello* against those closest to him by convincing the Moor his wife is cheating on him with his most trusted lieutenant,



(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

Members of the company, *Othello*. Stratford Festival 2026.

Cassio (Jordin Hall), gives the audience a truly detestable yet ingenious villain who clearly understands the innerworkings of jealousy and mistrust.

For her part, Pellerin offers a heart-breaking performance as Desdemona, a woman who loves her husband dearly and only wants to see her friend, Cassio, back in his good graces. Pellerin's portrayal of Desdemona's innocence in the

face of a crime she knows nothing about, and then her tragic death at the hands of the man she had trusted above all others is the motivation *Othello* needs to kill Iago and then himself in a fit of guilt and anguish.

I was similarly enthralled with Jessica B. Hill's performance as Emilia, Desdemona's loyal and clever lady-in-waiting, and Iago's wife, who uncovers her abu-

sive husband's secret plot too late and renounces him to secure justice for her best friend, despite it leading to her own murder at the hands of Iago. Hill's portrayal of Emilia's fierce loyalty to Desdemona and her unbreakable bond with her friend, even in death, adds another layer of tragedy to this production.

Hall's performance as Cassio, who is also left in the dark for much of this play as to why his relationship with *Othello* has soured, should also be applauded. The naive eagerness Hall portrays in Cassio to get back into *Othello*'s good books, especially when Desdemona offers to do what she can to help him, gives us that terrible dramatic irony this play, and many Shakespeare's works, needs.

If only *Othello* had spoken with either Desdemona or Cassio about his misgivings; this whole tragedy could have been avoided.

I guess that's why communication is key, folks.

Overall, I enjoyed this production of *Othello*. The lighting, soundscape, music and the set each complements the moments of madness, deception, rage and anguish perfectly.

Othello plays at the Tom Patterson Theatre until Sept. 27.

1975 Summer blockbuster *Jaws* returns with Stratford Film Festival double bill

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The summer of 1975 notoriously recorded a steep decline in beachgoers as the blockbuster film *Jaws* took to the screens and scared the population out of swimming. *Jaws* wasn't just a hit movie, it changed Hollywood and proved that a summertime event would bring audiences lining around the block.

"We wanted to show this for the audience experience. We wanted to do something fun and different this summer. We tend to do very curated films but thought it would be a great experience for people to see a familiar film on the big screen," said Megan Smith-Harris, festival director of the Stratford Film Festival (SFF).

Being in a packed audience collectively watching the film brings a shared response for all, a gasp, a laugh, knowing what's coming next and still being astonished.

This is a double bill with the celebrated "making of" documentary about *Jaws*, called *The Shark is Still Working: The Impact and Legacy of Jaws*. This film is among the best documentaries about the film and is included in the 50th anniversary blu-ray DVD release of *Jaws*.

"We're showing this documentary beforehand because it's not just about the shark that wouldn't work, it's about filmmakers that wouldn't give up until the shark did work, and until they made the

film work. It actually heralded a fantastic cinematic breakthrough for Steven Spielberg, director of *Jaws*, because he had to come up with camera techniques and sort of suspenseful moments for the audience to imagine as the shark is not shown on screen," Smith-Harris said.

In fact, the shark spends a grand total of four minutes on screen because it simply would not work for them most of the time. Another interesting fact, there were actually three sharks made for filming different angles, all named Bruce after Spielberg's lawyer.

"This documentary was made by *Jaws* fans which is really extraordinary because these kinds of projects are generally niche. This one became so much more. It is narrated by star Roy Schneider and includes Peter Benchley's final on camera interview before he died. There's extensive interviews with Steven Spielberg, Richard Dreyfuss, John Williams and more. There are also interviews with filmmakers that were greatly influenced by *Jaws*," said Smith-Harris.

This is such a great opportunity to revisit a film that perhaps kept everyone out of the water, or to introduce it to the next generation to appreciate the horror of it all.

"Bring the kids or grandchildren, aged 13 plus, and introduce them to it as a family. We're encouraging people to come in their favourite beach attire, so breakout those Hawaiian shirts, your sarong and



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Take a deep dive behind Hollywood's first summer blockbuster *Jaws* screening on the big screen July 11 with the fascinating double bill *The Shark is Still Working: The Impact and Legacy of Jaws*.

straw hat. We're going to have a prize for the best outfit. You can come to one film, the other or both. It's shark night!" Smith-Harris said.

The film *Jaws*, now over 50 years old, continues to resonate with audiences for how it still holds up. The psychological suspense from the first opening scene grabs and pulls the audience into the

world of the great white shark terrorizing the ocean front community.

The screening of *The Shark is Still Working: The Impact and Legacy of Jaws* is at 4 p.m. July 11 and the film *Jaws* is at 7 p.m. for the double bill at the Stratford City Hall auditorium. Tickets can be purchased in advance at stratfordfilmfestival.com and select Buy Tickets.

Editorial

I'm glad I raised my kids in Stratford: Thank you, St. Mike's



AMANDA NELSON

Times Reporter

My youngest daughter graduated last Thursday from St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, and while it's hard to imagine becoming an empty nester – no more dirty laundry on the floor, water bottles scattered around the house, a messy kitchen or a television mysteriously left on – I also know this day was always going to come.

I have just two more months of seeing both my girls every day before they head off to university. My oldest, Chloe, is returning to McMaster University for her second year of business, while Hailey will be heading to Queen's University this fall to study biology.

As I sat in the gym during the graduation ceremony, I found myself looking around at the incredible teachers who helped shape both of my daughters into the young women they are today.

There was Mr. Boersen, who inspired students to understand – and even love – politics. Mr. DeLuca helped Hailey discover both her talent for biology and chemistry and her passion for pursuing them beyond high school. Ms. Cunningham spent extra time making sure students truly understood chemical bonds before moving on. And then there was Mr. Kocher, who is probably looking forward to finally enjoying a lunch break now that Hailey has graduated. She and her friends spent nearly every spare minute, including his lunch breaks, in his classroom asking questions about vectors and data management.

From St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School to St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, every teacher played a part in helping my daughters become who they are today.

Of course, family and friends helped shape them too. Their dad and I certainly did our best. But teachers matter. They spend countless hours encouraging, challenging and believing in our children, often without realizing the lasting impact they have.

We are incredibly fortunate to live in a community where educators genuinely care about their students and love what they teach. I don't think we always stop to appreciate just how lucky we are.

it.

They lost some of the most important years of high school to a pandemic. They learned through computer screens, wore masks in classrooms and had to navigate friendships during a time when simply being together wasn't always possible. Adults made decisions to keep them safe, but those decisions also took away many experiences they had been looking forward to.

Most of these students didn't even write a formal exam until Grade 11. Instead of dreading it, Hailey told me she couldn't wait because writing an exam felt like finally getting to experience a normal part of high school.

That perspective says everything.

When I looked across the graduating class, I didn't see students who had missed out. I saw resilience.

I saw young people who adapted when life demanded it. I saw students who continued to show up, support one another and dream about the future despite everything they had experienced. They are entering adulthood with a level of adaptability that will serve them for the rest of their lives.

St. Michael principal Carolyn Bell captured it perfectly in her address to the graduates.

"Along the way, you've learned lessons that won't appear on any transcript. This graduating class is unique. You experienced a world that has changed rapidly, and you've had to grow alongside it.

"When I reflect on this graduating class, one word continuously comes to mind: hope. Hope is one of the greatest gifts of our faith. It is not simply wishing things will work out; it is having confidence that God is with us,

This graduating class has lived through experiences unlike any generation before



(AMANDA NELSON PHOTO)

Mr. Kocher, one of Hailey's favourite teachers, and Hailey at her graduation ceremony last week.

even when the path ahead is unpredictable.

"Warriors, you leave us at a time when the world can feel divided and anxious. Yet every time I look at you, I see hope. I have seen your kindness when others were struggling. I have seen your courage when you spoke up for what is right. I have seen your willingness to serve your communities and support one another and I have seen your strength through disappointment, setbacks and unexpected challenges."

As a parent, I couldn't have asked for a better community to raise my daughters.

Stratford gave them teachers who cared, classmates who became lifelong friends and a place where they were encouraged to discover who they wanted to become.

Watching them walk across that stage wasn't just the end of their high school years.

It was proof that this community helped prepare them for whatever comes next.

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Opinions

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: THE FINAL FRONTIER



STUART LENDER

Times Columnist

Remember Star Trek? Space: the final frontier? That's a fallacy. I know a place far more mysterious, sometimes unpredictable, and yet, oddly malleable – more so than outer space. The final frontier that really matters is within. It's always been within. It's never been out there. Not during the Stone Age, not through the Bronze and Iron Ages – nor was it through the Classical Era, Middle Ages or into the Modern Era of human history. And still today, it is not outside of us.

Certainly, there are many frontiers, but the final frontier as somewhere other than ourselves is a myth. What we perceive outside of us is the physical world as sure as we are born into it and become a part of it. What

is inside is everything else: the spirit, inspiration, wonder, the experience and creation – the foundation of our perceptions, our happiness, our ability to change. In fact, there may never be a “final” frontier at all, only a series of many frontiers, met and navigated.

Humans have come a long way, trudging through the annals of time and recorded history. We can examine our lineage in galleries and museums, recount our deeds through magnificent invention, brave exploration, compassionate community and “glorious” bloodlust for God and country. We can project forward, onward and upward, dig into the soil and thrust ourselves towards the planets – but the invisible thread that binds us, stitches us all into the tapestry of humanity, originates from ourselves – our minds. That is the only frontier every single individual upon the planet shares through the act of living. Wish 'twere possible that our minds could come together more and see the bigger picture of our global predicament – to sink or to swim.

While the mind is the frontier of paramount importance, it is often the one overlooked or least self-examined. The achievements of human beings are self-evident, the consciousness

of the achiever less so.

Indeed, every new idea or new happening that comes into our minds through the doors of our senses and enters the house that we have created for ourselves, comes in without knocking – and whatever event or thought it is, sits itself down in the middle of the room and says, “deal with me.” There it is! And so, everything we believe, all that we feel, all that we think and know – is all that we have as tools to welcome it or reject it, make friends with it or make enemies of it, expand our knowledge of it or stay uninformed of it.

Everything in the world of the human being, always and forever, is filtered through the brain. The body is the “house.” The mind is the “home.” It is what we do with what comes into that home that matters most. And when the home is in turmoil – the house is in turmoil.

Turmoil happens when there is a struggle between what one wants, thinks or feels, and what actually is. It's a universal truth that if I want to understand a thing I don't fully understand, I need to open my “home” even more than it is, expand the mind, and comprehend the current information. Likewise, with an emotion – if I want to feel loved, I need to show compassion. It

isn't a given. One thing begets another. What you give, so you will receive. And with confrontations? What then? With practice, one can stay in the relative calm of the emotional waters, while the tumultuous waves are rolling above on the surface – and this is the place of balance, where we can be unshakeable and clear – in the space one chooses to be in.

I don't berate myself or another when I don't have the thing I'm looking for. If I'm looking for harmony for example, I must act as if it is already within me – practicing peace and observing myself within my all too personal or narrow world view. Keeping myself as willingly open as possible. Growing into it. The mind first – the body follows.

And it can be so with almost everything within the frontier. I don't want to be in turmoil. I want harmony. So, I know that the only way I can possibly water that seed is to train my mind to be patient and not immediately react or respond rashly with what I'm feeling in the haste of the moment. No one I'm interacting with will give me the harmony I seek. I need to do it for myself. They're busy doing their own thing.

To practice standing still within the gap of what is and what I

would like to create is a skill and a powerful stabilizer. And to be gentle with myself and willingly search out the seams of my own ignorance or prejudice of a thing is striving for wisdom. It is not a weakness or shameful. If I don't do that, what I really want is nowhere in the room. What's blossoming instead is avoidance and frustration without any long-term understanding of the battle within.

So, I practice, through each interaction, through situations that present themselves and actions that are carried out. Like a child in perpetual discovery – if I act out who it is I want to be in practice, I eventually become that person. If I flirt with different perspectives on things, I eventually open to greater understanding and feel less provoked. If I start every interaction as “friend,” then “enemy” becomes something I need to be convinced of and becomes harder to find. That's good for everyone – especially if the enemy I'm struggling with is myself.

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

The gift of the mid-year pause



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

As we reach the midpoint of the year, many of us find ourselves wondering where the time has gone. January often arrives with resolutions, fresh calendars and a sense of possibility. We set goals, make plans and imagine the months ahead with optimism. Yet before we know it, June is here. The days are longer, gardens are blooming, and the pace of life seems to quicken. It is precisely at this halfway mark that we are offered an important opportunity: the chance

to pause and reflect.

In a culture that celebrates constant productivity and busyness, stopping can feel uncomfortable. We are often encouraged to keep moving forward, checking items off our to-do lists and striving for the next milestone. Reflection, however, invites us to do something different. It asks us to slow down long enough to notice where we have been, what we have learned and how we have changed.

Reflection is not about dwelling on mistakes or criticizing ourselves for goals left unmet. Instead, it is an act of curiosity and compassion. It allows us to ask meaningful questions: What has brought me joy over the past six months? What challenges have I navigated? What have I learned about myself? Are the priorities I set in January still the ones that matter most to me today?

Life has a way of shifting our expectations. Health concerns, family responsibilities, career changes and unexpected opportunities can alter the course we

originally envisioned. Sometimes, simply getting through a difficult season is an accomplishment worthy of recognition. Reflection helps us acknowledge these realities. It reminds us that progress is not always linear and that resilience often develops quietly, behind the scenes.

Taking stock of our experiences also allows us to celebrate our successes. We are often quick to focus on what remains undone while overlooking how far we have come. Perhaps you developed a healthier habit, strengthened an important relationship, learned a new skill, or found moments of peace during challenging times. Recognizing these achievements nurtures gratitude and builds confidence for the months ahead.

Reflection also provides clarity. When we pause to examine how we spend our time and energy, we become better equipped to make intentional choices. We may realize that certain commitments no longer

align with our values. We may discover that we need more rest, more creativity, more connection or more time outdoors. Rather than continuing on autopilot, reflection empowers us to adjust our course.

The beauty of a mid-year reflection is that it does not require grand gestures. It can be as simple as sitting quietly with a cup of tea and a journal. It might involve taking a walk through the neighbourhood and noticing what thoughts arise. Some people find meaning in conversations with trusted friends or family members. Others reflect through prayer, meditation or creative pursuits such as writing or art.

The questions themselves do not need to be complicated. Consider asking yourself: What has mattered most to me this year? What would I like to carry forward into the next six months? What do I need to release? What small change could make my daily life more meaningful or manageable?

As summer unfolds, we often become immersed in vacations, social gatherings and seasonal activities. Yet before we rush ahead, there is wisdom in taking a moment to look back. Reflection creates space for appreciation, learning and renewed intention. It reminds us that life is not simply about reaching destinations but about paying attention to the journey itself.

The midpoint of the year is more than a date on the calendar. It is an invitation to honour our experiences, acknowledge our growth and gently recalibrate when necessary. By stopping to reflect, we give ourselves the gift of living more consciously in the months ahead.

Perhaps the most important question we can ask ourselves is this: How do I want to move through the rest of this year? The answer may not arrive all at once. But in the quiet moments of reflection, we often discover that we already carry within us the wisdom we need for the road ahead.

Opinions

Stairway and experience of a lifetime

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

I have been to the beautiful Quebec City twice before on my own, but last week's visit was very special. My wife, mother-in-law, brother-in-law and I travelled 12-plus hours by vehicle from Stratford to Quebec. It was a very long ride with multiple stops along the route.

After our first night at the house we were staying in, we went to the Plains of Abraham and took a few pictures the following morning. Although sightseeing was one of the primary objectives of the trip, my main purpose in going to Quebec City was to compete in the Défi des Escaliers de Québec, known in English as the

Quebec City Staircase Challenge.

I decided to compete in the 4K walk event late this past January, intending to prove to myself that I could endure the race's terrain and physical challenges. Furthermore, it was not to win the event but rather to survive and finish the race in less than an hour.

When studying the map of the 4K race, I knew it was the right decision to compete in that mileage, as the other races – 9K, 14K and the big 19K – include the grueling 500 plus step Cap-Blanc stairs adjacent to the Plains of Abraham. My race was more concentrated in Old Quebec, a historic village nestled in the city's heart.

In the months before the event, I focused on cardio training at the Walking Track in

the Stratford Rotary Complex and Stratford YMCA. Alongside my training, I made an effort to support local businesses by getting my haircut at the Urban Barber and dining at Revel and Joe's Diner, a practice I still occasionally maintain and recommend to anyone.

The Museum of Civilization had the most difficult stairs, but knowing the area gave me a mental edge. Over the next two days, including race day, I was anxious about it. However, at the start, I was calm and ready to race. The first half of the course went smoothly until I reached the 90-step stairs at the Civilization Museum, which marked a key turning point.

I started feeling stressed, and it took a while to find my rhythm again after reach-

ing the top of Esplanade Park hill. In a late surge, I pushed toward the finish line and finished 64th out of 124 in the 4K walk category, completing the course in under 53 minutes. This is impressive for a 37-year-old, 230-pound man who hasn't taken part in a walk/run event since 2009. Besides the achievement, I also enjoyed the stunning views of Old Quebec and its hillside, capturing several photos along the way.

My wife and in-laws were very proud and impressed with my accomplishments. It was an unforgettable experience, and I encourage everyone in Stratford to make it a bucket-list item, test themselves and benefit from walking the fortress city.



(ELLEN PRUIJ PHOTO)

Times correspondent Michael Willoughby an hour after completing the 4K race at the Quebec City Staircase Challenge on June 20.



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Walking into the 2K mark of the race through Old Quebec at the Quebec City Staircase Challenge on June 20.

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Royal Canadian Legion Branch 8
Sebringville ESSO
Shell
Shell - Downie St
Shell - Erie St
Shell - Huron St
Shoppers Drug Mart - Huron St
Shoppers Drug Mart - Ontario St

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The Bruce Hotel

The Livery Yard
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Pick Up Locations

Opinions

Choosing curiosity over judgement



BRUCE WHITAKER

Times Freelance Columnist

"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." – Marie Curie.

Most of us have already formed opinions about public debates involving transgender people with respect to health care, washrooms, sports, pronouns. This piece won't wade into those policy debates. Instead, it aims to explore with curiosity what it means to be transgender. Being informed is the first step toward less fear and more respect.

I reached out to a number of trans people in Stratford to better understand how they are feeling today. Five individuals passionately articulated their thoughts and feelings. Before their comments, here is a bit of transgender education.

"Transgender" (often shortened to "trans") describes people whose gender identity – their internal sense of being male, female, both, neither or something else – does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is different from sexual orientation: attraction (who you're attracted to) is not the same as gender (who you are). Trans people can be straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual or any orientation.

There's no single trans experience. Some people socially transition (changing name, pronouns, clothing, presentation), others pursue medical steps (hormones, surgeries). Many do some combination, and some do none at all. Not every trans person wants or can access medical transition. Transition is about

aligning life and body with identity, and what that looks like varies widely.

Transgender has become such a hot topic lately because the existence of trans people challenges deeply held beliefs about gender, biology and society. When these foundational assumptions are questioned, it can trigger fear of the unfamiliar and lead to strong emotional and defensive reactions against trans identities.

Here is a sampling of what trans people in Stratford had to say:

"I was assigned female at birth but felt uncomfortable my whole life. Becoming a trans man felt right for me. It isn't about sexuality – I'm attracted to men – it's about identity."

"Gender and sex are different: sex refers to biological attributes assigned at birth; gender includes social roles, identity and expression, and exists on a spectrum."

"Why does everything have to fit so neatly into society? Gender is not so black and white as people

would like to think. There are grey areas. My friends have varying degrees of femininity and masculinity, yet they prefer not to explore themselves for fear of being misunderstood."

"Being able to live authentically matters. It's frustrating when people react with hostility instead of curiosity or support."

"It is horrible to be trans today. So many people are pushing back. If I had a choice, I wouldn't choose it. Yes, debate on issues is good, but please no longer debate the issue of the existence of trans people."

"Gender identity is not a phase or attention-seeking. For many, it's a core part of who we are. Constant questioning can harm mental health."

"Not all trans people pursue medical transition; respect people's choices about their bodies."

"Trans people are a small but visible part of society; restrictive laws or hostile rhetoric can have real, painful consequences."

A Stratford father of trans kids provides a simple answer on how to respond to trans people:

"As a father of trans kids – adults now – I don't really fully understand their experience, but I care about and love them very much as they are. But you know what? I don't fully understand what it's like to be a woman, or a minority, or someone living below poverty levels, or homeless, or to have a horrible addiction, or a major mental illness either, and I care about and love all of those people too, and want things to be better for them all."

You don't need to fully "get" someone's experience to treat them with dignity. Asking respectful questions – "Can you tell me about your experience?" – signals curiosity rather than judgment. Listening matters more than quick conclusions.

Yes, there are important policy questions around health care access, age, and participation in institutions, and those deserve thoughtful debate. But progress starts with seeing people as people. When we replace fear with knowledge and curiosity, conversations become more productive and humane.

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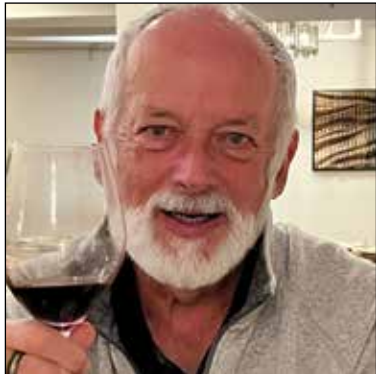


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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Learning on the job at a chef's table in Grenada



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

Chef Janice hands me an apron, a large, very sharp knife and a cutting board. "Chop this onion," she says.

Fast forward a few minutes. Chef Janice examines my work, and I fail. "No, chop it much finer than that." Lesson learned.

I was standing behind the chef's table at the Mount Cinnamon Beach and Wellness Resort in St. George's, Grenada. I was invited to Grenada as a member of an eight-person group of Canadian travel journalists.

To tell the truth, I probably should not have been included on the trip because places like Grenada like to introduce new travel media to their destination, and when it comes to this wonderful island in the east Caribbean, I am not new. This was my third visit to Grenada and I hope it won't be my last.

In my job, one should be focused on new, international destinations, I suppose, but there is a short list of amazing places that I would love to return to again and again. Ireland, for example. The southern tip of Italy. South-west England. And Grenada is definitely on that list.

So, when they invite me, I go. But while there, I figure that I should do



A spice seller in the St. George's Market.

my best to find new and different experiences to write about.

Being a sous-chef to Chef Janice fits that category perfectly.

Food is an increasingly important element of travel anywhere in the world. More and more people are building travel itineraries around opportunities to enjoy local cuisine. Others may not make food number one but still want to experience local food and drink.

It's the opposite of what may still happen in large, all-inclusive resorts where they offer food they think their guests – especially Americans – are comfortable with. I don't want "comfort," I want "authentic."

When our group arrived for our visit to Mount Cinnamon, the chef's table was set for the eight of us. Our host asked, "Would anyone like to assist the chef?" Two of us immediately raised our hands and

were designated sous – or maybe something lower than sous – chefs for the duration.

We stood behind the chef's table, which was spread with an amazing array of ingredients. Some were obvious – large, freshly caught filets of fish (which turned out to be Mahi Mahi), the aforementioned onions, garlic, tomatoes, lettuce. But then there were the many ramekins filled with colourful and aromatic spices.

That made sense. Grenada brands itself as "the spice of the Caribbean." Later in our visit, we toured the Belmont Estate, known for fantastic chocolate, but where our guide, Kelly, began at a table laden with about three dozen kinds of fruits, nuts and spices, all grown commercially on the estate.

Just as the national symbol for Canada is the maple leaf, Grenada's symbol is nutmeg, the signa-

ture spice of the island.

So, while my colleague and I were assigned the more easily identified elements – onions, garlic, tomatoes – Chef Janice added a delicious and mysterious mix of spices to the food we were preparing.

After I was released – we won't say fired – from my culinary duties, and had enjoyed the amazing meal we had prepared, I checked out the menu in the adjacent restaurant. The list of ingredients in the various dishes was mouthwatering: toasted coconut, rosemary, chives, chili oil, ginger, passionfruit, citrus, capers, thyme, cilantro, lemon, turmeric aioli, lime, tamarind chutney, mango, mint, parsley, basil, cinnamon and more, virtually all fresh from the island. And these are just the seasonings that accent the main ingredients!

The meal I – well, mostly not I – eventually served started with a

very tasty Callaloo Soup. Callaloo is a leafy plant; the green soup included coconut milk, garlic, onion, chili peppers and pinches of sundry amazing spices from the magic ramekins.

The main course was grilled Mahi Mahi garnished with tomato, onion and pineapple salsa, sauteed local vegetables (including chunks of yellow pumpkin) and twice-baked potatoes. I was involved in all of this but, shall we say, my learning curve was a factor. I was cautioned not to over-stir the vegetables, and when it came time to plate the meal, I forgot to start with the lettuce leaf that was supposed to be under the veggies. So, I got that one. A victim of my own incompetence.

Though as I enjoyed every single bite of an amazing meal featuring fresh, local, Grenadian ingredients and unique tastes, I did not feel at all victimized. Mostly, I felt lucky.

Local spices, fruits, vegetables and seafood are in evidence everywhere in Grenada, from the restaurants and pubs to the stalls in St. George's Market to the hill-sides where what might appear to be forests are actually orchards where foods like nutmeg or papaya grow on trees that shelter the soil beneath them, where other foods and spices grow.

There are lots of reasons to visit Grenada – more about this in coming months – but for any visitor, the amazing local cuisine should be high on your list.

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 author with Chef Janice.



Nutmeg, the signature spice of Grenada, "the spice island."



Fresh caught tuna at the St. George's fish market.

Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. ___ chat
- 5. Statue near the Pyramids
- 11. A process to change the look
- 14. Herb
- 15. Think about excessively
- 18. Bass vocal part
- 19. Supreme Allied Cmdr. of NATO
- 21. A major division of geological time
- 23. New Zealand parrot
- 24. Cognitive contents
- 28. Lump of yarn
- 29. Atomic #109
- 30. Let go of
- 32. Indian title of respect
- 33. Whereabouts unknown
- 35. Electronic data processing
- 36. Drivers' licenses count
- 39. Snakelike fishes
- 41. They precede C
- 42. Popular personal computers
- 44. Intermediate community stage in ecological succession
- 46. Wings
- 47. Indicates position
- 49. Pleasantly smooth or soft
- 52. Jeweled headdress
- 56. In slow tempo
- 58. ___ Falls
- 60. Reassertions
- 62. Eras
- 63. Hyphen

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Corporate executive
- 2. A plant used for flavoring food

- 3. Opinion or belief
- 4. Sheep in their second year
- 5. Intensities of sound
- 6. Indicates support for
- 7. Expression of laughter
- 8. OJ trial judge
- 9. Pointed ends of pens
- 10. True bugs genus
- 12. Lawyers argue theirs
- 13. Body parts
- 16. Closes tightly
- 17. World Heritage site in Nigeria
- 20. Islamic calendar month
- 22. Commercial
- 25. "Westworld" actor Harris
- 26. They ___
- 27. Religious guilds
- 29. Woman (French)
- 31. Parts per billion (abbr.)
- 34. Brew
- 36. Spiritual leader
- 37. Indigo bush
- 38. Burn with a hot liquid
- 40. Older citizen
- 43. Scad fish genus
- 45. Morning
- 48. Line passing through the center (abbr.)
- 50. Double S-shaped curve
- 51. Small, thin person
- 53. Older
- 54. Mars crater
- 55. Humanities
- 57. Word element meaning ear
- 58. To the ___ degree
- 59. Residue
- 61. It cools your home

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10									
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Pet of the week



ANGEL

Meet Angel, a sweet tabby girl with a gentle soul. She may be shy at first, but blossoms with patience and kindness. And her confidence is really starting to grow! She's really come out of her shell in foster care, and would do great in quieter home with a family will help her build confidence and socialize. Angel loves gentle pets and will lean in for affection once she trusts you.

Angel has experience with both cats and dogs and can adapt well with proper introductions. She prefers not to be picked up and needs some extra calm and quiet in stressful environments. She would do well with a family who can help her personality shine. In return, she offers loving, quiet companionship and heartwarming cuddles.

Learn more about Angel on <https://kwsphumane.ca/adopt/cats>



Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 27

COMING EVENTS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

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

STRATFORD ASTRONOMY GROUP MEETINGS

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

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

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, July 6; 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Grace United Church Tavistock
116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock
Siggis, Los Rolling Tacos, Berlin 95

Donations to Camp Bimini

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, July 13; 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Grace United Church Tavistock
116 Woodstock St. S. Tavistock
SWAT, Pablas Street of India, Beavertails
Donations to Grace United Church

STRATFORD LEGION YARD & BAKE SALE

Saturday, August 1; 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Legion 804 Ontario St.

Stop in at the and check out all our yard sale items, enjoy a back bacon on a bun and our many bake sale goodies

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRES

Friday, September 11; 6 p.m.
Legion 804 Ontario St.

Sign up your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540, Dave at 519-703-6544 or Anne at 519-

301-0914. Doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 6:30 p.m.

EDMONTON ELKS VS TORONTO ARGONAUTS

Sunday, September 19
The Stratford Legion is hosting a bus trip to see the Edmonton Elks vs Toronto Argonauts football game. It is a 3 p.m. game and the Badger bus leaves from the Cooper Lot at 12 noon. The cost is \$105 p.p. Contact Dean at 273-4463 to reserve and pay for your spot. Tickets are selling fast!

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRES

Friday, November 13; 6 p.m.
Legion 804 Ontario St.

November 13 – The next Stratford Legion Friday Night Euchre is Friday Nov. 13th. Sign up your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540, Dave at 519-703-6544 or Anne at 519-301-0914. Doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 6:30 p.m.

STRATFORD TIMES

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

PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

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

CLASSIFIEDS

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FOR SALE

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

CAMPFIRE WOOD Seasoned hardwood, bagged and ready for your summer enjoyment. \$7.00/bag \$20/3 bags \$30/5 bags. Face cords available. Call/text for pick up or ask about delivery. Jim 519-301-1395

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Fair value offered for your vinyl records, cassette tapes & hifi components. Please contact **Sound Fixation, 519-801-5421, 4 George St. W, Stratford.**

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SUDOKU

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

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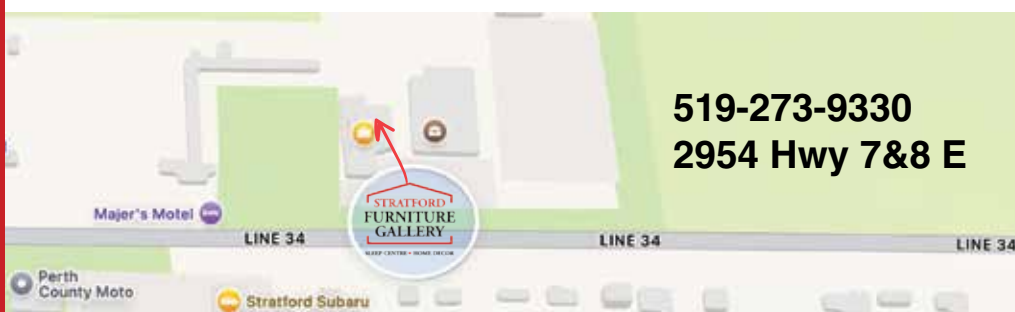
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