

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1288

Thursday, November 13, 2025

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ST. MARYS REMEMBERS

On Sunday November 9, St. Marys Legion Branch 236 held their annual Remembrance parade & service at the town's cenotaph. Despite the snow, there was a good turnout to remember those that served and are still serving for our freedom.

(GORD BARNETT PHOTO)

Perth South farmers speak out against proposed changes to Perth County forest-conservation bylaw

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A pair of Perth South farmers are voicing concerns around proposed changes to Perth County's forest-conservation bylaw they say could limit how farmers across the county can use their land while, at the same time, dissuading those same farmers from planting trees in the first place.

As part of the bylaw review process, county staff are bringing the proposed changes to the councils of Perth County's four lower-tier

municipalities before hosting a public meeting on the changes at the Perth East Recreation Complex in Milverton on Dec. 10. On Nov. 4, the bylaw changes were presented to Perth South council, where both councillors and local farmers Gerald Kolkman and Henry Koskamp had the opportunity to provide their feedback.

"Perth County's forest-conservation program exists to regulate tree destruction and injury, and to improve our forests, soil, fish, wildlife and water resources," said county

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Stonetown Cheese celebrates Royal Agricultural Winter Fair wins, including Grand Champion for Wildwood

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Stonetown Artisan Cheese continues to win more prizes in an award-winning year for the business.

Stonetown Cheese won the Grand Champion prize at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair for its Wildwood cheese in the firm and hard – surface ripened, natural or brush rind category. The St. Marys based cheese producer also took home the top prize in the semi-soft, interior ripened cheese category for its Farmstead Fontina.

"We are truly honoured to be recognized for these awards at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, especially to receive the Grand Champion for the Wildwood," said Rachel Dundas, Stonetown Cheese's office manager.

Earlier in 2025, Stonetown Cheese's Grand Trunk earned the top prize for washed rind cheese from the American Cheese Society Awards, as well as third place for best-in-show and an honourable mention for the highest-scoring milk cheese. The Grand Trunk, a gruyere-style cheese, also won the Grand Champion prize and top prize for Swiss-style cheese at the SIAL Canada Awards. Wildwood was also honoured as the firm cheese champion and Best Canadian cow's milk cheese champion by SIAL Canada.

Dundas is proud of the Stonetown Cheese team for earning the awards.

"It reflects the care, passion and dedication

CONTINUED TO PAGE 6

STONETOWN KARATE

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COMMUNITY

The Salvation Army calls for volunteers to help with upcoming fundraisers

ALEX HUNT
Independent Reporter

From decorating smiles on cookies to packing gift hampers, there's no shortage of volunteer opportunities to help make someone's Christmas special.

The Salvation Army Stratford-St. Marys Regional Community Ministries is requesting volunteers for a variety of upcoming holiday fundraisers. Depending on the initiative, volunteers are expected to fulfill duties such as sorting/packaging food, decorating Smile Cookies and standing with kettles at local businesses.

Salvation Army community and family services manager Jennifer Morris said volunteers will have the opportunity to learn and grow in an environment they're used to as well as build friendships and develop new life perspectives with a broader understanding of what's happening in the world.

The Salvation Army is looking for volunteers to help with the Kettle Campaign, which will run until Dec. 24. Kettles are located at Tremblett's Your Independent Grocer, Scotiabank, Foodland and the LCBO.

Upcoming events for volunteers include:

- The Toy Drive, collaborating with the Stratford Police Service at Canadian Tire on Saturday, Nov. 15, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Salvation Army is



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

Jennifer Morris, community and family services manager at The Salvation Army Stratford-St. Marys Regional Community Ministries, at the Salvation Army St. Marys branch.

looking for toy and game donations for children aged 10 and above.

- The Smile Cookie Campaign, which will run from Nov. 17-23. Volunteers are asked to decorate cookies to sup-

port the local foodbank and Tim Hortons Camp.

- The Food Drive, in partnership with Stratford Police Services, Your Independent Grocer and the St. Marys Fire

department will take place on Dec. 13 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Foodland. High-priority donation items are baking mixes, rice, lunch snacks and canned fruit.

- Giving Tuesday will return on Dec. 2, a day when locals host events and initiatives to benefit non-profit organizations and families in need. Past activities have included the "Pull Up a Chair Auction," where residents donated and decorated chairs to raise money for community meal programs.
- The Christmas Hamper Registration is open now and will close on Dec. 22, but it's encouraged that people sign up on Dec. 1. Families in need of Christmas essentials can register for a hamper, which will include food and toys.

"This is a great community of people, and St. Marys has a strong volunteer network, which is powerful to see," said Morris. "If someone is in need of support, their privacy is respected, and we are happy to provide food and clothing to those who need it. We want to make sure that everybody has a bright Christmas with the hope that it carries on throughout the year for them."

Morris said those looking to support the community as volunteers can apply online through the Salvation Army website at www.salarmycfs.ca/volunteer. They can also message the local Salvation Army on Facebook or call 519-284-2760.





Christmas TOY DRIVE

Saturday November 15th

10am-3pm

Located at St. Marys Canadian Tire
with Stratford Police Services



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7 Day Forecast

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Wednesday Nov-12th	Thursday Nov-13th	Friday Nov-14th	Saturday Nov-15th	Sunday Nov-16th	Monday Nov-17th	Tuesday Nov-18th
Few showers 4 OC Feels like -1	Sun & cloud 5 OC Feels like 2	Mainly sunny 7 OC Feels like 4	Few showers 6 OC Feels like 3	Potential showers 11 OC Feels like 8	Sun & cloud 6 OC Feels like 1	Potential showers 6 OC Feels like 6

Perth South farmers speak out against proposed changes to Perth County forest-conservation bylaw

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

clerk Tyler Sager. “However, the reality of this is actually kind of concerning. Perth County has only nine per cent forest coverage. So, to put that in perspective with our neighbouring municipality of Huron County, they have 16 per-cent coverage.”

According to county resiliency and stewardship coordinator Hannah Cann, the province recommends a minimum of 30 per-cent soil coverage to support just half of the species that live within a given area. That forest cover, she explained, has benefits for both the natural ecosystem and human agriculture, including protecting topsoil from wind erosion and crops from wind damage, providing shade and thereby reducing mortality of livestock, offering flood mitigation and air purification, and providing habitat for local wildlife including pollinator species.

For Kolkman and Koskamp, who delegated before council after the bylaw changes were presented by county staff, the crux of their concerns revolve around an updated definition of “woodlot” and the inclusion of “windbreak” as a new defined term in the bylaw, and where protections for woodlots intersect with windbreaks.

In the proposed changes, a woodlot in Perth County is defined as land at least 0.2 hectares in area and no greater than one hectare in area, with at least 200 trees

of any size per 0.2 hectares; 150 trees measuring over five centimetres in diameter per 0.2 hectares; 100 trees measuring over 12 centimetres in diameter per 0.2 hectares; or 50 trees measuring over 20 centimetres in diameter per 0.2 hectares, but does not include a cultivated fruit or nut orchard, a windbreak or a plantation established for the purpose of producing Christmas trees or nursery stock.

A windbreak, meanwhile, is defined as a linear treed area consisting of one to three rows of planted trees less than 0.2 hectares in size. The problem for some farmers, including Kolkman and Koskamp, is if a windbreak is larger than 0.2 hectares in size – which they say many are – does that make it make it a protected woodlot under the bylaw’s proposed changes?

“Farmers are good stewards of the land, and we plant windbreaks for our own reasons, and also aesthetic and landscaping purposes,” Kolkman said. “And plans change. We had a house fire a number of years ago; we had to rebuild our house. There was a windbreak on the one side and the house had to move over, so we took out our windbreak – and that was only planted for aesthetic purposes. I planted that windbreak and I took it out, and I moved the windbreak over and I planted it again. I took it down because plans change on a farm.

“What we’re suggesting ... is to encourage them. They should not be limited by area or size. Just encourage farms to plant windbreaks. We’d have a lot more uptake and a lot more trees planted because we’re incentivizing them. Also, we promote the one-hectare size of land (for woodlots). That’s what the Forestry Act requires; they’re not pushing the municipality to go down to (0.2 hectares). There’s nobody holding a gun to the municipality’s head that they have to do that. It’s totally within the power of the municipality to choose the size and how restrictive they actually want it to be.”

According to the two Perth South farmers, many other farmers in the township and elsewhere in the county are concerned any removal of trees from a windbreak could result in hefty fines under an amended bylaw.

Kolkman and Koskamp said they went through the proposed changes to the forest-conservation bylaw and made changes of their own they said would be more palatable to rural landowners in the township. Among those proposed changes is a proposal for registry through which landowners have the choice to register larger windbreaks to avoid classification as woodlots.

“We want to plant trees. I, personally, have a very negative attitude toward planting trees because this is so restric-

tive,” Koskamp said. “... If I plant a windbreak, do I have to get a lawyer and a planner to lay it out and keep it under (0.2 hectares) so I don’t have (a woodlot)? Because as soon as it becomes a woodlot, that land, without my consent, will be switched from arable land to woodland.

“... In our document, we put something in called a tree registry. The tree registry gives you an opportunity to protect that windbreak when the next farmer might want to rip it out. You can also register that you have the option to move it, change it, so it will not become part of the woodland. It’s your property, trees belong in the mix, but do we need to regulate everything over (0.2 hectares)? Couldn’t we just plant?”

Sager told those present at the council meeting the feedback from the Perth South delegation and councillors would be considered for the final iteration of bylaw. He also noted that should landowners have questions about whether the removal of trees might be a contravention of the amended bylaw, they can call the county’s tree inspector or county staff and ask before proceeding.

In many cases, the exemption/appeal process included among the proposed changes to the bylaw will allow farmers to state their case if the removal of trees is integral to work or life on a farm.



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EDITORIAL

No Sequel

SHARON SINCLAIR
Contributed Article

This poem was written by St. Marys poet Sharon Sinclair in 2014 and has been republished in the St. Marys Independent with her permission.

How old were you when you first knew
about a Horror film called “WAR” ...
Where actors bleed and every need
is denied as never before,
where lives are lost at unimaginable cost
in a senseless script of greed,
where voices cry and question why
and shattered hearts believe
that for a nation’s pride their children died
or live with anguished pain,
from shocking scenes their tortured dreams
return to haunt again
on a battle field where weapons wield
a force where might is right
and the heavens weep as humanity creeps
through the wretched dark of night?

I was 12 years old when our television showed
a movie called “Three Came Home”,
It brought World War Two to my startled view
with prison brutality shown;
The characters’ fears released all the tears
that flow from an innocent heart,
Soon Mother’s soft words were gently heard
through a message she tried to impart:
“You mustn’t cry so ... it’s only a show,
it’s just a sad story you feel,”
But my young heart knew it was all too true,
and atrocities like this were real.

So I urge you today to reflect in your way
on your own first impressions of war;
If you were lucky like me, they were history,
far removed from anything more
that could scar your soul with a ghastly toll
full of conflict and misery and strife,
and steal from the world, under flags unfurled,
generations of brilliance and light;
Let’s choose peace instead and honour our dead
for the sacrifice each of them made;
If we can learn to forgive ... to live and let live,
they will rest in peace in their graves.

Overheard at the Coffee Shop

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Ok, who shook the snow globe?

Despite a snowy morning, it was great to see a good turn out for Remembrance Day!

Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others? Either email them to us at info@stmarysindependent.com with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519-284-0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

Bravo	Boo
We have 1 Bravo this week. 1) Bravo to our community for supporting the St Marys Hospital Auxiliary October Bingo!	We have 2 Boos this week. 1) Boo to all the parents of children playing sports that criticize the coaches who are unpaid volunteers and other team players who are someone’s child. Treat them with the same respect that you would want. Or maybe become a coach and see what it is like on the other side. 2) Boo to the Oct. 30 Boo to the Boo section. The first step in solving a problem is publicly acknowledging that the problem exists. Hurrah for the long running and entertaining Boo section!
*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered. Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.	

Quote of the Week

“So Donald Trump, since I know you’re watching, I have four words for you: Turn the volume up!”

- Democratic socialist Zohran Mamdani used part of his first speech after his win in the New York City mayoral race to take a pointed shot at Republican President Donald Trump.



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

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St. Marys Independent

Thoughts of the Week
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395 Queen Street West

Small setbacks lead to great comebacks.

We don’t remember days, we remember moments.

There is nothing better than a good friend unless it is a friend with chocolate.

The first snow is the celebration of the changing seasons.

The Flower Shop and More hosting Santa Claus for visits, photos, supporting library pantry

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Santa Claus will be at the Flower Shop and More for photos and to help give back to the community.

The Flower Shop and More will run a meet-and-greet with Santa Claus and photo-shoots from 5-7 p.m. starting Nov. 27. Santa will return every Thursday until Dec. 18. No prior appointment is needed and visits with Santa are free, while photos with Santa cost \$15 for two, the proceeds from which will support the St. Marys Public Library Pantry program.

One of the employees at the Flower Shop and More, photographer Jayne Fuller, will be taking the photos. She also came up with the idea because she and her husband love dressing up for holiday photos. The store will be using its front window area for the occasion.

"Hopefully it will help make the evenings more festive and will encourage even more people to want to be down-



town for those four weeks leading up to the holidays," said co-owner Chris O'Connor.

The Flower Shop and More previously had their donation tree that also supported the St. Marys Public Library Pantry program through donations of food and funds.

"To us, this is a season of giving," O'Connor said.

Along with the Santa visits and photos, The Flower Shop and More will also give a free gift to visitors on Nov. 15, provide free flowers for every Wildwood Care Centre and Lodge resident and host Christmas workshops for stained glass, wreaths and other creative wares.

St. Marys Gives 2025

Get ready for Giving Tuesday, the 2025 edition!

Not sure what Giving Tuesday is? It's a worldwide day of generosity with a hugely beneficial impact on local charitable and community organizations.

A lot of good stuff happens here year-round, not just on the day itself. This year we're adding to our "Won't You Be My Neighbour" theme. We want to catch you - businesses, individuals & service clubs - in acts of good neighbourliness & giving to recognize the wonderful things our community does.

Can't participate on the day? No problem - there are 52 Giving Tuesdays in a year! Do what you can, when you can & be sure to share it with us (email below).

We'll publish a list of participants in the St. Marys Independent a week before Giving Tuesday - so we'll need to hear about your plans no later than Tuesday, November 18.

Sharing the good is contagious - we hope you'll take part so we can say we "Caught You Giving".

Email us at jdockerjohnson@gmail.com for questions or assistance

Your neighbours at the St. Marys Giving Tuesday Committee



GIVING TUESDAY

DEC 2



For more information contact jdockerjohnson@gmail.com
www.CanadaHelps.org/en/givingtuesday

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news
from the Town of St. Marys



CYBER SECURITY WORKSHOP

November 19 | 5 - 7 PM | St. Marys Public Library

This session offers hands-on training where you'll learn about phishing, online threats, malware, ransomware, password attacks and online safety tips.

Register by November 14th by calling 519-272-5174 or emailing sshute@town.stmarys.on.ca.

COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATION

We can help your community project grow! The Community Grant Program applications are live. This program provides funding for programs, projects, activities and events that enrich the community and advance Council's strategic goals.

Apply by November 30: townofstmarys.com/grants



ST. MARYS CRAFT SHOW

November 15 | 9 AM - 3 PM

The Friendship Centre's annual Craft Show is back at the PRC! Shop from over 60 talented vendors featuring nearly 100 tables of handcrafted treasures - from home décor and jewelry to festive gifts and treats. It's the perfect place to start your holiday shopping while supporting local makers!

Questions? 519-284-2340 ext. 621



CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON

- WinterLights: Nov 14 - Jan 1
- Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade: Nov 21
- Downtown Merchants Open House: Nov 21 - 23
- Giving Tuesday: Dec 2
- WinterLights Night Market: Dec 5 - 6

www.discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays



SHOWER PROGRAM Pyramid Recreation Centre

This program provides free showers to those in need. Showers are private, secure and accessible for individuals of all abilities.

Visit Guest Services or call 519-284-2160



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Seniors of the Week



Our Seniors of the week are Lenora and David Mountain who are celebrating 60 years of marriage this week. After marrying as high-school sweethearts in St Marys, they shared successful careers as accountants and entrepreneurs. They continued the adventure by sailing over 19,000 miles over ten years in the Caribbean and they continue to enjoy life to its fullest with their family as parents of two, grandparents of four, and even great-parents of two with a third expected this month!

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

Stonetown Cheese celebrates Royal Agricultural Winter Fair wins, including Grand Champion for Wildwood



(PHOTO COURTESY OF RACHEL DUNDAS)

Stonetown Artisan Cheese production assistant Nathan Grant, master cheesemaker Ramon Eberle and production assistant Roy Braconnier are all part of team making award-winning cheeses.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT
put into every batch of cheese we make. It shows that our commitment to quality and consistency truly stands out in the cheese world,” she said. “This all starts from the ingredients, our high-quality milk from the farm. Each award is a reminder of our team’s hard work and love for what we do.”
The accolades also reflect a strong sense of support from Stonetown’s customers.
“We’re so thankful to share what we love doing every

day with people who believe in us,” Dundas said.
The award-winning cheeses are also enjoyed by Dundas and her family at home for a variety of purposes.
“Two of our favourite cheeses for snacking are Wildwood and Grand Trunk. Farmstead Fontina also always has a place in our fridge, so creamy and buttery, making it perfect for melting,” she said. “It’s our go-to for Friday night pizza, and when we want to elevate the flavour, we reach for one of our flavoured cheeses made with Fontina as the base.”

Weekend Quiz

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- According to the Bible, which Apostle was a tentmaker?
- What city is home to the Spanish Steps?
- "Heaven is a Place on Earth" by Belinda Carlisle was released in what year?
- What do you call a word that sounds like what it describes?
- What is the sum of angles in a quadrilateral?
- At what time of day did guns fall silent on November 11, 1918?
- Who is the main character in The Lego Movie?
- What kind of species can live on both water and land?
- World War One officially ended with the signing of which treaty?
- Which company introduced "Comet" cleanser back in 1956?

By Jake Grant

This week's answers are found on pg. 39

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Christmas HOEDOWN

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Hendra Norris

GUITAR VIRTUOSO

Steve Piliocco

CHAMPION STEPDANCER

Leo Stock

SPECIAL GUESTS

Gary & Nadine Boles

This two-hour live presentation sparkles with heartfelt seasonal songs, family humour, trick fiddling, sensational stepdancing, not to mention the best in Country music the whole family will enjoy.

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AILSA CRAIG – Tuesday, December 16 at 7pm

Ailsa Craig Recreation Centre, 155 Annie Ada Shipley St.
Proceeds support Ailsa Craig United Church
Tickets and info at 1-855-726-8896 or www.scottwoods.ca

HPPH encourages residents to test for radon this November

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

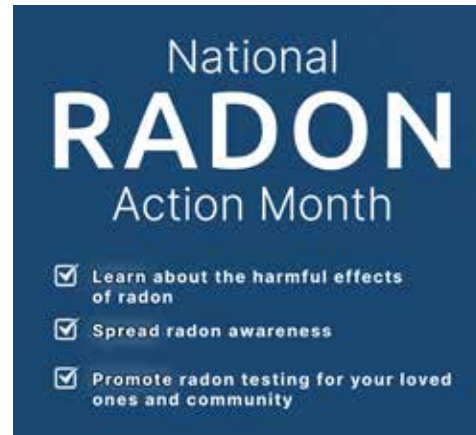
Staff Contribution

November is Radon Action Month in Canada, and Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) is reminding residents to test their homes for radon – an invisible, odourless gas that can pose serious health risks.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas released from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. It can enter homes through cracks in foundation floors and walls, or through sumps and drains. Because radon has no smell, taste, or colour, the only way to know if it's present in your home is through testing.

"Radon gas can be found at low levels in many homes across Ontario," said HPPH public health inspector Dana Merrifield in a press release. "Testing is the only way to know how much radon may be present indoors, and it's an important step in protecting your health."

Long-term exposure to high levels of radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in Canada, after smoking. Health Canada recommends taking action if radon levels are above 200 becquerels per



cubic metre (Bq/m³).

HPPH recommends residents use a long-term radon test kit, which measures indoor air for at least three months. Winter is the ideal time to test, since windows and doors are typically closed, allowing for more accurate readings. For best results, place the test device in the lowest lived-in area of your home where you spend at least four hours per day.

To find Health Canada approved test kits or learn more about reducing radon levels, visit www.takeactiononradon.ca or call HPPH at 1-888-221-2133 ext. 3670.

Festive events light up St. Marys for the 2025 holiday season

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Get ready for the holiday season in St. Marys, where the downtown comes alive with festive flair and cheerful spirit! St. Marys promises magical moments, welcoming visitors and locals to join in the celebration and fun.

The season kicks off with an invitation to attend the St. Marys Craft Show, scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 15, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Pyramid Recreation Centre. With over 100 tables of unique gifts and handcrafted treasures, there's sure to be something for everyone.

Experience the glow of more than 100 dazzling WinterLights displays at Milt Dunnell Field. Starting Friday, Nov. 14, the field lights up nightly from 5-11 p.m. until Jan. 1, 2026. Help keep this enchanting tradition free for all by sponsoring or donating at www.townof-stmarys.com/winterlights.

Mark the calendar for Friday, Nov. 21, as Santa Claus parades into town for the Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade. The parade departs from the Pyramid Recreation Centre (317 James St. S) at 7 p.m.,



following its classic route up James Street, west on Queen Street through our beautifully decorated downtown, and south on Water Street. Expect whimsical floats, creative costumes and plenty of holiday excitement!

Downtown St. Marys truly shines beginning Friday, Nov. 21, for the Merchants' Open House. Enjoy exclusive promotions, festive giveaways and horse-and-wagon rides. Don't miss the chance to meet Mr. and Mrs. Claus as they spread holiday cheer to all – and keep an eye out for a surprise visit from the Grinch!

Discover more about St. Marys' Christmas festivities at www.discover-stmarys.ca/happyholidays. For updates and sneak peeks, follow the Town of St. Marys on Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter).

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Soulstice Collective Fall Market brings wellness, connection and community spirit to St. Marys



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

More than 50 holistic vendors will gather at the Soulstice Collective Fall Market, offering treatments and products to help attendees relax, recharge and prepare for the winter season.

JULIA PAUL

Independent Reporter

With the changing of the seasons and the approach of winter, the Soulstice Collective Fall Market offers a space to pause and reconnect – to nourish body and spirit through local wellness, hand-crafted goods and community energy.

The Soulstice Collective Fall Market returns to St. Marys Golf & Country Club (Hideaway Room) on Friday, Nov. 22, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., promising a day of wellness, creativity and community connection. Co-founders Samantha Thompson and Kate Warren first launched the market last spring after a single conversation about holistic healing turned into a movement.

“We started with an idea that felt too big to tackle alone,” said Thompson. “Six weeks later, the first market came together.”

That debut drew hundreds of visitors; this season, organizers expect more than double.

"It began as a way to connect people with local healers and makers," said Warren. "Now, it's also about helping small businesses thrive and collaborate."

More than 50 vendors from the area will fill the space with everything from organic coffee, teas and skincare to Reiki, fascia stretch and homeopathic remedies. Visitors can sample, shop, or simply explore.

"There's something for everyone," said Thompson. "Whether you want a good cup of coffee or an introduction to energy healing, you'll find a welcoming, pressure-free space."

The first 100 guests will receive swag bags with local products and coupons. Families are encouraged to attend – there will be a children’s colouring contest, giveaways and donations collected for local charities.

Each vendor brings a unique perspective on wellness. Haley Bowler-Cooke, founder of Uplift Lifestyle Inc., says the market mirrors her mission.

"Anytime we gather in community with a shared vision of supporting and enhancing an economy of love and intention, we leave a positive impact," she said. "The Soulstice Market aligns perfectly with that."

For Christy Muddle of To Bean or Not to Bean Coffee Roasting Co., the market represents renewal.

“We haven’t done markets since before COVID,” she said. “Being surrounded by vendors who care about health, healing and intentional living – it’s an easy yes. We’ll have fresh-roasted coffee and community connection brewing all day.”

"The organizers, vendors and location will make for an enchanting day," said Karen Hartwick, tea sommelier and owner of Stratford Tea Leaves. "I'll be steeping healing herbs and teas, sharing knowledge as we sip and sample. It's all about being intentional and finding calm in a cup."

Rooted in the natural rhythm of the solstice, the fall market celebrates nourishment and restoration before winter's arrival.

"As we head into the colder months, it's about supporting ourselves – body, mind and spirit – with warmth and community," Thompson said.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Kate Warren, left, and Samantha Thompson, right, co-founders of Soulstice Collective, are organizing the Soulstice Collective Fall Market, taking place Nov. 22 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Visitors can expect cozy décor, thoughtful conversation and an atmosphere described by many as “warm, inviting and full of good energy.”

“We just want people to come, explore and feel inspired,” said Warren. “It’s free, family-friendly and built for every-

one.”

Don't miss the Soulstice Collective Fall Market at St. Marys Golf & Country Club – Hideaway Room – on Friday, Nov. 22, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free admission. First 100 guests receive swag bags.

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Stonetown Arts Show and Sale returns for 14th year

Annual show is an opportunity for local artists to display their work



Works featured in the 2024 Stonetown Arts Show and Sale.

(PHOTOS COURTESY OF CATHY ATWELL)

GALEN SIMMONS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The talent of St. Marys and area artists will once again be on full display across two weekends at the end of this month during the 14th annual Stonetown Arts Show and Sale.

Works by 24 local artists and members of the Stonetown Arts group will be displayed at Riverwalk Commons, 84 Water St. S, with an opening reception on Nov. 21 from 6-9 p.m., and the show itself running Nov. 22 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Nov. 23 from noon to 4 p.m., as well as on the following Friday and Saturday, Nov. 28 and 29, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days.

Cathy Atwell, the former co-chair of Stonetown Arts and coordinator of the show and sale since it started with just 12 participating artists in 2011, says this event is the culmination of members' hard work over the past year, showing just how far they've come as artists and how the group's collaborative and supportive atti-

tude has helped each of its members hone their craft.

"Both the show and the group have just grown tremendously (over the last 14 years)," Atwell said. "... It has been quite incredible to watch the growth of some of the artists. Some of the artists, right from the beginning, were excellent; they had been doing art for years and they were quite accomplished. But then we had others who were just new to art, it was something they thought they might like to do, and so they were pretty nervous about putting their work out into the world.

"... Some of those artists, my goodness, the progression they've made over the years is stunning. It has been really quite wonderful to see how some of those artists have grown and their work has become so much more sophisticated. ... Their technique has improved and they're willing to try different things. A number of our artists have progressed through different techniques from acrylics to oils to textiles to mixed media. They all seem to be willing to try something different,

which is wonderful, and that's what it's all about."

And the group itself has just kept growing over the years with new members joining all the time. This year's art show and sale features work by both returning artists and brand-new Stonetown Arts members.

"We have at least four brand-new artists who will be showing work for the very first time; it's always exciting when we have a brand-new artist," Atwell said. "... One of the new artists that will be showing is new to town and her daughter also has moved to town, so mother and daughter are actually showing."

Atwell says the show and sale, as it does every year, features work across nearly every artistic medium there is, so there's bound to be something for everyone. To ensure each piece on display is fresh and unique, all pieces submitted to the annual show are original works of art and not shown at previous Stonetown Arts shows.

The show will also feature work created specifically for this year's Members' Challenge.

This year, the challenge posed to members by the show's organizing committee was to create a piece that is six inches by six inches in size that fits under the theme, "light." Since each challenge piece is the same size, they are all priced at \$50, meaning even those with limited budgets can take home a piece of local art to display and appreciate.

This year's opening reception will be held on the same night as the St. Marys Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade. Atwell said those who attend the reception Nov. 21 should expect parking near Riverwalk Commons to be limited.

Atwell would also like to thank her fellow members of the art show organizing committee: Rob Anderson, Julia Armstrong, Kathy Blake, Sandy Craig, Bonnie Innes, Donal O'Connor and Paula Wilcox.

The art show is free admission and payment for art is accepted by cash, cheque or e-transfer.



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Local nature school promotes connection with the natural world while teaching perseverance, collaboration, and practical skills

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

From children to parents, Coyote Nature School shows families the value of learning among the trees and animals.

After Kendra Martin retired from her 25-year teaching career, she made her next move to open a nature school with a twist. Operating for four years and thriving, Coyote Nature School allows children and their parents to learn about a variety of outdoor concepts, ranging from the anatomy of chicken-egg membranes to learning about butterfly chrysalides.

Located on her farm on the outskirts of St. Marys, Martin offers a variety of programs catering to children from 18 months to high-school age. Selected programs also offer parents a chance to join in on the learning and observe how their children interact in an outdoor environment and with the rescue animals that live on the property.

"For the Homesteaders program, we want to grow capable kids, and we take a new focus on teaching children to learn a variety of skills," said Martin, founder and director. "They can build a duck house, make a quilt and even make soap from scratch. We have people from the community that also come to provide valuable life lessons."

Martin said kids struggling with anxiety who have enrolled in the program are now thriving and she hopes those challenges will lessen in regular school and home settings. She added children are placed in situations that allow them to utilize their problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that build their confidence and perseverance, preparing them for outside-world scenarios.

All programs offered at Coyote Nature School are built with their own unique education curriculum identities that provide different learning opportunities for enrolled students. The Homesteaders program runs every Thursday with a focus on children interacting with farm animals, doing property chores, building

shelters and using tools to solve problems.

Ten-year-old Ben Edwards loves to learn outside, feed the animals and cuddle with the puppies, while nine-year-old Izzy Pritchard enjoys learning survival skills like building campfires and shelters.

"It's better than normal school because you get to run around all the time and be outside. I love doing the chores because we get to see the animals," said 10-year-old Oakan Oyafuso. "My favorite animal is the horse named Gus, and I love petting the guinea pigs."

Children explore and learn about real-time environmental changes that occur on Martin's farm property. The nature school operates alongside another outdoor education property that is run by Martin in Harrington.

Coyote Nature School certified teacher Jacob Steinmann plans to adopt nature-school fundamentals within his own teaching career.

Erin McArthur, parent volunteer, helps to facilitate the education dynamics alongside Martin and her staff. McArthur said her son, Jack, who is enrolled in the Homesteaders program, has started to feel more grounded and attuned with himself since attending the nature school four years ago.

McArthur says not only has she noticed positive benefits for her son, but also for herself.

"People can step outside, but are they really taking it in?" asked McArthur. "For me, connecting with the outdoors means listening to the birds, looking at all the beautiful colours, feeling your feet on the ground, watching the water flow and really taking it. Are you being fully present?"

Martin says it's a child's right to be outside every day and connect with nature. She said some parents struggle with the cost of tuition to enrol their child. To remove the cost barrier, Martin is seeking community sponsors to build an education fund to allow parents to send their children to nature school tuition-free.



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

Oakan Oyafuso and Izzy Pritchard tend to the horses at Coyote Nature School.

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(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Many gathered at the cenotaph to honour our veterans in a Ceremony of Remembrance.

WENDY LAMOND
Independent Reporter

Even with lots of snow and cold, there was a great turnout on Tuesday at the cenotaph as the Town of St. Marys gath-



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

The Legion colour guard marches away from the cenotaph after the service.

ered to honour and remember our veterans.

Mayor Al Strathdee shared some opening remarks, followed by readings and prayers by Rev. Pirie Mitchell, Keith Mitchell, representing MP John Natter, Brogan Aylward representing MPP Matthew Rae and Sue Orr, Mayor of

Perth South. The Last Post was played followed by two minutes of silence and then the Lament and Rouse. The crowd sang God Save the King and O Canada.

This was followed by the march of the Legion colour guard and the laying of poppies on the cenotaph.

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Stratford and St. Marys mark first Youth Homelessness Awareness Day Nov. 17

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Independent Reporter

Shelterlink Youth Services is proud to announce that Nov. 17, 2025, marks the inaugural Youth Homelessness Awareness Day in Stratford and St. Marys.

This important day, officially declared by the City of Stratford and the Town of St. Marys, shines a light on the growing issue of youth homelessness in the community and the need for continued action, awareness and compassion.

Shelterlink invites community members, partners and supporters to join them at Stratford city hall at 9 a.m. on Nov. 17 for the official flag-raising ceremony.

"Youth homelessness is often hidden, but it's a reality for far too many young people across Perth County," said Cate Trudeau, executive director of Shelterlink Youth Services. "Having a dedicated day of recognition helps us raise awareness, reduce stigma and advocate for the supports and housing young people need to thrive."

Perth-Wellington MP John Nater supports the initiative and has done his part to bring federal attention to Shelterlink's request, hoping to make Nov. 17 National Youth Homelessness Awareness Day across Canada.

Nater wrote to Minister of Housing and Infrastructure Gregor Robertson on May 26 to share Shelterlink's interest in having the federal government recognize Nov. 17 as National Youth Homelessness Awareness Day.

"I was pleased to support the petition for a National Youth Homelessness Awareness Day as part of an initiative of Shelterlink Youth Services in Stratford," said Nater. "When a petition is tabled, the government is required to provide its response within 45 calendar days. I look forward to Minister Robertson and the government's formal response."

"While I recognize that some may see declaring an awareness day as a symbolic move, it is nonetheless an important way to bring the public's attention to this



issue."

For more than 30 years, Shelterlink Youth Services in Stratford has supported youth aged 14-24 who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness. Through outreach, emergency shelter and post-shelter supports, Shelterlink helps youth build stability, independence and long-term housing security.

The organization believes community awareness and collaboration are essential to breaking the cycle of homelessness and ensuring all youth have a safe place to call home.

In 2024-2025, Shelterlink served 107 youth in Perth County; 49 in shelter and 25 in outreach. It also introduced a new post-shelter program supporting 12 youth in maintaining housing. The initiative aims to reduce youth homelessness by preventing entry into the system through community support and family connections.

According to the federal report by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 46 per cent of chronically homeless adults had their first experience of homelessness before the age of 25.

Trudeau notes that nationally, one in five Canadians experiencing homelessness are youth between the ages of 13 and 24, and 40 per cent of homeless youth first

experience homelessness before the age of 16.

"Nearly half of chronically homeless adults first experienced homelessness before the age of 25," said Trudeau. "If we really want to look at prevention and addressing homelessness in general, we really need to start with our youth."

Young people are often experiencing homelessness for the first time, without the life skills, financial stability, or social supports adults may have developed. Many youth are fleeing unsafe homes, family conflict or aging out of care systems, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation, mental health challenges and barriers to education and employment.

"Far too often, I hear the concerns of our community about youth homelessness and the challenges faced by young people trying to find stable and affordable housing," said Nater. "I will continue to call on the government to take meaningful action to address the challenges of housing in our community."

Shelterlink expresses its gratitude to the City of Stratford, the Town of St. Marys and MP John Nater for recognizing this critical issue and taking a stand through the official declaration.

Shelterlink looks forward to the federal government's final decision within the next month.

"Having a national awareness day is an opportunity to reduce stigma, share accurate information about youth and raise awareness of the importance of having safe and stable housing for young people," said Trudeau.



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Local market raises funds to improve access to cancer treatment

ALEX HUNT

Independent Reporter

Pink cookie sales and snack mix may be the answer to providing affordable parking for cancer patients.

Sarah Nairn, co-owner of County Roots Fresh Market on Perth Road 163, has taken action to bypass the expensive parking requirements at the Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre at London's Victoria Hospital. Nairn, who is diagnosed with breast cancer, understands the struggle people have to endure when travelling to receive treatment.

"It's expensive; it's about \$13 a day to park there and I wanted to donate something that I knew would go to patients directly. This will impact them immediately," said Nairn. "I've been going through treatment for the last year and have gotten to know the nurses and patients, and most of them say that one of the centre's biggest expenses is the parking."

Nairn said she and the team at Country Roots will be selling snack mix and pink cookies until the end of the month. Sales will be used to raise money to purchase parking passes for patients attending the facility. A donation cash jar will also be available.

Nairn said patients can travel for

hours to receive treatment. To accommodate the high expense of travel, she will also be accepting gas certificates and food. She said some patients who commute long distances stay overnight in hotels.

"All of our customers have loved the idea since it hasn't been done around here," said Nairn. "We don't have a set goal in mind going into this fundraiser; we are just grateful for what we can provide and what the community can give."

"The response is very overwhelming and I'm very excited to go to the centre and deliver the proceeds to the nurses who will purchase the passes for those who need them."

Nairn hopes this initiative will help raise awareness about the undiscussed expenses associated with cancer treatment and the community can make a difference by donating a little bit at a time.

"I think to better serve people coming from out of town to receive treatment is that there should be some shuttle service that is provided and that parking should be covered," said Nairn. "With times right now, every little penny counts, and it's appreciated. We can do it if we all pull together. It does not take \$100 to make a difference; just a dollar here or there does add up to make an impact."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left are Hannah Bickell, Country Roots Fresh Market team member, Ashley Roger, team member, Sarah Nairn and Stephanie Bickell, co-owners, and Amy McLean, team member.

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The fun grows three sizes in St. Marys!

Councillors and staff defend continued expansion of Perth County Stewardship Program in 2026

Program funding to increase by \$25,000 year over year

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Though there was some concern about opening up the application period for the spring 2026 intake of Perth County's Stewardship grant program before the program is discussed and approved as part of the county's 2026 budget, several staff and councillors spoke in favour of the program aimed at increasing the county's tree canopy and improving the overall environment.

At a recent county council meeting, county resiliency and stewardship coordinator Hannah Cann presented details of the 2026 Perth County Stewardship Program, \$125,000 for which will be included in the county's 2026 draft budget – up from \$100,000 in the 2025 budget. The report was presented just over two weeks after its spring intake application period opened on Oct. 1.

"Normally, when staff comes to us and they want to have stuff in the budget, we have to give pre-approval, and I think that's one of those things because if staff's going out to tender for trucks or paving or any of that kind of thing, it comes to council first," said Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz, who represents Perth East on county council. "So, I think this is a little premature. We haven't even looked at our budget, we don't know where our budget's at. We're also duplicating a service that's already offered by the conservation (authorities) and I think we're charging our ratepayers double – we're paying a levy to the conservation (authorities) and we're also paying for this."

"I also realize there's (an additional) \$25,000; I think that's another item council needs to talk about during the budget deliberation. We have an awful lot of items on our budget now, and our budget's getting higher all the time. I

think this is a program we really have to look at during budget."

While both Ehgoetz and Coun. Sue Orr, a representative on county council for Perth South, expressed concerns around accepting applications for 2026 before discussing the stewardship program's future at budget time – especially if council opts to reduce funding or cut it altogether – staff explained the timing of the application period for spring intake is intentional.

CAO Laurie Wolfe told councillors applications for the spring intake need to be accepted from Oct. 1, 2025, to Jan. 30, 2026, to help inform 2026 budget discussions with information about how many applications have been made to each of the four funding streams and how much funding is being requested, while also giving staff enough time to review each application before the spring planting season. She also noted that should council decide to cut the program during budget discussions, the county would inform applicants after that decision.

As for the notion that council might reduce or cut the stewardship program, deputy warden Dean Trentowsky, who also serves as chair of the county's agricultural working group – the committee that helped develop the program in the first place – spoke strongly in favour of continuing down the path of future program expansion.

"What do we say to the community after we went through extensive consultations to set this program up," he said. "We went through extensive consultation and discussion with the four conservation authorities that serve Perth County. What do we say to those people if we would decide to say, 'Oh, no. We're not doing that anymore. Sorry. We got you all onboard, we got you all working together cooperatively. Oh, no,

we don't feel like doing it anymore.'"

"So, yes, we will have that discussion at budget and I look forward to that. In the meantime, I will point out in the 2022 Upper Thames River Conservation Authority watershed report card, it's not a very flattering picture. Regardless of anyone's opinions of the Upper Thames or the other three conservation authorities that serve Perth County, there is important work to be done and this agricultural working group, through council, has endeavoured quite diligently to perform that work."

According to Cann's report to council, as of 2025, Perth County maintained only nine per-cent tree cover, with some wards reporting levels as low as four per cent. Existing woodlands are experiencing a significant decline in health due to the compounding effects of stressors such as invasive species, habitat fragmentation and ongoing land-use changes.

To date, the Perth County Stewardship Program has achieved significant ecological milestones, including the successful planting of 20,584 trees and the establishment of 31.234 kilometres of strategic windbreaks. Additionally, 38.85 acres of previously degraded marginal lands have contributed or are contributing to land restoration and biodiversity enhancement. Collectively, these efforts are estimated to generate an annual carbon sequestration capacity of approximately 57,635.2 kilograms of CO₂ per year, underscoring the program's tangible contribution to climate mitigation and environmental resilience.

Speaking to Ehgoetz's point about the program offering funding that already exists through the local conservation authorities, Cann told councillors conservation authority funding is under a lot of strain from the province, it does not offer consistency from year to year

and many of the grant programs that exist have strict requirements precluding many of the smaller tree-planting projects that receive funding through the county's stewardship program.

While the stewardship program was initially launched to support tree-planting projects across the county through its four initial funding streams – landowner, community, woodland and living snow fences – Cann said she has a six-year plan, developed in consultation with the agricultural working group, that will expand the program to offer funding streams that address other environmental concerns.

"It was the plan in the conception of our stewardship program to build upon the streams year over year as more funding was available," Cann said. "As the first year of funding was focused on tree planting and we blew through that funding very quickly with the applications received, we decided to open it up with more funding in 2025, again focused on tree planting."

"However, there is a six-year plan that I've crafted to implement more streams under the stewardship program's umbrella that encompass things that are included in Huron County and Wellington County's clean-water portfolios, including agricultural best-management practices, manure and waste storage decommissioning, well decommissioning, water quality and aquatic habitat restoration, private drinking water protection and infrastructure, invasive species and biodiversity enhancement, and climate resilience and stormwater and flood mitigation."

While the stewardship program's spring application period will remain open until Jan. 30, 2026, whether it will be funded fully as proposed by staff won't be determined until budget deliberations begin.



Perth-Wellington MPP comments on Fall Economic Statement

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Ontario's Minister of Finance Peter Bethlenfalvy introduced the provincial government's 2025 Fall Economic Statement last week.

The economic statement outlines the government's plan to "protect Ontario by building a more competitive, resilient and self-reliant economy."

"This year's Fall Economic Statement will continue to support vital investments in our rural communities," said Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae in a press release. "In the face of Trump's unjustified tariffs, our government is stepping up to protect and support Ontario families and small businesses, while making life more affordable. We will continue to work to make Ontario the most competitive jurisdiction in the G7 to invest, create jobs and do business."

"Our government understands that increasing taxes only hurts the average family and makes Ontario less compet-

itive in the global market. Ontario families deserve more money back in their pockets and we continue to build on our track record of doing just that."

In the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the Government of Ontario has committed nearly \$11.5 billion in direct relief for individuals and families.

Highlights of the 2025 Fall Economic Statement include:

- Rebating the full provincial portion of the HST for first-time home buyers of most new homes. Ontario's new rebate would eliminate the full eight per-cent provincial portion of the HST for first-time home buyers on qualifying new homes valued up to \$1 million, saving homebuyers up to \$80,000 off the cost of a new home.

- Permanently reducing gasoline and fuel tax rates, saving households, on average, \$115 per year.

- Ensuring electricity bills remain affordable, stable and predictable for households, small businesses and family farms. The government has invested

about \$2 billion annually, on average, in recent years to keep electricity bills low and stable.

- Investing an additional \$100 million through the Ontario Together Trade Fund to further help small and medium-sized businesses diversify into new markets and strengthen trade resiliency. This is part of a total investment of \$150 million over three years.

- Continuing to make investments in public health care with over \$250 million to create and expand approximately 75 additional primary care teams – part of the government's larger investment of \$2.1 billion through the Primary Care Action Plan.

- Investing \$1.1 billion over three years to extend home-care services and the Hospital to Home (H2H) program.

- Investing an additional \$1.6 billion through the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program to speed up construction of homes and critical infrastructure, bringing the program to a total of \$4 billion in support for municipalities.

"With tariffs taking direct aim at Ontario workers and communities, it has never been more important for the government to deliver on its plan to protect Ontario," Bethlenfalvy added in the press release. "We continue to make historic investments in highways, transit, health care and all the other services our communities rely on, so we can build for our growing province. We are doing this all while keeping costs down for families and helping unleash Ontario's full economic potential."

"We are able to take unprecedented steps to protect Ontario thanks to our commitment to fiscal prudence, which has put Ontario's finances in the strongest position they have been in over a decade."

Ontario's 2025-2026 deficit is projected to be \$13.5 billion – an improvement of \$1.1 billion from the outlook published in the 2025 budget. Over the medium term, the government is forecasting a deficit of \$7.8 billion in 2026-2027 and a surplus of \$0.2 billion in 2027-2028.

Alliance Wellness Centre's toy drive supporting Make-A-Wish Foundation

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

The Alliance Wellness Centre, both in St. Marys and in Lucan, will be collecting toys to ensure children and youth supported by the Make-A-Wish Foundation will find Christmas joy.

The toy drive started on Nov. 1 and will run until Dec. 2. Alliance Wellness Centre, along with the Lucan Medical Centre, will be collecting new and unwrapped toys for children between the ages of zero and 14 years old. The donations will then be given to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which will bring the gifts to the children.

"We just started the drive, so still early to tell, but we've partnered with the

Lucan Medical Centre in the past for Christmas drives and they've gone very well," Dr. Lindsay Drew, owner of the Alliance Wellness Centre, told the Independent.

Make-A-Wish Foundation provides wishes for critically ill children, and its southwestern Ontario chapter covers London and surrounding areas.

"A lot of families will be spending their holidays in the hospital, and we are just hoping that we can bring a bit of joy during a difficult time," Drew said.

In addition to dropping off the toys at participating locations, other drop-off locations can be arranged by either calling 226-661-0130 or sending an email to info@alliancewc.ca.

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St. Marys Independent SPORTS

Lincs split home-and-home against Siskins; Lacko impresses in debut

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

In a home-and-home series on Nov. 7 and Nov. 9, the St. Marys Lincolns and Waterloo Siskins picked up right where they left off in their first-round playoff this past spring.

Head coach Jeff Bradley called the atmosphere of the Lincolns' 4-2 win on Nov. 7 "playoff-like."

"Waterloo is a well-coached team, they work really hard and they don't give up much," said Bradley. "They play really tight in the defensive zone, so it forces us to battle through sticks and bodies to get out front of the net. They're very hard on pucks and on faceoffs. I thought that was a really good test for us, and they forced us to really compete and battle. It was a game we needed and I think it's going to be really good for us. You're constantly playing really good teams in our conference, so us having to be on our toes and make sure our game is in order is hopefully going to help us be ready to have a successful playoff run."

The game remained scoreless until the 12:58 mark of the second period when Chase McDougall put home a second-chance opportunity to give St. Marys a 1-0 lead. The rebound came after a point shot by the newly acquired



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Chase McDougall beats Brock Greign on the five-hole to score the first goal of the game during the St. Marys Lincolns' 4-2 win over the Waterloo Siskins on Nov. 7.

Oliver Lacko, a German-born Slovakian forward who was acquired by the Lincolns last week from the National Collegiate Development Conference's

(NCDC) Idaho Falls Spud Kings.

General manager Pat Powers said the addition of the lanky, two-way centre, who has represented Slovakia in inter-

national play, brings several vital intangibles to the Lincolns' lineup.

"Oliver (Lacko) is a high-IQ player who will make others around him better," Powers told the Independent. "He has played high-level hockey through his international experiences, which will pay dividends in our pursuit of a championship."

Lacko, who ended the night with two assists to earn player of the game honours, received high praise from the bench boss.

"Oliver is a very intelligent, good kid, and obviously a really good player," said Bradley. "He works hard and does a lot of little things really well. You can tell that he's been taught very well. Defensively, there's an instance where he picked up a guy on the back check, and that's something that we've had to bring up at times with our team, whereas he just did it. He moves the puck well, he's got a good shot and he's perfect for that bumper spot on our spread powerplay unit."

Lacko himself was glowing post-game as he discussed his first game in a Lincolns' jersey.

"The boys welcomed me really nicely, and that made me comfortable, so I just tried to play hard, get to the net and pass to the guy open and help score."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 19

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Lincs split home-and-home against Siskins; Lacko impresses in debut

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

This, for me, is a changing point in my season right now, and from now on, I just want to keep improving.

"It was great," Lacko continued, touching on the atmosphere while playing at the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC). "I loved the fans. When they cheered me on, on the ice, and when we got to the fist bumps after scoring, (the feeling) was like goosebumps."

Four-and-a-half minutes later, Ryan Hodgkinson registered his sixth of the year, but less than two minutes later, Nolan Macey found the back of the net for Waterloo, cutting the St. Marys lead to one heading into the third.

In the third, a game-tying goal by David Bodzai was quickly countered by the eighth of the season for Chase MacQueen-Spence.

The powerplay unit on which Lacko played in the bumper position also included Hodgkinson, Blake Elzinga, Ethan Weir and Owen Kalp, who were responsible for an insurance marker midway through the third, with Kalp firing home his fifth of the season.

Despite not having a point, the game was the best performance in recent memory for the highly skilled Ethan Weir, who Bradley said gave the Lincolns exactly what they need from the 2023 second-round pick of the Kingston Frontenacs.

"Ethan (Weir) was outstanding. He really competed hard and he was thoroughly engaged. If he plays with that level of engagement, he'll be around the puck a little bit more, and with the skill

he has, we want him to be around the puck. He's just such a huge weapon for us. We expect Ethan to put up points, and he will do that when he plays like (he did on Friday)."

Offensive well goes dry as Siskins shut Lincs out

Despite controlling the majority of the play, the Lincolns couldn't solve the Siskins' stingy defensive play and an outstanding effort by goaltender Brock Grein on Nov. 9, with Waterloo blanking St. Marys 2-0.

The Siskins outshot the Lincolns in the opening 20 minutes by a 14-11 deficit, but much of the puck possession was still controlled by St. Marys. However, despite some great goaltending by Brogan Colquhoun, including an incredible save when Colquhoun dove back to keep the puck out after leaving the crease to play the puck, the Siskins took a 1-0 lead into the first intermission thanks to a goal by Liam King.

Assistant coach Mike Siddall noted the team still had plenty of confidence after the first 20 minutes.

"We had a really good feeling going into the first intermission," Siddall said. "We thought we outplayed them all through the first period, but we kind of made our guys reflect and take a step back. It felt like we were all over them, but they did have a couple of high-end opportunities. They had a couple of odd-man rushes and high-danger opportunities that Brogan (Colquhoun) had to make 10-bell saves on. So as much as it felt like we were in the driver's seat, there was still lots of stuff that

we can clean up."

Unfortunately, despite doing a better job preventing high-danger scoring chances in the final 40 minutes, the Lincs couldn't find the back of the net, while a highlight reel goal by Ulysses Lombardi and a 43-save effort by Grein lifted the Siskins to the 2-0 victory.

"It does get frustrating, especially on the big ice, when you think you're never going to score a goal and you're down by two late in a game," said Siddall. "You've just got to put your work boots on and keep going at it. Maybe not be as fancy at time, look to bang one in, or hope one goes in off your butt at some point, and make life difficult on the goalie."

Siddall added the team's efforts to increase their offensive production have been an ongoing work in progress.

"We took a deep dive at some video, and looking at the stats, it was taking us 18 shots to get a goal a couple of weeks ago. We've focused in practice on scoring more offensively and some tactics to try to reduce the number of shots it was taking us to get a goal. I thought we did a good job and started to get some more goals, but we have to keep focusing on that and making an effort to get to those dirty areas, play with skill and play with pace."

One bright spot for the Lincolns was the line of Elzinga, Hodgkinson and Declan Ready, who once again delivered a strong showing. Siddall mentioned Elzinga in particular, who has found his stride after a slow start to the year.

"Blake (Elzinga) is playing really

well right now," Siddall said. "He is lights-out right now. He's physical, he's engaged, he's moving his feet. I think he's understanding that he doesn't need to beat guys one-on-one all the time. He can chip a puck in and have confidence in his ability that he can out-muscle or out-work guys down low."

The trio of Elzinga, Hodgkinson and Ready, according to Siddall, have meshed well together thanks to their versatility of skills.

"Declan (Ready) has really found a home in that line, and he's making that engine run smoothly. Playing with two high-skill guys like Ryan (Hodgkinson) and Blake is not an easy task, but he goes out there, retrieves pucks and puts himself in good areas.

"Ryan feels pressure really well," Siddall continued. "He sucks a player in and then spins off and creates space that way, or he can fish pucks out with his long reach. You pair that with Blake, who can go in and get the puck, and has a really good shot. For Declan, who, as a young player, is still trying to figure out his game, to be as tenacious as he is and work as hard as he does, it makes all of their traits work really well together."

The Lincolns' next action is Nov. 14, when they host the Komoka Kings on Alumni Night at the PRC, where the Lincolns and the St. Marys Lincolns' Alumni Group will be honouring the 1975-1976 Lincolns' team. They then go to Listowel on Nov. 16 for an afternoon clash against the Cyclones.

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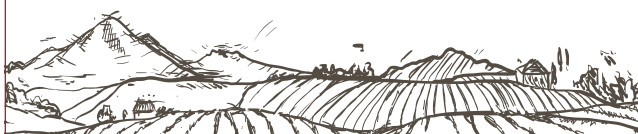
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Four STK athletes capture medals at World Karate Championships

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Stonetown Karate Centre (STK) had four of its martial artists bring home hardware from the World Karate Championships in Niagara Falls, N.Y., from Oct. 25-31.

Sensei Jalyne Lorentz, Marieke Van Lierop, Lisa Sheldon and Shannon Campbell each combined for 13 medals, eight of which were golds.

Lorentz, competing in the 18+ women's division, took gold in classical forms, kenpo forms and creative weapons, plus a silver in hardstyle forms. Lorentz also took part in the night show where gold medalists from other forms categories compete against each other to determine the overall champion, and the STK representative emerged as the overall best athlete in the world for the creative forms category.

Lorentz told the Independent her success was especially meaningful given her move to an older age group.

"This year was especially memorable because I moved up to the adult division," said Lorentz. "Being able to take home a win in my first year competing in 18+, against people more than double my age, was an unbelievable feeling. Winning my divisions earned me the



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Lisa Sheldon, Shannon Campbell, Marieke Van Lierop and Jalyne Lorentz. The four Stonetown Karate Centre competitors combined for 13 medals, including eight golds, at the World Karate Championships on Oct. 25-31 in Niagara Falls, N.Y.

opportunity to compete on the night show stage twice – once performing my traditional form and once performing my creative weapons routine – and

I walked away as the women's overall grand champion. Standing under the lights, surrounded by such a big and incredible crowd, was a moment I will never forget."

Lorentz added she entered the international competition looking to surpass her accomplishments from a year ago, which she was successful in doing.

"Every year, I set out to accomplish more than I did the year before, and I was able to achieve that once again," Lorentz said. "It's an amazing feeling to see all the hours of training, time spent travelling and countless tournaments, practicing my performances pay off, and come together to bring home the world title. Having another incredible result at the world championship felt amazing; now it's time to push for the next one."

For Van Lierop, this was her first time at the worlds, and her debut saw the 16-17 girls division competitor earn a pair of bronze medals. Van Lierop's prizes came in the traditional forms and kenpo forms events.

According to Van Lierop, the worlds were over half a decade in the making.

"Competing at the world championships has been a dream of mine since I began my competitive journey back

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Four STK athletes capture medals at World Karate Championships

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

in 2019,” Van Lierop said. “Having the opportunity to experience such a major international event was truly incredible. One of my favourite highlights was meeting athletes from all over the world who share the same passion for our sport.”

Van Lierop described feeling enthusiastic yet nervous competing on the international stage for the first time.

“This was both exciting and nerve wracking, especially knowing that many of my opponents had more experience than me,” said Van Lierop. “I had worked hard for years, improving a little every single day to earn my place on the podium. The entire experience is something I will never forget and will always treasure as one of my favourite memories. I have learned that if you truly want something and are willing to put in the effort, you can achieve it. Earning two bronze medals exceeded my expectations.”

In the 35+ women’s three-person team light contact continuous fighting

competition, both Shannon Campbell and Lisa Sheldon captured the gold medal.

Campbell also won gold in the 48+ women’s under-65kg light contact continuous fighting competition, as well as silver medals in both 42+ women’s under-65kg and 48+ women’s under-65kg point fighting.

According to Campbell, this year’s worlds brought a heavy layer of inspiration as she admired the competitors around her.

“This year’s world championships were an unforgettable experience for me, filled with moments of joy, new friendships and personal growth. Witnessing competitors in their 60s participating was truly inspiring. It reinforced the idea that passion and dedication know no age limits and that the spirit of competition can be a lifelong pursuit. One of the most standout aspects of the competition was the incredible support from my Canadian teammates. Having so many of them ringside to cheer me on was very encouraging.”

Arguably, the most personally important moment came on the last day of the world championships when Campbell was surprised to see some familiar faces watching her compete.

“Perhaps the most emotional highlight was when my husband and our three sons surprised me on the final day of competition,” Campbell said. “Seeing their faces in the crowd gave me an overwhelming sense of gratitude and determination. It was a reminder of the support and love that fuels my journey.”

Sheldon added gold medals in 35+ women’s over-70kg and 42+ women’s over-70kg light contact continuous fighting competitions. Sheldon described what her trio of world championship gold medals mean to her.

“Winning on the international stage meant everything to me,” said Sheldon. “It represented years of discipline, sacrifice and pushing through challenges that most people never see. Each world title wasn’t just about the medal; it was about proving to myself that hard work,

consistency and self-belief truly pay off. Competing against the best in the world and coming out on top showed me what’s possible when you stay committed to your goals.”

Sheldon cited the connection between the competitors and the feelings of immense support as hitting her deeply during the competition.

“Each year’s worlds are memorable. The level of competition is always top notch, and every match demands full focus and adaptability. What really stood out to me was the energy and sportsmanship among all the athletes; even though we’re competitors, there’s a deep mutual respect. One of the most special moments for me was standing on the podium after the finals, realizing I had just earned my fourth world title. It was a mix of relief, pride and gratitude, especially thinking about everyone who supported me along the way. It reminded me why I love this sport and how much it continues to shape me, both as an athlete and as a person.



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DCVI senior girls upset Mitchell in triple overtime thriller

TURNER ROTH

Independent Sports Reporter

The DCVI Senior Girls Basketball Team triumphed in Mitchell with a come-from-behind 65-63 win in triple overtime on Nov. 6 in their playoff semi-final.

The Salukis started out great, but the tides changed after the first quarter, with Mitchell clawing back to take a 29-24 lead by halftime. Tim O'Connor, who, along with Brian Chalupka, is filling in as guest coach for head coach Monica Ryan, described the events of the first half.

"We got off to a very solid start, we were very patient offensively and we were leading for most of the first half. Then we had a few turnovers and a couple of bad possessions for us, and Mitchell finished by going on a bit of a run. We ended up down five entering the half, but in the second half, we just chipped away and chipped away."

The second half started with Mitchell continuing their offensive success, scoring the first seven points in the third quarter to go up by 12 points. However, the resilient Salukis didn't give up, and by the fourth quarter, DCVI's senior girls had a seven-point lead.

In the dying moments of the game, Mitchell went on a fury, nailing a three-pointer before intense pressure led to a steal and a St. Marys foul. With just two-and-a-half seconds left, Mitchell got to the free-throw line and tied it up.

Despite Mitchell riding high heading into overtime, DCVI played hard defensively, turning Mitchell's strong suit – their three-ball – into a weakness, with few second-chance opportunities for Mitchell to score,

thanks to the great defensive work from Alanna Savile and Raegan Jones.

According to O'Connor, the team's defensive play was vital to securing the victory.

"We got a lot of defensive stops. We put a big emphasis on not giving up three-pointers because Mitchell is a good shooting team. We wanted to come and close them out, contest them and force them to put the ball on the floor, and when we didn't do that, we paid a price.

"We played solid defence," O'Connor continued. "We got some lucky bounces. They had some good looks and the ball didn't drop for them, and then we didn't give them many second looks. We rebounded really well. On offence, we just tried to be patient. When we were patient, we were able to work it around and get a better look."

With the game still tied after two overtimes, the Salukis still refused to quit, battling to go ahead by a slim margin as the clock ticked down in the third extra quarter. Marin Chateauvert made a great defensive play to steal the ball and dribble it out of the St. Marys half to run out most of what little time was left, with the Salukis completing the 65-63 win.

Charlotte Richardson led the scoring for the Salukis with 28 points. Chateauvert tallied 14 points, Savile added 10 and Valentina Urbano scored seven.

O'Connor praised the team's tenacity and energy, noting those traits got them through the more challenging moments in the game.

"They have a lot of composure, they are a little bit relaxed and patient, and they trust each other," O'Connor said. "There was a lot of energy and a lot of cheering



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Charlotte Richardson puts up a shot during a St. Marys DCVI senior girls basketball game earlier this season. Richardson scored 28 points in the Salukis' 65-63 triple-overtime victory on Nov. 6.

on the bench, which was fantastic. Holly (Black) was great at that. There were times when the momentum was not going our way, and it seemed like we were just barely hanging on.

"We had girls in foul trouble, so we were trying to defend and battle without picking up those fouls. Our defence kept us in the game and the willingness to roll up our sleeves and continue to battle really helped us. Rebounding was key to our success as well. We found a way to dig in and get the rebounds we needed against a bigger, taller team like Mitchell."

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STRATFORD NISSAN



Schoonerwoerd Memorial Rink unveiled in Mitchell



(PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN NATER & MUNICIPALITY OF WEST PERTH'S FACEBOOK)

Former St. Marys Lincoln Carter Schoonerwoerd was honoured on Nov. 1 with the unveiling of the CS8 Memorial Rink in Mitchell. The rink has been a labour of love and some tears for the Schoonerwoerd and Terpstra families to see the memorial rink come to fruition to honour the late Schoonerwoerd, who tragically passed away due to suicide at the age of 19 in June 2021. This project would not have been possible without the support of family and friends, as well as the support of the Municipality of West Perth, Mitchell Minor Hockey, Uniac Insurance, and Van Allen Insurance, with Uniac and Van Allen applying for various community grants on the organizers' behalf. The group also expressed gratitude to many other community organizations for helping develop the project through fundraisers and donations. Joe and Heather Schoonerwoerd, Carter's parents, told the Times of the project, "It was very impressive to see all the support from the community around us. After four-and-a-half years, we still feel the people around us. It never started with that intention, but with all the donations that have come along the way, we wanted to find something tangible to give back to the community. This rink does that in a very positive way. It's a great spot for kids, young and old, and adults to hang out, play, talk, and just decompress. Life is fast and includes a lot of screen time and media, which can be quite impressionable on young adults. Our hope is for an open spot to go and have fun with friends."

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St. Marys, Ontario

Bob Howie tournament hosted at St. Marys Bowling Lanes



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

The St. Marys Bowling Lanes hosted the Bob Howie Memorial Tournament on Nov. 2. The tournament was a scratch format with entries of boys, girls and mixed teams. Each team must have a bantam, junior, and senior bowler. Pictured on the left are all of the St. Marys bowlers who competed, including Felix Louwagie, Scott Louwagie, Rory Brockman, Helen Brockman, Jack Brockman, Nathan McKeen, Ivy Kittmer, Leia Slaney, Landon Ball, Natalie McKeen, Michelle McKeen, and Amanda Kittmer. Pictured on the right is the mixed team of Ball, Slaney, and Ivy Kittmer, coached by Helen Brockman, who captured the golf medal with 156 points more than their closest competitor. Ball posted an average 208 over the three games, and Slaney and Ivy both bowled well above their averages. The girls team of Natalie McKeen, Amanda Kittmer, and Rory Brockman placed fourth, with all three bowling their average. In the boys division, Nathan McKeen, Jack Brockman, and Felix Louwagie also finished fourth, just 16 points shy of taking a medal. Jack maintained a 199 average over the three games. A special thank you to the Downie Optimists for sponsoring lineage for the St. Marys Bowling Lanes' tournaments.

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MINOR SPORTS

SCRAPBOOK



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Jack Anderson unloads a quick wrist shot during a recent Social Thirty-One U11 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Cohen Hammond walks the line with the puck during a recent Cubberley Plumbing and Heating U13 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock game.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Avery Fifield rockets a shot while in the slot during a recent Sam's Home Hardware U15 B Girls St. Marys Rock game.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Owen Dittmer saucer passes the puck across the ice during a recent St. Marys Legion U18 B Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Cammie Lobb rips a hard shot on goal off the rush during a recent U18 C Girls St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Adelia Verbaan drops to a knee and takes a shot during a recent Synterra FUN3 St. Marys Snipers game.

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JULIA PAUL

Independent Reporter

There’s something quietly extraordinary happening inside a calm, softly lit space at 19 Water St. S in St. Marys. Behind the doors of Quantum Massage, registered massage therapist Cody Boyd has been developing a space that goes far beyond relaxation.

The Quantum Room is a first-of-its-kind environment that combines frequency healing modalities, ambient resonance and full-body comfort – all while allowing guests to control one of two homey massage chairs right at their fingertips.

With a simple app, visitors can log in, book and secure their time in the Quantum Room. The space can also be reserved for private healing sessions, group events, or other gatherings that align with its serene atmosphere.

On one side of the room, a gold-plated copper coil is wrapped around crystals with sacred geometry at its centre. Across, another coil sits facing two massage chairs. This system is known as the Qi Life Aura Sys-



(PHOTO COURTESY OF QUANTUM ROOM)

The heart of the Quantum Room – the Qi Life Aura System. Gold-plated crystal coils and copper counterparts emit finely tuned scalar and magnetic frequencies designed to harmonize the body’s natural energy field.

tem.

“They represent the yin and the yang,” Boyd explained. “I have them on opposite sides of the room. So, when they collide, they create scalar waves, which is like another healing, energizing effect on top of the selected frequency resonance.”

Because of the electromagnetic nature of the system, individuals with pacemakers or internal medical devices are advised not to enter the room.

Guests can book private or small-group sessions of any length, reclining in full-body massage chairs while gentle frequencies pulse throughout the space. Each experience is fully personalized; whether the goal is relaxation, mental clarity, or emotional reset, the room is programmed to match that specific intention.

Complementing the Qi Life Aura System are Translighters – small, credit-card-sized frequen-

cy devices developed through decades of research in quantum physics and bioresonance technology. Each card contains a thin membrane imprinted with complex energetic patterns. When worn around the neck or placed nearby, these cards are believed to harmonize the body’s energy field, uplift mood and enhance overall vitality.

Boyd offers several models in the room, including Translighter Comfort, which restructures the light and air of a space to create a peaceful, uplifting environment, and Translighter Super, known for its wide-spectrum harmonizing effects that encourage relaxation and emotional balance.

“These cards work by restructuring light and information at the energetic level,” said Boyd. “You don’t have to ‘believe’ in it to feel it – just wear it and you’ll start to notice the difference.”

For those curious about measurable results, Boyd offers BioWell Energy Scans – a non-invasive wellness tool that measures light emissions from the fingertips to map the flow of energy through the body. Clients often book

scans before and after a Quantum Room session to visualize shifts in balance, stress and vitality.

“The scans show what clients already feel,” Boyd said. “They confirm that subtle energy work can create tangible shifts in the body’s equilibrium.”

Sessions are available for individuals or groups of up to four, priced at \$75 per hour, with additional guests costing \$25 per person. Registered massage therapy is offered in the quantum room at an added rate to massage therapy. For example, a 60 minute massage at \$100 would cost an additional \$40 in the Quantum Room.

Between softly glowing mosaic lamps, geometric art and the hum of harmonic resonance, the Quantum Room feels like both a sanctuary and a science experiment – a place where the invisible forces of light, sound and energy meet the human need for stillness and restoration.

“This is about remembering what balance feels like,” said Boyd. “Step into the quantum realm and let your body do the rest.”

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NOTICE OF COMPLETION Thorndale Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion Schedule C Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Study



THE STUDY

The Municipality of Thames Centre (Municipality) has retained Stantec Consulting Ltd. to complete a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify options for expansion of the Thorndale Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), located at 1135 Ideal Drive, as shown on the map.

The Thorndale WWTP provides municipal wastewater treatment to Thorndale. WWTP expansion alternatives were developed and evaluated to address current needs and consider anticipated community growth. The preferred alternative includes:

- Expansion of the Thorndale WWTP within the existing site to increase existing capacity from 674 m³/day to 741 m³/day to meet 2046 peak flow rates
- Expansion will be achieved through installing a Sequencing Batch Reactor with Equalization Tank Upgrade within the existing site



This study was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of Schedule C projects, as outlined in the Municipal Class EA document (2000, as amended in 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2023) which is approved under the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act*.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

An Environmental Study Report (ESR) has been prepared and will be available for a 30 day comment period from November 6, 2025 to December 5, 2025 on the Municipality of Thames Centre website: www.thamescentre.on.ca. The ESR provides information about the project, the evaluation process, consultation undertaken, and the impacts and mitigation measures. Interested persons may provide written comments by December 5, 2025 to the Municipality of Thames Centre using the following contact information:

Jarrold Craven, Director of Public Works
Municipality of Thames Centre, 4305 Hamilton Road, Dorchester, ON, N0L 1G3
Phone: 519-268-7334, Email: jcraven@thamescentre.on.ca

In addition, following the filing of the Notice of Completion, a request may be made to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks under Section 16 of the *EA Act* requiring a higher level of study (i.e., requiring an individual/comprehensive EA approval before being able to proceed), or that conditions be imposed (e.g., require further studies), only on the grounds that the requested order may prevent, mitigate or remedy adverse impacts on constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights. Requests on other grounds will not be considered.

Requests should include the requester contact information and full name for the ministry. Requests should specify what kind of order is being requested (request for additional conditions or a request for an individual/comprehensive environmental assessment), how an order may prevent, mitigate or remedy those potential adverse impacts, and any information in support of the statements in the request. This will ensure that the ministry is able to efficiently begin reviewing the request.

The request should be sent in writing by mail or by email to both of the following:

Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 2J3
minister.mecp@ontario.ca

Director, Environmental Assessment Branch
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
135 St. Clair Ave. W, 1st Floor
Toronto ON, M4V 1P5
EABDirector@ontario.ca

Requests should also be sent to the Municipality of Thames Centre.

If you have any accessibility requirements in order to participate in this project, please contact the Project Team member listed above. Comments and information are being collected to assist with meeting the requirements of the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act*. Information collected will be used in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and *Access to Information Act*. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record.

First published November 5, 2025

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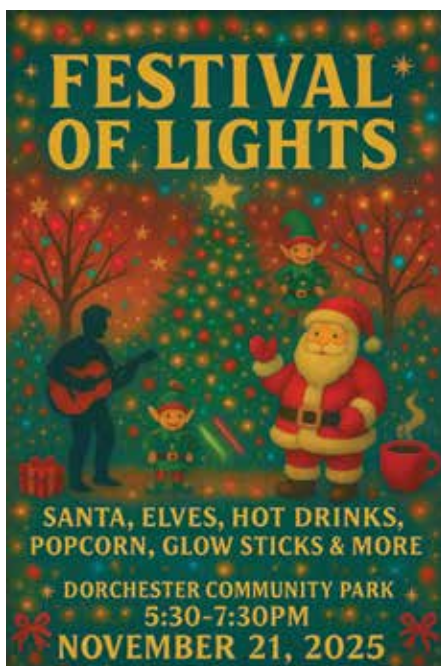
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SPOTLIGHT ON ARTS & CULTURE

“We Need A Little Christmas”: Local stars present musical event for Alzheimer society

DAN WELCHER

Contributed Article

What better way could there be to bring together two singing actors who didn't know each other than by having them star opposite each other while dressed as feral cats?

Don't laugh; that is almost what happened with Janet Martin and Philip Douglas Kerr. While they have not appeared together at the same time in Andrew Lloyd Webber's feline frolic, they did play opposing roles in different productions.

They actually met in a production of *Les Miserables*, and both have been featured in various productions of Gilbert and Sullivan musicals. Away from the Broadway lights, they have teamed up many times over the years to present concerts and to create new shows. Their long-term friendship inspires their work and leads to great chemistry onstage.

On Dec. 6 and 7 at the Town Hall Theatre in downtown St. Marys, Martin and Kerr will team up again to present “We Need A Little Christmas,” a full program of song and story to lift our spirits, just before the holiday season. A benefit concert for the Alzheimer Society of Canada, this will be a staged event featuring songs of the season – but also songs unrelated to Christmas, and even some sideways Christmas spoof songs.

Adding to the roster will be soprano Barbara Dunn-Prosser, baritone Scott Beaudin and pianist and musical director Danny McErlain. A vocal quartet with a pianist – the possibilities are almost endless.

Martin and Kerr sat down with me at Snapping Turtle Coffee Roasters to discuss the upcoming show.

“Both of us have close friends and relatives who have been affected by Alzheimer's disease,” Martin



(BRITTON THEURER PHOTO)

Philip Kerr and Janet Martin will perform in “We Need A Little Christmas: A Seasonal Music Celebration” at St. Marys Town Hall Theatre Dec. 6 and 7.

said. “And since we've been blessed in our careers to have been able to support ourselves as professional performers, we want to give back in a way that will help some people who really need help.”

All the proceeds from the concert, which Martin and Kerr are doing without pay, will go to the Canadian Alzheimer Society.

Martin has been active in the professional theatre world for 40 years. Among her favourite roles are the aforementioned Grizabella in *Cats*, Christine in *Phantom of the Opera* and Cosette in *Les Miserables*. But she's also trod the boards at the Stratford Festival,

the Shaw Festival and other venues in such roles as Maria in *Twelfth Night*, Countess Rousillion in *All's Well That Ends Well* and Mistress Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Recently, she produced and acted in *Menopause The Musical*, which is still touring across Canada. Together with her partner, Mark Zimmerman, she is the founder and producer of Shaggypup Productions.

Kerr is a native of Whitby. Trained as an architect and construction project manager, his life took a 180-degree turn when he first saw *Les Miserables*. Coming out of the theatre in tears, he announced, “I'm going to be in that show.”

Without much in the way of acting credits other than roles in community theatre, he was able to accomplish that, joining the original Toronto cast of *Les Miserables* and eventually performing the piece over 1,500 times during two runs in Toronto, two Canadian tours and a six-month engagement in London's West End. Several hundred of those performances were in role of Jean Valjean, the lead character.

A veteran of the stage, he has appeared as Gus/Growltiger in *Cats*, Marcel in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects of Love* and Bruce in the two-person play, *Mama's Country Record Collection*, in theatres across Ontario and Quebec. He has also appeared on camera in *Mayday*, *Flashpoint* and the ABC/Disney version of *The Music Man*.

Accompanying these artists, in addition to the singers Dunn-Prosser and Beaudin, is McErlain. A graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Music, McErlain is one of the busiest musicians in Toronto. He conducts two choirs there and is a frequent choice when a pianist is needed, in settings from intimate house parties to the stage at Carnegie Hall.

Founded in 1978, the Alzheimer Society has grown and expanded to serve Canadians from coast to coast. It has three principal goals: family support, education and research. It has allocated more than \$47 million in grants and awards to Canadian researchers over the years and continues to enlighten people on the problem of dementia, as well as its major contributions in research.

“We Need A Little Christmas: A Seasonal Music Celebration” will be presented twice: on Saturday, Dec. 6, at 7:30 p.m. and on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 2 p.m. at the Town Hall Theatre, 175 Queen St. E. Tickets can be bought online at alittlechristmas.eventbrite.ca or by visiting Troyer's Spices, 110 Queen St. E.

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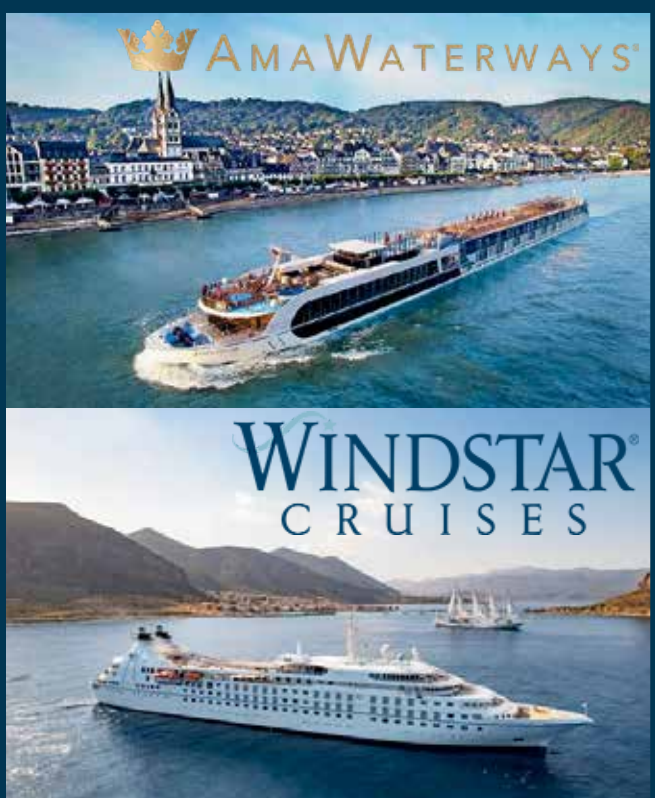
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Community Liaison Committee

The next Community Liaison Committee Meeting will be held on **Thursday, December 11th** at 6:00pm at the St. Marys Municipal Operations Center. Members of the public who wish to observe are welcome to attend.

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

Please submit all requests, questions, and concerns for the meeting to kara.pelissero@vcimentos.com by **Tuesday, December 9th at 10am.**

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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: From vintage ornaments to Elf on the Shelf: A newcomer's view on Christmas magic

ALONA VASYLIEVA

Independent Columnist

In Europe, the week begins on Monday. It's logical! You work Monday-Friday, then you rest Saturday and Sunday. The weekend days are neatly tucked together at the end. Here in Canada? The calendar proudly kicks off on a Sunday.

When I've asked Canadians about this, the common response is a delightful, "I've never thought about it being different anywhere else!" I have a sneaking suspicion it's tied to tradition – specifically, the ancient idea that the Sabbath is the first and most important day. I get it. I understand the history, but from a purely practical, "let's-get-the-weekend-together" perspective, it's still confusing to see Sunday lead the charge. It makes me feel like my week is starting and finishing at the same time. Ah, well. I can live with it. Maybe it's a Canadian trick to ease us into the week – making us think Monday is just a "second-day" slouch instead of the official start of the grind. Smooth transition, eh?

This time of year is undeniably overwhelming, especially for moms. I recently heard a profoundly funny and sad truth: "Mothers don't enjoy the Christmas, they give the joy to their families." And I wholeheartedly agree. In Ukraine, the pre-holiday stress usually involved being utterly exhausted from cooking the traditional 12 meatless dishes from scratch for Christmas Eve. Here in Canada, I'm exhausted from a different kind of labour; the relentless booking, scheduling and staying on top of everything.

But I'm not complaining! I really do enjoy giving joy to my family, at least during the first week of the festive season.

I've learned a critical Canadian lesson: You cannot do anything last minute. I mean it! If you wait until mid-December to look for that perfect set of festive Christmas pajamas or a truly hideous "ugly sweater," you're doomed. Why? Because the shops will have al-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Spooky to sparkly; Halloween's harvest décor shifts to festive Christmas trimmings in this seasonal transition.

ready moved on to the next commercial holiday! St. Valentine's Day hearts and pink fluff will be staring at you while you frantically search for a reindeer. I am not kidding. It was truly shocking when we first arrived and I missed this crucial nuance of the Canadian retail calendar.

I've come to realize that all this Christmas Jingle Bell magic is overly commercialized. Before Canada, I didn't grasp the true extent of it. My biggest misstep? Two years ago, I naively introduced my son, Alex, to the Elf on the Shelf tradition. I thought it looked "fun."

Oh, how little I knew.

Yes, it is fun until you realize you can't just stop. I can't tell my son our magical friend went on permanent vacation. Now, I have to do it every year. And simply moving the elf from one spot to another is apparently not "fun enough." Last year, things went from bad

to Elf-worse; our elf arrived with his brother. Now, it's double the fun or perhaps double the panic when I wake up at 3 a.m. realizing they haven't moved yet!

I think teachers must secretly be elves with PhDs! How they manage to keep things running in the classroom chaos of the pre-Christmas season is an absolute mystery.

They're pulling off the ultimate double-act: being the Queen/King of Class Cool during the day, making sure every kid stays happy and learning, then they go home and poof! you instantly become the domestic holiday wizard, conjuring up magic for your own children. To do all that and still have your sanity chip intact? That's not dedication – that's superpower-level stamina.

And the stuff they bring in! Every morning, it looks less like a teacher arriving and more like a festive special agent hauling in educational gadgets. I swear I've seen everything from what looks like kitchen appliances to who knows what – all for the sake of making learning fun and unforgettable. That level of investment is genuinely unheard of in many places, like Ukraine, and it just proves they're in a league of their own.

In Ukraine, we usually stick to the same Christmas theme every year. I think it's because the holiday has a much more religious, traditional vibe for us.

Honestly, I really loved putting up the old-fashioned, vintage ornaments on the tree. That felt super special because every single ornament has a story behind it.

These days, though, we have so much stuff – every store is packed with tons of Christmas decorations. I feel like most people have kind of lost the appreciation for what real Christmas magic is all about. We're all just running after the next new trend every year, trying to be the "most in" for Christmas, and that makes it tough to teach our kids the basic, meaningful traditions in this modern world.



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BIO

Born in London, raised in rural Ontario near St. Marys, Kim graduated from the Ontario College of Art. Almost 40 years later, over 20 as a full time artist, she has recently moved to Owen Sound. Having exhibited extensively across Canada, her work has been collected widely both nationally and internationally.

Her work is predominantly landscape and experience based. The use of colour evolves in ebbs and flow. Atlin's work changes as her interests evolve, seeking to capture not only what is seen, but what is felt in the fleeting transitions of place and time.

In September 2025 she had a solo exhibition at Bugera Lamb Gallery in Edmonton, her fourth exhibition in over 10 years of representation there. Her work can be found in Toronto at Dianna Witte Gallery, Edmonton at Bugera Lamb gallery, Saskatoon at Dervilla Art and Design amongst others.

For more information visit www.kimatlin.com or follow Kim on Instagram @ kimatlin.

For more questions kim@kimatlin.com 416-706-5447

This is a great chance to see her latest work!

ART EXHIBITION



HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Photographing the Quarries

MARY SMITH

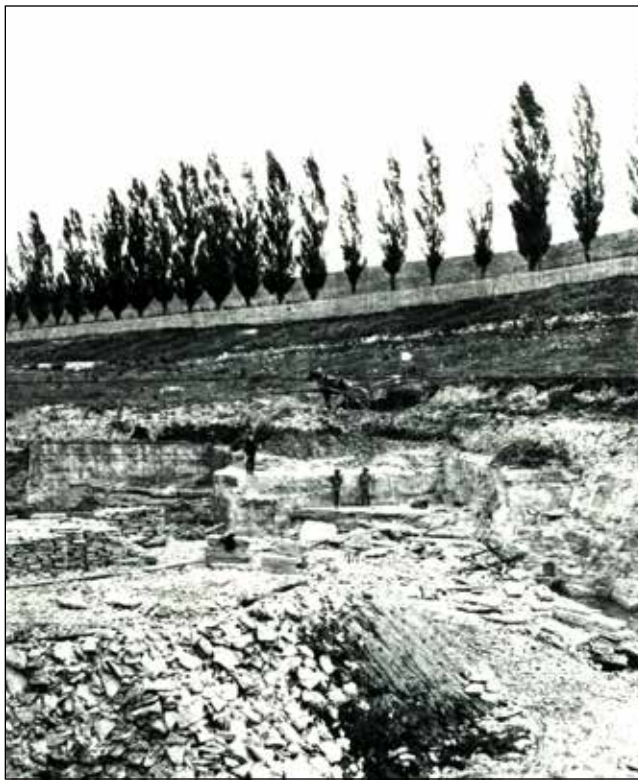
Independent Columnist

In August 1884, John Hugill, an Ingersoll photographer, took this photograph of James Elliott's limestone quarry. The quarry was located on the east side of Water Street South, approximately where Teddy's Field is today. Hugill had made the trip to St. Marys from Ingersoll, perhaps by invitation or possibly because he knew the town had landscapes, street views and buildings that would make attractive – and sellable – pictures. St. Marys had several well-regarded local photographers, but they did almost exclusively studio work. Outdoor photography in the 1880s required the patience and energy to transport and set up cumbersome equipment at each site. Hugill had been in the photography business since 1866 and had built a sound reputation not only for studio portraits but also for his outdoor photography.

Hugill had an additional advantage over the St. Marys studio photographers. He brought his stereoscopic camera with him from Ingersoll – a camera with two lenses. It took two simultaneous pictures of an object or scene at slightly different angles – just as the left eye and right eye see objects slightly differently. After these photographs were developed and printed, they were mounted on a thick card, the two images side by side. When they were viewed through a stereoscope, or stereo-viewer, a single image appeared, and it seemed to have depth and perspective. These old, hand-held stereoscope viewers provided an early version of 3-D. By the 1880s, many homes had a viewer and a supply of various stereoscopic cards. Some had comic scenes, others showed landscapes, mountain ranges, deserts or wide rivers. Famous attractions such as the pyramids in Egypt, the Arc de Triomphe, and Trafalgar Square were popular. These were set out on a parlour table for family and guests to enjoy at leisure.

Hugill's type of stereoscopic camera had been in use by professional photographers since the early 1850s. Even three decades later, it was an expensive piece of equipment. Only those committed to outdoor photography would have considered it worth the investment. A small item in the St. Marys Argus in August 1884 stated that Hugill had visited and had taken approximately 60 views of the town. Of these, the St. Marys Museum's collection of historic images includes prints taken from 18 of the stereoscope cards that Hugill printed after his visit. The cards' owners included the Andrews family and R. Lorne Eedy. They graciously lent their cards so that negatives and copies could be made for the Museum's archival collection.

It's not known how Hugill marketed his stereoscope views of St. Marys in 1884. The project would have taken several days' work, and he probably established a headquarters in one of the hotels. Perhaps once he appeared on the street with his equipment, he was commissioned by owners to photograph their houses and businesses. They could then proudly show the pictures as evidence of their success. Residents might have also ordered cards showing local landmarks such as Victoria Bridge and the recently opened Opera House. For



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS MUSEUM'S COLLECTION OF HISTORIC IMAGES; R. LORNE EEDY ARCHIVES)

Ingersoll photographer John Hugill took this photograph of James Elliott's limestone quarry on Water Street South in 1884.

viewers today, the value of these old pictures lies in the details they show of life in St. Marys 140 years ago. Consider what can be learned from the photograph of James Elliott's quarry.

To take this picture, Hugill set up his tripod and stereoscopic camera on level ground beside the gravel road that was Water Street South. Imagine his horse and buggy tethered nearby under a shade tree. He aimed his double lenses eastward, looking across the open pit. The poplars in the background had been planted in a row along Wellington Street South. They stood behind a stout picket fence that marked the boundary of the quarry. Several small figures are included in the photograph. Although they are difficult to see, the man on the left with a hat and white shirt collar is the owner, James Elliott. A man in his mid-60s in 1884, he was no longer doing the same heavy manual labour he had done when he was starting his business. But he understood every aspect of quarrying limestone and how to calculate the cubic footage of stone to tender on building projects. He also knew how to cut and dress building blocks and how to carry a project to its successful completion.

Elliott, in partnership with another mason, James Clyde, won the tender to construct the beautiful, limestone, two-arched bridge crossing Trout Creek at Church Street. Construction of the bridge was underway when Hugill visited St. Marys in the summer of 1884. One of the surviving stereoscope pictures shows the forms in place for the stone arches and the piers dug into the riverbed to support the bridge for generations

into the future. Some of the cut stone that can be seen stacked like cordwood on the left in this week's quarry photograph might be intended for the Church Street Bridge project. Two other figures to Elliott's right in the photograph are quarrymen, holding the tools they used to break off blocks of usable stone from the sedimentary layers. One is holding a long metal wedge bar, and the other seems to have a hammer over his shoulder. Another man in a white shirt, farther back, is standing on a higher ledge just above a horse hitched up to a wagon. When the picture is enlarged, it is possible to see that the wagon is loaded, waiting to be driven out of the quarry.

Through the years, many other photographers – some amateur, some professional – have taken photographs of the quarries and of the work involved in extracting limestone. There are many available for viewing on the St. Marys Museum's digital collection of historic images: www.images.ourontario.ca/stmarys/search. Search for "quarry" and several pages of images pop up. These can be viewed, sorted from oldest to newest, to show the evolution of technology and quarrying methods through the years. There are some wonderful photographs of the early years at the St. Marys Cement plant. The huge St. Marys Cement quarry is, of course, a direct descendant of the early quarries whose owners included James Elliott. Anyone travelling into St. Marys on the Water Street extension gets a wonderful view of the cement plant. It's especially impressive at night when its lights make it look like a separate community down in an isolated valley. What a contrast to John Hugill's view in 1884 of James Elliott's quarry!

Today, as we drive past the water-filled quarries on both sides of Water Street South, we remember that they are there because these excavated areas were once working stone quarries. The six concrete pillars between the west quarry and the Riverview Walkway were constructed more than a century ago with notches to hold I-beams. Buckets were suspended from these beams and crushed stone was hoisted up to fill railway cars along the Canadian Pacific Railway line. This crushed stone provided the roadbed for the network of Ontario highways built in that post-World War One era. The pillars help us remember this important part of our industrial history.

On Wednesday evening, November 19, Larry Pfaff and Paul King are making a presentation on the history of the St. Marys limestone quarries. They plan to show not only historic photographs of the quarries in operation but also some of the local and area limestone buildings that can be linked to specific stonemasons and their quarries. This event would normally be held at the St. Marys Museum, but because there is considerable interest in this presentation, it has been moved to the Friendship Centre at 317 James Street South. This larger venue means that there are still a few spots available for those who would like to register. These presentations are fundraisers for the St. Marys Museum. The cost is \$12 a person, \$10 for Museum members. For more information or to register, phone 519-284-3556 or email museum@town.stmarys.on.ca.



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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: You can visit The Roaring Lion any time you like



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

Everyone has been following the story of the huge jewel heist at the Louvre Museum in Paris. I have watched with special interest, relieved that the name, "Knowles," has not appeared among the suspects because we were at the Louvre only a few days before the theft took place. But I'm innocent, I tell you, innocent!

There is something a bit surreal about having been on the spot shortly before such a major crime occurred. As you may know, the authorities have arrested and charged a number of people, but as I write this, they have not recovered any of the missing jewels.

I thought about this a couple of weeks after we were at the Louvre because we were in another great city – this one in Canada – and were enjoying a visit to a significant Canadian work of art, one that was also stolen in recent years (actually, not long after we visited the site) which was found, returned and restored to the spot from which it vanished. And it's an iconic artifact that you can visit, free of charge!

The piece of art? Yousuf Karsh's famous photographic

portrait of Winston Churchill, signed by Karsh, which hangs in Zoe's Lounge in the Chateau Laurier hotel in Ottawa. It's there because Karsh lived and worked at the hotel for 19 years.

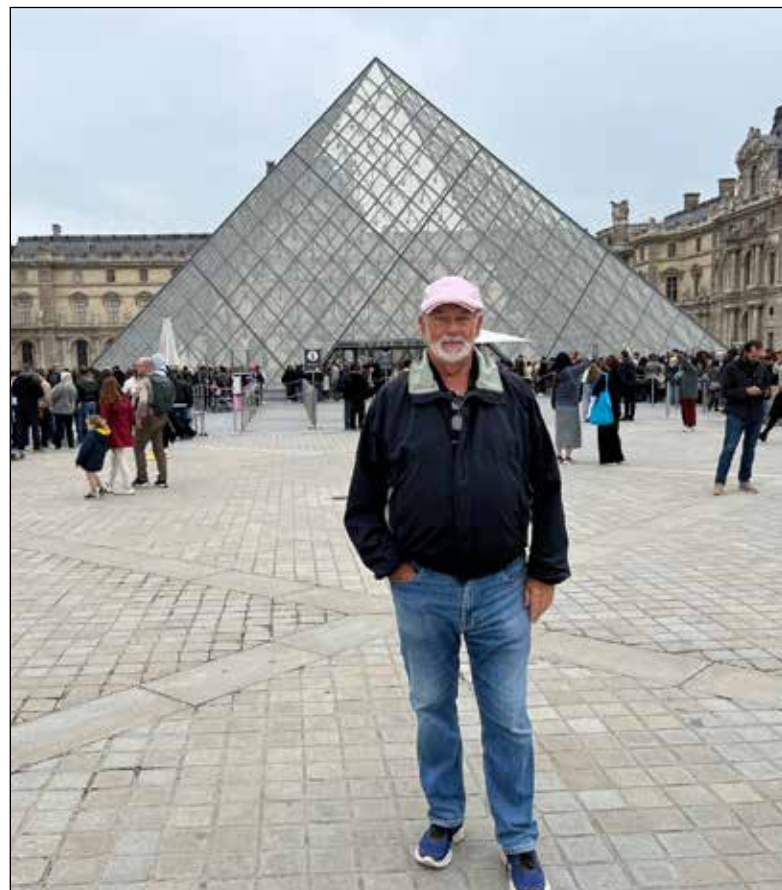
The story of this photo is fascinating. In Karsh's own words, "My portrait of Winston Churchill changed my life. I knew after I had taken it that it was an important picture, but I could hardly have dreamed that it would become one of the most widely reproduced images in the history of photography. In 1941, Churchill visited first Washington and then Ottawa. The prime minister, Mackenzie King, invited me to be present. After the electrifying speech, I waited in the Speaker's Chamber where, the evening before, I had set up my lights and camera. The prime minister, arm-in-arm with Churchill and followed by his entourage, started to lead him into the room. I switched on my floodlights; a surprised Churchill growled, 'What's this, what's this?' No one had the courage to explain. I timorously stepped forward and said, 'Sir, I hope I will be fortunate enough to make a portrait worthy of this historic occasion.' He glanced at me and demanded, 'Why was I not told?' When his entourage began to laugh, this hardly helped matters for me. Churchill lit a fresh cigar, puffed at it with a mischievous air, and then magnanimously relented. 'You may take one.' Churchill's cigar was ever present. I held out an ash-tray, but he would not dispose of it. I went back to my camera and made sure that everything was all right technically. I wait-

ed; he continued to chomp vigorously at his cigar. I waited. Then I stepped toward him and, without premeditation, but ever so respectfully, I said, 'Forgive me, sir,' and plucked the cigar out of his mouth. By the time I got back to my camera, he looked so belligerent he could have devoured me. It was at that instant that I took the photograph."

It was Churchill's stern facial expression that caused the portrait to be named "The Roaring Lion." It became an instant symbol of wartime resistance. The autographed photograph – taken in 1941 – was donated to the hotel by Karsh and his wife in 1998, four years before Karsh's death. It hung in the lounge – alongside several other wonderful Karsh portraits, including one of Albert Einstein – until sometime between Dec. 25, 2021, and Jan. 6, 2022.

That's when a thief removed the photo from the wall on which it hung, replaced it with a reproduction and fled. Remarkably, even though the phony photo was in an entirely different frame, no one noticed the substitution for about eight months! Then, the hunt was on. Eventually, the stolen, signed Karsh found its way into an auction; it was purchased by a collector in Italy, who had no idea it was a hot item. When the story of the theft unfolded, the purchaser returned the photo. It was turned over to Canadian authorities in September 2024. It was back on display at Chateau Laurier in December of last year. The crook was caught, by the way.

It's reported that security has



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Your faithful reporter, entirely innocent at the Louvre.

been greatly increased around the photograph. In small measure, when we were there in October, that was obvious because several entrances to the lounge are blocked by planters and furniture, and you can only get in past the greeters' desk. I'm sure there is other, more sophisticated security in place as well.

But the thing I like about all this is, anyone can visit the repatriated Karsh portrait. Just tell the staff member at the host desk you want to see the piece, and you will be welcomed in. And there you will find the

Roaring Lion, Winston Churchill, with his personality on full display!

I recommend this short stop as part of any visit to our nation's capital. And it's a lot handier – and less expensive – that going to the Louvre.

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.



Appropriately, the Parliament Hill statue of Sir Wilfrid Laurier overlooks the famous hotel that bears his name.



A sculpture of Yousuf Karsh stands beside the Chateau Laurier.

EAT AT OUR HOUSE: Holiday party snacks



LAUREN EEDY
Independent Columnist

It's that time of year when we gather and celebrate the holiday season with friends and family. These easy-to-assemble finger foods can be ready on hand or thrown together in under 40 minutes, taking away the pressure that can be abundant this time of year for hosts. Serve one or a combination of the three for an eclectic and satisfying nosh.

Shrimp toast

These shrimp toasts are a take on Chinese fried shrimp toast; they are baked with Cajun seasoning.

Prep: 5 minutes; Cook: 20 minutes; Serves: 12 toasts

- 1 small French baguette cut into half-inch thick slices
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 pound shrimp peeled, deveined and minced
- ½ small onion finely chopped
- 1 stalk celery, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic minced

- ¼ - ½ tsp Cajun seasoning
- ¼ tsp fresh cracked black pepper
- 4 ounces cream cheese cut in small cubes
- ¼ cup shaved parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup shaved Fontina cheese
- Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced

Method:

-Turn the broiler on low. Put bread slices on baking sheet in a single layer under broiler for 3-5 minutes or until lightly browned. Keep an eye on them. Turn slices over and put back under broiler until lightly browned on the other side.

-Heat olive oil in skillet over medium heat. Add shrimp, onion and celery. Cook for 1 minute, stirring frequently. Add garlic and sprinkle the skillet with Cajun seasoning and black pepper. Cook for 1 minute stirring constantly. Reduce heat to very low. Add the cream cheese, parmesan and Fontina. Stir until cheese is blended and almost fully melted. Season with kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper.

-Top toasted baguette crostini evenly with shrimp mixture. Sprinkle with crushed red pepper and place in 400°F oven for 10 minutes or until lightly browned and bubbly. Sprinkle with green onions, serve im-

mediately.

-*Tip: Have all ingredients on hand (i.e. cheeses) as recipe moves quickly and you don't want to overcook the shrimp.

Two-bite cranberry cheese ball pops

Deliciously sweet and savoury with a festive twist.

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup shredded sharp white cheddar cheese
- ½ cup dried cranberries, chopped
- ¼ cup green onions, finely chopped
- ½ cup pecans or walnuts, finely chopped
- 1 tsp local honey
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp onion powder
- Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
- 1 package pretzel sticks

Method:

-In a large bowl, combine cream cheese, cheddar, chopped cranberries, green onions, garlic and onion powder, salt and pepper. Mix until fully combined.

-Shape into balls, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

-Remove from fridge and use pretzel sticks for serving. Drizzle with honey.

-In addition, have crackers, bread or fresh vegetables available.

Sriracha mixed nuts

A sweet and spicy nut mix can double as a popular party appetizer or hostess gift.

- 1 large egg white
- 2 tbsp homemade sriracha (see recipe below)
- 5 cups unsalted mixed nuts (cashews, almonds, pecans for example)
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds

Method:

-Heat oven to 325°F. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

-In a large bowl, whisk together egg white and sriracha until foamy. Add nuts and toss evenly to coat. Add sugar and sesame seeds and toss until thoroughly coated.

-Spread nuts onto baking sheet, stirring halfway through until golden brown and dry. 23-27 minutes.

Homemade sriracha

- ½ pound Fresno chiles, stemmed
- 1 12-ounce jar roasted red peppers, drained
- 5 tbsp dark brown sugar
- 1 tbsp kosher salt
- 1/3 cup white distilled vinegar

-In a food processor, combine all ingredients except vinegar and pulse until smooth. Scrape down sides, add vinegar in final step and strain mixture through a fine mesh sieve into



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

This shrimp toast is a play on Chinese fried shrimp toast and is a perfect holiday party appetizer.

a saucepan. Push down with spatula to extract as much liquid as possible.

-Bring mixture to a boil, then reduce heat to medium and simmer, stirring occasionally until sriracha thickens and clings to the back of a spoon; 24-26 minutes. Let cool to room temperature and transfer to a glass bottle or jar. Can be stored in the refrigerator for up to four months. Makes ½ cup.



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Solutions on pg. 39

Riddles

What has 13 hearts, but no lungs, feet or bellybuttons?
A deck of cards.

What five-letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?
Short.

I speak without a mouth and hear without ears. I have nobody, but I come alive with the wind.
What am I?
An echo.

What is always in front of you but can never be seen?
The future.

What starts with a 'P', ends with an 'E', and has thousands of letters?
A post office

Give me a drink, and I will die. Feed me, and I'll get bigger. What am I?
A fire.

What breaks as soon as you say its name?
Silence

What's one thing that tastes better than it smells?
Your tongue.

What word begins with E and ends with E, but only has one letter?
Envelope.

I have no wings, but I can fly. I have no eyes, but I can cry. What am I?
A cloud.

- Word Search -



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The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK



Forrest Vergeer (11)

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

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

PET OF THE WEEK



LEST WE FORGET

This Remembrance Day, we honour the animals who served alongside our soldiers—carrying messages, detecting danger, and lifting spirits. Their courage and companionship saved lives and still inspire us today.



JAMES

Our Pet of the Week is 15-year-old James who greets everyone that enters our home. James can often be found on top of our living room couch looking out the picture window. He keeps an eye on everyone, particularly Leroy, the dog that lives next door. Staff at the vet clinic say "James is the sweetest cat" and we agree.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent

Thorndale extends a helping hand to a community in need

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

As time goes on, there are more people who find themselves in unfavourable living conditions and circumstances. Sara McClean, a compassionate 14-year-old of Thorndale, loves to help people and make a difference.

Over the past few years, she has been working with Advocate Connections, a non-profit group which is 100 per-cent run by volunteers, supporting people experiencing homelessness or going through hard times. Together, they hand out food, clothing, hygiene items and raise money to support people who need it most.

"I am hoping to take that impact further through my HighFive for Change Campaign," McClean said. "I am asking people to donate \$5 a month (or \$60 for the year) to help Advocate Connections continue their important work."

"Our goal is to reach 350 monthly donations of \$5 to raise \$20,000 that will go directly toward advocacy, outreach and basic-needs support."

Priyank Shah, owner of Sassy's in Thorndale, said he was very impressed by McClean's kindness and wanted to help with her campaign. On the weekend of Oct. 24-26, Sassy's donated \$10 from every large pizza sold, \$5 from every medium size and \$3 from every small pizza sold for a total of \$400 donated to the HighFive for Change Campaign.

"Thank you to this wonderful community of Thorndale," Shah said, "for buying our pizzas and supporting Sara's campaign. I hope to do this again in December."

"I really appreciate Sassy's willingness to partner with me to raise money for such an important cause, supporting people living on the streets" McClean said. "They didn't hesitate to offer their help when I asked them, and they are even offering to do this again next month. They are the best."

To contribute to McClean's HighFive for Change Campaign, donations can be sent through e-transfer to sarahighfive@yahoo.com with charitable receipts available for donations of \$50 or more through Advocate Connections.



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Priyank Shah, owner of Sassy's, with a cheque for Sara McClean's HighFive for Change Campaign.

All aboard with the Thames Valley Central Model Railroad club

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The railroad was instrumental in putting Thorndale on the map almost 170 years ago. It was the foundation for the growth of Thorndale, linking the community to regional markets for trade and goods produced in this area.

With the historical ties to the railroad, it seems only fitting that the Thames Valley Central Model Railroad (TVC-MR) club has called Thorndale its home since 1999.

The Thames Valley Central Model Railroad club, an offshoot of the East London Railroad Club, was founded in 1965. This year marks their 60th anniversary. In the early years, the club had many homes, mostly temporary, some used for storage. Club members would take turns hosting meetings and building modules in their basements or in their garages. Their clubhouse located at the Thorndale Fair Grounds has been a permanent home for their incredible model railroad setup and meetings.

"Our layout is 12 feet by 60 feet long, double decked and miles of scale track, in its own building," said club president Wayne Thornton. "Now, things have

come a long way from toy train days, as this layout is controlled by WiFi remote throttles connecting to a bank of computers that send the commands out to the rails to find each locomotive and perform the instructions sent to it by the operator/engineer. So many members can run trains independently controlled at the same time."

Thornton said they have been working on the main upper-level station scene, installing brightness-controlled LEDs, adding to the realism and visual appeal.

"We are also looking to add some animation with level road grade crossing signals triggered by approaching trains and shut off after the train has passed," Thornton said. "The layout continues to evolve as miniature technology develops and grows."

The Thames Valley Central Model Railroad club is one of the many community groups listed on www.ilovethorndale.ca/community/. For more detailed information, check their website at tvc-mrc.org. The club usually meets every Tuesday evening. Any groups, organizations or interested individuals that would like to check out the TVCMR setup can contact Thornton at cwasatahal@yahoo.ca.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF WAYNE THORNTON)

The Thames Valley Central Model Railroad club's setup at the clubhouse in Thorndale.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT GRANTHAVEN.COM

OBITUARY

May



Ombra Grace May (1930–2025)
How does one celebrate a 90th birthday? If you're Ombra May, your twenty-something grandsons take you to a remote beach resort in Panama. At 94, when one of them gets married, you haul them onto the dance floor all together.

Maybe it was surviving a lightning strike at eighteen that set the tone. Whatever the reason, Ombra's life overflowed with joy, laughter, and gratitude. She loved her family fiercely, including her seven nieces and nephews, and never stopped looking for ways to make her community better. Supporting the Order of the Eastern Star became an important endeavor in her later years.

Born on February 10, 1930, on the Lawrence Copeland farm near Woodham, Ontario, Ombra Grace Copeland was the eldest of three children, growing up alongside her siblings Donna and Murray during a time when electricity was still new to rural Ontario. Those early years—when resourcefulness and imagination were everyday necessities—shaped the inventive teacher she would become.

After qualifying at London Normal School, Ombra began her 37-year teaching career in a one-room Woodham schoolhouse, guiding twenty students from kindergarten to Grade 8. It was an apprenticeship in creativity and adaptability that served her throughout her years at Prince Charles, Westdale and Riverside Public Schools in London, where she inspired generations of children with her warmth and humour.

When Ombra's primary students were struggling to read, she'd find ways to spark their interest—such as inviting Paddington Bear to the classroom (arriving by taxi!), or by starting an after-school "Fun Runners" club that inspired many to take up long distance running. Countless former students still remember Mrs. May as the teacher who made learning an adventure.

In 1951, she met a handsome young man from Exeter, Murray J. May. Their love story might never have begun without an unlikely matchmaker: chicken pox. When Ombra fell ill and was quarantined, Murray—already immune—was the only visitor allowed. Those bedside chats sparked a loving partnership that lasted more than sixty years and took them around the world until Murray's passing in 2013.

Together, Ombra and Murray built a life centered on family, adventure, and laughter. Their children, Richard (Susan Carpenter) and Shari (John McNeill), grew up in a home where imagination and curiosity were part of daily life. She inspired her grandsons—Jason (Danica) and Reid (Amanda) McNeill, Thomas, Callum, and Ewan May, and McLean and Blake Carpenter—to dance, explore, and see the world with wonder. Her two recent great-grandchildren—Jack McNeill and Summer McNeill—are already discovering that "Great May's" approach to life is contagious.

Ombra passed away peacefully on November 1, 2025, at Windermere on the Mount, after spending a perfect day with her London family. She was ninety-five. A Celebration of Life will be held on November 15 at Harris Funeral Home, London, from 2–4 p.m. A few words from the family will be shared around 3 p.m. All who knew Ombra are welcome to join us in remembering her remarkable life - she'd want music, stories, and absolutely no long faces. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial donation to a London charity of your choice.

OBITUARY

McKay



It is with love and gratitude that we announce the passing of Joyce McKay (née Murray), daughter of Vernon and Roberta Murray of Avonton, Ontario, who peacefully left us at the remarkable age of 97.

Joyce was predeceased by her beloved husband, Tom McKay, and their cherished children Leita Stevens (Donald), Dorothy Greason, Murray McKay, and Bonnie McKay. She was also predeceased by her sister Louise Walkom (nee Murray) and granddaughters Sherry Daum (Dan) and Cindy Brown. She leaves behind a legacy of love through her grandchildren Tracey Greason, Sheila Cameron (Marc), and Sandy Shackleton (Scott), and her great-grandchildren Brock and Lily Daum; Lauren and Julia Cameron, Stacey and Nolan Shackleton and Jackson, Rachel, and Sasha Brown and her great-great grandchildren Watsi'tsyané:ka and Sawyor Brown.

Joyce and Tom built a wonderful life together on their family farm (Darview Registered Holsteins) on the Mitchell road, purchased from Harold McKay via a veterans land act. Joyce found great joy in watching horses and attending horse shows, and she loved nothing more than dancing with Tom, sharing many happy moments together on and off the dance floor. She was also a devoted Toronto Blue Jays fan and rarely missed a game.

She was a loving and caring presence in the lives of her sister's children Susan, Jayne and Sara and Tom's many nieces and nephews, all of whom held a special place in her heart. Her warmth extended far beyond her immediate family, and she nurtured deep bonds across generations. Joyce's life was one of kindness, strength, and community spirit. She was a proud and active member of the Motherwell Women's Institute where she devoted countless hours to supporting her community and building lasting friendships. Her generous spirit, quick wit, and unwavering devotion to family will be remembered always by those who were blessed to know her.

A private family service will be held on Friday, November 14, 2025. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Joyce's memory to the Cystic Fibrosis Society, the Alzheimer Society, or the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

OBITUARY

Collins



Peacefully surrounded by his family, Jack Hamilton Collins passed away after a brief palliative care stay at St. Marys Memorial Hospital on Nov. 4, 2025.

Predeceased by his wife Donna of 51 years, his daughter Candida, his parents and his father-in-law. Jack worked on many farms (mostly pig farms) and 20 years at Cascades (formerly Domtar/Norampac) where he retired from. Jack and his wife Donna ran Tollgate coffeehouse for many years where he shared many laughs and stories with his customers. Sadly missed by his son Chris (Dawn), Charles and Freda Warner, his grandchildren Kaitlyn and Alexis, extended family Kim, Joe, Abbygayle and Aryanna. Jack had a very large immediate family of 17 brothers and sisters who will greatly miss him.

Cremation has taken place and as per Jack's request there will be no funeral or visitations. A small gravesite service will be held in the spring. Memorial donations to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation are greatly appreciated. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

CELEBRATION

Ninety Years Young!

Ruth Ridley (Harris)

Born November 16, 1935 at Lakeside, ON



Happy Birthday from your loving family:
Daughter, Louise (Marty), Grand-Daughter Sarah (Jacob) and Great-Grandsons, Tyberius and Ignatius

CELEBRATION

Surprise 75th Birthday

for Alexis Fitzsimmons

on November 22 at 2pm
at the St. Marys Army and Navy Club

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BY SOMEONE
ELSE'S DRINKING?

Al-Anon Family Groups could help YOU! Call for time and place
1-800-706-9833 or App Available

HELP WANTED



St. Marys and Area
MOBILITY SERVICE

Accessible Transportation Driver
Full-Time (30+ hours per week)

ROLE OVERVIEW
St. Marys & Area Mobility Service is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing accessible and volunteer, door-to-door transportation for residents in our community. We support older adults (55+) and persons with varying abilities (18+), helping them maintain independence and stay connected.

POSITION SUMMARY
We are seeking a caring, reliable, and safety-focused Accessible Transportation Driver to join our team. In this role, you will operate agency-owned accessible vehicles, ensuring clients are transported safely and comfortably to their destinations. This position is physically active and requires assisting clients with boarding, securing mobility devices, and operating vehicle accessibility equipment.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide courteous, door-to-door transportation for clients using agency vehicles
- Assist passengers with boarding, exiting, and securing mobility aids safely
- Operate lift and ramp systems according to established safety procedures
- Maintain accurate trip and client records using a mobile app
- Perform routine vehicle safety checks and report any maintenance concerns
- Represent St. Marys & Area Mobility Service with professionalism and compassion

QUALIFICATIONS

Education & Experience

- Secondary school diploma or equivalent
- Minimum 3 years of professional driving experience
- Experience working with older adults, seniors, or persons with disabilities is an asset
- Strong customer service background preferred

Skills & Requirements

- Valid G and F driver's licence (or equivalent) with a clean driving record
- Current First Aid and CPR certification (or willingness to obtain)
- Comfortable using mobile devices and transportation software
- Able to work flexible shifts, including split shifts, weekdays, and some evenings
- Physically able to lift, bend, and crouch as part of assisting clients
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively in a team setting
- Willingness to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) as required

Compensation

- Hourly wage: \$20.34 – \$22.94, commensurate with experience and qualifications
- Supportive team environment with meaningful community impact

HOW TO APPLY
If you are a compassionate driver who enjoys helping others and making a difference, we'd love to hear from you! Please submit your cover letter and resume to apply. We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.



Happy Valley
Family Health Team

The Happy Valley Family Health Team is a dynamic team of professionals including 11 Family Physicians, Dietitian, Pharmacist, Mental Health Workers, Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and administrative support.

We currently have an opening for:
1 FULL TIME RECEPTIONIST

This position requires the ability to multi-task in a fast paced environment and excellent communication skills. Pleasant telephone manner is essential and knowledge of medical terminology is an asset.

Please forward resume by November 24th 2025 to:
Happy Valley Family Health Team
Attention: Kimberly Lang, Executive Director
268 Maiden Lane
P.O. Box 1120
St. Marys, ON N4X 1B7
stmhc@stmhc.ca

Thank you to all applicants who apply.
Only applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.
The Happy Valley Family Health Team welcomes and encourages applications from people with disabilities. Accommodations are available on request for candidates taking part in all aspects of the selection process.

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Music and Opera Appreciation seeks an Artistic Director to plan and present our fall and winter programs beginning with the 2026 fall series in Oct-Nov 2026.

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Please send resumé by January 10, 2026 to:
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For more details visit: www.musicandopera.weebly.com



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SALARY: Based on experience.

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Mary



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General International Machinery: 14" Drill Press, 14" Band Saw, 15"Thickness Planer (has tools for changing blades), 12" Miter Saw with DEWALT Stand, Rockwell/Beaver 9" Table Saw, Router Table with guide system, two routers (1 and 1/2 HP and 3.5 HP) 40-50 router bits, 1/4" and 1/2" Shafts, 10" Radial Arm Saw with wooden deck, 6" Beaver Jointer. All of the above are on mobile bases and **have extra blades.**
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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Paul

2. Rome, Italy

3. 1987

4. Onomatopoeia

5. 360°

6. 11 a.m.

7. Emmet

8. Amphibians

9. The Treaty of Versailles

10. Procter & Gamble (P&G)

St. Marys Independent

THE WEEK AHEAD

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

Friday, Nov 14

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- Winterlights display at Milt Dunnell Field turned on for the season – 5-11 p.m.
- A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Komoka Kings at the PRC – 7:30 p.m.
- Thistle Theatre presents “The Perils of Persephone” at Embro Town Hall – 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Nov 15

- Yard Sale in the Sunroom, 229 James St. N – 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- St. Marys Craft Show at the Friendship Centre – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Salvation Army toy drive at Canadian Tire – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw – 5 p.m.
- Thistle Theatre presents “The Perils of Persephone” at Embro Town Hall – 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, Nov 16

- Thistle Theatre presents “The Perils of Persephone” at Embro Town Hall – 2 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Listowel Cyclones at Steve Kerr Memorial Complex – 2 p.m.

Monday, Nov 17

- Community dinner at St. Marys United Church – 5 p.m., Sponsored by the Pickleball Club

Tuesday, Nov 18

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee – 10 a.m. to Noon
- St. Marys Legion cribbage – Starts 7 p.m. sharp

Thursday, Nov 20

- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun lunch – 12-1:30 p.m.
- Nourish Market at St. Marys United Church – 2-4 p.m.
- Thistle Theatre presents “The Perils of Persephone” at Embro Town Hall – 7:30 p.m.

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

Looking Back

AMY CUBBERLEY

Independent Columnist



Hospital anniversary

25 years ago (2000)
St. Marys Memorial Hospital, which was fighting for its very existence just a few short years ago, is looking at a very bright future. That message was loud and clear during the rededication ceremony held at the hospital last Thursday, November 2, which was 50 years to the day that the hospital officially was opened.
Staffen’s is sold and will soon be Valu-mart. It’s the end of a great run for the 29-year family-owned supermarket, which has been sold to National Grocers Co. Ltd. of Toronto.

50 years ago (1975)
The pump mechanisms on the two St. Marys Fire Department pumper trucks are in reasonable shape according to an expert running tests on the machines at the Flats last Thursday morning.
Mrs. Florence Weston of the Old Mill Apartments on Church Street North is reported to be in satisfactory condition in St. Marys Memorial, suffering from a fractured pelvis and other injuries resulting from an accident at the Queen and Church intersection. Mrs. Weston was struck by a vehicle while crossing the street.

75 years ago (1950)
One local hunter, while on duck season, bagged a number of blue teal. What he found when he had gone to the trouble of plucking, cleaning, and cooking the pigeon sized waterfowl is that the birds tasted like a good dose of cod liver oil.
The non-arrival of certain important fittings and equipment is still holding up the acceptance of patients at the new St. Marys Memorial Hospital.

100 years ago (1925)
Jack Anderson, Clifton Brown, and Homer Zurbrigg of St. Marys are the candidates for South Perth in the Older Boys’ Parliament. The election will be held throughout the province on Saturday, November 28.
The McConnell Club held their regular meeting last Thursday evening at the home of Miss Jessie Waddell. After the business part of the meeting, the girls showered one of their members, Mrs. F.J. Wilson Jr., with a number of beautiful handkerchiefs.
The T. Eaton Company of Toronto are building a \$40,000 three-storey parking garage. The Company’s cars are to be kept on the first floor, the employees’ cars on the second floor, and the cars of customers shopping at the store on the third floor.

SUNROOM SALE!

Saturday, Nov. 15 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
229 James St. North

Yard sale in the warmth! Come and check out this great indoor sale in our sunroom!

Lots of beautiful Christmas Décor; Home Décor, lovely Jewelry & lots more – think Christmas gifts!

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