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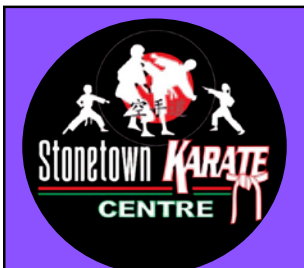
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From Grand Trunk to Grand Champion, Stonetown Artisan Cheese wins consecutive top prize at SIAL Canada International Cheese competition



STONETOWN CHEESE BRINGS HOME THE GOLD AGAIN (PHOTO COURTESY OF RACHEL DUNDAS)
From left, Ramon Eberle, Hans Weber and Wendy Furtenbacher with the award-winning Wildwood and Grand Trunk cheeses at the SIAL Canada International Cheese Competition.

Perth South councillors still trying to wrap heads around proposed double-digit 2025 levy increase

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Though it's nearly halfway through the year, Perth South council continues to grapple with the proposed 14.7 per-cent levy increase included in the township's draft 2025 budget.

At the May 6 Perth South council meet-

ing, council voted to dedicate more time at council's June 3 meeting so township staff can review the draft budget line by line with councillors in the hopes of finding savings that could reduce the impact on local taxpayers. Township staff, however, cautioned council it is unlikely they will find additional savings beyond what has already been

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

St. Marys cheesemaker Stonetown Artisan Cheese won the top prize in an international cheese competition for the second time in a row.

Stonetown Artisan Cheese won the grand champion prize at SIAL Canada's International Cheese Competition for their Grand Trunk Gruyere-style cheese. The Grand Trunk also earned the Swiss cheese category champion title at the April competition in Toronto. The SIAL Canada International Cheese Competition featured about 200 cheeses from around the world.

Stonetown's Wildwood cheese also earned the firm-cheese-category champion title and a special award from Dairy Farmers of Canada for Best Canadian Cow's Milk Cheese.

The St. Marys cheesemaker's newest accolades were earned in conjunction with its 10-year anniversary.

"It just kind of puts the bow around the last 10 years and a reward for the hard work that everyone puts in here at this place," co-owner and cheesemaker Ramon Eberle said of the win.

Stonetown Artisan Cheese won grand champion previously in 2023 with their Wildwood cheese.

"We experienced more sales with that cheese. This year, we won with the Grand Trunk and we're hoping for the same result," Eberle said. "We already got a bunch of big orders, actually, this week for that cheese."

Eberle was also part of a 14-judge panel for the SIAL Canada International Cheese Competition. As he was among retired cheesemakers and culinary instructors, Eberle was the only

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



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COMMUNITY

McHappy Day a hit in St. Marys

WENDY LAMOND
Independent Reporter

May 8 was once again McDonald’s Canada McHappy Day across the country, during which a portion of every order goes towards Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC).

Since its first McHappy Day in 1977, over \$100 million has been raised for this worthwhile cause, which helps families stay close to their sick children. Customers at McDonald’s in St. Marys lined up both inside and at the drive thru to support such an important day.

St. Marys residents Jenn and Jason Brodhagen recently spent nearly three months in Toronto at the Ronald McDonald House as their daughter Leandra was bravely fighting for her life at Sick Kids Hospital.

“These were the darkest, most uncertain days we have ever faced, and we truly don’t know how we would have made it through without the incredible support and care provided by this remarkable charity,” said Jenn Brodhagen.

Ronald McDonald house is not just a place to stay but a home where families can feel safe, warm and welcomed with a place to sleep, eat and get the strength they need to take with them back to the hospital. The house provides extra essentials and small comforts like laundry facilities, which helped the Brodhagens cope when everything else was chaotic.

Jenn Brodhagen also said that what touched them the most was the kindness and compassion of the staff. They were always respectful and supportive, offering help in any way that they could. Being in the house with other families, including another St. Marys family, gave them a feeling of community. Jenn Brodhagen said her family could not have gotten through their experience without the help of RMHC, making McHappy Day even more important.

“We are also deeply grateful to our community for their ongoing support of this worthy charity,” Jenn



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Krissy Nickle from the St. Marys local McDonald’s was all smiles as she worked a busy shift looking after Ronald McDonald House Charities supporters on McHappy Day.

Brodhagen said. “Knowing that our neighbours, local organizations and donors continue to uphold this incredible cause means so much. Your generosity made it possible for us and so many others to have a place to rest our weary heads, find nourishment and hold on to hope.”

The Brodhagens will forever be thankful for the



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Kimberley Davis spent most of the day cheerfully welcoming customers and thanking them for their support. She has previously donated some volunteer time at Ronald McDonald House London making meals and helping to share how important the facility is for families.

Ronald McDonald House and to everyone who supports it, as it directly impacts the lives of families in their greatest time of need.

“From the bottom of our hearts, thank you,” Jenn Brodhagen said.

From Grand Trunk to Grand Champion

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

judge who submitted cheeses for the contest.

The organizers made sure Eberle did not taste or judge his own cheese during the deliberations. Eberle voted for another cheesemaker’s product he liked instead.

“Ethically, I can’t vote for my own cheese, so I’m just going to choose a different cheese that I like and if we have the best cheese, then there’s going to be enough other judges that vote for our cheese,” he said.

However, three judges were absent, so the odds of winning seemed lower for Stonetown until it claimed victory.

“It was even more satisfying to see that we won grand champion,” Eberle said.

He added the support for the cheeses from local residents is always appreciated.

“It keeps us going, motivates us every day and we’ll keep up the good work for sure,” Eberle said.

Stonetown Artisan Cheese has been a finalist for more than 25 awards in several competitions over the years.

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Perth South councillors still trying to wrap heads around proposed double-digit 2025 levy increase

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

identified unless councillors are willing to approve service reductions.

"I think what you're looking at is a very tight budget and I want to manage expectations because if you think you're going to go line by line through the budget and find one, two, three, five per cent, I'm telling you that's not going to happen," township CAO Fred Tranquilli said. "The reason that your tax rate is where it is, is because ... there was reserves used last year to subsidize the tax rate. So ... if you decide you want to take six per cent out of the (tax-levy stabilization) reserve, you're going to start at (a) six per-cent (levy increase) next year.

"That's just how it works and that's why this number is what it is today because of the way we took nine per cent out last year. So, automatically, you started at (a) nine per-cent (levy increase in the 2025 draft budget)."

While the 2024 budget approved by council last April included just a five per-cent levy increase – equating to a nearly \$206,000 jump from the more than \$4.1 million levied from property owners in 2023 to the more than \$4.3-million levy last year – this year's proposed tax levy is roughly \$4.95 million – an increase by roughly \$635,000 over last year.

Though the transfer of nearly \$383,000 from the levy-stabilization reserve to reduce the impact on taxpayers last year accounts for the majority of the 2025 levy increase, an increase by \$224,500 to the estimated cost of gravel purchased by the township over last year's gravel costs along with a 20 per-cent increase to the cost of police and fire, an increase in the cost of library services from Stratford, St. Marys and South Huron, and the addition of a full-time recreation staff member accounts for most of the remaining increase.

"Something I would like to discuss at (the June 3) meeting also is that gravel's been an issue and it continues to be an issue," Perth South deputy mayor Bob Wilhelm said. "The resources are getting less, they're getting more expensive. Myself, I have not been able to find anywhere where engineering is saying, 'This is what you should do and when you should apply (gravel to roads),' so I would like to see us do a field test on a portion of road where we apply gravel, and on another section, not applying, and have that evaluated over the next two years."

While Mayor Sue Orr agreed the township should look into its gravel needs to mitigate rising costs, she noted the township had already approved a

roughly \$480,000 contract for the procurement of maintenance gravel for the Downie Ward and suggested such a discussion should take place before 2026 budget deliberations begin, potentially in September or October.

Wilhelm also asked staff why the township couldn't simply use the remaining \$250,000 from the levy stabilization reserve to once again mitigate the impact of this year's proposed tax increase on ratepayers – a notion both Tranquilli and treasurer Tracy Johnson strongly advised against.

"You have a tax-rate stabilization fund for exactly that reason, but I'm not going to tell you, you should consider taking nine per cent out of it," Tranquilli said. "If you want to take one or two per cent to soften the blow, that's probably reasonable, but the larger you withdraw from that reserve, the more you put a hole ahead of you. That's what it's there for. Sure, there's going to be years where ... maybe gravel doubles in price, maybe asphalt doubles in price, maybe fuel doubles in price. Those are the kinds of things we can't predict and those are the things that are real anomalies, and you want to have a little bit of money to soften the rate.

"But there's not any real, significant anomaly in the 2024 or 2025 budgets

that I would point to and say, 'That's a year where you had this blip because of some factor that was out of your control.' Nothing in this budget is out of the ordinary."

Explaining the point further, Johnson told the Independent any time the municipality uses funds from its tax-levy stabilization reserve to raise the money needed to run the township, it leaves that same gap in funding in the following year's budget because it is not a consistent, year-over-year revenue stream. In essence, reserve funds used in this way temporarily lower a levy increase but they do nothing to reduce a municipality's annual costs, which continue to increase every year.

Though staff cautioned council that it will likely not find any additional cost savings when it reviews the draft budget on June 3, Wilhelm did point out, from a discussion earlier in the meeting, the township will save more than \$412,000 on its share of the contract for paving and drainage work on Perth Line 29 from Perth Road 130 to Stratford city limits – a boundary road with the City of Stratford. As those savings have not yet been accounted for in the draft budget, Johnson said it could represent a decrease by almost four per cent to the proposed 2025 levy.

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EDITORIAL

The art of listening: How one quote changed my perspective

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE
Independent Reporter

Years ago, I came across a quote by public speaker and optimist Simon Sinek. “Listening is not the act of hearing the words that are spoken; it is the art of understanding the meaning behind those words.”

At the time, I was working as a nurse. I always believed I connected well with my patients, but this one quote transformed how I showed up for them and, ultimately, how I approach my work as a reporter now.

I consider myself a good listener; I love hearing stories and learning from others. The more people I speak with across different ages, backgrounds, religions and perspectives, the more I learn and connect with people I might never have known otherwise.

Sinek’s words came at a time when the world was rapidly changing and opposing views in my family and friendships began to surface. I’ve always considered myself a passionate believer in acceptance, and that conviction remains unshaken. But listening – truly listening – became the bridge that kept me connected to people I could have easily distanced myself from over conflicting beliefs.

Inspired by Sinek’s TED Talks and books, I began to understand that creating an environment where others feel genuinely heard is a skill that can be developed over time. I set out to do just that.

In my nursing practice, this meant listening to my patients’ perspectives; how they saw the world, how they showed up in it and what mattered to them. It made me a better nurse, a more empathetic person and, I believe, someone people wanted to be around.

Sinek argues that listening is a learnable and practicable skill – one that improves with time and attention. Over two years, I cared for more than 300 patients and the experience solidified this belief. I replaced judgment with curiosity and made an effort

to understand why someone held a different viewpoint. Even when I disagreed or had knowledge that could challenge their perspective, I prioritized listening not just to respond, but to understand.

Studies show that when we hear something we disagree with, our instinct is often to defend, litigate, or interrupt. We want to point out flaws in logic, but that reaction only builds walls. It’s the opposite of what we want from meaningful conversation.

Sinek suggests leading with an open mind and truly understanding someone’s thoughts and feelings can transform interactions. He advises using three simple phrases: “Go on,” “Tell me more,” and “What else?” These prompts encourage deeper exploration and signal genuine interest.

He also emphasizes that effective conversations don’t require both parties to be open-minded, just one person willing to create space for real dialogue. That person can be you.

Listening is the foundation of trust. It’s how we find common ground amid opposition. As a reporter, I’ve realized this is the ultimate goal. Whether covering small-town news, global events, or interviewing celebrities, the mission is the same; listen with an open mind, understand without judgment and the person you’re speaking with will walk away feeling truly heard and understood.

Hearing someone out doesn’t mean you agree with them. It simply means you value their perspective enough to understand it. And sometimes, even if you don’t change their mind – or your own – you’ve built a bridge instead of a wall. Maintaining relationships despite differing views isn’t always easy, but I’ve found the power of listening has allowed me to hold onto connections that might have otherwise been lost.

“Listening is one of the most remarkable skills anyone can learn; the power to truly listen.” - Simon Sinek

| Bravo | Boo |
|---|---|
| <p>We have 2 Bravos this week.</p> <p>1) Bravo to the man who found and returned my wallet. I am deeply grateful. You are a special person!</p> <p>2) Bravo to the kind gentleman that found my card, and gave it to my daughter at Foodland on Friday. He was parked beside us. Thank you so much!</p> | <p>We have 1 Boo this week</p> <p>1) Boo to the man on James Street South, on a unicycle, riding down the hill, with a small child in his arms. So dangerous and irresponsible. Anything could have gone wrong.</p> |
| <small>*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered.</small> | <small>Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.</small> |

Quote of the Week

“As you know from real estate, there are some places that are never for sale. ... We’re sitting in one right now. You know, Buckingham Palace that you visited as well. ... And having met with the owners of Canada over the course of the campaign last several months, it’s not for sale. Won’t be for sale, ever. But the opportunity is in the partnership and what we can build together. And we have done that in the past.”

- Prime Minister Mark Carney on Canada becoming the 51st state during his meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington D.C. May 6

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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!



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The St. Marys Independent
THOUGHTS OF THE WEEK
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Trust in karma, it never fails to balance the scales.

Thinking will not overcome fear, but action will.



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St. Marys Legion Branch 236 hosts annual bake sale



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

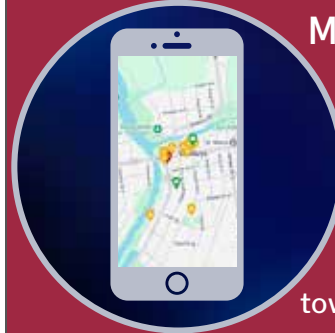
Legion members Corrine Rumble and Jan Jenkins had a busy morning at the St. Marys Legion Branch #236 annual bake sale. The sale has been taking place for approximately 21 years and all the money raised goes back to the Legion to support community projects.

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news
from the Town of St. Marys



MAPMISSIONS ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT



The Town is seeking volunteers for the MapMission project, which aims to highlight accessibility in public places using the AccessNow app. Register for the virtual training seminar on May 21, 2025.

townofstmarys.com/accessibility or 519-284-2340

SPRING WATER FLUSHING

April 28 - May 23

If you experience discolouration during the spring flushing, run cold water and avoid doing laundry until it runs clear.

For a detailed schedule and map:
www.townofstmarys.com/flushing



LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN SURVEY

Help plan for the future!

The St. Marys Public Library Board is actively gathering feedback on its Strategic Plan, seeking insights from individuals. Their aim is to identify areas of focus to help meet the needs of the community.

www.townofstmarys.com/librarystratplan



LEAF AND YARD WASTE COLLECTION

Leaf and yard waste collection has begun. Remember to have yard waste to the curb by 7 AM on collection days and place yard waste in kraft-style bags or reusable containers. Full schedule, map and details can be found on our website.

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Senior of the Week



“New Senior” Jeff Fowler turned 65 on April 25. Jeff grew up in St. Marys where he played minor hockey and helped out at the family gas station - Fowlers Esso. He always had a dream of someday being a pilot. This April 25, Jeff retired after a career of flying around the world, first in the RAF and then for over 31 years for Cathay Pacific airlines.

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

St. Marys Pride to host Pride Movie Night and Family Open House and other smaller events in lieu of Pride in Park

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

After cancelling the Pride in the Park event for 2025, St. Marys Pride will still host some events and look towards more advocacy initiatives.

In collaboration with the Friends of the St. Marys Public Library, St. Marys Pride will host the Pride Movie Night and Family Open House at Cadzow Park starting at 6 p.m. on June 6. The event will feature cotton candy, popcorn, the Sunset Shack, Drag Storytime, live music, lawn games and a children's book giveaway. The evening will conclude with a screening of *The Wild Robot* at dusk.

“We’re hoping to get some organizations to come out, like organizations that support the queer community and provide resources,” said St. Marys Pride chair Krissy Nickle.

St. Marys Pride is looking to host smaller events scattered throughout June in honour of Pride Month, as the Pride in the Park event was cancelled for 2025. Former chair Robin Awcock announced via Facebook in late March that the difficult choice to cancel came from losing committee members. Pride in the Park is expected to return in 2026.

After the post, St. Marys Pride saw the community share supportive comments with a keen interest in getting involved.

“We’ve had a number of volunteer applications since then. It’s just really great to see that this is something that the community wants,” Nickle said.

Nickle added volunteering for St. Marys Pride is a way for residents to show up for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in town and surrounding areas – something



that is needed more than ever amid anti-2SLGBTQIA+ rhetoric on the rise.

“I think, especially right now with the current political climate both here and the States, queer people are going through a lot right now,” she said. “There’s the constant stress of laws being passed that are going to limit you being your true self and things like that. It’s just really important for us as a community in St. Marys to support the queer community.”

St. Marys Pride is hoping to focus more on advocacy and working with other organizations in the area, including gender sexuality and gay-straight alliances (GSAs) in schools. The Little Falls Public School’s GSA held a bakesale fundraiser that supported the 2024 Pride in the Park.

“That was a nice little surprise and it’s nice seeing the kids get involved in activism,” Nickle said.

Anyone looking to volunteer can submit an application online at www.stmarysride.ca/volunteer.

Weekend Quiz

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1. How far is a click in military terms?
2. The region of Transylvania is located in what country?
3. How many popes have there been?
4. What is a male swan called?
5. The sport of two people engaging in combat with swords is?
6. Vitamin B12 helps your body to form what?
7. Cryogenics is the study of what?
8. Jack Daniel's whisky is produced in what U.S. state?
9. Who was the first winner on The Masked Singer?
10. What is the only mammal capable of true flight?

By Jake Grant

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

PERTH CHILDREN'S WATER FESTIVAL

Sunday, May 25th

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM, Milt Dunnell Field, St. Marys, Ontario

Get ready for an afternoon of hands-on fun, exciting games, and unforgettable experiences! From interactive activity stations, a Fishing Friendly Casting Exhibit, and an awe-inspiring Birds of Prey Show, the world of water conservation will be yours to explore.

Friends of the Library host another successful book sale



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Friends of the Library held another very successful book sale spanning over four days at the Lind Sportsplex. The sale raised approximately \$7,500 towards supporting the St. Marys Public Library. People of all ages came to check out the sale and to “fill their boots” with books, CDs, games, puzzles and DVDs. Friends of the Library volunteers worked hard over the four days manning the sale. Pictured from left are Sophia Biastien, Elisabeth Martin, Barb Walsh and Diane O'Shea.



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St. Marys fire chief bids farewell after nine years

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

It is with heavy heart and much consideration that Richard “Andy” Anderson has decided to leave his position as the director of emergency services/fire chief after serving more than nine years of dedicated service to the Town of St. Marys.

His last day with the Town of St. Marys is May 19. He is taking the position of deputy fire chief/VCEMC with the City of Stratford effective May 20.

Anderson has been with the town since 2016 and he was hired with a mandate of modernizing the fire department. In his time here, he has navigated new legislation requiring the uptraining of all the town’s firefighters, he helped construct the town’s state-of-the-art fire hall and he has administered the replacement of aging equipment to ensure volunteer firefighters are safe and can provide the absolute best service to the public.

Not to be outdone by anyone, in the town’s emergency management program, Anderson developed and oversaw large-scale, live-action emergency exercises that have far exceeded anything that anyone in the area has experienced before.

In his time with St. Marys, Anderson has truly taken what was a very good, small-town fire department and transitioned it into a professional and modern service that should be the envy of many.

“My goal as fire chief was to make the department better and I believe I have achieved that,” Anderson said. “For me, that means that we make sure the staff is trained, equipped and ready to respond to any emergency that gets called in. It



(PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD ‘ANDY’ ANDERSON)

St. Marys fire chief Richard “Andy” Anderson has announced he is leaving his post as of May 19 after taking a job as deputy fire chief with the City of Stratford.

also means that they go home safe at the end of every response.

“I have enjoyed my time working with the Town of St. Marys and appreciated the opportunities and experiences that I have gained during my tenure, said

Anderson. “The Town of St. Marys welcomed my wife, Amber, with open arms and it will always be treasured. I am now looking forward to working with the fine men and women of the Stratford Fire Department and to build upon the solid

foundation that is well established.”

Upon his departure, Anderson acknowledges the following people:

To the Town of St. Marys:

“Thank you to the mayor, council and staff for placing their trust in me over the last nine years to lead the men of the St. Marys Fire Department. Your trust allows the firefighters to provide the highest level of safety and protection to our residents.”

To the community:

“Thank you for your unwavering support for the department through fundraising events or day-to-day business. It is greatly appreciated.”

To the families of our firefighters:

“Thank you for your understanding and support as our firefighters often put their own lives on the line to help others.”

To the St. Marys Fire Department (SMFD):

“I am incredibly proud to have been your fire chief and to lead such a dedicated and skilled team. Your bravery, resilience and commitment to serving others are truly inspiring. Being a part of the SMFD renewed my faith in the fire service, how you unselfishly give of yourselves, day in and day out, to keep this town safe.

“I am confident that the department will be left in the hands of good leadership and will continue to move the St. Marys Fire Department in the right direction,” Anderson said.

St. Marys deputy fire chief Phil West will be the acting fire chief until such time a permanent fire chief can be hired. He can be reached at pwest@town-st-marys.on.ca or 519-868-6153.

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Deputy Chief Gerry Foster to retire from Stratford Police Service after 35 years of service

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After more than three decades of public service in both military and civilian policing, deputy chief Gerry Foster has announced his retirement from the Stratford Police Service.

Foster began his career in law enforcement with the Canadian Armed Forces, serving five years as a military police officer before transitioning to civilian policing in April 1995. Over the next 30 years, he rose through the ranks in Stratford, holding supervisory roles in uniform patrol, criminal investigations, the emergency response unit, and the training unit. He was appointed deputy chief in 2018.

During his tenure as deputy chief, Foster played a key role in expanding Stratford Police Service coverage to St. Marys and Perth South. He also led the modernization of the service, with a focus on integrating technology into police investigations, and acted as the point person for the rollout of the Next Generation 911 dispatch system, scheduled to launch this October.

"Gerry is a respected member of the Ontario policing profession and has demonstrated exemplary leadership for the members of the Stratford Police Service," said Chief Greg Skinner in a press release. "After 35 years in law enforcement, Gerry takes with him a wealth of expertise and corporate memory that will be difficult to replace. On behalf of the service and the community, I wish Gerry a long, happy and healthy retire-



STRATFORD POLICE SERVICES

ment with his family and friends, and thank him for his service."

The Stratford Police Services Board will begin a national search for Foster's successor once a selection committee is formed.

Local leaders offered their thanks and congratulations to Foster on his retirement.

Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma described Foster's "quiet leadership" as firm, fair and consistent.

"He went about his job with professionalism and took the responsibilities that came with it very seriously," Ritsma said. "He had the challenging position of serving both the staff and officers of the Stratford Police Association and the residents of Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South. I certainly wish to thank deputy chief Gerry Foster and wish him much health and happiness in his retirement."

Perth South Mayor Sue Orr called Foster "approachable and attentive," especially during his time on the Perth

up when needed and was capable of stepping in when the chief couldn't attend," she said. "We thank him for his excellent service and dedication to Perth South."

St. Marys Mayor Al Strathdee echoed those sentiments.

"My experiences with deputy chief Foster were always positive," he said. "He was an accommodating and loyal public servant who showed compassion and care for our communities. We were lucky to have him and wish him the very best in retirement."

Foster's final day with the Stratford Police Service has not yet been announced.

South Police Services Board.

"He was open to questions, followed

Andrew L. Hodges

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The Rotary Club of St. Marys hosts second-annual Shred-It event



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Rotarians and volunteers on hand at the Rotary Club of St. Marys Shred-It event May 10. Picture from left to right are Peter McCash, Pierre Chateauvert, Piper Kearney, Hailey Wubs and Isla Unich.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

The Rotary Club of St. Marys held its second-annual Shred-It event on Saturday at the DCVI parking lot.

The cost was \$15 based per banker's box of documents to be shredded and the funds raised will go towards Rotar-

ian projects for the community.

The Shred-It truck came from London and was onsite from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Those who had their documents shredded could watch to make sure their documents were destroyed properly.

The event is a greatly needed service for our community and Rotary Club



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Rotary president Mark Oliver hands over some documents before they go in the truck to be shredded as Shred-It employee Michael Rivard watches on.

ian president Mark Oliver shared this year was busier than last year, and the club will base their decision on whether to keep hosting it on this year's numbers.

This year, the club had 188 boxes shredded, weighing over 5,600 pounds in total, which is up from 86 boxes last year. The Rotary Club wishes to thank the community for their support and

to the Avon Maitland District School Board and DCVI for letting them hold the event on their property.

Oliver also thanked the student volunteers who received almost 40 volunteer hours combined from this successful project.

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SPOTLIGHT ON ARTS & CULTURE

The sleeping giant of St. Marys



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Former Mercury Theatre.

JIM GILES

Independent Columnist

Edited by Alice Rixson

An iconic landform resembling a giant sleeping on its back is an iconic landmark in Thunder Bay, the main hub of Northern Ontario. An Ojibway legend identifies the giant as Nanabijou, the spirit of the Deep-Sea Water, turned to stone when the secret location of Silver Islet, now a long-defunct, rich silver mine, was divulged to white settlers.

St. Marys has its own sleeping giant, not in the geological sense but in the unrealized wealth in the Arts that has prevailed in its midst for years. For the last two years, editor Alice Rixson and I have profiled artists, organizations and Arts activities in the area. We submitted more than 50 articles featuring local visual artists, performers, dancers, musicians, writers, filmmakers and active organizations who endured a hidden existence.

In his editorial of April 3, 2025, Galen Simmons, Regional Editor for the *St. Marys Independent*, acknowledges that, “There is an untapped opportunity here to connect tourism and the arts in a way that gives visitors a glimpse into the creative world unlike any other.”

Simmons also highlights the forward-thinking Feasibility Study & Business Plan presented to Council on March

18, 2025 by consultant and former Gallery Stratford curator Angela Brayham, MBA, outlining a vision for a communal cultural hub at the former Mercury Theatre building as well as the St. Marys Station Gallery. The mandate of the plan is, “...to showcase artists working across a wide spectrum of media whose creative insights, technical excellence and breadth of expression demonstrate a mastery of professional standards in artistic vision and technique; [to] assemble and display appropriate two and three-dimensional art works; to provide St. Marys’ greater community with an inclusive artist platform that proudly reflects its diverse culture, heritage, talent and character. Through creative transformation, [to] foster an immediate and lasting appreciation for the historical significance of St. Marys Station, that powerfully promotes its landmark heritage and helps ensure its preservation.” The report and the presentation are essential reading and are available at calendar.townofstmarys.com/council/Detail/2025-03-18-0900-Strategic-Priorities-Committee/40a71ea7-ccc1-43ef-bcbf-b2a001034802.

Other Ontario regions reap the benefits of being an Arts hub. Take for example Elora, a town near Guelph in Wellington County that has a population similar to St. Marys. It’s recognized for its natural beauty and historic charm, again like

St. Marys. Elora boasts the Elora Centre for the Arts with the mission to develop and strengthen an open and accessible non-profit arts and cultural centre that promotes, teaches and nourishes the arts and appreciation through exhibitions, programs and performances.

Established in 2002, the *Elora Centre for the Arts* serves more than 50,000 people annually with unique programs such as Supportive Arts for Adults with (Dis)Abilities, Youth Outreach and a Youth Addiction & Recovery Program. It also provide arts-based outreach programs, featuring workshops for adults and children, integrated art exhibitions, events and an artisan shop that uplifts local artists, eloracentreforthearts.ca

Almonte, just southwest of Ottawa in Eastern Ontario, is fittingly recognized for its charming, small-town atmosphere, vibrant arts scene and historical significance. Of distinction is that it’s the birthplace of Scottish-Canadian James Naismith (1861-1939), the inventor of basketball. The Mississippi Valley Textile Museum is a showcase to the town’s heritage as a former textile and a principal in the wool manufacturing industry.

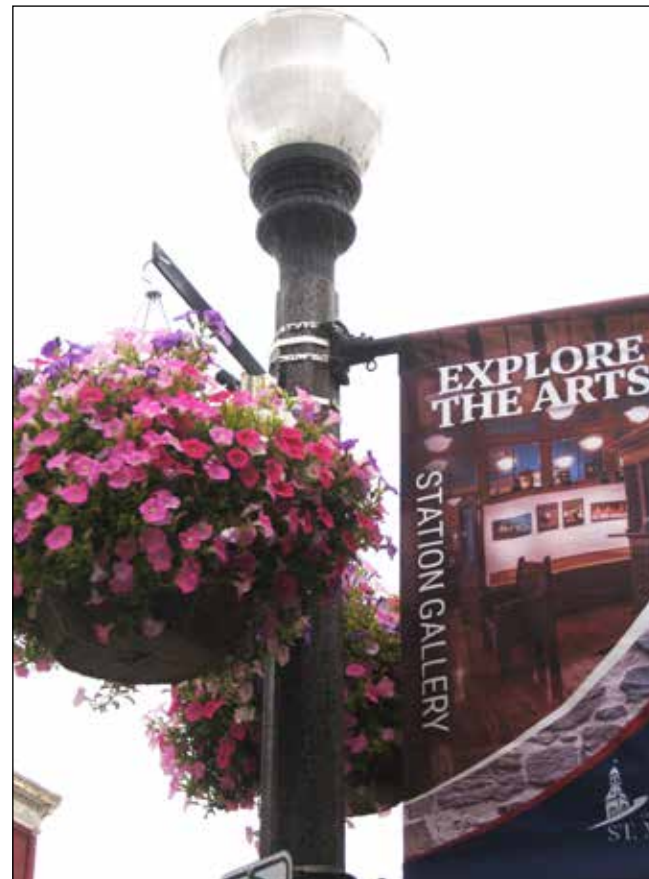
Almonte has a thriving arts culture comprised of galleries, studios and resident artists creating original work. The town is a popular tourist destination, known for its antique shops, boutiques

and cafes. Its website, www.almonte.com/artists-galleries not only features local artists but also information about museums, festivals and walks.

An especially popular summer event in Almonte is *Puppets Up!* It was started in 2004 and led by Noreen Young, the visionary puppet creator behind *Hi Diddle Day* and *Under the Umbrella Tree*. Her goal was to entertain and inform people of the varied and vibrant art of puppetry, something common to virtually all cultures. This festival draws world-wide crowds to sentry puppeteers and street performers to intimate theatres, all against the backdrop of Almonte’s historic main street.

In her report Brayham promotes the idea of forming a St. Marys and Region Arts Council that can unify not only the arts community in St. Marys but also those in Stratford and across Perth County. After visiting numerous areas in Ontario and abroad, I agree with Brayham’s perspective and Simmons’ editorial comment that, “St. Marys could take the lead in establishing an Arts Council that could support arts organizations, clubs and businesses throughout the region in shedding more light on the unique haven for the arts located dab in the middle of farm country that St. Marys, Stratford and the surrounding area has become.”

Let’s awaken the Sleeping Giant in St. Marys!



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Arts banner.

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Monthly family food bill increased to more than \$1,300 for residents of Huron-Perth in 2024, HPPH report says

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

According to research into local food insecurity last year conducted by Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH), a family of four, on average, spent \$309 per week or \$1,338 monthly on groceries.

Just released by the local public-health agency, *The Real Cost of Eating: Food Insecurity in Huron and Perth 2024* shows that a family of four receiving Ontario Works would need to allocate 46 per cent of their income to meet Canada's Food Guide recommendations. This underscores the growing challenge of food affordability and a broader trend of increasing household food insecurity. Between 2021 and 2023 (the most recent data available), nearly 18 per cent of households in Huron-Perth experienced food insecurity.

"We know that Huron-Perth residents are all feeling the impact of the increase to food costs that are happening right now, but it really has the biggest impact on those at the lowest incomes," said HPPH public-health dietitian Amy

MacDonald. "Every time we do this food-costing, we find that individuals and families living on social assistance and living on minimum wage simply do not have enough income to purchase adequate food to meet their needs."

Those who can't afford to meet the food-guide nutrition guidelines tend to rely on food banks and low-cost options at more affordable grocery stores. These types of food, MacDonald explained, are often shelf-stable with higher amounts of sugar, fat, salt and preservatives, and less nutritional value in them.

"Whether it be, at the lowest level, where you're just worrying about not having enough money for food, or where you're having to decrease the quality or eventually even decrease the quantity and going hungry, food insecurity has really negative impacts on health outcomes," MacDonald said.

"It results in increased health conditions like heart disease, hypertension, arthritis, pain; it also results in poorer mental health, and it can even result in increased issues with healthy growth

and development for children, and with infectious disease as well. If you're not meeting your (nutritional) needs, it's hard to keep yourself healthy."

From this report, the HPPH is emphasizing the critical link between income and food insecurity. As area residents with lower incomes and those who rely on social supports continue to make difficult choices between paying utility bills and going to the grocery store, MacDonald says the most effective way to address food insecurity is by making poverty reduction a priority at all levels.

"Our goal is to ensure that local leaders, local residents understand that food insecurity is an issue of inadequate income and is really best addressed by income-based policies," MacDonald said. "That means we want to see increased support for things like basic income, making sure we've got adequate old-age pensions, looking at working-age supplements or adequate Canada Disability Benefit, lower income tax rates for lowest-income households, and making sure we've got

good standards for working conditions, especially for precarious work and low-wage jobs.

"And, in the Province of Ontario, making sure our social-assistance rates are adequate because we know in Ontario right now, Ontario Works and ODSP are not adequate for people to be able to afford enough food. We need to look at how we can address those things."

Individuals and local business leaders can also help forge a path forward in addressing food insecurity by writing to their provincial and federal representatives to advocate for these income-based policies, and by supporting or joining Ontario's Living Wage Network, thereby ensuring local workers can make enough to live in Huron and Perth counties.

To learn more about why income solutions are needed to reduce food insecurity, read *The Real Cost of Eating: Food Insecurity in Huron and Perth 2024* in its entirety at www.hp-ph.ca/ reports.



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St. Marys Independent **SPORTS**

Stonetown Karate Centre students shine at Karate Maynia tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Four Stonetown Karate Centre (SKC) students picked up medals at the Karate Maynia tournament on May 3 in Kitchener.

Sensei Jalyne Lorentz won the grand championship for her U18+ women's black belt division thanks to her finishing with the gold medal in traditional forms, traditional weapons and creative weapons.

Marieke van Lierop also earned a trio of first-place finishes in the 15-17 girls' black belt bracket, including in the traditional-forms, traditional-weapons and creative-weapons competitions.

In the 35+ women's advanced category, Morgan Houston captured the top spot in forms and weapons.

Fox Houston, competing in the 13-14 boys' black belt division, earned a gold medal in traditional weapons, along with a silver in traditional forms and a bronze in creative weapons.

This event was the last tournament for the SKC students before the WKC National Canada Team tryout running May 16-18 in Gatineau, Que. All four students will represent the SKC at the national team tryout, as well as Lisa Sheldon and Shannon Campbell.

Sensei Jeremy Lorentz explained the impact the tournament experiences have on the local dojo's students.

"It's truly inspiring to witness our students at these tournaments, carrying themselves with dignity, confidence and a deep sense of sportsmanship, both inside and outside the ring," said Jeremy Lorentz. "Whether they win or lose, the connections they build through the sport of karate are lasting and meaningful. These competitions go far beyond medals. They foster personal growth, mutual respect and a strong sense of community, making them an integral part of each student's martial-arts journey."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Fox Houston, Morgan Houston, Sensei Jalyne Lorentz and Marieke van Lierop. The four students combined for 11 medals at the Karate Maynia tournament in Kitchener on May 3, with Lorentz also winning her division's grand championship.

DCVI senior boys dominate Central Huron

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys DCVI senior boys soccer team picked up a win against Central Huron on May 6 when they played a pair of road games in Clinton.

Head coach Scott Spillane told the Independent it was the team's defence that led to their dominant 5-0 win.

"The back four were pretty stingy," said Spillane. "They pushed them to the outside, so the shots they got were not that threatening. Danny (Switzer) didn't really get challenged in the net, but he made the one save he had to, and Owen (Littlejohn) scored a highlight-reel goal."

At the start of the second half, Littlejohn deked through several Central Huron players as he carried the ball upfield before finishing with a perfectly placed kick on the edge of the box. DCVI also got goals from Hayden Brintnell, Finn Wright, Adam Turner and Peyton Lobb in the win.

Along with their goal-scorers, Spillane mentioned Luke Binning, Ryan Hodkin-

son and Ian Partridge as key contributors to the dominant five-goal victory.

"I think Luke (Binning) had the best day he has had in the two years I've coached him in soccer. He was relentless through both games. His ability to stay on the ball and give full effort on attack was amazing. Ryan (Hodkinson) is a pretty athletic guy, and it is huge for us to get him back on the team to strengthen our defensive core. Ian (Partridge) was pretty relentless as well, moving the ball up."

When analyzing his outlook on the season his team could have, Spillane said as the team continues to grow, they could become among the best in the Huron-Perth division.

"I think we have the potential to be a top single-A team in Huron-Perth. This team could improve more by playing out from the back and not kicking long balls down the field, and we might have to change our formation from a 4-2-3-1 to a 4-3-3 so we can move Simon Taylor back and put Finn Wright up top, but regardless, I think we definitely have a pretty solid team."



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Finn Wright scores a goal during the St. Marys DCVI senior boys soccer team's 5-0 victory over Central Huron on May 6.

Glousher, Stewart win two-man scramble at SMGCC



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Pictured from left to right are Graham Glousher and Cole Stewart. The pair shot a 67 to win the two-man scramble tournament at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club on May 10.

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Consistent, well-rounded play helped Graham Glousher and Cole Stewart emerge with a one-stroke victory at the St. Marys Golf and Country Club’s (SMGCC) two-man scramble tournament on May 10.

Glousher explained how the duo was firing quality shots for the majority of the day.

“We played pretty well overall,” Glousher told the Independent. “We struck the ball great and both of us were putting very well. Both Cole and I made some key putts that got us to five-under-par, so it was a good day for both of us.”

The duo finished with a score of 67 to take the tournament’s top spot. Glousher and Stewart finished one stroke up on three teams, who all tied for second place. The teams of Matt Murray and Bruce Kraemer, Johnathan Allum and Justin Lingard, and Tom Charette and Mike McMullan all scored a 68.

Glousher emphasized the team’s play on the par-three holes as being vital to his team winning the tournament.

“Hitting every green on all the par-threes was big for us,” said Glousher. “Those are some of the toughest holes on the course, so getting in those good spots was important. We birdied two of them, so that might have been the deciding factor for us to get the win.”

St. Marys bowlers win four medals at Stratford tourney



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Amanda Kittmer, Austin Kittmer, and Colin Van de Gevel. In the back row, from left, are Natalie McKeen, Bridget Stevens, Landon Ball, Nathan McKeen, and coach Helen Brockman. Not pictured was Felix Louwagie. The group represented the St. Marys Bowling Lanes in Stratford on May 4. Stevens, competing in the junior division, headlined the St. Marys bowlers’ results, capturing the gold medal by posting 125 points-over-average. Nathan McKeen scored 32 points-over-average to earn the silver medal in the senior bracket, and only three points separated McKeen from the top spot. Also in the senior group, Ball placed fourth by rolling scores of 172, 142, and 165. Van de Gevel claimed the silver medal in the bantam category by recording 64 points-over-average. In the peewee division, Austin Kittmer ended the tournament with 45 points-over-average to take the silver medal, while Louwagie bowled scores of 71 and 112 to place third. Junior bowler Natalie McKeen finished third with 39 points-over-average. Amanda Kittmer posted a solid fourth-place finish in the bantam division with scores of 107, 122, and 119. The St. Marys Bowling Lanes thanked the parents and coaches for their support, as well as the Downie Optimists for paying their lineage fees.

St. Marys bowlers compete at 2025 Holiday Classic



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Pictured from left to right are coach Paul Bauer, Sophie Brockman, Kaitlyn Fares, Chris Collins, Dawn Collins, and Shaene Yates. The team, comprising of St. Marys bowlers and representing the Grand River region, claimed seventh place out of 40 teams at the 2025 Holiday Classic tournament hosted on May 10 at Neb’s World in Oshawa.

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Lincs host year-end awards banquet



Pictured from left to right are Noah VandenBrink, Donna Aldis, and Jacob Montesi. VandenBrink and Montesi were co-winners of the Jack Boyd Memorial Award for Most Dedicated Player at the St. Marys Lincolns' annual end-of-year awards banquet, hosted on May 9 at River Valley Golf and Tube Slide. VandenBrink played solid minutes up and down the lineup for the Lincolns, potting 11 goals and 25 points in 36 games this season. Montesi continued to be a staple on the Lincs' blueline, once again turning in a season of consistently strong shutdown play on the back end.



Pictured from left are Frank Edye, Jack Hemstock, Luca Spagnolo, and Jaden Lee. Spagnolo and Lee were co-winners of the Frank Edye Award for regular season MVP. Lee also won the Harold Maxwell Award as the team's leading scorer in the regular season and the Fan Appreciation Award. Both Lee and Spagnolo were part of a ceremony honouring the team's graduating players, which also recognized Ethan Coups, Ryder Livermore, and Jacob McLellan. Lee had 29 goals and 77 points in 50 regular-season games to lead the team in points, while Spagnolo led the Lincolns in goals with 35.



Pictured from left are Jacques Cousineau and Ryan Hodkinson. Hodkinson earned the Jacques Cousineau Award as the Lincolns' Playoff MVP. Hodkinson led the Lincolns in points in the postseason, registering 11 goals and 23 points in 19 playoff games.



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTOS)

Pictured from left are Bob Hearn and Ryan Cornfield. Cornfield was presented with the R.G. Kelly Hearn Award as the Lincs' Most Improved Player. Cornfield posted 13 goals and 27 points in 43 games this season and displayed a stronger 200-foot game.



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Lincs host year-end awards banquet



Pictured from left are Mike Brogden and Ryder Livermore. Brogden, a former Lincolns' general manager, presented Livermore with the David Baynes Award as the team's top defence-man. Livermore also received the D.R. Stevens Award for Outstanding Leadership. Livermore was widely lauded for being a warrior on the Lincolns' back end, fearlessly blocking shots, laying bone-crunching hits, and playing an incredibly detailed and hard-nosed style in his final junior season. Livermore had one goal and 25 points in 50 regular-season games.



Pictured from left are Owen Robinson-Leslie and Nico Armellin. Armellin took the Earl Leslie Award as Rookie of the Year. Armellin set a new all-time team record for wins by a rookie goaltender with 18. The Lincolns also honoured their league award winners from this past year. Armellin and Colby Booth-Housego won the Twin Cities Award for Lowest Team Goals Against Average. Booth-Housego added the MVP Goaltender Award. Jaden Lee won Most Gentlemanly Player and Best Defensive Forward, while Bradley won Coach of the Year.



Pictured from left are Mike Bannerman, Jacob McLellan, and Chris Bannerman. McLellan won the Bannerman Memorial Award as Lincolns' Veteran of the Year. McLellan scored seven goals and 31 points in 50 games this season.



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTOS)

Pictured from left are Steve Shaw and Chase MacQueen-Spence. MacQueen-Spence won the Carmen Stacey Memorial Award for Ability and Sportsmanship. MacQueen-Spence tallied 26 goals and 58 points in 50 games this season.



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St. Marys Bowling Lanes holds youth awards presentation



Pictured on the left is Ivy Kittmer. On the right is Felix Louwagie. Kittmer and Louwagie were awarded the Pee wee Girls' Highest Score and Pee wee Boys' Highest Score Awards. Kittmer won the award with a 93 average this season, while Louwagie led the boys' side with an 83 average. The awards were presented at the St. Marys Bowling Lanes' annual youth awards ceremony hosted on May 10.



On the left is Amanda Kittmer. On the right is James Van De Gevel. Kittmer captured the award for Bantam Girls' Highest Average with a 119 average. A 135 average earned Van De Gevel the Highest Average award on the Bantam Boys' side. The St. Marys Bowling Lanes presented the awards after recognizing the success of local youth bowlers this year, which included 81 tournament entries and 12 bowlers reaching provincials.



On the left is Natalie McKeen. On the right is Jack Brockman. McKeen took the Junior Girls' Highest Average award with a 158, while Brockman's score of 168 was good for the Junior Boys' Highest Score. McKeen, along with Landon Ball, Aisla Fisher, Nathan McKeen, Erin Slaney, and Leia Slaney, also received awards for perfect attendance.



On the left is Tyler Sims. On the right is Rory Brockman. Both Sims and Brockman won their divisions' Highest Average awards by posting a 179 average this season. Sims also recently took fourth in the provincial competition, while Brockman, along with Jaxon Cubberley, were recognized for joining the 300-club this season by scoring at least 300 in a game.



(TURNER ROTH PHOTOS)

On the left is Aisla Fisher. On the right is Drew Kemp. Fisher won the Most Improved Bowler award after increasing her average by 30 points this season. Kemp was recognized as the top salesperson in the St. Marys Bowling Lanes' chocolate almonds fundraiser sale.

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High Tea fundraiser at St. James Anglican Church



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTO)

A large group of people gathered together at St. James Anglican Church for an old fashioned high tea fundraiser on Wednesday, May 7. The fundraiser was held to raise money for new steps at the front of the church. Pictured above, from left, organizer Irene Wortley, Rev. Diana Boland, Robert Cathcart and Nancy Habermehl.

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Measles outbreak grows across Huron-Perth with over 1,400 cases reported provincewide

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Independent Reporter

Ontario continues to experience a significant measles outbreak with 1,440 outbreak-related cases and an additional 25 travel-related cases as of May 6, as noted in the Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) Board of Health meeting on May 9.

This is an increase of 197 cases over the previous week with cases reported by 17 public health units across Ontario, said Huron Perth Public Health medical officer of health Dr. Miriam Klassen.

“For context in Ontario, between 2013 and 2023, there were 101 cases altogether over that 10-year period. And last year, in 2024, there were 64 cases,” said Klassen.

The outbreak has now been deemed stable but concerning with 76.4 per cent of cases affecting infants, children and adolescents, and 87 per cent of cases being unimmunized. Klassen said this number is expected to be much higher as Public Health Ontario predicts several cases are not being appropriately re-



Huron Perth Public Health

ported to public health.

The outbreak pattern at this point is said to be stable but seems to be hopping from one region to the next, passing through unvaccinated communities, Klassen told the board at the recent meeting.

“Right now, we’re not seeing the same up-and-down pattern, but rather the disease hopping from one community to the next,” she said.

A total of 101 hospitalizations have occurred, including eight in the ICU. Among hospitalizations, 80 cases were unimmunized, including 63 children,

which Klassen says is very concerning.

“That’s a lot of hospitalizations, and this is not a trivial illness,” she continued.

“Public Health Nurses from the Anabaptist, immunization and infectious disease teams have been supporting local families in our Anabaptist communities by providing MMR vaccinations and consulting with community leaders to contain the spread of measles in the communities,” read the report presented to the board at the May 9 meeting.

The immunization team at HPPH has now completed six measles clinics

– three in-house and three out in the community. Some of these clinics also offered additional vaccinations for those who met eligibility criteria.

Due to the significantly increased demand for the MMR vaccine, the immunization team is also supporting Mother and Young Child Clinics.

Vaccination remains the best strategy, as the disease is generally milder in vaccinated people. Primary care centres are actively encouraging immunization and additional clinics have been launched to address the outbreak.

“What we continue to see is that (for those who are vaccinated), on the whole, the disease is much milder and doesn’t tend to cause onward transmission. So, vaccination is still the best strategy,” said Klassen.

“We continue to work away at it, assessing where risk might be, where we can add additional actions. If someone wants the measles immunization, they can still be immunized (by HPPH) or by reaching out to their primary care team.”

Town of St. Marys holiday hours – Victoria Day Monday, May 19

Please note the following hours will be in effect for Town of St. Marys facilities for Victoria Day (Monday, May 19).

Closed Monday, May 19:

- Town Hall
- Municipal Operations Centre
- Adult Learning

- Before and After School Program
- Child Care Centre
- Town of St. Marys EarlyON Centre
- Fire Station
- Friendship Centre
- Landfill
- Library
- Mobility Services Offices (Rides

must be booked by 3 p.m. on Thursday, May 15)

- Museum and Archives
- Pyramid Recreation Centre
- Aquatics Centre (temporarily closed for renovations)
- Service Ontario
- Youth Centre

No change:

- The Train Station will be open; visit www.viarail.ca for train scheduling.
- Home Support Services such as Meals on Wheels and telephone reassurance will continue.



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Stratford's Knox Wig Room to host Mad Hatter Dance Party fundraiser

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Stratford's Knox Wig Room is celebrating its 21 years supporting local cancer patients with a trip down the rabbit hole.

The wig room is hosting a Mad Hatter Dance Party on May 30 from 6-11 p.m. in the Knox Banquet Hall at Copperlight (142 Ontario St., Stratford). The event will feature live music from Stratford band Upside of Maybe and a variety of beverages including tea, lemonade and Distinctly Tea's iced tea to accompany the three-course tea-party meal featuring March Hare vegetables, Mad Hatter sandwiches and Queen of Heart's desserts.

The Mad Hatter Dance Party will also feature a prize for the best costume and other games such as croquet for a chance to win a stay-cation at the Lot 44 Inn and other locally made goodies. The fundraiser also features a wine-cork pull. Those who purchase a cork will be entered in a draw for a chance to win a donated bottle of wine.

"In this atmosphere currently, where a lot of the things in this world seem to be a little bit wild, we decided we wanted to turn that energy into an opportunity for people to just lighten up and have fun and just be playful and jovial and have a chance to dance," said Knox Wig Room



(IMAGE COURTESY OF CATHY BACHNER)

member Cathy Bachner.

The Care Wig Room, based out of the church formally known as Knox Presbyterian, now known as The Copperlight, offers wigs and headwear such as beanie hats to cancer patients at no cost. Over the past 21 years, volunteer hairdressers have styled more than 1,000 clients from across southwestern Ontario, including from St. Marys, Stratford, Goderich, Ta-

vistock, Listowel and Mitchell.

The Mad Hatter Dance is the first fundraising event Knox Cancer Care will host since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowing the price of wigs has increased over the years with the cost of living, the organization wants to continue providing free wigs and accessories to patients undergoing cancer treatment at any stage.

"They're at various stages, whether they are just starting their treatment or they're in the middle of the treatment, so they have lost all their hair," said Nancy Rothwell, wig room member. "So, they're coming to us vulnerable and not knowing what they're going to look like, or they already know that they're bald."

The Wig Room's volunteer hairdressers work with the clients from the minute they sit in the salon chair. The hairdresser and the client decide on the wig style, whether it's close to their hairstyle before treatment or a different length, and then they make adjustments such as bang trims.

"Most go home wearing it and with their new look. It's like going to the hairdressers to get a whole new look and it makes them feel a whole lot better," Rothwell said.

The organization is looking for wine-bottle donations to be used during the wine-cork pull. Bottles of wine worth at least \$20 can be dropped off in Stratford at AJ's Hair and Aesthetic Studio's second floor, Festival Square at 10 Downie St., or at St. Marys' Sensations Salon and Day Spa at 36 Water St. S.

Tickets are \$65 each, or \$500 for a table of eight. To purchase tickets, either call 519-271-0373, email knoxcancer-care@gmail.com or visit <https://tinyurl.com/knox-mad-hatter>.



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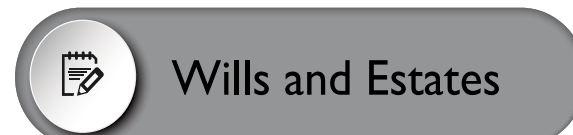
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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Easter traditions in Ukraine

TETIANA DIDKOVSKA

Independent Columnist

Easter in Ukraine is a very vibrant tapestry of ancient ritual and Christian devotion. This year, on April 20, Orthodox and Catholic Ukrainians celebrated the Resurrection together for the first time since 2017 – a rare alignment, because the Orthodox Church still calculates Easter with the Julian calendar, whose “spring equinox” falls on April 3.

Whatever the date, believers share one conviction: Easter proclaims things like love, rebirth and hope.

Spiritual preparation begins 40 days earlier with Great Lent. Ukrainians abstain from meat, dairy and eggs, devote extra time to prayer and practice charity. During the final week, farms, homes, yards and hearts are readied for the feast. The last three days – Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday – carry special weight.

Before sunrise on Maundy Thursday, every corner of the house is perfectly clean, stables are swept and gardens are cleansed. Farmers once raked last year’s leaves into a purifying bonfire, chanting for winter and misfortune to depart. People wash with water infused with pussy willow branches blessed on Palm Sunday to secure health and luck. In some regions, the night is called Navsky Easter, when ancestral souls walk the earth, so villagers avoid roaming after dark.

Good Friday is a day of deep silence. Church bells are replaced by wooden semantrons and the faithful fast until the embroidered shroud symbolizing Christ’s body is carried three times around the temple. Labour involving cutting, spinning, or hammering is forbidden, though housewives may bake festive bread or plant cabbage seedlings. Easter bread – paska – must be made from the finest and clearest white flour. In Galicia and Transcarpathia, the loaves are tall and round; in Polissya, they remain modest and unadorned; in Chernihiv and Poltava, creamy cottage cheese paskas studded with raisins are pressed into carved wooden moulds and left to set, never baked.

After the blessing, crumbs of this bread are buried beneath the first furrow or fed to hens, inviting fertile fields and abundant eggs.

Holy Saturday is colouring day for pysanky – intricately dyed eggs whose symbols “write” prayers for health, love, or harvest. Red recalls Christ’s blood, yellow grain, blue the heavens, green spring and gold divine glory. Families gather around beeswax candles, dipping and pencilling until baskets overflow with very colorful and bright talismans.

The night of Pascha is liminal and sacred. Lamps stay lit because folklore warns that evil spirits roam until the first shout of “Christ is risen!” Worshippers attend the midnight vigil, circle the church in procession, and listen to the Gospel amid a forest of candles. Legends say witches lurk under the porch hoping to snatch the priest’s robe at the moment of resurrection to gain a year of power; a woman who grips the door handle during the procession is similarly suspect.

At dawn, priests bless wicker baskets lined with embroidered towels. Inside rest paska, pysanky, salt, horseradish, sausage, smoked ham, butter shaped like a lamb and a candle. Families hurry home to break the fast, always starting with a shared egg, then sampling every consecrated food while toasting “Christos voskres!” Quarrelling at the table is strictly forbidden.

Bright Week follows, free from fasting or heavy labour. On Wet Monday, boys usually chase girls with buckets or perfume; a timely splash earns an Easter egg as ransom. Godchildren visit godparents bearing round loaves, while neighbours exchange painted eggs and blessings throughout the week. Songs and laughter echo across blossoming courtyards daily.

The season closes on the Monday after Bright Week with cemetery visits, uniting the living with the dead over picnic baskets of leftover paska and coloured eggs. Thus, the Ukrainian Easter arc moves from penance to joy, from earthly toil to eternal life, knitting family, village and ancestors into one hopeful spring-time circle.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

On Good Friday, church bells are replaced by wooden semantrons and the faithful fast until the embroidered shroud symbolizing Christ’s body is carried three times around the temple. 2: Easter bread – paska – must be made from the finest and clearest white flour. 3: On the night of Pascha, worshippers attend the midnight vigil, circle the church in procession and listen to the Gospel amid a forest of candles. 4: At dawn on Easter Sunday, priests bless wicker baskets lined with embroidered towels.

Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

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• June 10: Pour the Concrete – remove your 3D print from the hardened silicone and pour liquid concrete into your mold

• June 17: Demold and Decorate – remove your concrete creation from the silicone and decorate

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Sat., May 17: Dungeons and Dragons (10 a.m.)

Mon., May 19: CLOSED

Tues., May 20: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Wed., May 21: EarlyON Play and Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong! (1-4 p.m.), Scrabble (6-8 p.m.), Books and Brews*~ (7 p.m.)

Thurs., May 22: Joyful Mending (6:30 p.m.)

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Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett | 519 272 5742 | jtsquote@gmail.com



Dear Arborist,

I am wondering if the what-I-believe-is-a spruce tree in our backyard is reaching the end of its life. For the past couple of years, some of the branches die every year and the skirt of the tree is thinning.

Though I don't want to take it down; I would rather do that than have it fall on its own one day.

Thanks, Lynette

Dear Lynette,

I can confirm that is a spruce, white spruce to be precise. White spruce can be more difficult to identify and are often confused with Norway spruce.

White spruce have short green needles and tiny cones, Norway spruce has the bigger long

cones, and blue spruce is normally obvious due to color. It appears your spruce tree has needle cast. Needle cast is a fungal infection that normally affects blue spruce, unfortunately it can also affect white spruce though this is more rare.

The good news is it can be treated with copper sulphate. Additionally, even if not treated, your tree will probably still live for years, although it might be a bit unsightly or sparse.

Sincerely,

The Arborist

Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel's Tree Service. For contact call 519 272 5742 or email jtsquote@gmail.com

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: Finding a site for the library

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

The St. Marys Public Library looks perfectly sited, its original main entrance facing onto Church Street North. The path from Queen Street to the accessible entrance on the south façade winds past the cenotaph and the library's garden. It too seems a perfect approach to this popular building. However, when town council made the decision to build a library, this location just to the north of the town hall was not their immediate choice. Building a Carnegie-funded library was not without complications. Selecting a site was one of the many challenges that the council faced.

The very idea of a Carnegie grant was challenged as soon as it was proposed to council in October 1903. Although the Carnegie Foundation offered substantial grants to municipalities wishing to build public libraries, St. Marys town council did not immediately agree to apply. The grant came with conditions. It was to pay for erecting the library building itself. The municipality was expected to provide the site and to agree to support the new library's operations at the annual rate of ten percent of the original grant. To make such a commitment to spend future tax dollars was an early stumbling block. Although three of the six town councillors were in favour, the mayor at that time, W. F. Butcher, the owner of a local cooperage, was absolutely opposed. He stated that he was "not in favour of accepting five cents from Mr. Carnegie for a library or for any other purpose." A divided council eventually decided that they would make the Carnegie grant a referendum question at the next municipal election.

In the weeks leading up to the election, held in early January 1904, reports in local newspapers showed that Mayor Butcher was not the only St. Marys resident conflicted about dealing with Andrew Carnegie. Letters to the editor put forth some well-considered reasons. While many admired the Scots American philanthropist's rise to wealth and power, some believed that his treatment of his workers, particularly his strike-breaking actions, had been violent and unjust. For example, Dr. Andrew Knox, a well-known local physician, wrote: "While we cannot help admire his great energy, his intense application and his splendid executive ability, we cannot but feel there is a great rift in his life as a man and citizen." But another local doctor, Thomas Sparks, disagreed: "Carnegie's money has been made legally, which should satisfy, at least, the conscience of the municipality. Besides it has been made as honestly as that of scads of others whose munificent donations have been accepted without question."

The other concern was the ongoing



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS MUSEUM'S REESOR COLLECTION)

On the left behind the Town Hall, in this ca 1900 photograph, is a market shed that would be removed when the site was prepared for the new library.

cost of maintaining the library once it was built. Could the town really afford to spend money on a project that would forever be a cost to the taxpayer? Did the town really need such an expensive facility? After all, the library had managed for many years in smaller, rented quarters. St. Marys voters took these arguments into consideration when they went to the polls at the beginning of the new year. Those in favour of applying for a Carnegie grant won the referendum but by a very narrow margin – a mere 35 votes. It was a majority, nevertheless. St. Marys now expected council to make the application.

There were some changes on council in 1904. W. F. Butcher was gone, replaced as mayor by Robert S. Graham. The new mayor, an experienced municipal councillor, initially had some reservations about the Carnegie application. However, he was a fair and reasonable man and acted on the referendum results. Council requested information about the application process from James Bertram, Carnegie's private secretary, who administered the grants. He sent back an application form. The town clerk, Leonard Harstone, on council's direction, set out to complete it. He first had to answer some questions about the town's population and about the condition of its existing library facilities. He had to prepare a certified copy of the council resolution, pledging to support a new library through a tax levy at ten

per cent of the total grant received. But Mr. Harstone couldn't complete that immediately because councillors could not agree how much to request. A motion was made to ask for \$10,000. But several councillors felt \$8,000 would be more than enough to erect a library building and proposed an amendment to that motion. A smaller grant would mean a smaller annual commitment. The councillors were evenly divided, three to three, but Mayor Graham broke the tie in favour of the original motion. It read: "That this Council apply to Mr. Carnegie or his representative for the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) for the purpose of erecting a Library Building in this Town; that Council agree to levy taxes at the rate of ten per cent of amount of grant."

A final question on the form was: Is Requisite Site Available? The town clerk answered: "Yes." This response was not exactly truthful. When the application was sent off at the end of February, although a committee had been formed to select the best site for the new library, they had not yet reported to council. In fact, they were procrastinating, reasoning that perhaps they should wait until they heard whether they would get any money. On March 8, 1904, they found out. A letter from James Bertram announced: "If the City agree by resolution of Council to maintain a Free Public Library at cost of not less than One Thousand Dollars a year and provide a

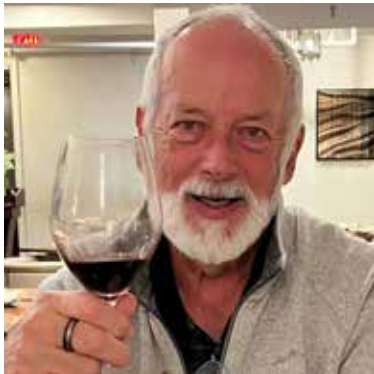
suitable site for the building, Mr. Carnegie will be pleased to furnish Ten Thousand Dollars to erect a Free Public Library for St. Marys." Council agreed to these conditions at the next meeting. Now there really was pressure to pick a site.

The committee prepared a list of about a dozen properties that might be suitable and whose owners were willing to sell. The three factors to consider were location, size, and price. The new library should be close to the centre of town – not more than a block, or at the most two, from Queen Street. While it would be nice to choose a lot large enough for landscaped grounds, the larger the property the higher the cost. Councillors were very aware that they could be spending up to \$2,000 of taxpayers' money for a suitable site. In the list of possible properties, council rejected several immediately because they were too small. Others were larger but too expensive. Property beside the water tower at the corner of Queen and James was already owned by the town and so would not cost anything. It was rejected for being too close to the railway tracks.

Council looked most seriously at two promising sites. Whelihan brothers offered to sell a parcel of vacant land on the west side of Water Street South, backing onto the Thames River. Some councillors felt this would make a lovely park-like setting, although it was several blocks south of Queen Street and perhaps prone to flooding. The cost was \$1,200. The second site was on the east side of Church Street between the town hall and the woollen mill on the banks of Trout Creek beside the stone bridge. Two large lots belonged to the millowner, Clove Myers, who offered to sell one lot for \$800 or both for \$1600. The southernmost lot adjoined town-owned property, part of the town's market area. The arguments for and against all these possible sites seemed never-ending.

Finally, Mayor Graham decided that a decision must be made so that construction could get underway by summer. On March 31, he called a special meeting of council to settle the matter. He had a proposal of his own and had lined up the support of three of the six councillors. The new Carnegie library should be built immediately north of the town hall on a portion of the town's market area. This site was close to Queen Street, but it wasn't very large and, because of the market, it was not very attractive. But it was already owned by the town. The only expense would be to clear away an existing shed so that the site could be prepared for new construction. Mayor Graham's proposal was passed, the resolution certified and sent to the Carnegie Foundation. It was time to get the project underway.

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Torremolinos - a perfect home base on the Costa del Sol



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

You probably read about the massive power outage in southern Europe a few weeks ago. Most of Spain and Portugal, and parts of southern France, lost all electrical power for almost 24 hours.

Now, for folks in eastern Ontario who lost power for days – some even more than a week – during the recent ice storm, that probably doesn't sound like much, I grant that.

The reason I took note was we had just spent a lovely three weeks in southern Spain. We flew to Lisbon, Portugal, then to Malaga and finally took a coach to Torremolinos, our home away from home for three weeks. All of those cities were affected by the blackout.

It left me thinking about what our vacation would have been like in those circumstances. Airports were shut down, the hotels would have had no power (we were on the eighth floor of a seaside hotel), and food services would have been non-existent.

So, we were lucky. No such disasters struck and we were able to enjoy our first-ever experience of Spain, specifically, of the Costa del Sol.

I have already written a couple of articles arising from day trips we took to other Spanish cities and the British enclave of

Gibraltar during our time there. This week, I am focusing only on our homebase, Torremolinos.

And I will admit, Torremolinos is a good spot to use as a homebase as long as you have trips to other destinations planned as part of your stay because there are few outstanding attractions in Torremolinos. It is kind of a tourist bedroom community.

That may sound boring, but when you actually stay there, you quickly start to appreciate all the good stuff about the admittedly touristy town. And Torremolinos is indeed a place that welcomes tourists and knows how to treat them.

The Mediterranean seaside is lined with hotels. Well, that's not quite true. There are lots of waterfront hotels, but between them and the sea is a many kilometre, tile-paved walking path with boutiques and restaurants, and an unending supply of public beaches. That walkway itself is a source of unending entertainment. A stroll from our hotel – Ocean House Costa del Sol – to the centre of Torremolinos offered ample opportunities for shopping, people-watching and drinking and dining along the waterfront. There are unique features here, too – flocks of beautiful (but sadly invasive) Monk Parakeets and a colony of well-cared-for feral cats which live in the nooks and crannies of cliffs, and which are cared for by officially appointed volunteers.

We enjoyed this walkway dozens of times and never tired of the experience. I mean, Canadians in March, strolling beside the Mediterranean? What can be wrong about that?

Our hotel happened to be located right on the border of Torremolinos and the next town to the west, Benalmadena. Fol-

lowing the path westward immediately took us to a beautiful marina, more shops, more dining, more beaches, more everything a visitor might want in a warm-weather getaway.

We did discover one intriguing destination in the heart of Torremolinos, the Parque Urbano 'La Bateria.' It's important to note here that, like all the Costa del Sol seaside towns and cities, the landscape shoots upward from the seaside. I mentioned cliffs and I wasn't kidding.

So, this armed battery – armed with ancient guns – and guard tower, the "Torre Mirador," rises high above the street. However, clever powers-that-be have built a dramatic, glass-sided elevator that carries visitors up to the base of the tower and to all the gorgeous gardens and water features that are also part of the "Parque."

Downtown Torremolinos – or maybe uptown considering its location on the top of the cliffs – offers many more shops, restaurants and pubs. We stopped to enjoy street musicians (there are plenty of buskers about) and then made our way down shop-lined staircases to the beachfront walkway.

Speaking of musicians, one of the great things about staying in a Torremolinos hotel is the nightly entertainment. That is the case with many of the hotels and you don't have to be a guest to wander in and enjoy the show. We enjoyed all of the shows and we took one in almost every evening. Highlights include an Il Divo style show by a superb trio called The Bohemians and a Flamenco dancing show that was both beautiful and astonishingly energetic.

The food scene in Torremolinos is highly cosmopolitan. Even in the hotel restaurant – which seats hundreds and



(PHOTOS BY PAUL KNOWLES)

Torremolinos and the Mediterranean Sea with the elevator and walkway in the foreground, viewed from the Torre Mirador.



Flamenco!

serves via buffets – you could find superb choices including freshly prepared fish (I, unlike normal humans, love squid) and every day, a new take on paella. We also had the chance to take a class in making paella (I continue my search for round rice here in southwestern Ontario), as well as a very jolly session on creating sangria!

As I said, Torremolinos is a terrific homebase for adventures around southern Spain,

but not just a place to leave from. Our 23 days included 12 without an excursion, and Torremolinos also proved to be a lovely place to enjoy in its own right.

Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer, and president of the Travel Media Association of Canada. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email pknowles@golden.net.



The Torre Mirador, high above the Torremolinos seafont.



Spectacular paella – the chef included the most expensive ingredients he could source!



Salvador Dali and friends, portrayed along the seaside walkway.

EAT AT OUR HOUSE: *Two Chefs in the Garden*



LAUREN EEDY

Independent Columnist

On May 6, Betty's Bookshelf teamed up with the Flour Mill to host a five-course vegetarian dinner inspired by the newly released cookbook, *Two Chefs in the Garden*.

Written by Chefs Lynn Crawford and Lora Kirk, both regarded as two of Canada's leading chefs, this beautifully assembled cookbook has over 150 garden-inspired vegetarian recipes and plethora amazing photos detailing their rural farm life in Peterborough. Available for purchase at Bettys Bookshelf, this is really a must-have.

The dinner was catered to a large, eager group and both Chefs popped into St. Marys for a visit to explain their philosophy behind writing their third cookbook together. Parents of two girls, they decided to retire from their respective cities to build a few plots of their farm dedicated to teaching the importance of knowing where our food comes from. The few plots grew immensely, encouraging more consumption of fruits and veggies, and the importance of sharing a table with others and being interactive in our food consumption.

Personally, I would not define myself as a vegetarian, but neither would these two chefs. It is a vegetarian-based book, but the recipes are flavourful, healthy and often surprising – especially to someone who personally didn't think much of vegetarian options.

Our first course was a green goddess hummus and pimento cheese dip with baked lavash (a thin flatbread). The hummus was light and refreshing with minty tones and the cheese dip was zippy yet savoury and would be perfect for sitting on a patio on a hot day.

The second course was a large serving of wholewheat spaghetti, roasted cauliflower, caramelized shallots, croutons and a brown-butter sauce. It was creamy with a sweet vinaigrette and lemon finish; filling yet interestingly light.

The third course was certainly a fan favourite! Roasted asparagus at the height of their glory,



(LAUREN EEDY PHOTO)

Betty's Bookshelf and the Flour Mill recently teamed up to host a five-course vegetarian dinner inspired by the newly released cookbook, *Two Chefs in the Garden*, by Lynn Crawford and Lora Kirk. Pictured from left are Alex O'Shea (the Flour Mill), Jan Scott (Betty's Bookshelf), Crawford, Kirk and Tracy Pritchard (the Flour Mill).

crispy sage, shallot cream and crispy parmesan chips. I will include this recipe this week as it shouldn't be missed, especially when asparagus are at their peak locally. I rarely finish a plate of food, especially with a prix fixe menu, but my plate disappeared.

The final course was two dishes served family-style; a spice-market fried rice with lovely curry notes and a sesame cucumber salad with pickled shallots. I was able to try a little but wanted to save room for dessert. I can't turn down a curry dish. I was luckily able to bring some home.

Lastly, another in-season ingredient for the dessert – rhubarb custard tart. This was different in an unexpected but tantalizing way as the custard was infused with ginger. Overall, it was a wonderful evening with likeminded people, two very talented Canadian Chefs and a memorable menu. Both ladies even joked about possibly moving to Marys. I certainly hope they visit again.

Stay tuned for future events from Bettys Bookshelf and the Flour Mill, this particular event was called 'Cookbook Book-club'. All recipes were lovingly cooked by Flour Mill Chefs.

Pan-roasted asparagus with sage, shallot cream and crispy parmesan

Serves: 4-6

Crispy parmesan

1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Pan-roasted asparagus with

sage and shallot cream
2 cups thinly sliced shallots
½ cup heavy (35%) cream
4 tbsp unsalted butter, divided
Salt and cracked black pepper
1 lemon, halved
2 tbsp olive oil
4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
6-8 fresh sage leaves
1 ½ lbs asparagus spears, trimmed

Method:

- Make the crispy parmesan: Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

- Spoon 2 tbsp portions of the parmesan 2 inches apart on the lined baking sheet, and using the back of a spoon, spread into 3-inch circles. Take care to give them a little room to spread without touching. Bake until melting and very slight-



(LAUREN EEDY PHOTO)

Pan-roasted asparagus with sage, shallot cream and crispy parmesan.

ly browned, 8-12 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool completely on the baking sheet.

- Make the pan-roasted asparagus with sage and shallot cream: In a small saucepan, combine the shallots and cream. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the shallots are tender, 8-10 minutes. Strain into a small bowl; reserve the cream.

- In a blender, combine the cooked shallots and 2 tbsp butter. With blender running, drizzle enough of the reserved cream to make a smooth creamy mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

- Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Place the lemon halves cut sides down in the hot pan for 2-3 minutes until caramelized. Transfer lemons to a plate. Add the olive oil and gar-

lic to the skillet and cook, stirring until garlic is light golden brown and crispy, 2-3 minutes. Add the sage and cook another 30 seconds until the leaves turn bright green. Transfer garlic and sage to a plate lined with paper towel to absorb excess oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

- Add the asparagus and the remaining 2 tbsp butter to the skillet and cook over medium-high heat, turning asparagus often to ensure even cooking, until fork-tender, 4-5 minutes. Return the fried garlic and sage leaves to the skillet and toss together.

- To assemble: Spoon the shallot cream onto a serving platter, then arrange the asparagus on top. Squeeze the juice from the charred lemon all over the asparagus and garnish with crispy Parmesan.

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Riddles

What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment,
but never in a thousand years?
The letter 'M'

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 has cities but no houses, forests, trees, and
rivers but no water?
A map

What is so delicate that saying its name breaks it?
Silence

What is always before you but can't be seen?
The future

What has to be broken before you can use it?
An egg

What starts with the letter 't', is filled with 't', and
ends with 't'?
A teapot

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

What has thirteen hearts, but no other organs?
A deck of cards

What has a ring but no finger?
A phone

I am not alive, but I grow; I don't have lungs, but I
need air. What am I?
Fire

- Word Search -



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IT'S GOLF SEASON

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Good exercise
Great outdoors
Nature
Sleep better
Challenging
Set goals
Relaxing
Better health
Golf clubs
Tee time
Sand trap
Hole in one
Handicap
St Marys Golf
River Valley
Science Hill



The **Riddle Kid**
OF THE WEEK



Sophie and Charlie Bilyea (2 & 1)

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



VICTORIA DAY IS FAST APPROACHING! We hope that you are ready for a day full of fun! It's important to keep in mind, fireworks are a completely foreign experience for animals and can be very frightening. Even if you live far from any public firework displays, be prepared for private fireworks close to home. Keep pets in their comfortable space indoors and away from windows as the noise and flashing lights can be very distressing.



JOLENE & JERSEY

Our Pets of the Week are Jolene & Jersey. Joelene (left), is a two-year-old chocolate heeler. Her favourite thing to do is chase squirrels! Jersey (right), is a five-year-old red heeler. Her favourite thing to do is play ball! Jolene and Jersey are owned by Amanda Harris.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent

Honouring a tradition as new fire truck welcomed in Thorndale



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Firefighters at the Thorndale Fire Station 2 prepare for the traditional push-in ceremony for a new fire rescue truck.

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Thorndale Fire Station 2 officially welcomed a new firetruck into their fleet with the time-honoured “push-in” ceremony.

This tradition originates from the days

of the horsedrawn fire engines. Then, the firefighters would unhook the horses and physically push the equipment back after a call into the station as horses couldn’t easily reverse.

Thorndale’s new Rescue 2 truck is equipped with firefighter’s gear, specialized hydraulic tools for extrication and



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Local firefighters “push-in” the new fire-rescue truck at the Thorndale fire station.

other tools needed for the various calls. As well, this truck can carry six firefighters to their calls.

“Thanks to Thames Centre council for supporting the purchase of this new rescue truck,” Thorndale Fire Station 2 district Fire Chief Wes Fox said. “This vehicle will be used for the next 20-25 years.”

The push-in tradition continues as a symbolic gesture, honouring the history of firefighting and the teamwork required to serve the community.

Thorndale Fire Station 2 is hosting a Firefighters Breakfast Sunday, May 25 from 8 a.m. to noon 17198 Thorndale Road.

Thorndale Lions Community Centre ad-hoc committee meets for first time

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Last November, following the Thorndale Lions Club’s presentation of a proposed expansion for the Thorndale Lions Community Centre to Thame Centre council, council established an ad-hoc committee for this proposed expansion.

The first meeting of the Thorndale Lions Community Centre ad-hoc committee took place in Thorndale on May 8. Sitting on this committee are represen-

tatives from the Thorndale Lions Club, Thorndale Agricultural Society and Thorndale Optimist Club as well as two members at-large, Thames Centre Mayor Sharron McMillian and Coun. Tom Heeman. Support staff from Thames Centre was also present.

Heeman was named chair of the committee with Norm Jary voted by the committee as vice chair. Heeman then briefly outlined the goal of this committee for developing a “shovel-ready project” that will include plans for an audi-

torium with a fixed stage, expansion of the community centre’s current kitchen, additional meeting and storage rooms, as well as consideration for parking.

Heeman stated the timeline for this project will depend on Thames Centre budget, grant application and community fundraising.

“With upcoming proposed provincial legislation and these tedious times, it could influence money available for this expansion,” McMillian said.

Thames Centre staff reminded the

committee that project plans must be complete before applying for grants.

After the committee toured the Thorndale Lions Community Centre, Heeman asked the committee members to put a wish list of features needed and desired for the proposed expansion for their next meeting in June.

For more information on Municipality of Thames Centre meetings, events and services, visit www.thamescentre.on.ca.

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OBITUARY

McCracken

Phyllis Diane McCracken 1929 - 2025

In her 96th year, Diane McCracken (nee Waddington) passed away peacefully at home on May 4th with family and loyal caregivers by her side. Predeceased by her loving husband, Carlton and two grandchildren, Hedy Stamm and Paul Davies. "Di" will be deeply missed by her children Wendy Davies (Jasper), Tara Stamm, David (Sheila), dear sister Judith and her many cousins. She was an adoring grandmother to Sandy, Erika, Carter and great grandmother to August, Leo, Addie and Anna.

The daughter of a symphony conductor father and concert pianist mother, Diane had a life long love of music. While attending Branksome Hall in Toronto she met her future husband at a UTS school party. Early in their marriage, to the surprise of family and friends, the newlyweds left city-life behind to purchase a farm, at auction, near London, Ontario. They embraced the country life, spending the next thirty years raising a family and acquiring additional acreage.

After selling the family farm they found their way to Guelph, making many new friends and becoming active members in the local bridge club. They also cherished their winters spent in Tarpon Springs, Florida.

Losing Carlton "Mac" after 59 years of marriage was tough. She was devoted to him as he was to her. It was always "Mac and Di". They went everywhere together.

After Mac's death Di chose to move closer to family in St Marys Ontario. She loved her 1870 heritage home where the door was always open for family and friends (including Wally, the neighbourhood cat). Anyone who came calling at 5:00 pm knew she would have her nightly martini in hand.

She was a gracious lady who always had a listening ear and an optimistic outlook. Di was an enthusiastic painter. She loved puzzles, books, old movies and rarely missed an episode of "Real Time with Bill Maher".

Diane will be greatly missed. A celebration of life will be held at a future date.

The family would like to extend sincere gratitude and appreciation for the wonderful and passionate care provided by Better Way for Seniors, Staff Relief Health Care Services and ONE CARE Home & Community Support Services.

For those who wish to honour her memory the family would greatly appreciate a donation to:

www.stmaryshealthcare.foundation/donate

CELEBRATION

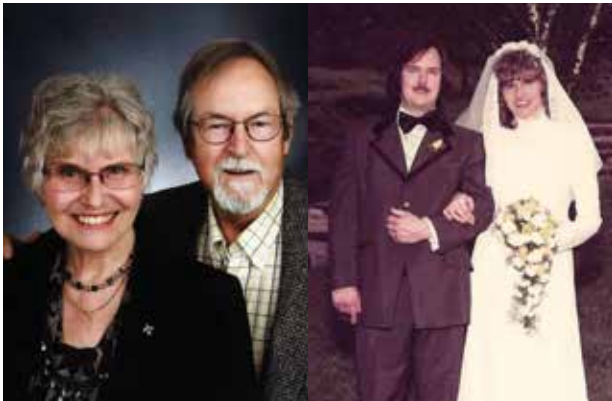
Happy 90th Birthday!



Don Phillips is celebrating his **90th Birthday**
Come celebrate at Thorndale Community Centre
Sunday May 25 2:30-4 pm

CELEBRATION

50th Wedding Anniversary
OPEN HOUSE



Family, Friends and Neighbours, come celebrate
**Clair and Mary Brandt's 50th
Wedding Anniversary Open House**
St. James Hall, 45 Thames Rd., St Marys
Saturday May 24, 1:00pm until 4:00 pm
Best Wishes only

OBITUARY

Mikita



It is with deep sadness we announce the passing of Michael "Mike" Joseph Mikita on May 5, 2025 at the age of 77, following a brief battle with cancer.

Mike was born in Belleville, Ontario and raised in Temiskaming, QC. He lived a life full of grit, heart, and humour. From a young age, Mike showed a spark that couldn't be contained—especially by the nuns at Catholic school, who quickly learned they had their hands full with his precocious spirit. That spark carried him far, shaping a life of deep love for his family, his work, and the outdoors.

Hockey was Mike's first true passion. At just 15, he moved to St. Marys, Ontario to play goalie for the Lincolns (1964-68), finding a second family with the Edye family who billeted him during those years. It was during these years that Mike met Donna. They married in 1968 and built a life together in the country—raising three kids, Tracey, Shane, and Robin, in a home filled with laughter and plenty of mischief. Mike never shied away from hard work. He worked as a welder and a carpenter before finding his calling as a truck driver, a job he loved.

No matter the job, Mike brought pride, skill, and a tireless work ethic. Home, for Mike, was more than a house—it was a lawn to mow, a garage full of projects, a woodpile stacked just right. Whether hunting, fishing, or fixing something that didn't quite need fixing, Mike thrived in the quiet rhythm of outdoor life. And if you asked for something, he'd bring you two — just in case. Mike had a laugh that could fill a room and a sense of humour that put people at ease.

He'll be deeply missed by his wife Donna; children Tracey (Mark), Shane (Jenny), and Robin (Charlie); very special big sister, Eileen (Don and son Eric), grand children Zach, Connor, Noah, Riley, Elliot, Jillian, and Lauren; and extended family and friends. Mike's was a life well-lived—loud, loving, hands-on, and full of heart.

The family would like to thank the staff at London Health Sciences University Hospital and St. Marys Memorial Hospital for their kindness and compassion in caring for Mike. Visitation took place at the Andrew L. Hodges Funeral Home on May 8, 2025. A private family service will be held at a later date. Memorial donations are appreciated to The Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre (London Health Sciences Foundation) or Operation Smile Canada. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Celebrate National Accessibility Week May 25-31

To the People of Perth County,
We invite you to celebrate with us this National Accessibility Week, taking place May 25-31.

What are we celebrating? Well, those extraordinary organizations and people who foster accessibility throughout our county. For example, the Alzheimer Society of Huron-Perth, which helps persons with dementia to live without barriers, or the former chair of our Joint Accessibility Advisory committee, Dennis Manarey, who, for over 15 years, worked tirelessly to guide businesses and property owners on making our built environments more accessible for persons of all disabilities.

"How do I celebrate?" you might ask yourself. It takes as little as a few minutes to remember those people helping to make an accessible county. They are your friends, they are your neighbours, they are your family. They might even be you. Remember them this week especially, and perhaps drop them a note of thanks. It's that simple. And then think of one small way you can make the places around you more accessible. If you are looking for ideas, just look to the many amazing or-

ganizations that support and advocate for individuals with disabilities.

One of those groups is your Perth County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee, of which I am chair. Our members come from across the County, representing all of the lower tiers, and bring a wealth of knowledge and experience on accessibility issues. We invite you to reach out to us with any questions, comments or concerns with regards to accessibility. You can contact the committee through the county by phone at 519-271-0531, via email at info@perthcounty.ca or by mail at 1 Huron St., Stratford, Ontario, N5A 5S4. Please note in your communication that it is in regards to the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC).

As you move about the county during National Accessibility Week, take a few minutes to think about the places we work, live and visit, and ask yourself how could we promote accessibility for everyone.

Happy National Accessibility Week!

In gratitude,

Mike Doan, chair, on behalf of the Perth County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

LOOKING BACK



BY AMY CUBBERLEY

The Quake

25 years ago (2000)

An early morning anonymous phone call to Tim Hortons in St. Marys on Monday led to a speedy evacuation of the coffee shop, OPP told the Journal Argus. Staff at Tim Hortons received three phone calls early Monday morning, each one mentioning a certain time. There was no specific mention of a bomb, but the calls were treated as a bomb threat.

A new dance club for teenagers, offering an alcohol-free environment, has opened in the Shallenberger Centre near Wildwood Conservation Area. Owner Toby Redfern says the club, named "The Quake" is geared to young people ages 12 to 18 who wanted to dance to today's popular music.

50 years ago (1975)

St. Marys Fire Chief Don Swan will act as coordinator in any future emergency situations. This decision was taken at a meeting in Town Hall on Monday night attended by Town Council members, representatives of the PUC, Board of Works, Police and Fire departments, along with the recently formed Flood Committee.

The firefighters speedily found the source of acrid smoke in Town Hall around 8:45 Monday morning. A fire in a plastic garbage container in the main floor ladies' washroom resulted in considerable damage from smoke and water on both the main floor and the Police office below.

There are apparently different ways of spelling Blanshard (the Township, that is). Dog tags recently issued to rural area canines have printed Blandshard on them. It is not likely the dogs will notice the difference.

75 years ago (1950)

One of the greenest lawns about town so far is Scotie Fairbairn's on King Street.

The boys have had a field day below the dam slugging carp and suckers trapped in the low waters following the floods.

The morel mongers of the district are whetting their appetites these days in anticipation. The tasty cone-shaped fungus growths are expected to make their appearance soon.

The C.N.R. bridge repair crew is working on the wooden overhead bridge on Jones Street this week. Much of the planking and other portions of the structure are being renewed.

Some amateur thieves who broke a small pane of glass at the top of the wicket window in the St. Marys Golf Club Caddy House one night last week took several golf balls, four of which were found on the course the next day, but did not touch the more valuable articles that were in the building.

100 years ago (1925)

William Boychoff of the Pleasant Hour Theatre won the second prize of \$50 given by the Canadian Universal Film Company for the best publicity campaign in connection with the Universal Serial "The Steele Trail" shown in that Theatre during the past months.

The Salvation Army Self-Denial Effort will commence on May 11 and continue until May 21. House-to-house canvass will be made during the campaign. The money collected will be used for the children's home, missionary work, hospitals, and for the general work of the Army. The Army is very grateful to all who contributed last year and trust they will be well supported this year.

Sudoku

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Solutions on page 31

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EARLY BIRD 12:45

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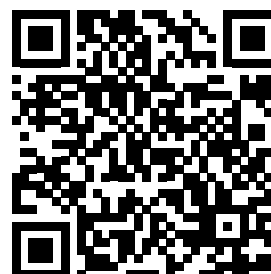
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1. 1000 metres

2. Romania

3. 266

4. A cob

5. Fencing

6. Red blood cells
7. The effects of very low temperature

8. Tennessee

9. T-Pain

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

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Rudd

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Donald Rudd - April 11, 1932 - March 8, 2010
Marion Rudd - December 18, 1933 - May 15, 2021

Although your gone, I'm not alone,
And never shall I be,
For the precious memories of the bond we shared
Will never depart from me.
On my mind and in my heart,
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For just as much as I am part of you,
You are part of me!
Love your daughter - Bonnie Lynn

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THE WEEK AHEAD

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

St. Marys Public Library events – See Page 22

Friday, May 16

- Royal Canadian Legion “hot dogs and more” lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw – 6 p.m.

Saturday, May 17

- St. Marys Farmers Market at Milt Dunnell Field – 8 a.m. to Noon
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw – 5 p.m.

Monday, May 19

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

Tuesday, May 20

- Royal Canadian Legion Buddy Check coffee at the Legion – 10 am to Noon
- Thorndale United Church strawberry & ham supper at Thorndale Lions Community Centre 4:30-7 p.m., Take out or dine in



Community Liaison Committee

The next Community Liaison Committee Meeting will be held on **Friday, June 13th at 10am** 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 at least 3 days prior to the meeting 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 **Friday, June 11**



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