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VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 4

SEPTEMBER 5, 2025

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45 years after Marathon of Hope, Terry Fox's legacy is still running strong

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

In April, 1980, Terry Fox embarked on a one-man mission to raise money for cancer research in his cross-country Marathon of Hope. For 145 days he ran until the unthinkable happened and lung cancer was detected, forcing him to end his courageous journey across Canada.

Now, 45 years later, communities across the nation will gather on Sept. 14 to keep the marathon alive. Here in Stratford, the local community will gather at Upper Queen's Park (near the picnic tables) to share their own memories of Fox or their own stories of how they have been touched by cancer. This year mark's the 40th anniversary of Stratford's own Terry Fox Run.

"It's amazing we still remember. We're still honouring Terry, we're still looking for a cure. We've made great strides, a lot of children's cancers are easy peasy now," explained Rena Spevack, organizer of the Stratford Terry Fox Run for the last 26 years.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma and peer outreach worker Joe Gladding raise the International Overdose Awareness Day flag on Stratford City Hall's central flagpole on Aug. 29. For more on the day, and what the city did to recognize it, see our story on page 9. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Resident wants more done for homeless as council preps for debate

LEE GRIFFI

Times Reporter

A former Stratford radio personality and part-time cab driver took to social media recently to express his concerns about homelessness and the absence of a shelter in the Festival City.

Rob Wreford, who was an on-air member of CJCS decades ago and was born and raised here, posted a two-

and-a-half-minute, heartfelt video on Facebook where he explained the problem is getting worse.

"Part of my job is to respond to requests from our city's social services to drive the unhoused out of town, sometimes as far away as places like Owen Sound or Hamilton," he explained. "There's no homeless shelter in Stratford and the choice is either couch surfing, a warm vestibule or maybe a tent on the edge of town or

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3



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Lake Victoria filled and ready for Dragon Boat festival – all due to Mother Nature

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In the Aug. 29 edition of the Times, the cover story said that organizers for the Stratford Rotary Dragon Boat Festival “could not rely on Mother Nature” to fill Lake Victoria for the Sept. 13 festival.

Evidently, that was not the case.

That same day, Robert Ritz, chair of the organizing committee, informed the Times that the lake filled naturally due to a higher-than-expected amount of precipitation in the area.

“Late this afternoon, we learned from Chris Tasker at the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) that Stratford received 23 millimetres of rain today – 400 per cent more than expected,” a subsequent media release reads. “The result? The Avon River is full and flowing over both dams.”

As Ritz had earlier explained, given the importance of the festival happening in the downtown core and the low water levels of the lake, he and the committee began working on filling the lake by pumping water from a nearby gravel pit. The organizing team submitted a Permit to Take Water (PTTW) to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks on Aug. 22, expecting to get approval to pump on Aug. 29.

That operation was expected to raise the lake by sixteen inches over eight days, pumping about 8,000 litres per minute into it.

“We are winding down the pumping operation, but we don’t see this as wasted effort,” the release said. “Preparing over the past month meant that if the rain hadn’t

come, we were ready. Think of it as having a fire truck on standby – better to have it and not need it than the other way around.”

The committee thanks Waters Edge Environment, Core Fuels, United Rentals, Lynn River Farms, Denham Construction, Wilhelm Excavations, Ritz Architect, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildwood Conservation Authority and the Rotary Club of Stratford for their work in the pumping operation.

They noted that the team has still incurred costs that could be offset by donating at https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/rotary-club-of-stratford-charitable-foundation/p2p/Fill_The_River_Challenge.

Thanks to decades of community support from sponsors, volunteers, dragon boat teams and spectators, the festival recently surpassed an impressive milestone of \$1 million raised. These funds have supported a wide range of initiatives including the Stratford Rotary Complex, Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth, Rotary Respite House and other global initiatives.

“This festival is about much more than racing,” said Gary Wreford, chair of sponsorship and publicity. “It’s a celebration of resilience, hope and the strength of our community – especially visible in the return of our breast cancer survivor teams, who inspire us year after year.”

The festival takes over Lake Victoria on Sept. 13, with the first race set to begin at 8 a.m. after the ceremonial dragon eye dotting. Food trucks, a beer tent and a kids’ tent open at 11 a.m. for spectators, and live music takes the stage at 1 p.m.

45 years after Marathon of Hope, Terry Fox’s legacy is still running strong

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

The Stratford run is non-competitive with no entry fee, where participants can run, walk, rollerblade or even skateboard. The run can be as long or as short as seen fit, starting anytime after 8:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. The community has always shown great support inviting family, friends and colleagues to “team up for Terry.”

“The kids are what really brings it forward because they learn about Terry in school,” said Spevack. “As long as the kids know who he is and how important he is – he’s a Canadian hero – it will carry forward. We’ve had kids that have overcome cancer ... We’ve had multiple generations, where perhaps the grandparents saw Terry and they come out with their children and grandchildren. Hockey teams have come out to support Terry Fox with a run.”

Last year there were approximately 100 people that came out. Participants can register online and donations can be made too, with an immediate tax receipt issued. The 2024 run raised in excess of \$16,000 and the schools raised \$15,700. There is not a fundraising goal declared as the mandate is to remember Terry Fox and to share his legacy.

“We just encourage people to come out. Even if you are not making a donation, then just come out, and let’s talk about Terry and what he was dreaming about, and keep his memory alive,” said Spevack.

All funds raised locally go to support Canadian cancer research through the Terry Fox Foundation. Research such as genome targeted therapies have progressed greatly. Since the inception of the Stratford Terry Fox run 40 years ago over \$412,000 has been raised.

Those interested in registering ahead of time can do so by visiting the website run.terryfox.org/92895 for Stratford specific registration and donations.

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Resident wants more done for homeless as council preps for debate on shelter

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

if you're lucky, a room at one of the motels that are contracted to social service agencies."

What motivated Wreford to post the video was a recent ride where he drove an old high school friend and a homeless woman out of town a few weeks ago.

"That's when it really hit home. I want to ask you this. If Stratford faced a natural disaster that put people out of their homes, the city would be the first to set up temporary emergency accommodation. When it comes to the homeless, are they somehow less deserving?"

At the next council on Sept. 8, Coun. Geza Wordofa is bringing forward a motion to use the Stratford Rotary Complex as an emergency shelter during the colder months of the year, which will invariably spark a heated debate amongst councillors.

"Geza has worked in refugee camps across Africa and the Middle East and has seen human suffering firsthand, so it's not surprising he's the only councillor speaking out about this issue. Yeah, there will be the inevitable NIMBY response, not in my backyard. What about other users? What about showers? What about? What about?" added Wreford, who is encouraging the community to attend the council meeting to support the motion.

Coun. Larry McCabe said he was not aware of cabs transporting homeless people from Stratford to other municipalities and added the issue itself is getting worse locally.

"The responsibility for homelessness is supposed to be on the provincial level, yet municipalities (in Ontario) spent \$2.1 billion on this last year. With budgets pressured by the growing costs of infrastructure, our shelter system is clearly inadequate. I have found the growth of the problem here pretty shocking and concerning. On a human level, it shows a failure at the community level to insist on action. It is interesting to hear Rob's perspective as a cabbie."

McCabe said he is looking forward to a healthy debate at council on Sept. 8.

"What I would say is that I think it is worth having a discussion. This issue is unlikely to be solved by relocating individuals who often require more support than we can provide. The statistics are pretty dire, 300,000 homeless in Ontario in 10 years, from 80,000 today. Whether the Rotary Complex is a good fit, I certainly have some reservations and hopefully we will get some ideas from staff about what this could look like."

He added there are risks in using a community facility where children and seniors are congregating.

"There are real mental health issues

being experienced by the homeless population that can't be glossed over."

When asked about the use of local tax is to transport those experiencing homelessness outside of the city, director of social services Kim McElroy confirmed that to be the case – though in only specific circumstances.

"It is the responsibility of each community to rapidly re-house individuals who become unsheltered within their vicinity. We adhere to this best practice by ensuring that individuals are housed within our community whenever possible," McElroy explained. She added if taxis are utilized, it is specifically due to identified supportive factors through thorough case planning.

"This may include transporting individuals to locations where a family member, friend or support service, such as a rehabilitation centre, is prepared to receive and support them during a precarious time."

She added any cab ride out of town is strictly voluntary, and no one is forced. McElroy explained Stratford offers a range of services aimed at addressing homelessness and supporting individuals in precarious housing situations. These services are often delivered in collaboration with community organizations, agencies and surrounding municipalities.

"The Emergency Housing Program provides emergency accommodations for individuals in the motel system as opposed to congregate living within a shelter system. There are also transitional housing units available while individuals seek permanent housing."

The Times reached out to Wreford, who said people have reached out to him to tell him just how close they are to living on the streets.

"A lot of people are one paycheck away from being homeless. Perhaps they can't make the rent, can't make the mortgage payment, or they've lost their job. I think we are in for some hard times for the next little while. People are facing a lot of problems and it's only going to get worse before it gets better."

He added the Rotary Complex may not be the ideal location, but at least a conversation to help those in need is starting.

"At least we open up discussion here in Stratford about what we're going to do. It may not be the Rotary Complex, but we've got to do something."

Wreford added some homeless people are hurling profanity at locals and visitors, something he said is not good for the tourism industry in the city. He concluded the video with one last thought.

"Driving my homeless high school buddy the other night reminded me that homelessness does not discriminate. It can impact anyone. Even you."



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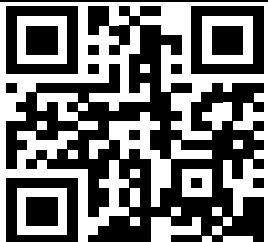
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Editorial

After six months of waiting, kitchen renovations are officially underway, and I've gone AWOL



GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

I'm feeling a little guilty this week. While Julia is at home overseeing the start of kitchen renovations we've been planning since we moved into our house back in January, I'm nowhere to be seen, having left town for the week to tend to some familial duties.

When we agreed to purchase our new home, both Julia and I knew it needed a lot of work

— the most important of which was a kitchen overhaul. With a peeling countertop and cupboard doors that couldn't open fully because of their proximity to the oven, as well as an overall layout that makes it difficult to do anything in the kitchen, let alone cook, we had planned to tackle the kitchen fairly soon after we moved in.

Of course, Julia falling and breaking her leg on moving day pushed those plans back quite a bit, as did the ice damming at the edge of the roof above our back wall in February, which caused water to pour through our walls, out our kitchen windowsills and down into the basement, necessitating an insurance claim.

As part of the claim, our insurance hired a local contractor to rip out the drywall and dry out our back kitchen wall with industrial fans and dehumidifi-

ers over the course of four days. They also ripped out some flooring to dry the subfloor and, for reasons that aren't entirely clear to me, replaced our furnace (apparently there was some water damage in the ducts).

Once everything was dried out, the contractor likely would have replaced our drywall and flooring right away, but because we still planned to renovate the kitchen, a plan that ultimately included replacing our two back windows with one larger window, we decided it would be best to hold off on that work until we could have the new window put in and get our new cabinets ordered.

Why replace the drywall and flooring if we might have to tear them out again in a few months, right?

In the meantime, the general contractor became busy with

other jobs, causing further delays to the work, and we lived with an exposed back wall and exposed flooring in our kitchen for more than half a year.

Now, the new window is in, and work has officially begun to restore our back wall and our flooring. Julia is at home this week taking care of the pets, including our new puppy, while also managing the work being done by our contractors.

With the kitchen cabinets expected to arrive any day now, she is also working to empty out our old cabinets and rip them out with the help of a friend. I will install the new cabinets with help of Julia's dad, who knows how to do this type of thing, after I get home next week.

As is so often the case, the timing of all this work couldn't be worse, as I find myself spending the week at my mom's, an hour-

and-a-half drive from Stratford, taking care of her after she had her knee replaced.

Now don't get me wrong; I'm happy I could spend the week with my mom, helping to cook, clean and do all the other household duties while she gets the rest she needs to recover. But my mom really doesn't need all that much help. She's up and walking around, and she seems to be managing the pain quite well.

So, as Julia sends me photos of all the work she's doing, emptying cupboards, moving furniture and caring for the pets, all while working a full-time job, I find myself wishing I was there to help shoulder some of the load.

I know I'll jump right back into it all when I get home this weekend, but until then, that sense of guilt is real.

A small thank you to the man in the grey truck at Tim Hortons

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Last Sunday, after packing up pink pillows, furry throw

blankets, a frilly lamp and a purple comforter set, I found myself a ball of emotions. My oldest daughter, my youngest and I set out on the 90-minute drive to Hamilton to settle the eldest into a little off-campus house as she begins her first year at McMaster University.

The car was unusually quiet for the three of us, who generally can't stop yapping. Almost as second nature, we stopped at the Tim Hortons drive-thru at Forman and Huron, currently under renovation. As I ordered three sandwiches and two drinks, tears welled in my eyes. I couldn't help but think how quickly the years have gone by, and how the everyday moments — like grabbing coffee and breakfast with my girls — are becoming more precious and more rare.

When I pulled up to the window and reached for my

card, the young man at the drive-thru smiled and said the customer ahead had already paid for my order — nearly \$25 — covered by a stranger.

I hadn't seen that happen in a long time. During the COVID-19 pandemic it was common, and I often paid for the person behind me. But this time there was no one in line. I drove away with a little extra money in my pocket and a heart filled with gratitude for the simple kindness that still exists in our community.

So thank you to the man in the grey truck with the cool sunglasses. I don't know if you noticed my tears, or the pile of pink, frilly accessories stuffed in the back of my black SUV, or if you just felt like brightening someone's day. Whatever the reason, you made mine a little lighter — and I am so very grateful.

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City hosting public meeting for draft Community Improvement Plan

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The City of Stratford is hosting a public meeting on the draft Community Improvement Plan (CIP), a document used by municipalities to promote revitalization and facilitate change within the community.

In 2022, the city launched the Stratford Attainable Housing Project, which recommended the development of a housing-focused CIP that aims to encourage private sector investment into housing within the community, while also identifying projects and initiatives that may be implemented to assist in housing availability and attainability.

As a first step, the CIP recommends an incentive in the form of a Tax Increment Equivalency Grant (TIEG), which

provides a sliding reduction in required property taxes over a 10-year period where eligible. Year one of the project is proposed to provide a 90 per cent property tax reduction grant, and the reduction is further reduced to 10 per cent by year nine.

Further details about the eligibility and administration of the TIEG are available by contacting the Kendra Fry, housing specialist, at housing@investstratford.com or by attending the public meeting.

The public meeting takes place on Sept. 15 at 6:30 p.m. in the council chambers of Stratford City Hall. It is meant to share information and to hear public comments prior to city council's consideration of the final CIP draft. No decision will be made by council that evening.

More information can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/5cet62j9>.



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Keep being you **Love your ears**

Stratford artist funding new film with local postcard project

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

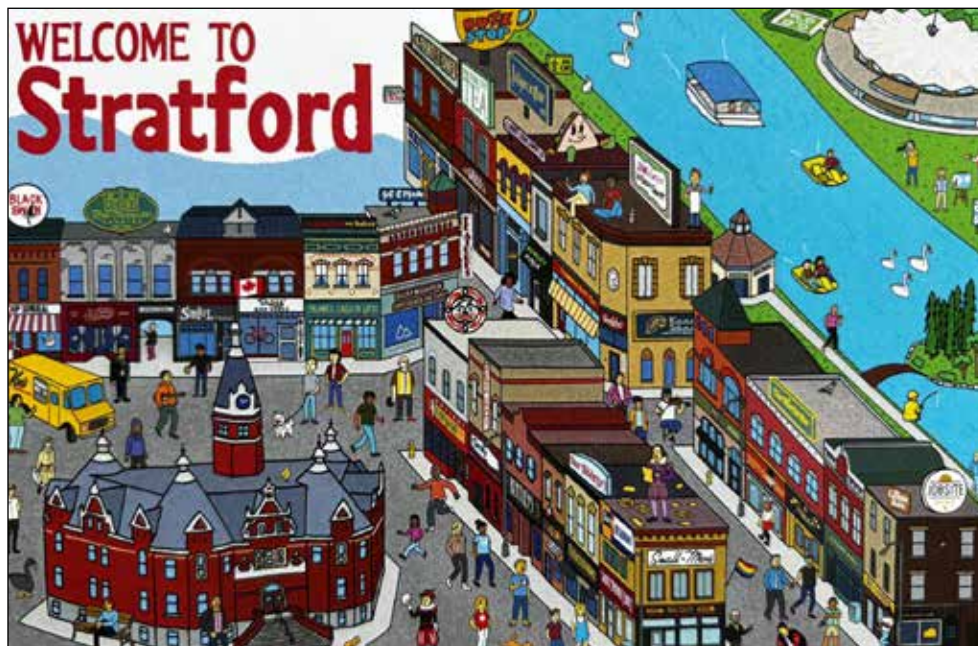
Filmmaker and visual artist Josh Cooper is combining his love of posters, postcards and film to bring his newest project to life.

Cooper, who grew up in Stratford, has launched a series of postcards featuring local businesses to help raise money for his upcoming film – a kitchen comedy-thriller about a restaurant owner seeking revenge after a celebrity chef steals their diner for a renovation show.

“I grew up in Stratford, and I worked at multiple stores downtown before I left to study screenwriting at UCLA, and also visual arts at OCAD,” Cooper said. “I consider myself a filmmaker and visual artist. I push myself to try every medium and style of design, to create artworks for local businesses to fund my films. And all of my films are shot in Stratford. This specific postcard is my first installment to fund my newest film.”

Currently, the postcards are available at Blowes Stationery & Office Supplies Ltd., the Stratford Festival Theatre Store and Our Stōr(y).

Cooper said he was inspired by his early days working in Stratford shops and wanted to capture the unique character of the



Josh Cooper brings his love of graphics to life with a new postcard showing off what downtown Stratford has to offer.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

city's downtown. “I'd love to design something for every store in town, but there's just too many I love, so I don't know where to start next,” he said. “I love York Street so much, too.”

For Cooper, postcards are more than souvenirs – they're small-scale posters that carry art into the world. “Postcards

are such a great way to show off your art, because they get sent all around the world, and there's no shortage of fridges to put them on,” he said.

His passion for design also comes from a lifelong love of movie posters. “A lot of my inspiration comes from movie posters,” Cooper said. “Even though this new

postcard does not look like a movie poster, I just love the idea of designing things and designing my own posters for my films.”

Cooper's next film is still in the final draft stage, but he plans to shoot it entirely in Stratford, highlighting local businesses and talent. “I'm obsessed with Gordon Ramsay, so I'm making the kitchen film in Stratford, but it's going to be a kitchen comedy thriller,” he said. “I want to film all in Stratford, and I want to include lots of local businesses.”

Every short film Cooper has made over the past decade has been filmed in Stratford – a commitment he traces back to his high school days. “I always wanted to be in film, but I basically started my first short films simply to impress my high school film teacher, Glenn Crumback. He was one of my biggest inspirations,” he said.

Looking ahead, Cooper hopes to expand his collaborations with Stratford businesses, whether through postcards or posters, and is considering creating a website to showcase his work.

Local businesses interested in working with him can reach out on Instagram at @joshcoop and those looking for postcards can purchase them in any of the listed downtown locations.

The Boathouse river tours return to Stratford

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The S.S. Juliet is set to sail once again.

The Boathouse announced via social media on Aug. 24 that boat tours returned and that both walk-in and online booking options are available. The boat tours were on hold earlier this summer amid low water-levels due to Lake Victoria draining. Kellan Herr, co-owner of the Boathouse, said that many customers are eager to cruise the Avon River on the S.S. Juliet again.

“So far, we haven't been able to do the full tours. We haven't been able to go all the way to the Festival City Bridge, but we've been going up to the festival and looping back then, so it's been really great,” Herr

said. “Getting a lot of phone calls, getting a lot of bookings online. People are happy to be able to bring their families down and go see the water.”

As the Boathouse lost nearly all of August and late July for its tours, the business is hoping to expand its season a bit longer than usual. Herr said the Boathouse received a grant through Destination Stratford that would help with extension. The grant would cover costs of heaters for the patio and evening events such as a Silent Disco on the water.

The Boathouse will also host Light Up the Night Kayaking's PJ Paddle on Sept. 20 starting at 7:30 p.m.

Herr said the Boathouse is also grateful for the community support during the tough time.

“There're so many people that came down to support us whether it was through gift cards or putting a bucket of water in or just coming down, (when they) wouldn't normally come down, for a hot dog, hamburger or ice cream. So we were really

thankful for everybody that showed their support,” he said. “It really showed what Stratford is and what the community is.”

More information including upcoming events can be found online by visiting <https://www.facebook.com/avonboathouse>.



The Boathouse is able to run their boat tours alongside the Avon River as of late August.

(KELLAN HERR PHOTO)

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Stratford raises flag for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Mayor Martin Ritsma joined local families outside Stratford City Hall on Sept. 2 to raise the Childhood Cancer Awareness flag and proclaim September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in the city.

Childhood cancer is the leading cause of death by disease among Canadian children. In Ontario, the incidence rate is rising by about one per cent each year. Childcan, a charity based in southwestern Ontario, serves about 25 per cent of all children in the province diagnosed with childhood cancer.

September is recognized internationally as a time to support young patients and their families, raise awareness about the realities of childhood cancer and highlight the importance of research. The gold ribbon – a symbol of the cause – represents children as “our most precious treasure.”

“We are deeply thankful to the municipalities across southwestern Ontario that are glowing gold, raising flags and officially recognizing September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month,” said Suzanne Fratschko Elliott, Childcan’s executive director.

“These actions speak volumes about the importance of standing with our children and their families. We invite everyone to join this meaningful movement – whether it’s attending a flag-raising, displaying an awareness lawn sign or stepping out for the Childcan Pyjama Walk. Together, we can honour the bravery of our young heroes and help drive real change this September.”

Founded in 1974, Childcan provides emotional, financial and social support to families facing the childhood cancer journey from diagnosis through treatment, post-treatment care or bereavement. The organization also funds research at the Children’s Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre and at the University of Windsor.

More information is available at www.childcan.com.

Amelia (AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)
Apple with her mom, Meghan Stocks, Mayor Martin Ritsma, and Ryker Dale with his mom, Amy Dale, gathered outside Stratford City Hall on Sept. 2 for the raising of the Childhood Cancer Awareness flag. The event recognized local families affected by childhood cancer.



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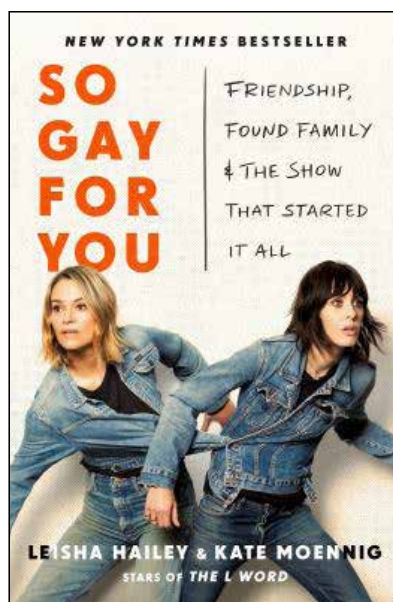
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So Gay for You, by Leisha Hailey and Kate Moennig

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Many folks will know Leisha Hailey and Kate Moennig as the characters Alice and Shane from the ground-breaking mid-2000s TV show *The L Word*. This Showtime series centred on a group of stylish lesbians and their often-melodramatic lives in LA. Leisha and Kate met at an audition for *The L Word*, and soon went from being fictional pals to real life BFFs.

In *So Gay for You*, the two open up to readers about their childhoods, coming out stories, careers in the arts, life-changing roles on *The L Word* and life after. Through bonding with each other and fellow cast members of *The L Word*, Leisha and



Kate discover the importance of friendship and found family, and it becomes the central theme of the book.

This book is written as a dual memoir, and the chapters alternate between Leisha’s and Kate’s perspectives. I didn’t find this jarring, but at times the book felt repetitive and plodding when the authors reflected on shared experiences. That said, reading about *The L Word* from an on-set and off-camera perspective was a lot of fun: deliciously dishy while staying even-handed about the show’s wins and misfires (and yes, Kate and Leisha share lots of thoughts on the recent reboot, *The L Word: Generation Q*). Readers will get a kick out of personal trivia too. Did you know that Leisha dated k.d. lang for five years, and that Gwyneth Paltrow is Kate’s cousin?!

So Gay for You is an honest, fun, quick read from two queer icons – a must for fans of *The L Word* and Leisha and Kate’s podcast, PANTS.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the highest possible score the can be achieved on the SATs?
2. What is the birthstone for September?
3. How much is a carat in grams?
4. What is a male turkey called?
5. In what city does Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade take place?
6. Manhattan is not a city. It is a what?
7. What does the acronym GPA stand for?
8. Where does The Boots and Hearts Music Festival take place?
9. The mandible and the maxilla make up what bone?
10. Which has the thickest fur of any mammal?

This week’s answers are found on pg. 23

STRATFORD TIMES

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Humane society hosting its biggest pool party to wrap up summer

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Dogs and owners can enjoy one last summer day before autumn comes this month. The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth (HSKWSP) is bringing back Dash and Splash, the organization's biggest dog pool party, on Sept. 7.

"Dash and Splash is a fun day at the pool while celebrating the bond between pets, their people and the community," said Jordan Baker, director of development at HSKWSP. "Every dollar raised helps us continue providing vital care, shelter and services to animals in need, and we are so grateful to our incredible supporters who come out each year."

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(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Dash and Splash returns on Sept. 7, a day at the pool to celebrate the bond between pets, their people and the community.

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Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and surrounding areas, Dash and Splash takes place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Kiwanis Park Splash Pad (1000 Kiwanis Park Dr. in Kitchener). A "small dog hour" kicks it off at 10 a.m., giving smaller pups weighing 22 pounds and under their own time to enjoy the water safely. Small dogs are welcome to stay and enjoy the pool all day long.

For food lovers, there are several food trucks to enjoy such as Fo'Cheezy, Schmuck Truck, Morning Dew Coffee and the Nest Café and Creamery. Guests can also pick up their 2026 HSKWSP calendar, celebrate the book launch of *Waldo The Wonder Dog* with Waldo the Corgi and more.

Supporters who choose to fundraise for Dash and Splash can earn rewards. Fundraise \$100 or more and unlock the ultimate package of free entry, a limited swag bag and Dash and Splash doggy beach towel, plus get entered into a draw to win a Tractive GPS with a one-year subscription. The top fundraiser receives a professional photoshoot with Kinsey Winger Photography.

Admission is \$20 per dog, with all proceeds directly supporting HSKWSP. Ten per cent of sales of *Waldo The Wonder Dog* go towards the humane society.

For more details and to register, visit: kwsphumane.ca/events/dash-and-splash.

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Stratford recognizes International Overdose Awareness Day with flag raising ceremony

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

This year's International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD)'s theme was "one big family, driven by hope." As Holly Smith, director of clinical programs at the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Huron Perth, told a crowd that gathered on the front steps of Stratford City Hall on Aug. 29, that highlights the huge impact overdose has on individuals and on families and communities.

"It also highlights that we as communities can come together to heal, to prevent further loss and support one another," Smith said. "... Overdose does not discriminate, and its impact ripples through families, workplaces and entire communities."

IOAD is celebrated every year on Aug. 31 to bring together local communities across Canada and encourage everyone to take action when it comes to overdose. That could mean holding an event, spreading the message or actively working to mitigate the effects of overdoses.

Though, as Joe Gladding, peer outreach worker at CMHA Huron Perth, said, it could be as simple as carrying Narcan or naloxone with you.

"I was asked recently by somebody, 'What's the best thing I can do if I have a loved one who's suffering with opioid use disorder?' And I said, 'The best thing you can do is have naloxone,'" Gladding said. "You can't necessarily make somebody change what they're doing ... but you can do things to make sure you're



The International Overdose Awareness Day flag flies over Stratford City Hall, recognizing the day on Aug. 31 where a global community comes together. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

ready to help if help is needed.

"You know, people have smoked marijuana and died from a fentanyl overdose, they had no idea was there. Police officers have died from just having skin contact when searching a vehicle with car fentanyl touching their skin. It's an extremely dangerous substance, and the best thing you can do is have naloxone. I carry naloxone everywhere I go. I've never had to use it on anybody, and I will

keep carrying it because I would rather have it and not need it than need it and not have it."

While there are no concrete numbers that capture the sheer number of actual overdoses that happen every day, there is plenty of data surrounding fatalities.

According to the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, and as reported by Public Health Ontario, four people in Huron Perth died from opioid toxicity

in 2024 compared to 16 in 2023. In the whole province, there were 2,231 opioid toxicity deaths in 2024 – about six people every single day.

Although the effects of overdoses are felt most by those experiencing them, they also have a severe impact on family and loved ones. Moms Stop the Harm (MSTH), a network of Canadian families impacted by substance-use-related harms and deaths, provided one of its purple chairs to the Stratford event this year. It sat empty, save for messages and photos, by the steps of city hall that day.

"That's the empty chair that sits at their kitchen table that should be filled with somebody from their family," Gladding explained. "And so they bring it here ... to have it up here as a reminder of that empty chair that's in so many houses, so many houses around the world."

To contend with the devastating results of overdoses, CMHA is dedicated to a non-judgemental harm reduction approach. It offers a number of services, such as addiction medicine clinics, and has a multidisciplinary staff team that includes counselors, case managers, peer supporters, court supporters, community withdrawal management workers, to name a few.

"Our work is driven by our values and inclusivity and dignity for all," Smith told the gathered crowd. "We strive to empower individuals and build hope for the future, because that is what we all deserve. The opposite of addiction is not abstinence or sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection."

City on the lookout for last swan that went wandering

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

As of press time, five of the recently missing six swans have been found and the City of Stratford is hopeful that the final wanderer will be returned soon.

On Aug. 25, the city announced that the six birds were unaccounted for, likely having left the main river system and travelling to nearby tributaries, parks, stormwater management ponds or the local golf course. Due to a lack

of tracking devices, the city leaned on the community to crowdsource the search effort, which largely worked.

Due to a series of excellent tips, five were found in short order. Three were found upriver to the east of Stratford (and have since been relocated to their winter quarters), one was found at the stormwater pond off Orr Street in the north end and the fifth was located at a nearby pond.

If you have seen the last wanderer, let the parks and forestry staff know by contacting (519) 271-0250 ext. 5246, or by emailing the department.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The City of Stratford thanks everyone who helped located five of the six wandering swans last week – and is still looking for the sixth as of press time.

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Aug. 29 Ron Morrison, St. Marys	\$50.00
Aug. 30 Tamara Wiedemann, Stratford	\$200.00
Aug. 31 Linda Longhurst, Stratford	\$50.00
Sept. 01 Ethan Bond, Komoka	\$1,000.00
Sept. 02 Stephen Bender, St. Marys	\$50.00
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Corner Store Candy Co. makes custom mixes for Emily Murphy Centre fundraiser

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Ahead of the Fall Beauty Mingle, the downtown Shoppers Drug Mart partnered with Corner Store Candy Co. for a sweet way to give back to the community.

The Shoppers Drug Mart Beauty Boutique on 211 Ontario St. is selling candy bags curated by the Corner Store Candy Co. for \$5 each to raise money for the Emily Murphy Centre. The candy bag fundraiser is part of Shoppers Fall Beauty Mingle on Sept. 13, which will feature fragrance readings, a lip bar, games, raffle baskets and makeup lessons by appointment.

Half of the proceeds from each \$10 Beauty Mingle ticket sale will go to the Emily Murphy Centre, along with donations through games and raffle baskets.

"The Emily Murphy Center provides vital support for women with or without children who have experienced violence," said Alison Michel, beauty manager. "Their work goes far beyond just providing a safe place, it's also about empowerment and helping women rebuild their lives. Fundraising helps ensure they can continue to provide the essential services needed for these women."

So far, the pink, purple and blue candy mixes have been a hit among

customers. Michel said that people are coming in after finding out about the candy mixes via local Facebook groups.

"The bags are eye-catching, fun and customers are really enjoying them," she said. "It's been a great way to spark interest and get more people involved in supporting the fundraiser."

Kelly Lindsay, owner of the Corner Store Candy Co., was happy to come aboard the fundraiser when asked by Beauty Boutique staff.

"It's really quite the honour any time we're asked to do anything like this, whether it's supporting a wonderful organization like the Emily Murphy Centre or our local hockey team that's

looking to raise money or anything like that in the community," Lindsay said. "It's a really great way for us to give back in that way as a local business. We really love curating special mixes for organizations but we also like making something special for them as well."

Corner Store Candy Co. made 75 bags for the Beauty Boutique's fundraiser but may make more if needed.

The Shoppers Drug Mart Fall Beauty Mingle will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Makeup appointments can be booked by either calling 519-271-8600 ext. 42 or by sending a direct message to @shoppers_downtown-stratford on social media.

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STRATFORD *TIMES* SPORTS

Special Olympics soccer player back home from Atlanta

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Richard Matthews, #17 with the Toronto FC's unified exchange team, is back on home soil after travelling to the U.S. to represent Stratford and area on the pitch.

"It was amazing," Richard told the Times just days after returning. "I just feel really special about it."

Richard travelled with his team for a three-day stay in Atlanta, Ga., playing against Atlanta United in the Mercedes-Benz Stadium on Aug. 24 and just narrowly losing in a 2-0 shutout. It was a rematch following a 5-3 loss at BMO Field in Toronto on July 12 and the end of a season which included an all-star game in Austin, Texas as well.

This is Richard's second year with the team, which was created by a partnership between Toronto FC and Special Olympics Ontario. The unified exchange team

is made up of athletes with and without intellectual disabilities, fostering inclusivity and community while allowing players of all abilities to show off their talents.

Richard started with Toronto FC through his work with Special Olympics here in Stratford. He said the organizer of the Toronto team reached out to area coaches inquiring about interested players, opening up an opportunity to try out for the team.

"His mother and I agreed, figuring he'll go out and practice," shared Don Matthews, Richard's father. "He'll get the experience of playing, won't make the team, and that'll be it. No more driving."

"You got that one wrong," Richard replied, to which his dad agreed.

This season involved three games, as mentioned, and numerous training sessions in Toronto. City traffic being what it is, the commute would take between an hour and a half to three and a half hours. For all that, Don expressed immense grati-

tude for the opportunity.

From sponsorships with Addidas and Coca-Cola to training in the Toronto FC's soccer academy right next to Rogers Stadium – and to playing in a stadium built for 70,000 people in Atlanta, Don said it's been the opportunity of a lifetime.

Now 18, Richard started playing soccer when he was four years old on regional house league teams. Originally from Ingersoll, he and his family moved to Stratford two years ago. His mother Nancy Matthews was originally from the Festival City, hence the move, but it proved fruitful for Richard.

"It was kind of a change from Ingersoll to Stratford," Richard explained. "Because Ingersoll didn't have any Special Olympics soccer. And then moving here, I really help the people work on their skills here for Special Olympics ... Some of the kids don't really know how to shoot or pass it. So I tell them how to shoot it and pass it."

When asked if he has any particular specialty, he answered "helping other people." His local coach Paul Cluff agrees. Cluff praised Richard's "amazing talent."

"The athletes love to get updates and hear his stories about playing with Toronto FC and his trips to the U.S. to play games," Cluff said. "We are big family and everyone supports each other. What stands out the most about Rich is his willingness to help his teammates learn and grow on the soccer pitch. We have a big variety of abilities out there at Special Olympics and he helps everyone without hesitation, and without ever being asked."

"That's a part of the game that isn't coachable. Every coach in every sport knows they have a gem of a human being when you see a player out there selflessly helping his teammates each week."

Richard and Don thanked Cluff for his help in their journey – as well as teammate Daniel Miller-Kaiser, who went to the same high school as Richard.



Richard Matthews shoots at the net of the Lower Queen's Park soccer pitch. Matthews, a Stratford-based Special Olympics soccer player, has just returned from Atlanta, Ga. Playing for the Toronto FC.



Richard Matthews poses with his dad Don Matthews in Lower Queen's Park.

(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTOS)

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Warriors progressing in time for next season

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

After winning the Eli Palfreyman tournament, the Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors had a great first week of GO-JHL preseason with a 2-1 record.

Warriors Head Coach Dave Williams was pleased with the performances from the team in the tournament and the preseason.

"I think we've been happy with our progress so far that tournament. Specifically, I thought we started a little slow against Pittsburgh in game one, but we only had two practices prior to going and some of the teams that we played definitely been together longer than we had the opportunity," Williams said.

"But throughout the tournament, I thought we got better with each game, got a little cleaner, a little more consistent, and I mean, that's all you're really looking for in the preseason – is to try and get better each time you're on the ice, whether you're practicing or playing. And I thought we accomplished that."

Williams also saw the team establish chemistry that grew during the tournament and the preseason, and hopes the team sustains that chemistry as the season approaches in under two weeks.

"We've had another week since then. And same thing, I think we're getting better each time we're on the ice. I think just the familiarity of the group spending time together, I think, is also really important," Williams said.

"Even though we've got a decent number of returning guys, I think ... them having the opportunity to spend time and getting some continuity together, I think that's really important."

The Warriors began their preseason play on Aug. 26 as they hosted the Plymouth Victory Honda at the Rotary Complex. Right from the opening faceoff, the Warriors dominated the visitors in all phases in a 13-1 win.

In a game where a total of nine players scored a goal for Stratford, Jonas Schmidt led the team with four goals and four assists, while Rhyse Brown registered two goals and four assists. Stratford starting goaltender Connor Davis had a quiet night with nine saves in two periods of shutout play and earned the win. Kobe Nadalin replaced Davis in goal for the third period and stopped six of seven Plymouth shots.

In front of a packed crowd at the Rotary Complex, the Warriors defeated their arch-rival St. Marys Lincolns 4-1 on Aug. 29. Schmidt picked up his fifth and sixth goals of the preseason in the



The Stratford Warriors celebrate a goal during their 4-1 preseason win on Aug. 29 against the St. Marys Lincolns.

(PAIGE CAMPBELL PHOTO)

first period.

St. Marys responded with a goal of their own early in the second period, but Colin Slattery and Max Wildfong both scored in the third period to put the game out of reach.

Gage Hurst got the start in goal for the Warriors, stopped 10 of 11 shots through over thirty minutes of game time and was credited with the win. Connor Davis came in relief and stopped all nine shots he faced.

On Aug. 30, the Warriors travelled to St. Marys to face the Lincolns in their final road game of the preseason.

Jack McGurn got the Warriors on the board late in the first period, and then Ty Wheeler scored midway through the second period to extend the Stratford lead to 2-0.

The Lincolns battled back in the third period with two goals in less than two minutes to tie the game, but Kade Kucan gave the visitors their second lead of the game thirty seconds after the second Lincolns goal.

Unfortunately, the Warriors couldn't hold the lead as St Marys rallied back late and took the lead in the closing seconds, giving the Warriors their first loss of the preseason.

Davis got the start between the pipes and played over 29 minutes of another shutout hockey before Hurst relieved Davis at the 9:17 mark of the middle frame.

For the upcoming season, Williams shared what fans can expect from the team.

"I think we obviously want to be a really competitive group. I think we

have a very tough division. I think there's lots of parity in our side, at least based on the last number of years, and more specifically, last year, I think our division was very competitive," Williams said.

"... Again, we just want to play a very competitive game every time we come to the rink and just try and consistently have good habits and details."

Under the stewardship of Williams, the Warriors have been a model of consistency. Since becoming the head coach of the team in the 2015-2016 season, Williams has led Stratford to a Midwestern Conference championship in 2022-2023, and the team has finished no lower than sixth in his nine-plus seasons behind the bench.

With the team nearly assembled for the long sea-

son ahead, Williams expects the team to contend for the Sutherland Cup. He acknowledges the challenging task ahead to secure the elusive title.

"I think that's always the goal, right? When you start off a season, everybody is starting their year with the mindset that they're there to compete for a championship," Williams said.

"We've had a very good track record and – being a very competitive team – I think the big thing is always getting through the league the first time to see. But I think with the returning guys we have and the new bodies we've been able to add, I think we should be a very competitive team this coming season."

The Warriors conclude their preseason schedule on Sept. 6 with the rematch of the Eli Palfreyman Tournament final against the St. Andrew's College Saints at the William Allman Memorial Arena.

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Game reports should be kept to a

maximum of 100 words. Please include a brief description of what happened during your games, including the names of those who scored and any special efforts made by your players.

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Remembering old friends and hockey... can it get any better?

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

There are some friends can be easily lost track of – but not Dave Walkom and Lynda Clarence.

Those from Stratford and area may remember Walkom and Clarence (née Matthies). They were both very much involved in their communities, especially in school and sports, bringing years of memories and fond thoughts from their teenage years.

Clarence was a dynamic skater and hockey player with the Tavistock Jets in 1969-1970 when they were in their first year in the league. The team was surprisingly undefeated and won the championship that year.

Clarence's father Bill ran the Tavistock Post Office along with her mother Barb. They were very much involved in organizations in the Tavistock community.

Clarence became a registered nurse from the Woodstock School of Nursing and spent much of her career as a home care case manager.

Most of her school mates remember her as one of the most dynamic cheerleaders at sports games for the high school in the late 60s, along with others like Tavistock's Jane Kaufman (née Chesney).

Walkom was raised in Shakespeare and was the son of Grace and Art Walkom.

Grace (Mrs. Walkom to most) was a lifetime teacher in Shakespeare for many years at the two room S.S. #10 public school, and later at Sprucedale Public School.

Art worked in Stratford at Kroehler Furniture Manufacturing for most of his life but was a prolific artist on the side – and his art work continues to be talked about in the village to this day. He designed the monthly Kroehler magazines, the Sprucedale logo, as well as designed the Shakespeare Community Athletic Association's booth and roller skating pad, and also took on secretarial duties with the Shakespeare Fire department among his many other accomplishments.

Walkom was always very much involved in ball and hockey.

He played fastball with the Stratford Memorials and then onto the Ontario Fastball league and the Kitchener Green-shirts.

Walkom's love was hockey, and in 1967 he was one of the many star players for the Junior "C" New Hamburg Hahns, when they went all the way to win the Ontario Junior "C" Championship and the Schmaltz Cup.

He was then awarded a four-year scholarship to play at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N. H. He also spent two years as a pro in Switzerland.

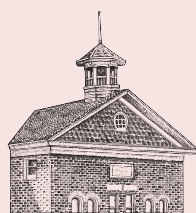
Coming back to his hometown, he coached Tavistock Minor Hockey for 12 years and was also named Optimist of the year by the Tavistock Optimist Club.

Walkom spent many years as a licenced independent adjuster and later spent 14 years teaching physical education and working as a guidance councillor with the Peel District School Board near Toronto.

He and Clarence are now happily retired and living in Collingwood.



Dave Walkom and Lynda Clarence (GARY WEST PHOTO)
may be remembered by many in Stratford and area – the two and their respective families were prolific hockey players back in the day.



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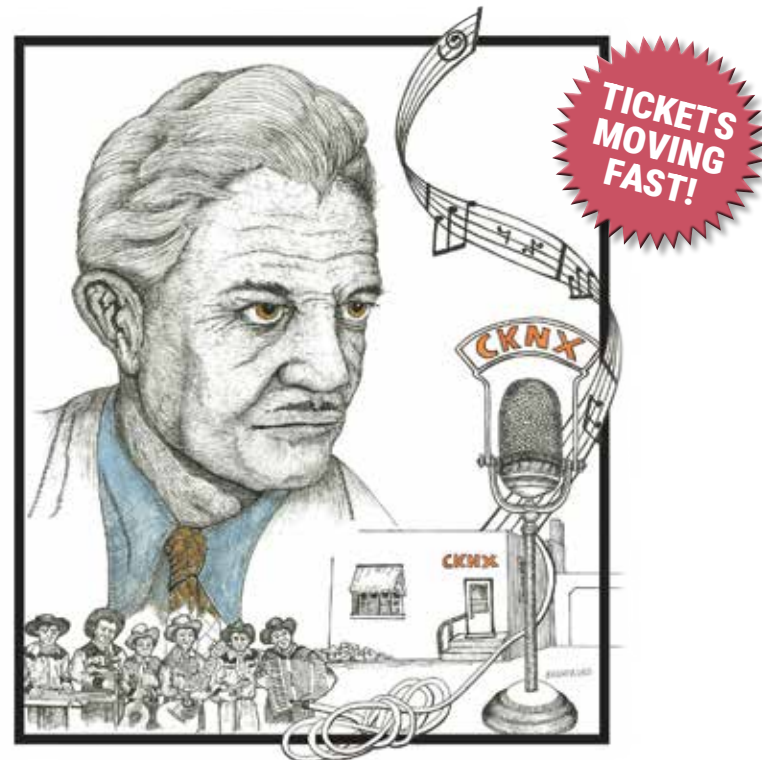
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Comedian Ron James “Not Nearly Done Yet” with Stratford

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Known coast to coast for his lyrically alliterative rants on everything from politics to aging, comedian Ron James is returning to the Festival City for his third benefit performance on stage at the Avon Theatre in support of the Stratford Arts and Culture Collective (SACC).

While on a break from cutting back his overgrown blackberry bushes at his summer home in Nova Scotia, James recently spoke with the Times about bringing his one-man show, “Not Nearly Done Yet,” to the Avon Theatre on Sept. 15.

“Ontario’s been my home for – how many years now – oh my goodness, 46 years; like the wandering Israelites, it took me 40 years to get a piece of home (in Nova Scotia),” James said, noting he spends his summers out east in his home province. “But I was in Ontario a lot this summer; I had a lot of gigs. It was a lot of fun. I had a wonderful tour of Ontario in November and then another one shortly after the election with about 12 dates.

“I’m telling you, man, I hit the stage just right after (Mark) Carney won, and I mean this was an election like no other. So, it’s interesting. It’s a bit more of a minefield, standup, than it ever was. I’ve always been political in my act. That’s not the dominant portion of my act by any stretch, but I like to give a little bit for everybody, and you have to be an equal-opportunity offender in Canada and hit both parties equally. You can’t hit the Greens anymore because they’re off to the meadows milking the unicorn, right? But Poilievre is endless entertainment to me and now Carney will be since they pulled the neo-Liberal corporate move and ordered the flight attendants back to work.”

Though James likes to take political pot shots across the spectrum, “Not Nearly Done Yet” spans both the micro and the macro of life as he sees it. He’ll tackle everything from the dating woes of Baby Boomers, embattled public health care, aging parents, food fads and exercise addiction to nostalgia, information overload, tropical vacations gone awry, New Age divas, the homelessness crisis, climate change, corporate monopolies, gambling ads in hockey and the rise of AI’s robot revolution.

“Of course, everything’s changing. I know this might



(STRATFORD ARTS AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE PHOTO)
Comedian Ron James will perform his one-man show, “Not Nearly Done Yet,” at the Avon Theatre beginning at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 15.

not seem like an overtly humorous topic, but mortality is the new reality,” James laughed. “I mean my demographic of Baby Boomers; we’re just 15 years away from roaming the home in our Led Zepplin onesies, just a sing-along away from taking the Stairway to Heaven. So, it’s imperative that you make the moments matter, you know? That’s one of the epiphanies I had during the pandemic when we were locked down, which seems like yesterday but now it’s been three years.

“It was such a lesson in human nature, how much we missed each other initially and how much we supported each other, and the angels of our better nature were in the forefront. And then when it kept getting so long, going on and on and on with no results immediately – I mean we don’t even have the patience for minute rice anymore – as humans, we fractured along crazy lines and I think, in this post-pandemic world, we’re still seeing the effects of it.”

James says he appreciates the opportunity extended to him by the SACC to keep coming back and performing in Stratford. As a performer, he says the chance to play Stratford, onstage at the Avon Theatre no less, is akin to reaching that performing-arts pinnacle so many actors strive for.

“Gosh, it’s one of the most beautiful theatres in the country; are you kidding? Stratford itself, too, is the north star, it’s the place that everyone who acts and works in the classics has the goal to be seen. I guess what it means for me, to get back to that Groucho Marx line that comedians are always eating at the little table; we’ve been trying for years to get standup recognized as an art form. There’s always lip service paid to it – ‘Oh, I couldn’t do that,’ ‘Oh, you’re so brave,’ ‘Oh yeah, it’s wonderful’ – but in Canada, your worth as a standup is constantly measured by your fame elsewhere.

“And fame is such a bogus thing. It’s like Billy Connolly says: ‘Chase fame. See what that does to your soul.’ So, to be invited for a third time to perform at such an august institution and such an iconic stage lets me believe that inroads have been made in order to validate this wonderful and peculiar calling. So yes, in terms of coming back to Stratford, that means the world to me.”

For more information or to purchase tickets for this show, which is recommended for people aged 16 and older, visit www.stratfordfestival.ca/whatson/playsand-events/leasedevents/ron-james.

Funds raised by this performance will assist the SACC in its work to create a state-of-the-art theatre within the city’s planned Grand Trunk community hub. According to the SACC, this community-based theatre space will provide a stage for performances, a classroom for learning and a gathering place for people of all ages to connect and be inspired.

COMING EVENTS Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

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Website: <http://www.rpsc.org/chapters/oxford>

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Monday September 8, 2025, 7:15 – 9:00 p.m.

Army Navy Hall, 151 Lorne Ave. E., Stratford

Featured Presentation: “Blowing in the Wind – Native Grasses and Sedges”, Shaun Booth from In Our Nature, Orangeville. Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

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Thursday Sept. 25 and Thursday Oct. 23

Legion 804 Ontario St B1, Stratford

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Saturday, October 25; 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

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Friday Oct. 17 and Friday Nov. 21.

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Doors open at 6 pm, play starts at 6:30 pm. Register your team of 2 people for \$20. Prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Call Dave at 519-703-6544, Anne at 519-301-0914 or the Legion at 519-271-4540 to register your team.

STRATFORD TIMES

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.

Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com

PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

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

SFF presents *Meet the Barbarians*, promising a sharply funny movie about bias and belonging

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Stratford Film Festival (SFF)'s monthly series returns Sept. 20 with *Meet the Barbarians* (Les Barbares), a witty comedy about a well-meaning Breton village that prepares to host a Ukrainian refugee family – only to discover the newcomers are Syrian. What follows is a brisk, big-hearted satire that nudges all sides, puncturing hypocrisy while finding grace, empathy and a side order of laughs.

This screening arrives almost ten years to the day after the launch of Stratford Welcomes Refugees in September 2015 – an initiative that mobilized residents, faith communities and local partners to sponsor newcomer families, most notably from Syria.

"When I first screened *Meet the Barbarians* at TIFF last fall, I knew it would resonate in Stratford," said SFF director Megan Smith-Harris in a media release. "The film is a sharp, funny and provoca-



Presented by the Stratford Film Festival, *Meet the Barbarians* will be screened on Sept. 20 in the Stratford City Hall auditorium.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

tive reminder of how bias can shape our responses to newcomers. It felt like a compelling fit for this community, which has a proud history of opening its doors to

Syrian families and embracing the work of sponsorship."

Following the film, SFF will host a post-screening panel reflecting on what

worked, what didn't and what comes next for welcoming displaced families in our region.

Featuring Kathy Vassilakos, a founding member of Stratford Welcomes Refugees and director of United Housing, Felicity Sutcliffe, a sponsor group member and community volunteer, an as of yet unannounced Syrian refugee and moderated by Smith-Harris, the screenings take place at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., with tickets available at stratfordfilmfestival.com/projects-8.

Meet the Barbarians (Les Barbares) is written and directed by Julie Delpy, who also stars alongside Sandrine Kiberlain and Laurent Lafitte. The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and was released in France in 2024.

In an interview with TheWrap, Delpy spoke about the challenge of striking a humane, comedic tone in the film.

"The very last thing I want to do on this planet is make fun of refugees," said Delpy. "You have to find the right dosage."

Stratford Festival review: *Dangerous Liaisons* is full of lies, deceit and aristocrats behaving badly

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Though their penchant for manipulation through sexual exploitation is perhaps the attribute they're most proud of in themselves, it is also the thing that leads to the downfalls of both main characters in *Dangerous Liaisons* as true feelings undermine each of their lies, cheats and deceptions.

Having never seen a theatrical production, or the 1988 film based on the 1782 novel by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, I found myself disgusted at the lengths Le Vicomte de Valmont (Jesse Gervais) and La Marquise de Merteuil (Jessica B. Hill) go to as they meddle in the love lives of their fellow French aristocrats and insert themselves (mind the pun) into their affairs as I watched the Stratford Festival's 2025 production of *Dangerous Liaisons*.

From a modern point of view, Le Vicomte's gaslighting and manipulation of both Cécile Volange (Ashley Dingwell) and Madame de Tourvel (Celia Aloma), and the pride with which he carries out his deception and sexual exploitation – at least initially – left me with a bad taste in my mouth. Perhaps it was due to my ignorance of the story beforehand, but for the first half of the play, I simply couldn't wrap my head around how someone could treat anyone with such disregard without any hint of regret or remorse.

La Marquise de Merteuil's scheming, on the other hand, is a little easier to un-



From left, Jessica B. Hill as La Marquise de Merteuil and Jesse Gervais as Le Vicomte de Valmont in *Dangerous Liaisons*. Stratford Festival 2025.

(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

derstand. While it's clear she's playing the same game of lies and deception as Le Vicomte – a game she so obviously enjoys and, through which, revels in feelings of competition and accomplishment – she plays the game because she believes she needs to, not because she wants to. As a woman in 18th century France, she sees manipulating men with the promise of sex as one of the few tools she has to get what she wants out of life.

In the second half of this production, Le Vicomte's motivation becomes clearer. Beyond his pride and lust, deep down, he is seeking intimate connection, even if he

doesn't realize it. At the beginning of the play, Le Vicomte's closest and most intimate connection is with his former lover and current friend, La Marquise, which she, in turn, uses to have him disrupt a budding romance between Volange and La Chevalier Danceny (Leon Qin) for her own selfish purposes.

While Le Vicomte may not see his friend's deception right away, the part of him that longs for connection and companionship finds both those traits in Madame de Tourvel – the very woman whose sexual conquest he sees as worthy of a man with his reputation. Without meaning to,

he falls in love with Madame de Tourvel, who, after uncovering Le Vicomte's deception, refuses to see him again.

Looking for reward and comfort from his friend and former lover, Le Vicomte discovers La Marquise de Merteuil has been engaged in an affair with Danceny, an affair made possible by Le Vicomte's own affair with Danceny's true love, Volange.

This tangled web of lies and deceit is unraveled with an excellently choreographed duel between Le Vicomte and Danceny, resulting in Le Vicomte's fatal comeuppance. As the play closes, the fate of La Marquise, and likely many of the other characters, is alluded to with a drop of the guillotine's blade signifying the beginning of the French Revolution and a violent end to French aristocratic society.

The opulent and over-the-top furnishings used to adorn the stage for each of the aristocrats' homes lends itself quite satisfyingly to this production's conclusion at the onset of the French Revolution.

While I struggled to understand the motivations of the main characters in this play at first, looking back, I consider this production an unmitigated success, having elicited feelings in me I had not anticipated. The performances of both Gervais and Hill as the detestable leads offers a sharp contrast to the innocent and trusting natures of the characters played by rest of the cast.

Dangerous Liaisons plays at the Festival Theatre until Oct. 25.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT GRANTHAVEN.COM

St. Joseph's Catholic Church front steps expected to be completed October, November

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The new steps of St. Joseph's Catholic Church are nearing completion.

Graceview Construction, who are sub-contracting for Ellis-Don, are hard at work at the intricate task of building new concrete and heated steps up to Stratford's iconic church on Huron Street, a project which has taken all summer.

Stratford's Peter Graansma, who is overseeing the project as a foreman for Graceview, is happy with the progress being made and with good weather hopes to have the job completed by the end of October or early November.

What is special to see, is that local area workers and contractors, including Cullitons, are installing water lines to supply heated steps in the wintertime to ensure safety for church members.

Most recently, all hands were on deck on Sept. 2 as the first concrete pour took place on a lower section of the stair. Another pour was expected the next day (after press time) and like the rest of the project, the progress will be weather-determined.



Work continues on the steps leading to St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Huron Street this week. With good weather, contractors expect the project to be complete in October or November.

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

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Opinions

Web-crawling through terminology



SHEILA CLARKE

Times Columnist

Environmental decisions are usually made by “Permit by Rule.” Beg your pardon? That’s not a term in my lexicon, and I suspect it’s not in standard use for most of us. We have many regulations that have been developed over the years. Some of them seem demanding, especially those that deal with health and the environment. Previously, new projects would be processed through Permit by Application, to ensure that appropriate regulations and safeguards were included.

It seems we’ve always had watchdogs to make sure the rules, the regulations, are being followed – primarily for safety and for the protection of the environment. We elect our governments, who make the regulations, but we’re careful.

Interested and knowledgeable parties were always offered the opportunity to respond to new projects.

Under Bill 68, the Open for Business Act, 2010, a new system emerged. It was designed to apply to automotive refinishing, heating systems and standby power systems. It was called Permit by Rule, or Permit by Registration, rather than Permit by Application. In this system, regulations for safety and environment would still be there. After all they were created by scientists and by experts in health and safety. What was missing in Permit by Rule was opportunity to review new projects by those who might be involved. Instead the project interests (“trusted proponents”) would fill out an online form, promise to follow all regulations, and once approved, begin the project.

Any activity that was going to be self-monitored under Permit by Rule could be found on a government website called the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry (EASR). The proposers fill out an online form about their intended project and sign, indicating that they would follow all rules that applied to their project. And that was all. As long as the main regulations were noted, there would be no

delays waiting for other interested parties’ opinions (Indigenous communities, municipalities, conservation authorities or environmental organizations). The project could begin. Follow-up, checking, and ensuring that the company did indeed follow the regulations would take place once the project was begun.

In 2023 the Permit by Rule system was expanded to apply to stormwater management and to the transport of waste toxins. If a company wanted to transport toxic waste, they would now use Permit by Rule. The expanded use of Permit by Rule also applied to the amount of water taken for building projects.

At the time, I remember responding before the expanded Permit by Rule act was passed. Forgive my suspicious nature, but to me it sounded like too much to ask. It had an aura of the fox minding the hen house.

CELA, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, also responded. CELA noted that there was no requirement to review project applications for cumulative effects and impact on the environment. The expanded permit registration was designed to move traditional approval processes to the Permit by Rule registration to enable immediate project initiation.

Despite concern, the expanded use of the Permit by Rule system passed and is now law (2021 and 2024)

More recently, Bill 5 has designated Permit by Rule as the means of integrating projects into “unleashing Ontario’s economy.” There is a catch 22 here. As reviews of applications take place, they will incorporate recent revisions in regulations and within Bill 5 itself. Wetland protection was recently mentioned as a vital carbon sink. That is true. But wetland protection has been diminished in regulation, to only one of a group of wetlands. That does not offer the vital habitat function of wetlands, nor their critical role in flood control. The substitution of the Species Protection Act for the internationally admired Endangered Species Act is of particular concern. The new act protects only the homes of the species, not the areas needed for food, migration and reproduction. That is not habitat. If that definition is used to accept Permit by Rule requests, it does not meet basic biodiversity science.

Bill 5 also contains special economic zones (SEZs), within which the provincial cabinet may determine which regulations and laws may be forgiven, in the name of economic

growth. Even if Permit by Rule reviews are carried out on new projects, no reviews need apply in SEZs, including Indigenous voices, municipal voices, and the voice of the environment, on which we depend. We need to rethink Permit by Rule – and Bill 5.

I saw a wonderful cartoon by Will McPhail. A passenger is standing in a plane aisle. He is saying something about “These pilots are getting too elite, they think they know so much. Who wants me to fly the plane?” And all through the plane, passengers are raising their hands. Why do I feel like I’m on that plane?

UPDATES:

1. Carbon parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere as of Aug. 28, 2025: 425.27 ppm (6.85 ppm increase from August 2024). Safe level, 350 ppm passed in 1990.

2. Coming soon, helpful insects and cocoons will be seeking winter shelter in your garden and in your fallen leaves. Many cocoons are there too – next spring’s biodiversity team.

Sheila Clarke is a Stratford advocate for the environment, of our community and of our planet. She is a member of CFUW Stratford, Stratford Climate Momentum, and the Perth County Sustainability Hub.

Earth Rise: Enjoying without destroying our planet, part 2



ANNA KOWALCHUK

Times Columnist

Travel, for many of us, is a compelling and captivating pastime. It enriches our lives, fulfills that almost primordial longing for excitement and adventure, and offers opportunities aplenty to exercise some bragging rights. But, as we know, air and other petroleum-based modes of travel are quite literally – and more quickly than previously thought – rendering our planet uninhabitable.

It seems, then, that we have two choices. The first is, admittedly, only for the most noble of us: to put the well-being of the planet and, by extension, all life on Earth ahead of our

personal desires and forgo oil-fueled travel entirely. Those able to do so have my deepest respect and gratitude.

The second option, which is more realistic for the rest of us, and the one we’ve been exploring here, is to find more viable alternatives to our currently self-destructive ways of travelling and vacationing.

In our last installment, we looked at the benefits of a Stratford stay-cation using local transit, an easy and inexpensive way (both financially and environmentally) to visit and enjoy the many delights of our own enchanting city.

Today, we will highlight the PC Connect transit bus service (funded in part by the City of Stratford), which allows us to travel a little farther afield and visit some charming destinations in the southwestern Ontario area, while keeping our carbon footprint to a minimum.

Route 1 of the PC Connect service runs between the Kitchener GO Station and historic Listowel. It makes several interim stops which include St. Jacobs, host of its world renown

farmers’ market, with stall after tempting stall of farm-fresh produce, home-baked goods and one of a kind handmade crafts and textiles.

Another stop on the route is Elmira. While there are many reasons to visit this lovely little town, its claim to fame is that it holds the Guinness Book of World Records title, earned in 2000, for the largest single day’s attendance at a maple syrup festival in the world! This annual celebration is a full day of craft and toy shows, musical entertainment, children’s play areas, pony rides, sugar bush tours and, of course, a plentiful supply of pancakes smothered in maple syrup.

And, whether you’re Irish by ancestry or just love all things Irish, Listowel’s Paddyfest, the biggest Irish festival in North America, is another must-visit, with its nine days of great food, music, dancing, games and fun for the whole family.

Route 2 of the PC Connect service runs from St. Marys, stopping in Stratford, Shakespeare and New Hamburg before continuing on to the Conestoga Mall and the Kitchener

GO and VIA Stations.

Shakespeare is home to, among others, the Best Little Pork Shoppe, Shakespeare Pies, the Shakespeare Brewing Co. and the iconic Shakespeare Antiques. A leisurely day or three of eating, drinking and shopping always makes for a lovely getaway!

New Hamburg, too, with its pretty downtown, unique shops, award-winning restaurants and historical walks, has much to offer. But take particular note of the Mennonite Relief Sale, held every spring, with its highly anticipated auction of stunning handcrafted quilts and textiles; and, coming soon, the fall fair running from Sept. 11 to 14.

And finally, Route 3, the most sedate of the routes, travels between Stratford and London, making a single stop in St. Marys. Home to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, Canada’s largest outdoor freshwater swimming pool, the Wildwood Conservation Area, and so much more, this charming little town gives us plenty of reasons, not just to visit, but to stay awhile.

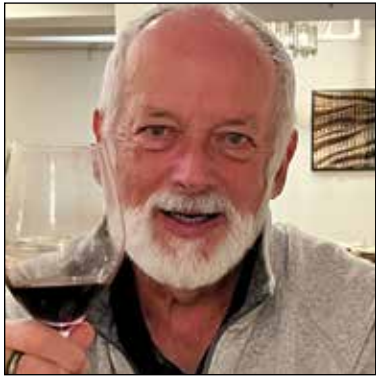
The PC Connect transit service conveniently operates year-round, from Monday to Saturday. Fares range between \$6 and \$12, with children five and under riding free. It’s fully accessible, accommodates service animals, pets in carriers, as well as extra luggage. For more information and to book your trip, go to <https://tinyurl.com/murz9ja7>

As we’ve seen, there are many lovely and interesting places to visit in our own beautiful backyard. While a little lower in key, these (and many other) vacation destinations allow us to enjoy the benefits of travel without incurring the enormous environmental costs.

So, dear reader, it’s up to us. Let’s you and I commit to more responsible travel; to leaving behind us a healthier, happier world, at which many future generations can continue to marvel.

If you know of an individual, company or organization that deserves recognition for their innovative and sustainable environmental practices, please contact me at frogs-a-leap-ing@tutamail.com.

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Malaga celebrates Picasso, its native son



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

There are plenty of reasons to visit the historic Spanish city of Malaga – a beautiful cathedral, extensive Roman ruins, a glorious view of the Mediterranean among them.

But the truth is everywhere you go there is an overriding presence; this was the birthplace of iconoclast painter Pablo Picasso. Though he only lived here for the first 10 years of his life, Malaga has claimed Picasso as its own.

The truth is, almost no one is blasé about Picasso's work. Either people admire it greatly, or they think it is ridiculous. This is not a man who painted lovely pastoral scenes or photographically correct still lifes. Picasso is credited as a co-founder of the Cubist movement. Cubist art involves the deconstruction and re-assembling of the subject of the painting, to dramatic and often unrecognizable effect.

It can probably be argued all of modern art owns much of its origins to Pablo Picasso. On a recent visit to the Gardiner Museum in



Malaga's first-century Roman amphitheatre.

Toronto, which features ceramic art, I was intrigued to spot a wildly painted plate amidst much more conventional designs – and yes, it was an original creation of Pablo Picasso.

But back to Malaga. And please don't misunderstand me; there really is much more to this ancient city than a groundbreaking painter. Malaga is, in fact, one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in western Europe, first founded by the Phoenicians around 770 BC. The Roman amphitheatre here is amazing. With its intact steps, tiers of stone seats and flagstone stage, it seems more like a contemporary performance space than a ruin that dates back almost two millennia. On the hillside above the Roman theatre is the Alcazaba, a citadel from the time of the Moors in the 11th century.

And then there is the lavish Cathedral of Malaga, one of several important historic churches in the city. It took about 250 years to complete the cathedral, a project that started in 1528!

So yes, history goes very deep here.

But inescapable in the heart of all of this is the reality that one of the most renowned, revered, disliked, adored, controversial artists of the modern period spent the first decade of his life here.

The historic sites throughout Malaga certainly gain their share of attention from avid photographers, but I suspect the most photographed scene in the city – and certainly the busiest selfie spot – is the life-sized bronze sculpture of Picasso, seated on a marble bench that is clearly intended to invite visitors to join the artist on the bench. And in the background is his birthplace.

Malaga is also home to the Picasso Museum. Well, one of many Picas-

so museums – there are certainly similarly named galleries in Paris, in Barcelona, in Antibes and any art gallery worth its salt has a collection of Picassos. Fortunately, he was a prolific producer of pieces of art.

Yet while his work has spread far and wide, the Malaga museum has managed to garner a good collection and the guided tours offer a lot of insight into Picasso's work and the philosophies behind his complicated images.

Our guide there was genuinely honest, explaining that while there are lots of theories about the development of Picasso's styles – including the fact that he was dyslexic – there is much that is merely conjecture.

One example I enjoyed involves a painting labelled "Seated Woman." Before she revealed the name of the piece, our guide asked us our opinion about the subject of the work. I boldly suggested it was a self-portrait by Picasso, basing my uneducated guess on the sweater and beret the subject appeared to be wearing, similar to clothing I had seen

on photos of Picasso.

The guide then told us the title, which seemed to discount my guess, but she admitted Picasso's paintings typically don't have titles given by the artist. "Seated Woman" was the opinion of an expert, but the guide admitted she actually agreed with my very non-expert guess.

As we toured the museum with a small group, I was interested to see about half of the visitors rushed through, barely glancing at paintings they clearly did not appreciate. The other half (maybe a smaller percentage) soaked up every bit of information they could get and lingered over individual paintings.

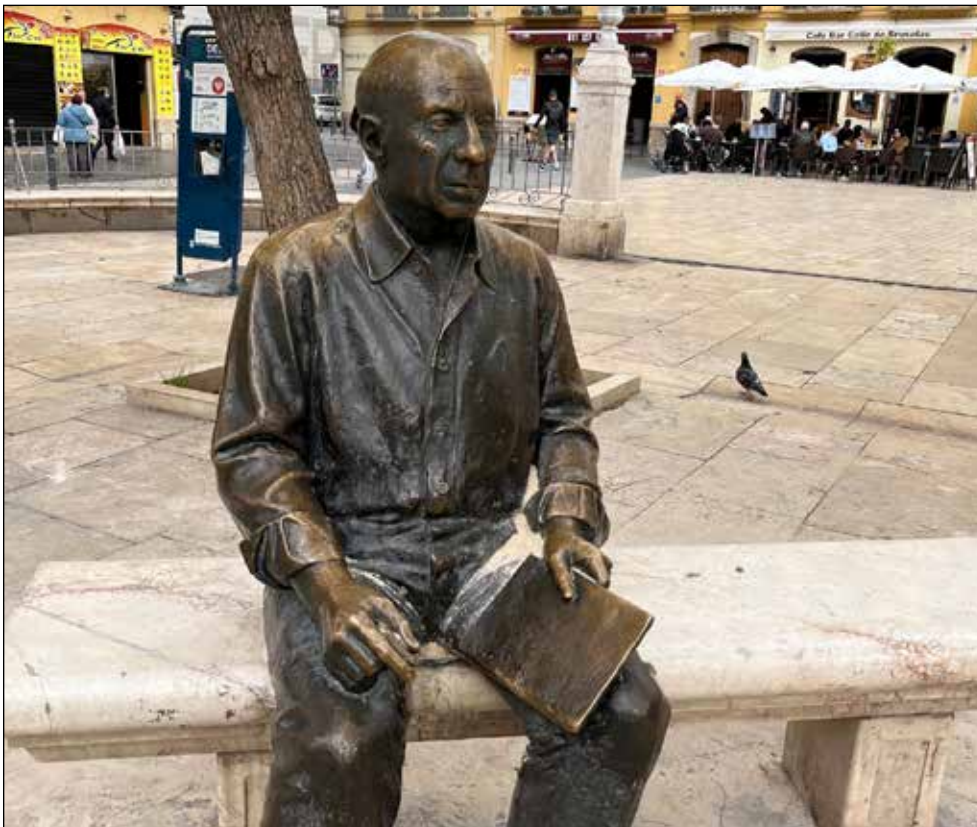
And it was intriguing. Our guide pointed out that in some paintings, Picasso had intended the normally impossible task of presenting his subject from all sides at once; thus, the Cubist reconstruction.

She also noted the overt sexualization in some of his work – his women tend to have large circles portraying oversized breasts, for example.

Enough art studies for today; I simply found Malaga's obvious pride in their native son was very appealing and I was glad to benefit from their work to celebrate Picasso.

And then, as we took in the harbour view from atop the hills, I noticed two young girls below us, attempting to create their own art – purse-lipped selfies on smart phones. The results won't be Cubist – but they won't truly reflect reality either.

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



A bronze Pablo Picasso with his birthplace in the background.



A Malaga street musician.

Opinions

The power of a two-hour mini retreat: Restoring yourself without leaving home



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

When we think of rest, most of us picture a cozy cottage by the lake, a luxurious hotel room or a week away from work and obligations. And while those kinds of retreats are wonderful, they're not always practical.

However, time, money and responsibilities often make them out of reach. But what if rejuvenation didn't require a fancy escape at all? What if you could restore your body, mind and spirit with something as simple as a two-hour mini retreat right where you are?

The truth is, you don't have to wait until vacation days roll around or your budget allows for a trip. Retreating can be less about where you go and more about how you pause. By intentionally carving out just two hours in your day or week, you can give yourself the gift of space, quiet and renewal.

The key to a mini retreat is creating an environment that feels different from your usual routine. This doesn't require special equipment, only intention. Start by picking a space in your home – or even outside – that feels peaceful. It could be your bedroom with soft lighting, a cozy chair by a window or a quiet corner in the garden.

Before beginning, silence your phone or put it in another room. Let family members or housemates know you'll be unavailable for two hours, just as if you were away. Even that simple act of claiming time for yourself can feel refreshing.

Here are a few tips for creating your perfect retreat.

First, every retreat begins with replenishing the body. You might start by brewing a cup of herbal tea,

cutting up some fresh fruit, or preparing a light snack that feels nourishing rather than rushed. Eating or drinking slowly, with awareness, signals to your body that this time is different – it's not about multitasking or grabbing something on the go.

Movement can also be a grounding part of your mini retreat. This doesn't have to be strenuous exercise; gentle yoga stretches, slow walking, or even lying down with a heating pad can bring comfort and restoration. The goal is not to work out but to reconnect with how your body feels.

Second, try to calm your mind. Meditation is one option, but if that feels daunting, you can try guided breathing exercises, prayer or simply sitting in silence for a few minutes. Journaling is another powerful way to declutter the mind. Try writing down your worries, what you're grateful for or ideas without judgment.

Creative expression can also be deeply restorative. Perhaps you sketch, knit, paint or play a musical instrument? Allowing yourself to

create without pressure helps your mind rest and wander in a nourishing way.

Third, any mini retreat should include something that speaks to your spirit. That might be reading a book that inspires you, listening to calming music or spending time in nature. Even just sitting outdoors and observing the sky, trees and birds can reconnect you to something larger than the everyday grind.

Here's one way to spend your two hours:

- First 20 minutes: Gentle movement and stretching, followed by a glass of water or cup of tea.
- Next 30 minutes: Journaling, meditation or reflective reading.
- Next 40 minutes: Creative or spiritual practice – painting, knitting, music, prayer or nature time.
- Final 30 minutes: Rest quietly – lie down, listen to soothing music or simply breathe and be still.

This structure is flexible, of course. The point is to focus on what restores you, not to follow a rigid schedule. Try creating a schedule that really works for you.

Therefore, taking a mini retreat

is powerful because it interrupts the constant cycle of doing. In two hours, you give your nervous system a chance to reset, your mind a chance to declutter and your spirit a chance to breathe. Research shows that even short breaks can reduce stress, improve mood, and increase focus. Think of it as giving yourself a pit stop in the marathon of life – without it, you risk burnout.

Once you experience the refreshment of a mini retreat, you may find yourself weaving its elements into daily life. Maybe it's five minutes of journaling in the morning, a mindful cup of tea in the afternoon or a quiet walk after dinner. But even when life feels hectic, you'll know that two hours of retreat is always within reach, no reservation required.

We often imagine that restoration requires exotic escapes or perfect circumstances. But real renewal is available anytime we pause, protect our energy and honor our need for rest. A cottage by the lake is lovely, but so is the quiet sanctuary of your own living room when you step into it with intention.



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Riddles

- Why did September get invited to every party?**
Because it always comes with a little fall flair!
- What's September's favorite type of music?**
Autumn leaves on vinyl.
- Why do trees in September always look so fashionable?**
Because they change outfits every season.
- What's a scarecrow's favorite month?**
September—because that's when he's outstanding in his field.
- Why did the apple stop in the middle of the road?**
Because it ran out of juice!
- What's a September leaf's least favorite subject in school?**
History—too many dates.
- Why was the calendar nervous in September?**
Because its days were numbered.
- What do you call it when September goes back to school?**
The "fall" semester.
- Why did September bring a pencil to the party?**
Because it wanted to draw some attention.
- What did the September breeze say to the leaves?**
"I'm just blowing through!"

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 23

Pet of the week



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I	L	D	B	I	B	Q	S	E	G	D	U	J	E	B	F	D	V	Q	F
N	N	E	J	D	N	A	T	S	D	N	A	R	G	L	E	N	Q	G	T
C	S	P	S	E	T	F	M	T	M	E	U	Y	H	X	R	A	N	O	Y
X	P	A	T	U	I	U	Y	B	R	K	J	M	L	J	R	B	K	X	H
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K	F	D	H	M	D	Y	A	F	W	L	J	T	C	M	W	I	D	U	N
C	F	E	C	G	A	T	N	C	I	E	C	V	O	K	H	R	M	M	Z
K	B	A	S	O	B	I	R	E	P	N	Y	N	I	R	E	W	U	A	X
D	Z	W	I	U	T	A	O	V	E	N	S	D	P	P	E	T	E	E	L
E	V	G	D	R	O	T	C	R	B	U	C	W	D	L	L	Z	S	U	N
I	U	P	C	F	G	H	O	Q	Y	F	F	I	R	E	W	O	R	K	S
R	C	Y	F	G	L	R	N	N	B	B	P	I	Z	R	G	Z	F	V	M
F	I	N	B	W	E	O	O	U	C	J	O	G	J	G	O	A	D	R	J
P	S	X	G	O	E	B	G	U	F	A	R	O	H	S	D	C	T	W	R
E	U	R	C	D	H	Q	W	V	N	E	N	G	T	J	Y	O	G	S	Q
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D	W	R	R	T	H	R	R	H	A	I	S	L	Y	R	T	N	E	P	K
O	N	G	N	T	S	L	N	R	A	A	X	Y	H	S	R	M	Q	G	B
U	B	L	O	J	S	B	B	P	T	C	F	M	C	B	I	R	D	X	A

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