

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 17

JANUARY 16, 2026

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Nova Scotia RCMP charges Woodstock man for additional sexual offences involving youth

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A Woodstock man is facing more charges as a result of an investigation by Mounties in Eastern Canada.

The West Hants RCMP General Investigation Section has now charged Sebastien Michael Vienneau with more than 40 sexual offences involving youth as part of an investigation that began in 2022.

In August 2025, the 29-year-old Vienneau appeared in Kentville Provincial Court to face charges of luring a child, indecent communications, and transmitting sexually explicit material to a child.

The ongoing investigation has now led the RCMP to charge him with 30 counts of luring a child, eight counts of making sexually explicit material available to a child, and two counts each of indecent communications and making child pornography. He also faces single counts of possessing child pornography, accessing child pornography and making child pornography available.

The charges were laid in Kentville Provincial Court on Dec. 11, and police say the offences involve 30 victims, all of whom were youth at the time.

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GATSBY NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA GLITZ

(RON YUZARK PHOTO)

Robert, Paul, Angela, Debbie, Sarah and Paul attended in their best 1920s looks and enjoyed a night of Gatsby-inspired fun at the the Gatsby New Year's Eve Gala Glitz, presented by Good Times Restaurant on New Year's Eve. Story on page 12.

Ingersoll passes strong mayor budget with less than 2% tax hike

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The 2026 Town of Ingersoll budget was adopted at the Jan. 12 council meeting, authorizing total spending of \$62,330,283, including a \$24,430,283 operating budget and a \$37,900,000 capital budget.

This is the town's first budget proposed since Ontario's expansion of strong mayor powers and is the final budget of this term of Council.

"The total requirement from taxation in 2026 is \$19,502,044, compared to \$18,779,122 in 2025. This represents an increase in the tax levy of \$722,922 or 3.85%, resulting in an effective

tax rate increase of 1.98% for Ingersoll property owners," said a town press release.

"The 2026 operating budget continues to balance service delivery with long-term sustainability," it added.

Key highlights of the operating budget include \$4.2 million in public safety services, including police, fire, and by-law enforcement. \$4.18 million in transfers to reserves, ensuring future capital needs are adequately funded and the town's financial position remains strong. A \$750,000 contribution to the Multi-Use Recreation Centre (MURC) project, support for local non-profit organizations, community groups, and youth programs as well as a continued focus on economic development. The budget does not include any new debt financing.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 3



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Mayor not a fan of forced provincial process

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Mayor Brian Petrie said he is not a big fan of the provincially mandated strong mayor budget process.

"I actually despise it says the mayor's budget because it's council's budget. I really appreciate all the work staff did to try and get information out to the public. It could have been that this is the first time anyone saw the budget and I don't think that's right."

Petrie added he appreciated the input provided by members of council and added all elected officials need to have a say in council decisions.

"It is one of the most important documents we do throughout the year. It is the plan for the community."

Deputy Mayor Lindsay Wilson echoed Petrie's comments and criticized the province's strong mayor budget rules.

"This process was weird, to say the least, but I know everyone made a lot of effort to make sure it wasn't weird, but we only have so much control over the process, so I give a lot of credit to staff and the mayor for trying to mirror what we have been doing."

She also praised her fellow council members for making the budget process as collaborative as possible.

"(The strong mayor) legislation provides the opportunity for conflict and grandstanding but no one did that. We did it together and I do really appreciate my peers, staff and the mayor for making this process as painless as possible."

Councillor Mike Bowman realized the mayor's name is on the document but staff and all elected officials had opportunities to get involved.

"We did what we needed to do to come to this result and I want to compliment everyone on a job well done through a whole difficult process we don't even understand. Thank you very much for making it as simple as possible and including us."

The town said the budget outlines planned investments in infrastructure, facilities, equipment, and technology that



(TOWN OF INGERSOLL PHOTO)

The Town of Ingersoll has approved its first-ever strong mayor power budget through a collaborative process.

support the delivery of essential municipal services.

"The program focuses on maintaining existing assets in a state of good repair, advancing council's strategic priorities and ensuring the long-term sustainability of municipal infrastructure. (It) also marks the groundbreaking and first phase of construction of the MURC. This project is a long-awaited and much-needed community facility that will provide significant recreational and social benefits to residents for decades to come," added the release.

The proposed 2026 capital plan includes 60 projects with a total capital budget of \$37.9 million, funded through \$21.35 in reserves, \$1.35 million in reserve funds, just under \$6 million in grants and fundraising, \$7.4 million in land sale proceeds and an Oxford County contribution of \$65,000.

In addition, \$1.75 million in prior-year projects is being carried forward to 2026, with corresponding funding remaining in reserves until spent.

Echo

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From the publisher's desk: Predictions for 2026



STEWART GRANT

Publisher

A New Year's Day poll on Smerconish.com asked people, "Will the world be in a better place at the end of 2026 than it is today?" Of the 25,000 responses, just over 60% replied "No" while the remainder replied "Yes". What do you think?

It's a subjective question that's hard to measure, but I had cast my Jan. 1 vote in the "Yes"

column. Maybe that's just wishful thinking. The year is certainly off to quite an interesting start.

As I finish up this predictions article on Jan. 3, one of 2026's big questions had already been answered, with the news that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has been removed from power by American forces. While Maduro was an illegitimate leader who had stolen the 2024 Venezuelan election, the brazen manner whereby he was taken out is very concerning, as are the unknown worldwide consequences that may follow.

Here's my crack at how the rest of the year will play out...

1. Despite Trump's comments to the

contrary at his Jan. 3 press conference, public pressure within Venezuela will sway the American President to eventually support Maria Corina Machado as the rightful leader of Venezuela.

2. A Democratic politician will call for the impeachment of Donald Trump for failing to gain necessary approvals for invading Venezuela, but this goes nowhere.
3. In Canada, the Liberal government's government will hold throughout 2026.
4. Pierre Poilievre will remain as Conservative leader following that party's leadership review in January.

5. Although there will be much speculation, China will not invade Taiwan in 2026.

6. A ceasefire will be negotiated in the Russia-Ukraine war.
7. Drone warfare, one of the staples of the Russia-Ukraine war, will sadly make its first high-profile appearance on this side of the ocean, with a notable strike sparking heavy interest in counter-drone defense systems.
8. American tariffs on Canadian-made products will decrease during the year.
9. Despite worries about an AI bubble, the stock markets will record another positive year.

10. More information will be released from the Epstein files, but no arrests of high-profile personalities will occur.

11. In sports, the Stanley Cup will stay south of the border, with the Colorado Avalanche earning the NHL's top prize.
12. Fans of the Toronto Maple Leafs will be spared the agony of losing in the first round when the team fails to make the playoffs.
13. The Buffalo Bills make it to the Super Bowl but lose to the Seattle Seahawks.
14. Team Canada will edge Team USA in the Men's Olympic Hockey Finals.

15. France will win the 2026 World Cup.

16. Speculation will grow regarding Trump's physical and mental health as he turns 80 years old this year. He will survive the year, but with increased public focus on J.D. Vance as potentially needing to take over as U.S. President in 2027.

17. Late addition to the prediction list - Despite all his talk, surely Trump will not invade Greenland, Colombia, or Cuba in 2026, right??

Do you have any bold predictions for 2026? Feel free to email me at stew@granthaven.com to have your say.



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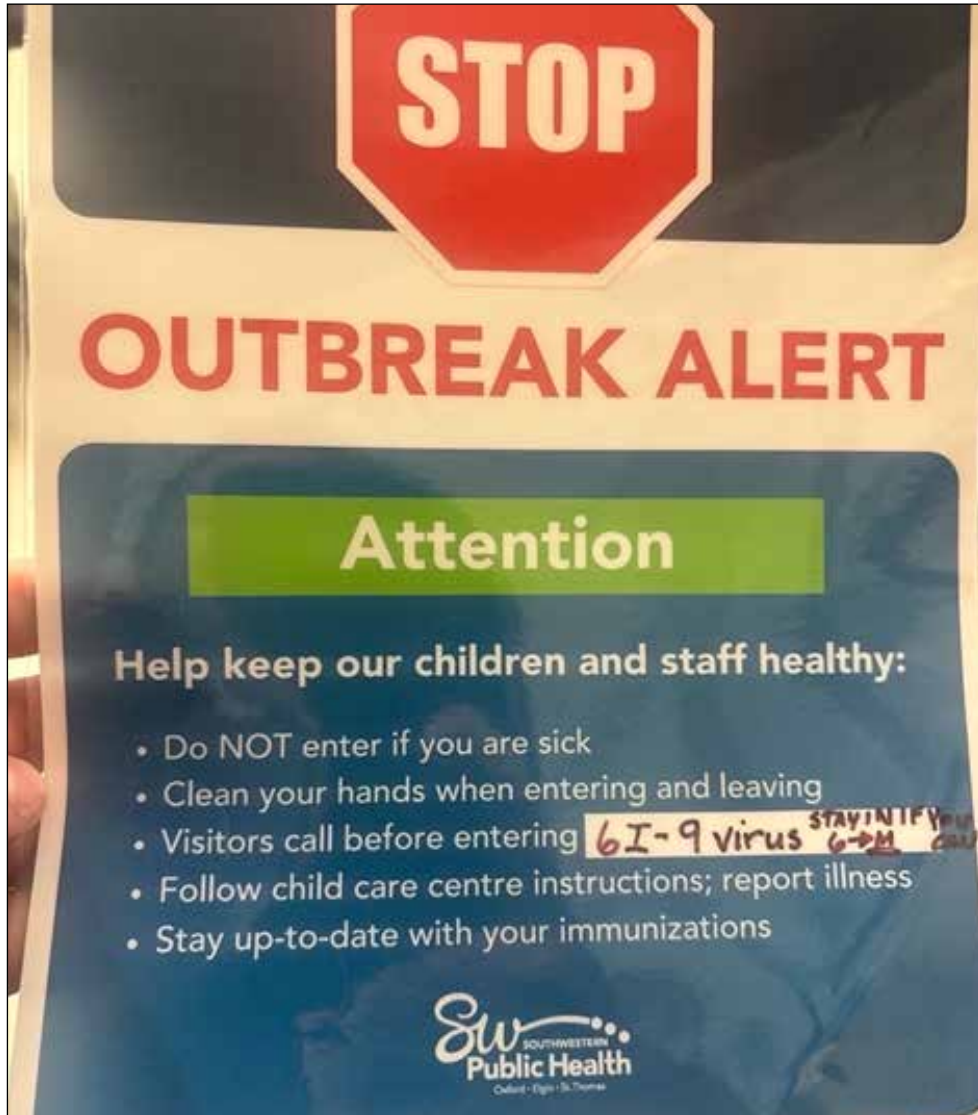
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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

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6. Newspapers strengthen communities
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8. Newspapers should be locally-owned and operated

SWPH advising public about unauthorized outbreak signage



(SWPH PHOTO)

Pictured is a false SWPH poster found in St. Thomas. Health unit officials have contacted police and an investigation is underway.

STAFF

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) is alerting residents and community partners about an unauthorized illness outbreak sign circulating in the community. The forged notice, which features the Southwestern Public Health logo, was not created, issued, or endorsed by SWPH. Local police authorities have been notified and the matter is under investigation.

The document falsely claims an outbreak alert is in the area, with guidance for visitors to call before entering facilities where the document is posted. At this time, there is no such outbreak, and residents should disregard the information.

"We want to assure the public that this sign is not an official Southwestern Pub-

lic Health communication," said Susan McIsaac, Director, Health Protection. "Replicating a forged public health alert is a serious matter. Valid alerts of this nature would be widely communicated through our verified channels, including our website, social media accounts, and direct communications with partners."

SWPH is actively working to resolve the situation and is taking appropriate steps to address the unauthorized use of its logo and branding.

The health unit encourages the public to rely on trusted and official sources for public health information and to verify the authenticity of any notice claiming to come from Southwestern Public Health via its website or by calling the health unit. If residents encounter questionable materials, they are encouraged to report them to SWPH.

Influenza continues to cause havoc in Oxford County

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Cases of influenza continue to rise across the Southwestern Public Health Unit area, as hospitals report an influx of patients presenting with flu-like symptoms.

Colleen Brett is the Manager of Infectious Diseases at the health unit and despite the media attention around this year's influenza situation, it is nothing out of the ordinary.

"What we did notice this year is we experienced flu sooner than we typically do and we are seeing a lot of influenza A, but otherwise it's following the same track."

According to the latest update to the health unit's influenza dashboard, last updated on Dec. 14, 31.3 per cent of flu tests are coming back positive, with the risk level still considered very high. Last year's positive test results peaked at 31.8 per cent on Feb. 16.

The health unit also tracks influenza outbreaks at area hospitals, as well as in long-term care and retirement homes. As of press time, that number sat at five across Oxford and Elgin Counties as well as the City of St. Thomas.

"It is declared where there is evidence of illness spreading, especially in a long-term care home, and it's based on specific criteria set out in provincial guidelines, depending on what the illness is," she added.

In general terms, two or more cases in a long-term care home area or hospital wing within a short period of time designate an outbreak.

Brett said the health unit supplies outbreak management support, which includes appropriate testing.

"We then encourage adherence to very specific infection prevention and control measures. We may have to isolate or cohort those who are ill and then just provide ongoing support to prevent further spread."

As of April 2022, long-term care homes were required to have an infection prevention and control (IPAC) lead on staff. The regulation also sets minimum hours that the IPAC lead must work on-site each week, based on the size of the home. The mandate was introduced after the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted gaps in infection control practices in the sector.

Brett said working with each home's IPAC lead means one point of contact

during an outbreak.

"It streamlines the communication with one person to talk to. There are very close conversations between our infectious disease staff and their IPAC leads. It ensures consistent communication for sure."

The Woodstock Hospital is feeling the effects of the flu season and took to social media recently to let potential patients know a visit to the Emergency Department (ED) could result in longer-than-normal wait times.

"Many patients who require admission are waiting for inpatient beds. As a result, they remain in an ED bed until an inpatient bed is available on the unit. This limits space in the ED and can contribute to longer waits," said a hospital Facebook post.

The hospital's communications manager provided a statement to the Gazette on Tuesday, which said several patients requiring admission are waiting for inpatient beds.

"As a result, they remain in an ED bed until a bed becomes available on an inpatient unit. This reduces space in the ED and may contribute to longer waits. This is often referred to as an ED hold or no bed admit," explained Chelsea Fagan.

Many people are arriving at Woodstock Hospital with significant flu-related symptoms such as fever, respiratory issues, dehydration, and complications such as pneumonia, which often require admission. Fagan added hospitals across the province have surge plans to deal with an increased number of patients.

"Hospitals have additional beds on inpatient units, known as overflow beds, that we are currently using. In addition, as part of surge planning, we have also turned some of our private rooms into double occupancy rooms. While we understand this isn't ideal, it is sometimes necessary to provide care for the number of patients requiring admission, and to move patients out of the Emergency Department as efficiently as possible."

Fagan explained Woodstock Hospital also has internal dashboards developed by its IT department for clinical teams to receive real-time updates on patient status, unit capacity, and flow indicators.

"These tools support timely decision-making and help promote smoother transitions of care throughout the hospital."

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Patterson wraps up Christmas gifting at mobile Canadian Blood Services clinic

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

It was seven days before Christmas and Eddie Patterson had already wrapped up his holiday shopping.

Accepting the futility of trying to buy for his two adult daughters, one in Woodstock, the other in Nova Scotia, he had opted for gift cards, a safer choice based on prior experience.

“I haven’t got a clue if I’m buying the right thing,” Patterson confessed. “At least they can spend it on themselves, buy something they want.”

He was also looking forward to sharing Christmas day with family in Woodstock, good food and good times including an additional mystery gift exchange. The exercise features sequential selections, with participants able to trade their pick for earlier presents, opening up what Patterson called ‘interesting’ options.

“It’s good fun,” he smiled.

Before enjoying family time, Patterson was adding a third donation to his yuletide agenda, the literal gift of life at a Canadian Blood Services (CBS) mobile clinic hosted Thursday, December 18th at the Reeves Community Complex. The donation was Patterson’s 221st, reflecting a commitment stretching back to the age of 22. Employed in England’s mer-

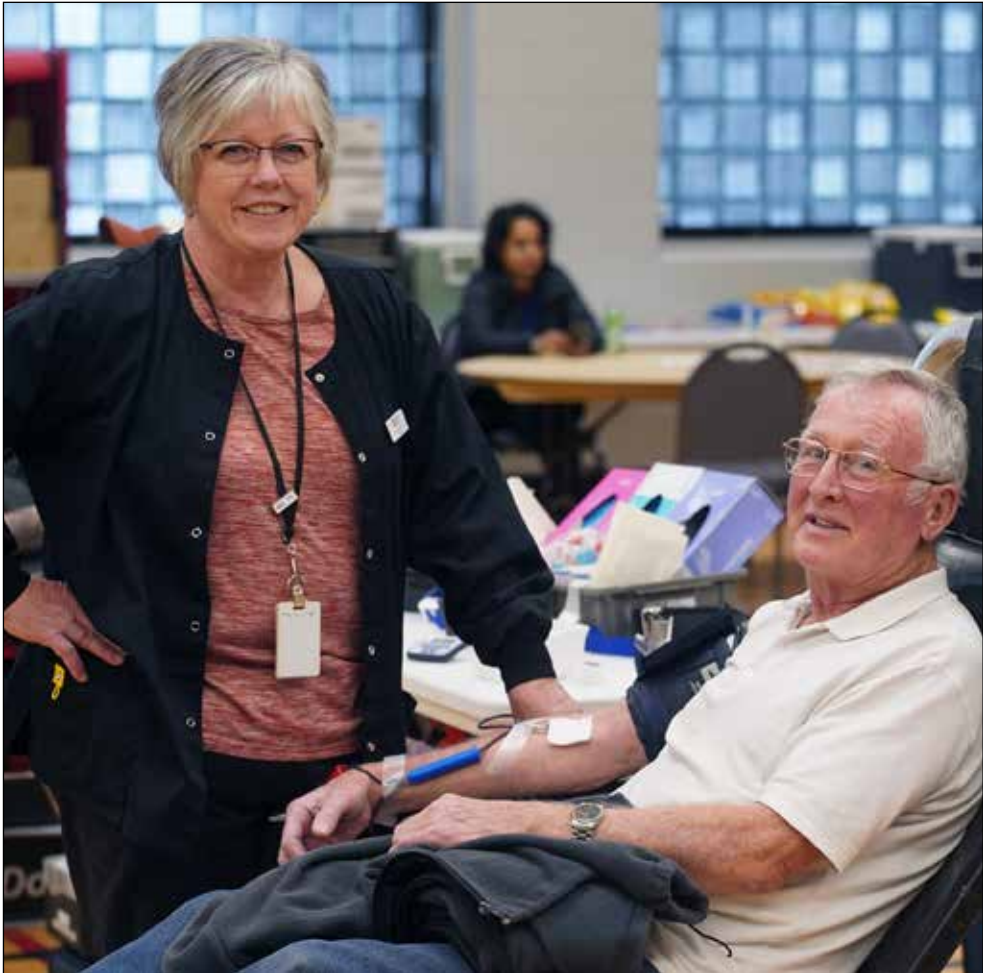
chant navy at the time, Patterson came ashore following a lengthy voyage to New Zealand, greeted by the request for blood from a hospital there.

“That was my first time,” said Patterson, who continued the tradition upon his emigration to Canada four years later. “I’ve done it ever since.”

Patterson originally donated every three months, a period reduced to 56 days as criteria changed following further study. He gave plasma for a time but returned to blood, receiving notices of appreciation at his 100th, 150th and 200th donations. Turning 80 in January, he plans on continuing as long as he’s “good to go.”

“There are so many people who need transfusions,” he explained. “It’s something they need, something I can give and it doesn’t cost anything.”

Patterson is a star in the world of blood donation and credits Adam Myers, Business Development Manager at CBS. His ongoing contribution is particularly impactful given statistics indicating that while one in two Canadians are eligible to give blood, only one in 76 do so. CBS stats also state a Canadian needs blood every 60 seconds, it can take five donors to help one heart surgery patient, eight a week to help treat a patient with leukaemia and up to 50 to save an accident or trauma victim.



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

Canadian Blood Services’ Jonni-Lyn VanDeursen (left) congratulates Eddie Patterson on his 221st donation on Thursday, Dec. 18 at the Reeves Community Complex.

Although our blood supply is ‘stable’ in Myers’ words, CBS has set the ‘very ambitious goal’ of attraction one million new donors across the next five years. That target reflects a growing need due to Canada’s ageing population and for the development of new medicines.

“It’s definitely a lofty goal, but something we are shooting for.”

Those 17 and older in relatively good health can qualify as donors, either at fixed clinics like that in London, or mobile clinics in locations including Woodstock, Ingersoll and Norwich. Going to the CBS website and clicking on the Book Now tab at its top right and entering a location (Woodstock for example) will bring up a list of scheduled dates in

the area.

Each clinic, mobile or permanent, features “great staff and great snacks,” Myers promised.

The blood.ca website also provides a wide range of information, contact listings and a live chat option accessed through its bottom, right portion.

“There is a boatload of information on there,” said Myers, who in conclusion, encourages others to follow Patterson’s example, adding blood donation their routine heading into a new year. The contribution goes both ways he concluded, meaningful for both the donor and those in need.

“Think of it as a gift for yourself and a patient.”

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Woodstock Public Library shares details on new reciprocal borrowing and Early Years programming

ALEX HUNT

Echo Contributor

Family Literacy Day and the new reciprocal borrowing program hit the shelves at the Woodstock Public Library.

The Woodstock Public Library launched the new reciprocal borrowing program on Jan. 1. Shared with Oxford County Library, the program allows locals throughout the county to conveniently receive a library card from both branches.

“Previously, that was a bit more challenging, and there was a cost when getting a card from both library systems,” said Lindsay Harris, CEO of the Woodstock Public Library. “We have removed that barrier. Resident can take stuff out at either library, but they must return the borrowed item to the correct library system.”

“There were a lot of different factors that brought this idea forward. We know people need to access our services if they go to school or work near a different branch, and we wanted to make sure it was convenient for them to stop by on their commute.”

On Jan. 17, the Woodstock Public Library will be having an all-day drop-in Winnie the Pooh Party. Locals will have the opportunity to participate in activities, crafts and stories. A special story time reading will take place from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

On Jan. 24, the library is bringing back its annual Family Literacy Day. Running from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the event promotes literacy-related programming opportunities for families. Centred on the theme ‘Make Mealttime Family Learning Time,’ it provides an opportunity for fami-

lies to incorporate literacy skills into their kitchen activities.

The event will also include a visit from ‘Granny’s Kitchen’ author, Sadé Smith, who will be teaching attendees about Jamaican cuisine. Families will also have the opportunity to try Smith’s dairy-free mango smoothies. Free children’s books donated by Friends of the Library will also be given out to visitors.

“The most important thing to take away from Family Literacy Day is recognizing how vital early literacy is in developing reading and critical thinking skills,” explained Gillian Green, public services supervisor at the Woodstock Public Library.

“Literacy isn’t just about reading; it’s so much more. It’s always exciting when we have authors visit who are passionate about their work, and it’s wonderful to see them engage with the community.”

On Feb. 3 from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., the library will host Wearable Technologies: Custom Light Up Sneakers, a workshop catered to Grade 9 and 12 students. University of Waterloo Stratford School of Interaction Design and Business students will visit the library and teach students about design and electronics programming. Participants will also have the opportunity to work on light-up sneakers.

“I think this is great for people to check out the libraries and see what they have both in their home community and throughout the county,” said Harris. “There are lots of things beyond books and story times at the libraries now, both of our collections complement each other really well, there’s something for everyone at the library.”



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Gillian Green, public services supervisor with some books that will be handed out on Family Literacy Day.

WOWC announces Ryan as new chair

STAFF

Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

The Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus (WOWC) has elected Warden Marcus Ryan of Oxford County as Chair for a one-year term, effective Jan. 9.

“It is an honour to serve as Chair of the Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus for the coming year,” said Chair Ryan. “Western Ontario is Ontario’s economic engine, and our region is facing both significant pressures and tremendous opportunity. Through a strong, united voice, the WOWC will continue to advocate for strategic investments in housing, infrastructure, workforce development, and the supports needed to address mental health, addictions, and homelessness—ensuring our communities remain strong, competitive, and resilient.”

The announcement was made following the organization’s Annual General Meeting, where additional officers were also appointed. Warden Kevin Marriott of Lambton County was elected as Vice-Chair, Ben Addley, CAO of Oxford County, will serve as Secretary, and Sonya Pritchard, CAO of Dufferin County,



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

From Left to Right are Warden Andrea Matrosovs (Grey County), Chair Western Ontario Municipal Conference Committee; Warden Marcus Ryan (Oxford County), Chair Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus; and Warden Kevin Marriott (Lambton County), Vice Chair Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus.

will hold the office of Treasurer.

In addition to the Board leadership, Mayor Jim Ginn of Central Huron was

named Chair of the WOWC Economic Development Sub-Committee. The committee includes sitting and past War-

dens, with support from WOWC member CAOs, regional partners, and economic development specialists.

Warden Andrea Matrosovs from Grey County will serve as Chair of the Western Ontario Municipal Conference for 2026.

“Collaboration will remain central to our work this year,” added Chair Ryan. “By working closely with municipal leaders, senior levels of government, industry, and community partners, the WOWC will continue to advance shared priorities that reflect the realities of our region and deliver tangible outcomes for the people of Western Ontario.”

The Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus is a not-for-profit organization representing 15 upper and single-tier municipalities in Southwestern Ontario, representing more than 1.6 million residents. The WOWC aims to enhance the prosperity and overall wellbeing of rural and small urban communities across the region. Caucus members work collectively to influence federal and provincial legislation and programs through advocacy, research, analysis and education. For more information, visit www.wowc.ca.

Woodstock Police looking to recruit more women

LEE GRIFFI
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Woodstock Police Service (WPS) is hoping to attract more women to a career in policing and has scheduled an information session for Jan. 29.

“This event is about showing women that policing is a meaningful, rewarding, and achievable career. When our workforce better reflects the community we serve, we are more effective in public safety,” explained Pritpal Thind, media relations and community service officer with the WPS.

“Women bring important strengths to policing, including communication, de-escalation, and different perspectives on problem-solving. For us, this isn’t about checking boxes or symbolism. It’s about building a police service that is operationally stronger and better equipped to respond to the needs of our community,” he added.

While there is no additional funding available to hire more women, the province has taken steps to support police recruitment more broadly.

“This includes eliminating tuition fees for the Ontario Police College, making it free for recruits to attend, increasing the number of available recruit intakes, and expanding training capacity through additional campus locations. The province has also committed funding toward modernizing Ontario Police College infrastructure to meet current and future training demands,” said Thind.

The WPS is recruiting for both sworn police officers and civilian positions within the service. The event is focused on introducing women to the wide range of roles available in policing and allowing them to speak directly with officers about career paths, training, and expectations.

POSITION	MEN	WOMEN
SWORN OFFICERS (102 TOTAL)	81	21 (21%)
CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES (54 TOTAL)	16	38 (70%)

Thind said the force is encouraged by the progress achieved to date but recognizes that continued efforts are needed to ensure the composition of its sworn ranks more accurately reflects the community it serves. He added WPS is pleased with the quality of its female employees.

“Our female officers and civilian members are integral to our success as an organization. They contribute across all areas of policing and consistently demon-



The Woodstock Police Service is holding a recruitment event for women on Jan. 29 at Huron Park High School. (WPS PHOTO)

strate professionalism, leadership, and excellence in service delivery. This event builds on that success by encouraging the next generation of women to see themselves in policing roles.”

The Woodstock Police Service continues to participate in the ‘Answer the Call’ campaign to support efforts to strengthen policing across Ontario. Thind said the event complements that initiative by focusing locally and giving women direct, face-to-face access to officers and members from the service.

The session is described as structured but informal. Attendees will have the opportunity to speak directly with female officers, ask questions, and learn about the realities of the job. An optional shuttle run will also be offered, allowing participants to practise a component of the physical fitness testing process. The goal is to make the experience informative, approachable, and practical.

“Women make up more than 50 per cent of Woodstock’s population, and under the Community Safety and Policing Act, police services are expected to be representative of the communities they serve,” added Thind.

“This initiative is not about replacing anyone. It’s about widening the door, so talented people feel welcome. More women in policing improves operational

capacity, reduces service delays, strengthens investigations, particularly in cases involving trauma or intimate partner violence, and enhances public trust.”

He added that, at the end of the day, the focus is on operational excellence, public safety, and ensuring that every woman and girl can see policing as a profession where they belong and can make a real difference.

The event takes place from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Huron Park Secondary School at 900 Cromwell Street. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet members of the Woodstock Police Service, ask questions, and explore a range of career paths, from frontline policing to civilian roles. Grade 12 students are welcome to attend.

Registration closes Jan. 27 and can be completed by sending an email to womeninpolicing@woodstock-police.ca.

The Woodstock Police Service is also recruiting Auxiliary Officers. Members of the Auxiliary Unit support the community by participating in events such as parades and festivals, assisting sworn officers with crime prevention and public safety initiatives, and providing support on certain calls for service. More information is available at <https://woodstock-police.ca/careers.../volunteer-auxiliary/>.

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Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the birthstone for January?

2. What is Canada's biggest forest?

3. In the Chinese Calendar, what is the animal of 2026?

4. Who was the President of Venezuela in 2025?

5. In what organ of the body is insulin produced?

6. What was the first single

released by Phil Collins as a solo artist?

7. Street Fighter was first released on what gaming device?

8. What is Mr. Beast's real name?

9. What does the federal agency, ICE stand?

10. What is Canada's only native marsupial?

This week's answers are found on pg. 35

Woodstock Police Service briefs

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Charges laid following altercation with weapon

Employees at a business on Dundas Street discovered two individuals inside a vehicle belonging to the business on the morning of Jan. 8.

Police say the suspects were asked to leave the vehicle, and during this interaction, one male became aggressive and swung a knife toward one of the employees. After a short altercation, he fled the area.

Police located and arrested the male on a warrant shortly after and found a quantity of suspected fentanyl in his possession. A 34-year-old from Woodstock has been charged with assault with a weapon, Possession of a Schedule I Substance (Fentanyl) and two counts of failing to comply with a probation order.

The accused was held in custody for a bail hearing.

Multiple charges for city man after bust

A Woodstock man is facing multiple charges following a traffic-related investigation.

On Dec. 22, a Woodstock Police Service officer observed a vehicle being driven on Dundas Street by a suspended driver who was quickly arrested.

During the investigation, officers also located a quantity of a substance believed to be cocaine and ammunition inside the vehicle. Further investigation revealed the accused was bound by a probation order prohibiting possession of ammunition.

A 53-year-old male has been charged with driving while under suspension, Possession of a Schedule I Substance (Cocaine) and failing to comply with a probation order.

The accused is scheduled to appear in court at a later date.

Impaired Driving Charge Laid Following Early-Morning Incident

Woodstock Police were called to a parking lot on Norwich Avenue early last Friday morning following a report of a male revving a vehicle for an extended period and appearing impaired. Officers located the vehicle with the

driver slumped in the driver's seat and the engine running.

A 54-year-old Woodstock man has been charged with impaired driving by alcohol and drugs and was released on an undertaking with conditions.

Theft and probation breach charges laid

Woodstock Police were called to a retail business on Norwich Avenue on Jan. 9 after loss prevention staff arrested a female for stealing merchandise. Police took custody of the female and charged a 32-year-old city woman with theft under \$5,000 and two counts of failing to comply with a probation order. She was released from custody with a future court date.

Collision leads to charges

A Woodstock man is facing multiple charges following a collision on Vincent Street on Dec. 29.

Officers responded to a report of a vehicle that struck a parked car and when they arrived located the driver inside. Police say he was on existing court-ordered conditions not to operate or have

care and control of a motor vehicle from two separate release orders. A Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) evaluation confirmed the driver to be impaired by a drug.

A 45-year-old Woodstock male has been charged with two counts of failing to comply with a release order, impaired driving (alcohol and drugs), dangerous driving and failure or refusal to comply with a demand. The accused was held for a bail hearing.

Young city man charged after hit and run

A Woodstock man is facing charges following a motor vehicle collision.

Police responded to a report of a fail-to-remain collision in the area of Nellis Street on Dec. 21, where a vehicle had been struck from behind and the other vehicle fled the scene.

Police located the vehicle and the driver a short distance away thanks to help from the public. Further investigation revealed that the driver was under suspension.

A 21-year-old male from Woodstock has been charged with failing to remain and driving while under suspension.

Ontario Provincial Police briefs

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Ingersoll man charged

An individual has been charged after an incident in Ingersoll where an officer was assaulted.

Police were dispatched to a disturbance at an address on Albert Street in the Town of Ingersoll at 5 a.m. on Jan. 2.

Police say the responding officers interacted with one of the persons involved, which resulted in that person assaulting one of the responding officers. As a result, a 37-year-old was charged with assaulting a Peace Officer.

There were no reported injuries sustained because of the assault. The accused was released from custody and is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Woodstock on March 3.

Collision leads to impaired and other charges

A Woodstock man has been hit with five charges after a collision in South West Oxford.

On January 3, 2025, at approximately 12:30 p.m., members of the Oxford Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Detachment Police were dispatched to the intersection of Foldens Line and Clarke Road at 12:30 p.m. on Jan. 3. It was reported that two vehicles had collided, where one failed to remain on scene.

Police subsequently located the vehicle on Clarke Road where a 33-year-old was arrested and charged with impaired driving with alcohol and drugs, dangerous driving, failing to remain, following too closely and disobeying a stop sign.

The accused was released from custody and is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Woodstock on March 7.

Police concerned over recent drug overdoses

Members of the Oxford OPP have responded to two recent opiate overdoses in Oxford County. In each instance, naloxone was successfully administered by officers, and neither of the overdoses was fatal. As a result, police are issuing a public safety alert due to the number of overdoses in a short period of time.

Anyone using unregulated drugs should use extreme caution, should not use them alone, and should have Narcan readily available. Anyone who suffers serious illness after consuming a narcotic should call 911, attend a local

emergency room, or attend a walk-in clinic immediately.

The Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act is supported by the OPP. It applies to anyone seeking emergency support during an overdose, including the person experiencing an overdose. The act protects the person who seeks help, whether they stay or leave the overdose scene before help arrives. The act also protects anyone else who is at the scene when help arrives.

The law protects against charges for possessing drugs for your own use and violating conditions of your parole, bail, probation or conditional sentence for a simple drug possession charge. It does not provide protection for trafficking, any outstanding arrest warrants or violating conditions of your parole, bail, probation or conditional sentence for an offence that is not simple possession.

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Vienneau faces over 40 new counts

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"This extensive investigation demonstrates a steadfast commitment by investigators to determine the facts of the matter," says Staff Sgt. Ed Nugent, West Hants RCMP. "It involved many units and agencies working toward a common goal of identifying victims and ensuring all appropriate charges would be laid."

Lead investigator Cst. Dave Trenholm spoke to the Echo and said there is a possibility more victims are out there.

"With the nature of these types of offences taking place on the internet, there is lots of access out there in terms of geography in Canada, the United States and elsewhere. We turn over so many stones and we find what we find and we lay charges on the evidence."

Trenholm wouldn't comment on whether the RCMP has found victims in other jurisdictions but would say police forces across Canada work closely together on these types of investigations.

"If there is another police force that can assist us with advancing our investigation we'll reach out and work together to bring the file closer to a resolution or to charges."

He added the investigation came to Nova Scotia

after the first identified victim was located in West Hants.

"A complaint was generated at the local detachment, as often is the case when these things come to light. An investigation took place and then, through a series of judicial authorization and some police work, we were able to identify the alleged suspect and file charges."

Trenholm admitted these types of investigations are extremely time-consuming due to the online nature of the offences but added Canadian police forces work well together in the best interest of victims.

"It's kind of a borderless crime, so there is a lot of motivation for people to work together when there is a reasonable prospect to identify somebody and bring them to court."

A total of eight RCMP units and agencies in Nova Scotia are involved in the investigation, along with the Waterloo Regional Police Service, Woodstock Police Service, and the Department of Justice's International Assistance Group.

Vienneau appeared in Kentville Provincial Court on Jan. 6, where the charges were read.

When asked about this case, Trenholm explained he

goes straight into prevention mode to educate people on the dangers of the internet.

"These cases happen a lot. If there's anything to take away, any public messaging to go out when you're reporting on this story, an education piece for parents to really be tuned in to how their children are utilizing the internet."

He added when he was growing up in the early days of the internet there were no parental protections.

"It was very much like the Wild West. Today, there are a multitude of parental controls. Check in with your kids to see what apps they have on their phones and who they are communicating with. There are certain apps kids can't use as they would be breaching the terms of service."

Trenholm said as hard as it can be, the best way to prevent these types of crimes is to be aware of what's going on.

"It's a really difficult thing to do and kids are very resourceful when it comes to accessing the internet. But, having that conversation with your kids and checking in with them to see how they are doing and who they are talking to online are all important steps to improve internet safety."

Oxford County Library participating in Forest of Reading

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Discover a variety of Canadian stories, authors, and illustrators at your local library branch with the largest recreational reading program in Canada.

The Oxford County Library is participating in the Forest of Reading Program, which highlights Canadian authors, illustrators, and stories. The library launched its Forest of Reading activities on Jan. 12, and readers of all ages can participate in reading challenges part of the Forest of Reading. Each year, more than 270,000 readers across Canada participate through their public or school libraries.

"It's important to highlight Canadian

authors, illustrators, stories because we are really promoting the sense of community and reading with our Canadian community and just highlighting different stories from different backgrounds," said Katelyn Bennett, a literacy program specialist.

The Forest of Reading program features a variety of categories depending on grade level and/or age including the Blue Spruce (kindergarten to grade two), Silver Birch (grades three to six), Yellow Cedar (grades four to eight), Red Maple (grades seven and eight), White Pine (grades nine to 12), and Evergreen for adults.

"I'm really excited. I know that Blue Spruce is usually one of our most popular programs in the past, but I'm excited

to highlight books in all of the categories this year and really showcase the nominees that have been chosen," Bennett said.

The Forest of Reading nominated books and feature stories from a variety of cultural backgrounds, particularly the picture books in the Blue Spruce category.

"It's important to share those different perspectives so people can see different ways of living and sharing different knowledge," she added.

In addition to tracking the read books, which can be done via the Beanstalk app, kids and adults alike can earn badges and vote for their favourite books. Children between the ages of four and 18 can vote in person at their library branch or online, and adults can vote in September.

Readers can participate in the Forest of Reading Program in their school library, public library, or on their own. Bennett explained that public libraries don't always participate.

"We do often see it in school libraries, but it's so important to just have this program in the public library system as well, just to showcase what amazing stories there are from Canadian authors, just to share because I find that a lot of books that come in and new things can not necessarily be Canadian authors," she said.

"So, we love to highlight those and just share those with our community."

More information, including reading lists, can be found at <https://www.ocl.net/programs-events/forest-of-reading>.

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Forgotten objects given new life at ICAC refurbished art exhibit



(KYRAH SMITH PHOTO)

"Brass Tunes" by Robert Norrie; featured in ICAC's newest Art Exhibit.

KYRAH SMITH

Echo Correspondent

The Ingersoll Creative Arts Centre (ICAC) kicked off the new year on Jan. 10 with a new exhibition titled Refurbished Art: Bringing New Life to Something Forgotten, highlighting the work of local artist Robert Norrie.

"I welcome all of you in celebration of Robert Norrie's show opening," began ICAC board member Linda Dineen as she addressed the crowd. "I see a lot of new faces here today. The Ingersoll Creative Arts Centre has been a community hub for over 50 years. We draw members from a radius of about an hour away," she explained proudly, "and that really speaks to the uniqueness of this place and the camaraderie we feel working alongside other creators and artists."

Dineen also took a moment to thank the exhibit's sponsor, Revolution Carpentry, before highlighting ICAC's ongoing mission. "Part of our mission is to feature both local and not-so-local, emerging and experienced artists," she said, gesturing toward Norrie. "We have Robert here today, who is a local artist, born and raised in Ingersoll for over 65 years. And, if you haven't guessed, he's had quite the career as a welder."



(KYRAH SMITH PHOTO)

"Frozen Heart" one of the many pieces featured in Refurbished Art; Bringing New Life to Something Forgotten.

Norrie spent much of his career working at Timberjack in neighbouring Woodstock where he developed the skills that would later shape his creative journey. His exhibit features primarily recycled materials, with each metal sculpture taking on a personality of its own. Guests were invited to enjoy refreshments while browsing the whimsical collection.

When asked what inspired his work, Norrie shared, "I like to bring old things back to life; things that have been forgotten." He believes each piece reflects the idea of second chances, where worn materials are not discarded, but reborn.

"This is my first time seeing all my things in a gallery setting," Norrie laughed. "It looks way better here than in my shop."

The opening reception proved to be a success, with Norrie selling four pieces within the first hour. He also expressed his gratitude to the centre for their hard work and for giving him the opportunity to share his art with the community.

For those interested in viewing Refurbished Art first-



(KYRAH SMITH PHOTO)

Local Artist Robert Norrie, standing with one of his sculptures on opening day.

hand, the exhibit runs from Jan. 10 to Feb. 21. More information about the exhibition and upcoming shows can be found at www.creativeartscentre.com/events.

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Downtown Woodstock restaurant rings in 2026

Woodstock stepped into a world of glamour and indulgence as guests gathered at 434 Dundas Street for the Gatsby New Year's Eve Gala Glitz, presented by Good Times Restaurant on Dec. 31. The gala experience offered attendees a rare escape into an evening styled with the sophistication of the Gatsby era and the vibrancy of a modern celebration. The venue was transformed into an elevated, intentional space where light, texture, and movement created an atmosphere reminiscent of a 1920s gathering—polished,

immersive, and designed to feel extraordinary. Guests arrived dressed in their finest, stepping into a room that blended vintage elegance with contemporary energy. The evening opened with a beautifully curated three-course supper, setting the tone for a night crafted for those seeking a New Year's Eve experience beyond the ordinary. As the gala unfolded, attendees enjoyed a celebration that felt indulgent from the moment they walked through the doors, offering a brief but memorable escape from the everyday.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Tables were filled with guests, all enjoying a beautifully prepared fine dining experience.



With every seat filled, Tiffany, Vanessa, Lauren, Jeff, Penny, and Lee were kept busy ensuring guests had a great experience.



With dining and dancing at the heart of the evening, Fernando, Andrea, Dulce, Warren, Andres and Kaitlyn enjoyed a truly memorable night.

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Mudmen returning to Woodstock

ROBBY CAMPBELL

Mudmen Band Member

Red Plaid Productions is bringing Canada's Celtic Rock Warriors Mudmen back to The Market Centre Theatre in Woodstock.

We are no strangers to the area, playing shows with Johnny Reid, The Irish Rovers, The Guess Who, Cowapolooza on Canada Day in Woodstock and selling out the Market Centre a few times. Mudmen have guested and opened for some of the world's biggest acts such as ZZ Top, Loverboy, Brooks and Dunn, Sarah MacLaughlin, Red Ryder, Glass Tiger, and 54-40, to name a few.

Our career highlights include meeting and performing for the Queen, 12 Canada's Walk of Fame ceremonies, performing at the Edmonton Oilers 1984 Stanley Cup reunion Gala, eight Grey Cups, three Briers, three Memorial Cups, 10 International Plowing matches and much more.

We have had a lot of commercial success over the years, mixing Celtic, country and rock together to create our sound. Our music has been featured on Hockey Night in Canada, six Don Cherry Rock'em Sock'em hockey videos, HBO'S Shameless, NBC's The Black Donnellys, WWE Wrestling, AE Sports games, and Much Music/MTV, reaching #19 on the top 20 countdown.

We always enjoy performing in Woodstock. It's a great little city that has supported us well over the years. The smaller towns and communities like Woodstock have



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

kept Mudmen in business for many years. When we were dropped from the record deal label with no radio or TV support, the small towns and the farming communities supported us, kept us alive, and we Mudmen will never forget that.

This is our 28th year together, and we have played over 3000 shows to date in eight different countries, building a legion of fans from young to old. Mudmen have played some of the grandest halls in North America, like Massey Hall, Victoria Hall, Cen-

tennial Hall and Brockville Arts Centre. We have also done big festivals like Dauphins Countryfest, Edgefest, Lucknow's Music in the Fields and Western Fair.

It's all about connecting with our audience. We have an original song we wrote called Old Plaid Shirt that goes over well, and fans show up wearing plaid shirts. It's great to see a sea of plaid shirts in the audience as fans sing along to well-known Mudmen songs. We also sell Mudmen plaid shirts at our merch booth as well

as colouring and trivia books, t-shirts, vinyl records and CDs.

It has been said that we are the last of the stubborn survivors, the band that just keeps going and going. Johnny Reid said Mudmen are Canada's best-kept secret. Don Cherry said we are good Canadian boys. Walter Ostanek said he was proud of us.

We have a show booked for Woodstock on Friday, Jan. 30, where we will be playing music from our 11 albums with a few new songs thrown in that will most likely be on the next

album. Tickets are \$35.00 and are available at the Market Theatre Box office at www.theatrewoodstock.com or by calling 519 537-

2582. This is an all-ages show with no alcohol being served. For more information on Mudmen, visit www.mudmen.ca.



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Polish Hall hosts retro New Year's party

Woodstock welcomed the new year in unforgettable style as hundreds of guests packed the Woodstock Polish Hall for the New Year's Eve Retro Pop Video Dance Party, a high-energy celebration featuring the biggest hits and music videos from 1985 to 2005. The event transformed the hall on Dufferin Street into a nostalgic time capsule of neon colours, iconic choreography, and classic anthems that defined two decades of pop culture. Attendees arrived dressed in everything from leg warmers and vintage band tees to low-rise denim and early 2000s sparkle, fully embracing the throwback theme. Throughout the night, a live VJ

kept the dance floor packed by spinning all request hits from artists such as Madonna, Missy Elliott, Nirvana, Nelly, and countless others. Each track was paired with its original music video, projected across multiple large screens that lit up the hall with retro flair. The event catered to a mature 30-plus crowd and offered a unique perk - every ticket holder was invited to submit a song request in advance, helping shape the night's playlist. As the clock struck twelve, the room erupted in cheers, confetti, and classic pop anthems, marking the start of 2026 with energy, nostalgia, and community spirit.

(RON YUZARK PHOTOS)



Geoff and Jen turned back the clock and rocked the dance floor '80s style.



Louise, Kim, and Tanya arrived in their finest and absolutely nailed the night's theme.



Ron, Rachel, Bruce, and Darlene nailed the night's theme with their standout looks.



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Woodstock Chamber moves into new digs

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Woodstock Chamber of Commerce has a new home at 21 Market Street.

The organization recently moved from the second floor of the United Way Oxford building, something Chamber General Manager Mike Crabbe said has its advantages.

“The thought came up that there was this office available in the city-owned Market Centre, and if the chamber had an opportunity to move into that space, it would give us the chance to be alongside some of our business-minded community partners.”

Those partners are the Business Improvement Area (BIA), the Oxford County Small Business Centre, the Downtown Development Officer and the city’s Economic Development Department.

“Ultimately, it has resulted in creating a business hub so when folks need help, they come in and between all of the organizations they’re going to leave with the answers they came in for,” explained Crabbe.

The chamber progressed gradually over the past several weeks, culminating in its official opening on Jan. 2. He added the move has already paid off in being able to steer someone in the right direction.

“I’ve had a member come in with a

question about chamber-related things, and through the conversation, we realized there were some things outside the scope of our work they needed help with. Traditionally, I would hand over a business card and say reach out to these folks and for me, that’s where the conversation would end.”

Crabbe said in this case, he was able to talk across the floor and introduce them to the person who could provide the right help.

“In this case, Brenda from the Small Business Centre happened to be available. The client came in with 10 questions, five for me and five for her, and left with all the answers. For the chamber, it’s a huge benefit to know we have friends within arm’s reach, who we know can help our members.”

He added there are other obvious advantages to the new workplace.

“Our old office wasn’t accessible, whereas now we are fully accessible, and that was a huge win for the chamber. We also have access to a decent-sized boardroom where we can hold networking events, so that’s a game-changer for us.”

Crabbe added he will also be able to offer education sessions to people outside of the chamber by collaborating with their new neighbours.

“There are more opportunities to lean into each other’s events and we have goals of actively preparing events to-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Woodstock Chamber of Commerce recently moved into 21 Market Street, allowing the organization to better serve its members.

gether.”

He explained the move also allows the chamber to better achieve its strategic goal of being a community player.

“By that I mean somebody our members can rely on to have access to the other networks around and our goals of being a more collaborative organization with like-minded folks. My goal over the next couple of years is to instill the importance of community.”

Crabbe added Woodstock is growing incredibly quickly, but the small-town lure remains and is something that should be highlighted.

“By working together we can embrace

the growth while still maintaining that small-town charm of knowing who people are. Having something like this business hub is going to help us cross-pollinate across each of our organizations.”

The chamber’s former home is looking for a new tenant on the second floor of the United Way Oxford building at 447 Hunter Street. The office is available for lease to a local non-profit or charitable organization and is approximately 300 square feet and fully furnished. Anyone interested can reach out to Kelly Gilson at 519-539-3851 ext. 301 or kelly@unit-edwayoxford.ca.

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Woodstock Ingersoll Echo

SPORTS

New CASS kids on the block 4-0 in TVRA Southeast junior hoops

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

The new kids on the Thames Valley Regional Athletics Southeast junior boys' basketball block have announced their intentions with an undefeated 4-0 run through the pre-Christmas portion of the season.

Last year, Woodstock College Avenue Knights junior wins of any kind were

celebrated, let alone four in a row. What makes this year's start impressive beyond the team's undefeated status is the fact three of their victories came against perennial division contenders, including a 16-point victory over Woodstock St. Mary's, an even dozen over St. Thomas St. Joe's, and a narrow 69-66 decision over the Woodstock CI Red Devils.

"This year it's totally different," said 6'8" forward Lukas Mickevicius, an intimidating force under the basket, combining that presence with the ability to handle the ball and a shooting touch reaching out past the three-point line.

"We're bigger and stronger than we were last year," added coach Scott Awde, Mickevicius' evolution from a

TVRA SOUTHEAST SENIOR BOYS BASKETBALL	
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ST. MARY'S	59
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LORD DORCHESTER	39
WOODSTOCK ST. MARY'S	58
ST. THOMAS CENTRAL ELGIN	38
ST. THOMAS PARKSIDE	48
WOODSTOCK HURON PARK	28
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6	
WOODSTOCK CI	76
INGERSOLL DCI	56
ST. THOMAS ST. JOE'S	61
WOODSTOCK HURON PARK	41
WOODSTOCK ST. MARY'S	53
AYLMER EAST ELGIN	33
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17	
WOODSTOCK ST. MARY'S	39
LORD DORCHESTER	19
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16	
PARKSIDE	57
WCI	37
INGERSOLL DCI	64
WOODSTOCK HURON PARK	54
CASS	89
CENTRAL ELGIN	49



Knights Dylan Hircsu (left) battles for a loose ball. (JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

tall, scrawny kid to a dominant player a case in point. The coach is pleased to see the kids compete hard as a team on defence, while admitting offence is still a work in progress.

"We're having fun, having a good time. You work hard, you're rewarded."

This year's roster is Grade 10 heavy said Awde, featuring a number of returnees. The Knights' 4-0 start may have come as a surprise to some he agreed, although an early strong showing in an exhibition game against Brantford North Park gave him an indication they were much improved over the previous season.

"That sort of set a tone early. We're good too."

While the Knights have stepped up their game, Awde sees league-wide improvement, highlighted at an early-season tournament featuring the teams mentioned above, as well as St. Thomas Parkside, which currently stands at 5-0 in league play.

"I was blown away by the level of basketball."

Tuesday, Dec. 16 the Knights closed out their pre-holiday run with an 89-49 win over the visiting St. Thomas Central Elgin Titans, paced offensively by Mickevicius' game-high 27 points. Tyler VanMarrum added 17 for College Avenue, point guard Kameron Roos had 14, Greyson Padfield an even dozen, Easton Freeman five, Faiad Alezzi four and Dylan Hircsu, Declan Greig and Brody Martin two apiece. E. Marr had

11 for the Titans and J. VanderMaare added ten.

The game was a high-tempo affair, the Knights able to distribute minutes against a solid opponent which played hard and scored for the duration.

"I enjoy that," said Mickevicius, pleased to see his team sharing both the floor and the rock. "I trust everyone on this team to shoot the ball."

He, Roos and Padfield, a 6'4" forward with a smooth shooting stroke, play with the Oxford Attack program, adding experience outside of school ball to a group featuring a bunch of kids who play.

The team has built community said Roos, listens to coach Awde, tries to execute during games and continues to work hard in practice.

"No one is perfect," he said. "There are things we have to work really hard on."

Looking ahead to the Christmas break, Mickevicius was encouraging his teammates to stay active, working on their game where possible. The obvious goal says Martin is to continue to play well, finish first and have a good playoff run.

"Make it as far as we can," said Roos.

And while the Knights are looking for continued improvement, they're aware every other team is working toward the same goal, meaning they can't relax.

"We have to keep improving every time, better every game so when it comes to playoffs, we play our best basketball," Padfield concluded.

Warriors junior volleyball girls chase Severwright aces to victory

JEFF TRIBE

Echo Correspondent

The St. Mary’s Warriors junior girls’ volleyball team chased 12 consecutive momentum-changing Mikayla Severwright aces to victory Tuesday, December 16 at Tillsonburg Glendale.

“I was kind of really nervous,” admitted the Grade 9 rookie. “I just went back there and served my best and did my best.”

Severwright’s service prowess helped underline the momentum shifts which may not define volleyball, but certainly are part of its makeup. Warriors coach Ethan Teague admitted his squad had none during the first set, which appeared to be headed in Tillsonburg’s favour, leading 22-13, until Severwright stepped to the line.

“Twelve in a row changes the game,” credited Teague of a crucial come-from-behind turnaround on the front end of a 25-22, 14-25, 25-13, 25-9 Thames Valley Regional Athletics (TVRA) match victory over the homecourt Gemini.

Having in effect stolen the first set,

the Warriors proceeded to give their advantage back. The Gemini proved stronger on service reception, converting solid first passes into offence en route to an 11-point win.

“You could tell it was a little rough,” said Warriors middle Jewel Mensah. “Just because we won the first set we thought we could play easy and we weren’t playing up to our potential.”

It was as if a switch had been flipped for the third set, St. Mary’s powering out to an early 11-2 lead.

“We went out there and were like, we’re playing volleyball this time,” said Mensah.

“We went out there, had a good start and kept that momentum for the entire set,” added Abby Dixon, in agreement with Severwright’s opinion the game is a lot mental. If the team gets down, its play goes down, Dixon continued.

“I feel like once our team’s energy is up, we get hyped, we play hyped.”

Given the Warriors are a young squad, just three Grade 10s and the balance first-year players, momentum swings are arguably more understandable. Al-

though, in general, Severwright has found the transition from elementary volleyball an enjoyable and manageable one.

“It’s pretty much the same. I’m with a bunch of girls I love to play with and just do my best.”

St. Mary’s closed out the match victory in the fourth set, displaying resilience after the Gemini got out to an early lead. The Warriors eased back into the game, went ahead 11-7 and were able to maintain momentum through a Glendale coaching time out, outscoring their hosts 14-3 from that point on.

The result raised St. Mary’s TVRA record to 3-1, good for a third-place tie with St. Thomas St. Joes. Ingersoll DCI

and Woodstock CI sat atop the standings heading into the Christmas break, both with undefeated 5-0 marks. In conclusion, coach Teague was happy to take the win, and also the lesson which came with it.

“We’ve got to start with the energy up so we’re not playing catch-up all the time.”



Warrior middle Jewel Mensah (left) gets up for the block against Tillsonburg’s Avery Haley (centre) and Lydia Yarmie (right).

TVRA SENIOR GIRLS VOLLEYBALL	
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8	
ST. MARY’S	25, 25, 25
ST. THOMAS CENTRAL ELGIN	21, 10, 20
PARKSIDE	25, 25, 25
HURON PARK	10, 20, 20
DORCHESTER	25, 25, 19, 25
COLLEGE AVENUE	22, 18, 25, 19
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6	
WOODSTOCK CI	25, 25, 24, 16, 15
INGERSOLL DCI	23, 20, 26, 25, 12
ST. JOE’S	27, 25, 25
HURON PARK	25, 17, 23
EAST ELGIN	25, 25, 25
ST. MARY’S	20, 4, 21
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16	
GLENDALE	25, 25, 25, 24, 13
ST. MARY’S	16, 12, 17, 26, 15
INGERSOLL DCI	25, 25, 23, 25
HURON PARK	19, 17, 25, 20
COLLEGE AVENUE	25, 25, 25
CENTRAL ELGIN	18, 17, 22
PARKSIDE	19, 23, 25, 25, 17
WCI	25, 25, 19, 20, 15

TVRA JUNIOR GIRLS VOLLEYBALL	
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8	
INGERSOLL DCI	25, 25, 25
AYLMER EAST ELGIN	18, 12, 16
ST. MARY’S	20, 20, 25, 25, 15
ST. THOMAS CENTRAL ELGIN	25, 25, 17, 7, 0
WOODSTOCK HURON PARK	23, 25, 25, 22, 15
ST. THOMAS PARKSIDE	25, 23, 15, 25, 13
WOODSTOCK COLLEGE AVENUE	22, 25, 25, 26
LORD DORCHESTER	25, 14, 22, 24
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6	
ST. MARY’S	25, 27, 25, 25
AYLMER EAST ELGIN	17, 29, 19, 18
GLENDALE	25, 22, 25, 25
COLLEGE AVENUE	9, 25, 17, 11
WOODSTOCK CI	25, 25, 25
INGERSOLL DCI	16, 18, 20
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16	
ST. MARY’S	25, 14, 25, 25
GLENDALE	22, 25, 13, 9
WOODSTOCK COLLEGE AVENUE	25, 24, 30, 25
ST. THOMAS CENTRAL ELGIN	18, 10, 32, 19
INGERSOLL DCI	25, 25, 13, 25, 15
WOODSTOCK HURON PARK	14, 21, 25, 15, 7
WOODSTOCK CI	25, 25, 19, 25
ST. THOMAS PARKSIDE	20, 23, 25, 23

Sense of satisfaction if no rest for committed IDCi Blue Bombers vice

JEFF TRIBE
Echo Correspondent

There was no rest for the very committed Ingersoll DCI Blue Bombers boys curling vice Ben Timleck.

But there was a wicked sense of satis-

TVRA SOUTHEAST BOYS CURLING	
MONDAY, JANUARY 12	
INGERSOLL DCI	14
GLENDALE	2
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8	
WOODSTOCK CI	11
GLENDALE	4
ST. MARY'S	7
ST. THOMAS PARKSIDE	5
INGERSOLL	7
ST. THOMAS ST. JOE'S	2
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17	
WCI	9
ST. THOMAS CENTRAL ELGIN	4
AYLMER EAST ELGIN	9
WCI	3
PARKSIDE	7
IDCI	5
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16	
WCI	7
ST. MARY'S	7
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5	
INGERSOLL	9
CENTRAL ELGIN	0
GLENDALE	5
ST. MARY'S	4
INGERSOLL	10
ST. THOMAS ST. JOE'S	4
ST. MARY'S	2
EAST ELGIN	2
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3	
INGERSOLL	8
ST. MARY'S	6
WCI	16
ST. JOE'S	0
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26	
ST. MARY'S	13
CENTRAL ELGIN	0
INGERSOLL	8
WCI	8

faction with a tenacious, short-handed Thames Valley Regional Athletics come-back against the St. Thomas Parkside Stampede midway through a day which would be considered busy by any standard.

"All around everyone played good," he said. "A pretty decent result."

Timleck's Dec. 17 began with a trio of intramural ball hockey games, helping his team to a 3-0 start before heading to the Ingersoll District Curling Club. There, with fellow Grade 11 skip Carson Zylstra sick and second Dominique Ling on a field trip, Timleck found himself stepping up to skip a three-member team featuring Grade 9 rookies Thomas Anger and Ronan Cottrell,

TVRA SOUTHEAST GIRLS CURLING	
MONDAY, JANUARY 12	
INGERSOLL DCI	8
GLENDALE	2
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8	
INGERSOLL DCI	12
ST. JOE'S	1
PARKSIDE	12
ST. MARY'S	1
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7	
PARKSIDE	11
INGERSOLL	6
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17	
PARKSIDE	11
INGERSOLL DCI	6
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5	
IDCI	11
CENTRAL ELGIN	3
PARKSIDE	10
WOODSTOCK HURON PARK	2
GLENDALE	7
ST. MARY'S	5
INGERSOLL	13
ST. JOE'S	0
ST. MARY'S	9
HURON PARK	2
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3	
IDCI	13
ST. MARY'S	0
HURON PARK	6
GLENDALE	5
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26	
ST. MARY'S	4
CENTRAL ELGIN	2

who typically share lead duties.

They started badly, giving up a three-ender to the visiting Stampede right off the bat.

"I thought it was over," Timleck confessed.

However, the Blue Bombers put up one in the second, trading singles through the next four ends before stealing two in the seventh, setting up a winner-take-all eighth and final end. It finished with Timleck attempting a tough, lengthy raise with his last rock which proved unsuccessful, Parkside counting two en route to a 7-5 final.

He didn't have much time to talk, an indoor soccer game in Woodstock still to be played that evening and a chemistry test to study for following that. But Timleck did give full credit to Anger and Cottrell for significant progression, as illustrated by a competitive outing against Parkside, which moved to 4-0 with the win. Ingersoll stood at 2-1-1 heading into the Christmas break, tied for third with the Woodstock CI Red Devils, one point ahead of the fifth-place Woodstock St. Mary's Warriors.

"I think we can win," Timleck said. "Especially when we have our full team."

"Just really proud of everyone," Anger added.

The Bombers trio of Grade 11 students have been together for three years says co-community coach Roger Moyer (with Fred Erickson), a level of familiarity and experience allowing them to both gel and move past mechanics.

"So, they're focussing more on strategy."

The boys are calling a good game, credited staff co-coach Elaine Di Stefano (with Mike Bryson) and also executing well.

"And being rewarded."

The Parkside game illustrated ongoing resiliency Moyer continued, first displayed during their initial league outing, an eventual 8-8 tie against Woodstock CI Red Devils in which they trailed 7-2 after four ends.

"In past years they may have gotten down and lost that game."

The Red Devil boys are in a rebuilding phase, although skipped with considerable experience by Grade 12 Alexis Schaeffer, who is helping out with 'everything' credits vice Mikhail Petrukhov, whose parents urged him to try the sport following their emigration to Canada.

Schaeffer has found the challenge and a different game approach to be 'fun', adjusting to a boys' strategy of putting more rocks in the house, as opposed to hitting. She is trying to both assess and emphasize each player's individual strengths, who likes in versus out-turns for example, who prefers draws to hitting. Her goal is both building for the future with a roster also featuring Grade 9 lead Grace Nelson, Grade 10 second Harry Langford and Grade 9 lead/second Ryan DeWit, and this year's post-season, if possible.

"It's definitely going a lot better than we thought," Schaeffer smiled.

WCI and St. Mary's tied 7-7 in a TVRA Southeast exhibition match on Dec. 16 in Woodstock, the Red Devils scoring dou-



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)
Ingersoll DCI 'guest skip' Ben Timleck releases a rock with lead Ronan Cottrell preparing to sweep.

bles in the first and third ends, and three in the sixth. The Warriors scored singlets in the second, fourth and seventh, stealing three in the fifth and one in the eight to earn the split decision. The Warriors feature a mixed foursome, returning experience with skip Sebastian Lagos and vice Killeen Coghlan balancing Grade 9 rookies Lucas Lowes and Isaiah Contestabile at second and lead respectively.

"I'm pretty proud of their ability to stay in a game," credited Warriors coach Richard Murphy.

The Blue Bombers girls also suffered their first loss of the TVRA Southeast season to Parkside, falling behind even further than their male counterparts. Five and five doesn't have the same ring as six and seven, however a five-point fifth end and steal of one in the sixth did make the final a more respectable 11-6 in the Stampede's favour.

IDCI skip Taylor Posthumus was battling illness on the day but gave the Stampede full credit for the victory.

"They're a good team."

Beyond heading into the game somewhat under the weather, Posthumus and vice Jaelynn MacLeod also felt they were a little tight, opening scoring in an end in which they were more collected and relaxed, 'a little more chill,' in the skip's words.

"I think we should start a little calmer," MacLeod surmised.

Posthumus (Grade 11), MacLeod (Grade 12) and second Marley Papais give the Bombers experience at the back end, with Grade 9s Lucy Zimmerman and Tara Sharpe sharing the lead. Like their male counterparts, they are moving past basics and developing their overall game, Posthumus, MacLeod and for the boys, Zylstra stepping up to embrace leadership roles.

"That's been a noticeable thing this year," credited Moyer.

The 2-1 Bombers sat alone in third place at the Christmas break, one point back of the 2-2 St. Mary's Warriors and jointly 3-1 Tillsonburg Glendale Gemini and Stampede.



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Hockey sisters in blue happy their band has been put back together

JEFF TRIBE
Echo Correspondent

The hockey sisters in blue are happy their ‘band’ has been put back together.

“Fun. Really fun. Really, really fun,” smiled Woodstock St. Mary’s Warrior Dani Breen after being challenged to sum up her Thames Valley Regional Athletics girls hockey experience in three words.

“Lots of development and skill and lots of different girls I wouldn’t have talked to without this,” added teammate Gracie Shumka.

“Just repping your school, playing with a bunch of girls, getting to know people at your school,” agreed Warrior Daynaka Strickler.

There hasn’t been a girls’ hockey team at the school since Team Canada and Toronto Sceptres Professional Women’s Hockey League star defender Ella Shelton suited up with the Warriors says coach Pat Sloan.

“It’s a super exciting thing,” he said, thrilled the student body has another sports team to support. “Now they get to be excited about something the girls are doing.”

Officially retired but still happy to contribute, Sloan is joined on the bench by Jo-dee Regeir, Denys Reid and Sloan’s former goalie Addy

Parkes, who played for him on the boys’ team for four years. They were encouraged to see 17 girls out to training camp all of whom were retained on the roster. It was a significant upgrade from the nine or ten of previous seasons - almost but not quite enough to put a program on the ice. Doing so has meant not only a Warriors team for the 2025/26 season, but significant promise for the future based on their comparative youth.

“I’d say about 80 per cent of the girls are Grade 9’s,” said Sloan.

Beyond instituting systems and expectations, he has been focussed on building confidence amongst the ranks.

“Once they get it in their heads, they can play.”

The Warriors first game back on Dec. 1 ended in a 6-2 loss to Aylmer East Elgin, but they skated to their first win, a 2-1 road decision over Tillsonburg Glendale on Dec. 15. And Thursday of that week, it was the St. Thomas Parkside Stampeders left singing the blues as St. Mary’s built a modest two-game winning streak on strength of a 4-2 win at the Woodstock Reeves Community Complex.

The Warriors notched all four of their goals in a dominant second period, Kaylee Blain opening scoring at the 15-minute period’s 29-second mark on an assist to MacKenzie Finbow.

“Crashed the net and missed and then Mac sauced (saucer pass) it out front,” Blain recalled. “I kind of just whacked at it and it went in.”

“Nice little net crash there,” credited Breen,



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

St. Mary’s defender Daynaka Strickler (centre) picks up her person in front of Warriors goalie Annabelle Artur (left).

who made it a two-goal lead just eight seconds later, basically off the ensuing face-off.

“Just tried to jump on it first,” said Breen, “gained the zone and tried to use the D (defender) to screen the goalie.”

Sammie Sterne and Kaydence Araujo were credited with assists.

The Warriors rounded their scoring on another pair of quick goals toward the end of the period. Marlie Herbert netted what would stand as the game-winner from Finbow and Ava Lee with 2:33 to play in the frame, Araujo adding an unassisted marker just 26 seconds later.

The visitors made a game of it in the third, Taryn Davies getting the Stampeders on the scoresheet with 9:02 reminding, assisted by Scarlett Wilson. Davies cut the lead to two goals with 7:09 left in the third, burying a cen-

tring pass from the slot, but the Warriors were able to hang on for a two-goal victory.

“Just keep playing,” summed up Strickler. “Playing our game.”

St. Mary’s sat in a respectable tie for fourth with St. Thomas St. Joe’s in the pre-Christmas TVRA Southeast standings. East Elgin, having played six games, led with nine points (4-1-1) while undefeated Woodstock CI (3-0) and Ingersoll DCI (2-0-1) have six and five, respectively.

Although getting a Warriors girls team back on the ice was the first goal, expectations included playing well and seeking positive results. Pleased with the progress so far, Sloan looks forward to continued improvement.

“This is a good group,” he concluded. “They listen and work hard to get better every shift.”



(JEFF TRIBE PHOTO)

St. Mary’s Warrior Abigail Leger (left) moves the puck against the attention of Parkside’s Britten VanHerten.

TVRA SOUTHEAST BOYS HOCKEY	
FRIDAY, JANUARY 9	
INGERSOLL	4
EAST ELGIN	1
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8	
GLENDALE	4
INGERSOLL	3
ST. THOMAS PARKSIDE	5
WOODSTOCK COLLEGE AVENUE	0
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6	
DORCHESTER	5
HURON PARK	4
MONDAY, JANUARY 5	
PARKSIDE	5
HURON PARK	0
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18	
HURON PARK	3
EAST ELGIN	1
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17	
LORD DORCHESTER	5
COLLEGE AVENUE	0
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16	
TILLSONBURG	9
HURON PARK	4
MONDAY, DECEMBER 15	
ST. THOMAS ST. JOE’S	6
COLLEGE AVENUE	1

TVRA SOUTHEAST GIRLS HOCKEY	
MONDAY, JANUARY 12	
INGERSOLL DCI	7
ST. MARY’S	1
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8	
WOODSTOCK HURON PARK	4
TILLSONBURG GLENDALE	3
AYLMER EAST ELGIN	4
INGERSOLL	3
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6	
WOODSTOCK CI	3
ST. THOMAS ST. JOE’S	1
ST. MARY’S	6
LORD DORCHESTER	5
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18	
ST. MARY’S	4
PARKSIDE	2
EAST ELGIN	6
WOODSTOCK HURON PARK	2
MONDAY, DECEMBER 15	
ST. MARY’S	2
TILLSONBURG	1

Woodstock Wildcats annual Rep tournament a success

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

55 teams participated in 125 games last weekend at the 28th annual Wildcat Rep tournament held in Woodstock and surrounding areas. Close to 900 girls hit the ice, including 13 Woodstock teams and two teams from Michigan.

"We were able to have such a successful tournament thanks to a dedicated group of board members and parent volunteers," said President Sarah Morrison.

"A huge shout-out to our Ice Director, Darryl Wharram, for securing space at multiple arenas and putting the game schedule together," she added.

Due to the sheer volume of teams, the tournament scheduled games in Norwich, Thamesford and Embro, along with the three ice pads in Woodstock. The tournament featured teams from U11 to U18 in A, B, BB and C divisions.

Thirteen Woodstock teams participated with four earning gold medals and four losing in championship games and settling for silver.

Morrison said feedback she received was generally encouraging, with visiting teams enjoying the Friendly City.

"Lots of positive comments on the flow of the tournament, support and assistance from tournament volunteers, and not too many complaints about officiating. Many teams that participated were returning teams from the last several years. They return each year due to the other teams that the tournament draws, as well as its overall being organized and well-run."

The Wildcats program has grown tremendously over the last few years, mirroring the success of girls' hockey across the country, thanks in part to the high-profile Professional Women's Hockey League and the success of local player and Olympian Ella Shelton.

"It is amazing to see so many new players each year," explained Morrison. "Some start young in our 'Kittens' U5 program, but we are also seeing girls starting the sport at the U13 and U15 level, which is great to see. When the Wildcats first started 30 or so years ago, we only had a few teams, and now we have 405 registered players ranging from U5-U18."

Morrison explained the only challenge facing the program is a lack of ice time, as the city currently has three ice pads.

"We are really hoping for a new, dual-pad arena so that more girls can play hockey."

During the tournament, the Wildcats collected donations, raffled PWHL tickets and sold Wildcat items with all proceeds donated to a London Devilette player who is fighting a rare form of cancer.

"The total donation is over \$3,000. I am very proud of our hockey community and the way they rallied for this family. A huge thank you to our association treasurer, Jenn Skevington, for organizing this donation," said Morrison.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

U11B won gold with a 3-1 win over the Bluewater Hawks.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

U15A won gold with a 2-1 win over the Stratford Aces, the team's third straight tournament victory. The team is ranked 12th in Ontario.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U15 BB team took gold with a 3-1 victory over the London Devilettes.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U18 BB downed Stratford 5-2 to win gold. The team also recently won an International Silver Stick tournament.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U13 team earned silver medals after dropping a 3-1 decision to the Mooretown Lady Flags.

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Navy Vets shine at PJHL all-star game in Tavistock

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Woodstock Navy Vets were well represented on Sunday afternoon in Tavistock at the South Conference All-Star Game.

The Doherty Division outscored the Bloomfield Division 10 – 7, meaning the Doherty playoff winning team will have home-ice advantage for the conference final series.

Defenceman Charley Barnes was outstanding, scoring a shorthanded goal while adding three assists. Cooper Vickerman added an assist, and while Owen Ireton was held off the score-sheet, he played well in the win. Tyler Bouck started the game and stopped 26 of the 30 shots he faced in 30 minutes of action.

Vets hang on to first place after weekend split

Woodstock played a pair of games last weekend, starting with a 5-2 loss in Tavistock on Friday.

Ryan Choi scored his first of the season to give the Navy Vets an early 1-0 but the Braves bounced back and led 3-1

by the 57-second mark of the third period. Liam Gorman made it 3-2 but Tavistock sealed the win with powerplay and empty net goals.

Woodstock bounced back on Saturday with a 5-3 victory in Dorchester. Kyle Arthur led the attack with his second and third goals of the season while Barnes added two assists. Ireton, Connor Stanley and Ethan Markle also scored for the Navy Vets who hold a two-point lead on Wellesley heading into weekend play.

First place is on the line Friday as Woodstock hosts the Applejacks and it doesn't get any easier on Saturday afternoon as the Navy Vets travel to New Hamburg.

Woodstock makes roster moves before league deadline

The Navy Vets made a few changes, including acquiring hometown defenceman Will Wright for a player development fee from the GOHL's St. Marys Lincolns where he picked up four points in 26 games.

Woodstock also added forward Luca Morra from the Caledon Bombers of the GOHL and sent Rashaad Eichenberg to



(©ANDREW_VANEVERYMEDIA PHOTO)

The Woodstock Navy Vets were represented at the PJHL Southern Conference All-Star Game by Charley Barnes, Cooper Vickerman, Owen Ireton and Tyler Bouck the Grimsby Peach Kings.

The Navy Vets also signed 19-year-old defenceman and Oakville native Ryan Choi. He spent last season with

the Burlington Cougars of the OJHL. At the same time, the team released local product Austin Doolittle who had four goals in 26 games.

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Route to the Past – First In, First Out

SCOTT GILLIES

Contributor

One name among the many on the Ingersoll cenotaph stands out. The name Gayfer will be familiar with some of our more senior readers because of the father and son (John and John E.) who ran their drug store for several decades. But the name deserves to be better known by all because of the heroism of 22-year-old John Burton Gayfer.

When war was declared, J.B. was the first man in Ingersoll to enlist. That very night, on September 3rd, 1939, “The Ingersoll Tribune” reported that he wired in his enlistment papers to the Royal Canadian Air Force. Following a stint at basic training in London, Toronto and Trenton he was posted overseas on June 9, 1940.

Growing up in the stylish large home at 310 Oxford Street, Bud as he was affectionately known by his pals, attended Victory Memorial School and Ingersoll Collegiate. He had even started to work in the family drug store which his father hoped would one day be taken over by the 3rd generation. His father John E. (John Ernest) had taken over the operation on Thames Street from his father John Gayfer the first druggist in Ingersoll. It was reported in the local newspaper that this fresh-faced young man with the swept back wavy hair was well-liked and had a wide circle of friends.

He would have been well known in town because he was also well connected socially. Bud was the youngest child and the only son of John E. Gayfer, but he had three sisters – Mrs. L.C. (Dorothy) Hazelton of Montreal at the time of the 1931 Census of Canada, Margaret, who was ten years older than Bud, and their sister Frances (aka Billie) who were both still living at home during the Second World War. Following the death of her first husband, Dorothy married the First World War veteran Reverend Harry Andrews M.B.E.

(Member of the British Empire). Her sister Margaret married Ross MacKay, son of a local stone mason. Bud’s mother Eva had been a daughter of one of Ingersoll’s early dentists Dr. Wright Abraham Sudworth. She was descended, on her mother’s side from Elisha Hall, one of the first white children to be born in the fledgling community of Oxford-on-the-Thames in 1800.

Bud’s commitment to the cause of freedom was further exemplified by his choice of posting within the aircraft. Bud wanted to be a rear gunner – one of the loneliest and the most dangerous position in a plane.

Arriving in England in the late spring of 1940 he witnessed the Battle of Britain and the bombing of London while clocking hours of airtime and experience at reconnaissance, taking photos, pinpointing and shooting air to ground targets. He recorded his total flight time for the month of August that year as 14 hours, 30 minutes. His logbook also indicates that most of the training took place in either a Hawker Hector biplane or in Westmorland Lysanders, nicknamed by most air crews as Liz-zies.

By the end of October, he had racked up a total of 35 hours and 35 minutes of airtime. A year later, he had moved up from these two-seat aircraft to the big boys – Wellington bombers. His logbook shows that he took part in a bombing raid over Berlin on the 7th of July 1941. That particular flight took off at 10:30 in the evening and lasted 7 hours and 50 minutes before successfully returning home to the air base in Yorkshire.

One of the many pilots Bud flew with was Flight Sergeant Alexander Hassan, a former RCMP officer from Edmonton. Bud often mailed photos of Alex to his family back in Oxford County. Hassan was killed in November 1941, and Gayfer was assigned to another bomber crew piloted by Flight Sergeant Osborne Bayfield Le Furgey from Prince



John Burton Gayfer.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Edward Island.

Le Furgey must have been jokingly considered “the old man” -- he was 32. The rest of the crew was comprised of fellow pilot 20-year-old Peter Wityck from Brandon Manitoba, 28-year-old Wireless Operator William Robertson of Toronto, 21-year-old native of Queensland Australia Air Gunner James Garrow, and Bud Gayfer. Together they made up the crew of Wellington bomber W5589 in RCAF 405 Squadron.

The old man had logged more than 440 hours of flight time. He had also previously served as part of a grounds crew before re-mustering to become a pilot, so safety was his paramount concern. Bud’s flight log records several trips which were just air tests, to ensure the plane was operating safely

before an important mission.

On January 5, 1942, the crew took off for another such test but in snow showers; within half an hour there was trouble on board. The port engine had caught fire and while attempting to land the aircraft, the Wellington crashed, flipped over and exploded. All members of the crew perished.

One of the brave young men from Oxford County and Ingersoll’s first man to enlist had become the town’s first casualty of World War Two.

Today John Burton “Bud” Gayfer and 53 others of his comrades lay in the peaceful cemetery of Barmby-on-the-Moor in Yorkshire England, under the shadow of an immense beech tree dwarfed only by the 13th century tower of St. Catherine’s Church.

route2thepast@gmail.com

St. John’s Repair Café encouraging sustainability and reigniting repair skills

EMILY STEWART

Echo Correspondent

Instead of tossing out a torn or otherwise damaged item, consider taking it to the St. John’s Repair Café in Eastwood.

The repair café operating out of St. John’s Anglican Church is made up of a small group of volunteers performing minor repairs on clothing, linens, household items and more that would otherwise be donated or discarded to a landfill.

“We want to try to make things more sustainable, not just getting something and throwing it away because it’s a small tear, rip or a little stain on it that could be cov-

ered over,” said member Beth Wild.

The St. John’s Repair Café is part of the global Repair Café International movement that began in the Netherlands in 2009 and now involves 3,000 repair cafés in dozens of countries. Wild would love to see the movement expand to other parts of Oxford County, like Norwich, Ingersoll, and In-nerkip.

“It would be absolutely amazing if every community had their own repair café there in a church hall like we are, or a village hall, in the local library or whatever,” she said.

The café was created after Wild discussed it with a friend and colleagues at the

church. Wild said growing up in England, she learned how to make minor repairs to her items to keep them going for longer. However, having the skill set to make repairs is less common in a throwaway society. The Repair Café movement encourages sustainability and helps people save money.

“There are a lot of seniors, families, who can’t afford to replace something that may have gotten broken and torn and whatever and we want to make it affordable for people just to come,” said Wild.

As of March 7, the St. John’s Repair Café will have been operating for two years and provided repairs to more than 170 items on a pay-what-you-can basis.

The operation has about 10 to 12 volunteers and the group is looking for more people with sewing skills to come aboard. It operates the first Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and everyone is encouraged to visit the church at 685860 County Road 2, R.R.#5.

“Just come out, talk to us, come see what we do,” Wild said.

More information about the Repair Café International movement can be found online by visiting <https://www.repaircafe.org>, where you’ll learn about the global network of volunteer-run events that bring people together to fix broken items, share skills, and promote sustainability.

Seasonal Affective Disorder facts, tips and tricks



REBECCA KITCHEN, RMT

Echo Contributor

As we enter more of the colder winter months, we want to take a moment to acknowledge Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

SAD is a type of depression that follows a predictable seasonal pattern — it tends to begin and end at about the same time each year, most often starting in the fall or winter when daylight hours get shorter and usually improving in spring and summer. People with SAD experience the typical symptoms of depression (like low mood, low energy, and loss of interest in activities) that recur annually rather than just occasional “winter blues.”

Tip: Vitamin D is important this time of year as we don't

get as much sunshine. Did you know if you're lacking certain vitamins and minerals, it can make the side effects and feelings more intense? Make sure you support what your body needs. You can ask your doctor for blood work or go by how you may be feeling. Vitamin D and B12 are great for energy, anxious feelings and positive mood, and magnesium helps with tension, stress, and digestion. All of these can help with sleep when taken regularly.

Canadian organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Association and CAMH note that reduced sunlight can impact mood, energy levels, sleep, and motivation. If you or someone you care about feels this shift, you are not alone.

Why Staying Connected Matters

Canadian mental health organizations consistently emphasize the importance of avoiding isolation during the winter months. Staying socially connected is one of the strongest protective factors for mental well-being. Simple ways to stay connected include scheduling tea or coffee with a friend, planning a short daylight walk with someone you trust, setting up regular check-ins (phone call,

text, or visit), or booking an activity in advance so you have something to look forward to.

You may also consider treating yourself to a small joy, such as a favourite snack, a new book, fresh flowers or a cozy night planned just for yourself. These small acts can help interrupt the cycle of withdrawal that SAD can create.

Know Your Triggers

CMHA and CAMH encourage recognizing personal triggers so symptoms can be addressed early. Common triggers may include spending too much time indoors, lack of sunlight, overscheduling or burnout, excessive screen time or doomscrolling and being alone for long periods of time.

Ways to manage these triggers include getting outside during daylight hours when possible, moving your body gently each day, setting boundaries around your time and energy and creating a winter wellness plan filled with supportive activities.

Plan Enjoyable Activities

The University of British Columbia highlights the mental health benefits of intentionally planning pleasant activities during winter.

Ideas to look forward to include a weekly tea date, trying a new winter recipe, a small self-care treat, a class, a hobby, or a creative activity or even a walk through a favourite neighbourhood. You could also book a wellness or massage appointment or a trip, big or small.

Try sitting by a window to make sure you're getting enough light. You can even look into getting a “happy light” to make sure your body feels more awake as the days are darker and shorter. Crying can be good because it helps people express and process emotions, reduce stress and release the “feel good” chemicals in our bodies, all of which are recognized as important parts of positive mental health and emotional well-being.

Planning ahead gives your mood something positive to anticipate.

Remember: The Light Is Returning

The winter solstice (around Dec. 21) marks the shortest day of the year. From that point forward, each day becomes a little brighter—an important reminder of hope during darker months.

Check In on Others

Organizations such as CMHA and the Canadian Red Cross encourage checking in on those who may be more vulnerable during winter, including older adults and individuals who live alone.

Call or message an elderly neighbour or family member, invite someone for a short walk or tea, offer help with errands, listen without judgement, or just ask “How are you doing today?”

You might also consider relaxation or therapeutic treatments that help support the vagus nerve and activate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting rest and calm.

A small effort can make a meaningful difference—sometimes even save a life.

When to Seek Support

If you or someone you know is struggling, support is available. Consider reaching out to a family doctor or nurse practitioner, a registered mental health professional, your local CMHA branch or a crisis line.

Seeking help is a strong and healthy step forward.

Rebecca Kitchen is a Registered Massage Therapist and owner of R&RMTs in Woodstock.

Visit us online at theecho.ca

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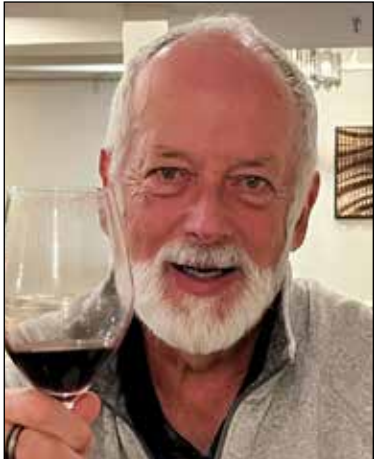
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Ingersoll Masonic Centre
190 Thames Street South
Ingersoll, Ontario

Contact: ingersollhallrentals@gmail.com

Oh, the places we'll go! Is travel safe, any more? Where should we go?



PAUL KNOWLES

Echo Contributor

It's not too surprising that, from time to time, I get asked questions about travel, in emails or in person. Once upon a time, they were either, "What are your favourite destinations?" or "We're going to a specific destination; can you give us advice about that place?"

But lately, there has been an increasing number of questions on a third theme: "Is it safe to travel?"

Good question. I know, personally, there are places on my once-upon-a-time bucket list that are now moved to a "probably never" file. The world is changing, rapidly, and for travellers, not necessarily in a good way.

But the increasing number of people wondering about safe places to travel prompted me to do some research. The results were intriguing. One much-cited, reliable study is the Berkshire Hathaway Travel Protection annual survey that polls thousands of American travellers who have actually visited the countries they comment on, and adds data from other sources like the Global Peace Index.

So... according to this survey, here are the 15 safest countries for visitors, in order: The Netherlands,

Australia, Austria, Iceland, Canada, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, Japan, Ireland, Belgium, Portugal, France, United Kingdom and Denmark.

I find several things quite interesting here. The majority of these are in Europe. Canada is rated highly – number 5 among a total of 195 recognized countries worldwide.

And you may notice who is missing – the United States. In fact, this survey, which reflects the view of Americans, mind you – rates the U.S. as only the 26th safest country, with respondents citing challenges including violent crime, health access and risk of terrorism.

Another report, published by World Population Review, ranks the safest countries in North America (which includes about half of the Caribbean Islands). Here, Canada is ranked best among 14 countries, immediately followed by Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. The U.S. is near the bottom, its safety ranking only better than Mexico and Haiti.

We need to acknowledge that while these reports are quite current, nothing can keep up with the challenges presented by our ever-changing global reality.

The BHTP report points out that "safety" is an evolving term. Where once it might simply have reflected the potential for being a victim of crime or terrorism, in today's world it also includes how safe women, LGBTQIA+ travelers and people of colour feel. And those factors were key components in identifying The Netherlands the safest destination.

There are sub-sections in the survey, and Canada comes off very well in almost all of them: second in safety from violent crime (after Japan); second in transportation safety; fifth in "health measures";



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Austria moved way up on this year's Safe Countries list, to be rated as the third safest country for travellers. Shown, the main square in the city of Linz.

second, after The Netherlands, in how safe women, LGBTQIA+ travelers and people of colour feel.

Make me again proud to be a Canadian, and glad that at least half of my travel plans take me to wonderful destinations inside our own borders.

The BHTP report also has a "Safe Travel Hall of Fame" – countries that have averaged a top-ten position since 2018. Eight countries are on the list and yes, Canada is one of them, along with Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Iceland, Norway, Ireland and Japan.

These surveys – and there are many more just like them – and the worrisome headlines of the day all do suggest that travellers need to keep themselves informed before they make plans.

I am not suggesting that you should make your travelling decisions based entirely on safety recommendations, although it would seem wise to be as aware as possible. I do still plan to travel,

a lot – this page doesn't fill itself, you know – and in the next weeks and months I will be visiting the Dominican Republic, Italy, British Columbia and Newfoundland.

But quite honestly, I am also turning down opportunities to travel. To the Middle East, for example and – full disclosure – to the United States. I have written dozens and dozens of articles about U.S. destinations over the years. Some of my closest friends and colleagues in the travel industry represent U.S. destinations, and my heart aches for the professional challenges they are currently facing. But just now – no, I can't go. For all the reasons you know about, including the fact that the country simply doesn't feel safe for visitors – and the statistics back this up.

However, many of you will disagree with this, and I have lots of friends who have made their annual trek to Florida, Arizona, the Carolinas or some other warmer

U.S. destination. I wish them to be safe and well. But I won't be dropping in.

And since I have become so darned serious in this week's feature, let me dive even a little deeper. As an old white guy, I feel the need to ask myself if I am comfortable travelling to destinations where I would probably be okay, but where my friends of colour, or my gay friends, or my single female friends, would be in danger. Should I go where they cannot go? I think not.

All of these present-day realities have made my bucket list bucket pretty darned leaky. But it ain't empty, and hopefully, some of the holes will get patched up, maybe soon.

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.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Canada is rated fifth safest country (of 195 nations in the world); shown are Newfoundland lobster fishers.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Travel by Canadians within Canada increased by as much as 10% in 2025, a trend welcomed in every province, including Saskatchewan (shown).

COMING EVENTS

FREEZER MEALS PROVIDED BY ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

We know life is busy for many families today, and it can be so nice to have things in the freezer to allow us to eat well, and quickly. St. Paul's Church in Ingersoll has been busy making different items you can simply pull out of the freezer! We have frozen ham & pea soup, cabbage rolls and cabbage roll casseroles, as well as individual turkey pies. We also have some lovely frozen apple and blueberry fruit pies ready for your oven! We'd love to make life easier for you this winter. For more details on what we have, and the prices, please call our church office at 519-485-3390 or by email: stpauls@execulink.com.

SACRED HEART PARISH EUCHRE

We invite everyone to join us for a Euchre afternoon. It will be held in Henderson Hall 133 John Street Ingersoll. Tuesday January 20 start at 1:00 pm. Refreshments provided.

OXFORD COUNTY FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, January 22: 6 p.m.

Craigowan Golf Club, Woodstock

Oxford OFA members and the community are invited to attend. This year's highlights include a keynote address by 'Wheat Pete' Peter Johnson, as well as the presentation of two prestigious awards: the Agricultural Hall of Fame Award to George Gilvesy and the Family Farm Award to Doanlea Farms, the Doan Family. These honours recognize outstanding contributions to agriculture and the dedication of local farming families. Tickets (on sale until Jan 14) and additional event details are available on our website at www.oxfordag.ca.

GRIEF SUPPORT FOR MAID RELATED LOSS

This monthly in-person grief support group for loss related to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) offers a compassionate, safe space to explore this unique loss. The group will meet the **4th Wednesday of the month from 1 – 2:30 p.m.** at the Thamesford Library, 165 Dundas St., Thamesford. The group is free of charge and pre-registration is requested. The next meeting is **Wednesday, January 28th**. To register or inquire about an evening group, contact 519-866-3016 or email faye@compassionategriefsupport.ca.

CURLING DAY IN CANADA - OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, January 31, Club opens at 12:30 p.m.

Ingersoll District Curling Club

36 Chisholm Drive, Ingersoll

Jitney play starts at 1 p.m. & 3:45 p.m., Canada's Big Shootout starts at 2:30 p.m., Bar open at 1 p.m., Kitchen open at 2 p.m., Silent auction tables open at 5:30 p.m., Live auction at 7 p.m., and Scotties 1 vs 2 Page Playoff Game on TV at 6:30 p.m. ingersollcurlingclub.com

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY OXPEX & OTEX 2026 STAMP SHOW

March 21: 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

St. Mary's Catholic High School, 431 Juliana Drive, Woodstock, ON, N4V 1E8

Free admission and parking. Framed and Judged exhibits, Stamp dealers, youth gift bags, Sales Circuit, draw prizes.

Contact: dhfe@silomail.com

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

IN 2026 IT'S YOUR FIX!

INGERSOLL COUNTRY MUSIC JAMBOREE

Meeting every other Friday 1-4 p.m. at Masonic Hall, 190

Thames St. S. Ingersoll.

Join us, walk ins welcome. Qualifications - love 50-70's country music. Perform, listen, dance & enjoy! January 16 & 30, February 13 & 27, March 6 & 20, April 10 & 17, May 1, 15 & 29, June 5 & 19.

MONTHLY VON BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC

Last Tuesday of every Month:

10 a.m. to Noon

Ingersoll Pharmasave

19 King St. E., Ingersoll

TILLSONBURG DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB

Interested in Bridge? Join us every Friday at the Tillsonburg Duplicate Bridge Club at 1 p.m. at The Senior Centre. Don't have a partner? Come anyway and we will match you up with someone. For more information, visit their Facebook page: [TburgBridge](https://www.facebook.com/TburgBridge).

THE OPTIMIST CLUB OF OXFORD COUNTY

The Optimists bring out the best in Youth, Community, and Themselves. If anyone is interested in coming out to meet us and learn more about us please email brenda7621@outlook.com

REPAIR CAFÉ - TOSS IT? NO WAY!

1st Saturday of each month: 9 a.m. to Noon

St. John's Church 685860 Oxford Highway 2, Eastwood, ON N4S 7V9

St. John's, Eastwood, now affiliated with Repair Café International (look for us at repaircafe.org). Meets the first Saturday of every month 9am to noon at St. John's Church 685860 Oxford Highway 2, Eastwood, ON N4S 7V9. Repairs made to clothing, linens, household items, toys, musical instruments etc. Save money, learn how to make your own repairs. Volunteers welcome. Payment by donation.

LIVING WITH LOSS

6-WEEK GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Beginning Tuesday January 27. 2-3:30 pm.

St. David's United Church, Woodstock.

No cost to participate. Experienced facilitators provide empathetic support and encouragement within a nurturing setting, fostering a sense of community and comfort on the path to healing. Contact to register. 519-536-3370, info@caringheartssupportnetwork.com

PEER SUPPORT GROUP FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

Third Wednesday of each month:

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

21 Wellington St., Woodstock

(Virtual options available)

PCMH is a peer support program providing support to parents and caregivers across Ontario with lived experience raising children and youth with mental health challenges. For more information, please visit family.cmho.org or oxfordcounty@pcmh.ca. We are also on Facebook: Parents for Children's Mental Health ~ Oxford County

VON OXFORD GRIEF CARE:

FREE MONTHLY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Register at: oxford.griefsupport@von.ca or 519-539-1231 Ext 6299 or 6296

TILLSONBURG

WHEN: 2nd Tuesday of every month

WHERE: VON Oxford Office 24 Brock St. W., Tillsonburg

TIME: 6:30PM-8:00PM

INGERSOLL

WHEN: 4th Tuesday of every month

WHERE: Ingersoll Public Library 130 Oxford St., Ingersoll

TIME: 10:30AM –12:00Noon

WOODSTOCK

WHEN: 3rd Saturday of every month

WHERE: Sakura House Hospice 715180 Oxford Rd.4, Woodstock

TIME: 10:30AM-12:00 Noon

THE LIONS CLUB OF WOODSTOCK

The Lions Club of Woodstock has been serving the community and Oxford County with kindness and generosity since 1931. The Lions always place the needs of neighbours and communities first. Through the dedication and hard work of our volunteer members, we are serving those in need together. If you are interested in becoming a member or simply wish to learn more by attending one of our monthly meetings, please email Steve Iorio at steveiorio4@gmail.com for more information.

COLOURING THROUGH GRIEF

Caring Hearts Support Network:

St. David's United Church,

190 Springbank Ave., Woodstock ON

Third Wednesday monthly. One time fee of \$15. Registration is required.

Call 519-536-3370. Check out website

www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Meetings: 2nd Tuesday (2 to 4 p.m.) and 4th Tuesday (7 to 9 p.m.)

September to May

Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock Ontario N4S 1C7

If you have never belonged to a stamp club, now's the time. Meet new friends, grow your knowledge and collection. Contact: Don Eaton dhfe@silomail.com

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

OXFORD COUNTY BRANCH OF ONTARIO ANCESTORS

Are you looking to start a summer pastime? Are you interested in your family history? Oxford Branch has an extensive collection of family history and genealogical resources that can help you.

Come visit our Resource Centre at 82 Light Street, Courthouse Square, Woodstock. We are open Tuesdays to Thursdays 10:00

am to 4:00 pm where volunteers are ready to help you get started or help you research for missing information. You can also connect with us on the web at <https://oxford.ogs.on.ca>. We are dedicated to supporting and promoting genealogical research in Oxford County. Hope to see you through the summer!

OXFORD COUNTY BRANCH OF ONTARIO ANCESTORS

Please join us on Monday, January 12 at 7:00 pm on zoom

for Sidney Williams 'presentation of "Your Heirlooms and the Next Generation". Sidney is a museum professional, curator, and community heritage leader with deep roots in the Beachville District Museum and the Beachville District Historical Society. With a passion for a traditional craft, collections care, and public engagement, Sidney strives to make history tangible - whether through artifact accessibility, educational community programming, or hands-on experiences that connect visitors to South-West Oxford and Zorra Townships' stories of making and place. Sidney is the 2025 recipient of the Ontario Historical Society's Dorothy Duncan Award for Leadership in Heritage, recognizing her creativity, leadership, and commitment to ensuring small heritage institutions have a lasting and meaningful impact.

To register for this presentation, please visit our home page at <https://oxford.ogs.on.ca>. This is a free event and all are welcome to attend.

BEACHVILLE LEGION EVENTS: 434852 ZorraLine, Beachville

OX ON THE RUN LIBRARY BOOK MOBILE

Wednesday, January 21: 4:30- 6 p.m.

CHAIR YOGA

Wednesdays, 7-8 p.m.

LINE DANCING

Thursdays, 7-8 p.m.

EUCHRE

Thursday nights 7 p.m.

INTRO TO BALL ROOM DANCING

Thursdays, 8:15-9:15 p.m.

No partner required.

DARTS

Friday nights 8 p.m.

THAMES VALLEY BLUEGRASS AND OLD TIME COUNTRY PICKERS

Saturdays, 1-4 p.m.

Open Mic(acoustic only). Come enjoy the music.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 55 EVENTS: 642 Dundas St, Woodstock, ON

COMING EVENTS

SHUFFLEBOARD
Every Thursday at 1:30pm

CADETS
Monday Nights

DART LEAGUE
Every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday nights

EVENING ENTERTAINMENT
January 17: 7-11 p.m. - 50-60 Bros
January 24: 7-11 p.m. - DJ Kelly
January 31: 7-11 p.m. - Flashback

PRIVATE FUNCTION JANUARY 10:
The canteen will be open in the afternoon but closed to the public for a private function.

NO GENERAL MEETING THIS MONTH

FAMILY ROAST BEEF DINNER
January 25: 5-6 p.m.
Prices have changed per person it's plus dessert
Pre-order and pay by January 20th no later. So please contact Office or Canteen for more information.

WING NIGHT

January 31: 4:30-6 p.m.
One price for wings plus w/Fries a different price
Pre-Order and pay by January 23rd no later. So please contact Office or Canteen for more information.

OXFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY WINTER 2026 SPEAKER SERIES

THE AGRICULTURAL ART OF ROSS BUTLER – PRESERVING OXFORD COUNTY'S HISTORICAL AND AGRICULTURAL ROOTS
Wednesday, January 28: 6:30 p.m.
Chartwell Oxford Gardens, 423 Devonshire Ave. Woodstock
Special Guest Speaker David Butler – Join David as he takes us through the history of his father's "Journey to Perfection" through art and agriculture, his roots in Oxford County and his special connection to the Oxford Historical and Museum Society (now the Oxford Historical Society). Free Admission, Donations Welcome!

HOW DO I LOVE THEE – VALENTINES THROUGH TIME
Wednesday, February 25: 6:30 p.m.
Chartwell Oxford Gardens, 423 Devonshire Ave. Woodstock
Special Guest Speaker – Scott Gillies, Chair

OxHS – Bring your sweetheart and come curl up in the big comfy chairs at Chartwell Oxford Gardens and listen to the history of Valentines Day. Free Admission, Donations Welcome!

LITTLE ENGINES CAN DO BIG THINGS
Wednesday, March 25: 6:30 p.m.
Chartwell Oxford Gardens, 423 Devonshire Ave. Woodstock

Special Guest Speaker - Colin Currie, Director OxHS – join Colin as he takes us through Oxford County's rich railroad history and historical infrastructure that helped shape and connect cities like Woodstock and Ingersoll (CN/CP) and towns like Tillsonburg, Hickson and Beachville (CASO/GWR), now featuring numerous surviving heritage train stations and active train-watching spots. Free Admission, Donations Welcome!

For more information, please email us at info@oxhs.ca

HURON PARK BAPTIST CHURCH EVENTS:
199 Berwick St., Woodstock, ON

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
Wednesday, December 24: 6:30 p.m.

FREE MOVIE NIGHT – SIGHT AND

SOUND PRODUCTION OF JONAH
Wednesday December 31: 6:00 p.m.

YOUNG AT HEART (SENIORS) LUNCHEON
Thursday, January 22, 202: Noon
Music by Louanne Schultz
Please call the church for more details
519 -421-4722

SOUTH GATE CENTRE EVENTS:
191 Old Wellington St. S., Woodstock, ON

SOUTH GATE CENTRE OPEN HOUSE
Saturday, January 24: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Unveiling our new expansion at 191 Old Wellington St. S. with self-guided tours, demonstrations, photos, videos and more! Come explore the possibilities for this stunning brand-new event space right on the edge of Southside Park. Available for rentals - Weddings, Meetings, Conferences, Special Events, and more.

CHILLY CHARLIE'S PROGNOSTICATION & PANCAKE BREAKFAST
Monday, February 2: 7:30 a.m. – 9 a.m.
Come see Woodstock's resident groundhog predict the weather forecast. Free community event. Breakfast: Adults \$6, Kids under 12 \$3

Scott didn't receive an organ transplant, but an organ transplant saved his life

Because thanks to an organ donor, his wife Katie received a lifesaving transplant.

Organ and tissue donation saves more lives than you think

Register to be a donor at ontario.ca/BeADonor

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Ontario





SHELTON REPRESENTING CANADA IN ITALY (FILE PHOTO)
Ingersoll-area native Ella Shelton has been named to Canada’s Olympic team for the second time and is off to Milan, Italy, next month. The defenceman is looking to help Canada defend its 2022 gold medal from Beijing, China and will be one of 16 returning players. Canada will battle the United States, Finland, Czechia and Switzerland in Group A round-robin action. The women’s tournament is being held from Feb. 5 to Feb. 19.

SIP & PAINT: PATTERNS OF LOVE

with Roxanne Tochor

**Saturday,
Feb. 14, 2026
5:00 - 7:00 p.m.**

Age: 19+
\$45 (extra drinks - \$15)

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CROSSWORD

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	10	11									12		
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	40								41	42	43		
44							45	46	47				
48							49						
50							51						

CLUES ACROSS

1. Mechanical lever

7. Rocky peak

10. Leave a country

12. Discount

13. D.C. ballplayer

14. Partner to “oohed”

15. Engine sound

16. Japanese ornamental box

17. Fido is one

18. Amounts of time

19. DiFranco and Phyo are two

21. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)

22. Make secret plans

27. “Tiny Bubbles” singer

28. “His Airness”
33. Morning

34. Perfected

36. Winger guitarist Beach

37. Abba __, Israeli politician

38. Self-immolation by fire ritual

39. A way to save money

40. Pulpit

41. Make ecstatically happy

44. Once more

45. Works on

48. Nocturnal S. American rodent

49. State again

50. Expression of disappointment

51. Type of door

CLUES DOWN

1. Yugoslavian communist leader

2. Exchange rate

3. High school dance

4. Peter’s last name

5. When you anticipate arriving

6. Israeli city __ Aviv

7. Goat-like mammals

8. Margarine

9. End-of-the-spectrum color

10. Make poisonous

11. Popular beverage

12. Actress Lathan

14. Where planes land and depart

17. Political fundraising entity

18. The distinctive spirit of a people or an era

20. Buffer used in microbiology

23. Light, open carriage

24. Metrical feet
25. Email subject line feature

26. A street with lots of nightmares

29. Rapper Rule

30. River in Scotland

31. One who settles a dispute

32. Most chummy

35. We all have our own

36. Arab tribe

38. Slap

40. Ottoman military commanders

41. Scottish or Irish Gaelic language

42. Emit coherent radiation

43. Sun or solar disk (Egyptian mythology)

44. Inclined to

45. Olfactory reference syndrome

46. Chest muscle (slang)

47. Body part

Answers found on page 28.

OFA Viewpoint: Snowmobile safety week highlights the need for respect and awareness on Ontario's trails

MARNIE WOOD

Director, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

This week marks International Snowmobile Safety Week, a timely reminder for farmers, landowners and snowmobile riders that winter recreation and farm safety are closely connected.

Ontario has already seen several tragic snowmobile accidents this season — and winter is only a few weeks in. At the same time, farmers across Ontario are reporting an increase in trespassing incidents.

Snowmobiling is deeply woven into rural Ontario. A trail network of more than 30,000 kilometres, maintained by Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) and its volunteers, allows riders to explore the province and supports local winter economies through tourism, fuel, food, accommodations, and equipment sales.

But that entire network depends on one essential ingredient: respect.

My family and I farm near Cannington in Durham Region, and I am also a director on the board of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, representing farmers in my area.

We don't have snowmobile trails running on our farm, but we are surrounded by properties that do — and my family and I are also snowmobile riders, which gives me a unique perspective of both sides.

As farmers and landowners, we have a responsibility to respect the trails when they're on our property and riders have a responsibility to respect the land they're crossing and make sure they stay on the trails.

Ontario's local snowmobile clubs make significant investments of time, energy and equipment to establish, manage and maintain the trail system every year. When riders leave marked trails, the consequences go far beyond broken rules.

For farmers, off-trail riding can mean stress for livestock from fast, loud machines moving too close to animals. It can mean soil becoming compacted and damage to crops that might be hidden under the snow. Gates may be left open, fencing damaged, or wildlife access created where it shouldn't be.

There are also serious safety risks for riders themselves, however, from venturing off-trails or riding in areas where there are no trails.

The snow hides water drainage tiles, culverts, rocks, old fencing material, or farm equipment that can pose risks to riders; speed combined with unknown terrain is incredibly dangerous.

That's why trail status matters. Before setting out, riders should make sure they know what the current status is of where they hope to ride; the OFSC Interactive Trail Guide, available at ofsc.evtrails.com/#, is the perfect resource for this.

Trails are only ever shown as available (green), limited availability (yellow), or



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

unavailable (red). Riding an unavailable (red) trail is trespassing — even if it looks rideable.

Anyone riding this season must also hold a valid 2026 Ontario Snowmobile Trail Permit, available online only through the OFSC. As well, snowmobilers are responsible for understanding the legal requirements under Ontario's Motorized Snow Vehicles Act and for following the ABCs of safe snowmobiling:

- abstaining from alcohol and drugs
- being prepared for the unexpected
- riding with caution, care, and control at all times.

According to OFSC CEO Ryan Eickmeier, trespassing on private property and entering prohibited areas must become as unacceptable socially as it is legally. Land use permission is a privilege, not a right, and it must be respected by every snowmobiler.

Landowners who experience trespassing incidents, including riding on unavailable trails or off marked trails, should report them to their local police detachment.

Snowmobiling and farming have successfully coexisted in Ontario for generations because most people do the right thing. Ontario Snowmobile Safety Week is a reminder that safety, access, and the future of the trail system all depend on respect — for landowners, for riders, and for the communities we share.

The season is still young. Let's make sure it's also safe.

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Riddles

I'm a lock you can't open with a key, but you can open me with a code. What am I?
Safe

I'm always hungry, but I don't eat food. I eat electricity. What am I?
Battery

I'm the place where letters sleep until you send them out. What am I?
Envelope

You can sleep inside of me wherever I am. What am I?
Tent

I have a belt but no pants, and I can carry things wherever they need to go. What am I?
Conveyor

I help you eat, but I never taste a thing. What am I?
Spoon

I'm a blanket made of tiny squares, and I keep you warm. What am I?
Quilt

I have a cap and a tip, and I leave marks behind. What am I?
Marker

I'm always moving, but I never leave my place. I can be wound up, but I'm not a toy. What am I?
Spring

I have a blade but I'm not a knife. I spin and move air. What am I?
Fan

Sudoku

by PeterS 2025

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

Solutions on page 35

Basic

Featured Pet



ARCHIE

Hi! I am Archie. I love to chase squirrels and pick up sticks in the backyard with my mom and dad. This Christmas Santa brought the best present of a baby brother which is why I am smiling!

Nominate your pet to be a Featured Pet by emailing info@theecho.ca

Word Search

WORLD GEOGRAPHY

L	O	N	G	I	T	U	D	E	O	B	O	R	D	E	R	Q	P	E	R	CONTINENT
D	C	G	Y	W	N	S	R	I	V	E	R	T	B	B	Y	T	O	D	N	OCEAN
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X	E	O	T	Y	R	M	U	I	S	L	A	N	D	T	W	R	E	S	P	DESERT
N	W	R	V	O	M	W	T	F	V	V	B	F	M	N	X	P	C	K	U	RIVER
H	E	M	I	S	P	H	E	R	E	B	G	S	R	M	O	T	Q	W	G	ISLAND
Y	R	T	S	M	T	O	C	E	A	N	E	A	K	D	A	A	K	Q	Q	VALLEY
N	J	O	F	O	R	E	S	T	X	B	E	V	Y	B	K	J	K	S	W	GLACIER
O	U	N	Y	S	L	T	L	P	E	N	I	N	S	U	L	A	A	Y	F	FOREST
Z	A	X	A	C	G	L	A	C	I	E	R	D	E	S	E	R	T	U	R	PLATEAU
R	M	O	U	N	T	A	I	N	A	Q	S	U	X	K	N	O	J	U	Z	PENINSULA
X	G	R	I	E	J	X	B	T	J	W	D	L	A	T	I	T	U	D	E	HEMISPHERE
W	T	N	U	I	S	Q	S	G	J	C	O	C	P	G	F	Z	U	X	V	LATITUDE
X	P	W	S	U	R	N	U	L	V	S	D	F	L	S	R	N	Y	W	N	LONGITUDE
N	C	O	N	T	I	N	E	N	T	N	V	L	A	E	Z	V	L	D	N	BORDER
Y	E	S	G	D	G	R	K	N	L	Q	A	D	T	Q	I	Y	D	O	B	
A	O	J	M	P	U	P	I	N	O	S	L	I	E	I	S	M	F	C	O	
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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Garnet
2. The Boreal Forest
3. Horse
4. Nicolás Maduro
5. The pancreas
6. In the Air Tonight
7. Arcade Machine
8. James Stephen "Jimmy" Donaldson
9. Immigrations & Customs Enforcement
10. The opossum

SUDOKU

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CROSSWORD

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T	S	K							S	C	R	E	E	N		

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OBITUARY

GERALDINE ROSE SHILLINGTON



Shillington, Geraldine Rose (nee Dunn) - Passed away peacefully surrounded by her family at Woodstock Hospital, on Saturday, December 20, 2025 at the age of 90.

Reunited with her beloved husband of 60 years Bruce Shillington (2016). Proud mother of Bryce Shillington of Nova Scotia, Christie and Rob Ludwig of Beachville, Vickey Shillington and Allan Robertshaw of

Beachville, and Monte Shillington and Sue Galts of Beachville. Cherished by her 7 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. Predeceased by her parents George and Coila Dunn and brothers Edward (Hazel) Dunn (1984), Jimmy Dunn (1938) and Donald Dunn (2006). Sadly, missed by nieces, nephews, and many lifelong friends.

She lived independently with strength and dignity into her 91st year, until her life was unexpectedly altered by a sudden illness.

A burial will take place in Beachville Cemetery in the spring.

Arrangements have been entrusted to the Glendinning Funeral Home Ltd. - Smith-LeRoy Chapel, 69 Wellington St. N., Woodstock (519-537-3611).

As an expression of sympathy donations may be made to United Way Oxford. Personal condolences may be shared at www.smithleroy.com.

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