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With the GTR committee coming to a close, here's where the keystone project stands today

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The ad hoc Grand Trunk renewal (GTR) committee, the citizen-led body which has advised Stratford city council on matters pertaining to its keystone revitalization project of the former locomotive shop grounds, will be disbanding next month. Throughout its two-year mandate, the committee has helped shape what will become of the 18-acre site, although when exactly its vision can be realized is still up in the air.

"Together, we've built a vision that honours diverse community voices and sets out a practical, yet ambitious roadmap," Mayor Martin Ritsma shared in a letter directed to the committee at its Aug. 25 meeting. "It's not easy to steward a project of this scale, but we've struck a balance – laying the foundation for a neighbourhood that will rejuvenate this site and become a defining part of Stratford's next chapter."

Over two years, the GTR committee has formulated the vision and guiding principles for the project, updated the timeline and provided clarity on questions and misconceptions about the site, and has held regular discussions between its members and guest speakers.

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Stratford Festival cricketer Evan Mercer sits with his teammates as they take in the words of the annual Stratford-Shaw game's opening ceremony. For more on the Aug. 25 match, read our story on page 15. (AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Lake Victoria to steadily fill for 28th Dragon Boat Festival

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Over the next few days, Stratford residents will notice a sharp increase in Lake Victoria's water-levels – just in time for the city's 28th Rotary Dragon Boat Festival on Sept. 13.

That wasn't an accident. Robert Ritz, chair of the organizing committee, has been hard at work since

the lake began to drain late July in order to make sure the waterfront is ready for the festival. As he told the Times, however, it hasn't been just him.

"My focus right now is getting water in the river," Ritz said. "I'm also working with other businesses to do 'in-kind' for us, so it's a real community effort to make it happen by the teams who have the ability to do it."

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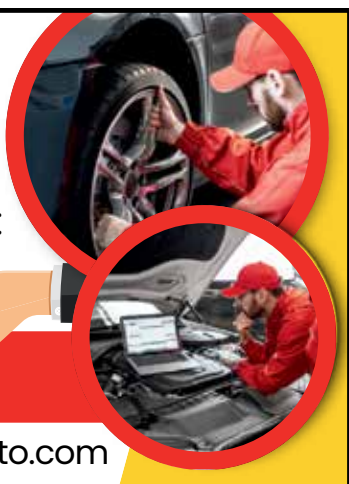
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Lake Victoria to steadily fill for 28th Dragon Boat Festival

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

The whole saga began after a July 24 rainstorm, when debris was caught under the north sluice gate of the RT Orr Dam, preventing it from fully shutting. Although shut on July 31, the lake had continued to drain at a rapid rate, leaving the waterfront at concerning low water-levels for much of the month of August.

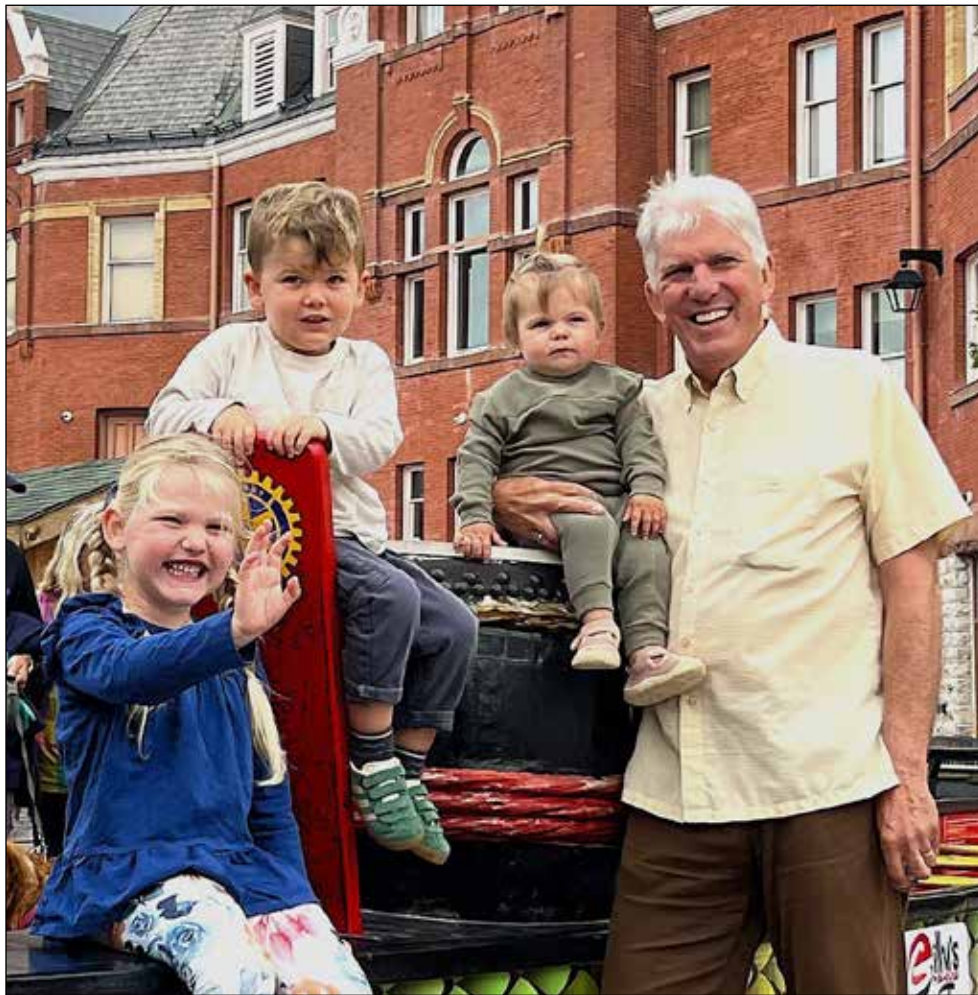
The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA), which manages the dam and waterway, reported that it was discussing next steps with the City of Stratford, but that the most likely scenario was that the lake would fill with rainwater over a few months time.

However, as Ritz explained, the lake needs to be at capacity for the festival to proceed, and while they could have pivoted and held the event at the Wildwood Reservoir, the flagship event is a beloved Stratford staple. They could not rely on Mother Nature.

"We like to be in Stratford," Ritz said. "People forget, there's a whole other side of the festival. (Teams) come, they stay for the weekend, go to the plays."

Citing a figure from Destination Stratford, Ritz said that the economic impact from the festival is \$180,000 a year with over 3,000 participants and many more spectators coming to downtown Stratford to attend – and that was in jeopardy if re-located to Wildwood.

Although Ritz had inquired with UTRCA and the city about filling the lake with water from local gravel pits, the organizing team were about 70 per cent into the planning process for Wildwood when they received word from the Ministry of



Robert Ritz, posing with his grandchildren in front of the Rotary Dragon Boat Festival's display at Market Square in 2024, is chair of the organizing committee. After some concern with the water levels of Lake Victoria, the 28th annual festival is set to return to the lake on Sept. 13.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Environment, Conservation and Parks that they were "pretty on board" with Ritz's plan. The organizing team submitted a Permit to Take Water (PTTW) to the ministry on Aug. 22, expecting to get approval to pump on Aug. 29.

United Rental Fluid Solu-

tion is providing the pump and hoses at a discounted rate, and Corey Denham of Denham Construction, one of the event's in-kind sponsors, will be assisting in the pumping on the day.

"We are also pursuing a past-in-kind sponsor, Core Fuels, to provide the diesel fuel as required to operate the pump," Ritz is quoted in a written statement.

"Mike and Lindsey Higgins of Lynn River Farms own the land where the pump and hoses will be located. Mike has been very cooperative and is providing us with assistance to set up the pump and hoses. The pit owners, Michael Wilhelm Excavating Ltd. and the Township of Perth East have been very supportive and patient throughout the process."

"The pump is arriving tomorrow morning," Ritz later said on Monday, Aug. 25, "We'll be hooking it up to do a test run with the engineer on site and then once we get the word, we'll open it."

Their efforts should raise the lake by two or three inches in the early days, pumping about 8,000 litres per minute from the gravel pit. With 16 inches needed in total, without rain the lake should be filled once again in eight days, Ritz estimated.

While slightly warmer than the river, Ritz said the water's pH level is very similar to the lake's and is within "allowable tolerances." It is not expected to impact the ecology of the lake.

Ritz thanked Water's Edge Environmental Solutions Team Ltd., an engineering firm assisting the group in organizing the fill, as well as the whole community for keeping the festival in the city's core park system, even when the odds were against them.

The Rotary Dragon Boat Festival is the biggest Rotary fundraiser, raising about \$50,000 for Rotary Stratford each year, which uses the funds for local projects. Since the festival's inception, it has raised \$1 million.

This year, 47 teams (and counting) will participate in the recreational Hong Kong-style races. Classes include mixed division, breast cancer and women's division teams, which will compete in over 30 500 metre four lane races, in addition to a 2,000-metre race final featuring the top eight teams.

AMDSB and area schools gearing up to welcome back students Sept. 3

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Schools will be back in session next week, and the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) is getting ready for students to once again be in their classrooms and hallways.

The first day for students in Grades 1 to 12 will be Wednesday, Sept. 3, given that there is a professional development (PD) day on Sept. 2. Kindergarten students will stagger their first day on either Wednesday, Thursday or Friday (organized by each school). A page on the board's website has been created to help parents and guardians with the common back to school questions and can be found at amdsb.ca/BackToSchool25.

"We know that back to school can sometimes catch families by surprise,"

director of education Graham Shantz is quoted in a media release about the 2025/2026 school year. "We want to ensure that our students feel supported and that families have the information that they need. Our staff are excited to welcome students."

Any new families are encouraged to register as soon as possible using the on-line registration system – details including which school a child should attend, bus information and the link to register can be found on the School Registration page, which can be found at <https://www.amdsb.ca/apps/pages/registration>.

While parents often inquire about the supplies students will need in September, the board noted that most classrooms have everything, but sometimes teachers will make recommendations about optional items.

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Editorial

From lemonade stands to McMaster: Watching my daughter chase her dreams



AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

My daughter Chloe is moving to Hamilton this weekend, into a house with three other girls, and I'm an absolute mess. She was accepted into McMaster University for business, and I couldn't be more proud of her. She worked incredibly hard in school to earn excellent marks, but beyond that, she's been an entrepreneur at heart for as long as I can remember. She's always crafting, baking, building, creating or caring for our family pets.

When she was about five, she saved up and bought a little sewing machine. I assumed she'd use it to make shirts for her dolls, but Chloe had bigger ideas. She bought fabric, stitched together small animals, stuffed them and marched door-to-door selling

them to our neighbours. They were crooked and falling apart, but she sold every single one within an hour. She came home grinning, with enough money to pay for the machine, the materials and even a little extra for candy.

Not long after, she discovered that the end of our driveway was prime real estate while neighbours were having lawn sales. She set up a lemonade stand with her sister Hailey and cousin Dominic. They sold out quickly, so Chloe added cookies, set her own prices and even offered a discount for buying both.

By the time she got to school, everyone could see what I already knew. Her entrepreneurial spirit shone through in everything she did. Teachers loved her. Friends admired her. And as her mom, I often found myself in awe too – of her work ethic, her bright attitude and her gentle way of moving through the world.

At St. Mike's, she found a mentor in her business teacher. With his guidance, she discovered her passion not only for entrepreneurship but also for politics and the bigger ideas shaping the business world. She joined the business club, travelled to

Toronto several times, as well as New York and thrived in lively debates about busi-



Hailey Modaragamage, Dominic Rasmussen and Chloe Modaragamage set up a lemonade stand in 2017, spearheaded by Chloe, who was chasing her dream of becoming an entrepreneur.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

ness strategies – a commitment she carried from Grade 9 right through to Grade 12.

Business runs deep in her roots. Her grandfather, my dad, was a farmer who worked tirelessly every day of his life. Her dad and I both chased our own business ventures over the years. Surrounded by that kind of spirit, it seemed only natural that Chloe would follow a path she had always loved.

Now, here we are. She's heading off to university for the first time, and I find myself pulled in two directions – proud beyond measure, but also a little heartbroken that she won't be home

every day. Phone calls don't feel like enough. She still feels so young to me, too young to be out there without me reminding her to lock her car doors or switch her laundry from the washer to the dryer.

How do parents do this? You spend years raising your children to be strong, capable and independent, only to step back and let them go, trusting that what you've given them is enough.

And deep down, I know it is enough. Chloe is an extraordinary young woman – determined, kind and endlessly creative. I have no doubt she will

find her way. Still, it's hard to believe we've reached this moment, that life has shifted so suddenly, even though I've tried to hold it still.

But perhaps this is what parenting really is: preparing them for the world, even if it means breaking your own heart a little in the process. As much as it hurts to let her go, I couldn't be more excited to watch her build her future. If history is any indication, Chloe will do it the way she always has – with grit, imagination and a heart full of kindness. And I'll be right here, cheering her on, every step of the way.

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8. Newspapers should be locally-owned and operated

Editorial

Life is good, especially when it comes full circle on the golf course



LEE GRIFFI

Times Reporter

Some people say life repeats itself, déjà vu if you will. I recently experienced something I never thought I would again: a chance to share a round of golf with Canadian golf icon and Canadian Golf Hall of Fame inductee, Mike Weir. Oh, he also won a green jacket at Augusta. I think I shed a few tears when he beat Len Mattiace on the first hole of a sudden-death playoff in 2003. Tiger Woods, as defending champion, suited Weir up with his new sport coat.

I remember exactly where I was. I was playing a round of golf

at the Stratford Golf and Country Club, a place where I worked for nearly 20 years. I started in the back shop at the age of 12, cleaning clubs and making sure members and guests had what they needed before teeing off. I eventually earned my way into the pro shop and was knowledgeable enough about the game to begin teaching lessons.

I made the high school team at the former Stratford Central all five years I was there, and I believe it was in my Grade 12 or 13 year when the Western Ontario Secondary School Association (WOSSA) tournament was held at Craigowan, just north of Woodstock. I had heard about this Weir fellow, and I knew how good he was. I was a pretty good player, but oh boy, could I knock the cover off the ball. My self-imposed nickname was 'Lee, Long Ball Griffi,' which I proudly displayed on my Jones carry bag. Some of you old golfers might remember the best carry bag ever made.

I had some success, winning a

few stops on the old junior Tyson Tour. But the mystique surrounding Mr. Weir was huge. I just never had the chance to play with the Brights Grove native until one wet, snowy day in October. And I beat him.

I always tell people that is my golf claim to fame, and I never thought I would see him again. But after entering a Rogers draw online, I was given the opportunity once again. I was the only winner of the Beyond the Seat contest, which gave me a chance to play a round with Weir for the first time in nearly 40 years in Calgary as part of the PGA Champions Tour during a pro-am event.

Besides watching some of the best over-50 golfers compete, I was proud to be a part of the charity aspect involved, as is the case in any PGA and PGA Champions Tour event. Since the tournament's inception, over \$137 million has been raised for over 290 children and youth charities across Alberta. I was a bit bummed John Daly, Fred

Couples and Ernie Els weren't there, but there were plenty of big names around, including former world number ones David Duval and Vijay Singh.

I don't think Weir believed me on the first tee when I mentioned I beat him years ago. He likened it to a fish tale where he caught a 30-inch trout, but it was all in good fun. Also playing with us were three Rogers and Wasserman fellas, along with a club pro from Calgary. I can't remember a more enjoyable round of golf. Wasserman is a sports management company Rogers works with on the sports side of its operations.

My partner and I were very well taken care of with all expenses paid, including a ride to and from Banff during our free day. I have never had the majestic experience I did there with one of the world's most incredible natural wonders so present.

I guess my point in writing this column is to be humble and thankful. I have never had a lot in life aside from my family. I don't

need much, mind you, so if they were all I had, I would be content. When something great happens in life, we should all be very appreciative. I'm not getting any younger, and with the amount of arthritis in my back, I honestly don't know how much longer I can play the game I love.

My brother Tony was a professional golfer in Alberta before passing away during the pandemic. All I wanted when he died was his Mizuno staff bag. I took his Mizuno staff bag with me on the trip, so it felt a bit like he was there with me. I know he would have been pleased.

I normally don't give plugs to big companies, but I truly want to thank Rogers and Wasserman for their incredible customer service. They made this a once in a lifetime experience. A video of some of my trip is available at <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DNYrspiPRZv/>.

Lee Griffi is the editor of the Woodstock-Ingersoll Echo and a contributor to other Grant Haven newspapers.



With the GTR committee coming to a close, here's where the keystone project stands today

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Most recently, the committee – and council – has discussed whether or not to demolish the structure.

The committee has recommended to investigate keeping part of the superstructure (as much as feasible) and to incorporate the community hub portion of the project outside of the superstructure, potentially through renovating the current YMCA building on Downie Street. On July 14, that recommendation was supported by council.

Although consulting firm Svec Group, which has extensive history advising municipal revitalization projects, is investigating and costing out that scenario, the possibility of completely demolishing the structure was discussed at length.

Coun. Brad Beatty was vocal for his desire to demolish the superstructure that meeting.

“My entire time on council, I don't believe there's been any single item I've spoken to, listen to, heard delegations on, reports on, community consultation on, more than this,” Beatty said. “This has been in front of our community for as long as everybody in this gallery, as council and staff, can think back to. ... I hate to say this, but we're still here where I was 15 years ago, and the only thing that's gone up is the cost of doing something.

“... It's time to make the slate clean, and for that reason, I'm going to make the motion, mayor, that we choose the option for a complete removal of the superstructure.”

There was some back and forth between council members, but ultimately it was decided to wait and see what

Svec Group brings back.

Initial estimates the firm presented to the committee and council had two “bookends” for a community hub which costed between \$43 million and \$126 million, with the cheaper option to locate the hub outside of the superstructure and the most expensive to build it within the structure.

Theoretically, the cost to completely demolish the structure would be recouped by the price of scrap metal, meaning it would be a break-even venture – although the ground beneath the structure would still need to be remediated.

Additionally, due to the structure's proximity to the rail tracks, some of the land underneath it would only be viable for certain projects, such as parking.

Although Svec Group is investigating and will be bringing forth its findings to council in the future (expected in late 2025, early 2026), no decision has been made to preserve or demolish the structure yet. That decision will solely be made by council.

Local architect Robert Ritz has been petitioning both council and the committee to preserve the building, arguing that Svec Group has given council a “glass half-empty” scenario.

In a letter written to council, Ritz stated his concern is the city's consultants are focusing on the superstructure and not the site as a whole.

“The true cost to rehabilitate one of our most significant heritage buildings remains uncertain,” Ritz's letter reads. “My report used figures from a 2012 structural engineering report, which I extrapolated to 2025 dollars, estimat-

ing approximately \$9 million for the rehabilitation of the entire building. Interestingly, I noted that the structure could be valued at around \$46 million if built today, which represents good value and a solid foundation. I have received a quote to build it today as a pre-engineered structure for \$52 million. However, since 2012, the building has deteriorated further, and even more so, without a roof. The question is, how severe has it become, and what is the cost of rehabilitation today? The suggestion is to retain the engineer from 2012 to provide these answers.”

Ritz, later speaking with the Times, said that he is investigating the site through his firm, R. Ritz Architect, in order to convince council and the public that the building should be saved in its entirety. He believes that culturally and financially, it is the avenue forward.

“I'm hoping I can turn council around,” Ritz said, before sharing that he will presenting his own findings with the public once they are realized.

The ad hoc committee next meets on Sept. 15, its last meeting. Paul Parlee, a member of the committee, asked Mayor Martin Ritsma if council is considering extending the committee's lifespan on Aug. 25.

“At this point, no,” Ritsma replied. “That doesn't mean they can't, but at this point no.”

“Our mandate expires the end of September,” Dan Mathieson, chair of the committee, further explained to the Times in a later interview. “It's our hope to be able to bring council recommendations and then leave it with them. If they feel there's a need or a value to

extend the committee or to have a new iteration of what the committee could look like, I think many people would continue to want to be engaged, but that will be council's decision.”

The next step for the Grand Trunk site, most immediately, is to activate it. Staff have been investigating how to have the community engage with the site while it is sitting unused. Although they won't be able to open it up due to safety concerns, staff will be opening up the grounds for partnership.

As announced by the Provocation ideas Festival (PIF), the building will be the backdrop to its Trophy x Dreamweavers event, where local storytellers will regale participants with the site's history on Oct. 4 and 5.

As apart of the winter festival Lights On Stratford, the iconic heart light piece that migrates around the city year-to-year will be on display on the side of the superstructure, as well.

Aside from site activation, committee member Melanie Hare brought forward the possibility of updating the Grand Trunk Master Plan, a 2018 master document that has guided council and staff in its work. As she told committee members on Aug. 25, what exactly would go into a new plan is fluid, depending on the direction council wants to go in.

Mathieson shared with the Times that updating the master plan would be for council to consider after it has settled on whether to save the superstructure or not.

To view the current master plan in its entirety, and for more information, visit <https://engagestratford.ca/grand-trunk-renewal>.

More than 160 firearms seized from Perth South home

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

A 69-year-old Perth South man is charged with careless use of firearms after Stratford police seized a total of 165 guns while executing a search warrant related to unsafe storage of firearms on the man's property.

Officers executed the search warrant on Aug. 13 after the police service received information about the firearms being unsafely stored throughout the property. According to Stratford police Insp. Mark Taylor, police were made aware of the guns when someone came forward about the state of the property.

“The guns were not being stored; there were guns left randomly throughout the building on the property,” Taylor said.

Of the 165 guns seized by police, approximately 65 were handguns that are restricted or prohibited under Canadian law. The other 100 guns, Taylor said, were rifles and shotguns. In addition to the firearms, police seized what the service said was “a large amount” of ammunition, gunpowder and gun parts.

“There were no immediate concerns for police or public safety,” Taylor said. “However, the manner in which the firearms were stored demonstrated a complete disregard for the safety of others.

“Anyone who possesses firearms has a responsibility to store them securely. If you are unable to do so, we urge you to turn them in at your local police station, where they can be safely disposed of.”

The accused was released from police custody on an undertaking with a court date of Sept. 29.

MAPH hosts backpack drive at Falstaff Family Centre

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Just ahead of the school year, the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron (MAPH) is making sure students in need have what they need to succeed in their education.

The organization is having a backpack drive until the school year begins, looking to collect new and gently used backpacks for students in need.

“We are very positive. We need more. When we have more, we can give for more kids,” said Geza Wordofa, MAPH founder and president.

Wordofa said that the backpack drive comes at a time when families are facing food insecurity and other financial challenges due to the cost of living. Many local families cannot afford new supplies or backpacks.

“Most families now, they're strug-

gling,” he said.

Wordofa added that in addition to an increase of school-age and high school students each year, there are more adult learners taking English as second-language (ESL) classes. Several employers such as factories require that employees whose English is a secondary language have their Level 5 ESL certification.

The organization is also looking for gift card donations so families in need can buy additional items for their children's school year, such as new clothes and snacks.

“Any gift card is very, very important as well,” Wordofa said.

MAPH will be collecting backpacks at the Falstaff Family Centre every day from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. More information can be found by either sending an email to info@maph.ca or by visiting the organization's Facebook page.

Kiwanis Garlic Festival returns Sept. 6 and 7

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Organizers say that last year's Kiwanis Garlic Festival was its most successful since its founding in 2007 – but they hope to top it this year when the annual event returns Sept. 6 and 7.

"I think this is our 17th event," spokesperson Bonnie Richardson, said. "We've had lots of time to learn and refine what we're doing and but we're always trying to respond to things that we maybe should improve on. ... We certainly work hard. We have a team of about eight people who all have various roles. We start planning next year's event not long after we finish winding up this one. It's a lot of work and thought that goes into what's happening. And as I said, we, we've got a long history."

The garlic festival was the result of a partnership between the local Kiwanis Club and well-known garlic grower Warren Ham of August's Harvest Inc., at a time when the local industry was struggling to compete with the cheap imported garlic that was flooding the Canadian market.

The original festival was an outdoor event staged on the site of the former fairgrounds located off Glastonbury Crescent. It featured two huge tents, one for entertainers and the other for garlic cooking demonstrations. Patrons loved the charm of this outdoor venue, but there were two big problems: the hoards of wasps that appeared and the rain.

"We had 10 outdoors seasons and nine of them were rainy," Richardson joked. "We did not have the weatherman in our corner."

In 2016, the committee pivoted to an indoor venue at the Burnside Agriplex and the festival has been home in the Stratford Rotary Complex's community hall since 2017, a welcome change Richardson said.

This year, the festival will continue to showcase the world-class product being grown in southwestern On-

tario, including August's Harvest Inc. and Brant County Garlic, mainstays of the garlic grower community and participants in the Stratford Kiwanis Garlic Festival since 2007. Pure Music Garlic, Butler Farm, Dancing Pig Farms and Gricklegrass Farm will also be on display.

New vendors for 2025 include Appleflats, a family business that began by making jelly from the single crab apple tree on their farm outside of Wellesley in 2016, Moss Berry Farm that will sell fresh berries, handmade jams and chutneys, and Huron County Salt Company with unique flavoured salts made from local ingredients.

Since its introduction to the Stratford Kiwanis Garlic Festival in 2017, the Tastings and Pairings event has captured the imaginations – and taste buds – of festival patrons and vendors alike. This year, the organizers have introduced a non-alcoholic session featuring tea from Tea Leaves paired with sweets from Rhéo Thompson Candies.

Patrons who do not participate in the formal tastings program may purchase tickets to purchase samples of alcoholic beverages throughout the event. Many food vendors provide samples of their products at no charge.

On Sept. 7, the festival will feature cooking demonstrations by local chefs, including Andrew Mavor, musician turned chef and currently a teacher of culinary arts at the Avocado Café in Stratford District Secondary School, and Eli Silverthorn, an instructor at the Stratford Chefs School.

All the proceeds from this event go towards supporting Kiwanis initiatives in the Stratford community.

Admission is \$10 per day and children under 12 are free. This year, organizers are offering a price break of two adult tickets for \$10 on both Saturday and Sunday for patrons who arrive after 2 p.m. A two-day pass is also available for \$15. Free parking is available on site.

For more information, including a complete listing of vendors, presentations and tastings, visit stratfordgarlicfestival.ca.

After six swans went a-swimming, five remain unaccounted for

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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As of publication, five of the City of Stratford's mute swans are unaccounted for.

The news was announced on Aug. 25, with the city stating that sometimes the swans wander and leave the main river system, travelling to nearby tributaries, parks, stormwater ponds and even the local golf course.

ies, parks, stormwater ponds and even the local golf course.

Because the city does not use tracking devices, the parks and forestry department is turning to the community for help in locating them.

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



Congruency

(prayer of the Poet Laureate)

*No podium for me,
no stuffed shirt oaken dais
on which to rest my palms
and hallowed laurels
while I launch
my weighted pith
into the universe.*

*I want nothing
nothing
to come between my pen
and the stories
that I am compelled
to irradiate,
nothing to separate
my blackened page
from the arresting shadows
of our monuments,
the parables and metaphors
of our knitted past
that are my kindling
to illuminate the present
and to telescope
what just might be.*

*Words are my currency now,
my tongue the honed
and singing highway
for the honeyed truths
that must bridge
and heal the rifts
between our differences.*

*If it is that the poem's
purest meaning
is found between the words*

*then so it is
within those spaces
that I must
ensure the voices
of those unheard.*

*And so I write,
and in my craft
create that one clear page
on which
we all shall meet
to celebrate
all that we have become
and everything
we are yet to be.*

As Stratford's poet laureate, David Stones creates and performs poetry to celebrate and to enhance engagement in local community events and initiatives. Today's poem is "Congruency": on the occasion of being appointed Stratford's first-ever poet laureate.

STRATFORD **TIMES**

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JENN and Larry's Ice Cream Shoppe invites the community to help celebrate 15 years in business

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Sept. 3 marks 15 years of JENN and Larry's Ice Cream Shoppe serving Stratford's residents and visitors, and owner Jenn Stacey is inviting everyone to come out and help them celebrate.

The iconic shop, located at 49 York St., has been running since 2010. As Stacey said, it was started in a blink of an eye. She heard about an opening, signed the lease in mid-August for the York Street location, and opened in September, all in the span of a month and half.

"Yes, we opened an ice cream shop in the fall," Stacey joked. "... How everything fell into place in such a short period of time was a miracle. We opened Sept. 3. I believe it was the Friday of the long weekend ... The appeal for this street is because (Stratford Central Secondary School) was just down the street. So once word spread with the students, the students bookended our season."

In those early days of the shop, it was herself and her father, Larry Stacey, along with her mother Gail Stacey, who longtime Stratford residents may recognize as the proprietors of Larry and Gail's, a beloved drive-in on the outskirts of Stratford in the 60s and 70s. In later years, her brother Dan also joined the family business.

Stacey credited her parents for the shop's entire existence, especially in those early years. As she explained, it was her father that pushed her to consider it. She remembers receiving a phone call one night – from someone that she has since tried to remember – about 49 York Street coming up for lease. At the time she had a peanut brittle business, but she knew it was not a brick-and-mortar business on its own.

"Two days later, my son was swimming at his lesson at the (Stratford Lions Pool)," Stacey said. "My mom and dad were watching, and I said, 'Someone called me about



JENN and Larry's Ice Cream (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Shoppe is celebrating 15 years of serving soft serve to Stratford residents and visitors – and is inviting the community to help them celebrate the milestone on Sept. 3.

49 York St. coming up for lease.' My dad's like, 'Let's just walk up and take a look.'"

The rest, Stacey said, is history. They purchased their first ice cream machine, since ice cream would comple-

ment Stacey's brittle well, started a business account with a local bank and got to work. She and her father ran the front-of-shop, while her mother did bookkeeping in the back, making sure bills were paid.

There were a lot of hurdles in those early days that the team had to adapt to, but since that time it has flourished. She credits both her family, the staff that would grow over 15 years and the business community on York Street, which Stacey praised for its interconnectedness and charm.

"It's just incredible what this little street has to offer," Stacey said. "It's awesome here ... It's a wonderful community to be part of."

The business has changed in the last 15 years. Her staff grew and her parents stepped away in 2018, as did her brother in 2016. Additionally, the loss of the high school was a huge blow, with Stacey saying that she still misses the community of students that would come in every day.

Looking back, if Stacey could give herself advice, she would say to remain adaptable.

"I love what I do," she said. "That is the core foundation of being a business owner. ... It's a commitment. You have to love what you do, and then everything else can fall into place."

She thanked her family, in particular those that helped at the shop and her husband Michael, and her staff for being part of the shop's legacy. In the future, the shop remains focused on its fans. They will be moving into the event and catering market, offering office birthday treats, customer appreciation treats, staff appreciation, a "treat the team" package for sports teams, dance, weddings and buck and doe fundraising.

For the celebration on Sept. 3, a regular dipped cone will cost \$2.50 that day, in honour of 2025. Staff will be there from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., and everyone is welcome to come and celebrate.

Fire ban lifted in Perth County after nearly a month of dry conditions

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

On Aug. 25, the open-air fire ban was lifted in Perth County, including the City of Stratford.

The ban was instituted on Aug. 6 due to the extreme dryness of all vegetation in the area and lifted due to the recent rainfall in the region.

Burn permits can now be issued and residents must abide by their respective municipality's burn bylaw, practicing safe burning by:

- Calling the local fire department to obtain an open air burn permit.
- Closely supervising all outdoor fires and making sure the fire is out before leaving the area.
- Ensuring that open fire is the correct distance from all structures and other combustible materials.
- Never burning plastics, household garbage, construction debris, treated lumber or other laminate wood, tires, asphalt products, pesticides, paint or aerosol con-

tainers, etc.

- Avoiding burning on windy days and be aware of wind direction when deciding to burn.

- Never using gasoline or other flammable combustible liquids.

- Having a source of water or equipment to move dirt/sand to extinguish the fire if necessary.

A burn ban may be put back anytime, if dry conditions return.

Farmers are encouraged to be very careful with combining, as field fires can quickly overtake equipment, neighbouring crops and can spread quickly into adjacent woodlands. Having a fire extinguisher on board large equipment is highly recommended.

If anyone discovers an uncontrolled/unattended open-air fire, it is very important that they are immediately reported via 9-1-1. Do not delay reporting while attempting to control or extinguish the fire.

The fire chiefs in Perth County thank residents and visitors alike for their patience and cooperation during the fire ban.

Twelve gardens named the best in the city by Communities in Bloom

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The City of Stratford's Communities in Bloom advisory committee has announced the winners of its annual Best Garden Contest.

Twelve gardens were recognized, including:

- The Semeniuk family – 146 Long Drive
- Julie Gray – 1 Forman Avenue
- Margaret Dickson – 59 Fairfield Drive
- Inn at Rosehurst Bed & Breakfast – 131 Front Street
- Carol Wood – 72 Long Drive
- West Village – Galt Road
- Mary Hesse – 185 Strachan Street
- Larry Davidson and Margaret Thompson – 30 Front Street
- Urban Farm Stratford District Secondary School Eco Club and West Village
- Charles Beall and Karon Bales – 51 Avon Street
- Bruce Whitaker – 4 Huron Street/Perth County Inn

- Bernie van Herk – Greenwood Court
- Additionally, seven gardens were named as honourable mentions, including:

- Energy and Environment Committee's Native Grass Garden
- Stratford General Hospital entrance
- Karen and Dwayne Goforth
- Revival House - Peter Cheyenne
- Irene Vant Voort
- Joan Houston
- Debra and George Mackie

Communities in Bloom thanks everyone who participated in this year's contest, and all those who make Stratford a more beautiful place.



Stratford's Marshall McCannell runner-up at 2025 CNE Ambassador Competition

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

This year's Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) Ambassador Competition turned out to be very exciting for Perth County's ambassadors.

Stratford's Fall Fair ambassador Marshall McCannell competed at this year's CNE competition in Toronto on Aug. 17.

As Stratford's first male ambassador, the Stratford and District Agricultural Society directors were excited for him, when he achieved top seven and then went on to be named to the final top three and, eventually, the second runner-up overall.

Stratford Fall Fair ambassador coordina-

tor, Heidi Danen, said it was an amazing accomplishment for McCannell. She said she was proud of him to be able to compete against the other 54 competitors from all across Ontario in the highly competitive competition. He will be Heidi Danen's final competitor, as she is now stepping down as convener of the Stratford Fall Fair ambassador program.

Taking over in the coming years is Amanda Eve (a past fair ambassador), along with help from Breanne Schaefer (also a former fair ambassador) and McCannell himself.

Lexi Johnston, representing the Listowel Agricultural Society, was later crowned the 2025 CNE ambassador herself.



Stratford Fall Fair ambassador Marshall McCannell, who eventually became the second runner up at this year's CNE ambassador competition, poses with Tavistock's Heidi Danen, who has co-ordinated the Stratford Fall Fair ambassador program and local competition for many very successful years. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Stratford-Perth Pride Centre's first coffee social a resounding success, with more planned

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

Nothing brings a community together like coffee, and that was the idea that the Stratford-Perth Pride Centre had when it announced it would run a coffee social earlier this month.

Executive director A.J. Ashley explained that it was an early Monday morning on Aug. 11, setting up the pride centre to get it ready for the very first coffee social.

"The more we plan, the more we will be able to fine tune our plan for this program," Ashley explained. "We're looking forward to finding new ways to bring together the members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and this coffee social was a great place to start."

Individuals came right at 10 a.m., ready for some coffee and excited to see the space. Conversation was lively, educational and informative, ranging from opinions of the past pride events, what some want to see the organization do in the coming future, to Dungeons and Dragons and what portion of the deep sea they would

want to explore.

"This one was a great success," Ashley said. "It was a wonderful turnout, especially for our first coffee social. We are currently looking to do this bi-weekly; right now we're looking to do it again on Sept. 8 after the long weekend."

Ashley went on to discuss how the organization is planning on evolving programming, even beyond the coffee social. As the organization is reworking its programming, there are a lot of changes that are being done internally, with each person working hard to ensure new programs are getting prepared that can help more members of the community learn and socialize.

The Stratford-Perth Pride Centre thanked Balzac's Coffee and Sirkel Foods for providing coffee and food for the event.

If anyone is interested in knowing more about the organization, they can follow them on social media at Stratford-Perth Pride on Facebook and Instagram. You can also give them a call at 519-273-7722, or send them an email at stratfordperthpride@gmail.com.

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Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. Moose Jaw is a city in what province of Canada?
2. The U.S. Marine Corps' motto is "Semper Paratus" which means what?
3. In *Curious George*, who is George's right hand man?
4. Apart from eggs what is in an Arnold Bennett omelette?
5. A gemshorn is made from what animal?
6. Who wrote the famous book: *Lord of the Flies*?
7. Which playing card is known as the Devil's Bedpost?
8. Name Batman's crime-fighting partner?
9. Which singing voice is the highest pitch? Soprano, tenor or baritone?
10. What kind of tree do prunes come from?

This week's answers are found on pg. 27

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SLAAA open house to showcase wellness and multicultural programs

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

The Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association's (SLAAA) annual Open House, Wellness and Multicultural Fair will be held Saturday, Sept. 13 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Stratford Agriplex Community Hall. Admission is free, and all community members are welcome to attend.

This year's event will feature 28 wellness and multicultural exhibits, along with interactive displays highlighting the wide range of programs and activities offered through SLAAA for adults aged 55 and older in Stratford.

Attendees will have opportunities to participate in hands-on activities, access expert resources, and meet new people in a welcoming environment.

"As you age, socialization becomes more important," said Trudy Jonkman, SLAAA board member. "We're really trying to focus on the social aspect within SLAAA by combining that with physical activity like pickleball, line dancing, tai chi and shuffleboard."

This year's guest speaker will be Dr. Jean Hewitt speaking at 10:30 a.m. on "Aging with Optimism." Hewitt is a "Su-



per Ager," identified by the University of Chicago's Healthy Aging and Alzheimer's Research Care Center.

"It is with great anticipation that we look

forward to Dr. Hewitt," said Jonkman. "At 85 years of age, Dr. Hewitt is going strong. Initiating the Aging Wisely - Stratford Third Age Learning she, with others, are

putting into action lifelong learning."

A total of 44 exhibits will be available. Exhibitors include the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth, Wellspring Stratford, the Stratford Police Service and the local Walking Soccer Club. Booths will also showcase the variety of activities offered through SLAAA.

Jonkman said this year's "Aging with Optimism" theme is a celebration of vitality, inclusion and lifelong learning for older adults in the community.

"Last year, with a New Horizons grant, we were able to increase the multicultural aspect," she said. "We want to engage all locals to come out and see what SLAAA has to offer, and we want to attract people who are new to the area to come to the event as well."

The Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association (for individuals aged 55 and above) provides opportunities for participation in activities, services and special events. Its mission is to promote enjoyment, wellness, connection and accessibility for all.

"We are trying to be as open and accessible as possible to everyone in Stratford," Jonkman said. "We hope to have something for everyone."

HälsaFusion blends tradition and science in holistic wellness

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

A Stratford entrepreneur is launching a new approach to skin and body care that blends holistic practices with science-backed principles.

HälsaFusion, founded by local mom of two Jenna Binkle, has opened and operates out of Illume Wellness Spa. The new business offers customized skincare consultations, holistic treatments, nutritional coaching and rebalance programs designed to support wellness from the inside out.

"As an esthetician, I noticed such a gap in how I was treating inflammatory skin conditions like acne and rosacea," Binkle said. "I thought, there's got to be something else besides just topical treatments, because I wasn't getting the results I was anticipating."

Her search for answers led her back to school, where she studied holistic nu-



Jenna Binkle, owner of HälsaFusion, has launched her new Stratford business, offering holistic skincare, nutrition and wellness services.

trition. From there, she expanded into

areas including acupuncture, lymphatic drainage and pressure point therapy – all of which became part of her "fusion" approach.

"The fusion aspect is literally just that – it can go anywhere," Binkle said. "Some people need more internal work, others need nervous system regulation through touch therapy. Most people leave feeling like they've had a reset."

Binkle said she has seen particularly positive feedback from perimenopausal and menopausal women looking for natural hormone-balancing options. She uses supplements such as red clover or adaptogens like ashwagandha when appropriate. She also refers clients to other providers, including Judy, a Menopause Society-certified provider nurse practitioner, who also operates in Stratford.

Her journey toward holistic health began long before HälsaFusion. In high school, Binkle worked at a Stratford health food store, where her employer – a graduate of

the Canadian School of Natural Nutrition – introduced her to textbooks on natural health. At the same time, she was completing a two-year esthetics program at Niagara College, motivated by her own struggles with acne.

"Reading those textbooks opened my eyes," she said. "Even while I was focused on skin treatments in esthetics, I kept coming back to the internal connection. Nutrition as medicine really clicked for me."

Now, through HälsaFusion, Binkle is weaving together her training and experiences to help others find that same balance.

"We're trying to get to the root cause, not just treat symptoms," she said. "When you support the nervous system and internal balance, everything else becomes easier."

For more information, visit halsafusion.com. All bookings are done through Illume Wellness Spa.

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First Stratford Filipino Festival a celebration of cuisine, clothing and entertainment

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The inaugural Stratford Filipino Festival had lots of tasty food to try and a positive energy amongst the attendees.

The Filipino-Canadian Community in Perth-Huron (FCC in PH) held the first-ever Stratford Filipino Festival at the Falstaff Family Centre on Aug. 23. Attendees had a chance to explore Filipino cuisine and clothing, as well as enjoy music and dance performances. Guests of all ages also tried out karaoke.

"The culture that we have around cel-

ebration is something that we've always wanted to share with more and more people. We always have these kinds of celebrations, and we have it within our community," said FCC in PH officer Meryl Ochoa. "We have it with people that have become integrated into our community, but this time we really want to share that widely with the Stratford community who has hosted us and have felt like home for so long for a lot of us."

Ochoa describes the close-knit relationship the Filipino community has with the city of Stratford as "Bayanihan," which is Tagalog for a community that helps each

other out.

"Whether that's something personal, something with your family and friends, something when someone's in need or just something to make a community or something in the community better. That's something we really feel within the small town but really expanding feeling of Stratford and that's what it's offered us this long," she said.

Vendors part of the festival came across from southwestern Ontario, such as Kitchener's Lola Liza, London's Mommy Ai Boutique, Woodstock's Mindanao Hub and Toronto's Salu-Salo.

"It shows us that while Stratford has a lot to offer us, there's not a (lot of) businesses catered to the specific needs, Filipino food for example, or just culturally," Ochoa said. "That's something that we all want to see progress in the future but in the meantime, we've built so many of these relationships by going to our neighbouring cities, to our neighbouring towns and finding those Filipino businesses, those stores that offer what we call a taste of home. Each vendor even represents a different group from the Philippines, so that really gives something for everybody ... to reminisce about or to feel again like home."



Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma with Filipino-Canadian Community in Perth-Huron officers.



Dancers entertain the crowd at the Stratford Filipino Festival with a traditional Cordillera dance.

(EMILY STEWART PHOTOS)

Fall brings changes to youth programs at the Y

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

Editor's note: Sydney Goodwin is a youth engagement worker at the Stratford YMCA.

The Y's youth team is getting their programming ready for the coming fall season. New programs, returning favourites and highly anticipated changes are coming as summer comes to an end.

Change is an important part of growth, taking what is loved and evolving it into something great, and that is exactly what the youth team has been working towards when putting together the fall schedule, said Teddy Beilby, youth engagement worker at the Y. Beilby broke down what the public can expect from the coming schedule.

"After weeks of pool maintenance, we are excited that the Film and Float will be

returning mid-September," Beilby explained, pointing out some of the things they and the team are looking forward to continuing. "Our 2SLGBTQIA+ youth program has gotten a new name, Out and About. LGBTQ+ programming is still every Wednesday, and Cook, eat, connect will be every Monday and Wednesday. Another great thing is that this fall we are also introducing newcomer youth starting up every Tuesday after school."

Beilby went on to talk about the much-anticipated return of baking with the youth team, which will be taking place on Thursdays before Film and Float. The change of seasons also means a focus on programs starting after school. As kids return to school, they will want a space to let out their energy, and Beilby and their coworkers can't wait to hear the stories of the kids'

summers at the Y and the Burnside Agriplex.

It's not just the kids that looking forward to the fall program, the youth programming team can't wait to get these programs started.

"Personally, I am looking forward to trying new things! We started Dungeons and Dragons in August ... I can't wait to see where the storyline takes us," Beilby said in regards to one of their newer programs.

Creating a safe space is the most important thing for the youth team, making a place where kids feel comfortable is of utmost importance to them. "We are really focusing on making a safe space for the kids, and we're doing that through specific programming like our LGBTQ+ program, Out and About, and Newcomer Youth programming, and general programming like Open Gym

and Film and Float."

With these programs happening on a weekly basis, the youth team is creating a space that the kids can rely on and know they can come to every week.

It's not just within the walls of the Y that the youth team is working and growing; but through all of Stratford. The team works extensively to meet the needs that they see around the community, focusing on what is missing, and what can be changed. One of the ways they are doing this is through their cooking lessons, free meals, and food always available in program. All of the programs offered at the Y are put on with the hope that memories and friends are made that will last a lifetime.

For more information about the Y's youth programs, visit its website at ymcathreerivers.ca, or check out their Instagram @stratfordyouth.

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Stratford's Ron Neeb tours central Ontario from an antique John Deere

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Stratford's Ron Neeb, who grew up on a farm near Gadshill in North Easthope Township, has been a big fan throughout his life of old, antique John Deere tractors. You may have seen him in area parades, with his polished two-cylinder green machines.

Neeb is a past president of the Stratford and District Agricultural Society and works hard to put on the city's fall fair, which entertains thousands every year.

In early August, Ron and two of his fellow antique tractor enthusiast friends, Claire McRoberts and Dave Proudlove, took a tour from Gadshill to Stayner, Ont., to visit one of the member's relatives.

They left Gadshill at 7:20 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 9, and with a few stops along the way, arrived at Stayner by 4 p.m. that same day. The route they chose was 156 total kilometres, and took them through Millbank, around Conestoga Lake, and onto Arthur.

In leaving Arthur, they made their way to Highway 89, passing through Damascus and Mogk.

To avoid the busy area of Shelburne, they took Highway 17 to the north of Masonville. From there they worked their



Claire McRoberts on his 50s-60s Oliver 1650, Ron Neeb on his favourite 40s-50s John Deere 60 and Dave Proudlove on his 60s Cockshutt 1350. The three toured central Ontario on top of their machines, seeing Ontario's beauty for themselves. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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way north-east through Honeywood and Lavender, catching Highway 9 at Dundas, at the base of Lavender Hill, a continuous descent for about three kilometres.

From there it was on to Creemore and then to Stayner to meet up with cousin Lincoln Mueller.

Mueller is a vintage car collector himself and has approximately 20 cars and trucks from the 1920s to the mid-1930s. His collection includes many vehicles of the Yundt Brother's vintage car and truck collection from Stratford. Two of the dump trucks and a pickup truck are all early 1930 models and were used to build Highway 19 from Stratford to Milverton. They will be on display at the Stratford Fall Fair from Sept. 18 through to Sept. 21.

Neeb, McRoberts and Proudlove had a great day that Sunday touring the Stayner area with cousin Mueller, taking in a number of waterfalls and viewing a huge international truck and tractor collection in the town of Coldwater.

Monday saw the trio heading south and west with the final destination of Elmwood, just north of Hanover, to spend the night there with another friend. There were, however, a number of stops to be made along the way before reaching Elmwood. The first stop was Eugenia Lake to view the lake and take in the waterfalls.

From there, it was on to Kimberly, to the north and then crossing the Niagara Escarpment. The three said that crossing of the escarpment was quite a treat for them.

They crossed on the road just beside the Kimberly Ski Resort Road, with the climb of over 500 feet including two road

"switchbacks."

After getting about a quarter of the way up, it became necessary to shift to a lower gear to get up and over the top.

The view from the top of Kimberly, overlooking Beaver Valley, was most spectacular, they shared, and from there, they continued going west on a road that was not maintained during the winter.

This road, for about 20 kilometres, happened to be a snowmobile trail in the winter, offering absolutely stunning, narrow, tree lined and hilly sections.

After a good night sleep at another friend's place, Tuesday morning saw Neeb, McRoberts and Proudlove heading to Hanover to accept an invitation to join a local group for coffee at McDonald's.

Next on the schedule was to refuel the tractors and then head south from Hanover going through Austin, Harriston and Teviotdale. After a stop along the way, south of Teviotdale, they visited with friend Shawn Flewelling, and another stop at Poole, to visit with Gid Jantzi.

The three are back and enjoying Perth County again, almost back to their starting point of Gadshill. Neeb said the trip was a great way to view some of Ontario's natural beauty at a slower pace on an antique tractor.

The sites, the sounds, the smell of newly cut hay, the waves of people on their front porches waving like old friends revisited, and new friends made, will never be forgotten.

"If anyone reading this is ever invited to go on an extended vintage tractor tour don't pass it up," Neeb said. "You won't be sorry!"

Junction 56 to honour 10-year business anniversary with behind-the-scenes tour

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Junction 56 is celebrating 10 years of making craft spirits, including the fan favourite Rhéo Thompson mint smoothie liquor, purple gin, and Cambria Street whisky.

"It's definitely a pretty proud moment for everybody. I mean, 10 years is a great milestone to hit, and I think everybody here just wants to celebrate getting to that point," said Jessica Heisler, retail manager of Junction 56.

Established in 2015, Junction 56 was formed after owner Mike Heisz felt inspired to make his own whisky after attending a Stratford whisky tasting event. Today, a variety of vodkas, whiskeys, gins and cocktail syrups make up the inventory.

Junction 56 even produced hand sanitizer during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it's no longer sold or produced, the hand sanitizer was a

big seller until the last batch was sold. The distillery also offers cocktail classes and guided tastings.

For Heisler, her favourite part of working at Junction 56 is seeing the products come together, especially new creations.

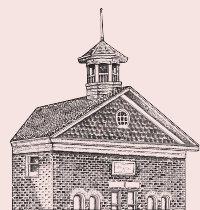
"Just being able to bring out new product, such as the coffee liquor, the gin and juice, coming up with the names and the label designs, taste testing," she said.

Junction 56 will host its 10th anniversary party at the distillery on 46 Cambria St. on Sept. 13 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Heisler said the event will give attendees a closer look into how products like the chocolate liquor is made and meet general manager James Donnelly and Heisz. Guests will also sip on a signature cocktail made just for the occasion while touring the facilities.

"It's always nice for people to be able to see how things are actually being made," Heisler said. "The type of detail that we put into our product, how proud we are of what we make and like I

said, being able to see first-hand how we make certain products."

To view Junction 56's products online, visit <https://www.junction56.ca>.



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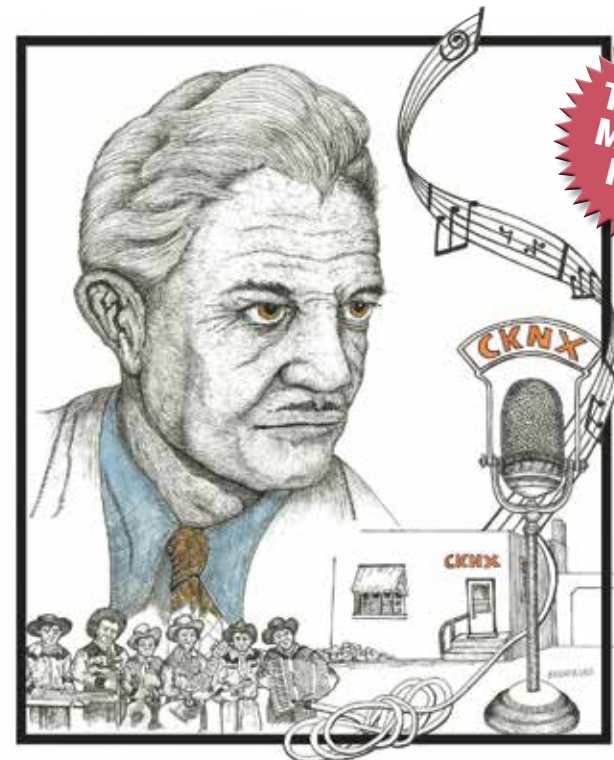
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STRATFORD **TIMES** SPORTS

Warriors prepare for the season and win the Eli Pelfreyman Tournament

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Hunter Steel Warriors began training camp and took home hardware after winning the Eli Pelfreyman Global Invitational Tournament on Aug. 24.

On Aug. 19, the Warriors started preparing for the 2025-2026 season with a training camp held at the Stratford Rotary Complex. The Warriors are coming off a heartbreaking seven-game series loss to the eventual Western Conference champions, the Chatham Maroons, and want to improve their position this year.

Director of hockey operations Jason Clarke said the team's expectations are high despite the level of competition in the conference.

"Well, we always like to set our goals that we want to finish in the top half of our league. So right now, it's the West Division with the split last year, super competitive and tough division," Clarke said.

"So that's always our goal. Every year, we want to finish in the top half but we really don't know where we sit until we

get through the league, and we've played everybody at least once just to see where the other teams are at and what they have. We think we have a good group, but we never truly know until we play everybody."

According to the GOJHL website, the Warriors attracted the highest average home game attendance in the league last season, averaging 906 fans per game at the William Allman Memorial Arena. Clarke believes the team will give the loyal fans a strong effort every game this season.

"I think they can expect another really hard-working team. I think we've added a bunch of speed, a lot of skill, and I think they can look forward to a real exciting group at the Allman every Friday night," Clarke said.

Following the three-day camp, the Warriors participated in the 2025 Eli Pelfreyman Global Invitational Tournament, co-hosted by the Ayr Centennials and Toronto's St. Andrew's College.

In the opener at St. Andrew's College, the Warriors lost 5-3 to the Pittsburgh Jr. Penguins. Coen Galbraith, Rhyse Brown

and McQuen Haylock scored for the Warriors in the losing effort. But the Warriors' offence clicked on in the next two games.

Stratford headed to the North Dumfries Community Centre in Ayr to face the Cambridge Redhawks. Max Wildfong scored a hat trick and a four-point performance by Jonas Schmidt propelled the Warriors to an 8-3 win on Aug. 22.

On Aug. 23, the Warriors returned to St. Andrew's College and blanked the First Assist Trappers 4-0. A pair of goals led Stratford by Schmidt and a 13-save shutout by Connor Davis. With the win, the Warriors advanced to the tournament final against the co-host St. Andrew's Saints.

In the final at the North Dumfries Community Centre in Ayr, the Warriors edged the Saints 3-2 to win the tournament. Jack McGurn opened the scoring for the War-

riors early in the first period before Jake DiCapo tied the game midway through the period.

Stratford took control and the lead with goals from Schmidt and Dominic Marshall within 77 seconds apart. Nolan Long got the Saints to within a goal with 36 seconds remaining, but the Warriors held on in the closing seconds to win the title. Davis stopped 28 shots for the Warriors and won the player of the game honours.

Next up for the Warriors is to begin GOJHL preseason play against the Plymouth Victory Honda on Aug. 26 at the Stratford Rotary Complex, after press time. Stratford will also play the home-to-home against the St. Marys Lincolns on Aug. 29 at the Rotary Complex before going on the road against the Lincolns the next day at St. Marys.

Fighting Irish to begin NPHL season on Oct. 5

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford Bentley's Fighting Irish released their 2025-2026 season schedule on the Northern Premier Hockey League (NPHL) website. Stratford will start their inaugural season in the Northern Premier Hockey League on Oct. 5 in Halton Hills against the Coyotes.

On the following weekend, the Fighting Irish start their home slate at the William Allman Arena as they host the Strathroy Jets on Oct. 11. The game is the rematch of last year's Western Ontario Super Hockey League (WOSHL)

final, in which Stratford won the league title on home ice in game seven.

As a member of the Metropolitan Division, the Irish will play all of their regular-season games in their division. Joining Stratford in the division are familiar faces from the WOSHL, including the Strathroy Jets, Woodstock Lakers, Alvinston Killer Bees and Tilbury Bluebirds. Orangeville Blitz and the Six Nations Ironmen round out the division.

The regular season will last twenty games, with the Irish wrapping up at home, playing Alvinston on Feb. 7. All the Irish home games at the Allman Arena during the regular season will be played on Saturday nights at 5:30 p.m.



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The annual Stratford-Shaw cricket match was held on the Butch Blake Memorial Cricket Ground this year, the inaugural match for the new pitch. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

New cricket pitch honours Butch Blake as Stratford Festival narrowly defeats Shaw in this year's exhibition match

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Reporter

Stratford's first official cricket pitch opened Monday, Aug. 25, and while the day began with light rain, by the time the first ball was bowled, the sun was shining on spectators.

The Stratford-Shaw match – a rivalry dating back to the 1970s, when both companies had Mondays off, is now in its 51st year and continues to bring players and audiences together. This year, the game concluded at 6 p.m., with Stratford securing a close win over Shaw, 158-157.

The new field, although not formally named, is already fondly known as the Butch Blake Memorial Cricket Ground. It was dedicated in honour of Mervyn "Butch" Blake, a man who gave much to Stratford, both on stage and on the cricket pitch.

Blake was a Stratford Festival actor for more than four decades, performing in 42 seasons, 118 productions and 132 roles, including Shakespeare's entire canon. But to many, he was just as legendary for his devotion to cricket.

"Today we continue a bizarre and beloved tradition of theatre people playing cricket on a mutual day off," said Emilio Vera, captain of the festival cricket team. "The Beacon Herald archives tell us one of the earliest recorded cricket matches in Stratford ended in a fist fight. We hope that doesn't happen today – but no promises."



Andrew Blake speaks at the dedication of Stratford's first cricket pitch on Monday, Aug. 25. The new ground was named in honour of his father, Mervyn "Butch" Blake, a longtime Stratford Festival actor and cricket enthusiast. (AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Vera said Blake's enthusiasm for the game "never wavered," adding: "He encouraged the best and the worst of us. It is because of his extraordinary contribution to our community that we honour him here today."

The dedication drew local leaders, including Mayor Martin Ritsma, who spoke

about the potential to welcome cricket teams from across Ontario to Stratford and was practicing right before the game for his first pitch to open the event.

"We're embracing our wide demographic of local families in our community," he said. "If I bowl well today, CeCe was a great teacher. If I bowl poorly, I

was a poor student."

Festival artistic director Antoni Cimolino remembered Blake as an actor who could transform any stage he walked onto.

"Butch was proof that good things come in small packages," Cimolino said. "When he got on stage, no matter how good the performance was, suddenly it became better. He believed in theatre, he believed in community, and he knew that being part of a company meant not only creating art, but also playing together."

For Blake's family, the recognition was especially moving. His son Andrew shared stories of his father's lifelong love of the game, which started when he was a boy in India.

"It's commonly believed that he came to the new world to promote what he had learned about the theatre," Andrew said. "The truth, however, is not entirely that. His prime reason for crossing the Atlantic was to teach North Americans how to play the game of cricket."

He recalled his father's catching ability, his dedication to the team even in his 80s, and his joy in seeing the Stratford-Shaw tradition continue year after year.

"Love was the motivating force of his life – love of people, love of the theatre, love of work and love of life itself," Andrew said. "Since 1997, Shaw has won 13 games, Stratford has won 11, and there were two draws due to rain. The team's motto is 'It shall be so.' I hope the Stratford team wins against Shaw today."



With a dramatic flourish, Bill Malmo pops a bottle of champagne with a sword before pouring a glass for Tim Campbell. (AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

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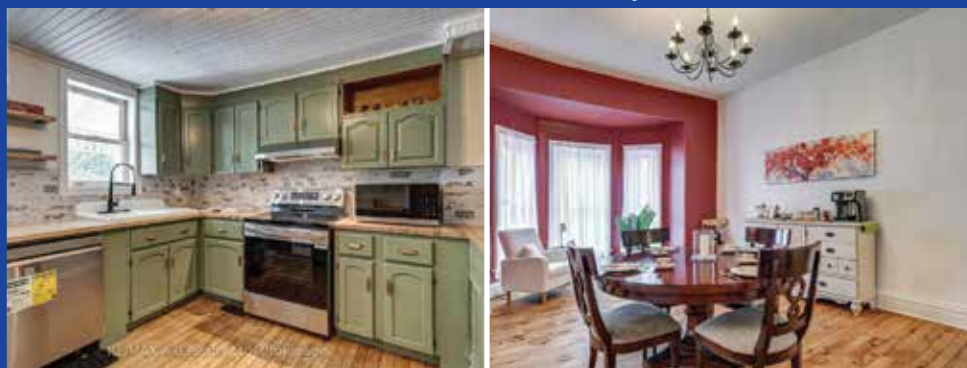
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Stratford couple celebrates Hughson Hall's 150th birthday

SCOTT DUNSTALL

Times Correspondent

Hughson Hall has accrued many stories over the past 150 years it has been standing in Stratford, and now it and those stories are being celebrated.

When you first set eyes on Hughson Hall, it's easy to be swept away by its stately presence — a 6,000-square-foot Victorian Italianate beauty built in 1875 by Joseph Sharman, one of Stratford's pioneering families. But spend an afternoon with its current owners, Debra and George Mackie, and you quickly realize this house isn't just a historic landmark, it's a living, breathing stage for community, history and a little theatrical magic.

The Mackies took over Hughson Hall in 2017, trading their long-established careers for a dream they'd been nurturing for 40 years: running their own bed and breakfast. Debra, a landscape designer with a flair for gourmet cooking, and George, a retired human resources and labour relations professional, knew exactly what makes a bread and breakfast exceptional. Still, they weren't quite prepared for the Herculean task of reviving a property that had become a clear example of an underperforming property in an excellent neighborhood.

When they arrived, the house and grounds were buried in ivy so thick it had forced the front Juliet balcony away from the wall. A hedge had grown so wildly that pedestrians had to step into the road to get past. Dead trees, a neglected pond and years of plant overgrowth hid the home's gracious bones. George, armed with ladders and sheer determination, scraped ivy off the three-storey walls by hand. The

couple cleared over a half-acre of land, backfilled the pond and transformed the yard into a sweeping interlocking-stone courtyard perfect for weddings, concerts and summer parties.

Today, Hughson Hall is a showpiece. The gardens, designed and maintained entirely by Debra, have won Stratford's Best Garden Selection award multiple times. Their newest jewel is a huge sunroom the Mackies designed themselves: 800 square feet of light, comfort and elegance, complete with heated floors and coffered ceilings. It's here that a bride booked her wedding for 18 guests. She was a European concert pianist and had a grand piano delivered, filled the room and the house with thousands of dollars' worth of flowers. After the last note faded, she simply left the blooms behind. George and Debra spent the next day delivering them to seniors' residences across the city.

The house's walls hold more than beauty, they hold stories. Hughson Hall has been home to, or a temporary residence for, a string of notable names. Christopher Plummer lived here for three years in what is now the dining room. Bea Arthur's first husband, actor and director Gene Saks, rented the west wing parlour. Raymond Burr is among the many well-known guests who have passed through. In the 1940s, Warner Brothers filmed scenes here for the Oscar-nominated *One Foot in Heaven*.

History runs deep in the details. The east parlour was once Stratford's public library in the 1920s, complete with its own street entrance. Two hand-painted murals in the formal west parlour went unnoticed for two years, hidden behind tapestries, until

CONTINUED TO PAGE 17



Taoist Tai Chi open house invites the public to try out meditative movements

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

An open house is planned for Saturday, Sept. 6 at the Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism, located at 670 Ontario St., at 10:30 a.m. Residents are invited to learn about the art of Taoist Tai Chi and practice a few movements with a group of practitioners.

For more than 50 years, volunteer instructors have been helping people around the world regain and maintain their health, improve balance, build strength and experience a deep sense of inner calm. Through mindful practice, practitioners learn true strength lies in softness, patience, humility and the ability to listen to both body and others.

The demonstration of the first seventeen moves will be performed by a group consisting of both experienced and newer practitioners, who themselves have only begun their journey with Taoist Tai Chi. For some, they first became aware of the practice by the sign out front advertising an open house while for others they came to the art as a recommendation by medical doctors or physiotherapists.

"My wife and I were looking for something to do after retirement and we saw the sign out front and thought this is something we could do together and thought we would check it out. We had no idea what we were getting into, but it is great. It's probably going to change my life," shared Stan Fraser, who has been practicing since mid-January.

Fraser had no pre-existing conditions but has come to realize that he has lost some balance and had thought he was experiencing some discomfort in his shoulders. Taoist Tai Chi has helped him. It has also helped Silvana Vito who started her journey on the recommendation of her



Recent practitioners, from left to right, Stan Fraser, Silvana Vito and Scott McKowen have all been experiencing the many benefits of practicing Taoist Tai Chi. (LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

doctors.

"I heard about (Taoist Tai Chi) again because of health issues with my back and everything and they suggested I could do Tai Chi because they couldn't do anything more to help me. This was from my doctors and physiotherapist. And now here I am, and I have found a tremendous help here. I can do more than I used to. I became aware of how my body felt. I feel the difference, turning with your core at the spine and even my balance is a lot better. It has helped me immensely and even my mind, it was busy-busy, but you can't have that with Tai Chi. You have to really

think, and the awareness takes over," said Vito.

Beginner classes are typically four months and starts with learning the 108 movements that comprise the set. Anyone of any skill level can start and the pace will depend on how well the students seem to be succeeding.

"It was easy to absorb and it was very well paced. Shirley (Walker, beginner leader) was very patient with us," said Scott McKowen, local artist that comes several times a week since finishing the beginner class.

Walker, one of the beginner leaders, has

been practicing Taoist Tai Chi since 2004 and has been leading for about five years. The classes commence as soon as Monday, Sept. 8 or Saturday, Sept. 13.

"The first thing beginners learn is to hopefully relax and to not worry. There's way too much information for beginners to absorb so the more they can relax and not worry too much about where their hands and feet go, the better."

Concepts like knowing where your body is and how to move comfortably are among the most basic concepts learned. Taking the time and doing the 108 moves, showing the 108 moves to beginners are what the curious can expect as they commence their journey. Once the beginning classes are complete, they then move on to continuing classes where a deeper understanding of Taoist Tai Chi is explored.

"Beginners learn the basic form, simply the placement of the feet and moving from one move to the next. The continuing class goes deeper, learning the expansion and contraction and getting more out of each move," explained Walker.

"It's not going to be for everybody," began McKowen, "I expect anyone who starts a Tai Chi journey here will pick up things, that all of a sudden you hear an instruction, and you'll go, 'Oh, all of a sudden that makes sense to me.' It's a long arc of absorbing and applying things to see where you're at – and that's the best kind of journey, it seems to me. You keep feeling and keep engaged in the activity as you can see that you're making progress."

The open house will be held at the Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism located at 670 Ontario St., Sept. 6 at 10:30 a.m. Introductory sessions commence the following week, Sept. 8 or Sept. 13. For more information and to view testimonial videos visit Taoist.org.

Stratford couple celebrates Hughson Hall's 150th birthday

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

the Mackies moved them during redecorating. And that striking red carpet running up the stairs and all through the second floor? It predates their ownership without a single stain, a survivor from less careful decades.

Life at Hughson Hall is a joint production. Debra designs the gardens, cooks their famous three-course gourmet breakfasts, oversees website management, bookings, administrative operations, wedding coordinator duties and keeps the interior as photo-ready as the history books demand. George handles the morning coffee service for guests, the heavy maintenance and the hosting duties. They run the bed and breakfast entirely themselves with no outside staff, while continuing to update and maintain the property year-round.

It's hard to pick a single highlight from their years here, but the 150th anniversary celebration this past July stands out. Guests mingled on the sprawling front yard and back courtyard with live music. Foot long hot dogs in eight-inch buns, fresh popcorn and other refreshments were given out. Parked out on the front lawn was a gleaming two-tone 1939 Auburn Speedster, a long ladies' blue fox fur coat casually draped on the front seat. By the end of

the afternoon event, the coat had been modeled by half a dozen guests. "It was one of those days you never forget," George recalled with a smile.

Events here range from intimate elopements to community concerts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when large gatherings were banned, the Mackies leaned into smaller weddings, creating curated vendor lists and even hosting their own son's wedding in the courtyard. Last year's Front Porch Tour saw over 200 neighbors gather under the trees for live music on the newly built three-tier patio area on the front of the property.

For all its grandeur, Hughson Hall remains warm and personal. It's this blend of elegance, history and heartfelt hospitality that draws guests back. Many leave with stories of their own: of breakfast conversations that last hours, of finding themselves at the piano in the west parlour or of strolling gardens that look like something out of a period drama.

The Mackies didn't just restore a historic home, they revived its soul. They've honoured its storied past, added their own chapter of hard work and hospitality, and kept it alive as a place where history isn't just remembered, it's lived.

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Stratford Festival review: *The Art of War* captures an artist's struggle to convey what war feels like

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

While photographs and historical accounts of war may tell us what happened, the emotions – the fear and anxiety of being attacked, the boredom of waiting for something to happen, the adrenaline-pumping excitement of action, and the crushing sadness of losing friends – can best be relayed to those of us who weren't there through art.

In Yvette Nolan's play, *The Art of War*, produced this season for the Stratford Festival's Studio Theatre stage, Nick (Josue Laboucane), a young Canadian artist commissioned to paint the war effort on the front lines of the Second World War in Europe, struggles both with his role in the conflict and with how to depict the horror, hopelessness and carnage he witnesses to preserve those memories as part of the national consciousness and as part of our identity as Canadians.

Over the course of the play, Nick – who initially doubts his own talent and ability as an artist – refines his craft and gradually gains a better understanding of the importance of his work, as well as what that work really should be, through conversations with the people he meets.

Impactful lessons come from characters ranging from friend and fellow Canadian soldier Newman (Jordin Hall), who is shot and killed during a conversation with Nick early on in the play but continues to return to his still-living friend with important lessons for the artist either as a ghost or some PTSD-induced hallucination, to a Polish refugee named Magda (Jenna-Lee Hyde), who helps Nick better understand the toll the war has taken on people like



From left, Jenna-Lee Hyde as a soldier, Jordin Hall as Newman, Josue Laboucane as Nick and Rylan Wilkie as a soldier in *The Art of War*. Stratford Festival 2025. (DAVID HOU PHOTO)

her, whose lives were once peaceful and happy, before she dies of starvation in a Nazi concentration camp.

Another important conversation is had between Nick and Eva (Julie Lumsden), a wartime performer touring army bases in Europe, who helps the artist draw a line between what patrons of his oil paintings can accept and appreciate, and what horrors Canadians back home may not be able or willing to come to terms with.

German war painter and Nazi deserter Matthaeus (Rylan Wilkie) helps Nick understand the impact of the war on the other side of the battlelines, while conversations with Dennis (also played by Wilkie), an arrogant wartime photojournalist who

believes photography has made painting obsolete, leads Nick to the understanding that his art has an important role in eliciting how it feels to be at war by those in the midst of it.

While the magic of this play lies in the depth of performance by each member of its cast, especially that of Laboucane, who skillfully portrays his character's immense growth as the play progresses while bearing the mental anguish of everything he's witnessed, the play's beauty comes from the art created both by the actors onstage and by real wartime artists, reproductions of the latter from the Beaverbrook Collection of War Art are displayed with permission from the Canadian War Museum.

The art created by Nick and Matthaeus onstage includes rough sketches and drawings, unfinished watercolour paintings and more complete oil paintings, all of which are collected in crates or displayed on an easel perched on an expanding patch of grass from which Nick paints the world around him – one of the play's very few set pieces – until it's time for the young artist to pack up his work and head back to Canada.

The reproductions of the real war art, meanwhile, are displayed in backlit panels mounted above the left and right sides of the stage. Before the play, they are lit for the audience to study and appreciate, however once the play begins, they are not visible again until Nick as an old man visits his only two pieces on display at the Canadian War Museum and invites a museum guide, Heather (Lumsden), to see it with him.

Despite most of his wartime work being locked away in a warehouse, Nick says he is proud to see two of his paintings, as well as those by other wartime artists, on display at the museum for all to see.

This play is an entirely fascinating character study of a Canadian war artist as he grapples with a commission far beyond his initial understanding, yet finds a way to perform his duty to country while carrying the immense weight of horror, trauma and grief.

It also reminds us of the vital role art plays in our understanding of history, and how important it is not only to support the creation of that art, but also to keep it safe and in the public eye for as long as we call ourselves Canadian.

The Art of War is playing at the Studio Theatre until Sept. 27.

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International Overdose Awareness Day is August 31

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) is recognized each year on Aug. 31. It is a time to honour the lives lost to overdose, to support those grieving and to take action to prevent drug overdoses.

This year's campaign theme is, "One big family, driven by hope." It is a reminder that behind every overdose is a person who was loved and valued, and that communities are stronger when they come together to support one another.

Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) acknowledges the families, friends, first responders, healthcare providers and support workers whose lives have been impacted by substance use and overdose.

"Each life lost to overdose is someone's child, sibling, partner, or friend," said Christine Riehl, public health nurse at HPPH, in an Aug. 27 media release. "These are not just numbers – they are people who were deeply loved. By working together as one big family, we can fight stigma, support those living with addiction, and save lives."

According to the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, and as reported by Public Health Ontario, four people in Huron Perth died from opioid toxicity in 2024 compared to

16 in 2023. More data on opioid-related deaths and naloxone distribution in Huron Perth is available through www.hpph.ca/opioidmonitoring.

Opioid addiction and overdose can affect anyone, regardless of age, income, background or gender. Removing stigma and increasing awareness are important steps toward overdose prevention.

To take action in preventing fatal overdoses, learn the signs of an opioid overdose, including difficulty staying awake or unresponsive, blue or grey lips or nails, slow or stopped breathing, choking or gurgling sounds and cold, clammy skin.

Naloxone can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose. It is available free from HPPH and from participating pharmacies. Find where to get a kit near you at www.ontario.ca/page/where-get-free-naloxone-kit.

If you see an overdose, call 9-1-1, stay with the person until help arrives and know that the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act protects those who seek emergency help during an overdose from charges for simple drug possession.

The Canadian Mental Health Association Huron Perth is hosting IOAD events in Stratford and Goderich on Friday, Aug. 29. For more information, visit <http://www.overdoseday.com/events-2025/>.

Stratford Festival review: *Ransacking Troy* takes audiences on an odyssey with a reimagined Greek classic

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

It's not about where you're going, but who you are when you get there.

In the world premiere of playwright Erin Shields' *Ransacking Troy*, as directed by Jackie Maxwell for the 2025 Stratford Festival, the classic Greek epics Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are reimagined with nine Greek women at their core, each with a strong connection to one major player in Homer's original stories.

The play unfolds as each of the women take turns telling their story and acting out all its parts after arriving back home in Greece at the end of their odyssey. On each leg of their journey, the women's story mirrors that of Homer's, only with the female perspective leading the decision-making, resulting in solutions to obstacles that men would have never thought of.

Instead of travelling to Troy to fight a decade-long war, the women travel to the walled city to broker some kind of peace and convince their husbands, fathers and brothers to come home after being away for so long.

Instead of building a giant, wooden horse as a deliberate ambush for the Trojans, they build it as a peace offering meant to be filled with gifts in exchange for the return of Helen and the war's end, despite the men ultimately using it for their own violent purpose.

Instead of fighting with the Trojans, they use a clever ruse to trick the Greek men into thinking they'd angered Apollo before appearing before the men under the guise of gods themselves to convince them peace is the only way to end the war.

Once they felt they had ended the war with the Trojans, the women embark on their journey home with the goal of changing Greek society for the better with a greater emphasis on feminine influence.

After being knocked off course by a



Members of the company in *Ransacking Troy*. Stratford Festival 2025.

(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

storm, they admire the Sirens for how they deal with the men they encounter, outright avoid the cyclops altogether, narrowly pull themselves back from being dragged into the entrance of Hades, find common ground with the goddess Circe and speed past the six-headed sea dragon, Scylla, suffering only one casualty before making it home relatively unscathed when compared to the male version of *The Odyssey*.

But still, the story ends the same. The women learn the men used their wooden horse as they did in Homer's original epic, leading to the rape and murder of Trojan women and children. Despite this story being centred on women in a society that had been led and powered by women for a full decade, men – as they always seem to – still hold the power, ruling with their own selfish pride, honour and glory front and centre.

Yet in this play, it's not about where the story ends, it's about how each of the nine

women grew into talented leaders, heroes, politicians, negotiators, craftspeople, warriors and problem solvers in their own rights, standing up for what they believe in and dedicating their lives to creating a world where they and their daughters are valued for more than their bodies.

With only nine women in the cast – Maev Beaty (Penelope), Irene Poole (Clytemnestra), Helen Belay (Electra),

Sarah Dodd (Galax), Ijeoma Emesowum (Psamathe), Caitlyn MacInnis (Cur), Yan-na McIntosh (Eurydice), Marissa Orjalo (Hermione) and Sara Topham (Aegiale) – each of the actors does an admirable job performing in many different roles.

Whether it's as their husbands, fathers, brothers or sons for a quick comedic jab at the men's expense, or as other pivotal women in the story, slipping offstage without the audience noticing and returning as Helen (Topham), Trojan Queen Hecuba (McIntosh), or the goddess Circe (Emesowum) among others, the actors' timing and ability to embody each role without confusing the audience should be commended.

So, too, should the backstage crew in this production be commended. The use of a single set-piece, benches and ropes to create the ship and its oars, Circe's giant loom, war encampments and more; the use of lighting to elicit the storm, sunlight and torches; and the production's sound design, which leads the audience to imagine giant waves, a cyclops, a sea dragon and great battles between the Greeks and the Trojans, truly brought this play to life.

To me, it seemed this play was written specifically for the stage at the Tom Patterson Theatre, and I truly can't imagine it being produced for any other space.

Ransacking Troy plays at the Tom Patterson Theatre until Sept. 28.



COMING EVENTS

September 10	Ladies' Auxiliary Cold Plate Luncheon, \$16 per plate. Call Mary Helen 273-1389 for reservations
September 14	Chicken Parmesan Dinner \$25 per plate, caesar salad, garlic rolls, harvest pie
September 25	Burger and Fry Night, pick-up 5:00-5:30, dine-in 5:45, 2/\$25 or \$13 each
October 4	Bus Trip to the Toronto Argonauts vs Hamilton Tiger Cats, BMO Field. Tickets are \$95 per person. Call Dean Listman 519-273-4463 to book your seat by August 26.
October 17	Euchre Night, register in advance, team of two players, \$20 per team
October 23	Burger and Fry Night, pick-up 5:00-5:30, dine-in 5:45, 2/\$25 or \$13 each

**Tuesday Morning Buddy Check, 10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. OPEN to all Veterans
Widows and First Responders**

Friday Afternoon Weekly Social 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Saturday Afternoon Meat Draw doors open at 2:00 p.m., meat draw starts at 4:00 p.m.

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We'll meet again: Remembering 80th anniversary of the end of Second World War in song

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

A fundraiser for St Paul's Anglican Church Foodbank is planned for Sept. 6 when four local musicians will come together to remember the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in a musical revue.

Gail Selkirk, Barbara Collier, Tim Elliott and Ray Ford will entertain with songs inspired by or written and performed during the war. This is not the first time that Collier and Ford have come together to recognize the anniversary of the end. They performed a concert to celebrate the 50th anniversary and collectively thought now would be another worthy milestone to remember.

"We did a performance together to mark the 50th anniversary and at that time had a large choir and more participants so we did the concert, and I thought to mark the 80th anniversary it would be nice to do it again," explained Collier.

While the theme is marking the end of the war, there are also micro-themes to be found throughout the concert. Departure, separation, humour and food security are all explored through song choices.

"All the tunes, which are not necessarily military tunes, were all written during the war and became popular songs," said Selkirk. "I'm going to do 'Besame Mucho,'



Gail Selkirk, left and Barbara Collier are two of the four celebrated musicians coming together in a rare concert raising funds for St Paul's foodbank. Not pictured, but also appearing is Tim Elliott and Ray Ford.

(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

'I'll Be Seeing You,' 'Stardust,' 'Tenderly' and 'Don't Get Around Much Anymore.' It will be fun."

These songs were made popular by singers that would travel to entertain the

troops. There will be a few words to introduce each thematic section to lead the audience into the melodies with Elliott and Ford performing, Selkirk and Collier and the four together for the finale. The finale

will be a set of singalong tunes for which the audience will be given the lyrics.

For the price of a \$20 ticket, the audience will be treated to the vocal stylings of internationally celebrated singer Collier, founding member of the popular group Major Hoople's Boarding House, Selkirk who is classically trained in piano and voice, Ford who is a tenor and major supporter of St Paul's, paired with Elliott, an improvisational genius on piano.

It is Elliott behind the series of concerts that have been happening at St Paul's this summer to raise funds for much needed programs like the foodbank.

"We're desperate. More and more people are coming in. We had a middle-aged man come in who said he never thought he would be middle-aged and need a foodbank. So, we have a lot of people like that. We have newcomers to Canada. Fortunately, we have a woman at the foodbank who has connections for food," shared Collier.

Visitors to the foodbank can come as many times a month as they need and only need to provide their first name and the number of people they are trying to feed. Privacy and dignity are at the forefront of St Paul's mission.

The concert is scheduled for 4 p.m. Sept. 6 at St. Paul's Anglican Church located at 9 Douro St. Tickets are available at the door for \$20 each. It is recommended to come early.

Avonslope: From the 1920s to the modern-day

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

In North Easthope, just to the northeast of Stratford, is a picturesque farm owned by the Bell family, which includes husband and wife Andrew and Sherry, sons Braydon, Cody and Griffin and daughter Gracie.

Although passersby may spot the farm as they drive through Perth County today,

Avonslope, as it is called due to the degree the land slopes toward the Avon River that cuts through it, has been operating for many decades.

Andrew's parents Keith and Gail Bell purchased the farm in 1964, along with livestock (including milking cows and heifers) and machinery. They had bought the farm from Alex and Mary Crerar, though the history of the farm goes back further. A photo of the original house

on the property is from the 1920s, then owned by Alex's father Peter Crerar.

After farming their working life on this property, Keith and Gail Bell sold it to Andrew, the youngest of five children, in the mid-90s.

The cows that graze today are in their dry period and when they have their next calf they will be moved into their new free stall milking barn to begin their lactation of producing Grade "A" milk for another

10 months or more.

Each cow in today's dairy world, will produce in excess of 10,000 litres of milk in one year, and can easily produce over 100,000 litres in a lifetime with the management skills of the modern dairy farmer in Perth County.

This county still boasts the highest number of dairy cows within its borders, to be ranked along with neighbouring Oxford County as the dairy capital of Canada.



This was the original House on the Bell Farm, pictured in 1920 when the farm was then owned by Peter Crerar.



Peter Crerar's son Alex, in the original barn, feeds hay to this dairy herd of Holstein cows in the 1950s.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Stratford Comic Con returns for another showcase of fandoms, cosplay and artisans

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Lovers of pop culture, comic books, TV shows and video games headed towards the Best Western Plus The Arden Park Hotel for this year's Stratford Comic Con.

Pop Culture Canada hosted the comic con on Aug. 23. The event was filled with artists selling collectables like 3D-printed sculptures, wall art, stickers, apparel and

books. Event organizers also collected local food bank donations.

"What's brilliant about Pop Culture is it goes to all these small communities, so we artists and business people can take our wares to communities that have never seen our stuff before," said Lue Nuwame, an artist selling artwork made with cardboard, in addition to magnets and comic books.

Nuwame is from Mississauga and was

part of the Stratford Comic Con last year. He enjoys the community and looks forward to coming back.

"It's always worth the drive. The community really embraces everything geek-dom," he said.

Beth Firth-Martin was showcasing her family-run business Cedar and Sage, which features 3D-printed and hand-painted objects like bookshelves and dragons. Like Nuwame, she was happy to return to

Stratford for comic con.

"We love Stratford. It's one of our favourite places ... Now we live out in the country so it's fun to come back and see everyone," Firth-Martin said.

After comic con, Pop Culture Canada also hosted a Great Canadian Wrestling Match in the evening.

The next Stratford Comic Con will be held on May 16, 2026, at the Arden Park Hotel.



Annika Brickman and Sadie Brand.



Lue Nuwame with one of his cardboard art pieces. Nuwame was also showcasing his magnets, comic books, and board games.



The Force is strong with Adrian Gray.



Siblings Alex Wood, Kira Eadie and Tyrone Wood.

(EMILY STEWART PHOTOS)

LOCAL MATTERS.



Remember that time when **Amazon** sponsored your church fundraiser?



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



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

Opinions

AI: A close encounter of an unwanted kind

JULIA SCHNEIDER

Times Columnist

Have you been noticing the presence of AI more and more recently in places you don't expect to see it? I have. What was the coming thing seems now the current reality, like it or not.

A case in point: in July I sent a friend who lives in Bradford, north of Toronto, an envelope with some clippings from Stratford papers. She is a Stratford regular and likes to know what is happening here; helped by the extensive print coverage of events here, I try to let her know.

Along with some play reviews (we both loved the production of

Anne of Green Gables we saw at a preview in May) and assorted other items, I included a column I wrote about information literacy and one by Stratford resident and writer Thomas Verny about the peril of using unreliable sources to get medical information (he noted this is especially a problem for those without a family doctor).

A couple of weeks later I received an email from my friend thanking me for the clippings. In it, she commented that both Verny and I had warned about misinformation and had stressed the need to check the veracity of sources. Her email was aware, insightful and conversational,

besides being timely.

What alarmed me was not what my friend wrote, but what came with her email. In a box above her email, I found an AI summary of what she wrote which failed miserably to summarize what she said. It ignored the tone, replacing bantering with boring. It also made a big error in saying I had said people should check Verny's veracity, instead of what he had written, which was that they needed to check their sources. I guess AI didn't understand that an article in print had been sent and preceded the email about it – how could it? On the other hand, why had it seen any need to summarize the email at all? Can't I

figure out what a personal email says on my own?

This situation raises questions:

1) Is this not an invasion of privacy? The fact that it was perpetrated by an "it" rather than a "they" doesn't alter the fact.

2) If AI is making such basic mistakes in interpreting text, can anyone rely on it?

3) Why does anyone think humans need help summarizing what other humans have said?

Along with the summary I received the question whether I had found it helpful. Needless to say, my answer was "no" – infuriating and perplexing yes, but not helpful at all. I gave five reasons why and said I did not want AI's

help in the future to tell me what others had written to me.

I went back to the old model of my email account, but imagine AI somewhere trying to figure out why a human might have such an antagonistic response to what "they" are (quite innocently?) doing. I reflect that, without my consent, I may have become an unwitting vehicle for training AI in the strange ways of human communication.

What can I say? If I'm going to teach, I want to teach students, not some entity with which I can't and don't want to communicate with. Nothing personal, AI, but please mind your own business, not mine!

As I See It From America: An oasis



PATRICK D. BURK

Times Columnist

And so, it happened. We decided to drive to Stratford a unique and different way, wanting to try something new. Of course, we were not totally successful. We often found ourselves on roads that did not have knowledgeable route signs. We also experienced a wide range of farm animals, tractors and agricultural machinery. In some ways it was interesting to still see tobacco as a cash crop on some of the farms. As a child it was a huge crop on many farms. I wondered if it was making a comeback and why? The immense open spaces were a breath of fresh air, with vistas that seemed to go on for miles

with no interruption.

We also found ourselves in wonderful small communities built around a business or as a centre for farming families and we were amazed at the sprawling of suburban homes, all looking one like the other. Many of our favourite communities are now bigger with the vast open farm fields being transformed into housing complexes to serve the growing need in this area. This too is something that we have been aware of for many years. A drive through the Ancaster area and the changes seem to happen almost monthly. At the end of it all, the mere fact that we were able to make it to your fair city and temporarily remove ourselves from the strange political pallor at home was a huge and powerful sigh of relief. A quick dinner at the Wild Hog and off we went to get ready to see our first production.

I am not sure if everyone in Stratford can imagine what your Ontario Street means to those of us that honestly just love your community. It brings a sense of joy and calmness to many. It also lets us know that we are among friends. So do the wide expanses of your surrounding fields

and pastures, the gentle sense of seeing the field of sheep across from our favorite place to stay and the greetings from friends and neighbors that we see only a few times a year and yet are so very caring and loving as if we are a part of their actual family.

Of course, our main reason for coming to your fair city is to see theatre and our many friends that perform on the Stratford stage. Your fair community is so very fortunate to have this resource as an integral part of your day-to-day life. It brings joy, fosters tourism and provides employment opportunities for people of all ages. It also allows the world to see what a class act Stratford, Ont. truly is. I am fortunate to have been a part of the magic of the Stratford Festival experience for the past 50 years. I might add that the love of your city is shared by our four children, their spouses and our grandchildren.

I find it especially heartwarming to walk the streets, stroll along the river and run into friends we have known for years. It is very special to us when the shopkeepers remember us and ask us how our trip was coming up. We also get caught up on

what is happening in our home away from home. For years we shared our vacation time at the Swan Motel with the most amazing husband and wife that do a lot to support the Stratford Festival. They are a beautiful couple who, like us, are U.S. Citizens. They now live here year-round and often we talk about the politics of our home country and celebrate what is true and correct. More recently we have been commiserating and hoping for change. We talk about our families, our work and the shows and people here. We met some wonderful friends and always had a special discussion with Colleen at the Swan. We miss that motel, but the beauty of Stratford is we have found a new place to call home while staying here. It will always be home.

For the first time in many years, we are seeing every single production at the festival this year, some we will see more than once. It is wonderful to cheer on our friends on stage and marvel into the creative side of Stratford and all the talent that has added to this amazing artistic experience that people from all around the world enjoy. We have met people and have gained friends

from many locations around the United States and the world. At the conclusion of Dangerous Liaisons we were fortunate to have a wonderful conversation with the remarkable writer of the play, Christopher Hampton, and to give a hug to its radiant and wonderful leading actress, Jessica B. Hill. There are so many talented people here that just thrill us with their talent. Our first night we experienced the amazingly talented Josue Laboucane in The Art of War.

As of this writing we are planning another daily foray around your wonderful community, meeting friends, having dinner and seeing a show. I don't mean to preach about all the positive feelings and things that we experience here. I am certain you all know what a special place this community is. In a time when our daily life in America is filled with a sense of dread and indecision, it is incredible for us to have Stratford as our oasis. How wonderful it is to relax, refresh and renew while we revisit once again our special place.

Please let me know how you feel at burk.patrick1956@gmail.com.

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO US!
CALL 519-655-2341 OR
EMAIL STRATFORDTIMES@GMAIL.COM

Opinions

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: Family extended – cats or dogs?



STUART LENDER

Times Columnist

Chances are you had an immediate response to these two words and took a side on which you prefer about as quickly as it took to read them. My choice used to be dogs. Now I'm living in a household in which the cat is dearly loved by myself, acts like a dog as far as affection goes and (I hate to say it), but the dog (now departed) kind of paled in comparison. Never would I have thought it. I'd have taken "dog" every time!

Don't misunderstand – I still love the dog, but the cat (the one with the greatest independence) loves-up like a sweet smooth

purring ball of devotion. I will never answer that flippant question with one or the other answer ever again! I was a dog person until I met my partner and adopted her most amazingly loving cat as my own.

When it comes to love from a pet though, it turns out there is no species that holds a monopoly. Certainly, some of that love is projected from the caretakers, the humans who choose to devote themselves, but I've since seen and heard of cats and dogs dancing around their "masters" in joy when they walk through the door, birds snuggling up to the neck and giving nip-kisses and head-rubs on the earlobe, piglets jumping up on the bed to settle in at the feet and even snakes curling up into a perfect "mandalic" circle in a blanket draped lap.

There are all kinds of reasons for pets existing with humans, but none of them are due to not liking them. In many cases a pet is virtually as loved as a family member, particularly for folks who don't have family. There may be an obvious argument brewing in that statement, but a

feeling of love at its root, a deep affection for, an interest and pleasure in (and I might add), a sustained and/or growing devotion can easily be applied to the love of a pet.

Let's remember that in the love experienced through any relationship, when the loss of that relationship suddenly ends, is sorely felt. For some, like a homeless person navigating life out on the streets or someone who experienced the death of a child or spouse and are now alone – a pet can be a lifesaver of unequivocal devotion and continued responsibility. They can and have, saved a life by their mere presence. And besides the love that we feel – turns out there are scientific reasons to love a pet. The Mental Health Foundation states that pets have been proven to be highly effective at relieving stress and anxiety. Cat and dog owners for example have significantly lower risks of both stroke and heart attack.

But as with most things in this world, perceptions and personal experiences rule. There are those who cannot fathom the deep and profound love of a pet let alone

understand the emotional loss. When a pet dies, there are many who have experienced what is called disenfranchised grief – a sense from others that the loss of their beloved companion is somehow less worthy of grieving than some other type of loss. It is like being told "you shouldn't be too upset, it was merely your aunt and not your mother who died, merely your friend, not your brother or sister who died." But I ask, who can put a value on love? Who can knowingly put an opinion of worthiness on a relationship?

What is "family" anyway? Is it merely a lineage of births and deaths or is choice of where our devotion should be placed in there somewhere? In my world I have experienced firsthand where we like to place our limiting definitions – usually in our comfort zones. Grieving is grieving. Loss. Sadness. Whether for a pet or a human being, we simply cannot know the depth of the love nor should we judge the quality of the despair.

I think upon Lucy, my first ever pet. I was 42 years young. I was not allowed a dog or cat growing

up due to my brother's allergies. Lucy – my devoted and well-loved Golden Doodle. The joy. The companionship. The loss through a divorce and then the final goodbye, years later, when she was virtually blind and barely able to walk. I entered my ex-wife's house, and in a strained but playful voice she said to Lucy... "Look who's here Lucy! Is that daddy?" And after years of not seeing her, Lucy limped over to my crouching body, head bowed to allow me our customary ear scratch and pushed herself into my lap, while I, relieved of grateful tears, whispered my gratitude and love into her other ear. Days later, on a date and at a time I didn't want to know, she was dead. I still, today, live in the warm memories she left me. I still, today, grieve that loss as much as some humans I've had the privilege to know.

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

COMING EVENTS Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

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Monday, September 1; 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Stratford Perth Museum, 4275 Huron Rd., Stratford

Enjoy a lot of rich history. Free event for the whole family.

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Tuesday, September 2; 7:00 p.m.

93 Morgan St., Stratford

Speaker – Peter West of Westcare Medical

Ostomy products, and what's new on the market

Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome.

519-273-4327

GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING

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

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

Featured Presentation: "Blowing in the Wind – Native

Grasses and Sedges", Shaun Booth from In Our Nature,

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BURGER & FRY NIGHT

Thursday Sept. 25 and Thursday Oct. 23

Legion 804 Ontario St B1, Stratford

Bring your friends out for a fun and tasty evening,

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Friday Oct. 17 and Friday Nov. 21.

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Doors open at 6 pm, play starts at 6:30 pm. Register your

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Call Dave at 519-703-6544, Anne at 519-301-0914 or the

Legion at 519-271-4540 to register your team.

STRATFORD TIMES

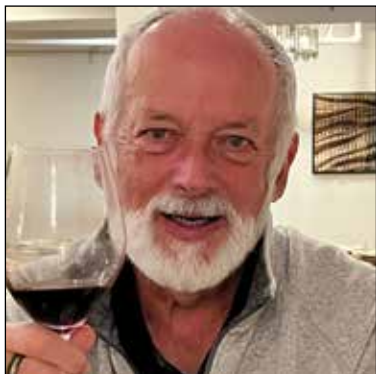
Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.

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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Exploring the unexpected on the Toronto Islands



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Freelance Columnist

As we boarded the ferry to Hanlan's Point, we could see the crowd of passengers swarming onto the neighbouring ferry, destined for Centre Island. Our much smaller craft was anything but crammed, and we started to wonder if all those Centre Island folks knew something we didn't.

In truth, they probably did – they knew that the heart of the action of the Toronto Islands is Centre Island, home to the Centreville amusement park, the pier, beautiful gardens, parks, picnic areas, a beach, bike rentals and lots of other activities.

But from the moment we left the dock at the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal, we were entirely happy with our choice of destinations.

Because Toronto Island Park – made up of several islands, all about a 15-minute ferry ride from Toronto's waterfront – is home to a wide variety of activities, attractions and opportunities for leisure, which is a good thing, I must note, since Toronto



A Toronto Islands ferry arriving at the Centre Island terminal.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

has generally done such a lousy job of making its waterfront attractive or enticing. Compared to other cities – Halifax, Kingston and Victoria come immediately to mind – Toronto has sacrificed waterfront quality of life to the gods of condominium investment. But I digress.

As my partner noted during our brief voyage, perhaps Toronto Island Park is the saving grace, offering a different kind of wonderful waterfront for Toronto residents and visitors.

Visitors to the islands have the choice of three ferries bound for and from Hanlan's Point, Centre Island and Ward's Island. All the islands are linked by walking/biking trails.

Our whimsical choice of the Hanlan's Point ferry immediately paid dividends. The ferry was

small but by no means crowded. And upon landing, we were immediately captured by the amount of history represented at this end of the Toronto Islands.

When you disembark, you immediately encounter an imposing statue. It's a sculpture of Edward Hanlan, namesake of this part of Toronto Island Park, and memorialized as "the most renowned oarsman of any age whose victorious career has no parallel in the annals of sport. Born and died in Toronto. July 12, 1855-January 4, 1908."

Full disclosure, until meeting his bronze likeness, I had never heard of Ned Hanlan. But having done some post-visit research, there is no doubt he was a very significant figure in Canadian and international sport. I am happy to have finally "met" him.

Hanlan Point is historically significant for another reason. A little farther down the path past the path past Ned Hanlan is a prominent

sign: "Welcome, you are entering Canada's oldest queer space. Hanlan's Point has been a gathering place for 2SLGBTQ+ people for nearly a century. Canada's first Gay Pride celebration was held here on Aug. 1, 1971."

The script concludes: "This space is built on freedom, acceptance, respect and diversity. While you are here, we ask that you keep these values in mind." That seems like really good advice and, in our current climate of looming repression, it seems especially important to espouse those values.

We opted to walk from Hanlan's Point to the Centre Island Ferry terminal, which should take about 45 minutes if you don't wander from the main road, which of course we did. We wanted to have a look at the clothing-optional beach (which was also people-optional on the day of our visit; we were the only folks there, and remained fully garbed), at the other beaches, at the historic Gibraltar Point Lighthouse (built in 1808, it's the oldest surviving lighthouse on the Great Lakes), the pier,

the amazing gardens along what was once Manitou Road, and, of course, Centreville, the venerable amusement park that was clearly the number-one destination of the crowds on the Centre Island ferry.

We didn't press on to Ward's Island, but had we done so, we would have seen the homes of about 600 people who live on Ward's Island and Algonquin Island. These determined folks live without the benefit of cars, stores or public transportation.

We did wander off the main route to stroll through the amusement park, where folks were having a heck of a good time riding a roller coaster, a mini-train, a flume ride, swan-shaped boats and much more. We took a break to have ice cream from a shop that had a sign advertising American-made ice cream, but which has switched its actual product to Canada's own Chapman's ice cream, for which we thanked them.

I admit that I approached our visit to Centre Island with a very limited concept of the place, so our time there was a delightful revelation.

And the cost? Well, the ferry ride costs \$9.11 for adults, \$5.86 for students and seniors, \$4.29 under 14. And that's for the round trip. There is plenty to enjoy that won't cost you anything (we were impressed with the frequent placement of water fountains, so you don't need to buy hydration, and with the large number of picnic tables); an all-day pass for a family of four at the amusement park costs \$182. The smiling families seemed to suggest it was a good investment.

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



The statue of Ned Hanlan, a world-champion oarsman, for whom Hanlan's Point is named.



Action on the water at Centreville.

Riddles

- Why did the teacher wear sunglasses to school?

Because her students were so bright!
- What's a math teacher's favorite place in New York?

Times Square.
- Why was the music teacher locked out of her classroom?

She left her keys on the piano!
- What did one pencil say to the other on the first day of school?

"Looking sharp!"
- Why did the student eat his homework?

Because the teacher said it was a piece of cake!
- What did the computer do at lunchtime?

It had a byte.
- Why can't you do math with trees?

Because they're always shady.
- What's a snake's favorite subject in school?

Hiss-tory!
- Why did the kid bring a ladder to school?

Because she wanted to go to high school.
- Why was the math book sad?

Because it had too many problems.

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 27

Pet of the week



BOURBON

Bourbon is a large-breed adventurer who's been waiting over 150 days for his forever home. This vocal, energetic boy lives for the outdoors. He loves tracking, trailing, and exploring. He'll thrive with an active, outdoorsy family who can give him plenty of enrichment like scent trails, long walks, and fun games.

While Bourbon has a big voice and an even bigger personality, he also enjoys quiet moments and couch time after a day of activity. If you're looking for a loyal, adventurous companion with a heart as big as his bark, Bourbon is your guy! Visit kwsphumane.ca to adopt today.



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



MAXINE JOYCE TAYLOR

Maxine Joyce Taylor, age 86, passed away on Sunday, August 24. Born in Niagara Falls, she was the daughter of the late Louie and Isabel Hawken. Predeceased by her brother, Bruce.

Maxine will be greatly missed by her daughter Joyce Matthies, her son in law, Brad Matthies, of Stratford, her daughter, Sue Taylor of Dawson City, Yukon, her grandsons, Chris Matthies (Rebecca), Nick Matthies (Kayla and Aiden) and her great grandchildren, Maya and Lenny Matthies. She is also survived by two nieces and a nephew.

Maxine moved to Stratford with her two young daughters in 1965 when Dominion Chain relocated to Stratford and worked there until her retirement in 2004.

She was a very capable, independent, strong willed woman who was always willing to lend a hand or an ear, give a hug or a ride.

Maxine's adventurous spirit and love of travel took her to North and South America, Antarctica, Africa, Galápagos Islands and Europe. She preferred summers in the Yukon and Alaska and winters in Myrtle Beach. As well as golf, in her younger years, she played softball and enjoyed bowling and hiking.

She will be missed by many golfing friends as well as special neighbours.

A celebration of Maxine's life will be held on Saturday, September 20, from 1 till 3 at the ANAF, 151 Lorne Avenue E, Stratford.

In tribute to the exceptional care and support Maxine and her family received while she was a resident of Spruce Lodge, the family is requesting that memorial donations in Maxine's memory be made to the Spruce Lodge Foundation through the WG Young Funeral Home at www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com

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1. Saskatchewan
2. Always Faithful
3. The Man with the Yellow Hat (Ted)
4. Smoked Haddock
5. Chamois (goat)
6. William Golding
7. Four of clubs
8. Robin
9. Soprano
10. A plum tree

SUDOKU

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

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Strickland's Toyota
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Stratford KIA
Expressway Ford
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Stratford Mazda
7-Eleven - Erie St
Joe's Diner
The Urban Barber
Erie Convenience
Mr. Sub
Balzacs Coffee
Shoppers Drug Mart - Ontario
New Orleans Pizza

Zehrs
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Festival Marketplace
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Stratford Subaru
Stratford Honda
Quality Festival Inn
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Toner & Ink Shop
Rutherford Funeral Home

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Stratford-Perth Museum
Sobey's

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Circle K - Huron
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Tim Hortons - Huron
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