

STRATFORD *TIMES*

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Barber brings free cuts to encampment

JULIA SIMMONS

Times Correspondent

A local barber is putting his skills to work for people in need through a partnership that brought free haircuts directly to Stratford's homeless encampment.

Manpreet Sharma, owner of Man Fadez Barber Shop, and his brother-in-law and co-worker Rahul Kumar recently set up their barbering equipment at the encampment, working with Geza Wordofa of the Multicultural Association of Huron Perth to offer haircuts at no charge.

For Sharma, who has lived in Canada for six years, the idea grew from seeing people experiencing homelessness in Stratford and recognizing barbering as one way he could give back to a community he said has supported him.

"I love the Stratford community. They are very good people and supportive," Sharma said. "One day I saw a couple homeless people, and they had long hair. I was thinking, why not give free haircuts? They deserve good-looking hair."

Sharma recalled a man experiencing homelessness who had previously come into his shop at 126 Downie St. after sleeping nearby and explained that he needed a haircut but could not afford one.

"We don't charge anything for people like that," Sharma said. "He sat in my chair, I did his haircut and he was very happy."

That willingness to help extends beyond the encampment. Sharma said newcomers, families with children and others experiencing financial hardship can come into his shop and receive a haircut even when they cannot af-

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(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Martin Ritsma, Jo-Dee Burbach, Mark Hunter, Robert Ritz and Andrew Rea sit on a panel for a special Q-and-A hosted by the Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce in the Rotary Complex. One of these mayoral candidates will be Stratford's next mayor, as decided by voters on Oct. 26.

12 questions, 5 mayoral candidates

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On Oct. 26, Stratford citizens will pick the city's next council. Last Tuesday, 20 days before election night, the Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce hosted the mayoral and councillor candidates for a special evening where residents could meet with them face to face and hear what they have to say about Stratford's future.

It also had a live Q-and-A with the mayoral candidates moderated by CJCS host Jamie Cottle, with questions supplied from the city's business community and curated by organizers. For an hour and a half, Martin Ritsma, Jo-Dee Burbach, Mark Hunter, Robert Ritz and Andrew Rea

fielded 12 questions from Cottle, ranging from affordability to housing and all things in between.

A ward system for Stratford?

When asked if they supported a ward system, the candidates were mixed.

Ritsma doesn't believe Stratford is big enough currently to support multiple wards and worries about good candidates not making it onto council because only one or two would be voted in for their specific area.

Burbach believes a ward system could improve accountability, but it would depend on how it was implemented. There are a few questions she has about the system: the costs, the methods and the like, and she also pointed out that Stratford had a ward system in the past but moved

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12 questions, 5 mayoral candidates

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

away from it.

Hunter was open to the idea, but said he would not pre-determine any investigation into how to improve accountability. He questioned the desire for a ward system.

“And the answer was better communication,” Hunter said. “And I agree that city hall needs to communicate with our city better. I think we need reliable, consistent communication with all of the community to keep everybody informed of all that's going on. In short, I'm open to exploring this, but I think there may be other ways to solve this problem.”

Ritz was in favour of neighbourhood or ward representation rather than a system where ward elections take place. In short, Ritz advocated for each councillor being designated a ward for representation wherein they would be responsible for communicating with those residents, though wouldn't be elected by said residents.

Rea fully supported a ward system moving forward and said he would do everything in his power – except use strong mayor powers – to get such a system in place by next election.

Procurement practices with the City of Stratford

Nearly all of the candidates agreed that procurement practices in the municipal system were difficult to adjust, considering they are provincially mandated – though they all said that some adjustments could be made so local businesses may have a better shot at acquiring municipal contracts.

“Provincial legislation says that we must take the lowest bid unless there's a justifiable reason we have for selecting a different service. For instance, if there's a value-added proposal or perhaps a poor recommendation from another customer, so we have very little room to maneuver in that provincial legislation,” Burbach said. “We can't favour businesses solely because they pay taxes for operating in a specific municipal boundary, but if the location of the contractor will affect service levels, then the location can be considered. So I think there's some other mechanisms for the city of Stratford to support and encourage local businesses to apply for municipal contracts.”

Hunter agreed with Burbach, though said he would support directing staff to favour local companies when hiring a third party under the discretionary threshold. Any con-

tract under a specific dollar amount does not need to go through a procurement process, but can be done at staff discretion.

Ritz said he wants to see the city move towards “pre-qualified bids for appropriate projects,” meaning that establishing a company is qualified would happen first, before comparing prices. Furthermore, he would look for ways to give local businesses greater consideration.

Rea would work with council and staff to see what policies could be changed or updated, wanting to make it easier for citizens to be involved in city decisions, all while helping local businesses thrive and contribute.

Ritsma, likewise, was in favour of making adjustments, though recalled something a voter told him recently: that local companies bid on projects out of town, and making sure the most competitive bid wins is the only way to keep things fair across the board.

A year-round tourist destination

On the topic of a year-round tourist destination, Hunter and Burbach pointed to the many organizations working towards that goal, with Burbach also adding that improving snow removal in the winter would make Stratford more appealing to guests and residents.

Ritsma pointed to last year, the 1.7 million tourists that came and the expansion of the city's transit options, Flix Bus and the GO Train, saying he looks forward to continuing that work.

“Stratford in winter offers something special: peace and quiet,” Ritz said. “People who love coming here in the summer can enjoy a different experience in the winter – a comfortable stay, a good meal and a walk through our parks in the snow ... We did not always need another expensive attraction to give people a reason to visit.”

Rea wanted to see better infrastructure in place before the tourist season expands: spacing out events, having more available transportation resources and enough parking. He wanted to see Stratford's tourism industry branch out from the theatre world and be future proofed for generations to come.

Municipal land transfer taxes, development charges

When asked about fees around the construction and sale of homes, like a municipal land transfer tax and development charges, all the candidates expressed a desire to remove barriers to homeownership and other red tape.

Ritz wanted to streamline the timeline for projects: clear requirements, better coordination and a smoother approval process.

Rea added that as a non-homeowner, the housing market affects him deeply. He wanted to see major change, so that in four years time future mayoral candidates will have other issues to debate, rather than the ones being brought up year after year.

Ritsma pointed out that Stratford has one of the lowest development charges in the province and those charges enable many of the services the city needs to provide, something Burbach and Hunter agreed with.

Burbach also said Stratford doesn't have a “missing middle” when it comes to housing, rather a “missing

bottom,” advocating for affordable housing, while Hunter said the development charges for a house pretty well breaks even in terms of the cost of servicing that house, so lowering development charges would put more of a burden on the general taxpayers.

The Grand Trunk renewal project

When asked about the Grand Trunk renewal (GTR) project and their individual visions for the site, Rea didn't mince words.

“Localized virtue signaling aside, I think we need to repair our reputation with the provincial government first,” he said. “Making a decision in a closed door format that was not done in view of the public to resort to litigation over strong mayor powers when we could just, I don't know, have a mayor that doesn't use strong mayor powers, does not put Stratford's government in provincial good graces. So we got to fix that first and foremost before any assistance on any projects, and then invite them to the table on any potential that they might be worth investing there as well.”

Ritsma defended the work that has been done so far, saying that after one of the most inclusive engagement events, the city distilled 166 ideas into five and is now in the market sounding stage of the development.

Burbach would like to see a vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood on the site, detailing the features she would like to see before addressing the “elephant in the room”: Ritz's comprehensive vision that was published and discussed at length this year. She began to list the costs of his project, before she was stopped for time.

Hunter as well defended the work city council has done, pointing out the plan for the community hub, which would see a new library and YMCA being built, will be a major asset for citizens – and achievable.

Ritz, for his part, simply said he wanted to move forward with the project, with a financing plan designed to pay for itself, funded through a market-rate condominium and shared spaces.

Concrete action for the homelessness issue

In regards to the homelessness issue, Ritsma, Hunter and Burbach all expressed a desire to get the Erie Street supportive housing project up and going. The city has \$5 million allocated for the 13-unit project and is shovel ready, though is waiting for provincial operating funds to get started. All three advocated for supportive housing, housing with wraparound social service support included.

Burbach added that she was in favour of adding emergency shelter beds to the city's warming centre.

Ritz said he would bring community partners together to work toward a common solution and Rea, again, wished to repair provincial relationships in order to get more resources for support.

Policing levels and gender-based violence

Answering a combined question on policing levels and what they would do to combat gender-based violence, most candidates were in agreement that policing levels required a nuanced look. All candidates committed to doing what they can to prevent the latter.

Burbach wanted to move the conversation from surviving gender-based violence to preventing it, through unlearning and re-education, a sentiment shared by Hunter and Ritsma.

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On October 26th, 2026.

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12 questions, 5 candidates

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Ritz wished to support the professionals working in the field, while Rea said every elected official needed to address and take immediate action to make sure support is available.

Increased funding for social services

As pointed out by Hunter, Burbach and Ritsma, social services are a provincial responsibility being administered by the municipality. All wished to see the department further funded, though noted the city is already doing more than it is required to foot the bill.

Ritz advocated for further efficiency by seeing where similar programs were being offered by the city, the library and the Y, preventing overlap.

Rea committed to doing a full departmental audit to make sure the city is doing things as rationally and efficiently as possible, identifying anything that was “a boondoggle, virtue signal or anything else that reeks of fiscal waste.”

“I want to emphasize the great work that our social service department does every day,” Ritsma said. “But in order for these people to do more work, we need to increase the funding, and that funding comes from two sources: your tax levy and grant dollars through the province. And this comes back to the importance of us working shoulder to shoulder with the province, finding opportunities to connect with (MPP) Matthew Rae and Sylvia Jones, our Minister of Health, to bring those services that are needed in Stratford.”

Recruiting more doctors

All the candidates were in agreement that more doctors were needed in Stratford and that health care was more easily accessible.

With some differences between their answers, all said one way or another that the key to attracting more doctors is to improve Stratford.

Snowfall and accessibility

In regard to snow removal, Rea said it is a complete failure on the city’s part any time people in wheelchairs and mobility scooters have to use the road rather than a sidewalk during the winter, saying that he will making sure the city’s public works department know his priorities this winter.

Ritsma commended the 24/7 work being done by the department during winter, pointing out that there are 400 kilometres of road to clear continually during a winter

event. The one change he would like to see is reminding residents to not use the roads unless it is essential, during such an event.

Burbach advocated for a service review through an accessibility lens, understanding that everyone needs to see where the current service levels are at and identify which roads and sidewalks are most important for those with accessibility issues, in order to target those with priority during a winter event, something Hunter agreed with.

Ritz believed targeting one sidewalk of a street rather than both could improve efficiencies.

Closing downtown streets for cars

Candidates were asked their opinions on shutting down certain streets downtown to promote more walking and cycling, either permanently or on weekends. All of the candidates said they wouldn’t make such a decision in a bubble and were in agreement that the balance held now was working.

Supporting seniors

In regards to supporting seniors, Burbach wanted to bolster communication so seniors and their families know what resources are available to them. She “would love” to support free transit for seniors so that they can get around more easily, and was in support of a dedicated senior centre downtown.

Hunter wanted more smaller housing options in the city, so seniors had the ability to downsize and free up more family homes for those looking to get into the housing market, and wanted better accessibility – sidewalks and access to health care.

Ritz looked to the GTR as a possible location for seniors’ activities, a one-shop stop for everything a senior would need: transit, recreation, access to services and areas to socialize.

Rea, as the youngest mayoral candidate, clarified that he would let the senior community dictate what they wanted to fix their issues. What he has heard on the campaign trail so far was transportation, inclusivity and medical support.

Ritsma, like Hunter, wanted to build up housing stock. He pointed to the new 288-bed peopleCare location being built next to Stratford General Hospital as a good next step, which is set to open January 2027.

You can find a recording of the full Q-and-A on the chamber’s YouTube page, here: tinyurl.com/cephdffy.

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Voter Information Letters will be mailed to those individuals who are on the Voters' List by October 14. The Voter Information Letter will contain all the information needed to cast your ballot, including a Personalized Identification Number (PIN) which you will use along with your date of birth to access the voting system.

If you are on the Voters' List and do not receive your Voter Information Letter in the mail by October 14th, please contact elections@stratford.ca, or call 519-271-0250 extension 5237.

Barber brings free cuts to encampment

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

ford one, located at 126 Downie St.

Wordofa said partnerships with local businesses are an important part of supporting people in the community, including newcomers and those experiencing homelessness.

"It's very, very important to look after our people," Wordofa said. "At the end of the day, it's all our people."

Stratford resident Mohamad Kaid, who works alongside Wordofa to support newcomers and people in need, said he visits the encampment several times a week and wel-

comed Sharma's contribution.

"It's fantastic what he's been doing because he's doing it for free for everyone here," Kaid said. "It is always good to give and help."

The visit marked Sharma's first time bringing his barbering services to the encampment, but he said he hopes it will continue. Wordofa also spoke about continuing to work with Sharma through the multicultural association to connect his services with people who could benefit.

"We come here and do a good job," Sharma said. "Next time, we can come again with more opportunity to help."



(JULIA SIMMONS PHOTO)

Man Fadez Barber Shop barber Rahul Kumar gives Stratford resident Mohamad Kaid a haircut during a free haircut event at Stratford's homeless encampment. Kaid works alongside Geza Wordofa of the Multicultural Association of Huron Perth to support newcomers and others in need in the community.

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Council candidates: Harj Nijjar



Introduce yourself to readers. Who are you?

... I am a lifelong Stratford resident, proud husband and father, local business owner and information technology professional. For more than 25 years, I have worked in business and technology, helping organizations grow through responsible financial management, strategic planning and strong leadership. Over the past four years, it has been a privilege to serve the residents of Stratford as your city councillor and deputy mayor.

or. I remain inspired every day by the strength, generosity and spirit of our community, and I am committed to working with residents to keep Stratford affordable, safe and vibrant for future generations.

What are the core issues you are focused on this election?

My focus is on keeping taxes affordable, managing growth responsibly, supporting housing, local jobs and protecting the quality of life that makes Stratford such a great place to live. Over the last four years, I have supported projects like the Grand Trunk redevelopment, supportive housing on Erie Street and efforts to bring GO Train service back to Stratford. I want to build on that progress by supporting local businesses and manufacturing, creating more housing options, investing in infrastructure, improving public safety and ensuring

Stratford remains a welcoming, vibrant community where families, seniors and young people can thrive.

Next year's budget, like last year's, will be presented and guided by the mayor. As a councillor, what will you do to keep the tax levy low?

Keeping taxes affordable starts with making tough choices and focusing on what matters most. I believe we need to prioritize core services, carefully review new spending and look for efficiencies before asking residents to pay more. As someone with a background in business and technology, I understand the importance of living within our means while still planning for the future. We cannot stop investing in roads, infrastructure, housing and economic growth, but we need to make sure every tax dollar is spent wisely. My goal is to keep Stratford afford-

able while continuing to move our community forward.

Housing and homelessness in Stratford continues to be a challenge. What, in your opinion, is the strategy the city should be taking in building more homes and/or improving affordability?

Housing and homelessness are some of the biggest challenges facing Stratford today. We need to keep creating more housing options, from starter homes and rentals to supportive housing for those who need additional help. No single project will solve the problem, but every new housing opportunity helps. I have supported projects like supportive housing on Erie Street because everyone deserves a safe place to call home. We also need to work closely with builders, non-profits and other levels of government to remove barriers, attract funding and get more

homes built ...

Are you in favour of the current council's direction on the GTR? If not, what strategy would you be in favour of?

I support the direction council has taken with the Grand Trunk project. It is a once in a generation opportunity to transform an underused property into something that benefits Stratford for decades to come. Both the YMCA and Stratford Public Library have committed to the project, and council has approved a \$15 million capital contribution to help move it forward. As the project progresses, we need to remain financially responsible, transparent and keep residents informed. My focus is on making sure we get good value for taxpayers while creating a community asset that supports housing, recreation, learning and economic growth ...

Council candidates: Ian Morton



Introduce yourself to readers. Who are you?

I am Ian Morton, an educator and community builder. I am in my 27th year of teaching in and around Stratford. The last 27 years have been about serving the people of Stratford and beyond. I volunteered as chair of Stratford's Energy & Environment Committee and as vice-chair of the Active Transportation Committee. I served on my union executive, ETFO, and St. Marys Curling Club board. I am the founder and head coach of

Stratford Sabrecats Track Club and coach with the University of Guelph. I bring invaluable experience building partnerships, building community, listening and collaborating to solve complex problems.

What are the core issues you are focused on this election?

The next four years must be focused on creative and responsible solutions in Stratford. We must build actual affordable housing and create affordability measures for families. We must provide needed supports and supportive housing for our unhoused. We must respect tax dollars, while continuing to provide necessary services. We must responsibly start development on the Cooper site, mixing public space with housing and commercial opportunities. We need more active transportation capacity, and transit must be improved. We must responsibly and creatively devel-

op our city to reduce the additional infrastructure demands of sprawl and to in-fill where existing services exist.

Next year's budget, like last year's, will be presented and guided by the mayor. As a councillor, what will you do to keep the tax levy low?

First, hear from residents! Councillors' job is to listen to residents, highlighting their concerns for budget priorities. Tax levies must be tied to inflation at the highest, to reduce stress on our families. Thus, careful examination of priorities and spending must take place around existing funding levels. To deal with new issues there may need to be reductions in other areas, a tightening of the belt of the city. Lastly, we are in need of new revenue, more industry brings more taxes and new sources, such as a vacant property tax should be explored

by staff. We can do better.

Housing and homelessness in Stratford continues to be a challenge. What, in your opinion, is the strategy the city should be taking in building more homes and/or improving affordability?

More affordable homes as well as affordability measures for residents are completely within city council's capabilities. We must stop the sprawl immediately, reducing its massive infrastructure demands and future responsibilities. We must focus on infill and housing intensity within our existing infrastructure and create more sustainable and resilient infrastructure to reduce future costs. We must demand more affordable options from developers. We must embrace below-market and alternative housing models. We can help the Local scale up their affordable grocery offerings for residents. We should offer

free transit to reduce residents' costs. This is a start to providing an affordable Stratford.

Are you in favour of the current council's direction on the GTR? If not, what strategy would you be in favour of?

I mostly support the current direction of council. We need this space to house a downtown community hub. A place for Stratfordians and visitors to enjoy! The library should absolutely be the centrepiece here. I believe the city would be best served by creating our own community recreation space, including a long needed indoor pool, to join the library. We can't fund development of the space alone. We must embrace private investment and push for affordable housing while allowing commercial opportunities. We can't put this space on the back of taxpayers, we can only afford so much as a city.

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Council candidates: Geza Wordofa



Introduce yourself to readers. Who are you?

I'm Geza Wordofa. I was born in Ethiopia, studied in Moscow and moved to Stratford in 2011.

I have been advocating for a homeless shelter for years.

What are the core issues you are focused on this election?

The major issues are homelessness, development of the Grand Trunk building, a new police building, a new library and the replacement of the YMCA, and tight financial control.

Next year's budget, like last year's, will be presented and guided by the mayor. As a councillor, what will you do to keep the tax levy low?

As to the budget, I will challenge anything that, in my opinion, is a want and not a need. That is why I opposed a DEI department. I question the need for a new police station, projected to cost \$40 million. There must be a cheaper alternative.

Housing and homelessness in Stratford continues to be a challenge. What, in your opinion, is the strategy the city should be taking in building more homes and/or improving affordability?

On homelessness, we need a men's homeless shelter. Homeless people need to know where they can go, rather than being sent to expensive local inns, or being driven to other communities.

Are you in favour of the current council's direction on the GTR? If not, what strategy would you be in favour of?

... We have to solve the problem. It has dragged on for too long. The cost of demolition and site remediation is expensive and we would lose a lot of land

because of the set-off required from the railway tracks. Repurposing the structure would cost in excess of \$100 million. The better alternative would be to repurpose the building, if we can get commercial and business participation. The repurposed project could house a new library, police department, shopping and parking, all downtown. The \$40 million budgeted for the new police station could be used to locate the new police station here.

Council candidates: Taylor Briscoe



Introduce yourself to readers. Who are you?

I'm Taylor Briscoe, a mom of three, assistant director of public affairs for the Salvation Army, and founder of ComplyGov, a civic tech company that makes government more transparent and accessible. In my director role, I work with all levels of government across Canada to implement innovative social and housing solutions addressing homelessness, cost of living, childcare, long-term care and access to justice. I'm running

for re-election because I want to bring the solutions I've helped implement in other communities home to Stratford, so every family here can thrive.

What are the core issues you are focused on this election?

My plan focuses on four areas. First, growing revenue outside property taxes through a Municipal Services Corporation, reducing reliance on the tax levy without cutting services people depend on. Second, building a full spectrum of housing that meets core housing need, including emergency, transitional, supportive and affordable. Third, maintaining our roads and core infrastructure, prioritizing safety-critical repairs, since deferring that work only raises the cost later. Fourth, expanding childcare capacity, so families can bring in the income today's cost of living demands. Together, these make Stratford afford-

able for everyone who wants to build a life here.

Next year's budget, like last year's, will be presented and guided by the mayor. As a councillor, what will you do to keep the tax levy low?

By growing revenue outside of property taxes. A Municipal Services Corporation is a city-owned company that can raise capital and earn its own revenue, running services like housing and parking so they fund themselves instead of relying on the levy. It stays publicly owned and accountable to council. I'll also bring budget amendments to defer transit fleet electrification, building a reserve for a future purchase while technology and grid costs settle, and invest in internal digital tools that streamline routine work and reduce outside consultant spending. Unlike deferring road repairs, these savings don't risk safety or grow

long-term costs.

Housing and homelessness in Stratford continues to be a challenge. What, in your opinion, is the strategy the city should be taking in building more homes and/or improving affordability?

Through a Municipal Services Corporation, the city can buy affordable units in new developments and rent them to people ready for independent living, the decentralized model Finland used to reduce homelessness. That frees existing units to become supportive housing with services on site. I'd also retrofit underused municipal buildings using federal housing funding. To keep homes turning over, I'd add a rent-to-equity trust: part of each tenant's rent is saved toward a down payment. When tenants buy their unit, the city reinvests the sale into the next one; when they move on, the unit opens for

someone new.

Are you in favour of the current council's direction on the GTR? If not, what strategy would you be in favour of?

I support the YMCA and library anchoring the Grand Trunk footprint. Together they create a true community hub, expanding childcare access and reducing stigma in reaching services. The rest of the footprint remains in the ideation phase. Through the market sounding, I hope to see visions of a mixed-use space with housing above or co-located with retail, dining, entertainment and community space. I've worked toward that by sharing the market sounding with not-for-profit builders across Canada. Establishing a Municipal Services Corporation would create revenue-generating potential on site, such as a grocery store, community and theatre space rentals and parking.

Council candidates: Adrienne Johnson



Introduce yourself to readers. Who are you?

I am Adrienne Johnson, and am proud to have called Stratford home for 32 years. For the past 31 years, I have had the privilege of teaching in our community ... I am a mother of three grown sons and am deeply invested in the community I call home. My work with children, families, and community organizations has taught me the value of listening, collaborating, and finding practical solutions. I am running for Stratford City Council because I believe we

can build a city that works for every generation. My platform centres around: Listening. Learning. Leading.

What are the core issues you are focused on this election?

My focus is on strengthening opportunities for youth and seniors. As an educator, I have successfully researched grants, built partnerships and implemented projects; I plan to bring that experience to the city. We can create inclusive spaces for both youth and seniors through creative, high-impact, low-cost initiatives to offer opportunities that help residents stay active and connected. I am willing to put in the work to make that happen. Affordable and supportive housing is another priority. I believe in thoughtful growth, responsible budgeting and long-term infrastructure planning. ... I want to strengthen communication between city hall and residents through collaboration.

Next year's budget, like last year's, will be presented and guided by the mayor. As a councillor, what will you do to keep the tax levy low?

Keeping the tax levy low requires careful planning, responsible spending and a clear understanding of priorities. I would closely review the budget, ask questions and look for efficiencies before supporting new expenditures. I would support long-term infrastructure planning to reduce costly reactive decisions. As noted, I will explore grants, partnerships and other funding opportunities to lessen the burden on taxpayers. I believe we need to regularly evaluate whether programs and services are delivering the intended value. My goal is not simply to cut spending, but to make thoughtful choices that protect essential services while making Stratford's tax dollars work harder.

Housing and homelessness in

Stratford continues to be a challenge. What, in your opinion, is the strategy the city should be taking in building more homes and/or improving affordability?

Stratford requires a range of housing options, from affordable and attainable homes to supportive and transitional housing. ... I would advocate for planning policies that encourage diverse housing types. This includes working with developers, the county, community agencies and other levels of government to increase supply. I support incentives and partnerships that make affordable housing projects more achievable, while pursuing available funding opportunities. I would also advocate for stronger prevention, mental health and addiction supports, and pathways to stable housing. I would ask questions, monitor progress and ensure the city is working collaboratively toward

practical, measurable solutions ...

Are you in favour of the current council's direction on the GTR? If not, what strategy would you be in favour of?

I support moving forward ... however, council must remain thoughtful and flexible as the project develops. This is a significant, long-term opportunity for Stratford, and decisions should be based on sound financial analysis, community needs and what is realistically achievable. I support exploring a mix of housing, community space (including seniors and youth), public amenities and opportunities that contribute to a vibrant downtown. I encourage continued public engagement, transparent financial information and careful consideration of the costs to taxpayers. I would ask questions, review each stage carefully and ensure the project continues to deliver meaningful value for Stratford.

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Beloved children's librarian rides into the sunset

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Trish MacGregor has told her final story at the Stratford Public Library (SPL) – and now the word that comes to mind for her is “gratitude.”

“So much gratitude, so much gratitude for the team here at SPL and for the community of Stratford,” MacGregor said, speaking with the Times on her last day. “I just have had really a dream job, and it has been such a pleasure. ... I've had the pleasure and the joy of connecting with different communities throughout the county. And so, as I wrap this career up, I just am filled with gratitude and joy and emotion. It is bittersweet, for sure, because it's hard to say goodbye.”

MacGregor was the children's librarian at the local library and coordinated programs and collections for the Public Library On Wheels (PLOW). She was with SPL for 22 years, originally hired in 2004 for PLOW before transitioning into her role overseeing the children's collections and running the many programs for children the library offers. She retired last week, doing her last Whale of a Tale reading Sept. 28, where children came to hear her read one of their favourite stories, as she has for years now.

MacGregor's job, both with PLOW and the children's section, was to create connections. She would travel Perth County with PLOW to introduce the library to people who haven't discovered it yet, “plant seeds of literacy and learning” in them and build a bridge that led back to SPL.

And, of course, to tell a good story. MacGregor, as perhaps Stratford's pre-eminent expert on telling children's stories, shared some trade secrets.

“Whether you're reading with one child or a group of children, your best bet is to make choices of what they're most interested in, and how they like to learn,” MacGregor said. “... I love to choose stories that always gives the child or the children a role, and so they're very involved – even when we had many, many children this summer, sometimes we had 50 and 60, 70 children.

“... Whether it's repetition and giving them a line or looking for something, hunting for something, make them part of

it because that shared storytelling creates not just literacy and learning, but also the bond and the excitement and the joy of reading.”

Despite being located in the basement of the library, the children's section gave MacGregor a unique vantage point over Stratford, one very few people have been blessed with. As the years went by and Stratford evolved, MacGregor was there for it all and had a front row seat. She watched connections be made by strangers, families connect and the city's youth grow.

At her last Whale of a Tale reading, MacGregor had three generations of past attendees in the audience. Children she used to read to when she first got started came by with their own children, now fully grown. Their parents who brought them all those years ago to the library were there again, but this time as grandparents.

After a career of building relationships, those connections have been able to tell MacGregor exactly what she meant to them. The library put out a notice in the weeks leading up to her retirement, asking the public to send MacGregor letters. Generations of readers have reached out since.

“I will be reading them over and over again – I was reading them through tears, of course. Yeah, it was such a gift ... It just speaks to the impact that libraries can have on community, and luckily I was part of that. And to hear their stories, there were stories of people saying that they came to Stratford during the (COVID-19) pandemic, and that was a hard time for all of us. A very shared experience, but everyone had unique stories at that time, and the library found a way to connect with people even when we couldn't be in person, and I was lucky to be able to be part of that.

“The library, over the 22 years I've been here, has evolved so much as the communities have changed,” MacGregor said. “The library has changed with the community and offered more and more. It's just growing, and it's been such an exciting place to work ... I'm very excited for the future of Stratford Public Library because the team here is amazing and I know great things are to come. The person who is the children's librarian is just wonderful and I'm very excited to see all the great things that are ahead for this library.”



(SARA BRADFORD PHOTO)

Trish MacGregor hosts her last Whale of a Tale reading on Sept. 28. After a 22-year career with the Stratford Public Library, MacGregor retired last week.



This Fire Prevention Week, SFD reminds residents to ‘charge into safety’

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Oct. 4-10 is Fire Prevention Week, a time when fire departments across North America remind the public how to improve their fire safety – and why it is so important. This year, like last, the Stratford Fire Department is asking residents to look at the devices they use in their daily lives: phones, tablets and laptops to name only a few.

Lithium-ion batteries, a core part of nearly all electronic devices in modern life, store high amounts of energy in a small space. If the batteries are damaged

or charged incorrectly, they can overheat, start a fire or even explode.

According to the U.S.-based National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), which spearheads much of the awareness and research for Fire Prevention Week globally, an increasing number of lithium-ion battery fires and explosions reported by fire departments, news outlets and other sources underscores the potential hazards they present.

In Stratford, that data is not publicly available; however, Lisa Walter, fire prevention and safety educator with the fire department, told the Times lithium ion batteries have started fires in Stratford before

– and they present unique dangers.

There are a few things she recommended, in order to prevent such dangers.

“We really want to focus on how we’re taking care of charging our devices,” Walter said. “... If something feels hot that you’re charging, you would stop using it. If it’s making weird noises or smoking or smells kind of strange, then you would just stop using it, and you’d only want to use cords that are with the device to charge the device. And with recycling, you wouldn’t want to throw your batteries in the garbage. You’d want to recycle them, and there are some places you can drop them off around you in Stratford.”

According to Walter, residents can find a drop off point at Stratford City Hall, the landfill on Romeo Street and either of the fire departments.

In addition, the NFPA are remind the public to:

Unplug a device when it is fully charged. Do not leave it plugged in longer than needed. Leaving a device plugged in too long can increase heat and stress on the battery.

Charge larger items like e-bikes, scooters, and power tools outside and away from exits. These batteries are larger and store more energy. If they fail, fires can grow quickly and spread.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 10

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(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Lisa Walter, G. Ankenmann, A. Rogerson, S. Knischewsky, A. Mix and S. Core of the Stratford Fire Department stand beside a fire engine at the Fire Station Number 2.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

When on a plane, keep your device where you can see it while charging. Do not charge devices in overhead compartments. Do not charge e-cigarettes or vapes on a plane.

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If a battery overheats or fails, it is important for the flight crew to respond quickly.

Aside from safety precautions related to lithium ion batteries, Walter recommends a few other measures to better secure residents' homes and families.

"We all want to make fire safety a priority," Walter said. "So, being sure to have working smoke alarms and (carbon monoxide) detectors on every level of your home, which you need to test once a month by pressing the test button. Also, having a family escape plan in place, being prepared with that, and how to call 911 if there was an emergency. These three things I just mentioned are simple steps that can make a significant difference when it matters."

To learn more about Fire Prevention Week and this year's theme, "Charge into Fire Safety: Safe Charging Is a Superpower," visit fpw.org.



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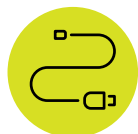
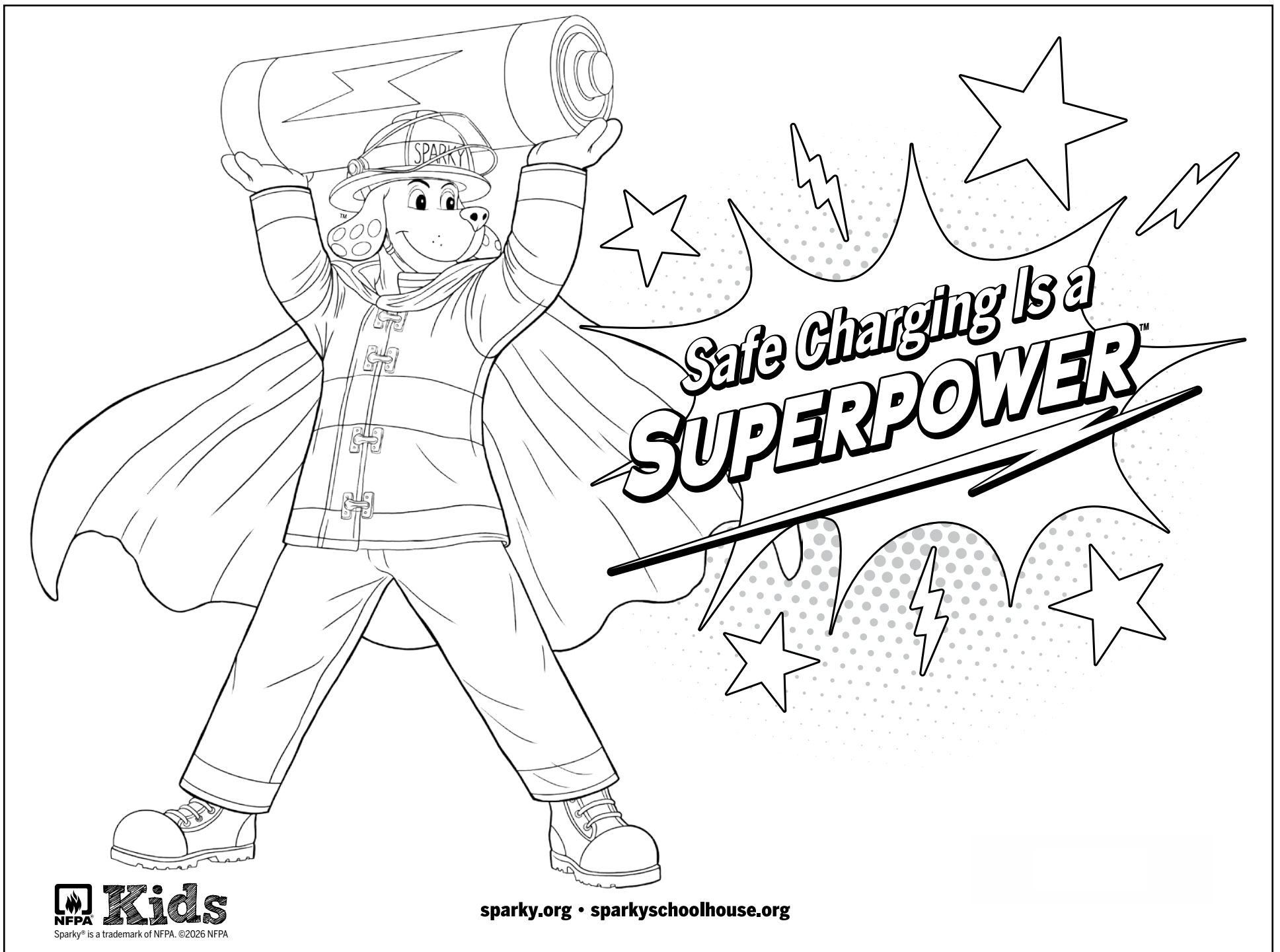
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Lakers compete at the Toronto Titans Tournament

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The U16 and U18 Huron-Perth Lakers competed at the annual Toronto Titans Tournament during the weekend of Oct. 1 through 4.

In the U16, the Lakers competed in Group 2 during the

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round-robin and began their tournament against the Central Ontario Wolves on Oct. 1, losing 4-0 in the opener.

On Oct. 2, Huron-Perth faced the Oakville Rangers in their morning contest. Oakville took a 1-0 lead after the first period, but Tyson Dale, assisted by Dexter Powell, tied the game at 2:39 into the second period. Oakville retook the lead before the end of the period and doubled their lead midway through the final frame.

Dale's second of the game from Simon Howard and Levi Dunn on the power play with 3:54 left put the Lakers within a goal, but Oakville iced the Lakers' second loss in group play with 31 seconds left in regulation.

In the evening game, the Lakers came back from a 2-0 deficit for their lone win of the tournament, defeating Northeast Generals 3-2. Nathan Murphy, from Logan Tallevi, scored with 2:58 left in the first period to start the comeback. Dale's third of the tournament in the second period tied the game with 1:31 left, and Will Molenhuis, from Carter Williams, capped off the comeback early in the third period.

On Oct. 3, the Lakers aimed to conclude their tournament performance positively in the matchup against the Ottawa Valley Titans.

After Ottawa Valley opened the scoring, the Lakers responded with 5:09 left in the opening frame, courtesy of Powell's first of the tournament, set up by Murphy. The Titans scored five unanswered in the next two periods to take the game out of reach. But the Lakers finished the game on an encouraging note with a late power-play goal from Colin Dinell, set up by Powell and Murphy, with 1:20 remaining.

The U16 Lakers finished the tournament with a 1-3 record, good for fifth place in the group. Next for the U16 Lakers is competing at the Wendy Dufton tournament in London from Oct. 8 to 11.

For the U18 Lakers, tournament play began on Oct. 1, competing in an eight-team Group 2. Their first opponent was the North York Rangers.

In the first period, Matteo Gircante opened the scoring on an unassisted goal with 8:38 left in the opening frame. North York tied the game in the second period and took the lead midway through the third period. Knox Harrison tied the game for the Lakers on a power-play goal from Owen Jarmuth and Josh Hall with 6:58 left in the game. The game settled for a 2-2 draw.

On Oct. 2, the Lakers played their late morning game against the Markham Majors. Tyler Burtenshaw, with assists from Ethan Schmidt and Grady Siroky, put the Lakers ahead 1-0 midway through the opening frame.

Markham answered with three unanswered goals in the middle frame, taking a 3-1 lead heading into the third period. The Majors tallied one more early in the period, but Schmidt's first of the tournament with 1:30 left alleviated a tough outing for the Lakers in a 4-2 defeat.

In the afternoon game against the Amherst Knights, Curtis Gracey's second-period goal, assisted by Ethan Mahn and Schmidt, gave the Lakers a 1-1 draw and their first point in the preliminary round.

The Lakers looked to finish off their tournament run on a positive note against the Southern Tier Admirals on Oct. 3.

With 90 seconds left in the first period, the Lakers got on the board with a goal by Mahn, assisted by Samuel Harrow. Schmidt scored his second of the tournament from Koby Hopf-Stasso and Gracey 26 seconds later to put the Lakers 2-0 after the opening frame.

Knox Harrison, from Jason Adair, scored at 3:02 into the second period to give the Lakers a commanding 3-0 lead. In the third period, Burtenshaw tallied his second of the tournament 24 seconds into the final frame, putting the Lakers up 4-0. From there, the Lakers held on to the multi-goal lead and finished with a 4-1 victory, closing out their tournament play with a respectable 1-1-2 record.

Next up for the U18 Lakers is their ALLIANCE season opener in Sarnia against the Sarnia-Lambton Jr. Sting on Oct. 11.



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U16 Warriors earn a split to start the season

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The Stratford U16 AA Warriors kicked off their ALLIANCE regular-season schedule with a split outcome last weekend.

Before team practice on Sept. 29, head coach Jamie Morris spoke to the Times about the team's aspirations for the upcoming season after a productive pre-season.

"We should be good. We battled hard for the first, you know, our first four games. Just some tough teams, so it's hard to tell so far what they'll be like, you know, going into the season, once we get into teams in our regular league, but yeah, I like the way we're looking right now," Morris said.

"There's a bunch of new kids this year. Probably a third of the team's new. So yeah, just getting to know where everybody plays and what they do and the things they're good at ... trying to work that into the existing guys there."

Stratford opened the season on the road against the Cambridge Hawks at the Preston Auditorium on Oct. 3.

The Warriors scored first 1:14 into the game and extended their lead to 2-0 with a power-play goal with 3:20 remaining in the first period. In the second period, Stratford increased their lead to 3-0, but Cambridge rallied, scoring twice in the last 8:17 of the middle frame to narrow the gap.

Stratford built a two-goal lead early in the third period, but the Hawks narrowed the gap to one goal midway through. The visitors sealed the win with under six minutes on the clock, finishing the season opener at 5-3.

The next day, the Warriors played their home opener at the William Allman Memorial Arena against the Kitchener Jr. Rangers Red.

Kitchener jumped out to an early 2-0 lead, but the Warriors responded with a goal late in the first period, cutting the deficit in half heading into the second period.

The Rangers ultimately put the game away with two late goals in the middle frame. Despite an early third-period goal, the Warriors suffered their first loss in a 4-2 defeat.

Despite the loss, Morris says the team played well despite the mixed results on opening weekend.

"I thought we played pretty hard both games. Boys worked hard, working on a lot of things that we're talking to them about. Today's result maybe wasn't indicative of the way we played. Seemed like any mistake we made ended up in our net. Had some chances that didn't go in, but yeah, both games we played really well," Morris said.

Team captain Liam Kelly feels honoured to wear the captaincy and states he aims to be communicative, expecting the team to remain competitive this season.

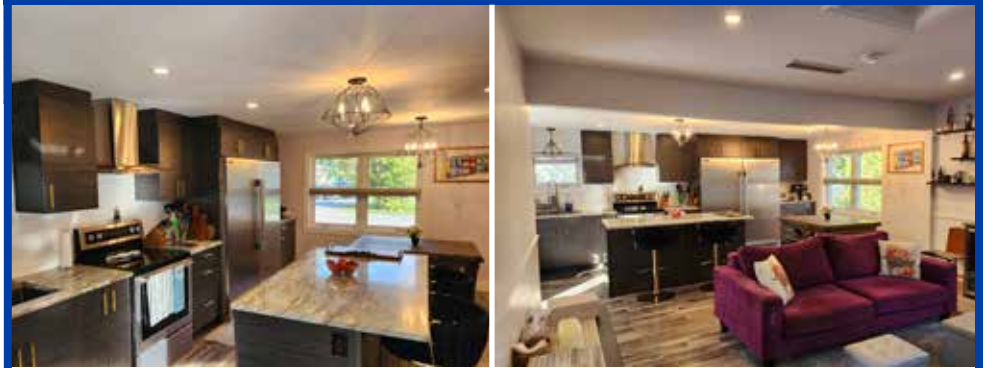
"Oh, it's a great feeling to be a part of this community and just to be part of the boys. It feels like family," Kelly said.

"The kind of leadership I want to bring to this team is vocal and talking to the boys and just leadership all night, showing the voice. I think the expectation is we'll go out there and try our best. We'll work hard, and we'll win some games."

Next for the U16 Warriors is an away game at St. Thomas against the Jr. Stars on Oct. 10. Following that, they start their two-week, four-game homestand at Allman Arena with a match against the Cambridge Hawks on Oct. 11.



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Mike’s Lanes celebrates 65 years with Beard Growers Challenge

NICHELE BUTCHER-BONTRUP
Guest Contributor

Mike’s Lanes is celebrating a remarkable 65 years of being part of Stratford’s Winterfest traditions. This event started with the first ever Stratford Winterfest, as local businesses were asked to contribute a fun addition to the winter festivities.

This year, Mike’s Lanes are bringing together bowling, the community and good times with a special anniversary event that is sure to bring out plenty of friendly competition, and some impressive facial hair.

To mark this milestone, Mike’s Lanes is launching its 65th year of the Beard Growers Challenge, inviting participants to put down the razor, let those whiskers grow and join in the fun. And there’s plenty of incentive to participate, with fabulous prizes up for grabs, including the grand prize, a Raleigh E-Bike.

Whether you’re a seasoned beard growing pro or someone whose facial hair needs a little encouragement, this is your chance to get involved, and have some laughs.

The Beard Growers Challenge is about more than just growing a beard. It’s a

celebration of the people who have made this event possible for bowlers, families, league members, friends and generations of local community residents who have walked through the doors and made memories on the lanes.

Participants are encouraged to get creative, embrace the challenge and show off their progress throughout the event. The bigger, better and more impressive the beard, the more fun the competition becomes!

With fabulous prizes, plenty of bragging rights and a Raleigh E-Bike waiting for one lucky winner, this is one anniversary celebration you won’t want to miss.

So, Stratford, put down the razor, and get growing. 65 years. Countless memories. One epic Beard Growers Challenge.

For more information about the Beard Growers Challenge, prizes and how to participate, contact Mike’s Lanes or follow their social media pages for upcoming announcements.

Entry fee of \$20. Registration is open Oct. 1- Nov. 15. Contact Mike’s Bowling Lanes for more information by calling 519-271-2092 or visit their Facebook page, Mike’s 5-Pin Bowling Association (M5PBA).

M5PBA Weekly Report

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Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. What is the capital city of New Zealand?

2. Which element has the chemical symbol, Fe?

3. Who painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel?

4. Which country is credited with inventing paper?

5. Which boxer was nicknamed Smokin' Joe?

6. In a standard deck of 52 playing cards, how many face cards are there?

7. Which everyday product was originally marketed in the 1890s as a wallpaper cleaner?

8. True or False. Bananas are botanically classified as berries, while strawberries are not.

9. Which famous novel begins with the line “Call me Ishmael”?

10. Which Canadian province is the smallest by land area?

This week’s answers are found on pg. 27

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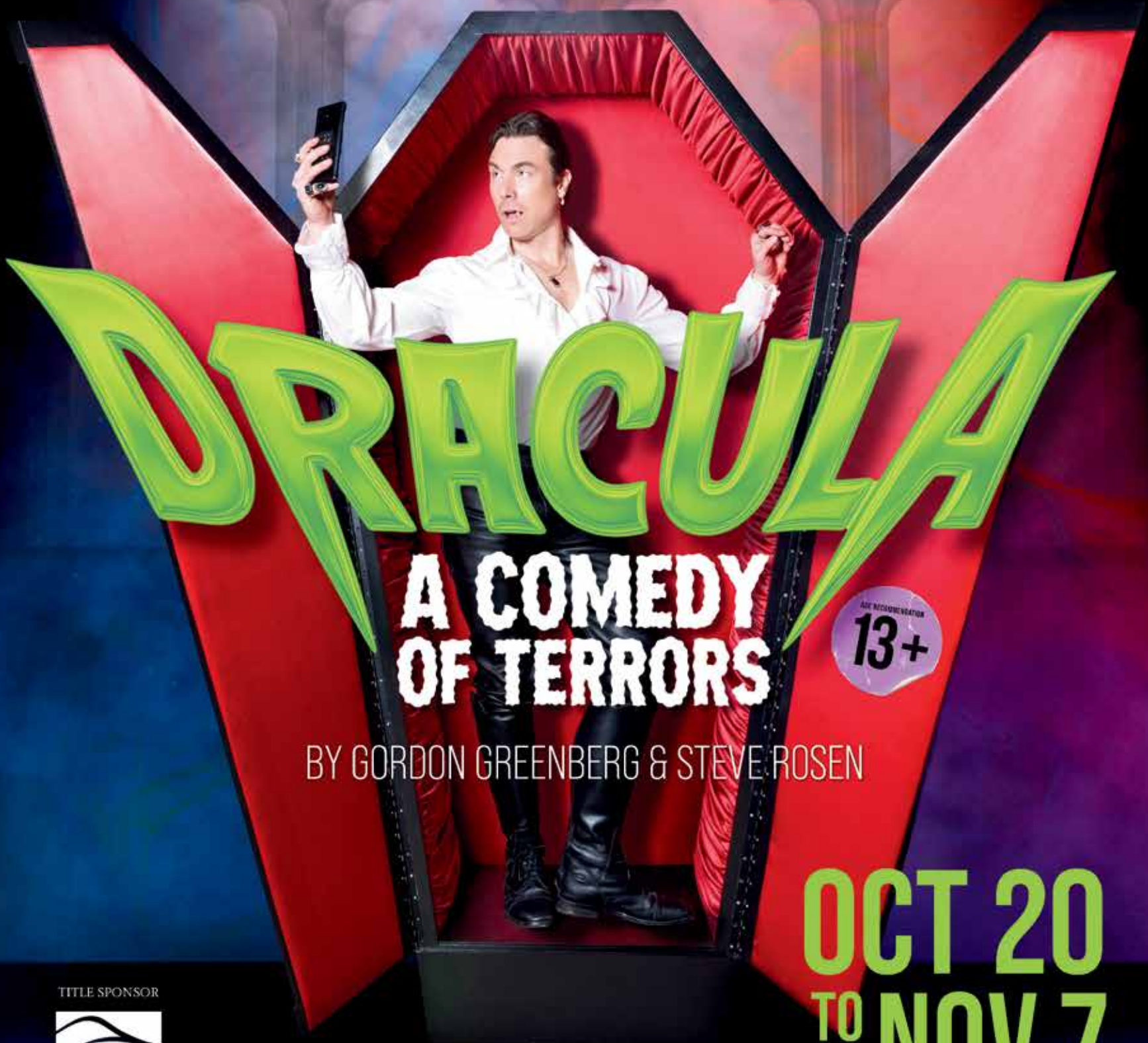
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SDSS wins Breslau tournament, sweep season openers



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Stratford District Secondary School senior boys volleyball team won their second consecutive tournament last weekend, capturing gold at the Woodland Christian High School tournament in Breslau. After finishing first in their pool, SDSS beat Guelph in the semi-finals 2-0 (27-25, 25-13) and took the title against St. David Catholic 2-1 (21-25, 27-25, 15-7). Left side Brody Sinclair took over down the stretch, sealing the deciding set with several clutch kills and strong serves. During Huron-Perth league play last week, SDSS defeated Mitchell District High School and Central Huron Secondary School in straight sets. Their season continues with upcoming games against Goderich and South Huron. Pictured in the front row from left to right are Cohen Bernard, Jack de Graaf, Nate Meadows, MJ White, and Yug Patel. Pictured in the back row, from left, are coach Bear Gough, Jordan Diep, Ashton Van Kooten, Brody Sinclair, Davis Longston, Zack Davidson, Ryan Cassone, Evan Ehnes, Evan Abercrombie, Chahil Patel, and coach Katey Kneider.

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Flowing Futures hosting awards celebration

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

What could Stratford's Avon River become in the years ahead? That question is at the heart of Flowing Futures: Avon River Design Challenge, a community-wide experiment in civic imagination culminating in a public awards night at Copperlight, 142 Ontario St., on Oct. 17.

Launched by the Provocation Ideas Festival (PIF) as a collaborative community initiative this spring, Flowing Futures invited artists, students, designers, environmental thinkers, community organizations and residents to propose new possibilities for one of Stratford's most cherished natural and cultural spaces. The response produced 34 completed submissions and 12 Statements of Interest, ranging from practical interventions to ambitious visions for how the Avon might become more ecologically resilient, accessible, creative and connected to community life. A public exhibition has been

on display at Copperlight since Oct. 1 and is set to conclude with the awards night.

The exhibition reveals the remarkable breadth of that response. Ideas include accessible paddling launches and riverfront pathways; habitat structures for barn swallows and native shoreline plantings; natural playgrounds and year-round recreation; public sculpture, poetry and land art; oral-history and sound installations; and QR-linked digital experiences that turn a walk along the Avon into an encounter with history, ecology and community memory.

Among the proposals are The Ankosé Trail, an accessible walking circuit integrating native plantings and biodiversity education; Barn-Raising for the Birds, proposing specialized nesting structures for barn swallows; Lakeside Reimagined, which rethinks the Lake Victoria waterfront as a connected pedestrian and ecological public space; The River Above The River Below, a QR-linked cultural pathway connecting the Shakespear-

ean Gardens and Gallery Stratford; The River Can Answer, an interactive digital artwork inviting collective observation of the river; and ARTxTERRA, a land-art festival using natural, biodegradable materials.

"Flowing Futures began with a simple belief: some of the most imaginative ideas for the future of a community can come from the people who experience it every day. What excites me about this exhibition is not that it offers one answer for the Avon, but that it brings together dozens of very different answers – and invites the whole community into the conversation," said Mark Rosenfeld, founding director of PIF.

The exhibition also includes a dedicated student stream, with a major planning project developed by six University of Waterloo students and three submissions from Stratford Intermediate School students – bringing younger voices into the conversation about the river's future.

"The strength of Flowing Futures is the

range of thinking it has brought forward – from ecology and accessibility to art, technology, recreation and storytelling. Seeing these ideas together makes visible how many different ways a public space can be understood, experienced and cared for," said Rosenfeld.

The exhibition is intended as a forum for exploration and discussion rather than a municipal plan or commitment to implementation. Visitors will be invited to consider the proposals, talk with contributors and vote for a People's Choice Award. A separate jury representing a range of community, environmental, cultural and educational perspectives will select awards recognizing ecology and climate resilience, community connection and accessibility, arts and placemaking, transformative vision and student innovation.

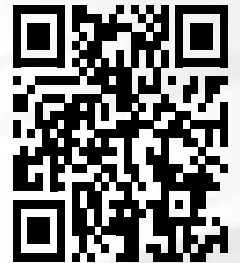
The awards celebration takes place from 7-9 p.m. on Oct. 17. It is free and open to everyone, though advance registration is required.

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Beatitude on a Sunday Morning

(on listening to the bells of Holy Trinity toll across our neighbourhood)

Today I sing for the sun
that descends in threads and teaches the
robins to dance.

I sing for stillness
that kisses the polished boot of movement.

I sing for the birds
that marvel at me while I marvel back.

I sing for the changing anemone of sky and the
fronds of its tender fists,
opening and closing above these holy
meadows.

I sing for the teachers of religious law
whose finery hangs on the silvery peg of
forgiveness.

I sing for the leaves
that burst through the hands of trees.

I sing for the church of your makeup table
whose powders urge your beauty, whose
brushes
stake their claim.

I sing for the neighbour's cat
coiled beside me now in his veil of silence,
feigning hunger.

I sing for the trees
that tick like clocks and never fail the hour.

I sing for the bricks of this house
that drink into their starry bones the shards of
sunlight,
that hold me in the glorious palm of their
giving.

I sing for my writing desk
where occasionally by heaven's grace I am
permitted
to assemble words like these.

I sing this for our joy.

I sing this for our sorrow.

And today I sing for the photographs
that dismantle me so that
I might emerge unbroken.

David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate

The Dinner Is Ruined brings three decades of art-punk to Stratford with new album in hand

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

After more than three decades of making music, touring around the world and sharing stages with some of Canada's biggest names, The Dinner Is Ruined is bringing its particular brand of art-punk rock 'n' roll to Stratford.

The Canadian indie trio performs at the Bunker Performance Lounge and Café, 104 Wellington St., on Saturday, Oct. 10, with doors opening at 7 p.m. and the show beginning at 8 p.m.

Frontman Dale Morningstar said he first played the Bunker solo earlier this year and came away wanting to return with the full band.

"I loved just playing there," Morningstar said. "We got a new actual vinyl record in our sweaty little palms ... and we just want to kind of go out there and stake our claim in as many towns as we can."

Morningstar is joined by longtime drummer Dave Clark of Rheostatics fame and keyboardist and bassist Johnny Pee. The trio has played together since 1994, releasing nine albums and touring Canada, the United States, Europe and Mali, West Africa.

Along the way, The Dinner Is Ruined opened for acts including Sonic Youth and Beck, performed at Massey Hall and joined Gord Downie's solo band, The Country of Miracles. Morningstar has also spent decades operating his Gas Station Recording Studio, producing and recording numerous Canadian artists.

The Stratford show also gives the band an opportunity

to showcase its new album, *Like A Tree, Heroic*, released earlier this year and now available on vinyl.

The opening track, "Look At You, Gord," draws directly from Morningstar's years playing with Downie.

Morningstar said the song was inspired partly by attending Downie's wake and returning afterward to his Toronto Island studio, where he walked out onto the beach and looked up at the night sky.

"I just said, 'Look at you, Gord. You're still taking me on adventures,'" he recalled.

Another track, "Yellowknife Open Mic," recalls an impromptu performance while touring with Downie. Morningstar said members of the band walked into a Yellowknife club on an open-mic night and took over the stage, with Downie freestyling alongside them.

"People were literally standing on tables," Morningstar said, describing it as perhaps his favourite moment on stage.

While he isn't promising anyone will be standing on tables at the Bunker, Morningstar said the band will bring plenty of energy.

"We're going to bring some fun to the party," he said. "We play rock and roll with a bit of a bite to it."

The Oct. 10 show is pay what you can, with \$15 recommended.

Download *Like A Tree, Heroic* at <https://tinyurl.com/34aakufv>.

Show information and reservations are available at <https://tinyurl.com/yynp887k>



The Dinner is Ruined members Johnny Pee, Dale Morningstar and Dave Clark.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



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Avondale's Craft and Vendor Show returns Oct. 17

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The Craft and Vendor Show at Avondale United Church will give visitors a chance to try tasty treats, browse about local vendors, and maybe even finish their holiday shopping far ahead of time.

Avondale United Church will host its annual Craft and Vendor show on Oct. 17 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event will feature around 50 vendors selling items like fudge, jewelry, indoor and outdoor home décor, handmade greeting cards, crochet animals and other knit ware, children's books and sketches. There will also be representatives from companies like Avon, Pampered Chef and Norwex selling everything from cosmetics to kitchen items to cleaning supplies.

The Craft and Vendor Show will even have a vendor booth selling skull-themed items, just in time for Halloween.

"There's close to 50 vendors. We're still working on a couple more that have said they want to be in it, but we have some re-

ally cool vendors," said Susan Wigan, one of the co-organizers of the event.

The Craft and Vendor show will take over five rooms inside of the church, with Cricut feet made by one of the vendors leading the way to each room.

Ken's French Fries will also be there in the church's parking lot off of Huntingdon Avenue and there will be a bake sale run by congregation members.

The Craft and Vendor show will also have a penny sale where each vendor donates an item representing their business. Guests can purchase raffle tickets to put in a bag next to the item they'd like for a chance to win it in a draw done at the end of the day.

The event is free to attend but donations of items and cash towards Avondale's Food Shelf are encouraged and appreciated.

"If everybody brings something then we just load up the grocery cart that we have. Last year, we actually collected three grocery carts full of stuff so that was really cool," Wigan said.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Grandpa Paul Gerber takes his grandchildren on a ride of his self-made Thomas the Tank Engine. The Gerbers are Perth County pork producers, farming for generations northeast of Stratford.

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Editorial

I'm back at my desk after a whirlwind wedding and honeymoon



GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Some of you may have noticed my name has been missing from the paper in recent weeks – for most of September actually.

No, I haven't abandoned you, my faithful readers, and I haven't hung up my editor's hat for another job elsewhere. Julia and I were just off getting married and touring Quebec and the East Coast on our honeymoon.

On Sept. 5, Julia and I hosted our wedding with roughly 50 of our closest family and friends. We wed under sunny skies with Georgian Bay as our backdrop and the sound of waves lapping on the shore as our music.

We enjoyed a wonderful meal catered by Athens Greek Souvlaki here in Stratford, delivered to our wedding venue by Grant Haven's own Gary West – who also attend-

ed our wedding and delivered a very heartfelt toast.

The evening was perfect with speeches, cake cutting and dancing under the stars.

Then, a short time later, on Sept. 17 after returning home for a week, Julia and I departed on a whirlwind honeymoon tour of Quebec and the East Coast, with a quick trip down into Maine, before returning home on Oct. 4.

The trip was everything we'd hoped it would be and more. Highlights included eating at two Michelin Star restaurants – one in Montreal and the other in Quebec City – spending two nights in Victoria by the Sea on P.E.I., driving the Cabot Trail and spending time near Baddeck on Cape Breton in Nova Scotia, spending a night at the Hollywood Casino and Hotel in Bangor, Maine, learning about the resilience of the residents of Lac Mégantic, Que., in the 13 years following the 2013 rail disaster, and revelling in the natural beauty of the changing leaves atop Mont-Tremblant.

Though we only spent one or two nights in each location, we did our best to experience as much culture, food, history and art as possible, and we promised ourselves we'd return to experience those things we didn't



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Times correspondent Simmons and Grant Haven Media regional editor Galen Simmons have some fun on their honeymoon, this time on the picturesque Mont-Tremblant.

have time for.

We also recorded much of our trip for our online publication, Northern Arts Perspective, where I review and write about people and places that inspire me. I've already written about several of our experiences in Quebec, New Brunswick and P.E.I., but I have a lot more sto-

ries and photos to share from our trip, so if you're interested in reading more, check us out at northernartsperspective.ca and follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Julia and I are planning to experience, photograph and write about future travels and destinations across this wonderful country and

beyond, so we hope you'll follow along.

For now, however, we're both just happy to back home with the dogs. Being away from them for 17 days was probably the hardest part of our trip, so we're looking at ways to bring them with us on our future travels.

Quote of the Week

"Remember, with the war, it's just artificial. It's a little bit high. It's a small price to pay for keeping the world safe, keeping our country safe. They can take out a city. Let 'em take out Los Angeles. Let 'em take out San Diego. It's a very small price to pay, and its going to be over with very soon."

– U.S. President Donald Trump on Oct. 5 at a rally in Nebraska, attempting to justify high gas prices and the Iran War

STRATFORD TIMES

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Publisher

Stewart Grant • stew@granthaven.com

Editor

Connor Luczka • connor@granthaven.com

Times Reporter

Amanda Nelson • amandajanevriter@gmail.com

Graphic Design / Sales Inquiries

Sarah Cairns • stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Business Development

Heather Dunbar • heather@granthaven.com

Billing Administrator

Cindy Boakes • boakescindy1576@gmail.com

Contributors

Galen Simmons, Spencer Seymour, Julia Schneider, Gary West, Paul Knowles, Emily Stewart, Lisa Chester, Fred Gonder, Sheila Clarke, Irene Roth, Lee Griffi, Stuart Lender, Sydney Goodwin, Patrick D. Burk

143 Queen Street E., St. Marys, ON, PO Box 2310 N4X 1A2
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Opinion

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: A KIND OF LOVE LETTER



STUART LENDER

Times Columnist

I try to come to terms with the joy and the pain of living at times. As we all do and as we all must. Whether we are aware of it or not – we are, in some manner, taking inventory of it all. End-of-life, I'm certain, is one of the main *matinées* for the reckoning of ourselves.

I suppose we should be grateful for the extremes, the joys and the pains, for without these highs and lows, we are stagnant.

It's obviously personal – one's satisfaction. And I don't believe that deeper satisfaction comes exclusively from how widely one has travelled, how much one owns, or even what one does for a living. I suspect this coming to terms

in one's life has something to do with the “me” as I perceive myself to be, and the “me” who projects into the world how I would like to be perceived. And then again, the “me” that is actually perceived by another. Although, much of our lives, we never really know how we are looked at by others. We want these sometimes-disparaging elements to be in harmony, and I think the merging of these personae is often the joy in the equation for us all – when we feel the most ourselves and at peace in our own space. When we are separated from ourselves, or the perception of ourselves is somehow disjointed, we're forced to come to terms, to face this reckoning.

As human beings, we are always doing this. We cannot help ourselves – as sure as we are consciously aware of ourselves and as sure as there are mirrors in our houses to reflect our image back at us.

After years of experiencing my share of the inevitable hurts and setbacks of varying degrees and durations, inevitable in anyone's life – I've discovered that the length of one's pain is in direct proportion to what is learned from it. Turns out, when we learn about ourselves on a deeply emo-

tional level, we break through some far wall in the psyche that we never fully understood before or couldn't see quite as clearly or in quite the same way as we do when we are standing in the rubble. Hence: “what doesn't kill us, makes us stronger.” Or more accurately: “what doesn't kill us, makes us wiser!”

As the philosopher Henry David Thoreau famously said: “Most (people) live lives of quiet desperation.” And who wants that? The only desperation we should hold is to truly find out who we are and what feeds our hearts and souls, so that we can then know what we want from our lives and how to change them. The equation sums itself up as such: pain = self-reflection = understanding = radical change. Otherwise, patterns are repeated – patterns of anger or blame, patterns of choosing the wrong partner, patterns of addiction, and so on. And we get slapped in the face time and time again with the same pain, but in different forms, without ever knowing why.

Everyone's life takes a turn for the worse sometimes, except, as is so often the case, the worst often doesn't turn out to be so – never at least, for as long as one

thinks. We are a resilient species. And there is a secret some of us know concerning the “worst” and how long it hangs around. It doesn't have anything to do with one person's pain compared to another's or the depth of the pain – more with what is learned from the pain itself.

In my work, I've been fortunate. In life's affairs, not always. My work doesn't even feel like work, as it's very clear to me that it is in me to serve others. I'm privileged to meet interesting and lovely people at the funeral home under not-so-lovely circumstances and am silently grateful to see the resiliency of the human spirit. Through all those interactions and through needed times of self-reflection, I've discovered that one may be born and then born again. As often as it takes, to finally rest in a place of understanding oneself – and as such, a place of relative consistency. Because of this, I have discovered that what feeds our hearts and souls is often connected to something we knew long ago and either let go of, ignored when we became adults, or have forever been pushing away from view.

I am building from there now.

The place in childhood where I instinctively knew what made me happy, and I nurture the aspects of myself that speak to who I have always been as I grew up, allowing them to blossom. Genuine. No masks.

And my partner – I think she knows who I am. I think I know who she is. We know change never stops. I watch her do her work to understand herself after her own life's pains, as she watches me do mine. We all have that work to do, and it can be joyous work, because to move through it is to reveal to ourselves the foundation of love itself. Something we all need to feel within.

And through that process, I know that I can be who I am in the world, without affectation, and still be loved. I've come to understand that if I am truly comfortable with myself and I can feel my own acceptance first, it leaves nothing within me wanting to prevent the changes emerging in another. I call that rest. I call that peace.

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.

Making autumn fit the life you have



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

Autumn invitations often arrive with cheerful expectations: join us for dinner, spend the afternoon outdoors, come to the gathering, stay a little longer. For older adults and people living with chronic illness, accepting may involve questions that others never have to consider.

Will there be a comfortable place to sit? How far is the walk from the parking lot? Will the

visit leave enough energy for tomorrow? Can I enjoy the occasion without spending the next several days recovering from it?

These considerations can feel frustrating when an activity once required little planning. We may remember preparing an entire holiday dinner, spending hours in the garden, or walking wherever we pleased. Comparing today's capacity with those memories can make a smaller outing seem inadequate before it even begins.

But an occasion can still be meaningful when we change how we participate. A brief visit may offer a welcome conversation. Preparing one dish may let us contribute without taking responsibility for the whole meal. Enjoying autumn colours from a bench or a scenic drive may suit us better than a long walk.

The challenge is giving ourselves permission to make those adjustments. Many of us have

spent years being helpful, capable and available. Saying that we need a shorter visit or assistance with a task may feel unfamiliar. We may worry that we are inconveniencing others.

Clear requests can make planning easier for everyone. “I would love to come, but I will need to leave after lunch” gives a host useful information. “Could someone carry that for me?” identifies a practical way to help. We do not need to provide a lengthy explanation every time we express a need.

It can also help to decide what matters most before an occasion begins. Perhaps our priority is seeing a grandchild, sharing a meal or hearing how a friend has been doing. Keeping that purpose in mind may make it easier to leave other expectations aside.

Hosts and family members can play an important role. Offer seating before someone has to

ask. Explain whether there are stairs or a long walk. Accept an early departure graciously, and continue extending invitations even when someone sometimes declines.

For someone whose capacity changes from day to day, flexibility can make participation possible. An invitation that allows a decision closer to the occasion may feel much more welcoming than one accompanied by pressure to commit.

There may still be sadness about what has become difficult. We can miss our former independence or stamina while appreciating what remains available. Allowing those feelings does not diminish our gratitude or our efforts to adapt.

On days when going out is too demanding, connection can come to us in other ways. A friend might stop by with soup, a relative might telephone after dinner, or a neighbour might

share photographs of the changing trees. These gestures can help someone remain part of community life.

We also deserve choices about the help we receive. Asking, “What would make this easier for you?” respects a person's knowledge of their own circumstances. Taking over without asking can leave someone feeling overlooked, even when the intention is kind. Support works best when it includes listening.

This October, consider what would help you enjoy one part of the season more comfortably. It might be assistance, a shorter plan, a quieter setting or a day with fewer demands.

A meaningful autumn does not require keeping pace with everyone around us. It can unfold through moments that fit our lives: warm conversation, a favourite meal, sunlight on changing leaves and the comfort of being included as we are.

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Opinion

Letters to the editor: Municipal election candidates impact local health services

At first glance it may appear that local healthcare services are not a municipal responsibility. After all the Canadian constitution lists health care as the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. But reality plays out differently for Ontario municipalities such as Stratford and Perth County. In reality our municipal government plays a direct role in community health services.

For example, Stratford is a partner in the Huron Perth Public Health Unit which provides a host of essential health services in several locations in Stratford/Perth County (the City of Stratford appoints two city councillors to the Health Unit's board).

Secondly, when it comes to emergency services, Stratford and Perth County are responsible for the operation and management of large Land Ambulance Service Grants for providing ambulance and community paramedic services in Perth and Huron Counties including Stratford.

Third, for the growing residential care needs area, the City of Stratford, the Town of St. Marys and Perth County own and govern Spruce Lodge, Woodland Towers and Hamlet Estates ... a very successful "campus of care" partnership (the City of Stratford appoints two city councillors to the joint Board of Directors of Spruce Lodge).

In addition, the city has recently had annual commitments to the Stratford General Hospital to fund new hospital equipment, technologies and services. Even the city's decision to sell city-owned property may directly impact local not-for-profit healthcare agencies. For example, a City of Stratford property sale for a private clinic or a developer's long term care institution, may jeopardize a community's ability to enhance local non-

profit homecare services, or assist elders wishing to age in place, or support the establishment of a naturally occurring retirement neighbourhood. In summary, the City Council's influence in all these local healthcare decisions is critical.

So, do municipal election candidates impact local healthcare? You bet!

*Paul Brown,
Stratford*

On the efficacy of wards

Dear editor,

At a Sept. 27 public meeting attended by four of the five mayoral candidates (Andrew Rea was not present), a resident asked the candidates for their views on adopting a ward system to elect councillors. Three candidates essentially dismissed the idea out of hand, citing a variety of reasons. Candidate Ritz was less definitive but not supportive.

None of the candidates acknowledged or spoke to the potential benefits of a ward system – and there many. Wards acknowledge that a municipality is composed of several local communities with specific needs, concerns and questions (for example, residents in the older areas close to downtown have a different perspective on public transit than those living in the rapidly expanding new sub-divisions). A ward model gives citizens the ability to elect a candidate with a connection to and understanding of the interests and concerns of the ward. The successful candidate becomes the primary contact for ward residents, as well as their advocate on council for matters that have distinct impacts or consequences for the ward.

A ward system would have another benefit. Stratford's

current council has 11 members (10 councillors and the mayor). According to the Association of Ontario Municipalities, over 85 per cent of the 444 municipalities have smaller councils, with seven members being the most common. Of the 17 councils with 11 members only three have fewer residents than Stratford – West Perth, Township of the Archipelago and Huron East. Six of the 17 had populations over 100,000, including Brampton, Kitchener, Oshawa and Windsor.

Stratford's population is approximately 35,000. Adopting a six-ward model would mean each ward would have roughly 6,000 residents, and would reduce council to seven, and align Stratford with the majority of municipalities. It would also mean that four of the 10 councillors elected this year would not return in 2030.

The Ontario Municipal Act grants municipal councils the authority to change the composition of council including to the number of members, and to adopt a ward system. The chances that a new Stratford council would use this authority seem slim at best.

Fortunately, the Ontario Municipal Act gives citizens the ability to force the question by way of a petition, signed by at least one per cent of eligible voters asking the council to adopt a ward system (in 2022 Stratford had 26,544 electors). The receiving council is required to consider the petition. If the council declines to act on the petition, any person who signed it may appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal, which has the authority to order the creation of the ward system proposed in the petition.

*Patrick O'Rourke,
Stratford*

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Stratford KIA
Expressway Ford
McDonald's - Erie St
Tim Hortons - Erie St
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
Food Basics
Tim Hortons - C.H. Meier
Festival Marketplace
Stratford Nissan
Stratford Subaru
Stratford Honda
Quality Festival Inn
McDonald's - Ontario St.
Papa Johns
Fore Everyone Golf
WalMart
Stratford Motor Products
A&W
Toner & Ink Shop
Rutherford Funeral Home

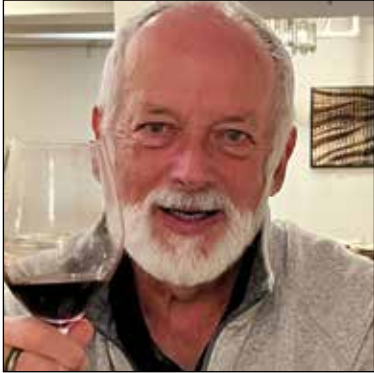
Athens Greek Restaurant
Stratford Legion
Gino's Pizza
Rosso's
Buzz Stop
Union Barber
Mornington Variety
Split Rail
Stratford Rotary Complex
Agriplex
No Frills
Cozyn's
Sebringville Esso
Dave's Diner - Sebringville
Stratford-Perth Museum
Sobey's

Pick Up Locations

Shoppers Drug Mart - Huron
Circle K - Huron
West End Pharmacy
Tim Hortons - Huron
Stratford Hospital
Video 99 - Erie St
Jenny Trout
Stratford Medical Pharmacy
Stratford Chamber of Commerce
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AJ's Hair
United Way Perth Huron
Sinclair Pharmacy
Blowes Stationery
Stratford Tourism
Coffee Culture
Stratford Public Library
The Parlour Restaurant & Inn
Dick's Barber Shop
The Livery Yard
Town Crier Marketing
North End Pharmacy
Annie's Seafood Restaurant
Avon Pharmacy

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: A superb tour of a sobering institution



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

Kingston Penitentiary sets the standard for guided tours.

If you have visited a fair number of historic sites, you'll know that sometimes you're on your own to wander, reading information panels or not finding any information at all. On other occasions, you may be guided by a well-informed student or an older volunteer.

But at Kingston Penitentiary, you will meet several guides on your way through the foreboding site, and they will all be people who worked at the Pen when it was hosting maximum-security prisoners, not curious tourists. And those former guards, medical staff and other personnel bring an amazing authenticity and personal touch to the tour.

A caution: there is very little that could be called "entertaining" in a tour of the Pen because the stories here are harsh, often violent and tend to reveal the worst side of humanity. But it is one of the most educational and thoughtful tours we have ever taken.

The Kingston Pen opened on June 1, 1835, and finally closed 178 years later, in 2013. In its earliest incarnation, the prison was enclosed with a cedar fence, which proved dramatically ineffective, as prisoners escaped on a very regular basis.



A view of Kingston Penitentiary.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

That problem was solved with the construction of 42-foot limestone walls – replaced in the 1950s with reinforced concrete – which give the Pen its ominous aspect, even though not a single criminal is resident there.

There are several tour options; we took the hour-and-a-half option – we were hosted by Tourism Kingston – which costs \$42.50 and which we would highly recommend. It would be tough to tell the whole story in less than that amount of time.

As you tour the stark site, you learn about the evolution of incarceration, and it will probably strike you that it has taken forever for us to decide to treat prisoners as human beings. We may not be there yet. In 1835, the cells measured two feet wide by seven feet long, or enough room for a cot. In 1907, those measurements were expand-

ed, and cells then measured four feet by eight feet by 10 feet. That was modestly good news for prisoners until the 1980s when overcrowding meant double bunks; two prisoners sharing that space. The maximum number of cells at the jail totalled 620; at one point, there were 1,250 prisoners, some housed three to a cell.

The sheer expanse of the penitentiary stands in sharp contrast to the tiny amount of personal space the prisoners had in their cells. Looming grey stone and concrete buildings abound – cell blocks, dining areas, medical facilities, recreational areas and workshops.

Prisoners did work in workshops – the goods they produced were then marketed through a federal government agency. The prisoners were paid a few dollars for their work (\$5 a day in the 1990s), money they could then spend for goods

in the prison tuck shop.

Prisoners also worked in construction on the site. In fact, most of the buildings that form the penitentiary were built by prisoners, a unique reality at the Kingston Pen.

Kingston housed federal prisoners – men and women whose sentence was two years and a day or more. The average length of incarceration was 18 years; one guide told us the longest stay she knew of was 36 years.

Another guide, Paul, served as a corrections nurse for 27 years. He showed us around the short-term segregation area, where problem prisoners including those on suicide watch were kept. There, prisoners were subject to strip searches and were locked up for 23 hours a day. The other hour could be spent in an open yard that seemed smaller than a small room in your home.

The most graphic part of the tour

comes as your tour group is seated in the central section of the cell blocks and you learn about the three riots at Kingston Pen – especially the riot of 1971, when prisoners captured six guards, took complete control of the jail, virtually destroyed the place and took advantage of their several days of control to kill or severely injure prisoners who were confined as sexual abuse perpetrators.

Ironically, the riot was caused because of false rumours that had spread among the prisoners – they wrongly believed they were to be transferred to Millhaven Penitentiary, where, they thought, conditions were far more harsh than even Kingston. None of this was accurate, but ironically, when the riot was finally quelled, many of the rioters were sent to Millhaven because Kingston was in no shape to house anyone until extensive repairs were completed.

No visit to the Pen would be complete without crossing King Street and climbing the steps to visit the Penitentiary Museum (once the home of the prison warden). Admission is by donation and visitors will find all manner of artifacts from the Kingston and other penitentiaries, ranging from the earliest punishment devices (some might say torture) to a drone captured from an attempt to smuggle contraband into Collins Bay Penitentiary in 2022.

These tours are sobering and sometimes shocking, but terrifically worthwhile. We recommend them.

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



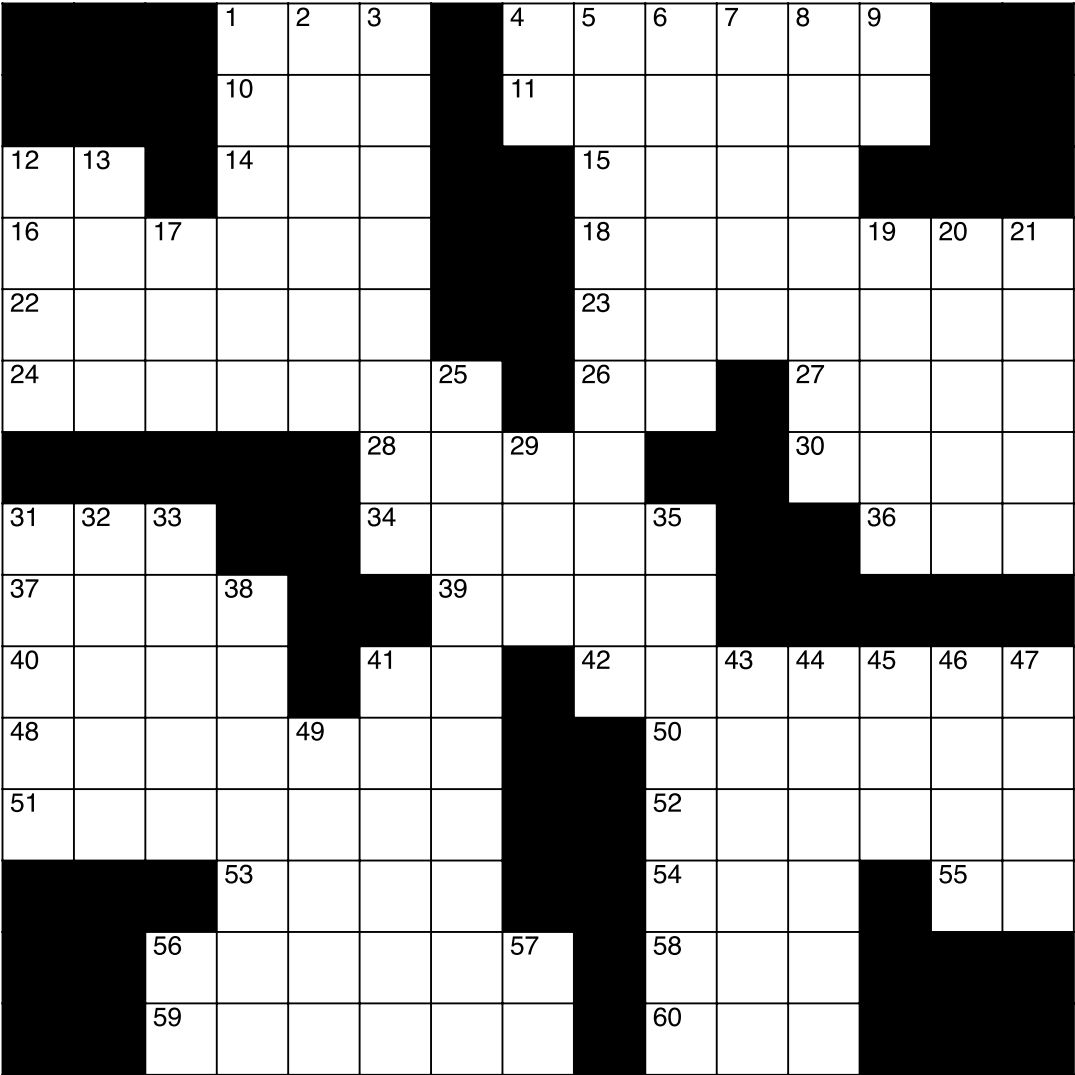
A Kingston Penitentiary tour guide who was a longtime staffer when the jail was in operation.



The entrance to penitentiary workshops; the footprints are where prisoners were compelled to stand as they were searched upon leaving the workshops.

Crossword

- CLUES ACROSS**
1. Small Eurasian deer
4. Province in Northern Ireland
10. A major division of geological time
11. Broadway actor Lane
12. Canadian province (abbr.)
14. Human gene
15. Two
16. A notable one was “blue”
18. Utter repeatedly
22. Ring-shaped objects
23. Sullies
24. Occurs
26. Commercial
27. Near
28. Tools you may need
30. A pledge
31. They start the alphabet
34. Silk garments
36. Soviet Socialist Republic
37. Longtime mayor of Rio
39. Hot meal
40. A type of gin
41. Atomic #84
42. \$10 bill
48. About ground
50. Medicine man
51. Seedless raisin
52. National capital of Albania
53. Appendage
54. OJ trial judge
55. European government entity (abbr.)
56. Bike parts
58. Friend to “Barbie”
59. Stretched to see or hear
60. Commercials
- CLUES DOWN**
1. Make up for
2. Baltimore ballplayer
3. Wages
4. International organization of countries
5. Engravers of gems
6. Declared as fact
7. One who steals
8. Jewelry
9. Hospital worker
12. Nonsense (slang)
13. Town in Galilee
17. Value
19. Alternative identity
20. Sheep in their second year
21. Town in Surrey, England
25. Appropriate to a time of year
29. Creative work
31. Recesses
32. Largely forested municipality in Germany
33. Rider of Rohan
35. Ancient symbol co-opted by Nazis
38. Pioneer
41. Scribe
43. Painted a bright color
44. Member of British nobility
45. “Pulp Fiction” actress Thurman
46. Helps people walk
47. Crest of a hill
49. People of southeastern Alaska
56. One’s own device
57. The Mount Rushmore State



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Pet of the week



WALL. E

Meet Wall.E, a 7 month old, big, sweet goofball who is all about self-improvement. Wall.E is smart, energetic, and eager to learn. He's still practicing his manners, and will do best with a family who have experience with large-breed dogs and are ready to commit to ongoing training and consistency. He has so much potential and would love to find someone who will embrace his enthusiasm, challenge his clever mind, and give him the enrichment he craves! If you're ready to help a clever young pup grow into an amazing companion, Wall.E is ready to get to work! You can meet Wall.E at our Stratford Centre or on our website at kwsphumane.ca/adopt/dogs



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

COMING EVENTS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

STRATFORD SCRABBLE CLUB

Anne Hathawy Residence 480 Downie St., Stratford

Meets every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. for 3 games. Check our website for further details stratfordscrabble.ca

STRATFORD ASTRONOMY GROUP MEETINGS

St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, 240 Oakdale Avenue, Stratford Rear parking lot off Matilda. Room #1104 - 1st Tuesday of each month from

September to June. 7-9 p.m.

We are night sky enthusiasts. Everyone is welcome to attend. See our website at <https://stratfordastronomy.com/> or call 519-275-4472 for more information

STEPS FOR SUPPORT

Every Tuesday morning and once a month on a Monday afternoon.

Hosted by Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth www.rotaryhospice.ca

Stratford Location

This walking group is an opportunity for people who are grieving to connect while walking alongside others who are bereaved. Contact Jaclyn at sw@rotaryhospice.ca to learn more and register. This is a free program.

PROBUS CLUB OF STRATFORD

Army Navy & Air Force Veterans Unit 261

151 Lorne Ave E, Stratford, ON N5A 2N9

Probus provides Fellowship, Friendship, and Fun for all men and women in their retirement and semi-retirement years.

We meet the 2nd Wednesday - September until June from 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m. Website <https://www.probusclubstratford.com/>

Email probusclubstratford@gmail.com

CAREGIVER CONNECTION

2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month at 1-2:30 p.m.

Arden Park Hotel

Caregiver Connection is a group for caregivers supporting someone with a life-limiting illness or decline due to aging. Learn about community resources, caregiver tools, and talk with others on a similar journey. All caregivers welcome whether you're a spouse, family member, friend, etc. supporting someone from near or far. Contact 226-921-7314 or referrals@rotaryhospice.ca to register. Free program.

Hosted by Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth - www.rotaryhospice.ca

YOUTH AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

Hosted by Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Mondays, 3:00-4:45 p.m., September 14/26-June 21/27

382 Britannia Street, Stratford

Free drop-in for students aged 11-18. Join us for snacks, board games, video games, and connection! Questions? www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

GRIEF SHARE

Stratford Christian Reformed Church, 190 Athone Crescent (parking on the upper level)

September 14 - December 14

Monday 1:00-2:30pm

When a loved one dies, it can feel like you're alone. Few people understand how painful & isolating your grief can be. At GriefShare, you'll find a safe, comforting place where you can talk with others about your grief. Contact: griefstratfordcergroup2627@gmail.com Register: griefshare.org/findagroup

YOUTH LUNCH PERIOD PROGRAM

Hosted by Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., September 30/26-June 16/27

382 Britannia Street, Stratford

Free drop-in for high school students. Join us for snacks, games, connection (and occasional pizza parties!).

Questions?

www.yfcstratford.com

info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

PURE HEART PROGRAM

Hosted by Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford

Wednesdays, 3:00-4:30 p.m., September 30/26-June 16/27

382 Britannia Street, Stratford

Free art program for students aged 11-18. Join us for discussions, guest artists, art instruction, and more! Questions? www.yfcstratford.com info@yfcstratford.com 519-272-1614

ANNUAL PUMPKINFEST

Morningside Adult Community,

10 Homestead Place, New Hamburg

Saturday, October 10; 9-12 p.m.

Free admission and hot cider. Live music, no crowds, pumpkins, bake table, fresh flower centerpieces, small & bulk root veg, apples, kale, squash.

STRATFORD LEGION 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Friday October 16; 6 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Fun Casino (Tombola) Night. Doors open at 6 pm, play starts at 7 pm. Admission is by donation. Lots of prizes to be won.

STRATFORD LEGION 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Saturday October 17; 9:30 a.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Dedication of a new bench at the cenotaph at 9:30 a.m. Legion Open House 11 a.m.. BBQ at 12 noon. Meat Draw at 3 p.m. Dance to Strings & Traps at 7 p.m. All events admission is by donation.

STRATFORD LEGION 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OPEN HOUSE

Sunday October 18; 11 a.m. - 2p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

LONDON ORCHID SOCIETY

Sunday, October 18; 2 to 4 pm

Richards Memorial Church, 360 Edgeworth Avenue, London

Meeting Topic: Deb Boersma from Windsor, An Orchid Expedition on the Rio Negro, Brazil. The London Orchid Society meets the third Sunday of each month. Join us October 18, 2026 at 2:00pm for Deb Boersma from Windsor, ON. Her presentation is An Orchid Expedition on the Rio Negro, Brazil deep into the Amazon Rainforest. Everyone is welcome to attend the meeting for more information at www.londonorchidsociety.com; contact Daryl at 519-666-2927.

CHANGE HER WORLD FALL BOOK SALE

Thursday Oct. 22 4-8:00

Friday, October 23 10:00 - 8:00

Saturday, October 24 9:00 - 2:00

Belgrave Community Centre

Accessible parking, food booth Friday & beverages Thursday & Saturday. Payment by donation

All proceeds raised support the library in Chilumba, Malawi, Africa COME STOCK -UP on winter reading.

OXFORD PHILATELIC SOCIETY CIRCUIT BOOK (STAMP) FAIR

Saturday, October 24, 2026

Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas Street, Woodstock

10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Free Admission & Parking

Stop in and buy some stamps and meet fellow stamp collectors.

About 8 participating stamp clubs. Contact: dheaton3e3@gmail.com

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

LEARN2SHINE PERFORMANCE CLUB [L2S]

Monthly on Sundays, 2-4 p.m.

First meeting Oct. 25 at Griffith Auditorium, Woodland Towers.

Suitable for everyone in the family aged 7 and up. A chance to sing, dance, say lines. Registration \$20+HST/hour, with 15% discount if registering 3 or more. www.mckinnamanagement.com/l2s

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRES

Friday, November 13; 6 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

November 13 – The next Stratford Legion Friday Night Euchre is Friday Nov. 13th. Sign up your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540, Dave at 519-703-6544 or Anne at 519-301-0914. Doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 6:30 p.m.

BURGER & FRY NIGHT

Thursday, November 19

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Doors open at 4 p.m. Take-out orders are from 5:00 – 5:30 p.m. and table service starts at 5:30 p.m. No ticket is necessary, simply show up and enjoy. Bring your friends and help support your local Legion.



STRATFORD COIN SHOW



SUNDAY OCTOBER 18TH, 2026 9:00AM TO 3PM.

Best Western Arden Park Hotel
522 Ontario St. Stratford
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STRATFORD TIMES

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.

Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com

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

**JAMES "JIM" UNIAC****April 27, 1959 – September 27, 2026**

It is with broken hearts that we announce the sudden passing of Jim Uniac on the morning of Sunday, September 27, 2026, at the age of 67 at Stratford General Hospital.

Jim was a kind soul with a big heart and an open door. He had a rare gift for making everyone around him feel welcome, whether they were lifelong friends or someone he had just met. People were drawn to his warmth, his easy laugh, and the genuine care he showed for others. Jim lived life to the fullest, and he always did it with others in mind.

Jim spent 40 years in the trucking industry, where he made lasting friendships. To everyone who worked alongside him and supported him over those years, thank you. You meant a great deal to him.

Jim loved all sports, from Sunday afternoons of NFL football to the excitement of college football Saturdays, but nothing matched his love for hockey and his beloved Boston Bruins. If you ever visited Jim's place, you saw the shrine: a treasured collection of Bruins memorabilia dating back to the glory days of Bobby Orr. One of his favourite stories came from a playoff run years ago, when Jim and his adopted brother Jeff Carr made the trip to Boston, parked in the city's infamous Combat Zone, and came back to find their car had been towed. It was all in pursuit of seeing their beloved Bruins, and they laughed about it for years. Jim never missed a trip to Boston, and he followed the team wherever they played, proudly reping the black and gold.

Music was the soundtrack of Jim's life. He loved live music wherever he found it, from big music festivals in Nashville and concerts to one-man shows in the most unexpected little places. If there was a stage and someone playing, Jim was happy to be there. If a band was playing, Jim would always find his way to the stage to sing "Mustang Sally." He would take the mic and give it everything he had, to the delight of everyone in the room. It became his song, and if you hear it. Please take a moment to remember Jim and maybe sing along the way he always did.

Jim had a true spirit of adventure. He travelled all over Canada and the United States, always looking for the next great experience. He escaped to the sunshine of the Caribbean, relaxed on the sandy beaches of Treasure Island, walked the grounds at the Masters in Augusta, and joined the famous crowds at the WM Phoenix Open. Wherever he went, he came home with stories to tell and new friends made along the way.

Above all, Jim's family was everything to him. Some of his fondest memories were made at the family cottages, birthdays, and holiday gatherings, where long days turned into even longer nights filled with laughter, competitive euchre games, and hilarious rounds of charades. Jim was always the one bringing the fun and getting everyone laughing. For Jim, time with family was the most important thing in the world, and those gatherings will never be quite the same without him.

Some of Jim's happiest days were spent at the Country Club with a wonderful group of friends who were always so good to him. Those days on the course and the laughter afterward meant the world to him, and his family is deeply grateful for the friendship and kindness they showed him.

Jim was predeceased by his loving parents, James Uniac and Shirley Uniac (née Gladding).

He will be deeply missed by his sister Gail Vivian (Dave), and his brothers Terry Uniac, Tim Uniac (Valerie), and John Uniac (Tina Baart). Jim will be fondly remembered by his nieces Katie Vivian (Joe Dale), Alex Uniac, and Ella Uniac; his nephews Tyler Vivian (Caro) and Greg Vivian (Ally); his great-niece Keira Vivian; and his great-nephews Nolan Vivian and Theo Vivian. He was a proud and loving uncle and great-uncle, and he leaves behind many friends who were like family to him.

Jim's sudden passing has left a hole in all of our hearts, but his kindness, his adventurous spirit, and his love of life will live on in everyone who knew him. So the next time you watch the Bruins take the ice, catch a band in some little bar, or find yourself somewhere new and exciting, raise a glass to Jim. He would want nothing more.

A private ceremony will be held with his family. The family will also host a Celebration of Life on Saturday November 7th from 5pm to 9pm at the Stratford Country Club, 53 Romeo St. North Stratford, Ontario. All who knew and loved Jim are welcome to gather, share stories, and remember him together.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, November 7, 2026 From 5:00 – 9:00 PM at the Stratford Golf and Country Club (53 Romeo St, North Stratford, ON).

In lieu of flowers and those wishing to make a donation in Jim's honour may do so to the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation or Stratford Summer Music Festival through the Stratford Arts Foundation. It is a fitting tribute to a man who loved live music with his whole heart. Funeral arrangements entrusted to the W. G. Young Funeral Home, 430 Huron St, Stratford, ON. www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com

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WANTING TO BUY – All collectibles including sports cards, beanie babies, Funko pops and stamps. Highest prices paid. Free appraisals. Are you downsizing or need an estate clean out? We can help. Call or text Stan anytime 519-868-3814.

I WILL PAY CASH FOR ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES – Coca Cola Pepsi any pop company, Brewery items Kuntz, Huether Labatts etc. Old radios and gramophones, Wristwatches and pocket watches, Old fruit jars Beaver Star Bee Hive etc. Any old oil cans and signs Red Indian Supertest etc. Any small furniture. If you are moving or cleaning out stuff please contact me - 519-570-6920.

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