

St. Marys Independent

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EASTER DONATION TO RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)
Scott, Jessica, Laura and Matthew Parkinson stand in front of Ronald McDonald House in London when they dropped off many Easter Baskets, supplies and cash donations.

10 Years of giving back to Ronald McDonald House

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Last week, Laura Parkinson turned 10. That means for 10 years in a row, the Parkinson family has been collecting Easter Baskets, supplies and cash to donate to the Ronald McDonald House of Southwestern Ontario. Thanks to the generosity of family and friends, this year, the Parkinsons were able to deliver 44 Easter baskets, \$1,000 in pantry and cleaning supplies and \$500 cash.

The South Perth Centennial Public School Grade 1/2 class also donated \$325 from their Easter Egg Hunt towards this year's fundraiser.

When Laura was born, she had to spend some time in London in the NICU. Mom and dad, Jessica and Scott Parkinson, stayed five nights at the Ronald McDonald House to be close to their cute little redhead and realized at the time what a wonderful place the house is for those families who need comfort during a rough time.

With Laura being born at Easter, the annual fundraiser was a great way to give back with some Easter love, starting a tradition that has carried on for a decade. Just knowing that there is a place like the Ronald McDonald House available is a great source of comfort.

Some other members of the Parkinson family recently had to spend some time at Ronald McDonald House, making this year's donation even more meaningful.

"What an amazing community we live in," Jessica Parkinson said. "Thank you to each and every person who has contributed over the years. We will never forget the comfort we felt when we stayed there."

For now, the family hopes to continue this tradition into the future.

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St. Marys Community Players promise fast-paced laughs with *Boeing Boeing*

The SMCP production hits the Town Hall Theatre stage from April 23 to May 9

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The St. Marys Community Players (SMCP) is preparing to deliver a high-energy comedy later this month as cast and crew bring the classic farce, *Boeing Boeing*, to the stage at the Town Hall Theatre.

Directed by theatre veteran Ralph Small,

the production blends rapid-fire dialogue, physical comedy and precisely timed performances to create what Small describes as a fast, funny and technically demanding theatrical experience.

"It's a particular kind of play – a farce – and I've loved watching this cast reveal their inner farceurs," said Small. "It takes a lot of

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

CB

Owen Lewis-Havard

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COMMUNITY

St. Marys Community Players promise fast-paced laughs with Boeing Boeing

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

technical work. There's slapstick, buffoonery, exaggerated situations and witty dialogue – it's funny as hell. I describe farce as a collision of human behaviour under extreme circumstances of their own making, with everyone just trying to stay above water. It's fast, it's funny, it's silly and very tongue-in-cheek, and we hope that translates to the audience."

A recent Stratford resident, Small brings extensive professional experience to the production as an actor, director, dramaturge, writer and instructor. He has directed numerous Canadian plays as former artistic director of the Blue-water Summer Playhouse in Kincardine and the Highlands Summer Festival in Haliburton, and has worked with theatre companies including Drayton Entertainment, Theatre Orangeville and Tarragon Theatre.

Small has also taught theatre at the University of Toronto Mississauga and Sheridan College for 25 years and served as an adjudicator for Theatre Ontario, leading workshops for schools and community theatre groups across the province.

Despite his professional background, Small said he has been impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm shown by the local cast as they take on the unique challenges of farce.

"There's no point in doing something unless you're doing it as well as you possibly could," Small said, noting the performers have embraced the timing and physical comedy required to make the production succeed.

Written by Marc Camoletti, *Boeing Boeing* centres on bachelor Bernard, who attempts to manage relationships with three airline hostesses, each unaware of the others, until unexpected schedule changes cause chaos when all three arrive at the same time. The play is known for its quick entrances and exits, exaggerated situations and witty dialogue.

The production marks Small's first time directing with SMCP, though he said he was eager to become involved after learning about the organization's reputation for producing high-quality community theatre.

"They take it very seriously, but they



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. MARYS COMMUNITY PLAYERS)

The cast of St. Marys Community Players' production of Boeing Boeing.

have some serious fun as well," he said.

Like many community theatre productions, *Boeing Boeing* has been a collaborative effort involving volunteers from across the region, with cast and crew travelling from communities including Stratford, Cambridge, London and Ingersoll to take part.

Despite several winter-weather cancellations that forced the company to re-schedule rehearsals, Small said the cast's dedication has kept the production on track heading into opening night.

"They're all doing it for the love of it," he said. "They've been extremely welcoming and willing to put in the work to make this as strong as possible."

The production features a mix of newcomers and familiar faces on the SMCP stage, each bringing their own energy and comedic timing to the fast-paced farce.

Rick Hastings takes on the role of Bernard, the charming bachelor attempting to keep his carefully scheduled romantic life from crashing down around him, while Alison Mullings plays Gretchen,

returning performers Alex Pedersen and Jessica O'Connor appear as Gloria and Gabriella, two of Bernard's fiancées whose unexpected overlap fuels the comedy. Ann Jackson rounds out the cast as Berthe, the observant maid who watches the chaos unfold with knowing wit.

Small said the cast has embraced both the technical demands and playful spirit of farce.

"This is a very committed group of performers who have really leaned into the rhythm and precision this kind of comedy requires," said Small. "Each actor brings a distinct personality to their role, and together they create the kind of chemistry that makes farce work – it's tightly timed, highly physical and full of energy. Watching them build that pace and confidence has been extremely rewarding."

While audiences can expect plenty of laughs, Small said the play also offers relatable themes and provides a chance for theatregoers to escape everyday stresses.

"We want people to walk out feeling lighter," he said. "We all need to escape once in a while and just enjoy the experience."

Boeing Boeing runs from April 23 to May 9 at the Town Hall Theatre in St. Marys as part of SMCP's 2026 season. Tickets are available online at stmaryscommunityplayers.ca and locally at Troyer's Spices in downtown St. Marys.



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EDITORIAL

Thinking about running for council? Here's a few things to keep in mind

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

In a few short weeks, candidates in cities and towns across the province will begin formally declaring their intent to run for a seat on their local council in the Oct. 26 municipal elections.

The nomination period officially opens on May 1, and prospective candidates will have until Aug. 21 to file their nomination papers with their municipal clerk's office. The process for filing nomination papers includes collecting endorsement signatures from residents in the municipality where you live and wish to serve on council, and the paying of a nomination fee – \$200 to run for mayor and \$100 to run for councillor.

However, the decision to run for a seat on council should be much more involved than finding people to endorse you and paying a small fee. Having covered municipal politics for the entirety of my career, including three municipal elections, I can tell you with certainty that serving on council goes well

beyond what the job may appear to be from the outside.

First, you need to be the kind of person who has a deep desire to serve their community. You must be committed to representing all your constituents, even if you don't always agree with everything they tell you. You must be willing to make decisions that impact neighbours, friends and local businesses, and have an interest in shaping the long-term direction of your municipality.

Some of your friends and neighbours may not appreciate the decisions you and your council colleagues make, and you need to be ready to accept criticism from anyone at any time and take accountability for those decisions.

The general public may only see their mayor and local councillors at public events like ribbon cuttings and community gatherings or read about the decisions they make in the local newspaper. The real work, however, includes hours of combing through reports and asking questions of staff to ensure you as a councillor understand what you're reading,

and often even more time discussing those reports with your fellow councillors and community members at council, committee and board meetings.

Having read many of those reports myself, I can tell you that part of the job can be boring and tedious, but each of the informed decisions that come from that work are crucial to shaping both the future and the day-to-day operations of your municipality.

In most municipalities, the pay councillors and mayors receive doesn't even come close to fair compensation for the work they put in every day, often on top of regular day jobs and responsibilities at home. So, if you're doing this for the money, you're doing it wrong.

The ability to communicate, both with the public and around the council table, is another important part of the job. Being able to express your thoughts and opinions and giving fair consideration to the thoughts and opinions of your colleagues and constituents is a huge part of the overall decision-making process. While speaking in public doesn't

come naturally to all of us – me included – it is a skill that can be learned and honed.

A knowledge of local issues is also a key piece for any member of a municipal council. If this is something you truly want to do, I would strongly encourage you to attend a council meeting and join an advisory committee to get a sense of the issues facing residents and how council and committees discuss and address those issues ahead of the election in October.

And look beyond your municipality, too. Give some thought to how new provincial and federal legislation is impacting your community, and how local politicians and staff are adapting to those changes.

If any of this concerns you, running for a seat on council may not be for you. If, however, you find yourself undaunted and ready to work collaboratively with council, municipal staff and the public towards the betterment of your community, you already have my vote.

Bravo

We have 2 Bravos this week.

1) Bravo to all of the downtown business who kept their sidewalks clear of snow this winter and who now have decorated festively for spring.

2) A well-deserved bravo to the St. Marys Lincolns for their relentless fight on the ice. Game after game, this team proves that no lead is safe and no moment is too late to push back. That kind of persistence, grit, and refusal to quit is exactly what makes hockey in this town so exciting to watch. Win or lose, the effort is undeniable – and it doesn't go unnoticed. Keep battling, Lincs.

Boo

We have 2 Boos this week.

1) Boo to the downtown businesses who have been closed for years. No maintenance, no upkeep, and an eyesore to our beautiful downtown. Shame on those landlords who are doing nothing with the vacant properties! They are benefiting from the amazing work our BIA does to make our town look good.

2) Boo to the individual bringing a noisemaker from home to a hockey game, causing confirmed permanent hearing damage. No family, fan or staff member deserves multiple sound blasts of 140+ decibels, especially kids. If the goal is to be heard, congratulations – mission accomplished. If the goal is to be a respectful and responsible adult, this misses the net entirely.

*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered. Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent.

Quote of the Week

"This is an opportunity for us to remember where we are, who we are, and that we are the same thing and that we've got to get through this together. Earth is an oasis amid a whole bunch of nothing, this thing we call the universe where humanity exists as one."

- Pilot Victor Glover of the Artemis II shared on the weekend on the crew's flight to the moon which includes Canadian Jeremy Hansen.

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA

Restoring small-town journalism, one community at a time!

St. Marys Independent

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Overheard

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I'm over the moon about having a Canadian on Artemis II.

I did not have Trump dropping the F bomb while praising Allah on Easter Sunday on my bingo card.


Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others? Either email them to us at info@stmarys-independent.com with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519.284.0041 or drop by the office to let us know!




Meeting the Easter Bunny in the rain



(NANCY BICKELL PHOTO)

A rainy day didn't dampen the spirits of the approximately 40 children that came out for the annual Easter Egg Hunt. This event took place at the Milt Dunnell on Saturday, April 4 from 9 - 11 a.m. They had fun meeting the Easter bunny, collecting Easter eggs and handing them in for a special treat. Pictured is Erin Parsons with her Son Blake and the Easter Bunny.



TROPICAL COSTA RICA

JANUARY 25 – FEBRUARY 2, 2027

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STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



SCRAP METAL AND E-WASTE COLLECTION



Items for collection to the curb by 7 AM on April 11

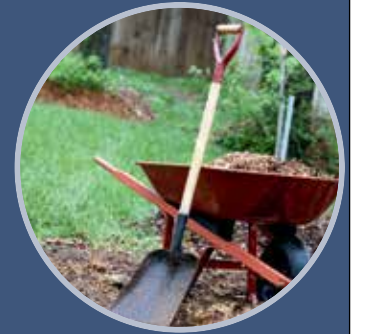
St. Marys Volunteer Firefighters and Kinsmen Club will be collecting scrap metal and e-waste curbside.

Proceeds support important causes:

- Scrap metal → Muscular Dystrophy Canada
- E-waste → Cystic Fibrosis

LEAF & YARD WASTE

Leaf & yard waste collection begins on Monday, April 20. Waste must be set at the curb by 7 AM on collection days. Only kraft-style brown paper leaf and yard waste bags or reusable containers (weighing less than 22 kg) will be accepted.



For a full list of acceptable and unacceptable materials and a detailed collection map, visit: townofstmarys.com/yardwaste

SPORTS WALL OF FAME NOMINATIONS



Do you know someone who has made a significant contribution to sports in our community? Nominations are now OPEN for the 2026 Sports Wall of Fame! The nomination period is open until April 30 for the following categories: Individuals, Teams and Builder.

Learn more: townofstmarys.com/sportswall

MUNICIPAL HAZARDOUS AND SPECIAL PRODUCT DISPOSAL DAY

April 11 | 8 AM - 12 PM | Municipal Operations Centre

Residents can safely dispose of items such as:

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Senior of the Week



Our senior of the week is Clair Brandt who celebrates his 80th birthday on April 11, 2026. Clair and his wife Mary live in Kirkton. Clair's hobbies include snowmobiling and golfing. He enjoys tinkering on his antique truck and his collection of antique snowmobiles and motorcycles. Clair is proud of his three children and his seven grandchildren whom he enjoys spending time with. Happy Birthday Clair!

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, contact us at 519.284.0041 or info@stmarys-independent.com.

WEEKEND QUIZ

By Jake Grant

1. What is the only country that begins with "q"?
2. What American restaurant chain is the biggest purchaser of lemons worldwide?
3. A cutlass, gladius and katana are all types of what?
4. In Greek mythology, who are Artemis' parents?
5. Which U.S president was a peanut farmer before entering politics?
6. Finish the saying, "April showers bring _____"
7. Mount Everest is part of which mountain range?
8. In scrabble, each player starts with how many letters?
9. What acid gives sourdough its tangy flavor?
10. What is the strongest currency in the world?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

Perth County council directs changes to proposed forestry bylaw update

Perth County
ONTARIO • CANADA

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Perth County council has directed staff to revise several key components of a proposed update to its forest conservation bylaw following months of public consultation and ongoing feedback from the agricultural community and other stakeholders.

At its April 2 meeting, council received a draft of the updated bylaw – now titled a bylaw to regulate the destruction or injuring of trees in woodlands and woodlots in the County of Perth – presented by county executive director of legal and corporate services Stefan Zhelev and CAO Lori Wolfe.

The draft reflects feedback gathered through the consultation process, which has highlighted the challenge of balancing environmental protection with the practical needs of farmers and rural landowners.

Among the most notable proposed changes was the inclusion of a permitting process intended to address the small number of situations in which a notice of intent (NOI) to destroy or injure trees would not meet the criteria outlined in the bylaw but may still warrant consideration.

According to Zhelev, approximately 100 notices of intent are submitted annually, with roughly 95 per cent resolved through the existing process. The proposed permit option was intended to address the remaining small percentage of more complex cases.

Under the proposal, landowners whose NOI applications were denied could apply for a permit allowing tree removal or injury under specific conditions, with the potential for an appeal process should the permit also be denied.

"What happens currently, at the point where the bylaw official is contacted and they make a determination on whether or not the proposed activity falls inside or outside of the bylaw, effectively no decision is made," Zhelev said, explaining why there is no appeal process currently included as part of the NOI process. "In theory, there is nothing in writing from the municipality and it makes it difficult to appeal. What are we appealing if there is no decision?"

"... In theory, (an appeal) could happen at the divisional court level, but to my understanding, it has never been done."

Council, however, expressed concern the additional process could be unnecessarily complicated for landowners and difficult to administer. Instead, councillors suggested incorporating a peer-review process involving another registered professional forester when an NOI application is denied, allowing for a second expert opinion without adding another layer of bureaucracy.

"This is less than five per cent; we're spending a humungous amount of time on something that is very, very small," Coun. Rhonda Ehgoetz said. "If they don't like the process, go to court. I'm sorry. That's how you do it. ... We're supposed to be simplifying the process and adding this permit, to me, doesn't simplify it."

"I think the suggestion of just having a peer review if the notice of intent is turned down is the solution to this," added Coun. Matt Duncan. "It does give an individual that feels he needs another avenue; it gives them an avenue. If at that point, the peer reviewer decides yes,

the notice-of-intent refusal was correct, then they have the position to go to court then. But at least it gives them the chance to be heard – a sober second thought."

The draft bylaw also includes proposed changes intended to clarify how agricultural practices intersect with forest-conservation rules, particularly along the edges of cultivated fields.

Among those changes are provisions allowing farmers to selectively trim tree branches along field edges to allow farm equipment to pass safely, as well as permitting the repositioning of dead trees that have encroached on cultivated land or access routes adjacent to woodlands or woodlots.

Council also directed staff to refine definitions within the bylaw, including removing the standalone definition of woodlot and incorporating the definition of windbreak within the woodland definition to better distinguish between the two.

The distinction between windbreaks and woodlots has been a focal point throughout the consultation process, with some farmers expressing concern certain windbreaks could inadvertently be classified as protected woodlots depending on their size or density.

Windbreaks, generally defined as linear treed areas consisting of one to three rows of planted trees, play an important role in reducing soil erosion, protecting crops and livestock, and improving overall farm productivity.

By removing the woodlot definition and clarifying how windbreaks are treated within the bylaw, council signalled its intent to allow farmers greater flexibility to manage windbreaks and living snow fences without concern those features could trigger additional regulatory requirements.

"Given the relatively small impact against the total tree canopy of Perth County, I'm starting to lean towards saying let's just take that woodlot definition out," Coun. Todd Kasenberg said. "It's woodlands that we're concerned about. We'll protect those with vigour and if we take out the woodlots, we still probably need the provision for windbreaks against woodlands because there could be an override."

"Generally, we're not going to lose it all. ... I don't think people will go crazy and take (all the woodlots) down."

According to Zhelev, woodlots make up just 813 acres of the 50,661 acres of total tree canopy in Perth County – roughly 1.6 per cent. Woodlands, meanwhile, account for 49,849 acres of the total tree cover in the county.

The bylaw review process began in 2024 following direction from council to examine how Perth County's existing regulations compare with those in neighbouring municipalities and to ensure the bylaw reflects current forestry practices and legislative requirements.

Throughout the consultation process, staff have received significant feedback from conservation authorities, agricultural organizations, municipal councils and members of the public, reflecting a wide range of perspectives on how best to balance environmental stewardship with agricultural productivity.

County staff will now incorporate council's direction into a revised draft of the bylaw, which is expected to return for further consideration at the May 21 council meeting.

We Lend a Hand is coming to St. Marys on May 21

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The St. Marys Museum and the Friends of the St. Marys Museum are excited to announce the screening of *We Lend a Hand: The Forgotten Story of the Ontario Farmerettes*.

The event will take place on Thursday, May 21 at 7 p.m. at the Pyramid Recreation Centre. This documentary reveals the forgotten story of the Ontario Farm Service Force, which put 40,000 volunteer teenage girls to work between the years of 1941 and 1952. Known as The Farmerettes, their job was to ensure critical food production continued during a period of great uncertainty.

Through reenactments and unique archival images, *We Lend a Hand* recounts the story of these remarkable young women, who are now in their late 90s. More details about the film are available

at welendahand.ca.

"This documentary shows how women and girls contributed to the war effort on the Home Front," said museum curator and archivist Emily Taylor in a press release. "They persevered through immense hardships, yet their stories aren't widely shared. *We Lend a Hand* helps put them in the spotlight."

After the screening, there will be a Q&A with the filmmakers, generously sponsored by Hyggeligt Fabrics. There will also be a chance to acquire autographed copies of *Onion Skins and Peach Fuzz: Memories of Ontario Farmerettes*, Shirleyan English and Bonnie Sitter's book that inspired the documentary.

Tickets are \$20 and are available for purchase in-person at the St. Marys Museum, Friendship Centre and The Hitching Post. For more information, call 519-284-3556 or email museum@town.stmarys.on.ca.

TRPC's annual Wildwood Dragon Boat Challenge supports Andrew's Legacy



ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Thames River Paddling Club (TRPC) and Andrew's Legacy are hosting the ninth annual Wildwood Dragon Boat Challenge May 23.

Join the TRPC at the Wildwood Conservation Area for a day full of paddling, games, CPR and automated external defibrillator (AED) demonstrations, a 50/50 draw, food, music, and some friendly community competition.

The TRPC and Andrew's Legacy have teamed up to provide a great team-building activity and challenge for all, from novice to competitive. Great for businesses, schools and other groups of peo-

ple aged eight to 24 to try something new.

Everything needed to participate is available at www.thamesriverpaddling-club.com/wdbc.

Teams will compete in a variety of races and points will decide overall champions.

Bring out the whole family to cheer on a favourite team. Enjoy the park, barbecue lunch, yard games, a silent auction and learn how to save a life.

To donate a silent auction item, email andrewslegacy11@gmail.com or visit www.andrewslegacyforever.ca. Via the website, locals can also pledge to support a participant or team, and all pledge proceeds will go towards placing AEDs in public spaces.

St. Marys Independent

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Max Smith to start summer festival circuit with performance at Ilderton 150

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Max Smith of St. Marys will be part of the lineup for Ilderton's 150th anniversary celebration.

Smith will perform on July 10 at Ilderton 150 at the Ilderton Arena as part of the all-ages country night. Genevive Fisher and Jade Eagleson will also perform.

"It's a great lineup and I'm just glad to be a part of another small town's celebration. It's going to be good. I'm excited," said Smith.

Smith also opened for Eagleson at the Tailgate Music Festival in Mitchell last September.

"What a phenomenal show he gets to put on. I'm very excited to be able to share with him again," he said. "I already know it's going to be a great night. I can't wait."

Smith has visited Ilderton before. As a minor-hockey player, he would visit the arena and play against the Ilderton team. The musician enjoys playing for the crowds found at small-town music festi-

vals.

"There's a different vibe to playing a small-town show. I think people maybe – I'm not saying they appreciate music more – but I feel like they know how to celebrate it more. One of my favourite things is to go play a live show in a small town because I know it's going to be great energy and a great vibe," he said.

"I'm pretty lucky that I have a very wide range of support and any small town around here seems to make for a great show."

After Smith kicks off his summer festival circuit with his performance at Ilderton 150, he will play some private events, St. Marys Summerfest on July 25 and the Hayloft Music Festival in Listowel on Aug. 1. For more information about Smith, his music and upcoming shows, visit maxsmithofficial.com.

Gates for the Ilderton 150 country night open at 5 p.m. with the show starting at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$65 each and can be purchased online by visiting <https://events.frontdoor.plus/event/1899>.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF MAX SMITH)

Max Smith, a country music artist from St. Marys, is looking forward to performing at Ilderton 150 on July 10 at the Ilderton Fairgrounds. Smith will be opening for Jade Eagleson, who he also performed with at the 2025 Tailgate Music Festival.

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Innovation and youth focus highlight Canadian Dairy XPO



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

The sales crew and staff join Daryl and Sarah Markus and family during Wednesday's CDX Sale for a Cause, which raised \$326,000 through the sale of 47 calves, with proceeds supporting the Children's Health Foundation.

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

The Canadian Dairy XPO was held in Stratford from April 1-3, drawing a record 18,000 attendees.

The show, considered Canada's largest dairy showcase, featured more than 350 exhibiting companies from around the world, bringing innovation, education, genetics and hospitality to Canadian dairy producers.

Opening ceremonies included several Canadian dignitaries, among them Heath MacDonald, Rob Black and Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma.

"It's really great to see these people show up and stick their neck out," said Jordan Underhill, CDX director. "Getting in front of and speaking to the people who produce their food means a lot to the farmers and everyone they talk to."

Underhill said the record attendance is notable at a time



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

CDX founder and general manager Jordan Underhill says the excitement surrounding the two-day Stratford event continues to grow each year within the dairy industry.

when the dairy sector is consolidating across Canada, with farms growing larger.

"We don't have fewer cows or less milk being produced; we just see small farms getting bigger and medium farms getting even bigger," he said.

"We're seeing consolidation in the dairy and agricultural sector by up to five per cent a year, so the fact that we're holding attendance and even slightly growing each

CONTINUED TO PAGE 11

April sales event

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Innovation and youth focus highlight Canadian Dairy XPO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

year is pretty incredible. It really comes down to the quality of the audience, which obviously we have with dairy farmers, but we're still seeing more people attending each year."

Event features included the Canadian Dairy Business Summit, held March 31. The one-day educational program focused on discussions about the future of Canadian dairy, including market outlooks, trade pressures, artificial intelligence, profitability and farm succession.

DairyFEST also hosted its annual Irish-themed opening night, presented by Enterprise Ireland, featuring food, networking and entertainment.

Youth Day was held April 2, offering students a career-focused program connecting them with dairy employers for résumé reviews and networking.

"It's a chance for youth to drop off résumés at the companies that are hiring," said Underhill. "Over half of the 150 companies that participate in CDX are actively hiring. There are a lot of great job opportunities not only in agriculture but also in agri-food."

Featured events also included the Youth Dairy Showing Clinic, Calves for a Cause sale, producer pancake breakfast, Hoof Trimming Corral show presented by Diamond Hoof Care, Blondin Sires Youth Clipping Clinic, John Deere Kids Zone, Genetics in Motion showcase and international pavilions from Germany and the Netherlands.

"The Canadian Dairy Expo is for Canadian dairy producers, but the idea is that we give them access to international innovations," said Underhill. "We've had the German pavilion for years, and this year we added a Netherlands pavilion showcasing companies interested in doing business in Canada and North America."

Underhill emphasized the importance of encouraging youth to consider careers in dairy farming, noting innovation is helping improve work-life balance on farms.

"You hear people say this is an industry show, and it's



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

CDX and ADX leadership attending this year's show included, from left, Jens Kremer of Frankfurt, Germany; Ulrike Schmidt-Machinek of Elora; Kuno Jacobs of the Netherlands; and Freya von Czettritz of Frankfurt, Germany.

become the place to be seen, whether you're an agribusiness or a producer," he said. "You see families walking around with their sons and daughters, and it becomes more than just a trade show. There's a cultural component – a real need for it."

"With farms getting bigger and dairy farmers having less time off, this is a chance to get away, network and share ideas. That camaraderie has become really important."

"The magical thing about the dairy industry in Canada is that it's attracting young people. Whether it's robotics or the ability to have some work-life balance – which is important to younger people now – those opportunities weren't really part of agriculture in the past, but with robotics, they are."



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Perth South Mayor and Perth County deputy warden Sue Orr, left, joins Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma at this year's Canadian Dairy Expo in Stratford.

Underhill said innovation plays a key role in attracting and retaining the next generation of dairy farmers.

"It's attracting and keeping intelligent young people on dairy operations. Youth and innovation go hand in hand. I don't think we'd have the youth without the innovation, but we do."

"The show's concept is giving Canadian dairy producers access to international innovation to make them more efficient and help them produce a safer product for consumers. In turn, that's keeping young people on these dairy operations."

"I think the Dairy Expo does a good job of capturing and showcasing the Canadian dairy industry to the rest of the world. We have so much to be proud of living here in Canada and being dairy farmers in Canada. It's a great snapshot of what the industry has to offer."



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Calves for a Cause grosses over \$484,000 for Children's Health Foundation – London

AMANDA NELSON

Independent Reporter

The Canadian Dairy XPO's annual Calves for a Cause auction raised more than \$484,000 during this year's live sale April 1 in the Cow Coliseum at the Stratford Agriplex. Thousands attended to show their support and submit bids on this year's lineup.

Calves for a Cause is a live auction featuring elite dairy calves, embryos and genetics from breeders across Canada. Proceeds from the sale support programs and care for children at London Children's Hospital.

The initiative was started by dairy producers Darryl and Sarah Markus to give back after their son, Brooks Markus, received care at the hospital.

The average sale price was \$6,942 across 47 live lots, with a total gross of

\$484,248, including frozen genetics. Jordan Underhill, CDX director, said more than \$72,000 will be directly sent to Children's Health Foundation.

"The cool part about it is that this donation helps people outside of the agricultural industry," said Underhill. "It's a bigger picture. Everybody knows somebody who's had a child who's been in a children's hospital, and it's such an important cause. I like the fact that the cause is helping all children, even those outside of the ag industry."

Top sellers at this year's auction included Lot 20, Hilrose-I Altitude Red Annalee, which sold for \$19,000 to Alphonie Stoltzfus of Pennsylvania. Coming in second was Lot 21, Budjon-Vail Ec Citron, purchased for \$17,000 by Mark-A-Valley Holsteins in Arthur. Third was Lot 44, Echo Glen Major Irene, which sold for \$13,500 to Martin-View – David

Martin, also of Arthur.

"The calves are selected for a combination of conformation, but also genomics," said Underhill. "So, some of it is about physical appearance, and some of it is genomics. The top-selling calf happened to have both, and when you get that combination, then you hit those kinds of sale numbers."

The sale attracted buyers from across Canada and the United States, something Underhill said is encouraging.

"The show definitely started off in the first couple of years mostly with southwestern Ontario farmers, and obviously, there's a high concentration of dairy farms in this region," said Underhill. "But over time, it's definitely pulling from the East Coast to the West Coast of Canada, and other parts of the world as well. It's pretty cool to see that it's become the industry show."

Those in attendance who purchased calves included dairy farmers from Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Pennsylvania and California.

"We want to say a huge thank you to everyone who attended our sale last night," the Markus family wrote in a follow-up post on Facebook on April 2. "Thank you to all the consignors and the buyers who invested in these great heifers. As a family, we are also so grateful for everyone who has played any part in this sale. Your dedication to our sale does not go unnoticed."

The Markus family also thanked the Canadian Dairy XPO for its support and for providing a platform to run the Calves for a Cause auction.

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St. Marys Independent **SPORTS**

Kiara McGregor wins ACHA D-1 hockey championship

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

St. Marys native Kiara McGregor helped Midland University in Fremont, Neb., capture their first-ever women's hockey title at the American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA) Division-One National Championship held March 16-22 in St. Louis, Miss.

McGregor, part of Midland's strong, first-year contingent, told the Independent the team grew steadily as the season progressed.

"Basically, at the start of the year, we had lots of games where we were trying to build as a team," said McGregor. "There were lots of freshmen coming in, and we started to build and started to get better and better. Then we started getting into more competitive games and that's when we started to dial in and make sure that we were focused and making sure that practices and everything were good."

McGregor added she has also developed individually over the course of her first season of university hockey.

"I can see myself getting better through adapting and learning how to play up to the pace. Going from minor hockey to college hockey, it's a bit different. I definitely grew as a player both physically and mentally. The coaches definitely pushed me to my limits in making sure that I could succeed in every way possible, making sure that I had the best chances and best opportunities to showcase my skills, and giving me the chance that not many freshmen get in their first year."

McGregor's team also featured Victoria Campbell and Jaden Greenlee, who McGregor grew up playing minor hockey with as part of the Stratford Aces program.

"To me, it was a really cool experience," McGregor said of playing with her lifelong friends and teammates. "They're two of my best friends, and being able to be with them and play with them and win the national championship with them was pretty cool, especially since we played all through minor hockey together. Going out to school together and continuing to play together was just such a cool experience."

McGregor described the experience of competing at the national championship.

"When we went to the national tournament, we just knew we had to have fun and see what we could do, and we ended up winning," said McGregor. "The atmosphere is what stands out most to me. Some of our men's team came down to support us, and all the parents who were there and fans everywhere and interviews going on, in addition to such good hockey, it just made it an even better experience."

As much as McGregor was excited just to be at the national championship, there was also a great deal of pressure and intensity to perform as the second-ranked team in the nation.

"I knew that we had to win every game," McGregor said. "We couldn't lose. We couldn't take our foot off the pedal and just had to keep our heads focused. Being a freshman, I wanted to take in the experience as well, and our team made that happen for us. Just being able to have fun, and we made sure that we just focused on the games, but then also got to enjoy it after, which



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

St. Marys native Kiara McGregor celebrates after helping Midland University of Fremont, Neb. win their first-ever women's hockey title at the ACHA Division-One National Championship.

made it a less stressful experience."

Midland met the first-place team in the country, Liberty University, in the championship final, which end-

ed up going into triple overtime before Midland fired home the game-winning tally to claim their first-ever women's hockey title. McGregor said the lengthy final battle was an exhausting yet thrilling experience.

"It was definitely a mental battle making sure that we were able to get pucks deep, and Liberty (University) being very experienced and winning. We knew that we had to take the chances where we got them and not waste too much of our energy, especially in the first and second overtime. We were trying to cycle pucks and use each other and pass as much as we could, so we weren't wasting as much energy as needed.

"There were a lot of nerves," McGregor continued. "Everyone was just trying to support each other and have each other's backs. We definitely tried to ease the nerves as much as possible, but obviously, in those situations, you can't really, so you've just got to try to play through it."

McGregor described a surreal feeling when the overtime winning goal was scored.

"In the moment, it was crazy since it was our captain. It was our senior teammate who led us through the whole year and scored our goal. No one could really believe it. I don't even think it's hit me now, but just being able to win and do it with such an amazing team was great. No one could believe that it actually happened."

McGregor credited her older teammates with instilling key mental pillars for the younger players to carry with them in the years to come.

"I feel like we had such a great senior corps where they had worked so hard for four years, and they'd put in everything they could, that we just wanted to really do it for them as well and make sure that they could experience it just as much as we could. They've helped us freshmen to never give up and make sure that we're always supporting each other and having each other's back, as no one should ever stand alone."

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U14 A Boys take gold at Ajax-Pickering tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Frayne's Custom Cabinets U14 A Boys St. Marys Rock won the gold medal at the March 26-29 Spring Thaw tournament in Ajax-Pickering.

Head coach Josh Becker was thrilled with his team's performance, which he called "amazing" once they shook off some rust from the end of their season.

"We started slow, but I think that was because of the two-week layoff from playoffs being done and just not having that routine," Becker said. "As soon as the second day hit, we started quick and things were going our way. It was all-around scoring again; that was the nice thing. It wasn't just a couple of guys or one line rolling. We had multiple lines going, so that really helped us."

According to Becker, the Rock began rounding into top form in their final round-robin game against the Belleville Junior Bulls, a 4-1 win for St. Marys.

"It's just like any other game. If you win the small battles, the big things come," Becker told the Independent. "Be the first on the puck every time. It doesn't matter what end of the ice it was in. We took control of the game, and we just kept battling all game and getting to the net."

In the team's semi-final against the Brampton 45's, they came away with a 4-1 win. Becker said the team's ceaseless net-front presence led them to defeating Brampton.

"We put pressure on their goalie," said Becker. "We were just relentless going to the net. We had two short-handed goals and we used our speed. We boxed them out really well. Our goaltending was unbelievable, as it has been all year. He made the saves when he had to, and our guys just wanted it more."

Logan Broughton opened the scoring midway through the first period with his second goal of the tournament. Becker credited Broughton for delivering some of his best hockey of the season.

"Logan (Broughton) battled every shift. He battled up and down the ice all weekend long, took hits, made plays and was rewarded with his two goals and his two assists. At one point, he came to the bench, I looked at him, and it reminded me of Paul Kariya and getting knocked out by Scott Stevens. He had the blood on his bubble from a bloody nose, and I said, 'Are you alright?' He goes, 'I'm great, just give me a towel, I've got to go again.' He had no fear of going back on the ice. He just couldn't wait to get back out for his next shift."

Lukas Francis extended the Rock's lead to two goals later in the first, but Brampton cut the lead back to one 17 seconds later.

Greyson Gillespie added a pair of goals for St. Marys,



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Frayne's Custom Cabinets U14 A Boys St. Marys Rock captured gold at the Spring Thaw tournament in Ajax-Pickering March 26-29. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Jake Ackert and Oliver Strickler. In the second row, from left, are assistant coach Jayden Rooney, Greyson Gillespie, Simon Bailey, Jackson Schoonerwoerd, Grayson Gorley, Cam Hughes, Ben Becker and Logan Broughton. In the third row, from left, are Elliott Wilhelm, assistant coach Ryan Francis, head coach Josh Becker, Beckham Skillings, Mason Soumalias, Rylan Dobinson, Lukas Francis, Liam Barker, trainer Brian Barker and assistant coach Joe Wilhelm.

scoring once in the second and third to give the Rock their 4-1 advantage.

The Rock met the North Durham Warriors in the gold-medal game, and after falling behind 3-1 with 10 minutes left in the third period, the Rock mounted an outstanding comeback to tie the game at three apiece and force overtime.

Francis scored the first goal of the game before scoring again to cut the 3-1 lead back to one, followed by Rylan Dobinson scoring the game-tying goal as part of the Rock's third-period comeback.

In the extra frame, the team's leading scorer, Francis, finished off a strong play with Gillespie to pot the game-winner and give the Rock the 4-3 win and the gold medals.

"We started the game off with another shorthanded goal, and had two power-play goals," Becker said. "Our special teams in that game were working well, just doing their jobs, getting into position and moving pucks around. And then, on the overtime winner, we went down the ice, got a shot from Lukas (Francis), the goalie kicked out a big rebound and Greyson (Gillespie) came in over the blueline, put it back on net and Lukas was there to jam in the rebound."

Becker called the reaction to the overtime winner being scored indescribable.

"It was amazing. There are no words for it. When we went down 3-1, we called a timeout and regrouped with

the boys and got them settled in, and I just told them to go to work. That's what they did, and they just wanted it that much more. I think they got that feeling at our Aurora tournament earlier this year, and they wanted it again.

"It was a solid team effort," Becker continued. "They all wanted it. They dug in and they came together as a group. Nobody was down or hanging their heads. They were all boosting each other up. Once they got that goal to make it 3-2, there was no letting up. They just were relentless on the puck."

In the eyes of the bench boss, the tournament win encapsulated the squad's year-long progression, both in terms of their abilities and their bond as a team.

"It's humbling," said Becker. "It's a great character builder for the boys, and it shows where we were from the start of the season to the end of the season. We finished with two gold medals, a silver and a semi-final loss early on in the season. When they want to play together as a group, they're unstoppable."

"The growth of the kids and the camaraderie of the group are the biggest differences from the start of the year to now. We had nine new members of this team, so just the friendships that were built is the biggest thing. They get along so well, and that's what I really love about this group. They're just a bunch of young men who wanted to play so hard for each other."

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Lincs take 3-0 series lead; Elmira claws back to 3-2

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

Three near-perfect performances put the St. Marys Lincolns ahead three games to none on the Elmira Sugar Kings, seemingly with all the momentum in their favour.

Then, Elmira won two straight games.

All of a sudden, the series fit for the final, fully living up to the hype, is into the deep waters, with Game 6 taking place after the Independent's April 7 press time.

The Lincolns withstood a better effort from the Sugar Kings in Game 3 April 2, putting on a defensive masterclass in a goaltender's duel that ultimately ended with Blake Elzinga deflecting a Ryan Hodkinson shot for the overtime winner to clinch a 1-0 victory.

Colby Booth-Housego made 39 saves in a stellar shutout bid.

Head coach Jeff Bradley called his team's Game 3 showing excellent.

"I thought it was a great game," said Bradley. "We played a team that was incredibly desperate, and we didn't give them much. The penalty kill was great. Defensively, we were outstanding. We didn't panic. When you don't stop, which we didn't, good things are going to happen."

"I think it's just about understanding that Elmira is a really good team and they're going to be pushing at times, and we just have to make sure we handle it the right way, and I thought we did."

The Lincolns entered Game 3 riding the momentum of a 4-1 victory in Game 2 March 31. The Lincolns jumped out to a 2-0 lead with goals by Hodkinson and Chase MacQueen-Spence. Earlier that



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

Colby Booth-Housego dives back to make an unbelievable stick save during Game 2 between the St. Marys Lincolns and Elmira Sugar Kings, which the Lincolns won 4-1.

day, Hodkinson was named the winner of the Western Conference MVP and Best Defensive Forward awards, while MacQueen-Spence won the Most Gentlemanly Player honours.

"I'm very happy for them," Bradley told the Independent. "Just incredibly happy for both Ryan (Hodkinson) and Chase (MacQueen-Spence). They are both very deserving. We know how important they are, and it's really nice to see them get that recognition. I don't think they care too much; they have other goals in mind, but it's nice to see them get league-wide recognition like they deserve."

Hodkinson himself was humble in discussing his awards, but admitted it was special to be a St. Marys-born player winning such high honours with his hometown team.

"All the credit to my teammates and

coaches for putting all their trust in me," said Hodkinson. "They make it easy for me, but we're more focused on the team accolades. I was that kid growing up watching for many, many years, and it's pretty special, obviously, being one of the local guys and showing (younger kids growing up watching now) that really anything's possible if you keep going after what you want and what your goals are."

In the second, Jakob Drobny and Jacob Montesi scored their first career Greater Ontario Hockey League (GOHL) playoff goals, with Montesi's coming in the 63rd playoff game of his GOHL tenure, which the bench boss said was a bright spot for the entire team.

"Jacob (Montesi) has got a big piece of this team and this run," said Bradley. "What he does doesn't normally get reg-

istered on the scoresheet, so to have his name get on there in a big game like that and get a goal, I'm hoping it's something everyone can always look back and enjoy thinking about that moment."

Booth-Housego stopped 32 of 33 Elmira shots.

Sugar Kings surge back to avoid elimination

With their season on the line in Game 4 on April 4, the Sugar Kings put forward their best game to that point in the series, scoring just 17 seconds into the game and overcoming a second-period comeback by St. Marys en route to a 4-3 win in overtime.

Brett Warrilow scored the opening goal of the game as well as the game-winner for Elmira.

Assistant coach Michael Siddall said the Lincolns didn't quite click when it came to some of the finer details of Game 4.

"I think we had a little bit of a lapse in trying to close the series out," Siddall said. "The fourth win is always the hardest one to get. You're playing against a really good team, and they have desperation on their side, so we've got to match that desperation, and everything's got to click in the right order for us to do well. Everything just wasn't lining up for us, so we'll keep trying to find that right combination."

After Callum McAuley tied the game at one apiece early in the second, the Sugar Kings scored two straight to go up 3-1. However, the Lincolns stormed back before the end of the middle period, with goals by Owen Kalp and Lincoln Moore tying the game.

With their goals, McAuley snapped a

CONTINUED TO PAGE 17

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Lincs take 3-0 series lead; Elmira claws back to 3-2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

seven-game goalless slump, and Moore ended a five-game point drought.

“Having those two guys on the score-sheet is definitely beneficial for the team, but it’s also beneficial for them,” said Siddall. “Those are two big horses that we need to be firing all cylinders. Although they weren’t scoring for a while, they were playing really well. Lincoln (Moore) is fully engaged right now, and his forecheck is crucial for his game and our game as a whole. And the same with Callum (McAuley). He manages the game in a lot of different areas. He plays good defensively. He’s got speed in the neutral zone. And he can obviously finish in the offensive zone.”

Just 24 hours later, the Lincolns had a repeat performance, coming back from being down 3-1 in the second before falling in overtime, as the Sugar Kings forced a Game 6 with a 6-5 win back in Elmira on April 5.

The Lincolns delivered a much stronger performance on the road despite the loss, thoroughly outplaying the Sugar Kings for most of the game, but going unrewarded when they fell behind by a score of 3-1 in the second.

Moore cut the lead to a goal, before two straight goals by Owen Voortman put St. Marys up 4-3, completing their second straight two-goal comeback, which Siddall said reflects the team’s mental fortitude.

“When you go down a couple of goals, and you fight back, you’ve got to give the guys credit that they didn’t quit, and they battled back,” said Siddall. “That’s one thing we’ve always done. We’ve got that determination and willingness to compete for a full 60 minutes and give our-



(TURNER ROTH PHOTO)

Chase MacQueen-Spence buries the eventual game-winning goal during the St. Marys Lincolns’ 4-1 win in Game 2 March 31 against the Elmira Sugar Kings.

selves a chance to win later in the game.

“There’s not a lot of times you’re going to go through a full playoff series and start up a goal or up two goals or up three goals every single game. So, being able to have the composure and the responsibility and the leadership and all those good attributes to come back and give yourself an opportunity to win, those are some really good traits to have because winning teams have those traits.”

However, the Lincolns’ lead only lasted 17 seconds when Warrilow tied the game at four apiece. In the third, another shot from the boards by Hodgkinson, who scored back in the first frame, was tipped by Elzinga to put the Lincolns back up by a goal. The goal gave Elzinga points in eight straight games, with the head coach crediting the native of Walkerton for elevating his game even more this post-season.

“It’s his time to do it,” Bradley said.

“That’s something we’ve discussed since Blake (Elzinga) was a first-year player here. It takes you a couple of years to gain your footing and become a contributing member to this team and on a consistent basis. We saw really good steps in that direction last year, and this year, he’s taken it to another level.”

Hodgkinson and Elzinga, responsible for two of the Lincolns’ goals, delivered one of their strongest performances of an already excellent playoff run by the pair. Siddall described their incredible effectiveness at both ends of the ice.

“Their body positioning and how they feel pressure in the offensive zone and down in those corners is really elite. I feel like they’re learning how to play that junior game and understand different angles and different pressure situations and feeling guys on their hips and being able to roll off the defenders and find their soft ice. They know when to

slow the play down and when to speed up, and when to cross over, and when not to cross over.

“As much as they know what to do in the offensive zone, in the defensive zone, they know what’s going on just as much,” Siddall continued. “They read off each other, and they can get out of the defensive zone against any top line, put themselves down in the offensive zone and create those opportunities.”

However, with two-and-a-half minutes left, a point shot by Nolan Battler deflected off some traffic in front to find its way by Booth-Housego, sending the game in overtime.

In the extra frame, a shot from the blue-line by Alex Simioni hit off the end wall and bounced back out to Brendan Gerber, who fired home the game-winner.

Despite the losses, Siddall said the team is confident they are doing what they need to do to have success, just like they did in the first three games of the series.

“We’ve just got to keep at it and keep pushing forward, and we think we’re going to break through at some point,” Siddall said. “Liam (Reid) is playing really well, and we’ve got to get more traffic in front. We’re dominating their defence down below the goal line, so that’s something we’re going to continue to try to expose.”

“We’re not changing much. We’re not changing any high-level systems. We’re picking apart the defensive zone, and hopefully the guys understand that sticks and bodies in different lanes and picking guys up at certain points are important, and hopefully they can lock in on that stuff too.”

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U11 LL Boys Red win LMLL division championship

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Tremblett's Independent Grocer U11 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock captured the D Division Lambton-Middlesex Local League (LMLL) Championship on March 25.

Head coach Dale Leonhardt credited his squad for their strong adherence to the team's philosophy.

"The boys really bought into our team identity, outworking every opponent and relying on effort as our core principle," Leonhardt said. "Once we realized that our success was directly tied to how hard we worked, the results started to come. The combination of our defence, offence and goaltending all came together as a team that helped us with the D division title."

According to Leonhardt, it took some time for the group to hit their stride, but once they did, they were an incredibly well-rounded team.

"At the start of the year, we had flashes of success but weren't very consistent," Leonhardt said. "The team was still figuring out positioning, line combinations and overall chemistry. After Christmas, everything started to click and they began to trust each other and play as a unit. In the playoffs, that growth really showed. We had solid goaltending, our defencemen moved the puck extremely well and we were getting offensive production from all three lines."

Leonhardt added the galvanizing point of the year came just before the holiday break in December.

"I think back to the Regional Silver Stick tournament in Collingwood before Christmas; that was when the boys started to come together, both on and off the ice. The team bonding during that trip



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Tremblett's Independent Grocer U11 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock won the 'D' Division Lambton-Middlesex Local League Championship March 25. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are JayIn Arn and Bryson Stacey. In the second row, from left, are Cameron Foley, Bryson Nairn and Elliot Cociu. In the third row, from left, are Mac McCarthy, Elijah Campbell, Caxton Stewart Noeske, Ethan Cubberly, Theo Shute, Jase Hazen, Jack McArthur, Owen Barker, James Hammond, Bryson Nairn, Brayden Rumble and Andrew Garvie. In the fourth row, from left, are Mark McArthur, John Cubberly, Dale Leonhardt and Jeff Nairn. Not pictured was Cale Stacey.

really carried over into our play. Then, during the playoffs, we had some strong-played games. Earlier in the season, we might have folded in those situations, but later on, they believed they could claw back and they did. That belief grew every round-robin game as their confidence and chemistry built."

St. Marys defeated the South Huron Sabres to win the division title, with the championship-winning game going in

the Rock's favour by a 6-2 final score. Leonhardt said the win is a huge accom-

plish-

plish. "It means a lot. These players earned every bit of it. They've put in the work week after week in practice, in games and in the way they support one another. To see that effort rewarded with a championship; that feels well-deserved. They know how far they've come since the start of the season, and standing at the top of the division is a reminder of what hard work and belief can accomplish."

"We had contributions from players across the lineup, including kids who may not always get the spotlight but stepped up when it mattered most," Leonhardt continued. "That's been the beauty of this team; everyone has had a role in this success."

Leonhardt raved about the team's progression over the course of the season leading up to their division championship, which they won thanks to their strong work ethic.

"This is a hardworking group of kids who simply love the game. Our motto is, 'Outwork the other teams,' and that really sums it up. They've learned that if they put in the effort in every shift, good things happen. They've also developed strong bonds off the ice, which you can really see in how they play for each other. It's been great to watch the growth of each player from the start of the year until now. I'm proud of every boy on our team."

St. Marys Minor Ball, Western fastball team hosts second annual pitching clinic



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

St. Marys Minor Ball hosted the Western Mustangs fastball team at St. Marys DCVI on March 14 for their second annual pitching clinic. The clinic saw 20 local fastball players take part in the event in preparation for the upcoming fastball season. St. Marys Minor Ball thanks the Western fastball team, players, and families for making this another successful clinic.

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Garlon RTU	Triclopyr	29334
Garlon XRT	Triclopyr	28945
Gateway (Adjuvant)	Paraffinic Oil	31470
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Visit www.cn.ca/vegetation for more information or to make an inquiry, contact the CN Public Inquiry Line at contact@cn.ca or 1-888-888-5909.

St. Marys Curling Club hosts successful final mini-spiel for Monday Daytime League



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Jim Smith, Madelyne Campbell, Joan Kennedy and Verna Strathdee, who captured the Jim Nairn Trophy as winners of the St. Marys Curling Club's Monday Daytime League.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Murray Pink, Mary Chowen, James Smith and Luke DeBrabandere for the Fall 2025 half of the Monday Daytime League season, hosted by the St. Marys Curling Club.

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The St. Marys Curling Club's Monday Daytime League brought its 2025-2026 season to a close with a spirited Wrap-Up Mini-Spiel on March 30.

The event marked the culmination of another enjoyable and competitive season, highlighted by camaraderie, sportsmanship and strong performances on the ice. Curlers gathered for a day of friendly competition and celebration, with the mini-spiel providing an opportunity for league members to showcase their skills one final time this season. The event concluded with a series of presentations recognizing outstanding achievements.

The Burns Blacker Award, presented to teams demonstrating excellence over the course of each season segment, was awarded to two deserving rinks:

- Fall 2025 Winners: Luke DeBrabandere, James Smith, Mary Chowen and Murray Pink

- Winter 2026 Winners: Rick DeBrabandere, David Mountain, Robin Mountain and Madelyne Campbell

Both teams were applauded for their consistent play and teamwork throughout their respective seasons.

In addition, the Jim Nairn Trophy was awarded to the winners of the Wrap-Up Mini-Spiel:

- Jim Smith, Joan Kennedy, Verna Strathdee and Madelyne Campbell.

The trophy represents not only success in the final event but also the spirit of friendly competition that defines the Monday Daytime League.

Special thanks to Janice's Fine Country Catering and to the many volunteers, Mary, Dawn, Matt, Anne, Lorrie, Susan, Ken, Jason, John, Tony and to everyone else that helped out.

League organizers expressed their appreciation to all participants for contributing to another successful season, noting the strong sense of community that continues to make the daytime league a high-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Rick DeBrabandere, Madelyne Campbell, Robin Mountain and David Mountain, winners of the Burns Blacker Award for the Winter 2026 portion of the Monday Daytime League season.

light at the club.

With another season in the books, curlers now look ahead to the fall, eager to

return to the ice and continue the tradition of sport and fellowship at the St. Marys Curling Club.

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DCVI Senior Girls Volleyball team performs well at OFSAA

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Volleyball team has a solid showing at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) championships in North Bay March 9-11.

Though they didn't capture a medal, they were honoured with the Team Sportsmanship Award, which head coach Steve Chateauvert said was a great accolade for the squad that won a Western Ontario Secondary Schools Athletic Association (WOSSAA) title earlier this season.

"As a coach and a team, we're incredibly proud of receiving this award," Chateauvert told the Independent. "It speaks to our team's character, sportsmanship and the way they represented St. Marys DCVI both on and off the court."

Chateauvert explained the experience of competing at OFSAA was very valuable for the part of the team who are eligible to play again next year.

"I think it's very important," said Chateauvert. "About half of these players can

play again next year, and now they know what it takes to play at that next level. Being involved in that WOSSAA match and then getting some experience up in North Bay at OFSAA really is important in getting them to understand how they need to play the game."

Chateauvert added the younger players have grown into very good players thanks to the guidance of the graduating students.

"I think they have aggressiveness and intensity. They certainly showed that at WOSSAA as well as when we were up in North Bay for OFSAA. We were in a couple of really close matches with teams, and some of them went our way, some of them didn't, but I think one of our strengths this year was just playing really aggressive, serving tough, hitting the ball as much as we can instead of playing it safe. And in the end, that strategy really did pay off."

"I think just their experience and how they play the game (is what the younger kids have taken most from the graduating players)," continued Chateauvert. "All



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The St. Marys DCVI Senior Girls Volleyball team had a strong performance at OFSAA in North Bay March 9-11 and earned the Team Sportsmanship Award.

the seniors who are graduating play with such intensity. They play to win. They don't quit on anything, and that's really

important in the game of volleyball. I really hope that has been passed down to the Grade 11 students this year."

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St. Marys Minor Basketball hosts wrap-up night



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Another fantastic season of St. Marys Basketball came to a thrilling conclusion on April 2 at the St. Marys DCVI gym. Throughout the season, Thursday nights were filled with energy, growth, and competition. This program simply could not exist without our incredible community. A massive thank you to our student volunteers, whose energy on the sidelines kept the wheels turning every single week. St. Marys Minor Basketball also owes a debt of gratitude to our dedicated head coaches who shared their time and expertise to mentor these young athletes. Pictured on the left, from left to right, are the grades five and six boys division, coaches by Devin Arn and Paul Vergeer. The Grypons emerged as the team champions, while Finn Reid won the MVP award, and Tucker Posthumus took the defensive player of the year award. Jaxson Arn was named the division's most improved player, and Lincoln Voht received the award for best teammate. On the right are the grades five and six girls division, coached by Tim O'Connor. The Aces captured the team championship. The all-stars of the girls' division were Sierra Vandello, Akaya Hylton, Kate Foster, Brooklyn DeHaan, Maya Brown, and Jerziee Mayos. The most improved players were Presley Folkes, Mie Laren, Elizabeth Laliberte-Dixon, and Clara Allen.



Pictured at left, are the players in the grades seven and eight boys division of St. Marys Minor Basketball, coached by Ken French and Jack Taylor. The Steamrollers emerged as the team champions. Mark Richardson was recognized as the league MVP. Talan Ward, Jake Carpenter, James Holiday, and Carter Prudomme won the league MVP awards. The most improved player prizes went to Luke Savile, Sam Richardson, Sawyer Hayes, and Derek Vernoooy. Dylan Kittmer earned the league's spirit award.



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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: The Ukrainian Carpathians – where nature, history and legend meet

TETIANA DIDKOVSKA

Independent Columnist

There are places in the world that stay with you forever. The Ukrainian Carpathians are one of them. Stretching across western Ukraine, these mountains combine breathtaking landscapes with ancient Ukrainian history.

Formed about 25 million years ago, the Carpathians are among the oldest mountain systems in Europe. Here rises Ukraine’s highest peak, Mount Hoverla, reaching 2,061 metres above sea level, while nearby lies Lake Synevyr, the country’s largest alpine lake. Surrounded by dense forests, the lake is often called the Sea Eye of the Carpathians.

The region remains one of the most environmentally preserved parts of Ukraine, protecting more than 20 per cent of the nation’s forests. It is also home to Rakhiv, the highest city in the country, located about 820 metres above sea level. Built along steep slopes, the city rises and falls nearly 400 metres from one neighborhood to another.

Culture in the Carpathians is as powerful as the scenery. One of its most recognizable symbols is the trembita, the longest wooden wind instrument in the world. It can reach four metres in length, and its deep sound may travel up to 10 kilometres across mountain valleys. For centuries, shepherds used it to send signals from ridge to ridge.

The mountains also gave rise to the remarkable Hutsul horse. Small in stature yet incredibly strong, these horses are famous for endurance and their ability to move confidently along narrow mountain paths. In 1979, the breed received official protection as a rare relic species.

Architecture also tells the story of the region. In the village of Vorokhta stands a striking stone railway viaduct built in 1895. Its elegant arches stretch across the valley and remain one of the oldest stone railway bridges of their kind in Europe.

The Carpathians also hide unusual natural and medical wonders. In the town of Solotvyno, underground salt chambers almost 300 metres below ground have treated respiratory illnesses since 1968.

Another extraordinary place is the Valley of Narcissi near the city of Khust. Every spring, vast white fields of the rare *Narcissus angustifolius* bloom there. Thousands of visitors come to witness the short but unforgettable flowering.

Local legend tells of two young lovers who once met secretly in those meadows. A prince’s son and a village girl were forbidden to be together. When tragedy separated them, the valley is said to have blossomed with white flowers symbolizing faithful love.

The mountains even preserve traces of ancient Earth. In 1907, the remains of a mammoth and other Ice Age animals were discovered near the village of Starunia. Nearby sandstone cliffs still display fossilized patterns of prehistoric ocean waves.

Today, the Carpathians are also one of Ukraine’s most popular travel destinations. The largest ski resort, Bukovel, near the village of Polyanitsia, offers more than 75 kilometres of slopes and modern lifts. Like other major ski destinations in the region – including Dragobrat, Slavske and Krasia – it is privately owned and developed, reflecting the role of private investment in building the region’s tourism industry.

Yet beyond statistics and attractions, the true magic of the Carpathians is a feeling. Mist rising over quiet valleys, forests breathing after rain and traditions carried from generation to generation. That is why those who visit once so often dream of returning again.

The Ukrainian Carpathians remind us that landscapes can carry memory, culture and hope at the same time. In their forests and villages, the past speaks quietly while the future continues to grow, inviting the world to discover a remarkable corner of Europe together with wonder. See you next time!



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

1: Mount Hoverla, Ukraine’s highest peak. 2: Lake Synevyr, Ukraine’s largest alpine lake. 3: The trembita, the longest wooden wind instrument in the world. 4: Ukraine’s oldest stone railway viaduct built in the village of Vorokhta in 1895.

Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

Rabbit! Enjoy the peace and serenity of the pond at “Edith’s Storytime Adventures” this Saturday! Join Edith the puppet for songs and stories themed around frogs, beavers, swimming, and teamwork, followed by a casual talk about her time spent amongst the tadpoles and cattails. The fun begins at 10 a.m. sharp!

Can’t join Edith this month? She’ll be back again with more exciting tales to share on May 23, June 13, July 11, and August 8; all Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Up This Week

Fri., Apr. 10: Open 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sat., Apr. 11: Edith’s Storytime Adventures (10 a.m.)

Mon., Apr. 13: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Tues., Apr. 14: Write of Way (6:30 p.m.)

Wed., Apr. 15: EarlyON Play & Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong (1-4 p.m.), Books & Brews*^ (8 p.m.)

Thurs., Apr. 16: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett • 519.272.5742 • jtsquote@gmail.com

Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel’s Tree Service. For contact call 519.272.5742 or email jtsquote@gmail.com



Dear Arborist,

My maple trees last year got ugly black spots all over the leaves. I am hoping to avoid it this year. Any advice?

Thanks, Kelly

Dear Kelly,

Sounds like a common fungal infection

called tar spot, though it makes the trees appearance unattractive, it is not generally considered a major problem. You can normally manage it by cleaning up all the leaves in the fall, and doing an interior and exterior thin (trimming).

Sincerely, The Arborist



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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: The tale of two houses

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

The two handsome brick houses shown in this week's photograph have the street addresses 250 Elgin Street East (on the right) and 256 Elgin Street East (on the left.) They were both built in the first decade of the 20th century by the same contractor. Both have had owners through their history who were connected to some of the town's early important businesses. They have both been well-maintained and are an attractive part of this pleasant neighbourhood. Early survey maps of the town show one large lot – number 23 – located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Elgin and King Streets. The houses at 250 and 256 Elgin Street East are each on one half of Lot 23.

Volunteers at the St. Marys Museum completed a property history report for 256 Elgin Street East in 2012 and now, 14 years later, are finishing a report for its neighbour at 250 Elgin, the house right on the corner. Because these two properties are on the same lot, the transactions relating to both were all entered on the same abstract at the Perth County registry office. There are other similar large lots in St. Marys and, therefore, other properties that share abstract documents. Many transactions will specify which part of the lot they apply to. This has not been the case for Lot 23 on the south side of Elgin Street East. Researchers must solve the puzzle: which transactions apply to the east half and which to the west half?

For the first five decades of its recorded history, although it could be clearly identified on maps of the town, Lot 23 on Elgin Street East was undeveloped. Nothing substantial (that is, no building worth assessing and taxing) was constructed on it. These lots near the core of the town did have value and were frequently purchased as investments. Many business-minded people with some extra money bought up property, sometimes using it as collateral or re-selling when they needed cash for special projects. For these reasons, many properties changed hands frequently.

The first name on the abstract is James Ingersoll – not a surprise because the Canada Company granted the Ingersoll family from nearby Oxford County more than 300 acres of land on both sides of the Thames River at the heart of the newly surveyed village of St. Marys. In return, the Ingersolls built mills to attract settlement to the area. In 1854, James Ingersoll transferred a portion of his land including



(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. MARYS MUSEUM'S PROPERTY RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS)

The two houses at 250 and 256 Elgin Street East were both built in the first decade of the 20th century. Both have been owned by families significant in the history of St. Marys.

Lot 23 to his nephew, Thomas Alexander Hamilton Ingersoll. When Thomas A. H. Ingersoll died in 1860, the property was then transferred to his widow, Isabella, in trust for their children. Isabella later remarried, sold the property in 1874, and left St. Marys.

The next person to own Lot 23 for a significant length of time was James Henry Carter who bought it in February 1876. James was the only son of George Carter, a grain buyer who eventually became a prosperous mill owner in St. Marys. Starting as a very young man, James worked with his father to build the family fortunes. His parents' home was a large, white brick residence at 224 Jones Street East, built in 1868. As a young married man, James moved into an even larger, more elaborate home at 67 Peel Street South – a wedding gift from his father.

By the end of the 19th century, the Carters owned several blocks of undeveloped property to the south and east of their homes. George Carter died in 1889, and James became president of the company. For some years, thanks to James's experience, contacts in the industry and good will within the farming community, the company carried on successfully, but it was a volatile industry. To increase the value of the company's assets, in 1902, James transferred the ownership of Lot 23, Elgin Street East, to the G. Carter & Son Company Limited. Looking to ex-

pand, the company built an ambitious five-storey limestone mill on an abandoned mill site just a few miles southwest of town on the Thames River. The mill, equipped to produce rolled oats and other cereals, opened in 1903 but it had barely begun production when a disastrous fire burned it to the ground in 1904. The stress was overwhelming. James Carter died suddenly in August 1905. His obituary remembered his many good qualities: "By the community he will be mourned as a kindly and lovable man and one who took an active part in the building of the industries of the Stone Town."

Just a few weeks after James Carter died, Alfred Horatio Lofft acquired Lot 23. It was directly across Elgin Street from his own magnificent home at 253 Elgin Street East. Lofft, who owned a prosperous dry goods store on Queen Street, wanted some control over the way that the south side of Elgin would be developed. As he sold off the lots, he stipulated that the houses were to be built of red brick, be a generous size, and have a uniform set-back from the street. He divided Lot 23 into two halves. He sold the west half to Alexander

Bruce Creighton in 1906 and the east part to Joseph Francis Hooper in 1909. By the time of the 1911 census, both men were living with their families in these handsome brick houses on Elgin Street. Records indicate that William Stafford, a well-known local contractor, designed and built both houses at 250 and 256 Elgin Street East.

From this time on, these two properties had their separate histories. A. B. Creighton, the first owner of 250 Elgin, sold it in 1916. This property became one of the many assets of the J. D. Moore Company Limited, a large produce shipping and cold storage industry. James Douglas Moore, the company's founder, had died in 1902, leaving his company to his two daughters and their husbands. One son-in-law, Robert C. Hunter, and his family lived at 250 Elgin Street for many years.

Joseph Hooper sold the property next door in 1921 to the estate of John Bonis. In 1920, John Bonis, one of the owners of the Thames Quarry on Water Street, was killed in an industrial accident at his own quarry. In 1921, John's executors purchased Joseph Hooper's fine house for his widow, Ellinor, and her three young children. Mrs. Bonis lived at 256 Elgin until 1946 when she went to live with her daughter near London, Ontario.

For more than a century, these two houses have been standing side by side, sheltering families, witnessing both sad and joyful occasions. Property history reports unravel some of the stories of the people who lived in these two homes. Thanks to the skill of the builder, William Stafford, and to the care and attention given by their successive owners, these houses will survive for many more years and there will be many more stories.

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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: The silly side of travel writing



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

I get a lot of comments from people who are a bit jealous of my gig as a travel writer. They're right – it's a great job. I will insist that it does involve work – being on a busy, dusk-to-dawn travel “familiarization tour” can be exhausting, but still fun and sometimes unexpectedly hilarious.

Often, these silly moments involve food. Like in Hong Kong, where I was taken out to breakfast at a congee restaurant. Congee is rice porridge, usually served with tea, and you add meat to the congee. My host recommended that I add, wait for it, bull's penis. I did not and opted for chicken – at least, I hope it was chicken.

In Locarno, Switzerland, in the Italian canton of this multi-lingual country, I asked my waiter if he spoke English. “Yes,” he said with a vigorous nod of the head. So, I ordered. My meal, when delivered, bore no resemblance to what I had asked for. I explained. He nodded, hopefully, but clearly without comprehending my comment. I asked

again, “Do you speak English?” “Yes!”

I pondered. And then, knowing that French is one of the four official languages of Switzerland, I asked, “Parlez-vous anglais?” He laughed and shook his head. “Non!” Well, that at least explained that.

And speaking of food, there was the time I punched a pigeon. I was in Ottawa exploring the Byward Market and decided to have a Beaver Tail. Yum. I sat down and was immediately approached by a herd of rather aggressive pigeons. Foolishly, I thought that if I threw a couple of bits of Beaver Tail well distant from me, they would leave me alone. Wrong. They got more aggressive and one flew straight at my face. I reached out to defend myself and, yep, I accidentally punched a pigeon.

In Ponce Inlet, Fla., at a diner, I ordered a salad. “We're all out of salads,” said the waiter. “Really?” “Yes.” “Okay, I have a question,” I said. “If I order a hamburger, can I get it with lettuce, tomato and onion?” “Sure.”

“That's a salad,” I pointed out with some emphasis. Made no difference, of course. Salads were off.

Occasionally, the unreal reality of being a travel writer does lead to amazing things – circumstances you still have to laugh about because they really are so genuinely unreal.

Like the time in San Diego when I was supposed to go tandem hang-gliding off the cliffs.

This seemed an ill-conceived idea, so I asked if there might be an alternative activity. “Do you want to play golf,” asked my host, “at Torrey Pines?” Did I want to play golf at one of the most famous golf courses in the world? We arrived. I was escorted to my golf cart, complete with a beautiful set of loner clubs, balls, tees, wate, the works. I asked “Am I playing with anyone?”

“No sir,” came the answer, “we closed the course for you.”

I looked at my host. He quietly said, “I don't know who they think you are, but go with it.” So, I did. I played well – about which, I have no proof and no one believes me.

I have been bit on the lip by a sea turtle in the waters off Barbados; I have kissed a stuffed beaver in New Brunswick; I have marched in two parades in Québec City, one in full, brilliant blue costume as a 16th century seigneur; I have felt my underwear fall off during a walking tour of Lugano; and I have been trussed up like a hippopotamus in bondage gear to go ziplining in the Jamaican rainforest.

But it was in Mexico where two incidents left me laughing and feeling rather humiliated at the same time.

We went snorkelling; the transportation to the coral reef involved two-person speed-boats. Upon arrival at the reefs, they tethered the boats together and said, “Jump in.” Jumping in, I could do, but there was no way I was going to be able to



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The Beaver Tail kiosk in Ottawa, where our hero punched a pigeon.

haul myself back up and into the boat. I tried to ask, but our guide spoke as much English as my Locarno waiter. What the heck – I jumped in. The snorkelling was great; eventually, we were called back to the boats, and I was first to return. I went to the back and started to try to board the beast. No luck, of course.

The guide motioned that I should come to the front, which was even farther out of the water. I obeyed. Whereupon he grabbed me by the life jacket and landed me unceremoniously on the prow. It's hard to laugh hysterically with the breath knocked out of you, but I managed it.

And also, during that visit to

Mexico, I was offered a moment of self-awareness. A small group of media folk went to the amazing attraction called Xcaret, where you can swim in an underground river. You don a life jacket, but it takes some effort to complete the course. When we finished, a much younger member of the group told me, “If I ever live to be as old as you, I hope I am able to do as well as you just did.”

Sigh.

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.



Kissing a stuffed beaver at the Big Fiddle Still in Harvey, N.B.



The famous Van Doos marching band, which led a parade in Québec City.

EAT AT OUR HOUSE: Sweet potato, the super food



LAUREN EEDY
Independent Columnist

A favourite and versatile ingredient, sweet potatoes are a staple in our household.

A go to, we often enjoy a simple yet elegant roasted sweet-potato pasta with browned butter and crispy sage, which I have noticed has popped up in menus across the province.

Looking for fresh, alternative uses for this super food, I have enjoyed the following two recipes which can be vegan-friendly and healthy takes on this seasonal vegetable. Just look up the health benefits of the sweet potato and they, too, will become a staple in your pantry.

Coconut ranch and sweet potato kale salad

Serves: 2-4; Prep: 20 minutes; Total: 1 hour and 10 minutes

Ingredients

Coconut ranch:

- 1/4 cup coconut milk
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise (vegan if preferred)
- 1 tbsp freshly chopped parsley
- 1 tbsp freshly chopped chives
- 2 tbsp freshly chopped dill

- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp onion powder
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- Pinch kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Salad:

- 1 large sweet potato, cut into 1/4-inch thick half moons
- 1 tbsp plus 2 tsp extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 1/2 tsp chili powder, divided
- Pinch kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed thoroughly
- 1 large bunch of curly kale, washed and dried, stems removed
- Avocado, thinly sliced
- Parmesan, vegan parmesan or nutritional yeast (Troyers Spices)

Method:

- In a small bowl, whisk together coconut milk and mayonnaise. Add herbs, garlic powder, onion powder and a pinch of cayenne. Stir to combine and season with salt and pepper. Refrigerate.
- Preheat oven to 400°F. Place sweet potatoes on a large baking sheet and drizzle with 1 tbsp olive oil, season with 1 tsp chili powder, salt and pepper. Toss to coat and spread potato slices in an even layer.
- Bake sweet potatoes until tender and bottoms start to crisp, 35-40 minutes.
- Pat chickpeas dry with paper towel and place on small baking sheet. Bake

until dried out and crisp, 30 minutes.

- While chickpeas are still warm, place in a medium bowl and add remaining 2 tsp oil and 1/2 tsp chili powder. Toss to combine and season with salt and pepper.
- Place dried kale on cutting board and roughly chop into bite-sized pieces. Place in a large bowl. Add a pinch of salt and massage kale with fingers, rubbing salt in, about 1 minute.
- Top kale with sweet potatoes, chickpeas, avocado and parmesan. Drizzle with coconut ranch to serve.

Vegan sweet potato curry

Serves: 4; Prep: 15 minutes; Total time: 40 minutes

A flexible curry dish, by no means is authentic but allows for easily adaptable individual preferences.

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, quartered
- 6 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup green curry paste (or use your preference such as red or yellow – this recipe is highly adaptable)
- 2 sweet potatoes, diced into 1-inch cubes
- 1 can coconut milk
- 2 birds-eye chilis (optional)
- 1 1/2 cups broccoli florets
- 1 1/2 cups cauliflower florets

- 1 cup fried tofu puffs (air fried)

- 1 1/2 cups water plus more as needed
- Cooked rice or noodles for serving

Method:

- In a large pot over medium heat, heat oil. Add onion, garlic and curry paste and stir until toasty and fragrant, about 3 minutes.
- Add sweet potatoes, coconut milk and chilis if using. Stir to combine and bring to a simmer. Cover pot with lid and let cook, stirring occasionally until sweet potatoes are knife tender, 12-14 minutes.
- Stir in cauliflower, broccoli and water. Cook until broccoli is vibrant green and tender, about 7 minutes. Add more water as needed to dilute sauce to desired consistency.
- Serve over rice or noodles.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

This coconut ranch and sweet potato kale salad is the perfect way to make sweet potato the star of your next healthy meal.

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I have lines but I'm not a road, I tell a story in a special code. What am I?
A poem

I help words sound the same at the end, cat and hat – I'm your friend! What am I?
A rhyme

I count the beats in every line, helping poems sound just fine. What am I?
Rhythm

I'm a writer of poems, that's my art, putting feelings on paper from the heart. Who am I?
A poet

I'm short and sweet, with 5-7-5, a tiny poem that feels alive. What am I?
A haiku

I show feelings strong and clear, in poems I often appear. What am I?
Emotion

I use exaggeration for fun, "I've told you a million times!" – just one. What am I?
Hyperbole

I repeat words again and again, to make a point stick in your brain. What am I?
Repetition

I help you feel what words can't say, like happiness or a rainy day. What am I?
Mood

- Word Search -



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The **Riddle Kid**
OF THE WEEK



Tommy Pavliuk (3)

Hey Kids... Every Riddle Kid that appears in the paper gets a FREE MILKSHAKE at the Sunset Diner!

St. Marys Veterinary Clinic is pleased to be the sponsor of the

PET OF THE WEEK



TIPS FOR YOUR ANIMAL HEADING INTO SPRING

Keep dogs on leash. In addition to preventing your animal from getting lost, keeping them on a leash will allow you to guide them away from people and other animals. As the snow melts, this also helps you keep an eye on your dog to make sure they don't get into anything they shouldn't that may be surfacing under the snow.



HENRY & FRANKLIN

Henry and Franklin are "brothers" that were rescued from a boarding house that had over 30 kittens in it. They love playing and fighting with each other and have learned how to "sweet talk" their fur grandma into extra food.



Thorndale News

A section within the
St. Marys Independent



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Easter treats a big hit in Thorndale

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Chocolatey treats are always popular among children, and in the Thorndale community, they were the highlight on two occasions last week leading up to Easter.

On April 1, Thorndale Optimist members Wilf and Patti Kemp, accompanied by the Easter Bunny, delivered special chocolate bars to all the classrooms for the 489 students at West Nissouri Public School. Optimist member Greg Morris organized the purchase of these chocolate bars from The Chocolate Factory in St. Marys and the Optimists delivered them to the school in Thorndale, a tradition dating back more than a decade.

“We greatly appreciate the Thorndale Optimist in their acts of kindness and the support to our students in their various ways,” said Naomi Pol, West Nissouri vice principal.

In keeping with tradition, the Thorndale Optimists organized and hosted Thorndale’s annual Easter Egg hunt April 4. I

Love Thorndale supplied support and the registration of 320 children. Due to the rainy weather, the egg hunt was held in the Thorndale Lions Community Centre, where hundreds of brightly coloured eggs covered the floor in one of the community rooms for children to pick up. Then they took their gathered eggs to exchanged them for goody bags of chocolatey treats.

The whole community centre was abuzz with excited children and fun activities. A large Easter Bunny greeted children and posed for special photos. A special play area was set up for toddlers, a live bunny drew lots of attention and the face-painting stations were busy decorating happy little faces.

Angels Childcare of Thorndale supplied a small bag of craft items for each child. As well, the Thorndale Library staff was in attendance with a couple activities and a story corner for the children.

“The Easter Egg Hunt was a great success and thanks to everyone who came out. Hope to see everyone again next year,” said Thorndale Optimist Club president Melanie Sorensen.



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Thorndale Optimist members delivered special chocolate bars to the classrooms at West Nissouri Public School on April 1. Pictured from left to right are West Nissouri vice principal Naomi Pol, the Easter Bunny and Thorndale Optimist members Patti and Wilf Kemp.

Memorial unveiled at the Thorndale Library

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Recently, about a dozen members of the Thorndale Dinner Theatre committee gathered at the Thorndale Library to unveil a memorial to their friend and dinner theatre volunteer Rob Harmer.

Harmer was a talented artist and helped to build the sets for the theatre productions over the years. He also enjoyed spending time at the Thorndale Library and many of his sketches and paintings hung in the library in the featured local artist exhibits.

When Harmer passed away in June 2023 after a brief illness, the dinner theatre committee organized a collection. With the donated funds, they purchased a stone for the Memorial Rose Garden in Thorndale and a plant for his wife, Nan-

cy Harmer. As Rob Harmer touched so many lives in the community with his endurance, love of life and his talent, there was money left over for the committee to do something at the library in his honour.

After many ideas were considered, the committee chose the perfect concept that expressed Rob Harmer’s artistic talent, while making the memorial functional and for children. The result is a beautiful hand-painted tree designed and painted by his good friend, Reed Needles, with three-dimensional metal leaves made by Practical Art in Stratford and hung in the tree by another good friend, Joe Facey.

The hope for this memorial is that children will proudly hang their artwork on the leaves of Rob Harmer’s tree to display their budding talent for all to see and admire.



(NANCY ABRA PHOTO)

Joe Facey, friend of Rob Harmer, and Rob Harmer’s wife, Nancy Harmer, unveil a memorial to Rob Harmer at the Thorndale Library.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.GRANTHAVEN.COM

OBITUARY

Brant



"Ron" William Ronald Dale Brant passed away at the Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth on April 5, 2026 at the age of 77.

Beloved husband of Tracy (nee Thompson), married 34 years. Father of Sherri Barclay (Derek), Jamie Brant (Sheila) and Randi Lumley-Brant. Grandfather of Aurora and Ellie. Brother of Bob,

deceased (Donna) Brant, John Brant (Linda), Carolyn Thorton, deceased (Bob), Barry Brant (Peg), both deceased, Sharon Tully (Charlie, deceased), Brian Brant (Gloria MacDonald), Brenda Verellen, deceased (John), Jim Brant, deceased (Vicki), Deb Mills (Tim) and Ed Brant (Wendy).

Ron will also be missed by many nieces, nephews, extend family members and Willow "Peewee." Ron's family wish to sincerely thank the nurses and volunteers at the Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth for their wonderful care.

Cremation has taken place. A Celebration of Life Open House will take place at the St. Marys Legion, 66 Church St. N. St. Marys, on Sunday, April 12, 2026 from 1 - 3 pm. Memorial donations may be made to the Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

IN MEMORIAM

William Inch

July 28, 1954 - April 10, 2017



IN MEMORY OF YOU

If we could visit heaven
Even for a day,
Maybe for a moment
The pain would go away.
I'd put my arms around you
And whisper words so true,
That living life without you
Is the hardest thing to do.
No matter how we spend our days
No matter what we do,
No morning dawns or evening falls
When we don't think of you.
-Author Unknown-

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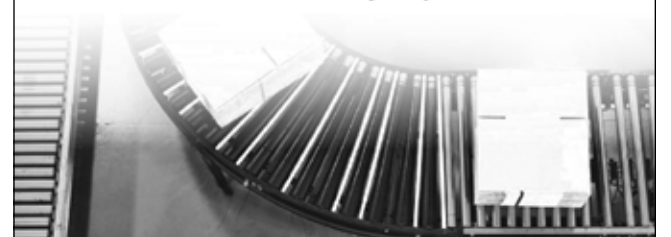


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THANK YOU

Thank You

Thank you for making my 80th Birthday party a joyous and wonderful day!

It was great to see everyone and I am very happy that you took the time out of your day to be there.

Special thank you to everyone who helped make the day an amazing memory.

Love Nan

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Solutions on pg. 31

St. Marys Independent

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Letter to the Editor: Oppose the proposed changes to Ontario's FOI legislation

This letter was originally sent to Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rob Flack. It has been edited slightly and reprinted here with the permission of the author.

I'm writing to express my deep concern with the government's proposed changes to Ontario's Freedom of Information (FOI) rules. These rules have been in place for nearly 40 years and have served the public well. In that time, I am not aware of any instance where the existing framework prevented government from functioning or compromised cabinet confidentiality. If such an example exists, I believe the premier should present it clearly to the public.

One justification offered for the changes is that they would "align" Ontario with the federal government and a few other provinces. This is not a compelling argument. A policy is not better simply because another jurisdiction uses it. For four decades, Ontario's FOI system has supported transparency, accountability and public trust. Weakening it because others have weaker systems is not a persuasive rationale.

In my research, I have not found any publicly documented case – in Ontario or elsewhere – where FOI laws exposed cabinetlevel confidentiality or created harm that required tightening the rules. It is therefore difficult to understand why this change has suddenly become a priority. Ironically, if such evidence did exist, it would likely be harder to uncover under the proposed rules.

What is clear is that the current FOI system has enabled journalists and citizens to uncover important information that did not involve cabinet records but did involve

decisions affecting Ontarians – including matters related to the Greenbelt, transportation planning and health communications. Under the proposed changes, much of this information would never have come to light.

To my knowledge, the Ontario PC Party did not campaign on removing ministers' offices from FOI, expanding exemptions, retroactively cancelling requests, or limiting access to political staff communications. These proposals were not part of the 2022 platform, campaign speeches, advertising, or postelection commitments. This raises a reasonable question: why now, and why retroactively? If the government believes this change is truly in the public interest, it should present it openly as part of a future election platform and seek a mandate from voters.

Elected officials are accountable to the people who elect them. This proposal would reduce that accountability, not strengthen it. It does not align with the government's message of "working for workers" or "working for you." Ontarians need their government focused on the issues that directly affect their lives – the economy, affordability, health care, education, housing and public safety. These challenges require transparency, not less of it.

Ontario's elected representatives need to stand for transparency and accountability. As Ontarians, we must demand it. I have asked my MPP to oppose this proposal and encourage the government to withdraw it and I urge all Ontarians to do the same.

Respectfully,
Mike Ferguson, St. Marys

Looking Back



AMY CUBBERLEY
Independent Columnist

Boys days

25 years ago (2001)

An insulated ceiling will be installed at the St. Marys Arena following the completion of the current ice sports season. The arena board approved a new "Low Emissivity Ceiling" system last week. The price tag is \$22,100.

The committee of the Town of St. Marys Heritage Festival is proud to announce the performance of "Owen & Nora", an interpretive dance based on an intriguing period in the life of world-famous St. Marys violinist, Nora Clench. The performance was researched and is narrated by Larry Pfaff, performed by Rory Omel, a dancer and teacher at the Motus School of Dance in St. Marys, and is produced by Burton Ready.

50 years ago (1976)

The \$35-million huge concrete and steel encased giant Meccano set that will produce cement "clinker" at a phenomenal rate, hopefully by the end of this year, is going together in relatively large chunks this spring at St. Marys Cement Plant.

Lawrence Taylor of Lakeside thought he had received a pretty generous gift from the Government for the couple's 40th wedding anniversary. His regular pension cheque had been made out for one thousand dollars more than usual. There was only one problem - it had to be sent back to the government in exchange for the correct amount.

75 years ago (1951)

Last week, one local merchant dropped the price of butter by a total of eight cents per pound. The dairy product had been selling for 83 cents per pound.

The theft of coniferous trees from the triangular piece of land at the junction of the Centre Gravel and Townline roads, north of St. Marys, has caused comment in County Council sessions. Thefts occur at Christmas time and now it is being proposed to hire neighbours to watch this community forest at Yuletide in the future.

100 years ago (1926)

Mr. F.E. Butcher, owner of the St. Marys Coopers Shop, one of those industries that flourished in years past but has been in a state of coma of late years owing to the extensive use of steel and cement in tank manufacturing, has leased part of his plant to the Wolverton Milling Company Limited, who will henceforth manufacture their own barrels for flour shipment.

To stimulate the interest of grown-ups in boys and their activities, "Boys Days" have been held by Rotary Clubs throughout America the past several years. The St. Marys Rotary Club is introducing the idea here in late May. A special outside speaker will feature the Sunday program and on Monday there will be sports and other features. The Pushmobile contest will be a stunt that every boy will be interested in.



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

St. Marys Public Library events - See Page 22

FRIDAY, APR 10

- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw - 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, APR 11

- Firefighters & Kinsmen Club scrap metal and e-waste pick-up, Put items at the curb before 7 a.m.
- South Nissouri Presbyterian Church pancake breakfast - 7:30-10:30 a.m.
- Hazardous waste disposal day at the MOC - 8 a.m. to Noon
- Coyote Nature School poetry showcase at Riverwalk Commons - 1-3 p.m.
- Stratford Symphony Orchestra performs at Avondale United Church - 3 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 p.m.

SUNDAY, APR 12

- Canadian Country Opry Show at Purple Hill Country Opry - 2 p.m.

TUESDAY, APR 14

- Royal Canadian Legion buddy check coffee - 10 a.m. to Noon
- Playing at the Shoreline - In the lap of poetry: Interactive talk at Riverwalk Commons - 7-9 p.m., \$20
- St. Marys Legion cribbage - Starts 7 p.m. sharp
- St. Marys Horticultural Society meeting at the Legion Hall - 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APR 15

- Friends of the Library management committee meeting at the library - 6-8 p.m.

THURSDAY, APR 16

- A.N.A.F. sausage on a bun - 12-1:30 p.m.
- Nourish Market at St. Marys United Church - 2-4 p.m.
- Rotary Club rural urban night at the PRC - Social 5 p.m., Dinner 6:30 p.m., Presentation 8:30 p.m. Tickets available online at rotarystmarys.ca

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