

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1244

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CELEBRATING A UKRAINIAN CHRISTMAS IN ST. MARYS (WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)
Families from the Ukrainian community start off the festivities singing "A New Joy has Come" at a Ukrainian Christmas Concert Dec. 22, 2024. See stories and photos on pages 20 and 21

SMCP's auditions for *Over the River and Through the Woods* about to begin

EMILY STEWART
Independent Reporter

Role call for a spring community theatre production is already underway. The St. Marys Community Players (SMCP) will hold auditions for their spring production of *Over the River and Through the Woods* by Joe DePietro. The heartwarming comedy focuses on Nick, a single Italian-American man with well-meaning but overbearing grandparents who want him to find love. SMCP will have six performing

roles available, including two sets of grandparents, Nick and a young woman named Caitlin who goes on blind dates with him. Auditions will be held at the St. Marys Presbyterian Church (147 Widder St. E) on Jan. 10 from 7-9 p.m., Jan. 11 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1-3 p.m., and on Jan. 12 from 1-3 p.m. Those auditioning are asked to prepare a monologue, a poem and/or a story about one to two minutes in length. Shortly after auditions, rehearsals begin on Jan. 15. "We have had some new people that have

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St. Marys downtown service location review resumes after nearly two-year pause

GALEN SIMMONS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Questions over how to best optimize municipal services in downtown St. Marys and how to solve current space needs at the library are now focused on two key buildings in the downtown core as the town's downtown service location review resumes after a nearly two-year pause.

On Dec. 18, 2024, the town's downtown service location review advisory committee met for the first time since March 2023 – the first and only meeting of the committee. The original project, which was driven by space needs for various municipal services including the library, police, community outreach and social services, would have seen the development of a master plan by consultants a+LiNK Architecture Inc. with recommendations on the most efficient deployment of services and programs at St. Marys town hall (the lower level and auditorium), the library, the train station and the former Mercury Theatre at 14 Church St. N, the latter of which the town purchased in 2021.

"We bought it because it was a strategic move knowing we had the library, town hall and that new building across the street; we'd hoped to create a campus of services," town CAO Brent Kittmer told the Independent. "In 2021, the province still had these grants called modernization grants, so we applied for a grant and were successful, and it was to

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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St. Marys downtown service location review resumes after nearly two-year pause

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

complete a study of all the services the town offered in and around the downtown and to help us figure out where strategically to place them ... amongst (the four buildings).”

From January to April 2024, the library board undertook a space-needs review showing the library will need an additional 2,638 square feet in 2034 at the end of the 10-year planning period.

Though the town hired a+LiNK to begin the preliminary work after receiving the modernization grant from the province, two key changes to municipal service delivery ultimately led to a change in scope for the project. First and foremost, the town undertook a renovation of town hall that, once complete, saw the optimization of staff offices and service delivery in that building and in other town buildings outside the downtown core. Second, the town relocated its Service Ontario office to the municipal operations centre (MOC) from its previous location on Queen Street West, which also necessitated the shifting and optimization of staff offices and service delivery at the MOC.

“Over time, we kind of started naturally doing our own service delivery review and figuring out where things needed to go, and because we realized that, we went back to council in May of 2024 and asked them to consider rescoping the downtown service review ... (for) developing a future vision of how we best use the train station and then how we also best use the newly acquired 14 Church St. N,” Kittmer said. “That’s the scope that we’re now working with and it’s just to create the future vision for those two buildings.”

At the recent advisory committee meeting, members were presented a number of potential uses for the former Mercury Theatre building and the train station, and they provided their thoughts and any additional ideas for

future uses of those buildings.

For the former Mercury Theatre building, Kittmer said the notion of establishing a cultural hub on the first floor with space for cultural organizations like the museum, library and art gallery to engage with the public seems to be gaining traction with committee members and town staff. On the second floor, Kittmer said the idea of establishing additional office space to accommodate future growth of town staff, and meeting rooms or program space for community organizations and social services like the chamber of commerce, the library, Ontario Works and Stratford Social Services on the second floor of the building is also gaining support.

As for the train station, which has also housed the St. Marys Station Gallery since 2016, the town has hired Angela Brayham, former curator of Gallery Stratford, to lead a feasibility study to develop a future vision and strategic plan for the town’s involvement in the gallery moving forward, which is still in its data-collection phase. Whether the gallery remains at the train station or is moved elsewhere, possibly to the former Mercury Theatre building, has not yet been determined.

Brayham has also been retained as project manager for the entire downtown service location review project.

As the train station’s primary function somewhat limits what that building can be used for, Kittmer said ideas for that building are focused on uses that complement train travel like a small café, retail space or space for a St. Marys Museum display welcoming visitors to town with heritage and cultural information.

Comments and further ideas for both buildings discussed during the Dec. 18 advisory committee meeting have been forwarded to the a+LiNK consultants, who will conduct further investigation on each and bring a report back to

council, likely in the spring, to launch a more fulsome discussion around the council table.

Renovations to former Mercury Theatre building nearing completion

As work on the downtown service location review resumes, renovations to the former Mercury Theatre building at 14 Church St. N have entered the home stretch.

The building, which was first built in the mid to late 19th century and then expanded in 1900, had sat vacant since 2006 before the town purchased the building and first opened it up to area residents for tours in early 2022 before renovations began in November 2023. As renovations of the building were not a top priority for the town, Kittmer said staff were able to establish a relaxed timeline for the work with its construction contractor.

“There’s no work that we’re doing right now at 14 Church St. that will, say, box us in for a future use of the building,” Kittmer said. “Really, the whole project at 14 Church St. will create a structurally sound shell of the building. It’s a blank template. The first floor, we completely tore it out, put a new flooring system in – put structural steel as well as new floor joists in – and we did the same thing (to) create a second floor as well.

“It will stand now as a building that

has two usable floors and a basement that will need some future improvement to make the basement in better shape than it is today. It will be sitting there ready for council to pick a design, say in June, out of our downtown service (location) review, and then say in the next three to four years, then they can start renovating 14 Church St. (for that specific design).”

The work done on the building so far includes a complete gutting of the interior back to the exterior walls, the removal of sections of problematic concrete in the basement, the pouring of new structural footings for the first floor, the installation of structural steel and floor joists for the first and second floors, and the demolition and reconstruction of the north-facing block wall.

“Now, inside what they’re doing is up at the very top of the building where the roof trusses are, there were two lath and plaster ceilings there, so they’re pulling both of those down and they’re being disposed of, and then the final thing that’s going to happen is they’ll insulate the underside of the roof. That will complete the job,” Kittmer said.

With the remaining work expected to be completed by the spring, Kittmer said the total cost between the purchase of the building and the renovations is estimated at roughly \$1 million.



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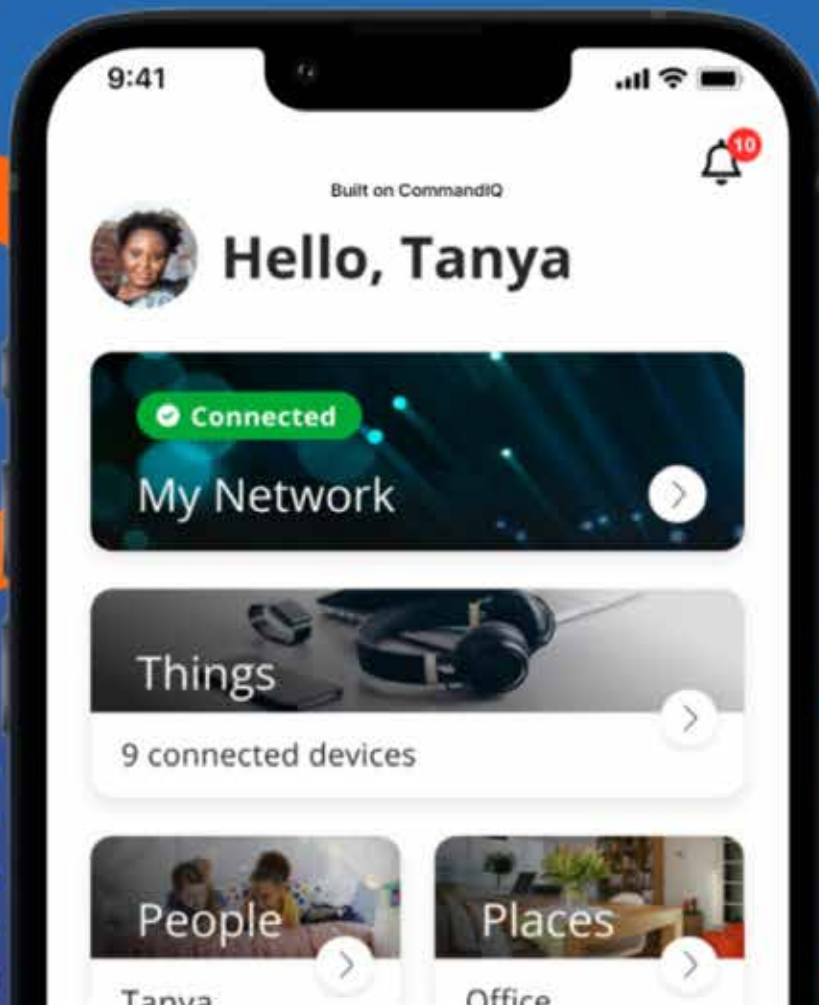
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EDITORIAL

Predictions for 2025: A new PM and a Stanley Cup for Canada

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

I've been doing predictions in the newspaper for a few years now, and after getting so many things wrong in 2024, I had to ask myself, "Why do I do this?"

Life sometimes is like a set of dominoes, and if that first domino doesn't fall, the others won't either. Therefore, last year when I predicted that Donald Trump would face consequences and be ruled ineligible to run in the 2024 election, well you can imagine how badly some of my other predictions turned out from there.

I did get a few things right though, such as Biden dropping out before the election, a woman would run for president, and the Leafs would get bounced in the first round of the playoffs.

Like golf, it's those few successes that keep me coming back.

Mostly though, it's good to do predictions because life moves fast, and sometimes we forget about where we were at a point in time, and how we thought things would go. If we look back a year later, maybe we learn things and gain some perspective somehow. Speaking of Trump, I was pretty worked up about him in 2024. Hopefully, I'll look back at the end of 2025 and reflect, "I guess it wasn't as bad as I thought." Only time will tell.

My 2025 predictions:

1. I typed these predictions up the other day and my first prediction came true before we went to press, so I'm one-for-one if you believe me! I wrote a few days ago that Justin Trudeau would resign as Prime Minister this year.

2. I'll predict the Liberal leadership vote results in Mark Carney becoming Canada's 24th Prime Minister. Carney won't hold the position for long though.

3. The Conservative Party will cruise to a majority win in the 2025 federal election, and Pierre Poilievre will take the reins as

Prime Minister. His first policy announcement upon taking office will be to cancel the Carbon Tax.

4. Echoing the results of the 1993 federal election where the incumbent party lost most of its seats, the Bloc Quebecois emerge to form the official opposition.

5. Shifting away from politics, here's one more 1993 parallel. For this first time in 32 years, a Canadian team will host the Stanley Cup! (I want to say it's the Leafs, but let's just say it'll be a Canadian team).

6. Alex Ovechkin will pass Wayne Gretzky to become the NHL's all-time regular-season, goal-scoring leader.

7. The Detroit Lions will win the Super Bowl.

8. U.S. President Donald Trump will assist in ending the war between Russia and Ukraine, but the terms favour the Russian side.

9. Similarly, a ceasefire is negotiated in the Middle East.

10. The 25 per-cent tariff on Canadian goods entering the U.S. fails to materialize. Relations between the U.S. and Canadian governments improve following the 2025 Canadian election.

11. Despite certain achievements, general uncertainty and chaos during the first year of the Trump administration is reflected in a down year for the stock market.

12. Just as the 1999 Columbine massacre produced a noted increase in school shootings in the U.S., the 2024 killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson will produce copycat crimes in 2025 by troubled individuals inspired by social or political causes.

13. Chinese-owned TikTok will avoid being shutdown in the United States, with Elon Musk assisting by purchasing a significant ownership share of the social media app.

14. The Trump-Musk bromance will have its up and downs, but the working relationship will continue to last throughout the year.

Bravo

We have 3 Bravos this week.

1) I would like to thank the person who found my earring and brought it into Foodland. I appreciate you finding it and returning it on a cold, rainy day. Thank you.

2) Bravo to everyone who sponsored a free festive skate. It was very enjoyable to spend this time with my grandchildren and watch them build confidence and skills on the ice. A huge thank you.

3) A huge Bravo to the St. Marys Ringette Association. They organized and helped with a very successful bottle drive. Your help was greatly appreciated.

Boo

We have no Boos this week.

*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 country deserves a real choice in the next election, and it has become clear to me that if I'm having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election."

An excerpt from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's resignation speech on January 6, 2025.

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Back to reality where chips and chocolate have calories!

I'm glad I won't have to look at my neighbour's Trudeau flag anymore.

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"Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519-284-0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

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Lyric Flowers and Nina Polidoro Photography donate to St. Marys Healthcare Foundation



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Lanny Hoare (Lyric Flowers), Lori Currah (Lyric Flowers), Jay Harrison (Lyric Flowers), Nina Polidoro (Nina Polidoro Photography), Bernice De Decker (St. Marys Healthcare Foundation) and Cindy Bilyea (St. Marys Healthcare Foundation).

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

On Nov. 30, a snowy Saturday, Lyric Flowers and Nina Polidoro Photography held their fifth annual fundraiser with Santa for the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation.

Bruce and Nancy White lent their '52 Dodge truck as a backdrop for locals to

have their photos taken with Santa in front of Lyric Flowers on Queen Street. The event ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with approximately 50 families signing up to have their pictures taken with Santa by the very talented Nina Polidoro.

A cheque for \$1,600 raised during the event was presented to the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation at Lyric Flowers on Friday, Dec. 20.

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The draft Recreation, Culture, and Leisure Service Master Plan is ready for review. Community members are invited to participate in the second phase of the update process and provide feedback.

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Senior of the Week



Our senior of the week is Georgina McGregor. Georgina was born and raised in Stratford. For a few years she lived in St. Marys and Campbellford before moving back to St. Marys. She then drove a bus for Murphy Bus Lines until her retirement. She is now 89 and resides at Fairhill. Georgina, along with her husband, had 12 children. She now has 27 grandchildren and 35 great grandchildren. She has been a proud member of the Lions Club for 30 years. She volunteers her time at the store at Fairhill and loves to help out wherever she is needed.

If you would like to nominate someone for Senior of the Week, Contact us at 519-284-0041 or info@stmarysindependent.com.

Weekend Quiz

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- 1) How many combined years have Pierre Trudeau and Justin Trudeau been Prime Minister of Canada?
- 2) How do you spell the last name of the current Conservative Party of Canada leader?
- 3) What are the two zodiac signs for January?
- 4) How do you write 2025 in Roman Numerals?
- 5) What four countries comprise the United Kingdom?
- 6) Hydrogen is the most common element in the universe. What is the second most common element?
- 7) What is the Japanese word for "hello"?
- 8) What has been the most common baby girl name in Canada for three years in a row?
- 9) What has been the most common baby boy name in Canada for three years in a row?
- 10) True or false: the rate of left-handedness in Canada is higher than the world average of 10%.

By Stewart Grant

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

Catholic women's league donates to St. Marys Support Services and Mobility Bus



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

The Holy Name of Mary Catholic Women's League (CWL) recently made a donation to St. Marys Support Services and the Mobility Bus. The local chapter is made up of approximately 90 members that meet once a month and their mission is to grow in faith and to witness the love of God through ministry and service. Pictured from left to right Yvette Mullings from St. Marys Mobility Bus, Patricia Healy with the CWL, Anne Paxton with the CWL and Amber Miners from the Mobility Bus.

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SMCP's auditions for *Over the River and Through the Woods* about to begin

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

applied to audition, so this is really good," said Marie Stevens, who sits on the SMCP board of directors. "Not all of them are from St. Marys. We're looking for surrounding communities as well."

Along with on-stage roles, SMCP offers behind-the-scenes roles such as set construction, stage management and front-of-house.

"If someone wanted to learn lighting or sound, there's always that possibility," Stevens said. "We're always glad to

mentor anyone who would like to learn a new task."

Stevens encourages anyone interested in being part of a SMCP production to join.

"It's a very fun group of people," she said. "We enjoy entertaining St. Marys and we just like the comradery."

Over the River and through The Woods will run from April 24 to May 10 at the Town Hall Auditorium. Anyone looking to audition can send an email to info@stmaryscommunityplayers.ca.

Honouring longtime farmers' market vendor and co-founder



(REG QUINTONPHOTO)

St. Marys Farmers' Market co-founder and vendor Ann Slater was recognized for her 32 years of service — and counting — to the market. At the market's Dec. 21, 2024 pop-up at the Pyramid Recreation Centre, a painting of the market created by local artist Robert Cathcart was presented to Slater for her dedication to local food. When the market board saw the painting at the recent Stonetown Arts show, they knew it was the perfect way to show their appreciation. From left are Stonetown Arts representative Cathy Atwell, market board member Andrea Macko, Robert Cathcart, Ann Slater and board members Chris Woolf, Melody Arnhold, Simon Fraser, Lynette Geddes and Sean Brode.



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Wildwood Labs releases first-ever hemp stick to be sold on recreational market



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Representatives from Wildwood Labs and staff from Little Leaf Cannabis Co. celebrated the launch of Wildwood Labs' hemp stick on the recreational cannabis market in Canada Dec. 13 with a product-launch event at Little Leaf in Stratford.

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A local hemp producer and manufacturer of CBD topicals officially launched its flagship hemp-stick product on the recreational cannabis market during a special event at Little Leaf Cannabis Co. in Stratford last month.

In honour of this milestone product

launch, Wildwood Labs of Lakeside in Oxford County, just a short drive from St. Marys, celebrated at the Stratford pot shop on Dec. 13, 2024. At the event, members of the media and those who visited the store that day were invited by Wildwood Labs representatives to learn more about hemp sticks and the company that makes them.

"A lot of people are under the impres-



(GALEN SIMMONS PHOTO)

Wildwood Labs co-owner and managing director Shane Wiebe speaks at a product-launch event for the company's hemp sticks at Little Leaf Cannabis Co. in Stratford Dec. 13.

sion that cannabis can get you high, and of course it can if you're smoking it or certain edibles can have a psychoactive effect if they have THC in them," said Shane Wiebe, managing director and co-owner of Wildwood Labs. "But our product is very rich in CBD and in CBC and in CBN and CBG and all these other cannabinoids that specifically target inflammation and pain, restless muscles, these kinds of thing.

"Our product is a full-spectrum hemp product – it's not made from marijuana; it's made from hemp. It's a full-spectrum product, so we do not isolate the different cannabinoids after we've extracted this healthy crude oil from the hemp. The benefit is now instead of just having one cannabinoid in there – maybe it's CBD, maybe it's CBC or maybe a little bit of both – in this case, we're actually using the crude oil as part of the product. You could almost use it before we put it into its format as a topical cream. ... Instead of having one or two cannabinoids, I always joke we have between nine and nine million in there because there's only about 20 (cannabinoids) we can test for right now."

While Wildwood Labs' four varieties of hemp sticks – lemongrass and lavender, cool menthol, warming cinnamon ginger, and extra strength – have been available on the medical cannabis market for some time, the product launch last month marked the first time customers could purchase a hemp stick without first seeing a doctor and obtaining a prescription, something Wiebe said is a huge step toward making the product more accessible to people who may benefit from it.

"We've really wanted to target people who are grandma's and great grandma's age because there's so much that is not known about the cannabis market; they really do think of it as a recreational (drug) ... to get high, and that's not at all what our ethos is about. For us, why it's a big deal is because now we can just talk to people (about it)," Wiebe said.

"Let's say we had a conversation about it with someone at Walmart. ... Now we can educate people around us and say, 'No, this is not going to get you high, but it will help you get moving.' We can say, 'Hey, order it on the (Ontario Cannabis Store) online or order it here at Little Leaf."

Wildwood Labs is a homegrown business started by a group of local farmers and families who planted 60 acres of hemp in Lakeside in 2020. The company not only grows the hemp it uses in its products, it also extracts the hemp oil and processes it into the hemp sticks. For Leanne McPhie, CEO of Little Leaf Cannabis Co., being able to support a local business that is innovating in the cannabis industry is an important partnership for the Stratford pot shop.

"Like us, they are a family-run business, they're local, they truly believe and are passionate about what they are doing, and the product they have put out is an all-natural product; it's just incredible," McPhie said. "I've been using it for a while now and it works so well. I find it more effective than anything else I've tried. Because they are local, family owned, we need to support each other."

According to McPhie, about 30 per cent of Little Leaf's customer base come into the store looking for wellness products.

"It's always important for us to be looking for products that are going to be effective for our customers that are as natural as possible," McPhie said. ... Wildwood Labs came to us about a year ago and said, 'This is a product we are looking to put on the market,' and I thought it would be great for our customers."

Currently, only the warming cinnamon ginger hemp stick is available at Little Leaf and through the Ontario Cannabis Store, however Wiebe said Wildwood Labs is hopeful the other three varieties of hemp stick will be available on the recreational market soon.



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Friendship Centre hosts Holiday Social



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

On Dec. 20, the St. Marys Friendship Centre held its annual Holiday Social with a full room of attendees showing their Christmas spirit. The Friendship Choir sang some holiday favourites. There was also some entertainment by the Little Falls Grade 1 classes and a variety of performances and acts from other program groups. The social was attended by Friendship Centre members and community members. Above left, Friendship Centre staff Louise, Jenny, Sarah, Eliza and Kim show their festive cheer. Above right, the Friendship Centre Choir entertained the crowd.

Town requesting feedback on draft recreation, culture and leisure services master plan

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys is inviting community members to provide feedback on the draft recreation, culture and leisure services master plan.

This plan, now in its second phase, aims to enhance the town's recreational, cultural, and leisure offerings.

In June 2024, the town completed the

first phase of public engagement, gathering input on the types of facilities, services and programs needed to meet local needs. The draft plan, developed using community feedback, demographic data, growth forecasts, participation and usage levels, and best practices, is now ready for review.

A copy of the draft recreation, culture and leisure services master plan is available online at www.townofstmarys.com/RCLSMP.

com/RCLSMP.

Residents can provide their feedback in several ways. The survey is accessible online at www.townofstmarys.com/RCLSMP, with print copies available at town hall, the St. Marys Public Library, Pyramid Recreation Centre and municipal operations centre. The survey will remain open until Jan. 13, 2025.

Written comments can be submitted in-person at town facilities or sent by

email to sische@town.stmarys.on.ca.

Once completed, the recreation, culture and leisure services master plan update will guide the delivery of recreation, culture and leisure opportunities in St. Marys for the next 10 years.

For more information, visit www.townofstmarys.com/RLCSMP or contact Stephanie Ische, director of community services at 519-284-2340 ext. 624 or sische@town.stmarys.on.ca.

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SPOTLIGHT ON ARTS & CULTURE

Photography in flight

JIM GILES
Independent Columnist
 Edited by Alice Rixson

By the early 1800s, after decades of debate, photography finally developed into a recognized form of art. While some may see it as mere documentation of reality, photography can be art when it becomes a form of creative expression.

Photographs tell stories and convey messages where words are inadequate. A single image can capture complex emotions, cultural moments, tragedies, and beauty in everyday life. The power to communicate visually makes photography a compelling art mode.

Photography originated when Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833), a French inventor and one of the earliest pioneers of photography, created the first permanent photograph. Niépce used a primitive camera to capture an image on a pewter plate coated with a light-sensitive substance. Exposures consumed hours because materials available then did not have enough photoelectric properties necessary to change its electrical resistance, for example, when exposed to light. In 1839, Louis Daguerre, another Frenchman (1787-1857), identified the daguerreotype process that required only minutes of exposure in the camera, much closer to the photographic camera concept of today.

Prior to the development of photography, realistic images could only be produced by skilled artists by portraits. Photography became more accessible to the public in the early 1900s, and the first cameras used in Canada were simple wooden boxes with lenses and brass fittings. English industrial chemist and entrepreneur Hugh Lee Pattinson (1796-1858) is credited with Canada's first photograph of Niagara Falls in 1840, which took about 10 minutes to capture.

Long-time St. Marys resident and photographer Herman Veenendaal was born on the Indonesian island of New Guinea. When he was a young child, his family emigrated to Canada, settling in the Niagara area. After graduating college his first job was at a bank in Niagara Falls. Later he joined the Royal Bank and was relocated in St. Marys in 1975. "By 1981 I'd had enough of banking and went back to school to study meteorology," recalls Veenendaal. After five years of working for Meteorological Service Canada, he once again returned to school, this time focusing on aviation weather and worked for Transport Canada, Air Navi-



(PHOTO COURTESY OF HERMAN VEENENDAAL)

Bald Eagle

gation System retiring in 2011.

As a youth, Veenendaal expressed no interest in sports. Instead, he spent countless hours in the local forests and areas of Niagara-On-The-Lake taking pictures of wildlife, which he finds interesting and challenging. This ignited his passion for photographing birds. "The first task is to find the birds," he says. "A bird photographer often has to travel to distant locations to find specific species. One needs knowledge of species behavior, its feeding habits, its seasonal patterns, and its preferred habitat." Of primary importance is respecting the space of the bird and "to avoid stressing it, I rarely stay long."

"There is an art to composition and exposure, and choosing the setting for the photograph. Getting the exposure right, framing the subject, and processing the image are all artistic attributes," stresses Veenendaal.

Weather presents additional challenges, especially with pictures taken from a distance. Lighting can be harsh at midday so mornings and late afternoons are preferred. "I often use a canoe to take photos of water birds. Balancing the boat and a heavy camera can also present a challenge," he states.

Veenendaal claims that habitat destruction has made local bird photography arduous in recent decades. For example, grassland birds are now rare in this part of Ontario due to farming practices, particularly the early and frequent harvesting of hay; grassland birds need



(PHOTO COURTESY OF HERMAN VEENENDAAL)

Belted Kingfisher

an undisturbed habitat until late June to successfully raise their young, he discloses.

"Favourite birds for me to photograph include those that frequent water bodies such as rivers and marshes. Herons, Grebes, Bitterns, and other such species are usually well camouflaged," continues Veenendaal. "Treasured photos that I've taken include the local Osprey population diving on fish and climbing out of the water," he relates. Colourful warblers in spring are also among his admired species to photograph.

For those interested in bird photography, Veenendaal advises to purchase the best equipment affordable, and splurging on the lenses, which are the most important components.

When asked what camera and lens he uses to take his photos, Veenendaal recounts the story of Ernest Hemmingway asking Ansel Adams what camera he used to take a particular prized photograph. Adams countered by asking Hemmingway what type of pencil he used to write his successful books. In other words, it takes more than good equipment to generate a worthy product. It requires a degree of "knowledge and skill, both of the subject and the equipment."

View Veenendaal's wildlife photographs on his Facebook page. Pictures are displayed and available for purchase at the Station Gallery.

Please send comments and proposed topics for Arts articles to - smindependentarts@gmail.com



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Perth-Waterloo Egg and Pullet Farmers pledge to continue school egg program

GARY WEST

Independent Reporter

Egg and pullet farmers from the Perth County and the Region of Waterloo recently got together to celebrate a year of giving in the area.

These area farmers came up with the idea a decade ago to promote proper nutrition in schools by providing individually packed hardboiled and peeled eggs to students at no cost. There are now more than 150 schools taking part in this very successful program.

“Through the 2023-2024 school year, Perth-Waterloo Egg Farmers were able to supply 65,000 hard cooked eggs to the 150 schools,” said Kayla Veldman, who farms with her family near St. Marys and helps to monitor the Egg donations. These Eggs were used in school breakfast and snack programs, to help address food insecurity within

the community. “The addition of Eggs to school nutrition programs provide children with access to a healthy source of protein to help fuel them through the school day.”

Statistics show that as many as one in three children in Canada are at risk of going to school on an empty stomach. Through this program, every student is encouraged to take an egg, no matter their lifestyle or situation.

The Perth-Waterloo school egg program would not be possible without the support of their generous sponsors, which include local businesses, companies and farmers.

The funds raised and committed in 2024 will support the continuation of the program until at least 2026.

Local individuals and businesses can contribute by emailing perthwaterlooeggfarmers@gmail.com.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Pictured is a group of egg and pullet farmers from Perth County and Waterloo Region at a recent gathering. In the front row, from left, are Erin Gerber, Amanda Cook, Bonnie DeWeerd, Sally Van Straaten, Brenda West, Pauline Neeb, Karen Wagler, Gary Wagler, Jess Graham, Laurie Graham, Gary West and Julie Wynette. In the back row from left are Josh Gerber, Mark Cook, Andy DeWeerd, Mike Van Straaten, Delmer Schultz, Mike Ready, Julie Ready, J.J. Deslippe, Rita Reynen, Brett Graham and Kyle Wynette.

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Lincs ring in new year with back-to-back wins

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The St. Marys Lincolns started the 2025 portion of their season on the right foot with a pair of wins over the Komoka Kings and Strathroy Rockets.

The Lincolns returned to the ice on Jan. 3 for their first game back from the holiday break against the last-place Kings and cruised to a dominant 7-2 win over the Kings. Head coach Jeff Bradley acknowledged the quality of the opponent and the fact it was their first game back from the layoff made it a bit tough to get perfection out of the roster, but still, he was content with his team's effort.

"I thought it was a fine performance, all things considered," Bradley told the Independent. "We're playing our first game back from the break and we didn't have too much practice time recently so we knew it was going to be at least a little bit sloppy, but we still felt we definitely should win that game and, at the end of the day, we did what we needed to do."

Coming into the contest, Bradley said the Lincolns were focused on getting back up to game speed.

"It was good to shake off the rust and that was the main goal. We didn't want to necessarily focus on Komoka or tailoring our game to match theirs as much as we wanted to worry about ourselves and make sure we were getting back into the groove of how we need to play, and as the game progressed, we did a better job of that."

Despite their rusty start, the Lincolns jumped out to a 3-0 lead that was kick-started by a shot from the high slot by Julian Stubgen sailing past Kings' starter Zack Irvin. Chase MacQueen-Spence followed that up when he buried a one-timer from Ryan Hodkinson to put St. Marys up by two before Chase McDougall drove the net to bury a rebound. Before the period was done, however, Shane Neusteter got the Kings on the board with a wrist shot from along the board he managed to sneak through the five-hole on Colby Booth-Housego.

Booth-Housego made 31 saves in the win.

In the second period, a point shot by Stubgen took a deflection-filled trip to the back of the Kings' net which was last touched by Owen Voortman. Voort-



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

Jaden Lee and Julian Stubgen celebrate a goal during a St. Marys Lincolns' game earlier this season. Lee started the new year with one goal and six points in the Lincolns' two games against the Komoka Kings on Jan. 3 and Strathroy Rockets on Jan. 4, while Stubgen scored a goal in both games.

man's linemates, Luca Spagnolo and Jaden Lee, combined for a goal later in the period with Spagnolo tipping home a set-up pass from Lee despite falling as he drove to the net. With just 14 seconds left in the period, MacQueen-Spence netted his second of the night when he backhanded a loose puck by Owen Edwards, who came into the Kings' net in relief of Irvin after Spagnolo's goal.

With a comfortable lead after 40 minutes, the Lincolns locked the game down in the third, with the only exception being a goal by Gavin Hern, which he managed to jam by Booth-Housego after the puck pinballed around the crease before fortuitously landing on Hern's stick. Just 64 seconds later, however, the Lincolns' "Perfect Complement" line struck again as Voortman finished off a strong offensive zone shift by deking out Edwards, with assists going to Spagnolo and Lee.

Lincs hang on for win in Strathroy; penalty troubles persist

Though the Lincolns won their third consecutive game one night later in Strathroy, one glaring issue continued to rear its ugly head in their clash with the Rockets; a lack of discipline. Heading into the game in Strathroy, the Lincolns had been shorthanded seven times or more in five straight games, and con-

tinued that unpleasant trend with the Rockets having 10 chances to work on the powerplay.

The bench boss was blunt in his assessment of the team's constant penalty box parades.

"There's no doubt about it; we're way too undisciplined right now," Bradley said. "It's something that we're going to be addressing today. It's something I'm irritated by and that we need to fix. We are undisciplined at the moment, which is something we haven't traditionally been in the past. We have a fantastic penalty kill but we can't be relying on it as heavily as we are, so we have to address it or it will cost us down the line."

Heading into Jan. 4, the Lincolns had been shorthanded 47 times in their previous seven games, and thankfully, their penalty kill had been turning in herculean efforts as 46 of those penalty kills were successful. However, the Lincs played with fire too much and finally got burned against Strathroy, whose three goals in the game all came on man advantages, two of which were on five-on-three powerplays in the third period.

It was a strong first 40 minutes that allowed the Lincolns to stave off the Rockets' late-game comeback, Bradley explained.

"Aside from the penalties, we were

outstanding. I thought we were the better team for the majority of that game and we didn't give up much at all through the first two periods. I really thought it was an awesome, all-around game by our entire group.

"You look at our conference first through ninth, and there isn't a huge difference in the talent level," continued Bradley. "Strathroy has plenty of talent, but I find we have a very intelligent group. They know what they need to do and how and when to do it, so I think for us, it's not just our skill that allows us to have success, but it's also our players' smarts."

Bradley contrasted the game against the Rockets with his team's 7-2 win 24 hours earlier, and noted he was happier with the intensity his group displayed.

"In the game against Komoka, we were taking our time making plays, whereas against Strathroy, we were attacking with and without the puck with more intention. Our forecheck was on point, our defencemen did a fantastic job getting up the walls and taking away Strathroy's options, and the forwards did a great job supporting our defence and preventing odd-man rushes."

For the second consecutive game, Stubgen opened the scoring for the Lincolns, this time with a point shot that found the five-hole on Rockets' netminder Hayden Duncan thanks to a screen by McDougall for the only goal of the opening period.

The second saw each member of the Lincolns' top line find the back of the net, with Lee scoring a shorthanded marker off of a misplay with the puck by Duncan, followed by Spagnolo tipping home yet another set-up pass from Lee just over a minute later. After Nathan Schaap got the Rockets on the board with a powerplay goal, Strathroy had close to three minutes of a flurry of momentum, but it was stopped at the 10:47 mark of the period by Voortman burying his 19th of the campaign.

Voortman's goal gave the Thunder Bay native a three-game goal streak and was his seventh goal in his last three games dating back to Dec. 20. Meanwhile, Lee has points in eight of his last nine games, and Spagnolo boasts an 11-game point streak, which is the longest active point streak and tied for the longest point streak of the season in the en-

CONTINUED TO PAGE 13

U14 Snipers teams battle in tournament final

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The U14 St. Marys Snipers teams met in their group's final game of the Snipers Tournament hosted Dec. 13-15 in St. Marys.

In the end, it was the U14 Habermehl team who captured the Gold medal in an 8-5 win, with the U14 Graham team settling for Silver. After the two teams traded leads back and forth in the first period, a five-goal second period propelled the U14 Habermehl Snipers to victory.

Peyton VanStraaten scored four goals for the Habermehl Snipers, while Maddie McCutcheon scored twice and Miranda Scherberth and Maelle Hachler each had one goal.

For the U14 Graham Snipers, Kyla Graham recorded a hat-trick and Isla Ritchie chipped in a pair of goals.

U14 Habermehl Snipers' head coach Evan Habermehl described the semi-final and final clashes between the two Snipers' squads as highly competitive showdowns between friends and former teammates.

"The majority of the two St. Marys U14 teams played together on the same team last year, so putting them against each other made for an intense pair of games," Habermehl told the Independent. "In the semis, the U14 Graham team came out with an intensity that I don't think our girls were ready for. They came to play and played amazingly in both games. Our team was able to check their emotions at the door and find their game to manage a comeback victory in both."

Habermehl was also impressed by the team's ability to incorporate different



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured are members of both U14 St. Marys Snipers teams, who met each other in the semi-finals and finals of the Snipers Tournament on Dec. 13-15 in St. Marys. Pictured laying in front in the hot dog costumes, from left to right, are Lauren Garniss and Elaine Ritchie. Kneeling in the front row, from left, are Myelle Reaume, Olivia Hendricks, Maelle Hachler, Isla Ritchie, Peyton VanStraaten, Mary McCutcheon, Kyla Graham, Maddie McCutcheon, Meredith Stokes, and Layla Taylor. Standing in the back row, from left, are Miranda Scherbarth, Lyla Habermehl, Reagan Smith, Brenna Bearss, Mikayla Ford, Amara Grant, Jordyn Schellenberger, Lilian Johnston, Ava Bastien, Scarlett Gloor, Georgia Hunter, Isabella Flutert, and Lilly Murphy.

players into their lineup.

"Our team played really well over the weekend. We had a couple of players from outside of our association to help us get to the league minimum number of players on a team of 12. These two players integrated into our team well and our team embraced them from the moment we hit the ice for the first game. As a team, we played really well in some pretty tight games and came away with

some great wins."

Meanwhile, U14 Graham head coach Christen Graham explained the progress her team showed that made the weekend a big success for her U14 squad despite not winning the top prize.

"Our girls came to play and really stepped it up a notch and put everything they had into the entire weekend," Graham began. "We also had two awesome players join us from Mitchell who fit in

flawlessly and helped propel our team throughout the weekend. We have been wanting our players to work on the important little details and the team really showed how much they have been working to improve the basics of ringette that makes you a stronger player and team.

"Our goalie was on fire all weekend, our defence stood strong protecting our goalie and allowing as few shots as possible, and our forwards did a great job at moving the ring and hitting the back of the net. Overall, they showed amazing teamwork all weekend and that's what wins games. They put up a great fight and it was rewarding to see them come together and play some great ringette."

Graham also remarked on her team's resiliency through their difficult opening to the season, which guided them to a strong tournament performance.

"We have had a rough start to the season and played some really strong teams, so when we made it to the semis, our girls came out swinging and held their own," Graham remarked. "They put everything they had into those games and made the other team work incredibly hard for everything they got."

Meanwhile, Habermehl credited his team for the growth in the team's understanding of the game.

"The girls are seeing the game of ringette better and better every game. They are setting goals for themselves and we as a coaching staff are encouraging them and helping them achieve those goals. They are developing well as individuals and as a team and this was a great result to finish up the first half of the season. The coaching staff is proud of how these girls have played so far and I hope they continue to do so in the second half."

Lincs ring in new year with back-to-back wins

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12
tire GOJHL.

"That Luca (Spagnolo), Jaden (Lee), and Owen (Voortman) line was great. They got us goals when we needed them and just looked like dominant players. They obviously have a lot of familiarity between the three of them and they're veteran players who know what to do and when to turn it on. We have a team full of gamers who know what they need to do to be successful when the chips are down."

Bradley also had high praise for Ryder Livermore and Blake Elzinga, the latter of whom moved to the blueline from his typical forward position due to the Lincolns being down to just five defence-men.

"Ryder (Livermore) was unbelievable. He looked like he didn't have any time off. He was making incredible plays, which is a part of his game that goes a bit under the radar, but his playmaking was awesome. He was physical. He just played like a top-tier leader.

"We put Blake (Elzinga) back on defence because we were short on the blueline, and he was outstanding too. He's a

Swiss Army knife for us. He really can do anything when he's on his game and consistently playing hard, and the last few weeks, he's been really consistent and effective. He can run a powerplay, he can play up front, he can play on the back end and it looks like he's found that consistency that makes him so important for us."

The Lincolns entered the final period with a 4-1 lead, but powerplay goals by Braedon Clark and Brendan Gerber just over four minutes apart made things much closer than the Lincolns wanted. A penalty against Strathroy with under two minutes to go allowed the Lincolns to get a last-minute powerplay tally from Spagnolo and seal a 5-3 victory.

Nico Armellin made 28 stops in between the pipes to secure the victory.

With the game not only being the toughest of the Lincolns' first two games back from the holidays, but also a potential first-round playoff preview, Bradley described the win as one more solidifying example the team is doing what they need to do with over half the regular season done.

"I think it just reinforces to our guys that we are doing the right things. We're preparing the right way and we're focused on the right things, and being prepared and focused are huge parts of our

game. We didn't just show up in Strathroy to play hockey; we came with a well-thought-out plan and the players had the focus to execute on our plan."

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Pearson representing Canada at World University Games

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The flourishing hockey career of Kaleb Pearson continues to grow stronger as the St. Marys native prepares to play for Team Canada at the Fédération Internationale du Sport Universitaire (FISU) Winter World University Games starting Jan. 12 in Torino, Italy.

Pearson expressed high excitement when discussing his place on Team Canada.

“It’s unreal, honestly,” Pearson told the Independent. “Not a lot of people get the opportunity to play for their country and represent their country on a national stage, so I’m really looking forward to the opportunity and I’m going to jump into it with arms wide open.”

The 24-year-old forward is currently in his fourth season with the University of PEI Panthers, for which he serves as an assistant captain and, through 15 games, leads the Panthers with 17 points, nine of which were goals. Last summer, Pearson was invited to the development camp of the NHL’s Dallas Stars.

Canada will be coached by Mark Howell, the current bench boss of the University of Calgary Dinos and the person from whom Pearson received confirmation he would be part of the national team.

“The FISU had a scouting board that did evaluations of the players who they thought might potentially make the team, so they came to a bunch of games throughout the first semester and were watching video of our games,” said Pearson. “I found out I had made the team when I got an email from the head coach, Mark (How-



(PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF PEI)

Kaleb Pearson will represent Canada at the FISU Winter World University Games starting Jan. 12.

ell), and then I got a phone call from him a few minutes later, and it was just really exciting to realize the opportunity I had in front of me.”

Pearson discussed his view on his role heading into

the competition.

“I think I can be a really effective power forward who has the threat of putting the puck in the net at all times and keep pushing the pace every time I’m on the ice. Our coaches have set the standard that we want to be a team that plays at a high pace and can strike quickly, so for me, getting to pucks quickly and taking advantage of every chance I get is my focus. Obviously, we have a lot of talented players, so I’m excited to play with them and use their abilities to complement mine and vice versa.”

The accomplishment of reaching an international stage such as the FISU winter worlds, according to Pearson, is something that is both humbling as an accolade he couldn’t have fathomed when he was a kid, and gratifying after the countless hours of hard work in his junior-hockey career.

“If you were to ask 12-year-old me, I wouldn’t have ever thought I might one day have the opportunity to play at anything like this and be in the position I’m in today. I’m really grateful for it because it’s such an incredible honour, but I’m also really proud of myself because I know it didn’t come out of the blue. The hard work I’ve put in throughout my years growing up and then here at UPEI has gotten me to this point.

“Now that I’m in this position, I’m just trying to take it all in and keep trying to get to the highest level that I can,” Pearson continued. “Hopefully, I can use this as an opportunity to get seen and get noticed, and hopefully, this is an amazing experience that I’m also able to use to get closer to playing in the NHL one day.”

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U18 B boys win gold at Grant Lee Memorial tourney

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Frayne Custom Cabinets U18 B Boys St. Marys Rock started the new year with a bang as they took the top prize at the Grant Lee Memorial Tournament hosted in Clinton from Jan. 3-5.

Head coach Dale Switzer told the Independent his team's willingness to battle was excellent throughout the weekend.

"The boys' compete level was much better," Switzer raved. "Our defensive play and goaltending were very strong all weekend. Although the consistency of our play can always improve, the players did take a step forward in that area as well. Another point of emphasis for us was every player's commitment to accomplishing the tasks we gave them during the tournament, whether that was a specific checking role or being placed in different powerplay or penalty kill positions."

Switzer also noted a stronger coordination between the blueliners and the attacking forwards allowed the team to find more opportunities in the prime scoring area.

"Our defencemen were getting shots through to the net very well," said Switzer. "Our forwards were also helping by establishing some net-front presence well. I think we saw improvement in both of those areas as well this weekend and we want to see more of that going forward."

After going 2-1 in the round-robin, the Rock met the South Muskoka Bears in the semi-final, and thanks to strong two-way play by St. Marys, the smooth-skating Bears were stifled offensively. Meanwhile, Ethan St. Clair scored on the powerplay in the second period followed by Thijs Paulin finding the back of the net early in the third. Danny Switzer potted an empty



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Frayne Custom Cabinets U18 B Boys St. Marys Rock took gold at the Grant Lee Memorial Tournament hosted Jan. 3-5 in Clinton. Pictured sitting in front is goaltender Reid Taylor. In the middle row, from left to right, are Luke Richardson, Owen Dittmer, Callum MacIntosh, Brody Higham, Simon Greig and Dylan Regier. In the back row, from left, are coach Sam Bolton, coach Todd Dittmer, trainer Ian Bolton, Isaac Cousineau, Ethan St. Clair, Brody Tubman, Owen Maxwell, Brier Frayne, Thijs Paulin, Andrew Davis, Grier Mahoney, Jordan Wiles, Cole Jones, Danny Switzer, coach Rob MacIntosh and head coach Dale Switzer.

netter to seal a 3-1 final score. Reid Taylor earned the win in goal and turned in strong efforts throughout the weekend with goalie partner Isaac Cousineau out due to injury.

"We had not seen South Muskoka yet this year and they were a strong skating and passing team, so our guys had to play at a high level," Switzer said. "We moved the puck well and did a good job limiting South Muskoka's scoring chances. When shots did get through, Reid gave us really solid goaltending, and when we got into penalty trouble late in the game, our penalty killers did a fantastic job holding onto our lead."

The gold-medal game was a rematch from the Rock's

only round-robin loss against the South Huron Sabres and, this time, it was St. Marys coming away victorious, with Andrew Davis netting a powerplay tally late in the second, while Taylor stood tall for a 1-0 shutout win.

Switzer added the final game was another example of the team getting rewarded for responsible defensive-zone play.

"We have played South Huron five times this year and all but once, it was a one-goal game, so our guys knew it was going to be a battle. Both teams skated and competed hard but, again, it was our commitment to defence and strong goaltending that got us through."

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Alzheimer's is what I have, but not who I am. I'm just "Ruthie".



This testimony is written by Ruthie Brown. The Alzheimer Society Huron Perth thanks Ruthie for sharing her life experience. This is one person's experience with dementia. Each person affected by dementia has their own story.

It's an honour to be able to share my journey with you. Please keep an open mind as this is my story, but it might not be the same as someone else's walk with Alzheimer's.

Allow me to give you a brief background. I am 77 years old and was born and raised in St. Thomas. My husband, Alan, and I live in Exeter, and have been married for 56 years. I am a retired Registered Practical Nurse.

I was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in February 2023.

I've often been asked how I knew that something was different than the "normal" forgetfulness that sometimes happens as we age.

A few examples of the difference for me are as follows:

1. Not recognizing what red and blue stood for on the taps, therefore not knowing which one was hot and which one was cold.
2. Not being able to get my hearing aids in the correct ear because I didn't recognize the colours indicating which one was left and which one was right.
3. Getting in the car to drive and not remembering how to start it.
4. Proof reading something I had written and realizing that I had put wrong words in sentences therefore it made no sense at all. Also, when I was talking to someone, I sometimes said something that also didn't make any sense.
5. Finding things in strange places or not finding them at all.
6. Not remembering how to start the washing machine or sometimes running the washer or dryer without adding the clothes.
7. Turning wrong burners on the stove due to not recognizing the symbols.
8. Not remembering if I completed some of my routine hygiene practices therefore repeating them once or twice or maybe not doing it at all.

At this point I didn't get alarmed. I just thought I wasn't concentrating hard enough. Then something changed. I was driving home to Exeter from London, when I suddenly didn't know where I was or how I got there. I knew where I was supposed to be but didn't know how to get there. I pulled into a parking lot and waited until my mind cleared. I'm not sure how long it took, but eventually my mind cleared enough, and I drove home as if nothing happened.

A week or so later, I had a similar incident, but thankfully I wasn't driving this time. When we arrived at our friend's house, I was reluctant to get out of the car because I didn't recognize her house or its surroundings. When my husband convinced me to go in, I didn't recognize anything about the house. Again, after some time, my mind cleared, and I continued our visit as if nothing had happened. Periodically, I continue to have more of these types of events.

Once my husband found out that this wasn't the first incident, he insisted that we make an appointment

to see our family doctor. After a memory test and a CAT scan, the doctor diagnosed me. He also strongly advised my to give up driving.

At first, I was in a state of "shock". Even though I knew that something was "off", it wasn't the diagnosis that I was expecting. Once the shock passed, I went into a bit of a "pity party". I soon realized that "negative" or what I call "stinking thinking" was not a path that I wanted to stay on.

When I was first asked to share my testimony at a church function, fear and panic set in. "Why would they ask me to do that?", I thought. How could someone with dementia be able to remember well enough to speak in front of others. Then I heard a small voice say, "Why not you?" That speaking engagement led me to share my story.

I had heard of the Alzheimer Society but didn't know much about it. When I was first diagnosed a family member suggested that I get in touch with the society. I was reluctant at first because I didn't think I was ready for that yet. I presumed that you had to wait until you were much more advanced. Later, one evening I decided to Google info about the Society. There was a wealth of information available regarding programs and to my surprise, I found that the early stage is the best time to get involved. The next day, I made the phone call. It was the best decision that I could have made.

Because of the monthly phone calls that I receive, the "First Steps" program, "Minds in Motion", and the support group for caregivers, my husband and I are much better equipped to walk this journey.

Through my own experience this far with this disease, I have written a few suggestions that are helpful for me.

- No pop quizzes. Don't ask me if I know who you are. Just assume that I don't. Please introduce yourself when you are speaking to me. Some days I might know who you are and some days I might not. You won't offend me.
- If I can't finish a sentence, please don't try to finish it for me as it might not be what I'm trying to express, and it would be frustrating for me. Just move the conversation on. Keep conversations short and simple.
- I love having visitors. Just call and arrange a time that's suitable for both of us. Keep your visits to 30-60 minutes. Long visits leave me frustrated and mentally exhausted. Please keep your conversations positive. Lift me up. Encouraging words are much better than critical words.
- If I'm walking without my walker, I tend to slam my feet down. It's because my perception is diminishing, so I can't tell how close my foot is to the floor. I use my walker whenever possible now because my balance has been affected and it helps to prevent a fall. If you see me trying to walk without my walker, gently remind me as I've probably just forgotten it.
- If I don't respond to you right away, don't assume that I can't hear you and start shouting. It's likely at that moment, I might not know how to respond.
- Please have patience with me if I ask you something that you just told me.
- Please have patience with me if I ask you something that you just told me.
- Try not to talk "Baby Talk" to me. Remember that I'm not a child. I'm just someone living with dementia.
- Please don't ignore me because you don't know what to say. All I need is a friendly smile, a kind word, or maybe just a hug.
- Try not to approach me from behind, because my peripheral vision is not as good as it used to be. Stand in front of me so that I can see you clearly. Otherwise, you will likely frighten me, and I might react negatively.
- I do seem to wear my emotions on my sleeve. So, if I get teary, it doesn't mean that I am depressed. Crying does not define me. It's just an emotion. I may also have moments of frustration. Please don't take it personally.
- Lastly and most importantly, don't put all your focus on the person with this disease. Remember the caregiver. They need all the support they can get, but likely won't ask.

There is no point in denying that our lives have changed. I'd be lying if I said that everything is "rosy" and we have it all together, because we do not. Because of our faith, family, friends, and the Alzheimer Society, I am living well with dementia.

Alzheimer's is what I have, but not who I am. I'm just "Ruthie".

Individual support, support groups, education programs, the In-Home Recreation Program, Minds in Motion®, and other Social Recreation programs are all offered virtually, over the phone, and in person.

The Alzheimer Society Huron Perth accepts and welcomes new clients and volunteers. If you are in need of support or have questions about programs and services, please call one of the offices.

Huron 519-482-1482 | Perth 519-271-1910

SUPPORT and EDUCATION

First Link Learning Series
The First Link Learning Series is comprised of courses that build upon one another to help you better understand dementia, coping strategies, planning, resources, and supports.

Taking Control of Our Lives
A self-management program for people living with dementia and their care partners.

One on One Support
Free, confidential support services to individuals, families, and friends affected by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups are offered for both persons living with dementia and their care partners. Groups provide an opportunity to discuss topics related to dementia with others who truly understand. Groups are available in Clinton, Exeter, Goderich, Grand Bend, Listowel, Seaford, St. Marys, Stratford, Wingham, and online. New members always welcome. Registration is required.

PROGAMS

Memory and Aging Program™
Developed for those who are experiencing normal age-related changes in memory or who are interested in learning more about this topic.

Minds in Motion®
An 8 week community based social program incorporates physical activity and mental stimulation for people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and their care partners.

Learning the Ropes for Living with MCI®
A program aimed at community dwelling older adults experiencing Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) and their close family member/friend.

Alzheimer Society **Talk with the Doc!**
Dr. Alexandra Peel, Geriatrician

Planning Ahead for Medical Decisions **1:30 PM WEDNESDAY JANUARY 22** Zoom presentation 1:30 - 2:30 pm Questions & Answers 2:30 - 3:00 pm

Online Event Register at <https://bit.ly/Doc-Talk2025>

Forward any questions to christyb@alzhp.ca or 519-271-1910

January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month

During Alzheimer's Awareness Month, Alzheimer Societies across Canada unite to challenge dementia stigma and create a community where everyone feels more comfortable talking about dementia and sharing their own experience.

The Alzheimer Society Huron Perth has a variety of education events coming up.

Talk with the Doc! Planning Ahead for Medical Decisions with Dr. Alexandra Peel will take place on ZOOM on Wednesday, January 22 from 1:30 - 3:00 pm.

Dr. Peel, a local geriatrician well-versed in dementia care, will identify and discuss how to prepare for the complex decisions that people and families living with dementia and frailty may face.

Talk with the Doc, also includes a lively Q&A session with Dr. Peel after the presentation. This is a FREE event. Self-register at <https://bit.ly/Doc-Talk2025>.

An exciting half-day Safety Sessions workshop will be taking place on Wednesday, January 29th at the Burnside Agri-plex 353 McCarthy Road, Stratford!

Alzheimer Society Huron Perth has partnered with the Stratford Lakeside Active Adults to present these in-person and interactive sessions in one place! Doors open at 8:30 am and the sessions start

at 9:00 am including topics on Frauds and Scams, Fire Safety, Driving and Aging, Brain Health, Community Paramedicine Program and a word from John Nater's office on Federal Matters! Pre-registration for this free workshop is available through Eventbrite: <https://SafetySessions.eventbrite.ca>.

Contact the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth for more about these and other upcoming programs.



SAFETY SESSIONS

COME HEAR THE LATEST INFORMATION

Federal Matters



Driving & Aging



Brain Health



Fire & Home Safety



Community Paramedics



Fraud & Scams



WEDNESDAY JANUARY 29

BURNSIDE AGRIPLEX - COMMUNITY HALL
353 McCarthy Road, Stratford
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Doors Open 8:30 AM

Pre-register at: <https://SafetySessions.eventbrite.ca>
Questions? 519-271-1910 or info@alzhp.ca
Walk-ins welcome!

EDUCATION HOUR

Join the Public Education Coordinators for one-hour virtual presentations on brain health, cognitive changes and dementia. Bring your questions!

<p>Wednesday, Jan. 8 10:00 AM Your Journey of Support Starts Here!</p>	<p>Monday, Feb 3, 7:00 P.M. Tuesday, Feb 4, 1:30 P.M. Brain Changes: 8 A's</p>
<p>Wednesday, Jan 15, 1:30 P.M. Wednesday, Jan 15, 7:00 P.M. Dementia Overview</p>	<p>Wednesday, Feb 5 10:00 A.M. Your Journey of Support Starts Here!</p>
<p>Monday, Jan 20, 7:00 P.M. Tuesday, Jan 21, 1:30 P.M. 10 Warning Signs</p>	<p>Monday, Feb 10, 7:00 P.M. Tuesday, Feb 11, 1:30 P.M. Communication Tips</p>
<p>Monday, Jan 27, 7:00 P.M. Tuesday, Jan 28, 1:30 P.M. Types of Dementia</p>	<p>Tuesday, Feb 18 1:30 P.M. What is M.C.I.?</p>

Self-Register: bit.ly/ASHPEducationHour
Questions: 519-482-1482 or 519-271-1910

Building Dementia Friendly Communities Across Huron and Perth Counties

A diagnosis of dementia changes everything. Or does it? A diagnosis means things are changing, but it also means there is still lots of good living to be done. Do you know where to find support and connection to continue to live well on this journey with dementia?

The Alzheimer Society Huron Perth works every day to create dementia friendly communities.

Those who have involved themselves with the First Link® Support Program, our multitude of education options, and our fun and inspiring social recreation programs share the impact of their experience with Alzheimer Society Huron Perth.

"Thank you so much for these resources, and our talks. I felt the weight lift from my shoulders and gained much clarity. Speaking with you was massively helpful, I can't thank you enough."

-Care partner after connecting with Counsellor



"Thank you for your work! The Zoom (Minds in Motion sessions) motivate me to actually do the physical exercises. I admire your ability to create 'community' among the participants."


-Person with dementia who attended Minds in Motion® virtual sessions

"The staff and people attending the program have been very helpful and wonderful to share things with. Have made it so much easier to understand and learn to live with it."

- Person with dementia who attended First Steps education program

The Alzheimer Society Huron Perth offers dementia education to healthcare professionals, retail staff and community groups interested in becoming more dementia friendly.

Get involved with Alzheimer Society Huron Perth. The staff: counsellors, educators and social recreation staff would love to connect with you and become part of your community.



Knowledge Changes Everything

Memory & Aging Program™

What is her name? What did I come down here for? Where did I put...? The Virtual Memory and Aging Program, reviews age-related memory changes, how to optimize your brain health, and helpful memory strategies.

It is designed for anyone experiencing normal age-related changes in memory or anyone interested in learning more about this topic.

The Memory and Aging Program describes what memory is, how it changes with age, and when to be concerned.

Brain healthy lifestyle choices and practical memory strategies are reviewed and practiced, improving your ability to remember those everyday things – including those pesky names and things you intend to do!

The Memory and Aging Program consists of four weekly ZOOM sessions, 9:30 – 11:30 am on Thursdays: January 23, 30, February 6, and 30.

There is a fee of \$25, which covers the cost of the program workbook and materials. Financial assistance is available.

Register online at <https://bit.ly/MAP-Winter25>

www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth

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Alzheimer Society
HURON PERTH

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Winter Session Details:

- January 14 – March 4 (rotating between 8:30pm and 6:30pm)
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All you need is a clean pair of indoor sneakers, warm clothing, and a desire to have fun and learn something new.

Come make friends, get active, and fall in love with curling this winter!



18+ Open C Snipers capture gold at St. Marys tourney

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The 18+ Open C St. Marys Snipers won the gold medal at the Snipers Tournament hosted Dec. 13-15 in St. Marys.

A dominant 7-0 win over St. Thomas propelled the Snipers to the final game against the Southern Ontario Fury.

Head coach Jim Burlingham discussed his team's focal points going into the tournament, the most important of which he expressed high satisfaction.

"We went into the weekend focused on neutral zone control, getting quick shots and rebounds, playing shorthanded, and keeping ourselves out of the penalty box," Burlingham told the Independent. "Control of the ring in the neutral zone has been our biggest challenge over the first half of the season and we saw positive progression in the tournament."

After getting caught with an early goal by the Fury, Michelle-Anne Riordan tied the game at one apiece with just one minute and 59 seconds left in the first period. Riordan then followed that up



with her second of the game less than two minutes into the second frame.

Tanya Colbert, Stacey Regier, and Jessica Burlingham all chipped in a goal as the Snipers rode their four-goal second period to a 5-2 win to win the top prize.

"We played a better neutral zone game over the tournament and in the finals," said Burlingham. "We had stronger possession of the ring and fewer turnovers. The opposing goalies were all strong, but we capitalized on top-corner shots and rebounds. We found ourselves in the penalty box a little too often, but overall, I think we executed on enough of our gameplan to ultimately get the result we were looking for."

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ANDREA MACKO

Hodges Funeral Home

While thoughts often turn to taxes in January, a local business is offering a way to get organized when it comes to that other inevitability in life, death.

The Andrew L. Hodges Funeral Home is hosting a free seminar on funeral pre-planning on Thursday Jan. 16 to shed light on what's involved when planning a funeral, whether it be for oneself or a loved one.

"This is a great opportunity to learn about what funeral options exist in a stress-free environment," said Hodges Funeral Home owner Andrew Hodges. "Pre-planning gives families time to discuss what they'd like and to make solid decisions rather than emotional decisions, which can often happen if the discussion only happens at the time of death."

Hodges adds pre-planning can range from something as straightforward as having a file at the funeral home with one's basic wishes to more specific plans,

such as pre-paying for services, pre-writing obituaries and providing photos, song selections and other celebration elements.

The evening will also include information on how to pre-pay for funeral services, and where funds are held in trust and gain interest until the time of need.

"Pre-payment is increasingly popular as it guards against inflation and offers financial peace of mind," Hodges said. "Families can even pre-pay the components of a service they know they do want and fill in the rest at time of need."

The evening will include a question-and-answer period about pre-arrangements and funeral practices in general – something Hodges welcomes. It's also an opportunity for the business to showcase its recent improvements.

The seminar begins at 7 p.m. at the Hodges Funeral Home (47 Wellington St. S.). RSVPs are appreciated either by calling the funeral home at 519-284-2820 or emailing rsvphodges@gmail.com.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF HODGES FUNERAL HOME)

Andrew Hodges, owner of Hodges Funeral Home

Heading to the U.K. this year? Read this first

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

There's an important new step to complete before packing your suitcase and heading overseas to the U.K.

As of this week, beginning Jan. 8 to be exact, Canadians are among those who will be required to apply for and get approval for the new Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) before entering the United Kingdom.

This new requirement applies not just to those who are visiting the U.K.,

but also to those who are connecting through a U.K. airport.

The intended benefits of the program are to strengthen border security and to use modern technology to expedite the arrival process of those entering the U.K. The cost of applying for the ETA is £10 per person, but the ETA is valid for a period of two years (or until your passport expires, whichever is sooner) and is good for unlimited trips to the U.K. during that time.

There are two ways to the apply for the new U.K. ETA, but it is strongly

recommended to apply through the UK ETA app rather than through the government website. In fact, if you visit the government website at www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-an-electronic-travel-authorisation-eta, they will also push you towards the app, which is available through your app store on Google or Android.

Using the app is preferred because the camera function on your phone is helpful to take photos of your passport and of your face during the application process. The estimated time required

to complete the application is 10 minutes, and most approval decisions are rendered within three business days but could be as fast as just a few minutes.

Whether you're heading to England, Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland, it is a great time to visit the United Kingdom. Just make sure that you avoid problems at the border by applying for the new Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) in advance of your travels.

Stewart Grant is owner of Stonetown Travel Ltd., with offices in St. Marys and New Hamburg.

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PRE-ARRANGEMENT SEMINAR THURSDAY, JAN. 16

Advancing planning can save you time, money and the stress of decisions at an emotional time!

Join Andrew at 7 p.m. for a brief presentation and Q-and-A. RSVP appreciated.

47 Wellington St. S., St. Marys
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Experiencing a Filipino and Ukrainian Christmas



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are organizers of the Filipino Christmas party Mirabel Skirten, Mershiel Van Erk and Babylin Lucas.

WENDY LAMOND

Independent Reporter

Over the holidays I was very honoured to be invited to stop in at two separate Christmas celebrations taking place in our lovely town.

The first was hosted by the Filipino community and the second was for our Ukrainian community. What I noticed at both events was not only the appreciation the two communities have for Canada but the joy they have to celebrate with friends and family the traditions of their own countries. And the food, oh wow, the food.

The Filipino Christmas took place at the Legion. Approximately 80 people attended coming from London, Stratford, Kitchener and other areas. The Filipino community will get together quite often to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries or just to visit.

This was the first year for the Christmas party and there were some attendees who were being welcomed to the community for the first time. Santa stopped in to see the young ones and hand out gifts.

The festive season in the Filipino culture is for celebrating Jesus Christ's birthday as 90 per cent of Filipinos practice Christianity. The joyful season starts off in September and continues through

until Jan. 6 culminating with the Feast of the Three Kings. They even hold the record for the world's longest Christmas celebrations.

One of the common traditions in the Philippines is lechon, a roast pig similar to the North American turkey tradition. Filipinos are known for their love of festivities and gatherings. In the Philippines, it is customary to throw monthly fiestas where there is lots of food, bright costumes and traditional dances.

The extended Christmas celebration is also a great boost for the economy as over that time, the production of decorations, gifts, food etc. are increased over many months. Much of the Filipino population is Catholic and will complete the Nine Mornings, known in Tagalog as Simbang Giabi. This involves nine mornings of mass that go from Dec. 16 until Christmas Eve, often taking place as early as 4 or 5 a.m. By completing the nine masses, it is believed Christmas prayers and wishes will come true. A common practice during the festive season is for carolers to go door to door singing for small gifts like money and food.

When I walked into the United Church for the Ukrainian Christmas, it was amazing to see the amount of people attending this event from the Ukrainian community, host families, local dignitaries and Santa Clause. Guests came from



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Excited kids waiting to see Santa.

St. Marys, Stratford, Exeter, Goderich, London, Kitchener, Kirkton, Welburn, Granton and Rannoch were in attendance.

There was so much talk and laughter taking place as the full room waited for the performances to begin.

Coun. Rob Edney did a great job as emcee by introducing the entertainment and telling a few jokes of his own. To start off the festivities, some Ukrainian families sang a traditional Ukrainian song called "A New Joy Has Come." There were also performances by Vira Furman on her violin, a traditional Ukrainian dance by Alina Shyshkivska, a skit by the Ukrainian school children, a song called "Good Evening to You" sung by Maksym, Damian and Platon, an ugly Christmas Sweater competition and much more.

The Ukrainian community shares some traditions similar to those in North America like getting the whole family together to celebrate. There is also a lot of delicious food shared, carols sung, church attended and gifts given. The Ukrainians have a tradition where children or a group of adults dress up as mythical characters with a Christmas star and go from house to house to act out a nativity scene and sing carols that glorify God. Similar to the Filipino tradition, the owners of each home will give them sweets or a donation and everyone has a great time.

As I mentioned at the start, I was so honoured to attend both events, and it was great seeing the joy of the festive season being shared among family and friends.



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right, Maksym, Damian and Platon entertained the crowd singing the traditional Ukrainian carol, "Good Evening to You."

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ST. MARYS, ONTARIO

Ukrainian community in St. Marys celebrates Christmas with a festive concert

OLENA OLIANINA

Independent Reporter

On Sunday, Dec. 22, the Ukrainian community of St. Marys gathered at the St. Marys United Church for a festive Christmas concert, creating a joyful celebration of unity and cultural heritage.

The event brought together families, friends and all those interested in Ukrainian traditions. The evening was masterfully hosted by Robert Edney, with support from Tetiana Holub, a teacher of English and Chinese. Their warm interaction created an atmosphere of friendship and holiday cheer, energizing the audience and setting a festive tone for the event.

A special highlight of the evening was the presentation of the first original recording of "Shchedryk" by Mykola Leontovych. This masterpiece of Ukrainian music, which has become a global symbol of Christmas, added a sense of grandeur to the evening, showcasing the richness of Ukrainian culture.

Children from the Ukrainian school, together with their parents, captured the audience's hearts with a heartfelt performance of the carol "Raduisia" (Rejoice). This touching moment highlighted the unity of generations and the passing down of cherished traditions.

The fun-filled Ugly Sweater contest was another highlight of the evening. Five participants competed for the title of the brightest and funniest sweater. The audience chose the winner with their applause, and Maksym emerged victorious with his exceptionally creative and colourful design.

A magical moment came with the arrival of Santa Claus, portrayed by Mr. Art. Santa distributed gifts to children, spreading joy and creating unforgettable holiday memories. A heartfelt thank you was extended to him for bringing smiles and festive spirit to the event.

The evening also featured an exhibition of children's artwork showcasing their imaginative depictions of Christmas. This part of the program delighted guests of all ages.

Another exciting moment was the dance contest with the Polar Bear, who energized the crowd with humour and lively moves. Participants displayed creativity and talent, and the best performers were rewarded with fantastic prizes.

This memorable evening was made possible by the generosity of the United Church and Presbyterian Church ministers, who provided the venue for the event. The Ukrainian community expressed heartfelt gratitude to VJ and Ric Knutson for their contribution to establishing this wonderful tradition and for their unwavering support of the Ukrainian community.

Special thanks were also given to Nataly and Ruslan Shyshkivski for their impeccable organization of the celebration. Their hard work and dedication made the evening truly warm and unforgettable.

The celebration concluded with a delicious feast of traditional Ukrainian dishes, adding a cozy touch and marking a perfect end to the evening.

The Ukrainian community of St. Marys extends its gratitude to everyone who joined the event and wishes each of you a Merry Christmas filled with peace, joy and goodwill!



(OLENA OLIANINA PHOTO)

The St. Marys Ukrainian community hosted a festive Christmas concert and celebration at St. Marys United Church Dec. 22, 2024.

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THE TOWNSHIP OF PERTH SOUTH

TAKE NOTICE that a vacancy exists on the Township of Perth South Council for one (1) Councillor. Council shall fill this vacancy by appointment through a selection process as outlined in the Appointment Procedure for Filling Vacancy on Council by Call for Nominees Policy.

The term of the position is from the date of Council appointment to November 14, 2026.

To be considered for appointment, those interested must meet the following qualifications as per The Municipal Elections Act:

- Resides in the local municipality or is the owner or tenant of land there, or the spouse of such owner or tenant;
- Is a Canadian Citizen;
- Is at least 18 years old; and
- Is not prohibited from voting under Section 17 (3) of the Municipal Elections Act or otherwise by law.

Application forms are available on the Township website at www.perthsouth.ca/councilvacancy or at the Township office listed below.

Any qualified person who is interested may submit, in person, a completed application indicating the reason for your interest and any related experience by 2:00 p.m. on Friday, January 24, 2025, to:
Lizet Scott, Clerk | 3191 Road 122, St. Pauls, Ontario, N0K 1V0
519-271-0619 x224 | lscott@perthsouth.ca

THE WEEK AHEAD

SPONSORED BY: **McDonald's St. Marys**
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PRC & Friendship Centre events - See the Stonetown Crier on Page 5
St. Marys Library events - See Page 22

Friday, January 10

- Royal Canadian Legion "hot dogs and more" lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw - 6 p.m.
- SMCP auditions at the Presbyterian Church - 7-9 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs KW Siskins at the PRC - 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 11

- SMCP auditions at the Presbyterian Church - 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., 1-3 p.m.
- Library board and Friends of the Library annual general meeting at the library - 10:30 a.m.
- Alzheimer Society Soup's On at the Rotary Complex, Stratford - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 p.m.

Sunday, January 12

- SMCP auditions at the Presbyterian Church - 1-3 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Chatham Maroons at Chatham Memorial Arena - 7 p.m.

Monday, January 13

- Community Dinner at St. Marys United Church - 5 p.m., Sponsored by Cascades

Thursday, January 16

- Hodges Funeral Home free pre-planning seminar at the funeral home - 7 p.m.

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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Walking the streets of Lviv

TETIANA DIDKOVSKA

Independent Columnist

Let me take you on a fascinating journey to a city that has witnessed the tides of history and been a part of eight different states over the centuries: the Galicia-Volyn Principality, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire, the Western Ukrainian People's Republic, the USSR, Nazi-occupied territory and today's Independent Ukraine.

This city is home to a vast share of Ukraine's architectural treasures and, in 1998, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. With over 2,500 preserved monuments of history and architecture, this cultural gem is none other than Lviv.

Another interesting fact is that Hollywood orders special effects for its films in Lviv. Such popular Hollywood films as Harry Potter, Hulk and Spiderman received their software in Lviv. Lviv IT specialists have been working on orders from the Hollywood film industry for 10 years in a row.

Founded in 1256 by Danylo Halytskyi and named in honor of his son, Lev, Lviv is one of the seven largest cities in Ukraine. Its historical charm is matched by modern achievements.

As you stroll along the cobblestone streets, imagine the footsteps of legendary figures like Balzac, Mozart and prominent Ukrainian writers Ivan Franko and Lesya Ukrainka echoing through time. Let's begin our journey in the heart of the city, Rynok Square.

Rynok Square is the vibrant epicenter of Lviv where history meets modern life. This picturesque square is home to the Lviv town hall and surrounded by 43 colourful Renaissance and Baroque buildings. These centuries-old structures once housed merchants and craftsmen of diverse nationalities and now host bustling restaurants, cafés and souvenir shops. The lively

atmosphere here captures the spirit of Lviv.

Nearby, you'll find the Museum of the History of Ukraine, a treasure trove of exhibits spread across four floors. The museum showcases Ukraine's journey from ancient times to the present day. Among its most valuable artifacts are the 17th-century portrait of Varvara Langysh by M. Petrakhnovych, the folk painting "Cossack Mamai" from the 18th century, and Oleksandr Klymko's "Battle of Khotyn" (1937). Every piece tells a story of resilience and culture.

Another must-see attraction is the Pharmacy Museum, located in a historic pharmacy called Under the Black Eagle, which has operated since the 18th century. Inside, you'll find a fascinating collection of pharmaceutical tools, from pill-making devices to vessels for preparing powdered medicines. The museum also features an ancient underground tunnel once used for storing medicines. This hidden dungeon holds many secrets, waiting to be uncovered by curious visitors.

Lviv's cultural heartbeat can also be felt at the Lviv National Academic Opera and Ballet Theater named after the renowned Solomiya Krushelnytska. This iconic building is a symbol of the city and one of its most cherished landmarks. I had the unforgettable experience of watching the ballet Forest Song here as a teenager – a moment that sparked my lifelong love for ballet. Spending an evening at this theatre is a must for any visitor.

Lviv is more than its monuments and landmarks; it is a city alive with energy and culture. Hosting nearly 100 festivals each year, it offers something for everyone, from classical music and street theatre to celebrations of coffee, chocolate and donuts. The city's vibrant café culture is legendary, and the enticing aroma of fresh coffee and pastries fills the air, making it impossible not to fall in love with this place.

Lviv is a city of stories, tastes and experiences – a place that calls you to return again and again. To be continued ...



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

1. Rynok Square. 2: The Museum of History of Ukraine. 3: Pharmacy Museum. 4: Lviv National Academic Opera and Ballet Theater.

Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

The Annual General Meeting of the Library Board and the Friends of the Library is at 10:30 a.m. in the Library on Saturday, January 11. Come and learn what the board and FOL have been up to over the last year! No registration is required, and light refreshments will be served.

This Week's Recommendation

Imagine this: absorbing the contents of a book without reading it. Although many would argue that the act of reading is half the fun, such is not the case for the Book Eaters, a rare group of people who must physically consume books for sustenance. Devon is one such eater. Constrained in her youth to a strict diet of fairytales, Devon fights her family's

dragons in adulthood to save her son, an eater born with the desire for brains instead of books. Sunyi Dean's creative take on our human need to read is called "The Book Eaters" and is available in hard copy and via Libby.

Up This Week

- Fri., Jan. 10: Open 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Sat., Jan. 11: Dungeons and Dragons (10 a.m.), Library and FOL Annual General Meeting (10:30 a.m.)
- Mon., Jan. 13: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Tues., Jan. 14: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Wed., Jan. 15: EarlyON Play and Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong! (1-4 p.m.), Scrabble (6-8 p.m.)
- Thurs., Jan. 16: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Ask the Arborist

By Joel Hackett | 519 272 5742 | jtsquote@gmail.com



Dear Arborist,

I have to plant a wind row of trees, and wondered what kind of trees I should plant.

Recommendations?

Dear Recommendations,

Over the years, many different types of trees have been used to block the wind. I have seen people use Poplar, English Oak, Ash, and even various kinds of Beech. The most common though are evergreen trees like Spruce or Pine. The most common mistake people make is planting all of the same kind of

tree, which means if the trees become diseased, they all die at the same time.

So, normally, I would recommend picking 3 different species of tree which are similar in size and shape, and staggering them as needed.

Sincerely

The Arborist

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

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: HMCS Stone Town

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

In the early 1940s, as World War II raged on, Canada stepped up efforts to increase its wartime fleet. As these new ships were being planned and built, the Town of St. Marys received a special honour. On March 4, 1943, the Journal Argus reported: "The Department of National Defence has asked St. Marys councillors to submit three names of local geographic significance in order that one of His Majesty's Canadian vessels should be named after the Town of St. Marys. The name St. Marys, however, cannot be used because it is too much like the names used in the Royal Navy. The three names selected at the council meeting were: 1. Stone Town; 2. Blanshard; 3. Little Falls. These will be sent to the Department for consideration."

A full year later in March 1944, the Department sent word that a frigate being built at the Canadian Vickers Company shipyards in Montreal was to be named for St. Marys. The name selected was town council's first choice: Stone Town. Corvettes are the ships that most often come to mind when the Royal Canadian Navy's convoy service during World War II is remembered. But in late 1943, the Department of Defence was supplementing the original corvettes with larger, more comfortable, faster, and better armed models. These "super corvettes" were known as "frigates." Stone Town would belong to the River Class of frigates because her counterparts in the Royal Navy were named for rivers. Canadian frigates, however, were named for municipalities. Some 70 frigates were built and launched in Canada from 1942 to 1944, most of them for duty on the mid-Atlantic.

After the notification, events happened quickly. St. Marys officials were invited to Montreal to see the launch and christening of the ship – an important ceremonial occasion. Mayor David White, Clerk J. W. Durr and Perth Member of Parliament Fred Sanderson all expected to be at the Vickers shipyards in mid-April when the ice had cleared on the St. Lawrence River below Montreal. Then, unexpectedly on Monday, March 27, they were informed by telephone that the launch date had been moved up and would take place the next day, Tuesday, March 28, at 6 p.m. Mayor White and Clerk Durr caught the overnight train to Montreal and arrived on Tuesday morning. Vickers representatives met them at the station, entertained and drove them around the city during the day. They went to the Vickers shipyards in time for the launching ceremony.

A sister frigate, HMCS Hollowell, named for a township in Prince Edward County, was launched first at 5 p.m. The HMCS Stone Town ceremony took place at 6 p.m. According to the Montreal Daily Star, March 29, 1944: "To beat delivery schedules and speed these ships to the sailors who will man them, Canadian Vickers Limited blasted the ice out of their fitting-out basin so that yesterday, at 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., two more fighting frigates for the Royal Canadian Navy slid down the ways in a double launching." Not only were double launchings unusual, but these two broke the record for early spring launching on the St. Lawrence River.

Mayor White described the impressive ceremony to the Journal Argus. "The St. Marys men were given a prominent place in the procession which proceeded to the docks, headed by the pipers. As the big boat slipped towards the water, there was a breathless pause. Then she hit the water and went forward smoothly under her own power." The wife of the Canadian Vickers superintendent of the engineering department had the honour of christening the ship with the traditional breaking of a bottle against the hull. Mayor White brought a flower from her bouquet and a ribbon from the ceremonial bottle home to St. Marys as souvenirs. At a reception and banquet following the launch, the mayor "expressed the appreciation of the Town of St. Marys for the high honour bestowed upon it."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

HMCS Stone Town (K531) at sea. The World War II frigate was named for St. Marys and served on the Atlantic in 1944-1945.

But HMCS Stone Town was still not ready for active duty. A great deal more work was needed before she could be turned over to the navy. After the launch, the Vickers company conducted several weeks of trials on the St. Lawrence River. Fittings and weapons were installed and tested. The ship's commander, officers and crew were assigned and reported for training and for familiarization with their new ship. Meanwhile, in St. Marys, town council considered an interesting project – adopting HMCS Stone Town. The Journal Argus, May 18, 1944, reported that it was a new custom: "Ships named after towns and cities are being "adopted" by these centres, and equipment for the crew's comfort is thus being contributed. Suggestions for gifts which, not being provided by the naval department, would be welcomed by the men, include stationery, games, subscriptions to magazines, books, phonograph records, electric irons, hot plates, and even electrical washing machines."

The mayor convened a meeting of representatives from the various service organizations in St. Marys – the Lions and Rotary Clubs, the IODE, the McConnell Club, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Women's Institute and the Women's Patriotic League. The newspaper reported: "It was generally felt by those present that everybody in St. Marys should be free to participate in the adoption of HMCS Stone Town and that the best work could be achieved by one central body undertaking its organization." The Women's Patriotic League agreed to take on this responsibility and the campaign got underway. As well as service clubs, school and church groups held fundraisers and there were many individual donations. (According to the custom of the time, the Journal Argus published the name of every donor and the amount donated.) The goal was to raise at least \$2000 to buy "comforts" for the Stone Town.

There was an added incentive when, on Saturday, June 24, Lieutenant-Commander William P. Moffatt, commanding officer of HMCS Stone Town and Lieutenant R. W. S. Johnston, Executive Officer, came to St.

Marys. They travelled by train from Montreal specifically to discuss the adoption of their new frigate with the town's representatives. Clerk J. W. Durr met them at the station and took them for lunch at the Windsor Hotel. There they met town councillors and members of the Women's Patriotic League. They told the naval officers about the articles already collected for shipping to the crew and asked what other needs they should try to meet. The officers' suggestions included heavy sea-boot socks, leather and woolen mitts, cribbage boards and cards, and thermos bottles that could hold cocoa or coffee for men on night watches. They also asked for pictures of the town "to grace the walls of HMCS Stone Town." They had dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Durr before returning by train to Montreal.

Lieutenant-Commander Moffatt sent a thank you letter to the town, addressed to Clerk J. W. Durr. "It was a great pleasure indeed to visit the people who are doing so much for the welfare of the ship and the ship's company, and to see all the sights of the town after which the ship is named. Once more, I would like to repeat our invitation to every person in St. Marys who can possibly make the trip for our commissioning ceremony. I shall advise you of the date as soon as we know it."

Commissioning is the act of placing a ship on active service. HMCS Stone Town was commissioned on July 21, 1944, at the Victoria Dock, Montreal. Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Durr represented the Town of St. Marys and brought greetings to the officers and men of the ship. A number of former St. Marys residents who lived and worked in the Montreal area were also able to attend. Mr. Durr reported on an impressive ceremony, followed by a tour of the ship. "It was St. Marys' Day, and the guests were treated royally by those in charge." Within a week Stone Town was on her way to Halifax to prepare for duties on the Atlantic. But this was not the end of the Town of St. Marys' connections with the ship. To be continued next week.



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EAT AT OUR HOUSE: Comforting dishes to usher in the New Year



LAUREN EEDY
Independent Columnist

Happy New Year! After some significant time indulging over the holidays and spending a large amount of that time in the kitchen, I offer three recipes quick to assemble, delicious and comforting yet nutritional. With minimal prep, these all deliver the flavour we look for in cooler temperatures, but with healthier ingredients. Please enjoy the following suggestions and my sincere wishes for a joyful (and tasty) 2025!

Honeycrisp apple broccoli salad

Prep: 15 minutes; Chill: 30 minutes; Total: 45 minutes
4 cups broccoli florets, chopped

1 large Honeycrisp apple, diced
½ cup dried cranberries
½ cup chopped pecans or walnuts
¼ cup red onion, finely diced
½ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese (optional)
For the dressing:
½ cup mayonnaise
2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
1 tsp honey
Salt & pepper to taste

Method:
- In a large bowl, combine chopped broccoli, diced Honeycrisp apple, dried cranberries, chopped pecans, red onion and shredded cheddar (if using).
- In a small bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, apple cider vinegar, honey, salt and pepper until smooth.

- Pour the dressing over the salad and toss until evenly coated.
- Chill in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes before serving to allow flavours to meld.

Roasted cabbage salad

Prep: 5 minutes; Cook: 25 minutes; Serves: 4; Total: 30 minutes
Cabbage:

1 small head green cabbage
2 tbsp olive oil
Salt & pepper to taste
Dressing:
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp rice vinegar
1 ½ tsp low sodium soy sauce
1 tsp Dijon mustard
2 tbsp freshly grated parmesan
Salt & pepper to taste

Optional Toppings:
4 strips cooked bacon, chopped
2 tbsp chopped chives
Method:
- Preheat oven to 425°F.
- Slice cabbage head in half, removing the stem and slice halves into one-inch pieces. Place on an extra-large baking sheet and drizzle with 2 tbsp of olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Toss well to coat all. Spread evenly and bake for 20-25 minutes.

- If using bacon as a topping, fry in a pan until crisp and drain to a paper towel-lined bowl.
- Whisk together dressing ingredients in a small glass or bowl. Taste and adjust if anything is needed.

- Once the cabbage is done, transfer to a bowl and toss with dressing to coat. Add crisp bacon and chives if using. Enjoy warm or at room temperature.

- *Make this salad dairy free and vegan by using nutritional yeast instead of parmesan cheese and replace the bacon with vegan bacon.

Roasted pear, cranberry and brie flatbread

Prep: 10 minutes; Cook: 12 minutes; Total: 22 minutes
1 large flatbread (or naan bread)

1 ripe pear, thinly sliced
½ cup fresh or dried cranberries
4 oz brie, sliced
2 tbsp honey
¼ cup candied walnuts, chopped
¼ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
1 tbsp olive oil
Fresh thyme leaves for garnish

Method:
- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Place flatbread on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and brush lightly with olive oil. Arrange pear slices

evenly over the flatbread. Scatter the cranberries over the pears and place slices of brie cheese on top.

- Drizzle honey over the entire flatbread and sprinkle with ground cinnamon and nutmeg.

- Bake in oven for 10-12 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and bubbly and flatbread edges are golden brown.

- Remove from oven and sprinkle with candied walnuts and fresh thyme leaves.

- Slice and serve warm.



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Solutions on page 31




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2024 cosmic recap and 2025 predictions

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

Last year was one for the astronomical history books. Our region experienced several unique and rare cosmic sightings throughout the year. If the skies above weren't interesting before, they certainly had people captivated to witness and record these exclusive cosmic events.

Probably the highlight for 2024 was the solar eclipse on April 8. This rare and breathtaking celestial event made the local and global news headlines and was the focus of many social media posts. The next full solar eclipse for this region isn't until 2144.

We also witnessed four supermoons last year, occurring in the late-summer and fall months. A supermoon occurs when a full moon or a new moon is at its closest point to Earth in its orbit, making it appear slightly larger and brighter.

Unless you are an astronomy enthusiast, many of us probably didn't realize there was a close encounter between Mars and Jupiter last August, creating a stunning planetary parade that was visible in the night sky in our region. Another stunning sighting was the comet, Tsuchinshan, a rare comet which made the news in mid-October and was visible throughout the region and beyond.

With the sun's energy and activities last fall, our area was treated with aurora borealis, evenings of spectac-

ular light shows of mesmerising green and red hues. Many people in our area shared stunning photos on social media to document this uncommon phenomenon.

December didn't disappoint the stargazers. There were spectacular meteor showers of Geminids as more than a 100 meteors an hour soared through our night skies. These meteors are caused by debris from a crumbling asteroid, shedding particles due to the heat of its close orbit around the sun.

According to my research for 2025, we won't have the rarity of cosmic wonders but there will be lots to keep our eyes on the skies throughout the year. In mid-January, Mars will make its closest approach to Earth since 2022, lying in the opposite direction to the sun in the sky and making it closer, brighter and larger than at other times. Six supermoons are expected in 2025 with the first set of three in the spring months and the second set in the fall months. These moons will look 30 per cent brighter and 14 per cent larger than typical full moons. There will also be a pair of total lunar eclipses with one visible in our region in March.

For those especially fond of tracking shooting stars, 2025 won't be a disappointment as there are eight major meteor showers expected through the year. And for more stunning shows in the night sky, NASA anticipates with the heightened solar activity we should expect more dancing lights of aurora borealis in our skies again this fall.



(JOHN GOUGH PHOTO)

A shot of the comet, Tsuchinshan, captured by Thames Centre pilot John Gough while flying over Lake Superior on Oct. 14, 2024.

Thames Centre budget for 2025

NANCY ABRA

Independent Reporter

The Municipality of Thames Centre currently has the lowest property taxes in Middlesex County and is projected to remain in that position for 2025 with a 3.9 per cent levy increase.

As part of the 2025 municipal budget, they will be making new investments in roads and infrastructure. As Thames Centre residents identified recreation as a high priority in the 2025 budget survey last year, the municipality plans to improve parks and trails, and provide

funding for improvement to the Outdoor Recreation Centre and the Thorndale Lions Community Centre.

After the December council meeting, Coun. Tom Heeman said Thames Centre council received and approved a new stormwater rates study and discussed new corporate benchmarks for the municipality's energy use that can reduce costs to taxpayers while reducing the carbon footprint.

For more details on the Thames Centre 2025 Budget, visit www.thamescentre.on.ca/articles/council-highlights-december-9.

Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society elects new executive and board



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The Thorndale and Area Horticultural Society executive and board members for 2025 are, from left to right, Norma Poel, Jeannie Tiemessen, Brenda Hamacher, Liz Iglesias, Jennifer Prgea (president), Dian Chute (installation officer), Cheryl Stephenson, Annemarie Hollestelle, Carolyn Noble (treasurer) and Marylou Bontje (past president). The horticultural society meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m., except in January and July, in the Lion's room at the Thorndale Lion's Community Centre. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, Feb. 12 when guest speaker Steve Etherton will give a presentation on "How to get the best out of your roses."

Thorndale Lions Club Presents
Winter Community Breakfast
Sunday, January 26th 8:30 am - 11:30 am
Thorndale Lions Community Centre
Adults – \$15 , Kids 6-10 – \$5, 5 & under – Free



Riddles

- What's the best way to talk to a monster?
Long distance
- How do fisherman make their nets?
They just take a lot of holes and sew them together
- What's wet and says "how do you do?" sixteen times?
Two octopuses shaking hands
- What's the same size as an elephant but doesn't weigh anything?
An elephant's shadow
- Which insect eats the least?
A moth - it just eats holes
- What lies on the ground, a hundred feet in the air?
Time
- A centipede sleeping on his back
- On which side of a chicken are the most feathers?
The outside
- Why do elephants have trunks?
Because they'd look silly with suitcases
- What Rooms can't you enter?
Mushrooms
- What falls but never gets hurt?
Rain
- What is always coming but never arrives?
Tomorrow
- What passes by and never stops?

- Word Search -



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

Word List

- Ice skating
- Hockey
- Dog sledding
- Ice fishing
- Tubing
- Cross country
- Downhill skiing
- Curling
- Snowball fight
- Snow fort
- Shovelling
- Tobogganing



The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK

What has no beginning and no end?



A circle!

Jack Campbell (3)

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

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PET OF THE WEEK

Each Pet of the Week will receive a FREE treat bag from St. Marys Veterinary Clinic



Our Pet of the Week is Rocky, the newest member of the Diamond Disposal team. Rocky is a two-month old Australian Shepherd who loves playing in the snow and enjoys his rides in the Diamond Disposal truck. Best of all, he works for treats.

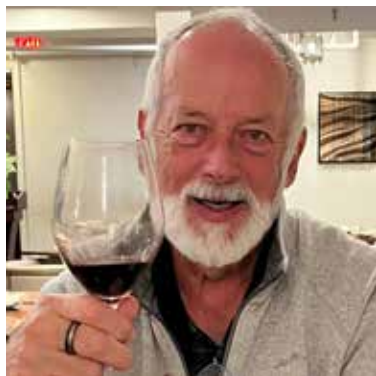


St. Marys Veterinary Clinic is pleased to be the sponsor of the PET OF THE WEEK New Year, Fresh Start for Your Pet!

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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: The challenges of an historic town at the confluence of three rivers



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

There is a well-worn cliché about travelling in Europe: “I’ve seen enough castles and cathedrals!” Well, I am a pretty big fan of castles and cathedrals, but I do understand there can be too much of a good thing. And there is no lack of either castle or cathedral in the historic towns and cities of western Europe.

And yes, the German town of Passau does have a castle and, in fact, a cathedral, but don’t let that stop you from including it on your itinerary. There is so much more here, including a long and dramatic history of coexisting with the three rivers that meet, right here, and the frequent crises arising from that uneasy coexistence.

We were in Passau as part of our excellent Viking River Cruise, Romantic Danube. It’s probably true that the Danube can be very romantic at a time when it is flowing peacefully through Passau, but when we were there, the Danube and the other two rivers that meet here, the Inn and the Ilz, were

in flood and the lowest parts of the town were already underwater.

But that, believe it or not, is one of the most interesting reasons to visit this historic town located just west of the Austrian border.

The story here is one of perseverance and community cooperation. Passau has existed for more than two millennia, founded because of the trade benefits of the three rivers that occasionally become its enemies. In medieval days, the number-one trade commodity was salt. Today, it’s tourists.

Like many of the towns located along the Danube, the community rises quickly from the riverbank into the hills round about. So, while the homes and businesses nearer the river are very vulnerable to high water, the upper levels of the community are impervious to flooding.

We saw dramatic examples of both realities when we toured Passau. Our guide admitted that, since the river had just started to rise, he could take us around the town – skirting some streets that were turning into streams – but that a day or two later, he personally would be temporarily confined to his three-floor apartment, as water would have risen a metre or two against his building. We saw many nearby homes and businesses barricaded with sandbags and metal flood barriers.

But then we ascended some rather steep but scenic cobbled streets to the square where St.

Stephen’s Cathedral is located. And no, cathedral cynics, this is no ordinary church. St. Stephen’s is home to the largest pipe organ outside the United States, an instrument that includes 17,974 pipes, 233 stops and four carillons. I have heard it played and it is truly worth the trip. The temporary bad news is I didn’t hear it on this visit because the organ is being refurbished, a project that will extend into next year.

But the cathedral is magnificent in its own right and while you won’t hear the organ in 2025, you may be fortunate enough to hear the eight bells in the cathedral’s bell tower.

One of my favourite streets in lower Passau is the Artists’ Alley, where local artists have their shops and studios, and where they paint the cobblestones in bright colours and hang whimsical pieces of art above the street.

You can get a great view of Passau and its rivers from the Veste Oberhaus, the castle high atop the hillside on the opposite side of the Danube from the cathedral. Other popular photo stops include the Roman Tower, the Bishop’s Palace and the oldest church.

But be sure to spend time on the river front, contemplating the dual nature of Passau’s situation – ideal for trade in times gone by, for transportation during the days of the Roman Empire and for river-cruise stops today, but also, subject to the whims of nature and the temperament of the Danube and its sister rivers.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Danube expert and historian Isis-Sybille Frisch, who lectured aboard the Viking Var.

It’s definitely appropriate the Danube was named for the great river goddess of the Celtic tribes. We learned that from Isis-Sybille Frisch, an expert on the Danube who gave an amazing lecture onboard the Viking Var. When you sail on the Danube, she told us, you are travelling on “the major river of mainland Europe,” a waterway that stretches 2,896 kilometres from the Black Forest and to the Black Sea, and passes through 10 European countries. We visited four of them on our cruise.

As we sailed on a Danube

swelled by heavy rains upstream from Passau, Frisch observed, “Despite all human intervention, we cannot control the river.” The great river goddess will have the last say, and the historic high-water markings on the buildings of Passau offer dramatic documentation of her more violent moods.

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



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OBITUARY

Grant



GRANT, Dr. Ross Allan. 1927-2024

Ross, 97, passed away peacefully on Saturday, December 28 at The Village of Winston Park, Kitchener.

Ross was born in his parents' (Albert & Jean) farmhouse in Avonbank, Ontario. He attended high school in St. Mary's and later graduated in 1952

from the medical school at the University of Western Ontario. While in medical school, he had entered the Navy Reserves and traveled to Halifax to work in the naval hospital. While there, he had a blind date with Doreen Randall. They married a year later. Ross and Doreen celebrated their 70th anniversary before Doreen's passing in 2022.

Ross and Doreen were the loving parents of five children: Dr. David Grant (Sheila); Stephen Grant (Cathy); Cynthia Andrews (Dennis); Robert Grant; and Elizabeth Grant (Jason Aurini). Ross also loved doting on his nine grandchildren: Erin Abreu (Wilson), Ryan Grant (Lisa), Allison Greer (Patrick), Elizabeth (Nick Klauzny), Charles (Krissey Wishart), Laura, Maia, William, Isabella, and seven great-grandchildren.

Ross practiced family medicine in Kitchener for 49 years. In addition to private practice, Ross was medical consultant for Uniroyal Canada, for Uniroyal Tire factories in Kitchener and for J.M. Schneider's. He was attending physician and Medical Director at Winston Park Long Term Care. Ross was a founding member of the Council of College of Family Medicine of Canada, and of the local branch of the Canadian College of Family Medicine. He was a founding member and vice-president of After Hours M.D. medical clinics and served on the board of Habitat For Humanity for several years.

Whether at work or away from the office, Ross always found the good in people and approached life with optimism, warmth and humour. In his personal life, Ross loved to spend time with family and friends at his cottage at Bogies Beach on Lake Huron. He and Doreen were long time members of Westmount Golf & Country Club and both enjoyed their time there playing bridge with dear friends. He also played golf well into his 80's. In his early 80's he shot his one and only hole in one.

Ross is predeceased by his wife Doreen, his sister and four brothers.

The family sincerely thank the staff on the fifth floor at Winston Park for their kind and thoughtful care over the last two years. They also extend their heartfelt gratitude and well wishes to Joan Cowcill who aided both Ross and Doreen greatly in their declining years.

Ross' life will be celebrated with a private memorial service for the family.

In memory of Ross, donations to the Ontario Cancer Society or Habitat for Humanity may be arranged through the Erb & Good Family Funeral Home, Waterloo at 519-745-8445 or www.erbgood.com

OBITUARY

Pike



Dianne Beverley Pike, age 86, of Stratford, passed away peacefully on December 19, 2024. Born in York Township, daughter of the late John and Ruth (Trilsbeck) Parkes.

Predeceased by her husband Ralph February 26, 2018.

Dianne is the loving mother of John (Christie), Jodi Doxey (David), June Leitch (Roger).

Grandma Dinny to Megan, (Justin), Sarah (Ben), Jessie (Ryan), Zach, Morgan (Kurt), Kate, Carter (Makaila), Mitchell and Andrew. Great grandmother to Thomas and Mason. Sister of Joan Martin. Also survived by sisters-in-law Marie Green, Kay Tracey, Gisele Mills, brother-in-law Robert Anderson and several nieces and nephews.

Predeceased by sisters Marion Walsh (Joe), Marie Smith (Ron), sister-in-law Daphne Anderson, brothers-in-law Jack Martin, Joe Walsh, Ron Smith, Walter Pike, Don Mills, Jim Green and Joe Tracey.

The love of music, dance and movement was a large part of Dianne from a very early age. Her dance training as a young girl lead her to an extremely successful career as a fitness instructor and owner of a national fitness company, BodyFIT. Dianne began as a choreographer for Dance Fit and when the original partners split ways, Dianne purchased the Canadian rights to the company and renamed it BodyFIT. Dianne had many instructors nationwide and would travel across the country teaching fitness workshops. Dianne also had her own location in Stratford on Wellington Street called The Studio Fitness and Dance Centre. This space spanned the entire top floor of a historic downtown building with hardwood floors, high ceilings and windows along both walls. Dianne offered dance and step fitness classes as well as a traditional dance program and full gymnastics program. Dianne also had a strong following in St. Marys where she taught classes at the St. Marys Arena. This love of music, dance and fitness stayed with Dianne throughout her life. She continued her fitness at the classes offered at River Garden Retirement Home and could always be found singing and tapping her toes with the musical guests.

Dianne's family would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the management and staff at River Gardens Retirement Home for their amazing compassion and care of Dianne. And although her stay was brief, thank you also to the nurses at People Care Long-term Care in Tavistock. It was comforting to know she was always well cared for.

Family and friends are invited to a visitation at the W.G. Young Funeral Home, 430 Huron Street, Stratford on Friday, December 27, from 1 – 3 p.m. A private family service will follow. Memorial donations in Dianne's memory may be made to the Heart and Stroke Foundation or the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth. www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com

OBITUARY

Schmitt



Harold Schmitt, born February 7, 1937, and passed quietly surrounded by loving family on December 28, 2024 in his 88th year.

Married to his loving wife Rosemary (Bodenham) for 61 years (1963).

He will be fondly remembered by his two loving children Stephen and Susan Schmitt;

his grandchildren; Ian (Laura)Chambers, Alan (Jess) Chambers, Thomas and Olivia Corniel, Emma (Tyler) Corniel Schmitt and Kyle (Maria) Garland and great grandchildren; Sophia and Raelah Chambers and Vincent Garland.

Survived by his brothers; Paul, Edward, and Bernie; sisters-in-law; Marg, Jetta, Della, Joyce, Ginny and Pat. He will also be missed by his large family of cherished nieces and nephews.

Predeceased by his parents, Eileen and Edward Schmitt, In-laws, Myrtle and Bill Bodenham, his sister Angela Hunt, brothers, Karl and Alf, brothers-in-law Bill, Jamie and Fred Bodenham, Stewart McLennan and Doug Hunt and his sisters-in-law Fran, Beth, Rita, and Lois.

Harold the "Tall Barber" was a life long barber who loved what he did and enjoyed his time with his clients and families. He served for 67 years, spanning at least 4 generations for some families. He began as an apprentice with his father at Eddie and son on Queen St. S.(beside the Barra Castle). Then for 47 years at Highland Rd. and West Ave.(Harold Barber Stylist). In his younger days, Harold served in various positions on the executive of the Barber association.

He was an avid fisherman with his friends. He bowled for years on 3 teams, giving up only because of covid closures. He was a wonderful graceful dancer especially the polka and waltzes. He loved and cheered for the Toronto Blue Jays.

He was active in serving at St Aloysius RC Church for most of his married life as an eucharistic minister at church and hospital, and an usher when needed. A member of the stain glass guild of St Aloysius.

He now joins his 3 best childhood friends from Kingsdale neighbourhood to resume cards, fishing and friendship.

Harold's visitation was held at the Henry Walser Funeral Home, Kitchener, and his Funeral Mass was at St. Aloysius RC Church, Kitchener, on Friday January 3.

As expressions of sympathy, donations to the Alzheimer Society of Waterloo Wellington, Diabetes Canada, or Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated by the family (cards available at the funeral home).

Visit www.henrywalser.com for Harold's memorial.

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OBITUARY

Unholzer



Joseph "Joe" Charles Unholzer, after a long struggle with health issues, passed away on December 25, 2024 at the age of 77.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Nancy, and sons Robert and Michael. Brother of Jim (deceased), Tony (Beth, Julie, both deceased), Bill (Bev), Johnny (deceased,

Margaret), Michael (Debbie), Marty (Janet), Larry (Jeanne), Raymond (Mary Anne) and Mary Jane Pranter (Joe). Brother-in-law of George Gates (Theresa) and Sandra Boyd (Bob). Also remembered by many nieces and nephews. Special thanks to friends Mindy, Louise, Brad (Jennifer) and Richard.

Joe was a lifelong dairy farmer, farming in Woodslee and then the Lakeside area. Cremation has taken place. A celebration of life will be held in the spring. Arrangements with the Andrew L. Hodges Funeral Home, St. Marys (519-284-2820) with online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

OBITUARY

Brookshaw



Brookshaw, John – passed away peacefully at his Warton Residence, surrounded by family, on Friday December 27, 2024.

John Irvine Brookshaw at the age of 86 years. Devoted and loving husband to Marie (nee Levy) for 66 years. Beloved father of Murray (Michelle), of Comax, BC, Steven (Cindy),

of Mt. Pleasant, Jeff (Judy), of Warton, Scott (Nancy), of Stratford, and Ron, of Waterloo. Cherished grandfather of 17, and great-grandfather of 8. Dear brother of Barbara Brookshaw, of Woodstock; and brother-in-law of Harold Levy (Betty), of St. Marys, Margaret Levy, of Mitchell, and Ann Levy, of St. Marys. Sadly missed by his many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by his parents, Irvine and Thelma; Marie's parents, Eleanor and Walter Levy; brother, Ray Brookshaw; and brothers-in-law, George Levy (Ruth), and David Levy.

John's family wish to express their gratitude to Care Partners, and the Owen Sound Palliative Care doctors. Family invite friends to gather for visitation at the Thomas C. Whitcroft Peninsula Chapel, 272 Berford St., Warton 519-534-5341 on Friday January 3, 2025 from 11 AM – 1 PM, where a service to celebrate John's life will be held at 1 o'clock. Spring interment of ashes in Colpoys Bay Cemetery. Donations to the Bruce Peninsula Hospitals Foundation – Warton would be appreciated. Condolences may be expressed online at www.whitcroffuneralhome.com

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO US!

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OBITUARY

Plain



Patricia Anne Plain passed away at Tavistock People-care on Dec. 17, 2024 in her 84th year. She will be missed by her children Kim Ohashi (Ray), Judy Elliott (Joe), Todd Plain (Louanne), Randy Plain (Julie), Kristi Plain, and her brother Eric Clayburn. Grandmother of Nick and Sarah Ohashi, Kelly Elliott,

Jessica Elliott, Joanne Hutchison (Adam) Sam Elliott (Brittany), Douglas, Micheal, Carly and Gabe Plain, Tyler, Sebastian, Zay and Jett Plain. Gigi will be lovingly remembered by Colin, Abby, Kason, Waylon and Walker. A private family service will be held at a later date. Memorial donations may be made to a charity of choice. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

OBITUARY

Neilson



Carol Ann Neilson (Huisser) passed away peacefully at home with her family by her side on Dec 20, 2024, in her 82nd year.

Predeceased by her husband John Neilson in 2012. Loving mother of Darwin (Rose) McClocklin, Kevin (Melissa) McClocklin, Jeff (Julie) McClocklin, Mike (Tammy) McClocklin

and Shannon McClocklin (Mark Nelson). Proud grandmother of Wesley (Jennifer), Lacey (Brad), Malissa (Kyle), Connor (Georgia), Blair (Haylee), Trevor (Janine), Ashley (Joe), Kaylee, Devyn (Brooke), Emily (Victor), Raymond, Nicole, Shelby (Allwyn), Sydney (Johnson). Happy great grandma to 10 great grandchildren.

A private family service will take place remembering Carol. Memorial donations may be made to Crohn's & Colitis Canada. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca.

IN MEMORIAM

Hodgins

In loving memory of Dawn Kathlene Hodgins (Thistle).

We think about you always and talk of you often.

You will never be forgotten.

Your memory is a joyful keepsake and with us always.

Such a beautiful, kind soul you are.

Love, Dad and Rob

OBITUARY

Cowdrey



Helen Mae Cowdrey passed away peacefully at Kingsway Lodge with her family by her side on January 3, 2025 in her 90th year.

Helen lived a life full of love and spirit, lighting up any room with her wit and her infectious smile. Family and friends were

so very important to her and she always made any occasion special with her delicious dishes. Loving mother of Bob (Mary Anne) Cowdrey of Perth South and Patricia Cowdrey of London. Proud grandmother of Michael (Stevie) and Jennifer. Happy great-grandma to Macy and Mallory. Sister-in law to Mildred Cowdrey and Fred (Beth) Cowdrey. Predeceased by her husband Lloyd Cowdrey (1996), her parents Harry Webber and Mae Hanna, step-mother Ordell (McAllister), brother George Webber and sister Dorothy Knight.

Family and friends are invited to the ST. MARYS UNITED CHURCH, 85 Church St. South, St. Marys, on Thursday, January 9, 2025 for visitation from 1 pm until the time of the Funeral Service at 2 pm. Reception to follow in the church hall. Spring burial in Zion Cemetery, Osborne Twp., South Huron. Helen's family would like to thank the staff at Kingsway Lodge for their years of compassion and service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Victorian Order of Nurses – Perth Huron or the St. Marys United Church. Online tributes at www.hodgesfuneralhome.ca

OBITUARY

Cull



John Anthony Cull

Date of death: December 29, 2024

Arrangements: no visitation, no funeral service

Donations: Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth

Please Note: Dear Friends,

If you have the time and the inclination, please drop in and say "Hello" at my new 'digs' in St. James Churchyard, Wilmot Township, Waterloo County.

John

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

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QUIZ ANSWERS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) 25 | 6) Helium |
| 2) Poilievre | 7) Kon'nichiwa |
| 3) Capricorn (until Jan. 19) and Aquarius (Jan. 20 onward) | 8) Olivia (2nd place is Amelia) |
| 4) MMXXV | 9) Noah (2nd place is Liam) |
| 5) England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland | 10) True. Nearly 13% of Canadians are believed to be left-handed |

St. Marys Independent

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LOOKING BACK



BY AMY CUBBERLEY

Expanding tennis courts

25 years ago (2000)

Long-time St. Marys Memorial Hospital employee Shirley Veenendaal has been named Clinic Site Leader at the facility. The new leadership position had many applicants and a number of candidates were interviewed. Vice-president Andrew Williams said that Veenendaal was the top choice for the job.

Final totals aren't in yet, but it is calculated that over a trillion dollars was spent world-wide on preparations for Y2K. After months of hype and speculation, it's over and nothing happened!

50 years ago (1975)

Perhaps the most surprised family over the holidays was that of St. James Anglican Rector, Rev. Bob Crocker and family. The congregation of St. James had a station wagon, complete with a red ribbon, in the family car port following the Christmas Eve service. A rather whirlwind fundraising campaign among the congregation secured the Christmas present for the popular rector.

Bob Favacho tells us John Sparling has donated a good-sized colony house to be used as housing for the town-owned duck population. A foundation will be placed under the new facility in the spring.

75 years ago (1950)

After nearly eight years as superintendent of St. Marys parks, Orrie Whetstore has retired and is going back to his former role as salesman. He has joined Nelson Bonis' garage staff and in future will be in charge of sales of the cars and other lines of equipment handled there.

Anna Langford, youngest daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Langford, who has been a patient at the Beck Memorial Sanitorium in Byron for some years past, recently won first prize in an art exhibition with her showing of dolls and flowers made from seashells.

100 years ago (1925)

The Council of the Township of Blanshard broke all precedent on Tuesday evening when they were hosts of a banquet in the dining room of the Windsor Hotel in honor of Mr. John H. Jameson, the popular Clerk who has held the pen for thirty-five years. This is the first time in the Council's history that a civic employee was banqueted.

At a well-attended meeting of the St. Marys Tennis Club held in town hall last night, it was decided to extend the grounds of the club in order to lay out four courts in all. The direction of play will be changed to North and South instead of East and West. Work will start on the new arrangements at once.

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