

STRATFORD TIMES

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We don't get rainbow without a little rain

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

An overcast sky and some misting rain did not deter the residents of Stratford from coming together to celebrate Pride Month at the Perth County Pride March June 2, from 1-4pm.

The march is a way for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and their allies to celebrate Pride and raise awareness of the importance of acceptance and love. The march kicked off with a speech from members of the Stratford Pride Community Centre board of directors and Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma.

"I am a mayor that takes pride in raising the Pride flag at city hall, takes pride in our crosswalk being refurbished again, and being here amongst you because I truly believe it's not the words that make a difference, it's our actions," Ritsma said, highlighting the small things within Stratford that can make the city feel welcoming and inclusive.

After a thank you to the amazing sponsors of this year's march, Brock Hart, president and chairperson of the Stratford Pride Community Centre, concluded the speeches with exciting news regarding the centre.

"Happy Pride. I thought it was fitting to announce at pride this year that the Stratford Pride Community Centre and Stratford Perth Pride are officially merging, so we will be one organization. We will be announcing more as we head into the summer once all the very final things are done. We'll announce the new board, the new name of the organization, all those things. Now, let's all march and carry in our hearts love, friendship, ally-ship, hope and, most of all, pride." Hart said, focusing on the importance of

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(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

TALKING ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY

Jamie Pritchard and Kayla Besse end the 2024 National AccessAbility Week at the Walk and Roll on May 31.

From walking, rolling and sharing experiences, Stratford celebrates AccessAbility Week 2024

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The 2024 AccessAbility Week was a success, Diane Sims, co-chair of the city's accessibility advisory committee (AAC), said, but like accessibility there is always room to improve.

AccessAbility Week, which took place this year from May 26 to June 1, is a time to recognize the valuable contributions and leadership of people with disabilities in Canada, as well as identify ways everyone can do their part to make the world more accessible.

This year, a number of initiatives were held in Stratford, organized by the AAC and Oonagh Vaucrosson, the accessi-

bility, diversity and inclusion coordinator for the city.

On May 29, best-selling author, educator and strategist Julie Sawchuk spoke at the Stratford Festival's Paul D. Fleck Marquee, telling her story to a room full of city employees, a few councillors and members of the wider public.

Sawchuk sustained a spinal cord injury in 2015 after being struck by a car while cycling on a country road near her home just outside of Blyth. Since then, Sawchuk has been in a wheelchair and has been an advocate for making accessibility on the forefront of people's minds, particularly when building and renovating.

Sawchuk shared her story with attendees and said accessibility work begins with talking about accessibility.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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Stratford celebrates AccessAbility Week 2024

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

“Eliminate the fear,” Sawchuk said. “There is no need to be afraid about accessibility. Just start having conversations.”

On May 31, Vaucrosson organized a Walk and Roll event in downtown Stratford, inviting members of the public to join the AAC and see the kinds of challenges they face every day for an afternoon.

“That’s really what a lot of this is about,” said Jamie Pritchard, a member of the AAC. “Getting able bodied people to go to things ... and be able to experience (it).”

Kelly Lindsay is the owner of Corner Store Candy Co. on York Street, but doesn’t own the actual building, which makes improving the space difficult.

Her shop is inaccessible due to a step right in front of the entrance. As Pritchard explained, York Street was built mainly as back access to the storefronts on Ontario Street, primarily for deliveries. The shops there now were not retrofitted with accessibility in mind.

Still, Lindsay said she sees issues every day, be it a family with a big stroller that

needs assistance getting in or someone with physical limitations.

Kayla Besse, accessibility coordinator for the Stratford Festival, joined the group for the afternoon. She told the Stratford Times events like the Walk and Roll are really important.

“It helps make people more visible for business owners,” Besse said. “When we as disabled people gather in groups like this, it’s like, ‘Oh, it’s not just one person. There are so many of us.’”

At the June 4 AAC meeting, Vaucrosson said the week was largely a success and they will be reflecting on it to see how they can improve it moving forward, with the committee across the board thanking her for her work.

Sims also pointed out that, during the Walk and Roll, there were no city representatives from council that took the time to join the group, despite being invited. She called it “extremely disappointing.”

“These things are put on not for us,” Pritchard later said. “It’s put on for all the able-bodied people to learn from.”

AccessAbility Week 2024 is over, but the work does not end.

Applications are now open for the city’s 2024 Accessibility Award, an annual recognition for a business, organization, or individual in Stratford that has worked to make their space or service accessible and barrier-free.

Nominations are accepted through adviscom@stratford.ca and will be accepted until Oct. 4.

The winner will be recognized by city council at a later date, after the AAC votes on a winner.

We don’t get rainbow without a little rain

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

each individual person who turned up for the march and how big changes are coming to Stratford and Perth County.

Even with the on-and-off rain, the march had an amazing turnout of nearly 650 participants walking together down Lakeside Drive to Queen’s Park, where the second half of the celebrations were being held – the Stratford-Perth Pride Festival.

There was a wide array of activities and attractions at the festival this year, from live music by Robert Ball, an arial arts performance by Cirquesmith and Stratford Dance Co., and a long lineup of wonderful local vendors with handmade goods fitting in with the theme of Pride.

Along with these attractions, there were also booths set up in the ally alley, where resources and information were

available to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. For those who were hungry at the festival, there was a wide selection of food trucks for participants to choose from, from Annies Fish ‘n’ chips to Fo’cheezy, a gourmet grilled cheese sandwich truck offering delicious grilled cheeses atop a bed of cheese puffs.

Every year, more and more people begin to find themselves, discover who they are and learn to be comfortable with who they are meant to be. Community events like the Pride Festival are vital to the progression towards creating a city filled with pride. For more information about the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, visit the Stratford Pride Community Centre website at stratfordpride.com, the Stratford-Perth Pride website at stratfordperthpride.com, or follow them on social media.



(SYDNEY GOODWIN PHOTO)

Snapshot from the Perth County Pride March and Stratford-Perth Pride Festival June 2.



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Council does not appeal committee of adjustment decision, despite Sebben's push

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A development at 161 Nelson St. will be moving forward without the City of Stratford appealing, despite a homeowner petitioning council to do so.

Jean-Michel Chadillon, a homeowner on the street, delegated at a special city council meeting June 3 with a petition that he said was signed by every homeowner on the affected stretch of Nelson Street.

He and his neighbours are concerned about the development and wanted city council to appeal the committee of adjustment decision.

Chadillon said the proposed development, which is suggesting six units, is not in line with the current density of the street. He pointed out that between West Gore Street and Cambria Street, Nelson Street is short with only 10 residential properties on it, eight of them being single-family homes.

He also said the scope of development was not clear in the public notice the neighbours were sent and there wasn't adequate time for neighbours to fully understand the proposal from what was given to them.

"We also seek an evaluation to be done on the cultural and historical significance of 161 Nelson St." Chadillon said. "Since the structure is slated for demolition, it would be unfortunate to tear it down without fully knowing the history of the property."

"We are not anti-development, but want transparency and collaboration with the developers to ensure a mutually beneficial result."

At the committee meeting, Chadillon said neighbours had concerns with waste management, arguing there would not be enough space for garbage bins on the property for six units, and that there isn't enough parking. Currently, the proposal outlines eight parking spaces in tandem.

"Tandem parking is controversial," Chadillon said. "Neighbours will block neighbours in. If someone needs to get to work at 7 a.m. and someone's blocking them in, there will be issues and our concern is that parking will spill onto the street causing traffic and unsafe areas for our children to play."

After Chadillon's presentation, councillors expressed sympathy for Chadillon, but many pointed out there is a housing crisis in the country and in Stratford.

Coun. Taylor Briscoe said municipalities are in a bind at the moment, having to balance preserving communities and building much needed housing. She said cities need to show ample housing already being built to be eligible for money from the housing accelerator fund, a necessary boon if the city wants to build affordable housing.

Additionally, any development under 10 units, per provincial legislation, does not need to share site plans with municipalities, Briscoe said, which is why a detailed scope of development was not available.

"This issue raises a challenge for council because we're bound by provincial law," Coun. Mark Hunter said. "And our professional planners are telling us, in their professional opinion, the province would allow this development. If we take this to the (Ontario Land Tribunal), there's a strong – a very strong – possibility that we would lose an appeal."

"It creates a real challenge for us to spend money that has very little chance of getting the outcome that we'd be seeking."

He and Briscoe both said they share the delegate's frustration, with Hunter saying the best course of action would be to lobby the provincial government, which created the rules, rather than pushing back on the rules in tribunal.

Coun. Cody Sebben, on the other hand, agreed with the delegation. Bottom line, he said, the proposal does not meet the city's current official plan, though Adam Betteridge, the city's building and planning director, later said the zoning bylaw and official plan allows for a semi-detached dwelling to be established in this neighbourhood and the tandem parking is also suitable for the development, per the province.

Still, Sebben said the development does not fit the street and the city represents the citizens on the street, not the developer.

"We represent people in the city. We should be advocating for that rather than doubling the units that would normally (be), and even provincially legislated to be, allowed on that piece of land. So I don't support the decision. I do think we should appeal."

Coun. Geza Wordofa seconded Sebben's motion to appeal, but did not garner further support.

Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach did not support the motion, saying they have their hands tied considering provincial legislation supersedes the bylaw and official plan.

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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

In my short time on city council I have witnessed a disturbing deterioration of public discourse that is not only inappropriate, but also counter-productive. This has been building for some time, but it reached a peak at the Feb. 26, 2024, council meeting.

Council chambers are a forum for public discourse, but they are also the workplace for city staff. As such, the city is bound by the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Occupiers Liability Act and the Municipal Act. We have a legal requirement (and a moral one) to have policies designed to protect our staff from harassment and violence. Some of the comments made at that meeting were directed at staff who were accused both of incompetence and misconduct. If not directly, then by inference.

As a councillor, I put my name forward in the public and I'm okay with public criticism of my role. Our staff did not sign up for that. If there is deserved corrective action needed to help our staff improve, it should be done in private, by their supervisor – not in public at a council meeting.

After that meeting, a number of staff (and members of the public) filed formal complaints of harassment in the workplace. An internal investigation was conducted and a conclusion of harassment was reached. The investigation was aided by the fact that the meeting was recorded. The temporary suspensions were made in an attempt to protect

staff from further harassment. This decision was a management decision, not a council one. It is the appropriate method of dealing with this and is in accordance with the policy. The suspensions have been appealed and are currently under review.

The police presence in council chambers resulted from a separate incident at the same meeting. A member of the public threatened another member of the public with physical violence. The exchange was heated on the part of the threatener and a member of city staff felt compelled to intervene in an attempt to de-escalate the situation. The offender was not named in the media reports, nor was the offending conduct. In my opinion, the offender should have been charged criminally, but the decision was not mine. Unfortunately, we never know which person will go from threats of violence to actual violence until after the fact. It is better we take preventive action than wait to see who crosses that line.

Each of the banned people is still free to communicate with the city by email and written delegation submissions, just not in person until July. Their right to speak has not been limited. The city has and will continue to make accommodations to ensure their right to speak is preserved, such as offering to set up a Teams Link to a community open house. At no time was the intent to limit, restrict, or hinder anyone's freedom to speak. The only impact has been to

temporarily limit the forum in which they can speak.

I have not consulted my fellow councillors, but I believe that each of us welcomes dissent. Better dialogue leads to better decisions. However, we do ask that people be civil, respectful and refrain from offensive conduct.

Our city staff do their jobs to feed their families. They do not set city policy, but they are tasked with delivering those policies. I have seen nothing but professionalism and an enthusiastic desire to serve our community. Rather than expressing gratitude for the work they do, certain members of our community deliver nothing but derision and scorn. To those people I say, shame on you. I will continually support any efforts to make our staff feel comfortable as they try to earn a living. I would ask that all of our community join me in that. We can still have productive disagreements without demeaning people.

It is extremely unfortunate that the steps the city has taken are necessary. I think we've all seen a deterioration of civility since the pandemic – a phenomenon which is not unique to Stratford. My hope is that the publicity from this incident will lead to much conversation and reflection, and that people will return to behaving like members of a community rather than members of a mob.

*Sincerely,
Mark Hunter,
Stratford*

Dear Councillor Hunter,

Your letter to the editor continues the city's sad, new habit of spreading misinformation to limit residents' rights to freedom of speech. I am one of two Stratford residents banned from all public buildings in town for three months.

Your letter states that the city is bound by the Municipal Act. Councillor, you know full well an independent investigator hired by the city concluded that you and Stratford council violated the Municipal Act on hundreds of occasions, many in an irresponsible and wildly unpopular attempt to bring the Xinyi glass plant to Stratford but continuing long after. When I criticized council for doing so, I was banned.

Members of Get Concerned Stratford called out the in-camera violations, especially so at the Feb. 26, 2024, council meeting. I blamed Council squarely. As you well know, I did not accuse any staff person of incompetence or misconduct, nor were my comments derisive or scornful. As such, we immediately appealed the ban, citing my democratic rights to freedom of speech and assembly.

As a lawyer, you know the rules of natural justice:

1. Nemo iudex in causa sua – no one shall be a judge in his own case. 2. Audi alteram partem – both the parties must be heard. The adjudicator of the appeal was the acting director of human resources for Stratford, and appears to be the same person who certified the complaints, and may have even recommended the ban. This appears to violate the first rule. Despite numerous requests to have the actual complaints against us disclosed, apparently the appeal will proceed without us ever knowing the charges against us. This violates the second rule, to know the case against you.

In your op-ed, you say "shame" on us?

It is clear to anyone who watched the video of the meeting that we did nothing wrong and did not behave as a mob. Most importantly, there were no threats made by anyone associated with me and Get Concerned Stratford.

I will continue to act to question illegal practices of council, to question inappropriate spending like paying for Xinyi's planner without a contract or leasing city property at well below the market value. We are seeking better ways

to engage the public, including urging significant increases in city communications to the public.

The current public comment system is absurd – requiring the public to comment on a matter four days before the relevant report is even issued. That rule requires the public to have a crystal ball in order to comment on important matters. Council has known about that for several years but has so far done nothing.

We will continue to encourage council to act as if there really is a climate emergency, and question development plans that ignore the need to eliminate the use of fossil fuels.

We will continue to speak directly to council at meetings. I have delegated on perhaps a dozen occasions in the past five years and have yet to get any questions or comments from any member of council, some of whom are busy looking at their phone during delegations from the public. Talk about disrespect!

Respect is a two-way street, Mr. Hunter.

*Respectfully,
Mike Sullivan
Stratford*

Dear Editor,

Thank you to Lorne Bolton whose Letter to the Editor in the May 31 issue of The Stratford Times raised the possibilities of a seniors' centre at Stratford's GTR/CNR site.

When the Kiwanis Centre closed six years ago, it came at the end of a conflicted situation between the city and seniors, who had come to consider the Lakeside building their second home. The Rotary Complex was presented as a temporary substitute at that time, as the new Tom Patterson Theatre was okayed to rise on the former Kiwanis site.

The glorious TPT is now fully operational, but seniors remain sequestered in the far-off Rotary Complex. For those without a vehicle, this complex can be remote and is by no stretch welcoming. For the promise of 2018 to be fulfilled, a more inviting and accessible location must be forthcoming, and the downtown one Bolton suggests seems ideal – especially since use of the TPT off-season, while hinted at and desirable, has not been mentioned in recent years.

*Sincerely,
Julia Schneider, Stratford*

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Car Free Friday returns on rainy day

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The first Car Free Friday of the summer returned on an unusually rainy day.

The Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) kicked off the Car Free Friday program in front of KBD Law, the sponsor of the first event at 14 Erie Street on June 7. Car Free Friday is an initiative by the Downtown Stratford BIA that celebrates all forms of active transportation and encourages residents to walk, bike, skateboard, or take public transportation instead of driving their car during the summer months.

The Downtown Stratford BIA gave out free coffee and juice from Revel Café and had draws for a chance to win a 30-day Stratford Transit pass or a \$25 Downtown Dollars voucher.

Kim Griffiths, membership and animation liaison at the BIA, said the turnout for the first hour was great. Then, a downpour happened. She said there are only a few Car Free Fridays throughout the summer, and normally the event sees sunny weather without a drop of rain.

Still, Griffiths was pleased with the overall turnout during



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

GOING FOR A SPIN

Elizabeth Cooper, United Way Perth-Huron's community development manager, heads off on her bike after a rainy start to the Downtown Stratford BIA's first Car Free Friday on June 7.

the morning. The organization's Car Free Friday events promote active transportation for residents to enjoy outdoor exercising such as walking or biking, and to reduce congestion from cars on the roads.

"I would say that the less cars downtown, the better," Griffiths said.

Attendees of Car Free Fridays also learned more about the bicycle-theft prevention and recovery

program, Project 529, from Stratford Police Service Const. Darren Fischer and took advantage of bicycle tune-ups by Totally Spoked owner Joel Curtis. Fischer said between Stratford and St. Marys, about 600 bikes have been registered with Project 529 since expanding to those municipalities two years ago. He also said there are benefits to more people engaging in active transportation and less people driving

their cars.

"If you can engage in active transportation, it keeps less vehicles on the roadway and makes the roadway safer," Fischer said.

The next Car Free Fridays will happen on July 5 at the Shoppers Drug Mart parking lot and Aug. 9 at the public-art barricades beside Chocolate Barrs.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

Kayakers and other assorted boaters glide under the Tom Patterson Island bridge as people watch. May 18 was the first Light Up the Night Kayaking event this year, encouraging residents to decorate their small watercraft with lights and join the group for themed nights every month. May 18 was Flower Power, June 28 is Canada Day, July 27 is Christmas in July, August 24 is Hawaiian, Sept. 28 is Superhero, Oct. 19 is Lantern Paddle, and Oct. 26 is Halloween.



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A decade in the newspaper business

STEWART GRANT

Publisher

Ten years ago, on June 1, 2014, this accountant decided to buy a fledging newspaper in his hometown of St. Marys. Believe me, I did not have high expectations. I was well aware of the continued growth of the internet, and I thought maybe we could last another five to seven years and it would be an interesting life experience.

Back in 2014, I never could have guessed that I'd someday end up quitting my full-time insurance accounting job and dive into newspapers full time. Nor could I imagine that, ten years later, our St. Marys Independent (and Stratford Times, which would come in 2021) would have more regular local news coverage in it than many Canadian cities have in their newspapers.

There have been some major challenges along the way, and there were times, par-

ticularly in the early years, when I didn't know if the Independent would survive. St. Marys is a pretty small town for two newspapers, and we had to run things on a shoestring budget just to break even.

Frank Doyle had started the Independent in 2000 following Torstar's 1999 purchase of the St. Marys Journal Argus. One of the many things Frank understood from the beginning was that a town's news source should be locally owned. We learned just how true this was on Monday, Nov. 27, 2017, when Torstar and Postmedia completed a transaction that resulted in the closure of dozens of Canadian community newspapers including the 164-year-old St. Marys Journal-Argus as well as the Stratford Gazette. The lesson: big conglomerates might have fancy slogans such as "connected to your community" but ultimately, their big-city ownership has proven time and time again through their actions that they really don't give a

crap about journalism in small towns and cities.

Our goal when we started the Times was to fill the void left by the departure of the Stratford Gazette, which was a free community newspaper that served the community with news and stories each week. We started as a monthly newspaper, then as advertising support grew, we were able to graduate to twice-a-month, and then bi-weekly. Eventually, we hope to be able to become a weekly paper.

I'm proud of what we are doing with the Stratford Times and we're always trying to get better. Over the years, it's been so exciting to continue to grow what I call our "all-star team" at the newspaper operation (not just employees, but also those who contribute in other ways by sending us stories and photos), and I look forward to getting more local people involved in the future.

I think life is all about interesting ex-

periences, and certainly the newspaper industry has provided many of those. In recent years, I've really enjoyed starting newspapers in other communities and, in doing so, I always talk with pride about how communities support our papers. St. Marys is the best example of that - it's amazing that each week in our small town of 8,000, we have 32 pages of local coverage - particularly when there are cities with populations over 100,000 in this province (i.e. Guelph) that don't even have a print newspaper anymore. We hope to duplicate the St. Marys success in Stratford as time goes on.

For much of the country, the last 10 years in the newspaper industry have been brutal, but I remain quite optimistic about print media based on our experiences here in Stratford, St. Marys, Wilmot-Tavistock and other communities where we have seen local news is still very much in demand.

Huron Perth Catholic District School Board will fly new, inclusive flag at high schools, not the Pride Flag, during June

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The Pride Flag will not be flown at schools across the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board during Pride Month in June according to updates to the board's flag protocol policy approved by the board of trustees Monday.

Instead and as part of the updated policy, a new, inclusive flag will be flown at both of the board's high schools, St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford and St. Anne's Catholic Secondary School in Clinton, and at the Catholic Education Centre.

In an email, director of education Chris Roehrig said neither himself nor board of trustees chair Mary Helen Van Loon were available to speak with media about the updated policy, which was developed after a year of consultation with the community, however the board did release a statement about the new inclusive flag.

"Our Catholic schools are grounded in

Gospel values," the statement says. "This inclusionary flag is not a statement about diverging from the teachings of the Catholic Church. Rather this flag is a symbol that recognizes and respects the dignity and value of each person and that our schools are safe places of inclusion. We are all called to love one another as we journey together toward the Father.

"As Catholic communities, we share a deep concern for the marginalized and their particular needs which affect their sense of safety, wellbeing and self-esteem."

In addition to permitting the board-approved inclusionary flag to be flown during June, the updated flag-protocol policy now ensures that the Flag of Canada remains flying at all times and in a prominent position relative to other flags, and permits other tertiary flags to be flown at both high schools and the Catholic Education Centre including the Papal Flag and the Flag of the Province of Ontario.



INCLUSIVE FLAG

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

This new, board-approved inclusionary flag will be flown at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford, St. Anne's Catholic Secondary School in Clinton and the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board Catholic Education Centre.

STRATFORD TIMES

Sebringville Esso
Dave's Diner - Sebringville
Stratford-Perth Museum
Cozyn's
Stratford Rotary Complex
No Frills
Sobey's
Wightman
Shoppers Drug Mart
Tim Hortons
Mornington Variety
Buzz Stop

Union Barber
Stratford Public Library
HH Delea
Balzacs Coffee
Queen's Inn
Arden Park Hotel
The Bruce Hotel
Stratford Motor Products
Stratford Legion
Festival Marketplace
Stratford Nissan
Stratford Subaru

Peavey Mart
Stratford Honda
Walmart
Shakespeare Variety
Shakespeare Brewery
Shakespeare Esso
Joe's Variety
Zehrs
Food Basics
Stratford Variety
Foodland
Freeland's Diner

Pick Up Locations

Stratford Hyundai
Stratford Chamber of Commerce
A.N.A.F.
McDonald's - Erie St
Expressway Ford
Strickland's Toyota
Stratford KIA
Fix Auto
Erie Street Esso
Stratford Medical Pharmacy
Erie Convenience
Stratford Mazda

Stratford Hospital
The Livery Yard
The Parlour Restaurant & Inn
Erie Convenience
United Way Perth Huron
AJ's Hair / Festival Square / Features
Joe's Diner
The Urban Barber
Graham Energy - Hwy #7
Delmar Foods

Stratford Bingo holding out hope as they vacate agriplex

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

“That’s all folks,” reads the daily jackpots section of Stratford Bingo Country’s website.

The beloved institution that has, until now, resided at the Burnside Agriplex, has begun moving out, shutting down unless they can find a new space to call home.

Jeremy Miller, who was manager of the program for the past eight months, had been working for the local bingo hall for his whole adult life, getting started with the company when he was just 14 years old.

“It sucks to see everything go,” Miller said on June 8 when Bingo Country opened its doors for the public to come and grab some items that the organization needed to part with as they moved out of the space.

Displayed on a few tables were holiday decorations, some kitchen gadgets and rows of posters.

In September 2023, the organization’s lease of the space was not renewed. Tim Wolfe, director of community services with the City of Stratford, told city council at a subsequent meeting that staff were directed to better utilize the municipality’s spaces for all of its communities and that the space, when bingo is not operating, sits empty for long periods of time.

Angie Miller, Jeremy Miller’s mother,



BINGO COMES TO AN END

Angie and Jeremy Miller in the Bingo Country Stratford hall at the Burnside Agriplex on June 8, opening their doors for community members to come and take some leftover items the organization doesn’t need anymore. Although the team hasn’t had much luck finding another space, they both say they are hopeful to find somewhere soon.

had been the manager of the local program for the past decade before Jeremy Miller took over. She told the Stratford Times that if they had acquired a lease for a new space, the city would have allowed them

to stay until they moved, but the organization hasn’t had luck yet.

“We had a place over at the Jenny Trout Centre, but then they sent over a lease and it was ridiculous,” Angie Miller said, un-

able to go into the specifics of the deal due to a non-disclosure agreement. “So that didn’t work out.”

Since then, the team has been unable to find a suitable spot, needing 7,000 square feet, but they are hopeful they will find something. Jeremy Miller said ownership is really keen to keep bingo in Stratford.

Angie Miller, who has been with the organization for 20 years, said there have been a lot of memories made in the hall over the years.

“We had one lady that was 95,” Angie Miller shared. “She never missed the bingo. She missed the bingo, then you knew there was something wrong.”

“I started here when I was 14,” Jeremy Miller, who is now 31, added. “When I got married, everyone took around a collection for me and we got \$800 or \$900 ... Everyone pulled together for us.”

“It’s like a family here,” Angie Miller agreed.

Angie Miller, in particular, said Stratford Bingo Country owner John Rinn has been hugely supportive.

“He’s really about the charities,” she said. “He’s from St. Marys, is a small-town boy .. and he just loves helping out the charities. He says, ‘As long as I break even, the charities are getting money.’”

Angie Miller estimated that when they were operating, there would be on average about \$200 to \$300 divided up at the end of each month to local charities.

(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Stratford Legion elects new executive



The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 8, in Stratford, and the Ladies Auxiliary held elections for their new executive last month. Their term will run from 2024 to 2026. The new Branch President is Frank Mathieson and Ladies Auxiliary President will be Mary Helen MacIntosh. Pictured in front row, from left, are Branch 8 executive members Ken Albert (2nd vice president), Steve Zurbrigg (past president), president Frank Mathieson, William Rothernel (1st vice president), and Maria Hartney (secretary). Pictured in the back row, from left, are executive officers Dale Bast, Linda Hunter, Marg Jordan, Tom Soper, David Hartney and David Mewhinney.



(ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 8 PHOTOS)

Pictured are the newly elected members of the Ladies Auxiliary executive. In the front row, from left, are Joyce Stubbings (secretary), Theresa Martell (past president), president Mary Helen MacIntosh, Anne Boyd (vice president), Doreen Zurbrigg (Treasurer). In the back row, from left, are executive officers Corrine Malcho, Susan Deckert and Ruth-Anne Matetich.

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Lions Pool Opened June 7

The Stratford Lions Pool opened on Friday, June 7, 2024, with pre-season hours in effect.

Lengths swims will be held weekdays from 4:30-5:30 p.m., and open public swims will be held weekdays from 6-8 p.m.

Open public swims will also be held Saturdays and Sundays from 2-4 p.m.

and 6-8 p.m., with lengths from 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Pre-season hours continue until June 28, and the regular season hours will begin June 29.

For more information, including swim lessons and public swim schedules, please visit www.stratford.ca/en/play-here/aquatics.aspx

Community grants awarded this year, but council may consider a new approach in the near future

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The 2024 community grants were awarded, though one organization in particular had to fight to get more funding.

Crystal Spicer and Jean Anne McLeod of Stratford Summer Music appealed the decision to halve their ask of \$30,000 to \$15,000 this year when they delegated to Stratford city council during a special meeting June 3.

McLeod shared that the organization relies on three revenue sources: government support, donations from individuals and businesses, and ticket sales.

Support from all levels of government have waned, she noted. In 2023, support from the federal and provincial governments was halved.

"We reduced expenses by 13 per cent in 2023 and we repaid our \$40,000 CEBA loan," McLeod said. "With all this effort, we still completed our 2023 season with a deficit for the first time in many years, directly related to the drop in government

support."

Coun. Jo-Dee Burbach, in the interest of fairness, made a motion to restore the funding for the organization to the 2023 level, which was \$25,000.

"It seems that most of the grants requested were either given an increase or they were given at their last year's funding model, with the exception of Stratford Summer Music," Burbach said.

"I think if we were flushed with cash, it'd be a lot easier to support these requests," Coun. Mark Hunter said. "We're not. We can't afford to fix our roads currently at the level we should."

Hunter also objected to the grants in general, reiterating that every organization receiving money from the city is deserving of the funds based on what they do for the community. His objection, he said, is due to the fact that it makes donating a mandatory exercise without residents able to opt out of grant requests.

Burbach acknowledged Hunter's position and the fact that the city will be reviewing the program for next year.

Once council has adopted its strategic priorities for the new term, the management report noted, the community grants evaluation committee will be reviewing the policy and recommending changes to council.

"I just feel like for this year we should support the level we have previously," Burbach said. "And then, now they're forewarned that the program is going to be changing."

Coun. Cody Sebben made an amendment to Burbach's motion to give Stratford Summer Music the full amount they requested, \$30,000, but that amendment was defeated. Burbach's motion, allocating \$25,000 to the organization, subsequently passed.

Twenty-nine applications, in total amounting to \$559,292 in funding requests, were received.

The committee recommended \$481,392 be granted after looking at needs identified in the applications, criteria and the spirit of the grant policy. After Burbach's motion, \$491,392 was awarded.

In addition to a review of the program as a whole, a handful of grant recipients received 2024 funding but were flagged by the committee to be reviewed in particular for next year.

The Local Community Food Centre, the Kiwanis Festival for Performing Arts, United Way Perth Huron and Gallery Stratford made applications, though as included in the report, those applications were deemed to be outside the program's mandate or the services seemed to duplicate other services and are being recommended to be handled outside the community grants program after this year.

In addition to the grants, \$141,922 in fee waivers were also distributed. The total is over budget, the report notes, but the total program is within budget.

In the future, the committee requested applications be authorized for a maximum of three years to streamline the process, since these events are recurring.

The full list of the nearly 30 organizations that received funding are included in the agenda package for the June 3 meeting.

New to Stratford, TOAD Delivery Service is locally owned and operated

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Like the rest of us, Rob Puschelberg found himself without work during the pandemic.

He has been in the entertainment industry for 29 years, but when the pandemic hit, there was no entertainment. He had a lot of restaurants where he would do Karaoke that were equally hurt. A long time ago, he used to be in the pizza business and was familiar with the delivery business.

"I thought I'm just going to start something to help my friends in the restaurant industry pivot through this pandemic and hopefully make enough money to pay bills at the same time. So, I spent most of the pandemic just delivering food. That was in Kitchener-Waterloo. I moved to Stratford a year ago," said Puschelberg.

TOAD stands for Take Out and Delivery and has become a passion project for Puschelberg. He didn't expect to continue after the pandemic restrictions were over, but they had many restaurants on board in Kitchener-Waterloo. At the same time, when he came to Stratford, another delivery service determined they just wanted to deliver alcohol only. This left a number of restaurants without an in-house delivery service. They connected and he hasn't looked back.

A web developer friend has created a series of apps; there is a restaurant portal, so if a restaurant has someone that wants to order for delivery, they put the customer information into the portal and push send. That goes into the dispatch app and from there it is dispatched to the driver. They also have a client-facing app that shows all the participating businesses, and if users click on one, they will have the option to order direct from the restaurant. If they don't have online ordering, then simply order from the restaurant and request TOAD delivery online.

"The big delivery companies, Skip, Uber and DoorDash, they take all the restaurants' orders but they take all the money too. They charge up to 30 per cent on every order to the restaurant plus they charge a delivery fee to the customer, too. We don't charge the restaurant, we just charge the delivery fee," said Puschelberg.

They currently have three drivers as they are just ramping up. It is a flat-fee delivery within city limits, and by the kilometre for outside the city. This is good news for those hungry folks in Shakespeare or Tavistock wanting for food from Stratford. And it is not just food they deliver. There is a client that gets his printing done at Staples and then TOAD will pick up and deliver it when ordered.

Another interesting opportunity is delivering from a laundry service to seniors, or for those with young kids that don't want to bundle them up to go out. What they don't deliver is alcohol, cannabis and people.

"There's a lot of liability with alcohol and upfront expense. I'm not there yet. I need to get a good handle on the other stuff before that. There's training and insuring drivers and liability to who they deliver to," said Puschelberg.

Restaurants interested in signing up with TOAD simply need to reach out to Puschelberg and then fill out the information required. The same goes for anyone interested in driving for TOAD.

TOAD also has exclusive access to Bailey's Local Foods, Kitchener-Waterloo's year-round online farmers market of primarily organic foods sourced within a 100-mile radius. At Baileyslocalfoods.ca, simply set up an account online, choose the food and an order will be delivered for a fee. Market day is Monday.

Residents can expect to see more promotion in the near future as they launch their new Delivery On Demand app. In the meantime, visit toadapp.ca to view and order from participating business or call 226-289-6492. Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week.

Weekend Quiz

1. AC/DC's first album was named what?
2. How many stars are on the China flag?
3. Who was the lead actress in Pretty Woman?
4. The Tudors ruled in which European country?
5. Who painted the Mona Lisa?
6. What are fish eggs also known as?
7. What is the tallest mountain in the world?
8. How many planets are in our solar system?
9. What color are Smurfs?
10. How many phases of the moon are there?

This week's answers are found on pg. 39

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First-year medical students practice with Stratford doctors

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

Medical students have wrapped up Discovery Week 2024 at Stratford General Hospital.

Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry first-year medical students attended their institution's Discovery Week at Stratford General Hospital. Students participated in a four-day immersive mandatory placement training under health-care workers in various medical specialties.

The milestone celebrates the Western University based school's 26th year of their ongoing partnership with the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA).

"This has been great because we had the opportunity to try a bunch of different specialties and see how they compare to the facilities we are mostly at," said Aaron Thompson, a first-year medical student at Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry. "Stratford is definitely smaller than what we're used to, but it's been awesome, it's been really cool to see the difference in resources."

"This is the opportunity to showcase the practice of medicine within the community and highlight the values, relationships and personal connections through delivering care," said Dr. Shanil Narayan, Huron-Perth regional academic director with the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and physician lead with the Huron

Perth and area Ontario Health Team.

"Students get to see a variety of different things and, overall, the clear theme that comes through is the enthusiasm that these folks have along with their appreciation for the people putting everything together for their experience."

Twenty-eight first-year students took part in the experience from June 3-7 before beginning their summer break.

"I didn't know what to expect going into Discovery Week. What I found is that I got a lot of exposure to specialties I wouldn't normally have exposed myself to," said Shirley Fan, a first-year medical student at Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry.

As a first-year medical student, Fan said she's unaware of the role she's taking part in she tries to put herself in the position of being helpful without overcrowding daily operations.

"One of the key aspects towards training is students must gain exposure to a variety of different clinical environments where they can see medicine delivered in different contexts, and that plays a core curricular element in their curriculum," said Dr. Narayan. "The more time these students can be out here developing relationships with our folks allows us to have higher chances of bringing these students back to our community."

More than 170 students are posted in 31 communities residing as temporary residents during Discovery Week.



PROGRAM'S 26TH OPERATING YEAR (ALEX HUNT PHOTO) Shirley Fan and Aaron Thompson are first-year medical students from the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry based at Western University in London who participated in Discovery Week at the Stratford General Hospital.

Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

June 02	Jamie Turvey, Embro	\$50.00
June 03	Melissa Hurley, Stratford	\$50.00
June 04	Ken & Jean Aitcheson, Stratford	\$50.00
June 05	Keith & Judy Needs, Stratford	\$50.00
June 06	Stosh & Liz Cubberley, St. Marys	\$50.00
June 07	Helen Harrigan, St. Marys	\$50.00
June 08	Julie Jenkins, Carberry, Manitoba	\$200.00
June 09	Murray Schlotzhauer, Stratford	\$50.00
June 10	Al Strathdee, St. Marys	\$50.00
June 11	Don & Laureen Hillman, Shallow Lake	\$50.00
June 12	Wayne & Karen Ehnes, Ayr	\$50.00
June 13	Sam Corriveau, St. Marys	\$50.00
June 14	John Blake, St. Marys	\$50.00
June 15	Bill Harmer, Fullarton	\$200.00

ALL OF THE CALENDARS HAVE BEEN SOLD

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Stratford Airport's Fly-In Breakfast deemed a tremendous success

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Members of the Perth County Flying Club (COPA) Flight 69 are thankful for the community support at this year's Fly-In, Drive-In Breakfast at the Stratford Municipal Airport.

Light rain and low clouds did not stop aviators and aviation fans alike from gathering for the famed pea-meal bacon and pancake breakfast.

Organizers were pleased to serve over 310 breakfasts at the return of this event after a five-year hiatus.

Proceeds from the day will be donated to the Stratford General Hospital Foundation, which the club has always supported by way of this annual event.

Organizers would like to thank all those who attended and all the volunteers, as well as Stratford Air Services for use of the hanger space to host the breakfast that they hope will now be an annual event again.



IN OUR HANDS (CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Left: ictured are Stratford Hospital Foundation executive director Cheryl Hunt and Stratford Mayor Ritsma holding the poster for the In Our Hands campaign, where the money raised June 2 will go.

Below: Stratford General Hospital Foundation executive director Cheryl Hunt, Fly-In, Drive-In Breakfast organizer Peter Stolk and Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma thank all those who flew in on their planes and the more than 300 people who sat down and donated money for a hearty breakfast. Hundreds of dollars raised goes to the hospital foundation's In Our Hands campaign.



Stratford Horticultural Society 2024 Garden Tour features eight gardens

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The annual garden tour by the Stratford and District Horticultural Society will be held July 7, rain or shine, and will feature eight gardens. Seven gardens are located in the City of Stratford while one garden is located a short jaunt away in Gads Hill.

The Gads Hill property has a new owner from when it was part of the tour many years ago and has been completely revamped.

"The owner is actually a gardener with the festival so she's got a lot of expertise. She's put in a lot of new trees, shrubs and plants in general. It's much different than before and it has a pond water feature that is of interest," said Ron Nichol, member of the garden selection committee.

Locals don't need to be a member of the Horticultural Society to show their gardens as part of the annual tour. Gardens featured on the tour are by volunteer, and it is often word of mouth that catches the selection committee's attention.

"Many of the properties on the tour are members, or of the local master gardeners chapter, but it's also word of mouth, places we see around, someone knows somebody. We try not to redo properties too often, for at least a 10-year window, but sometimes it changes hands over that time as well. But if we can find properties that have never been on before, that would be good. Usually over the course of the summer and the fall, we can get enough places for the next year. We want to be able to see the properties," said Nichol.

This year, the gardens featured are a real mix. There are older, established properties that have been there for a long time, gardens that are newer, shade gardens and sun gardens.

"It's a mix of water features, some places are full shade, some places are full sun. It's really an effort to mix it up and to get a lot of different types of plants. Where we can get people to focus on pollinators and native planting, that is desirable too because those are key features in modern horticulture," Nichol said.

One garden on the tour belongs to Lynn Atkin-Phillips on Cobourg Street. Here you can expect to see a modern style of garden out front using both hard and soft scape of grasses and a water feature. Through the gate on the side of the house opens to a tranquil shady hideaway that is filled with birdsong.

"A friend who has been on the tour and is a member (of the horticultural society) knew about the (work in the) backyard and obviously saw the front yard, and said to me, 'Would you mind if I enter your name, if you are eager to be on the tour,' and I said I had no idea what it involves, so he (Ron Nichol) came to see the backyard and told me what was involved and I said, 'Sure!' " said Atkin-Phillips.

The garden was started in October 2022, but the front was done in 2019. Originally, it was a property of all grass. Together with her landscape designer, they selected all the plants with the proviso of nothing orange. They researched and while she knew a fair amount about plants, her landscaper knew much more. The challenge was the shade and dappled sun, but she is having success with peonies and eastern redbuds in those conditions.

"The garden is a sanctuary. There's birds, water, that's what I like most of the garden. The variety of textures, the undulation; it's not flat, not one dimension. The green, all the different textures attract me," she said.



MODERN STYLE GARDEN

(LYNN ATKIN-PHILLIPS PHOTO)

This garden on Cobourg St owned by Lynn Atkin-Phillips is featured on the 2024 garden tour with a pergola that looks like a starburst under which you can sit and enjoy the many birds.

This is the biggest fundraiser for the horticultural society aside from its annual plant sale. Again, this year there will be a "name that plant" contest. In each garden, there will be a specific plant selected for the attendees to identify. The ballot with the most correct answers will win a prize. There is also a door prize for which everyone attending is eligible.

Funds raised help the society with educational programs and help members look after a number of community gardens in the city, for example, Churchill circle, the gardens at Catherine Street, right across from the cemetery and the Iris Garden down McLagan Drive, among others. The city owns the property, but the society has offered to look after the gardens

so they can plant perennials and water and tend them.

"Last year, in spite of the rain, and it rained all day, we still had 375 people show. That would be a low average. Usually, we have about 400 people. We make the tickets available the first week of June and there is a deal when you buy multiples," said Nichol.

Tickets are available at Cozyn's Garden Gallery, Klomps Home and Garden and Sebringville Garden Centre. On the day of the tour, tickets can be purchased behind city hall in Market Square from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. as well as at Cozyn's. The price of the tickets is \$15 or two for \$25. The tour runs rain or shine Sunday, July 7 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Stratford and District Agriculture Society annual chicken barbeque deemed another successful evening



ASSEMBLY LINE

Members and directors of the Stratford and District Agriculture Society held their annual fundraising drive-through chicken barbecue recently, feeding 579 agriculture society supporters. Pictured is the food assembly line in the Burnside Agriplex filling takeout boxes donated by Cascades of St. Marys. From left are Laurie Neubrand, Janice Wick, Kim McKay, Ron Neeb, Dave Gaffney, John DeWys, Martin Ritsma, Tom Melady and Jeremy Eaton.



DRIVE THRU WITH A SMILE

(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

Greeting drivers picking up their agriculture society meals include, from left, Heidi Danen, Faith Knechtel, Ashley McKay, Susan McGonigle, Aislinn Eaton and Ron Mckay.

Raising the funds to raise the Allman in 1924

BETTY JO BELTON

Stratford-Perth Archives

A group of prominent citizens formed the Classic City Arena Company in early 1924 and began canvassing for the funds needed to build what is now the beloved Allman Arena, complete with the machinery required to make and maintain artificial ice. The old arena on Waterloo St. had served the city as well as it could since opening in 1881 but its natural ice surface deteriorated quickly on warm spring days.

Led by Dr. Lorne Robertson from an office on Downie Street, the directors of the new arena company bought \$25,000 worth of shares themselves and ordinary citizens bought up others for \$10 apiece. Ads like the one seen here from June 6, 1924 challenging all “red-blooded citizens” to support this community enterprise appeared frequently in local newspapers. By July the Company could announce that W. Lindsay Malcolm’s Stratford firm was about to begin excavating and grading the riverside site so they could pour the foundation.

Arthur William Connor’s Toronto engineering firm designed the facility with a regulation size ice hockey rink with wooden bench seating for 3,500 plus standing room for another 1,000 fans. Connor had somewhat local roots. He was born in Renfrew County in 1870 to James William Connor, a schoolteacher, and his wife Dora Howenden but the family moved to Berlin (now Kitchener) soon after Arthur’s birth. He graduated from the Berlin High School around 1890 and went on to study at the School of Practical Science, Engineering Department, University of Toronto. Connor remained in Toronto after graduating and is described as an engineer in city directories. In 1909 he and Herbert J. Bowman went into part-

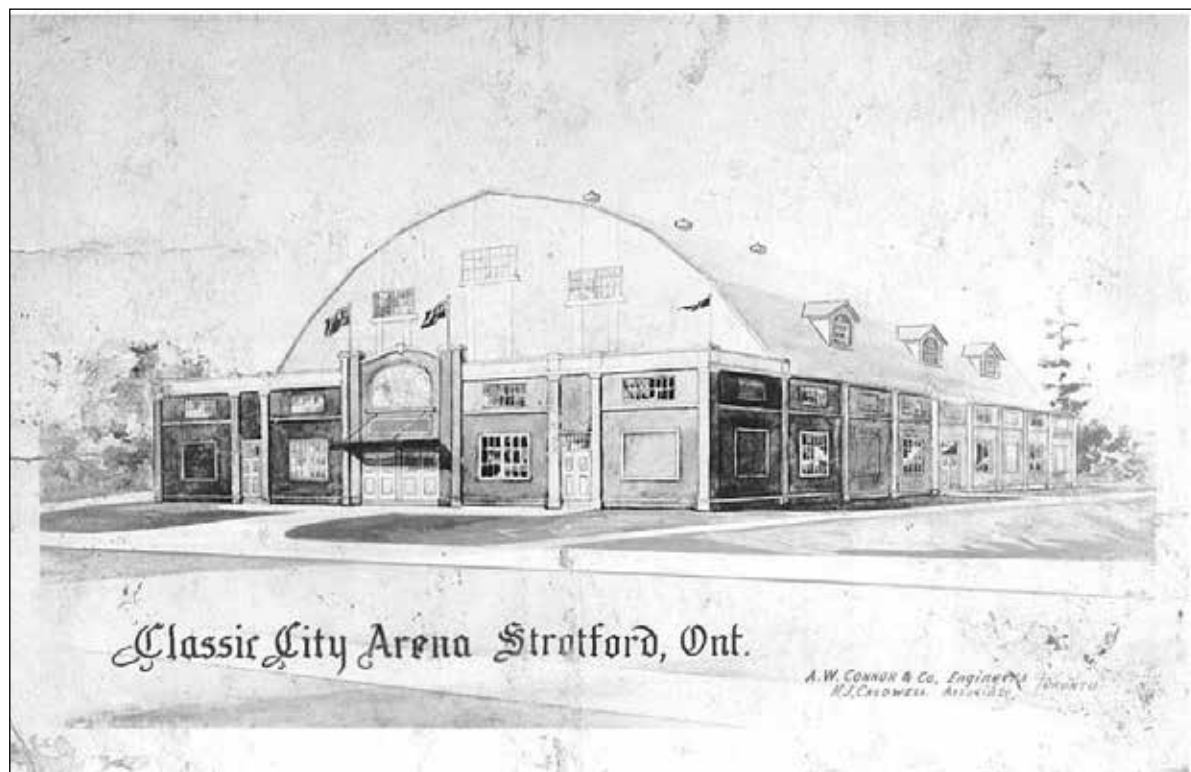
nership as civil engineers with offices in Berlin and Toronto. Connor carried on a consulting engineering practice under his own name after 1920.

General contractor, Stuart Brothers of Hamilton, worked with local subcontractors to get the building up in sixty-six days. Stratford Bridge and Iron Works supplied and installed 150 tons of steel and trusses to hold up the gambrel style roof. The Red Star Brick Yards provided 275,000 bricks for the exterior walls. Local companies, including Bennington Electric and A.E. Cash, were brought in to paint, install windows and set up the electrical and mechanical systems. Just before Christmas, Mayor Tom Brown officially welcomed everyone to the new arena’s first hockey game. Sadly, London beat Stratford 4 to 3 in front of 2,500 fans.

Having enough money to pay the mortgage and operate the marvelous new facility became a problem. Local journalist Tom Dolan later described how “with the exception of the first year, when a net profit on operations of \$3,478 was reported, directors of the Classic City Arena Company Limited were provided with a succession of financial headaches. The biggest fly in the soup was that John Public didn’t get wholeheartedly behind the campaign to raise funds of the new building, officially opened on December 15, 1924. Stock subscriptions toward the \$110,000 project amounted to only \$48,000 and of that over \$8,000 was never paid. The property was highly mortgaged from the start.” The Company transferred the building to what amounted to a restyled version of themselves in 1928 with new arrangements for their mortgage and tax assessment and operated as the Stratford Arena Syndicate. They then sold to Stratford

Arena Gardens Ltd. in 1929.

A referendum held during the 1941 municipal election authorized the City to purchase the



Classic City Arena for \$25,000. It was managed by the Board of Parks Management until 1959. At that point, the City took over operations directly. In a 1999 article about the building’s history, Stratford Beacon Herald Sports Editor, Steve Rice, described how the “years brought many changes, including an entrance which was added to the west end in 1950, and new seating in 1960. The 1980s and early 1990s saw a new refrigeration system, new roof, new boards and expanded press box, new score clock, and changes to the player benches and the entrance for the ice resurfacing machine.” In a ceremony on December 2, 1996, the Stratford Arena was renamed the William Allman Memorial Arena in honour of a dedicated and long-serving city employee. Allman began working for the parks and recreation department in 1947 and became the facilities manager in the late 1960s. He retired in 1994 after devoting much of his life to arena operations. He died in 1995 at the age of 63.

In the early part of this century, the cherished building survived suggestions that it might be too expensive to update and that demolition should be discussed. In the end, the “Old Barn” was spared and in 2009 was designated by City Council as a building of architectural and historical value under the Ontario Heritage Act. The formal reasons for heritage designation state that:

The William Allman Memorial Arena is one of the last remaining examples of the so-called Ice Palaces built

in North America during the nineteen twenties and thirties, which took advantage of new technologies that permitted the installation of indoor artificial ice surfaces. It is often touted as the longest continuously operating arena of its kind in the world. The arena’s story is more than steel, bricks and mortar. It is about the people of Stratford who came together to build and ensure the survival of the arena ... and to establish the facility

as a central place in the sports, social and cultural history of the City and therefore is worth preservation.

Earlier this year, fans of the Allman arena celebrated its one hundredth birthday with a day long event of hockey games and skating exhibitions.

This article is based on information resources available at Stratford-Perth Archives www.perthcounty.ca/StratfordPerthArchives

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One of the first black professional hockey players – and his Stratford home – recognized by city’s Blue Plaque program

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Homeowners Kim Foster and Kevin Gormley didn’t know much about Charley Lightfoot before they got a call out of the blue that their home at 94 Cobourg St. was also the home of the very prominent Stratfordian.

“We got called one day,” Foster said, who has owned the building with Gormley since 2018. “And we were going, ‘Oh this is fantastic!’ ... It was a surprise, but a lovely surprise.”

Foster and Gormley found out, like many other residents, that Lightfoot was an esteemed resident who carries the distinction of being one of the first black professional hockey players in the nation.

Lightfoot is one of the past residents being honoured by the City of Stratford’s Blue Plaque program, an award given out by the city’s heritage committee to link notable figures of the city’s past and the buildings they lived in and worked at.

Although born in West Flamborough in 1880, it was here in Stratford, his father George’s native city, that Lightfoot would spend most of his life.

While living with his parents, Lightfoot resided at the Cobourg Street home where he first began to play hockey.

In 1900, Lightfoot played on the Stratford team that won the OHA Junior Championship and the following year he played on the intermediate team that won the OHA Championship, scoring the winning goal against the Toronto Simcoes in the semi-finals.

In 1906, Lightfoot made it to integrated professional hockey, playing for the



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

HISTORICAL HOME

Brian Johnson, Kim Foster, Barb Cottle and Kevin Gormley outside of Foster and Gormley’s home, where trailblazer Charley Lightfoot once lived. Their residence at 94 Cobourg St. is one of the homes and stories being recognized by this year’s Blue Plaque program.

Manitoba Professional Hockey League with the Portage La Prairie Cities team.

“There wasn’t really an NHL yet, at that point,” said Brian Johnson, chair of the heritage committee. He later clarified that records seem to be a “little shaky” the further back one researches.

“They don’t have any records of any other black players in the Professional Hockey Association around that time.”

In a 1906 edition of the Ottawa Journal, Lightfoot was quoted as enjoying “the distinction of being the only coloured player in Canadian senior hockey.”

At around the time he played hockey professionally, his family lived in a residence at 126 Water St., a dwelling

that has since been demolished, though he played for a number of teams across Canada, from Thunder Bay to Halifax.

Lightfoot went on to work as a welder at the Grand Trunk Railway and Canadian National Railway shops in Stratford, continuing to coach hockey teams and staff in the area.

Lightfoot continued athletics all his life, playing hockey, baseball, cricket, lacrosse and soccer-football even when he was around 70 years old.

In 1968, Lightfoot passed away. He is buried in the Avondale Cemetery. In 1975, two hockey sticks used by Lightfoot were donated to the Stratford Perth Museum.



Lightfoot pictured with a Stratford team in the early stages of his career, as included in the City of Stratford’s documentary video posted on its YouTube page.

In 2016, one of those sticks made it to the big leagues, being donated to the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto.

The city’s heritage committee has been running the Blue Plaque program for a number of years, though it was interrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, Johnson said the group is trying to get back to work.

This year, the committee is unveiling two plaques, with Lightfoot’s being the first to be revealed. Jenny Trout, the first licenced female physician in Canada, will also be honoured this summer.

To learn more about Lightfoot, the heritage committee produced a video on the city’s YouTube page, narrated by CJCS host Jamie Cottle, which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7y-qpVZcQG0>.

Queer books of the month: *Rainbowsaurus* and *Sparkle Boy*

HEATHER LISTER

Stratford Public Library

Rainbowsaurus by Steve Anthony

@SPL: JP Anton

Steve Anthony has written a wonderfully vibrant story about a family of two dads and their children that go off on an adventure to find a colourful dinosaur called the Rainbowsaurus.

They all follow the rainbow on one big adventure that the 3 - 5-year-old age group will connect to.

Eventually, a menagerie of animals joins the hunt, including a red cow, a green pig and a purple bear.

Children will have fun counting the animals, mimicking their animal sounds, and identifying their colours. But they’ll also see that families come in different shapes and sizes. This simple concept is one that this age group can embrace and celebrate.

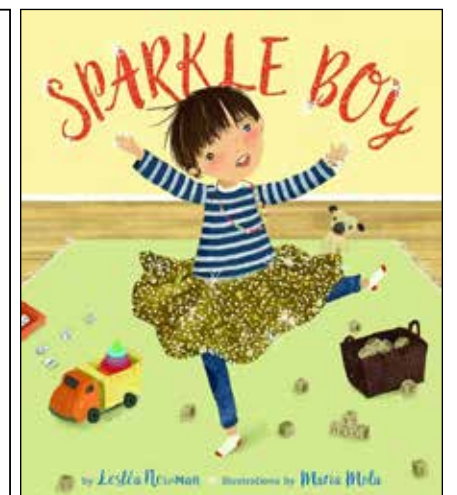
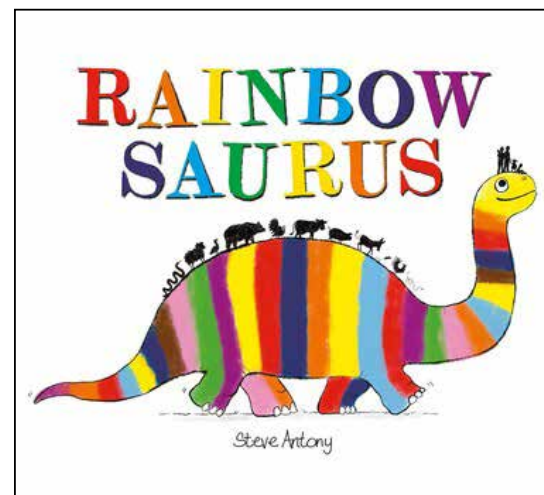
Sparkle Boy by Leslea Newman

@SPL: JP Newman

The second picture book I’ve chosen to review is *Sparkle Boy* by Leslea Newman, and this one’s for a slightly older age group. It’s most suitable for the 5-8 age range, just because of the increased vocabulary.

Casey is a little boy who loves shimmer, glittery, sparkly things, including his sister’s skirt and nail polish, and his grandma’s bracelets. But his sister Jessie tells him that he can’t wear these things because he’s a boy. Of course, Casey’s feelings are hurt, but with the understanding and encouragement of his family Casey learns that it’s OK to dress any way he wants to, and his sister Jessie, also with a little encouragement, begins to understand that too. The brother and sister come to adore all things shimmer and sparkly – together!

Sparkle Boy is a great story about acceptance and respect.



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Ontario 

Stratford long-term care is set for expansion to accommodate growing needs of the community

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

Stratford's Greenwood Court long-term-care home is planning for expansion to combat a growing wait list.

Tri-County Mennonite Homes will soon begin construction operations for Nithview Community Long-Term Care Home in New Hamburg. Construction is set to be underway within the next 12 months and expected to finish in under three years. During the Nithview construction, preparations for the Greenwood Court expansion will be made in the background but won't fully begin until Nithview's completion.

"If you've lived in Wilmot and you want to have long-term care support in the same county, we're your only shot," said Dr. Steven Harrison, CEO of Tri-County Mennonite Homes. "Nithview is the only long-term care home in the entire township of Wilmot. Our board took the very brave step to say, 'Yes, we need to grow and we are on the collision course for doing that

right now.'"

The expansion at Nithview will grow its total bed count from 97 to 160 allowing more seniors to receive their required care.

"It's no great mystery and you see it in the media frequently that the number of seniors who need or would like to access long-term-care support is far greater than the number of long-term-care beds that exist across the province," Dr. Harrison said. "Our wait list in Ontario is about 50 per cent bigger than the number of beds that are already in place."

Dr. Harrison says a few factors have contributed to the influx of seniors requiring care, including the baby boomer generation growing older, staff shortages and at-home care becoming less manageable.

With over 100 people on the waitlist, Greenwood Court accommodates 48 beds within its interiors. Dr. Harrison says it's not impossible to get on the waitlist, however it's challenging to get to the top.

"People who are on the crisis placement list, which is the sickest of the sick and they need to be put into care, they can still wait six or eight months, sometimes longer," said Dr. Harrison. "I can't just stick a bed in the hallway. You have your own room and the only way you get into one of those rooms is if someone else isn't there. When you're providing great care, people



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

PLANS FOR EXPANSION

Dr. Steven Harrison, CEO of Tri-County Mennonite Homes, talks expansion plans at Stratford and New Hamburg long term care facilities.

tend to live longer."

Tri-County Mennonite Homes will be hosting future fundraising events such as a community golf tournament, a carnival day and other community engagement activities. Dr. Harrison says Tri-County also encourages community members to volunteer.

"Volunteers make a home. It would be lovely to see them all come back," said Dr. Harrison. "The pandemic was not kind

to volunteers; we were compelled to halt all activities due to provincial directives which wouldn't allow us to have volunteers in the homes."

Volunteers perform duties such as socially interacting and assisting senior residents and are encouraged to commit 100 hours a year, but are not required to do so.

To become a volunteer or for information on events, fundraisers and long-term-care living, visit tcmhomes.com.



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- Nominate a senior in June for an Ontario Senior Achievement Award at www.ontario.ca/page/honours-and-awards-community#section-2.
- Post a message on your social media channels and tag us on X (Twitter): @SeniorsON or Facebook: @SeniorsOntario. Tell us what you are doing during Seniors Month.
- Join our Seniors Month conversation on Twitter and Facebook by using #SeniorsMonth2024.
- Post photos or videos of your Seniors Month celebrations and tag us on X (Twitter): @SeniorsON, and Facebook: @SeniorsOntario

- Seniors volunteering and helping in their neighbourhood? Tell us about it! Tag us on X (Twitter): @SeniorsON, and Facebook: @SeniorsOntario Promote Seniors Month to your friends and family
- Share health and fitness tips for seniors.
- Post info about seniors' events taking place during Seniors Month (via link to community centres/municipalities)
- Feature topics of interest to seniors (retirement, financial scams and fraud, elder abuse, housing, driving, health and well-being) in your posts.
- Provide Seniors Month resources to celebrate the month: poster, factsheet, or ideas to celebrate Seniors Month.

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Ontario 

One Care relies on community support to care for seniors at home and in the communities across Huron-Perth

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The broad range of at-home and community-based health-care services offered by One Care and its partners is helping seniors across Huron and Perth county remain at home and live independent lives longer.

Formed in 2011 when three local support organizations merged into one, One Care Home and Community Support Services is a charitable, not-for-profit health organization that provides supportive care to families across both counties.

“Our vision is really about delivering that broad range of services because as people age or face health challenges, there are so many different things they may

need,” said One Care executive director Kathy Scanlon.

“What will support you in your life with your particular issues? So we try to deliver that really broad range of services, everything from health prevention services like wellness exercise to things for people who have a fairly high level of need like assisted living where you’re supported in your home with those services that help you to be at home, or some of our adult-day programs that are increasingly providing services for people with more complex needs, and everything in between.

“In a rural area, rides are so important, so our transportation services, whether that be an accessible van or a volunteer driver, we have that range of those sorts of services.”

Whether someone needs support as they transition from hospital to home or their abilities to those everyday things like cooking and cleaning are diminishing as they age, One Care works with other organizations in communities across both counties to develop plans for support and connect locals with the services they need when they need them.

As the lead agency of the community support services network, locals can call 1-877-502-8277 to access any of the services delivered by community support services throughout Huron and Perth counties.

“We’re trying to make it easier for people to get the services they need,” Scanlon said. “... By calling one number, you can get that service as opposed to having to call and figure out, ‘Who in my area does

this?’ “

One Care also works with other partners in the health-care sector. The organization is involved with the local Ontario Health Team and works closely with all area hospitals and long-term-care homes to provide better support.

Recently, that close, working relationship resulted in a new program called Let’s Go Home aimed helping people with the transition from hospital to home.

“For hospitals, that’s a big concern. How do we move people out of hospital, but as person that’s needing to move from hospital to home, there are so many things that’s new and you’re wanting to ensure you get right,” Scanlon said. “Sometimes you don’t know what to expect if you go through this process.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 18



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W.G. Young Funeral Home celebrates 40 years of serving the community

It's hard to believe that it has been 40 years since Wayne and Joanne Young first opened the doors to the W. G. Young Funeral Home. It was June 1, 1984, that the family began the business, with the philosophy "Your wishes tended to in a warm, friendly atmosphere."

When Wayne found himself at a crossroad in life, having worked in funeral homes since he was 18 years old, he thought it was time to take the challenge. He and Joanne would spend many evenings with their friend and accountant Jim Henry, coming up with a business plan. After meeting with many Real Estate Agents, they met Leonard Denny, of Denny Construction, regarding renovations to buildings. He told them about the property at 430 Huron Street that was to come up for sale. With the knowledge that had been provided, they then approached Bill and Josie Cozyn who owned the Huron Street property. In December of 1983 Wayne and Joanne purchased the property, which also housed the St. Willibrord Credit Union, managed by Josie. They were building a new Branch down the Street. They then approached six banks for financial assistance and would be turned away by all of them.

Eventually Josie from the Credit Union, asked to see their financial plan, and following that meeting, met with the Credit Union Manager from London head office. Soon realizing their determination, the Credit Union agreed to the entire financial cost.

In the early spring of 1984, before they opened, Wayne often visited Madelyn's Restaurant, which was next door to the funeral home. He met an old florist friend Austen Wake and had coffee. In conversation Austen asked Wayne when he hoped to open. Wayne

replied June 1st.

Austen replied, "I think I can hold on that long". He told his family he wanted to give Wayne a good start in business. On June 1st Austen's Doctor suggested he be hospitalized, to which he asked what day it was, and then replied that instead, he would be going to Wayne Young's. He passed away later that day. Austen was Wayne's first funeral, and why he thinks of him often.

Wayne has two sons and a grandson that are funeral directors. Scott has his own funeral home in Guelph, with his son Taylor, and Greg has partnered and worked along side of Wayne and Joanne for the past 28 years. Wayne's wife has been a blessing to him. She has been alongside him from the beginning. Joanne has been my right-hand person. She planned and decorated the funeral home from the very beginning. They have invested in redecorating for the 40th Anniversary to bring in a more modern feel to the times. This is the 3rd time in 40 years for complete renovations.

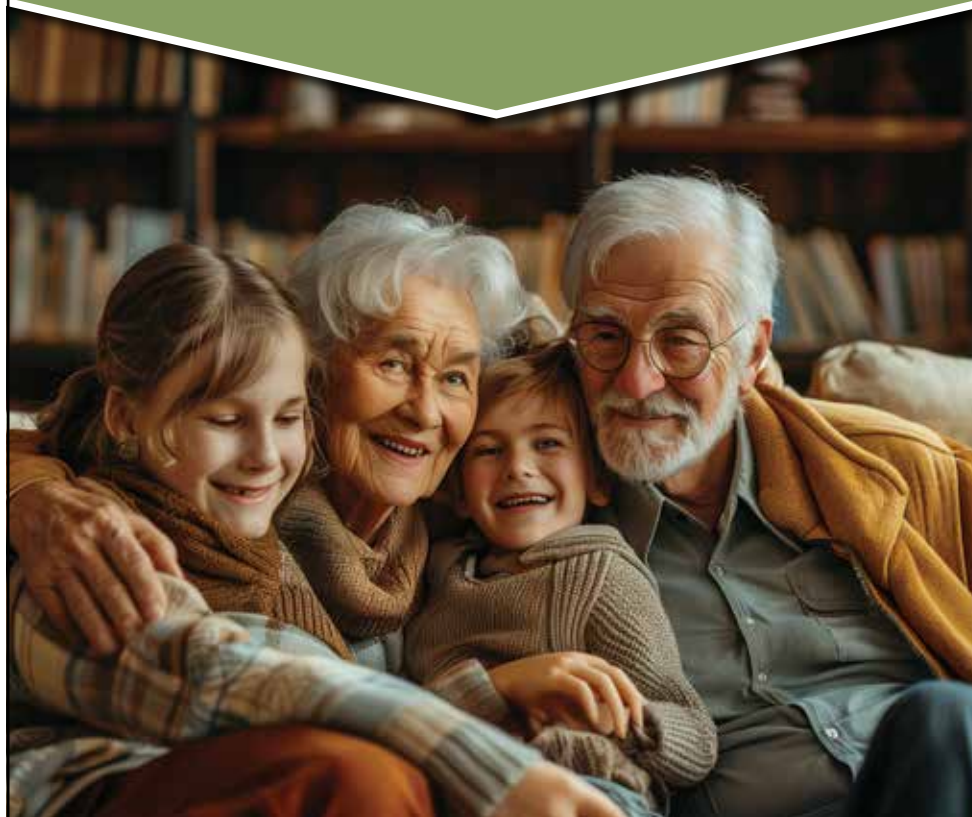
The W. G. Young Funeral Home is an independent family owned and family operated business and in addition to their legacy, will be making a gift to the Stratford General Hospital Foundation as part of their appreciation to the communities that has supported them.

Wayne also wishes to acknowledge his first employees, Mildred Rose, Mary McCann and Fred Wolfe, who have now passed away, as well as all their past and present employees, who have always shown care and compassion in their service.

Wayne, Joanne and Greg wish to say thank you to Stratford and surrounding communities. They would not be here without you.

Congratulations to the Young Family on such a wonderful milestone.

ARE YOU AFRAID TO TALK About Your Funeral



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Ontario 

One Care relies on community support to care for seniors

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

“So, we have a community nurse who supports the person ... in hospital and then supports the person and their family as they’re going home, and then follows up in the home to ensure they get settled. They also coordinate services like home help or meals or a ride back to the doctor for a follow-up.”

Not only does this program support the person leaving hospitals, but it also supports the caregivers but putting in place a support-services plan and reducing that caregiver burden as much as possible. Scanlon said One Care works with client advisors to help the organization continue to develop and improve on the services offered through Let’s Go Home and ensure it is meeting every need it can.

As home and community support services have been identified as having the potential to reduce the system-wide strain on hospitals and long-term-care homes, Scanlon said it’s important that One Care has the support to help it deliver those services to everyone who needs them.

“At One Care we deliver both community-support services ... (and) home care ... and we do social work and personal support. There’s so much need for that (home-care service). ... One of the things I’ve seen over the years is there are just as many if not more people who need that service, but it’s been a service that’s not as available as it needs to be as our system changes,” Scanlon said.



(ONE CARE PHOTO)

A personal support worker with One Care Home and Community Support Services helps one of his clients in Huron and Perth counties navigate his day-to-day life, allowing him to live independently at home.



(ONE CARE PHOTO)

Demetre’s Family Eatery in Stratford is proud to be participating in One Care Home and Community Support Services’ Shop for Seniors fundraiser this month.

“And there’s a whole lot of complex reasons why that is the case including enough human resources or personnel whether that be nurses or personal support workers to be able to carry out that role. So that is one of the things we are really looking at internal to One Care is, ‘Are there different things we could do with our communi-

ty-support programs that may cover some of that gap that is happening?’ People don’t know where to go. They need that help at home. If there’s anything that’s going to help our system as it changes, it’s more investment in our community (support services) because that’s what keeps people out of hospital.”

And since investment from province may not be where it needs to be yet, Scanlon says support from the communities One Care serves is crucial to its mission.

This month, residents of Huron and Perth counties can support the work One Care does for seniors by participating in its Shop for Seniors campaign. Throughout June, participating businesses across both counties will be running special promotions with proceeds going to support the organization.

For a full listing of participating businesses, which include Social Thirty-One Restaurant in St. Marys, Demetre’s Family Eatery in Stratford and Olive and Rose Flower Studio in Goderich, visit www.onecaresupport.ca/shopforseniors.

One Care is also running its Senior Smile Photo Contest in June in which locals can pay \$20 to submit their favourite photo of a senior and encourage their friends and family to vote for their photos at a cost of \$1 per vote with a five-vote minimum. The top three photos will win their photographers a Visa gift card each. More information on that fundraiser can be found on the Shop For Seniors webpage.

New Horizons for Seniors Grant supporting library’s Aging with Agility Program

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

A new program enriching the lives of seniors at the library received a federal boost to kick it off just before Seniors Month.

The Stratford Public Library announced in a May 22 press release the library received the Government of Canada’s New Horizons for Seniors grant worth \$21,968. The New Horizons for Seniors Grant fosters positive change in seniors’ lives through initiatives with impact. The grant will fund the library’s Aging with Agility program.

“It was pretty fantastic,” said Robyn Godfrey, adult collections and outreach librarian, about receiving the grant. “It’s a very big project and it will be taking the full year up until February 2025 and we could not have done it without the grant. Many,

many thanks to the folks who approved that grant at the Government of Canada.”

The Aging with Agility program, so far, has 40 workshops planned through February 2025 focusing on independent living, emotional intelligence, physical agility, financial agility and spirituality. The program is starting with the physical-agility component as part of Seniors Month this month with workshops about strength and balance, tai chi and home gyms.

The Stratford Public Library also has exercise-at-home kits created in consultation with Huron Perth Public Health and The Alzheimer Society of Huron Perth. The kits include a yoga ball, bean bags for balance and grip, light dumbbells, dry erase markers for activity tracking, resistance bands and resources.

The library will offer five brain-health kits made in consultation with the Alzhei-

mer Society of Huron Perth, which will include resources, matching games, aqua paints, MP3 players with short stories, large print books and illustrated songbooks. The songbooks will have lyrics to songs from the 1960s and 1970s such as “What a Wonderful World” by Louis Armstrong and “Good Vibrations” by the Beach Boys, as well as cues to turn the page.

“They’ll be very familiar to people of certain generations,” Godfrey said. “But they will also be multi-generational. Grandma who may be on a cognitive decline can read through this book with their grandchild and introduce them to the songs she’s familiar with along with some really beautiful illustrations.”

Between 12 and 15 Launchpads with ad-free games such as crosswords, word searches, find-the-difference and matching games will be part of the library’s col-

lection. The Launchpads will be available for all ages and the games will test problem-solving skills, memory, attention span and reaction time.

Godfrey said the library has an advisory team with all members 55 years old or older who provide suggestions on what materials they would like at the library. After receiving feedback from the advisory team, the Stratford Public Library will offer more large-print books and digital audiobooks.

“We want to make sure that everybody in our community feels welcome at the library; that there’s something for everyone here for them and that means that we reach out to members of our community, to this particular demographic, to help them lead full lives where they are,” she said.

More information can be found by visiting splibrary.ca/aging-agility.



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Muscle is magical: The importance of staying active as we age

MERCEDES KAY GOLD

Times Correspondent

Active ageing is the name of the game. Longevity is the goal, but with quality of life. Feeling strong physically is the key to maintaining independence. You can't sit on the couch and expect to live your best life.

Sarcopenia, the age-related decrease in muscle mass, is normal due to nutrition, hormones, activity level and other factors. Being active is key for helping preserve lean body mass. Strength training is non-negotiable, or you can expect to lose four to six pounds of muscle per decade. Move it or lose it!

Muscle strength is linked to everyday life and simple activities such as walking, household chores, lawncare and even getting dressed or tying one's shoes will be utterly impossible without maintaining muscle mass. Inactivity is normal when recovering from an illness

or injury, and muscle will atrophy, leaving you in a vulnerable position. Balance is connected to overall muscle strength, but strong legs are your link to preventing dangerous slips and falls.

Strength training at least two days a week is beneficial overall. Blood-sugar control and slowing down bone loss are advantageous as the number of candles on the cake increases. Speaking of dessert, muscle mass is linked to a higher basal metabolic rate. Muscle burns more calories at rest than body fat.

Building muscle through resistance training is a super way to manage chronic conditions such as arthritis, back pain and heart disease, to name a few. Functional training unilaterally supports cognitive health. Sharpening thinking skills while lifting weights is an epic win.

It's never too late to start building a stronger fit body. If you have a chronic condition, check with



(MERCEDES KAY GOLD PHOTOS)

To keep your muscles active at home, the use of something as simple as a can of food can take the place of dumbbells in daily exercise.

your doctor or naturopath before starting. Join a community class, local gym, follow along on YouTube or hire a trainer one-on-one to come to the house, but love yourself enough to start.

Step out of your comfort zone and embrace uneasiness, either solo or with a buddy. Start by warming up with a brisk walk outside or on a treadmill followed by a few simple in-home exercises. Everyone has to start somewhere, and one's body weight, a simple can of food or light dumbbells is a beautiful beginning. Choose an option heavy enough to tire your muscles after 12-15 repetitions. Once easy breezy, increase to two sets of 12-15, three sets, and then it's time to add weight or increase the weight used.

Strength training equals functional life and freedom. Three simple exercises you can start today in the privacy of your home. Sitting down and standing from a sturdy chair or a modified squat allows

you to rise and sit from the toilet without a handrail. Bicep curls increase arm strength helping you carry groceries in. Push-ups on the wall use your own body weight, but still target key muscles such as the chest, arms and shoulders.

Anthony Douglas Williams said it best. "Don't let your age control your life. Let your life control your age."



Wall pushups are a great starting point for seniors looking to improve and maintain their muscle strength.

Thank You!

This Seniors Month, I wish to acknowledge the contributions and wisdom of all seniors in our communities.

JOHN NATER
MP | PERTH—WELLINGTON

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Grip strength leads to longevity

MERCEDES KAY GOLD

Times Correspondent

Aging is inevitable, but the rate is up to you.

This is not the time to sit down. It is imperative to keep on moving and grooving. Strength training is more important than ever. Besides staying active, there's increasing evidence that grip strength is an indication of overall health. Stop passing the pickle jar and start increasing the force you personally generate and pop the top.

Grip strength is correlated to overall strength. Sarcopenia or losing lean muscle mass is common with ageing. With decreasing mobility and endurance, sitting at home is more comfortable but muscle atrophies. It doesn't

take long before lost muscle is replaced with fat and strength plummets. Losing grip strength explains one's quality of life. Are you thriving? Muscle strength also sheds light on current health issues, and it's a predictor of health issues to come.

Grip strength is linked to coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, heart failure, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and all cause mortality. Low grip strength is also associated with dementia and an increased risk of cognitive decline.

Determining one's grip strength is simple and easy to measure using a handheld device called a dynamometer. Simply squeeze the device as hard as possible.

A Canadian study used a large, healthy, nationally representative sample to determine reference values that correspond to age, sex, height and weight in regards to grip strength. The study found men between the ages of 60 and 79 ranged from 40.1 to 42.3 kilograms while women of the same age group had a grip strength range from 23.7 to 24.7 kilograms. How well would you fare?

A journal published by the Gerontological Society of America classified 26-32 kilograms as intermediate and less than 26 kilograms as weak. In women, a grip strength of 16-20 kilograms was intermediate and less than 16 kilograms as weak. Is it time to test your grip strength?



(MERCEDES KAY GOLD PHOTO)

GET A GRIP

Grip strength is a good indicator of current and future health in seniors.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 21



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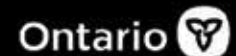
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June is Seniors Month

Working for Seniors

ontario.ca/SeniorsMonth



Peavey Mart 'Grandma' not leaving anytime soon

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After 40 years of service at one of Stratford's local outfitters, Valerie Roth, 68, said that she is not retiring yet.

"I know a lot of people think I retired when they saw it on Facebook," Roth said, referring to a post on the local Peavey Mart's Facebook page that garnered over 60 likes. "They saw it and thought maybe I retired. ... I'm still hanging in there full-time."

Roth celebrated the milestone in May with balloons, kind words, a Peavey Mart pin and a monetary gift – not to mention the social media post and the wider community's congratulations.

She also said her coworkers

were very supportive and continue to be supportive as she continues to work.

"One of them calls me the grandma of the store," Roth shared. "We're a family in this store, we really are."

Roth started at Peavey Mart, then known as TSC, in 1984 when she was 28. After some tough times for farmers and high interest rates in the '80s, Roth sold her farm and was working at the Shakespeare Feed Mill covering a maternity leave. She had one week left in her contract when she came to the store off of Highway 8 to buy bolts for a plough.

She asked about a job but was informed they had just filled the position.

"I went to get in my car and the

manager came and he said, 'Oh, I overheard you ... are you looking for a job?'"

The rest was history. She started working a week later.

"It keeps me busy and keeps me occupied, but never did I think that I'd be here 40 years later, that's for sure," Roth said.

A lot of things have changed since she got started – like the name, the company that owns it and the very building they operate out of. That being said, Roth maintained some things haven't changed at all. They still carry the same products they had at TSC and provide the same kind of service.

Over the years, Roth said there aren't any specific memories that stick out for her as she reflects on her time.



GRANDMA OF THE STORE

(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Valerie Roth outside of Peavey Mart, where she just celebrated 40 years of service.

ily, but they know where I belong."

Roth also thanked Jackie Catania, admin of popular community Facebook group Stratford Connect. Catania had shared the post on the page and Roth "couldn't get over" how many people reached out and said congratulations.

Roth said although she isn't going anywhere anytime soon, she

is considering slowing down as she gets older.

"My boss and I, we tease each other, and I'll say, 'As long as I'm an asset,' and she says, 'Believe me, I'll let you know when you're not,'" Roth laughed. "I hope I can keep going. Life can change in a heartbeat, too, so we just hope that we can get up every day and come to work and do our jobs."



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Grip strength leads to longevity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

Improving grip strength is possible at any age. Using a racquetball or squash ball, simply squeeze, switch hands and aim for ten minutes twice a day. Skip squishy balls as the resistance is wrong for working the forearm enough to make gains.

A handheld device is another option for daily use. Match your starting point, anywhere from approximately 11 to 132 pounds of resistance, adjusting the resistance as strength increases. The handheld device is portable, user friendly and the ergonomic handle is suitable for all hand sizes and

can be used by both men and women.

The benefits of improving grip strength can be seen in functional life. From in the kitchen with a manual lemon squeezer and garlic press, playing piano and a strong serve in tennis to an even better score in a round of golf. Grip training supports a speedy recovery from hand injuries, arthritis and carpal tunnel.

Overall muscle weakness leads to loss of independence. Get active! It's never too early or too late to improve muscle strength, cardiovascular health, flexibility and, in-turn, grip strength.


Live your life to the fullest!



June is Seniors Month

Working for Seniors

ontario.ca/SeniorsMonth

Ontario 

Ontario Celebrates Seniors Month: New one-stop-shop website connecting seniors and their families to government services and resources

June is Seniors Month in Ontario – a time to honour and celebrate the contributions seniors have made to help make this province the great place it is today.

To make it easier and more convenient for seniors and their families to find the information they need to connect to services and resources, the Ontario government is launching a new and interactive website at Ontario.ca/seniors.

"Thanks to our seniors, Ontario is a place we can proudly call home and I encourage all Ontarians to join me in celebrating Seniors Month throughout June," said Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, in a press release. "As

part of our government's plan to help people easily connect with the government services they need, our new seniors website now puts everything seniors and their loved ones need to find right at their fingertips."

The simple and easy-to-use website and its search tool provides a one-stop shop for seniors and their families to have all the information and resources they need on how to connect to government services and community supports such as home and housing supports, health and wellbeing, recreation, caregiving and finances.

Seniors can easily find out how to connect to services such as Health811, renew

a driver's licence and find tax credits. It also helps seniors find other community resources including local seniors organizations that offer social, cultural and recreational programs.

This year's Senior's Month theme, Working for Seniors, highlights the programs and services that are helping seniors all over the province stay fit, healthy, active and connected to their family, friends and communities.

Ontario is working for seniors by investing more than ever before in hundreds of local programs and services every year because when seniors have more opportunities to be social and together, they have a

happier and better quality of life.

Quick facts


- Seniors are Ontario's fastest growing demographic.
- The number of seniors aged 65 and over is projected to increase significantly, from 2.8 million or 18.4 per cent of the population in 2022 to 4.4 million or 20.3 per cent by 2046.
- Seniors are recognized through two provincial senior award programs. Nominations for these awards can be made at any point in the calendar year.

Provided by: Ontario Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility

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STRATFORD **TIMES** SPORTS

WOSSAA Track and Field SDSS Results 2024 Day 1

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Thirteen Golden Bears qualified for OFSAA West at the University of Windsor during Day 1 of the WOSSAA Track and Field competition at Western University's Alumni Field May 23.

Top five WOSSAA finishers qualify for regionals.

Here's how the Stratford athletes did:

GOLD

Caden Diehl - JB Pole Vault (3.20m)
Caden Diehl - JB Triple Jump (12.37m)
Olivia Mark - SG Triple Jump (10.76m)

SILVER

Jashan Singh - JB Discus (48.75m)
Joel Gates - NB 1500m (4:33.72)
Luke Feltham - SB 1500m (4:03.89)

BRONZE

Cole Otten - JB Pole Vault (2.80m)

4th

Jashan Singh - JB Shot Put (13.49m)

5th

Daniel Bean - JB Pole Vault (2.55m)
Payton Barclay - JG Pole Vault (2.20m)
Daniel Ogilvie - SB 1500m (4:07.04)

NB 4X100m Relay (48.44) - Anadi Mishra, Nolan Trysenaar, Zachary Clarke, Caden Ollson

6th

Zachary Clarke - NB Long Jump (5.45m)

(MARCIE STEARS PHOTOS)



Caden Diehl - gold in junior boys pole vault.



Luke Feltham (bib #789) - silver in senior boys 1500m; Daniel Ogilvie (bib #807) - 5th;



Olivia Mark - gold in senior girls triple jump.

STRATFORD **TIMES**

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WOSSAA Track and Field SDSS Results 2024 Day 1

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Caden Diehl led the Stratford District Secondary School Golden Bears with a triple-gold performance at the WOSSAA track-and-field meet at Western University's Alumni Field.

Diehl won the Junior Boys Pole Vault, Long Jump, and

Triple Jump events. A total of 16 SDSS students earned a spot at OFSAA Regionals.

Here's how the rest of the SDSS athletes did:

GOLD

- Caden Diehl - JB Long Jump (6.23m)
- Owen Chambers - JB Javelin (51.08m)

BRONZE

- Joel Gates - NB 3000m (10:04.38)

4th

- Maddox Anderson - NB Discus (36.20m)
- Olivia Mark - SG 200m (26.62)
- Luke Feltham - SB 3000m (8:58.07)
- Noah Feltham - JB 3000m (9:28.25)

5th

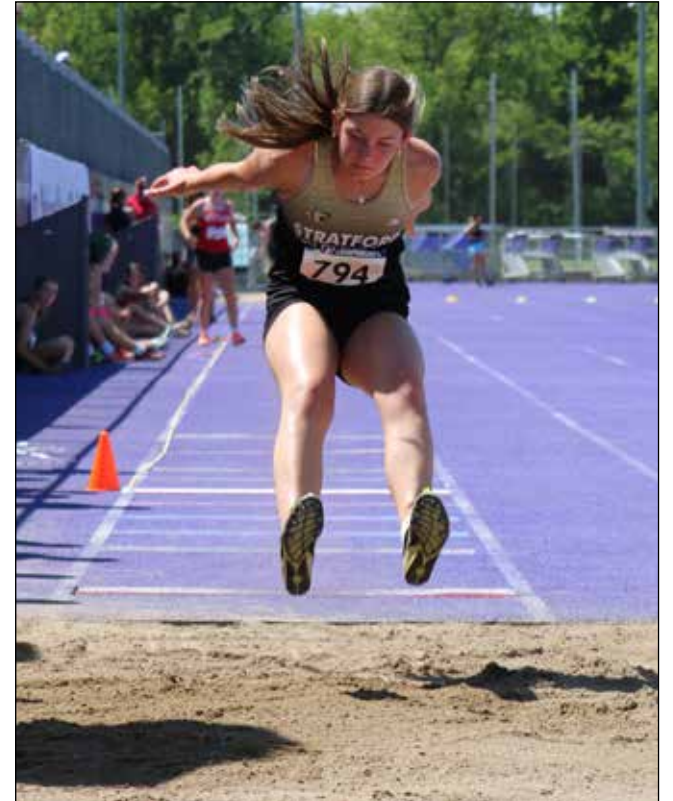
- Owen Chambers - JB 300m Hurdles (44.51)
- Daniel Ogilvie - SB 3000m (8:59.20)



Luke Feltham (bib #789) and Daniel Ogilvie (bib #807) in the Senior Boys 3000m



Dustin Krahn (bib #795) in the Senior Boys 200m heats



Vivienne Kouwenberg in the Novice Girls Triple Jump

(MARCIE STEARS PHOTOS)

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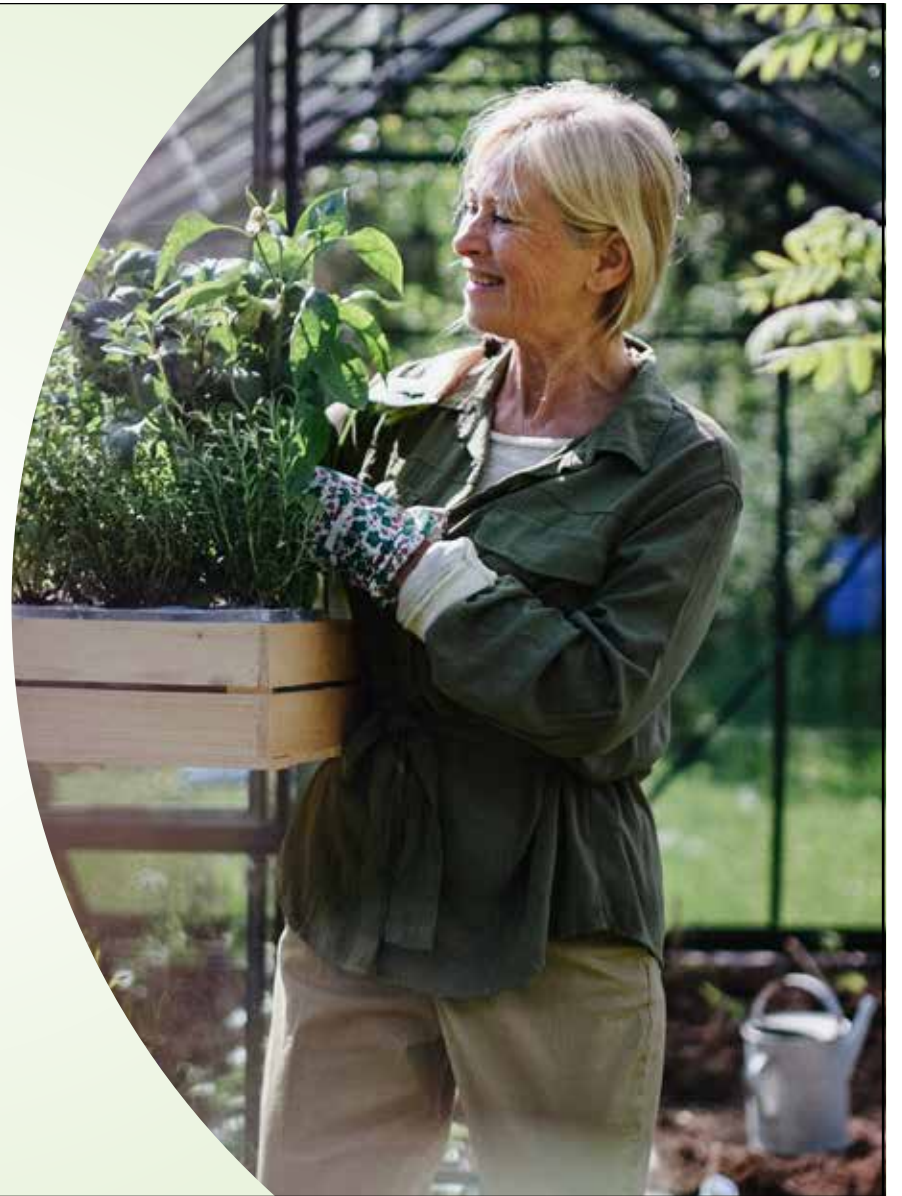
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Stratford District Secondary School athletes compete at OFSAA Regionals in track and field

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Sixteen athletes from Stratford District Secondary School competed at the OFSAA Regionals Track and Field Meet at the University of Windsor on May 31 and June 1.

The top four athletes moved on to OFSAA At West University. A total of eight Golden Bears competed.

BRONZE

- Caden Diehl - Junior Boys Triple Jump (12.56m)
- Daniel Ogilvie - Senior Boys 3000m (8:36.56)
- Noah Feltham - Junior Boys 3000m (9:17.84)

4th Place:

- Caden Diehl - Junior Boys Pole Vault (3.35m)
- Jashan Singh - Junior Boys Discus (49.17m)
- Joel Gates - Novice Boys 1500m (4:26.36)
- Luke Feltham - Senior Boys 3000m (8:37.02)

5th Place:

- Luke Feltham - Senior Boys 1500m (4:03.26)
- Maddox Anderson - Novice Boys Discus (37.40m)

6th Place

- Jashan Singh - Junior Boys Shot Put (14.29m)
- Joel Gates - Novice Boys 3000m (9:46.15)
- Caden Diehl - Junior Boys Long Jump (5.93m)

Also competing at OFSAA:

- Daniel Bean and Cole Otten (Junior Boys Pole Vault)



(RANDY JOHNSON PHOTOS)

Top left: Jashan Singh won fourth place in Junior Boys Discus.

Top Middle: Caden Diehl place fourth in Junior Boys Pole Vault.

Top Right: Owen Chambers competes in Junior Boys Javelin.

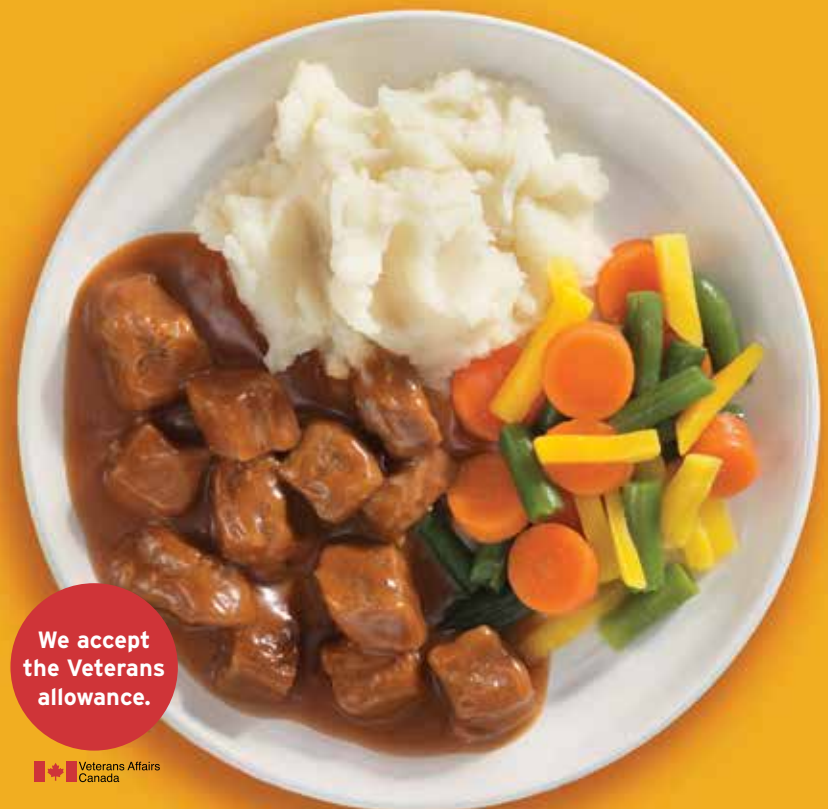


(KERRY THOMPSON PHOTO)

Bottom Left: Olivia Mark competes in Senior Girls Triple Jump.

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Slingshot softball team competes in U.S. tournament

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Several local softball players recently travelled to Hallstead, Pa on Memorial Day weekend for a modified softball tournament.

The Kirby Electric T.N.T. Slingshot team included Stratford natives Robbie Gibson, Mike Lamers and Bevan Mathieson, who play on the Saints of the Old Timers' Slingshot League in Mitchell.

Members of the Fullarton Crew slingshot team of the Old Timers' league including Jeff Pfeifer of Monkton, Steve Pfeifer of Mitchell and Dave Irwin of Listowel, as well as Fullarton fastball players Ray Gettler, Connor Gettler and Owen Amos rounded out the team.

The tournament began on May 25 when the T.N.T. squad faced a local team,

Growens. The game was a hard-fought battle until the sixth inning when Growens was able to bring their batters across the plate for 11 runs en route to a final score of 16-7. Bill Nakluski was able to strike out two batters before leaving the mound in the sixth after surrendering a home run. After Lamers and Jeff Pfeifer struggled to contain the Growens' offence, Mathieson stepped in and was able to end the game in the seventh allowing only one hit. At the plate, Gibson, Amos and Ray Gettler all went two-for-three. Steve Pfeifer and Mathieson went one-for-two with Pfeifer laying down a perfect bunt to make it on base.

Game two saw T.N.T. face the Misfits from New York. Bill Nakluski had the ball on the mound for the entire game and allowed 15 hits and one walk. The Misfits ended the game in the seventh after a solo home run and three subsequent hits

for a final score of 11-10. Connor Gettler homered in his first at-bat in the game and overall was two-for-three at the plate with a single and a fielder's choice. Jake Nakluski also cleared the fence with a three-run homer in the sixth. He was also two-for-three at the plate, along with Bill Nakluski, Gibson and Mathieson. One of the most talked-about plays of the tournament saw T.N.T. get a runner out in a pickle rundown play.

With two losses preceding it, the third game on the morning of May 26 became do or die with

T.N.T. facing the Fort Apache Dodgers from the Bronx, a team paid to play and travel across North America and into the Caribbean for monthly tournaments. T.N.T. started the game strong and kept the game within one run until a monstrous fifth inning which saw the Dodgers score 10 runs to end the game

in a mercy. T.N.T. recorded nine hits – all singles except for a double by Gibson. Connor Gettler batted 1.000, Jake Nakluski was two-for-three and Mathieson and Lamers went one-for-two.

According to Jodi Nakluski, the team's experience was very special despite the win-loss record.

"T.N.T. went into this tournament unknown and unranked," Nakluski told the Times. "We were the first Canadian team to play in this circuit which encompasses New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont. We were treated like superstars. All the teams came over to introduce themselves and to watch us play. Most teams wished for the opportunity to play against us and many are hopeful that they can travel to our area to play ball and visit the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. We definitely walked out respected."

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Local swimmer medals at Special Olympics pool events in New Hamburg

LEE GRIFFI

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford swimmer Amiera Black was excited to compete in the South-Central District's Special Olympics last week. Not only did she compete, but she also won. Lots.

Black is a member of the Wilmot Aquatic ACES Swim Club and was participating in her first Special Olympics where she hit the pool in four events. She brought home three gold medals and one silver. Despite bringing home a barrage of hardware, Amiera said for her it was about the fun.

"It was amazing. I met lots of new friends and I swam really well," she told the Gazette.

The competition wasn't the only part of the event as Amiera played a big part in the opening and closing ceremonies. There was also a dance for competitors when the event wrapped up.

"She was up at 5 a.m. that morning, so it was a very long and busy day. They were all extremely tired, but they loved it when the music started. I think about an hour into the dance everyone said let's go home," laughed Jennifer Black, Amiera's mom.

Amiera was also excited to have swimmers from across the region compete in her home pool, and while the competition was about making friends and having fun, she said winning did feel good.

"I love the medals," said Amiera.

"They were pretty heavy around her neck," added Jennifer Black.

Not only did she win three golds and a silver, but she was able to perform with personal-best times in all four races including the 800-metre freestyle.

"She swam that race a month ago and took off 51 seconds, and last weekend she won gold in 11 seconds less than that. Those are big chunks of time to take off," added Jennifer Black, who was allowed to be one of her daughter's coaches at the competition.

"Her sister, father and grandparents all came to watch. Even her old coach when she was four came from Goderich to watch. It was really cool to have everyone in the stands there cheering her on," she added.

Amiera also stayed at the athlete's village at Laurier University with a roommate, something that was a first for her.

"It was funny at nighttime. She made me laugh all night," she said.

The 18-year-old swimmer may or may not be moving on to the 2026 National Summer Games in Medicine Hat, Alta. Jennifer Black said there are several factors in making that decision.

"That's our hope but we don't know for sure. Special Olympics does things a little differently. It's not just by times, it's by community and coaching endorsement. I don't completely understand how they choose but we are in a waiting game now



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

SPORTING HARDWARE

Amiera Black is seen smiling with her three gold and silver medals following the Special Olympics competition in Waterloo Region.

to see if she carries on."

The event was special for everyone involved, be it the athletes and their families, coaches, volunteers, or organizers. Jennifer Black said the opening ceremonies were her highlight.

"We participated in the flag-bearing ritual. Just having that many athletes with different challenges be welcomed into the community with open arms. The excitement and support was incredible. At any Special Olympics event, it doesn't matter what level, they always remind me of what's really important. It doesn't matter if they win, they are so excited to be there. They cheer for their friends, they cheer for people they don't even know."

She added the athletes are there to just enjoy what they are doing at the moment and, in turn, everyone around them is supporting the community as a whole. The event sponsors, the Waterloo Regional Police get top marks for their involvement.

"It was overwhelming how many people were there to cheer the athletes on. We were emotionally moved by the whole experience at every level. The Waterloo Regional Police were phenomenal. They were amazing with the athletes and wanted them to feel comfortable. Amiera even got to sit on one of their motorcycles. It was so uplifting," said Jennifer Black.

Over 750 athletes from across Ontario came to the Waterloo Region to compete in five diverse and exciting sports during the event - basketball, powerlifting, rhythmic gymnastics, swimming and 10-pin bowling.

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Warriors hand out annual awards

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

The Stratford Hunter Steel Ltd. Warriors recently unveiled their award winners for the 2023-24 season.

Rookie sensation Carson Harmer was the big winner, adding four additional team awards to his trophy case. Earlier this year, Harmer received the GO-JHL's RJ Noble Memorial Award as the league's Rookie of the Year and the Unique Cup as the Midwestern Conference's regular-season scoring leader. At the Warriors' recent awards ceremony, Harmer added the Erik Anderson Award as the team's regular-season scoring leader and the Pavestone Plus Award for the team's top plus-minus at plus-24. Harmer also received the Jack Wright Memorial Award as the team's most valuable player in the regular season, plus the Ron Schulthies Memorial Award as the team's top rookie.

Director of hockey operations Jason Clarke had nothing but high praise for the Saginaw Spirit third-round draft pick.

"I can only describe his rookie season as incredible," Clarke told the Times. "With a young team, he took on a top role

and never looked back as evidenced by him leading the team in scoring and finishing top-five in the league. Carson is a fantastic young player with a very bright hockey future ahead of him."

Jacob Wiseman received the James Elder Memorial Award for leadership on and off the ice as well as the Mike Lebreux Memorial Award as the fan favourite. According to Clarke, Wiseman, like Harmer, became a consistent contributor to the team's success very quickly.

"Jake is another rookie who made an immediate impact and a great impression on not only his teammates but also the fans. He continuously came to the rink with a smile and worked on his game every day. Jake is a key part of our team's success and we look forward to him developing even more this coming season."

The MacArthur Award for most valuable player in the playoffs was shared by the trio of Camden Daigle, Cole Lewis and Braydon Stumpf. The three forwards combined for 66 points in just 15 games. Clarke noted the decision on the three players sharing the playoff MVP award was fairly clear to the coaching staff who voted on the winners.

"It was hard to look elsewhere with the

point production and consistency these guys brought every night. The experience these guys had from the previous season's run towards the Sutherland Cup helped them put a team of mostly rookies on their backs and they drove the bus to the Cherrey Cup appearance this season. I'm very proud of them."

Daigle and Lewis also received individual honours, with Daigle capturing the Herb G. Parker Award as the top Stratford Minor Hockey Association (SMHA) graduate, while Lewis earned the Cherrey Buslines Award as the team's best defensive forward.

"We'll never be able to say enough about Cam and his five seasons here with the Warriors," Clarke said of Daigle. "As a hometown player who had opportunities elsewhere but stayed true to our hockey club and finished with back-to-back runs to the Cherrey Cup is remarkable. Cam was always available for the SMHA players who watched him play and attended some of the practices for their minor hockey clubs.

"Cole is one of the most honest and hard-working guys around. The coaches trusted him to do things the right way day in and day out. With having a great of-

fensive season, Cole's winning this award proves what a great 200-foot player he is."

The offensively electrifying Casey Bridgewater took home the Jack Dent Memorial Award as the team's most outstanding defenceman. Clarke said Bridgewater is another young player with high-end potential.

"Casey is another high-end rookie who we were fortunate to have spent time with us as well as the OHL's Sarnia Sting. Casey continued to develop throughout the season and his combination of speed and skill is elite. Casey is another player with a bright hockey future in front of him."

Rounding out the Warriors' award winners was Zachary Schooley, who received the John Mavity Memorial Award as the team's most improved player. Clarke credited Schooley for having the skills needed to grow on and off the ice.

"Zac, from a season ago, has grown immensely not only on the ice but, and probably more importantly, off the ice. His maturity level has grown steadily and he's become a hard-nosed player on the ice, playing to the limit and not crossing it. I think he can have a large impact on and off the ice for us this coming season."

Stratford Skating Awards



The Stratford Skating Club (SSC) hosted its year-end awards night June 6. The SSC acknowledged the hard work of program assistants on its preschool and canskate sessions. Pictured in the back row, from left, are program assistants Coach Kevin Winter, Jaida Ford, Olivia Clemmer, Tessa Bell, Coach Reese Manzer, Mason Clemmer and Coach Austin Phillips. In the front row, from left, are program assistants Melanie Milton, Katerina Schmidt, Eva Boutis Elfstrom and Isabella Pritchard. Absent from the photo are Hailey Graul, Abby Keane, Devin Keane, Aviva Goad and Becky Schmidt



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

The Stratford Skating Club (SSC) acknowledged all its skaters that passed their National Skate Canada Tests in 2023. Pictured in the back row, from left, are Nicole Verhoef, Amy Schroeder, Honor Gropp, Mason Clemmer, Tessa Bell and Reese Manzer. In the middle row, from left, are Gracie Sutherland, Jaida Ford, Olivia Clemmer, Jane McCutchen and Bella Danika Lingard. In the front row, from left, are Clara Robertson, Melanie Milton, Katerina Schmidt, Eva Boutis Elfstrom and Isabella Pritchard. Absent from the photo are Annabelle Stewart, McKenna O'Connor, Morgan Mott, Hailey Graul and Elena Aroutzidis Desormeaux.

History within brass

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

Learning about new and different cultures is something that many of us are interested in; it's something that can bring a new understanding and appreciation for different countries.

Dancing Waters Boutique is one such store that provides a glimpse into traditional figures, household terms and historical pieces from countries in Asia.

Maggie Liu and Koi Thomson opened Dancing Waters in 2021 as a way to introduce Asian culture to the population of Stratford. They offer various pieces from several different Asian countries and are always ready to provide the rich history behind the pieces that are for sale. Recently, Liu and Thomson acquired more than 15 beautiful brass artifacts from varying Dynasty periods in China. Each of these pieces have a rich history behind them.

One of the pieces that came into Dancing Waters' possession is Qijies. Dated in the late Warring States period, these two pieces were previously housed in the Anhui Provincial Museum. On these slates, bronze tallies are divided into boat tallies and cart tallies. Each party held one half and they would only be considered valid if the tallies matched correctly.

"Ejun Qijie" refers to a tax-exempt token cast in the name of a monarch, and only a very small number of noble officials and merchants could obtain the tax-exempt token in the name of the monarch. Among them, if one obtains the gold token, then no levy is imposed; if one does not obtain the gold token, then a levy is imposed.

Another piece that is now for sale in the store is the four birds vessel. This container is dated back to the mid Warring States period and was commonly used as the

holding place for wine. It is constructed with a domed lid, adorned with four bird-shaped knobs on top, straight walls tapering inwards and a flat bottom with three hooped legs. The central part of the lid is engraved with clouds and dragon-phoenix patterns. The belly is embellished with six groups of dragon patterns, each group containing four dragons.

The entire vessel's decorative patterns are harmonious and intricate. It is one of the most beautifully crafted wine vessels discovered from the Chu State to date.

These two pieces and more are for sale at Dancing Waters. Anyone interested in these pieces, can visit Dancing Waters at 11 York St. in Stratford. Those interested can also visit their website at dancingwatersboutique.com for more information about the shop and history about the products that are for sale there.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured is a piece (Qijie slates) from Dynasties period recently acquired by Dancing Water Boutique in Stratford.

Our Stör(y) is an Explorium Emporium featuring regional artists and makers

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

There is a new addition to the retail arts offerings here in Stratford at Our Stör(y) located at 7 George St. W. Kevin September, owner, is quick to say that he hesitates to call it a gallery, though art is on the offering, but it also showcases eclectic, exclusive and unique products that appeal to everyone.

While September may have only lived here for a few years – he and his wife moved here in 2021 – he has quickly ensconced himself within the scene and developed a strong sense of how he can contribute to the region in an impactful way. His artisans and makers are all from the Perth, Huron, Waterloo Region and Wellington counties.

“I was stuck on Stratford, then Huron-Perth, but then I met people from Guelph and Tavistock or Fergus and so I started thinking about my region. I didn’t want to be a Canadian or Ontario supporter, there’s enough of that, and there’s people doing that really well. I wanted to be micro-focused. I have a potter here but I won’t carry bowls and cups because that’s what Village Studios does and Got It Made, so I really am being careful to be exclusive,” said September.

There has been much collaboration between like-minded individuals like Zac Gribble and Stewart Reynolds among others in helping him develop and bring his vision to reality.

“Meeting creative people from all around the region has helped and the other wonderful thing is the ability to go to all these other towns and villages within an hour from here. My wife and I started doing weekend day trips and I saw art that I haven’t seen before. I learned about hop water, which we serve here, and a lot of people haven’t tried it before,” said September. “Culture Shock Kombucha is also available.”

In a nutshell, his philosophy for the place is to share stories of our region through artists and makers that live and create here. Inside, patrons will find sculptures by blacksmith Beau Beckett as well as functional pieces he has forged. There are quilts, but these pieces are more unique and unlike Mennonite quilts. There is art on the wall by Grahame Lynch, Paul Kalbfleisch, who was to have a book launch there, and pieces by Colleen Schindler, all unlike anything available anywhere else.

Remember Beardo? The facemask unlike all others? It’s in there. There’s also hand-decorated skateboards, pickleball paddles from St. Marys, textile art pieces by Julia Masci, handmade hats, books by local authors and it’s the only place in town to get an autographed copy of Brittlestar’s recent book, *Welcome to the Stupidocalypse*. Also exclusive to the emporium is the “Peace, Love, Canada, Stratford” t-shirt by Brittlestar.

There is even artwork available by September himself. Not surprisingly, he too



(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

EVERYONE HAS A STORY

Kevin September, owner of Our Stör(y), has opened his doors at 7 George St West and is ready to welcome in the curious and creative guests to the emporium.

is talented and compelled to create. He has a lofty history of participating in creating an arts community prior to moving here and he has an impressive skillset.

As consumers, residents of Stratford can look forward to book launches, creative cross promotion and workshops

such as Indigenous moccasin making among others to be finalized. Store hours are Tuesday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. For more information, visit their website at ourstor-y.com

Building opportunities in art with Lego

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

When Zachary Steinman reconnected with a childhood favourite, he didn’t think it would take him to where he is today.

Steinman, who grew up in Stratford, played with Lego as a child but lost touch with the hobby as he grew up and gave a lot of his bricks away. Looking for something to do at home during the COVID-19 Pandemic, he bought a Lego set.

He started making structures and taking on online challenges from the Lego community on Instagram, where he’d post his results.

“There’s the challenges where you take part and enter pictures and hashtags and stuff like that,” Steinman said. “More and more, people started following me and then it sort of blew up from there, and now it’s sort of me taking it more seriously so I have art galleries and art collectors contacting me about purchasing and/or putting my stuff on display. I’m still getting my head around it, but it is a pretty cool experience so far.”

The official Lego Instagram account messaged him and said he was chosen to have his work displayed in the Lego House in Billund, Denmark. Steinman is one of two Canadians to have his work displayed in the Lego House.

“Until it actually happened, I wasn’t totally sure of what was going on,” Steinman said. “But no, they flew us over there and put us up and put the stuff on display, so it’s pretty cool.”

Steinman’s Lego creations have been on display since



(ZACHARY STEINMAN PHOTO)

BRICKED

Zachary Steinman enjoys making unique Lego creations. His dedication to Lego challenges led him to being one of the only two Canadians to ever have their creations on display in Billund, Denmark’s Lego House.

September 2023 and will be there until September 2024.

Steinman takes about a night or two, three to four evenings for larger pieces, to build most of the structures and likes to make the Lego creations look nothing like Lego. He also likes the flexibility that comes with working with the material.

“I’m not gluing it. I’m not putting it in ways that it doesn’t stick together but I’m just finding different ways of doing it than the norm,” he said.

Steinman has been interacting with the Lego community and will be meeting more members of the community at the upcoming Brickwork Chicago 2024 event, the largest North American event dedicated to Lego. Brickwork Chicago will take place on June 15. Steinman also met some of the people he got to know from the online Lego community while in Billund.

“I’m sort of recognized in Europe and different parts of the world more than I am here locally, so it’s cool going to these places,” he said.

Now in Nova Scotia, Steinman has an art exhibition in Halifax. He was married on the Gallery Stratford grounds. The former Samsonite building in Stratford used to manufacture Lego and distribute it in North America up until the late 1980s.

Nothing is set in stone yet, but Steinman would like to bring his Lego creations to Stratford.

“At some point, it would be kind of cool to have a collaboration with Gallery Stratford,” he said. “Or to having Stratford being the home of Lego North America back in the day and then having the art form of Lego displayed as well.”

Steinman’s work can be found by visiting [instagram.com/steinmanzachary](https://www.instagram.com/steinmanzachary).

Stratford Festival Review: Rarely produced Cymbeline brought to life on Tom Patterson Theatre stage

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

It is a rare thing to go into a Shakespeare play with zero expectations.

When it comes to Shakespeare's most popular works, most, if not all of us know the stories, the characters and the plot twists either by having read them in high school, through references in television and movies, or by seeing them produced again and again by theatre companies around the globe.

That is not the case with perhaps Shakespeare's most rarely produced play, *Cymbeline*, which opened at the Stratford Festival's Tom Patterson Theatre May 29.

Walking into the theatre auditorium, I must admit I knew nothing about the play I was about to see. I didn't know the story, I didn't know the characters, I didn't know who was in the cast and, honestly, I didn't even know it was a Shakespeare play.

While I'll blame my ignorance on a bout of food poisoning that kept me from doing the research I'd normally do before reviewing a play, I think that was actually to my benefit. Going into this production without any expectations and a truly open mind allowed me to immerse myself in the world of Ancient Britain and the repercussions of the controversial marriage between Innogen (Allison Edwards-Crewe) – the daughter of Queen Cymbeline (Lucy Peacock) – and Posthumus Leonatus (Jordin Hall) – a Roman man below her station – more than I otherwise would have.

I didn't have any other productions of



(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

CYMBELINE

Members of the company in *Cymbeline*. Stratford Festival 2024.

Cymbeline to compare it to, nor had I read the original text in which *Cymbeline* is the King of Britain, and I had to pay close attention to ensure I wasn't lost in Shakespeare's often unnecessarily descriptive prose.

But it paid off.

From the moment Jupiter (Marcus Nance) and Philarmonous the Soothsayer (Cynthia Jimenez-Hicks) set the stage for the story that ensued, introducing each of the characters and their motivations, I was hooked.

I'm a sucker for special effects, and this play delivered on that front. From the

lighting and the fog machines to the set design anchored by a large tree that glows when certain characters touch it and the enormous wings of Jupiter puppeteered each with their own onstage actor, the audience experience felt nearly cinematic at times.

The battle scenes between the Romans and Queen Cymbeline and her soldiers were particularly exciting to watch thanks in part to the special effects, but also to the impeccable fight choreography.

The performances were also on point. Peacock's portrayal of Cymbeline's unbridled fury at her daughter's choice to

marry a man below her station and Edwards-Crewe's enactment of Innogen's emotional roller-coaster ride from being helplessly in love to being betrayed by that same man, then thinking he's dead before finally finding out he is indeed still alive are, unsurprisingly, high points of the production.

Yet the two leads weren't alone in their stellar performances. Christopher Allen's hot-headed and vain portrayal of Cloten brought humour to the production as he tried again and again to win over Innogen to take advantage of her wealth and power, to no success, as did Tyrone Savage in his portrayal Iachimo as he hid himself in a trunk placed in Innogen's bedroom to steal a token that could prove her infidelity and win him his bet with Posthumus.

Jonathan Goad's Belarius, an English nobleman who kidnapped Cymbeline's two sons after he was unjustly banished and raised them as his own into strong, kind men, and Wahsont'io Kirby's Cornelius, the doctor who didn't trust the Duke (Rick Roberts) – Cymbeline's husband – and gave him a concoction that would mimic death instead of causing it like the poisons he'd asked for, were also highlights for me.

Like me, if you've never seen a production of *Cymbeline* – or maybe you've never even heard of it before – director Esther Jun's production of this rarely staged play won't disappoint. Just make sure you brush up on your Shakespearean English first.

Cymbeline runs at the Tom Patterson Theatre until Sept. 28.

Stratford Festival review: '60s counterculture gives new context in McKenna's Twelfth Night

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

There is something to be said about setting a Shakespearean comedy about a woman who disguises herself as a man to gain favour and influence in a male-dominated society in 1967.

Though, admittedly, I didn't initially understand why Seana McKenna opted to position her directorial debut, *Twelfth Night*, just weeks before *The Summer of Love*, looking back on the play as a whole, I now see there are some key themes that ring true both in Shakespeare's writing and in the decade shaped by counterculture.

Finding herself shipwrecked in the exotic land of Illyria stranded separately from her bother, who she believes is dead, Viola – masterfully played by Jessica B. Hill – disguises herself as a man, Cesario, to gain favour with Duke Orsino, played by André Sills, and secure her place in his court as his personal confidant.

As Viola aids in Orsino's unproductive attempts to win the heart of the wealthy Lady Olivia, played by Vanessa Sears, Olivia instead falls in love with Cesario, and Cesario's alter ego, Viola, falls in



(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

TWELFTH NIGHT

Vanessa Sears as Olivia (left) and Laura Condlin as Malvolio with Sarah Dodd as Maria in *Twelfth Night*. Stratford Festival 2024.

love with the duke. Muddying the waters even further, Viola's brother, Sebastian – played by Austin Eckert – who is the spitting image of Cesario, unwittingly and without his sister's knowledge evades

death and reaps the benefits of Olivia's already established love for Cesario, ultimately marrying her.

In true Shakespearean fashion, everything comes to a head as true identities

and passions are revealed, hilariously and one by one giving each of actors a chance to flex their considerable comedic chops.

Yet while the central plotline of *Twelfth Night* touches on the empowerment of one woman, the play's secondary plotline steals the show and fits perfectly with the '60s motif, at least in my mind.

This plotline involves a trio of drunken fools – Sir Toby Belch (Scott Wentworth), Sir Andrew Aguecheek (Ryan Wilkie) and Feste (Deborah Hay) – along with Olivia's servant, Maria (Sarah Dodd), conspiring to destroy the reputation of Olivia's authoritarian steward, Malvolio (Laura Condlin), who disapproves of their drunken revelry.

Condlin plays the traditionally male character perfectly, allowing the audience to at first understand why she would be conspired against, a result of her overbearing and controlling nature, before revealing that nature is simply to mask her deep love for Lady Olivia. Once convinced Lady Olivia feels the same, Malvolio risks deep humiliation to woo her love, only to discover she's been tricked before being locked away for supposedly losing her mind.

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Stratford Festival review: Hedda Gabler offers a disturbing look inside the mind of an unfulfilled woman

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Sara Topham's performance as the titular character in the Stratford Festival's production of Hedda Gabler is deeply disturbing – and I mean that in the best way possible.

Having tied herself down to a future she dreads with Dr. Tesman (Gordon S. Miller), a man she barely likes, let alone loves, Topham's Hedda is rude, uncaring, cold, disconnected and mischievous – finding just the briefest of joys in subtly tormenting the people around her.

Only just married, she is already bored of her surroundings. The prospects of, at very least, a comfortable, posh life filled with parties and finer things have begun to fade as Tesman's career aspirations as an academic and a writer seem to pale in comparison with those of his colleague, Lovborg (Brad Hodder) – a brilliant yet tortured author whose alcoholism and romantic history with Hedda offer plenty of opportunity for Hedda to meddle in Lovborg's newfound relationships with both Mrs. Elvsted (Joella Crichton) and sobriety.

Hedda seeks to uncage what she sees as the beauty of Lovborg's true self at the cost of his hard-won abstinence from alcohol, which he only achieved with the love and support of Elvsted. Hedda gaslights Elvsted into, at least in part, believing she has always been her friend with her best interests at heart and she not so



HEDDA GABLER

Sara Topham as Hedda in Hedda Gabler. Stratford Festival 2024.

subtly manipulates Lovborg into joining Tesman and Judge Brack (Tom McCamus) for a night of debauchery.

In so doing, Lovborg loses the manuscript for, perhaps, his best book yet – one he wrote with the help of Elvsted – and he falls into a deep depression, believing himself unworthy of both his love and his work. With the secret knowledge that Tesman had actually recovered said manuscript from the gutter, Hedda opts to keep the manuscript hidden – later going so far as to destroy it – and encourages

Lovborg to take his own life as one last, independent act of true beauty – or so she sees it.

When she discovers Lovborg did not in fact kill himself and was instead killed by a secret lover, and Judge Brack plans to blackmail her for nefarious purposes with the knowledge she provided the gun that took Lovborg's life, Hedda ends the play on the darkest note there is – but on her own terms.

This play is dark from start to finish. The goodness of characters like Tes-

man, Elvsted and Juliana (Bola Aiyoola) is overshadowed by the selfishness of Hedda, Brack and, to a lesser extent, Lovborg. The relatively small cast, bare bones set decoration and sparse lighting offer stark contrast to the deeply complicated personas portrayed on stage.

While Topham is certainly and deservedly the main focus of this production, the performances by each of the supporting actors add context and understanding to Hedda's depression. Tesman's refusal to see the signs of his wife's rapidly declining mental health, for instance, and instead focusing on his own career and professional jealousy, is an important reminder not to take our loved ones' mental health and wellbeing for granted.

Brack, who at first presents as a friend to Hedda, ultimately proves himself to be the predator he is, lying in wait for the right moment or piece of information that will put someone else's life in his control. While Hedda freely acknowledges this about her so-called friend, it comes as no less of a shock when he turns his predatory sights on her.

This production of Hedda Gabler is well worth seeing, though it does deal heavily with mental illness and suicide. If you are struggling with mental illness or have thoughts of suicide, there is help available. If you are in crisis, call the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance's Huron Perth Helpline and Crisis Response Team at 1-888-829-7484. This service is offered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Stratford Festival review: '60s counterculture gives new context in McKenna's Twelfth Night

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While a male Malvolio may be perceived as having received his proper comeuppance, Condlln's portrayal of the steward leaves the audience feeling pity for the wronged woman, who was only doing her job – and doing it well. While Malvolio is ultimately released from her imprisonment, she is the only character who does not get a satisfying conclusion to her story arc; she swears revenge, but that vengeance is never acted out onstage.

As a straight, white man living in the 21st century, I can't fully put it into words, but there is something that rings true about a scorned woman not getting the justice she deserves in 1967. While women's rights and female empowerment did take a big step forward thanks to the counterculture of the '60s, both still had a long way to go – and they still do.

There is one more component of this production of Twelfth Night that fits

well with that '60s motif, and that's the music. While studying Twelfth Night in high school, I remember reading Shakespeare's song lyrics and then later hearing them performed and thinking, "He may be a playwright, but he sure isn't much of a songwriter."

Having now seen this production, I am willing to admit I was wrong. The decision to put Shakespeare's lyrics to '60s-esque folk rock and have it performed by Hay, who I couldn't help but compare to Janis Joplin, was a stroke of genius. That in and of itself made this production of Twelfth Night work for me, though I do think the music director could have had a little more fun with that final song-and-dance number.

Overall, McKenna's directorial debut is thoroughly enjoyable and I applaud her for taking creative licence in presenting a play familiar to so many of us.

Twelfth Night is playing at the Festival Theatre until Oct. 26.



ADVISING FUTURE ACTORS

Stratford Festival actor Gabriel Antonacci signs Rendall Lackenbauer's jacket that he wore in the Theatre Woodstock Senior STAGES production of 'Something Rotten!' as Nigel Bottom. The cast of the STAGES show got to see Stratford Festival's take on 'Something Rotten!' on June 8. The students also listened to Antonacci's advice on auditioning, staying healthy, and balancing multiple shows in a Q&A seminar after the show.

(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

Stratford Festival review: La Cage Aux Folles offers glitz and glamour underpinned by a heartfelt story about family

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

There is a lot of love and a lot to love in the Stratford Festival's production of *La Cage Aux Folles*.

The costumes are fabulous, the sets are extravagant and the singing and dancing talents of everyone on and off stage are more than enough to make the show fun and enjoyable. What sets this production apart as one of my favourites so far this season, however, is the heartfelt story of a family learning to love and be proud of who they are, and one another, regardless of what the outside world may think.

It's the incredible onstage chemistry between Georges (Sean Arbuckle) and Albin (Steve Ross) that really drives that story home. Arbuckle, as the audience's conduit, does a wonderful job conveying that sense of being caught between two people he loves. On one side, his son, Jean-Michel (James Daly), is hell-bent on making a good impression on the hardline, conservative family of the woman he loves, Anne Dindon (Heather Kosik). On the other side, Albin, the man Georges loves who stepped up as a loving, caring and often overdramatic mother to his son for the past 20 years, is heartbroken at the notion that Jean-Michel



LA CAGE AUX FOLLES

Sean Arbuckle as Georges (left) and Steve Ross as Albin in *La Cage aux Folles*. Stratford Festival 2024.

(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

doesn't want him to attend the first dinner with his potential parents-in-law in fear of what Anne's father, the far-right, family values political leader, Edouard Dindon, might think.

As a sort of compromise and to ensure

Albin remains a part of Jean-Michel's life in some capacity, Georges first convinces the love of his life to dress and act like Jean-Michel's straight uncle Al – a near impossible task for the drag-queen sensation, but one he agrees to, nonetheless. Then,

when Jean-Michel's real mother makes yet another excuse as to why she can't make the dinner, Albin falls into a much more natural role, that of Jean-Michel's real mother.

It's a classic comedy setup and boy does this production deliver on that front, thanks in no small part to the supporting cast. Most notably, Chris Vergara delivers an outstanding comedic performance as Jacob, who does little if anything to hide his true, dramatic, drag-queen self as he serves as butler for the evening all in the name of achieving that centre-stage spotlight in the next performance at *La Cage*.

As a musical, this production hits all the right notes. The performers onstage manage to hit those emotional highs and lows that drive the plot forward in all the right ways. And, in true drag-queen-superstar fashion, whenever Albin hits the stage to sing, Ross delivers those show-stopping, toe-tapping, heart-wrenching numbers that truly hammer home the play's underlying message of being proud of who you are and not being afraid to show it.

Director Thom Allison's production of *La Cage Aux Folles* for the Stratford Festival is entirely uplifting, both for the characters onstage and the audience that watches the story unfold. For this reviewer, it was the perfect jumpstart into Pride Month.

Seeking Sustainability: Urban sprawl, Highway 413 and Wilmot farmland

Urban sprawl is a term that many have likely heard of before, but few know what it means. So, what is urban sprawl?

Urban sprawl is the rapid expansion of a city into the underdeveloped land surrounding it. A large number of new houses, apartments and other such buildings are built in a short amount of time, often without being thoroughly planned, resulting in urban inefficiency. Urban sprawl happens because of rapidly expanding populations. As the populations of cities in Ontario and throughout the world continue to grow, more and more houses have to be built, and quickly, to support new families and arriving immigrants.

Urban sprawl can also result from the common desire for a larger living space and other residential amenities such as recreational facilities and shopping centres. The problem with urban sprawl is it does not use land responsibly and effectively, therefore harming the environment. Urban sprawl diminishes prime farmland and greenspace and destroys natural habitats including forests and wetlands. Urban sprawl communities are often low-density, meaning that they are built out, not up, and take up a lot of space without housing many people. Another problem relating to urban sprawl is the houses built are all nearly identical, which robs a city of culture, originality and uniqueness.

Here in Stratford, urban sprawl is occurring in the new neighbourhoods that are currently expanding in the northwest re-

gion of the city. These houses are being built rapidly into areas that were once primarily farmland. Stratford needs to play the long game when it comes to urban planning and ensure our citizens can find the housing they need but also place great emphasis on maintaining our surrounding farmland and greenspace. This can only be achieved through diverse input and careful future planning to benefit all involved as we move forward.

Our provincial and federal governments have agreed to proceed with the construction of Highway 413. This agreement was reached after filing a court order to have the environmental-assessment process removed from the project. The court accepted in the hope of expediting the construction. They plan to break ground within the next year. The proposed route extends from Highway 400, between King Road and Kirby Road, to the 401/407 ETR interchange near the Mississauga, Milton and Halton Hills. This route crosses green lands that are part of the protected Greenbelt land.

Premier Doug Ford has consistently ignored innovative solutions to protect our green lands, ecosystems and environment. For instance, subsidizing tolls for trucks on Highway 407 has been proposed, which would accomplish the same objectives as Highway 413 and save the government around \$6 billion. Yet, Doug Ford has once again refused to support our local protected green lands and species,

including the western chorus frog and the red-headed woodpecker. Unfortunately, these plans are essentially set in stone. All that is left for us to do as a collective community in Perth East is to play our part in limiting our own carbon footprint.

Over the past few months, many people in Wilmot Township, along with concerned residents of the surrounding municipalities, have rightfully lost their trust in local government. Over 770 acres of prime farmland in Wilmot Township, near Nafziger Road and Bleams Road, have been slated for rezoning. This new plot of land would be zoned for industrial use to create "shovel-ready sites to attract economic investments in the area" according to the Region of Waterloo. The process has been far from fair, with farmers being blindsided by lowball offers that insult their intelligence. These negotiations – if you can call them that – between farmers and the American-owned real estate company, Canacre, have been far less than just. Canacre, which the Region of Waterloo has contracted to lead the land acquisition, lowballed some of the landowners while others never even received a visit from a Canacre representative. The farmers were told they could take the price offered or "the region would expropriate their land." That is hardly a negotiation.

Hundreds of local residents have protested this blatant theft of private property. Both local and provincial environmental and agricultural associations have

released statements sharing their concerns about the land grab, and the dangerous precedent it sets for the future after last year's Bill 97, where the Ford government expanded the ability for the minister of municipal affairs and housing to turn productive farmland into housing. Farmers were fearful at the time that it could set a precedent for future agricultural land grabs and, unsurprisingly, the Ford government continues to push to urbanize, industrialize and destroy Ontario's precious farmland.

What is even more worrying than the land grab itself is the secrecy that has plagued the entire process. Landowners were disheartened to learn their local municipal leaders had signed non-disclosure agreements, conveniently preventing them from discussing the issue and having any accountability. Offering someone money for their land, when that money does not represent the true value of the property, and then in the same breath threatening to take their land if they don't take the deal is not a negotiation – it is an abuse of power.

The Wilmot community has set up a website, www.fightforfarmland.com, which you can visit to learn more about the issue and help stop this appropriation of local farmland.

Come back in August to see what's new with Seeking Sustainability!

By Kieran Albrecht, Nathan Bean and Avery Durand; edited by Elliana Morrison, SDSS Eco Club

The Joy Experiments book launch brings out artists and visionaries

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

In *The Joy Experiments*, co-authors Scott Higgins and Paul Kalbfleisch re-imagine mid-sized cities to heal our divided society.

The launch, hosted by Kevin September of Our Stör(y), was attended by artists, visionaries and the curious, to hear Kalbfleisch talk about how joy can transform a community. The setting, which Kalbfleisch calls a joy experiment in itself, was ideal for community members to come together and experience joy through the art displayed by regional makers including several pieces by Kalbfleisch as well.

The book is intended to help create common discussion with common goals for citizens, politicians, architects, city planners and business leaders on what we want and need from our cities. It was written as a sort of manifesto for how to create cities that encourage and foster

healing of a divided society, where people come together united in community.

“The reason we wrote the book is it was hard to tell the government and other partners that we want to build X, Y and Z and actually build something creative and great, and people are going, ‘Well, why are you doing that extra work?’ People get suspicious. So, Scott said he wanted a manifesto so people would know why,” said Kalbfleisch.

He thinks the most important theme of the book is talking about solutions for a divided society. There have been decades of divide which has been further accelerated with the pandemic. It’s about how cities can heal the wounds we have right now.

The book features a lot of photography by Kalbfleisch. In fact, early adopters of the book from when it was self-published will note there is even more pictures in this edition published by Dundurn Press. When the book was self-published, sales



COMMON GOALS (LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

Paul Kalbfleisch reads his favourite passage of the book, *The Joy Experiments*, at the launch hosted by Kevin September at Our Stör(y) located on George Street West.

were phenomenal right here in Stratford.

“I asked what was going on in Stratford and what I learned was there were people in the community, various groups, who were all kind of looking at that property, the Grand Trunk property, with a desire that some of the philosophies and principles in *The Joy Experiments* can find their way to help drive what that project could become,” said Kalbfleisch.

For residents of Stratford, this is an important and timely book with the development of the Cooper Site looming. He thinks this is a wonderful opportunity. That site will be a community building site, it’s going to shape the community and define what Stratford will be in 20 years. If that is the case, then the conversation should be, “What do we want as a community?” That is where it starts.

Copies of *The Joy Experiments* can be purchased at Fanfare Books, downtown on Ontario Street, or online through Amazon.

Can creativity be important for seniors?



IRENE ROTH

Times Freelance Columnist

Let’s face it, we all struggle to find meaning as we age. For many of us, life can become an uphill battle, leading to minimizing our activity level and what we feel can and cannot do.

Creativity is a powerful tool for promoting not only healthy aging but also alleviating cognitive decline, offering a range of benefits that enhance cognitive, emotional, and physical well-being.

Here are nine ways that creativity can be beneficial for healthy aging:

1. Being creative can stimulate our brain

Engaging in creative activities stimulates the brain, promoting neuroplasticity and the formation of new neural pathways. This can help maintain cogni-

tive functions, such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills, reducing the risk of cognitive decline and neurodegenerative diseases like dementia.

2. Being creative can be an outlet for expressing emotions

Creative activities provide an outlet for expressing emotions, which can be particularly therapeutic for older adults. For example, art, music, and writing can allow seniors to process and express feelings that may be difficult to articulate verbally. In the process, this can lead to improved emotional health and reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety.

3. Being creative can reduce stress

Creativity can be a great stress reliever. Activities like painting, knitting, or playing music can induce a state of flow, where individuals become fully immersed in their activity, forgetting about their worries and reducing stress levels. Lower stress levels can contribute to better overall health, including lower blood pressure and improved immune function.

4. Being creative can foster social interaction

Participating in group creative activities fosters social interaction and combats loneliness and isolation. Joining a choir, an art

class, or a theater group provides opportunities to meet new people, build friendships, and create a supportive community, all of which are crucial for mental and emotional health.

5. Being creative can boost self-esteem

Completing a creative project, whether it’s a painting, a piece of writing, or a craft, provides a sense of accomplishment and boosts self-esteem. This sense of achievement can enhance overall life satisfaction and contribute to a positive self-image.

6. Being creative can improve our physical health

Many creative activities involve physical movement, which can improve physical health. Dance, for example, enhances cardiovascular health, flexibility, and balance. Even activities that require fine motor skills, like playing a musical instrument or sculpting, can improve hand-eye coordination and dexterity.

7. Being creative can encourage intellectual curiosity

Engaging in creative pursuits encourages lifelong learning and intellectual curiosity. Trying new creative activities, such as learning to play an instrument or taking up a new form of art, challenges the brain and keeps it active and engaged.

8. Being creative can enhance mental health

Regular engagement in creative activities can improve overall mental health. It provides a constructive way to channel thoughts and emotions, reduces feelings of boredom and monotony, and offers a meaningful way to spend time, all contributing to better mental health.

9. Being creative can build resilience

Creativity can help build resilience by encouraging a positive outlook and adaptability. Facing and overcoming creative challenges fosters a sense of perseverance and problem-solving, which can translate into a greater ability to cope with the challenges of aging.

Here are some practical tips to incorporate creativity into your daily life:

- Write about your thoughts, experiences, or dreams in a journal. This can be a reflective practice that boosts emotional health.
- Take a local art class to learn new techniques and meet new people.
- Try gardening, which combines physical activity with the creativity of designing and maintaining a garden.
- Try to cook on a regular ba-

sis. Experiment with new recipes and culinary techniques, turning meal preparation into a creative activity.

- Try knitting, crocheting, or other crafts that involve creating something with your hands.

- Explore photography as a hobby, capturing images that inspire you and telling stories through your photos.

- Join a dance class or simply dance at home to your favorite music.

- Explore digital art or creative writing online, using software and platforms that offer new ways to express yourself.

Creativity is not just for the young or the exceptionally talented. It’s a powerful tool for everyone, particularly older adults, to enhance their quality of life and promote healthy aging.

By incorporating creative activities into daily life, individuals can enjoy numerous cognitive, emotional, and physical benefits, leading to a more fulfilling and vibrant life.

The summer months are a great time to get creative. Why not try one of the activities above to boost your morale and feel better both physically and mentally?

Happy Summer!

Welcoming Ukrainians: Finding employment

VJ KNUTSON

Times Freelance Columnist

I've been busying myself this past while helping Ukrainians find meaningful employment. It's not an easy task. Like any newcomer to Canada, without English (or French) competency, jobs are hard to come by. Discovering that one's qualifications and employment history has little bearing on Canadian soil, is also disheartening.

Most Ukrainians understand that in the beginning they will need to find a "survivor" job. The goal is to make enough money to launch their independence. In my experience, Ukrainians are hardworking and exemplary employees. The ideal is that they will work, improve their English and take whatever courses are necessary to improve their situation. The reality, however, is much different.

One Ukrainian, who was a plumber in

Ukraine and has experience in everything from installing in-floor heating to municipal services, currently works in a plant making well below plumber's wages. In order to keep up with current rental fees, he works all the overtime he can get and is exhausted most of the time. He takes English classes online when he can and realizes that requalifying in his field seems next to impossible.

Others, like our current guest, have found quality of life working mindless jobs. After a career as a university professor, she is enjoying the perks of working with low stress and time to tend a garden and visit with friends.

Some with passable English do not understand why their degrees and work experience do not land them similar careers in Canada. They feel undervalued and righteously so. One woman, who possesses a PhD in English, laments that she has sent out countless resumé with no re-

sponse. I asked to see her resumé.

Ukrainian resúmes do not resemble Canadian ones. For one thing, they are long and overly detailed. Ukrainians tend to include a photograph and disclose personal information, something to be avoided. I try to explain that a resumé should catch an employer's eye by highlighting skills and strengths related to the job in question, but the concept is not always translatable.

I did manage to help two Ukrainians get an interview this week. Both are highly, in fact, overly qualified for the job. One kept me informed every step of the process, asking for verification for required forms and other demands on the employer's part. Even our paperwork is alien to our newcomers.

Of course, I offer myself up as a character reference. What can I say on behalf of the Ukrainians I have met? To start, they have been through something few of

us can understand. Despite the tragedy, I find Ukrainians to be positive, motivated and incredibly resilient. They are appreciative of any opportunity and eager to prove their worth.

I understand that Canadians are hesitant to hire foreigners. Language issues can equate to safety issues – I get it. It took me several tries to convince my own son to hire a Ukrainian man, qualified in his particular field. Now, he employs three Ukrainian men.

"They are hard workers," he tells me.

I bite my tongue on the "I told you so."

(Disclaimer: I am a grassroots volunteer and not affiliated with local organizations raising funds for refugees. My goal is person-to-person, hand-to-hand, lifting up those in need. If you'd like to help, please message me at english.knuton@gmail.com, or reach out to the volunteers at Stratford Community Connects with Ukrainian Newcomers on Facebook.)

Until Soon. Live Well: Now here, in the nowhere



STUART LENDER

Times Contributor

The greatest tragedy of human living is that we think we are important in our tiny lives, but that we can't see we are sacred in the grand one.

Andrew lived under a small squat bridge at the intersection of the Don Valley Parkway and Lakeshore Boulevard in Toronto. I met him in 2012. I lost him in 2015. I don't know if he's dead or alive. Unlike some of my other homeless acquaintances I knew him by name, where he lived, some shadows of what happened to him, why he was there, but never ever if he would still be there when I showed up.

Where Andrew lived was iso-

lated. No stores. No pedestrians. Not even sidewalks – just concrete all around, except for a stretch of grass descending on the south side of the bridge and Lake Ontario beyond – where eyes in cars could not see the "entryway." Next to the triangular wedge of road and the hill where the underside of the bridge gaped open into darkness there were sheets of plastic and a tarp creased and ripped by inclement weather.

Traffic above, Andrew below. I noticed him one day in his struggle to tie a torn end of cloth to one of the metal posts of the bridge. Then, 30 seconds past the intersection – a spontaneous blip of awareness of myself: time (that I had), privilege (that I lived), hope (that I held), and anger (that this situation existed) and I turned my car around. That day, our sporadic meetings and conversations began.

Andrew loved history, particularly the history of the Saints. His mind was filled with blasts of Christian conjecture about their lives and what they meant. He would suddenly interrupt "regular" conversation with a biblical quote or two and ask me "who said that?" I didn't know. His mind was sharp but misfired, disjointed, and I had

to sometimes piece together what it was he meant to say. It was obvious he was educated but that he had suffered some kind of trauma at the hands of church and family as the altar boy he said he'd been and the failed son he was told he was. He intertwined stories of his two "fathers" as if they might be one, and I often wondered if he was pontificating about church or household or if his only father was indeed the one that conjured up the spirit of the other. They often seemed one and the same. But the scars from the beatings were all too clear. He was most willing to reveal them and tell me each wound's history. But he had blended the memory of them together, the authority figure(s) of his youth into one all-seeing master. And sometimes, he was fearful.

His favourite Saint was St. Callistus – in the year 199. A former slave, then deacon, then pope, capable and in charge of the most important underground Christian cemetery in Rome. Under him the cemetery grew into a thirteen-mile labyrinthine space of interconnecting tunnels lined with tombs chiseled out of the stone, housing 500,000 bodies. The cemetery bore his name and does so today – the

Catacombs of Saint Callistus. Andrew spoke of him a lot. He liked that I took care of the dead too. He asked questions I've never been asked, about heaven, about how the dead would "see" each other.

I gave him food. I gave him money. I bought him a brand-new tarp to shelter him from the winter wind which whipped into the crevice and through the bridges belly...and he...he fancied himself St. Callistus under that bridge, sitting upright and smoking, laughing at himself and at the world above him. Sometimes focused and deathly silent. Sometimes a frightened child. And I wondered with a crooked smile if he would become like one of those nameless 500,000 in Rome, now forgotten, but this time in the narrow backstreets of Toronto, Canada. We had shared so much of who we are and yet I felt I knew so little.

It was on December 23rd, on the day of my daughter's birth – I visited Andrew's space bearing a gift. An illustrated hard-copy edition of the "Saints of the Ages," wrapped in festive Christmas wrap with a silver bow and card. I was excited to give it to him. He wasn't there. Some newspapers and a scratched up and empty tupperware contain-

er were on his makeshift ledge of bricks. His new tarp was badly torn at one end. Construction vehicles had come to the site. Frozen and abandoned. There were orange cones everywhere stacked like New Year's hats, waiting to be dispersed.

I wasn't sure anymore if this was home... and I stood there, dumb, in the mouth of the "catacombs," thinking of sudden absence and what to do. And what could I do? I left the book of Saints propped up on his bricks. I told myself that I had to have faith, but truly didn't know if my offering was a gift or a monument? I took a picture with my phone of the present on the bricks, in that oh so empty and present moment. No one there. Not even myself really. Just the book and the ghost of St. Callistus – who flashed in my head for a moment in that nowhere space – before I left it all behind and walked out into the light, into awareness of myself again, in the now here.

I never saw Andrew again.

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

STRATFORD TIMES

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Dave's Diner - Sebringville
Stratford-Perth Museum
Cozyn's
Stratford Rotary Complex
No Frills
Sobey's
Wightman
Shoppers Drug Mart
Tim Hortons
Mornington Variety
Buzz Stop

Union Barber
Stratford Public Library
HH Delea
Balzacs Coffee
Queen's Inn
Arden Park Hotel
The Bruce Hotel
Stratford Motor Products
Stratford Legion
Festival Marketplace
Stratford Nissan
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Shakespeare Brewery
Shakespeare Esso
Joe's Variety
Zehrs
Food Basics
Stratford Variety
Foodland
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Stratford KIA
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Stratford Medical Pharmacy
Erie Convenience
Stratford Mazda

Stratford Hospital
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- 1. Where her mom is
- 2. Why her Grampa likes Elvis so much

Photo of Goldie Garratt by Gemma James Smith

Saving Graceland

Written by Gil Garratt

PREMIERES

JUNE 19 - AUGUST 3

Blyth Memorial Hall
Blyth, ON

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JUNE 12 - AUGUST 4

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Original photo from The Farm Show, 1972
Anne Anglin, Paul Thompson, Miles Potter, Fina McDonnell

COMING EVENTS

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AN EVENING OF SUPPORTING VETERANS GALA DINNER

Saturday, June 15; 6:00 p.m.

Legion Branch 8, Stratford, 804 Ontario St B1

Three course meal with feature speaker NHL alumni Tim Taylor and musical performance by Dayna Manning. \$150/person. For tickets call 519-271-4540 or email stratfordlegion008@gmail.com

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Stratford Branch 8

ATTENTION: CANADIAN VETERANS AND EX-SERVICE PERSONNEL

Branch 8 continues to offer emergency assistance as well as the services of Veterans Affairs Canada to eligible Veterans, their spouses, widows and dependents through the Poppy Fund.

The Stratford Branch 8 Veterans Service Officer William Rothernel, with the support of Veterans Affairs Canada continues to serve the needs of all Canadian Veterans in need of assistance or advice on all service-related situations.

Call our Branch office at 519-271-4540 to speak to Bill.

804-B Ontario St., Stratford N5A 3K1
stratfordlegion008@gmail.com

Longtime humane society resident Hazel finds forever family

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

After being under the care of the Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth for more than nine months, Hazel the dog was adopted.

The organization announced on the Stratford Perth Humane Society Facebook page on June 6 that Hazel found her forever home. The post included a video of staff at the shelter giving Hazel a send-off as she had a big smile on her face walking down the hall. Students from Conestogo Public School also made a care package for Hazel.

"All of us are elated that Hazel has found her forever home," said Victoria Baby, CEO of the Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth. "We lined up to say goodbye and cheered her on."

The dog entered the shelter in August 2023 and was fostered from Jan. 15 until she was adopted. The foster family trained her to work on her behaviours.

Baby said Hazel was always full of pep and ready to soak up as much playtime and attention as possible while under the care of the humane society. She was underweight when she came into the shelter, but nearly doubled her intake weight after being put on a feeding plan.

The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth campaigned to find Hazel a home on social media, sharing pictures of her on adventures with the staff and support from the community. Posts about community support for Hazel include colouring pages at the KW Bilingual School and a song about Hazel by

Frances Walker Music.

"The generous support of our community is amazing," Baby said. "We could not do all the work we do without their support. We are not funded for our humane work in the centre and outreach in the community. It is only through donations that we are able to serve our communities and promote the human-animal bond."

More information about the organization, including donation options and animals available for adoption, can be found by visiting kwsphumane.ca.



(VICTORIA BABY PHOTO)

FOREVER HOME

After being under the care of the Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth for more than nine months, Hazel the dog found her forever home.



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Riddles

How do you make a hot dog stand?
Steal its chair.

How do you make an egg laugh?
Tell it a yolk.

What did the mother broom say to the baby broom?
It's time to go to sweep.

What do bees do with their honey?
They cell it.

Why was Cinderella thrown off the basketball team?
She ran away from the ball.

What do you call a pig that does karate?
A pork chop.

What do you call a song sung in an automobile?
A cartoon.

How do you fix a broken gorilla?
With a monkey wrench

What did the dog say to the little child pulling his tail?
This is the end of me.

What happens to the duck who flies upside down?
He quacks up

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 39



Pet of the Month



KILI

Meet Kili, the lovable and lively large breed mix who's eagerly searching for his forever home! This handsome pup is bursting with energy, ready to embark on adventures and play to his heart's content. At first, Kili may seem a bit reserved, but once he warms up, his true, playful personality shines through. Kill loves going for walks and would do best in a home where he can get lots of exercise. He would make a great hiking or camping buddy! If you're looking to add a new member to your family, please fill out an adoption survey on our website at kwsphumane.ca.



Word Search

SUMMER

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

- Sunshine
- Beach
- Picnic
- Ice cream
- Swimsuit
- Barbecue
- Vacation
- Sandcastle
- Sunglasses
- Lemonade
- Fireworks
- Flipflops
- Watermelon
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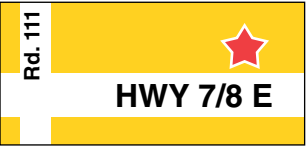
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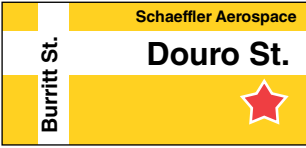
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