

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1201

Thursday, March 7, 2024

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Golf season comes early



St. Marys Golf & Country Club (SMGCC) member Kyle Heinbuch tees off at the first hole March 4, a busy day on the links that saw a high temperature of 20 degrees. SMGCC general manager Matt Staffen told the Independent this year's March 3 opening of the golf course is a full week earlier than the previous record of March 10, 2012. Photo by Stewart Grant

Local school boards reschedule April PA day to coincide with solar eclipse

By Galen Simmons

As a result of health-and-safety concerns for students and based on advice from Huron-Perth public health (HPPH), both the Avon Maitland District School Board and the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board have rescheduled a PA Day from April 19 to April 8 to coincide with

the upcoming total solar eclipse.

The local public and Catholic school boards announced the change to the school calendar in recent press releases. While the Huron-Perth region is not in the eclipse's path of totality, residents will see a partial solar eclipse at some point between 2 and

Continued on page 2

St. Marys to establish sports wall of fame at Pyramid Recreation Centre

By Galen Simmons

St. Marys council has given the go-ahead to establish a Sports Wall of Fame at the Pyramid Recreation Centre's Rock Rink that will commemorate the remarkable accomplishments of local athletes, teams and builders of sport.

At the Feb. 27 council meeting, councillors voted to approve the selection criteria and nomination form recommended by the town's recreation and leisure advisory committee, and authorized staff to proceed with a call for nominations in April as well as the implementation of the Sports Wall of Fame, which is expected to have its grand opening and inaugural induction ceremony this fall.

"This initiative will really celebrate the outstanding feats of athletes, teams and builders from St. Marys and representative of St. Marys," said recreation manager Joanna Campbell. "... Champions of sport is something really worth celebrating and acknowledging above and beyond what is already done by the various user groups. We know that the minor-sport organizations will also have annual ceremonies or celebrations to highlight volunteers ... but for the Town of St. Marys, the Sports Wall of Fame is to be a larger, legacy initiative that really allows people to promote and highlight and nominate those who have contributed to the town."

According to Campbell's report to council, the wall of fame is designed to recognize outstanding representation of the town through sports on a local,

Continued on page 2

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COMMUNITY

Sports wall of fame at Pyramid Recreation Centre

Continued from page 1

provincial, national or international scale. The Sports Wall of Fame is reserved for those who have accomplished incredible feats, demonstrated outstanding long-term dedication to their sport and promotion within the town, and others who have a lasting legacy impact on sport and recreation in St. Marys.

Campbell said the recreation and leisure advisory committee will be responsible for receiving nominations and determining who the successful inductees will be each year based on eligibility criteria for each of the three categories – athletes, teams or builders of sport.

Everyone who submits a nomination form will receive one of three letters either informing them their nominee will be inducted in that calendar year, requesting additional supporting documentation for their nominee to be considered in a future year, or explaining why their nominee is not

eligible for the wall of fame.

“Back when this was brought to the previous council, I had the same concern ... under (the) builders (category). It says that in order to be nominated, they have to have dedicated 25 years of service,” Coun. Marg Luna said. “That seems to me to be a long, long time. That seems to me like a career in whatever sport ... they’re involved in. I personally know of two individuals in this town who have promoted a particular sport area in the town and taken it to higher levels outside of the town, and I believe they deserve to be nominated for this, but I don’t believe they’ve had 25 years of service.

“It just seems exorbitant to me to have it that long.”

Coun. Jim Craigmile voiced a similar concern about local teams only being considered for induction at least 10 years after a given team is no longer active.

“For example, if there was a volley-

ball team last year that won the Ontario championships and they happen to be in Grade 12 or high school or something – 16- or 17-year-olds – you wouldn’t want to wait 10 years to give them the recognition because they’re all together in the community for maybe one more year and then they’re gone to university.”

Addressing both councillors’ concerns, Campbell said the intent of the Sports Wall of Fame is to commemorate significant achievements of people who are either no longer active in local sports or have gone on to do bigger and better things in their sport out in the wider world. Commemorating an inductee too soon, she said, might result in the need to update their wall-of-fame submission as time goes on and they continue to achieve in their sport.

Campbell also said the recreation and leisure advisory committee will have the opportunity to review nominations that don’t necessarily fit the exact criteria in a given category and

determine on a case-by-case basis whether they’re worthy of induction.

The Sports Wall of Fame itself will be installed as a permanent fixture on the wall immediately adjacent to Rock Rink entrance B between the guest-services desk and the hallway to the Friendship Centre. It will include a digital-display board featuring a rotating selection of information on and images of the annual inductees and an inset display case showcasing memorabilia like trophies, medals, banners, equipment and photos on loan from the nominators and/or inductees.

A draft design concept of the wall of fame will be shared with the recreation and leisure advisory committee in March.

More information about the nominations process and induction- and grand-opening ceremony in the fall will be published and promoted by town communications staff in the coming months.

Local school boards reschedule April PA day

Continued from page 1

4:30 p.m. April 8.

“It is a really good learning opportunity for students,” said Avon Maitland director of education Dr. Lisa Walsh. “It doesn’t happen very often and there is a nice opportunity for students. The challenge comes with the timing when the partial (eclipse) ... is occurring. It’s projected to be hitting our area at approximately 3:17 p.m., so that’s the time when students are travelling home.

“... (Huron Perth Catholic director of education) Chris Rhoerig and I asked Huron Perth public health to weigh in on this ... because it’s a health-and-safety issue.”

According to Walsh, the local public-health unit participated in provincewide discussions with the ministry of health about the eclipse that resulted in Huron-Perth medical officer of health Dr. Miriam Klassen recommending the school boards move up their regularly scheduled PA Day.

“There is the risk of individual damage to vision so they’ve indicated it’s not safe to look directly at the sun during a total or a partial solar eclipse,” Walsh said. “The health impacts include retinal burns, blurred vision and loss of eyesight.

“... If it was during the (school) day, we could put paper on the windows, which some of us experienced in the past when this happened when we were kids, but it’s a safety issue to put anything on windows of buses and we would have a lot of kids travelling at that time. The HPPH did recommend we consider a PA-day move and we were lucky because we already had a PA day two weeks later.”

While students won’t have the opportunity to experience and learn about the eclipse at school, Walsh is urging parents and caregivers to safely watch and learn about the eclipse at home either by purchasing special glasses that allow the wearer to see the eclipse without damaging their eyes or, better yet, by watching

it on TV or online.

Local daycare providers and other community partners that are providing PA Day camps and activities are being notified and will take the proper steps to ensure safety during the eclipse.

While schools are closed to students April 8, school staff will be participating in training sessions around student mental health and wellness. As a result, schools will be open to students for a full day of instruction April 19.



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Wednesday
Mar-6th

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8

Thursday
Mar-7th

Mainly sunny



10°C

Feels Like

7

Friday
Mar-8th

Sun/cloud



10°C

Feels Like

8

Saturday
Mar-9th

Rain



8°C

Feels Like

5

Sunday
Mar-10th

Flurries



0°C

Feels Like

-7

Monday
Mar-11th

Mainly sunny



2°C

Feels Like

-3

Tuesday
Mar-12th

Sunny



8°C

Feels Like

7

COMMUNITY

St. Marys' Express Sign Products building new warehouse at James Street South and Highway 7

By Galen Simmons

A new build on James Street South near Highway 7 that has piqued the curiosity of some St. Marys and area residents is the sign of good news for St. Marys' Express Sign Products.

Business has been booming for the company, which serves the Canadian sign-making industry with quality supplies and has one of its two office-warehouses on Industrial Road. It is now preparing to expand into a much-larger building.

"We have about a 9,000 square-foot warehouse (on Industrial Road) and we just kind of outgrew it," said Express Sign Products general manager Mark Giesbrecht. "So, we decided, if we were going to expand, we might as well have some rental bays and make sure we're good for a long, long (time)."

The new building is 20,000 square feet in size, 13,000 square feet of which is dedicated warehousing with 3,300 square feet for rentals. The building, once complete, will also in-



Express Sign Products general manager Mark Giesbrecht stands in front of the company's new, 20,000 square-foot warehouse and office building on James Street South, near Highway 7, just across the St. Marys town border in Perth South. Photo by Galen Simmons.

clude roughly 2,200 square feet of office space that will be used by Express Sign Products with an additional 6,000 square feet of mezzanine space for whatever purpose the company sees fit.

"We haven't done manufacturing (in

the past), but we're moving into manufacturing some sign products on our own as well," Giesbrecht said. "A lot of stuff these days comes from China. We actually found out we can manufacture it here for cheaper than we can get it from China. It keeps things in

Canada."

With the expansion into manufacturing, Giesbrecht said he expects the company will hire an additional three or four more employees on top of the eight or nine already working for the company in St. Marys and the roughly 30 total across both its Canadian offices, the second of which is in Pincher Creek, Alta.

Completion of the new building is expected at the end of June or early July, however Giesbrecht said the recent span of good weather could help speed up that timeline. All the construction contractors and subcontractors are local or from within Perth and its neighbouring counties.

"All the Perth South Township staff ... were really helpful getting this going because it's not an easy process at all," Giesbrecht said. "I've never been part of a project like this before, so I kind of learned as we went. I found out it's pretty complicated, so it's nice to have people who know what they're doing helping out."

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COMMENTARY

America can't shake the stink of Trump

By Stewart Grant

Like a bad lingering fart, Donald Trump's presence continues to foul up the political scene nearly 10 years after he burst upon it.

The United States Supreme Court ruled unanimously on Monday that Colorado does not have the right under the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment to keep Donald Trump off the ballot for his role in the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection, making it a near-certainty that he will be the Republican nominee when Americans line up to cast their votes this November. The Supreme Court ruling read that while "States may disqualify persons holding or attempting to hold state office ... States have no power under the constitution to enforce section 3 with respect to federal offices, especially the presidency." Instead, the Supreme Court clarified it is up to Congress to "enforce the provisions of the amendment against the states."

Unfortunately, it is in Congress where such enforcement breaks down, as it has been proven during Trump's first two impeachment hearings that the vast majority of Republican politicians are willing to overlook Trump's high crimes – continuously to their own detriment. And the G.O.P. outliers who supported the rule of law such as Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger have essentially been exiled from the party by the herd.

This year's political rematch between Joe Biden and Donald Trump was the one nobody seemingly wanted, but that's where we are headed. Trump won't go away and thus Biden feels the need to run again as the incumbent.

The Republican Party had multiple chances to rid themselves of their polarizing, narcissistic leader, but instead they keep going back to him like an addict that can't lay off the drugs that will eventually kill them. Since shocking the world in taking the presidency in 2016, the Republican

Party has underperformed in every mid-term and U.S. presidential election since.

Each of Trump's impeachments would have been glorious opportunities for Republicans to vote out the man who was leading them to loss after loss. They could have moved on from Trump and sought a new leader that wasn't so offensive to half the country, but they gutlessly ignored his crimes and voted to protect him so not to offend his base, many of whom received their political education from the Fox News entertainment channel and worse.

Of all the people the Democrats could face in the next election, they probably have their best chance against Trump. This would be a blessing for them were it not for the fact that a second Trump presidency is so profoundly scary for America and the world in general.

Not only is Trump in a more unstable, vindictive, and dangerous mental framework than he was last time, a second Trump presidency would not have the important safeguards in place that were there previously. A "presidential transition project" known as Project 2025 (see project2025.org) has been developed to recruit tens of thousands of likeminded conservatives to replace existing federal civil service workers to further the objective of the next Republican president.

Those who saw the events of Jan. 6 unfold know the importance of safeguards in the system. If Mike Pence acted like all the other yes men on Jan. 6 and obeyed Trump's instructions to refuse to certify Joe Biden's election victory, America's second civil war might already be upon us.

As it stands, Civil War is coming to the United States on April 12 in the form of a blockbuster film starring Nick Offerman and Kirsten Dunst. But each instance of Trump avoiding consequences for his various crimes brings actual civil war closer to reality and brings incredible instability and uncertainty to the world in general.

Bravo

We have no Bravos this week.

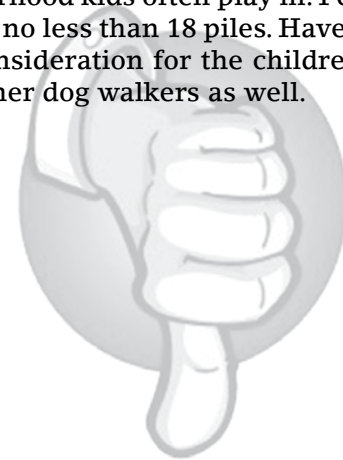


*Please note all Boos and Bravos must be signed in order to be considered.

Boo

We have 1 Boo this week.

1) A Big BOO to the person that walks their big dog on the grassy area at the end of Maxwell Street in front of the wall that fronts Birch Creek Crescent. I know it's a big dog based on the piles of dung that are left in this area that neighborhood kids often play in. I counted no less than 18 piles. Have some consideration for the children and other dog walkers as well.



Bravos and Boos are submitted by community members and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the St. Marys Independent

Quote of the Week

"I was an opponent of him all my political career, but in politics, opposition is opposition. It's like playing hockey. You can fight on the ice and have a beer together after that. And we had a lot of things in common"

Former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien reflected on the passing of fellow former PM Brian Mulroney, who died at the age of 84 on Feb. 29, 2024.

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Have you heard something humorous around town that you think might be of interest to others? Either email them to us at info@stmarys-independent.com with the title "Overheard at The Coffee Shop", call 519-284-0041 or drop by the office to let us know!

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**THOUGHTS
OF THE WEEK**

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prayer which will
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Springtime is the
land awakening
and the March
winds are the
morning yawn.

COMMUNITY

Marlene Poirier takes home February jackpot



Congratulations to Marlene Poirier from St. Marys on her big win! She's taking home an impressive \$7,458 after winning February's jackpot with her lucky ticket, BB-1335041, drawn on Thursday, Feb. 29. Marlene has been a loyal supporter since the inception of the 50/50 lottery, and her dedication has certainly paid off. St. Marys Healthcare Foundation would like to thank everyone who participated in purchasing tickets this month and to those who consistently support the lottery each month. The proceeds from February's jackpot will be directed towards a new ice and water dispenser for the St. Marys Memorial Hospital. Don't miss out on the chance to win big in March! Visit www.stmary5050.com to grab your tickets. Draw Dates: \$250 early bird draw: Thursday, March 7, \$500 early bird draw: Thursday, March 14, Jackpot Draw: Thursday, March 28. Contributed photo

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



MARCH BREAK TOONIE SWIM

March 13, 1:15 - 4 PM | Pyramid Centre

Swim from 1:15 - 4 PM on Wednesday, March 13 for only a toonie! Brought to you by the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation. Register through our website.

townofstmarys.com/aquatics or 519-284-2160

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March 11 - 14 | Pyramid Centre

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March 12 & 14 | Pyramid Centre

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CAMP PRC

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- March Break Camp (March 11 - 15)
- PA Day Camps
- Summer Camp (starting July 2)
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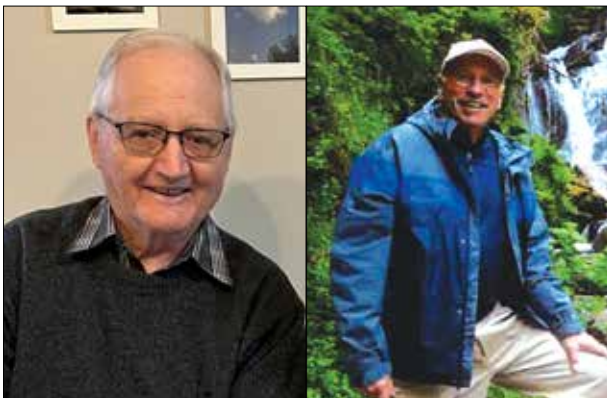
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Seniors of the Week



Our seniors of the week are Marvyn Hartwick and Ron Hunter. Marvyn is celebrating his 80th birthday on March 6th. He has been married to Orrie for 60 happy years. Marvyn and Orrie have four children, 12 grandchildren and five great grandchildren, all girls. He was born a preemie in London, Middlesex County. He farmed in Perth county and then moved to St. Marys. His favourite thing to do is fish. Happy Birthday Marvyn.

Ron is celebrating his 85th birthday on March 6. Ron was born in London, and lived most of his life in St. Marys and on Emily St. He's been married to Bernice (nee Steele) for almost 61 years. Ron has 3 children, 5 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren. He worked for Hooper Dairy from an early age, then ran Thames Crest Mink Ranch, then Dairy Farms until it finished in 1997. After worked for Town of St Marys in Parks Dept until retirement and was Icemaker at Curling Club for many years. You can usually find him at the Curling Club, helping someone at Church or at the Horticulture Society.

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

Weekend Quiz

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1. What singer holds the most Grammy nominations?
2. What sporting event is held every Memorial Day?
3. How many hearts does an octopus have?
4. In which country can you find the Terracotta Warriors?
5. Australian crocodile hunter Steve Irwin was famously killed by what type of animal?
6. How many kills is a flying ace?
7. Who won this year's Scotties Tournament of Hearts?
8. What are the four colors in UNO?
9. What fruit helped Newton form gravitational theory?
10. What is Shakespeare's first name?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

COMMUNITY

EarlyON and Friendship Centres offering intergenerational music experience

Move and Groove concert with Erick Traplin on Tuesday, March 12 at 10:00 a.m.

By St. Marys Independent staff

The Town of St. Marys EarlyON Centre and the St. Marys Friendship Centre are teaming up to create an intergenerational-music experience.

At 10 a.m. March 12, children's entertainer Erick Traplin will take the Pyramid Recreation Centre stage for a morning of music, dancing and toe-tapping fun for all ages. The doors to entrance C will open at 9:15 a.m. for attendees to grab a seat. The event is free and open to all residents.

"We are excited to bring the community together

for this intergenerational music event," says EarlyON coordinator Jessica Kurtz. "The goal of this collaboration is to create lasting connections and memories through the universal language of music."

Advance registration for the event is required on a first-come, first-serve basis through ActiveNet (www.townofstmarys.com/activenet) or by calling the St. Marys Friendship Centre at 519-284-3272. Families who are part of the EarlyON Centre are asked to register ahead of time through their KEyON accounts.

Perth County warden comments on past warden Annabelle Thomson's passing

By St. Marys Independent staff

Perth County staff and council are mourning the recent death of past Perth County warden Annabelle Thomson.

Thomson served as warden of Perth County from December 2002 to December 2003. She began her political career in 1974 as councillor of Downie Township where she was the first female elected to the township council.

"We are approaching International Women's Day on Friday March 8 and, as a fellow woman in public office and current warden, I feel a strong connection to the women who have had the privilege of serving on county council and in the office of the warden in years past," Perth County Warden Rhonda Ehgoetz said in a statement released to the press.

Just shy of a decade later, in 1983, Thomson became deputy reeve of Downie Township, followed by reeve of Downie Township in 1988. She remained in leadership through the county's amalgamation, and she served as mayor of the Township of Perth South from 1998 until 2013.

She had a history of community involvement and service through her work with the Women's Missionary Society and as a member of the Elm Grove Women's Institute. She also had a hand in operating her family's dairy farm located just outside of St. Pauls in the Township of Perth South.

"In honour of her life and public service to our county, the county courthouse flag will be lowered until the day of the funeral," Ehgoetz said.

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COMMUNITY

Community housing consultation rescheduled for March 20

By St. Marys Independent staff

The community housing consultation originally planned for Feb. 15 has been rescheduled for March 20 from 5-8 p.m. at the Pyramid Recreation Centre.

The event – which is being jointly hosted by the Town of St. Marys and City of Stratford – is an opportunity for residents to learn about local efforts around housing and homelessness.

The consultation will include a presentation from Stratford's social services department and St. Marys' community outreach Worker. Attendees will have the chance to share input, ideas and strategies about housing and homelessness, and chat with local service providers.

The event is open to all residents and advance registration is not required. A free, fully accessible shuttle will

be available to transport attendees to and from the event. It will pick up passengers at the following times and locations:

- 4 p.m. – Pickup at Sunset Diner (343 Queen St. W)
- 4:15 p.m. – Pickup at St. Marys Presbyterian Church (147 Widder St. E)
- 4:30 p.m. – Pickup at Town Hall (175 Queen St. E)
- 4:45 p.m. – Pickup at Dollarama (588 Queen. St. E)

The shuttle will leave the Pyramid Recreation Centre at 8:15 p.m. and drop passengers off at their pickup locations.

For more information about the event, contact community outreach worker Brittany Petrie at 226-261-0098 or bpetrie@town.stmarys.on.ca. To learn more about local housing and homelessness services, visit www.townofstmarys.com/stonetownsupports.

St. Marys Kinettes host an entertaining St. Paddy's Pub Night



Rick Kyle and Dan Dube of the Paddy Stones delight the crowd at the St. Marys Legion on Saturday night celebrating an early St. Paddy's Day. Wendy Lamond photo

By Wendy Lamond

The St. Marys Kinetite Club held a fun pub night at the Legion on Saturday night.

Live entertainment by the Paddy Stones kept the crowd engaged with pub favourites from Ireland, Scotland, the East Coast and popular Sea Shanties.

The acoustic guitar playing twosome

are from Tillsonburg and can be found playing at pubs, restaurants, wineries and breweries around Southwestern Ontario. They do many toasts to the crowd throughout the show and love having audience participation.

Proceeds from this Kinetite fundraiser goes back into the community.

Upcoming shows can be found at www.thepaddystones.com.

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COMMUNITY

Stonetown Artisan Cheese offers behind-the-scenes look at cheesemaking

By Emily Stewart

Stonetown Artisan Cheese will offer a behind-the-scenes glimpse at every step in their cheese-production process this spring.

The cheesemakers at 5021 Perth Line 8 in St. Marys will host their annual open house on March 23 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"What we really want is for the public to come out and to see and learn about every step that goes into producing the high-quality milk that then is used to produce our delicious cheese," said Rachel Dundas, daughter of founders Hans and Jolanda Weber.

The open house will feature several opportunities to learn about how Stonetown's cheese is made. The family-run business will allow visitors to tour the cheese plant and the barn to see the dairy cattle.

Dundas' brother and sister-in-law Stefan and Lori Weber, along with Perth County Dairy Producers, and

Wallenstein Feed and Supply Ltd. staff will be answering questions about every step, from what dairy cows eat to how the milking process works. Cheesemaker Ramon Eberly will educate guests on the process and the length of time crafting cheese.

"It's not just you make it today and you eat it tomorrow," Dundas said. "There's a lot of time and energy that goes into making the cheese and just to see that process; we find that people who come to tour the cheese plant are like, 'Oh wow, we didn't know that there was this many steps or that much love and care that goes into it.'"

Guests can also enjoy food from the Field to Truck mobile eatery, Sunset Shack and Campbell's Catering and Canteen food trucks. Admission is by donation and all proceeds will support the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation.

More information and updates on the open house can be found by checking out the Stonetown Cheese Facebook page.



Cheesemaker Ramon Eberly will be talking about the cheese production process at the Stonetown Artisan Cheese Open House on March 23. Photo by Rachel Dundas

Save the date for the 2024 Stonetown Heritage Festival

By St. Marys Independent staff

St. Marys' favourite summer festival returns on July 12, 13 and 14.

This year's Stonetown Heritage Festival will include street performers, food trucks, heritage tours and children's activities. The town's vibrant arts scene will be on full display as local musicians, actors, writers and craftspeople showcase their talents.

"St. Marys has an incredible arts com-

munity, scenic natural surroundings and charming downtown core," said Town of St. Marys events coordinator Alanna Bowes in a press release. "We are excited to celebrate these elements and a wide array of talent at this year's festival."

Most of the festival's highlights will happen on Saturday during the downtown street festival. Following a great first year, The Riverview Walkway will once again play host to an art

show.

The musical headliner for the Saturday evening dance will be announced soon, but attendees can expect a rocking good time. Following the dance, Milt Dunnell Field will be the perfect place to watch the beloved Rotary Fireworks show.

Look for more exciting announcements on this summertime staple as the festival approaches. Be sure to

visit www.discoverstmarys.ca/festival for the festival schedule and application forms for food trucks, vendors, community groups and artists to participate in the event.

Sponsorship and event volunteers are crucial to the success of this event. Those interested can contact Bowes at 519-284-2340 ext. 249 or abowes@town.stmarys.on.ca for more information on how to contribute.

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COMMUNITY

Single-source-purchase proposals make some St. Marys councillors uneasy at recent council meeting

By Galen Simmons

In a somewhat rare occurrence at a recent council meeting, town staff asked St. Marys council twice to abandon the town's standard competitive purchasing guidelines in favour of single-source procurement, first for the purchase of new outdoor lights, and then for the purchase of new firefighter bunker gear.

At the Feb. 27 council meeting, both recreation operations manager Doug LaPointe and fire Chief Richard Anderson brought forward recommendations for purchases of new equipment from specific manufacturers. Though the town's procurement policy stipulates most purchases must first go through a public and competitive process that offers an even playing field for any business able to provide what the town is seeking, there are specific exceptions in the policy that allow for single-source procurement.

"The procurement policy that we have in place right now ... determines levels at which our staff can go through and make certain purchases," St. Marys corporate services director André Morin told councillors at the meeting. "There's different funding levels in there as to what people are allowed to do and where we go when we move from quotes to tenders to (requests for proposals) etc., and the process within that.

"In section nine of that bylaw, council has an opportunity to award sole source if it meets certain criteria. We've identified that criteria and there's about six or seven ... that allow council to move ahead with single source."

Presenting his case for single-source procurement to council, LaPointe recommended the purchase of new, LED outdoor lights for the town's racquet courts and the St. Marys DCVI soccer field at a cost of just shy of \$200,000 from Lande Associates Inc.

In his report to council, LaPointe said the current outdoor lights at the town's racquet courts, which were installed in 2013, and at the DCVI soccer field, installed in 2009, are what's known as metal-halide lighting, a technology that is quickly being phased out in favour of more energy efficient lighting like LED. That phase-out will

soon lead to a scarcity in replacement parts, making the lighting more difficult and costly to repair as time goes on.

As Lande Associates Inc. was the company that installed the outdoor lighting and poles in the first place, LaPointe told council there are a number of benefits that could meet some of the criteria to justify a single-source purchase in this case, namely it would be most cost effective and beneficial to the town.

"We know what product we're getting, we know that Lande Associates is typically one of the competitive bids for when we do procure projects, and also just the idea that we would get the additional warranty coverage for the product so we wouldn't have anything to worry about for 10 years using their existing poles," LaPointe said, noting the installation of lighting from other manufacturers on the Lande Associates poles could result in voided warranties for those products.

LaPointe said the town stands to save as much as \$125,000 by having Lande Associates install lighting on its existing poles and by having that 10-year warranty – a warranty he said doesn't exist elsewhere on the market – to cover potential repairs.

"The (cost) scares me and I need to justify it," Mayor Al Strathdee said, speaking against LaPointe's recommendation for sole sourcing. " ... I've done all sorts of upgrades and retrofits to LED and there are a lot of options. ... To Doug's point, I get the quality piece, but I'm not sure I have the information and the backup to make this decision on what I'm seeing. ... I'd like to see a little more information (on what else is out there) before I make this \$200,000 decision."

Ultimately, council voted to put the purchase through a request-for-proposals process that would allow outdoor-lighting providers to submit proposals for the purchase and installation of the lighting based on the town's specific needs, and then have a town evaluation committee rank the proposals and come back to council with a recommendation. If Lande Associates' proposal is truly the most cost-effective and beneficial to the town, council will have the justification it needs to purchase the new

lights from that company.

While single-source procurement was a no-go for council when it came to the outdoor-lighting purchase, Anderson's request to purchase 18 sets of new bunker gear from A.J. Stone Co. Ltd. at a cost of \$60,000 – well under the \$75,000 budgeted for the purchase this year – was a different story.

"The gear is at its 10 years. When it gets to 10 years, it needs to be replaced," Anderson said. " ... Since I've been here in the last eight years, I've tried to always recycle the bunker gear. As a new firefighter would come in, I tried to find the best gear possible to fit them. ... Back in about 2018, we hired a couple of firefighters that absolutely could not fit the gear. So, I went out looking for a good set of gear just to try it out, and it's the same gear that I'm proposing today.

" ... I had nothing but positive feedback from the firefighters that currently have the gear for numerous reasons: the way it's made, it's lighter, the padding in the back for when you wear your self-contained breathing apparatus, the air flow, the sleeves being angled. There was so much thought put into the bunker gear when they created it compared to the stuff we had from 10 years ago."

Having just discussed why single-source procurement wasn't appropriate for the lighting project, Coun. Marg Luna asked her fellow councillors if they were comfortable making the opposite decision for the purchase of new bunker gear.

"I understand it from the side of the department heads who are bringing these proposals forward ... but on the other side, as a councillor, I don't recall ever having two sole-source pur-

chases brought forward in one council meeting before," she said. " ... For some reason, it's just not sitting right with me. ... I just don't want to be seen as having preferences as a council when we're approving purchases."

Yet for the rest of the council members present, the recommendation for the single-source purchase of bunker gear made total sense.

Coun. Jim Craigmile, who spoke against the outdoor-lights recommendation, said, in this case, the fire department had tested out the A.J. Stone gear and preferred it over others, the purchase is well under budget and A.J. Stone is the only Ontario supplier of this type of gear. Both Strathdee and Coun. Brogan Aylward agreed with Craigmile's points, and the sole-source purchase of bunker gear was ultimately approved with Luna voting against it.

"This is council's policy and staff's job is to administer it," CAO Brent Kittmer said. "Sometimes we bring forward these ideas and, in this case, competitive procurement is the rule in public life ... and we're asking for an exception from council's rule. ... What you've heard tonight is both staff coming forward saying, 'We'd like an exception to the rule and here's our justification.' It's up to council to decide."

Both Kittmer and Morin said staff will be reviewing the town's procurement policy in the near future and conversations like this one are important to helping staff in all departments better understand the policy itself as well as council's comfort level when it comes to recommending sole-source purchasing.

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COMMUNITY

St. Marys expands its electric vehicle infrastructure

Three new chargers installed as part of County-wide initiative

The Town of St. Marys is expanding its electric vehicle infrastructure.

Last month, three Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations were installed in municipal parking lots - two at the Pyramid Recreation Centre, and one in the Jones St. lot. Each station features two ports, bringing the town's total to eight ports over three locations, with one post already installed at the train station.

The new charging stations were added as part of the Perth County Electric Pathway, an initiative aimed at improving access to electric-vehicle (EV) chargers across St. Marys, Stratford, and Perth County.

Level 2 chargers are ideal for residents who don't have a charging station at home, commuters who work in town and day trippers. An average electric vehicle will take four to 10 hours to charge using a Level 2 charger.

"These new chargers offer yet another incentive for people to visit the beautiful Town of St. Marys," said Mayor Al Strathdee in a press release. "They are also a great asset for residents who own an EV and those considering one."

The Town is currently seeking funding to add a Level 3 fast charger to its network, with a goal of having one in place by 2026. The installation of a single Level 3 charger can cost upwards of \$100,000, compared to \$7,500 for a Level 2 port.

The cost to use the chargers in St. Marys is \$2/hour. Parking spaces that have a charging station are reserved for use by EVs, and only while charging. Those who park a non-electric vehicle in a charging space or park an EV in a charging space without using the charger could receive a fine up to \$120.

Questions about the chargers can be directed to the Clerks Department at clerksoffice@town.st-marys.on.ca.



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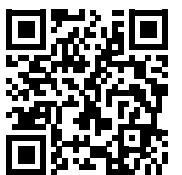


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COMMUNITY

Avon trail extends with a four-kilometre extension through Ontario's countryside

By Amanda Modaragamage, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

An enthusiastic group of volunteers and hikers who work to maintain the 130-kilometre Avon trail from St. Marys to Conestogo happily announced the addition of a new, four-kilometre extension that opened late last year.

The Queen Elizabeth Trail was developed along Line 35 near Harrington and is known as a beautiful trail that runs through the Ontario countryside. The new addition to the trail was made possible because of the enthusiasm of Avon Trail group president Bruce Graham and the more-than 200 volunteers who maintain and care for the Avon Trail year-round.

Named after the late Queen Elizabeth II, the planning of the trail started shortly before the late Queen's death and, therefore, organizers decided to name the new section to commemorate her with the four-kilometre route through the countryside.

The Avon Trail was founded in 1975 and is run entirely by volunteers who dedicate time to caring for the trail



Hikers and walkers of the Avon Trail can see signs like this along the way. This particular sign faces west from Road 110. The trail runs beside the south bank of the Avon River and leads to Stratford. It is between Perth Line 37 and County Road 33. Photo by Amanda Modaragamage

and meeting regularly to enjoy hiking and walking together.

Though it is 130 kilometres long, the trail is known to be an easy hike for almost everyone with about 40 kilometres along roads and the rest as off-road trails.

"It passes along several creeks and rivers like the Avon River," said Gra-

ham.

"Anybody who can walk around town and is reasonably ambulatory can hike on the Avon Trail. The trail does not involve mountain climbing or scrambling and is accessible for most people to walk and enjoy."

Sections of the trail go through beautiful woodlands with scenery that

changes throughout the seasons, including apple trees in the fall, attracting local dog walkers and visitors alike.

The Avon Trail group is always accepting new members and, with the help of donations, members help to care for the trail and regularly get together to plan hikes, meet new people and engage with other like-minded and health-focused hikers.

Members enjoy receiving news alerts about special events and hikes organized by the group, participating in exclusive member-only events, accessing the group's online tools like filling out monitoring reports and viewing trail maps, and even receiving a discount at Columbia Sports-wear.

"Members also have the satisfaction of knowing that their donation helps maintain and expand the trails," said Graham. "The \$25 donation helps pay for maintenance costs such as paint for blazes, lumber for repairs and occasional tree-removal services."

For more information, to donate or to join the Avon Trail group, visit www.avontrail.ca.



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ARTS

St. Marys Station Gallery presents: The Wonder of Water

By St. Marys Station Gallery

An exhibition of watercolour paintings by St. Marys artist Bonn Richardson is opening at St. Marys Station Gallery.

Over the course of Richardson's more than 30 years painting, her fascination with water has fuelled her desire to re-create the essence of this subject on paper. This has led to epiphanies on how to represent the sparkle and fluidity this medium demands. In this show, gallery visitors will experience two unusual techniques Richardson has developed.

For her underwater work, Richardson doesn't use a camera. She sketches while snorkelling over the coral reefs below her. This allows her to sketch what she sees, which creates an emotional response to the underwater world. What better way to understand water than to be immersed in it and study it on its own terms. She developed a way to do just that, sketching on the swim while snorkelling. Once she is done her water sketches, she takes the drawings to shore to let them dry. Then she finishes them off using watercolours from her travel kit. Back home in her studio, Richardson



"Tang Fish Feeding," a watercolour painting by artist Bonn Richardson, will be included in The Wonder of Water exhibition at St. Marys Station Gallery March 8-16. Contributed photo

uses her "body memory" gained from her underwater experience to transfer all she has observed onto larger paintings.

Another technique Richardson has developed is a sparkling effect on paper. She has observed the wonder of prisms on tiny droplets of water within the petals and stems of flowers as

they sit in a vase on her dining table. Water is a prism when light hits it. The range of colour she sees while observing water or snow sparkles leaves her spellbound. Water transcends all cultural barriers. It is in everything and

through everything. Our very wellbeing depends on our water health.

She has not seen work done in this way anywhere else. These techniques help her express the wonder of the liquid realm that continually keeps her captivated.

Richardson was the successful recipient of an Ontario Arts Council grant to show these works at the Arts Project in London, Ont. in 2015. The title of her show was Healthy Water/Healthy Life.

This exhibition previews March 8 from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The opening reception is the next day, March 9, at the gallery from 1-4 p.m. Richardson will be in attendance during the reception as well as during the exhibition from 1-3 p.m.

Due to the train station being painted by the town, this show will be viewable in person at the gallery from March 8-16. The show can then be viewed in our virtual gallery on our website at stmarysstationgallery.ca/bonn-richardson-art.



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COMMUNITY

Springing forward a good reminder to check smoke- and CO-alarm batteries

By Wendy Lamond

As clocks spring forward at 2 a.m. March 10, residents should also take the opportunity to change the batteries in their smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms.

Canadians are required by law to have working alarms on every floor of a home and close to sleeping areas. Most fatal fires occur at night when people are asleep. Having working alarms provide early warnings in the event of a fire.

"If you are unsure if your alarms are in good working condition, in proper locations or any other concerns, call the St. Marys Fire Department," said chief fire prevention officer Brian Leverton.

Tampering or removing batteries from smoke and CO alarms can result in a ticket for \$360 or a fine of up to

\$50,000.

For more information on smoke and CO alarms, contact the St. Marys Fire Department at 519-284-1752 or visit www.townofstmarys.com/smoke-alarms.

The first communities in the world to adopt daylight savings time were right here in Canada. The small towns of Port Arthur and Fort William, which would eventually merge to become Thunder Bay, Ont., adopted daylight savings time on May 1, 1908.

Most digital and Wi-Fi based devices like smart phones and watches will automatically adjust the time. Make sure all manual devices get set an hour ahead before going to sleep.

Despite losing an hour of sleep by "springing forward," it also marks the point in the year when daylight hours will be noticeably longer.



Megan Kosch from Angela Dawn Aesthetics & Medispa and Jocelyn Lawrence from the Fanshawe fire-prevention program are reminding everyone to change batteries on smoke and CO alarms this weekend to correspond with the time change. Photo by Wendy Lamond




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SPORTS

Lincs finish second, to meet Sarnia in first-round of playoffs

By Spencer Seymour

The final weekend of the GOJHL's regular season was full of unexpected twists and turns, but once it was done, the St. Marys Lincolns had clinched second place in the Western Conference, setting up a first-round playoff series against the Sarnia Legionnaires.

Last Friday saw the first of the final two games of the season for the Lincolns as they hosted the Strathroy Rockets in what was expected to be the game that decided who would end up second in the west. Despite out-chancing the Rockets for large portions of the game, Strathroy netminder Colin Androlewicz turned in a herculean effort, making 49 saves to get the Rockets into overtime when Mason Landry fired the game-winner.

Head coach Jeff Bradley told the Independent he was happy with his team's overall showing despite only coming away with a single point.

"I thought we did enough to win," Bradley said. "We executed what we needed to execute but we just couldn't score enough goals. If you look at the teams we've played recently, we've had a few games where we didn't score much. Our powerplay has gone a little stale and we've run into a couple hot goaltenders including (on Friday) against Strathroy. Their goaltender played really well, but so did the entire team. We out-chanced them by a wide margin, but we just couldn't get the puck by Androlewicz."

The Lincolns finished the game with a 50-39 lead in shots, largely due to the first and third periods in which St. Marys outshot the Rockets 36-15. Bradley said those two periods highlighted the team's hunger and compete level.

"Our first period and third period were really good. Strathroy got out to a good start in the second but in the latter half of that period, I thought we did well. As far as our gameplan, they executed it with intensity and desire to win. It sucks we lost but I'm not too upset because it's one thing to not show up and lose but (on Friday) we did everything we could to win and just missed out on the win."

Both of the goals that came in regulation were scored in the second period, first with Liam Spencer finding the game's first just 97 seconds into the frame. At the 15:07 mark of the second, Ryan Hodgkinson whacked in a bouncing rebound to tie the game at one apiece.

The Lincolns held the white-hot Rockets' powerplay, which had operated at 37.9 per cent in their five previous games, off the scoresheet on five opportunities. Bradley feels that the team's penalty kill is one of several key elements to the Lincolns' strong campaign.

On a night when the team honoured their five graduating players, Bradley felt the group's overall



Jacob Montesi strides out of the dressing to take the ice during a recent St. Marys Lincolns' game. Montesi created one of the team's most heartwarming moments of the season this past Sunday with his first goal of the year in the Lincs' 7-3 win over the St. Thomas Stars. Photo by Spencer Seymour

maturity was on display.

"This a really mature group. We gave up some odd-man rushes early in the first off of a defensive zone faceoff play that Strathroy made. In the first intermission, we went over it again and we didn't get caught again. They were stopping our breakout early in the game so we went to a five-back and they didn't stop that. Those are just two examples of how you can go in, adjust what you're doing and they can go out and execute. Regardless of age, you have to have a mature group of kids to be able to do that."

Lincs clinch second in St. Thomas

One day after the Rockets beat the Lincolns, an upset loss to the Sarnia Legionnaires by the Rockets gave the Lincolns a chance to overtake Strathroy for second when they visited the Stars of St. Thomas this past Sunday and, per coach Bradley, finished the regular season on an incredibly positive note.

"They played great again. Our recent games against Chatham, LaSalle, Strathroy and then (Sunday night) against St. Thomas, we've played some really good hockey. Our game is in order and we've continued to do the things that we need to do to be successful."

Bradley elaborated on what it means to him for the

team to have their game in order.

"We break it down into different sections of the ice. In the offensive zone, we always make sure we're taking away the walls by having our defencemen be very active but also having support from the forwards. In the neutral zone, it's much the same thing. In the defensive zone, we're trying to condense one side of the ice and freeze the outs and every part of that has been really good."

Just under 11 minutes into the first period, Blake Elzinga drew first blood with his eighth of the year assisted by Hodgkinson. The goal snapped a 14-game goal drought for the versatile rookie who has played both forward and defence this season, and was part of a standout night for the Walkerton native.

"Blake played amazing," remarked Bradley. "He's had several great games recently. Blake has been trending upwards. We've asked him to be a bit more physical and defensively responsible and he's doing both of those. With that comes trust and with trust comes more ice time and more opportunity to showcase his skillset."

A one-time blast by Judd Katz tied the game at 1-1 which would hold up as the score when both teams went to dressing rooms for the first intermission. However, the game was clearly lopsided as the Lincs led 18-4 in shots.

The dam broke open in the second for St. Marys, beginning with Billy VanSumeren on a Lincolns' powerplay sending a shot off Luca Spagnolo's foot

Continued on page 16

GOJHL PLAYOFFS - ROUND 1

- GAME 1 FRIDAY, MARCH 8 @ HOME - 7:30 PM
- GAME 2 SATURDAY, MARCH 9 @ SARNIA - 7:10 PM
- GAME 3 MONDAY, MARCH 11 @ HOME - 7:30 PM
- GAME 4 THURSDAY, MARCH 14 @ SARNIA - 7:10 PM
- GAME 5 FRIDAY, MARCH 15 @ HOME - 7:30 PM *
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SPORTS

Burgins shine at Athletics Ontario Masters indoor meet

By Spencer Seymour

Aileen and Harold Burgin once again brought home a strong slate of results, including a

record-breaking performance, after competing in several events at the Athletics Ontario Masters Indoor Track and Field Championships Feb. 24-25 at York University's Toronto Track and Field Centre.

The highlight of the results came in the indoors 200-metre run for women 80-84 in which Aileen Burgin broke the record set by Agnes Lamb by four seconds, finishing the race with a time of 53.16 seconds to claim the record and first place. She narrowly missed breaking her own record that she set last year in the 60-metre dash by less than a second, coming in at 14.13 seconds, just a hair over the 14.07 she turned in last year.

Aileen told the Independent her strong showing this year was validating after a technical glitch last year.

"Setting the Indoor 200-metre record was quite satisfying," said Aileen. "The first time I ran a 200-metre dash was at last year's indoor meet, but the timer malfunctioned so there was no time available. The staff was apologetic and offered to do a timed run after the meet was finished for the day. So I looked at it as a chance to prove to myself that last year's run had been a record breaker too."

Aileen also credited her husband for helping her reach her record-setting level.

"My achievement is a joint effort. It was Harold, a retired Physical Education coach, who saw that the potential was there. Together we work out the training routines and, probably just as important, together we are able to manage the very intimidating travel to and around Toronto in order to get to the competitions."

Meanwhile, her husband Harold was competing in the 60-metre dash as part of the 85-89 age group and, despite running through a nagging hip-flexor injury, still placed first in his field. He also finished first in the shot-put event.

According to Aileen, the pair has been overwhelmed by the support from the community.

"I wasn't expecting all the positive responses, both from fellow competitors as well as all the people I encounter when in and around the community. It feels good that people of all ages are recognizing that there are octogenarians who can still enjoy an active lifestyle and that it isn't a necessity to slow down and take it easy."

"More than one mom has said to me that they want their children to see that one doesn't have to reduce or eliminate physical activity as one grows older," Aileen continued. "It really doesn't have to be running, though. Any kind of activity qualifies. Also, I had not really realized that I was

being used as a model by the younger Masters' runners who are 50-70 years old to continue with their own running pursuits."



Aileen Burgin runs a race at the Athletics Ontario Masters Indoor Track and Field Championships. Burgin came in first place in both the 60-metre and 200-metre runs, her time in the latter of which – 53.16 seconds – set a new record. Her husband Harold Burgin also turned in a strong showing, finishing first in both the 60-metre dash and shot-put events. Photo courtesy of Shaggysphotos.com

Eight Stonetown karate students earn top-three finishes at provincial tournament

By Spencer Seymour

The Stonetown Karate Centre had eight students return from the Ontario Provincial Martial Arts Championship in Burlington Feb. 24 with top-three placements in their respective competitions.

Sensei Jalyne Lorentz led the way with two first-place finishes in traditional kata and traditional weapons. Lorentz, competing in the girls 15-17 black belt age group, also took second in freestyle forms.

In the 15-17 advanced girls division, Marieke Van Lierop also had a stellar showing, claiming the top spot in both traditional kata and traditional weapons.

Isabelle Lariviere of the 18+ women's black belt bracket had an outstanding five top-three results to her credit, including taking second in traditional weapons and freestyle forms. She also added three third-place finishes in creative weapons, traditional kata, and point sparring.

Shannon Campbell captured first-place honours in the 42+

women's advanced point sparring. Other highlights included Lisa Sheldon, who took third in point sparring in the 42+ women's black belt category, as well as Fox Houston who nabbed third in 13-14 junior black belt freestyle forms.

It was also a milestone day for Santiago Tierra, competing in the 11-12 novice division, and Morgan Houston of the 35+ women's novice/intermediate group, as Tierra and Houston were competing in their first tournaments. Both claimed third in traditional kata within their respective divisions.

Sensei Jeremy Lorentz felt it was a fantastic way to kick off the tournament schedule for the local dojo.

"We are super proud of all our students for their amazing efforts and very impressed to see their results starting the 2024 season off. It has been great to see the life skills we teach at the dojo, like goal setting, perseverance, sportsmanship and focus being enhanced by a karate tournament."



Eight Stonetown Karate Centre students claimed at least one top-three finish at the Ontario Provincial Martial Arts Championship, which took place in Burlington on Feb. 24. Pictured in the front row from left are Santiago Tierra, Fox Houston, Marieke van Lierop, and Sensei Jalyne Lorentz. In the back row from left are Lisa Sheldon, Isabelle Lariviere, Shannon Campbell and Morgan Houston. Contributed photo

SPORTS

DCVI skiers bring 'grit, determination' to OFSAA

By Spencer Seymour

The St. Marys DCVI Nordic Ski team concluded its season when skiers took part in the OFSAA High School Championships held Feb. 22-23 in Lakefield.

Coach Rachel Hendriksen praised the group for overcoming adversity in their journey to OFSAA.

"The conditions this season made it feel like the ski team couldn't win, but our OFSAA performances proved that our ski team runs on grit and determination," Hendriksen told the Independent. "With the lack of snow and warm conditions, it was a challenging year because skiers didn't get to train on snow very often.

"We are so impressed, especially with our rookie skiers, for the improvements they made throughout the season despite less time on snow than other schools. The veteran skiers were leaders at practices, helping out with training but also leaders in spirit and sportsmanship."

Arguably the strongest leaders of DCVI's team as a whole were the senior girls group. Highlighting the senior girls portion of results includes Avery Jones snatching a top-20 finish, while Anna Ropp fought hard to



Despite a year of challenging weather conditions, the St. Marys DCVI Nordic Ski team showed "grit and determination" in their quest leading up to and at the OFSAA High School Championships held Feb. 22-23 in Lakefield. Pictured in the front row from left are Owen Littlejohn, Adam Turner, Nathan Wolfkamp, Griffin McGregor, Myles Clinton, Ethan Henderson, Nic Brintnell, Trevor Richardson, Ben Robson, Hayden Brintnell and coach Kelli Schiedel. In the back from left are coach Kim Jones, Trevor Aarts, Nate Schiedel, Oliver Black, Charles Black, Colton Henderson, Arthur Douglas, Charlotte Richardson, Regan Jones, Avery Jones, Addi Jones, Anna Ropp, Bailey Ross, Holly Black and coach Rachel Hendriksen. Contributed photo

grab a solid 31st, and veteran Bailey Ross put in another good effort.

In a field of 119 skiers from across

the province, the talented and experienced senior boys cohort had incredible performances that land-

ed them fifth and eighth in the team events. Arthur Douglas and Trevor Aarts pushed hard through challenging conditions. Experienced skiing from Oliver Black, Colton Henderson, Charles Black, Trevor Richardson and Hayden Brintnell helped them each crack the top 50. Owen Littlejohn and Adam Turner pushed through the warm snow to finish in the top 20. Griffin McGregor had an impressive 12th-spot finish.

DCVI's junior girls did a stellar job in their OFSAA debuts. Competing in a crowded field of 114 competitors, all of the DCVI girls cracked the top 50. Holly Black had an excellent race, taking on the icy course with confidence. Regan Jones turned in a great performance and Charlotte Richardson clinched an impressive 13th spot.

The junior boys also had a strong OFSAA performance. Myles Clinton led the team and landed on the podium, winning the bronze after finishing third. Nathan Wolfkamp claimed the 13th spot. Strong and consistent skiing from Ben Robson, Ethan Henderson and Nic Brintnell earned their team a seventh-place overall finish and helped them advance to the finals of the relay.

Lincs finish second, to meet Sarnia in first-round of playoffs

Continued from page 14

and past netminder Trenten Bennett. It was the 18th of the campaign for Spagnolo with VanSumeren and Ryan Cornfield

getting the helpers. The bench boss felt the team's powerplay, which dried up drastically in February, looked better than in recent memory.

"It seemed like there was a little bit more movement and a little bit more confidence. We're trying out three units right now so we're still figuring out if we stick with three units or if we mix the three together and go back to two units."

Quinn Gavin-White tied the game for St. Thomas at 13:51 in the second after tipping a puck into the net after it took a lively bounce off the glass and back out in front of the net. It took Hodgkinson just 24 seconds to answer for St. Marys, however, with the hometown product making it three straight games with a goal. Linemates

Elzinga and Matt Prendergast each picked up an assist.

Two minutes and 25 seconds later, James Sigmon caught everyone by surprise when he slid over the Stars' blueline and sniped a wrist shot home for his second of the year. Shortly after scoring, Sigmon had to leave the game when the blade holder on his skate was shattered by a shot block.

The highlight of the night and one of the season's best moments came just over five and a half minutes into the third when defenceman Jacob Montesi seized a perfect pass by Luca Spagnolo and scored his first goal of the season. Jaden Lee also had an assist. Montesi, a highly respected member of the Lincolns' roster, received an explosive ovation from the St. Marys bench, which Bradley felt created one of the team's most heartwarming moments of the year.

"It was great. During this season, you look for special moments and that

was certainly one of those. Jacob is a true Lincoln. He loves playing for this team and he gives everything he's got every time he's on the ice. So, to see him get rewarded was awesome to see. It's not what he always goes for but it's nice to see him get one. He's one of the more deserving guys to have one of those moments."

Spagnolo and Lee were both still glowing after the game.

"How awesome was that," exclaimed Lee.

"I told him, 'If you see me going (from behind the net to the faceoff dot, just go to the backdoor, it's been open all night,'" Spagnolo recounted.

Spagnolo picked up his second of the game later in the third while Ethan Weir snapped a four-game goalless stretch, while Kaedyn Long got one back for the Stars enroute to a 7-3 Lincolns win.

With four lines and three defence

pairings turning in either good, great, or excellent performances, Bradley explained the "good problem" the team is tasked with working out heading into the post-season.

"We've got 13 forwards, seven defencemen and two goaltenders who are playing really well. That's what you want this time of the year. We'll have to make some tough decisions with the lineup going into the playoffs but it's a good problem to have. We believe in the style we play and believe it will be successful when it matters most."

The Lincolns begin their first-round playoff series against the Sarnia Legionnaires this Friday night. Half an hour before each playoff game, a series of mini-documentaries entitled the Lincolns' Season Special will air on St. Marys Radio. Game Two takes place on Saturday in Sarnia followed by Game Three this coming Monday. Game Four moves back to Sarnia next Thursday.

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MINOR SPORTS SCRAPBOOK



Talan Ward rockets a shot on a breakaway during the Social Thirty-One U11 A Boys St. Marys Rock game this past Monday.



Adelyn Laidlaw gathers a loose puck during last Saturday's St. Marys Kinsmen Club U9 C Girls St. Marys Rock game.



Reese Crawford skates the puck into the offensive zone during the U13 B Girls St. Marys Rock game last Wednesday.



Marta Rintoul stares down an incoming shooter during last Saturday's Hubbard Pharmacy U18 B Girls St. Marys Rock game.



Kane Douglas tucks the puck by the opposing netminder during the Dunny's Source For Sports U10 A Boys St. Marys Rock game last Wednesday.



Liam McCutcheon fires a shot on goal during last Saturday's U9 LL Boys 3 St. Marys Rock game. Photos by Spencer Seymour

SPORTS

U11 C Boys pick up first win of playoffs

By Spencer Seymour

The U11 C Boys St. Marys Rock posted their first victory of the playoffs last Saturday when they defeated the visiting Strathroy Jr. Rockets 7-3.

Head coach Brayden Lord credited his group with continued strong play, which he said began in their previous game against the undefeated Mt. Brydges Cougars.

"They played great," Lord said following his team's win over Strathroy. "We had a tough game against (Strath-

roy) last time we played them and in our last game against one of the best teams in our league we played a really good game. We wanted to play the same game here tonight and the boys did it."

Lord added the team's ability to bounce back after their less-than-stellar performance with two strong games against Mt. Brydges and Strathroy has been built up throughout a season in which resiliency has become a necessity.

"We don't just try to teach the hock-

ey skills and smarts, but also the life skills and off-the-ice aspects: being respectful, being good citizens and being resilient. We only have 10 skaters and one goalie so we're one of the smallest teams in the league and that resilience has definitely become a strength of ours."

Goals by Rylan Lord and Sheamus Ross helped the Rock head into the first intermission with a 2-1 lead. In the second, Lord tallied his second of the game while the Rockets got one back as well, putting St. Marys up 3-2.

Luc Richardson widened the gap for St. Marys with a third-period hat-trick with Tristan Fraser also finding the back of the net. Lachlann Thistle had two assists in the game.

"They did a lot of the small things right. We were asking them to win a race, win a battle, win a battle, win a race and do everything in between, and that's what they did. We asked them to play with consistency and keep coming at our opponent every shift and they did a great job of that."

Minor Basketball's grade 3/4s enjoy final night of weekly play



St. Marys Minor Basketball held their final night of weekly action for this season last Thursday at St. Marys DCVI. The Raptors won the Gold Medal game while all four teams turned in exciting and competitive efforts in both the semi-finals and the finals. Steven Reid and Kylie Monteith officiated the games and helped all the players grow and have plenty of fun this season.



After the games, all of the players were presented with certificates recognizing their hard work this year. Players like Logan Baechler, pictured on the right, also had great resources to learn from and be encouraged by in stellar young leaders like Alanna Savile and Charlotte Richardson, pictured with Baechler. Photos by Spencer Seymour

SPORTS

St. Marys bowlers place third at provincial championship




St. Marys bowlers Mike Gregory and Matt Dezan represented the Grand River Zone at the Provincial High Low Doubles Championship Tournament held at Jeff's Bowlarama in Welland on Saturday, March 2. They placed third with a score of 208 points over average and finished just 10 points behind second. Pictured from left to right are Mike Gregory, award presenter Brenda Hamilton, and Matt Dezan. Photo courtesy of Ontario Five-Pin Bowlers Association

Lincs honour graduating players



Before last Friday's game against the Strathroy Rockets, the St. Marys Lincolns honoured their five overage players who are in their final year of junior eligibility. Each player had members of their family join them on the ice and were presented with a framed jersey bearing their name and number. The five players honoured, from left to right as they are pictured, were Maddox Callens, Brandon Abbott, Billy VanSumeren, Adam Barkley, and Josh Cornfield. Contributed photo



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SPORTS

Sixteen teams compete in 6th annual Wellington Brewery Men's Bonspiel



The winner of Draw 1 at the Wellington Men's Spiel held on Saturday was "Team White". From left to right: Russ Mitchell, Stewart Grant, Richard White, and George White.



The winning team for Draw 2 of Saturday's Wellington Brewery Men's Bonspiel was "Team Van De Walle". Pictured from left: Kevin Rops, Morris Van De Walle, and Michael Visser.

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HISTORY

HISTORIC ST. MARYS: The St. Marys-on-the-Thames Historical Society

By Mary Smith

On Feb. 23, the 28th annual St. Marys Heritage Fair was held at the St. Marys Pyramid Recreation Centre under the auspices of the St. Marys Museum. As always, it was an enjoyable and friendly event. Various organizations such as the Friendship Centre – celebrating its 50th anniversary – showed what their members' community involvement has accomplished through the years. Others, including the Harrington Grist Mill supporters, explained ambitious, ongoing history-related projects. Individuals such as Jo-Anne Lounds, shown in this week's photograph, displayed special hobbies or interests. In Jo-Anne's case, it was her collection of wicker containers, some extremely old and valuable. By far the best part of the evening was, as always, the willingness of the exhibitors to engage with visitors and to talk about their displays.

This community event – and its convivial atmosphere – is a legacy of the St. Marys on-the-Thames Historical Society, the sponsor of the first Heritage Fairs in the late 1990s. Though the historical society chose the official title – St. Marys-on-the-Thames – to give it some distinction, it was usually just called the historical society. It was established in 1978 with the specific purpose to administer the publication of *Early St. Marys*, the local history book with photographs and text written by L. W. Wilson and L. R. Pfaff. The first edition was printed in 1981. An event launching *Early St. Marys* was held in the town hall auditorium that year and was a gala occasion with the two authors in attendance to answer questions and sign personal copies.

L.W. (Curly) Wilson, 92 years old at the time of the book's publication, had lived almost his entire life in St. Marys and was a keen observer of the people and events around him. He had worked as a plumber and tinsmith, a trade that put him in touch with all sorts of people in the town. He himself had been a participant in many key events such as early versions of Homecoming and the celebrations that followed the end of the two world wars. Curly had accumulated a fine collection of local memorabilia and an even-better collection of stories. His recollections formed the heart of the book.

Larry Pfaff also grew up in St. Marys through the 1950s and 1960s and he too listened to the stories told around him. Even after leaving for university in Toronto and subsequently for a career at the Art Gallery of Ontario, he retained his interest in St. Marys,



Jo-Anne Lounds' display of antique wicker containers was one of the many exhibits at the 28th annual Heritage Fair at the Pyramid Recreation Centre Feb. 23. Photo courtesy of Friends of the St. Marys Museum

spending frequent weekends and holidays in this town. He used his academic training to research the background to Curly's stories, consulting primary and secondary material to corroborate details and to expand the context. The two authors chose the photographs that worked best to tell the story of the town's development up to 1914. That year saw the start of World War I when history took a swing in new directions. Early St. Marys was instantly popular and went through several printings. Copies are still available for sale at the St. Marys Museum – it's a must-have book for anyone interested in this town's history.

Throughout the 1980s, members of the historical society took a lead role in many initiatives that increased appreciation of this area's heritage. Some worked with town council to establish a local architectural conservancy advisory committee (LACAC), the original name for the municipal heritage committee. The society applied for grants to have the earliest copies of local newspapers microfilmed and summer students were hired to create the index to use with the microfilm. Some members offered walking tours, highlighting heritage buildings. Others created downtown window displays of old photographs, showing early views of the town. The society was unfailingly supportive of the St. Marys Museum, assisting as volunteers at special events such as open houses to celebrate Christmas and Victoria Day. It also sponsored more local-history publications, including *Reflections* in 1984. Subtitled *Firsthand Accounts of Life in St. Marys* from 1900 to

1929, it was edited by Bruce Hicks and was a compilation from a series of oral interviews he had conducted with longtime St. Marys-and-area residents. It remains an entertaining local history resource. Later publications included *Bravi* in 1996, a history of the Italian community in St. Marys based on earlier research by Loriana Rocchetti and Robert Rose. In 2012, the historical society's directors approved a loan to the St. Marys Museum to assist with the printing costs for a book marking the 100th Anniversary of the St. Marys Cement Company. The book sold briskly and the loan was repaid.

The historical society's final publication project was in 2014 when the directors approved a loan to subsidize the printing of Richard Holt's *The Fallen*. It is a book of photographs and brief biographies of the men named on the St. Marys and Blanshard Township war memorials, including explanations of the circumstances that led to their deaths while in the service of our country. One of the final society events was a reception to honour Lt.-Col. Richard Holt, the book's author, a committed researcher and long-time volunteer for many projects relating to the history of St. Marys.

The historical society arranged field trips for its members to historic sites and museums in nearby communities. It held regular meetings, sometimes with special themes. A favourite was show and tell. Members brought some object they treasured because of its association with their own family history. There was so much interest in this theme the

society decided in 1997 to expand it as an event during Ontario Heritage Week in February. A number of people with collections of St. Marys memorabilia, postcards, old newspapers and historic photographs were invited to set up display tables in the former Friendship Centre building in the southeast corner of Cadzow Park. The event was advertised, the organizers arranged tables and chairs on a dreary February day and waited that evening to see if anyone would come.

The attendance, as it turned out, was overwhelming. People, looking for some entertainment in the middle of a long winter, crowded into the building and patiently took turns filing past the exhibit tables, chatting with the exhibitors and with each other as they waited in line. Particularly popular were Reg Near's postcard albums, Muriel Sheldon's scrapbooks and Elsie MacKay's historic photographs. The evening was so successful the historical society decided to make it an annual event each February. The Heritage Fair increased in popularity with more people wanting display tables. It soon outgrew the Friendship Centre, moved for a few years to the cafeteria at St. Marys DCVI, and eventually to the Pyramid Recreation Centre. Even during the pandemic, the Heritage Fair survived. In 2021 and 2022, the exhibits were virtual and received many online visits from across Canada and even abroad.

For many years, members of the historical society played key roles in the organization of the Heritage Fair, especially in the popular silent-auction component. But through the years, there was a shifting of responsibilities and the Heritage Fair was taken over by the museum. Many of the society's other outreach and interpretive activities such as heritage walking tours have also been assumed by the museum or by volunteers from its support organization, the Friends of the St. Marys Museum. The reality is almost all the original, enthusiastic and committed supporters of the historical society have died. The pandemic seemed to dampen any hopes of revitalizing the group by attracting new members. After some years of inactivity, the St. Marys-on-the-Thames Historical Society will soon be formally disbanded. In accordance with a longstanding agreement, its few remaining assets will be transferred to the Friends of the Museum. But the continuing strong interest in understanding and preserving local history is a legacy left by the historical society to the entire community.

Thorndale News

A section within the St. Marys Independent

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Local Dairy Farms on Ont Holstein Convention tour

By Nancy Abra

The 2024 Ontario Holstein Convention was hosted by the Middlesex County Holstein Club in London on Feb. 27 and 28. As part of this convention, a barn tour was organized showcasing 10 area Holstein dairy operations. Elliotdale Holsteins and Nuview Farms just east of Thorndale were part of this tour.

Elliotdale Holsteins Ltd., owned by John, Yvonne, Andrew and Nicole and their family milk 85 head in a milking parlour twice daily. In 2021, they won the Milk Quality Award.

"We have been operating out of this barn for just over four years. It is our pleasure to be on this farm tour to showcase our operation. It is also great to see friends and neighbours

take in this tour as well," the family said.

Jean, David and Danna Johnson of Nuview Farms Ltd. were also part of this tour. Their facility is a free-stall barn built in 2017 featuring a fully automatic milking station for 75 head.

"As these barn tours are focused on education, we are happy to open our barn doors to show our milking and breeding facility to our fellow dairy people as well as our friends and neighbours," David Johnson said.

As dairy farm operations are not regularly open to the public, the barn tour is a valuable component of the Ontario Holstein Convention, providing education, networking, inspiration, and a chance to celebrate the hard work of local dairy farmers.



Pictured are Nicole and Andrew Elliott of Elliotdale Holsteins Ltd., a Thorndale area farm featured in the Ontario Holstein Convention tour. Contributed photo

One for the history books

By Nancy Abra

The Thorndale Dinner Theatre was created by the Thorndale Ag Society as a fundraiser back in the 1980s and continued annually for a few years. It was later revived in 2007 as a special community event to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Thorndale Agricultural Society. Being such a hit, this event has continued yearly since, except during the covid pandemic.

The community has played a crucial role in shaping the success of the Thorndale Dinner Theatre. Besides being a fundraiser for the agricultural society, its success has also been shared by local churches and groups who provided the meals for these performances.

Over the years, the dedication and devotion, not only of the agricultural society but also of community members who have donated countless hours and their talents on stage and behind the scenes, are the main factors of the continued success of the Thorndale Dinner Theatre.

The Thorndale Dinner Theatre has never backed away from a challenge. With

the community's help, Thorndale Dinner Theatre rescued the performance venue after the devastating fire at the community centre in 2020. Last year, Thorndale Dinner Theatre miraculously transformed the community centre's gym into a cozy dinner-theatre venue. And this year, with two sold out evenings and over 650 tickets sold, they performed on stage the premiere of *Appearing This Evening* by Anthony Keenleyside.

"Thank you to you seems so inadequate," Keenleyside wrote in a message to director Kay Rogers, "for having faith enough ... to take on a completely unknown work and author and bring the words to life. And to the cast and crew ... you did it! ... You should be very proud of what you did."

With the agricultural society board's permission, Keenleyside will be including at the front of his script the following: "*Appearing This Evening* ... was first performed by the Thorndale Agricultural Society Dinner Theatre in Thorndale, Ontario, February 17 - 24, 2024, Director Kay Rogers."

Thorndale Lions 'Effective Speaking' Competition

By Nancy Abra

The Thorndale Lions Club held its Effective Speaking competition for area students at its meeting last week.

This competition is part of the International Lions Clubs Multiple District A Ontario and Quebec Lions Clubs contest. It is the largest effective-speaking contest held in Canada in both languages.

The Thorndale Lions Club has hosted this annual student-speech competition for more than 35 years. The goal of this program is to provide an opportunity for competitive speaking and to stimulate self-expression and independent thinking among students.

The students from grades four to eight of West Nissouri Public School were chosen from the school to participate in this competition. The topic of their speeches was the student's choice with



Pictured from left are effective-speaking competitors Makayla Varallo, Brooklyn Dehann, Madi Dopp, Corrina Ropchan, Luna Dewan and Molly Haight. Photo courtesy of Thorndale Lions Club

each student in their allotted time delivering their speech in front of a panel of judges, Lions Club members and the students' parents. The winners of this competition will go on to the southern Ontario region competition in April, which will be hosted by Lions Club in Thorndale.

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COMMUNITY

McCully's Hill Farm holds first pancake brunch



McCully's Hill Farm held the first pancake brunch of 2024 on Saturday, March 2. Serving up the delicious meal was employee, Hayley Chase on the left, Inner Wheel Club of St. Marys members and Rika Aarts and granddaughter Ella on the right. Contributed photo

St. Marys Rotarians pay off Rotary Field pledge



Rotary Club of St. Marys recently completed their pledge to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame (CBHFM) which was used to build Rotary Field. Pictured left to right are Rotarian Len Hawkins, Scott Crawford (CBHFM director of operations) and Mark Oliver, president of the Rotary Club of St. Marys. Contributed photo

What's happening in March at the Thorndale Library

By Thorndale Library staff

Happy March from the Thorndale Library!

Adults and teens are invited to meet former Thorndale resident and trans author Loghan Paylor March 20 at 6:30 p.m. as they discuss their debut novel, *The Cure for Drowning*. Seats are limited, so please register early.

Our March-Break programming starts March 12 at 11 a.m. with our Toy Hacking program. Children under eight must be accompanied by an adult. Registration is required.

A Video Game Party at the Library is happening March 14 at 1 p.m. Registration is required.

Our Taylor Swift Friendship Party is March 15 at 12 p.m. Registration is required.

We're also offering two arts and crafts programs this month. Gather and Quilt meets March 22 at

12 p.m. Please bring your supplies and machine (if you need it).

Don't Worry be Crafty meets March 27 at 6 p.m. This month the craft is paper quilling. Registration is required.

To register, please visit us online at www.library.middlesex.ca/events or contact library staff at 519-461-1150.

Please join us at our weekly drop-in programs: Storytime is the place to be for little ones and their caregivers on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. School-aged children are invited to Afterschool Hangout on Thursdays from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Please note that Afterschool Hangout is cancelled on March 14 for March Break.

As always, feel free to drop in, call us at 519-461-1150 or email us at thorndale_staff@middlesex.ca with any questions or to register for upcoming

programs. We hope to see you at the library!

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Community Liaison Committee

The next Community Liaison Committee Meeting will be held on Friday March 8 at 10am at the St Marys Municipal Operations Center. Members of the public who wish to observe are welcome to attend.

Residents who wish to speak in front of the Committee may submit a detailed request in writing at least 3 days prior to the meeting in writing to the Committee. The request will be considered by the Committee and approved prior to the meeting. Please submit all requests, questions, and concerns for the meeting to kara.terpstra@vcimentos.com by March 7th, 2024.

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COLUMN

WHAT'S FOR DINNER: St. Patrick's Day classics



By Lauren Eedy

A great way to celebrate St. Patrick's Day is with the classics, along with some inspired, new takes on classics.

Colcannon Soup

Inspired by a traditional Irish dish, this is a comforting potato and cabbage soup that is budget friendly and hearty enough to eat as a meal. This dish can be made vegetarian by substituting chicken stock for vegetable and of course omitting the bacon garnish.

Prep: 15 minutes; Cook time: 20 minutes; Serves: 4

2 tbsp olive oil

2 tbsp unsalted butter

4 cups packed finely chopped green cabbage and/or kale

1 cup thinly sliced leeks, white and light green parts only (3-4 small leeks) plus additional for garnish (optional)

1 1/2 lbs russet potatoes, peeled

and cut into 3/4-inch cubes (about 4 cups)

2 thyme sprigs

1 bay leaf

4 cup good chicken stock

2 tsp kosher salt

1/2 cup half and half

2 tsp fresh lemon juice

1/4 tsp white pepper

Pinch ground nutmeg

4 slices oven-baked bacon, crumbled for garnish*

Method:

- Heat oil and butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add cabbage and/or kale and leeks to pot and stir well until combined. Cover pot and cook 8-10 minutes until greens are tender, stirring occasionally.

- Stir in potatoes, thyme sprigs, bay leaf, stock and salt. Heat to boiling over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook 14-16 minutes or until potatoes are very tender. Remove thyme sprigs and bay leaf to discard.

- If desired, remove from heat and use an immersion blender to partially purée.

- Return soup to medium-low heat and stir in half and half, lemon juice, pepper and nutmeg. Serve immediately, gar-

nished with bacon and sliced leeks if desired.

*For oven-baked bacon, pre-heat oven to 375°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment or aluminum foil. Arrange bacon in a single layer, cook 20-22 minutes or until bacon reaches your desired level of crispiness. Transfer to paper-towel lined plate to blot excess grease then use as required.

Eedy Family Irish Soda Bread

After adding buttermilk, aim to get this bread into the oven within 3 minutes. Delicious toasted with good butter on its own or served with Colcannon soup or Guinness stew. This is one of the first recipes I learned.

2 cups all-purpose, white flour

1 3/4 cup wholemeal flour

2-3 tbsp extra flour for dusting

1 1/2 tsp baking soda

1 1/2 tsp salt

2 cups buttermilk (add 1 tbsp of white vinegar or lemon juice to milk, mix and set aside for 15 minutes. Use sparingly when adding to dry ingredients or the dough will get too wet. End result should be sticky- not wet).

Method:

- Preheat oven to 430°F. Line a tray with parchment paper.

- Whisk both flours (not extra flour), baking soda and salt in a large bowl.

- Add buttermilk, stir until it's too hard to stir anymore.

- Sprinkle extra flour onto work surface, scrape out dough and sprinkle with more flour.

- Gently knead NO MORE than 8 times, bringing together in a ball.

- Transfer to tray, pat into a 1-inch sized disc. Cut a cross into the surface 1 cm deep using a serrated knife.

- Bake 20 minutes. Turn oven down to 390°F. Bake further 20 minutes or until base sounds hollow when tapped in the middle.

- Transfer to a rack and cool for 30 minutes.

- Keeps well for 3 days in an airtight container, 4-5 days in the fridge or freeze for months.

Irish Apple Crumble

The difference between apple crumble and apple crisp is the Irish version does not use oats in its topping.

Prep: 10 minutes; Total time: 1 hour; Serves: 8

3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter, melt-

ed plus more for pan.

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1 cup chopped pecans, plus more for serving

1 cup lightly packed brown sugar

1/2 tsp kosher salt

6 large apples, cored and cut into wedges (granny smith, honey crisp, pink lady)

1/2 cup granulated sugar

2 tsp cinnamon

1/2 tsp ground ginger

Juice from 1/2 lemon

Vanilla ice cream, for serving

Method:

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a large baking dish with butter. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, pecans, brown sugar and salt. Stir in melted butter until texture is coarse and sandy.

- Add apples, sugar, cinnamon, ginger and lemon juice to the baking dish. Toss to combine. Spread in an even layer, then press crumb mixture on top of apples. Bake until apples are bubbling and top is golden, about 50 minutes.

- Serve warm with ice cream, if using.

Sláinte!

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ST. MARYS, ONTARIO

Ask the Arborist

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

Dear Arborist,

My Cedar trees are not doing very well, they are near the road. What can I do about salt damage?

Sincerely,
Jenny

Dear Jenny,

Unfortunately, salt damage is something Ontarians live with on a daily basis. Road salt is extremely harmful to plants and animals. Thankfully, there are some options. Deep root fertilizing often works quite well.

A number of years ago in the UK, the Queen Elizabeth used to own a large estate on the coast. I believe it was the Sandringham Estate. One year, due to a large storm, the ocean came in a long way damaging acres and acres of land. In Europe, they often reclaim land from the ocean so they knew exactly what to do. They applied gypsum and were able to replant the land within 12 months.

Sincerely
The Arborist

Joel Hackett is a certified Arborist residing in the St. Marys area. Currently, he spends most of the year running Joel's Tree Service. For contact call 519 272 5742 or email jtsquote@gmail.com

COLUMN

HOSTING UKRAINE: Welcomes and Warnings

By VJ Knutson

Twice this past week, Ukrainian teenagers have sat at our dining table seeking help with English homework. As a former teacher, I love interacting with this age group. Lesia, whose training includes mathematics, joined in to help with math homework. There is just something about these two generations coming together that warms the heart.

Lots of planning is going on behind the scenes. Free swims at the Pyramid Recreation Centre for Newcomers to Canada are being offered by the Cook-Rees Memorial Fund for Water Search and Safety. The fund has generously set aside six Sunday afternoons for newcomers starting March 10 from 3-4 p.m. Times vary each week and registration is required as numbers are limited. Hosts are welcome as are all new to Canada. Message me for further information.

Also in the works is an Easter potluck. I'll be putting together a list of volunteers and tasks shortly. We

hope to include the Stratford community as well as locals.

A few items of concern emerged this past week also. As tax season is upon us, our newcomers will be looking for services to help them. While many offer free or reduced prices to Ukrainians via social media, I need to offer a stern warning. Last year, we uncovered a sex-trafficking ring that was offering reduced rates to our newcomers across Ontario. Unfortunately, young women were targeted and their personal information fell into the wrong hands.

A second cautionary tale is related to preparing documents for permanent residency. Authorized immigration consultants will charge a fee for this service as they have the right to do. No others can charge. Authorized consultants will have a number and be registered through the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants (<https://college-ic.ca/protecting-the-public/find-an-immigration-consultant>). Please verify this information before handing over

information. Hiring an unlicensed consultant can have serious consequences, including but not limited to a ban from permanent residency for the applicant or any temporary resident that is involved. Getting it right makes all the difference in attaining permanent-resident status.

I cannot stress enough that scammers are always on the lookout for victims. When sharing personal information such as SIN, birth dates, address, banking information and so on, make sure you are dealing with a legitimate professional. Identity theft, money stolen from bank accounts, threats of violence or exploitation are painful consequences of your information getting in the wrong hands.

On a brighter note, I have recently discovered that the library has an online-language program that is free to the public with a Library card (thank you, Sarah Andrews). Pronunciator offers courses in 315 languages and can be accessed through mobile devices. If you are interested and do

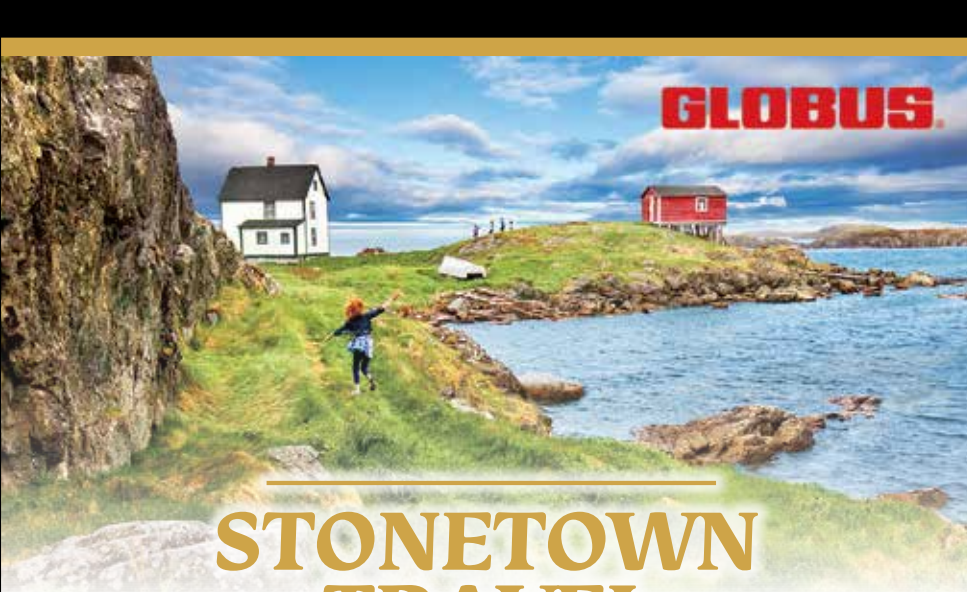
not have a library card, just drop in at the library on Church Street to get started.

It has been brought to my attention that Ukrainians are not the only English language learners in our community. Although my work started in response to the war in Ukraine in 2022, our volunteers and programs are open to all.

Lastly, I want to extend a warm welcome to our most recent newcomers to St. Marys. Nadiia, her sister, Tanya, and their children along with Nadiia's fiancé, Dima, have moved here from London. This family is so dear to our hearts and we are pleased to have them nearby. Congratulations on Nadiia and Dima's engagement. I am also thrilled to announce the engagement of another of our cherished newcomers – Tanya Bila to her beloved, Matt. So many blessings ahead for all of you.

Until next time.

(Reach me at english.knutson@gmail.com)



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Riddles

What is silver and has a head and tail but no legs or arms?

A coin

What is a bunny's favourite music?

Hip Hop

What is a kangaroo's favorite year?

Leap year

What's the best way to paint the ocean?

In watercolours

What a cow's favourite past time?

Going to the MOOVies

How do pigs get to the hospital?

By HAMbulance

What is a racer's favourite sauce?

Ketch-up

How do you fix a broken pizza?

With tomato paste

What happened when 500 hares got loose on the main street?

The police had to comb the area

Why did the girl throw the clock out the window?

Because she wanted to see time fly

There are many castles in the world, but who is strong enough to move one?

Any chess player

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FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS

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

Word List

Groundhog Day

Early spring

KC wins Super Bowl

Apple Vision Pro

Alexei Navalny

Family Day

Rae Family Feud

Hat trick

Caitlin Clark

Onexbus

Coldest Night

Brian Mulroney



The Riddle Kid OF THE WEEK

What does baseball and pancakes have in common?



They both rely on the batter!

Trey Megens (18 mo)

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

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PET OF THE WEEK

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



Our pet of the week is Francis Elisabeth, a 1.5 year old Jack Russell terrier. Her favourite things are playing with her best friend Pearl, visiting her mom Heidi and chewing on a squeaky ball. Francis Elisabeth is owned by Kathy and Amy MacKay



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St. Marys Vet Clinic online vet store has officially launched!

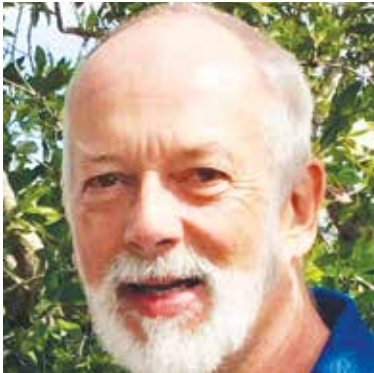
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COLUMN

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Walking through history at Bunratty



By Paul Knowles

It is not rare in North America to find tourist attractions known as pioneer villages. There are several in Ontario, including Doon Pioneer Village in Kitchener, currently closed until at least 2025.

That raises some interesting questions about the state of tourist attractions in Waterloo Region and the sincerity of the commitment of the regional government to them. The region's symphony has been allowed to die, the funding for institutions like the museum has been slashed, the pioneer village is closed for at least two years, but I digress. That's a rant for another time. Stay tuned.

This week, my attention is focused on a unique pioneer village that includes a feature no North American destination can aspire to – an authentic, 15th century castle. If you guessed this destination is not on this side of the Atlantic, you would be correct. The structure in question is Bunratty Castle, proclaimed to be “the most complete and authentic castle in Ireland.” The castle

is open to visitors with costumed and well-informed guides and lots of authentic heirlooms.

But wait – as they used to say in those cheesy ads – there's more! The castle is well worth a visit on its own, but the good news is visitors also get to explore Bunratty Folk Park, an assemblage of more than 30 buildings representing an historic era in rural and smalltown Ireland.

Here too there are many costumed interpreters portraying the folks that lived in some of these homes, ran the shops, served the community, or, in the case of the constable on patrol, kept the peace a couple of centuries ago.

During several visits to Bunratty, I have watched thatchers at work creating new roofs on thatched cottages, and I have talked to printers, bakers, doctors, farmers and gardeners, or at least people authentically portraying those roles with the appropriate skills and anecdotes.

And I have also – not surprisingly – dined, sipped and lingered in the highly authentic pubs and beer gardens that invite visitors to relax and stop worrying about getting back to the tour bus on time.

To be fair, the castle is the real deal. Some of the homes and shops were either moved here or are recreations of historic buildings. But when you are walking the historic streets, exact provenance ceases to matter. The precise details of architecture, craftsmanship, homemaking

and animal husbandry immediately draw you into the history of Ireland.

Yes, I did mention animal husbandry. Throughout the village are farmsteads and small fields well-populated with sheep, chickens, pigs and other farm animals.

There is live entertainment here too – not a formal concert in an amphitheatre, but street musicians playing period instruments and sharing wonderful Irish tunes with passersby.

The history of Bunratty dates back to at least AD 970 when it was the site of a Viking trading camp. The Vikings left a permanent footprint on Ireland, colonizing much of the island nation, and founding many of its main cities including Dublin, the capital of the republic.

The influence of the Vikings remains to this day, partly because, unlike in England and much of Europe, the Romans did not follow the Vikings in invading Ireland. Whereas the largest historic footprint in England is Roman, no such evidence has obliterated the contributions of the Vikings.

The Viking heritage is acknowledged at Bunratty, especially in the whimsical children's Viking Playground where slaughter and ravaging is kept to a minimum. However, the folk park is actually set in a much later era, the 19th century. One structure that was actually built in that era, on the site, is Bunratty House, constructed



A very simple, thatched peasants' cottage. All photos by Paul Knowles

in 1804 as the home of the Studdarts, the last family to occupy Bunratty Castle. My favourite feature is not inside the house, it's the wonderful walled garden with its rich assortment of heritage plants and flowers.

Bunratty has proven to be one of the most popular attractions in Ireland. Located near the southwest coast between Shannon and Limerick, the castle and folk park drew almost 350,000 visitors in 2023. A good proportion of them came to the Bunratty Medieval Banquet, one of Ireland's oldest-running entertainment shows, which was first staged 65 years ago.

A visit to Bunratty can easily occupy most of a day, but while you are in the area, there are many other popular attractions that can be

added to make for an amazing day out. The dramatic Cliffs of Moher are about an hour away to the north, and the spectacular ruins of the Rock of Cashel, including the soaring cathedral, ancient chapels and artifacts dating back more than a millennium, are just over an hour to the east.

And of course, any ride through any section of Ireland is a treat in itself. The Emerald Isle has certainly lived up to its reputation for amazing scenery and unspoiled beauty every time I have visited.

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



Street musicians entertaining visitors to Bunratty Folk Park.



One of the more beautiful, thatched homes in the village.

OBITUARY

Matthison



Evelyn (Hill) Matthison, age 100, passed away peaceful with family by her side on Friday, March 1, 2024, at Kingsway Nursing Home in St Marys.

Evelyn was Born in Downie Township on October 28, 1923, daughter of the late Frank & Mary (Armstrong) Hill.

Predeceased by her loving husband of 52 years Jack Matthison (October 21, 1998). Jack and Evelyn raised their family and farmed at Fair Acres farm in Downie Township. With their love of music, Jack and Evelyn volunteered their time to entertain at area nursing homes and community events and enjoyed dancing at area dance halls with friends.

Evelyn was the loving mother of Murray Matthison (Darlene), Reg Matthison, Louise Monteith (Brian), and Ross Matthison. She was a loving Grandmother to Chris Matthison (Kevin), Colin Matthison (Kelly), Carrie de Graaf, Erin Richardson (Jason), Greg Matthison, Ashley Matthison, Curtis Monteith (Lisa), Vanessa Monteith, and Ryan Monteith (Shannon). Loving Great-Grandmother to Micah, Naomi, Ethan, Chloe, Ella, Casen, Maddie, Jack, Kyle, Avery, Jake, Jack, Kate, Claire, Grace, Connor, Emma, Aidan, Jacob, and Sophie. Evelyn is survived by several nieces, nephews, and cousins in Canada and England. She is predeceased by her brother and sister-in-law Bill and June Hill, sister-in-law and brother-in-law Dorothy and Peter Sawatsky, in-laws Bert and Emily Matthison, and her daughter-in-law Lynn Matthison, and special family friend Mary Ann Huggett.

Evelyn was a member of the Avonton Presbyterian Church, a Charter Member of the Evening Auxiliary. She was a Life Member of the Avonton Women's Institute and entertained with the St. Marys Friendship Center Choir and Dance Group. Evelyn always had a deck of cards in her purse ready to play euchre, crib, or any other card game. She also enjoyed playing Crokinole and Scrabble. She loved cooking, baking, gardening, quilting, knitting and shared those skills with her many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Evelyn was a breast cancer survivor and participated in Relay for Life for many years.

Evelyn's family would like to send a special thank you to the staff at Kingsway Lodge in St. Marys for your wonderful care and compassion over the last years. She loved going to all the programs while she was able, especially anything to do with music.

Friends and relatives are invited to Evelyn's visitation on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 from 5:00 -8:00 p.m. at the W. G. Young Funeral Home, 430 Huron St Stratford. And on Thursday March 7, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. until the time of Evelyn's funeral service at 11:00 a.m. As expressions of sympathy memorial donations may be made to Kingsway Lodge Resident Activity or To Avonton Presbyterian Church through the funeral home. www.wgyoungfuneralhome.com

OBITUARY

Wallis



WALLIS: Gerald "Gerry" of Whalen Corners passed away peacefully at AgeCare, Parkhill on Thursday, February 29, 2024 of Whalen Corners at the age of 86. Beloved husband of the late Barbara (Switzer) Wallis (2021) for almost 49 years. Proud dad of Catherine and Chris Liscumb. Adored grandpa of Luke

Liscumb. Dear brother-in-law of Ray Switzer, Norma and Jamie Payton, Shirley and John Clemente, Donna and Jeff Kahun, and Murray and Leslie Switzer. Fondly remembered by many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by his parents Alton and Hazel Wallis, his brother Bruce Wallis, and sister-in-law Rosilyn Switzer.

Visitation was held at Haskett Funeral Home, 223 Main Street, LUCAN on Tuesday, March 5th from 6 – 8 PM, where Gerry's funeral service was held on Wednesday, March 6th at 11 AM. Spring interment Kirkton Union Cemetery.

Donations to St. Marys Healthcare Foundation or a charity of your choice would be appreciated by the family. Condolences may be forwarded through www.haskettfh.com.

CELEBRATION

Spearin

George Mills Spearin, who passed away on January 25, 2024 at the age of 85, will have a Celebration of Life Open House at the St. Marys Legion, 66 Church St. N. St. Marys, on March 30 from 1 to 4 pm.

CELEBRATION

Open House Birthday Celebration for Irma Coveny's 80th birthday
 March 9, 2024 at St. Marys Pyramid Centre from 2-4 pm
 Best wishes only!

THE WEEK AHEAD

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

Thorndale Library list of March events - See Page 23

St. Marys Library events - See Page 29

Friday, March 8

- St. Marys Cement Community Liaison committee meeting at the Municipal Operations Centre - 10 am
- Station Gallery preview of "The Wonder of Water" - 11 am to 4:30 pm
- Royal Canadian Legion hot dog/sausage lunch at Noon
- Secret Marathon 3K run - Starts at 172 Queen Street - 5:15 pm, Register at admin@gcboyle.ca
- A.N.A.F. meat draw - 6 pm
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Sarnia Legionnaires at the PRC - 7:30 pm

Saturday, March 9

- McCully's Maple Syrup Festival - 10 am to 2 pm
- Station Gallery opening reception of "The Wonder of Water" - 1 to 4 pm
- Irma Coveny's 80th birthday open house at the PRC - 2 to 4 pm
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 pm
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Sarnia Legionnaires at Pat Stapleton Arena - 7:10 pm

Sunday, March 10

- McCully's Maple Syrup Festival - 10 am to 2 pm

Monday, March 11

- Community Dinner at St. Marys United Church - 5 pm, Sponsored by First Baptist Church. Admission is free but donations are greatly appreciated
- St. Marys Horticultural Society meeting & seed exchange at the Legion - 7 pm
- St. Marys Lincolns vs Sarnia Legionnaires at the PRC - 7:30 pm

Tuesday, March 12

- Erick Traplin (children's entertainer) Move & Groove concert at the PRC - 10 am, doors open 9:15. Pre-registration is required at www.townofstmarys.com/activenet
- Friends of the Library free community skate at the PRC - Noon to 1 pm
- Friends of the Library free swim at the PRC - 2:30 to 4 pm

Wednesday, March 13

- Ministerial Association lenton lunch & worship service at St. Marys United Church - 12:10 pm
- St. Marys Public Library Books & Brews at Broken Rail Brewing - 7 pm

Thursday, March 14

- St. Marys Lincolns vs Sarnia Legionnaires at Pat Stapleton Arena - 7:10 pm

IN MEMORIAM

Rudd

In loving memory of

Donald Earnest Rudd March 8, 2010

Marion Lou Rudd May 15th, 2021

I hold you close in memory even though we are apart,

Your spirits will live forever within my little heart.

My heart still aches in sadness, and secret tears still flow,

For what it meant to lose you both, no one will ever know.

In heaven we shall meet again, where farewell is never spoken,

We shall clasp each other hand in hand, and the clasp shall never be broken.

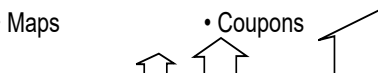
Your loving daughter

Bonny Lynn

Are You A Newcomer To The St. Marys Area?

The friends of the library has a **FREE Welcome Package** for you to pick up at the library!

- Recreation Info
- Gifts + MORE
- Local Services
- Health & Wellness
- Maps
- Coupons



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COMMUNITY

Straight from the Shelves

By Laura McAsh, St. Marys Public Library

Celebrate March Break at the St. Marys Public Library!

- **Stuffy Sleepover***: Tuesday, March 12 (6:30 p.m.) - all ages
- Watch a movie then leave your stuffy overnight for a sleepover at the Library! Feel free to wear your pjs! Stuffedies can be picked up on Wednesday.
- **Stitch Party***: Wednesday, March 13 (1 p.m., movie starts @ 2 p.m.)* - all ages
- Join us for popcorn, button making, Plinko and prizes at our Stitch-themed party. Stay and watch Lilo & Stitch at 2 p.m. Feel free to dress up as your favourite character.
- **Tech Petting Zoo***: Friday, March 15 (10:30 a.m.-5 p.m.) - all ages
- Drop-in between 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. and enjoy access to the library's interesting and engaging tech toys.
- **Stitch Reading Challenge**: March 9 – March 15 (prize draw March 16 @ 10 a.m. on our Facebook page) – ages 0-12
- Log your reading during March Break to unlock adorable Stitch badges and to be eligible for a chance to win a stuffed Stitch! Track your reading

here: stmaryspubliclibrary.beanstack.org.

· **March Break Mystery Reads**: Starts March 9 (prize draw April 5) – all ages

· Take home a mystery chapter book this March Break. Return your "Rate Your Read" bookmark before April 5 to be eligible for a \$30 gift card to a local eatery!

*Caregiver/guardian supervision required.

Up This Week

Friday, March 8: Crafty Tales (9:30 a.m.)

Saturday, March 9: Dungeons and Dragons (10:30 a.m.)

Monday, March 11: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12: Stuffy Sleepover (6:30 p.m.)

Wednesday, March 13: EarlyON Play and Read (9:30-10:30 a.m.), Mahjong Intro (1-2 p.m., 6-6:30 p.m.), Mahjong! (2-4 p.m., 6:30-8 p.m.), Stitch Party (1 p.m., movie starts at 2 p.m.), Books & Brews* (7 p.m.)

Thursday, March 14: Scrabble (6-8 p.m.), FOL Social (6:30 p.m.)

* Held at Broken Rail Brewery (480 Glass St., St. Marys)

LOOKING BACK



BY AMY CUBBERLEY

Small efforts add up

25 years ago (1999)

A troupe of local girls found out just how tiring a video production can be. Rory Omel and her troupe of dancers from Motus Movement Dance Studio spent 10 hours on Saturday morning taping a three-and-a-half-minute segment for a children's music video in Stratford. The dancers were Taylor Wilson, Candra Staffen, Avyn Omel, Lauren Stacey, Stefanie Latham, Heather Kittmer and Emma Baynes.

The relocation of the dispatch of the mobility bus service from the hospital to the Friendship Centre was recently given approval by town council. A ribbon-cutting ceremony is expected before the end of March.

A St. Marys man is heading to Honduras this month to help with hurricane-relief efforts. Tom Small, who works for a London sign company and is a carpenter by trade, will join a team of 10 Americans and one other Canadian to build homes with Habitat for Humanity.

50 years ago (1974)

Complaints have been heard regarding a somewhat "vicious" drop in the roadway along James Street North at the spot the town road joins the county asphalt. Fire devices report they almost lost the tanks when the trucks went over the route to a fire Saturday evening.

Thanks to the fine weather, the town sweeper has made its earliest start in years at cleaning up the winter deposit of sand on local paved roadways.

Fire Chief Don Swan tells us that the most violent explosive anyone under 18 may now purchase is a cap for a toy pistol. Any type of fireworks display must now be under the supervision of a card-carrying person who has completed a fireworks-supervisor course. The chief, John Near, Jack Treanor, Bob Favacho Jr, Dennis Brownlee, Chas. Goddard and Larry Foreman recently completed the necessary course in Stratford.

75 years ago (1949)

The veteran sign painter Frank Willard is more in demand than ever these days. Frank lettered the doors on six trucks last week alone and figured that last year he did over 200 truck-lettering jobs. "Cheaper, quicker and better is my motto," says Frank.

Tobacco growers Albert Deman, Arthur Masselis and son, Art, have successfully disposed of their three-acre tobacco harvest to a Leamington buyer. Altogether, 2,613 pounds of burley tobacco were sold at 25 cents a pound. The three partners are well satisfied with the results of their season's work.

The DCVI Glee Club has been practicing quite diligently on the comic opera, "The Grasshopper", which they will present to the school on March 25.

100 years ago (1924)

Six young St. Marys people, two girls and four boys, were aboard the 8:15 CNR train that collided with a West-bound freight near St. Pauls on Monday morning. Their experiences were, to say the least, exciting, but all escaped, as did the other passengers, with a few bruises and a good shaking up.

The McConnell Club is presenting a musical comedy, Kathleen, on Monday and Tuesday, March 17 and 18.

Hon. George S. Henry, Ontario minister of public works and highways, has announced a change in the method of financing the planting of trees along public highways. Instead of sending out its own workmen, he says the new government has a scheme whereby farmers planting trees in front of their own property will be bonused so much per tree for planting.



You're Invited!! Come Out and Enjoy!!

Monday, March 11th at 7:00 pm

ST. MARYS LEGION HALL

Speaker: David Hobson

Topic: Virtual Tour of the "Amazing Chelsea Flower Show", London, England

David is a photographer, humorist and gardener who will whisk us away to enjoy a taste of spring at one of the world's most famous Horticulture Events.



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

Solutions on page 31

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2. The Indy 500
3. Three
4. China
5. Stingray
6. Five
7. ON - Rachel Homan
8. Red/Blue/Yellow/Green
9. Apple
10. William

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1	9	4	7	5	6	3	2	8
5	3	2	1	4	8	7	9	6
2	1	3	5	8	4	6	7	9
9	4	8	6	2	7	1	3	5
7	5	6	3	1	9	8	4	2
6	2	5	4	3	1	9	8	7
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Thur. Feb. 29 - Dan McNamara, Stratford	\$50.00
Fri. March 01 - Rene Smith, St. Marys	\$1000.00
Sat. March 02 - Dennis Johnston, Clinton	\$200.00

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**The Friends of the
 St. Marys Museum**

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Presentation of Annual Reports

Monday, March 18, 2024 at 7 p.m.
 St. Marys Museum, 177 Church Street South
 (in Cadzow Park)

Take entrance off Tracy Street to parking lot beside Museum.

Please note: All are welcome but only paid members are entitled to vote or to stand for executive positions.

Memberships are \$15 per year and will be available at the meeting.

For information or for an agenda package, contact the Museum 519-284-3556 or museum@town.stmarys.on.ca

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Application forms will be available on the Stratford Police Service website under the "Careers" link.

Completed application packages for this Part Time Special Constable position will be accepted until March 26, 2024.

Please mail or deliver completed applications to Stratford Police Service, 17 George Street West, Stratford, ON N5A 1A6.

We thank all applicants for their interest; however only those selected for testing will be contacted.

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