

STRATFORD TIMES

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Neighbours, residents oppose five- and seven-storey nursing home

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A proposed long-term-care (LTC) home and campus recently saw sharp criticism from neighbours and residents alike.

At the Stratford city council meeting Aug. 12, a public meeting had numerous residents express hesitancy or outright opposition to the design of the proposed nursing and retirement homes at 3188 Vivian Line 37.

The peopleCare development is being proposed as two buildings, one five-storey and one seven-storey building, attached by a linking building.

The proposal states the property will be severed and developed in two phases. The northern portion would be developed first as a five-storey, 288-bed nursing home with associated parking, landscaping, amenities and other components.

The southern portion would be developed later as a seven-storey, 150-unit and 164-bed retirement home, again with its own associated parking, landscaping, amenities and other components – though as time goes on, it is subject to change.

Operation of the two would be done by the

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

SUMMER ISN'T OVER YET

Aleah Smith pours a glass of homemade lemonade for Tallulah Helm. The two entrepreneurs started a cookie and lemonade stand on Aug. 13 in front of Black Sheep Social Club on St. Patrick Street, painting a sign, crafting the stand, and making their own lemonade. Smith told the Stratford Times that they wanted to hang out before school started back up again in September.

Stratford chamber announces Perth South's Aaron Martin as general manager

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

The Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce has announced the appointment of Perth South's Aaron Martin as its new general manager.

Martin previously worked with the Western Fair District in London where he led the Grove Agri-Business Incubator and Accelerator, a position in which he sup-

ported agri-food businesses on the cutting edge of the industry.

"The incubator; I like to think of it like the Airbnb of commercial kitchen spaces," Martin said. "There are four spaces for companies that have a great product, but they may not have the financial literacy, track record or even the regulatory literacy, so we build them up, get their track record up and going, get those companies to

CONTINUED TO PAGE 11



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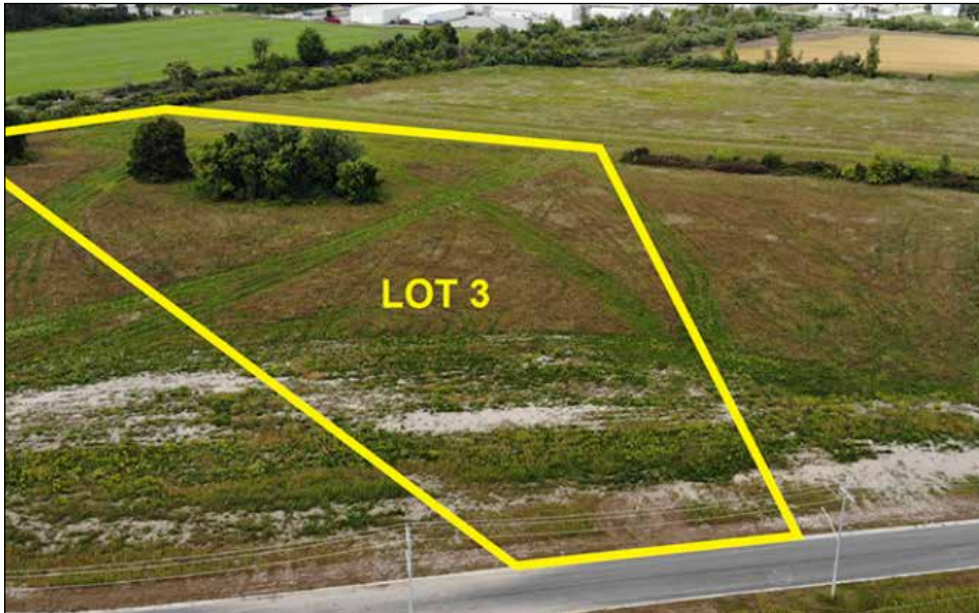
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Part of Crane West Business Park to be sold after council decision



Lot three of the Crane West Business Park.

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

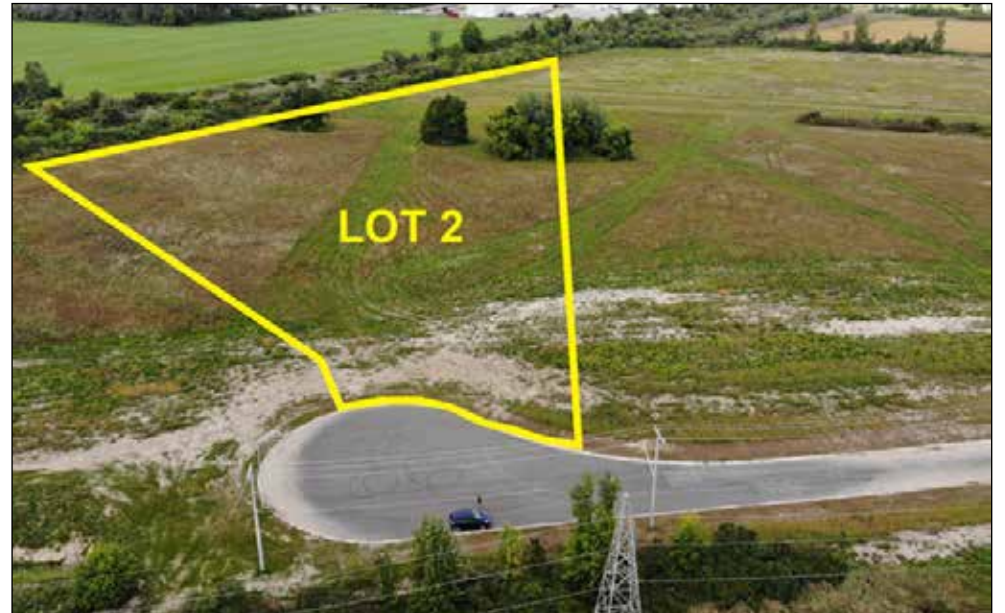
Two parts of the Crane West Business Park will be sold after a vote by Stratford city council at its Aug. 12 meeting.

Council voted to consent to the sale of lots two and three in the park, subject to

a drainage easement over part of each lot.

According to investStratford's profile of the Crane West Business Park, each of the lots sold are shovel-ready, serviced and have enough acreage for one or more buildings, exterior storage and parking.

Lot 2 is described as 5.610 acres and



Lot two of the Crane West Business Park.

(INVESTSTRATFORD PHOTOS)

Lot 3 is described as 5.510 acres.

Both can be sold individually or combined with adjacent lots for a larger parcel size; however, no indication of the use was listed in the motion council approved and no report was included with details of what the lands will be used for.

Zoning is flexible, according to invest-Stratford, and can be used for various uses like manufacturing and large-scale office environments.

Lot 2 was consented to be sold to Crane Avenue Holdings (Stratford Lot 2)

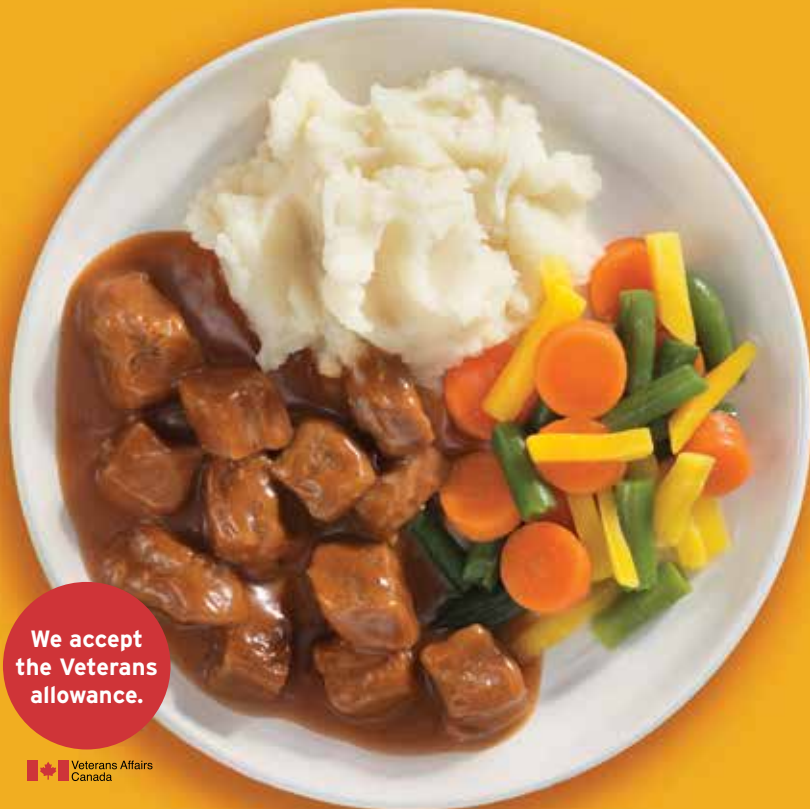
Inc. and Lot 3 was consented to be sold to Crane Avenue Holdings (Stratford Lot 3) Inc.

The matter was previously discussed at the July 22 committee of the whole in-camera session before the actionable item of conveyance was brought to council on Aug. 12.

Lots one and four, the other half of the business park, have already been sold according to investStratford's listing of the park.

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Online fundraisers bring in over \$5,000 for Bradshaw Drive shooting victims

Drive shooting victims



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Stephanie Irvine and the late Jonathan Bennett pictured together in the photo used for a GoFundMe started by their friend, Nicky Mercer. Although Bennett was killed during the Aug. 1 Bradshaw Drive shooting, Irvine is recovering and will need funds as she and her children start again.

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After a shooting rocked a Stratford street earlier this month, the community has come together to support the victims, according to one GoFundMe organizer.

Nicky Mercer started a GoFundMe for her friend, Stephanie Irvine, one of the victims in the Bradshaw Drive shooting on Aug. 1. She said she wanted to start it because Irvine and her late partner, Jonathan Bennett, were new to the city and didn't have the same network that she does.

"I knew she was going to be having some troubles," Mercer said. "It's been a long time since Stratford has had something this significant happen. ... I'm finding that people are being a little bit more open than what I expected them to be because it was somebody that not many people knew.

"I think that's really good. Just because you don't know them well or they're new to Stratford doesn't mean that they don't deserve just as much help as anybody else."

Police say Bradshaw Drive resident Ricky Bilcke opened fire on his neighbour, Bennett, after an ongoing dispute on the evening of Aug. 1. He proceeded to shoot David Tokley, another neighbour, and Irvine before turning the gun on himself. Bilcke was found by police dead on the scene and Bennett was pronounced dead in hospital.

Tokley and Irvine were transported to Victoria Hospital in London by ORNGE Air Ambulance for further recovery.

It was Stratford's first homicide in 20 years.

"She's doing well," Mercer said about Irvine, who received injuries from a gunshot to her arm. "She's recovering. ... She has movement in her fingers and they're really surprised that she's even able to do that."

As of publication, Mercer's GoFundMe

has raised over \$4,000 of its \$5,000 goal. Mercer said she made the goal lower than what is actually needed. The money goes directly to Irvine's expenses like funeral expenses and recovery costs. Irvine will be off work for a time and will have to start from scratch for her children, so costs are expected to be high.

Additionally, Mercer said Irvine doesn't want to bring her kids back to the same house, so the family is looking for housing in Stratford or close to Stratford.

"I want to get enough for her to help get her off her feet when she gets out," Mercer said. "Rent's not cheap. She's going to be struggling. She's not going to be able to work. So, I'm hoping to keep it going until she's at least home from the hospital and then she's got something secure that she has. ... You know, in the Stratford (Facebook) groups, one of them has 30,000 people in it. One dollar from each person; it might not be a life changer for other people, but for somebody who's looking at starting from nothing, that's everything."

Another GoFundMe was started by Kayla Hardman for Tokley, her uncle. As of publication, it has raised a little over \$1,400 of its \$6,000 goal.

"My uncle was severely injured by getting shot in the head," Hardman wrote in the description of the GoFundMe. "He was (an) innocent bystander who was outside at the wrong place and wrong time."

Tokley has gone through brain surgery and faces a long road to recovery. Donations go to help his family, who stayed at a hotel to be closer to Tokley while he was in hospital, and for any expenses that arise due to his recovery, as he won't be able to work for some time.

Tokley's GoFundMe can be found at www.gofundme.com/f/help-david-ducky-tokley.

Likewise, Irvine's GoFundMe can be found at www.gofundme.com/f/stephanie-irvine-and-children?qid=4f2cf3252f-2faa4144934afbb6850209.

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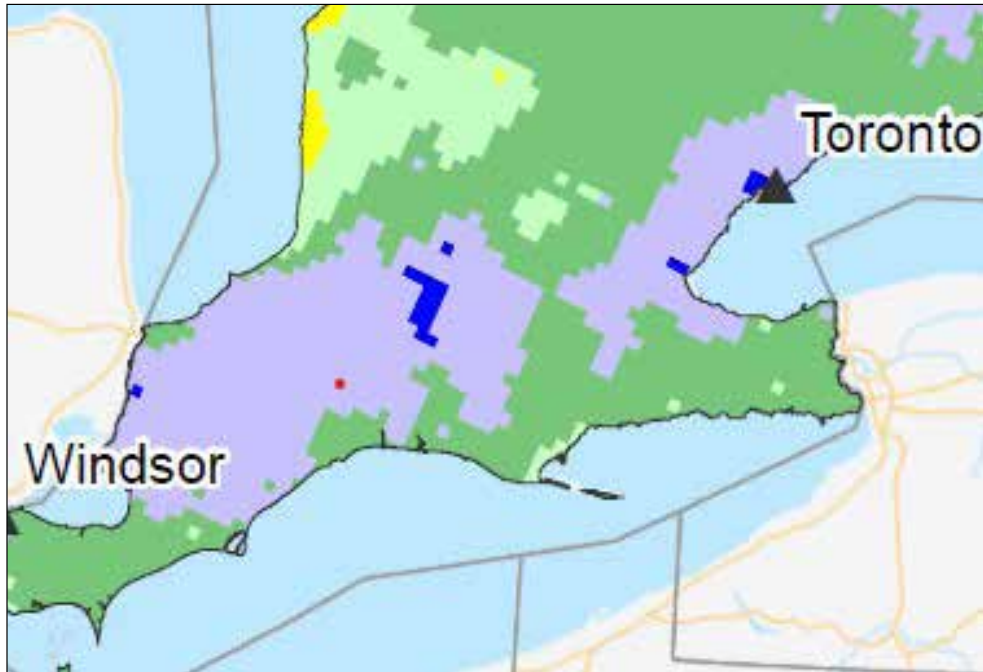
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How wet has it actually been for local farmers?



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A map showing per cent of average precipitation (rolling 60-day average, June 15 to Aug. 15). Image courtesy of Agriculture and Agrifood Canada



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A bean field outside of St. Marys shows drowned-out plants in the low spot, a sight that is all too common this summer. Photo by Amy Vingerhoeds

AMY VINGERHOEDS

Times Correspondent

Any way you look at it, this summer has been wet in the Stratford area.

The wide swath of purple on the map shows the area in southwest Ontario that has received between 150 and 200 per cent of normal rainfall since mid-June. Tiny blue areas mapped in our region northeast of London delineate localized areas that have had more than 200 per cent or double the long-term average rainfall for the area.

According to precipitation data from crop insurance provider Agricorp, the

long-term average summer rainfall for the three counties in this area – Perth, Oxford and Waterloo Region – ranges between 85 and 95 millimetres per month from April to August.

Between July 10 and 17, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority reported rainfall ranging from 76 to 197 millimetres, resulting in widespread flooding of farmers' fields and high runoff into streams and rivers. Anecdotally, some places south of St. Marys and Stratford got 100 millimetres of rain at the beginning of Hurricane Beryl that week, and another deluge July 16-17 emptied almost 200 millimetres.

On July 30, up to 100 millimetres pounded down again. Rain gauges don't always agree with weather-station observations, but using really rough math, that rainfall amounts to more than a month's worth of rain three times in July.

Soggy does not even begin to describe the situa-

tion. Curtis Hayes, an agronomist with Wellburn Agromart, noted the distribution of rain has been patchy and highly variable, even within a 10-kilometre range.

For example, on the last day of July when the weather station at Wellburn measured 88.9 millimetres of rainfall, Kintore received only half of that amount. Variable and heavy rainfall is a recurring story for farmers this summer.

Driving around the countryside, the crops are reflecting the same patchy weather story. There are more fields than usual where corn and soybean crops are uneven and inconsistent in height and colour. Many fields have patches in low spots with yellow-coloured, stunted or browned-off plants.

"Many fields look okay, and then you see a field with drowned-out spots. It's hard to make a top yield when some areas of the field have zero yield," Hayes said.

Corn and beans, or any other plant for that matter, can stand in flood water for

about 48 hours before running out of oxygen. Without oxygen, plants cannot perform functions critical to growth and survival. Hotter weather means oxygen is depleted at a faster rate, causing permanent crop loss similar to the photo.

"Production and quality will be a challenge across all crops," added Hayes. "With all the rain, it's been a tough time for farmers to make good-quality forage and dry hay. Root rots are sizeable across every crop. The potential for disease pressure is rising – white mould is showing up in specialty beans and soybeans, and foliar diseases are showing up on corn plants. Grain quality at harvest could also be a concern."

When the topic of economics came up, Hayes responded that there are ups and downs in farming, and we have just had a couple great years with excellent yields and pretty good commodity prices.

"Profitability will be a challenge for all of our farmers this year, especially considering unfavourable grain markets."

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STRATFORDTIMES

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8. Newspapers should be locally-owned and operated

Neighbours, residents oppose five- and seven-storey nursing home on Vivian Line

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

same company, peopleCare, and parking would be shared between the two. Thus, the sites will function together.

The public meeting was held due to the applicant's request for a zone change from an agricultural and urban-reserve zone to two site-specific community institutional zones.

Brian Elliott, a would-be neighbour to the proposed homes, had some major issues with the proposal, including the wind and sun blockage the two buildings would cause.

"I fail to see why we have zoning by-laws in place if every one of them has to be broken to achieve this building," Elliott said. "Every one has to be amended – from setbacks to parking setbacks to green space. Why are we creating these bylaws if we're not going to adhere to them and we have to amend them every time we want to achieve something like this?"

With the rezoning, a laundry list of provisions are being requested including:

- Reducing the south, interior side yard setback of the northern portion to zero metres, rather than 9.9 metres, and likewise reducing the rear-yard setback of the southern portion to zero metres, rather than 7.5 metres.



Brian Elliott, a would-be-neighbour to the peopleCare nursing and retirement homes proposed for Vivian Line 37, expressed a number of concerns with the project, including the laundry list of provisions to reduce requirements like setbacks and greenspace.

- Reducing the overall landscaped open-space requirement to 26 per cent, rather than 35 per cent.

- Allowing green roofs above ground to add to the landscaped, open-space requirement.

- Reducing the minimum landscaped, open-space requirement for parking lots

with more than 50 parking spaces to 9.5 per cent, rather than 15 per cent.

- Removing the requirement for a planting strip between parking areas or aisles and lot lines where the northern and southern portion meet, rather than the 1.5-metre planting strip or 0.15-metre-wide fence, wall, hedge, or shrub.

- Reducing the minimum bicycle parking requirement for the northern nursing home to six spaces, rather than 34 spaces.

- Adding a provision that allows bicycle parking to be within 35 metres of the principle building entrance or the main employee entrance, rather than just at the principle building entrance only.

- Reducing the minimum number of loading spaces for a nursing home to two, rather than three spaces.

- Reducing the minimum loading space setback from the south interior lot line to zero metres, rather than one metre.

- Adding a provision that a loading space shall not be required to be abutting the nursing-home building.

- Allowing access and manoeuvring to and from a loading space of both portions to exceed the boundaries of the subject lands, only into a right-of-way easement registered in favour of the subject lands.

- Allowing accessory care and service establishments, like private haircutters, at the retirement home.

- Reducing the minimum western, interior side yard setback of the southern portion to six metres, rather than 12.25 metres.

- Reducing the minimum eastern interior side yard setback of the southern portion to nine metres for a canopy, rather than 12.25 metres.

- Increasing the maximum lot coverage to 34.5 per cent, rather than 30 per cent.

- Removing the parking requirement for a personal-care establishment and personal-service establishment accessory to a retirement home, rather than the one parking space per 30 square metres of net floor area.

- Reducing the minimum number of loading spaces required for a retirement home to one, rather than three.

- Reducing the minimum loading-space setback from the rear lot line of the southern portion to zero metres, rather than one metre.

- Adding a provision that a loading space shall not be required to be abutting the retirement home building.

The lands, still technically owned by the City of Stratford, were previously a greenfield used for agriculture. After a decision by council at its July 23 special meeting, they were deemed surplus and authority was granted to CAO Joan

Thomson to authorize its sale to peopleCare.

After a question from Elliott at the public meeting, Thomson confirmed the sale has not gone through yet but is under an agreement of purchase, pending conditions.

Paul Brown, who spoke at the meeting in which the lands were deemed surplus, spoke again at the most recent public meeting, highlighting how crucial it is for the province to change how they handle health care for Ontario's aging population – and how Stratford can be leading the charge.

"Some councillors have commented that if we don't grab this deal now, some other community will," Brown said. "Or 'Mr. Brown, that's just the way the system works.' This seems like a very defeatist attitude instead of taking a constructive approach to trying to change the status quo."

By his calculations, he said the 288-bed facility will cost Ontario taxpayers about \$860 million and, with inflation over 25 years, \$1 billion.

"I understand the need for a certain number of not-for-profit nursing homes, but I oppose private, for-profit ownership of nursing homes in Ontario who demonstrated during the recent pandemic that their profit motive was more important than patient care," he said.

Sheila Elliott also pointed to the plan used during the presentation by the applicant's representatives, saying the straight line representing the border of the property in the illustration does not match what surveyors had done on the site.

As a neighbour, she said the stakes used to mark the border were not straight.

Jane Marie Mitchell said she has a number of concerns with the proposal, such as the lack of green space, the supposed lack of accessible parking given what type of facility it would be and the density of the project.

"A total of 494 people at least on this property," Mitchell said about the proposal. "That means a density of 215 on a ... 2.3-hectare lot with 171 parking spaces. ... This institutional use seems overcrowded and missing some important features for the residents' benefit."

Vivian Line is a collector road. One nearby resident, Pam Balfour, also noted traffic to be dangerous and already overcrowded, and with more than 200 people planning on coming into the neighbourhood – along with any visitors that would come – she was concerned.

The stop sign at Harrison Street and Vivian Line, for instance, is blown through at least twice a week, she said.

"I am just coming as a mother for you

to consider the safety of my children," Balfour said.

A road widening is recommended by the applicants, according to planning consultant Pierre Chauvin. Additionally, after further inquiry from Coun. Taylor Briscoe, Chauvin indicated that, with direction from council, the applicant may investigate any traffic-calming measures.

Rachel Bossie, a senior planner with GSP Group, which acted on the applicant's behalf during the meeting, thanked everyone for their comments and said she would take them to the team working on the project.

No decision on the zone change was made at the meeting. The zone change will be decided at the Aug. 22 special council meeting, according to Mayor Martin Ritsma.

The full proposal package is included in the agenda of the Aug. 12 meeting.



Jane Marie Mitchell said there weren't enough accessible parking spaces in the proposal, considering the building would be nursing and retirement homes, and that there was a lack of greenspace, among other issues she had.

(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTOS)



Pam Balfour came as a mother and said traffic is already concerning on the street. What will an influx of over 200 people to the neighbourhood bring?

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
WWW.STRATFORDTIMES.COM

Kiwanis Garlic Festival 2024 not just about the garlic

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Like its namesake ingredient, the Stratford Kiwanis Garlic Festival pairs well with just about any food – sweet or savoury.

According to organizers, the annual garlic festival has evolved beyond where it began as a way to promote and support local garlic growers – an industry that has boomed since the first festival in 2007 – into a celebration of food and drink, and the people who grow, raise, distill, brew or cook it, with garlic remaining steadfastly at the festival's core.

"I think COVID ... really has impacted our event. ... We really noticed that a lot of garlic growers that we had come to our event over the years; a lot of them either went out of business or they just closed up their shop – they were older and they shut down their business or they totally pivoted. There are very successful garlic growers who are mainstays at our event who do all their business online or at the farmgate," said Bonnie Richardson, chair of the Stratford Kiwanis Garlic Festival committee.

"So, this has meant we still have a core of sort of the finest growers all over Ontario. We still have a good garlic-grower, garlic-producer presence, but we've had to expand. ... There are people out there who say, 'Garlic festivals; I really don't like them,' or, 'I don't cook with garlic, why would I go?'"

Building off the success organizers saw after 2017 when they brought in producers of cheese, wine, beer and spirits, and began hosting tasting and pairing sessions led by local producers, chefs and connoisseurs, the variety of vendors, both local and from further afield, has continued to expand, as has the live demonstrations of what attendees can do with the bounty of ingredients featured at



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

MORE THAN JUST GARLIC

The Stratford Kiwanis Garlic Festival returns to the community hall at the Stratford Rotary Complex Sept. 7 and 8.

the festival.

This year, patrons can purchase tickets to sample wine from Munro Honey and Meadery, Maelstrom Winery, Schatz Winery and spirits from Junction 56. Cheese samples, including Huron County cheese made without preservatives, are available at the Capella Meadows booth, goat cheese can be sampled at the Great Lakes Goat Dairy booth, and naturally aged cheddars from Millbank Cheese and Butter are also worth checking out.

On Saturday, Sept. 7, patrons can enjoy tastings and pairings featuring ingredients from a wide range of local and regional artisans. Think sweet, savory, and sipping as chocolate, wine, cheese, honey, alcohol, bison, beer, jam, mead and even popcorn are mixed and matched to awaken taste buds and stretch imaginations. Tickets for the tastings and pairings sessions can be found at stratfordgarlicfestival.ca. Book early to avoid being disappointed.

On Sunday, Sept. 8, the festival will feature cooking

demonstrations by local chefs including Andrew Tutt, owner and executive chef at Tutteo Eatery in St. Marys, and Andrew Mavor, musician turned chef and teacher of culinary arts at Stratford District Secondary School. Eli Silverthorn, who is an instructor at the Stratford Chefs School, is sure to dazzle in the final session of the afternoon.

This year's garlic festival isn't even limited to food and drink. Don't leave without stocking up on bamboo bedding from Mr. Bamboo, pure soy candles from the Sense of Soy, chef's tools from Spartan Road Products, lavender from Deep Purple Lavender Farm, custom-made art pieces at JDV's Metal Design, and fresh flowers and plants from 81 Petals and the Sebringville Garden Centre.

As always, the Ontario Garlic and Artisan Market is one of mainstays of the Stratford Kiwanis Garlic Festival, featuring garlic growers from all over Ontario including August's Harvest, Brant County, Butler Farm, Garlic Cloves, Pure Music and Weathered Rock Farm. Festival patrons return year after year to meet with their favourite vendors and pick up their supply of garlic in its many

manifestations – fresh garlic by the bulb or in bags, braids, bundles and variety packs, and garlic that has been dried or powdered and used to flavor spreads, jams, jellies, pickles and sauces.

Rick Francis on guitar will be featured on the Café Stage all weekend performing his repertoire of smooth jazz, folk and soft rock music. After building their appetites, festival attendees will have their pick of garlic sausages at the Kiwanis Booth, sandwiches, coffee and pastries from Brenda's, munchies from Old Railway Popcorn Company, garlic ice cream from the Simple Dreams booth, and fudge made the old-fashioned way from Ye old Fudge Pot.

Since its founding in 2007, the Kiwanis Club of Stratford has raised more than \$135,000 through the garlic festival, funds from which support the free concerts in Upper Queens' Park on Sunday nights during July and August, programming for moms and their young children at the Local Community Food Centre and Stratford House of Blessing, scholarships for local secondary school graduates, the Kiwanis-CJCS Christmas Basket Fund and the Kiwanis Aktion Club, a service club for adults with disabilities.

"For the Kiwanis Club, it's just an all-hands-on-deck event," Richardson said "Everybody in the club is right there volunteering. We even get support from our Aktion Club, which is our club for adults with disabilities. They love to come out because we give them a free meal and they get entry, and they get to volunteer in the community. It really is a good event. I really think it's a good service for our community, both for the people who come as vendors in increasing their profile, and for people to just come and find out what's available."

Adult admission is \$10 per day and children under 12 are free. Again, this year organizers are offering a price break of two adult tickets for \$10 on both Saturday and Sunday for patrons who arrive after 2 p.m. A two-day pass is also available for \$15 and free parking is available on site. For a complete listing of vendors, presentations and tastings, visit stratfordgarlicfestival.ca.

Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

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August 14 Scott Frayne, St. Marys	\$50.00
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August 17 Jim & Joan Morrison, Ottawa	\$200.00
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August 24 Scott & Nana Simons, Stratford	\$200.00

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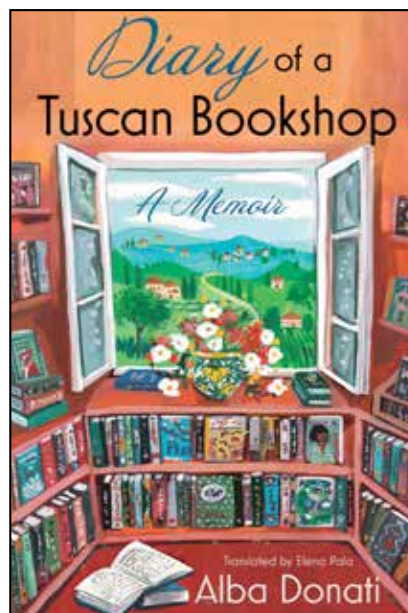
Diary of a Tuscan Bookshop by Alba Donati

@SPL 381.45002092 Donat

This charming memoir will appeal to booklovers who might also dream of opening a tiny bookshop in the middle of nowhere -- and having it actually become a success!

Alba Donati worked in the publishing business in Milan, but decided to move back to the tiny Tuscan village of Lucignana (pop. 180) where she was born. She built a tiny bookshop on a hill, stocking it only with books she loved. And plenty of charming additions, like local jams, Emily Dickinson calendars and literary stockings, too.

This book is structured in diary entries, relating everyday events from small to dramatic, like a fire in the shop. Each entry ends with a list of daily orders, a great way to find out what her



customers are reading, and maybe add a few ideas to your own reading list.

But even though there is a lot of charm just in the descriptions of the bookshop and its gardens, and of course in Donati's talk of all the books and her bookish customers, there is also deep reflection on Lucignana itself, and her family ties in the village. There is family history, biography, and self-reflection mixed in to this escapist dream, showing that it wasn't easy, but returning to her home village and creating positive change was worth it.

We finish up after a year of hard work and exponential success, with Donati still making plans for more bookish delights -- new titles, author events, and other ideas to draw new customers. If you're a booklover and want to live vicariously through Donati's journey to create this destination

bookshop in the hills of Italy, you won't want to miss this one.

Rock the Muse's third year featuring Stratford talent, Cat Clyde headlining

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

It'll be a celebration of local musicians of all kinds in early October for the third edition of Rock the Muse.

Rock the Muse will return for its third year on October 5 at the Stratford Perth Museum's Player's Backstage. The music festival will feature performers that have a connection to Stratford and area from 12 p.m. to 11 p.m. Stratford-based folk singer Cat Clyde will be headlining the concert.

"She's kind of a true local success story of what can be accomplished come out of Stratford as a musician," Johann Yundt, event organizer, said. "She's toured Europe, toured Australia, and we're just excited to bring back a homegrown talent to be a part of this year's Rock the Muse."

Rock the Muse is going back to its original one-day format. In 2023, the festival ran for two days and had Stratford artists play on one night and London, Ont. rock band Texas King headline another night.

The concert will have back-to-back performances between up to 14 musical acts and no intermission in sets. The performances will take place on both the Player's Backstage and the Little Big Stage, a stage for solo artists, duos, trios, and quartets, with the MC presenting the acts on alternating stages.

Yundt said that Rock the Muse provides a chance to check out the Player's Backstage and discover the venue.

"It's a little bit on the edge of town, so people might not know that it is an awesome space back there and cool events can happen back there," he said.

Performing at the same event with an established indie-rock artist like Clyde also brings the possibility of future opportunities for musicians.

"It offers people a chance to have a feather in your cap moment perse," Yundt said. "When you're reaching out for different gigs after, you can say 'Hey, I was in this festival with Cat Clyde', and it helps local artists extend themselves and give themselves potentially more opportunities."

Kelly McIntosh, general manager of the Stratford Perth Museum, said that the city has a rich musical history with the Perth County Conspiracy and John Till, Janice Joplin's guitarist. She said events like Rock the Muse will make the



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

CLYDE TO HEADLINE

Singer-songwriter Cat Clyde returns to Stratford on Oct. 4 for the third annual Rock the Muse at Player's Backstage.

city more appealing for young creatives.

"I think it's going to make people think Stratford is a cool place. We can live here, we can be digital artists, we can be musicians, we can be writers," McIntosh said. There's opportunity here and we've got to keep building towards that if we want to keep young people in and around this place vibrant."

This will be the first Rock the Muse for McIntosh, and she's looking forward to seeing what Yundt and co-organizer Ethan McCarroll will bring.

"I'm really looking forward to the vibe and seeing young people with such a serious interest in, good quality music coming out to the museum," she said.

Tickets are \$40 each and can be purchased by visiting stratfordperthmuseum.yapsody.com. The latest updates, including who else will perform at Rock the Muse, will be announced on Facebook and Instagram via @rockthemuse.

Closed meeting report finds no violations of Municipal Act

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

An investigation into two recent closed meetings found Stratford city council acted appropriately and followed the rules of closed sessions.

The meetings discussed minutes of settlement in an Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) matter and occurred on Jan. 8 and June 3 of this year.

At the Jan. 8 closed session, Tony E. Fleming of Cunningham, Swan, Carty, Little & Bonham LLP, the city's investigator, said in his findings the closed-session rules were followed.

"After conferring with city staff, we were advised that the minutes of settlement were approved under the chief administrative officer's delegated authority," Fleming wrote in his report. "Although it is beyond the scope of our jurisdiction to investigate or confirm delegated authority, we were provided a copy of a bylaw that appears to provide this authority."

At the June 3 meeting, an update on the matter was provided to council and "clearly" falls under the exceptions for solicitor-client privilege and matters before a tribunal.

Any person may request an investigation be done on a municipality, local board, or committee to verify closed meeting rules, as outlined in the Municipal Act, 2001, are being followed.

The City of Stratford appointed Local Authority Services Ltd. to provide closed-meeting-investigation services, which subsequently delegated authority to Cunningham-Swan lawyers.

Investigations are funded by the city. This year, \$50,000 was included in the budget. Every year, a \$200 retainer is paid in addition to a fee paid at an hourly rate, which will be payable upon receipt of an itemized invoice. About \$20,000 is placed in a reserve annually to cover any additional costs.

The city has yet to receive the invoices for work performed.

CORRECTION: An error was published in the Aug. 9 edition of the Stratford Times. In the story entitled Local Community Food Centre looks to rise to the challenge at recent AGM on page 6, it was incorrectly stated that Katelyn Cullitin of BMO Wealth Management pledged \$50,000. Katelyn is a member of and treasurer for the Local's board of directors, however, it was Katie Deblock Boersma of KDB Law that pledged the \$50,000. Also, the Local would like to clarify that the number of meals distributed last year was 10,800 meals served at the Local and 3,000 servings of soup or stew distributed through the Stratford Connection Centre. We regret any confusion this error may have caused.



(LOCAL COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE PHOTO)

RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

Katie Deblock Boersma and Brent Shackleton each pledged \$50,000 on behalf of their businesses, KDB Law and Shackleton's Real Estate & Auction Co., to kick off the Local Community Food Centre's \$750,000 'My Community Includes the Local' fundraising campaign at the Local's recent annual general meeting.

Weekend Quiz

1. What year did Canada get its own flag?
2. Where does meningitis affect?
3. What country won the most Olympic medals at Paris 2024?
4. When did Newfoundland and Labrador join Canada?
5. What is a baby horse called?
6. How did Princess Diana die?
7. Who was the first black athlete in the Baseball Hall of Fame?
8. Who painted Girl with a Pearl Earring?
9. Don Bradman was known for dominating what sport?
10. What country was the first to grant women the right to vote?

This week's answers are found on pg. 34

Family-owned business brings the four corners of India to Stratford

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

A new restaurant has opened in Stratford in a flavourful fashion.

Curry Zone is one of the latest additions to downtown Stratford. The Indian restaurant is run by Vishal and Nirali Joshi. After moving from India and making a living in the United Kingdom for 20 years, Vishal Joshi, a former retail-store manager selling high-end watches, and Nirali Joshi, a former assistant accountant, began a new chapter as restaurant owners in Canada to be amongst their family.

"We started looking and looking and wanted to get a good spot, and this building came up at 38 Erie St.," said Vishal Joshi, co-owner of Curry Zone. "We placed an offer and the property was already gone, and a few months down the line, the location came back up again and we immediately finalized it.

"People were spreading the word through social media and word of mouth. It truly is the best form of marketing when you get recommended by someone and this helps us a lot. Local support is extremely vital and we appreciate everyone that gives us a try."

The restaurant officially opened July 7. Following a busy first day, the married couple said the initial few weeks were challenging.



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

CURRY ZONE BRINGS UNIQUE FLAVOUR TO DOWNTOWN

Proud Curry Zone owners Vishal and Nirali Joshi recently opened their new family business in downtown Stratford.

"Since we opened, there was an initial struggle, but every day is brand new and there is always something surprising happening," said co-owner Nirali Joshi. "It's

definitely been a learning curve, but things are falling into place now; we're learning.

"On another note, we were and are always thinking about allergies because nowadays, people want to have curry and, due to the allergies, there are limitations. So, all of our curry dishes are gluten free and there are vegan and non-dairy options as well. We take these approaches very seriously."

Vishal and Nirali Joshi also own a restaurant in Exeter and live a life of juggling management duties between the two locations with support from their family.

Vishal Joshi says the menu has a British influence on their Indian dishes with a focus on a sweeter taste rather than the traditional spicy flavors. The curry dishes feature authentic flavors from various Indian locations ensuring all guests are offered a curry style of their preference.

"This business is family owned, we care about how we prepare our food, the cooking times take longer because everything is made fresh," said Vishal Joshi. "Fresh food always gives you better taste and a good taste takes time."

The couple currently lives in Brampton but says they are enjoying the Stratford culture and its residents, and they plan to move to the Festival City at the end of the month with their two children.

Stratford's Tom Ralston turns passion for film into illustration career

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Tom Ralston's interest in film began in childhood where he watched VHS tapes of his favourite movies again and again.

The illustrator also recalls being fascinated by the film posters at Blockbuster. He also kept an encyclopedia-like book on cinema by his bedside for evening readings.

"I've never had a great memory for names and dates, but somehow I memorised all the dates, titles and the actors for films that I hadn't seen. I was obsessed," Ralston said.

He studied art in post-secondary school hoping to be a painter. Ralston incorporated characters from movies in his artwork, but his professors and tutors discouraged him from doing that.

"At that time, my teachers believed that pop culture had already had its heyday with Andy Warhol and it was not the thing to be done," Ralston said. "You know, they were trying to teach me within that mindset."

Ralston worked as a graphic designer for 10 years before the business he ran with a business partner folded. He got posters designed by Mondo, a company known for its limited-edition, screen-printed posters for films, comic books and video games, and felt inspired to get back into art. Ralston started sharing his personal illustrations online and received positive feedback.

Ralston felt discouraged from pursuing illustration in the past because he felt it would



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Stratford's Tom Ralston has turned his childhood love of film into a career as an illustrator

be tough and there wasn't a lot of money in it. He reached out to a life-coach friend who asked him what he would do if money wasn't an issue. He said he'd be illustrating film posters. After his friend then asked why he wasn't pursuing it, Ralston took the leap.

"Since then, I haven't looked back," he said. "All those fears and anxieties, turns out, were unfounded." Ralston, who moved to Stratford from Toronto, illustrates film posters for the Revue, the oldest operating cinema in Toronto. Nathan Boone, who edits trailers for the Revue, reached out to Ralston on Instagram about creating posters for the Revue's Neon Dreams monthly film club. He then got involved with

other projects.

Ralston said some of his favourite pieces are posters he illustrated for the Revue.

"On one hand, there's a level of freedom in terms of expression, he said. "The films have been out there; people are possibly aware of them. Obviously, they have a lot of first-time viewers, but it's fun to play with that medium and play with those expectations a little bit."

"It's just about celebration of cinema."

Though the 112-year-old movie theatre is beloved amongst the film community, the Revue is in danger of shutting its doors. The Revue received an extension for the injunction halting their eviction to Oct. 30, coming after landlord

Daniel Mullin said he would not renew the lease that expired on June 30.

Oscar-winning filmmaker Guillermo del Toro showed his support for the Revue on X, formerly known as Twitter, by asking Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow to do what she could to save the cinema. An online petition garnered more than 25,000 signatures from supporters who want to keep the Revue's doors open.

"It's a horrific thing and I hope the Revue can survive that," Ralston said. "It's also really cool to see everyone come together and to see a lot of other artists producing work to drum up support and it's nice to see that support does exist."

He enjoys living in Stratford, as it is a community that celebrates the arts. Ralston also loves the Little Prince Micro Cinema and Lounge, and watches films there with his family every Christmas.

"Anywhere that's trying to keep cinema alive in this day and age deserves a lot of respect," he said. When asked about why he enjoys illustrating film posters, Ralston thought back to visiting Blockbuster as a child where he went home pondering on the posters he admired – especially illustrated ones.

"I'd think about it, and I think if I could recreate that feeling for someone else, then that's just magic," he said. "These days, more and more I find that just the process of painting and formulating a piece is the joy. It's also cool to see it in print. That's just kind of the cherry on top."

More information can be found by visiting tomralston.info.

McDonald's Erie Street temporarily closes its doors for much needed renovation

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

"All hands are on deck; everything is ready to go," said Will Mason, general manager at McDonald's restaurant on Erie Street.

The McDonald's at 709 Erie St. temporarily shut down Aug. 6 and will remain closed until at least Aug. 27 – a date subject to change. The store will get a complete overhaul of its restaurant interior and efficiency system.

"The reason we are doing it is because the current state of the restaurant is not up to date, and so are the standards in which we need to be able to serve the guests efficiently," said Mason. "The physical building is getting older and harder to maintain, so it's in dire need of a fresh, new look. The new remodel of our kitchen and drive-through will help produce our capacity to serve more guests quickly and effectively."

Plans for the renovation have been in effect since January of this year. The 72 employees of the store had the option to be temporary laid off or work at the Ontario Street location over the course of the expected five-week restaurant overhaul.

In the third week of the closure, Mason said drive-through operations are expected to resume at the Erie Street McDonald's, while the dining-room remodel is expected to take an additional two weeks.

Mason says the dining area will be shrinking to incorporate the new third-party delivery driver entrance and new drive-through drink station, but will receive a fresh new look. The kitchen will also receive a deep renovation,



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

McDONALD'S ERIE STREET CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS

Will Mason, general manager of the McDonald's at 709 Erie St. in Stratford.

remodelling the grill to increase sandwich-making capacity.

"My management team will be using the closure time to teach, develop and receive training in order to learn the new layout of the restaurant and then everyone will come back when the store reopens," said Mason. "The team is excited to get the new look and see everything. It's a good time for the crew to get a refresh and it's nice to get a new

restaurant to stand behind.

"I've always been proud of this restaurant and the team since I started working at this site. My department leadership is just outstanding, the engagement is there and they are always ready and willing to help the guest. The crew is like a little family. We do excursions and outings. Most recently, we took the team out to play soccer. It's always great to see them outside the work environ-

ment; the team spirit in this restaurant is unbelievable and very guest focused."

The building was built in 2000 and received the most recent dining-room renovation in 2012 as well as small upgrades to the kitchen in 2017. A standard store renovation is done every 10 years by McDonald's Canada. The renovation was planned prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but was ultimately pushed back.

York Street Thought Process thrilled to share new tunes on Colder tour

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

It may have been the first night of the Colder tour, but it was an evening full of warmth as the joy of music and community filled the room.

Folk duo York Street Thought Process, made up of St. Marys' Jaron Camp and Stratford's Rachael Frankruyter, kicked off the Colder tour Aug. 17 in London, Ont. at Rum Runners. The tour celebrated the release of the band's latest album, Colder, and the duo performed songs from the new album including "Lawn Mower," "White Lie" and "Stars and Machines."

"I feel great about tonight," Camp said after the show. "I felt it was really fun to play some brand-new original music to an attentive audience that was into it. That's always nice and Wild Bloom opening up the show too; they were absolutely amazing and we're honoured to have them on the tour."

"I would totally agree," Frankruyter added. "It's just very exciting being able to sort of premiere all of our new music in a live setting like this. It was a very special first show for the tour."



(EMILY STEWART PHOTO)

COLDER TOUR

Jaron Camp and Rachael Frankruyter of York Street Thought Process held their Colder tour to promote their latest album of the same title. The tour kicked off in London Aug. 15 at Rum Runners before stopping in Stratford, Toronto and St. Marys.

The intimate show had Stratford and St. Marys residents alike attend the event and cheer on the musicians. Bev Camp, known within the London music scene as "The

Dancing Cowboy," had his art up for sale and he danced and tapped his feet throughout the night, supporting his grandson. During the show, Jaron Camp gave his grandfather a shoutout and talked about how he influenced him.

Before York Street Thought Process took the stage, Toronto based trio Wild Bloom entertained the audience and even got guests to waltz during one of the band's songs. Wild Bloom, which met York Street Thought Process while studying at Humber College, later joined the duo on stage. Juno-nominated musician Emm Gryner, who Jaron Camp performed with as a backup musician at the Home County Music and Arts Festival, was also in attendance.

York Street Thought Process also had tour stops in St. Marys, Toronto and an album-release show in Stratford's The Bunker Lounge and Performance Café. Both Camp and Frankruyter have new music on the way as solo artists and will soon release another single as York Street Thought Process.

More information can be found by visiting www.yorkstreetthoughtprocess.com.

Times Past: Election riot in Stratford



County of Perth Electioneering Monitor, 1863

(STRATFORD-PERTH ARCHIVES PHOTO)

BETTY JO BELTON

Stratford-Perth Archives

There was what we would now call a federal election in Canada in the summer of 1863. The campaign literature from one of the candidates who ran in Stratford rivals social media posts in modern times with comments about court cases and accusations of “unprincipled behavior.” Three issues of a newspaper called the County of Perth Electioneering Monitor from June of 1863 are preserved at Stratford-Perth Archives. The Electioneering Monitor seems to have been produced in response to articles in the Stratford Beacon newspaper that favoured candidate Robert MacFarlane, a local lawyer, over the incumbent, Thomas Mayne Daly. (MacFarlane’s painted portrait and Daly’s photograph, both seen here, are also at the Archives.) The publisher of the Monitor describes the Beacon as MacFarlane’s mouth piece and a “defender of swindlers.” Daly had taken out a substantial loan from someone and then been involved in a legal dispute over an unsettled balance on the debt. Daniel Home Lizars, MacFarlane’s law partner, represented the person trying to reclaim his money from Daly. Eventually, Daly was summoned to court to explain himself. He, according to an editorial in the Monitor “being at the time engaged in an important municipal arbitration did not see fit to comply with this summons, and the consequence was that an order was given to commit him for contempt of court.” Again, according to the account in the Monitor, MacFarlane, though claiming he was acting only on behalf of his partner’s client, arranged the summons to embarrass Daly and further his own political campaign, going so far as to wait at the train station with the Sheriff to attempt to have Daly arrested as

he came back into town. The Monitor then reported that having “been foiled in his unmanly design [MacFarlane] left Stratford and went on a bender...Mr. McFarlane has shewn a meanness throughout the whole affair unworthy his position – unworthy of a gentleman, a meanness which the meanest of pettifoggers would scorn to exhibit...The disgraceful subterfuge ... has failed. Mr. Daly is among his friends, and will again be elected to represent this noble County.”

Alas for Daly, he was indeed defeated by Robert MacFarlane in the August 1863 election. Local history enthusiast R.T. Orr described the aftermath in one of his Stories of Stratford, originally published in 1955:

“The Liberals in the district were elated by MacFarlane’s victory and plans were made for a huge parade. The Beacon records that it was the longest procession ever witnessed in the county, over 300 horse drawn vehicles crowding around MacFarlane.

An unfortunate choice of route led the marchers past the Albion Hotel, the Conservative headquarters, situated where Northway’s Store now stands [currently the site of Gadsby’s Clothing Co]. As they passed the Albion, T.M. Daly was standing on the balcony overlooking the street, addressing his disappointed supporters.

The taunts of the marchers enraged Daly, who declared he would drive the Grits out of town by brute force. To emphasize his statement, he flung his leg over the balcony overlooking the street, preparing to leap down on the hecklers.

Some onlookers claim that he never really intended to jump, that he couldn’t have jumped if he had wanted to, for he was lame. At any rate, his fellow Conservatives took him seriously and began to plunge

from the balcony onto the crowd below.

The battle was on. The defenders of the Albion began to heave bricks from the roof of the hotel. Men poured from the surrounding buildings and ran to the aid of their friends.

Everyone fought. Women put rocks into the toes of their stockings and, swinging the weapons over their heads, joined their fighting husbands. Thomas Daly’s house was near the corner of Erie and Ontario streets and it is said he fortified his supporters by handing out axe handles and whiskey at the back door.

Despite the whiskey, the Conservatives appear to have lost the battle for the next day as many of them as could be contacted were summoned to appear in court in Goderich, then the site of the court. Before they left Stratford, however, fearing a fight in the notoriously Liberal Dublin, they asked S.R. Hesson, who owned a store in Sebringville to report on the lay of the land. Mr. Hesson evidently felt there was no danger, for the men proceeded to Goderich.

When they arrived in Goderich, they seriously embarrassed the local police force by marching around the square shouting loudly “Arrest us, arrest us.” As the Goderich police force consisted of one lone policeman, they were in no danger of being taken seriously and returned to Stratford unpunished.”

Daly continued his political career at various levels of government. He was Mayor of Stratford in 1869-70 and Reeve of North Easthope Township in 1872. That year he also returned to the federal government as MP for the Perth North riding. From 1873 to 1875 he was a member of the Ontario legislature. After he failed to be re-elected to that seat in 1875, he became Mayor of Stratford again from 1876

to 1878.

As for Robert MacFarlane, he went on to be re-elected in 1867 to represent the Perth South riding in the first parliament of the new Dominion of Canada. Early in the morning on April 7, 1868 he and his fellow MP, Thomas D’Arcy McGee, a “Father of Confederation,” walked to their boarding houses after an extremely late session in the House. McGee was shot and killed as he entered the door of his rooming house. MacFarlane testified at the trial of the man accused of the assassination. He described how he and McGee walked together as far as Sparks St. and MacFarlane continued on to his lodgings in Lowertown. MacFarlane reported that he “heard no pistol shot. There were no other persons in company with us when I parted with Mr. McGee.” Patrick James Whelan was convicted and executed for the crime. He pleaded his innocence throughout his trial and on the scaffold, where he was publicly hanged. Whelan’s trial is now the subject of a critically acclaimed play, Blood on the Moon, by Pierre Brault.

MacFarlane married Mary Elizabeth Woods in 1870. He died in office in 1872, just thirty-seven years old. MacFarlane and his wife had buried their only child, an infant son named Woods, earlier that same year. Most members of the House of Commons accompanied MacFarlane’s body to the train station in Ottawa. He was brought back to Stratford by “a deputation from St. Marys, Downie and Stratford” and was buried in Avondale Cemetery with his son, not terribly far from the Daly family crypt where his great rival, Thomas Mayne Daly, was laid to rest in 1885.

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

STRATFORD TIMES

Erie Street Esso
Strickland’s Toyota
Fix Auto
Stratford KIA
Expressway Ford
McDonald’s - Erie St
Tim Hortons - Erie St
Stratford Mazda
7-Eleven - Erie St
Joe’s Diner
The Urban Barber
Erie Convenience
Mr. Sub
Balzacs Coffee
Shoppers Drug Mart - Ontario
New Orleans Pizza

Zehrs
Food Basics
Tim Hortons - C.H. Meier
Festival Marketplace
Stratford Nissan
Stratford Subaru
Peavey Mart
Stratford Honda
Quality Festival Inn
McDonald’s - Ontario St.
Papa Johns
Fore Everyone Golf
WalMart
Stratford Motor Products
A&W
Toner & Ink Shop

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

Pick Up Locations

Sobey’s
Shoppers Drug Mart - Huron
Circle K - Huron
West End Pharmacy
Tim Hortons - Huron
Stratford Hospital
Video 99 - Erie St
Jenny Trout
Stratford Medical Pharmacy
Stratford Chamber of Commerce
A.N.A.F.
Freeland’s Diner
Stratford Hyundai
Daisy Mart
Foodland
Stratford Variety

Brch & Wyn
Stratford Place
Stratford Chefs School
HH Delea
AJ’s Hair
Features
United Way Perth Huron
Sinclair Pharmacy
Blowes Stationery
Stratford Tourism
Coffee Culture
Stratford Public Library
The Parlour Restaurant & Inn
Dick’s Barber Shop
The Livery Yard
Town Crier Marketing

Stratford chamber of commerce announces Perth South's Aaron Martin as new general manager

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the point where they can kind of get their own brick-and-mortar place or possibly to the next step, which is the accelerator.

"The accelerator is an area where we had 20 places built out and (they are) below market rate for what a company would generally pay for a space at that calibre. And, if there was certain infrastructure they need to put in, we could cover some of that with the federal money that we received."

In that job, Martin said he worked with a lot of companies focused around agricultural technologies, including agri-robotics, that could be applied in other sectors.

Martin, who has a Bachelor of Arts in general studies at Athabasca University and a diploma in agriculture from the University of Guelph's Ridgetown campus, not only brings a wealth of business connections, experience and knowledge to the chamber, but he is also familiar with Stratford, St. Marys and the surrounding Perth County.

Martin lives on his in-laws' 800-acre farm on Perth Line 26 south of Sebringville. Both he and his wife have been busy starting their own small businesses: a winery/cidery, a business Martin says is lacking in the Stratford area, and his wife manages logistics for shipping milk, cheese and meat products, a business that has been growing exponentially.

"I'm a big proponent of serving your



(STRATFORD AND DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PHOTO)

GENERAL MANAGER

Perth South's Aaron Martin has been appointed the new general manager of the Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce.

local community," he said. "... This opportunity came up; it means I can be closer to home.

"... For the area that the chamber's serving, I feel that we're positioned really well because we're in Perth South kind of smack dab between St. Marys and Stratford and Mitchell. Two things I know the chamber's identified they want to see more involvement is in manufacturing and with agriculture, and I have a background with both of those. Through

family connections and through my own personal connections, I think we'll be able to reach out to a lot of those people and bring them into the chamber. I think that's going to make the chamber stronger as a whole."

As a small-business owner in Perth South, Martin said he is hoping to bring more businesses in St. Marys, Perth South, Perth East, West Perth and those further afield into the chamber fold, something previous chamber general

manager Eddie Matthews also tried to do.

"I want to find out what issues businesses are having and what level of government can help solve that ultimately, and what ways we as a business community can come together to fix these issues," Martin said. "That's the whole point. We want to talk with each other and find out how we can help. On the flip side, we can be a huge value-add to all three levels of government with the representation there. We can tell them, 'This is what we've been hearing with the local constituents, this is where we've been having issues with local job creation,' or anything along those lines. We want to be able to value-add to them – we scratch their back and they scratch ours – to ensure everything is moving smoothly for local businesses."

Martin says he is excited to hit the ground running when he officially starts in this new position at the end of August, and begin meeting with local business representatives and touring their businesses to find out how best the chamber can serve them.

"His hands-on approach and dedication to fostering business growth have made a significant impact in his previous roles," the chamber board of directors said in a press release. "Aaron's commitment to supporting local businesses and driving economic development aligns perfectly with our chamber's mission. We look forward to the fresh perspectives and energy Aaron will bring to our team."

Stratford council briefs: Mayor honours shooting victims

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

During the moment of silent reflection for the Aug. 12 Stratford city council meeting, Mayor Martin Ritsma encouraged council, staff, the gallery and those watching the livestream at home to keep in mind the victims of the Aug. 1 Bradshaw Drive shooting.

"I had the opportunity to visit two Bradshaw residents that are in Victoria Hospital that were harmed during the shooting," Ritsma shared. "Both have a long recovery ahead of them, but are doing remarkably well. ... The entire street in our community has a long recovery ahead."

Ritsma thanked the first responders and said he continues to speak with Stratford Police Chief Gregory Skinner before the meeting proceeded.

An open invitation for Mr. Justin Bieber

As Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford, presented the 2024 Grand Trunk Renewal committee and working groups' workplan to council, Coun. Bonnie Henderson asked about fundraising opportunities for the space, given the large, roughly \$100 million they will have to raise to complete the project.

Henderson spit-balled a few ideas like admission fees, donation jars and hosting museum exhibits like the Justin Bieber exhibit.

"I believe you just issued an open invitation to Justin to come do a concert on the site," Gerber laughed. "He should feel free to do so, but

in all seriousness, Coun. Henderson, ... we are being very mindful of our partners because the YMCA will obviously have a large fundraising campaign and the real key is to not cannibalize each other. ... I think a fundraising or a philanthropic gift package is a little bit down the road from where we're at today, but it's on our radar for sure."

Gerber was at the meeting to present the workplan and the committee's ultimate goal for 2024 and 2025: a complete business case that builds off of the 2018 master plan. The business case will provide recommendations and insights into the vision and development principles, partnership models, financial modeling, community impact, financial implications, operating and capital pro forma budgets, and phasing.

Over the summer, the committee has completed draft vision and guiding principles and developed a workplan to achieve the business case, which includes finalizing the vision and guiding principles, completing a site analysis and environmental assessment, developing a key partnership model, completing ongoing communication and engagement with the community, completing recommendations for a competitive procurement process and legal-agreements structure, developing a financial and real-estate model, completing an economic, environmental and social impact analysis, and identifying government relations for the purpose of identifying funding opportunities.

According to Gerber's report, council will be considering the finalized vision and guiding principles in September, the key partnership model in October and committee recommendations for development models in November.

As part of her presentation, Gerber fielded a number of questions from council, including how organizations can get involved through one of the working groups and how they can take a tour of the facility through investStratford and Emily Robson, corporate initiatives lead with the city.

The workplan and update was received and staff were directed to assist members of the committee in a unanimous vote.

Previous grant decision appealed by council

Playmakers! Theatre School successfully appealed an early decision council made to award them \$1,000, netting them \$5,000 through the community grant program.

In June, council approved the community grants evaluation committee's recommendation to only issue \$1,000 to the organization, despite them asking for \$15,000.

The committee felt the large increase was not justified in the application and the organization had the opportunity to raise that money through revenue rather than taxpayers.

Playmakers! appealed the decision, requesting \$8,000-\$10,000.

"We fear that support from the City of Strat-

ford in the amount of only \$1,000 for an event that will be offered for the sixth time (in eight years) and now brings out 2,500-3,000 participants each year does not represent a major vote of confidence from our hometown and may seem underwhelming to other funding bodies we approach for support," the appeal application included in the finance and labour relations standing committee agenda reads. "This amount also comes nowhere near providing any significant support for attracting and retaining the local artists and artisans we would like to involve creatively in the event – which was the purpose of our application for a community grant this year."

The subcommittee recommended appealing the council decision and increasing the grant to \$5,000, which the standing committee approved unanimously without discussion.

Stratford Symphony Orchestra will celebrate its 20th season

Council is proclaiming Sept. 23-28 as Stratford Symphony Orchestra (SSO) Week in recognition of the Stratford staple's next milestone season.

Founded in 2004, the SSO is celebrating 20 years of helping to foster not only Stratford's arts-and-culture landscape, but southwestern Ontario's arts-and-culture landscape as well.

The season will honour the organization's past and look to its bright future, according to its website.

\$1.3 million in provincial funding will help retain over 50 local, high-paying jobs for historic manufacturer



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Matthew Rae, MPP for Perth-Wellington, with Chris McGregor, president of Sommers Generator Systems, and Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma. Rae announced over \$1.3 million will be going towards onshoring production capabilities from abroad and expanding Sommers Generator Systems' operations in Perth County as part of a total \$9.2-million investment from the company.

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A local manufacturer will be bringing production of a state-of-the-art product closer to home with some help from the provincial government

Matthew Rae, MPP for Perth-Wellington, was in Stratford Aug. 16 to announce \$1,393,350 in funding for Sommers Generator Systems, a local manufacturing company with a long history in Perth County.

"Sommers Generator Systems will be receiving over \$1.3 million from the provincial government to help fund and onshore production capabilities from abroad and expand operations in Perth County, retaining over 50 jobs locally – good, high paying jobs here in Stratford and Perth County," Rae said at an announcement at Sommers Generator Systems' Stratford facility.

This funding is provided through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund (SWODF) and part of Sommers' total investment of \$9,289,000 to expand its existing Stratford and Rostock facilities to begin production of their new hydrogen generators and move production of their natural-gas generators from Wisconsin to Ontario.

Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma thanked Rae for the investment, saying that it is twofold.

"It's investment in a product that is world-wide, that'll be global reaching, but it's also investing in our local economy," Ritsma said. "What's good for Stratford is good for

the county; what's good for the county is good for Stratford."

Sommers Generator Systems was established in 1936 in Ontario selling electric motors and bringing some of the first electrical infrastructure to area farms, according to Chris McGregor, president of the company.

It started in Tavistock before moving to a facility purpose-built for them on Packham Road in Stratford in 2019. They have sales locations all across Canada and a facility



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Sommers Generator Systems was established in 1936 in Ontario selling electric motors. Now, they will be producing these newly designed hydrogen generators right here in Stratford.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Mayor Martin Ritsma called the investment a great thing for the region as "what's good for Stratford is good for the county; what's good for the county is good for Stratford."

in Oconomowoc, Wis. that did all of its electrical, natural gas and propane builds – though manufacturing will be moved back to Ontario with the newly designed hydrogen product.

"One thing with small companies," McGregor said, "we tend to be far more flexible and we can react much quicker than larger companies. Our main holdback are resources and finances because we don't have that huge bank account sitting behind us to make these sorts of things happen.

"Now, with the support and confidence of the Ontario Government, we can overcome that challenge," McGregor further stated in a subsequent media release. "Their investment in Sommers is allowing us to create jobs and expand our facilities. Their investment will have a global impact on sustainable, clean power as we get set to produce the first hydrogen-fuelled generators in Canada, paving the way to a cleaner future."

"Our government is proud to support local manufacturers across the province as they grow and create more good-paying jobs in their communities," said Vic Fedeli, minister of economic development, job creation and trade, in that same media release. "Investing in these types of community-building projects will help us continue to build Ontario and strengthen the economy. We thank Sommers Generator Systems for making a significant impact in the community and for contributing to our province's dynamic and growing manufacturing sector."

Ontario is investing \$170 million through its Regional Development Program's Advanced Manufacturing & Innovation Competitiveness (AMIC) stream to help manufacturers across the province grow while supporting distinct regional priorities.

To date, the provincial government has supported more than 120 projects through the program, leveraging more than \$1.8 billion in new investments and helping to create more than 3,200 jobs.

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Stratford Summer Music concludes successful season and talks future plans

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

At the conclusion of its summer season, Stratford Summer Music (SSM) is sharing ambitious plans to expand venue space and reflecting on season highlights.

The season concluded with its massive “The Big Finale: Zombie Blizzard” event which took place last Sunday, Aug. 11 at The Avondale. The concert was themed around the poems of Margaret Atwood, which were spoken over loudspeakers and accompanied by a musical ensemble helmed by composer Aaron Davis and Measha Brueggergosman-Lee on vocals. SSM artistic director Mark Fewer said it was a rewarding and uplifting show that will push SSM into its next season.

“Feedback for this current season has been very positive and the public wants more, which is a great thing,” he said. “This particular season feels more regular again and we didn’t feel that for a while because of COVID-19. Now, pushing away from the pandemic, things feel quite normal and have been running without a hitch; any of the issues are small things and there are always small things. No matter what plans you put in place, there will always be small things that happen, but it has not been anything major.”

Fewer said he has plans to do a three-concert series at a museum next year, as well as a four-concert series at Revival House.



(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

SSM CONCLUDES ITS SEASON

Mark Fewer, artistic director of Stratford Summer Music says “the public wants more.”

A classical series will be shown at The Avondale, there will be more intimate indoor and outdoor spaces and he has plans to host an event on a grander scale at a

larger space yet to be fully determined.

SSM is planning to expand its six or seven regularly used venue spaces to as many as 10 for the next season.

“It takes a long time to get this variety of music and artists together. We have planned all the way up to 2027 and depending on the artist involved, I might not be able to get them for several years and there’s a more immediate need to fill out a series,” said Fewer. “There’s a lot of aspects to sort out like how many concerts are we going to do that are classical, how many are we going to do that are folk and jazz.

“I want to fill a roster that has a great number of varieties and give people a very enriching, rewarding and entertaining experience, but also an opportunity to be engaged with the art form itself and feel like they are really learning something from it.”

Fewer said it's important to balance those elements to keep the content fresh or the way the community engages with the art form diminishes because it's not bringing audiences along that path of exploration.

“The job of an artistic director is to start the audience on a path of growth through the listening experience rather than just doing the same thing over and over again. This process does take a long time, but it’s very rewarding,” he said.

Fewer said SSM is well underway planning its 25th anniversary event happening in 2025, which will be filled with many surprises that are not ready to be discussed.

West Nile Virus Activity Reported in Huron Perth

Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) is reminding residents to protect themselves against mosquito bites after mosquitoes collected from traps in Stratford and southern Huron County tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV).

These are the first positive-mosquito findings of the season for Huron and Perth counties. The findings indicate that WNV-positive mosquitos could be present anywhere in Huron and Perth. HPPH was also notified of an American crow testing positive for WNV in the North Huron area. Crows are a known carrier of WNV.

“It’s not surprising to see positive-mosquito pools in the month of August,” said HPPH senior public health inspector Dale

Lyttle in a press release. “People are at greatest risk of contracting West Nile virus in late summer, so it is important to protect yourself while outdoors when mosquitoes are most active.”

As part of its annual surveillance, HPPH has been trapping and testing mosquitoes in locations across Huron and Perth since June 17. To help reduce mosquito breeding and lower the risk of potential WNV transmission, larvicide has been applied to roadside catch basins in Stratford, St. Marys, Listowel and Mitchell this summer.

In Ontario, three confirmed human cases of WNV have been reported in 2024. Not everyone who is bitten by an infect-

ed mosquito will show symptoms of the virus. Of those who do show symptoms, most will experience mild illness including fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting and a rash on the chest, stomach or back. About one in 150 people infected will get seriously ill, with symptoms like high fever, muscle weakness, vision loss and coma. WNV can lead to death.

Symptoms usually develop between two and 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. People older than 50 and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk for WNV infection.

People can protect themselves from mosquito bites by:

- Using an insect repellent containing

DEET or Icaridin when outdoors. Be sure to follow the manufacturer’s directions.

- Covering up with light-coloured clothes, long sleeves and pants when outdoors or in areas where mosquito activity is high.

- Taking extra protection measures between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

- Removing standing water around the home at least once a week to reduce mosquito-breeding grounds.

For more information:

- Huron Perth Public Health: 1-888-221-2133

- Visit www.hpph.ca

- Follow HPPH on Facebook and X

UTRCA inviting area residents to weigh in on draft lands strategy

Whether a seasoned camper, an occasional visitor, or part of a recreation club, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) wants to hear area residents’ thoughts on its new conservation areas and lands strategy.

The 13-page draft strategy outlines its guiding principles and goals for the lands the UTRCA owns and manages for the next 10 years.

There are four key goals to the draft strategy: to provide environmental protection and natural hazard management, to be a leader in sustainable land-management practices, to meet the current and future needs of natural spaces and local communities’ recreational opportunities, and to support the UTRCA’s strategic directions, programs and services.

The UTRCA was created in 1947 and

owns and manages approximately 6,000 hectares (14,700 acres) of land and water in the Upper Thames River watershed. Most of its property is within the three large, multi-use conservation areas of Fanshawe, Pittock and Wildwood, or in wetlands, floodplains and other natural areas.

The strategy is mandated by the provincial government, which requires all con-

servation authorities to complete a strategy by the end of 2024. Residents across the watershed can weigh in and find the full draft strategy at <https://engage.thamesriver.on.ca/utrca-lands-strategy-public-input>.

Those who complete the survey will have the opportunity to win a season pass for 2025.

The online survey will be up from Aug. 15 to Sept. 15.

Stratford teen lands coveted position at CBC Kids News

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Julia Hammerl told the Stratford Times she was excited when she heard she will be one of CBC Kids News' newest contributors, largely for the opportunities it has provided her, but also because of how hard she worked to land the position.

"It wasn't a competition," Hammerl explained. "It was an application process to get a job. It wasn't that I won, it was more so that I earned this position."

Hammerl, 14, lives in Stratford and joins the nine other contributors from across the country who help produce videos on a plethora of topics that kids care about for CBC Kids News' YouTube page, from viral trends to important issues facing the world.

She started in late April after seeing advertisements for the position on social media.

"I was on TikTok and they were posting promo videos for people to apply for the position, and they mentioned how one of their kids reporters interviewed Timothée Chalamet," Hammerl said. "My friend really likes Timothée Chalamet, so I was like, 'This is a great idea because I might meet him, and then she'd be so happy for me.'"

So far, Hammerl has anchored two videos on the YouTube page, one on the viral trend, "mewing" (which is an oral posture technique purported to improve facial structure), and one on popular YouTuber MrBeast's formula for success. She also had the opportunity to go to Toronto recently to join other journalists at the



CBC KIDS NEWS REPORTER

Julia Hammerl, 14, is one of CBC Kids News newest contributors. The Stratford resident helps to produce videos for the media company's Youtube page, covering viral topics like "mewing" and social media giant MrBeast's rise to success.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Canadian Chinese Youth Athletic Association's 2024 Celeb Classic event.

"I got to interview Gordon Cormier from 'Avatar: The Last Airbender' and then I also got to go to a press conference with a few other celebrities that were showing up at the event," Hammerl said.

"It was really nerve-wracking, being in that room for the first time. There were so many people there that I had known – and there were a few that I didn't know exactly what they did. ... It was a really cool opportunity that I wouldn't have had if I hadn't had this position. ... It was so exciting."

Hammerl said she has always had an interest in writing, something she wish-

es to pursue in the future. This position also gave her the chance to experience video-making, another passion of hers, though she hasn't yet had the opportunity to start video editing.

Hammerl, who has all of the necessary equipment provided to her by CBC, said that a video usually takes about four days from initial conception to finally being published.

"We start on one of the days of the week," Hammerl said about the process. "I get added to a meeting where we go over the topic of the video and then we start brainstorming ideas for the creative process of the video ... and then they will set up interviews with people that are

more knowledgeable on the topic."

For the mewing video, Hammerl spoke with Mike Mew, who created the concept of mewing with his father, John Mew.

"And then sometime later – usually the day after – we start script writing, where I go over the script and I add ideas and I put my creative input into it. I'm able to change almost anything in the script, unless it's a hard fact. ... And then usually the day after, we start filming."

Michelle Luyten, Hammerl's mother, told the Stratford Times she was shocked when her daughter was selected to join the team – not because she didn't think Hammerl could do it, but because at that time, there were hundreds of children from across the country applying to the position.

"I know Julia to be adventurous and really go for things that are interesting and exciting," Luyten said. "She thrives in a lot of different areas, so it doesn't surprise me."

"I'm just really proud of her. It amazes me. ... I think this is a great opportunity for setting yourself up for a resumé or other job opportunities."

Hammerl said she wants to continue contributing for the page until the end of high school, when the cut-off for the position is. After that, she said she has a few ideas of what she will want to pursue as a career, but isn't set on just one avenue yet.

Those interested in watching one of Stratford's own can see Hammerl's videos on the CBC Kids News YouTube page at www.youtube.com/@CBCKidsNews.

Walk for Parkinson's to be held in Stratford

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The annual walk for Parkinson's is coming up in Stratford at Upper Queens Park on Saturday, Sept. 7.

Registration is at 9:30 a.m. and the walk around the river starts at 10:30 a.m. To register a team, visit walkforpd.ca and find the Stratford Event, or just show up on the day of the walk and register.

One of the organizers, Barb Myers from Shakespeare, said they walk once around the river. For more information, email Myers at bamyers@rogers.ca or visit her place of work at Adams Building Supply, formerly Akins and Brewer Lumber, in Shakespeare.

This year, there will also be an online auction to raise money and everyone is invited to bid on Raptors tickets, theatre tickets and cooking classes. Organizers are still looking for more donated items to go up for bid in the auction.

Last year, the walk set a record with \$95,000 raised, exceeding their goal of \$36,000.

This year's goal is \$76,000.



WALK FOR PARKINSON'S

Ron Harrison and Barb Myers anchor their team known as "Ron's Racers," which numbers in the dozens of family and friends again this year. Photo courtesy of Barb Myers

Stratford's Elgin Missionary Church hosts the North Easthope Antique Tractor Club and antique tractors

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

There are many churches in Stratford and Perth County that fundraise with the help of members of the North Easthope Antique Tractor Club (NEAT).

Most members of the club are retired farmers who are glad to drive their tractors they once used to work their soil to their breakfast destinations in the counties of Perth, Oxford and Waterloo.

Last week, that destination was Elgin Missionary Church on the northwestern edge of Stratford at Quinlan Road and

O'Loane Avenue.

The Elgin Missionary Church congregation started more than 100 years ago and has been in the present church building since 1985.

The church's pastor, Rick Bruinsma, welcomed close to 80 tractor-club members and their wives, and the church's breakfast cooks were pleased to have the opportunity to meet members from Millbank, Poole, Wellesley, Phillipsburg, New Hamburg, Baden, Tavistock, Shakespeare and areas around Stratford.

The tractor club's next destination is at the Nithview Home in New Hamburg.



(GARY WEST PHOTOS)

ANTIQUA TRACTOR CLUB

The North Easthope Antique Tractor Club (NEAT) members were welcomed with their tractors at Elgin Missionary Church last week, at the northwest edge of Stratford.



Church members who cooked breakfast for their church fundraiser with the North Easthope Antique Tractor Club included, from left, John Schiff, Betty Otten, Dorothy Schultz, Wayne Berry, Ruth Noble, Karen Berry, Marlene Robinson, Guy Coneybeare and Christine Lindner.

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR HOUSE IS

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Apple Fritters a popular treat at the weekly Stratford Farmers Market

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Apple Fritters are a popular treat at the weekly Saturday Stratford Farmers Market.

The mother and daughter duo of Pat and Katherine Smith have been regular vendors at the market with their food trailer since 2010.

They not only treat marketgoers to freshly made apple fritters, but also offer deep-fried Mars Bars and maple fritters with local maple syrup and whipped cream.

The Smiths live on their family farm on the western outskirts of New Hamburg in Wilmot Township.

Pat Smith has worked in the food industry for over 30 years which, in the past, included the food court at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, where daughter Katherine Smith also recently graduated with her degree after 4 years.

The pair said they have always enjoyed the friendly people of Stratford and area where visitors in the summer take in the Saturday morning market before taking in plays at the various stages of the Festival City.

Their busiest weekend is coming up Aug. 17 and 18 in their hometown of New Hamburg, when the annual Moparfest comes to the fairgrounds and they anticipate serving hundreds of fritters during the two-day event.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

FRESHLY MADE
Mom, Pat Smith, with daughter, Katherine Smith, just sold out of their apple fritters at the Saturday farmers market in Stratford on the weekend.

Woodstock Fair

August 22 - 25

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TRACTOR PULL

SUNDAY

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Horse Show
Limas Show
- Chain Saw Carving
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- Old MacDonald's Barn
- Tiny Tracks Petting Zoo
- Black Smith
- Raptor Show (birds of prey)
- Train Ride
- Exhibits & Commercial Exhibits
- Food Trucks

Third-strongest man in Ontario fundraises for charity

JULIA PAUL

Times Contributor

Mike Brown, a bud-tender at Little Leaf Cannabis in Stratford, has been competing in strongman competitions for the past five years.

What started as a happy accident has turned into a pursuit of international status.

“I got into the strongman by accident,” said Brown. “I started going to the gym to get in shape, reconnected with some old friends that were bodybuilding, and I realized very quickly that I was stronger than they were and they kind of pushed me into this lane. I just really fell in love with the sport. I took to it very quickly. Obviously, it’s been a very successful five years. I’m now the third-strongest man in Ontario. So, it’s something that I’ve become very passionate about.

“I’ve also ended up competing in the Highland Games, which is a lot of fun as well. It’s a different kind of strength, but it’s fun nonetheless. I just like putting on a show for a crowd, so it’s a good time.”

A fundraising event Brown held behind Little Leaf Aug. 3 included pulling a 38,000-pound tow truck, a hot-rod deadlift, an arm-wrestling super match and the ascending-the-yoke challenge. Folks from all over came to see this strongman event and support a good cause.

Brown was invited to an international stone-lifting competition in England. Because of this, Brown will be using the proceeds from the fundraiser to help him compete at this event while the remaining funds will be donated to Optimism Place, Perth County’s only women’s shelter.

“Optimism Place has always been a huge support of our business, Little Leaf, and we have always supported



Mike Brown shows off his muscles in front of a 38,000lb tow truck.

(JULIA PAUL PHOTOS)

them. It just made sense. It’s a good cause; it’s something I am always proud to support. I have a friend who was a victim of spousal abuse, so it’s kind of a no-brainer to support the women’s shelter,” said Brown.

In regard to his future, Brown has his sights set on international shows.

“The hope is to earn my pro status this year,” said Brown. “I’ve been invited to the National Championships in New Brunswick, and if I podium at the national cham-

pionships, I get my pro status. That’s kind of the big ticket in strongman because then you can go to Canada’s Strongest Man, World’s Strongest Man, the Arnold Classic, all the big international shows.

“Hopefully, if this sort of thing catches on, we’ll see more strength events in Stratford and area because it is a sorely underserved area.”

To keep up to date with Brown’s progress, follow him on Instagram at @bigvikingstrength.



Above: Mike Brown deadlifts a hot rod, front shot.

Top right: Side view of Mike Brown deadlifting a hot rod
Right: Participants crowd around a friendly arm-wrestling match.

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Stratford invasive-plant plan details best practises for stopping and managing invasion

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Over the years, the City of Stratford has worked to combat invasive species creeping into it, and now it may get easier to do so.

At the Aug. 12 Stratford city council meeting, council adopted the Stratford Invasive Plant Plan (SIPP) and management training for its staff.

Invasive species are considered one of Canada's greatest threats, causing many ecological, societal and economic impacts, according to the plan. Though the city and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) work collaboratively to fight the spread, there is no formal agreement, schedule, or reporting mechanism in place and their responses have been reactive rather than proactive in the past.

"Invasive plants pose threats to agriculture and forest ecosystems due to their ability to spread quickly, out-compete crop and forest plants, and deteriorate soil quality," the plan says in its introduction. "Some invasive plants even pose health risks and safety hazards, like giant hogweed, which causes severe chemical burns to the skin after contact."

Thus, prevention and management are required to curb these impacts. To that end, the plan lists three goals:

Goal one: increase the efficiency of invasive plant management in the city.

- Compile a comprehensive occupancy list of invasive plants already present in the city.

- Identify invasive plants that are high priority for long term management.

- Provide resources that can support management and control of high-priority species and containment species.

- Recommend actions, programs and initiatives the city can implement to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of invasive-plant management.

Goal two: prevent new invasive plants from arriving in the city.

- Review current policies that are aimed at preventing invasive plants.

- Recommend policy, actions, programs and initiatives that will prevent invasive plants.

Management List Species		
Management Categories	Scientific name	Common name
Aquatic	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Yellow iris
	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Purple loosestrife
	<i>Phragmites australis</i>	Common reed (phragmites)
Herbaceous	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	Goutweed
	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Garlic mustard
	<i>Concallaria majalis</i>	Lily of the valley
	<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>	Giant hogweed
	<i>Hesperis matronalis</i>	Dame's rocket
	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	Himalayan balsam
	<i>Vinca minor</i>	Periwinkle
	Woody	<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>
<i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i>		Oriental bittersweet
<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>		Russian olive
<i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i>		Autumn olive
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>		Common privet
<i>Lonicera tatarica</i>		Tatarian honeysuckle
<i>Lonicera x bella</i>		Bell's honeysuckle
<i>Morus alba</i>		White mulberry
<i>Reynoutria japonica</i>		Japanese knotweed
<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>		Common buckthorn
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>		Black locust
<i>Rosa multiflora</i>		Rambler rose (Multiflora rose)

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

A shortlist of 21 priority species listed in the newly adopted Stratford Invasive Plant Plan, as presented to city council on Aug. 12.

- Create a watch list of invasive species that are not in the City of Stratford but are nearby or have a high risk of being introduced.

- Provide resources that can support prevention.

Goal three: Increase public awareness about invasive plants in the city.

- Recommend actions, programs and initiatives the city can implement to increase public awareness and support for invasive-plant management.

The SIPP also includes a shortlist of 21 invasive-plant species that are a priority for the city and a watch list with 22 known species included.

Best management practices are included with the most effective removal methods listed with the best months to remove the species.

The T.J. Dolan Natural Area and Lake Victoria are priority areas in the SIPP.

Watch List	
Species	
Scientific name:	Common name:
<i>Abutilon theophrasti</i>	Velvetleaf
<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	Tree-of-heaven
<i>Cicuta maculata</i>	Spotted water-hemlock
<i>Cuscuta spp.</i>	Field dodder
<i>Erochloa villosa</i>	Woolly cup grass
<i>Euphorbia cyparissias</i>	Cypress spurge
<i>Euphorbia esula</i>	Leafy spurge
<i>Galium mollugo</i>	Hedge bedstraw
<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>	Tansy ragwort
<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>	Japanese stiltgrass
<i>Miscanthus sinensis</i>	Silvergrass
<i>Nassella trichotma</i>	Serrates tussock
<i>Persicaria maculosa</i>	Spotted lady's thumb
<i>Pilosella aurantiaca</i>	Orange hawkweed
<i>Pueraria montana</i>	Kudzu
<i>Reynoutria x behmica</i>	Bohemian knotweed
<i>Reynoutria sechalinensis</i>	Giant knotweed
<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	Perennial sow thistle
<i>Stratiotes aloides</i>	Water soldier
<i>Trapa natans</i>	European water chestnut
<i>Ulmus pumila</i>	Siberian elm
<i>Vincetoxicum rossicum</i>	Dog-strangling vine

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The watch list includes 22 species that are a threat for invasion into Stratford.

The plan does not include specific funding figures but recommends a maintained level of funding be provided by the city for prevention, containment and management.

Knowing how much funding is required will take further investigation into the extent of the invasive species in the city, though it does indicate that the budgets for invasive-species management tend to be higher to initiate controlling programs, but overtime decrease as invasion comes under control.

External funding is available in a variety of places, including the Invasive Species Centre and various ministries with the provincial and federal governments.

The process to develop the plan began in early 2023 when the ecological working group of the energy and environment advisory committee met with Quin Malott, manager of parks, forestry and cemeteries,

to discuss how to best deal with invasive species in the city.

In May of that year, council directed staff to develop a plan and Malott contacted the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie. The energy and environment advisory committee spent \$13,842.50 of its 2023 budget to have the centre create the strategy for the city.

It was completed in April 2024, reviewed by the committee and recommended to city council.

Council will consider funds for the plan during the annual budget process starting in the 2025 budget and subsequent years.

The full, 31-page plan is included in the agenda package of the Aug. 12 council meeting. It can be found at <https://calendar.stratford.ca/meetings/Detail/2024-08-12-1900-Regular-Council/f3aea122-8693-41cd-a94b-b1c7011ffa0>.

Stratford Fall Fair ambassador Faith Knechtel named first runner-up at CNE ambassador competition

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

With the opening of the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in Toronto last weekend, it was exciting for local fair ambassadors who were there competing among 47 other fair ambassadors from all across Ontario to be named the Ambassador of the CNE for 2024.

This year's winner was Hannah MacDonald from the Ripley fair, while first runner-up was Faith Knechtel from the Stratford Fall Fair.

Knechtel is the daughter of Clare and Joanne Knechtel and granddaughter of long-time Stratford Fall Fair director Bessie Wilhelm.

Sebastopol's Heidi Danen, who coaches and is the ambassador coordinator for both Stratford and Tavistock fair ambassadors was more than pleased with how the local girls competed.

"They handled their interviews and speeches exceptionally well considering the talent from across the province they were competing against," Danen said.



Heidi Danen (centre) with Tavistock fair ambassador Nicole Danen (left), Tavistock Fair and Stratford fair ambassador Faith Knechtel (right), who was named first runner-up following judging in the CNE Ambassador Competition on the weekend in Toronto.

Raising awareness of the Yellow Dog Project; what the yellow bow means

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Christine Foster, founder of Pawsitive Difference Professional Pet Care, is making it her mission to incorporate in her business and educate the public about the Yellow Dog Project.

Education is a major cornerstone of Foster's business. She is a certified fear-free-pets professional and has been pursuing continuing education for several years. When she heard about the Yellow Dog Project, she was excited to learn more and incorporate it into her training.

The Yellow Dog Project was first initiated by Canadian trainer Tara Palardy. Sometimes, a dog just needs some space. As a trainer, she wanted a visual aid to let people know that the dog she was with did not want to be approached. The visual cue she incorporated is a yellow bow, leash and collar.

"We see people come up and want to pet the dog and have dogs meet, but sometimes that's not good for the dog. In fact, the veterinarian that trained me said, 'Christine, you and I don't like every person we meet, why do we expect our dogs to like every person they meet?' So, (Palardy) wanted a visual aid and that aid is a bow. This has been adopted by 43 countries," said Foster.

Foster thought this project would be excellent in Stratford with such a high dog population. The yellow bow identifies dogs that may be in training, may be injured in some way, may be in rehabilitation or, quite simply, may be scared and reactive around other dogs.

"It's my goal for anyone to realize that if they have a dog that needs a yellow bow that they are not alone. There are many dogs that have space issues. It helps pet parents, too, to not have a stigma around their dog and think that their dog



(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

YELLOW DOG PROJECT

Christine Foster of Pawsitive Difference Professional Pet Care always carries a yellow leash with her when she visits clients just in case the dog is having one of those days where they need space.

is a problem. I like to tell parents that your dog isn't giving you a hard time, it's going through a hard time," Foster said.

To her, that shows a bit of emotional intelligence around what the pet is experiencing. One of the things in Fear Free they learn is to try to see things from the animal's perspective because they, too, will be different every day.

The Barkery has partnered with Pawsitive Different Professional Pet Care and displays an informational poster. They have sourced a local supplier of yellow bows, Doggie Bow Tie in London, and yellow leashes are also available for purchase. Global Pets are also participating and have sourced yellow bows from Gads Hill's By the Hill Creations.

When approaching a dog with a yellow bow or leash, don't be surprised to see them attempt to make space for themselves by crossing the street. Anyone who sees a yellow bow on a dog can assist, too, by making space around the pet. Parents can educate children that when they see a yellow bow or leash, they should not approach to say hello and try to pet the dog.

"The pandemic brought a lot of stress to pets. There was the working from home, then going back to work, then travel, so there is separation anxiety among many pets. The vets are seeing it more and I'm seeing it in my business," said Foster.

The benefits of the program is visual awareness and respect for the dog's needs. It's for the dog, about the dog and educating the public. The greater the awareness, the greater opportunity to benefit the dog.

Foster will also present about the Yellow Dog Project at the Stratford Perth Humane Society to children at the OSP-CA camp and she is hoping to access the schools to educate children about the project there.

Those who would like their dog assessed as part of the Yellow Dog Project can learn more about Christine Foster at Pawsitive Difference Professional Pet Care. Visit pawsitive-perstratford.ca for more information.

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Barricade Art ribbon cutting held as part of Car Free Friday

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Association (BIA) recently held a ribbon cutting to celebrate the completion of the Barricade Art blocks at 35 George St. between Chocolate Barr's and the police station.

There are 27 brilliantly illustrated blocks located on the property that was once drab and uninviting.

"We had this eyesore of a vacant city lot and wanted to clean it up a little," said BIA general manager Jamie Pritchard in a press release. "On the lot were 27 barricades and our team decided they would make excellent blank canvases and thus the idea which ultimately became this open-air art gallery. This peaceful, art-infused spot is perfect for a timeout in your busy day."

The ribbon-cutting event attracted a number of citizens and dignitaries as it was held in conjunction with Car Free Fridays on Aug. 9. Car Free Fridays is a successful summer initiative held by the BIA promoting active transportation and welcoming people who left their car at home with coffee and juice on their way to work.

The artwork was created by two talented artists who were both inspired by Stratford's natural beauty and what flora and fauna are found within the city limits. Toronto based artist Montana Hussey and



(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

BEAUTIFYING DOWNTOWN

BIA general manager Jamie Pritchard, Coun. Geza Wordofa, Mayor Martin Ritsma, artist Liz Emirzian and BIA member liaison and animation lead Kim Griffiths prepare to cut the ribbon on the new Barricade Art installation at 35 George St.

local Armenian-Canadian artist Liz Emirzian each painted 13 blocks, then collaborated on the 27th.

"Cleaning and preparing them with exterior primer was a challenge, then simply wrapping your head around how many there were," said Emirzian who was onsite with her family during the ribbon cutting to celebrate. "When we first came out here, we were, 'Whoa, this is a lot of work.' Also

dealing with the wind and the elements; it rained a lot. Aside from that, I actually found it very easy to work with this surface because it has a nice texture to it."

She also found the paint dried really fast so she had to adjust her blending technique. Each block took a few hours to complete, but they had to do both sides, making two paintings per block. In total, it took a couple months to complete the work.

Art installations such as these are a benefit to the community. While the artists were painting, many people would stop and initiate conversation about the images, what they like about Stratford and the memories the artwork invoked.

"I can say people love the colour, they love that the space has been transformed. There was a lot of conversation about the love for nature locally as well as provincially and the rest of Canada. People connect with public art and with artists and freelancers. I'm also an illustrator as well," said Emirzian.

Her new children's book is called A Woodland Dance Party, which came out just before she started work on this art installation. She enjoyed and was grateful for this transition from illustrator to mural artist and the challenge it brought.

Mayor Martin Ritsma was on hand for the ribbon cutting and thanked the BIA for the many outstanding events they put on that contribute to our vibrant downtown core.

This project was funded by the BIA, as well as from a monetary "innovation award" the BIA received for a previous installation. This award was created as part of public-art consultants STEPS' "I HeART Mainstreet" initiative, a program that engages communities, inspires innovation and transforms Canadian business districts through public art.



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STRATFORD **TIMES** SPORTS

The perfect pitch for the Stratford Festival cricket team

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Stratford citizens have been playing cricket for 150 years without a permanent home and are now seeking to rectify that with a fundraiser for a permanent pitch.

The Stratford Festival cricket team can be seen practicing in Lower Queen's Park east of the soccer fields on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, and take turns hosting the annual tournament between Stratford and the Shaw Festival for what will be the 50th year on Aug. 26 in the Niagara region.

"This has been a long time in the making. I currently serve as the captain of the Stratford Festival cricket team, but captains before me since the '80s have been saying we need something better than a piece of burlap on the grass," said Emilio Vieira, Stratford Festival actor and captain of the Stratford Festival cricket team. "In one part, the history of that piece of ground being where people have played cricket historically in this town for 150 years, which is kind of extraordinary, and two, the need for it to be safe and consistent because playing cricket and bouncing a ball off an uneven surface can lead to uneven bounce and for those of us working in the theatre, management is always saying, 'Please be careful.'"

Not only is cricket popular in Stratford, there is a permanent pitch in Woodstock, Fergus and pitches throughout the GTA, for example. Vieira cites cricket as one of the fastest-growing sports in the nation. As Stratford grows multiculturally, there are many cricketing nations represented locally now.

"I just love when we are out there for practices twice a week. There is always someone stopping by saying, 'When I left my country, I thought I wouldn't see cricket again and here it is in Lower Queen's Park as I walk my dog.' The parks board was ready to hear us when we pitched the idea to them at the end of last year," said Vieira.

He thinks, if you build it they will come. Currently, folks have been using a makeshift setup at ball diamonds, so a permanent pitch will accommodate them, too. The city is in pursuit of a sports tourism strategy at



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

SOLIDIFYING CRICKET IN STRATFORD

The sport of cricket is practiced in Lower Queen's Park on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. By October, a permanent pitch will be constructed, giving a home to the Stratford Festival cricket team

the moment, which could also incorporate cricket.

The pitch itself is a strip of astro turf that is laid over top of compacted limestone granite mix and goes about a foot into the earth. It requires excavation of a trench about 15 feet wide and 80 feet long that still allows for grass to grow surrounding the area. So, the area would not be completely resurfaced, just the rectangular strip. Maintenance is minimal and the astro turf lasts approximately ten years.

"Some grounds in Brampton are really picturesque in their surroundings and I can think of no more picturesque an area than down by the waterfront with people walking," Vieira said.

The festival cricket team is in the last push to fundraise \$20,000. Carpet has been ordered and an excavator is on hold. With fundraising through GoFundMe, the team hopes to have the funds in place to have the pitch built in October. If the weather is good, as it has been in the past few years, it is hoped there could be an inaugural game in the same timeframe to celebrate.

Sponsorship of the pitch has come from Bentley's, Pazzo, Starlight and the Perth

County Inn. It is important to Vieira that this not be a corporate endeavour, as he thinks this can be supported in a more grassroots, local and inclusive way.

The local community has expressed excitement and enthusiasm for the cricket pitch. In particular, he has heard from the south Asian community, the west Indian community, and

the expat English, Australian and South African communities with great zeal.

"I look forward as we host Shaw next year and show that we have made this investment and maybe it's time you do the same in your locality. So far, it's been a huge response. Once people know that it is not taxpayer dollars building this, it is independently funded and this has been a longtime lobbied project. I look forward to the skeptics coming and seeing the energy and saying, 'Good on you for doing this,'" Vieira said.

Once the pitch is built, the possibilities are there for the future. Sports tourism is desirable and the pitch could help capitalize on that. Possibilities could include a tournament or festival with food trucks and music as an extension of the current Multicultural Festival held each summer. And ultimately, the new pitch will provide a safe environment with which to build the popularity of the sport locally.

"I've been captain since 2016, so I've been looking forward to training in a proper, safe and consistent facility in which we can actually develop the skills that we're able to see in the players at a professional level that we wish to emulate."

Anyone interested in pitching in and helping raise the final dollars can visit www.gofundme.com/f/2024-stratford-festival-cricket-team.



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To RSVP, email stew@stonetowntravel.com or call our offices at either 226-333-9939 (New Hamburg) or 519-284-2332 (St. Marys).

Stratford Festival review: *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* challenges an audience's tolerance

Playwright Edward Albee's play, *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*, was written and first staged in 2002 in part to challenge what an audience and we as a society will tolerate.

Albee accomplished this by centring his story on a world-renowned architect, Martin (Rick Roberts), who has fallen in love and engaged in a sexual relationship with a goat.

That simple and morally corrupt concept is explored, without intermission, over the next hour and 50 minutes as Martin's loving wife, Stevie (Lucy Peacock), his son, Billy (Anthony Palermo) and oldest friend, Ross (Matthew Kabwe), struggle emotionally and, in Stevie's case, violently to come to terms with such an indefensible admission by an otherwise loving, smart, talented and widely respected man.

I won't candy coat it. This play is difficult to watch. There is no happy ending or hidden explanation that makes Martin's actions acceptable or even understandable. He just saw a goat one day, looked deeply into her eyes, fell in love, called her Sylvia and the rest I need not explain further.

The Goat, or Who is Sylvia? was a bold choice for the Stratford Festival's 2024 season, themed around the idea of "a world elsewhere." In this case, it seems that world elsewhere is a hypothetical what-if about a man who feels compelled to break one of our most basic social conventions at the cost of everything he holds dear.

Why would someone listen to that dark voice in their head most of us ignore? What happens after and is there a way back from that? Can we look past the irredeemable in support of someone we love? Can we even control who or what we love?

Those are the questions both the audience and the characters on stage were confronted with as the story plays out. I still don't know the answers to those questions but, admittedly, I was captivated by the performances of each of the actors as their characters were forced into a new world and understanding of someone they love without any conceivable way back to the world and the man they once knew.

Peacock was particularly captivating as she delivered Stevie's witty, emotionally wrought, yet open-to-some-kind-of-understanding repartee with Roberts' Mar-



(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

THE GOAT, OR WHO IS SYLVIA?

From front, Lucy Peacock as Stevie, Rick Roberts as Martin and Anthony Palermo as Billy in *The Goat or, Who is Sylvia?*. Stratford Festival 2024.

tin, translating her character's justifiable rage, hurt, disgust and sadness into physical violence as she destroyed the set – her family's once tasteful and modern living room – over the course of the play's long middle act.

Roberts, too, did an excellent job bringing the audience on side with his likable character before dropping that inevitable bomb. More than anything, Roberts' performance throughout made me want some kind of reasonable explanation for Martin's actions that would bring the father and husband back into the good graces – or at least on the road to recovery – with both his family and the audience.

Palermo's performance as Billy offered at least a glimmer of hope for Martin in

the play's third act as the confused teen painfully tried to understand his father's actions and make a conscious choice to continue loving the man despite all he'd done to tear their family apart.

This is not a play that will leave you feeling good at the end; in fact, it's quite the opposite. However, if you see the value in a what-if social experiment that tests what you personally can tolerate, and you're prepared to be shocked, disgusted and entertained, this one is worth the price of admission.

Just be sure to leave the kids at home. *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* plays at the Studio Theatre until Sept. 29.

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L'Arche Stratford campaign continues to reach new highs for the community

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

L'Arche Stratford, a local organization that supports adults living with developmental disabilities, is continuing full steam ahead with its capital-campaign fundraising efforts after a big win.

L'Arche Stratford hosted its 4th annual Golf Tournament followed by an After Party and Silent Auction at Mayor Martin Ritsma's farm on Aug. 7. The goal of the event was to raise funds for L'Arche's Be Belong Become Campaign. The campaign's goal is to raise \$6.5 million towards construction of the organization's new base of operations at the former Sunshine Montessori School at 426 Britannia St.

Previously sitting at \$4 million, the golf fundraiser added another \$16,000 to the total raised.

"The Britannia model is a very holistic model. We're hoping to have administrative office space, as well as activity space

and housing," said Stephanie Calma, executive director at L'Arche Stratford. "This is a place where people can have some sense of independence and where they can have a connection to other people who are there, whether it be the administrative staff or folks who are there for activities and programming.

"We're hoping to expand and grow our services and activity support and welcome more people with developmental disabilities."

Including their current facility at 400 Huron St., the local organization also rents temporary properties throughout Stratford. L'Arche Stratford currently supports 35 people, but they hope to be able to support up to 70 either with housing or programming at their new Britannia Street location.

"As an organization, we are very relationship oriented, so we like to have everyone be together," said Calma. "Unfortunately, at our current property we don't have enough space for the administrative

offices right now. Beyond the physical space, there's also the investment in owning our own property because we rent our current home.

"Part of our whole plan is once we construct the building, we have the resources to continue to and achieve a sustainable trajectory for our future."

Calma says there is still no official date

on when the organization will begin construction, but says it feels surreal that they are approaching their goal.

"For myself, I really enjoy the relationship building and the process. It's a relief to be able to say that we're at this phase and actually seeing some action happen."

L'Arche Stratford is aiming to reach its \$6.5 million objective within the next year.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

L'ARCHE STRATFORD INCHES CLOSER TO THE \$6.5 MILLION GOAL

Pictured from left to right are fundraising leader Wendy Gray, campaign ambassador Corey Maschke and executive director Stephannie Calma at the L'Arche Stratford After Party and Silent Auction Aug. 7.



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The Crosswalk documentary to weave together stories from Stratford's 2SLGBTQIA+ community

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

Inspired by the efforts of Kelly Ballantyne to install a rainbow crosswalk in the heart of downtown Stratford, local production company Ballinran Entertainment is working with Stratford-Perth Pride on a documentary aimed at sharing the stories of some of the city's most prominent 2SLGBTQIA+ residents.

Currently in the works, The Crosswalk will use Ballantyne's story as a jumping-off point and will include other characters from Stratford's 2SLGBTQIA+ community. The film will delve into issues such as education and inclusion initiatives as well as social programs and supports available in and across the Stratford-Perth area.

"I've known Kelly Ballantyne for a long time," said Ballinran Entertainment executive producer Craig Thompson. "In fact, our company was one of the supporters of the first incarnation of the crosswalk – sort of the vinyl-lettering one that first went up two or three years ago. Shortly thereafter, it got defaced and eventually replaced by the one that's there now. Kelly also faced the issue of having graffiti sprayed on the back wall of her restaurant.

"So, I've had this idea for a long time because there's a lot going on in the world. We're not becoming more tolerant; we're becoming less tolerant. There's a rising

tide of intolerance. When I went to see La Cage Aux Folles (at the Stratford Festival) – I went on opening night – I sat there and said to myself, 'Wow this musical is 41 years old and they're talking about the same issues (that exist) when you walk outside the theatre door.' Things have progressed, but not as far as one might expect."

While Thompsom said Stratford is a relatively accepting city of people from all different backgrounds and of all different identities, in the surrounding Perth County and other rural areas across the province, that acceptance and tolerance is much less apparent.

"We are grateful that an accomplished filmmaker like Craig Thompson is interested in turning his focus and attention to members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Stratford, and in rural Ontario," said Stratford-Perth Pride co-chair Melissa Marcelissen in a press release.

"Sharing stories of exceptional members of the queer community is critical when it comes to representation. Only too often, the stories that young people navigating coming out and their families hear are those of the challenges and hardships faced by queer folks. So, by focusing on the joys that exist in the lives of 2SLGBTQIA+ folks, this film helps contribute to overcoming an incomplete narrative that queer youth and others face in

today's media."

Ballantyne, the owner of Sirkel Foods in Stratford, told the Times she is both excited and nervous to share her personal story around the establishment of the rainbow crosswalk downtown, but she believes in the goal of the documentary and the importance of sharing what was ultimately a story of love and the power of community triumphing over hate.

"There's good and bad in every situation," Ballantyne said. "(My experience as a gay person growing up in Stratford is) mostly positive. My family is very supportive of me and the community, for the most part, is too. You sort of see the underlying not-supportive people when they post photos (on social media saying), 'The crosswalk's happening,' that sort of thing, and then there are some negative comments.

"When it was first vandalized and everyone banded together to get it cleaned up and fixed up, then when the snowplows sort of ruined it and we had to paint it again, so many people stepped forward to raise more money. ... No taxpayer dollars were involved. It was all funded by local people and everyone was more than happy to donate a second time. Everybody was just always so positive about it, at least that's how I felt. We're just like everyone else trying to go to work and live our lives. I just think everybody should just be accepted for who they are."

While shooting on The Crosswalk hasn't started yet, Ballinran Entertainment is hoping to crowdfund the film's production. Anyone interested in supporting the documentary or learning more can visit ballinran.com/crosswalk/.



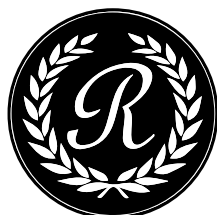
(BALLINRAN ENTERTAINMENT PHOTO)

INCLUSIVE CROSSWALK

The story of Kelly Ballantyne's efforts to install a rainbow crosswalk in the heart of downtown Stratford will be included in an upcoming documentary by Stratford production company Ballinran Entertainment highlighting the stories of members of the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community, as well as the social programs and supports that exist for that community in Stratford and Perth County.

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Perth County's Ron Neeb participates in Antique Tractor tour in Germany

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Perth County's Ron Neeb loves adventures to many places inside and outside of Canada, and he is a unique traveller because of his method of transportation touring other countries.

This can sometimes be on an antique farm tractor, owned by friends of his, that he has met over the years in different countries.

Neeb, who himself is an antique tractor collector, recently went to Germany to meet up with friends there and to take part in a two-day classic tractor tour through the hills, valleys and forests of that country.

His German friend, Dirk Schulze, took him to see several tractor collections in the area for the first few days of his eight-day visit.

Tractor brands collected and restored included Lanz, Porsche, MAN, Unimog, MB Trac, Fendt, Deutz and Hanomag, as well as a host of other European tractor brands and models from the past that most farmers in Canada have never heard of.

When the time came for the organized

two-day tractor tour, Neeb was told he would be driving a Porsche Master.

He said much care was needed while driving this particular tractor as they are quite rare worldwide and very expensive, and he found out the value of the fully restored tractor would be in the neighbourhood of €100,000 (\$160,000 Canadian).

Once he knew that, he said he definitely kept two hands on the wheel at all times.

The tractor tour, which involved nine vintage tractors, went from Porta Westfalica 70 kilometres southwest of Hannover to Einbeck, Germany.

There, they visited the P.S. Speicher Oldtimer Museum, which had over 2,500 exhibits of European vintage cars, trucks, motorcycles and tractors on display.

After an overnight stay at a hotel with their tractors parked, the group made their way back to Porta Westfalica.

"The warm weather turned out to be perfect and the scenery was absolutely awesome," Neeb said. "It was something I will never forget. Between the rolling hills and the valleys of the area, there were many small fields of ripened wheat that was ready to be harvested in the near future."

In summarizing, Neeb said the trip



(RON NEEB PHOTOS)

TRACTORS ON PARADE

Pictured is Ron Neeb with some of his family warming up for the 2024 Canada Day parade in Stratford.

was an unforgettable adventure for eight days, filled with much laughter, many great meals, seeing lots of tractor and car collections, and a two-day tractor tour

through the hills of Northern Germany. Most importantly, it was a time to reconnect with friends Neeb had not seen for several years.



Stratford's Ron Neeb in Germany with the antique tractor, Porsche Master, which he drove with eight other friends on a tractor tour through parts of Germany recently.



Ron Neeb showing the antique tractor convoy he was part of entering the German city of Einbeck.



The German entourage of tractor drivers paused for an ice cream cone. Pictured from left are Dirk, Reiner, Holger, Herman and Norbert.

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Cabaret double-bill performers to share personal stories with Stratford audience

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

Longtime friends and actors Starr Domingue and Jennifer Stewart recently shared their thoughts on expressing their personal stories to the community in their upcoming cabaret double-bill performance.

Domingue and Stewart will individually perform their respective shows, *I'm the Greatest Starr* and *Confessions of Motherhood* at Stratford City Hall on Sunday, Aug. 25 from 8-10:30 p.m. The actors in both shows will be accompanied by Aaron Eyer instrumental talents as musical director and the shows are produced by Jennifer Stewart.

Through her show, *I'm the Greatest Starr*, Domingue will share her personal experiences on how her struggles and triumphs as an actress has shaped her into the woman she is today.

"This performance is the story of my life, as we all go through challenges and have great successes sometimes as actors and my ... story is one that is relevant because this is a human story of success through adversity," said Domingue. "I try to bring a lot of joy and light and a voice to the people that might not feel as seen."

"It's a conversation that highlights the similarities between one's experiences throughout Canada. Although we are all



SHARING STORIES THROUGH ART

Starr Domingue and Jennifer Stewart in front of Stratford City Hall, where they will perform their plays, *I'm the Greatest Starr* and *Confessions of Motherhood*, respectively on Aug. 25.

(ALEX HUNT PHOTO)

different and go through our own unique experiences that may not be spoken about, we try to tell our stories through joy, laughter, song and hopefully bring an understanding to the audiences about

things we think that are important."

Domingue, who has been involved in various productions on stage and film including the Stratford Festival's *Something Rotten* and *La Cage Aux Folles*,

said her favourite aspect of performing in live theater is the emotional reactions of audience members.

"You cannot recreate that anywhere else. You can't plan it and the audience is having their own experience which is an incredible thing to think about. There's this human aspect that can't be replicated in any other form."

Stewart's production *Confessions of Motherhood* will play as the second act of the night.

"My show is about my journey as a mother," she said. "I had a unique story about being an older mother, such as trying to get pregnant and staying pregnant, as well as the birth story. Throughout the show, I sing musical theatre songs that are appropriate to the story I'm telling, which chronicles my journey going through motherhood."

"Both shows are very relatable to men, women and teenagers because these are experiences that we all go through. There's lots of humanity in both of the productions and gives audiences a different perspective on how people live."

Domingue and Stewart met 25 years ago through Sheridan's College musical theatre program and have worked in multiple projects with each other over the course of their long-lasting friendship.

Tickets will cost \$46.06 per person and can be purchased on Eventbrite.

Stratford Festival review: Get That Hope offers a familiar family story with new context

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

A single-room play lives or dies on its character development. Without strong characters with rich backgrounds and motivations the audience can understand and relate to, the story itself never moves beyond the four walls it is being told within.

Inspired by the Stratford Festival's 2018 production of playwright Eugene O'Neil's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, London, Ont., playwright Andrea Scott set out to tell a similar story for Black-Canadian audiences of one family's struggle and the love for one another that underpins their personal and interpersonal challenges.

Having seen the very same production that inspired *Get That Hope*, I truly believe Scott, director André Sills and the cast and crew have achieved so much more.

While this is certainly a play about a family dealing with issues stemming from each member's past and present circumstances, telling the story from the perspectives of a modern Jamaican-Canadian family living in their cramped apartment in Toronto's Little Jamaica offers so much rich character history to draw from.

That history – be it Richard and Margaret Whyte's (Conrad Coates and Kim Roberts) immigration and love stories, and their own upbringings in Jamaica; Rachel and Simeon Whyte's (Celia Aloma and



GET THAT HOPE

From left, Celia Aloma as Rachel Whyte, Savion Roach as Simeon Whyte, Conrad Coates as Richard Whyte, Kim Roberts as Margaret Whyte and Jennifer Villaverde as Millicent Flores in *Get That Hope*. Stratford Festival 2024.

(DAVID HOU PHOTO)

Savion Roach) childhoods as step-siblings and their relationships with each other, their parents and their Jamaican heritage; and the similar-yet-contrasting experiences of Filipino-Canadian physical therapist and neighbour Millicent Flores (Jennifer Villaverde) – is a masterclass in weaving complex and captivating backstories into onstage interactions without the need for heavy handed exposition.

And while *Get That Hope* is a story

about a family whose members share those newcomer and first-generation experiences so many new Canadians and their children can relate to, the issues that drive the plot are universally relatable, whether you grew up here or not.

From concerns for Richard's increasing short-term memory loss and Margaret's struggles with physical pain to Rachel's Millennial drive to work around the clock and save as much money as she can just

to be able to support herself, let alone her whole family, and Simeon's quarter-life stagnation as he copes with severe PTSD from his time as a peacekeeper, each character brings their own complexities to the tapestry that is the Whyte family dynamic.

Even the setting – a tiny apartment with dated appliances and furniture immediately recognizable to anyone who has ever rented at the low end of the market – is relatable. The daily routines, close quarters and lack of disposable income certainly hit close to home for me, as I'm sure it does for many audience members. The use of street art, lighting and sound effects serves to ground the apartment setting in the real world and reminds us this family's strife is not happening in a vacuum.

The performances in this production are really what brought this story to life for me. Each actor had the opportunity to portray their character's daily routine and confront their most-pressing issues while responding to incursions from the outside world – be it intrusive construction or a condo-developer's bankruptcy – without taking the audience beyond the confines of their home.

If, like me, you're a fan of strong character development supported by a brilliant cast of actors, this is the play for you.

Get That Hope runs at the Studio Theatre until Sept. 28.

Michele Boniface's third act

JULIE ASHLEY

Times Contributor

When Shakespeare wrote, "All the world's a stage," I think he was prophetically referring to the life of Stratford local Michele Boniface.

At 80, Boniface is still driven and passionate about all things theatre. It is no wonder she, along with her husband, Ted, happily reside in a condo strategically overlooking the theatre scene downtown.

"Oh look, there goes some of the cast from Peter Pan," she interjects during our interview.

Boniface recounts early Muskoka cottage memories as a five-year-old playing Cinderella on a homemade stage complete with backdrop of blankets hung between birch trees.

Boniface eventually taught high school, choreographing musicals and directing community theatre at the opera house in her hometown of Orillia. Hungry for more, she then followed opportunities out west where she built a 25-year career in video, film and TV production, including directing Family Channel dramas and History Channel documentaries. Additionally, her skills were further expanded to produce the complete Grade 12 physics curriculum for educational broadcast.

As no stranger to either the arts or education, it is no wonder Boniface eventually settled in Stratford in 2003 where she took on the responsibilities of executive director of the Kiwanis Festival. It was during that time that Boniface joined the Boards

of Playmakers! Theatre School and Off the Wall Stratford Artists Alliance. In 2010, she assumed the position of chair/program administrator of Off the Wall (OTW) in a volunteer capacity.

OTW is a theatrical-production gem, opening its doors to anyone who wishes to share a glimpse behind the scenes of professional theatre or learn skills required for the comprehensive world of backstage arts. What began in 2005 as a periodic offering of weekend workshops has now grown to more than 25 year-round courses including costume-and-set design, prop-and-mask making, wig-and-boot making – the list is exhaustive. Some arrive at Off the Wall classes with no previous experience, while others with theatre backgrounds seek to further develop their skills to be cutting edge in theatre or film.

The vision for OTW began as theatre artists and arts-education volunteers wanted to raise awareness about the backstage world of theatre and to mentor aspiring production artists – unwittingly, a type of feeder school for the theatre. Stratford Festival artists could teach skills in their off season, imparting knowledge required for eventually filling positions backstage. Such a school is a natural fit for Stratford, of course. What better opportunity to ensure new hires are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to create the world that characters inhabit on stage.

I have personally taken a course in beginner sewing instructed by Stratford Festival cutter Lela Stairs and found it both skill-building and inspiring to hear up



Michele Boniface.

(JULIE ASHLEY PHOTOS)



Michele Boniface speaks with Off The Wall Stratford Artists Alliance student Sam Cleveau.

close and personal about the intricacies of creating certain costumes I could watch for when attending festival shows. I think Boniface has tapped into the part of many of us who want to envision ourselves close to the magic of such a world-renowned entity as the Festival.

Off the Wall quietly had a hand in many local projects the community has enjoyed, including creating a model of the 6218 – the last train engine repaired in the CNR shops – on display at the Stratford Perth Museum.

Students have also built sets and props for local theatre companies that can't otherwise afford them. Moreover, Off the Wall skills training has shaped careers. For instance, one art student who took prop-making for five seasons landed the role of lead builder on Macy's Christmas windows across the U.S.

Boniface proudly points to many former students of Off the Wall who have become contractors at the Festival in props, wardrobe, scenic art, shoemaking and wig-making departments.

I accompanied Boniface to St. Michael Catholic Secondary School where she

checked in with Off the Wall students building a set for a 1950's jukebox musical, Return to the Forbidden Planet, to be mounted next spring in Windsor. It is obvious the students are totally engaged and thrilled to be part of something bigger while developing carpentry skills that will prepare them for future work in the industry.

Last year, due to such growth and demand for courses, OTW hired its first paid employee, April Burns, to coordinate OTW's comprehensive programs, as it could no longer operate solely with the help of volunteers.

However, as is too often true in the arts, the future of OTW is dependent on precarious revenue sources. Historically, OTW has received funding through government grants and fundraising events to supplement course income. Looking forward, it will be necessary to discover new funding streams and financial alliances to continue offering the quality programming it has developed over the past 20 years.

One thing is for certain; Boniface will be somewhere in the middle of it. Her curtain call is not happening any time soon.

COMING EVENTS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Tuesday, September 3, 2024; 7:00 p.m.

93 Morgan St., Stratford

What Do I Wear (with an ostomy)?

Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome. For more information contact 519-273-4327

SECOND-HAND BOOK NOOK/SALE

Friday, Sept. 6 to Sunday, Sept. 8, 2024

Tavistock Arena, 1 Adam St., Tavistock

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GARDEN STRATFORD GENERAL MEETING

Monday September 9, 2024; 7:15 – 9:00 p.m.

Army Navy Hall, 151 Lorne Ave. E., Stratford

Featured Presentation: "Bees and Native Bees", Jennie Girard, Master Gardener. Meeting Open to Everyone; Free Admission.

THE TERRY FOX RUN (annual event)

Sunday, September 15, 2024; 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Upper Queen's Park (near the picnic tables)

No registration fee or minimum pledges

Terry Fox t-shirts for sale

Walk, run, cycle, wheelchair or however you like to go

Cycling through Stratford to raise awareness for childhood cancer

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The Great Cycle Challenge (GCC) for childhood cancer rolled through Stratford on Aug. 10 with a small group of riders who have challenged themselves to raise funds and awareness for research during the month of August.

Funds raised during the GCC support the Garron Family Cancer Centre (GFCC) at SickKid's Hospital. Although the funds are not sent to other hospitals, the reach SickKid's has stretches beyond the borders of Toronto. The GFCC is one of the leading cancer programs in the world and the funds raised have helped to advance research efforts, as well as patient-care programs that support kids in health institutions across the country.

The Saturday morning ride was organized by local rider Bill Vandenberg who has pledged to ride a total of 250 kilometres with a goal of raising \$2,000 throughout the month. He was joined by Wendy Webb, who has pledged to ride a total of 100 kilometres with a goal of raising \$500. Finally, to round out the trio is the riding rockstar from Ingersoll, Henrietta Mulder, who has pledged to ride 400 kilometres with a fundraising goal of \$15,000.

"You do your own ride, you do your own fundraising, you set your own riding goals for the month," said Mulder. "The first year that I biked, I went with my friend just to get some exercise. I don't think I had biked in 15 years. We thought we might as well raise money for a worthy cause, so I think my friend talked about the GCC and we biked about 100 kilometres and raised maybe \$500.

"Then, the following year my daughter was diagnosed with cancer so I dedicated my ride to her. Then, by the next year she was gone so I ride in her memory now and try to raise a lot of money."

In their brightly coloured jerseys, they set off from St. Michael Catholic Secondary School's rear parking lot through the streets of Stratford neighbourhoods and

travelled just over 16 kilometres on their ride, each with their own reasons for doing it in their hearts.

"Cancer has touched so many people. My school girlfriends, we went to public school together and stayed friends all the way through but one died at 58 of ovarian cancer and one died at 62 of another type of cancer. It's just too young. So, I ride in their memory," Webb said.

Vandenberg too was inspired to ride because it was a good cause, and then a friend was diagnosed with Hodgkins Lymphoma giving him a more personal connection. Thankfully, his friend is in remission.

Mulder rides for her daughter and is spurred on by her image mounted on her bike. She is in her eighth year participating and, at the time of writing, has travelled a cumulative 3,161 kilometres and raised in excess of a whopping \$137,000. This year alone, she has raised \$31,000. She is currently ranked the number-one fundraiser in Ontario, and number two in Canada.

Has it been mentioned, she is 73?

In addition to biking to raise money, Mulder is also running a 50/50 draw on her personal site.

"People see the GCC site and they click the donate button then they go away. They never find out anything more about the GCC. The goal of the 50/50 is to inspire people onto the site and to find out what it's all about. I have a board and for \$5, you can buy a block with a number on it. When you buy the block, I colour it in yellow. There is also a skill-testing question. It is on the top of the board and the answer is in the drop-down menus on the GCC page. Once they are looking at it, maybe they will be inspired to learn more about it," said Mulder.

Each of the riders have surpassed their fundraising goals and are thrilled. For more information on the GCC or to contribute a donation, visit greatcyclechallenge.ca. To buy a block for the 50/50 draw, the best bet is to message Henrietta Mulder on Facebook.



(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

Bell Vandenberg, Henrietta Mulder and Wendy Webb set off on a ride through Stratford neighbourhoods to raise awareness and funds for childhood cancer

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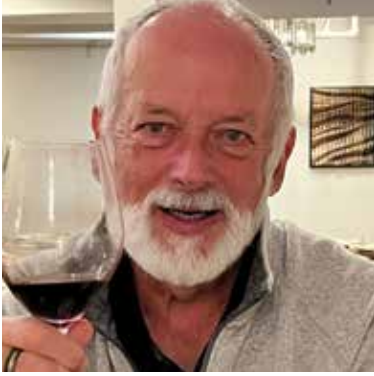
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Elaine's offers a great menu - of food and of stories



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

Let's be honest here; there are a lot of reasons to plan a trip to Walt Disney World in Florida, and also, a few reasons not to. After all, Disney is expensive, it's always busy, lineups can be long and merchandizing is ubiquitous.

On the other hand, Disney is fun, especially for an adult willing to abandon any pretence of sophistication and spend a day or two celebrating his or her inner nerd.

I use that term knowing it may sound a bit insulting. But I am claiming it myself. And what else could you call someone who rushes through the streets of Disney World to ride a space ship piloted by C-3PO, or to thrill at a stunt show based on Indiana Jones, or to take a boat trip through the animatronic world of the Pirates of the Caribbean, or, for that matter, to giggle my way through the MuppetVision3D show?

Nerd, right?

Now, clearly I am not alone. Orlando's Walt Disney World is the most-visited vacation resort in the world. Over 58 million people show up at the attraction every year.



The iconic Cinderella Castle at Disney World in Orlando.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

And let me say this right here: in my opinion, some of those people should not be visiting. I'm referring to young families who have planned their visits while their children were still in the planning stage and now can't wait to get to Disney, where they push two-year-olds around in strollers and try to quiet crying toddlers as they wait in line to discover that "it's a small world, after all."

I'm not saying they should not go to Disney; I simply suggest they wait until the kids are all old enough to actually enjoy the place. Then, have a ball!

Now, kids aside, Disney can be a lot of fun for adults as well. Even some of the attractions designed for children can be enjoyed by the grey-haired cohort, like the stage shows (we saw Beauty and the Beast), which are always well-produced and well-performed.

But if you are willing to surrender to the fantasy, those nostalgic

attractions like the several Star Wars features and The Muppets movie are a whole lot of fun. I mention these, particularly, because Disney has accomplished something that seems counter-productive; the designers have made waiting in line fun.

With the ride, Star Tours: The Adventure Continues, you make your way in the queue among active droids and other Star Wars features until you eventually reach the flight simulator, which takes you on a convincingly exciting and action-packed voyage in space.

With MuppetVision3D, the wait in the entrance lobby is almost as entertaining as the 3D movie/live-action experience awaiting in the actual theatre. As guests loiter in the lobby, sundry Muppet characters - chief among them, Gonzo, Bean Bunny and, of course, Kermit and Miss Piggy - are in a frenzy to prepare for the show

you're about to see. Naturally, mayhem ensues and I giggle.

There were plenty of other features that we enjoyed at Disney. The name, the "Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular," may sound like hype, but the show honestly lives up to the promo. The stunts echo many of the famous action scenes in Raiders of the Lost Ark, and they are the real deal. Falls, fire, explosions and fights carry Indiana Jones fans - nerds like me - right back into the heart of the Harrison Ford adventures.

Pirates of the Caribbean is an intriguing ride, especially if you know the history. The ride first debuted at California's Disneyland in 1967, one of the last Disneyland attractions where its development was overseen by Walt Disney himself. Decades later, the first Pirates of the Caribbean film was created based on the ride! The initial film was released in 2003, launching a highly successful movie fran-

chise. There are now five Pirates of the Caribbean movies, the latest released in 2017, all starring Johnny Depp as the pirate, Jack Sparrow.

Three years after the first movie was released, the Jack Sparrow character was added to the Disney ride and, as we drifted on our boat through the piratical world, Jack Sparrow popped up a few times.

So, to sum up, the ride came first, inspiring the movies, which inspired a change to the ride!

One other ride that we thoroughly enjoyed despite the typical waiting line was the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad. Here, too, my inner nerd emerged in full form. It's been a while since I road a roller coaster, but in the days of my youth (lo those many years ago), I loved them.

Turns out, I still do and Big Thunder Mountain Railroad is an authentic, spine-shaking, gasp-inducing, old-fashioned coaster, just right to satiate my nostalgic appetite.

So, can adults have fun at Disney? Absolutely, but bring your patience and your gold card, and check the details of scheduling and accommodations. We stayed at the Marriott Village, which advertised a shuttle service which ran only on a very limited schedule. So, we opted for Uber and made our way to and from Disney efficiently and inexpensively.

And when you're there, say hi to Kermit for me, would you?

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.



The Disney paddle-wheeler can provide a nice break from the bustling crowds throughout the iconic theme park.



Adult visitors to Disney will especially enjoy the nostalgic-but-thrilling feel of the Thunder Mountain Railroad roller coaster.

Riddles

What comes down but never goes up?
Rain.

What did Delaware?
A New Jersey

What do you call a person with a tree for a briefcase?
A branch manager.

What did the calculator say to the other calculator?
"You can count on me"

Why were the pirates so good at singing?
They were working on the high Cs.

What do prisoners use to call each other?
Cell phones.

What did one NASCAR driver say to the other?
"Do you want to crash at my place tonight?"

Why do gorillas have broad fingers?
Because they have large nostrils.

Why is a snake lucky?
Because you can't pull its leg

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 31



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- CHRISTA DEGUCHI
- SUMMER MCINTOSH
- ETHAN KATZBERG
- CAMRYN ROGERS
- JEROME BLAKE
- AARON BROWN
- ANDRE DE GRASSE
- BRENDON RODNEY
- KATIE VINCENT
- PHIL WIZARD

MUSINGS: Who's On First?



MARK HERTZBERGER

Times Freelance Columnist

Who said what, in what manner, why, and to whom? We watch, with some consternation, the drama that has been unfolding at Stratford City Hall. We know that something was said to someone in some manner that led to certain individuals being banned from Council meetings.

One of the banned residents says: "None of us were hostile, disrespectful, harassing or vexatious". Yet a councillor has accused the residents of "casting derision and scorn" at staff. So the question is, exactly what words were used and in what manner and tone? Nobody can really say

apparently. To be fair, though, protecting the privacy of the individuals involved may be a concern here.

In a past life, I was a workplace mediator and harassment investigator. I don't care to revisit those days but am always curious about spectacles of miscommunication and assumption as they play themselves out in political circuses.

We don't really know what was said. There is no mention of human rights grounds, such as race or gender, so we assume the alleged remarks would fall under the definition of harassment or bullying under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Were these alleged remarks recorded? We don't really know. Was an investigation conducted by a third party neutral investigator? They aren't really saying. One would hope so, given the tangled mess this has become.

There has been a flurry of news articles and letters to the editors around this matter. Some of the controversy centres around the City's Respectful Workplace policy. There are a couple of points worth noting here:



To begin with, any employer's policy must be at least as stringent as the prohibitions and guidelines set out by the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). Otherwise, the Act supersedes. So how does the OHSA define workplace harassment? Using "governmentese" language, of course: "Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome". In other words: repeatedly saying or doing something, that a reasonable person would find upsetting.

So, for example, you might not reasonably expect that an employee would be easily offended by elephant jokes. You would, on the other hand, expect that an employee might be embarrassed and humiliated by public criticism of their ethics or job performance.

There has also been the suggestion that city council chambers do not constitute a "workplace" therefore are exempt from the OHSA harassment prohibitions. Sorry, but no get-out-of-jail-free card there. "Workplace" encompasses anywhere that an organization's business is conducted.

So that would certainly include council chambers where senior staff members attend meetings as part of their job duties. In some circumstances it could even include conference centres, hotels, vehicles, or restaurants.

It reminds me of the classic Abbot & Costello baseball skit, *Who's On First?* The players are named "Who", "What" and "I Don't Know". Because no one seeks to explain that these are actually names, confusion ensues and the audience is soon pulled into the insanity.

Let's hope that someone soon defines the terms in the current City Council drama. Otherwise we may never know who's on first and this will be a colossal waste of time and municipal tax dollars.

Mark Hertzberger is a former social services supervisor, human resources manager, conflict mediator, and literacy practitioner. He has since freed his mind and now writes poetry and occasional opinionated columns. Mark has lived in Perth County for 27 years, the last 12 of which have been in Stratford where he resides with his wife, novelist Yvonne Hertzberger.

Are your kids always on social media?



BRUCE WHITAKER

Times Freelance Columnist

Our recent trip to Japan was meant to be a memorable vacation with our niece, who had never ventured outside of North America. We wanted to give her a meaningful experience before she headed off to college. What we didn't anticipate was that our trip would be shared with an unwelcome companion: her smartphone. It was aggravating to watch her on Tik Tok only oc-

asionally looking up to catch a glimpse of Japan before diving back into social media. Despite our best efforts, we couldn't pry her attention away from her phone. At one point, the thought of tossing her phone in a trash bin crossed our minds. We resisted the urge, but the temptation was strong.

There is a growing societal concern that social media might be harming our children's futures. Despite frequent arguments from kids, like ours, that social media is their essential social lifeline, we must ask: at what cost? With nearly 95 per cent of youth having access to smartphones, is there a way back?

U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy recently suggested that tech platforms should include warning labels, citing social media as a significant contributor to the mental-health crisis among teens. His recommendations are supported by statistics from

Jonathan Haidt's bestseller, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. While these figures are American, they highlight a troubling trend:

- Percentage of U.S. teens who say that they have had one "major depressive episode" in the past year has increased by more than 150 per cent since 2010.

- Among American girls between the ages of 10 and 14, emergency room visits for self-harm grew by 188 per cent during that period, while deaths by suicide increased by 167 per cent.

Many, including Haidt, argue that technology has diverted young people from activities crucial for healthy development, such as outdoor play, face-to-face interactions and adequate sleep. Instead, they are immersed in a digital world that undermines their self-esteem, shortens their attention spans and pressures them

into a relentless performance of their online personas. The constant barrage of notifications and the urge to stay connected detract them from their studies and contribute to late-night screen time.

However, some critics argue that Haidt may be exacerbating a moral panic. They point to a marked decrease in youth suicide rates across Europe between 2012 and 2019, which fell by 26 per cent. They also suggest that increased awareness and reporting of mental-health issues could explain the rise in self-harm statistics. Additionally, they highlight the positive aspects of social media, such as maintaining connections with family and friends, expressing identity, supporting social movements (e.g. Black Lives Matter) and finding support networks.

Like many families, we are searching for solutions. It is crucial to stay informed about how our kids interact with and respond to the social-media landscape

while experts work to understand the full implications. While we need to listen to our children and understand their perspectives, we must provide guidance to young minds still developing their decision-making skills. To that end, we have established these six guidelines:

- No technology at dinnertime, in bedrooms at night, or in bathrooms.

- No technology at least one hour before bedtime.

- Morning chores and breakfast to be completed before using technology.

- No smartphones while doing homework.

- Unscheduled checks of online activity.

- No smartphones on vacations (a rule to consider when traveling with our niece).

By implementing these rules, we feel we have secured a healthier balance and more meaningful interactions within our family.

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Environmental Heroes: Reaping the benefits of car co-ownership

ANNA KOWALCHUK

Times Contributor

Our first featured environmental hero, Indigo, to whom we were introduced in our previous installment, showed us that living car free is far more manageable and much more rewarding than those eye-popping, seductive car ads and that pesky human-sloth gene would have us believe.

Gas-powered vehicles account for approximately 29 per cent of global greenhouse-gas emissions. In contrast, electric vehicles account for zero until we factor in the highly polluting manufacturing process of the batteries, and the sometimes-questionable source of the energy used in the recharging process. While many are working hard and in good faith to overcome these drawbacks, until they do, both gas-powered and electric vehicles (though much less so) will remain part of the environmental problem rather than the solution.

But living entirely car free may still be a bridge too far for many of us. Given the dire existential predicament in which we find ourselves, though, it is well worth our while to explore ways of at least limiting the use of cars and perhaps even limiting cars themselves. Enter Al.

Al is a child and family therapist who, along with his wife Janine, a speech therapist, and good friends and retired neigh-

bours Louise and Peter, came up with an intriguing and, as far as I'm aware, novel approach to car ownership. It began innocuously enough during the COVID19 pandemic. No one was going anywhere because there was nowhere to go and Louise and Peter's car sat in their garage decidedly not useful. In fact, studies show that, pandemic or not, the average car is moving only 5 per cent of the time, which means that it remains parked for a whopping 95 per cent.

As the world began to open up again and Al and Janine found themselves in need of a car, theirs being out of commission, Louise and Peter kindly began lending them theirs. Al and Janine were able to reciprocate when Louise and Peter's car also refused to do what cars are supposed to do, ie. run, and thus things went back and forth until it became clear that, with both cars being older and in constant repair mode, a new car was needed by both couples.

Which of the four actually said it first is not clear, but the idea slowly took hold, then shape and finally the two couples decided that having had, by circumstance, to essentially manage with only one car for almost two years, surely they could, this time by choice, manage with only one car going forward. So, Al, Janine and Louise (Peter no longer drives) put their wish lists together (extra-large coffee-mug holder, low-tech interior, easy to enter and exit)

and the search was on! There certainly is truth in the adage, "Leap and the net will appear." Not only were these good folks able to find a car that fit all their requirements, but it was in a condition and at a price that they couldn't turn down. So, in November of 2023, their little seed of an idea germinated into a full bloom.

The cost of purchase was split between the two couples and the ongoing costs of gas, insurance, maintenance, etc. is split amongst the three drivers, with Louise as the designated bookkeeper. In the winter months and if not in use, the car is kept in Louise and Peter's garage, and in the warmer months, in the driveway of whoever drove it last. Because Janine works from home and enjoys walking, she uses the car the least. Youthful 83-year-old Louise uses it mostly for specific activities such as attending her bridge club and visiting friends, but she has also made changes, for example, in where she banks, so that she too can walk to many of the places she needs to go. Al typically drove to work but was happy to walk when required.

Each knows, more or less, the others' routines – who will need the car when – and a quick chat will usually accommodate any unexpected requirements. Conflicting schedules are easily resolved by determining whose need is the greatest, with the others making use of alternative options, including public transit. All three

of these lovely people are relaxed, easy-going and delightfully good-humoured; they make car co-ownership work.

This is not to say, though, that there haven't been challenges. Louise recalls the time that Al left the gas tank a hair off empty and, preferring not to white-knuckle it to a gas station, had to hustle to her medical appointment on foot.

"Just one dirty look and Al got the message," she laughed.

And getting to and from the Toronto airport recently without the car was quite the adventure for Al and Janine, but with some careful juggling and delicate maneuvering, they too managed successfully.

These two inspiring couples are my environmental heroes. They chose car co-ownership for a variety of reasons and they have been rewarded in a variety of ways. They have saved significantly in financial terms, they are reducing that critical carbon footprint and they are understanding there is dignity in sacrifice.

"It's good for us to not always have everything we want; it's good to compromise once in a while" Al says.

And I know that he means it.

If you know of an individual, company or organization that deserves recognition for their innovative and sustainable environmental practices, please contact me at frogsaleaping@yahoo.com.

Seeking Sustainability: 2023-2024 school year in review

NATALIE DITTY

Stratford District Secondary School Eco Club

Welcome to Seeking Sustainability! This column is written by the Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) Eco Club to share environmental news and initiatives with the public.

The SDSS Eco Club had a very busy and successful 2023-2024 school year! The urban-farm project, located on a previously unused patch of land at the end of Smith Street, had its first plants put into the ground this year. A large array of vegetables were transplanted from where they had been growing in the school greenhouse, while others were planted directly from seed. Wildflowers were also planted along the border of the garden to help attract pollinators.

A row of cedar trees was planted along O'Loane Avenue to act as a windbreak. This, along with the use of cover crops and no-till farming practices, will help to protect the topsoil. In addition, a few different types of fruit trees have been planted just outside of the garden. Two water totes, which will be filled by the city, were also donated to the club to help with watering the gardens.

Next school year, the food harvested from the garden will be shared with the

local community and the school's culinary program.

In September 2023, the Eco Club worked in collaboration with other local climate-activist groups including Climate Momentum and the Perth County Sustainability Hub to organize a march to Stratford city hall to raise awareness about ending our reliance on fossil fuels. At city hall, speakers shared messages of hope and spoke about the importance of building a sustainable future for all. Among those speaking were the Eco Club 2023-2024 co-chairs, Jocelyn Williams and Zack Kritzer.

In November, members of the Eco Club attended and presented at Perth County Municipal Day. The group shared information about the issue of the lack of tree cover in Perth County, which was the topic of a culminating project completed by the senior green industries class the previous year. During this meeting, club members spoke with many municipal politicians about the importance of increasing tree cover and discussed actionable steps that can be taken to achieve this, including the possibility of amending tree bylaws.

In early April 2024, members of the Eco Club attended an Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) Student Environment Forum held at the South

Huron Recreation Centre in Exeter. Our club was invited to present at the conference as part of the workshop section of the forum. Here, members shared stories of our past projects and our plans for the future, then workshopped with attendees from other schools to help them brainstorm ideas for how to get environmental initiatives started in their own schools and local communities.

From April 22-26, the SDSS Eco Club organized interactive events for students to participate in and learn more about climate change and sustainable solutions to current environmental problems. Events included information based on this year's Earth Week theme, "Planet vs. Plastics," as well as fun prizes for classes to win. Individual classes were also scheduled to go on field trips to local businesses or had guest speakers join their classes to help students learn more about environmental innovation in their field of study.

After the Earth Week celebrations, the club held its third-annual SDSS Student Swap in May. At this event, students and staff members brought in gently used items from their homes, which were collected from all homerooms. The items were sorted by members of the Eco Club and displayed in the cafeteria on the day of the event, and every student who brought in at least one item was excused

from their final class of the day to look through all the items and take home as many as they wish. The purpose of this event is to promote the reuse of items, which helps to reduce emissions, save natural resources and reduce textile waste, along with encouraging a culture of kindness and generosity within the school community.

In May, the Eco Club and green industries class held its annual plant sale to raise money for next year's events and initiatives. Every year, the sale includes herbs, vegetables, perennial and annual plants, succulents, cacti, and other plants that have been growing in the school's gardens and greenhouse throughout the year. The green industries class also teamed up with other tech classes to sell products showcasing their welding, woodworking and cosmetology skills, to name a few.

During the final week of classes in June, members of the Eco Club met with city officials to give their input on the Grand Trunk project. This initiative is focused on the repurposing of the Cooper Site in Stratford. The club shared its ideas for possible projects and uses of the land, lending an environmental perspective to the discussion. With the new school year coming up soon, there is much to look forward to from the SDSS Eco Club!



ROBERT "BOB" ARTHUR WOODBURN

Robert (Bob) Arthur Woodburn, born July 28, 1928 in Montreal, passed away in Stratford on Tuesday, August 6, 2024 in his 97th year.

Beloved husband of Margaret, his wife of 65 years. Dear father of Anne (David) Campion, Beverly (Trevor) Savage and Andrea Woodburn. Grandfather to Arielle (David) and Dylan (Julie), Ben (Sam), Nathan and Caleb (Rebecca). Great-grandfather to Ezra and Sadie, Ezekiel, Grace and Amelia, Maille, and Murphy. Dear uncle to Peter (Ann), Cathy (Brian), Lindsay, James (Mary Ann) and Deborah (Alex). He is predeceased by his parents Arthur Woodburn and Jessie Muir, his sisters Joyce (Jim) and Beverley (Bob), nephew-in-law Michael and niece-in-law Patricia.

Bob went to be with his Lord and Saviour on August 6 2024. Born into a family of plumbers, it's no surprise Bob took up the family plumbing and heating trade. Raised in Montreal, he inherited a love for hockey, and more specifically, a love for the Montreal Canadiens, of which he always remained a fan. When Bob had free time, you may have found him reading his Time or Discovery magazines, listening to classical music, or enjoying a hockey game. Bob's laser level gave him the straightest woodpile in Christieville, and you would never find him without a pocket calculator, pen, notebook and comb in his front left shirt pocket! Bob was an active member in his local church, singing in the choir, teaching Sunday School, serving as a deacon, and volunteering for anything else. Bob loved to listen to or tell a good story and was known for laughing the hardest at his own jokes.

While Bob had many talents and abilities, he spent the larger part of his working life serving the Lord together with Margaret in a children's home ministry. There he added cooking to his skills and took responsibility for all the maintenance needs of the home. Working alongside a team of staff, they dedicated their lives to caring for the needs of the children, showing them the love of Christ.

Above all, Bob will be most treasured as a dad, grandpa, and great grandpa. His commitment to his family was evident in the kilometres on his vehicles, the tools in his vans, the skis and sleds in his basement, his swimsuits, hats and long-johns, his chair in front of the barbecue, and the amount of ice cream in his freezer (well that might also have been for him). In the words of his great granddaughter, his legacy to us all will be "always love Jesus" and "always remember family." We love you Dad, thank for showing us the meaning of those two things, we are forever grateful. XO.

With hearts full of gratitude, we wish to acknowledge the staff of Greenwood Court for their love and care of Bob these past five years. You have walked this journey alongside Bob and our family with skill and compassion. The words "thank you" could never hold the appreciation we feel.

Donations may be made to the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth directly (www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth) or through the James A. Rutherford Funeral Home. 804 Ontario St., Stratford. 519-271-5062.

Private family interment was held on Saturday, August 10 2024, followed by a public funeral service and celebration lunch at 11:15 am at Tri-County Mennonite Homes Community Space (Greenwood Court), 90 Greenwood Drive, Stratford, N5A 7W5.

CLASSIFIEDS

OBITUARY



MICHAEL WILLIAM GORNICYZKI

We are sad to announce the passing of Michael William Gornyczki, on August 3, 2024 at Greenwood Court at the age of 94 years.

Mike was pre-deceased by his parents Julia and Mike Gornyczki and his siblings Helen Majer (Joe), Julia Papai (Jim), Les Gornyczki (Mary) and Mary Heywood (Jack). He also leaves behind several nieces and nephews who spent quality time with him over the years.

Mike was well known throughout the community providing a much loved and popular meeting place for the gathering of friends and families at Mike's Bowling Lanes. His parents before him and his own family all worked there at one time or another.

Those who are left, believe it highly appropriate to say that Mike's life was well lived and that he will surely be missed.

There will be no formal public visitation or funeral service held. Instead, family will honour and remember him as he wanted to be remembered – with gratitude, in kindness and in love.

All arrangements made through Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services. Donations in Mike's memory may be made to a charity of one's choice through the funeral home. 804 Ontario St., Stratford. 519-271-5062

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GET OUTDOORS: Try something different this fall



JEFF HELSDON

Times Freelance Columnist

Outdoorspeople love their time in nature, but often tend to partake in the same activities each fall.

Be it hunters, anglers, hikers or birders, many fall into a routine. With all the opportunities that southwestern Ontario has to offer, try something different this fall.

From what I've seen at the launch ramps when the Lake Erie walleye fishing is on, there is no shortage of

anglers who are taking advantage of the numerous walleye to add to their freezers. Along the way, they pick up some steelhead (rainbow trout) as well. Catching a good-sized steelhead is always a thrill. Now, imagine the fun catching those fish on lighter rods in the river. There are many rivers on both Lake Erie and Lake Huron with steelhead or salmon runs to take advantage of.

There is nothing like the thrill of tying into a muskellunge. Known as the king of freshwater game fish, these large predators are also known as the fish of 1,000 casts for their elusiveness. The good news is trolling for muskies has a better success rate, and fall is prime time as they feed to prepare for winter. Lake St. Clair and the Niagara River are known for their muskie fishing, and Long Point Bay is gaining a reputation for muskie fishing. Not comfortable with bringing a fish four feet long into the boat? Try going with one of the guides who have great

success.

Southwestern Ontario has many opportunities for upland game hunting. Having a cackling male pheasant take flight from under your feet is heart-stopping excitement, and one that ends up with fine eating. There are several spots for pheasant hunting, ranging from the well-known Pelee Island to Norfolk County, Fingal Wildlife Management Area in Elgin County and Hullet Marsh near Clinton.

The majority of duck hunters pursue puddle ducks because they are more easily accessible and require less equipment. Hunting for diving ducks is a whole other game, and one I would recommend hiring a guide for. Large numbers can be found on Lake St. Clair, Rondeau Bay and Long Point Bay. Even if the hunting is slow, one of my favourite things about this type of hunting is seeing the huge number of birds at peak migration – the clouds of ducks is a sight to behold.

A few years ago, several individuals in the outdoor community put a lot of effort into having a dove hunt in Ontario. These birds are popular for hunting in the United States and people pay thousands of dollars to hunt doves on their wintering grounds in South America, but it hasn't taken off here. Typically done with decoys from a blind like duck hunting, but over a field, I have plans of hunting field edges with my dog this season.

Fall turkey hunting is a different sport than pursuing male turkeys in the spring. It's also a good way to learn more about turkeys, their calls and interactions with each other. And a bonus is the fall turkey woods is a lot less crowded than in the spring.

For some reason, small game hunting isn't as popular as it used to be. My grandfather and uncle talked of doing weekly jackrabbit drives in Oxford County in the 1950s and '60s. While jackrabbit numbers ar-














en't what they once were, rabbit and squirrel populations are healthy.

Opportunities also abound for hiking, bird watching and butterfly watching in the fall across southwestern Ontario. Fall colours add another element to any hike. It's prime time for bird watching and southwestern Ontario is on the migration corridor for many species. The Lake Erie shoreline is used by migrating raptors and the lake's three points – Long Point, Rondeau and Pelee – are used for crossing the lake by birds. Catching peak butterfly migration is a little trickier, but seeing a whole tree filled with monarchs is awe-inspiring. The best times to catch them are late in the day or the morning.

Make a vow to yourself or your companion in the outdoors that this fall you are going to try something different.

Jeff Helsdon is an award-winning outdoor writer, a columnist for Ontario Out of Doors and writes for several other outdoor publications.

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1	5	4	7	2	6	8	3	9
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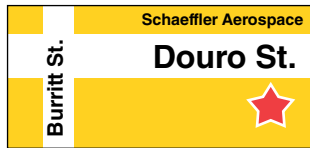
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