

# STRATFORD TIMES

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DECEMBER 8, 2023

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## Stratford StopVAW Committee hosts an evening of discussion around Gender-based violence

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On November 28, the Stop Violence Against Women Committee of Perth County (StopVAW Perth County) hosted an evening of education in collaboration with partners, including the Stratford Police Services.

The community was invited to a public viewing of StopVAW's commissioned film Survivor Stories: Responding to Domestic Violence in Perth County. This screening was during The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

The government of Canada recognizes The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in November and December. The campaign started in 1991 to call out and speak up on gender-based violence and to renew their commitment to end violence against women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals.

This annual international campaign begins on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and goes until December 10, known as Human Rights Day.

The goal of the StopVAW committee is to work collaboratively in an effort to end violence against women in Perth County by educating community members about available local services. The committee is committed to supporting survivors of domestic violence

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



### WINTER WANDER-LAND

(FRED GONDER PHOTO)

Twinkling carousel and s'more roasting by cozy firepits last weekend at Market Square to start the holiday season off right.

## What's your wish for the community? Lights On Stratford opens next weekend

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Lights on Stratford officially opens Friday, December 15, at 5 p.m., with opening remarks and special events happening at 6 p.m. in Market Square. Visitors are invited to experience firsthand one of the main attractions this year; "Dandelion," a light art installation making its North American premiere travelling all the way from Sydney, Australia.

Dandelions are traditionally known to be the makers of wishes when the seeds are blown, and this year's opening night will be based around just that: "What's your wish for the community?"

Zac Gribble, Destination Stratford's Executive Director, says this year that Lights On Stratford is designed around the theme of "Emergence," perfectly aligned with how Stratford, as a community, is coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on resilience and vibrancy.

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DEC 8 2023

# Stratford StopVAW Committee hosts an evening of discussion around Gender-based violence



## STOP VIOLENCE

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

StopVAW Committee members: Kehlar Hillyer, Policy and Program Coordinator for City of Stratford Social Services; Julia Church, Women's Advocate and Program Coordinator for Emily Murphy Centre; Jen Olenewa, Community Projects Lead at Optimism Place; and Alicia Houston, Senior Manager of Programs at Optimism Place.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT  
within Perth County and beyond.

During the screening of the film, committee members from outreach supports within Stratford - Kehlar Hillyer, Policy and Program Coordinator for City of Stratford Social Services; Julia Church, Women's Advocate and Program Coordinator for Emily Murphy Centre; Jen Olenewa, Community Projects Lead at Optimism Place; and Alicia Houston, Senior Manager of Programs at Optimism Place were available to discuss the topic of domestic violence with those in attendance.

The educational event, held at the Stratford City Hall Auditorium, played the one-hour-long video which offered insight into first-hand accounts of gender-based violence within Perth County as well as professional discussion around the topics regarding the justice system, health system, shelter and second-stage

systems within the community.

This video has also been used as a training tool for community outreach groups, such as the Stratford Police Services.

The StopVAW committee says they have very good feedback about the use of first-hand accounts for training purposes, "The video stemmed a lot of really great conversation about police interactions and domestic violence cases in the community," said Church, "I also talked about safety planning and risk assessments with these groups. And we had a good discussion about domestic violence in our community."

To learn more or support the committee, please visit [www.stopvawperth.ca](http://www.stopvawperth.ca) or contact the StopVAW committee members individually as above. You can also view the entire film by scrolling down on the site's homepage.



# City requests community input regarding Homelessness at Community Consultation

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The City of Stratford Social Services Department hosted a Housing and Homelessness Community Consultation on Thursday, November 23, from 5 to 8 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium.

In a packed house that evening, city staff had to introduce more chairs throughout the auditorium to accommodate the number of community members attending the event.

Speakers from the city discussed housing and homelessness and how it impacted those in the community. They also asked for community involvement with regard to thoughts and feelings about the state of the housing crisis within Stratford.

Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services for The City of Stratford, said, "This gathering signifies the power of collaboration and collective action to come together to explore innovative solutions for housing and homelessness and the challenges we face," she continued, "Your perspectives, insights and experiences will provide invaluable guidance in shaping our next update."

"Everyone has the right to a safe, suitable and affordable home," said Jeff Wilson, Housing Manager for The City of Stratford, "And everyone has the right to support that will help keep them in their home."

The presentation by Wilson discussed the different terms used with regard to housing, such as attainable housing, affordable housing and community housing, as well as the many roles of the Social Service Department.

Wilson noted one crucial role of the social service department is to administer social services to residents in Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys between four divisions: Housing, Ontario Works, Children Services and Anne Hathaway Day Care Centre.

With regard to homelessness, McElroy noted that there are currently 153 households in Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County experiencing homelessness.

"26% of those households were experiencing unsheltered homelessness being that they were sleeping rough outdoors or in a shelter or are not fit for human habitation," said Alex Burgess, Ontario Works Manager for The City of Stratford, "This is an increase of 7% since last December, and currently 92% were experiencing chronic homelessness and of those, 50% identified as First Nation or having First Nations ancestry."

Currently, the city operates with a three-million-dollar budget. Community members who attended the event were asked how they would divide the allocated budget between different homelessness initiatives. These include community outreach support, emergency shelter solutions, housing assistance and supportive housing.

Attendees were asked to divide up the allocated funds (by percent) on a budget activity form, and this would be used to better understand community input as to how people in Stratford, St. Marys and Perth-County could see tax dollars being used to support housing and homelessness.

Although some people were unreceptive to the idea, one Stratford citizen noted, "I have sympathy for you trying to organize your budget. And I applaud you for seeking our input, but I don't feel I will make a well-informed decision without more time."

Many people did take the time to note their thoughts about the allocation of funds, which will now be taken into consideration by the City of Stratford to help better manage and understand community input and how a small portion of the public feels the three-million-dollar budget should be allocated for homelessness.



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

There was a room full of attendees at the Housing and Homeless Consultation at the City Hall Auditorium.

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# STRATFORD TIMES

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[stratfordtimes@gmail.com](mailto:stratfordtimes@gmail.com)  
[www.stratfordtimes.com](http://www.stratfordtimes.com)

## Editor

Stewart Grant

## Graphic Design / Layout

Sarah Cairns

## Administrative

Wendy Lamond, June Grant, Cindy Boakes

## Advertising Inquiries

Contact [stratfordtimes@gmail.com](mailto:stratfordtimes@gmail.com)

or call 519-655-2341

## Contributors

Spencer Seymour, Betty-Jo Belton, Julia Schneider, Gary West, Paul Knowles, Emily Stewart, Lisa Chester, Fred Gonder, April Taylor, Sheila Clarke, Irene Roth, Lauren Eedy, Lee Griffi, Stuart Lender, Amanda Modaragamage, Thomas R. Verny (If interested in contributing to the Stratford Times, send us a note at [stratfordtimes@gmail.com](mailto:stratfordtimes@gmail.com))



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# Stratford restaurants' pay-it-forward initiative feeding those in need

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Diners can give back this holiday season by paying for meals for those in need.

Joe's Diner and Sirkel Foods started pay-it-forward programs. Customers can pay for a meal for someone who is otherwise unable to afford it. The meal tickets go up on a board and those looking for a previously paid meal can pick one from the board.

Dan Myers, co-owner of Joe's Diner, said the restaurant started the pay-it-forward program after seeing a Facebook post about the Nelson Street Pub in Pembroke, Ontario launching one.

"Our restaurant is the perfect avenue to do something like that," he said. "Especially that close to downtown where a lot of the less fortunate are hanging around and where a lot of the programs and community outreach programs are located. It just makes sense to give it a shot."

So far, over 300 meals have been bought as part of Joe's Diner's program. The diner offers a breakfast and a beverage combo and a soup and sandwich combo for its pay-it-forward program. If someone looking for a pay-it-forward meal wants something different to eat, then the restaurant can provide that and cover the difference.

"There's really no set rules to it," Myers said. "If you're hungry and you need a meal, come and grab the chit and we'll make sure that happens - no questions asked."

Kelly Ballantyne, co-owner of Sirkel Foods, also saw the post about Nelson Street Pub's pay-it-forward program along with the post from Joe's Diner. She wanted to bring such a program to Sirkel Foods, too.

"I feel strongly about helping others," Ballantyne said. "We often feed people living on the streets. If we see someone sleeping close to Sirkel, we always take them out coffee and breakfast."

Sirkel Foods is including drinks, macaroni and cheese, coffee, scones, and soups in its pay-it-forward program. Realtor Shaun Pickering also teamed up with the restaurant and donated 295 sandwiches, one for every main dish sold on November 29. The sandwiches will be donated to the Emily Murphy Centre, Optimism Place, Shelterlink, Stratford House of Blessing, and a church in St. Marys.

"This was amazing. So many people came in," she said. Myers is thankful for the support from those who came in and paid-it-forward, especially with new customers



## PAY-IT-FORWARD

(KELLY BALLANTYNE PHOTO)

Sirkel Foods customers can purchase food for someone in need as part of the pay-it-forward program, following the initiatives run by Joe's Diner and Pembroke's Nelson Street Pub

coming in to contribute.

"The thanks isn't to us," he said. "It's to the community for stepping up."

Ballantyne would like to see the program continue.

"We have already had people pick cards off the wall and use them so the program works. If we get too many cards then we will make up some sandwiches and send them to the Connection Centre or anywhere else that needs help," she said. "I hope the program stays forever. You never know when you just might need a little help."

**CORRECTION:** the November 24, 2023 article entitled "The Stratford and area Master Gardeners plant pollinators to support local wildfire" had incorrectly listed the name of the Conservation Fund involved. The

article should have referenced that funding came from the Donald McTavish Conservation Fund held within The Stratford Perth Community Foundation. The Times apologizes for the error.

# STRATFORD TIMES

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# What's your wish for the community? Lights On Stratford opens next weekend

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

On opening night, Lights On Stratford will partner with the Stratford Public Library and local high school students to make this event memorable with a Flash(light) Mob. Students will use their phone flashlights to add to the creation of the dandelion display, and a drone will capture the event. Community members and visitors are encouraged to come out and experience the fun and excitement of opening night.

“Stratford is home to some of the world’s most creative artists and designers,” said Gribble, “Lights on Stratford has not only found a way to harness this during the winter months but also offers a way for the community to gather in our public areas to experience connection, meaning and joy.”

Although Destination Stratford organizes the events and displays, Gribble notes, “Lights On Stratford is a community-wide collaboration, all with community connection in mind.”

This year, fun for the whole family also includes free skating at the historic William Allman Memorial Arena for Lights On Stratford Skate Dates starting at 3 p.m. on Friday, December 15. “We thought, wouldn’t it be great to combine skating on ice with colourful lights projected on the surface, so we partnered with the City to offer free public skating that everyone can enjoy, whether as a couple, a family, with friends or skating solo,” said Gribble.

Similar to last year, Destination Stratford has partnered with Stratford City Transit to offer a free and accessible hop-on-hop-off shuttle bus for festival patrons; however, this year, there will be two buses, allowing for a bus pickup at each stop every 15 minutes. “We found a single bus took about half an hour to do the full loop,” said Gribble, “so we’re excited about doubling the capacity to halve the wait time. We’ve also turned



## EXPERIENCE THE FUN

The Dandelion Light Installation is coming to Stratford. The shuttle buses themselves into roving light displays.”

A favourite display returns this year to Tom Patterson Island: Space Island. Similar to what was seen at the location two years ago, however, this year is much larger, including a new interactive light installation titled Lunar Lamp Posts. “Space Island combines multiple light elements across the entire island and will be visually striking from all sides of the river,” said Gribble.

“Lights on Stratford very much came out of the recovery response to COVID,” said Gribble, “It came at a time when indoor activities were closed, and the theatre was temporarily shuttered. We’ve got an interesting mandate, which is, in part, a layered strategy to tackle seasonality for the local visitor economy, but we’re also a big proponent of regenerative tourism, where tourism plays an active role in improving the quality of life for residents within the community.” The size and scope of the light art attractions have grown yearly over the four years since the inception of the lights festival during the pandemic and have had great feedback from community members and

businesses alike. “The feedback we’re getting each year from local residents is truly wonderful,” said Gribble, “and we also have many businesses within the community asking how they can be involved, and it’s really motivating for us to experience all of their enthusiastic support as evidenced by over 50 local corporate sponsors this winter.”

This year, Destination Stratford received a contribution from the City of Stratford to help support the festival. “The biggest single funding source is cash and in-kind sponsorship from local businesses,” said Gribble, “and their support is an excellent sign that we’re doing something right; that we’re on the right track and businesses in the community are aligned with our vision.”

Investments from the community in the Lights Festival are being noticed across the world, and Lights On Stratford is seen as an innovator in destination development. Gribble notes that because of this, Stratford is being recognized. “We’ve received provincial awards for innovation, and I’m speaking tomorrow at a Destination

Canada event about Lights On Stratford,” said Gribble. “We’ve had many conversations with other cities and destinations, including nearby communities as well as those further afield, such as the Flatiron District in New York City, who reached out to us to learn more about our approach and experiences. We are keen to continue developing a light art culture in Ontario and hope that an increasing number of light festivals keep our winters shining bright across the province.”

Gribble notes that large-scale destination development projects such as Lights On Stratford take time to reach maximum impact, but sometimes, slow and steady wins the race. “One of our festival’s goals is to be a cultural anchor tenant that enables an increasing number of other cultural activities to take place during the winter months. Creating a vibrant cultural tourism for this time of year will take time, but we’re very encouraged by all the cultural activations that have already formed in a relatively short period of time.”

“If we collectively employ a regenerative tourism lens, we will make our community more vibrant in a way that both residents and visitors will embrace,” says Gribble. “The best tourism development projects are those that directly improve the community by providing opportunities for joy, meaning and connection.”

You can join Lights On Stratford for opening night remarks and festivities at Market Square on Friday, December 15 at 6 p.m. and keep an eye out for other events throughout the festival, including free skating at William Allman Memorial Arena, silent disco at the LightWall display, and much more at [lightsonstratford.ca](http://lightsonstratford.ca).

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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### ReImagine Senior Living



# Festive RIDE Campaign reminds drivers to make a plan

LISA CHESTER

*Times Correspondent*

The Festive RIDE Campaign is underway, running from November 16th to January 1st. Perth County OPP and Stratford Police Services are visibly out this time of year to help remind drivers that driving while impaired is against the law.

This is the season where people get together and celebrate, but must do so with a plan beforehand. The safest thing is to plan to use a taxi, have a designated driver, plan to stay the night, or use public transit if available.

“The Festive RIDE allows us to educate drivers of the dangers of drinking and driving. This is the season where people socialize more so we want to make sure that people plan ahead and have a ride home. Every year we do a Festive RIDE, we’ve been out since November 16th in all of our communities,”

said Perth County OPP Inspector Wendy Burrow.

Drivers can expect to see the police doing RIDE operations at any time of day, not just the afternoon and evenings. Impairment by alcohol or drugs can happen at any time. This is an effective way to locate those drivers that are impaired as well as act as a reminder to stay safe and make the right choices.

“People may wonder why we are here at eleven in the morning but we find impaired drivers at seven in the morning and we find them at seven at night. This is also a reminder to drivers to have a safe ride home,” said Inspector Burrow.

So far in 2023, as of November 24th, there have been 78 impaired driving charges laid. The Perth County OPP and Stratford Police remain committed to keeping the roadways in Perth County, the City of Stratford, and the Town of St. Marys safe from drug-impaired and alcohol-impaired drivers.



## ARRIVE ALIVE

Members of the Perth County OPP and Stratford Police conduct the official launch of the Festive RIDE program on November 24th.

(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

# HPHA recognizes staff at a recent Community Connections Event

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

*Local Journalism Initiative Reporter*

Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA) recognized their team’s accomplishments with the annual Awards of Excellence presentation at the recent Community Connections event at the Rotary Complex. The presentation also provided an update on the activities across the Alliance, including staff retention and clinical services.

Andrew Williams, President and CEO of Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance, spoke first, describing his appreciation to staff members, “If there’s anything that you want to convey during these sessions, it is how incredible the HPHA team is and how proud we all are to be associated with an organization with such a dynamic group.”

Later, Williams started the presentation of the awards ceremony by reading through some of the nomination forms submitted by staff at HPHA, “I’ve had the opportunity to read through the nominations that came in, and it really is heartwarming to see what people say about their peers.”

Jackie Tam, Director of Patient Care, then presented the award for Collaborating with Exceptional Care to the Interdisciplinary Stroke Team for their collaborative work to bring exceptional care to the community.

The Optimism Award was given to Daniel Moutte, Manager of IT Operations (pictured), for his consistent optimism and positive mindset, especially through COVID-19. Moutte’s staff from the IT department were among those who came to

see the award presented to their beloved manager.

“Winning this award is like the positivity jackpot,” said Moutte, “Thank you for recognizing the importance of keeping things positive. Thank you for inspiring me to create an environment where positivity is celebrated, and thank you for inspiring me to create an environment where positivity is celebrated.”

The next award was the Leadership Award of Excellence, which was presented to Emily Ohler-Adams, Supervisor, Medical Device Reprocessing Department (MDRD), who has worked for HPHA for over 22 years. Her work as a supervisor has shown empathy, passion, dedication, and a ‘fantastic sense of humour,’ according to her co-workers. She was recognized as being a positive reinforcement in the department.

The medical reprocessing department cleans, reprocesses and sterilizes all hospital equipment, including surgical supplies, and Ohler-Adams oversees all operations within the department.

Williams ended the award presentation: “Healthcare is people looking after people, and the better the people are, the better the care is.”

The other awards that were presented were as follows: Engaging with Passion Award was given to Stephanie Untucht from Environmental Services (HPHA Stratford); The Innovation Award of Excellence was presented to Elizabeth Callaghan, Nurse Practitioner; and the Leadership Award of Excellence – Physician was presented to Dr. Eric Thomas.



## HPHA RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING STAFF

Daniel Moutte, Manager of IT Operations, received the The Optimism Award for his consistent optimism and positive mindset, especially through COVID-19.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)



# United Way Perth Huron announces United Housing Initiative

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After a year and a half of planning and work behind the scenes, United Way Perth-Huron (UWPH) officially announced its United Housing Initiative.

United Housing's focus is as a non-profit developer and operator of affordable rental supply. United Housing also aims to take a lead role in helping current landlords by fundraising, renovating and operating units so buildings don't sit unused; partnering with developers to help meet government requirements around affordable housing units; and creating workforce housing so people can afford to live in the community they work in.

For United Housing, affordable housing is defined as taking up no more than 30 percent of an individual or family's income every month.

"We are pleased to unveil the next evolution of our work on housing," said Mitchell Rhodes, director of United Housing and Ryan Erb, UWPH executive director at the Housing and Homelessness Consultation in November



## UNITED HOUSING

Mitchell Rhodes, director of United Housing and Ryan Erb, UWPH executive director at the Housing and Homelessness Consultation in November

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

housing for two reasons," said Ryan Erb, UWPH executive director, "Market workforce and affordable units. The point is that we want to ensure that by principle, we're not segregating people in any way."

"One thing we really want people to know is that we're also going to be working as a Property Management Service for those who have rental properties but don't want to be landlords," said Erb, "We can work with landlords to manage the properties and just sign the cheque to landlords."

"With United Housing, we're aiming to help ease a housing crisis we all either see or are experiencing firsthand," said Erb, "This is important work, and only through the support from our community can we raise the \$543,000 necessary to continue our work."

The finances raised will go directly towards housing projects that are currently underway, including eight current projects, some right here in Stratford, "We do have eight projects in the early phase of development," said Erb, "But at this time, we cannot release information to the public on those specific units."

United Housing Initiative will work closely with the municipal government to house those in need, and there is said to be an application process as soon as the units become available.

Erb ended by stating, "We hope to ensure that everyone in the community has access to safe, affordable housing choices."

For more information or to donate to the United Housing Initiative, please visit [perthhuron.unitedway.ca](http://perthhuron.unitedway.ca).



(SARAH CAIRNS PHOTO)

## CHARITY DRIVE

The Stratford Police Services held their annual toy drive outside of Walmart (Stratford) and Canadian Tire (St. Marys) in late November to support the Salvation Army and the House of Blessing.

Both toy drives were very successful," said Cst Darren Fischer, Media Relations Officer at The City of Stratford Police Services, "We had a great variety of items. There was a good range of toys for children of all ages and spectrums. It was great to see the community support."

Pictured: Gracie Dafoe and Cst Darren Fischer at the toy drive at Walmart in Stratford

ing. "UWPH has been doing a lot in this space over the past three years because we want to build something special in our region. We know it will take time and effort for our community to solve homelessness, but we're going to continue reaching out to partners and supporters to build a made-in-Perth-Huron solution that fits local needs."

The United Housing Initiative will work throughout Huron Perth to develop and operate mixed-income housing to help ease the burden of the housing crisis in the area, "We're intentionally doing mixed

## Light Up Stratford Contest

Decorate your home or business during the holiday season for the Light Up Stratford Contest. From Thursday, December 14th to Sunday, December 17th, judges from the volunteer CBEAC (Civic Beautification and Environmental Awareness Committee) will be viewing homes and businesses. Please have your lights on by 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Judging is based on creativity, innovation, environmental elements and curb appeal. The Committee thanks Orr Insurance, Dordel Unique Awards for their sponsorship of the Light Up Stratford Contest.

For more information please contact Bonnie 519-271-4545 or [cbeacstratford@yahoo.ca](mailto:cbeacstratford@yahoo.ca)



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# The City of Stratford implements Care Kit Program to help individuals experiencing Homelessness

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Outreach staff from the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, Municipality of North Perth, Stratford Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, Community Paramedic program, and the Canadian Mental Health Association have recently implemented a new Community Care Kit program to support those who are experiencing homelessness in the communities.

These partners will keep large yellow backpacks consisting of Care Kits in their vehicles, which will help provide support options and safety measures to individuals in encampments and sleeping rough through the colder months.

"We understand that during harsh weather conditions, people may not always have immediate access to essential supplies," said John Ritz, Homelessness and Housing Stability Supervisor of the Social Services Department at the City of Stratford, "After witnessing the success of a similar initiative in North Perth, we wanted to extend this support throughout



**ESSENTIALS** (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

**Newly implemented Care Kit Program backpack that community partners will carry. The colour is aimed to draw attention and be a proactive way to engage with the community about the program.**

our service area to assist anyone in need. We believe that this program will become a vital source of assistance in our community for years to come."

This program is aimed to provide support and build trust between Outreach staff, partner agencies, and the individuals within the community.

"We're hoping to gain an opportunity to have just a little bit more reach and provide support to those who are experiencing homelessness," said Cst Darren Fischer, Media Relations Officer at The City of Stratford Police Services, "We want people to be aware that we are here to provide whatever resources they need. The Care Kit program is a gentle reminder that we're here to help."

The Care Kit backpacks only cost the city \$1,166, and the supplies will be approximately \$15-\$20 each, which will be funded within the current Homelessness Prevention Program budget for 2023.

Community partners will provide the kits to individuals on an as-needed basis. Kits will include but are not limited to the following:

- A list of community services and phone numbers in the area in which they are located

- A printout of warming stations and community meals, locations, and times

- Single-use disposable hand and glove warmers

- Gloves and hats

- City of Stratford Transit and PC Connect schedules.

- Lip balm

- A gift card for local establishments

- Reusable water bottle

- Socks

The success of this program will propel the city to move forward with similar initiatives throughout next year as well," said Ritz, "As we continuously evaluate how we can best serve our community, we are also planning to launch a similar program in spring, focusing on supplies suitable for the changing weather. We are grateful for our strong community partners who actively support these initiatives, allowing us to collaboratively serve those who are most vulnerable in our community."

## What is the future of Falstaff Family Centre? McKennitt seeking input

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The Falstaff Family Centre is losing its anchor tenant, and the owner and director of the centre is looking for suggestions on what to do with the building.

The centre announced in a November 27 press release that the Perth Care Centre for Kids will no longer run the EarlyON program as of January 1, 2024, as the contract with the City of Stratford's Social Services was not renewed. EarlyON provided programming and support services for families with children from newborn to six-years old. The Falstaff Family Centre saw 22,000 children since opening more

than 20 years ago.

Loreena McKennitt, singer/songwriter and the owner and director of the Falstaff Family Centre, said the EarlyON program was the main tenant of the building. Since purchasing the 1929 neo-gothic building in November 2000, McKennitt has welcomed Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Snoezelen Room, Family Services Perth Huron, and Kindermusik to use the space, among others.

The building on 35 Waterloo Street North is currently occupied by the Stratford Middle Years School and the Multicultural Association of Perth Huron. The Falstaff Family Centre also worked with Indigenous communities to bring a medi-

cine wheel garden and host Indigenous-related activities such as Truth and Reconciliation Day programming.

"I know I own a very important heritage building in this city and in the neighbourhood," McKennitt said. "I felt a moral obligation to actually allow the community to decide what should become of it next."

The Falstaff Family Centre held a briefing on November 5, with discussions to follow under the name "The Future of FFC – The Discussion Begins." The public consultations within the next months will encourage residents to present their ideas about their vision for

the beloved heritage building.

"We've just seen the Avon Crest building come down and I know that with any heritage building, you want to feel that the community has time to consider their options," McKennitt said. "I think it's just too special of a place for me to just put up for sale and have side-by-side duplexes or something there."

## Weekend Quiz

- 1) Who was the first U.S President to be assassinated?
- 2) What country has the most natural lakes?
- 3) Which Austin Powers character loved gold?
- 4) Which planet is known as the "Red Planet"?
- 5) What is the square root of 16?
- 6) In 2004, what became the first Morse code characters to be added since WWII?
- 7) What country does curling originate from?
- 8) Which bird has the largest wingspan?
- 9) How many herbs and spices are in Colonel Sanders' original KFC recipe?
- 10) What is the most common eye color in humans?

This week's answers are found on pg. 31

## Queer Book of the Month

*Pride and Joy* by Frank J. Sileo @SPL: JP Sileo.

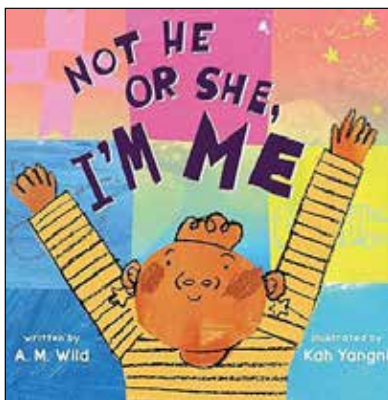
*Not He or She, I'm Me* by A.M. Wild @SPL: JP Wild.

*Everything Possible* by Fred Small @SPL J 782.421582 Sma.

This month I've chosen three books for younger children that focus on inclusivity.

*Not He or She, I'm Me* is a beautifully written picture book by A. M. Wild, with vibrant illustrations by Kah Yangni. It's an introduction to the gender-neutral pronouns, and is a wonderful celebration of the non-binary child.

The second picture book I'd like to share is called, *Pride and Joy* by Frank J. Sileo. Joy has a big brother called Noah, who is being bullied about being gay. Joy is so proud of Noah. He makes the best cookies and he's great at skateboarding. Most of all, he's always kind to her. But when Joy sees her brother being bullied, it makes her heart sick. She's just a little girl, and what can she do to support her brother? Joy's Mom comes up with an idea, to help Joy



become an ally to Noah.

This is a wonderful tale, explaining how we can support the people we love, and it has a list of discussion questions at the end of the story.

Finally, a book based on a song by Fred Small, *Everything Possible*. The original song was inspired by Small's friendship with a fellow musician. His friend's son was experiencing bullying at school, mainly because of his gentle, quiet personality, so Small wrote the song, and subsequently the book, to show kids it's OK to be who you are. There's a QR code at the back of the book so that children can hear the song. *Everything Possible* is a great reminder that it's OK to be who we are, and to love who we love.

These three books are just a taste of the many gender affirming stories that we have here at the library - stories that encourage kids to be themselves.

Heather Lister  
Public Service Librarian  
Stratford Public Library



# Times Past: Green Holly

BETTY JO BELTON

*Stratford-Perth Archives*

In 1895, a group of Stratford women published a small book of Christmas themed stories called *Green Holly* to raise awareness of the need for a “house of refuge” for vulnerable people in Stratford and Perth County. Copies of the book are preserved at Stratford-Perth Archives. One of the stories is reprinted here. It was written by Katharine McLagan McKenzie. I believe that Katharine was the daughter of Hugh and Catherine McKenzie (nee McLagan). The McKenzies were married in Stratford on December 13, 1859. Both were born in Scotland. Hugh McKenzie is described as a merchant in the 1861 census. At one point the family lived on Ontario Street, near the corner of Nile Street. When Catherine McKenzie died in 1904, her obituary described how her parents, William and Grace McLagan, moved to Stratford in 1845 and that she lived here until her family moved to Toronto at some point. Catherine’s obituary also notes that she was survived by four daughters, including “Miss Katherine McKenzie of Toronto.” Katherine was born on September 25, 1878. She never married. She died in 1947 in Michigan where she had gone to live with one of her sisters.

Katherine’s tale is a love story with a past tragedy and demonic forces threatening a happy future for a young couple, Cambell and Nell. It is told by Bailey, a “sad broken-down old man” in his fifties, who has a close relationship with Cambell and is friendly with Nell and her brother, Doc Anderson. Full of Christian references typical of the time and the writer’s social context, it is an interesting contribution to the tradition of stories of the supernatural as entertainment during the darkest time of the year. From *Beowulf* to *The Winter’s Tale* to *Dr. Who* specials, we have long welcomed distraction from a sometimes cold, dark reality by imagining good triumphing over the evil in our world.

## AN AFTER-DINNER YARN

By Katherine McLagan McKenzie

We had been sitting round the open fire, smoking. It was Xmas Eve. Cambell had just finished telling us a tall ghost story, which he swore was true. I could hear Doc Anderson chaffing him about it, but my thoughts were far away. I was aroused from my reverie by hearing Cambell say, “So you think there is no sixth sense, do



you? I know better.” I looked round startled, “Bailey thinks you are a little off, Cambell, and so do I,” Doc said carelessly.

A new note in Cambell’s voice had stirred some old memories long since buried in my heart. I am fifty-five, Cambell is twenty-eight; yet, if a sad, broken-down old man and a gay rollicking lad with never a care or a sorrow, can be friends, we have been that for ten long years – no for only nine – for he is so much changed that I have had a new lad to love this year – such an earnest steady lad, full of determination to redeem the past. One of Cambell’s old chums walked up street with me the other day – Cambell was on the other side.

“What has got into Cambell anyway?” he asked me confidentially. “He won’t touch a drop of anything, and as for going anywhere that isn’t first cousin to a church you might as well ask your grandmother.”

But to come back to the present, Cambell was saying, “I guess you two fellows have often wondered what has made me so different this last year. Well, I’m going to tell you – and when I am through you may believe or not in

what I call the sixth sense. Now don’t interrupt me; I’ll try to tell it straight. One year ago today I was in a restless mood and I wandered all over the town. I had a strange feeling of impending evil. I did not know what to do with myself. You were away Bailey. In the evening I went over to your place, Doc. I remember you met me at the door and asked where I got my long face. “Go in and see Nell; she has a long face too, and misery loves company, you know,” you laughed.

“Miss Nell certainly seemed unlike herself. She was restless, and looked unhappy. Conversation dragged. The feeling of danger and of impending evil deepened; I grew desperate, Miss Nell’s manner became more and more constrained. My mind was a blank. I tried to speak, but all I could think was, Rose of my heart I love you – and I dared not say that. As the moments passed this strange feeling intensified; in my distress I instinctively cried to God for help. All at once the years rolled back; in one of those odd soul illuminations of which I have often read, I saw what lay between Miss Nell and myself – it was the dead body of poor Polly.”

His voice choked, his eyes were dim. We waited in silent sympathy. We knew the story – it is too long to tell here. Poor lad! The heart he had so madly wooed and won at twenty he had thrown away at

twenty-three. And Polly – broken-hearted Polly – had drowned herself in wild despair, and on the next day but one her body had drifted into shore. He went on tremblingly, “It was the great temptation of my life; the devil whispered two or three versions of the story in my ear – all partly true, too. Another voice said, “Now is the time; don’t delay; tell the whole truth.” I rose and walked over to where Nell was sitting – something seemed to guide me. I said – or rather a voice said, “Miss Nell, I love you with all my heart and soul, but I dare not ask you to be my wife until I have told you something.” I thought the voices would be still if I were near my love, but they kept right on. “Tell the whole truth,” said the one, solemnly. “What! Lose the girl you love,” mocked the other. “She will hate and despise you. It is not at all necessary that she should know the whole truth. Tell her ---” “Would you perjure your soul?” interrupted the other voice, sternly.

“In despair I began to tell her the story, the two voices each prompting me. Word by word they fought for the mastery. Stumblingly, with Nell’s hands firmly clasped in mine to give me courage, I told the whole bitter, shameful truth.

“Since then Nell has told me that all that day she had had a sense of impending evil – doubts of me flashed through her mind; unformed suspicions clung to her consciousness, and in the evening when I called a mocking voice, whispered, “Ask him about Polly.” Distressed, torn by conflicting emotions, she too had cried to God for help. He heard us both I know, for the voices ceased.”

“That is a very odd story” Doc remarked when Cambell paused. “It certainly was a temptation of the devil but that is common enough.”

“But you have not heard the whole story yet,” my lad interrupted. “The next day Nell received a letter from a person who had been a friend of Polly’s. She apologized for her interference by saying that, though she was almost a stranger to Nell, some unseen force impelled her to lay the facts of the case before her that very night. The letter was dated December 23rd – that is the night before Xmas Eve. The writing of that letter was a fiendish act I think, and so does Nell.”

“But if the letter were written the night before Xmas Eve, how was it that it did not reach Nell until Xmas Day,” her brother objected.

“Nell forgot to send for her mail that day – at least you would say ‘forgot.’ I maintain that her sixth sense took possession of the field and saved us both.”

He stopped abruptly. We two smoked on in silence – Cambell never touches a pipe now-a-days. I thought wonderingly over my lad’s story. Had the Prince of Darkness prompted Nell to ask Cambell about Polly, at the same time tempting him to lie to her so that she would hate him when she learned the truth from that letter? Then he must have known about the letter lying in the post office even then. Does he really know everything, then? Was my next thought. I turned wearily away from these perplexing questions and fell to dreaming.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 13

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# Athens Greek Souvlaki and Gyro matching donations to the Salvation Army

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Terry Voukarakidis, Owner of Athens Greek Souvlaki & Gyro, located at 804 Ontario Street, is matching all donations given to the Salvation Army kettle pot inside the restaurant.

Voukarakidis immigrated to Canada in 1969 and says not a day goes by that he doesn't think about how lucky his family was to have the support of the Salvation Army during those fragile first years in Canada, "The Salvation Army came; God bless them. They gave us long Johns, boots and gloves. They gave us their hearts. They're wonderful people who never discriminate."

This is why he and his staff have decided to match all donations from their kettle pot, which will go towards the Christmas Campaign for The Salvation Army, "The Salvation Army saved my family, and I want to make sure I give back to them as they gave to me," said Voukarakidis, "Let's put a smile on every child's face this year."

The Salvation Army kettle pot Christmas campaign was started back in 1906 in order to collect donations for the most vulnerable. Currently, there are kettles in more than 2,000 locations across the country.



## MATCHING DONATIONS

Terry Voukarakidis, owner of Athens Greek Souvlaki and Gyro, stands with the Salvation Army donation kettle inside the restaurant where he and his staff match, dollar-for-dollar, all donations made at this location.

"The funds we raise go to support our community services," said Richard Honcharsky, The Salvation Army Stratford - St. Marys Executive Director, "This supports our food banks, our Back-to-School programs, Christmas hampers and Kids Sending Kids to Camp program."

This year, the Christmas campaign starts on November 17 and will run until December 23. This is the Salvation Army's sole yearly fundraiser, "In these five weeks during the campaign, we raise our operating funds for the whole year," said Honcharsky.

Currently, the Salvation Army staff and volunteers are completing Christmas registrations for their Christmas hampers. These hampers will provide food and toys to people in Stratford and St. Marys, "We're just a hub of activity right now," said Honcharsky, "It's a short period of time and we need to raise the funds so we can operate."

Honcharsky also noted that being approached by Voukarakidis was a great opportunity, "it's a win-win," he said, "Terry asked us if we could set up a kettle in the store and as soon as we did, he started filling it up with 10-dollar bills; Just to set a precedence, he's a great guy!"

Because of the rising costs of food and housing, Honcharsky notes that the need this year is greater than ever. "We've noticed more than a number of people who haven't used our services before are accessing them, and the need is just so much greater than it has been in previous years."

Honcharsky also said that if you're looking for other ways to support the Salvation Army, they welcome kettle pot volunteers. "We're all kind of involved and active, but we always welcome volunteers; they are essential."

If you can, stop in at Athens Greek Souvlaki & Gyro to donate, where Terry will double your Salvation Army kettle pot donation.

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# Passport To Savings book is the gift that keeps on giving

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The 2024 Passport to Savings book has been launched just in time for gift giving. Now in its eleventh year, there are over two hundred businesses participating. Compared to the first year of just about one hundred and twenty, your opportunity to save has grown tremendously.

The Passport to Savings book is the joint fundraiser for Stratford House of Blessing, Simple Dreams Ministries and the Stratford Kiwanis Club in which all proceeds stay within the community through these three organisations.

"It's not just Stratford anymore, it covers Stratford, St Marys, Mitchell, Tavistock and Shakespeare. It truly is a win-win situation for the people that buy it and the organizations that benefit from it," said Richard Kneider, founder of Simple Dreams Ministries.

The House of Blessing has been very hard hit this year with donations down and demand rising dramatically since the onset of the pandemic. Funds are used to purchase food for their clients and to keep the House of Blessing operating.

"The numbers have continued to rise. Not only have food dona-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

## GET YOUR PASSPORT

Simple Dreams Ministries volunteer Cheryl Farello and founder Richard Kneider were onsite at the Farmer's Market in Stratford selling the 2024 Passport To Savings

tions dropped but more people are coming in through the doors. We are on track for just over fourteen thousand people this year and last year was under twelve thousand. So even in one year it's quite a jump. I think we are at a 27% increase over last year in visits," shared Kelsey Lauerson, resource coordinator for the Stratford House of Blessing.

Simple Ministries can be found at the Farmers' Market on Satur-

day mornings where they are now able to offer debit payment for the book as well as cash or cheque.

"We're so so pleased. It was always cash or cheque but now they can do debit and on Saturday we sold sixty. Twenty-five of those were debit so that's sales we wouldn't have had before," said Kneider.

Doing a home reno? There's discounts on flooring, or windows and doors. Need new eye glass-

es? There's a discount for that too. There are deals for your pets, home and décor, health and beauty, restaurants, specialty foods, entertainment, automotive, and more. A full list of offers is available online at [simpledreams.org](http://simpledreams.org) and [shob.org](http://shob.org).

Funds raised to benefit Simple Dreams are used to help fund their annual dinner, To Stratford with Love which is being held on December 16th this year. This is

the thirty-fifth year of the annual dinner which welcomes everyone for a free meal. Another item that they find in demand throughout the year is the need for beds. Agencies are now reaching out to them with clients in need.

"We actually got an email from someone in Brantford needing help, as far away as that. If we can help in any way, that's what we are here for," said Kneider.

The Kiwanis Club also serves the community in many ways. They make cash donations to non-profits in the community like The Local. They are behind the summer concerts in the park series on Sunday nights and the highly successful Kiwanis Festival of Performing Arts. They build parks for children in Stratford as well as operate the Garlic Festival.

Passport to Savings books remain the same price of \$50 and can be purchased at a number of locations. They can be found at Stratford House of Blessing, Marlin Travel, YNCU, Jiffy Lube, Stratford Home Furnishings and Stratford Home Furnishings Outlet, members of Kiwanis Club and Stratford Farmer's Market on Saturday mornings. They are also available online through the House of Blessing's website <https://www.shob.org/passport-to-savings>.

## Times Past: Green Holly

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

As I looked back along the years, many Xmas Eves passed before me. Sorrowfully I pushed them back away from me, back into the dimness of the past. I was groping about for last Xmas Eve, when suddenly a vivid flash of understanding swept across me and made clear to me the wherefore of Cambell's story. In my surprise I sprang out of my chair; the two men looked up and Cambell said, "What has struck you now, old man?"

"I have the solution of your story," I answered. "Now listen to me and see if you don't think so, too. You remember when I was in Sackville last year? Well, as I was coming out of The Arlington one night I almost ran into Van Tromp. I tried to get away from him - I always disliked the man. He had a pretty good jag on, but still his mind was quite clear. He began enquiring for all his old friends and asked particularly for your sister, Doc, who, you remember, refused him without much ceremony. Just to tease him I mentioned that Dame Rumour said that Miss Nell was likely to marry Cambell. His face changed instantly; he sprang out of his chair and swore a great oath that Cambell should never marry her. "I have sold myself to the devil and he shall help me this time or" - here followed more oaths and adjurations to his Satanic Majesty - "I shall know why," he muttered as he flung himself out of the room. "When was that?" Doc questioned eagerly, "It was the night before Xmas Eve, one year ago." "Do you think Satan-Doc hesitated - O pshaw! I don't." "The night before Xmas Eve," exclaimed Cambell, white with excitement, "the night before the devil tried to get me to lie to Nell about Polly, - the night he tempted Nell to question me about Polly, - the night that woman wrote that letter to Nell. By jove! He worked hard that night. I always did think some angel of darkness, if not Satan himself, impelled that woman to write that letter, - now I know it."

"So you actually believe that his Satanic Majesty re-

sponded to Van Tromp's demand and at once set to work to make trouble between you and Nell?" Doc questioned smilingly.

"That is exactly what I believe," Cambell answered stoutly. Doc looked at me with an inquiring air.

"As for me, I agree with Cambell," I replied, in response to his look, "I believe that the devil is true to his own."

"Well! what is the end of the story Cambell? It's the end I am interested in" Doc smiled quizzically. "From what I have seen the last year I should judge that the Evil One has had his hands full in trying to keep you and Nell apart. Where are you going? What's your hurry?"

Cambell was putting on his coat. "I am going to get to the end of the story for you," my lad teasingly replied. Then he added shyly, "I am going to get Nell's answer tonight."

"Nell's answer?" we repeated stupidly.

"Yes. The answer to the question I asked her last Xmas Eve, he explained, with shining eyes and heightened colour.

Doc and I sat over the fire wrapped in thought till the clock struck ten - I silent with an old man's happiness; happy in following my dear lad in his wooing. Half wistfully I imagined his passionate caresses, his tender words, for I knew that Nell loved him. How did I know? I know because his dear love poured out her heart to me not so very long ago, sitting by the fire in her own study. "And you promise to let me be your friend always?" she said lovingly, taking my old worn hands in her young strong ones. "I promise," I answered solemnly.

The memory of that promise lies in my heart tonight like a fragrant flower, and unconsciously I whisper, "Rose of my heart, I too love you."

This article is based on information resources available at Stratford-Perth Archives [www.perthcounty.ca/StratfordPerthArchives](http://www.perthcounty.ca/StratfordPerthArchives)

## Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

### OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

Nov. 26 Ev Scott, St. Marys	\$50.00
Nov. 27 Shaun Pickering, Stratford	\$50.00
Nov. 28 Anne Milton, Stratford	\$50.00
Nov. 29 Janet McLelland, St. Marys	\$50.00
Nov. 30 William Jackson, Stratford	\$50.00
Dec. 01 Jim & Diane Lamond, St. Marys	\$50.00
Dec. 02 Chad & Lori Hartman, St. Pauls	\$200.00
2024 Cash Calendar Early Bird Draw Winner	
Dec. 01 Brenda Yeates, St. Pauls	\$500.00
Dec. 03 Marlene Ballantyne, Stratford	\$50.00
Dec. 04 Susan Lindsay, St. Marys	\$50.00
Dec. 05 Bob Zimmer, Stratford	\$50.00
Dec. 06 Donna Jones, Lakeside	\$50.00
Dec. 07 Blaine Myers, Stratford	\$50.00
Dec. 08 Fred Olbach, St. Marys	\$50.00
Dec. 09 Andrew Klomp, Sebringville	\$200.00

### 2024 CALENDARS ARE GOING QUICKLY



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# Parking fines will spike in downtown Stratford in the new year

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

At the regular council meeting on November 27, Council passed a recommendation to modernize set fine amounts for parking offences under the City's Traffic and Parking By-law. This would see some tickets increase to triple their current cost.

Earlier this year, Stratford City staff participated in a survey of parking fine data amongst 23 Ontario municipalities. Respondents to the survey included comparators for the City such as Collingwood, Grand Bend, Niagara on the Lake, St. Marys, St. Thomas, and Woodstock. Findings from this study confirmed that, on average, Stratford's set fines for several parking infractions were low or out of date.

Although passed in council, some coun-

cillors did not agree with the arrangement, "The increase is quite significant. Ideally, I would have no increases, but I understand the need," said Councillor Cody Sebben, "Tickets, particularly parking tickets, are something that disproportionately affects people in the city."

He continued to point out that, post-COVID-19, downtown businesses are already feeling the stress of increased costs and decreased shoppers. Sebben points out that this, too, could affect shopping in a negative way, "I also am concerned that our downtown is very unique and fragile, and so, to me, anything to deter visitors from the downtown core, is a negative thing."

Councillor Mark Hunter, on the other hand, notes that the parking meter cost is not going to increase, and therefore, those who visit the downtown core and pay



(CITY OF STRATFORD PHOTO)

at the parking meters (by coin or on the app) will not be impacted, only those who roll the dice on parking will be hit with the new fines, "I think if we were talking about increasing the meter rates by 166%, I would be more sympathetic but the meter rates are staying the same," he said, "I'll speak against the amendment; you do the crime you do the time."

Fine changes will include some of the

following: parallel parking on the wrong side of the roadway would increase from \$20 to \$40, parking in an accessible parking space would increase from \$300 to \$400, and the most significant change would be parking on any street in a manner which obstructs traffic, which is current set at \$20 and will spike to \$120.

Future year operating budgets would see an increase in fine revenue due to the recommended set fine rates increase of 143%. The 2024 draft budget is being prepared using the increased fine rates and projected volumes

The City of Stratford will need approval from the Ministry of the Attorney General before proceeding with the fine increases; therefore, it is likely that there would be no impact on the current year's operating budget, and these fines will most likely start sometime in the new year.

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## Fighting Irish special teams stay white-hot; win streak ends at five

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

STRATFORD FIGHTING IRISH					
2023-24 Player Statistics					
(through December 3, 2023)					
PLAYER	POS	GP	G	A	PTS
Ray Robbins	F	8	6	6	12
Cooper Leitch	F	10	5	6	11
Dylan Buckholz	F	11	5	5	10
Sean O'Brien	F	6	1	9	10
Ryan O'Bonsawin	D	11	5	4	9
Cameron Stokes	F	7	2	6	8
Matt Fuller	D	10	1	7	8
Warren Gorman	F	9	2	5	7
Matt Henderson	D	10	3	3	6
Riley Coome	D	11	3	3	6
Matt Granger	D	10	2	4	6
Graham Brulotte	F	5	2	3	5
Justin Murray	D	3	2	3	5
Brody Smith	F	8	2	2	4
Mav Petrie	F	10	2	1	3
Zachery Tierney	D	3	1	2	3
Colin Martin	F	11	1	2	3
Sebastien Nogueira	F	11	0	3	3
Michael Finlay	D	6	1	1	2
Steven DeGroot	F	5	1	1	2
Tye Campbell	F	4	1	0	1
Mason Goldie	F	1	1	0	1
Spencer Mills	F	8	0	1	1
Curtis Nogueira	F	9	0	1	1
PLAYER	RECORD	GAA	-	SV%	
Darren Smith	3-1-0	3.75		.907	
Zach Weir	4-3-0	3.25		.905	

The Stratford Bentley's Fighting Irish lost for the first time since November 4th when they were narrowly edged out by the Woodstock Lakers last Saturday, December 2nd. However that five-game winning streak, inspired by incredible output from their special teams, has them entering this week sitting in third place in the WOSHL standings.

This season, the Fighting Irish have allowed the second-fewest goals against while their powerplay has produced more goals than any other man advantage in the league.

Two of those powerplay goals came back on November 25th, one of which was the game-winner, in a 5-2 win over the Petrolia Squires. At the end of two periods, both teams scored twice. In the third, the Fighting Irish took tighter control of the game and scored three unanswered goals to secure the 5-2 victory. After a minuscule two-shot difference through 40 minutes, Stratford led the shot clock 13-6. In addition to two powerplay goals, both scored by Justin Murray, Graham Brulotte added a shorthanded marker.

A week later on December 1st, the Fighting Irish travelled to Tilbury to take on the Bluebirds in what turned out to be a barn-burning 8-6 final score in favour of Stratford. Two powerplay tallies by Warren Gorman as well as the game's first goal by Riley Coome helped the Fighting Irish lead 3-1 after 20 minutes.

The Fighting Irish were pushed back on their heels in the final 40 minutes as they got outshot 32-17 in the second and third frame but the first-period two-goal deficit held up as the difference with both teams scoring five times in the last two periods. Once again, the powerplay was massive for the Fighting Irish with goals



**FINDS THE BACK OF THE NET** (FRED GONDER PHOTO)

Sean O'Brien #16, breaks in on net and puts the puck behind Squires goaltender, Sean Parker #1 during the game on November 25.

by Cooper Leitch, Steven DeGroot, and Ryan O'Bonsawin scoring on the man advantage. Brulotte and Mason Goldie also had goals for Stratford.

One day later, the Fighting Irish were back at the William Allman Arena to take on the Lakers from Woodstock and the drama didn't dissipate. After the Lakers jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first period, Stratford doubled Woodstock's shots in the second period, leading 16-8 but still unable to beat Woodstock netminder Ben Edwards. Despite being heavily outshot, the Lakers scored the lone goal of the sec-

ond stanza.

In the third, the Fighting Irish continued to outshoot the Lakers and finally broke through. Ray Robbins got the first goal for Stratford followed by a powerplay goal by Dylan Buckholz just under three minutes later. The powerplay once again proved vital for the Fighting Irish as Leitch scored tied the game with just one minute and 37 seconds remaining in the third. The miraculous comeback was squashed in overtime with Woodstock scoring the game-winner with just 31 seconds left in the extra frame.

### WOSHL STANDINGS

(Standings through December 3, 2023)

	GP	W	L	OTL	T	PTS
Tillsonburg Thunder	11	9	2	0	0	18
Petrolia Squires	11	8	3	0	0	16
Strathroy Jets	13	7	6	0	1	15
<b>Stratford Fighting Irish</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>
Elora Rocks	12	7	5	0	0	14
Tilbury Bluebirds	11	6	5	0	0	12
Alvinston Killer Bees	9	5	4	0	1	11
Woodstock Lakers	11	5	6	0	0	10
Dunnville Aeros	11	3	8	0	2	8
Delhi Flames	9	3	6	0	1	7
Orangeville Blitz	13	1	12	0	0	2

### GOJHL STANDINGS

Midwestern Conference

(Standings through December 3, 2023)

	GP	W	L	OTL	T	PTS
Elmira Sugar Kings	27	19	6	0	2	40
Listowel Cyclones	24	17	5	1	1	36
<b>Stratford Warriors</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35</b>
KW Siskins	23	14	5	1	3	32
Cambridge Redhawks	24	14	9	1	0	29
Ayr Centennials	25	12	13	0	0	24
Brantford Bandits	26	6	19	1	0	13
Caledon Bombers	26	1	24	0	1	3



# Warriors drop three in a row

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

A three-game winning streak has turned into a three-game losing skid for the Stratford Warriors including back-to-back one-goal defeats last weekend.

On Friday, November 24th, the Warriors began a stretch of three games in as many days at home against the Ayr Centennials. Camden Daigle had a three-point game including a goal with just four seconds left in the contest, while Matt Perdue earned the win in between the pipes.

The next day, the Warriors were on the road in Caledon taking on the Bombers and, on the backs of a 75-shot performance, Stratford came away with a 6-4 victory. The Warriors had 32 shots in the first period alone and, at the end of 40 minutes, led the shots 55-20.

Braydon Stumpf had a goal and two assists, while Daigle, Carson Harmer, Cole Lewis, and Michael Denney all had two-point nights.

The trouble, results-wise at least, began for the Warriors on November 26th when the team returned home to host the white-hot Listowel Cyclones. Stratford was outshot 40-25 in the game and trailed 5-0 after two periods.

Dylan Dundas and Owen England both took penalties at the 10:58 mark of the opening frame, both of which resulted in powerplay goals for Listowel over the next two minutes.

Head Coach Dave Williams felt that was a critical moment in the game as it put the Warriors in a position to have to battle uphill the rest of the game.

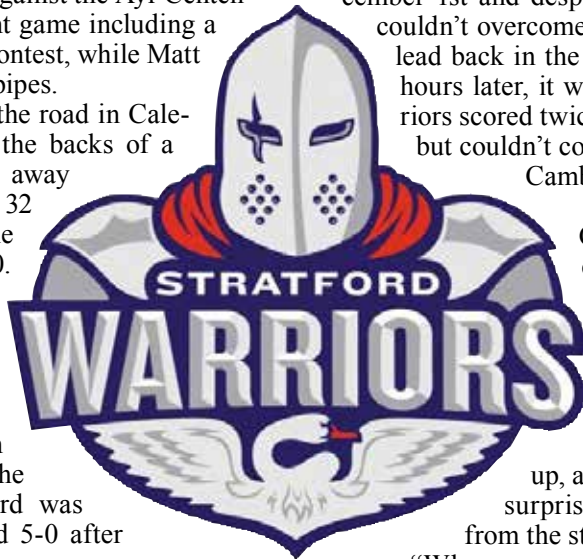
“We took two penalties on the same stoppage of play and Listowel scored two powerplay goals,” said Williams. “I think from there, we were chasing the game and it makes it much more challenging when you’re playing from behind like that. You’re probably playing a bit differently than you normally would like to.”

The Warriors then hosted the Elmira Sugar Kings on December 1st and despite a three-goal third period, Stratford couldn’t overcome the Sugar Kings jumping out to a 3-0 lead back in the first frame, giving Elmira 5-4 win. 24 hours later, it was another one-goal deficit as the Warriors scored twice in the final three minutes of the game but couldn’t complete the comeback, falling 4-3 to the Cambridge RedHawks.

Despite the youthful nature of the team, Coach Williams told the Times that so-called “growing pains” can’t continue to plague the group.

“If this was earlier in the year, I think I’d give more consideration to things like [growing pains]. But given that we’re halfway through the year, even with some new guys in the lineup, at this point, there shouldn’t be too much surprise at how tough every game can be right from the start.”

“Where we need to continue to focus on is our consistency,” Williams continued. “I think there have been times this season when we’ve played really good hockey and other times, we’ve struggled at times when it was the least expected. Even from shift to shift or period to period, we’ve been playing well and had it get away from us. That consistency of doing what we need to do is the big thing for us to focus on.”



## STRATFORD WARRIORS 2023-24 Player Statistics (through December 3, 2023)

PLAYER	POS	GP	G	A	PTS
Braydon Stumpf	F	27	8	28	36
Michael Denney	F	27	20	11	31
Camden Daigle	F	27	9	20	29
Carson Harmer	F	25	12	15	27
Cole Lewis	F	27	11	15	26
Jaxon Broda	D	24	7	13	20
Casey Bridgewater	D	20	4	11	15
Joey Brehmer	F	27	6	7	13
Drew Agnew	F	25	3	8	11
Dylan Dundas	F	26	4	4	8
Haden Frayne	D	23	2	6	8
Jacob Wiseman	D	19	2	3	5
Wyatt Adkins	D	16	0	5	5
Liam Gorman	F	23	3	1	4
Tristian Huinink	F	13	3	1	4
Evan Hjelholt	D	20	0	4	4
Rhyse Brown	F	15	1	2	3
Owen England	D	20	1	2	3
Zach Bell	F	21	2	0	2
Zachary Schooley	F	21	1	1	2
Cole Brooks	D	18	0	2	2
Keaton Bartlett	D	10	0	1	1
Ben Graham	F	9	0	1	1
Gianmarco Caringi	F	3	0	1	1
Trenten Bennett	G	9	0	1	1
PLAYER	RECORD	GAA	SV%		
Matthew Perdue	11-8-1-0	3.22	.906		

# U18AA Stratford Aces Take home Gold at the CCM Chicago elite tournament

The U18 AA Girls Hockey team participated in the CCM Chicago elite tournament this past weekend and went undefeated with a record of 6 wins and 0 losses, with 27 goals scored and only three against.

During game one on Friday, Dec 1, Stratford Aces U18 AA beat out L.A. Lions with a win, 6-0. During

game two that day, the Stratford Aces U18AA took on Arizona Kachinas and won again, this time 5-0.

The following day, during game 3, Stratford Aces U18AA beat Team Illinois, winning with a final score of 4-1. Game 4 on Saturday, the Stratford Aces U18AA took on Windsor Wildcats, winning that game 6-1.

During the semi-final game on Sunday, Dec 3, Stratford Aces U18AA played the Florida Alliance, winning 2-0, taking them to the finals on Sunday.

During the intense, final game on Sunday, December 3, the Stratford Aces U18AA took on Team Illinois, winning an easy 4-1.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

## CHICAGO ELITE TOURNAMENT

Alexandra Binning, Forward; Ella Boersma, Defense; Tessa Burdett, Forward; Victoria Cambell, Forward; Ella Gracey, Goalie; Emma-Kate Gray, Defense; Jaden Greenlee, Defense; Danielle Heard, Defense; Mackenzie Heywood, Forward; Mary Lencz, Goalie; Kiara McGregor, Forward; Leah McPhee, Forward; Kendal Middleton, Forward; Rylee Nethercott, Defense; Julia Papalia, Forward; Maeve Turner, Forward; Taylor Van Hooydonk, Defense  
Coaching Staff - Chad Greenlee, Head Coach; Stacey McGregor, Manager/Trainer; Chris McPhee, Assistant Coach; Dereck Boersma, Assistant Coach; Chris Turner, Assistant Coach



## STRATFORD Hunter Steel WARRIORS

### UPCOMING GAMES

Sunday, December 10 - 4:30pm  
vs Caledon - Allman Arena

Wednesday, December 13 - 7:00pm  
at LaSalle - Vollmer Culture Rec. Complex

Friday, December 15 - 7:30pm  
vs Strathroy - Allman Arena

Friday, December 22 - 7:30pm  
vs Cambridge - Allman Arena

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# U16 Warriors clinch top spot in BB division

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

The U16 Stratford Jr. Warriors have not only advanced to the BB side of their Alliance division but have also secured the top spot after two wins last week of Cambridge and Kitchener.

Head Coach John Hruden reflected on what has propelled his team to the top of the BB division.

"This team has grown as a whole by sticking together and the discipline that has been instilled in them," Hruden told the Times. "They have become great at keeping their cool in the last minutes of the game. Along with never giving up, they have made a habit of playing every minute of every game."

Last Wednesday, November 29th, the U16 Warriors travelled to Cambridge to take on the Jr. Hawks. Henry Flanagan got Stratford's first goal of the game assisted by Rem Hruden, the first of two assists Hruden picked up in the game. His second helper came on the team's second goal of the game, scored by Ethan St. Clair. Caden Diehl scored an unassisted goal followed by the eventual game-winner posted by Mark Martin assisted by Will Welsh. Isaac Cousineau got the win in between the pipes.

Hruden praised his group for weathering the storm of a highly competitive contest.

"It was a great back-and-forth battle [against Cambridge]. We actually had to play our goalie from last year who made things tough on our scorers. I think a big

reason we won that game was the discipline that all

of our guys showed when the other side was trying to get us to take penalties."

The team's attention then turned to this past Sunday's game at the William Allman Arena against the Kitchener Jr. Rangers Blue. Against an undisciplined squad, the Jr. Warriors once again displayed their strong focus on not getting sucked into penalty trouble, en route to a 3-1 victory.

"We won [against Kitchener] because of some quick line changes that kept Kitchener on their toes and, once again, the fact that our players kept their cool and didn't retaliate during the heated moments."

Ryder Walker, playing his former team from Kitchener, got the win in goal for the Jr. Warriors. St. Clair scored twice, one of which was an empty-netter, while Rem Hruden once again had a pair of assists. Blake McIntosh, along with Hruden, had the assists on St. Clair's first goal. Liam

Benton scored the game-winner assisted by Will McKee.

Coach Hruden further discussed what allowed his team to find such a high degree of success.

"The thing that makes these boys special is the fact that they have become one cohesive unit. Everyone has each other's full support and they all motivate each other. It is very high on my list of important qualities for a team to have to have all the players bond so tightly and it shows in their play."

"This team has great cardio thanks to Nikki Welsh our Dryland instructor," Hruden continued. "Because of this the players are in good shape and don't run out of gas in the third period. The guys are also showing their maturity in not retaliating in the situations that arise in close, hard-fought games."

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## Stratford Aces U11 Girls take home another win



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

### ACES U11

Lauren Rossi, Sydney Langis, Stella Zacher, Sophia Mounfield, Chloe Illman, Jillian Devereaux, Allie Lambert, Raelynn Jacob, Jenna Antonio, Emma, Rogerson, Charlie Munro, Makayla Harrigan, Macy Green, Brooklyn Cater, Mie Larsen, Lily Bohnen, Luxe Ignor, Sabelle Ische

Head Coach Josh Bohnen Assistant Coaches- Aaron Munfield, Jordan Munro, Jessie Jacob

Trainers - Megan Cater, Jealyn Ignor, Lindsay Zacher; Manager- Sarah Devereaux

### AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

On Friday, the Stratford Aces U11 Girls lost their opening game to the Lakeshore Lighting 7-1, but in their second game, they refocused and came back to win against Twin Centre 4-2. They played Bluewater Hawks on Saturday morning and had another won 7-1. Sunday morning, the girls were at it again. They had an 8 a.m. semi-final game against Twin

Centre and won 4-0. Goalie Lauren Rossi recording a shutout.

In the final game, they were up against Lakeshore Lighting, the team that beat them in the first game of the tournament. After three periods, it was a tie game and went into OT. Sofia Mounfield scored the game-winning goal.

Coach Jessie Jacob said, "The girls focused on four things during each game: effort, attitude, resilience and friendship! They did that this weekend."



**Stratford Branch 8**

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# Stratford hosted the OFSAA Senior Boys AA Volleyball Championships



## GOOD SHOWING AT OFSAA

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Above: St. Mike's Boys Senior Boys AA Volleyball Team Back Row: #12 Darien Koskamp, #13 Daniel Van Rooyen, #14 Owen Gaylor, #3 Kody Eisler, #8 Jackson Campbell, #11 Noah Campbell, Front Row: #6 Cole Iacobellis, #2 Andrew Van Bakel, #9 Jarrett Van Bakel, #1 Owen Holloway, #16 Leland Smith, #5 Zac Van Straaten, #10 Ryan Middegaa  
Missing from picture: Coach Joel Murray, Assistant Coach Bryan Kocher, Assistant Coach Milayna Mulder and #7 Christ Keumoe  
Below: Ryan Middegaa, #10 serving for St. Mike's



The St. Mike's Warriors senior boys volleyball team had a very successful run at the 2023 OFSAA Championship hosted over at the Agriplex from November 23-25. Finishing atop their pool, they defeated North Park C&VS, Crestwood SS, and Sir Winston Churchill, while dropping a close one in their final game vs. Chippewa SS. Matched up against a very well-rounded team from Francis Libermann CHS of Scarborough, the Warriors were narrowly edged out by the eventual 4th place finishers, thus ending their tournament. Coaches Joel Murray and Bryan Kocher are very proud of their team's effort and performance all season finishing as one of the top 8 teams in the province.

# Stratford Stingers Jolt 16U take Gold

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

On Saturday, November 2, Stratford Stingers Jolt 16U hosted the U17 Challenge Cup at the Stratford Rotary Complex and went undefeated despite being the youngest team.

In their first game against Norfolk Chaos, the Stratford Stingers Jolt came together to win the first set 15-17 and then beat them again in the second set, 25-18. During their second game, the Stingers Jolt team blasted through perfect serves and won against Georgetown Impact, 25-20 in the first set but giving Impact hope during the second set, losing 17-25; thankfully, the girls held it

together in the third set, winning the game 15-5.

In the quarter-finals, Stratford Stingers Jolt beat out Sincoe Xtreme 25-14 in the first set and 25-17 in the second, taking them into the semi-finals.

At the semi-final game, they held it together to win 25-21 and then 25-18 again, winning against Georgetown Impact.

Moving onto the gold medal game, Stingers Jolt played the impressive Forest City Cypress but kept up their winning streak, beating them 25-22 in the first set and 25-14 in the second.

The girls will play their next tournament in Strathroy this weekend.



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

## CHALLENGE CUP

Back Row: Assistant Coach - Natalie Hynd, Selena Will, Megan Todd, Sophie Heimpel, Julia Daly, Hannah Mogk, Julia Havegna, Marin Chateauvert, Janelle Boyse, Katie Namink, Head Coach - Shawn Edwards  
Front row: Dani Cassone, Lucy Thompson, Hailey Modaragamage

A NIGHTMARE IS ON THE LOOSE!

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# Teahen Construction Ltd stepping up to support Stratford Youth this Holiday Season

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

This year, Teahen Construction Ltd. hosted a new annual event at the Tom Patterson Theatre featuring Loreena McKennitt, singer-songwriter and cellist Caroline Lavelle, who took the stage to entertain guests throughout the evening.

The First Annual Teahen Construction Ltd. Children's Charity Gala and Auction is part of the Teahen Children's Charity initiative that Chris Teahen, owner and operator and Courtney Teahen, Director of Community Affairs and Consultant, started over eight years ago to support local children and teens in the community.

Several high-ticket items for auction, from Toronto Maple Leafs tickets, Toronto Raptors tickets, and a one-of-a-kind Robin de Costa acrylic-on-canvas painting of Stratford's own Justin Bieber portrait, were up for auction at the Gala this past weekend. The one-of-a-kind art piece may be recognized by those who visit the Stratford Perth Museum Bieber exhibit, as it has been a main attraction since the beginning of the exhibit. This piece was donated by a private donor for the charity event.

The money raised from the Gala and Auction, and other events organized by the Teahens, goes directly towards local children for food and wellness support and six award scholarships given out by the organization annually.

To date, the pair, with the help and support of the local community, have raised almost one hundred thousand dollars through their charity organizations.



(MELISSA SCHENK PHOTO)

## SUPPORTING THE YOUTH

Special guest appearance from Loreena McKennitt with cellist Caroline Lavelle.

"Chris is just so giving," said his wife, Courtney Teahen, "This is all him; he just loves to support people in the community; it's just the kind of guy he is."

"There are currently twenty homeless minors living in Stratford," said Teahen, "the need is so great locally, and we want to support local students so they can thrive in the classroom, and that starts with proper nutrition." Because of this, the Teahen Family Nutrition and Wellbeing Fund partners with local school programs to help fund breakfast and food

programs for schools in Stratford.

Held at the Stratford Perth Community Foundation, the Teahen Children's Charity works with the Foundation for Education to coordinate with schools on both local school boards to assess the needs and requirements from within the schools, so no dollar is going to waste, "We want to make sure every child and teen in Stratford is seen and knows they matter," said Teahen.

Beyond their work in helping local youth with necessities, such as food, the

Teahens also have a "Teahen Construction Ltd. Scholarship Fund," in which they support six teens each year to pursue their dreams through further education. "We don't limit the scholarship to students who want to go to university," said Teahen, "We offer this to all students who want to pursue university, college or the trades."

Teahen notes her gratitude towards the Stratford community for being part of the First Annual Teahen Construction Ltd. Children's Charity Gala and Auction, "We know it takes a village to raise the next generation, so we're thrilled so many community partners have stepped up to help at this event."

If you'd like to find out more or donate to this fantastic cause this holiday season, please visit their donation page, found on the Stratford Perth Community Foundation website, <https://spccf.ca/teahen-family-nutrition-and-wellbeing-fund/> or by scanning the QR code here:



## Casey and Diana now streaming on Stratfest@Home

See the show everyone is talking about!

Nick Green's Casey and Diana, which had a triumphant premiere directed by Andrew Kushnir at the Stratford Festival last May, is now available for home viewing on Stratfest@Home, the Festival's subscription-based streaming platform.

The play is built around the famous 1991 visit from Princess Diana to Toronto AIDS hospice Casey House, when she made international headlines by shaking hands with a dying patient. It shares the remarkable warmth, strength and resilience of the people at Casey House, working, living and dying in the face of unimaginable pain, isolation

and stigma.

The production features Sean Arbuckle as Thomas, Laura Condlin as Pauline, Linda Kash as Marjorie, Davinder Malhi as Andre, Krystin Pellerin as Diana and Sophia Walker as Vera.

In addition to Director Andrew Kushnir, the creative team includes Designer Joshua Quinlan, Lighting Designer Louise Guinand, Composer and Sound Designer Debashis Sinha and Dramaturge Bob White.

Word of mouth quickly made Casey and Diana one of the season's hottest tickets, leading to a sold-out run. The play was hailed as "emotionally powerful" (The Globe and Mail), "incredibly moving and deeply accomplished" (Toronto Star).

The production is also moving on to Toronto, where it will have a run at Soulpepper from January 23 to February 4.

Subscribers to Stratfest@Home can view Casey and Diana, along with dozens of productions from the Festival's stages, original digital content and work from performing arts companies across the country. Cost is \$7.99 per month.

Soon to be released on Stratfest@Home, joining hundreds of other titles, are Richard III, Much Ado About Nothing, Richard II, Women of the Fur Trade, Henry V, and Season 2 of Leer Estates.



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# Alice in Wonderland being presented at St. Mike's Catholic School

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The cast and crew of *Alice in Wonderland* have been hard at work for the holiday presentation at St. Mike's Catholic High school. It was written and adapted for this stage production by drama teacher Tina Robinson, art teacher Andrea Longstaff and senior students among which is Asha Pereira.

The drama class has been working cooperatively on set design, artwork with the art class, and production since October. By the time the play is presented December 11th to 15th over one hundred people will have contributed.

Rehearsals have been ongoing, with Robinson giving stage notes to the cast on voice, speed and placement while the crew worked on props of flowers for the set and Humpty Dumpty, or the menacing Jaberwocky life sized puppet. As the cast dances she encourages them to smile with their teeth.

The performance will provide for an evening of song and dance, fun for the whole family. It also is an enormous achievement for each and every one that has contributed in their own way.

Asha Pereira is cast as the Cheshire Cat, the part she auditioned for and really wanted to play. "I've been in a lot of shows, it's a little bit different from other roles, but I plan to go to school for this so I wanted to push out of my comfort zone a little bit."

Her favourite scene is called "The Mirror Scene" where the cats show up dressed as Alice and lead her around. "It's the most creepy scene in the show and one of the reasons I wanted to play the Cat. It's a lot of fun and I love it because they keep saying it's time in this really creepy tone and it changes each time they say it, kind of like it is time for the climax of the show. I also love the sister lines because we get to be sassy to our little sister Alice and



## CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER!

The cast of *Alice in Wonderland* rehearse the Tea Party scene in their first dress rehearsal with props.

(LISA CHESTER PHOTO)

that's a lot of fun," shared Pereira.

Participating in the production has really tested her ability to find the characterization. She says she sometimes struggles with articulation and projecting, and it gets even harder when she has this mysterious voice which is a little softer, but also have to have the whole stage and audience hear the lines. This has tested her abilities to grow as an actor and helped her work on areas she struggles with.

Sarah Damen plays the lead character Alice. She has been acting and in theatre camp since she was three and has been in shows since she was eight. The challenges she faced in playing the character was found in that Alice is young and very stubborn. Her opinions are set so for Damen it was interesting to see how a young girl would grow and adapt to all the wacky things she faces.

"I also thought that there is a lot of imagination that needs to come into a character like Alice to be able to believe the Mad Hatter and talking birds, so it was interesting to work on how I can portray that onstage and communicate it to the audience," said Damen.

As an actor she's learned that mistakes are forgivable and rehearsals are meant for mistakes. Acting is a growing experience, with so much you can discover about yourself.

"It's been a lot of fun to put on," said Pereira, "Christmas shows are always my favourite so I really hope it puts people in a Christmassy kind of mood and the kids are full of the Christmas magic we are trying to capture. I think that is what Wonderland is all about. I know it's not a Christmas show but it captures that wonder of what it's like to be a kid and that is what Christmas is all about."

The show will be over four nights, commencing December 11th until the 15th. Tickets are \$20 and are available at the door.

## Humane Society's Hope for the Holidays campaign encourages all kinds of support

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth is encouraging residents to give back to animals as part of their end-of-the-year campaign.

The organization announced the launch of their Hope for the Holidays campaign on November 21. The campaign will run until December 31 and encourages supporters of the organization to contribute, whether that means to adopt, extend, give, or gift.

"The holiday season is our biggest giving time. Being a charity and relying on donations, it helps to fund all our programs and services that we have here," Calla James, the director of community engagement and outreach, said.

The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth is looking for

donors to gift an item, either new or gently used, on their wish list during the holidays. The organization updates their wish list often on their website and will have a call out on their social media channels for urgently needed items.

"Some people would like to donate towels or blankets that we can use in shelter," James said. They might donate gently used dog beds or cat beds or toys. Those are all great. We try to use them in shelter as well we use them for outreach programs to support people and pets in need."

She added they are always looking for non-clumping litter and dry cat and dog food. With winter weather approaching, the organization is also looking for large dog coats in sizes large to 4XL.

"When we're supporting people who are experiencing homelessness or who are vulnerably housed, those dog coats do us

a great service," James said. "We'd love to be able to hand those out to our clients and support them."

Residents can also extend their time either by fundraising, volunteering, or fostering an animal. The organization has been calling out for fosters in Perth County for over a year, in particular, as there's a huge need for fosters in the region. The Humane Society covers all of the costs that come with fostering.

"You're just giving them a couch to crash on until we can find a forever home together."

The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth is also looking for at least 100 or more animals to be adopted during December. There are more than 200 animals in shelter, and 100 more on the waiting list to get into the shelter space.

"Every animal we can adopt this holiday

season, it means one of those animals on our waiting list can come in for much needed support," James said.

The organization operated in crisis mode for over a year, especially with an increase in large-breed dogs coming in and a decrease in adoptions. The Humane Society is reliant on monetary donations to run more than 40 services. James said whether you can donate a small or large amount, it will help.

"No amount is too small because it definitely adds up," she said. "If you have \$5, your Starbucks coffee this week that you'd like to donate, we would be so incredibly appreciative because every little bit goes a long way."

Participating in events and programs also supports the organization.

Visit [kwsphumane.ca](http://kwsphumane.ca) for more information.



# Flag lowered to half-mast in remembrance of École Polytechnique massacre victims

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

At the November 27 Stratford City Council meeting, councillors approved a flag half-masting on December 6 at 8:30 a.m. in recognition of the École Polytechnique massacre, also known as the Montreal massacre. Mayor Ritsma, councillors, and Canadian Federation of University Women members were in attendance.

Canada observes the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6, during The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. This day is to acknowledge the women who were murdered during the tragic mass shooting at Polytechnique Montréal on December 6, 1989, when an antifeminist walked into a Mechanical Engineering classroom, where he murdered fourteen women; another ten women and four men were injured in an attack.

Before turning the gun on himself, he read a letter that he had written, which contained a list of 19 radical feminists who he said would have been killed had he not run out of time. This list included the names of well-known women in Quebec, including journalists and television personalities.

Both councillors Bonnie Henderson and Jo-Dee Burbach spoke on this event at the November 27 meeting, thanking the women of the Canadian Federation of University Women who requested the flag half-masting.



## IN REMEMBRANCE

MP John Nater, Councillor Jo-Dee Burbach, Mayor Al Strathdee of St. Marys and members of The Canadian Federation of University Women among those who came to support the lowering of the flag on Wednesday morning in remembrance of the École Polytechnique massacre.

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Henderson spoke on the University of Women's work and effort in recognizing not only a tragic event but violence against women, too, "I was really impressed the Canadian Federation of University Women to call on council to lower the flag to half-mast, it's important and should be recognized," she continued, "I urge everyone in our community and worldwide to speak out in emphasis and hopefully some days soon this can end."

Councillor Burbach also noted in her comments the murder of three women

on the morning of September 22, 2015, when a man shot and killed three women whom he had past relationships with. This attack is also recognized during The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

"In Canada, one woman is killed by an inter-intimate or former intimate partner every six days," said Burbach, "Almost half, 44% of Canadian women report having been subjected to some form of inter-partner violence, and they are disproportionately the victims of the most

severe forms of abuse."

Burbach went on to say that approximately 3,500 women and 2,700 children live in shelters for abused women every night of the year, while most are turned away.

She also noted that Stratford's local women's shelter and support services centre, Optimism Place, received 2,144 calls to their crisis line and served 58 women and 36 children in the residential program, and since that time, calls for service have only increased.

Burbach continued to recognize Stratford for declaring Intimate Partner Violence an epidemic in May of 2023 and notes that this is one step in the right direction across the province, but it's not enough, "Declaring Intimate Partner Violence to be an epidemic has both symbolic and practical value" she said, "It validates the experiences of countless women of whom carry shame about the abuse that they have been subjected to. It moves Intimate Partner Violence out of the shadows and into the public health realm, where it belongs."

The Canadian Federation of University Women would love to see all 444 other municipalities across Ontario follow suit. "Having the flag lowered to half-mast is a visible symbol to get a discussion going," said Cambria Ravenhill, Canadian Federation of University Women member – Stratford, "Advocacy is so important to the Canadian Federation of University Women; we need to keep showing up and keep carrying the torch."

## County Gearing Up for Inaugural Year of New Stewardship Program

A long awaited program launched in Perth County in December! The Perth County Stewardship Program is a new grant program supporting community groups and landowners with tree planting projects within the Municipalities of Perth South, West Perth, Perth East, and North Perth.

Grants are available for both private landowners and community organizations. Started on December 1, 2023, eligible applicants can apply through an online Stewardship Program intake form. Applicants are encouraged to read and review the program guide for tips on preparing a strong application.

This first phase of the County's Stewardship Program helps offset the costs of tree planting and forest health monitoring surveys for individuals and organizations. Three grant streams geared towards new tree plots, forest rehabilitation, windbreaks, stream buffers, and forest health check-ups will contribute to

the naturalization and resiliency of dozens of properties across the County.

"These projects are essential to Perth County's resiliency, restoration of natural areas and preservation of quality agricultural lands" said Hannah Cann, Resiliency and Stewardship Coordinator for Perth County. "Often, the financial aspect of tree planting projects is a barrier for landowners. The resources and grants offered through the Perth County Stewardship Program will encourage landowners to make their projects a reality in 2024".

Perth County is committed to cultivating a greener future through Stewardship. The grant opportunity for 2024 opened for applications on December 1st 2023, closing January 19th 2024, with successful applicants being notified by early February 2024.

For more information about the program, and to access application forms, visit [www.perthcounty.ca/Stewardship](http://www.perthcounty.ca/Stewardship)

## Rae announces over \$860K to Combat Local Auto Thefts

Matthew Rae, MPP for Perth-Wellington announced that the Perth County OPP will receive \$860,579 to help combat and prevent auto thefts. The Guelph Police will also receive \$859,977 over three years.

"I appreciate the good work our officers do day in and day out," said MPP Rae. "They are integral to the health and safety of our small and rural communities. The province is providing law-enforcement with the tools they require to continue to protect our communities."

The funding is part of the government's new Preventing Auto Thefts (PAT) Grant program designed to support new and enhanced crime-fighting measures that focus on prevention, detection, analysis, and enforcement. In total, 21 police projects across the province are receiving funding for a total investment of \$18 million over three years in the fight against auto theft.

"Every 14 minutes a vehicle is stolen in Ontario and this investment will give police services the tools they need to successfully fight auto theft across the province," said Solicitor General Michael Kerzner. "This grant will enable police services to work with law enforcement and logistics

partners to enhance prevention, improve investigations and gather evidence to hold criminals accountable."

The PAT grant is one of several measures underway to fight auto theft. Earlier this year, Ontario announced the Organized Crime Towing and Auto Theft Team to help police services identify, disrupt and dismantle organized crime networks. In addition, the government also announced the creation of the Major Auto Theft Prosecution Response Team to help police prepare and prosecute complex cases. Ontario is also exploring opportunities to combat vehicle thefts by partnering with Canada Border Services Agency, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and shipping container and rail companies.

### QUICK FACTS

- From 2014 to 2021, there was a 72 per cent increase in auto thefts across the province, and a 14 per cent increase in the last year alone.

- Car thefts in Ontario have increased by 31 per cent in the first six months of 2023, when compared to the same period in 2022.



# From Ukraine to Canada: A Journey of Resilience, Community, and Dreams

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In a recent interview with Tetiana Didkovska, a Ukrainian refugee now living in St. Marys, the Stratford Times learned about the resilience of one family whose lives changed overnight and are now learning to navigate a new way of life here in Ontario.

Didkovska and her family lived near the capital of Ukraine - Kyiv, worked and studied in Kyiv, enjoyed life, dealt with work-life balance issues, and prioritizing time spent with family above all else. She has a higher legal education, defended her dissertation and received a scientific degree: she has a Ph.D. in law. She also engaged in private legal practice.

Didkovska's parents also have a higher education - in economics: her mother was a manager in a bank, and her father was the head of the logistics department in a large distribution company.

Didkovska's son, Volodymyr, is a third-year student at the University of Telecommunications in Kyiv, majoring in cybersecurity, and, despite the war in Ukraine, he continues his studies online. In addition, last year, he completed summer courses in his specialty at the University of Toronto.

It is worth noting that Didkovska's career in Ukraine was varied and responsible: from private legal practice, head of the legal department of a leasing compa-



Tetiana Didkovska and her family.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

ny, to head of a department in the Ministry of Social Policy. However, she was armed with a legal education and the tenacity to face the odds, which was necessary when her family boarded one of the last buses out of her town in wartime Ukraine.

It should be noted that this family had a private house which always had beautiful flowers and a vegetable garden. "We love flowers very much, so every summer we have a lot of beautiful ones. We lived well and made plans for the future. But everything changed on February 24, 2022," notes Tetiana.

Moving to Canada brought new challenges, but Didkovska notes that she found solace in

the St. Marys community and those who supported her and her family after her trip to Canada: "We are very happy to be in St. Marys. Our Canadian and Ukrainian friends here are wonderful and we also receive great support from our host family."

With the support of a host family, they found work at a local manufacturing company and navigated the Ontario housing market during the current housing crisis. Although her job has changed a lot now, Didkovska values her workplace, noting that there is an excellent, friendly team that she and her parents value, as well as good working conditions.

Didkovska also notes that

during their forced move to Canada, they met wonderful, kind and sympathetic people in Poland, where they lived for almost two months, before coming to Canada.

The unwavering support from her newfound community was critical to them making this change in life here in Canada. "The community here at St. Marys is a very interesting and very close community," she said, "It's great that we know and interact with so many people, both Canadian and Ukrainian. We know each other and celebrate holidays together, both Canadian and Ukrainian; you know, we have very interesting events. We are all very grateful and greatly appreciate the support of the St. Marys community during this most difficult and exciting period of formation and self-discovery."

Since education is very important to Didkovska's family, her son entered Sheridan College in his major and will begin receiving a Canadian college education in January.

At the same time, Didkovska also strives to gain new knowledge in Canada. One of the last courses that she and her mother Olena completed was "The self-employment course" at Fanshawe College.

Didkovska and her family dream of a future in which they will make a unique contribution

to the development of society - by opening a Ukrainian restaurant and receiving the necessary knowledge and certificates for this. Tetiana's mother is an excellent cook and baker, and she also makes homemade jam that is better than any store brand.

With this knowledge and experience as a chef, their dream could become a reality with the right support. "My mom ran the kitchen when she was young," said Didkovska. "She started out as a cook, and then trained and received a diploma as a food technologist, and also received a higher education in economics."

As they plan for the future, Didkovska and her family discuss travel, education and the joy of exploring new cities in Canada. Their dreams go beyond personal aspirations, as Didkovska would also like to someday return to her beloved profession and be able to help other new Ukrainian refugees coming to Canada.

Didkovska's story is not just a personal triumph but also a celebration of the diversity of the local community. The presence of family enriches a community, adding layers of culture, dreams, and shared experiences. Their story demonstrates the acceptance of a city like St. Marys that welcomes newcomers and recognizes the strength that diversity brings to a community."

## Welcoming Ukrainians: Communicating

VJ KNUTSON

Times Freelance Columnist

Anyone that drops by our house comments on the fact that two different languages are being thrown about simultaneously and yet we all seem to understand one another. It's true. After 18 months of hosting Ukrainians in our home, we have learned to adapt, using Google Translate, yes, but also understanding tone and gestures.

I've been trying to learn Ukrainian through Duolingo, but that is a slow process. Ukrainian letters do not even resemble our alphabet. I have found, however; that I pick up on a few words, through repetition, or because they resemble their French equivalent. For example, the Ukrainian word for nightmare sounds like *cauchemar*. Suitcase sounds like *valise*.

The communication challenge has been a source of laughter at our house. While our Ukrainian friends constantly ask us to correct their English, we are reluctant. We don't want to discourage their progress, and also, so many of their

turns of phrases are endearing. For the longest time, Nataly, the mom of our first family, called cottage cheese, "cotton cheese". Nataly dropped off some pancakes this week, and when I asked my husband what was inside, he smiled and said: "Cotton cheese." Somethings just work.

Google Translate, a free app for the phone, is very helpful. Speak a phrase into the app and it will translate it into any language. It doesn't work in all cases. For example, my husband's name is Ric. According to the translator, he is 'the river' - another source of laughter. Translation devices do not work well with colloquial expressions or nuanced language, so it's important to be clear and straightforward about what you want to communicate.

The telephone is a source of anxiety for most Ukrainians, no matter their level of English. Many will message me and ask if I can call the school for them, or the doctor's office, or whatever other service they need to contact via phone. This is where volunteers can be of great help. Families need 'buddies' to help them ma-



(KATERINA MASLOVA PHOTO)

December 6 is St Nicholas Day for Ukrainians. Cookies are part of the celebration.

never through what we might consider simple communications.

Cultural differences can impede communication, also. Some of our guests are confused, for instance, by what constitutes a holiday (i.e. day off school/work). Nataly messaged me on International Woman's Day, for instance, to ask if I was celebrating. They had taken the day off and were planning to drop by. They arrived laden down with flowers and gifts for the women in the house.

I tried to explain that we use this day to acknowledge the feats and plight of women, but don't actually take a holiday or exchange gifts. I discovered that in Ukraine, it's a reason for celebration.

"Coming to Canada is like landing on an alien planet," one of my Ukrainian friends once told me. "It's important to have a safe place to land, while we adjust to the Canadian way."

"I don't understand all the rules," another told me.

One thing that hosting has taught is that one language that needs no translation is the language of love. Hugs, smiles, tender words, and the willingness to listen, are all good communicators.

Ric and I may not speak Ukrainian, but our intentions speak for themselves. A year and a half into this adventure, we like to stop from time to time and reflect.

"Who could have imagined how much our lives have been enriched through this process," Ric said just yesterday.

Amen to that.

Interested in hosting, or wondering how you can help out? Reach me at [english.knutson@gmail.com](mailto:english.knutson@gmail.com).



## UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: SNOWFALL Snowing again. Dusk.



STUART LENDER

Times Contributor

I'm sitting alone in this house, but for the sleeping company of the dog and the cat. Quieter somehow with the soft music on than the sound of the silence itself. I know that's because my mind is talking this and talking that, and won't shut up. The music is the leveller. Sometimes the old questions re-surface and I

welcome them; but not tonight. What's the purpose? Will I live to see the balance of all things become so disjointed that recovery is impossible? Is my daughter generally hopeful? Happy?

Uneasy; I'm bent to dwell upon my work and my life as a funeral director because my work is my life and vice-versa. How can it not be, it's so intimately personal for all involved. And then a thought forms from outside the windowpane as I watch the snow fall. Thousands upon thousands of flakes and no two are alike, they say. Must be billions in this snowfall alone. How can that be? Some strange anomaly that makes one like this and one like that. Some slight alteration in which this one freezes in its perfection while another – equally perfect, fuses onto the first... and again... and again... covering up the season that went before in

fragile chains of embrace; leaving white. The "light" of an evening's landscape.

I open the front door. The quiet of it all; a strange invasion of calm muffling up the sounds of the wind that brings it, and the growl of a car engine somewhere, warming itself so it can escape. But I'm motionless watching it descend. I don't move. I don't escape. For an instant I wonder something about mortality and connectedness, and before another kamikaze flake can enter the warmth of the house, I shut the door.

I imagine the snow as stars, supernova's spraying their mass throughout the neighbourhood. Billions of soft subtle explosions settling themselves on the yard, the side of the tree, the birdbath and steps. And it strikes me how brilliant these bright deaths must be to sculpt this panoramic

scene of winter perfection – and then, again, there it is once more – some kind of connection I can feel; for living with all of the catastrophic explosions of lives I've taken part in. The panorama of all the lives I've served allowing the unbroken view; each as meaningful and beautiful as the snowflakes constructing themselves on mass outside my window. Each life leaving their seasons behind for others to delight in and remark after the dark days have gone... "remember when..."

And there are literally thousands of these people who have laughed out stories, cried out stories, squeezed them out through hugs; for each other, and for me who has served them. The brilliant one-of-a-kind lives that I have merely touched for a brief and fleeting moment, like a snowflake on a cheek, that turns to tears.

And each year, their memories return. And mostly in wintertime, when the snow is deep and profoundly still. All the names. All the memories. All the stories. My own too. My mother. My father. My boyhood friend. They spread themselves out before me on such a night as this. In a blanket of white that somehow calls me to slip under it's strange and warm covering, like all of the lives that went before me did. They are perfectly imperfect and yet, as bright and brilliant as the snowflakes that keep falling now as I write this down.

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL.

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

## Web-crawling In Seasonal Celebrations



SHEILA CLARKE

Times Freelance Columnist

Beautiful music, family gatherings, festive dining, and sharing joy- What a wonderful time of year! Be it Christmas, Hanukkah, Bodhi or Kwanzaa- or just enjoying the feeling of good will that seems to fill the air in December, we're looking forward to the pleasure of winter celebrations. Let's add another presence to the season this year- a very large, very beautiful blue and green jewel, floating in space- our planet.

We live within an economy that is based on using new/raw materials to make things- which we then encourage people of the world to consume- to buy. There have been two results to this system: One is that those new resources are not part of a never-ending story- They are running out. The other result is really important for our winter celebrations- and that is waste.

Advertising loves to entice us to buy bigger and better every year. Our guard is down, our sentiments rule, and before we know it, our shopping cart and our bills are overflowing! I've mentioned that catchy little line, "want versus need" before, but what if we really tried to keep our winter celebration within the ability of our planet to provide materials for products, and to minimize waste. What a challenge!

Some options are out there to impact both waste and consumerism. One choice that I'm hearing from young folk is "thrift-shopping." I have begun to try to visit thrift stores more often as my first stop, but taking that as a place to do gift shopping is brilliant! There are often unique items that are a perfect fit for someone on your list! (I love old-fashioned handkerchiefs- What better place to find them! -no trees cut down to blow my nose :)

My next favourite is one we tried as a family one year- make your own! We ended up with a huge variety: embroidered pillowcases, throw pillows, knitted scarves (that would probably keep you warm in an Arctic blizzard!), home-baked cookies, personal bookshelves, and many whispers and secret productions that would be whisked away when we entered rooms.

Try that as a family project, with some help and ideas for the younger set- Nothing compared to the smiles that greeted those homemade gifts- from the makers, and the recipients.

If you do want to make a special purchase for someone on your list, shop locally. There are many gifted creators and many shops in our communities. Bypass the waste of trees needed to box and courier goods to your house, bypass the fossil fuel in the packing tape, the plastic packing and the GHG emitting truck that delivers the item to your door.

Consider whether new items are ethically made, how far they had to travel to get to you and how wastefully they're packaged. Harkening back to want vs. need, think about useful gifts- Those plastic thingamajigs can be fun for a minute, but in the long run, a crazy pair of socks might be more fun!

And then there's the HUGE problem of waste- oh my! Resources are part of that story too: trees cut down to make wrapping paper, fossil fuel present in tape, the mountain of waste from packages, the forever plastic that will stay in the environment and work its way into water and soil (and us), and so many items that don't fit into recycling and instead are destined for the landfill- Are there

solutions??

Absolutely! The solution begins with stockpiling whatever gift paper does come into the house- We have some treasured pieces that have been around for years. We don't buy new- It's a waste of trees and most aren't recyclable. It's fun to use newspaper, festive cloth bags with drawstrings, and sometimes dishtowels for wrapping.

For a while we used paper gift bags, but it began to seem like an industry unto itself with lots of raw materials and new ones always appearing, many of which aren't recyclable. Tissue paper is also on our avoid list, it's not recyclable and is often a big part of gift bag packages. Similarly we haven't bought ribbons and bows for years- We dig deep into a basket of leftovers and come up with some crazy but creative packages!

One suggestion from Greenpeace is to cut colourful magazine pages into strips and make a bow! I have a neighbour who buys natural twine for ribbon. The new project in our house is to avoid tape entirely, and fold either material scraps or paper around our gift treasures. We sometimes write on the packages, or make gift tags out of old greeting cards.

There are lots of creative possibilities to make your winter festivities a gift to the planet as

well! Challenge yourself as well as your families and friends to invite that beautiful blue and green jewel known as Earth to your seasonal celebrations- the best winter holiday gift of all, for the future.

Climate Updates:

1) Atmospheric Carbon this week reached 420.4 ppm (parts per million), November 2023, up from the safe level of 350 ppm, passed in 1990.

Try to reduce your use of plastics- They come from fossil fuel production which releases Carbon into the atmosphere.

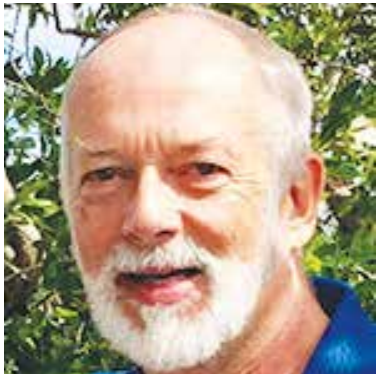
2) Congratulations to the Leave the Leaves heroes. The overwintering-in-the-leaves-oh-so-necessary-pollinators thank you!

3) From Katherine Hayhoe, a Canadian scientist: "This is literally what the science says: every bit of warming matters, and every action and every choice matters, too."

*Sheila Clarke is a Stratford advocate for the environment, of our community and of our planet. She has a BSc Zoology from the University of Illinois, and a host of courses beyond in disciplines that inform ecology, the science of how everything living fits together in nature. She is a member of CFUW Stratford, Stratford Climate Momentum, and the Perth County Sustainability Hub.*



## OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: A beautiful Irish location for a domestic tragedy



PAUL KNOWLES

*Times Contributor*

The story of Kylemore Castle comes straight out of a gothic romance. It is, indeed, a castle, but not one built for military or defensive purposes, nor a castle that has a long history of restoration and renewal. No, Kylemore Castle, situated in the beautiful Connemara district of Ireland, was built in the Victorian age, in 1868, by a rich English doctor, Mitchell Henry.

Both the Castle and its grounds are enormous – the place includes 33 bedrooms, four bathrooms, four sitting rooms, a ballroom, billiard room, library study, schoolroom, smoking room, gun room, and sundry offices and quarters for domestic staff.

You might think it was already a tragedy to have 33 bedrooms and only four bathrooms, but there is a bigger tragedy here, and that's where the gothic, romantic bits come in. Mitchell built Kylemore as a home for his beloved spouse, Margaret – but she died only seven years after her dream castle was built. It is amazing how many elaborate, palatial homes – Boldt Castle in the Thousand Islands comes to mind, as does Toronto's own Casa Loma – were built to celebrate love stories that ended in



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

**Kylemore Abbey, set in the beautiful Connemara district of Ireland.**

tragedy.

And thus it was at Kylemore. But Margaret's death led to the construction of yet another beautiful structure – the chapel at Kylemore. And eventually, to one more, smaller, but still ornate, building – the Mausoleum, where both Margaret and Mitchell are entombed. Mitchell had long since left Kylemore, but when he died in 1910 – having lost most of his fortune – his body was returned to the estate to lie beside his beloved.

Mitchell's fortune came by way of inheritance from his wealthy, industrialist father. Instead of stepping up and running the family business, when he inherited his father's wealth, Mitchell stopped practicing medicine and entered politics. Which proved a costly enterprise.

The property changed hands. From 1903 to 1913, the Duke and Duchess of Manchester made Kylemore their home. But in 1920, the 33-bedroom Castle became the home of a group of Benedictine nuns, and

their successors own and manage the estate to this day.

All of which makes Kylemore one of the most interesting destinations I have visited.

First, there is the stunning setting. The entire region of Connemara is breathtakingly beautiful. Mountains, moors, lakes and free-range sheep (including some ranging in the middle of the roadways) make this drive a highlight of any trip. And Kylemore's own lakeside setting, backed by craggy mountains, is right out of a storybook.

What makes Kylemore even more special, though, is the diversity of attractions throughout the large property. The Castle, of course, is worthy a lengthy visit. And the nuns – or whoever is running the attraction on their behalf – have come up with clever, state of the art interpretive features. Holograms of the period characters tell the story of Kylemore. Visitors are not dependent on written guidebooks, or the necessity to download a tour on their phones – instead,

we meet helpful, if virtual, characters, eager to share their story.

The property's features are located all around the lake – actually, two lakes, linked by a stream – and the walks are very enjoyable. From the main entrance, you can choose to turn right and visit, in turn, the Abbey (which is the castle), then the Gothic Church and finally (appropriately enough), the Mausoleum.

Turn left after the main entrance, and you can walk, or take a trolley, to one of the finest, and largest, Victorian walled gardens I have ever visited. And I love visiting Victorian walled gardens.

At the same time the Castle was built, Mitchell Henry ordered that a six-acre bogland be converted into an impressive walled garden. Today, you can wander through the beds and plantings, talk with gardeners, and visit the glasshouses (two of an original 21 have been restored), the head gardener's house, the pigsty, and all manner of individual gardens

– kitchen garden, formal flower garden, rockery, nuttury, herb garden, herbaceous borders, and more.

The entire Kylemore estate covers 1,000 acres, and while you won't visit the property in its entirety, there are several walks and trails, carefully identified, that will take you through woodland, along rivers, and even to a waterfall.

All of this at a place where Benedictine nuns continue to "live, work and pray." In fact, visitors are welcome to join the sisters for daily mass and vespers, in the modern, newly-constructed Monastic Church, located near the entrance to Kylemore (and quite close to the restaurant and gift shop). By the way, when the nuns aren't praying, they spend their time making chocolate – and of course, the handmade Kylemore Abbey Chocolates are on sale in the gift shop.

Kylemore Abbey has become a national leader in sustainable tourism in Ireland. The vehicle fleet is being electrified, hundreds of native trees are planted on the property each year, and the attraction is developing a full "biodiversity plan", working with the National University of Ireland in Galway (about an hour and a half south-east of Kylemore).

There are plenty of destinations worth an hour or two of your time. Kylemore is not one of them – you'll want to schedule a full day at this dramatic, romantic, stunningly beautiful place.

*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](mailto:pknowles@golden.net).*



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

**Kylemore boasts a six-acre, walled Victorian garden.**



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

**A parade of sheep, along a lake backed by mountains, in Connemara.**



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The other side died with you.  
I often lay awake at nights  
when the world is fast asleep  
And take a walk down memory lane  
With tears upon my cheeks.  
A million times I've thought of you,  
a million times I've cried.  
Forgive me Lord, I'll always weep  
For the one I loved so much  
But yet I could not keep.*

**Forever loved and deeply missed by your  
loving husband Ken and family**

**OBITUARY**



**ROSEMARIE RICHARDS**

Rosemarie Richards in her 95th year, passed away peacefully at Stratford General Hospital on December 3, 2023. Beloved wife of Ronald Richards (2016).

She is survived by her sons Matthew Richards, Michael Richards (Arlene); grandchildren Alexander Richards (Katrina), Hazel Hollowheart, Rebecca Richards, Stephanie Brydon (Dwayne), Ryan Ross (Caitie) and great-grandchildren McKayla Ross, Audrey Ross, Emerson Brydon, and Atlas Richards.

Rosemarie was born in Kitchener to Filippo and Rosa Ganci. She was the youngest of seven children. She became an accomplished figure skater which led her to meet her husband Ron on the ice at the Stratford Arena. Rosemarie and Ron coached figure skating throughout southern Ontario and were instrumental in the formation of the Palmerston Skating Club.

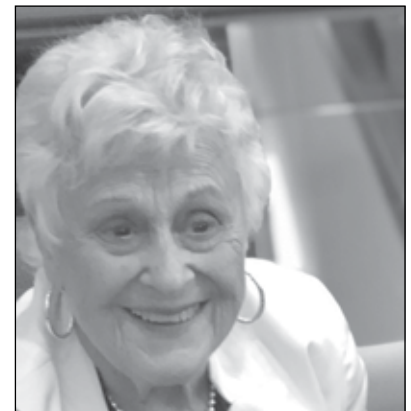
Rosemarie had many interests including sewing, travel (39 Countries), astronomy and the arts. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Waterloo.

Her laugh, smile, and affection will be missed by all that knew her and her family will miss her baking creations that were the centerpiece of the Christmas Season.

Rosemarie will be fondly remembered and loved forever.

Cremation has taken place and an informal gathering of friends and family will be held at Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services, 804 Ontario Street, Stratford (across from the Canadian Legion), on Tuesday December 12th from 6pm to 8pm. Casual attire is encouraged.

Donations to the Alzheimer Society of Perth County are gratefully being accepted and may be made directly at [www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth/](http://www.alzheimer.ca/huronperth/) or through Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services. 519-271-5062.



**MAXINE ELIZABETH MCFADDEN  
(NÉE CAPLING)**

July 20, 1927 – November 28, 2023

Maxine McFadden passed away peacefully in her sleep in the early hours of November 28, 2023. Maxine was born and raised in Stratford, Ontario, where she returned from her nursing training in Hamilton to work at the Stratford General Hospital and in Drs Hazel, Roberts, and Jarrett's office at 42 Albert Street. Maxine is survived by her daughter, Nancy Fair, and son-in-law, Michael Fair; granddaughters Hilary Fair (Joel Kechnie) and Stephanie Fair (Zixi Wang), and her first great-grandchild, Julian Fair Wang. Just prior to her death she received with joy the news of a great-granddaughter on the way. Maxine is also survived by her brother Robert (Bob) Capling and sisters-in-law Diane, Wilma, and Doreen, several nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews, and her dear friend, Jan.

Maxine is predeceased by her husband, Donald McFadden; her parents, Roy and Madelyn Capling (née Zinn); her brother William (Bill) Capling and sister-in-law Lorna; and many beloved friends.

For ninety-six years, Maxine lived with the same strength and determination of spirit that made her such an asset in her nursing career. For decades, her family has found meaning in frequent reflections from the public about the high-quality care Maxine delivered to her patients on the obstetrics, emergency, and recovery floors at SGH. In her retirement, she brought that same outstanding care to her role as grandmother with a long history of providing expert comfort to the girls when they were ill, teaching them to bake and build gingerbread houses, and playing long, patient games of scrabble over tea. Her laugh was deep and infectious and will be missed.

Special thanks from the family to the PSW staff at Woodland Towers for their very important support, and to Marilyn Brickman for the companionship she provided, in the last few months of Maxine's life.

It was Maxine's wish to be cremated and a service of interment be held at Avondale Cemetery in the Spring of 2024. Details will be posted once known. In her memory, donations are gratefully being accepted to a charity of one's choice, through Rutherford Cremation & Funeral Services. 804 Ontario St. Stratford. 519-271-5062.

**LOCAL MATTERS.**



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## Provincial Series Stratford December Classic

The Stratford Skating Club is excited to announce our annual skating competition: The Provincial Series—Stratford December Classic, presented by Elite Jump Performance, will be returning to the Stratford Rotary Complex this coming December 15-17, 2023.

This year, we will be welcoming 820 skaters to Stratford over the three days of this event. Our staple events returning this year will be our men's and women's singles events at the Star 5-Gold levels, Star 2 to Star 4 Free Skates, and Pre-Juvenile and Juvenile Free Programs.

These skaters are competing not only for this event, but the skaters scores are archived and then compared with others in the Province. The top scores by the end of February 2024 will be invited to the Skate Ontario Provincial Cham-

pionships in March 2024. Our regular Special Olympics events as well as Adult events will also be returning this season.

This year the Stratford Skating Club will have a record number of our home skaters competing in The Stratford December Classic. In total, seventeen SSC skaters will be taking to the ice during this competition.

This event is open for general admission for the public. Cost to watch the competition is \$5 per person, per day for those aged 5 and older. All children 4 years and younger are free.

Admission is taken at the door. The events will start at 8am on Friday December 15th and run on both ice surfaces until 6p.m. on Sunday, December 17th at the Stratford Rotary Complex.



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# Riddles

**Why did the tightrope walker visit the bank?**  
He wanted to get his balance

**Why did Patrick eat money?**  
His mom said it was his lunch money.

**Why can't computers play tennis?**  
They try to surf the net.

**What does the Invisible Man drink at snack time?**  
Evaporated milk.

**What kind of running means walking**  
Running out of gas.

**What goes up and down but never moves?**  
The stairs

**Why did the kid put his head into the piano?**  
He wanted to play by ear.

**Why did the kid run to school?**  
Because he was chased by the spelling bee.

**What did the tie say to the hat?**  
"You go on a head and I'll hang around here."

**Where do snowmen keep their money?**  
In a snowbank.

# Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 35



# Pet of the Month

## GRIZZLY

Meet 8-year-old Grizzly, a lovable senior dog bursting with energy and affection! This gentle giant has a heart as big as his size. Grizzly thrives on staying active and enjoys long, leisurely walks. But what he loves the most is being by your side, cuddled up and showering you with all the love he has to offer. Grizzly does have some special needs. He experiences high separation anxiety, which means he prefers the comfort of a home environment rather than an apartment. If you want lots of unconditional love in your life, submit an adoption survey for Grizzly at <https://kwsphumane.ca/adopt/process>.



# Word Search

## CHRISTMAS

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

- Christmas
- Merry
- Festive
- Santa Claus
- Elves
- Jolly
- Reindeer
- Carolers
- Mistletoe
- Nativity
- Yuletide
- Tinsel
- Stocking
- Presents
- Candy
- Rudolph
- Holiday



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

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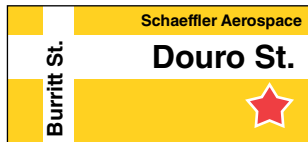
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