

STRATFORD **TIMES**

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Optimism Place launches new creative fundraiser to bring art to blank walls

LISA CHESTER

Stratford Times Correspondent

Optimism Place, a refuge for women and their children who have experienced abuse, has launched a creative new fundraiser called Artists Inspiring Hope and Healing. Through this initiative, donors can purchase pieces of art to hang on the walls of the newly renovated and expanded shelter later this year.

This inspired method of fundraising is meant to elevate the soon to be 12,000 square feet of wall space.

“Our community has always been really supportive of us, and it was important that we support our local community so this is a really creative fundraiser that allows us to have art on our walls and is an opportunity for artists to create art with the women who stay here in mind,” said Donna Jean Forster, financial manager for Optimism Place.

The art featured for sale is produced by Perth County artists; 25 artists have submitted 70 works for this creative fundraiser. The pieces vary in size and subject and are created with the inspiration of hope and healing for the women and children in mind.

Interested donors can purchase the piece of their choice with the intent that it will hang in a bedroom or shared area to inspire hope and healing to those living there. The proceeds of the sale are paid to the artists for their work, and a tax receipt is issued by Optimism Place to the donor along with a thank you letter. A plaque will be installed on the wall with the donor’s name next to the artwork donated.

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(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

READING FOR CHARITY

Isabella Martchenko, in her family home, reading "The Mouse Mansion" by Karina Schaapman.

Six-year-old “Izzy The Bookworm” is on track to raise \$15,000 for MS by April of this year

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

Canada has one of the world's highest rates of Multiple Sclerosis (MS), but Isabella (Izzy) Martchenko wants to change that and is starting to do so with her love of reading.

Izzy has been reading between 50 and 75 books a year since she was 4

years old through the MS Read-a-thon program. Her goal this year is to raise \$5,000 for the initiative, bringing her total to over \$15,000 over the last three years.

Diagnosed in 2018 with Multiple Sclerosis, Izzy’s mom, Lindsey Martchenko, was excited to learn that the MS Readathon was still running. She decided to sign Izzy up when she

was only 4 years old. “I was excited because Izzy could raise money, and she loved books!” Martchenko states. Within the first year, Izzy had read 75 books and raised \$10,000 for MS. She’s happy to be able to raise money for a good cause all while supporting her mom, “I’m extremely happy [to be involved], and I love

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5

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Stratford Easter Market set to run April 1st

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The annual Stratford Easter Market is set to run this April 1st and is expected to showcase more than 70 vendors from across Stratford. The event is set to take place at the Arden Park Hotel from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., and all parking is free.

Hosting the event is the Stratford Maker's Market, a group of five local women who run their businesses and saw a need for larger-scale markets in Stratford. "It's important to us to have large-scale space makers can showcase their work," states Sara Clarke, gemstone jewelry designer and owner of Sara Clarke Designs as well as one of the organizers for the event.

"We want to showcase local makers," Clarke states. She and the team at The Stratford Maker's Market decided to organize markets in Stratford due to the lack of spaces available to showcase their work to community members interested in purchasing items from local vendors. "It's a lot of work, but it's worth it," states Clarke.

This year's event will be in support of the Stratford Hospital's special care nurs-



MAKERS MARKET TEAM

From left to right, Sara Clarke (Sara Clarke Designs), Abby Rivers (Petals 2 Posh), Brittany Henry (Brittany's Bath Bombs), Nicole Bearss (The Creative Bear) and Rosalie Preikschas (Georgie & Co.)

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

ery, and instead of charging cover at the door, the Maker's Market always takes "pay what you can" donations instead; "that way, everyone can still come and support local makers and also give what they can to charity," States Clarke. There will be a silent auction, a photo booth (by donation), and face painting for kids. The Easter Bunny is also said to be making an

appearance.

Their last event, the Christmas Market, at The Tom Patterson Theater saw over 2,100 shoppers and raised \$5,118 for the Stratford Rotary Hospice. "There are not enough words to describe how grateful, happy, and proud we are," the group posted on their Instagram page after the event. The group has raised money at past mar-

kets for rotary hospice, house of blessing and out of the ashes: large animal rescue centre. "Supporting the community is a huge part of what we do." States Clarke.

The Easter Market is expected to see approximately 1,600 shoppers this year and welcomes all those looking to stock easter baskets or decorate their homes. There will be makers showcasing everything from candles and jewelry to wreaths and homemade dog treats at the event. There is no limit to what you might find at The Stratford Easter Market this year.

If you're looking for a fun way to spend an afternoon on April 1st, the Easter Market will surely provide you with what you want. On top of local shopping, a cash bar and café open to serve you, and food trucks will be available on-site.

If you're interested in learning more about the Stratford Makers Market or learning about upcoming events, you can follow the group on their social media pages @stratfordmakersmarket. Clarke also suggests a great way to support local makers is to purchase products from them directly before looking to large-chain retailers. "Everything counts!" she says.

Optimism Place launches new creative fundraiser to bring art to blank walls

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"Often we ask the creative community to contribute so much to fundraisers in the community and we ask them to simply donate it. We wanted to recognize the value that artists contribute in our community and that there is great value in artwork, and we wanted them to be fairly compensated for it," explained Forster.

Sales have been brisk since the launch of this campaign with many pieces already spoken for. The sale will continue through March until early April. Optimism Place has curated the art on their website at www.optimismplace.com/artists-inspiring-hope-and-healing. Clicking on the title of the artwork reveals a page with additional details and an artist bio.

"We are looking forward to what this will look like in our space," shared Forster.

Optimism Place has been in Stratford since its humble beginnings in a house in 1983. As needs changed, so too did their address and a new, bright fully accessible building was built in 1994. Now, decades later, to answer growing demand, this new addition and renovation to the existing facility will see it grow to 12,000 square feet.

"In total this increases capacity by 115 per cent. The need in the community has been increasing through the years and we are glad to be there to answer that need and in a position to do this expansion, and take on this fundraising to really be able to support the community. The community has always been



SOLD

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Haile Mcleod, left, multimedia artist, sold her piece "Group Chat" to Selena Jones (right) from The Chica Project.

really supportive of us," Forster emphasized.

The capital campaign stands at 33 per cent of fundraising, and there will be more ways for the community to contribute as there will be fundraising throughout 2023, with the goal of an October occupancy. At that time, there will be an opportunity for donors to visit and view the artwork adorning the new walls.

While this fundraiser contributes to the capital campaign for the renovation and addition, day to day needs can still be met through an Amazon wish list that is updated monthly to meet the current needs of the shelter. This can be found by navigating to the website Optimismplace.com and clicking on the Donate button.

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2023 Stratford Home and Leisure Show set to take place on March 25th and 26th

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

The 37th annual Stratford Home and Leisure Show is an event that draws visitors from across the region. The show offers a diverse range of exhibitors and vendors showcasing their products and designs. The event will take place one week earlier than usual and will be held on Saturday, March 25th, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, March 26th, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

“It’s a great place to check out what’s new,” states Melissa Schenk, Executive Officer at Perth Huron Builders Association, formally known as Stratford and Area Builders Association. The event is family-friendly; children are welcome and can even participate in interactive building projects with local schools. “There’s something for everyone,” Schenk states.

One notable stop, in particular, is the ice cream stand, run by Stratford’s own Richard & Ruth Kneider, who have been scooping ice cream at The Home and Leisure Show for over 30 years. “I’ve never seen anyone walk away with a sad face after they buy an ice cream cone,” states Kneider. The pair have been raising money through their registered charity, Simple Dreams, with the primary goal of helping their community and those in need. “Right now, the biggest thing [we raise money for] are beds; you’d be sur-



HANDS ON Students take part in building activities at the 2022 Stratford Home and Leisure Show (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

prised by the number of people in Stratford that sleep every night without a bed,” Kneider states. All the proceeds from the ice cream stand will go directly to their charity and help raise money for those in need.

If you’re a homeowner looking for inspiration for your next renovation, thinking of putting in a pool or are a gardening enthusiast, there is something for you. “We are excited to have such a great variety of vendors from home and leisure at this year’s event,” states Schenk.

Tickets are only \$6 and can be purchased at the door. Children under 12 are always free. All of the money raised goes directly into the community. It helps support community fundraisers such as team sports, Aquabox (clean water kits for disaster areas), Stratford-Perth Rotary Hospice, food banks and technical training at local schools.

The Stratford Home and Leisure Show is a great way to support local businesses and learn about new and upcoming trends and innovations in the home industry. It’s a fun day out for the whole family with activities and events that appeal to all ages. The event is taking place at the Stratford Rotary Complex, 353 McCarthy Road in Stratford and as always, parking is free.

For more information on the event, you can visit their website at <https://stratford-homeleisureshow.com/>

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Stratford Restaurateur, Taxpayers Group and Local MP Asking Feds to pause escalating tax increases

LEE GRIFFI

Times Correspondent

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is calling on the federal government to scrap its plan to increase the carbon tax, alcohol taxes and member of parliament pay on April 1. A local conservative member of parliament and restaurant owner both agree.

"The feds will make life more expensive with the April tax hikes," said Franco Terrazzano, Federal Director of Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF). "Prime Minister Justin Trudeau shouldn't be raising taxes when Canadians can't afford gas or groceries." First passed in the 2017 federal budget, the alcohol escalator tax automatically increases excise taxes on beer, wine and spirits every year by the rate of inflation. Alcohol taxes will increase by 6.3 per cent on April 1. On top of that, the federal carbon tax will increase to 14 cents per litre of gasoline and 12 cents per cubic metre of natural gas on April 1."

The Times has learned that at least some Liberal MPs are in favour of seeing the escalator tax capped or at least have some sort of ceiling clause implemented when inflation reaches a certain level. The owner of Pazzo and Café Bouffon in Stratford, Larry McCabe, says it should be. "I don't like anything that rolls out without thought. If everyone rolled out everything going up as much as inflation, then you have a problem. There are people from the producer side of things who would have been hurting from the last couple of years with their cost structure. I am happy to hear they may put a pause on that."

Conservative Perth Wellington Member of Parliament, John Nater, says to his knowledge there has been no indication the Liberals are thinking about a pause in the tax. "Despite our best efforts this has been happening for nearly six years and it is the absolute worst time for a tax increase on the hospitality industry. It has been a disastrous three years and to be hit with a significant tax increase won't help." The rising cost of food, as evident by the Consumer Price Index, has increased the risk in the service industry and Nater says the escalator tax will only make it worse. "People in the hospitality industry will tell you how tight the margins are right now. The additional six plus per cent tax will just make it even more difficult to make ends meet. There are far too many local businesses who have struggled over the last three years, and this is just an added burden that will be felt across the board," he adds.

When asked about the difficult decision to pass the increase in alcohol taxes on to patrons, McCabe says an additional concern is the reduction in sales in the restaurant sector as a whole. "Everything is a bit of a wait and see right now as far as the hospitality sector goes. There has been a



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

real slowdown. February was pretty good, but I would be cautious about raising prices at all right now because the market has softened." McCabe says the costs of borrowing have gone up so significantly that people are waiting it out. "Things will bounce back for the summer in Stratford, but people are cautious on how they spend their money. I don't think we will be raising prices."

The restaurant industry as a whole is still in a state of flux as the economy continues to struggle post pandemic. McCabe says he is in an uncertain world at the moment. "Its an industry that has a hard time accessing traditional sources of capital, so I do have some concerns. As far as cost structure goes it is hard to really know where we stand because we haven't had a straightforward period of time to run operations. The overall thing is caution."

More Elected Officials Set for a Pay Hike

MPs take pay raises each year on April 1 and the CTF estimates this year's hike will range from an extra \$5,100 for a backbench MP to an extra \$10,200 for the prime minister, based on contract data published by the government of Canada. This will be the fourth MP pay raise since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"To add insult to injury, MPs will take another pay raise the same day they take more money from taxpayers' wallets," said Terrazzano. "Politicians don't deserve a pay raise when they make life unaffordable with tax hikes and runaway spending."

Nater says if he had his choice, he wouldn't be getting any increase in pay. "My view is the same one I have had the past few years. I believe our raises should be paused. They just shouldn't happen. As a politician I should not be getting any extra pay and there should be something in the budget this year to cancel those pay raises. It's the wrong time for politicians and those who are making the rules to get a lucrative increase."

STRATFORD TIMES

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(GARY WEST PHOTO)

WINTERFEST 2023

Enthusiastic committee members Carys Wyn Hughes and Matt Stone pause beside one of the excellent ice sculptures prepared for the 2023 Stratford Winterfest festivities.

Stratford Winterfest draws hundreds of visitors for their 25th anniversary

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

For the 25th year of Stratford's Winterfest, even though there wasn't a lot of snow in sight, the show was magical for everyone who attended Upper Queens Park.

There were lots of food attractions and activities for children and adults to enjoy, and in the afternoon of Saturday's activities, organizers saw so

many people visit the alpacas, along with sipping on their favourite Tim Hortons hot chocolate.

The hard-working Winterfest committee members said it was fantastic to be back again in the park to celebrate the wonder of winter.

Area children were getting their faces painted and they learned from the professional blacksmith on site, or maybe had a picture with BJ the Swan, before warming up by the fire-

side. There was so much to do at the Stratford Winterfest, including sitting on two large farm tractors supplied by Stratford's Mayor Martin Ritsma all at no cost to any of the visitors that came.

Longtime committee member, Carys Wyn Hughes thanks the many volunteers, the City of Stratford and Tim Hortons for their unwavering support for the February day of fun and entertainment, and are already planning for 2024.

Six-year-old "Izzy The Bookworm"

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

books!" she says.

For over 40 years, the MS Read-a-thon has promoted a love of reading with children across Canada. Their efforts to raise funds for technology and medical advancements for MS by getting children involved in fundraising and reading is a spectacular way to raise money in a fun way. Today, the MS Read-a-thon features an interactive online website where children can create profiles and characters and track their reading progress with a simple click.

Currently, Izzy's online character is a mermaid with purple hair, and she's reached a new goal called "Super Hero Status" for kids who've raised over \$500. "I'm going to raise money for MS for the rest of my life," Izzy states when asked how long she plans to participate in the MS Read-a-thon. Registration is free for children to participate and get involved and can be done simply by visiting the website.

Izzy's classroom at Bedford Public School was happy to learn of their classmate's initiative and is excited to participate by reading and donating to Izzy during the month of April, right before the program's closing. The plan is to have a pajama day dedicated to Izzy's fundraising efforts and have the children in class donate a few dollars if they can.

Every year, the money raised goes directly towards advancements in preventative treatments, "We are seeing more and more treatments that help prevent the disease rather than treat the disease," states Martchenko—a big step in the right direction for the treatment and cure for MS.

If you are interested in donating to Izzy and helping her reach her \$5,000 goal this year, you can donate online at <https://www.msreadathon.ca/fundraisers/IsabellaMartchenko/read-a-thon-2023>.

PC Connect Celebrates March Break with FREE RIDE Week

PC Connect Transit Service will be offering FREE rides during the week of March Break. From March 13 - 18, 2023, anyone can ride the PC Connect bus anywhere along the 5 routes completely FREE of charge. Although not required, riders are encouraged to secure their seat in advance through the Blaise Transit App (download from your device App Store), online at ride.blaisetransit.com or by calling 1-888-465-0783.

"We are thrilled to be offering another FREE ride promotion to encourage residents of all ages to try the PC Connect service at no cost," said Maggie Kerr, Transit Project Coordinator. "PC Connect will be FREE the entire week of March Break, making it easier than ever to fill your kids' week off school with March Break magic! From family-friendly local shops, restaurants, movie theatres, and outdoor activities, you can plan the perfect day-trip without having to worry about the cost of getting there."

The March Break promotion also falls on Transit Appreciation Day (March 18th); an international day to celebrate public transportation services and the drivers who make them possible.

Launched in November of 2020, PC Connect is funded by the Government of Ontario's Community Transportation Grant Program. Since launch, the service has welcomed over 14,000 riders aboard its fleet of 5 buses. PC Connect operates 5 routes Monday to Saturday, serving Perth County, Stratford, St. Marys, Kitchener/Waterloo and London.

For route maps, schedules and more information about PC Connect, please visit: perthcounty.ca/pconnect

County Council Acknowledges Recent Provincial Economic Development Award

At the regular meeting on February 16, 2023, County Council recognized its Manager of Economic Development and Tourism, Meredith Forget, who received the Joseph A. Montgomery Award at the Economic Developer's Council of Ontario (EDCO) Conference.

"Meredith has made a meaningful contribution to the Economic Development profession," said Perth County Warden, Rhonda Ehgoetz. "Council would like to thank Meredith for her work to positively impact the business community across Perth County. Economic Development is an important component to the work we do and it helps ensure the economic prosperity of our region."

"We were pleased to acknowledge this award at our

recent Council meeting," said Annette Diamond, Director of Legal / Corporate Services. "Perth County is fortunate to have excellent staff talent across the Corporation and it is wonderful when their hard work is recognized on a Provincial level."

The award is handed out annually to Economic Development professionals who demonstrate impact on their communities as well as their contribution to the Economic Development profession. Under Meredith's leadership, the County's Economic Development Division has grown to include both Tourism and the County's Community Transportation program.

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"Emily for Emily" support of The Emily Murphy Centre



EMILY FOR EMILY

(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

Lisa Wilde, Executive director of the Emily Murphy Centre, and guests at the "Emily for Emily" event downtown Stratford hosted by Cafe Bouffon.

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

February 23rd was a busy night for Café Bouffon in downtown Stratford. The owner, Larry McCabe, along with Danielle Amos-Brodhagen and Lori McCabe, hosted the "Emily for Emily" event, raising funds for the Emily Murphy Centre.

"We wanted to give back to the community in a fun way," Amos-Brodhagen states, "we all love Emily in Paris and thought we would center the event around that theme all in support of the Emily Murphy Centre; it worked perfectly." The event was a chance for the community to dress up for a good cause and give kudos to a fan-favourite Netflix show, Emily in Paris. McCabe agrees and states she believes "empowering women and giving them a chance to get back on their feet is so important to us."

The sold-out event was hosted by Café Bouffon in downtown Stratford and featured French cocktails and wine graciously donated by Tawse winery in Niagara. Many local vendors and businesses supported the event and donated items for the silent auction. Attendees could bid on everything from yoga packages from Modo Yoga Studio, Business coaching packages provided by Empress to sustainable, handcrafted watches made by a local watch company, Revival by Martin & Co Watches.

Lisa Wilde, Executive director of the Emily Murphy Centre, was at the event with

the other staff members. "The money raised will help bridge the gap between the Provincial and Municipal funding that we receive," she states, "this will help with the purchase of houseware, furniture, dry and frozen goods." The Emily Murphy Centre is a not-for-profit organization that supports local women and children in need. "The rate that we see women again is less than 5%" she states; this shows how important and effective the Emily Murphy Centre is in the community.

The Emily Murphy Centre was established in 1989 to empower and serve women, with or without children, who have experienced violence in Perth County and the surrounding area. The second-stage housing establishment provides safe alternative living options for women to help them achieve independence and freedom.

The event raised over \$4,000, as \$35 from each ticket sold was donated along with the money raised from the silent auction items. "Your support means the world," McCabe said during his speech. "The need in our community is higher than ever before."

If you are looking for ways to support The Emily Murphy Centre, they accept dry and frozen goods. "We also love gift cards!" Wilde states, saying gas and grocery gift cards are always a very welcomed and loved donation item.

If you or someone you know is in need of support, please contact the Emily Murphy Centre at 519-273-7350.

A visit to Stratford City Hall and the Mayor's Office



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

A WARM WELCOME

Mayor Ritsma presents Neil McPhee with a city of Stratford lapel pin in appreciation of his visit to city hall.

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

A visit to Stratford's City Hall for some people might just be another day at the office, but for this family, it was a highlight of their year.

Newly elected mayor, Martin Ritsma, treated the Neil and Kim McPhee family from Sebringville to lunch and a tour of the historical Stratford landmark.

To put into context, Neil is now relegated to a wheelchair due to his ongoing battle with A.L.S. (Lou Gehrig's Disease) after his diagnosis 8 years ago. McPhee has had a slow progression of muscle and nerve deterioration.

Mayor Ritsma, who lost his mother early in his life, along with five siblings with the debilitating disease, upon meeting and hearing of Neil and his story, felt it was appropriate in showing the McPhee family the hospitality the city is known for and toured the family to various rooms of City Hall.

This included the various offices, spacious auditorium and stage, Mayor's Office and finally the historical council chambers with the Mayors chair, where

decisions are made when city council is in session.

Mayor Ritsma also encouraged the wheelchair bound McPhee to travel the recently repaired elevator and visit the halls and washrooms, to be assured that the building was adequately accessible to visitors with mobility issues and wheelchairs. This included doorways with enough width for those wheelchairs and ease of opening and closing. Regarding washrooms, the Mayor wanted to make sure that toilets and grab bars were in the right places, and sinks and water taps were at the right levels to be used by wheelchair visitors and those manoeuvring with walkers.

The family said they were very happy with the way City Hall has upgraded facilities over the years to accommodate visitors like themselves with disabilities.

McPhee, and his family, were most appreciative of Mayor Ritsma and city hall staff for taking the time to make their memorable visit an enjoyable one, and the compassion shown will not be forgotten.



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Local entrepreneur launches platform to keep memories alive, and us OFF social media

STEWART GRANT

Times Editor

What is the best way to organize and retain life's precious moments?

Depending on the generation, your most treasured memories might be stored in an eclectic collection of photo albums, deteriorating VHS videos, or scattered digitally within various social media sites and your latest phone or tablet. What hope is there of reliably preserving these important moments into the future for your older self or for your descendants to enjoy? Where will you leave your legacy?

Local entrepreneur and former St. Michael Catholic SS student Kevin McCotter has thought deeply about this subject and has recently launched an internet-based platform called LifeShare. This secure website, located at www.lifeshare.info, went live on February 4th, chosen specifically as the same date that Facebook was launched back in 2004. McCotter says that LifeShare though will not repeat the pitfalls that have emerged within Facebook and other social media sites. "My goal is to get people off Facebook and onto LifeShare."

"Over the past year or so I have been working on and developing a new business that really sprung from COVID and when people were not able to see and talk to their family and loved ones," McCotter told the Independent. "The idea also became more relevant as the chatter on the ills of social media, fake news, click bait, etc., picked up more awareness. I personally don't post anything on social media and would say the majority of people I know do not either, but I thought there needs to be a better way to document your life and the most important moments and memories (not just what you were having for dinner at some restaurant to get a few comments or likes). So that is how I developed the idea, and now the platform, LifeShare."

McCotter explained that LifeShare combines the best aspects of Facebook, Instagram, and Dropbox, and the future of Arti-



PRESERVING MEMORIES

LifeShare founder Kevin McCotter

(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

ficial Intelligence. "You can document any special moments via video, images, audio, or text onto your 'life line'. You can share these moments with your chosen contacts if you want and they can comment about the experience, or you can simply keep your story private for yourself, or to pass on when you actually pass on. I'm presently working on adding a new feature where if people want to clone their voice to leave on to their loved ones they can. It's amazing. When someone loses someone the thing I always hear is "I wish I could just hear their voice again", this will be an option for people."

The platform has many other features for documenting and organizing your life.

One unique offering is the Pre-Programming of future messages, which enables you to record and pre-program messages to be delivered anytime in the future, such as grandkid birthdays, anniversaries, or anything special you want to make sure you are a part of in the future. This can be done by simply recording the message and choos-

ing the date for it to be delivered with an email link in the future. "It's a great tool if someone knows they might be passing on sooner than later, or also just to make sure you don't forget a special day for someone," said Kevin.

In another local connection, LifeShare has partnered up with Willful, an online and affordable Will services company headed up by St. Marys native Julia Staffen. The link with Willful was a natural extension of what LifeShare is looking to do in preserving important information. "I think it's a great tool and will encourage people to make sure they have their affairs sorted sooner than later," McCotter noted.

In preparing to write this article, I took a few minutes and setup an account with LifeShare to test it out. I found it easy to use, and I liked how I could "timestamp" key moments in my life and add photos, video, sound and text to my "lifeline", which could then be sorted chronologically. It became easy to imagine how someone in retirement years would find it a great

project to share with their family members, or for young parents to document the early years of their children's lives.

Unlike Facebook in which everyone's accounts are at least partially visible to everyone, McCotter insists that LifeShare is not a social media platform and has invested heavily into "military grade security" that keeps each cloud-based account completely private and secure. Kevin added that LifeShare will also never resort to selling ads or news within the platform, instead earning revenue (not now, but in the future) from reasonably priced membership fees and pre-programmed message credits.

Successfully launching a start-up platform such as LifeShare is a lofty and ambitious goal, but McCotter does have a good track record. In 2008, he partnered with friend Tony Pook on a business that began with "PookToques" and has since morphed that business (www.pook.ca) into much more than its origin as a sockhat company and is now a full line of comfy clothing. McCotter and Pook have made two appearances on the popular television show Dragon's Den and have expanded the Canadian company significantly into the United States during the last seven years. Many from Stratford will also recall that Kevin, along with brothers Stephen and Niall, opened and restaurant called Avoca and operated the Albert Street Inn for five years.

With the design and development of LifeShare already done and paid for, marketing the platform is the next big step. "We're going to do some trade shows, such as the Mommy and Baby tradeshow, and start approaching retirement homes and pitching them on accounts so that people can get comfortable with it. There's probably a trust barrier that we need to break," said Kevin. He also has an audition in the works to get back onto Dragon's Den, who knows what Mr. Wonderful will think...

To give LifeShare a try and see for yourself what it's all about, create an account for free at www.lifeshare.info.

Rae Announces Funding for High-Tech Machinery for Local Schools

Matthew Rae, MPP for Perth-Wellington, announced over \$185k in funding to bring high-tech machinery to four schools in Perth and Wellington Counties.

"Our government will continue to invest in skilled trades education," Rae said. "These are in demand, good paying jobs. By 2025, 1 in 5 jobs will be in the skilled trades, we need to ensure our students have industry leading machinery to learn on."

Equipment deliveries for the program began in November 2022, and range from CNC milling centres, lathes, and plasma cutters to CNC desktop milling machines, high precision conventional milling machines, lathes with readouts, and more. In addition, each school will receive tool kits

Recipient High Schools	Funding
Wellington Heights Secondary School	\$25,780
Stratford District Secondary School	\$69,752
St. Marys District Collegiate and Vocational Institute	\$78,400
Pathways Innovation Centre	\$11,400
Total	\$185,332

and cutting tools.

"Our goal is to expose high school students to technology at an earlier age to engage their interest for a career within our industry," said Robert Cattle, Canadian Tooling & Machining Association (CTMA) Executive Director. "Not only does this expose students to newer technology at an earlier age, but also gives teachers up-to-date equipment to imple-

ment in their classrooms."

This project by the CTMA and the Ontario Council for Technology and Education (OCTE) is funded through the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, Skills Development Fund.

"Our government is proud to be funding projects that expose high school students to the skilled trades early on," said

Minister McNaughton. "Ontario needs more skilled workers, and that starts with attracting more young people to these rewarding, well-paying and life-long careers. I want to congratulate the CTMA and OCTE for this incredible initiative."

"This funding and equipment are great additions to our rural schools," Rae added. "It is vital that our students are prepared for the jobs of the future."

The Skills Development Fund allows organizations to apply for funding to deliver in-demand training programs. Since the Fund was launched in 2021, more than \$660 million has been invested to help more than 400,000 people upgrade their skills.

Free Sunday Community Breakfast every month at “Caring” church in Stratford



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Tables filled up quickly in the hall at the Community of Christ Church in Stratford on Sunday, February 19 where a free community breakfast took place for all residents no matter what their faith.

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

There is an active church in Stratford that is serving up a “free” community breakfast one Sunday every month between February and June.

The first one at Stratford’s Community of Christ Church at 226 Forman Avenue took place on Sunday, February 19th.

The breakfast is served between 9 and

11 a.m. in their community hall and includes eggs, sausage, pancakes and hot oatmeal with all the toppings along with coffee and juice.

Dates to keep in mind in the future include March 19th, April 16th, May 28th and June 25th.

The church Pastor Nancy Brookshaw was pleased with the large turnout and even though there was no charge, donations topped over \$700 which will be donated to local charities.

Weekend Quiz

- 1) Only one chess piece can only move diagonally - which is it?
- 2) In the Sikh religion what is kesh?
- 3) Frankenstein' is a novel by which writer?
- 4) In mythology, who was banished by his son Jupiter?
- 5) The prefix 'neo' means what?
- 6) Miss Havisham is a character in which Dickens' novel?
- 7) Board game 'Trivial Pursuit' was invented in which country?
- 8) Which Book of the Old Testament tells the story of the birth of Moses?
- 9) What is China's official language?
- 10) What is the ideal storage temperature for all wine?

This week’s answers are found on pg. 31

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Perth County Approves 2023 Budget in Principle

At the regular meeting on February 16, 2023, Perth County Council adopted the 2023 Capital and Operating budgets in principle following presentations from staff.

The 2023 budget was adopted in principle with a 9.06% increase to the levy in the total amount of \$19,765,573 - an increase of \$1,642,517 from 2022. The 2023 taxable assessment in Perth County from 2022 will cover 2.54% of the levy with the remaining 6.52% being the levy increase directly related without the County’s 2022 assessment growth.

“We are excited to begin the new term of Council with strong support for program delivery for our region.” said Warden Rhonda Ehgoetz. “County Council has done an efficient job reviewing and reaching a decision with an approved budget.”

“I am happy with the outcome of the 2023 budget review.” said Corey Bridges, Manager of Finance / Treasurer. “Council balanced the needs of the region while using reserves and understanding the County faces the same external fiscal pressures as the other municipalities across Province such as inflation and the continued decrease in OMPF (Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund) funding.”

“We appreciate the support of Council though the 2023 budget. This year marks a new term of Council and staff look forward to continuing the excellent work delivering programs and services to the region.” said Lori Wolfe, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). “All staff across the Corporation continue to work hard to deliver on a variety of major projects and key initiatives.”

About the Budget:

The annual budget is informed by the Business Plans and Capital and Operating Budget presentations delivered by each department over the course of several Council meetings. Budget items and key initiatives are informed by the 5 strategic plan goals as outlined in the 2019-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan, which include: Growth and Economic Development; Regionalization and Service Effectiveness; Customer Service Excellence; Community Development and Planning; and Corporate Sustainability. In 2023, the County will be undertaking a refresh of the Corporate Strategic Plan to identify changes or emerging priorities since its creation in 2018.

For a detailed budget breakdown, visit www.perthcounty.ca/finance.

In Celebration of Kin Canada Week



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

HOIST THE FLAG

Left to right, Kinsmen Life Member Bob Walters, Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma, Kinsmen President Trevor Exner and Kinsmen Doug Young

On Friday, February 17th, Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma and three members of the Kinsmen Club of Stratford raised the Kin flag over City Hall.

At the February 13th regular council meeting, the City of Stratford Council approved the request from the Kinsmen Club of Stratford proclaiming Monday, February 20th, 2023 Kin Canada Day and the week of February 19 – 25, 2023 as Kin Canada Week.

The COVID pandemic put a hold on many activities including the celebration of Kin Canada’s 100th anniversary and the Stratford Kinsmen Club’s 75th Anniversary in 2020. Kin Canada is celebrating its 103rd anniversary on February 20, 2023 while the Kinsmen Club of Stratford is celebrating its 78th anniversary of “serving the communities greatest need”.

Chartered in 1945, the Kinsmen Club of Stratford was one of the most recognized

service clubs in the city and at one time had over 75 active members. Major fund-raising and service projects over the past 40 years have included the Arena Booth, Canada Day and Santa Claus parades, July 1st fireworks, Stratford Blues and Ribfest, Camp Tanner, high school bursaries and Cystic Fibrosis.

Kin Canada was founded Feb 20, 1920 in Hamilton by returning WW1 Veteran Hal Rogers. Kin has been a vibrant and responsible all-Canadian service organization devoted to serving communities across Canada.

Kin Canada, Canada’s largest all-Canadian service organization, is made up of Canadian men and women who gather together in clubs to volunteer their time for the purposes of bettering their communities by performing ‘hands-on’ service work, raising funds for important community projects and having fun.

Downtown Stratford BIA finalizes Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, and Anti-Racism Policy

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) is taking more steps forward to an inclusive and equitable community.

A press release sent February 22 announced the Downtown Stratford BIA has released their Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, and Anti-Racism (EIDAR) Policy. The policy has been in the works since July 2020. Per the policy, all staff and volunteer members will be undergoing training as part of their onboarding.

"To get it to a level of where we want it to be, it's all about follow-up and training of it all so we make sure that our board members and staff are fully trained on the equity policy and then we can take it out to the rest of our membership and say 'Here's what we put together' and give them a place to start rather than have them starting at scratch trying to put together their own policy," Jamie Pritchard, general manager of the Down-

town Stratford BIA, said. "We're hoping that many businesses will look at it and say 'Hey this is done, this is well put-together and it's worthwhile and I need to work with this within my own business.'"

Pritchard said that Downtown Stratford BIA board members and staff, stakeholders, and different organizations were involved to make sure that the policy was all-encompassing. The policy was unanimously approved by the Board of Directors.

The EIDAR policy outlines protected grounds that it will honour:

- Age
- Ancestry, colour, or race
- Citizenship
- Ethnic origin
- Place of origin
- Creed
- Disability
- Family
- Marital status, including single status
- Gender identity and expression

- Receipt of public assistance (in housing only)
- Record of offenses (in employment only)
- Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)
- Sexual orientation

The policy also extends to behaviour conducted outside of Stratford BIA activities, such as social media and aims to prevent bullying and harassment by and towards members of the Downtown Stratford BIA. Those part of the BIA are expected to report any incidents violating the policy to the board of directors as soon as possible and will not face repercussions for doing so in good faith. Any staff member or volunteer who does not abide by the policy will face disciplinary action including and up to termination and/or removal from the board and volunteer duties.

The EIDAR is an evolving document that will be updated as needed.

"To be inclusive and to make sure that you're not leaving anyone out, it has to be evolving. You can't just take something like this type of policy and say 'here it is, in stone. This is it. It's going to last forever,'" Pritchard said. "We look back where we were in society 50 years ago compared to standards of today and we have to make sure that we're continually looking at it, updating it and making sure that it suits the needs of the community."

Feedback on the policy can be sent to info@downtownstratford.ca.

Applications Now Being Accepted for Phase 2 of Britannia Street Affordable Housing Project

The City of Stratford's Social Services Department is now accepting applications for Phase 2 of the Britannia Street Affordable Housing Project.

Applications are available on the City's Britannia Street webpage. Once submitted, complete applications will be reviewed for eligibility, and qualifying residents will be selected on a chronological basis. Apartment units are expected to be available beginning in June 2023.

Rent for a one-bedroom unit will be \$1,002 plus hydro, and an applicant may qualify with an income between \$33,960 - \$47,568. Rent for a 2-bedroom unit will be \$1,190 plus hydro and an applicant may qualify with an income between \$39,999 - \$54,576.

"We are pleased to see this project come to completion and that there will be 27 more affordable housing units available within our community," said Kim McElroy, the City of Stratford's Director of Social Services.

Phase 2 of the Britannia Street Affordable Housing Project consists of 27 units, with 22 1-bedroom units and 5 2-bedroom units. Six units will be accessible. The building will contain storage lockers and scooter storage, has a community lounge and a community garden. The building is close to a bus stop and the neighbourhood contains grocery stores, schools, licensed child care and playgrounds.

Questions about the application process can be sent to britannia@stratford.ca

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International Women's Day recognizes Anita Gaffney

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

International Women's Day was March 8th and was celebrated across the globe in support and recognition of women's cultural, political, social, and economic achievements through centuries of fighting for the rights women have today. International Women's Day has been celebrated since 1911 and showcases women throughout history who have broken down barriers and carved the path for those who come after them.

Anita Gaffney is Executive Director at the Stratford Festival; she has been working to steer the festival to financial stability, all while supporting staff, volunteers, partners, and visitors alike. Working at the Stratford Festival and being a past chair member for the economic development agency for the City of Stratford and Stratford Public Library has shown Gaffney's dedication to her community. She also served as Campaign Chair member for The United Way Perth-Huron.

Gaffney has proven time and time again that the strength of a woman can impact the local community very much. "Stratford is a special place that punches above its weight. It's a place of creativity, warmth, and ambition. It's easy to get passionate about this community," states Gaffney when asked what Stratford means to her.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Stratford Festival saw extraordinary challenges and hardship, forcing the festival to shut down in-person shows and events, which

took a toll on the whole community, especially those managing the festival. Self-care is vital in helping manage stress, and Gaffney strongly advocates using self-care to get through hard times. She notes the importance of

carving out time to be with her husband and prioritizing personal time. Gaffney finds yoga, palates, and walking keep her motivated, fit, and healthy.

Through the years, Gaffney has had to find her strength and even states, at times, she has been underestimated as a woman, "I've often been underestimated, which actually motivates me to stay the course."

Gaffney says it's essential for the younger generation to care about what they do and find joy in it, "Find the joy in what you do. Even 30 years on in my career at the Festival, I'm inspired by the work on our stages. I'm in awe of

the talent of the artists and artisans and the pride of everyone associated with the festival."

Young women across Stratford are encouraged to be involved and learn from those who paved the way, "We have to be sure our voices are being heard. In my interactions with young women, I have no doubt they are taking the space they deserve. It's wonderful to witness." Gaffney states. It's always essential to continue to be open to learning and growing, "I'm still a work in process. I've been motivated by seeking ways to contribute to the community. I've been fortunate to have been able to do so through my career at the festival."

Anita Gaffney is a pillar in the Stratford community, a great role model, and an example of what International Women's Day is all about.



ANITA GAFFNEY

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO US!
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Times Past: Stratford's 1932 Centennial celebrations

BETTY JO BELTON

Stratford-Perth Archives

Stratford celebrated its centennial in 1932 with an Old Boys Reunion that lasted “five big days”—each one jam-packed with community events. The souvenir booklet lists the full program and is bursting with local history and civic pride. For example, James S. Russell “Registered Architect, est. 1902” had an advertisement listing “some of Stratford’s public buildings erected from my plans: YWCA, Public Library, Majestic Theatre, Masonic Hall, Avon School, Falstaff School, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Ch., Zion Lutheran Church, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Parkview United Church.” Elsewhere, a collage of photographs shows off highlights of Stratford’s Park System “said to be the most beautiful in Canada.”

Here are some of the tales of times past included in the booklet:

“the site of Stratford was determined by a broken wheel, which resulted in a stop in June 1832, at the river Avon where it crossed the Huron Road at what is now the Stone Bridge. The traveler who was thus unwittingly to be a deciding factor in this city was J.A. McCarthy, whose son, T.B. McCarthy, now ninety years old, is still living on Romeo Street. True, he found a shanty here and William Sargent was building the Shakespeare Hotel, but McCarthy was the man who saw at this spot a chance to settle down and build a permanent home... But unless there had been a potential water power in the small river here, even McCarthy’s settling down might have been in vain. The Canada Company ... proceeded to construct a dam and erect a mill – saw-mill first and then a grist mill...Stratford’s growth has been slow but sure. It reached the village stage by 1853...The growing village became a town in 1858 with J.C.W. Daly as first mayor, the population having reached over three thousand. Depressions were known then as now, for in 1859 there were thirty-three families reported as destitute and a soup kitchen was opened for the poor...By 1885 the population had increased to the ten thousand mark, largely owing to the enlargement of the Grand Trunk shops in 1870, when many families moved here from Toronto...The railway shops and varied manufacturing industries, with furniture second to the railway in importance, have made Stratford the thriving city that it is; but there is another side to



Above, 1932 Shakespeare Hotel Plaque, Redfront Dept Store - now Pazzos
Left, Century of Progress 1932 cover



its development – the beautification of the city that in its early days was established in the centre of a great swamp. Its streets up to twenty years ago with the exception of Ontario and Downie, were unpaved and in wet weather veritable mud holes. But all that is a thing of the past and the Park Board, organized in 1904, has been working ever since to make Stratford the most attractive city in Ontario.”

The 1932 celebration began on Saturday,

July 30 with an “Aviation Meet” of forty planes at the City Airport followed by parachute landing contests, horse races, baseball games, concerts and dancing at the Casino. The City Hall auditorium was transformed into “a historical exhibition of rare distinction” with artifacts like a piece of the rail line in place in the 1850s, “over which the first train came to Stratford”, a fire helmet from the 1860s and a flintlock musket used in the 1837 rebellion to name a few – all on loan from many private collections. There was a midway “in full swing throughout” near City Hall, where the local newspaper reported “every ride, every concession... was doing a land office business. Merry-makers fought for seats on the merry-go-round, the ferris wheel and the whip... Orangeade disappeared at an alarming rate, and hot dogs received terrible punishment.”

The next day being Sunday, people gathered at the Allward war memorial to honour local soldiers. There was a mass church service at the bandshell in the evening with sacred music provided by a choir of 200 singers for a crowd of over 5,000 visitors.

On Monday, August 1, plaques marking the sites of the first building, first mill and first school in the city were unveiled. Local

artist Bruce Stapleton’s copy of a portrait of the infamous Canada Company official, William “Tiger” Dunlop, was installed at City Hall. (The painting was later on display at Stratford Public Library for many years and is now part of the Stratford-Perth Archives collection.) There was a parade, horse races, tight wire walking, more baseball, football, a ladies softball game between the Preston Rivulets and the Stratford National Maids, band tatroo, fireworks and a “Jitney Street Dance” with music by Olin Brown and his Ten Piece Orchestra.

On Tuesday, the Avalon golf course on Romeo Street was open to visitors all day without charge. Former students of Stratford schools were invited to a reception at the Central Collegiate. In the afternoon there was a “huge historical pageant and parade on City streets.” Those who still had some energy in the evening could take in the Ladies 3 mile swim race, a community concert at the bandshell and the Mammoth Lions Frolic and Dance at the Casino.

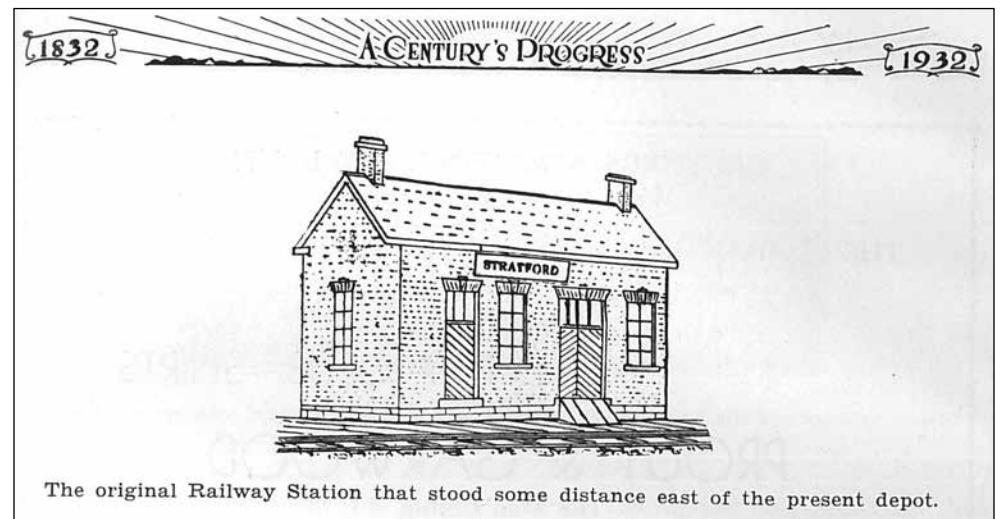
Visitors wound down on the last day of celebrations with a Farmers’ Basket Picnic in Queen’s Park where they could watch a softball tournament with teams from each Perth County township and a tug of war between county council and city council. The Beacon Herald’s “war correspondent” described that contest as “a decisive and slashing victory” for Perth County councilors who were awarded all-day suckers as prizes along with bragging rights. In the evening there was a fiddlers’ contest, waltzing competition and a final dance on Downie Street, from Ontario to Wellington. The hard-working Olin Brown and his orchestra once again provided the music from a platform set up in front of City Hall.

Later in the week, the newspaper reported that the city looked a little deserted after thousands of old boys and old girls had departed. Organizers were congratulated for working as a team and making the most of limited funds to offer “something to appeal to the old-timers from elsewhere, something for the folk from the country, something for those who liked sport and for those who are becoming air-minded.” It certainly sounds like it was a great success – perhaps worth repeating with modern touches for Stratford’s bi-centennial. Less than a decade away!

This article is based on information and images from the collections at Stratford-Perth Archives. www.stratfordpertharchives.on.ca



Left, 1932 parade on Ontario Street looking towards County Courthouse. Right, Century of Progress 1932 first train station.



The original Railway Station that stood some distance east of the present depot.

Coldest Night of the Year in Stratford celebrates success

Stratford/Perth Shelterlink and United Way Perth-Huron (UWPH) are proud to announce results from the Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) event in Stratford.

“The spirit of Stratford was out in force Saturday night,” said Elizabeth Cooper, UWPH manager community development, Stratford & Area. “Together, we raised \$143,728 in support of programs helping those experiencing hurt, hunger, and homelessness, which makes such a difference in the lives of people right here in Stratford. Thanks to everyone who joined us for such an inspiring night.”

“We also want to say thank you to our incredible volunteers. From route marshals, to registration check-in, to the entire planning committee, we couldn’t have pulled off such a successful event without them.”

“My wife Ella (Fox) has been volunteer-

ing at CNOY for a few years,” added Sean Collins, who works at Soup Surreal and served up soup during CNOY Stratford. “She always arrived home excited about the night. It’s really special to see caring people who go out of their way to help others. It was an honour to join in this year.”

Overall, 363 walkers, including 60 teams, participated in raising this year’s total. The top five fundraising teams were Stratford Snow Striders, Stratford Anglican Churches, Monteith Ritsma Phillips, Avondale Almighty’s and Team Haggis. The top five individual fundraisers were Martin Ritsma, Cranla Warren, Sandra Sousa, Judy Matheson and Marilyn Holmes. Donations are accepted at cnoy.org until March 31. For updates, pictures and video join UWPH’s Stratford Coldest Night of the Year Facebook group.



(MICHELLE WEBBER PHOTO)

Funds raised support UWPH’s Stratford Connection Centre, providing a safe place for vulnerable people, including access to basic needs, social ties and connections with allies and services, and Shelterlink’s programs and services supporting vulnerable local youth.

UWPH and Shelterlink would like to thank our CNOY sponsors: Barlow Smisek Dentistry, Coventry Animal Hospital & Mitchell Veterinary Services, Goebel Insurance Agency (Desjardins), Home & Company Real Estate, Ideal Supply, Klomp’s Landscaping, McDonald’s, Monteith Ritsma Phillips, Peter Maranger &

Associates, SBS Metals, Scotiabank, Sinclair Pharmacy and Stratford Lions Club. In-kind donations were provided by Black Angus Bakery & Catering, Georgian Bay Fire and Safety, Soup Surreal and Tim’s Tree Care. Thank you as well to Michelle Webber for photographing this year’s event.

About Stratford/Perth Shelterlink

Stratford/Perth Shelterlink is a Housing First shelter providing Perth County youth ages 16–24, who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, with shelter, basic needs, support, community aid and advocacy services. For more information visit shelterlink.org or call 519-272-2294.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

WINE TASTING EVENT

Sixty-five people enjoyed an evening of Wine Education and Tasting on February 10th at the Stratford Legion Branch 8. The hall was set up in a U shape fashion allowing everyone a great sightline to the guest Sommelier, Bob Latham. Three white wines and 3 red wines from Pelee Island Winery were being explained and tasted. The evening wrapped up with a snack and some great conversation.

Electricians in the classroom

The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board has partnered with Conestoga College to provide electrical presentations for elementary students across the district. Licensed Electrician, Mr. Tom Smith, Conestoga College Electrical Instructor, teaches an interactive lesson to elementary students on the basics of electrical wiring, electrical boards and energy circuits.

The board recognizes the leader-

ship of Mr. Mark Flanagan, HPCDSB OYAP Project Leader, for arranging this programming and hands-on learning experience. We are aware that there is an ongoing need in the community for skilled workers in the area of electrical and this is one of the initiatives that our board is undertaking to encourage students to consider pursuing this incredible educational and career path opportunity.

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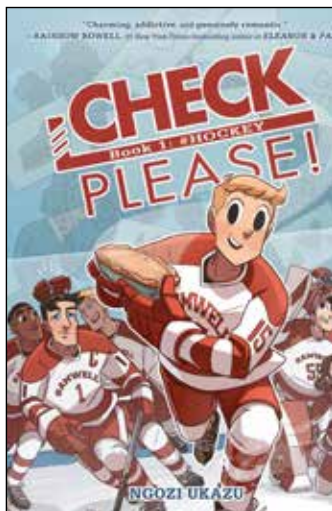
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Queer Book of the Month Club

Check Please! Vol. 1, by Ngozi Ukazu
@SPL: YA GN FIC Check

Eric Bittle has just started at Samwell College and has made the hockey team. “Bitty,” is a former junior figure skating champion, vlogger, and compulsive baker; he’s small but fast and nimble, and quickly becomes a valuable member of the team. While he selected Samwell because of its reputation for being an LGBTQ+ friendly campus, he still feels a modicum of awkwardness as he develops feelings for handsome team captain Jack Zimmermann. Jack has his own personal issues to struggle with, but is committed to his team, and focuses on helping Bitty overcome his fear of being body checked during games.

We follow Bitty through his first two years at Samwell as his game improves, he gains self-confidence in an inclusive environment, and bakes an obscene number of pies. Speaking of obscenity, this book is a thoroughly realized comed-



tale taking place in what amounts to a hockey-frat house on a post-secondary campus. While highly entertaining,

there is a lot of swearing and bro-culture in the story, and readers should be prepared for this. Bitty’s teammates’ main points of discussion are hockey, partying, swearing, and sexual conquest. Having said this, there is very little actual romantic content, with the story focusing on Bitty’s feelings and experiences as he tries not to crush too hard on Jack. Never fall for a straight boy. Bitty also deals with hockey injuries, threats to his sports scholarship, and becoming a mentor for the newest members of the team.

This is a humorous and fast-paced tale of self-discovery and self-worth. Highly recommended.

CJ Nyssen
Public Service Librarian
Stratford Public Library

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After 35 years, owners Sandra and Peter Metelski are retiring from Swiss Chalet in Stratford

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

There was a celebration recently at Stratford's Swiss Chalet restaurant, when after 35 years, owners Sandra and Peter Metelski have decided to retire. However, patrons won't see much change as their daughter, Janine, will continue in a management position.

As one of the busiest restaurants in town, the owners over the years welcomed their regular clientele as well as many outside visitors over their many years of serving a varied menu.

The Swiss Chalet franchise owners and their three children, Samantha, Evan and Janine, have all been kept busy and involved in the day to day operations, which saw not only in house dining but also a very well established take-out business, especially during COVID.

Sandra stated that their 60 staff members were very loyal and many stayed long term, which they appreciated. She has always realized through the years that their "Team" approach to their employees was very important to their hospitality business.

The restaurant received many awards for their great food and service, including in 1989 with the top Sales Increase Award and the Hospitality and Service Excellence award.

The Ontario Street business was also awarded the Dinerex President's award of Excellence for many consecutive years under their management.

As of this writing, the couple have decided to take a well deserved vacation, which will be a big change for them after serving the eating public 7 days a week for the past 35 years. They want to thank area residents for all their support and their hope is that the restaurant will continue for many years into the future.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

RETIREMENT AFTER 35 YEARS

Swiss Chalet's retiring owners Sandra and Peter Metelski flanking their daughter Janine, at a recent celebration of their retirement at the Ontario Street restaurant.

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Renaissance and Scholarship in Queen's Park

HAYDEN BULBROOK

Times Contributor

Situated amongst snow covered evergreens in the winter months and lush greenery in the summer, the Stratford Normal School has stood majestically in the southwest corner of Upper Queens Park since it was finished in 1908. Though it was one of four identical normal school buildings designed by Ontario's Chief Architect of Public Works at the time, Francis Riley Heakes, it is a unique and remarkable building - something that you readers will see by the end.

The impetus to establish normal schools in Stratford, Hamilton, Peterborough, and North Bay derived from provincial plans that aimed to create a well-educated teaching force. Before their construction, Ontario only had three normal schools. Now just what's in the name? We need to go back to Reims, France in the year 1685 when St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle founded the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He is believed to have established the first École Normale. In 1823, Samuel Read Hall established the first normal school in the United States when he founded a place to train teachers in Concord, Vermont. Ontario's first normal school dates to 1847 when it was established on the site of what is now Toronto Metropolitan University. I will let you guess the controversial figure who founded it. In this context, normal is not meant to convey a sense of the ordinary or average. Instead, these institutions sought to instill and reinforce norms so that student teachers would graduate to be model teachers to children.

In a 1908 report, Provincial Deputy Minister of Public Works, A.W. Campbell, described a wide array of resources provided to students stating, "Provision is made for manual training rooms, gymnasium, library and reading room, chemical laboratory, art rooms, domestic science rooms, and assembly hall, in addition to class and lecture rooms and offices." Undoubtedly, as the province entered the 20th century and an age of modernity, it embraced ideals of education for its youth.

By July 25, 1906, the location in Queen's Park had been selected for the Normal School and approved by the provincial government. Stratford was selected over Berlin (Kitchener) because it was a railway city so model-school students could conveniently



(HAYDEN BULBROOK 2022 PHOTO)

The Stratford Normal School after a late December snowfall.

travel home on weekends. This decision was beneficial and by 1932, the school contributed approximately \$100,000 annually to the local economy. It also produced Shakespearean plays as early as 1913.

The school's architect, Francis Riley Heakes, was born in Toronto on July 30, 1858 to the son of an English immigrant. Heakes had been a private architect until he was appointed assistant to the renowned Chief Architect of Public Works, Kivas Tully, in 1883. In 1896, Heakes took over from Tully as Chief Architect where he would sign off on nearly 100 structures during his purview which lasted up until his death in 1930.

Heakes applied deliberate attention to detail to the four normal schools to reinforce the norms they intended to instill. Writing in 1907 to the Minister of Public Works, Joseph Octave Reaume, Heakes remarked:

The buildings will be four stories in height, including basement. The design in the style of Italian Renaissance, with a central tower in the front facade, surmounted by a dome, the main entrance being at the side of the power, with an imposing portico of stone. The building from top of stone to the main cornice will be in brickwork, with stone string courses, capitals, columns, etc., with

sufficient enrichments to give relief to the architectural lines, and when completed the composition will give an ornate and substantial appearance. The outside dimensions on the ground line are 78 feet front by 108 feet in depth.

Contractor S.F. Whitham of Brantford was awarded the contracts to erect each of the four buildings. The Purdy, Mansell Co., Limited, of Toronto received contracts for the heating, plumbing, and ventilation of each building, while electrical work was completed by The Fred Armstrong Co. The Canadian Art Stone Manufacturing Company supplied the stone. This latter company began only in 1905 and rapidly grew after supplying material for large-scale projects such as these four normal schools.

Looking at the Stratford Normal School in more detail, we see a number of fine details including brick columns with stone bases and capitals. Heakes deviated from the pure symmetry of the Italian Renaissance style by making an off-centre entrance on the right side of the main facade. However, the use of columns, a segmental pediment, a dome, and stonework such as keystones and stone sills and lintels are quite representative of the style. As with the Renaissance more gen-

erally, there is intentional inspiration from the Greeks and the Romans. With its raised height, large projecting pavilion, and dome, the building is imposing and grand; however, its orientation amongst the trees and the use of red brick bring restraint while preserving its order. Even in the busiest times of the Festival season, I find it one of the calmest and most inspirational spots in the city.

The Stratford Normal School served the province with its siblings for a number of years. In 1953, as the baby boom was in full swing, normal schools were renamed Teachers' Colleges in an effort to again modernize and to meet the growing demand of teachers as countless schools were erected province-wide. Following reforms to teacher training in the late 1960s, the Stratford Normal School closed as a teachers' college in 1973. The normal schools in London, North Bay, and Toronto were absorbed into their local universities, but having no university in close proximity, Stratford's simply closed. Nonetheless, the building itself has continued to fare quite well throughout its history, especially in comparison to its three siblings.

The Hamilton Normal School succumbed to fire in 1953. The North Bay Normal School remains but is cradled by glassy additions to the north and east. However, it has been put to good use as part of the Lindsay Weld Centre for Children. The Peterborough Normal School remains quite intact, with a low modern addition added to the rear. Some rather unsympathetic window replacements unfortunately diminish its heritage value. Thus, Stratford can boast the most architecturally integral Normal School with few major changes witnessed throughout its history. In fact, it has retained its cornice, its keystones, its entry points, and to my enjoyment the wood sash windows - a heritage feature that is often sacrificed in a misguided attempt to decrease energy waste. How unique and remarkable! As a means to recognize and preserve its heritage, the property was designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act in 2002.

Stratford's Normal School turns 115 years old this year. Though the school ceased functioning under its built purpose 50 years ago, it remains as a landmark adjacent to - and in service of - the Stratford Festival Theatre. Equally important, it is a reminder of Stratford's contribution to education and the ushering in of the modern era in Ontario.



The four identical normal schools of Stratford, Hamilton, Peterborough, and North Bay. J. Valentine & Sons c. 1909-1911.



Drawing of the Normal School plans drafted by Francis Riley Heakes. Ontario Department of Public Works, 1907

Tax Tips for Individuals to Ensure a Stress-Free Tax Season

TINA GROENESTEGE

Famme & Co. Professional Accountant /Partner

Almost 31 million Canadians filed personal income tax and benefit returns in 2022. Taxes can be tricky, stressful, time consuming and sometimes frantic. The following tips will provide you with new credits to be aware of and touch on ways to ensure a smooth and stress-free tax season.

Know Your Deadline, Start Gathering Information Early and Get Organized

Ensuring you file on time will help you prepare and avoid last minute gathering of information and reduce late filing penalties and interest. At the time of writing, the interest rate on unpaid taxes and late or insufficient instalments is 8%. Accordingly, we encourage you to pay attention to the instalment request letters from CRA and make payments by the due date.

Individual tax payers must file their T1 Personal Income Tax and Benefit Return and pay the taxes owing on or before May 1, 2023.

Taxpayers with at least one business statement must file their T1 Personal Income Tax and Benefit Return on or before June 15, 2023 (however tax payment due date is still May 1, 2023).

Know What Has Changed and Take Advantage of Credits and Deductions you Can Claim

Research or seek professional advice before filing your personal income tax and benefit return to ensure you are taking advantage of all the tax credits by reporting everything correctly. This knowledge will help avoid any issues or unexpected tax payments or penalties in the future. A few new credits or programs available are as follows:

Ontario Staycation Tax Credit: Ontario residents can claim 20% of their eligible 2022 accommodation expenses in Ontario such as a stay at a hotel, cottage or campground. You can claim eligible expenses of up to \$ 1,000 as an individual or \$ 2,000 if you have a spouse, common-law partner or eligible children, for a refundable credit of up to \$ 200 as an individual or \$ 400 as a family.

Multigenerational Home Renovation Tax Credit: The Multigenerational Home Renovation Tax Credit is a refundable credit of up to \$ 7,500 (15% of up to \$ 50,000 in construction costs) for families wishing to add a secondary unit to their home for the purposes of allowing an immediate or extended family member, who is either a senior or adult with a disability, to live with them.

Residential Property Flipping Rule:

The CRA has introduced new sections of the Income Tax Act aimed at taxing individuals who flip residential properties and avoid paying income tax by claiming these houses as their principal residence, or as capital gains. For any dispositions after December 31, 2022, profit from the sale of a house will be treated as ordinary income for tax purposes if the property is bought and sold within 365 days. Some exceptions apply to this rule such as moves required for work.

Disability Tax Credit for Individuals with Type 1 Diabetes: Individuals with Type 1 diabetes will now be eligible for the disability tax credit and no longer permitted to provide additional information about time spent on permitted activities for tax years 2021 and later. The Disability Tax Credit Certificate (T2201) form must be completed by your medical practitioner prior to being able to claim the credit with CRA.

Tax-Free First Home Savings Account: Beginning in April 2023, Canadian residents who are 18 years of age and are considered a first-time home buyer can open a new Tax-Free First Home Savings Account. This new registered plan would give prospective first-time home buyers the ability to save up to \$ 40,000 on a tax-free basis. Like a

RRSP plan, contributions would be tax deductible, however withdrawals to purchase a first home, including the investment income, would be non-taxable.

Canada Dental Benefit: This payment is intended to help lower dental costs for eligible families earning less than \$90,000 per year. This tax-free benefit provides support for parents and guardians of children under 12 years old if they receive dental care in Canada and do not have access to any private dental insurance. Children already covered under another government dental program may be eligible if not all dental care costs are paid by that program.

One-time top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit: This payment aims to help lower-income renters with the cost of rent. They may be eligible for a one-time tax-free payment of \$500 if their income and the amount that they pay in rent qualify. The application for this benefit will be open until March 31, 2023.

Tax filing does not have to be a burden. Be prepared, informed, organized and file on time to avoid any unnecessary late filing penalties and ensure you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to. We wish you a successful, stress-free tax season. Happy filing!

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Gordon Pinsett - a Tribute

JULIA SCHNEIDER

Stratford Times Correspondent

When Gordon Pinsett was born in Grand Falls, Newfoundland in 1930, it was not part of Canada, nor was it when he started acting at 17. As we reflect upon the life of this great man who passed away on February 25, 2023, it's amazing how much has changed. A boy self-described as shy and awkward was now famous for over 150 roles in theatre, film and TV. Acting, he said, had freed him and the world reaped the benefits of his release.

Many speak of Pinsett's acting presence, character and impact. Mark Critch, a fellow Newfoundland actor, protégé and friend said of him "Actors in Canada are on a path that [Pinsett] cut through a forest," while Mary Walsh, of This Hour Has 22 Minutes, said "Gordon seemed to enjoy almost everything...he managed to keep a twinkle in his eye. "My whole career has depended on the happiness I get when asked to do something," he said in a 2010 Toronto Life interview. "Pick up the phone and say 'Yes;' I do that a lot."

In 2016 Pinsett was presented with the Stratford Festival Legacy Award by Christopher Plummer, who was the first recipient of this award. They had shared the stage in a 1962 performance of Macbeth and were long-time friends. By that time of the Stratford award Pinsett's roles had exponentially grown from the Servant he played in The Scottish Play:

he was the producer, writer and lead in The Rowdyman, set in Newfoundland, a memorable character and Genie award winner in The Shipping News, which also had a Newfoundland setting, and the husband in Sarah Polley's Away From Her, a role redolent with loss, for which he won both Genie and ACTRA awards. He also was a Companion of the Order of Canada and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and had been awarded honorary doctorates from a number of Canadian universities.

TV roles ranged from the early CBC drama series Quentin Durgess, M.P, Due South and The Republic of Doyle, to a guest starring role on the CBC comedy series The Red Green Show and voicing Babar in the children's program Babar and the Adventures of Badou. He was in the original Street Legal, Banazek, and the film The Thomas Crowne Affair. Of him Steve Smith, who created The Red Green Show, said "He loved to a paint... When I think of his career I think of a million colours."

Though born in Newfoundland before it joined Canada, his family said "Gordon loved this country, purpose and culture to his last breath." With typical humility and lack of ego and pretense the actor said that for him acting was like "getting away with something he didn't quite deserve."

Most everyone in Canada was happy that he did.

Justin Bieber: Steps to Stardom Exhibit celebrates five years at Stratford Perth Museum

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

It's been half a decade of Bieber Fever at the Stratford Perth Museum.

The museum on 4275 Huron Road celebrated its fifth year of the Justin Bieber: Steps to Stardom Exhibit on February 18 with a commemorative post on social media. The post featured photographs of fans at the exhibit and a black wall covered in messages for the pop star.

The exhibit honouring the Stratford-based singer lasted longer than expected.

"We thought that if we opened it for Family Day weekend in 2018 that we thought that it'd likely leave at the end of the year," John Kastner, general manager of the Stratford Perth Museum, said. "It's proven to be our most popular exhibit without question."

The Steps to Stardom exhibit was also once equal to the Anne Frank House exhibit in terms of attendance.

Memorabilia comes and goes from the Steps to Stardom exhibit, with a few permanent items staying during the whole exhibit run. The museum will be placing Bieber's autographed high school basketball jersey from his days at Stratford Northwestern Secondary School, now known as Stratford District Secondary School, where he

played basketball in Grade Nine.

The pop star has popped in the Stratford Perth Museum a few times, along with his wife, model Hailey Bieber. The couple signed the blackboard as well. His mother Pattie Mallette also visited the exhibit and his grandparents are regular visitors of the museum.

The Stratford Perth Museum had to close for part of 2020, 2021, and 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions such as museum closures. When the borders were closed, the museum also dealt with a decreased number of attendees. Kastner said about 30 per cent of the Steps to Stardom visitors are not from Canada.

Attendance recovered beyond pre-pandemic numbers. From September to December 2022, the attendance for the exhibit exceeded that of the last quarter of 2019, just months before the COVID-19 Pandemic was declared.

"We're here, we've managed to survive. There were times where we wondered if we would, if we'd be around after COVID and what that would look like but here we are," Kastner said.

The Stratford Perth Museum's Steps to Stardom Exhibit will run until December 31, 2023 and is included with general admission starting at \$10. Visit stratfordperthmuseum.ca for more information.



(STRATFORD PERTH MUSEUM PHOTO)

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Fighting Irish finish third; start playoffs with two wins

STRATFORD FIGHTING IRISH
2022-23 Player Statistics
(through regular season)

#	PLAYER	GP	G	A	PTS
9	Ray Robbins	22	11	25	36
10	Graham Brulotte	18	20	15	35
44	Cooper Leitch	23	15	12	27
77	Cameron Stokes	22	7	20	27
19	Brody Smith	22	11	12	23
21	Steven DeGroot	19	12	10	22
14	Mitchell Casey	23	8	11	19
16	Sean O'Brien	18	4	12	16
55	Riley Coome	24	4	12	16
81	Dylan Buckholz	20	5	8	13
8	Warren Gorman	20	4	9	13
24	Brenden Speziale	20	7	5	12
27	Matt Fuller	14	4	8	12
18	Mav Petrie	17	2	8	10
13	Matt Granger	24	4	4	8
7	Colin Martin	15	3	5	8
27	Sebastien Nogueira	12	1	7	8
15	Zachery Tierney	17	0	8	8
25	Daniel McCutcheon	15	3	2	5
33	Devon Rymarchuk	3	1	4	5
	Tye Campbell	5	1	3	4
23	Michael Finlay	13	0	3	3
21	Frank Nemeth	5	0	1	1
33	Andrew Bogdon	6	0	1	1

#	PLAYER	GAA	SV%
1	Darren Smith	3.60	.887
60	Zach Weir	3.17	.899



(FRED GONDER PHOTO)

HAT TRICK

Stratford Fighting Irish players, including captain Ray Robbins (#9) and Riley Coome (#55) celebrate as Cooper Leitch (#44) scored one of his three goals on the evening on March 4th. The Irish defeated the Erin Blitz 6-3 to take an early lead in their WOSHL playoff series.

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

With a third-place finish in the WOSHL standings, the Stratford Fighting Irish are taking on the sixth-ranked Erin Blitz in the first round of the

post-season.

The regular season didn't end the way the Fighting Irish would have liked with the team getting blown out in their last two games of the campaign against the Strathroy Jets on February 17th and the Tilbury Bluebirds on February 19th. They were outscored 16-1 in the two games combined.

Before the two thumpings, Stratford defeated the Bluebirds 6-1 on February 11th thanks in large part to a five-goal second period, which included two shorthanded goals and two powerplay goals by the Fighting Irish.

The Fighting Irish had some time off

between the end of the season and the start of the playoffs to regroup, which is exactly what they have done through two games of their first-round matchup against the Blitz.

In Game One on March 4th, after an even first period in which both teams potted one goal and Erin held a narrow 11-10 lead in shots, the Fighting Irish came to life in the second, scoring three times to take a 4-1 lead into the third. Both teams netted a pair in the final frame, allowing the Fighting Irish to take a 1-0 series lead on the backs of a 6-3 win.

One day later, Stratford got off to a hot start in Game Two, outshooting the Blitz 16-8 in the opening 20 minutes and getting out to a 2-0 lead. The Blitz pushed back in the final 40 minutes, outshooting the Fighting Irish 20-16 in the second and third periods combined. However, only two more goals were scored, one for each side, for a 3-1 final score in Stratford's favour.

The Fighting Irish have a chance to end the series on Saturday afternoon at the William Allman Arena and advance to the second round of the WOSHL Playoffs.

FINAL WOSHL STANDINGS

	GP	W	L	OTL	PTS
Tilbury Bluebirds	24	19	5	1	39
Elora Rocks	24	18	6	2	38
Stratford Fighting Irish	24	18	6	0	36
Tillsonburg Thunder	24	17	7	0	34
Strathroy Jets	24	13	11	0	26
Erin Blitz	24	9	15	2	20
Plattsville Lakers	24	6	18	1	13
Alvinston Killer Bees	24	6	18	1	13
Delhi Flames	24	2	22	1	5



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International Down Syndrome Day: Amiera Black “Aquaflash” set to take home gold in 2024

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Correspondent

International Down Syndrome Day is a global celebration that takes place annually on March 21st. The day is dedicated to raising awareness and promoting the rights, inclusion and well-being of those with Down Syndrome.

For Amiera Black and her mom, Jennifer Black, the day is extra special as they celebrate Amiera’s accomplishments together as a person with Down Syndrome and a professional athlete. Amiera will head to Turkey for the World Down Syndrome Swimming Championship competition in 2024. She has competed in past competitions, winning four gold and four silver medals.

Jennifer states that the competition is essential, not only to Amiera but to everyone who knows her or knows someone with Down Syndrome. “The more visible her life is, the more people understand that yes, Amiera has Down Syndrome, but her diagnosis isn’t who she is.”

Amiera is a grade 11 student at St. Mike’s and dreams of becoming a professional swimmer one day. “I want to be an Olympian,” she says with a grin. Just like any other 16-year-old, she likes watching TV and even has a TikTok account dedicated to her dogs, where she creates videos about them. She loves Hamilton – The Musical on Disney+ and one-day dreams of seeing it live in Toronto. “She knows every single song,” Jennifer laughs.

“Have things changed? Yes, but it’s only because we push the envelope,” Jennifer

states, “some people still have preconceived ideas of what Down Syndrome looks like, but we want to change that.”

Down Syndrome is a genetic condition that affects approximately 1 in every 700 babies born worldwide. It is caused by an extra chromosome 21, which can lead to intellectual disabilities. “Everybody is different and has different needs, like glasses; some people need glasses, and some don’t,” Jennifer states when explaining Amiera’s diagnosis.

Amiera has been well known across Stratford and calls herself “Aquaflash” due to her many gold medal titles and love of the show “The Flash.”

At a recent competition, the WOSSAA championship, Amiera took home three gold medals (pictured) and plans to take home more gold in 2024. Her main goal is to stop her competition, a 16-year-old swimmer, just like herself, who has dominated the pool for years. “Amelia is from Great Britain, and I’m going to stop her in 2024,” Amiera proudly states.

Amiera has proven time and time again that Down Syndrome is just a minor step that won’t stop her from anything; she has big goals and dreams and even plans to be the first person with Down Syndrome to swim across Lake Erie one day.

“I’m very proud of her; we’re going to see the world because of her,” states Jennifer.

If you’d like to reach out and donate to Amiera’s 2024 competition in Turkey or for all other inquiries, you can contact Jennifer Black at jennileeblack@icloud.com.



(AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE PHOTO)

BIGGEST SUPPORTER

Amiera Black with her three gold medals from her recent WOSSAA competition and her dog, Aragon, the golden retriever.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

SOLID AS A ROCK

At the Stratford Country Club, the winner of the Friday morning league 12 team Round Robin competition was the Doug Sproule team with an impressive record of nine wins and two losses. Pictured above with the award of the Andy Park Memorial Trophy, from left to right Dave Nolet (second), Wayne Klooster (vice), Doug Sproule (skip) and Cam Fraser (lead).



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

Branch 8 Stratford is now offering a support program called the Buddy Check Coffee Program. Meant for all Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans, as well as interested first responders, it is a no-cost social gathering to share coffee and snacks every Tuesday morning of the year from 10:30 am to noon, paid for by the Branch Poppy Fund, with a host able to direct guests to support resources, under the guidance of the RCL OSI Group.

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Local curler a key member of fan-favourite Nunavut team

Brady St. Louis' second Brier appearance a special one

STEWART GRANT

Times Editor

For the first time since 2011, the Tim Hortons Brier is being hosted this week at London's Budweiser Gardens. For local curling fans, it's been a welcome opportunity to make the short drive to London to see some of the world's very best curlers compete.

I've attended three draws this week to cheer on the "home team", by which I'm not referring to Team Ontario but rather Team Nunavut, the plucky group of underdogs that includes Brady St. Louis of St. Marys, who plays second, and Jake Higgs of Strathroy, who is the team's skip. Brady is a former member of the Stratford Curling Club, where he played for three seasons.

Since first being admitted to the Brier in 2018, Team Nunavut had compiled a win-loss record of 0-38 heading into this year's event, as they have been considerably over-matched by the more populous provinces and territories.

St. Louis, who was eligible for the team due to being born in Iqaluit in 1997, told the Independent that Team Nunavut's goals for this week "were to try and show that we belong to be there and hopefully win one or two games."

This goal was achieved right away in their very first match, as the team prevailed 7-4 over Newfoundland and Labrador. "My favourite memory of the week would defi-



(STEWART GRANT PHOTO)

IN THE ZONE

Brady St. Louis of St. Marys slides out of the hack at this week's Tim Hortons Brier at Budweiser Gardens in London.

nately have to be Nunavut's first ever win," Brady said. "We played well that game and Newfoundland is a great team. It came down to the final shot."

This year was Brady's second appear-

ance at the Brier, having participated as the alternate for the team skipped by Peter Mackey in 2021 when the event was held "in the bubble" in Calgary.

"This Brier is definitely a different experience being close to home and having fans around," he said. "Hearing the crowd cheer is something that can be tricky with many sheets in play, but the crowd is involved in every shot and it's awesome to hear a good roar from them."

The crowd was particularly loud during Monday morning's game despite having lower attendance than the weekend draws. Many area schools facilitated a field trip to the arena on Monday, and the kids were having a blast cheering on the players and making as much noise as possible.

One of the great things about curling that

it is truly a game for all ages, and it's also a game with strong family ties. Many of the players at this year's Brier are the sons of notable curlers. Brady's father, David St. Louis (former Director of Community Services for City of Stratford), skipped Team Nunavut at the Brier in both 2018 and 2019.

When Nunavut and Yukon were first guaranteed spots in the national championship in 2018, some pundits argued that it was ridiculous to have these sparsely populated territories match up against curling-rich provinces such as Alberta, Ontario, and Manitoba. By 2023 however, the decision appeared to be vindicated. Three wild card teams have been added to the field in recent years to give teams from strong provinces another path to the Brier, and each year the teams from smaller provinces and territories have gradually improved and played up to their competition. This year, both Nunavut and Yukon have won games, while Prince Edward Island has won twice, including an upset over Mike McEwen's Ontario rink.

"All the teams are getting stronger every year," said St. Louis. "It comes with a little more experience every time someone comes to the Brier. The teams are finding the best possible group of guys and making a strong team which makes the field stronger. Hopefully it keeps the games closer and more interesting to watch."

It's been a great watch indeed. For those hoping to catch a glimpse of Team Nunavut at this year's Brier, you'll only have until Wednesday night (March 8th), when they take on Reid Carruthers' Wild Card entry. Once the round robin is complete, only 6 of the 18 teams will continue into the playoffs in pursuit of the title which will be awarded on Sunday night.

Although Team Nunavut won't be hoisting the Brier Tankard this year, they've certainly proved that they belong to be there and, based on the cheers so far this week, they seem to have won the hearts of curling fans right across the country.

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**STRATFORD WARRIORS
2022-23 Player Statistics**
(through regular season)

#	PLAYER	POS	GP	G	A	PTS
9	Zac McCann	F	48	27	56	83
17	Hunter Nagge	F	44	32	28	60
18	Camden Daigle	F	49	25	37	62
27	Sheldon Pryce	F	45	18	39	57
19	Reid Oliver	D	49	14	37	51
22	Jonas Schmidt	F	44	23	24	47
16	Patrick Cole	F	39	26	15	41
12	Keaton McLaughlin	F	42	16	21	37
11	Luke Fritz	F	49	16	20	36
14	Jordan Moulton	D	48	7	27	34
7	Braydon Stumpf	F	49	10	13	23
24	Cole Lewis	F	45	8	13	21
25	Zach Hatch	D	49	4	19	23
6	Rhyse Brown	F	42	8	5	13
5	Nolan Adkins	D	35	3	10	13
10	Dylan Dundas	F	49	8	7	15
5	Jackson McLlwain	F	23	5	9	14
23	Wyatt Adkins	D	37	1	12	13
4	Bo Doxtator	D	34	2	6	8
20	Zachary Schooley	F	15	1	5	6
15	Haden Frayne	D	23	0	6	6
21	Owen Robertson	D	26	0	4	4

#	PLAYER	RECORD	GAA	SV%
30	Zach Burleigh	15-3-0-02.07	.914	
1	Owen Willmore	11-3-1-03.11	.915	

Second-place Warriors focused on having long playoff run

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

The Stratford Warriors may not have finished the regular season as emphatically strong as they would have liked, but they still went into the playoffs with plenty of reason to feel confident, claiming second in the Midwestern Conference and drawing the Caledon Bombers in the opening round of the GOJHL Playoffs.

Director of Hockey Operations Jason Clarke told the Times that the team battling the injury bug coupled with the parity of the conference contributed to their late-season stumbles.

“Injuries played a huge factor in our February,” said Clarke. “The focus of the group was to stay as consistent as possible and play our game each night. I

think we did a good job with that as we battled through a number of lineup changes. League parity and things tightening up also didn’t help us at the end. In the Midwest, all the teams in the top six can beat anyone on any given night.”

Even though they didn’t get the result they wanted, losing 3-1 to Listowel, the Warriors’ Family Day game was special as it saw 1,183 people in attendance for the matinee. That came just three days after another 1,000-plus person attendance was recorded at the William Allman Arena. Clarke said that the fan support has been truly special for the team and hopes the crowds continue growing in the post-season.

“It’s one of the great things about Stratford, that backing from the fans. Traditionally we have great support and you see it in our crowd numbers, especially lately. The team loves playing in front of those huge crowds and we hope to pack them in during the playoffs.”

The Warriors started their first-round battle against the Bombers on March 3rd and kicked it off with a bang, beating Caledon 8-3 in a game that saw Stratford score five goals in under 12 minutes in the second period. Hunter Nagge had a five-point night including a hat-trick, while Jonas Schmidt put up two goals and four

points on the evening. Reid Oliver put up five assists in Game One and the Warriors dominated the special teams, killing off all five Bombers’ powerplays while going three-for-five on the man advantage themselves.

Schmidt’s offensive hot streak carried over to Game Two when the series shifted to Caledon with the Owen Sound Attack prospect scoring twice in a 3-2 Warriors victory. Dylan Dundas scored the game-winning goal with 5:22 left in the third period.

In Game Three, Jackson McLlwain, Zac McCann, and Sheldon Pryce each scored as part of Stratford’s 3-1 win to take a 3-0 series lead. Through three games, the Warriors’ powerplay is operating at 33.3 percent while their penalty kill is at 92.3 percent. Zack Burleigh has taken the reigns in goal with Owen Willmore unavailable and the rookie netminder has given the team quality goaltending, posting a .925 save percentage in the Warriors’ first three playoff wins.

Clarke explained the three points making up the team’s message as they ramp up their playoff intensity.

“Leave nothing in the tank, believe in yourself and the guys beside you, and enjoy the pain of the Playoffs.”

FINAL GOJHL STANDINGS

Midwestern Conference

	GP	W	L	OTL	SOL	PTS
KW Siskins	50	38	10	0	2	78
Stratford Warriors	50	38	11	1	0	77
Cambridge Redhawks	50	34	8	6	2	76
Elmira Sugar Kings	50	29	20	1	0	59
Ayr Centennials	50	28	19	2	1	59
Listowel Cyclones	50	25	23	2	0	52
Caledon Bombers	50	7	43	0	0	14
Brantford Bandits	50	2	45	3	0	7



STRATFORD SKATING CLUB COMPLETES LAST EVENT OF SEASON

The last event of the Stratford Skating Club season took place during the weekend of February 24-25 in the Town of Durham. Pictured above, left to right, back row: Danika Lingard (Star 2 Ladies Group 4 – Bronze), Reese Manzer (Star 2 Ladies Group 7 – Silver), and Tessa Bell (Star 2 Ladies Group 3 – Bronze). Front row: Jane McCutchen (Star 1 Ladies Group 3 – Bronze), Hailey Graul (Star 1 Ladies Group 2 – Bronze), and Elena Aroutzidis-Desormeaux (Star 1 Ladies Group 1 – Silver). Also medalling was Honor Gropp (Star 3 Ladies Group 5 – Silver).



HURON-PERTH CHAMPS

(MARK DEWAN PHOTO)

St. Michael Catholic SS boys are headed to WOSSAA after prevailing at Huron-Perth on Wednesday, March 1. The title came in thrilling fashion as Isaac Nickel scored his second goal of the game just 67 seconds into overtime to edge South Huron 3-2 in the finals, held in Stratford. Members of this year's Huron-Perth champions include Aaron Green, Aidan Hill, Austin Musselman, Beckham McLeod, Blair Stokes, Caleb Templeman, Carter Petrie, Cody Bach, Cole Baier, Cole Humphrey, Colin Schultz, Colin Slattery, Connor Brooks, Dominic Marshall, Isaac Nickel, Jackson Campbell, Josh Ballantyne, Mark Pyzowski, Nolan Miller, Owen Holloway, Ryan Gansevles, Rylan Hall, Vincent Voros, Zachary Houben, and coaches Bryson Filipetti, Mark Price and Craig Campbell.



ST. MIKE'S SENIOR GIRLS WIN SILVER IN VOLLEYBALL (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured above, front row from L to R: Kiara Michiels, Faith Vito, Kiera Slattery, Milayna Mulder, Kristina Beckett; Back from L to R: Coach Bryan Kocher, Ashtyn Wedow, Autumn Mikel, Aydrie Groenestege, Annika Van Kooten, Jensen Pohl, Avery Ryter, Ella Van Bakel, Coach Michelle Weersink

The St. Michael Catholic Secondary School capped a strong season with a Silver Medal performance at WOSSAA.

St. Mike's qualified for WOSSAA by passing through the Huron-Perth competition in straight sets, first by defeating Mitchell 25-16, 25-14, 25-11, and then prevailing over Stratford District SS by

scores of 25-16, 25-23, 25-20.

At WOSSAA, the girls got past St. Joseph (St. Thomas) by scores of 25-16, 25-14, 25-13 in the semi-finals. The gold medal game against London South was closely matched, but London ultimately prevailed in four sets (28-30, 25-18, 25-21, 25-20).



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

NEXT GEN JIU-JITSU

Kellen Clark recently competed in his first Jiu-Jitsu tournament

This past Saturday March 4th, a contingent of Stratford grapplers made their way to compete in the Next Gen Jiu-Jitsu Niagara Championship.

31 athletes from Stratford BJJ braved the weather to make it down to Niagara Falls. This was the first time since covid shut the sport down that SBJJ has brought such a large team to compete.

Most notably this is the first time SBJJ brought a large force of kids.

The team did amazing. 26 medals in total for Stratford.

Stratford BJJ has a strong reputation for

producing stellar competitors but this was a first for the local team in regards to sheer numbers and it was truly the next generation of the team competing. None of the advanced members, coaches or primary competitors were on the mats. It was all recreational members of the team.

The academy looks forward to continuing this trend of success, but also fielding larger competition teams as the season progresses.

The Ontario International Open is next on the docket this May.

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An enduring love between nations - Frisian friends for life

RICK BOON

Times Contributor

For most people, we wake up in the morning ready to go about our daily routines, that being work, school, parenting, etc. We forge ahead to try and make the day enjoyable and look forward to the times where we can relax and share a few smiles with friends and family. I cannot think of anyone in my world that would not enjoy some simple “me time” once in a while.

Each of us, whether consciously or unconsciously, seek to feel the warmth and the love of people. How we feel this love is different for all of us. It can come from soothing words, a soft touch, a pat on the back, or a willingness of someone to go out of their way to make our lives easier. There are countless ways where we can feel the love of a person, a group of people, or a nation. In this country, you need not look any farther than how we get behind our Olympic and pro athletes.

In Friesland and the rest of The Netherlands, they too show their love for their Olympic and professional athletes. But, there is another group of people to which they love that transcends time across this tulip growing nation. They are not the hard working farmers that grow and harvest the tulips, nor are they the people working to strengthen the dykes from future climate changes that are possibly coming their way. No, these people are Canadians and not just any Canadian. These are some of the bravest Canadians to have ever walked this earth. In The Netherlands they call them “OUR LIBERATORS.”

In 1939, the Germans, under Adolf Hitler, took all of these basic civil liberties away from the nations his armies capitulated. These people were thrust into a dark hole destined to be lost forever without the help of others. That small glimmer of hope came on June 6, 1944, “D-Day.” Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy determined to drive the Nazi’s back to Germany. This would not be an easy task to complete. Many lives would be lost and many hopes for a free world lay in the balance for many months to come.

As the fearless Canadians and other allied nations pushed forward toward Germany, the German soldiers continued to wreak havoc on the lives of the Dutch people across the nation. Adults were put into hard labour work camps, women forced to provide food and other services to the German soldier, and children were taught to fear the might of the German soldier. But, through all of this, the strength of the Dutch demeanour and will to survive in the hopes of regaining their freedom kept them alive in some very dark times. They prayed for help, for hope, for liberators to make this happen.

In Friesland, the northern part of The Netherlands, those liberators were the Canadian soldiers who had fought gallantly up the the French coast into Belgium, and over to the Breschan’s pocket, into the port of Antwerp and then across into the mainland. The fighting in the Scheldt Es-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

CANADIAN HEROES REMEMBERED

Pictured above, from left are Mikaila Boon-Blair, Art Boon, Rick Boon (three generations) at the grave site of Bombardier J.O. Gibbons. Mr. Gibbons was a crew member from Art Boon’s tank and was shot by a German sniper in Groesbeek, Holland in the early morning of February 9, 1944, passing away in Art’s arms.

tuary was as difficult, if not more difficult at times, than the actual landing at Juno Beach on D-Day. The Canadians fought with honour and valour throughout this campaign, but many lives were lost in doing so.

From birth, the Dutch descendants of those who suffered throughout WWII were taught to cherish the freedoms and life that they had been given by the Canadian Liberators, many who gave up their lives for them. These messages were/are driven home in the family discussions, in their schools, and at their Remembrance Day celebrations where towns and cities empty their homes and go to the services that are held each May 4th. They go because they want to go, not because they are told to go. This is very refreshing to see as a Canadian in attendance.

It was only fitting that the organizers of our pilgrimage to Friesland incorporated some very important ceremonies at two Canadian War Cemeteries, those being Holten Canadian War Cemetery, and Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery. I had the distinct honour to be the Master of Ceremonies for the Holten memorial service.

For those who have never been to a Canadian War Cemetery, the experience is like no other. Throughout the pristine grounds of burial markers, you feel the love by the way flowers and the tombstones are maintained. But, it is not only the physical part of being in these hallowed grounds that strikes a person. The sounds that emulate throughout the grounds burrow straight

into your mind. The various types of birds constantly chirp or tweet away, almost like a sign that those who are buried there are content that they “did their job with honour” and were welcoming us to their resting places.

On a personal note, the service at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery was one that was included in our journey to help me to bring a little closure to a very important situation that happened on February 9, 1944. On this fateful day, Bombardier James Owen Gibbons, a valued crew member of my father’s tank, was fatally shot through the heart by a sniper in the early foggy hours that morning. I had heard the story firsthand from my father that this could have been him, as he was usually the first out in the morning, but on this day, he wasn’t. I had been told that all my father heard was, “I’m hit.” as J.O. fell to the ground. My father and the other crew members rushed to his aid, but for all intents and purposes, he died in their arms. As he was taken away, the shell that killed him fell into my father’s hands from under his jacket. Those are moments that none of us can even begin to relate to, nor try to make sense of. Those are thoughts you bury away and somehow try to continue moving forward with your task and your life.

I owed J.O. Gibbons a eulogy to thank him for his service and for being a friend to my father, but I needed to do this with my father and daughter present. My words were true and fitting for an honoured soldier, but they also represented the respect

from this generation of people who may never know his story. My father and Mikaila both approached the wreath, pinned their poppies onto the massive structure that was draped over the tombstone and paused. A shiny plastic covered picture of J.O. Gibbons was also pinned to the wreath. The wreath will continue to be at this burial site until it is not in an acceptable state, but the committee members have promised to return with a framed picture and place it at the base of the tombstone for my father.

It was here that I glanced up through the tears that had formed in my eyes to witness my ninety-seven (97) year old father and my twenty-six (26) year old daughter deep in thought and connected through a bond that can never be broken. Chins were quivering throughout our small group who were gathered here on this sunny day, but for myself, this allowed me to pay tribute to a man who I obviously never knew, but through my father, I did know. This is another form of unselfish love that is so incredibly hard to explain to people, unless they are present to witness it themselves.

As we approach the Spring of 2023, my father and my family have been invited back to Friesland once again. The winds of time continue to guide us back to Friesland so that these very special people can bestow their gratitude upon my father and any other Liberator who can be present on May the 4th. I only wish all Canadians could witness and feel the love and respect of this entire country toward our Canadian Veterans.

Let Me Introduce...

Performer Extraordinaire Mr. Cedric Smith

APRIL TAYLOR

Times Contributor

I don't think it's possible to reign this untethered spirit to the confines of the written page. But I will give it a whirl. Last week, a friend and I had dinner with Cedric Smith; we sat for hours in a booth at Fellini's while he entertained us with a series of animated stories and amusing antics which he would call "His Life". Open-minded, intelligent, and adventurous are words I would use to describe him.

Stratford's unique quality is... well, it's like there's an invisible, giant cauldron boiling and bubbling over with creators and their creativity. There's a lot of talent here. Cedric made his splash into that cauldron back in the late 60's. He was discovering the Folk Music Scene and found his way to Stratford and the beret wearing, finger snapping Beatnik establishment: The Black Swan - a place where folks would discuss their feelings and the political environment through poetry and music. Cedric wrote and played anti-war songs and was part of the folk band The Perth County Conspiracy. Here he met Michael Langham {the festival's artistic director} and was offered a position in the company. With no formal training in acting, Cedric being Cedric answered, "sure, why not" and he learned to act while he stood silent on the stage holding a spear, watching Christopher Plummer and Bill Hutt.

"I was born like this - I had no choice - I was born with the gift of a golden voice." That line was made famous by Leonard Cohen. But Leonard doesn't have anything on Cedric. He too was born with the gift of a golden voice; which I am sure is why he has made a career of narrating. Working alongside of Loreena McKennitt, he is known for reciting Dylan Thomas's 'A Child's Christmas in Wales' and has performed on her recordings. He has done voice-overs and was also the voice of Professor X in the Marvel Comic series The X-Men. Smith also provides narration for Canada's History Television's series, Turning Points in History.

Television:

Mr. Smith has played parts in dozens of TV shows. In comedy, in drama, you name it... he has done it. One of his most famous roles was as Captain Thomas Sims in The Campbells, a drama series produced by Scottish Television. "What a trip!" he said as he accepted a Gemini for Best Performance by an Actor in a Continuing Leading Dramatic Role in 1993

for his part in Road to Avonlea as Alec King. There are too many to list, but he has done guest spots on shows such as Blue Murder, Kung Fu, Twilight Zone, Street Legal and Murdoch Mysteries to name a few.

Movies:

See what I mean, he has done so much. Over the years when he is not performing live, doing TV or stage he has managed to do several movies. Dr. Svarich in Who Has Seen The Wind, Sam Wells in The Christmas Switch and the bartender in Heavy Metal and more. He is a real character on and off the set.

Stage:

Of course, Cedric has played some leading Shakespearean roles here and elsewhere. In Toronto, he has done several things but when I asked what role he was proud of he said ... "Billy Bishop Goes to War." A Canadian production, with Cedric and pianist Ross Douglas, toured in 1980-81. They had an exciting opportunity to take the show on the road to Broadway. Oh, and guess who was the opening act for George Carlin and Dick Cavette? Yup, Good Ole' Cedric.

Radio:

I left radio for last because The CBC was a constant in our house growing up. A source of news and entertainment and all things Canadian. I swear I thought Peter Gzowski and Don Herron were part of the family. I asked Cedric what was a favourite moment in his career was. "Subbing in for Don Herron on his interview show, Morningside." He introduced the Irish band The Chieftains and many other interesting people. Gosh, I wish I could tell my mom that story, but I am sure she must have been listening.

My friend Philip is friendly with Cedric and said to me recently ... "I just love it when I see that guy {Cedric} come through that door. {Balzac's}" Now I know what he means I very much enjoyed getting to know this vibrant character, robust and full of life with a flair for telling stories with his gift of a golden voice. We talked about his travels and experiences and tales of his visits to village life in Italy. I could have listened for hours. I hope I will have the opportunity to hang out with him again. Who knows maybe in Italy, if a can wangle an invite. wink wink ...

Today:

While Mr. Smith keeps busy and was recently on tour with Loreena McKinnitt his biggest and probably his most important role these days is being a hands-on father to his young daughter Maddie-Nell. What I know of her, she is as exuberant



as her dad. It'll be interesting to see if she follows in his footsteps.

In conclusion: I have been fortunate to learn from my clients for years at my day job and now I have the opportunity to learn even more from these interesting people I write about. What I learned

for Cedric was ... it seems he just goes through life without a care, doing his thing, letting others do theirs. Accepting opportunities when offered, well I guess he just seems free. Untethered and free ... That's what I want to be.

Rotary Club of Festival City hold their Wine survivor draw



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

WINE SURVIVORS

L-R Lucy Railton, Dianne Yundt (20 bottle winner) with daughter Laura Anderson, and Tina Grasby, event co-ordinator for the wine survivor draw.

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The Rotary Club of Festival City Stratford, held a very successful "Wine Survivor Draw" on the weekend and the last ticket drawn won 50 bottles of wine.

Nic Weir of Kitchener was the winner, with the last ticket drawn, while Dave Harvie had the second last ticket drawn

to win 30 bottles, while Dianne Yundt from Stratford took home 20 bottles with the 3rd last ticket drawn.

Rotary Club event co-ordinator, Tina Grasby, said the fundraiser was very successful with all 200 tickets sold for the event and thanked all those who bought tickets. All money raised stays in the community for the benefit of the clubs programs.

HAVE A COMING EVENT COMING UP?

Let us know!

Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com or
call 519-655-2341

Three CSA nominations for Three Tall Women

The Stratford Festival is delighted to announce that their film of Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* has been nominated for three Canadian Screen Awards.

Martha Henry, whose remarkable performance as A was captured for the film just weeks before her death from cancer, is nominated for Best Lead Performer in a TV Movie.

Barry Avrich of Melbar Entertainment Group is nominated for Best Director of a TV Movie, for his beautiful transformation of the stage production, which was directed by Diana Leblanc.

The film, which was broadcast on CBC and is on CBC Gem, is also up for Best Performing Arts Program.

In addition to Martha Henry, the film features Lucy Peacock as B, Mamie Zwtzler as C, and Andrew Iles as The Boy.

"Our production of Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* was to have been presented in 2020, but had to be cancelled early in the pandemic," says Artistic Director Antoni Cimolino. "During those dreadful months, we also learned of Martha's diagnosis, and getting the play to the stage and then to the screen became of great import. Martha's performance was beyond anything I have ever seen, and we are all so proud to see it honoured with this nomination. My congratulations go



THREE TALL WOMEN

From left: Mamie Zwtzler as C, Martha Henry as A and Lucy Peacock as B in Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women*.

to Barry, Diana, Lucy, Mamie, Andrew and the entire team for both the screen and stage productions. This is a wonderful acknowledgment of a very special production."

"This was a thrilling opportunity to immortalize one of the great performances of all time," says Avrich, who is both the director and producer of the film, "and to continue ensuring that the legacy

of Stratford's brilliant productions is seen by the next generation of theatre lovers."

Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* is available on Stratfest@Home until mid-October. The film was made possible through a one-time special arrangement with the Estate of Edward Albee in acknowledgment of the final performance of Martha Henry.

Subscriptions to Stratfest@Home, are just \$10 a month. The streaming platform features the best in Canadian digital theatrical productions, including the Stratford Festival's acclaimed Shakespeare films, selected productions from the 2021 and 2022 seasons, original digital content, and selected events from the Festival's Meighen Forum, along with documentaries and original content from across the country.

Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* is a Melbar Entertainment Group production in partnership with the Stratford Festival.

Support for the filming of Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* was generously provided by Sandra & Jim Pitblado.

Production support for the stage production of Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* was generously provided by Sylvia D. Chrominska, by Dr. Desta Leavine in memory of Pauline Leavine, by Sylvia Soyka, by The Westaway Charitable Foundation and by Jack Whiteside.

Web-crawling through the lawn



SHEILA CLARKE

Times Freelance Columnist

I know, it's cold and the ground is often covered with white. You are yearning for warm sun and blissful days in the garden! Seed catalogues are beginning to appear; it's a good time to think about the lawn! For a long time we have worked hard to have a perfect lawn- no weeds, no leaves, just grass, cut short. Don't look now, but times have changed! Those perfect lawns, sadly, are contributing to the climate crisis, and to a sterile world of plant and animal extinction. Whoa, that's a big bite! Let's have a look:

We'll start with a few truths. The first is the dramatically dropping numbers of insects, including pollinators (who definitely are not just honeybees). The next missing link is the number of songbirds we used

to have. Their numbers too are dropping dramatically. Lastly, we're also losing residents of healthy ecosystems, such as frogs, toads, and turtles. We've been talking about the web of life, how everything is connected. That web of life is in real danger, and because it's all interconnected, that means we are a connected part too.

It would be brilliant to devote some of your lawn to that web of life- to grow "biodiversity," plant and animal life supporting each other in that complex web of life. Making that change goes further than biodiversity. There's a strong connection between lawns and gardens that support biodiversity and the fight to halt and to moderate climate change.

One of the key connections is sustaining the plants and animals that live here. That means specifically asking for native plants (plants that have lived here for thousands of years). Those plants provide food and shelter for insects and animals that live here. They've developed together here for a very long time, and depend on each other.

The change from yesterday's gardening to native plants means no fertilizer (Production of fertilizer adds 4-5 tons of carbon into the atmosphere

for every ton of nitrogen.), no energy-using (and noisy!) lawnmowers, no watering systems that waste our precious supply of water, and an end to garden chemicals going into our air and water. Plant native shrubs and native trees for extra benefit. They provide terrific shelter and food for birds and insects. Native trees are absolutely golden. They give us cooling shade, provide amazing habitat, and absorb CO2 to slow down climate change.

How do we make this shift from lawns that only have one plant (grass), non-native, and flower beds with plants from other places, that don't provide nutrition for our own birds and insects? It's not as hard as it sounds!

- Start with an area of your lawn, large or small, your call. Remove the turf. (You can do the same thing with beds of plants that aren't native. Decide on a patch size, and remove the plants.)

- Stratford has clay for soil, which would benefit from encouragement until your naturalized lawn or garden gets started. Where the turf is gone, you can "amend" the soil. Dig in some "cured" manure (no smell :), and some sand! That will break up our clay soil, and help to release the nutrients for

plants.

- Plant some clumps of native perennial plants (Echinacea, e.g. goldenrod and asters), add a native shrub such as a dogwood, and take a deep breath. (Goldenrod doesn't cause hayfever, ragweed does; it blooms at the same time. Our native insects love goldenrod!) Plant as many plants as you can, and keep adding when you can. Between additions, and the plants spreading, you want to fill that space with native plants, just like nature does!

- You'll have some (minimal) gardening to do every year, but the first few years are the most challenging. Your garden doesn't need to be super-perfect, but you want to keep invaders out, and you may well need to water the plants the first year.

- The plant clumps will expand, and your wonderful garden visitors will begin. Every morning in the growing seasons I head out to see who is visiting in my garden today- what butterfly, what tiny, tiny pollinator wasp (harmless), what bird, what toad- It's amazing and it's fun! :)

- There are hundreds of native plants to choose from. If you want a low ground cover in shade, plant wild ginger or blue violet. In sun, plant barren strawberry or silverweed

(ground covers: www.inournature.ca/native-groundcovers).

Plant pearly everlasting for a low flower, one that is a host plant for the American Lady butterfly! Plant milkweed for monarchs, and plant bergamot for nectar- and that's just a very small selection!

Fight climate change, and plan to make your garden a beautiful, and welcome, voice for biodiversity- for our native plants, insects, birds, toads and turtles.

For a list of native plants and shrubs for sun and shade, and native plant sources around Stratford, see <https://cfuwstratford.ca/native-plants-for-a-sustainable-garden/>

For extra help and advice, contact the Stratford Master Gardeners (<https://stratford-mastergardeners.ca/>)

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.

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL: The Family Mirror



STUART LENDER

Times Contributor

The key word when you look up anything related to “grief” or “grieving” or “to grieve,” is the word “suffer.” The thing about suffering is that no one person’s suffering is the same as anyone else’s. There’s a lot tied to it in one lifetime. And it need not be after a death occurs. Case in point: several years back, and long before I became manager of the James A. Rutherford Funeral Home, a son wanted to see his father prior to cremation, at the home I was working in at the time.

When he arrived, I was, of

course, sensitive to the possible difficulty for him of seeing his dad for the last time and so I was calmly explaining where he was and what he would see... before he politely stopped me mid-sentence and explained why he had come. He wanted to make sure that the person in the cremation container was indeed his father, so that he could be satisfied and tell his mother that he was finally gone! Through a dialogue containing a series of expletives, he explained about the restraining order, the physical and verbal abuse, the soul-destroying damage carried out through his 19 years of life with, and his mom’s 20 years of marriage to... such as him. Their suffering had ended as far as he was concerned.

I was lucky. My father was a loving man. A long time before he died, he said something that stayed with me: “You can’t choose your family.” In one manner of definition, that’s true. But in another iteration, for example - that of some homeless friends or those with families untimely ripped from them; “family”

might be composed of something entirely different. Relatives and blood have nothing to do with it. There are those who need to repaint “family” with a wider brush because the narrow brush of the definition is too painful to admit or simply too limiting.

My father impressed upon me that the word “family” is not synonymous to the word “devotion,” and he’s right. You can downright dislike someone who is related to you despite any title they may hold. Devotion is earned. For those of you though, who know me by now through these articles or my posts; you can probably see how my father’s comment fed into my embedded sense of our universality. Family? Well, goodness... isn’t that just everybody on one level? And yet, also, only those whose hearts beat in unison with ours?

Family is part of the understanding of our place; one human self, amongst our selected specialities and people. Those fortunate enough, or unfortunate enough (depending upon your viewpoint), to have large

blood-related families, might have a few members one would like to avoid. But we may also have a few non-blood related friends we would like to include. I dare say, my lifelong friend Phil and my non-blood-related “brother” Martin, are in my heart and soul right there alongside my actual brother Greg. While my history with Greg stems longer and deeper, on an emotional level, the loss of either one of the three would be deeply painful.

A severely simplistic Venn diagram of human connection would show overlaps, in ourselves, family, community, region, country, continent, world. Take any one of those out of the equation in terms of one’s awareness of themselves, and the richness of what it means to be human is diminished. Human connection is the fundamental building block of what we need, but what we are extends so much farther out, and is clothed, likewise, in the garments and colours and cultures of thousands upon thousands of others.

But back now, with our son and his deceased abusive father alone

in the chapel of the funeral home. What, I wonder, was he thinking as he looked down upon the source of his existence lying in that cremation container? What iota of a thought penetrated that moment of gazing upon the begetter of his distress and suffering? Was it of “father” or “fiend?” Satisfaction or sorrow? A human connection - no doubt. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have come to the funeral home. He wouldn’t have taken the 10 minutes he did. We didn’t speak, however, when he came out. He simply walked past me, out of the funeral home doors and back to his car, while I took a “stranger” to the crematorium. Family? Such a loaded word for many; in which a particularly poignant element within the definition might be “those who teach the lessons others dare not speak.”

UNTIL SOON. LIVE WELL.

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

MUSINGS: Look What They’ve Done to My Song, Ma...



MARK HERTZBERGER

Times Freelance Columnist

Is it my imagination? Is mainstream popular music getting worse? Or maybe it’s my “CRAB” (Curmudgeonly Regressive Attention Bias) that’s getting worse. After all, music is a very personal thing. One person’s song is another’s noise.

But what is “music” exactly? The simplest definition I’ve found is “the art of producing pleasing or expressive combinations of tones especially with melody, rhythm, and usually harmony”. Technically speaking then, many current popular songs are music, even ones with the same three notes repeated 20 or 30 times as is often the case.

Are rap and hip hop songs truly music? Certainly they can include good poetry, stirring social protest and a danceable rhythm. Somehow, though, I always feel like I’m being lec-

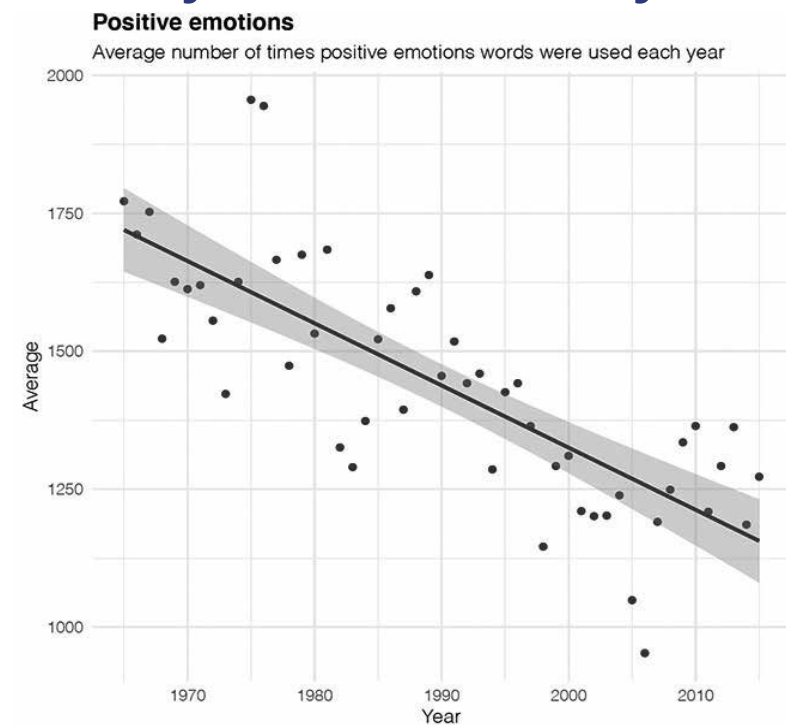
tured to...and just who are those guys in the background interrupting the lead singer? A comedian once said that, when he first heard rap music, he thought he’d wandered into an auction by mistake.

Personally, I like my music to evoke, not provoke. A well written song virtually sings itself with no need of vocal theatrics or electronic enhancement.

Is there any objective way of deciding whether music is “good” or “bad”? A few scientific studies have tried to answer this question. Researchers analysed nearly half a million songs which came out between 1955 and 2010. At the Spanish National Research Council they examined three aspects of those songs: **timbre** (ie. sound color, texture, or tone quality), **pitch** (chords, melody, and tone) and **loudness**

They concluded, not surprisingly, that music has gotten louder, increasing by approximately one decibel every eight years. Why is this a problem? Because it comes at the expense of dynamic range. If the whole song is loud, nothing stands out as “punchy or exclamatory”.

While the volume has gone up, “timbral variety” has gone down since the 1960’s. In other words, songs are becoming more and more homogenized. In the 1990s, chord changes became fewer and melo-



dies became simpler. Songs like “Gangsta’s Paradise” and “Born in the USA” are examples. (Apologies to Coolio and Springsteen fans!) Musicians today seem to be less creative in moving from one chord or note to another. Similarly pitch content has taken a nosedive and the key change is becoming an endangered species. Boring.

But why worry? If a particular genre of music resonates personally with someone, that should be fine, right? All the same, I do worry about the messages conveyed by more re-

cent songs. Music can unite or divide depending upon the lyrics. Between 1965 and 2015 the use of the word “love” was cut in half, while “hate” increased drastically. This applied generally to other words associated with positive or negative emotions.

I suppose it’s understandable that harder times produce harder edged, darker music. Art imitates life, but what happens when life imitates art? I worry about younger generations and the outlook that negative and divisive music fosters.

There are, of course, exceptions to all of this. Musicality is out there if you really dig for it. Here in Perth County, we are fortunate to have a little oasis of singers and songwriters who still understand the importance of melody and creativity: Ron Sexsmith, Loreena McKennitt Dayna Manning and Emm Gryner just to name a few.

I take heart in the fact that, in the grand scheme of things, musical trends tend to be cyclical. Before the Beatles came along, rock and roll melodies were pretty formulaic and their lyrics could be simplistic. After the sixties, rock gradually became bloated and derivative, described by one reviewer as a snake devouring its own tail. We can only hope that what goes around comes around again. Perhaps the day will arrive when a mainstream singer accidentally breaks out in song and people discover that they like what they hear.

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

Spring Forward With Inner Resilience



IRENE ROTH

Times Freelance Columnist

Spring can be such an exciting time. We may crave to have more light because daylight savings time starts. To have more light is usually equivalent to improving our lives and infusing it with hope and happiness. But what if we had another reason to rejoice this spring?

Spring is one of my favorite seasons of the year. One reason for my appreciation of this season

is the rebirth and purging that we're encouraged to take part in. We usually do some much-needed spring cleaning in our home and car where we declutter, recycle, wash, and clean. And all of this is great. Believe me, I also engage in such cleaning and purging. It can feel so refreshing.

But what if I invited you to declutter and purge another additional way? What if I encouraged you to turn inward and perhaps purge some old attitudes or mindsets that are no longer serving you? What if I persuaded you to try to clean and declutter on the inside?

I realize this is a far-fetched idea for some of us. However, it really isn't. Not only is changing your mindset and attitude important, but it can be life changing and cleansing. Here's how.

We all struggle to live with a positive mindset. We all hang on to attitudes and habits which are counterproductive and even

harmful. Once we get into the habit of saying something to ourselves, it becomes part of the backdrop of our lives every day, even if no longer serves us.

For example, lately I became aware that I said a lot of negative things to myself every day. In fact, I had an entire repertoire of negative thoughts I kept recycling, depending on the day and situation.

One such cluster of negative thoughts focused on my health and well-being. I have struggled to live with several chronic conditions for over two decades. Many days I feel tired and in pain. Recently, I became aware that my negative mindsets have held me back and even made me feel worse.

That's because, the more often I told myself I was in pain, tired, and unwell, the worse I felt. I realized that my thoughts were defining my life and attitudes. In other words, the more negative I

was toward my pain and fatigue, the more I gave into it. These negative thoughts also stopped me from living my best life.

This realization gave me some much-needed pause. Suddenly, I felt freer and lighter. There was a space or awareness between what I said to myself and what I experienced daily. I'm not saying I don't have bad days. Who doesn't after a certain age? However, I deal with those days in a very different way now.

No longer do I allow myself to wallow in negativity. I get out of bed, eat a healthy breakfast, do a meditation session, say a few prayers, and hop on my treadmill for 30 minutes. Then I am fortified for the day. In other words, I give myself some time and space to ease into my day by setting up a healthier routine, one which is in line with a strong and healthy mindset.

I assure you, I still have negative thoughts. Our thoughts come

and go involuntarily. We can't do anything about them. However, it's how we handle them that's so important. I acknowledge them and then let them go. On harder days, I may schedule some extra time to do a meditation or sit and enjoy a nice, warm, luxuriating cup of tea.

So, what are some of your negative thoughts that stop you from being your best? Instead of merely decluttering and cleaning your home, car, and office, perhaps take some time to clear out some of the thoughts, mindsets, and emotions that are stopping you from living your best life. That way, regardless of what you have to endure in life, you will be able to handle it better.

As daylight savings time starts, may you turn inward to clear some of the things that stop you from living your best life.

I wish you a healthy and wholesome spring!

Irene Roth

PUSHING BOUNDARIES: The Power of Words



THOMAS VERNY

Times Contributor

While there is much psychological evidence for the power of words there is a dearth of biological research on this subject. An example of the former approach is the research of David Chamberlain, a San Diego psychologist and one of the early pioneers of Pre and Perinatal Psychology. According to Chamberlain, birth memories that arise in the course of insight-oriented psychotherapy illustrate how babies can be stung and poisoned for decades by unkind remarks such as "What's wrong with her head." Or, "Wow, this looks like a sickly one."

Research shows that heart contractions become erratic, disordered, incoherent with negative emotions, such as anger or frustration. In contrast, positive emotions, such as love or appreciation, are associated with a smooth, ordered, coherent pattern.

You can perform your own research by following a simple experiment two of my friends devised. They placed two labeled jars of cooked white rice on top of their piano, not too far

apart so that they would have the same light and room temperature, etc. Toward the rice on the left, they daily directed their voices, saying "Thank you! You're beautiful!" Toward the rice on the right, they said, "You fool! You stink!" 3 months later the rice in the first jar was a bit grey while the rice in the second jar was almost black and starting to decay. After another three months, the rice in the first jar was still in pretty good shape while the rice in the second jar (you stink) was totally decomposed and, in fact, stunk.

Hypnosis

Another example of how words can affect the mind and how the mind in turn can affect the body is hypnosis. Hypnosis is best described as an altered state of consciousness, similar to relaxation, meditation, or sleep. Traditionally, psychologists and neuroscientists have been skeptical of participants' subjective reports of profound changes in perception following specific suggestions. However, the advent of cognitive neuroscience and the application of neuroimaging methods to hypnosis has brought about the validation of participants' subjective responses to hypnosis. Therefore, it is not surprising that in 1958, the American Medical Association suggested that hypnosis should be included in the curriculum of medical schools, and in 1960, the Association of American Psychologists officially acknowledged the therapeutic use of hypnosis by psychologists.

Individuals suffering from

chronic pain, irritable bowel syndrome, and PTSD have benefited from hypnosis. Psychotherapists have also successfully used hypnosis in the service of age regression and the uncovering of past traumas. What hypnosis teaches us is that the words of a person who is perceived by the subject as having certain powers can change bodily movement ("Your arm feels light as a feather, let it rise towards the ceiling") or provide analgesia for painful procedures.

Placebo

Hypnosis and placebos have much in common. What is a placebo? A placebo is an inactive treatment, sometimes called a "sugar pill." In fact, a placebo may be a pill, tablet, injection, medical device, or a suggestion. Whatever the form, placebos often look like the real medical treatment that is being studied except they do not contain the active medication. Using placebos in clinical trials helps scientists better understand whether a new medical treatment is safer and more effective than no treatment at all.

This is called the 'Placebo Effect.' The placebo effect describes any psychological or physical effect that a placebo treatment has on an individual. Placebos have been shown to produce measurable, physiological changes, such as an increase in heart rate or blood pressure. Placebos can reduce the symptoms of numerous conditions, including Parkinson's disease, depression, anxiety, irritable bowel syndrome, and chronic

pain. Researchers have repeatedly shown interventions such as "sham" acupuncture to be as effective as acupuncture. Sham acupuncture uses retractable needles that do not pierce the skin.

Placebo interventions vary in strength depending on many factors. For instance, an injection causes a stronger placebo effect than a tablet. Two tablets work better than one, capsules are stronger than tablets, and larger pills produce greater reactions. One review of multiple studies found that even the color of pills made a difference to the placebo results.

The positive health benefit that a patient experiences in response to a placebo is a function of the symbols, rituals, and behaviors embedded in their clinical encounter. Part of the power of the placebo lies in the expectations of the individual taking them. These expectations can relate to the treatment, the substance, or the prescribing doctor. If these expectations are positive, the patient will have a positive response to the placebo and vice versa.

This is very similar to hypnosis. The more the subject expects the hypnosis to work, the deeper they will enter a hypnotic trance. A person expecting a certain outcome such as pain relief, will by way of his mental operations initiate a cascade of physiological responses (hormonal, immunological, etc.) that will cause effects similar to what a medication might have achieved.

Expectations

This process of expectations extends right into our brains. It has

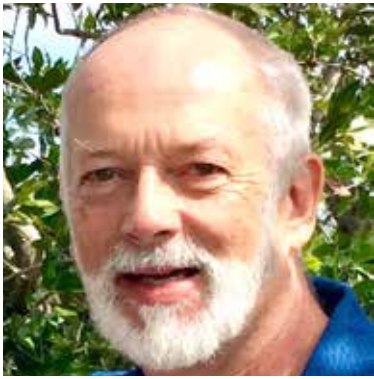
been by now well established that humans depend on our senses to perceive the world, ourselves, and each other. Despite senses being the only window to the outside world, people do rarely question how faithfully they represent the external physical reality. During the last 20 years, neuroscience research has revealed that the cerebral cortex constantly generates predictions on what will happen next and that neurons in charge of sensory processing only encode the difference between our predictions and the actual reality.

A team of neuroscientists of TU Dresden headed by Katharina von Kriegstein presents new findings that show that not only the cerebral cortex, but the entire auditory pathway, represents sounds according to prior expectations. The Dresden group has found evidence that this process also dominates the most primitive and evolutionary conserved parts of the brain. All that we perceive might be deeply contaminated by our subjective beliefs of the physical world.

Like hypnosis, placebos demonstrate clearly the power the mind has over matter.

Dr. Thomas R Verny is a psychiatrist, podcaster and author of 47 scientific papers and eight books including the international best seller, The Secret Life of the Unborn Child, published in 27 countries and the recently released, The Embodied Mind. The Embodied Mind shows how intelligence and consciousness—traits traditionally attributed to the brain alone—permeate our entire being.

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: When good service makes all the difference



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

I am a huge fan of good service – and a bit of a curmudgeon when service is poor. But receiving especially good service at a destination adds enormously to my level of enjoyment.

During the past few months, I have been very well treated in several provinces and several countries. But a few of those moments stand out – apparently insignificant incidents that have made all the difference between having a good time, and having an outstanding experience.

Like, in Mexico. I wrote recently about the Sensira Resort in the Riviera Maya. But I didn't tell you about a moment that was the icing on the cake.

We – a small group of travel

communicators– were dining in Sensira's gourmet restaurant, Galerie Des Sens. The meal was amazing, and the dessert was wildly imaginative – Chef John Bertrand had created a dish that evoked a child playing in the snow. I can't tell you the specific recipe, but it included white, herbed sorbet, shaved and frozen coconut, and, playing on top of this "mountain of snow", the lego-like figure of a child – made from peanut butter and chocolate.

It was delicious fun.

As we finished, I said to our server, "My partner, back home, loves peanut butter and chocolate. Would you have an extra one of those figures that I could take home to her?"

"Absolutely," said our server, and she disappeared. For quite a while.

After I lingered for at least 10 minutes, she reappeared, bearing a ramekin containing two of the figures. The ramekin was warm.

John Bertrand had made these special little figures precisely to order, for the dinner – and then took the time to make two more, for me to take home.

That is over-the-top service.

Last June, wandering around Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, I stumbled upon the Sweeney Museum,

a creatively constructed marine museum including artifacts from the fishing industry. They've even built some replica buildings – and a boat – inside this museum.

I asked the woman at the desk – her name was Julie – if I could have a quick look inside the museum, even though it was to close in 15 minutes. "Sure," she said. "There's nobody else here, so why don't I give you the full tour?" And she did. Terrific service.

We travelled around Ireland by coach, last fall. Our driver, Anthony McCann, was superb. One day, we discovered that there was to be a concert in Galway that evening, although it was not on our itinerary. One of our group members had found it, and most of us decided we would like to go, too.

Anthony volunteered to work unpaid overtime, so we wouldn't have to taxi to the concert. He arranged our tickets. He drove us there and back in the coach. And we got to enjoy the superb Trad on the Prom concert. Unpaid overtime service – pretty impressive.

A more local coach trip involved our annual golfing-friends' coach tour to Ni-

agara Wine Country, where the small, friendly wineries offer the epitome of great service. I visited Ridge Road Winery twice last year, and each time, was treated like a king. A king who, of course, bought a case or two of wine. But the folks at Ridge Road, like many of its wine-making neighbours on the Niagara Peninsula, know all there is to know about creating happy, satisfied customers.

To return to Nova Scotia for a moment, while there in the spring, I dined with some others at La Cuisine Robicheau Restaurant, where Nadine Robicheau serves up amazing dishes including Lobster Lasagna and Rappie Pie. When some of us could not quite decide what to order – everything appeared on the table. "Sample it all!" was her answer to our indecision. Very special service.

But to be completely truthful, superb service doesn't guarantee a happy ending. Once upon a time, I was invited to visit the beautiful Abaco Club on Windward Bay, in the Bahamas.

The day of arrival, our small group of journalists was greeted with rum punches. Then there was a pre-dinner drink. Then, wine with dinner.

That was all very tasty, of course. But after dinner, our hosts asked if we would like to join them for a nightcap.

All the other, smarter, writers declined – it had been a long day, already. But, of course, I said "sure!" and off we went to the elegant bar.

At that time – I am older and wiser, now – my cocktail of choice was a Rusty Nail – half Scotch and half Drambuie. Potent stuff. Best enjoyed in small doses, with plenty of ice.

I asked the bartender for a rusty nail. She was unaware of this concoction, but was dedicated to good service, so she asked me to describe it. I did: "Half Scotch, half Drambuie."

When she brought the drink, it was a full, tall glass of booze – about a quadruple rusty nail, at least.

"There's no way I can drink this," I thought.

Turns out I was wrong. I could drink it. But I should have been right, and gone with my first instincts. Good service usually ends well... but not always.

Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email pknowles@golden.net.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Irish coach driver Anthony McCann, with Paul Knowles.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Chef John Bertrand, creator of spectacular desserts.



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTO)

Server Sylvia Lamothe at Ridge Road Winery.

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Restoration of a one room school house

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

When motoring on country roads, it can sometimes be of interest to recognize some of the old one room schools in North Easthope Township of Perth County that are still standing today.

In years gone by the one and two room schools went by the United School Sections and in this story we're referring to U.S.S. # 6, which was built at the turn of the century and became known as the "Irish" school, situated north-east of Stratford on what is now known as Line 37 (Vivian St.)

Many settlers in the area were from Irish descent and the school ran until 1967 when it was declared redundant by the school board.

In 1977, Dave and Candy Logan of Stratford bought the one acre property with the idea of converting the school house into their residence. Upon further study, they concluded the building was too close to the road, and learned it would cost too much at the time to renovate. They opted to build a new house toward the back of the lot where they still live today.

In the summer of 2022, Dave and Candy's son Barry, felt that restoring the old school was something he'd like to undertake, to preserve the past, and with the help of friends began the operation of cleaning the brick and restoring the school to its original state inside.

The Logans, apart from putting glass back in all of the windows, and adding a steel roof in 1980, have left the school much like it was originally. They say that regularly, former teachers and students stop in and ask to view the interior. A former teacher walked to the centre of the classroom, and on the floor, pointed to the burn mark created by the wooden stove that once heated the building with wood, and warmed the students lunches.

Barry Logan and his family would like to have the old school house restored, just as another one room school house a couple miles to the east has done (Brocksden School Museum), where activities happen during the summer organized by an active group of former teachers and students.

It's all part of restoring the past while looking to the future for generations to come.



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

RESTORING THE PAST

U.S.S. # 6 (the Irish School) in the process of being renovated to its original state by the present owners.

**SHOP SAVE
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Letters to the Editor

I am not amazed that your paper has increased its pages and readership. I am an advocate for seniors...who in some situations (more than you think) are not computer literate; who struggle with the basics of technology; and who as a result are "isolated" from their community... that is why your paper is a welcome addition to their lives.

Seniors make up a major part of this community and it is about time they are accommodated by communications they can access and use.

Remind your advertisers of this the next time you look for an increase in their number.

Karen Haslam

Dear Editor,

Stratford's older buildings are a threatened species. Archival records attest to this; many Stratford landmark buildings have been demolished over the years as convenience trumped history, design and those who wanted to preserve them. An exception is the Stratford City Hall. In the '60s a protest erupted when a "modern" replacement to the building was proposed that would have changed the face of Stratford forever. Thank God the committee protesting this sacrilege succeeded in saving an essential part of Stratford's heritage.

Now, in 2023, a new challenge has emerged with the threatened demolition of Avon Crest, Stratford's first hospital, built in 1891. In the insightful article about this by Hayden Bulbrook in February's *The Stratford Times*, we see the story of this once majestic building. Designed by George F. Durand, the London-born architect whose style can be found in the Courthouse and many other historically significant buildings in town, it is a fine part of Stratford's history, though sadly neglected. The last time I was inside it was to visit the physio department it housed years ago;

though the building was artificially fragmented, I could see the potential of its expansive windows and airy vistas. Though this building is not as central or well known as City Hall, it is one of the almost extinct architectural gems in Stratford and, according to those opposed to its demolition, eminently useable. Why tear it down?

One reason not to, in addition to the obvious historic and aesthetic ones, is the massive waste and pollution that demolition of such a large edifice would create. This consideration was not as significant in the past, when environmental concerns were seldom voiced, but this alone is sufficient reason to reconsider its destruction. Is there not some way that the building can be saved to live another day as a useful and used, rather than abandoned and undervalued reminder of what has served us so well?

(This letter was sent to Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma, Stratford Councillor and Chair of the Planning and Heritage Sub-committee Cory Sebben and Andrew Williams, President and CEO of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA).)

Sincerely, J. Schneider

I don't live in Stratford but I received a request in the mail to donate to the Stratford General Hospital Foundation (SGHF). I give generously to charities and I firmly believe that giving time and/or funds generously to charities is an important part of being a citizen. I will not, however, be donating any funds to the SGHF while historic Avon Crest is under threat of demolition.

Did you know that the funds to build Avon Crest in the 1890s mostly came from donations by citizens like you?

If Avon Crest is demolished, it is not only an insult to those citizens who contributed to its construction more than a century ago, it is also an irresponsible way to deal with one of the most important heritage buildings in Stratford, which ranks up there, for example, with the Stratford City Hall and the Perth County Court House. Has there been any imaginative and meaningful consideration of potential

adaptive reuses of Avon Crest (perhaps like the adaptive reuse of the old Victoria Hospital buildings in London, Ontario for affordable housing)? Has there been any fulsome consideration of the disastrous environmental impact of demolishing such a large building, not to mention the wasteful cost of demolition? Will Avon Crest be reduced to a few mementos (maybe some pictures and a couple of bricks) stored in the Stratford General Hospital Archives, which according to the SGHF Monitor is located "in the furthest corner of the hospital basement"?

I suggest you confirm before donating that your donated funds will not be used directly or indirectly towards the demolition of Avon Crest. According to the SGHF Donor Bill of Rights, you are "free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers".

Paul King, St. Marys

Riddles

How do you make soup rich?
Put 14 carrots in it.

What fruit always travels in groups of two?
Pears.

What two things can never be eaten for breakfast?
Lunch and Dinner.

What gets bigger and bigger as you take away from it?
A hole.

What has a beginning, no end, and nothing in the middle?
A doughnut.

What does a pickle say when he wants to play cards?
Dill me in

What do you call a nervous celery stalk?
An edgy veggie.

Did you hear about the actor who fell through the floor?
It was just a stage he was going through.

What's black and white and red all over?
A penguin with a diaper ras

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 31



Pet of the Month



RIVER

Are you looking to stay active with an adorable companion by your side? You've got the right guy! River is an active boy that loves to get lots of pets and love. He will do best with a family that can keep up with him and offer him an enriching active life with lots of long walks and hikes. River will need to be signed up for training before he can go home to help him with some basic manners/obedience, resource guarding and helping him desensitize to some touch. This good boy is very excited to meet his new family and hopes you will give him a chance at a loving furrever family! Please submit an application at <https://kwsphumane.ca/adopt/process>.
*River is being promoted with a 25% reduced adoption fee to help him find is forever home sooner! *

Word Search

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

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

- DUBLIN
- ST PATRICKS DAY
- IRELAND
- IRISH
- HOLIDAY
- POTATO
- SHAMROCK
- POT OF GOLD
- LEPRECHAUN
- RAINBOW
- LIMERICK
- BAGPIPE
- CLOVER
- LUCK

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STRATFORD TOYS, GAMES, AND COLLECTIBLES SHOW
Sunday, March 12;
9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Festival Inn, 1144 Ontario St., Stratford
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POP UP MARKET
Saturday, March 18; 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.,
10 Downie St., Stratford
Festival Square Market is hosting an inaugural pop-up market. There will be over 15 vendors selling leather goods, woodwork, jewelry, candles and more. Admission is free.

CHARITY HOCKEY GAME
Saturday, March 18; 8 p.m.
William Allman Memorial Arena, 15 Morenz Dr, Stratford
This exciting game will feature the Stratford Professional Firefighters Association facing off against a full line-up of former NHL hockey heroes. This fantastic community event promises lots of skills and lots of laughs, and is guaranteed to be fun and memorable for all ages! Tickets are \$30. Tickets available at www.ProHockeyHeroes.com or by calling the Event & Ticket Line 1-800-516-5810.

EASTER MARKET
Saturday, April 1; 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.,
Arden Park Hotel, 552 Ontario St., Stratford
Special care nursery fundraiser. Shop over 70 vendors, silent auction, donations at the door, photobooth, face painting.

SMALLTOWN STRIP CLUB
Saturday, April 8; 7:30 p.m.,
The Hall, 15 Church St., Stratford
Special guests: Julie & The Giants, La Grove, Javelin, The Hedge Hoppers. Tickets \$25. Tickets available at Needle's Appliances or online at www.ticketscene.ca/events/43947/

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QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1) Bishop
- 2) Uncut hair
- 3) Mary Shelley
- 4) Saturn
- 5) New
- 6) Great Expectations
- 7) Canada
- 8) Exodus
- 9) Mandarin
- 10) 55°F (12.7°C)

SUDOKU

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

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