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A11

NIAGARA
FARM DAY

A12

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ISSUE 3 / JUNE 2024



A2
Summer shindig



A4

Here's the beef



A5

Reducing the stigma

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Twenty Road Country Farm to host summertime shindig

Backyard Music Company bringing Nashville to Niagara

By Luke Edwards

It started at six chickens, which turned into 30, and then 60. And then there were the ducks, and the goats.

Eventually there'd be a few beef cattle, a garden, market stand and firewood business.

Paige and Gerry Kielt didn't really know what they were getting into when they bought their new home about nine years ago. They knew they wanted a little more land than they previously owned in Fenwick.

But each year things grew. Gerry had a construction company, but around 2019 transitioned to working full time on the farm. He now processes and sells about 1,600 cords of wood to people across Niagara each year. It's used for backyard bonfires, campouts, or for residents who heat their home with wood.

Each day customers come to pick up some wood, or eggs, produce and beef. Often they take a quick side trip out to visit with the goats, who offer their friendly faces and quirky behaviour.

This summer the Kielts are planning to open their farm up to more than just their customers. Their Twenty Road Country Farm will be hosting a Backyard Music Company event, bringing up-and-coming country musicians in to perform, along with food trucks to feed the visitors.

"We like being able to share our farm, because not everyone has this," Paige said.

The Backyard Music Company came about as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Founders Scotty James and Andrea Watson searched for ways to share music while the pandemic and rules in place to manage it made public music a challenge.

Today they offer a Nashville-style concert experience to people wanting to host such an event. Inspired by Nashville's Bluebird Cafe, the

idea is to give songwriters new to the scene a chance to perform.

The Kielts are big country music fans, and when they heard about the Backyard Music Company it fit in with what they wanted to do at their farm. Though they didn't come from farming families, Paige said they were drawn to the country lifestyle and hope this summer's event will turn into an annual chance to put a little country into the lives of others.

While enjoying the music, Paige said visitors will be able to tour the farm, see their animals - and of course pet the goats - or simply relax and enjoy the afternoon. Food trucks that will be there include The Runaway Greek, Smoke and Moonshine, and Hometown Ice Cream.

The performing musicians won't be announced until closer to the event date.

Paige said growing their own food gives the family a sense of accomplishment and a closer connection to what they eat. Those lessons

are being passed down to their two children, including their son, who wakes up each morning ready to feed the animals and do the farm chores, Paige said. Even on the coldest and snowiest days, she said he's eager to get out there.

Since the event is geared more to adults, children under 12 will have to stay home. It takes place on Saturday, Aug. 17. For more information, or to buy tickets, visit backyardmusiccompany.com/events/nashville-at-the-farm.

For more information on the farm itself, as well as the products offered, visit Twenty Road Country Farm Facebook page. Paige said they're working on getting a new website built to handle firewood orders since she has her own off-farm job and the business is getting overwhelming. But in the meantime, visit the Facebook page or email twentyroadcountry-farm@gmail.com.

The farm is located on Twenty Road. 🌿



Twenty Road Country Farm has grown over the years and now includes, chickens, goats and beef cattle. ~ Luke Edwards photos

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Publisher

Stewart Grant • stew@granthaven.com

Editor

Luke Edwards – luke@granthaven.com

Business Development

Heather Dunbar • heather@granthaven.com

Graphic Design

Erin Parsons • niagarafarmsnewspaper@gmail.com

Billing Administrator

Jen Gaetan – jen@granthaven.com

Contributor

Ann Marie Chechalk

36 Water St. St. Marys, ON, PO Box 2310 N4X 1A2

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Working group formed to look at region's soil health

By Luke Edwards

It's the building block on which farming starts, and the Region's agriculture policy and action committee is going to be taking a closer look at Niagara's soil health.

At the committee's April meeting members agreed to form a working group that will look at matters related to soil health. The decision came following discussion around a staff memo members requested at last fall's meeting in relation to soil health, the importation of soil on agricultural lands, and local area municipalities' site alteration bylaws.

Lincoln mayor Sandra Easton said towns in Niagara have been facing issues, not necessarily with farmers so much as with some non-farming landowners.

"This issue is significant in our communities, and it's very disruptive," she said.

"Normal farm practice is not the issue here."

Member Kai Wiens, a Niagara-on-the-Lake peach farmer, took exception with some of the wording in the memo that seemed to lay some blame on farmers.

"We are not threats to the soil," he said, adding the group needs to include farmers.

Regional planner Erik Acks said they could pass a motion at the meeting to create the group and then follow up later to determine who should be on it. There would just need to be one APAC member on it, and the rest could include outside expertise.

Ian Potter, president and CEO of Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, offered up the services of his team.

"Soil is part of our daily work," he said.



The Region's Agriculture Policy and Action Committee is creating a working group to look into Niagara's soil health and some of the activities that can put a strain on that health.. ~ Pixabay photo

Potter said soil health is vital, not just for the agricultural community, but beyond. And with development continuing throughout the region, it should be top of mind for everyone.

"It's an issue that's not going away and with all the construction planned it's going to get worse," he said. 🌱

Harringtons host spring beef meeting

By Luke Edwards

The annual Beef Farmers of Niagara spring barn meeting gave local farmers a chance to get an update on the industry, learn some tips and tricks for improving feed, and tour a local operation.

Todd Harrington and his family hosted the April 29 meeting at their St. Anns farm. Harrington got into beef farming in the late 1990s, with a small herd.

"I started in 1997. I worked with my uncle and then bought six cows from him when he passed away," Harrington said.

Today he and his family have about 30 cattle on the farm, mostly Angus and Limousin. Additionally, they cash crop between 600 and 700 acres.

The annual spring barn meeting is a chance for the area's beef farmers to get together, share knowledge and learn a bit about where the industry is going, Beef Farmers of Niagara president Jason Koudys said. This was the second year they held the event after a brief hiatus due to COVID-19, and there seemed to be an eagerness, with roughly 100 coming out to enjoy a beef on a bun meal and listen to three presenters.

Leading off was Dan Ferguson, from the Beef Farmers of Ontario, the provincial branch. He covered some of the latest news, including the installation of new leadership at the BFO, some funding programs and an update on the spread of avian flu among some cattle operations south of the border. Fortunately, Ferguson said the situation seemed to be under control here in Ontario and Canada.

"It's got everybody nervous," he admitted.

"But CFIA (Canadian Food and Inspection Agency) is doing a really good job managing it here."

While there's no need for immediate fear, Ferguson did remind the farmers to practice safe biosecurity measures.



Todd Harrington and his family welcomed fellow Niagara beef farmers to their St. Anns property this spring for the Beef Farmers of Niagara spring barn meeting. ~ Luke Edwards photo

Ferguson also updated farmers on some of the government lobbying they've been doing, including on climate change and sustainability, reducing trade barriers and investment in the Risk Management Program. He also discussed ongoing talks they've been having about providing more exemptions to the carbon tax for farmers and work on a quality assurance program.

Next up was Jason Hurst, a farmer from the Belwood area, and representative from Masterfeeds. His talk was on wrapping forage, and some of the nutritional and timing benefits that can come from wrapping instead of waiting for the conditions to allow for dry hay. He showed the audience some research that suggested how wrapping forage can maintain higher pro-

tein levels and other important nutrients in the feed.

Finishing off the presentations was Kim Glenney, from KC AG Solutions. Like Hurst, she spoke about feed, though in this case it was before it comes time to cut. Glenney talked about the importance of soil tests.

"You need to have your base of what nutrients are in the ground," she said, adding pH, phosphorus and potassium levels are among the first things she looks at.

She also encouraged farmers to test the manure they use as fertilizer. While this doesn't need to be done often, she said it provides key added information to better plan what crops to plant and what other applications may be needed. 🌱

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AWO's mental health programs gaining acceptance in ag community



The Agriculture Wellness Ontario team with Ontario's Minister of Agriculture, Farming and Rural Affairs Lisa Thompson. ~ Agriculture Wellness Ontario photos

By Luke Edwards

Only a few short years ago, the hesitancy to talk about mental health in the farming community was so strong that Kristin Wheatcroft coined a term for a phenomenon she'd routinely experience at industry events.

"I feel like even two years ago when we were out at shows we'd experience what I like to call the banana, where people would see the booth and do a banana around the table," the director of Agriculture Wellness Ontario said. Many were so reticent to talk about mental health that they'd avoid the table altogether and keep a wide berth.

But thanks in part to the program run through the Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario that stigma is evaporating.

"I really do have hope that it's becoming a more comfortable conversation in the ag community," Wheatcroft said.

There are three main programs run through AWO, beginning with the In the Know program, what Wheatcroft describes as a "Mental Health 101" workshop. It sees trained staff sit down with a group of farmers or people in the agriculture community to go over some of the basic topics surrounding mental health.

"It's where people can get to know the key concepts around anxiety, depression, substance use and suicide and how to start a conversation with friends and neighbours if you're concerned about them," Wheatcroft said.



Kristin Wheatcroft, director of Agriculture Wellness Ontario.

The program's foundation came from a 2016 University of Guelph study that showed farmers have higher stress levels and are more susceptible to chronic stress, anxiety and depression than the general population. It provided academic research to issues many in the industry had long known anecdotally, Wheatcroft said.

Lill Petrella is the team lead, mental health promotion for CMHA, covering Haldimand, Brant and Norfolk. She received training to lead the In the Know workshops three years ago, and said it's led her to learn just how much stress many farmers carry on a regular basis.

"You think of farmers as salt of the earth and they're very strong, and they are all of that. But I guess I didn't realize the extent of the stress and worry that farming can be," Petrella said.

With so many things out of a farmer's control - from weather to global commodity markets - stress is often an inescapable part of the job.

Petrella will lead a few workshops a year and she said they're usually well received. Often she'll see light bulb type moments as participants realize things they're experiencing or things they know their peers are experiencing are common. They'll also go over some case studies of real situations (with names and specifics altered to protect confidentiality), which Petrella said are usually a big help.

"It really stimulates discussions," she said.

More recently, AWO has added two other programs to further support the ag community. In 2022 they launched a free counselling helpline for farmers to access any time of day or night. It's since expanded to include an employee of any farm operation in Ontario. People on the other end of the line are specially trained to understand the issues of farmers, Wheatcroft said, and can deal with a farmer who's looking to set up planned or preventative care, as well as those who are in more of a crisis situation.

"By far the No. 1 thing people are talking about is managing chronic stress," Wheatcroft said, adding anxiety and depression, as well as managing family relationships as other recurring topics.

The third major arm of AWO is the new Guardian Network, which encourages those in

the agriculture community or those who have common contact with farmers to undergo training to recognize and support people who may be struggling.

"If you run into someone you're concerned about, knowing how to have the conversation around 'hey, are you thinking about hurting yourself' and feeling confident in what words to use and you practice doing it, it can literally save someone's life," Wheatcroft said.

With farming often being a solitary and isolated job, the Guardian Network helps connect farmers to supports. Other farming-adjacent people like agronomists, vets, and dairy truck drivers can help bridge that gap.

Petrella said she hopes more people sign up to be Guardians because when it comes from a family member or peer it can often have much more impact than when it comes from a stranger who works in the mental health field.

"People always listen to their peers and it hits home more often," Petrella said.

Wheatcroft said they're also looking at increasing their training opportunities to respond to the needs of the ag community as they learn more.

"We hope to build that toolbox more as we grow," she said.

As for those in the farming community who remain hesitant about looking after their own mental health, Wheatcroft said it's not just about them.

"Trying out counselling is looking out for yourself, but it's also looking out for your farm and your family," she said.

Petrella said the general public also needs to appreciate farmers for what they contribute.

"They're very tough and they do an amazing job, they're very dedicated. But their physical and mental health kind of comes second to their work and we're helping them to realize that that should be first and foremost on their plate," she said.

For more information on the AWO and its programs, visit agriculturewellnessontario.com or call 1-866-267-6255. If you're in crisis, call or text 988. 🌱

New traditions forged, old rekindled at race track's opening day

By Luke Edwards

As the powerful animals prepared to take off around the historic oval in Fort Erie, Hailey Madsen was just happy to catch a glimpse of them.

"I just love horses," the young Wainfleet girl said. "They're fun and they're pretty."

The Fort Erie Race Track celebrated opening day on Tuesday, May 28, with crowds returning to watch the races, enjoy some food and drink, and lay a few bets down. For Hailey - who has made trips to the race track over the past couple years with her family, including mom Kerstin and brothers Hunter and Lucas - it was all about seeing the horses. She's had a quarter horse and a draft/quarter cross for about a year now, while the family had miniature horses before that.

While the visits to Fort Erie are relatively new for the Madsens, Thorold's Jon Blouin is on the other end of the spectrum.

"My dad brought me here as a kid," he said. "It's just the atmosphere, I've always loved horse racing."

Now a dad himself, Blouin brought daughter Tatum to the track for opening day, hoisting her up on his shoulders so Tatum could better



Spectators watch as the first race of opening day comes to a finish. ~ Luke Edwards photos

see the horses as they came around the bend, galloping towards the finish line.

This year marks the 127th year of racing at the Fort Erie Race Track. Unfortunately a storm did roll through after the second race of the

day, putting a bit of a hamper on things, but otherwise the day was a success.

Total wagering nearly hit \$2 million for the day. The \$1.9 million total was 11 per cent higher than opening day 2023.

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Spectators watch as some of the horses in the first race make an appearance before heading out to the track.



The Lloyd family from Fort Erie check out the oval before the first race. Their horse, Anarchy, would compete in the second race of the day. From left: Luke, Hailey and TJ Lloyd.

The signature race of the day, the \$30,000 Summer Solstice Cup, topped \$250,000 in wagering, leading the way. Jockey Sofia Vives and horse Bellaspina won the race, keeping a slim lead for most of the race before galloping well ahead of the competition at the end.

"Going into this race, I rode this mare a couple times already," said Vives. "Today in the paddock she was eager to go, and in the gate she was eager to go, so I thought that we should break on top and secure position, and

we did just that, then at the sixteenth when we cleared in front, we went for home."

Officials had to postpone the final race of the day due to the weather. It was made up on the following card on June 4.

Racing continues most Mondays and Tuesdays through until closing day on Oct. 22. There's also a wide range of special events held at the track throughout the year, including wiener dog, basset hound and the new corgi races. There are also four special Sunday race

days, including one coming up in June on Father's Day. The June 16 day features two new \$30,000 races, the Longrun Thoroughbred Retirement Stakes and the Longrun Thoroughbred After Care Stakes. The first race track farmers' market of the season takes place then, and a variety of food trucks will be on hand.

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AT THE MARKET

Sillastial Farms produce packs a punch

By Luke Edwards

She was hoping to improve her diet. Jennifer Johnston ended up with a new business to boot.

Johnston will be a regular at the Grimsby and Niagara-on-the-Lake markets this summer, selling microgreens through Sillastial Farms, which she runs with Allan Sillaste. It started with Johnston wanting to eat healthier and learning about microgreens.

"They are nutrient-packed little plants," she said.

This will mark her first year as a market vendor, something she's looking forward to. The microgreens she sells will be cut and served to the customer right at market.

"So they're really as nice and fresh as possible," she said.

Sillastial Farms will also offer other items, such as jams and preserves.

Johnston said microgreens are versatile, with several ways to be enjoyed and add nutrients to your diet. They can be added to smoothies, stir fried, or tossed in with salads. The latter is Johnston's personal favourite.

She grows hers in soil, which she said adds to the nutritional value. Similar to sprouts, Johnston said microgreens take a little more time to grow before they're harvested.

Outside of the markets, Johnston's looking at starting a delivery service in Niagara, so customers can have their microgreens delivered to their door courtesy of Sillastial Farms.

In the meantime, visit them at either the Grimsby or NOTL market. They can also be reached at 905-920-2987 or by email, sillastial-farms@gmail.com.



Jennifer Johnston will be at farmers' markets in Grimsby and Niagara-on-the-Lake this summer, cutting fresh microgreens for customers. ~ Luke Edwards photo

To nominate a local vendor for our monthly "AT THE MARKET" feature, contact Luke Edwards at luke@granthaven.com

Picture perfect start to the 2024 market season

By Michelle Seaborn

On May 30, under cloudless blue skies, the town of Grimsby welcomed the farmers' market back to downtown. Many of our full-time vendors came out to celebrate the opening day, which will now run every Thursday from 3 until 7 p.m. right through until Thanksgiving.

The market will be the weekly home to 35 unique farm and food vendors. This year space will be allotted to some of the merchants of the downtown area that are not located in the road closure area. This gives them the opportunity to showcase their business to the large number of weekly guests at the market.

While many of our farm vendors were not onsite for opening week, we did welcome two local organic farms that are new to this market. First, 9 Acres Organic farm joined the market in 2023. Located in Grimsby at 514 Ridge Rd., Carolyne and Rodney operate a small farm dedicated to producing honey, garlic, tomatoes, peppers, and other vegetables using ecological

principles mainly inspired by Korean Natural Farming and permaculture. They focus on providing quality food products from their harvests, managing healthy bee colonies, producing bee

related products and contributing to food sovereignty in the Niagara region.

The Promistry is a family owned and run no-till, organically grown, farm located at 3428 Eleventh St., St. Catharines. They started out in 2020 with hopes of bringing healthy produce free of pesticides and other harmful fertilizers to the community. They currently offer vegetables, herbs, fruits, mushrooms, flowers, meats and eggs. The farm is open to the public on Saturdays.

Joining us as we move into June will be some of our familiar vendors, which include Pineview Orchards, Neufeld Family Farm, Pete's Meats as well as Haist Orchards. New farms joining include Bain Orchards and Al's Produce. Sadly, Warner Orchards have decided not to return, we wish long time farm vendors Jim and Mary all the best.

The Grimsby farmers' market is located right on Main Street West between Christie and Ontario Streets. There is always something happening, plan to join us on the street! 🌿



The Grimsby Farmers' Market got off to a roaring start and will be returning each Thursday to the downtown area. ~ Michelle Seaborn photo

'That community feeling': Niagara Falls Farmers Market unveils its new spot at The Exchange

Market returns to Ferry Street after three years away

By Luke Edwards

What's old is new again at the Niagara Falls Farmers' Market.

The city-run market celebrated its return to the Ferry and Main Street area with its first market day at the newly built Exchange building. The market spent three years operating at the MacBain Centre as construction of The Exchange took place.

"A lot of people are happy, a lot of people are excited it's back in the neighbourhood," said Chetan Chandratre, who's running the market this year.

The first day featured a couple dozen vendors, music and entertainment. It also marked the opening of the on-site cafe where the owners of St. Catharines Mahtay Cafe will be offering coffee and goods at The Exchange. Local politicians held a ribbon cutting event that morning at the cafe.

Chandratre said Chris Scott, one of the musicians who performed, also wrote two original songs that were tributes to farmers and performed them at the opening.

Throughout the rest of the spring and summer months Chandratre said visitors can expect around 24 to 28 vendors each week, including a few outreach groups in addition to the fruit and vegetable producers and artisans. As more crops come into season he said shoppers can expect an increasing amount of fruits and vegetables that will be available.

Locals can also start taking advantage of the weekly supermarket, which runs Wednesday evenings at The Exchange beginning in June. With more of a focus on entertainment and meals, and perhaps some craft beer, spirits and wine, it'll run weekly from 4 to 7 p.m. until the end of September.

Chandratre said while most people he talked to on opening day were happy to have it back, there remained some concerns about a perceived lack of parking in the area. However, he pointed out that the same number of spots exist now as before The Exchange was built and that there are many free parking spots close by for visitors arriving by car.

And for him, it's the sense of community that most excites Chandratre. He recently welcomed a new child into the world and said there were many regulars at opening day asking him about it.

"Each time they come they will stop by and say hello and ask about the family," he said.

"It's fun to have this community feeling."

The market runs Saturday mornings from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Exchange is located at 5943 Sylvia Pl. For more information visit nfexchange.ca/market. 🌿



There was excitement for all as the Niagara Falls Farmers' Market celebrated its opening at The Exchange. ~ Luke Edwards photos



Emily Teichman and Jon Zworth brought Maddie and Brayden Zworth to the Niagara Falls Farmers Market to do some shopping and pick up fresh produce.



Chris Scott was one of the musical acts at opening day for the Niagara Falls Farmers' Market.



Ethan DeVries and Marharyta Tkach were helping patrol the DeVries Fruit Farm booth.

Creekside Country Market reopens for its second season

By Luke Edwards

A former apple barn that found new life last year in the form of a gift shop with ice cream and chicken, is once again open for the year.

Creekside Country Market on Twenty Road opened in early May to much fanfare, said owner Anja Lipiec. This is the second year for the market, which is located on a farm owned by Lipiec's mom Atsje Bruinsma. What was once a storage barn for apples has been renovated into the gift shop and ice cream parlour.

"The town was very supportive in getting it open and the community itself was lacking some place where they take the kids," Lipiec said.

"It was something I felt the town needed."

Lipiec always wanted to have her own store, but long thought it would be a clothing shop. However, with a creative mind the gift shop made sense. And with her background, ice cream did as well.

"I grew up on a dairy farm, my parents farmed just up the road. And then I married a dairy farmer,"



Atsje Bruinsma and Anja Lipiec at Creekside Country Market. The gift shop and ice cream parlour that's located in a former apple storage barn is open for its second season. ~ Luke Edwards photo

she said, adding the market is a full family effort, with others helping out with repairs, maintenance or simply to hop behind the counter when it's busy.

In addition to the Kawartha ice cream they'll be scooping out this summer, they also sell a mix of homemade gifts. Most of them are created in house by Lipiec and

company, but for anything else she tries to be as local as possible.

There's a wide variety in the gifts offered, and Lipiec said they try to follow the seasons, offering items for mom in May, dad in June, and so on.

Even the Maple Lodge chicken they offer has something of a local twist, as many local farmers - including Lipiec's family members

- produce for Maple Lodge, which in turns supplies the market. Food safety requirements are understandably strict, but Lipiec said this was a nice way to give a little nod to Niagara's chicken farmers.

Lipiec also offers workshops for children during the summer, and for adults throughout the year. Both she and her mom have the creative gene, so walking a group through how to make a craft is something Lipiec enjoys. Over the winter she ran a knitting group, with money raised going to West Lincoln Community Care. Staff have also made bracelets that were sold, with the money allowing them to buy four backpacks for WLCC's back-to-school program, and to sponsor a family of four at Christmas.

Creekside Country Market is open from 3 to 9 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday, 1 to 9 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sunday. They're also open holiday Mondays, usually 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

They're located at 8535 Twenty Rd., and can be found on Facebook and Instagram. 🌿



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WENTWORTH-NIAGARA JUNIOR FARMERS CLUB

Junior Farmers getting back up and running

Wentworth-Niagara club returns after previous iteration folded in 2019

By Luke Edwards

You can't keep a good farmer down.

It seems the same goes for a good farm club. A small group of young people in Niagara have been hard at work getting the local Junior Farmers club back up and running. The Niagara-Wentworth club folded back in 2019, but provincewide the Junior Farmers has a long history in the province. The first clubs popped up in Durham, York, Peel and Middlesex in 1914, with the Junior Farmers Association of Ontario organization getting established 30 years later in 1944.

For Jordyn Domio, who's leading the charge to restart the local branch, the club is a chance for young people to get together, try new things, and build skills that will come in handy later in life.

It's also just an enjoyable time.

"Honestly, just being out with other people," she said, when asked about her favourite part.

The revamped group has six members to start, and Domio said they're getting re-affiliated this year.

Members will meet regularly and take part in activities, ranging from farm tours to rural fairs, to a summer games event. In fact, Domio said the term Junior Farmers is a bit of a misnomer, as the club is open to anyone 15 to 30 years old, and many of the events go beyond the agriculture realm. For instance, Domio said they have a paintball outing planned as well.



The Wentworth-Niagara branch of the Junior Farmers is back up and running after folding back in 2019. From left: Brook Lillioth, Jordyn Domio and Daniella Mancino. ~ Luke Edwards photo

The club is also a great chance for young people as they age out of 4-H but want to stay involved.

"It's building rural leaders," Domio said.

"But it's also hanging out as a group and it's a good way to make friends."

Junior Farmers has an exchange program as well, that sees members from foreign countries

travel to Canada, and vice versa, making the organization a "great way to see the world," Domio said.

For more information on the organization, visit jfao.on.ca, email wentworth-niagara@jfao.on.ca or follow their social media channels @wentworthniagarajf. 🌱



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NIAGARA FARM DAY

Niagara Farm Day offers a glimpse into the world of agriculture

Annual event put on by the Niagara Federation of Agriculture

By Luke Edwards

As Natasha reached down for something to eat, her daughter Mindy draped herself over Natasha's head and neck.

Kids will be kids, as they say. Or, in this case, calves will be calves. The kid goats were in a nearby pen, as were the lambs and other barnyard animals at the West Niagara Agricultural Centre and Fairgrounds.

The Niagara Federation of Agriculture hosted its annual Farm Day event on Saturday, May 11. The event gives visitors a chance to learn about farming in the region, see demonstrations, and find out about all the hard work that goes into creating a successful farm.

All told, organizers were happy with the day, though some questionable weather in the afternoon put a bit of a damper on things.

"Overall, it was a success. Many thanks to all those who volunteered their time and energy to this event," said NFA president Chris Mullett Koop, pointing out there was a rush of activity in the morning while the rain held off.

Mullett Koop said the sheep shearing, horse handling, and milking demonstrations were among the highlights for many, though there were plenty of other things to keep the whole family busy. Antique tractors were on display outside of the building, with kids climbing up to see what it's like behind the wheel.

Some organizations were on hand to share information about what they offer, and the 4-H food booth was in operation for those who got hungry.

Michael Cott runs a small cow-calf operation in Caistor Centre and brought Mindy and Natasha to the event as part of the Beef Farmers of Niagara showcase. He got into beef farming after his daughter's time in 4-H. The family fell in love with the shorthorn breed and now the Cott's have been raising them for 10 years.

"I love the breed, love the genetics," Cott said. The family describes the cattle as "like a big dog to us."

This was the first time the Cott's were involved with Niagara Farm Day.

"It's a good education opportunity," Cott said, adding people were asking them all sorts of questions about raising beef and how they care for the animals. 🌱



Michael Cott brought a cow-calf pair from his Caistor Centre farm to show visitors at the Niagara Farm Day event on May 11. ~ Luke Edwards photos



Charleigh Rae got behind the wheel of an antique Minneapolis Moline tractor.



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NIAGARA FARM DAY



Audrey Morrison took Magic the Pony for a ride.



Brad Comfort showed visitors how to shear a sheep at Niagara Farm Day.



There were many displays to visit at Niagara Farm Day, including this beekeeping exhibit.



There were young animals of all sorts at Niagara Farm Day.



George Crompton tries his luck by spinning a wheel at the Egg Farmers of Ontario booth.

Farm equipment road signs pitched for the region

By Luke Edwards

A Niagara-on-the-Lake farmer would like to see drivers reminded that they share the road with farm equipment in parts of the region.

At the April 19 Agriculture Policy and Action Committee meeting, Kai Wiens brought the issue up, asking how they could go about installing signs on some regional roads. He said he's brought a similar issue up at NOTL council for local roads. While he admitted a sign wouldn't necessarily be a cure-all, it's a good reminder.

He wasn't aware of any specific incidents, but said he's experienced close calls while on the roads with his tractor. Often times cars when cars pass him they do so within inches of his tractor.

"I can reach out and touch these cars," he said.

Albert Witteveen, chair of the committee, suggested Wiens come up with some specific areas where such signage might make sense and be most effective. Then they could bring the issue to the attention of the Region's transportation people.



"We don't put signs up without rationale," he said.

Chris Mullet Koop, president of the Niagara Federation of Agriculture, supported the idea.

"It could bring awareness and caution people to please have patience," he told committee members.

The NFA had a minor campaign last year with stickers on farm equipment preaching patience from drivers.

Wiens said he'd take Witteveen's suggestion to nail down some more specifics and go from there. 🌿

Applications open for HFA scholarships

Haldimand Federation of Agriculture handing out two \$1,000 scholarships

By Niagara Farms staff

Post secondary students who will be studying rural and agriculture related subjects in the fall have a few more weeks to apply for two scholarships.

Applications for the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture scholarships close on June 30. The HFA will be handing out two awards of \$1,000 each to deserving college or university students. That includes a new scholarship created in honour of Frank Sommer, a longtime HFA member and supporter of all things Haldimand agriculture.

The Frank Sommer Memorial Scholarship will be given out to a student who displays the same aspirations, achievements and values of Sommer. These include community involvement and volunteering, as well a demonstrated interest in agricultural innovation.

Students in any year of post secondary education are eligible, though preference will be given to first year students. OFA members are also preferred.

Preference will also be given to students studying in the following

fields: rural planning, land stewardship, agriculture, and environmental studies.

The HFA scholarship, meanwhile, is geared towards first year students who are in an agriculture or trade apprentice program (such as truck/coach mechanic, electrician, plumber etc.). Applicants for this scholarship must be from an OFA member family.

To receive a detailed application forms email haldimandfederation@gmail.com.

Filled out forms, along with a copy of the student's transcripts, can be sent to the Secretary of the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture, c/o Charlotte Huitema, 730 Concession 2 Rd. South, Dunnville, ON, N1A 2W4.

Applicants will be contacted individually for an interview.

HFA summer barbecue

The HFA is also reminding members of the annual summer barbecue the federation hosts. This year's event takes place on Thursday, Aug. 8 at the Fisherville Lions Hall. More details to come. 🌿

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It's all about the base...line, as new funding announced for AgriScience project

Feds provide \$1.1M to give fruit growers a better understanding of their environmental footprint, and produce new varieties

By Luke Edwards

It's hard to know where you're going, if you don't know where you've been.

That's part of the objective behind another \$1.1 million in funding the federal government announced last month at an event held at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre. The funding will keep research going into new varieties for tender fruit and apple growers, as well as developing baselines and tools to help measure the impact of efforts to reduce carbon footprints.

In a lot of cases, "we don't know if what we're doing is good or not," said Phil Tregunno, a Niagara-on-the-Lake tender fruit grower and chair of the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers.

The project has several goals, including developing baseline data on the carbon footprint and environmental impacts of Canadian apple and tender fruit farming operations, measuring the impact of climate-smart management practices on a farm's environmental footprint, and creating a "carbon calculator" that will help operators understand, track, and reduce their impacts to the environment.

It will also continue work on developing newer varieties that will better withstand the inescapable effects of climate change and lengthen the season of locally grown produce.

In announcing the funding, Niagara Centre MP Vance Badawey said VRIC was an obvious choice as a setting, since the centre is known for its "cutting edge research to promote climate-smart crop management."

"Farmers know that taking action on the environment is the right thing to do," Badawey said.



The federal government announced last month \$1.1 million in funding to continue work in the tender fruit sector surrounding understanding the environment footprint of growers and to continue developing new varieties. From left: Phil Tregunno, Vance Badawey and Ian Potter. ~ Luke Edwards photo

But Tregunno said it's tough to steer the industry in the right direction when that baseline information is missing or not fully fleshed out.

Ian Potter, president and CEO of VRIC, said there are other larger agriculture sectors that have already done this type of work. This project will help the more niche tender fruit sector better understand things such as carbon sequestration in their orchards.

The funding comes through the AgriScience Program - Projects Component. Badawey made the announcement on behalf of federal

Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Lawrence MacAulay.

New peach varieties have helped extend the Ontario peach season, as consumers can enjoy local peaches earlier than ever. Work on table grape varieties is also ongoing.

"This will make sure consumers can get earlier fruit from Canada, they can get later fruit from Canada," Tregunno said. On the flip side, it will help ensure farmers have varieties that can withstand new climate norms, survive frosts and other extreme weather, he added. 🌿

'It looks like a symphony': New technology could reduce spray output by 30% for tender fruit farmers

By Luke Edwards

Wasted spray does no one any good, and new technology Dan DeVries employs on his Fenwick farm aims to keep that waste to a minimum.

DeVries said his family farm was an early adopter of the Intelligent Spray Application sprayer technology, which uses sensors on the spray tower to detect leaf mass, opening and closing the caps in real time to target only parts of the tree with the application.

"By using that sprayer, we're reducing our spray output by 30 per cent," DeVries said.

DeVries said many fruit farmers like his family want to be sustainable, but it can't always be

easy to balance those efforts with ensuring a crop is successful and a farm profitable. The ISA sprayer on the DeVries farm wasn't cheap, but DeVries estimates a three to five year time-frame to pay back the added cost with savings on spray.

It also's pretty cool to watch in operation, he said.

"It looks like a symphony," he said.

DeVries said there are other technologies in the pipeline that can improve efficiency and increase sustainability, and their Fenwick farm is looking at products such as mechanical weeding devices.

"It's a constant battle at keeping things affordable," he said.

Last month the federal government announced \$1.1 million in funding to help tender fruit farmers on their quest to be more sustainable. Among other things, the funding will help create a carbon calculator that will help farmers track their environmental footprint.

DeVries bought the new sprayer in 2022, one of, if not the first in Niagara, he said.

The farm has about 200 acres of fruit trees, and also runs a popular on-farm market. For more information on the farm, visit devriesfruitfarm.com. 🌿

Smithville master gardener sharing more than just seeds

Bev Campeau eager to help aspiring greenthumbs make the best of the growing season

By Luke Edwards

She's accustomed to growing beautiful flowers and tasty veggies, but a Smithville master gardener is also hoping to grow something else with a project she launched a few years ago.

Bev Campeau is trying to grow a sense of community and an understanding of nature in her neighbourhood.

Campeau, who moved to the area about eight years ago, has been operating a little free seed library in front of her Anastasia Boulevard home. Similar to the little free book libraries that offer a chance for bibliophiles to swap and share novels, the seed library is where greenthumbs can do the same.

"It gives me the opportunity to give back to the neighbourhood," Campeau said.

She started her community seed library four years ago. The current iteration - a small box with

a hinged door and window on the front, with shelves inside separating the perennials, annuals and veggies - was built for her by a neighbour.

Each spring she fills the library with around 500 packages of seeds she collects. Her seeds are all non-invasive and organic, practices she encourages other gardeners to follow.

She said often-times she'll notice people are hesitant to see what's in the library if she's out front in her garden. But Campeau invites anyone to check out the library at any time. She even offers up her expertise to visitors, sharing knowledge she's gathered from her time as a master gardener.

Soon after she moved to Smithville, Campeau said the children next door would often peer over at



Bev Campeau is a master gardener who for the past four years has maintained a seed library in front of her Anastasia Boulevard home in Smithville. ~ Luke Edwards photos

her impressive garden. Eventually they began coming over to her place to help with the gardening, and also learn about growing their own vegetables.

Now that they're older, Campeau said the kids have a small garden in their own yard.

"And they started eating vegetables they never liked before," she said, though she added jokingly it might have been a double-edged sword for her now that they're busy with their own gardens.

"I still hope they come over to help," she said with a laugh.

Other times, Campeau said she'll come home from an outing to see a couple neighbourhood kids sitting on the bench in her well manicured front yard garden. Or families out for a walk will stop and parents can help teach things like colours to their young ones.

"It's a way of educating the children as well," she said.

For those who do come to the library with questions, Campeau said there are quite a few common ones: When and where to plant it, how much water, what's something that will work for a shady area.

For those who are looking to get into gardening, or simply upping their garden game, Campeau said it's important to plant for the soil you have. Trying to change the pH levels, for instance, can be a never ending, uphill battle.

At the end of the day, there's a simple piece of advice she offers: "You can't fight Mother Nature."

She keeps the seed library open all summer, giving visitors a chance to offer up seeds they collected. 🌱



Campeau is eager to share her knowledge and passion for gardening and will offer advice and tips for those using her seed library to make their yards look as pristine as her own.

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Early bird gets the plant at Lincoln Garden Club annual sale

Residents eager to pick out some unique additions to their gardens

By Luke Edwards

In his younger days, one of the jobs for Gerard Schouwenaar was to tend the family's garden.

It was a common task, something many of his friends had to do as well. However, there was a difference.

"For some guys it was a chore, but I always liked it," he said.

Later, Schouwenaar would become a fruit farmer in St. Catharines. He's retired now, but for someone like him, the green thumb never fully goes away. On May 11, he and several other members of the Lincoln Garden Club were out at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's research farm selling home grown plants in their annual plant sale.

Schouwenaar grew 500 perennials that were quickly scooped up by local gardeners.

Plant sale coordinator Lori Graham said the annual sale raises money for the club, while also giving gardeners a chance to find something that's both unique, and well suited to the local climate.

"There are some interesting things you might not find at a nursery," she said.

For instance, Graham grew trilliums, and while it's Ontario's official flower, they're not always the easiest thing to find at a nursery. Graham said there were also many unique varieties of otherwise common plants, such as lady slipper orchids.

Since club members grew most of the plants locally, Graham said customers could be confident bringing them home.

"You know they're going to survive here," she said.

There were also a few nurseries that provided plants as well, to round out the options.

Money raised at the sale will help fund some scholarships the club offers to local students. They also usually use some of the money to plant a tree in the nearby Millennium Forest.

The garden club boasts nearly 100 members and has regular meetings and outings. Graham said it's also a chance to share knowledge and advice. For more information visit the Lincoln Garden Club's Facebook page or visit gardenontario.org.



Judy Cline shows some visitors plants for sale at the annual Lincoln Garden Club plant sale last month. ~ Luke Edwards photos



Gerard Schouwenaar grew 500 perennials for the Lincoln Garden Club plant sale. He's pictured here talking with some visitors.

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Medicinal herb farm brings health and education together

By Luke Edwards

Could an Apple Hill visit a day keep the doctor away?

Melissa and Jennifer Schooley opened Apple Hill Apothecary in Niagara-on-the-Lake last May. Their family has long run a lavender farm of the same name in Norfolk County and were approached with the idea of opening a similar lavender farm at the Niagara Stone Road property. However, Melissa had other ideas. She's studied the benefits of medicinal herbs, completing her Medicinal Plant certificate from Cornell University. She's also currently working her way through a Practical Herbalist diploma from Wild Rose College. With that background, she and Jennifer decided to start a medicinal herb garden with a focus on raising awareness and understanding.

"We really wanted a space that could showcase education because we really wanted to teach people," said Melissa.

Her interest in medicinal herbs came partly from her mother Janice, who was the first ginseng and medicinal herb specialist for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and partly for her own benefit as she looked for ways to improve her health, sleep and reduce the issues "women of a certain age" experience, as she put it.

This summer the farm will have 43 different plants growing that the Schooleys say can help with



Melissa and Jennifer Schooley opened their health store and medicinal herb farm, Apple Hill Apothecary, last year in Virgil. ~ Luke Edwards photo

all sorts of issues, from stress and anxiety to digestive issues, sleeping problems to hot flashes.

They recently gave a tour to a group that took part in a fundraiser for the Niagara Bee Group where they received a collection of native plants to take with them for their home gardens. As part of it master gardener Mary-Lyn Hopper gave a presentation and the Schooleys provided some info on the herbs they grow.

The plants can be used in a variety of ways. Some are used to make teas, others tinctures. Melissa recalled a few years ago a friend caught COVID-19 and had a brutal cough. She rolled up some dried mullein leaves and told her friend to smoke it. The friend was understandably hesitant, but followed the directions and within minutes Melissa said the cough eased.

However, Melissa stresses they're not anti-Western medicine, and instead offer an additional way to get and stay healthy.

While Melissa knows what to do with the plant once it's harvested, her sister Jennifer is the growing guru, taking care of the planting and growing.

"I love the challenge," she said of growing such a wide variety of plants. Coming to Niagara has presented its own unique challenges, as the soil and micro-climate are both different from what they're used to over in Norfolk.

As part of their commitment to being an educational experience, Jennifer said they offer tips to visitors who want to grow their own medicinal herbs at home.

The fundraiser for the Niagara Bee Group fits in with Apple Hill's support for sustainability, where they sell other health products with a focus on women-led businesses and businesses that contain a strong sustainability component. All of the proceeds from the sale went to the Niagara Bee Group, which works to promote biodiversity and a healthy ecosystem in the region.

Apple Hill Apothecary is open seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. The Schooleys invite visitors to take a tour of their herb farm and learn more about what's offered. Jennifer and Melissa both said people seem more interested in understanding where their food and medicine comes from, and Apple Hill can do its small part to provide that information.

To learn more about Apple Hill, visit applehillapothecary.com or follow them on Facebook and Instagram. 🌿



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SCAN ME

Belgians invade West Niagara

Annual horse pull and sale a major fundraiser for volunteer association

By Luke Edwards

It was getting a little drafty at the West Niagara Agricultural Centre and Fairgrounds last month, but no one seemed to mind.

For the third year the fairgrounds welcomed members of the Belgian horse community for its annual horse pull and sale. The event, this year marked the 68th time it's been held, is the biggest annual fundraiser for the Ontario Belgian Horse Association, which represents breeders across the province.

"We always say that we have our own horse show family," said OBHA president Mark Lindquist, about the tight-knit Belgian horse breeder community.

Despite rain welcoming visitors as the event kicked off Friday, May 3, horse lovers were excited to take part in the two-day show and sale. Friday evening saw teams compete in a horse pull inside the Richardson building at the fairgrounds. Next door there were several horses for sale. Visitors could also peruse a wide collection of equipment and tack, or take part in a silent auction that was held throughout the weekend.

Money raised from the event is used to support the industry. Lindquist estimated there are over 100 Belgian horse breeders located in all corners of the province. Over the years the OBHA show and sale has moved around Ontario. It originated in Lindsay, near where Lindquist has his third generation Belgian horse operation, but has spent time in Toronto, Markham, Orangeville and elsewhere.

"(West Niagara) has been a great facility to deal with," he said, adding he hopes their event can



This young horse got tired out from all the activity at the West Niagara Agricultural Centre and Fairgrounds during the annual Ontario Belgian Horse Association show and sale in May. ~ Luke Edwards photo

help attract other horse shows and events to the area.

Lindquist said the association will use the money they collected to sponsor other shows and support its youth program.

"We try and make sure we support the industry," he said.

Breeders are now looking forward to show season, which begins in July. This year also marks the return of the North American Belgian Championships, which Lindquist said is like the Olympics for Belgian horse breeders. It takes place every four years, alternating between Canada and the United States. This year it will be held in Illinois in late September.

Lindquist said Belgians are docile and disciplined animals that can be used in all sorts of ways,

from farm work to show horses, in parades and for wagon rides.

"It's something our family has been involved with for over 80 years," he said. With any luck, Lindquist said a fourth generation

of Lindquists will take over some day.

For more information on the OBHA visit ontariobelgians.ca or the Ontario Belgian Horse Association Facebook page. 🌱



Several teams took part in the horse pull at the OBHA annual show and sale.

Making the Case for this year's Niagara Antique Power show

Tractors and equipment from Case will be this year's show feature

By Luke Edwards

Canada Day weekend is always a chance to look back on our past as a country. In Port Colborne, it will also mark the return of an event that honours a very specific part of our history.

The Niagara Antique Power Association's annual show returns to Learn Farm from Sunday, June 29 to Monday, July 1.

"To me it's a way of honouring my ancestors...making sure all the hard work, blood sweat and tears that they put in is honoured, recognized and remembered," said Derek Fretz, president of NAPA. His grandparents on both sides were farmers.

The weekend features a wide range of things to do, including special displays and exhibits, a tractor pull, food vendors and musical entertainment.

There's also a kids corner, demonstrations, flea market and NAPA Mill Pond Trading Post.

Those who are feeling lucky can buy a raffle ticket throughout the weekend.

Sunday starts with a 9 a.m. church service for those who wish to take part.

"We've got some new things this year, we've got vintage race cars coming in, and a Volkswagen collectors group coming in," Fretz said. There will also be antique dealers and tractor competitions and games of skill.

Newfoundland ponies and mini horses will be there to meet families, and



Antique equipment will be on full display at Learn Farm during the Canada Day weekend as the Niagara Antique Power Association's annual show returns. ~ NAPA photos

Last Chance Horse and Pony Rescue will be offering pony rides.

"It's busy busy, and it's great. We just keep adding things to it that we feel are missing and listen to what the public asks for," Fretz said. As long as it fits their mandate to preserve heritage, specifically agriculture heritage, the volunteers try to make it work, he said.

The association began in the 1960s and 70s as a group of enthusiasts from Fort Erie began sharing their interests. The first show was held in 1972 at Ken Benner's home.

Later, Wilfred Learn would offer up his Wilhelm Road property for the show. It's continued to be held there each year, even though Learn has since died.

Fretz said they maintain about 200 members, though that often swells to around 240 by the time of the show. Dozens of volunteers will help make the weekend a success.

"The vast majority are people who either have agricultural roots or have an appreciation for it," he said. "And some people just love it."

Fretz has traditionally oversaw the trading post, which has meant despite being deeply involved he hasn't gotten the full experience. With his daughter taking over the trading post this year, Fretz said he's looking forward to wandering around and seeing everything.

As a teacher, his favourite part of the weekend is seeing the kids get engaged in and excited for history.

"Seeing the kids connect with this old history makes it all worthwhile," he said.

The event runs Saturday, June 29 to Monday, July 1 at Learn Heritage Farm in Port Colborne.

Gates will be open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. An opening ceremony is planned for noon on Saturday, featuring presentations from local dignitaries, a singing of the national anthem, and introduction from the city's town crier.

Following the opening ceremony there will be a parade of equipment.

Tickets are \$8 each, with children 12 and under getting in for free. There's also a weekend pass available for \$10 for those who want to make it a multi-day event. The farm is located at 1857 Wilhelm Rd.

For more information visit niagaraantique-power.org or call Fretz at 905-834-3083. 🌱



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Niagara Breeders Cup celebrates regions top Holsteins

By Niagara Farms Staff

The region's top Holsteins were on display earlier this spring at the Niagara Breeders Cup.

Judge Scott Walker toured 15 Niagara Holstein farms, judging dozens of animals before announcing the top finishers at a wrapup celebration at Rick and Angela Attema's property. Feederlane Sidekick Twix was named grand champion and Abbylayne Impression Taekwondo was named reserve champion.

Andrew Vellinga helped out with scheduling, while Yolanda Flederus put together the slideshow.

Looking forward, the Niagara Holstein Club will be hosting its next twilight meeting on Friday, July 26 at Nieuwcrest Dairy. They'll also soon be getting ready for the Aug. 21 show at the Wainfleet Arena that's open to Niagara and Haldimand farmers.

Contact a Niagara Holstein member for more details or keep an eye on their Facebook page.

Here's a rundown of the categories and top finishers from the spring Breeders Cup event.

FIRST LACTATION (19 entries)

- Feederlane Alongside Tarot from Feederlane Farms
- Sleepy Hollow Charity from Brett Alders
- Moonshine Maiu Agnes from Moonlight Holsteins (Jan and Jeanette VanWely)
- Brookturn Mirand Valerie P from Brookturn Holsteins
- Luxury Randall Barracuda from Luxury Holsteins

SECOND LACTATION (19 entries)

- Feederlane Sidekick Twix from Feederlane Farms
- Luxury Impression Josie from Luxury Holsteins
- Spierdyke Me In Control from John and Brad Jansema and Frank Stoop
- Abbylayne Dempsey Chelsea from Abbylayne Farms
- Alderberry Find Frostbite from Rick and Carol Alders

THIRD LACTATION (10 entries)

- Abbylayne Impression Taekwondo from Abbylayne Farms
- Vellhaven Ali Brew Addison from Vellhaven Farms
- Moonshine Rambo Angela from Moonlight Holsteins
- Brookturn Capture Lenora from Brookturn Holsteins
- Feederlane Dropkick Muffin from Feederlane Farms

FOURTH LACTATION-PLUS (12 entries)

- Vellhaven Ali Brew Sandra from Vellhaven Farms
- Spierdyke Briar Impression from John and Brad Jansema and Frank Stoop
- Brookturn History Velvet from Brookturn Holsteins



Feederlane Sidekick Twix was the grand champion at the Niagara Breeders Cup, held earlier this spring. ~ Submitted Photo

- Frieso Ali Merrick Paparazzi from Huiztein Farms
- Summerstine Stanley Cup Bee from Summers Farms

DAUGHTER/DAM (9 entries)

- Moonshine Rambo Angela and Moonshine Maiu Agnes from Moonlight Holsteins
- Brookturn Mirand Valerie and Brookturn History Velvet from Brookturn Holsteins

- Vellhaven Ali Brew Addison and Vellhaven Ali Chief Astro from Vellhaven Farms
- Abbylayne Impression Neverland and Abbylayne Rubihaze Neut from Abbylayne Farms
- Luxury Doorman Bentley and Luxury Randall Barracuda from Luxury Holsteins 🌱

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Graham Coppel
INSURANCE ADVISOR

Injured temporary foreign workers to receive improved benefits

Changes came from a foreign agricultural worker review launched by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

By Niagara Farms staff

Temporary foreign workers who get hurt on the job will no longer have unfair deductions to their income replacement payments when they return to their home country.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board announced the changes in a press release issued May 15. Under the new rules, deductions will take into account the injured worker's home job market.

"These are some of the most vulnerable people working in Ontario today and we owe it to them to be there if they get hurt on the job," said Jeff Lang, president and CEO of the WSIB in the release. "These are people who come to work our farms, grow our food, and contribute to our economy. If they get hurt while they do it, our responsibility does not end when they return to their home country."

WSIB launched a review of foreign agricultural workers last fall, which has led to these changes. The new Foreign Agricultural Worker Strategy covers income replacement changes as well as an emphasis on recovery and return to work in Ontario.

When a person is hurt on the job and can return to work, but not to the same job they

had at the time of the injury, WSIB is required to adjust their income replacement payments to reflect suitable and available work. Before the changes, WSIB interpreted that to mean work available here in Ontario. For workers who had to return to their home country, that often meant deductions that weren't realistic to their local job market.

"I can't say to an injured farm worker who was sent back to Jamaica that we are deducting the equivalent of an Ontario salary that is impossible for them to get. It's not fair, it's as simple as that. I know that's what was happening and I'm sorry it did. We're fixing it," Lang said.

Under the new rules, WSIB will interpret that to mean suitable and available work in the person's home job market.

In addition to making the changes going forward, more than 50 claims filed since 2007 will also be reviewed. In June, WSIB will begin contacting people with a claim under review.

"This is about doing the right thing," said Lang. "As a first priority we're going to work with Ontario farming employers to help get more injured farm workers back to work. In cases where that is not possible and they return to their home country, we are going to treat them fairly."

Each year thousands of workers from Mexico and the Caribbean arrive in Ontario to work on local farms, providing a crucial labour resource for farms who struggle to find local help. 🌱



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AG EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

June marks the official beginning of summer with the mid-month solstice. It's also an exciting time as crops are growing and fruits and vegetables are starting to come into season.

Here are some ag-related things to do in June and beyond:

FARMERS' MARKETS THROUGHOUT JUNE

MORE MARKETS KICKING OFF

With more fruits and vegetables coming in season, more local farmers' markets will also be getting going again. The **Stevensville Farmers' Market** begins on Wednesday, June 5, and continues each Wednesday until the end of September. It runs from 2 to 6 p.m. on the lawn in front of the Stevensville library/community centre.

Also kicking off June 5 is the **Thorold market**. It runs from 5 to 9 p.m. Wednesday evenings at the Battle of Beaverdams Park.

The **Fort Erie Race Track's** first farmers' market takes place on Father's Day, June 16. Another one will occur on Canada Day. They begin at noon.

Wainfleet's market kicks off Tuesday, June 11, running from 3 to 7 p.m. behind the arena.

In Haldimand, the **Cayuga Market** starts the first of June, running every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., 8 Echo St. West at Highway 54

FRIDAY, JUNE 7 TO MONDAY, JUNE 10

ERIE SHORES KENNEL CLUB SHOW

From Friday, June 7 to Monday, June 10 the Caledonia Fairgrounds will be going to the dogs, literally. The Erie Shores Kennel Club Show returns this month. Friday sees the bred by exhibitor competition, brace class and a complimentary barbecue. Sunday has best of specialties and junior handling. Monday will be the all breed show and owner handling competition. For full details visit eriesthoreskennelclub.net.

THURSDAY, JUNE 6 TO SUNDAY, JUNE 9

MUDCAT FESTIVAL

The Dunnville Mudcat Festival returns Thursday, June 6 to Sunday, June 9. It features parades, music, a car show, fishing derby, strongman competition and children's activities, including a midway. For more information visit dunnvillemudcatfestival.com.

CHECK OUT THESE THREE STRAWBERRY FESTIVALS WITH TWO TAKING PLACE ON SATURDAY, JUNE 15 AND ONE ON SATURDAY, JUNE 22

STRAWBERRY FESTIVALS

As the first fruits of the year come in season, strawberry festivals will be occurring throughout the region. Here are a few to take place in June: **Victorian Strawberry Social** at Cottonwood Mansion, 740 Haldimand Rd. 53

Selkirk, Saturday, June 15 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. visit cottonwoodmansionmuseum.com for details.

Stoney Creek Strawberry Fest, King Street East in downtown Stoney Creek, Saturday, June 15 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Strawberry Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, 323 Simcoe St, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Saturday, June 22 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

THURSDAY, JULY 18 TO SUNDAY, JULY 21

THE RETURN OF i4C

Niagara's wine industry will once again be celebrated with the return of the i4C event. The International Cool Climate Chardonnay Celebration runs July 18 to 21, with things to do at locations across Niagara.

For more information on the event, or to purchase tickets, visit coolchardonnay.org.

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Why right now is the best time to invest in liquid storage solutions.

It's estimated that total fertilizer revenue in Canada grew by 35.1% in 2022, and that overall farm input costs increased by 26.1% over 2021. Unfortunately these costs remained volatile throughout 2023, and into 2024.

One of the growing trends we're seeing is farmers purchasing and storing their fertilizers in advance using vertical liquid storage tanks. By pre-purchasing your fertilizer you can save thousands of dollars in crop input costs.

Another reason why it's a great time to increase your fertilizer storage is that the supply chain for polyethylene has caught up to demand and is approaching 'more normal' production timelines. As a result, we're fully stocked with vertical tanks in a range of sizes, with our most popular being 1,500, 3,000, and 5,000 USG. Any tank that we currently have in stock can be delivered within a few days, or custom tank sizes can arrive in 4-6 weeks.

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Beyond fertilizers for the farm, there are plenty of other chemicals and liquids that can be stored in vertical tanks. With many homeowners and businesses using them for oils or petroleum, potable water, and even syrup. Before selecting a tank, we highly recommend inspecting the chemical structure of the product being stored, and reviewing the chemical resistance datasheet to ensure it can be kept safely without leaching or other issues.

Vertical tanks available at Ontario Agra conform to the requirements of NSF/ANSI Standard 61 for drinking water systems, and are manufactured from medium or high-density polyethylene with U.V. inhibitors, and a specific gravity rating of 1.7 or greater. When you're ready to plan your purchase you'll find everything you need to make an educated decision throughout our website at ontarioagra.ca. Including tank specs, drawings, pricing, and dimensions.

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