

St. Marys Independent

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Issue #1242

Thursday, December 19, 2024

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LIT UP WITH CHRISTMAS SPIRIT AT THE KING HOUSE (PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK KING)
 The King family and the Town of St. Marys welcomed locals to the King Family Christmas House on Dec. 6 and 7. For more photos turn to page 12.

Coun. Brogan Aylward appointed as deputy mayor for second term

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

St. Marys council has appointed Coun. Brogan Aylward to serve as deputy mayor for a second term.

In accordance with the town's procedure bylaw, a councillor is appointed to serve as

deputy mayor annually. That appointment is based on nominations made at council's first regular meeting in December. At St. Marys council's Dec. 10 meeting, Coun. Dave Lucas nominated Aylward to serve his second term in the position – a nomination supported by the rest of council.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 6

St. Marys council refuses to pay \$487,000 for county road maintenance next year

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After receiving a more than \$487,000 bill for road maintenance next year from Perth County earlier this fall, St. Marys council voted last week not to pay.

During a special meeting of council Dec. 11, councillors discussed the county invoice behind closed doors. After the meeting was opened back up to the public, council unanimously passed a lengthy resolution refuting any factual, legal or equitable basis for St. Marys to pay for a portion of Perth County's roads and authorized town CAO Brent Kittmer to defend St. Marys from any purported liability for the cost of county roads.

"There was no previous discussion or notice of this invoice," Mayor Al Strathdee told the Independent. "In my opinion, there was no detailed explanation, calculation model, or rationale attached to the invoice. When the town asked for an explanation of the invoice, it was noted that 'the invoice was sent with the expectation of payment to avoid provincial involvement and/or court proceedings to mandate payment.'"

Strathdee said the added expense would represent a three per-cent increase to St. Marys residents' property taxes next year. Speaking on behalf of the town, Strathdee argued

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2

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Ron Morrison, Owen Lewis-Havard, Julien Polidoro, Emma James, David Forster, Heidi James

COMMUNITY

St. Marys council refuses to pay for road maintenance

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

there is no legal basis, provincial legislation or previous agreement that requires St. Marys residents to foot the bill for regional roads.

“In Perth County, contributions to regional roads appear to occur in exchange for the county’s approval of boundary adjustments,” Strathdee said. “The Town of St. Marys has never had a boundary adjustment approved by Perth County. Roads are infrastructure for the common public good.

“I am extremely disappointed in the county’s actions. This is a further example of their continued approach to dictate, not negotiate, in regional matters. I can point to the most recent example of their announcement of the discontinuation of the county portion of the PC Connect transportation system. It is very unfortunate that there was no regional consultation with the City of Stratford and the Town of St. Marys to try to improve connectivity and somehow save the system. It is very unfortunate that there is a lack of willingness at the Perth County government level to engage in constructive dialogue with regional partners and work together to find creative solutions to enhance our region.”

In a statement sent to the Independent, a representative from Perth County said the county believes a contribution from its regional partners is necessary to ensure costs are fair and equitably distributed among the residents and businesses that benefit from regular use of country roads.

“St. Marys had previously recognized for close to 65 years that it was fair and equitable for it to contribute to these costs,” the county spokesperson said.

According to the county, both St. Marys and Stratford – two municipalities that are located within Perth County but are not part of the county’s two-tier governance system – historically contributed to the cost of county roads through what were known as suburban roads commissions. Through the Stratford Suburban Roads Commission, the city paid a portion of roads costs as far back as 1927, and through the St. Marys Suburban Roads Commissions, the town paid for a portion of county roads costs as far back as 1950.

In 1996 however, the Province of Ontario disbanded suburban roads commissions and gave direction to municipalities in Ontario to reach local solutions rather than having the provincial government impose conditions.

As of 2009, St. Marys discontinued contributing to county roads.

“It has derived the benefit of county roads since then without making any contribution,” the county spokesperson said.

Stratford, meanwhile, continued to pay for a portion of county roads based on a cost-sharing agreement. This year, however, the City of Stratford notified the county by letter it would cease contributing to regional roads at the beginning of 2025 under the terms of a September 2017 boundary roads agreement that ex-

pires on Dec. 31, 2024.

In an email to the Independent, Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma said the city is still in negotiations with the county on this matter and he couldn’t yet comment on the decision to cease contributions to the county to share the costs of boundary roads.

The county spokesperson said while the requested roads contribution from St. Marys was not included in its 2025 draft budget, if St. Marys were to pay, it would reduce the county’s current proposed 13.18 per-cent levy increase by 2.2 per cent.

The impact of Stratford ending its regional-roads agreement, however, would be a loss of roughly \$2.7 million for the county and would nearly double the current proposed levy increase for 2025, increasing the county levy further by another 12.22 per cent.

This matter has been brought to the attention of Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Paul Calandra who, in a letter to all parties, said he and his staff will work with all three municipalities to find a resolution.

“Industry and residents of Stratford and St. Marys derive a substantial benefit from the county maintaining the surrounding regional roads,” the county spokesperson said. “The county road network is vital to the safe and efficient movement of goods and services, workforce employees and tourists throughout the region, particularly to and from the larger urban centres, including St. Marys

and Stratford. The county ensures that its critical road infrastructure and assets are well maintained and managed through maintenance programs and capital projects. Over the past decade, many capital improvement projects and road-safety initiatives have been completed in the surrounding road network of St. Marys and Stratford. These improvements contribute to the overall safety, efficiency and effectiveness of the county road network to the benefit of all road users.

“It is not equitable for Perth County’s taxpayers to be forced to subsidize Stratford and St. Marys’ use of the regional roads, by carrying the entire amount of the costs of repairing and maintaining those roads. ... Both St. Marys and Stratford previously acknowledged the benefit and need to contribute to the costs of the regional roads. It was acknowledged that the only way residents could get in and out of St. Marys is by using county roads, creating a direct benefit to Stratford and St. Marys, and that there should be some financial commitment from them.”

Given that the county, Stratford and St. Marys all contribute to shared services in the region including paramedic services, social services and Spruce Lodge, the county spokesperson suggested regional roads should be considered a “critical shared service” that requires annual contributions from all partners.

Both Stratford and St. Marys have agreed to work with the minister and his staff on a fair resolution to this issue.

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From the Harris-Greig Auto Team

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WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

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7 Day Forecast - Weather Sponsored by **The HITCHING POST**

| Wednesday Dec-17th | Thursday Dec-18th | Friday Dec-19th | Saturday Dec-20th | Sunday Dec-21st | Monday Dec-22nd | Tuesday Dec-23rd |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Few flurries | Mainly cloudy | Few flurries | Sun/cloud | Sun/cloud | Sun/cloud | Few flurries |
| -1°C | -2°C | -1°C | -9°C | -11°C | -5°C | -1°C |
| Feels Like -3 | Feels Like -5 | Feels Like -5 | Feels Like -16 | Feels Like -12 | Feels Like -11 | Feels Like -5 |

Council to consider 2025 budget bylaw with proposed four per-cent increase on Jan. 14

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Council will consider a bylaw to adopt the 2025 budget on Jan. 14, 2025, at its regular 6 p.m. meeting in town hall council chambers (175 Queen St. E).

The draft 2025 budget can be viewed online or in person at the municipal operations centre (408 James St. S).

The budget calls for an additional \$605,062 (4 per cent) to be raised through property taxes in 2025. For an average residential taxpayer with a median assessed value of \$264,000, this corresponds to an increase of \$144 per year. Water and sewer bills will increase by 3.19 per cent or \$29 annually for the average residential household. Wheelie bin fees will increase by 4 per cent.

For an average residential taxpayer, this is an increase of \$144 per year, adjusted for assessment growth. This may change pending the final library budget and 2024 assessment growth data.

The 2025 operating and capital budget requires a total property tax levy of \$15,727,772, balancing service levels with cost control. The town continues to invest in long-term capital and infrastructure and up-

hold commitments to community outreach and housing supports.

The capital budget includes over \$5 million for projects like reconstructing Elgin Street East, replacing water and sewer systems, public facility upgrades, and lifecycle replacements at the Pyramid Recreation Centre. Renovations to the swimming pool and upgrades to the sewage treatment plant are also expected to be completed within the first half of 2025.

"The proposed budget reflects our commitment to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for our residents while remaining fiscally responsible," said Mayor Al Strathdee in a press release. "By focusing on essential services and infrastructure projects, we are ensuring that our town remains a vibrant and sustainable community for years to come."

Council held open budget meetings to deliberate the budget on Oct. 15, Nov. 19 and Dec. 3, and will consider the final budget bylaw on Jan. 14, 2025.

All meetings will be livestreamed on the town's YouTube channel and are available for viewing. Anyone may attend the meetings and/or make written or verbal statements about the budget. Written statements can be sent by email to amorin@town.stmarys.on.ca.



Thank you for your continued support in 2024!

Wishing you and your families a

Merry Christmas!

and a joyous 2025!

From the Stonetown Cheese Family

5021 Perth Line 8, St. Marys

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COMMUNITY

Town reminds residents of payment options as Canada Post services resume

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Canada Post mail service is scheduled to resume on Tuesday, Dec. 17. Due to the backlog, some additional delays in mail delivery services are anticipated.

Property owners and residents are reminded they remain responsible for ensuring property tax payments are made on time by the specified due date. Standard penalties will apply for late payments. Failure to receive a tax notice does not exempt the responsibility for payment.

Alternate payment options include: Telephone/internet banking: Please contact your financial institution regarding this payment option. A 19-digit property roll number will be the account number.

In-person: In-person payments can be made by cash, debit or cheque at town hall (175 Queen St. E) and the municipal operations centre (408

James St. S) during regular business hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). A drop box is available at lower level of town hall and the front door of the municipal operations centre for cheques only.

Pre-authorized payments: Residents can pay taxes in 12 monthly or four quarterly installments (last business day of February, May, August and October). Taxes are deducted from bank accounts on the first banking day of the month. Please complete a Pre-Authorized Tax Payment Form to enroll in the pre-authorized payment program.

For inquiries regarding payment options or to confirm any outstanding property tax balances, please contact the finance department at cbrine@town.stmarys.on.ca or 519-284-2340 ext. 214.

For more information and updates on Canada Post operations, visit their website.

Bravo

We have 3 Bravos this week.

1) Bravo to Tom Donati and Harmony of Friends with guest performance by Lanny Hoare as the Innkeeper. It was a fabulous night of entertainment at the St. Marys Presbyterian Church last Friday night as they told the Christmas Story from so long ago.

2) We the staff at the St. Marys post office would like to extend our gratitude for your support and kind conversation while we have been out on the picket line. We would also like to thank you for the treats and warm drinks, they are very much appreciated!

3) Bravo to the Town of St. Marys employees who have done much extra work over the last months to keep our community functioning smoothly and festive.

Boo

We have no Boos this week. Merry Christmas!

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

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

Quote of the Week

"We're calling a timeout. Suffice to say positions appeared to have hardened and it became clear to me we were in a total impasse"

- Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon told reporters in Ottawa on Friday on the return of operations for Canada Post on Tuesday, Dec. 17

Overheard at the Coffee Shop

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Apparently, the budget didn't balance itself.

Pension plan Singh is more loyal to Trudeau than a Liberal cabinet minister.

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

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA

Restoring small-town journalism, one community at a time!

St. Marys Independent

Publisher

Stewart Grant • stew@granthaven.com

Regional Editor

Galen Simmons • galen@granthaven.com

Graphic Design / Sales Inquiries

Tyler Carruthers • info@stmarysindependent.com

Business Development

Heather Dunbar • heather@granthaven.com

Billing Administrator

Cindy Boakes • boakescindy1576@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant

Wendy Lamond • wendylamond74@gmail.com

Contributors

June Grant, Nancy Bickell, Mary Smith, Nancy Abra, Lauren Eedy, Spencer Seymour, Sarah Cairns, Paul Knowles, Jake Grant, Julia Paul, Emily Stewart, McGinny Photography

36 Water St. St. Marys, ON, PO Box 2310 N4X 1A2
info@stmarysindependent.com | 519.284.0041 | granthaven.com



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The St. Marys Independent
THOUGHTS OF THE WEEK

Sponsored by:

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Christmas magic is silent. You don't hear it, you feel it.

Gifts are good but friends are forever.

Seeing isn't believing, believing is seeing.

Giving is the key to true happiness



How to LISTEN TO ST. MARYS RADIO
Step 1. Go to www.stmarysradio.com
2. Click play on the online player





Holiday Season Reminder



Please Don't "Wish-cycle"



Just because something is paper, metal, plastic, or glass, does not mean it is recyclable! Placing the wrong items in recycling bins increases program costs and affects the safety of our staff.

During this holiday season, please remember that the following items are not acceptable for recycling:

- Greeting cards
- Gift wrap
- Christmas lights
- Batteries

If you are unsure, contact info@bra.org or 1-800-265-9799, visit www.bra.org or download the Recycle Coach App.

Landfill Holiday Hours



The Landfill (1221 Water St. S) will be closed on the following regular days of operation (Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday) over the holiday season:

- December 24 as of 12 PM
- December 25 & 26
- December 31 as of 12 PM
- January 1

Details: townofstmarys.com/landfill

Be in the know about where waste should go!



Curbside Collection



There will be no disruption to curbside garbage and recycling collection throughout the holiday season.

To ensure that materials are collected, place your wheelie bins at the curb by 7 AM on your collection day on your designated side of the street.

For a map and details visit: townofstmarys.com/curbsidecollection

Christmas Tree Collection



Wondering what to do with your real Christmas tree?

The Kinsmen Club will once again be doing a curbside tree collection on Saturday, January 4, 2025. Please ensure your tree is out by 8 AM and be sure to remove:

- Ornaments
- Tinsel
- Lights

If you wish to dispose of your tree before January 4, you can bring it to the Yard Waste Depot (408 James St. S).

After January 4, trees can be taken to the St. Marys Landfill.

STONETOWN CRIER

The latest municipal news from the Town of St. Marys



FREE FESTIVE SKATES

Pyramid Recreation Centre

The Optimist Club of Downie, Friends of the Library, Quadro Communications and the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation have generously sponsored public skating this festive season.

townofstmarys.com/skating or 519-284-2160

ALTERNATE PAYMENT OPTIONS DURING CANADA POST STRIKE

Property tax payment options:

- Telephone/Internet banking
- In-person at Town Hall or the Municipal Operations Centre
- Sign up for pre-authorized payments

townofstmarys.com/propertytaxes or 519-284-2340



HOLIDAY BREAK DAY CAMP

Pyramid Recreation Centre

We are hosting a Holiday Break Day Camp on December 23, 27, 30, 2024, and January 2 & 3, 2025, featuring crafts, games, and skating!

townofstmarys.com/campprc or 519-284-2160

CELEBRATE THE SEASON

November 15, 2024 to January 1, 2025

Celebrate the season in St. Marys! Join us for a merry lineup of festive fun and activities all through November and December. Let the celebrations begin!

discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays



SHOWER PROGRAM

Pyramid Centre

This program provides free showers to those in need. Showers are private, secure and accessible for individuals of all abilities.

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communications@town.stmarys.on.ca



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Senior of the Week



Guess who is 80? This week's senior of the week is Phyllis Annis. Phyllis will be celebrating 80 years young on Dec. 22. She was born in Norfolk, England and came to Canada at the age of 20. She was married to her late husband, Ken, for 46 years. In her spare time she loves gardening, shopping, playing with her cat and visiting with lots of friends and neighbors.

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

Coun. Brogan Aylward appointed as deputy mayor for second term

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"Thank you for the nomination to deputy mayor," Aylward said later in the meeting. "I will fulfill the position with the same level of energy and vigour as I did this year. I'll give it everything."

Speaking with the Independent after the meeting, Aylward said he's looking forward to continuing his service to the community in this role. In his first term as deputy mayor, Aylward said he gained valuable experience having the opportunity to chair council meetings and represent council at town and other functions in Mayor Al Strathdee's absence.

"I chose to stand for a second term as deputy mayor because it grants me the opportunity to serve the community in a greater capacity," he said. "I have more chances to chat with folks about issues that physically impact our town. I've really enjoyed chairing council meetings and the growth I've achieved in doing so. This experience will only increase my ability to serve St. Marys. I feel very fortunate.

At 25, Aylward is the youngest member of St. Marys council. He said having the opportunity to serve in a higher-profile position on council could help engage younger St. Marys residents in the municipal decision-making process.

"I believe that if we want younger people to engage with politics at any level, then we need younger representation," Aylward said. "The only way that I can contribute to that ideal is to take on greater responsibility and put myself out there. I hope to encourage younger generations in St. Marys to use their voices, as well as ensure that they are heard."

As the voices of younger residents are often missing when it comes to municipal decision making in any municipality, Aylward has used his platform as councillor and deputy mayor to speak during council and other meetings about issues important to younger generations, including the need for more affordable housing in St. Marys – something he has said he's struggled with personally.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF BROGAN AYLWARD)

St. Marys Coun. Brogan Aylward has been appointed deputy mayor for his second, one-year term.

"Serving as a councillor and deputy mayor has truly deepened my appreciation for our community. I am blessed to be a part of something that I feel so passionate about. I will continue to meet this position with my greatest effort and enthusiasm," Aylward said.

So far during the 2022-2026 term of council, there have been two deputy mayors. Coun. Fern Pridham served in the role from December 2022 to December 2023 before Aylward was appointed to his first one-year term.

Weekend Quiz

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- 1) What reindeer has a glowing red nose?
- 2) How many ghosts show up in A Christmas Carol?
- 3) Eggnog is also known as what?
- 4) What is the name of the Grinch's dog?
- 5) What is Merry Christmas in Spanish?
- 6) What are people supposed to do under the mistletoe?
- 7) After fleeing Bethlehem, where did Joseph, Mary, and Jesus go?
- 8) What mythical creature kidnaps naughty children at Christmas in Austria?
- 9) Which actor played six different roles in "The Polar Express"?
- 10) What do people traditionally put on top of a Christmas tree?

This week's answers are found on pg. 37



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

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HOLIDAY HOURS OF OPERATION

CLOSED THE WEEK OF DEC 25 AND RE-OPEN ON JANUARY 2, 2025 FOR REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM MONDAY TO FRIDAY.



BACK ROW - DAVID MCLEOD & AVERY HOSKINS. FRONT ROW - CHEYENNE CLIFFORD GWENDOLEN BOYLE, JANICE THOMSON, HARMANPREET KAUR

Town to enforce no parking on section of Pelissier Street

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Street parking changes are underway on Pelissier Street

On Nov. 26, council approved an amendment to the traffic, parking, and boulevard maintenance bylaw to enforce no parking on Pelissier Street from Queen Street West to Grahlyn Avenue. These changes have been made at the direction of council following discussions with the public.

The Town of St. Marys is committed to ensuring the safety of all residents and visitors. The amendments on Pelissier Street aim to enhance overall safety and traffic and pedestrian flow.

The resulting changes will include the installation of no-parking signage beginning Wednesday, Dec. 18.

Questions about the amendment may be directed to the clerk at 519-284-2340 ext. 212 or clerksoffice@town.stmarys.on.ca.

Little Falls students entertained by DCVI concert band



(WENDY LAMOND PHOTO)

DCVI's concert band, led by Donna Mitchell, entertained a full gym of Little Falls Public School students on Friday. Welcoming the kids to the school was Daniel Greig, rep for the student council. The band played some rock, some Christmas and some fun tunes for the visiting school.



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Quadro and Gosfield North communications cooperatives to amalgamate

GALEN SIMMONS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Perth County's Quadro Communications Co-operative Inc. and Gosfield North Communications Co-operative Ltd. out of Essex County will officially amalgamate into one organization at the beginning of 2026.

At recent annual meetings, members of both telecom cooperatives voted overwhelmingly in favour of the amalgamation, which both organizations say represents a significant step forward offering benefits and new opportunities to enhance the services and support available to all their members.

"In looking at the landscape of telecom today, at one time, there used to be ... 689 independent (telecoms) in Ontario. Now, across Canada there's only 22," said Quadro general manager Darryl Evans. "So, you're seeing your big players – Bell, Rogers, Telus, Cogeco – but for ourselves as cooperatives, we're challenged by not having a big bank account. So, with that being said, how can we strengthen ourselves for another 100 years? ... We started chatting about this with the other seven telecom cooperatives in Ontario. ... We had interest from about four of them ... and two of us are seeing the importance of moving forward, which I think is the right thing."

"We are deeply grateful for the trust and support of our members," Gosfield North general manager Don Casemore said in a press release. "This is more than a partnership; it's our commitment to keeping our communities connected. With a stronger foundation, we are ready to face the challenges of a changing industry and continue meeting the evolving needs of our



members for years to come."

In the next few months, Quadro and Gosfield North will work to complete the integration process. During this time, members will receive regular updates via email, on their websites and other communication channels, all while continuing to enjoy the same friendly, reliable service without any interruptions.

Evans said both the Quadro and Gosfield North teams have much more to discuss and work out over the next year before a clear picture of what this amalgamation will look like can take shape.

"There's no job loss with this," Evans said. "We're not looking to right-size. ... This is all about the people, the communities, the members, the companies and the employees, of course. ... We're still going to see savings, which is a good thing, but because of our geographical locations ... we still need our employees where they are."

"... An amalgamation is a partnership of equals. ... Our true amalgamation date isn't until Jan. 1, 2026. ... We're going to start having meetings about integration and implementation planning ... and then start the activities. Some activities we can start before we're legally one organization and some you have to wait until after the fact such as finance and a few things. What we want to do is get some quick wins ... and we want to have a plan going forward. We knew we weren't going to do the deep, deep dive until the members supported this."



Though amalgamation will mean the two telecom cooperatives will be unified under one organizational banner, Evans said local customers can rest assured the Quadro branding and the great customer service and community support that goes with it won't be disappearing anytime soon.

Evans also noted the new amalgamated organization may consider further amalgamation with some of the other Ontario telecom cooperatives in the future if it makes sense at the time.

Established in 1995, Quadro traces its roots back to the Blanshard Municipal Telephone System, established in 1924 in Perth County. As a full-service telecommunications co-operative, Quadro offers internet, television, phone and cellular services to both residential and business customers.

Gosfield North Communications Co-operative Ltd., established in 1907 in Essex County, was founded by local politicians and community leaders to provide phone services to the municipality. Gosfield North offers internet, IPTV and residential phone services to both residential and business customers.

As cooperatives, both companies are member owned with all customers having the opportunity to become members for a minimal fee. Members actively participate in the governance of the cooperative through the election of the board of directors.



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T&C APPLY

Crozier's surprise screenwriting awards attests to *Cry of Silence* success

EMILY STEWART

Independent Reporter

Local screenwriter Robin E. Crozier was surprised to hear she won an award for her first-ever screenplay.

Wild Filmmaker Magazine, an independent cinema publication, awarded Crozier the 2024 Best Screenwriter of the Year prize for *Cry of Silence*. The award-winning thriller film, made in St. Marys, also earned about 80 prestigious accolades from around the world including the Brussels World Film Festival and the Cannes World Art Festival.

"I was quite surprised, shocked actually, to win the Screenwriter of the Year award from Wild Filmmaker as I didn't even know my script was under consideration," Crozier told the Independent. "But apparently, since it had won a number of international awards in London, New York and Cannes, it was automatically submitted. Wild Filmmaker Magazine is a publication that celebrates independent filmmak-

ers, which makes this award dear to my heart."

Cry of Silence was the first screenplay Crozier wrote 30 years ago. AKool Film Company producer and director Allen Kool, executive producer Michael Charbon, editor and post-supervisor Andrew Brown, assistant director Yaz Lachporia and the rest of the team spent over a year bringing the script to screen. Though filming alone just took a month, the multiple steps in the editing process such as colour correction, music, score, sound editing and graphics took quite some time.


"I'm extremely grateful to everyone involved," Crozier said. "Especially the town and the people of St. Marys for their continued support. This was the third film we've produced in the six years we've been in St. Marys, despite a pandemic, and I think that's remarkable."

AKool Film Company is working on *Noose: A Hangman's Tale*, a docu-series about the hangings that occurred in Canada post-confederacy.






St. Marys screenwriter Robin E. Crozier.


(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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Locals visit the King Family Christmas House



Carter VanWieren visits with Santa at the King Family Christmas House.



Sandy MacPherson visits with Santa at the King Family Christmas House.



(PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARK KING)

The town provided free shuttles to the King home, which was lit up with Christmas lights and decorations.

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

As part of the Winter Market festivities on Dec. 6 and 7, Mark King partnered with the Town of St. Marys to welcome locals to the King Family Christmas House.

The town provided a shuttle from the Flats to King's house where he was hosting Santa and the Kinsmen Club. Local kids had the opportunity to drop off their letters to Santa and avoid the postal strike.

The St. Marys Kinsmen, of which King is a member, was also there col-

lecting food and toy donations while handing out warm apple cider and candy canes to all who attended.

At the end of the weekend, the King Family Christmas House saw over 300 visitors who stopped in to see Santa, enjoyed the light display and made donations that will benefit the local Salvation

Army and food bank.

Approximately 75 letters to Santa are now being read by the big man and they will be distributed back to the community this week.

They young lad in the chair beside Santa is Carter VanWieren and the lady in the other photo is Sandy MacPherson.



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A visit with Santa at The Hitching Post



(MURRAY GRANT PHOTO)

Kaitlyn Steckly accepts a candy cane from Santa at The Hitching Post Saturday morning.



(MURRAY GRANT PHOTO)

Kevin Tate, a longtime employee of The Hitching Post, should certainly be a contender for the Ugliest Christmas Sweater award.

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St. Marys Tim Hortons donates more than \$4,100 through Smile Cookie campaign



(PHOTO COURTESY OF SHARI-ANN MCHARDY)

Pictured, Shari-Ann McHardy from St. Marys Tim Hortons (on right) presents a cheque for \$4,138.25 to Raelyn Marshall from the St. Marys Salvation Army Food bank. The money was raised through the most recent Smile Cookie campaign.

Breakfast with Santa



(MURRAY GRANT PHOTO)

On Sunday, Dec. 15, the St. Marys Legion Branch 236 hosted a breakfast with Santa. They had an excellent turnout with 110 attending to enjoy breakfast and a visit with Father Christmas. Pictured with Santa are Kinley Leaman and Clayton Dale.

Town of St. Marys continues to shine bright this holiday season

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The Town of St. Marys is bursting at the seams with holiday spirit!

St. Marys continues to shine bright, thanks to the WinterLights display and Holiday Light Tour. The WinterLights are lit every evening from 5-11 p.m. at Milt Dunnell Field. Enjoy the display

from a horse-drawn wagon on Dec. 21 and 24 from 6-8 p.m.

The Holiday Light Tour features 14 beautifully decorated homes located throughout town. Download and print the map at www.discoverstmarys.ca/happyholidays. Hard copies of the map are available at municipal facilities. The tour runs until Jan. 1, 2025.

For indoor fun, browse the museum's

O' Tannenbaum exhibit running until Monday, Jan. 13, 2025. Explore the history of Christmas tree decorations, including historic ornaments in the museum's collection.

The Pyramid Recreation Centre is also offering free skates throughout the holiday season thanks to sponsorships from the Downie Optimist Club, Friends of the St. Marys Library, Quadro Commu-

nications and the St. Marys Healthcare Foundation. Pre-registration is recommended. For specific dates and times, visit www.discoverstmarys.ca/happy-holidays.

Have a safe and happy holiday season, and be sure to follow the Town of St. Marys' Facebook, Instagram and X accounts for any updates and reminders.

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Monday, December 23, 2024 8:30 – 4:30 pm

Tuesday, December 24, 2024 8:30 – 12:00 pm

Thursday, January 2, 2025 8:30 – 4:30 pm.

We will be closing on December 24th at 12:00 pm. We will reopen on Thursday, Jan. 2/25 at 8:30 am for regular business hours

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Town of St. Marys holiday hours 2024

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

The following hours will be in effect for Town of St. Marys services for the 2024 holiday season:

Administrative offices (town hall and municipal operations centre)

• Closed as of Dec. 24 at 12 p.m. to Jan. 2, 2025, at 8:30 a.m.

Adult learning

• Closed as of Dec. 19 at 4:30 p.m. to Jan. 6, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.

Child-care centre and before-and-after-school programs

• Child-care centre closed as of Dec. 24 at 11:30 a.m. to Jan. 2, 2025, at 7 a.m.

• Before-and-after-school program closed as of Dec. 23 at 5:30 p.m. to Jan. 6, 2025, at 7 a.m.

• Winter break camp running Jan. 2 and 3 from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Community outreach

• Closed as of Dec. 24 at 12 p.m. to Jan. 2, 2025, at 8:30 a.m.

• For non-emergent needs, contact communityoutreach@town.stmarys.on.



ca or City of Stratford Social Services department at 519-271-3773 ext. 200

• For emergent needs, contact Stratford Police Service at 911

EarlyON Centre

• Closed as of Dec. 23 at 4:30 p.m. to Jan. 2, 2025, at 8:30 a.m.

Friendship Centre/Senior services

• Closed as of Dec. 23 at 4:30 p.m. to Jan. 6, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. For in-home support throughout the holiday season, please contact the Friendship Centre at 519-284-3272 prior to Dec. 23.

Landfill

• Closed on the following regular days of operation (Tuesday, Wednesday, Fri-

day, Saturday):

Dec. 24 at 12 p.m.

Dec. 25 and 26

Dec. 31 at 12 p.m.

Jan. 1, 2025

Library

• Open Dec. 24, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Dec. 30, 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Dec. 31, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

• Closed Dec. 25 to 29 and Jan. 1, 2025

Museum and archives

• Closed as of Dec. 24 at 12 p.m. to Jan. 2, 2025, at 9 a.m.

Mobility services

• The mobility services and EasyRide offices will be closed from Dec. 22 at 4 p.m. to Jan. 2, 2025, at 8:30 a.m.

• Mobility services will continue to operate for prearranged transportation from Dec. 23 to Jan. 2, 2025. Rides must be booked by Dec. 19 at 4 p.m.

• Staff will be available to respond to inquiries at 519-284-4010 during this time.

Pyramid Recreation Centre

• Arena and rooms closed Dec. 24 at 3

p.m. to Dec. 26; Dec. 31 at 3 p.m.; Jan. 1, 2025.

• Running a Holiday Break Day Camp Dec. 23-30, and Jan. 2 and 3, 2025, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (pre-register at www.townofstmarys.com/activenet)

• Aquatics Centre closed for renovations

Service Ontario

• Closed as of Dec. 24 at 12:00 p.m. to Jan. 2, 2025, at 8:30 a.m.

Train station

• No change to station hours
Visit www.viarail.ca for train scheduling


Youth centre

• Closed as of Dec. 20 at 6:30 p.m. to Jan. 6, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.


Waste and recycling collection

• Running as scheduled throughout the holiday season.

Any updates will be posted to the town website (townofstmarys.com), Facebook page (facebook.com/stmarysontario) and X account (twitter.com/townofstmarys) as soon as they are available.



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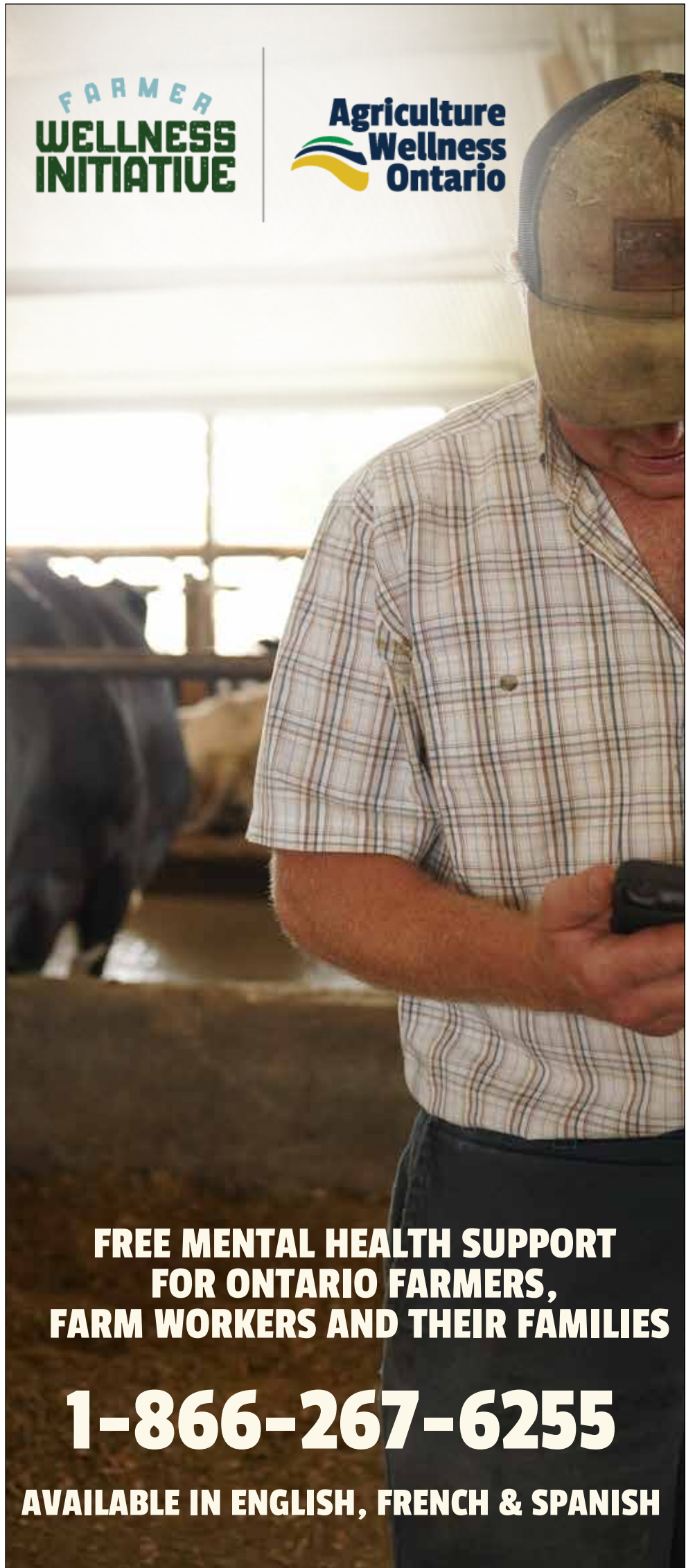
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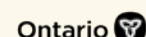
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Museum partners with local musicians for winter concert

ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT

Staff Contribution

Following 11 successful seasons of Melodies at the Museum, an outdoor summer concert series, the St. Marys Museum is pleased to announce the addition of an indoor winter concert to its programming.

On Saturday, Feb. 8 at 7 p.m., the St. Marys Museum will host Valentines II at the St. Marys town hall auditorium (175 Queen St. E). This event is organized in collaboration with local bands, York Street Thought Process and The Bone Radlers, who first hosted Valentines in 2023.

The event is a fundraiser for the St. Marys Museum. The organizers encourage attendees to support local restaurants by making a dinner reservation prior to the show.

"I attended the Valentines show in 2023 and it was such a lovely, cozy atmosphere in the town hall auditorium on a winter night," said cultural services manager Amy Cubberley in a press release. "I reached out to the bands to see if they would be interested in partnering to recreate a similar show in 2025 and both were eager."

York Street Thought Process is a folk duo that performs a blend of singer-songwriter folk and improvisation. They draw inspiration from both contemporary folk musicians and notable legends, combining storytelling with various instrument switches, including mandolins and baritone guitars.

The duo comprises Jaron Camp, a guitarist and singer-songwriter from St. Marys, who has experience performing as a side-musician for artists such as Emm

Gryner. He now focuses on creating his own original music in the lyrical folk genre.

The other member of the duo is Rachael Frankruyter, a classically trained vocalist from Stratford who pairs her vocals with storytelling and guitar tones, providing listeners with a sense of warmth and comfort.

The other duo to take the stage will be Aimee Jesso and Chet Greason of The Bone Radlers. Between the two of them, Aimee and Chet Greason have played in countless bands and dabbled in a wide variety of genres. Celtic, folk, rock, pop, reggae, ska, comedy, you name it, they have probably played it. If it pulls at your heartstrings and taps at your toe strings, they add it to the binder; and only the best tunes make the final setlist.

Both bands have a connection to the St. Marys Museum, with Chet Greason of the Bone Radlers and Jaron Camp of York Street Thought Process both being former summer employees. Both duos have also performed at Melodies at the Museum.

Also taking the stage on Feb. 8 are special guests Stacey Frayne and Makenzie Bartlett. Frayne has been gigging in Canada and Ireland for the past 10 years. Bartlett is a violin player who hails from Stratford. She plays in the Stratford Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Straying from the usual admission-by-donation policy, this will be a ticketed show and seating is limited. Tickets are \$20 cash and are available for purchase at the St. Marys Museum or from any band member. Proceeds support the St. Marys Museum.

For more information, contact the St. Marys Museum at 519-284-3356 or museum@town.stmarys.on.ca.

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Lincs split back-to-back with Perth County rivals

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

There was no shortage of emotion in the St. Marys Lincolns' back-to-back battles of Highway 7, which first saw a strong performance earn the team a victory over Listowel before they travelled to Stratford the next night, only to have a great defensive showing spoiled by a disastrous third period.

Head coach Jeff Bradley raved about his team's performance in their 5-1 win over the Listowel Cyclones on Dec. 12.

"That's such an important matchup for our team," Bradley told the Independent. "We have a ton of respect for Listowel. In our opinion, they are definitely one of the top teams in the league. Obviously, they are the defending champions. It's not hard for either team to get up for that game, but I thought we showed our best all game. We didn't give up much. Our penalty kill was fantastic. Our goaltending was outstanding. I was thrilled with how we played."

With 59 seconds left in the opening period, the Lincolns registered their first of three shorthanded goals in the game with Blake Elzinga one-timing the puck past Cyclones' goaltender Riley Arts. The goal ended Elzinga's prolonged offensive dry spell, which saw the Walkerton native score just one goal in 20 games and go 17 consecutive games without a goal.



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

Blake Elzinga celebrates with goaltender Nico Armellin after the St. Marys Lincolns' 5-1 win over the Listowel Cyclones on Dec. 12. Armellin made 31 saves in the win, while Elzinga scored two goals. Going into the game, Elzinga was on a 17-game goal drought and had just one goal in his last 20 outings.

Bradley was pleased with all his players but acknowledged Elzinga was one of the major standouts.

"Everybody played really well. All of the penalty kill guys were great, obviously. Nico (Armellin) was excellent in net for us. Blake (Elzinga) gave us exactly what we need out of Blake. I think it was time for Blake to really step into

what he is capable of doing night in and night out, and it's not just about the goal scoring. He was shooting the puck with confidence and he competed incredibly hard. I just thought he was outstanding.

"Blake is adored by his teammates," continued Bradley. "When he is on his game and playing like he did against Listowel, he is a huge help to our team.

I think sometimes it just takes a little reminder to recentre you. It's very difficult to stay dialled in for 50 games, but we're in a fight right now. We need wins, and if Blake brings it like he did, he will help us get them."

Just two minutes and 35 seconds into the second period, Jacob McLellan ended a slump of his own, snapping a 14-game goal drought to put the Lincolns up 2-0. Bradley said the influx of depth scoring the Lincolns continue to rediscover adds an important boost to the team.

"We're starting to get some goals throughout the lineup. It started at the showcase when (Josh) Cornfield got one, (Ryan) Hodkinson got two, and (Hayden) Barch got one. And now, you have Elzinga scoring twice and McLellan scoring one and definitely could have had a second. It's fantastic because it takes some pressure off of the handful of guys who did a lot of the goal-scoring for us for a while."

Before the second period was done, Jaden Lee posted his 13th of the year, assisted by Luca Spagnolo. Lee's shorthanded goal also ended a five-game stretch in which Lee hadn't found the back of the net.

Spagnolo found a shorthanded goal of his own in the third, which was answered less than a minute later by a Cyclones' powerplay goal by Harrison

CONTINUED TO PAGE 21



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Lincs split back-to-back with Perth County rivals

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

Meulensteen. Just over five minutes later, Elzinga ripped home his second goal of the night.

Armellin scored the win in goal for the Lincolns with 31 saves.

Bradley explained it was his team's physical engagement and implementation of their systems that made it such a successful game for the Lincolns.

"The effort was good, but that's an expectation for us. Effort is non-negotiable. It was the execution that we were really happy with. In the last two years, we didn't seem to be quite strong enough to beat the teams who beat us, so for us to take on such a hard team to play against like Listowel and not shy away from the physicality at all and go face-first to try to put them on their heels was something I was really happy with."

Lincs crater in third period against Warriors

A mere 24 hours later, the Lincolns appeared to be on the verge of their fourth straight win, but instead, they left Stratford having trailed by two goals for just the fourth time this season, losing 4-2 to the Warriors.

Bradley left the game with a very bitter taste in his mouth.

"I was incredibly disappointed," said Bradley. "It was a very frustrating end to that game because we did such a good job defensively in the first two periods, and honestly, we didn't give up that many good chances in the third either, but we made some uncharacteristic



(MCGINNY PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO)

Jacob Montesi goes by the bench after scoring a goal during the Lincolns' 4-2 loss to the Stratford Warriors on Dec. 13.

mistakes. We have to clean up our discipline and our powerplay."

The Lincolns opened the scoring less than three minutes into the game when Jacob Montesi buried his second of the year, with the lone assist going to Tyler Oletic, his first point as a Lincoln. Later in the first, with just one second left in a powerplay, Spagnolo scored his 18th of the season, assisted by Lee and McLellan.

With the goal, Spagnolo has goals in four of his last five and eight of his

last 13 games, as well as points in eight straight.

After a scoreless second and two periods in which the Warriors struggled to generate much of anything in the offensive zone, the game suddenly tilted in Stratford's favour. Rhyse Brown deflected a point shot to get the Warriors on the board two minutes into the third. Hudson Binder then scored back-to-back goals, which came four minutes and 24 seconds apart. During the final minute, Drew Hodge fired the puck into

an empty St. Marys net to seal the 4-2 win for the Warriors. The two-goal deficit was just the fourth time this season the Lincolns have trailed by two goals during a game this season.

According to the team's internal stat-tracking service, the Lincolns afforded the Warriors very few high-danger scoring chances in the contest, which Bradley mentioned when discussing how the Lincolns let the game slip away.

"We gave up six shots in that home-plate area in front of the net in the entire game. In the first two periods, we didn't give them anything decent in terms of scoring chances. But in the third, it just seemed like everything went wrong. Credit to Stratford; they played great in the third, but it felt like a game where we beat ourselves.

"There were two goals that maybe we would like a save on, but I'm definitely not blaming that loss on Colby (Booth-Housego) alone because we put ourselves in so many positions to not succeed," Bradley added. "We made turnovers we don't usually make. We allowed goals we don't normally allow. And our powerplay is absolutely rotten right now. One or two bad goals shouldn't sink us like that. We have to score more than two goals."

The Lincolns' last game of 2024 comes on Dec. 20 when they host the Kitchener-Waterloo Siskins. The Lincolns resume play after the holiday break on Jan. 3, 2025 when they host the Komoka Kings.

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U11 A Boys go unbeaten to win gold at Oshawa tourney

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Social Thirty-One U11 A Boys St. Marys Rock went a perfect five-for-five and only allowed two goals over their five games at the Oshawa Hockeyfest tournament Dec. 13-15.

Head coach Brent Kittmer told the Independent his team displayed excellent adherence to the team's game-plan throughout the weekend.

"It sounds cliché, but the standout theme for me all weekend was how the boys bought in to play the game the way we asked them," said Kittmer. "We've been really working on establishing a strong forecheck and cycle game, and they really did that well. Even when the competition was a bit lighter in the round-robin games, and it would have been easy for a player to play for himself, when we challenged them to use that game time to keep practicing what was working, they did."

Kittmer added his team showed plenty of adaptability during the tournament.

"They kept moving the puck, getting it into the other team's end, and then set up their cycle. When the competition was stiff and we challenged them to set the tone early, they rose to the challenge and didn't give the other team time to establish their game. When we had to make in-game adjustments to our style or playing time, everyone was on board."

St. Marys walked through their three



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

The Social Thirty-One U11 A Boys St. Marys Rock won the gold medal at the Oshawa Hockeyfest tournament hosted Dec. 13-15. Pictured laying on the ice is Franklin Anderson. Pictured in the kneeling row, from left to right, are Harper Graves, Edwin Froud, Finnley Harburn, Cooper Sass, Kane Douglas, Cameryn Stokes and Rylan Lord. In the standing row, from left, are Dean Feeney, Jacob Hahn, Jaxon Wittig, Ben Kissler, Jakob Kittmer, Jack Bilyea Karson Garrett. In the back row, from left, are trainer Ben Douglas, assistant coach Brayden Lord, assistant coach Jared Stokes, head coach Brent Kittmer, and trainer Marshall Graves.

round-robin games without allowing a goal, picking up three straight shutouts over Oshawa, Whitby and Don Mills. Their perfect record set the Rock up for a semi-final clash against the West Niagara Flying Aces, which St. Marys won by a final score of 2-1.

Karson Garrett scored at the 7:29

of the first period, assisted by Harper Graves, which was followed by the eventual game-winner goal by Edwin Froud just over four minutes later. Cooper Sass picked up the lone assist.

West Niagara tallied their only goal of the game with just 61 seconds left in regulation but was unable to find the equalizer in the final minute.

Kittmer called the team's semi-final victory a "textbook example of how to win a game."

"The challenge to the boys was to be the team that started fast and to establish their game. It took a couple of shifts, but fairly early on, we established the game the way we wanted it to be. The gameplan was to put the puck into West Niagara's corner, send two players in on the puck and use the cycle to wear their defenders out. Even though they pulled within one goal at the end, the boys finished off that final minute by not allowing Niagara another chance."

Kittmer also highlighted the trio of Garrett, Sass and Froud, the line that generated both St. Marys goals, for

leading the charge in the semis.

"The line of Karson (Garrett), Cooper (Sass), and Edwin (Froud) had a particularly strong game, and they were a problem for the other team down low all game. The entire team bought in for the rest of the game and made it difficult for West Niagara to get out of their own end. Even when they did, our defence did a great job of pushing their attackers outside, winning the pick and getting it back up to the forwards."

In a gold-medal game against the Whitby Wildcats Blue that was described as "scrappy," Cameryn Stokes scored a powerplay goal with just over two-and-a-half minutes left in the opening frame, with assists going to Jaxon Wittig and Finn Harburn. At the 11:36 mark of the second, Kane Douglas netted an unassisted goal that eventually held up as the game-winner. Whitby found the back of the net early in the third, but once again, the Rock held their opponents off the rest of the way to take their second straight 2-1 win and the gold medals.

Kittmer described the much-closer nature of the championship game.

"The finals were definitely different from the semis. By the fifth game of the tournament, everyone was getting tired and it's natural to be nervous. Whitby Blue is a very good team and we weren't able to establish our cycle down low as well as we had the previous four games. This was definitely a more back-and-forth affair, with both teams scrambling at times."

The head coach noted his team held a slight advantage over Whitby early in the game, but the Wildcats pushed back in the second half of the contest.

"That powerplay goal definitely helped energize the team and we started the second period strong after it," Kittmer said. "We knew that Whitby would start pushing, and they did, and we had to defend much more in the second half of the game. When they scored in the third, they had us on our heels at times."

"Although our goaltender Franklin (Anderson) didn't see many shots throughout the tournament, he was ready in that third period and did a really good job of deflecting rebounds to the corner and freezing the puck when we needed it. With 30 seconds left in the game and their goalie pulled, we played in our own end the entire time and had four faceoffs, all of which Kane (Douglas) won. Kane, Harper (Graves) and Cameryn (Stokes) did a great job pinning the puck along the boards to kill the clock."

Overall, Kittmer called the weekend a great success for his squad, both in results and how they performed.

"This weekend was a great step for the boys to play as a team. From setting up their down-low play to executing their neutral zone regroups, and just simply looking for a pass rather than skating it themselves, it really started to come together for them, and to get the gold on top of that was a great achievement for our boys."

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| Michael Visser | 6 | 3 | 0 | 21 |
| Tom Westerveld | 5 | 2 | 2 | 21 |
| Lindsay McLeod | 5 | 3 | 1 | 20 |
| Pat Murray | 5 | 4 | 0 | 19 |
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| Stewart Grant | 3 | 4 | 1 | 15 |
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Matthew Scott launches a shot on goal during the Tremblett's Independent Grocer U11 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock game this past Sunday.



Brett Pearson passes the puck through the offensive zone during this past Sunday's Cubberley Plumbing and Heating U13 LL Boys Red St. Marys Rock game.



Ben Ewing releases an off-balance wrist shot during this past Sunday's St. Marys Legion U16 A Boys St. Marys Rock game.



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTOS)

Isla Unich passes the ring through the neutral zone during the U19 St. Marys Snipers' game last Saturday.

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DCVI junior boys dominant against St. Anne's

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

After dropping an overtime nail-biter earlier in the day, the St. Marys DCVI junior boys basketball team picked up a convincing 59-17 victory against St. Anne's on Dec. 11.

Even though the Salukis were favoured in the contest, head coach Ken French noted his team still had reason to bring their best.

"You still have to put the ball in the basket more than the other team does, so we had to be ready to go," French told the Independent. "I told them that this was a chance to show me what they had and maybe earn a bit more time on the court later in the season, so I thought we saw guys stepping up and really working hard to earn more opportunities."

French added that his squad was especially impressive in the latter half of the game when they firmly took control of the play.

"They played great in just about every facet of the game. It was a little bit tough to keep their heads in it for the



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

Donovan McGregor puts up a shot with several hands trying to block during the St. Marys DCVI junior boys basketball team's 59-17 win over St. Anne's on Dec. 11.

first little bit, but once they really got refocused, I thought they played awesome. I want to see us getting better every time we're on the court and win

a bunch of games, and I think we're capable of achieving that goal."

Henry Switzer led DCVI in points with 19 in the game, while Donovan

McGregor scored 16 and Parker Levy chipped in 12. Zach Larmer added four points and Hayden McCauley tallied two.

"We were doing a great job, when we had the ball, of getting into the post and diving into the key," said French. "Our guys love to shoot, which is a good instinct to have, but you may have games where those shots don't fall, so we need guys getting into the key, getting some layups and trying to make the opposing defence fold in on itself."

A large swath of the team also made up DCVI's junior boys last year, meaning the core of the team is still intact and gives DCVI an added boost in their chemistry and experience.

"You're a year older and a year bigger," French said. "When you go from being a Grade 9 to a Grade 10, you get a lot closer to having an adult frame really quickly. There are some adult bodies on our team. We're bigger and stronger than we were a year ago, which is paying dividends considering the improvements they made last year in various other areas of the game."

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DCVI hosts Grade 7/8 volleyball tournament



(SPENCER SEYMOUR PHOTO)

On the left, members of the St. Marys DCVI Grade 7/8 girls' volleyball team celebrate after scoring a point during one of their games on Dec. 10. On the right, the DCVI Grade 7/8 boys' team counters the ball back over the net during one of their games. DCVI hosted a volleyball tournament on Dec. 10 for their intermediate students, who hosted teams from Stratford, Mitchell, and South Huron during the day-long tournament.

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U16 Snipers take silver in St. Marys tournament

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The U16 St. Marys Snipers captured the silver medal at the Snipers' ringette tournament hosted Dec. 13-15 in St. Marys.

According to head coach Kelly Frayne, the tournament and her U16 team's strong result represented the group's continued development through the first half of the season.

"The girls worked so hard," said Frayne. "They really dug in and gave everything they had. Our defensive play was stellar all weekend, and our goalie really came up big and did a great job holding us in the games when we needed it. The girls have made such a huge improvement since the start of the season. They have really come together as a team."

The Snipers finished second after the round-robin concluded, earning them a spot in the championship game against the Mitchell Stingers.

In the final, St. Marys fell by a final score of 6-3 with the Snipers getting goals from Carlie Muir, Alexis Schellenberger and Emerson Borg. Despite the loss, Frayne saw many positives in the team's overall play.

"Defensively, the girls really played aggressively and shut down a lot of plays in the neutral zone," Frayne said. "They did a great job of using their triangle play to push the other team out and shut down the other team's shooters very well, so they couldn't get quality shots off."

"Every aspect of the girls' game has improved from the start of the year to now. They are doing a better job seeing the opportunities to make smart passes and moving the ring well in front of the net. Even their drive and determination to be the first to the ring or take the shot, even though it might not be the perfect one, has gotten better. Each and every one of our players gave us everything they had, and as a coach, that's all you can ask for."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

The U16 St. Marys Snipers walked out of the Snipers' ringette tournament hosted in St. Marys Dec. 13-15 with the silver medal. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Carlie Muir, Devanne Frayne, Brooke Hahn, Amy Shearer, Sydney McLeod and Madison Crooks. In the back row, from left, are Lily Hollestelle-Black, Emerson Borg, Deanna Muir, Leighton Lichti, Evelyn Borg, and Alexis Schellenberger. Not pictured are Aryn Sheldon and Marci Linton.

SKC students medal in pair of tournaments

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Independent Sports Reporter

The Stonetown Karate Centre (SKC) once again added a haul of hardware to its trophy case after three students combined for 14 top-three finishes in their last three tournaments of the season.

First, Sensei Jalyne Lorentz and Shannon Campbell attended the Southern Ontario Open Martial Arts Tournament in Windsor on Nov. 30, a World Karate Championship (WKC) Canada event hosting competitors from Ontario and the USA.

In the 15-17-year-old girls' black belt division, Lorentz captured four gold medals, including in the traditional forms, traditional weapons, creative forms and creative weapons competitions. Lorentz also attended a Karate Ontario Elite tournament in Windsor on Dec. 1, where she took third in the U21 women's division. The elite tournaments are part of Karate Ontario's National Team qualifiers.

Campbell's strong tournament on Nov. 30 included a gold and a silver medal in the 35+ women's advanced bracket's point sparring and traditional forms events.

The final event of 2024 ran from Dec. 12-14 in Mississauga, with Lorentz, Campbell and Marieke Van Lierop competing in the Toronto International Tournament of Martial Arts Championships.

Lorentz took the top spot in the triple kata challenge, a three-person team event, as well as a second-place finish in the elite kata challenge and the third place in traditional weapons. In the 42+ women's advanced category, Campbell finished first in the point-sparring competition.

Competing in the 16-17 girls' advanced belt division, Van Lierop earned

the gold in traditional forms and traditional weapons and a bronze in point sparring. Van Lierop also placed second in the overall grand champion for 14-17-year-olds. The grand-champion division consists of all first-place winners in all categories, excluding point fighting, in the 14-17 coloured-belt divisions, who then compete to be the overall champion.

Sensei Jeremy Lorentz said the pair of tournaments were an excellent way to cap off a successful year for the local dojo.

"Our students have had a year to remember," Lorentz told the Independent. "They had remarkable success and made their dojo and community proud. Across local, regional and national competitions, along with amazing results from the World Championships in Portugal, our students demonstrated unparalleled discipline, skill and sportsmanship, proving that their dedication to karate extends far beyond the mat."

Lorentz added the year also saw plenty of development on and off that mat for the St. Marys karate students.

"While our students' achievements are undoubtedly impressive, their real victories lie in the personal growth and character development seen throughout the year. Karate isn't just about winning trophies; it's about building confidence, resilience and a strong sense of community. Watching our students grow into well-rounded individuals is the most rewarding part of what we do."

"As 2024 draws to a close, our students and instructors at the Stonetown Karate Centre are already gearing up for the next season," continued Lorentz. "With new goals, fresh faces joining the dojo and a wealth of experience from this year's successes, the future looks bright for our exceptional group of students."



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured from left to right are Shannon Campbell, Marieke Van Lierop, and Sensei Jalyne Lorentz. The three Stonetown Karate Centre students combined for 14 medals in their last three tournaments of the 2024 schedule on Nov. 30 and Dec. 12-14

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SPOTLIGHT ON ARTS & CULTURE

Art is Skin Deep - Part 2

ALICE RIXSON

Independent Columnist

Tattoo artists characterize their art as collaboration with their clients, to tell stories through pictures and to define personalities. The artists quizzed for this feature are all tattooed and provided similar answers for reasons for getting inked. They included self-expression and in memory of a loved one, human or pet.

Cher Rettinger and Jay Stirling, tattoo artists and colleagues, operate New Life Tattoo Parlour and have been practicing their art in St. Marys for 10 years. Stirling also has a parlour in Granton.

Stirling, originally from Chatham, has been tattooing for 31 years. He has always felt deeply connected to art. "I was especially fascinated with the works of the Old Masters of the Renaissance era and their techniques," he says. As a budding teenager, he spent countless hours in the library, pouring over art books, studying the various styles and approaches to visual art.

Stirling's talents are intrinsic. He embarked on his tattooing career at the age of 16 and in his 20s, he found a mentor who helped him define his style and cultivate his techniques. His artistic talents also stretch into sculpting and painting.

Before starting a commission, Stirling fasts to channel his vitalities into his exertions. "I also gather inner energy generated from my client," he explains, "Spirituality and meditation also comes into play."

Rettinger, who grew up in small town in Bruce County, has been plying her art for 25 years. She began her career as a sketch artist and earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts diploma from Georgian College. She apprenticed with another artist to hone her skills through on-the-job experience.

"I strive to make clients feel comfortable and relaxed before starting a project," Rettinger stresses. She feels that developing a trust with her clients is crucial. "Tattooing is frequently an emotional process with the realization the finished product will be permanent, especially if it's in memory of a loved one," she adds. She sketches freehand and consults with her client to achieve an agreed-upon design.

Tattoos are sometimes applied to conceal scars. Some with allergies opt for a medic-alert "bracelet" designed on their wrists. Size dictates where any tattoo will be applied.

Inks are available in all conceivable colours. Colours



(PHOTO COURTESY OF FACEBOOK - JAY STIRLING)

Body Tattoo.

selections will depend upon the client's skin tones. Light plays a significant role in the appearance of a final image.

Stirling's states his clientele is comprised of slightly more woman than men, whereas Rettinger says hers is 70-30 in favour of men, although her feminine trade is slowly increasing.

Tattooing is not limited to the traditional body and facial markings. Enter permanent makeup, which dates back to the days of Egypt's Cleopatra more than 5000 years ago. First commercialized in England in 1902, its popularity rose in the 1980s as an upcoming cosmetic technique, using tattoos to produce designs that resemble makeup, such as eye lining and permanent enhancing colours to the lips and face. Pioneering professionals utilized the same inks as traditional body tattoo artists.

It is also used to define and create artificial eyebrows, particularly for people who have lost them due to aging or have suffered complete head and facial hair loss resulting from chemotherapy, thyroid or genetic disturbances. It's also used to restore or enhance areolas after reconstructive breast surgery.

Owner of Angela Dawn Aesthetics & MediSpa in St. Marys is Angela MacPherson. She is a certified per-



(PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELA DAWN MEDISPA)


Permanent Eyebrows

manent makeup artist, skin specialist who has worked in advanced esthetics for 20 years. "I believe that to be your best, you should never stop educating yourself," she states. "I bring my expertise and a passion to enhance the beauty and self-confidence of my guests to every appointment," says MacPherson proudly.

MacPherson participates regularly in continuing education for upgrades in trends and health codes in the cosmetic and medi-tattooing industry. Her staff includes several technicians and a registered nurse. Another noteworthy aspect about MacPherson is that, aside from practicing her art of permanent makeup applications, she is a multi-tattooed woman.

Tattooing has come a long way when considering health and safety. These three artists are subject to stringent regulations and regular inspections by the Perth District Health Unit. Needles used in the process are single-use disposables and ink cartridges have an expiry date.

Rettinger, Stirling and MacPherson, whose clientele collective ages range from 16 to 90, are confident that the long-perceived stigma surrounding tattooing will continue to diminish with the continued recognition of this skill as an art.



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Letters to Santa



Dear Santa,
My name is Leena. I've been very nice to my brother this year. Sometimes he does silly stuff and I get mad, but I try to be calm with him. I'd like Blundstones for Christmas. I also want a Bitzee and a Barbie Dream House with a slide. How many elves do you have in the North Pole? I will leave you cookies and milk and some carrots for the reindeer.

From, Leena
Grade 1, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Jack and my favourite colour is orange. I like reindeer. At home I clean up my toys and clean my room with my mom. For Christmas I want Nintendo Switch, and Sonic and Mario games. I also want colouring books and some new Pokemon cards. Is your laboratory under the snow? How do you get into your laboratory?

From, Jack
Grade 1, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Harper. I like to play Roblox with my brother. I like building snowmen with my family. For Christmas I want Monster High dolls and a real dog. Do your reindeer like candy canes. I will leave them some.

From, Harper
Grade 1, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
I am sometimes nice to my sister. If I hurt her by accident then I say sorry and help her up. For Christmas I want a baby doll and I want some Lego. I want some Magnatiles. How do you eat so many cookies a day? My elves are funny. I have three. Their names are Jingles, James and Cindy. I hope you have a good time on Christmas Eve.

From, Jillian
Grade 1, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Quinn and my favourite colour is teal. Once when my brother got hurt I gave him a hug. Does Rudolph really have a red nose? I would like a Bitzee, a Rainbow Loom kit and a Pikachu stuffy. Also an axolotl toy that can make noise. I also want a marker kit. I can't wait for Christmas.

From, Quinn
Grade 1, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Eli and I've been good. I have been doing chores, sharing with my brother and helping my mom and dad bake. We are baking chocolate chip cookies for you and I will leave carrots for the reindeer. For

Christmas I want a Bitzee, a PlayStation 5 and a Pikachu and a Bulbasaur stuffy. How do the reindeer fly? How do you talk in different languages? How do you talk to the elves if you need help to deliver the presents?

From, Eli
Grade 1 Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Levi. I play hockey. At school I try not to talk to Jack. I am a good big brother and snuggle my sister. I would like a baby monkey that comes with a bottle, and some Hot Wheel toys. How many elves do you have?

From, Levi
Grade 1 Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
I want a 4 wheeler for Christmas and a skateboard for Christmas. I want Hot Wheels cars and big toy car called a HellCat. I like you a lot. I like you better than the Grinch. How do you make all the stuff?

From Jayce
Grade 1 Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
I am Clementine. I like to eat fruit. I would like to get a Bitzee and a craft book. I would like a Sleeping Buddy Mickey Mouse to go with my Minnie Mouse one.

From, Clementine
Grade 1 Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Emily and I am 7 years old. At school I do a lot of work and work hard. My favourite part of school is recess! For Christmas I would like a Bitzee, a stuffy that looks like my cat, Santa pajamas and colouring books. I like to colour a lot. How many elves do you have? I will leave you mint cookies on Christmas Eve.

From, Emily
Grade 2 Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Logan. I like your sleigh. I like that it goes really fast. I am in grade 2 and I am 7 years old. For Christmas I really want Super Mario Bros Wonder Game, a Super Mario sweater and Super Mario socks. Do you like to shovel snow? Say hi to Rudolph for me.

From, Logan
Grade 2, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
I hope you have a very Merry Christmas. I have been good this year. I cleaned up all my mom and my dad's dishes. I have cleaned up my room. I want a snake stuffy, a Nerf gun, a squishy maker, and an Australian Shepherd

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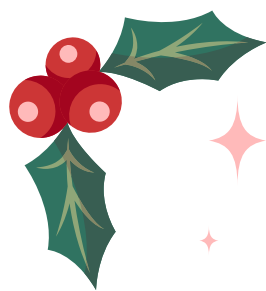
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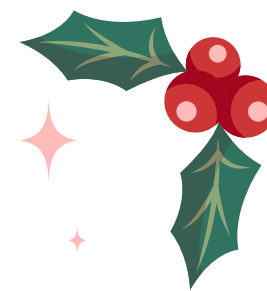
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Letters to Santa



mixed with a Border Collie puppy. When I got your picture, were you an elf, or did you not want to be seen? You did look like an elf.

From, Oliver
Grade 2, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
This is Blayke. I have a little brother. My grandma lives across the street from me. I am 6 year old and have a birthday after Christmas. Can I please have a slime pack for Christmas? I also want a Disney Bitzee, and a Harry Potter Lego set. I had one, but my little brother destroyed it! I'd also like an LOL house. How many elves are in the North Pole?

From, Balyke
Grade 2 Little Falls, PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Alex and I am very athletic. I like to play hockey and my team is St. Marys Rock. I'm very good at getting the puck and sometimes I'm the only one getting in there. I want a Hot Wheels Mario track and a new hockey stick for Christmas.

From, Alex
Grade 2 Little Falls, PS

Dear Santa,
I have been so good. I am great at school. I'm learning a lot of math. For Christmas I want a Bitzee and I want Pokemon stuffies.

From, Valeria
Grade 2 Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Asher and I have been good this year. I help Mom clean up her room. I do have a lot of toys at home so I don't need too much for Christmas this year.

From, Asher
Grade 2 Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
I hope you have a Merry Christmas. I am 7 and am in grade 2. I'm always curious. I've been reading books and found out I'm curious about frogs and that they are endangered now. People keep hunting them. I like to play with Lego and make creations. I would like some new Play Doh and Treasure X for Christmas. How many reindeer do you actually have? Every year I keep hearing of more and more.

From, Blaine
Grade 2, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
I am really nice to friends. I love Christmas. I love spending Christmas with my family. For Christmas I want a Disney Bitzee and also I want a Rainbow Loom kit to make bracelets. And also, I want a tomato Squishmellow and funny books to read for Christmas. Do you have Rudolph with a red nose? How tall are your elves? I have a present for you at home. I will finish colouring it and leave it for you on Christmas Eve.

From, Elena
Grade 2, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
My name is Isla. I'm in a grade 1/2 split at Little Falls. I've been nice. I wash my mom's dishes. Sometimes I do what they say. I try to look after my sister when she is playing with her friends. For Christmas I would like to get a new phone case and a toy baby dog that can move and make sounds. What do you do with the reindeer when it's not Christmas time? How does Rudolph's nose glow so bright? I'm going to give you cookies and milk on Christmas Eve. Does that sound good?

From, Isla
Grade 2, Little Falls PS

Dear Santa,
I have been a good boy. I have been getting better at math and spelling and think I must be on the nice list. Thank you for your time. I will love whatever you bring, BUT if you could please bring me a Robot Godzilla, I would be bursting with happiness. I am hoping for a Shimo figure too, but please the one that doesn't make a sound. Sound toys are annoying! Have a Happy Christmas.

Love, Wylie Carr, Grade 3

Dear Santa,
I have been really good this year. This year I would like new slippers, shorts, and Amelia Bedelia Book #7. Santa what do you do when it is not Christmas, yet? I also would like some Art stuff too. I will leave you milk and cookies. I hope you have a great Christmas, Santa!

Love from, Jillian Davies, Grade 3

Dear Santa,
Merry Christmas, Santa! I hope you have a wonderful Christmas this year!

This year I only want two things. One is to have the best Christmas ever and the second is that I really want a puppy. I feel like I could take it on lots of walk and give it lots of baths

too. I'd name it Ellie, if it is a girl and if it's a boy, I'd name it Brocky. Thank you Santa, that is all I want for Christmas this year.

Have a safe journey!
Love, Jocelyn Neufeld, Grade 4

Dear Santa Claus,
Happy December! Merry Christmas to you! I hope you are getting ready for the big night. It will soon be here.

This Christmas I would like more toys for me and my puppy, Willow. That Willow, is always chewing my toys. I would also like another puppy, please. Puppies are the best thing in the world. Pretty please! I just love all the puppies. If you could bring me a surprise bag that would be great too. I like being surprised!

Have a great Christmas Santa! Thank you for all the gifts.
Love, Aubree Arthur, Grade 4

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COLUMNS

UKRAINIAN CORNER: Education through the eyes of a newcomer

KATERYNA MASLOVA

Independent Columnist

Moving to a new country always comes with questions and concerns. How will life be organized? What challenges will need to be overcome? For me, as a mom, two aspects were the most worrying: my child's education and health care. Today, I want to share my experience and impressions of the Canadian education system, comparing it with the Ukrainian system, which I've experienced for many years.

Education has always been a central focus in my family. My mother and sister are both teachers, and during my university years, I worked as a math tutor. Because of this, I've always paid close attention to ensuring my child receives quality education in an environment where they feel comfortable and supported.

After a year of my son attending a Canadian school, I can confidently say this system has pleasantly surprised me. It is built on principles of inclusivity, respect for the individual child and a balance between learning and rest. However, comparing it with the Ukrainian system, I understand each has its strengths and weaknesses.

Similarities between education in Ukraine and Canada:

1. System Structure. Both systems are divided into levels: preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. Schooling is mandatory for children of a certain age.

2. Core Subjects and Assessment. Curriculums in both countries include math, languages, natural sciences, history and geography. Both systems use grading scales and final exams, although their approaches differ significantly.

Key differences

1. In Canada, the system is decentralized. Each province or territory establishes its own standards and curriculums, allowing for regional adaptations and needs. In Ukraine, education is centralized and overseen by the Ministry of Education and Science. Schools must follow state programs, though they have some freedom in choosing textbooks and elective subjects. For example, one school might emphasize advanced math, while another incorporates creative subjects like choreography or foreign languages.

2. Preschools. Ukrainian state preschools accept children from the age of two. Education is free, with parents only paying for meals (\$2-5 per day, depending on the region). For some fam-



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Due to the war in Ukraine, 2,800 schools and kindergartens in Ukraine were destroyed or damaged.

ilies, meals are subsidized or free. The schedule typically runs from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., though it varies by region. One major advantage of Ukrainian preschools is the mandatory afternoon nap (about 2.5 hours), which helps children recharge and stay active throughout the day. In Canada, daycare centers are often private and the costs can be significant, especially for families with multiple children.

3. Schooling approach. Canadian schools prioritize inclusivity, individualized learning and extracurricular activities. Homework exists but is limited in scope, allowing children time for family and hobbies. In Ukraine, the situation is different. Classes typically begin at 8:30 a.m., with students having five to eight lessons of 45 minutes each. Homework is assigned for nearly every subject and often takes several hours to complete in the evening.

However, Ukrainian schools have their advantages. Many schools offer extracurricular activities such as music, sports and art, often organized directly within the school. This provides students with opportunities to explore their interests without requiring additional commuting or expense for parents. Additionally, Ukrainian schools provide hot meals, which are well-balanced and funded by the government in primary schools. Parents can choose from several meal options, ensuring children receive nutritious food during their school day. One significant downside, however, is the frequent need for private tutors. Despite the heavy workload, many students struggle to keep up with the curriculum, especially in core subjects like math, languages and science. Parents often

spend more on tutoring to prepare their children for university entrance exams than they do on higher education itself. This highlights a gap in accessibility within the Ukrainian education system that places an extra financial burden on families.

4. Higher education. Ukraine has about 240 universities, but their quality varies widely. In public institutions, students can receive free education or scholarships, but the allocation of government-funded spots often doesn't align with market demands. As a result, many graduates find themselves with degrees in fields that are not in demand. While I only have a theoretical understanding of Canadian universities, I can already see the more practical and balanced approach they seem to offer.

After a year of my son studying in Canada, I can say that I prefer the Canadian education system. It focuses on nurturing the child's personality, interests and talents, rather than solely emphasizing academic performance. The Ukrainian system, while having its strengths, often feels overwhelming. Children are frequently exhausted by homework and strict requirements. However, it's worth acknowledging the strong theoretical foundation, particularly in technical subjects, which allows Ukrainian graduates to compete successfully on the international stage.

Comparing the two systems reveals how cultural and historical differences shape approaches to education. Each has its pros and cons, but as a mom, I'm glad my child is learning in a system that values individuality and balance between education and personal life.

More than anything though, I'm grate-

ful that my child simply has the opportunity to learn.

The Reality of war: How the war changed schooling in Ukraine

The war, now in its third year, has drastically changed the lives of millions of Ukrainians, especially children. Education, like every other aspect of life, has undergone significant transformation. Many students are deprived of the traditional learning process, and schools have become places where the pursuit of knowledge often intersects with the struggle for safety.

My mother is a teacher, and her school has been operating exclusively online for the past three years. While online learning might seem like a solution, it's a daily challenge for both children and teachers.

Lessons are frequently interrupted by air-raid sirens, forcing students to seek shelter, often unable to return to their studies. Even in calmer times, unstable internet connections and power outages hinder the learning process.

In regions where the situation is relatively stable, some schools operate offline. However, even there, the process is far from normal. For example, in the school my son used to attend, classes are interrupted by missile attacks and children and teachers must seek refuge in bomb shelters. After nights filled with air-raid alarms, children come to school exhausted, often sleep-deprived. The psychological toll on both students and teachers is immense, as constant tension makes it nearly impossible to focus on learning.

One of the greatest challenges has been addressing the psychological impact of the war. Students and educators alike face anxiety, fear and fatigue. Even the most ordinary school day no longer feels safe. Despite all these challenges, teachers and students in Ukraine find the strength to continue learning. This resilience demonstrates an incredible commitment to education and hope for the future, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Watching all this from afar, I often think about how difficult it is for Ukrainian children to find the strength to study under such conditions. Lessons interrupted by sirens, nights spent in shelters and constant stress have become their reality.

I am proud of how they persevere and hope these hardships will not take away their desire to learn or dream of a better future because, despite everything, they are the ones who will one day make the world a better place.

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HISTORIC ST. MARYS: St. Marys in December 1944

MARY SMITH

Independent Columnist

The year 1944 was pivotal for Canadians in many ways. In its final weeks, there was considerable optimism that the long years of World War II were drawing to a close. The costly D-Day invasion of France, June 6, 1944, meant the Allies were reclaiming northwestern Europe and forcing the German army to retreat. The liberation of Paris in August 1944 was the symbolic confirmation that France would soon again completely belong to the French. In Italy, the Perth Regiment had been part of the landing in Sicily in 1943 and in the heavy fighting as the Allies pushed northward up the peninsula. By December 1944, the Germans were still fighting fiercely but were now entrenched in Italy's mountainous north. While proud of these successes, Canadians were still anxious. While fighting continued in Italy and in the Netherlands, those serving overseas were in danger.

A look through the St. Marys Journal Argus in December 1944 gives some indication of life in this community at that time. The notices of special Christmas events and merchants' ads for gifts and holiday treats suggest that the community was "carrying on." But the newspaper was also filled with reminders of the war, including news items about local men serving overseas and regular reports of battle casualties. The ration calendar, reproduced with this week's column, was included in the December 7 issue. With government-imposed limits on these items, sugar and butter could only be purchased upon presentation of a numbered ration coupon. To prevent hoarding, the coupons were only available for a limited period. Another reminder in the same newspaper stated: "Coupons now valid are butter 89 to 86; sugar 14 to 47; preserves D1 to 34; canning sugar F1 to F10. All coupons in ration books three and four expire December 31."

To us, this seems very complicated. Clearly, a shopping trip in wartime had to be well planned. Tea, coffee and meat were rationed as well as sugar and butter. Canning sugar was available to encourage households to grow and preserve fruit. It was against the rules to use canning sugar for any other purpose. Gasoline rationing was also enforced, placing tight restrictions on car travel. Government ads in Canadian newspapers urged people to give service personnel priority in public transportation so that they could visit loved ones during the holidays.

In early December, the local Rotarians and Lions held a joint dinner meeting in the Windsor Hotel. Their guest speaker was M. W. Lapp from the Wartime

| CONSUMER'S RATION COUPON CALENDAR | | | | | | | COUPON VALUES | | |
|---|--|------|-----|---|--|--------------------|--|--------|--|
| DECEMBER | | | | | | | BUTTER - ½ pound SUGAR - 1 pound CANNING SUGAR - 1 pound | | |
| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURSDAY | FRI | SAT | | | |
| ALL COUPONS IN RATION BOOKS 3 AND 4 EXPIRE DECEMBER 31. | | | | | | 1 | 2 | | |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | ••• | 8 | 9 | | |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | Butter Coupons 88, 89 | 15 | 16 | Valid | |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | Sugar Coupons 48, 49 Preserves Coupons 35, 36 | 22 | 23 | Valid | |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | Butter Coupons 90, 91 | 29 | 30 | Valid | |
| 31 | Butter Coupons 86, 87, 88, 89 Sugar Coupons 14 - 45 | | | Canning Sugar Coupons F1-F10 Preserves Coupons 17 - 32 | | D Coupons D1 - D16 | | EXPIRE | |

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

This ration calendar was published in the St. Marys Journal Argus on Dec. 7, 1944. It was a reminder to use the numbered wartime ration coupons for items such as butter and sugar before they expired.

Prices and Trade Board. This national agency was established by Prime Minister Mackenzie King to keep prices and inflation under control during wartime. The rationing of commodities was one of the Board's responsibilities. Mr. Lapp pointed out that Canadians had it easy compared to civilians living in Great Britain where rationing was much more restrictive. Visitors to Canada were amazed by the quantity and quality of food available despite rationing. "The war brides are astonished at our abundance of fruit and vegetables, meat, eggs, butter, milk, and bread."

The government had also imposed a freeze on wages for the duration of the war. However, because of the country's push to increase production to support the war effort, there were also new employment opportunities especially for women who took the places of enlisted men. One example was a local foundry, Maxwell's Limited. Originally a manufacturer of farm implements, by the 1930s, Maxwell's produced small machines and appliances for home use such as meat grinders, washing machines, and lawn mowers. But when the opportunity came to switch to "instruments of war," the factory was ready. It won a number of lucrative contracts to manufacture hand grenades and other supplies for the military. With more than half of their pre-war employees in the armed forces, to meet their contract deadlines Maxwells employed women on the production line. The situation was similar in other local places of business. By December 1944, many St. Marys families included at least one female member with wartime wages to contribute to household expenses.

Many women who did not work out-

side their homes were volunteers. Women's service clubs like the IODE and the McConnell Club organized fundraising dances and raffles for the benefit of overseas relief, often for children left orphaned by the war. The Women's Patriotic League had upper-storey rooms above the Journal Argus office at 142 Queen Street East. At their end-of-year meeting, December 12, they announced that they had raised almost \$5,500 in funds for the war effort. They had sent hand-knit socks, balaclavas, scarves, mitts, and sweaters to service men and prepared many items for the Red Cross to deliver to refugees and families whose homes had been bombed. The Patriotic League coordinated the donations from other area organizations including Women's Institutes and church groups. A special project was sending "comforts" to the crew of HMCS Stone Town. This frigate, engaged in North Atlantic convoy duty, had been named for the Town of St. Marys.

Regular Red Cross blood donor clinics provided more opportunities to volunteer. Before there was a community centre, they were held in the town hall auditorium, administered by Red Cross nurses who travelled from town to town setting up one-day clinics. They were assisted in each community by local registered nurses who volunteered their time. The blood collected was sent overseas to be used for the wounded in military hospitals. The Journal Argus reported that a clinic held on December 5 – the 17th in St. Marys since the beginning of the war – was the most successful of all with 145 people from town and country coming to donate blood. In a full-length column, the newspaper listed the names of each volunteer nurse and each indi-

vidual donor.

Although the war made life uncertain, St. Marys folks did have ways to enjoy themselves. They could go to the movies. The Lyric Theatre had two different features each week. The weekly notice, "Now Playing," advertised the movies for Thursday, Friday and Saturday. It also promoted the change of bill for the beginning of the following week. Some movies had wartime themes. "Mr. Winkle Goes to War" starred Edward G. Robinson, and "The Story of Dr. Wasell" had Gary Cooper playing the heroic title role. Other movies like "And the Angels Sing" with Dorothy Lamour, Betty Hutton and Fred McMurray were musical comedies, offering a temporary escape from day-to-day worries.

Bingo was another form of entertainment. On Friday, December 15, Town Council sponsored a "Monster Turkey Bingo" 20 games for 35¢ and five big specials for five 20-pound turkeys. The Bingo was "In Aid of the Soldiers' Cigarette Fund – help send a million cigarettes to our boys!" Throughout the holiday season, there were regular evening dances at the Winter Garden, a popular hall near the southwest corner of Queen and Peel Streets. The dance at the Army and Navy Veterans Club, December 15, featured "New and Old Time Dancing" and the Lions Club Holiday Dance, December 28, was a fundraiser for the British Child War Victims' Fund. All these dances featured music by local and area bands.

There was skating on the outdoor rink beside Trout Creek near the Wellington Street Bridge or even, in very cold weather, on the creek itself or on the Thames River below the Sarnia Bridge. Those who would rather stay indoors could go bowling. On December 21, the management of the St. Marys Bowling Alleys placed a small display ad in the newspaper wishing all their patrons Season's Greetings. The Bowling Alley was even open on Christmas Day.

The churches in St. Marys all published the times of their Christmas services, many offering special music, pageants and children's stories. The sermon topics were messages of hope in troubled times. In fact, the Canadian Council of Churches had already prepared an Order of Service for "VE-Day" – the day of victory in Europe. This outline of hymns, Biblical readings and prayers of thanksgiving could be ordered by clergymen for use in their churches. But VE-Day would not happen until May 8, 1945, and there was still heartbreak ahead. Among the names on the commemorative plaque on the wall of the town hall are a dozen local and area servicemen who were killed in the last five months of the war.

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FROM THE GARDEN: Winter Solstice



NANCY ABRA

Independent Columnist



As we approach the official beginning of winter, we are reminded of cold short days ahead. Between Dec. 21 to 23 in the Northern Hemisphere, the North Pole is tilted the farthest away from the sun, making it the shortest day of light in the year. In the Southern Hemisphere, this happens around June 21 or 22. This is referred to as 'Winter Solstice' which happens on Saturday, Dec 21 this year.

The word 'solstice' comes from the Latin 'solstitium', meaning sun stands still. As Winter Solstice is the day of the longest hours of darkness in the Northern Hemisphere, some believe it is the rebirth of the sun, and holds a powerful energy for regeneration, renewal and self-reflection.

In ancient pagan times, Winter Solstice was the beginning of Yule – a celebration of the moon's energy. They believed that on this day the Moon would give birth to the Sun. To them it was a revival of the Sun God and the coming days with more light. The Yule was celebrated for 12 days with lighting of candles or fire as well as decorating trees with small gifts for the gods. In fact, many ancient Yule rituals

have been adapted in how we presently celebrate Christmas.

In ancient times as well as now, there are certain plants important to the celebration of Winter Solstice both as symbols and/or as decorations. For instance, 'evergreens' were a symbol of immortality. They were viewed as having power over death. As evergreens they were the only trees to stay green when all other trees lost their leaves and seemed dead. They were also associated with themes of protection and prosperity and that of continual life and renewal.

Yews represented the death of the old year and the connection between this world and the next. Because of being green year-round, it too was associated with immortality and longevity.

Oak trees were revered for being long-lived. Even though they were not evergreens, they were symbols of endurance, power and strength. Several ancient cultural deities valued the oak tree to represent victory and triumph. Rulers often wore a crown of oak leaves indicating strength and power.

Birch trees were to represent new

beginnings. When a forested area burns, birch is often the first tree to grow back. Thus, they are associated with rebirth and regeneration.

Holly, in pre-Christian British Isles, was associated with protection. Because of its prickliness it was thought to capture or ward off evil spirits before they could enter a home and cause harm.

Ivy, as holly, is an important plant for Winter Solstice celebration. Often after the host plant has died, a sprig of it will start a new ivy. This symbolizes that life goes on in the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Mistletoe was used by the ancient Druids priests in special ceremonies during Winter Solstice celebrations of the female element of fertility. It is also associated with peace making and the end of discord. The perfect theme for this time of the year.

Sources- <https://www.learnreligions.com/sacred-plants-of-the-winter-solstice>

<https://www.almanac.com/content/first-day-winter-winter-solstice>

Straight from the Shelves

LAURA MCASH

St. Marys Public Library

The holiday season is upon us! The Library's special hours over the next two weeks are as follows:

- Dec. 24: OPEN (10 a.m. to 1 p.m.)
- Dec. 25 – 29: CLOSED
- Dec. 30: OPEN (10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.)
- Dec. 31: OPEN (10 a.m. to 1 p.m.)
- Jan. 1: CLOSED

Be sure to join us on Monday, December 30 for our Winter Wonderland Family Activity Day! Celebrate the holiday season with fun for the whole family in the form of crafts, games, and more. This drop-in event runs all day (10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.), is free to attend, and

no registration is required.

From all of us at the St. Marys Public Library, we wish you a warm and cozy Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and start to your New Year!

Up This Week

- Fri., Dec. 20: Open 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 - Sat., Dec. 21: Makerspace Workshop – Reusable Gift Bag* (drop-in between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.)
 - Mon., Dec. 23: Open 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
 - Tues., Dec. 24: Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
 - Wed., Dec. 25: CLOSED
 - Thurs., Dec. 26: CLOSED
- *Registration Required

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STOP IN FOR LAST MINUTE STOCKING STUFFERS



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Thursday Dec 26 – Closed
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T'is the season in Thorndale for ...



Giving ... The Chou family with arms laden with food items for the Thorndale United Church collection for the St. Marys food bank. Photo by Nancy Abra



Festive Lights ... One of 20 brightly illuminated floats with Santa as the main attraction at the Thorndale Lions Santa Claus Parade held on the evening of Friday Dec. 14. After the parade, people flocked to the Thorndale Lions Community Centre for hot drinks, snacks, childrens activities and a visit with Santa. Photo by Nancy Abra



Celebrating ... This fun group of pickleball players who play regularly at the Thorndale Lions Community Centre pose for their Christmas photo. Photo courtesy of Bernice Rice



Music ... The Thames Centre Choir performed at Heeman's Greenhouse a few weeks ago and they hosted a special concert on Sunday Dec. 1, singing a wide selection of Christmas music. Photo by Cathy Baskerville



Shopping local ... Thorndale Country Mills hosted their annual Christmas open house with fun activities and treats for children provided by Meghan and Danielle (pictured in left photo) while Leslie and Wendy (pictured in right photo) were busy in their retail store with a wide selection of gifts for all ages. Photos by Nancy Abra

- Word Search -

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CHRISTMAS

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

Word List

- Jingle bells
- Frosty
- Presents
- Gingerbread
- Holiday
- Decorations
- North pole
- Ornaments
- Pudding
- Sleigh
- Santa Claus
- Reindeer
- Turkey
- Family
- Scrooge

Sudoku

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Solutions on page 37

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The **Riddle Kid**
 OF THE WEEK

Where do snowmen put their money?



In snow banks!

Yvonne Menezes (4)

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

TONS OF FUN FOR KIDS EVERY WEEK!

PET OF THE WEEK

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



Our Pet of the Week is Papi who is the perfect choice for our Christmas issue since he turns four on Christmas Day. He is a mini poodle who loves winter. He will rub his face in the snow and walk around with it all over his face. He also loves to carry his empty food dish around and will leave it at your feet in hopes of getting seconds. Papi is a member of the Henderson family.

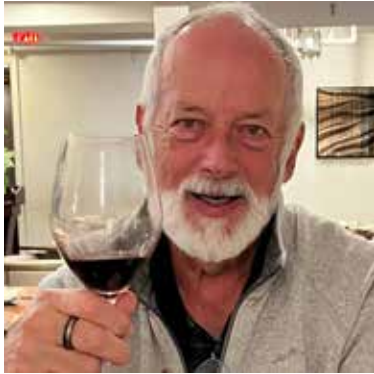


St. Marys Veterinary Clinic is pleased to be the sponsor of the PET OF THE WEEK Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from Our Family to Yours!

As 2024 comes to a close, we want to take a moment to thank all of our amazing pet parents for their support throughout the year. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful Christmas and a fantastic 2025!

**500 Water Street South St. Marys
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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in Yarmouth



PAUL KNOWLES

Independent Columnist

If you haven't heard sundry versions of "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" in the past few weeks, you simply haven't been listening. You have probably been subject to versions by Perry Como, Michael Bublé, Bing Crosby, Johnny Mathis, Meghan Trainor and almost any other singing star who has done a Christmas album.

The song was written by Meredith Willson, an American songwriter, musician, bandleader, composer and writer who also wrote the popular musical, *The Music Man*.

And he wrote "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" while staying in Yarmouth, N.S. Or, not.

Turns out, there is no proof of that, but no solid evidence against the story. And Yarmouth locals believe it, to a person.

It seems Willson did stay in Yarmouth at some point, and the details of the song match Yarmouth to this day.

Willson wrote about "a tree in the grand hotel," and yes, I have also stayed at the Rodd Grand Yarmouth Hotel. It's right across the street from Frost Park, allegedly cited by Willson in the same verse; "One in the park as well. It's

the sturdy kind that doesn't mind the snow."

When I was in Yarmouth, it was in June, however that didn't stop a local acapella group from singing "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" to us, assembled in the park for an outdoor picnic.

Frost Park is unusual in that it includes lots of public park space, benches, a gazebo and a historic cemetery. The gravestones did not get a mention in Willson's masterpiece, though.

There's more evidence, claim the defenders of the made-in-Yarmouth theory. The song invites you to "take a look at the five and ten, it's glistening once again with candy canes and silver lanes that glow." Well, say the locals, there certainly was a Five and Ten in downtown Yarmouth, only a short walk from the grand hotel at the time Willson may have stayed there.

So, did Academy Award nominee Meredith Willson write the well-known seasonal song while in Yarmouth, or based on a stay there? We will never know. But the folks in Yarmouth are sure. Just as sure as they are that famed artist Maud Lewis, who lived in a nearby town, produced all of her primitive but popular works in the vicinity.

When you visit Yarmouth – and you should – be sure to visit the sites mentioned (or as I said, not mentioned) in Willson's song.

And when you visit the harbour, the coastline and the countryside, remember these are the landscapes and seascapes that inspired Lewis.

But there is, as they say, so much more to do in Yarmouth and the area, officially known as Acadian Shores. While wan-

dering on Water Street one day, I stumbled upon the W. Laurence Sweeney Fisheries Museum, an unprepossessing enterprise that holds a surprising collection of artifacts related to the very important fishing industry here in southwest Nova Scotia.

The museum is located in what were the Sweeney Fisheries warehouses. It is jam-packed with memorabilia from history of the business. The museum simulates a traditional fishing wharf. Visitors will see fishing, processing and ship-repair sheds, wharf decks and even a replica of a coastal freighter.

And speaking of fishing, during my stay in Yarmouth and area, I got the chance to hit the high seas on the lobster fishing boat, *The Second Secret*. Actually, we weren't really fishing because it wasn't lobster season in those particular waters, but our hosts had arranged to have lobsters placed in traps for us to find, hold, band, photograph and then return to their briny habitat. Those were not the lobsters we ate in an incredible feast in Yarmouth, honest!

It felt like quite the accomplishment to have personally banded a lobster, and I have been tempted to add "lobster wrangling" to my resumé.

The truth is, I fell in love with Yarmouth and area. I have written previously about the Acadian culture there with that heritage captured at two excellent museums; and about Black Loyalist heritage, celebrated at a very fine heritage centre; and about some really good golf courses.

All of these attractions and many more are within short drives from Yarmouth. Hon-



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

Music is everywhere in Yarmouth, so perhaps Meredith Willson did get inspired to write his Christmas classic here. These are *The Shantymen*, a Yarmouth musical group.

estly, what is not a short drive, is the trip from Halifax's Stanfield Airport to Yarmouth – about three and a half hours, but that's the only way for air travellers to get there. But trust me, it's more than worth the trip.

So, yes, there is a lot to do in the Acadian Shores district but lobster boats, golfing and outdoor heritage sites may be more suited for warmer months. Right now, though, it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in Yarmouth; there's a tree in the grand hotel and more in Frost Park as well.

I'm not authorized to say this, but what the heck. From the folks of Yarmouth, in the words of Meredith Willson, "Soon the bells will start, and the thing that'll make 'em ring is the carol that you sing right within your heart."

Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer, and Presi-

dent of the Travel Media Association of Canada. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email pknowles@golden.net.



Franklin & Donna Hinz

Do what makes you happy.

Look upon what gives you joy. Listen to what lifts your spirit. Speak to those who warm your heart.

Surround yourself with sights and sounds and people who make you smile during this 2024 Festive Season.

 **Franklin E. Hinz**
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Brightly coloured shops in downtown Yarmouth where once there was a "five and dime."



Frost Park in Yarmouth in a warmer month; an unusual combination of picnic area, gazebo and historic tombstones.

IN MEMORIAM

Podszadecki



In Loving Memory of Sharon Podszadecki
June 20, 1944 - December 27, 2022

Two years have passed since you left us, yet your presence is always near, In every whisper of the wind, In every silent tear.

Your laughter echoes in our hearts, Your smile lights up our days, Your spirit never fades.

You taught us love and kindness, The world feels a bit emptier without you by our side, But we cherish every memory in our hearts.

Rest in peace dear mother, Your legacy lives on in the lives of those who loved you.

Love Ted, Paul, Michelle, Jeff, Faye, Avery and your grand fur babies.

IN MEMORIAM

Webb



MICHAEL WEBB

March 1, 1979 - December 21, 2006

Remember him with love.

Remember him with kindness.

Please take a moment today and remember our Michael as a son, brother, grandson, uncle, husband and friend.

But most of all, take some time to remember he will always be with us.

Always loved.

Always cherished.

Mom, Dad, Kiel, Megan & Boys

IN MEMORIAM

Webb



DONALD WEBB

April 15, 1925 - December 23, 2008

If time would stand still,

We could listen to the stories you loved to tell,

If time would stand still,

We could tell you how proud we were of you.

If time would stand still,

Our family's father would still be here.

In our hearts everyday.

David, Judy, Kiel, Megan & Boys

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Wanted

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CORRECTION: An error was printed in the story, "Lion Raymond Taylor reflects on 20 years with St. Marys Lions Club," on page 9 of the Dec. 9, 2024 edition of the St. Marys Independent. While the article states the St. Marys Lions Club meets on the first and third Thursday of every month, the club actually meets on the first and third Tuesday of every month in the Quarry Room at 13 Water St. S beginning at 7 p.m. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

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THE WEEK AHEAD

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

St. Marys Public Library events - See Page 32

Friday, December 20

- Royal Canadian Legion "hot dogs and more" lunch at Noon
- A.N.A.F. meat draw (turkeys and hams) - 6 p.m.
- St. Marys Lincolns vs KW Siskins at the PRC - 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 21

- St. Marys Farmers Market at the PRC - 8 a.m. to Noon
- Royal Canadian Legion meat draw - 5 p.m.

Sunday, December 22

- A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols at St. Marys United Church - 7 p.m.

Wednesday, December 25

- Merry Christmas

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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QUIZ ANSWERS

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1) Rudolph | 6) Kiss |
| 2) Four | 7) Egypt |
| 3) Milk Punch | 8) Krampus |
| 4) Max | 9) Tom Hanks |
| 5) Feliz Navidad | 10) Angel or Star |

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LOOKING BACK



BY AMY CUBBERLEY

Y2K

25 years ago (1999)

Hospitals in the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance are preparing of Y2K. Each hospital has a Y2K coordinator and an active team working on the Y2K project. Essential and non-essential biomedical equipment, computers and infrastructure systems have been inventoried and remediated where necessary.

About 100 students from St. Marys DCVI took to the streets on Monday to show their anger at the government's "Millennium" souvenir books. The students walked out of class at 12:30 p.m., gathering in front of town hall for one hour before heading back to school. They say the \$2.5 million spent on the books could have been better spent elsewhere. "\$2.5 million feeds a lot of homeless people," one student said.

50 years ago (1974)

The dandelions were blooming last Sunday. Andy Hoe brought a dandelion into the Journal Argus office first thing Monday morning, which he reported was in full bloom the previous day.

Town employees are on the lookout for a small colony house in which to shelter the wild ducks for the winter months. A big loss was suffered over the weekend when five of the ducks were killed by mink and several were mutilated. Their present shelter has no door on it. Bob Favacho is the keeper of the municipal ducks. This winter, eight swans are being sheltered in Stratford.

75 years ago (1949)

The Woodham skating rink is going full blast despite the weekend's threat of mild weather. The former United Church shed has been taken over as the village's covered rink.

A rather rare event occurred on the farm of Alvin Hodge at Mount Pleasant last week when one of his Holstein cows gave birth to three heifer calves. The trio are reported to be doing remarkably well.

100 years ago (1924)

While a number of children were sleigh-riding on the Park Street hill, just at dusk on Wednesday night, a car came along Wellington Street and struck one of the sleighs and threw the children off. The sleigh was broken to pieces, but no one was hurt. The practice of coasting on the roads and sidewalks in the town is a dangerous one and is contrary to the by-laws of the town.

Stanley Green of St. Marys and William Johnston of Blyth will leave on the 27th with two cars of turnips for Jacksonville, Florida. After spending about a month there, Mr. Green will go to Columbus, Ohio, where he will engage in the hay and feed business. He will probably move his family there in the spring.

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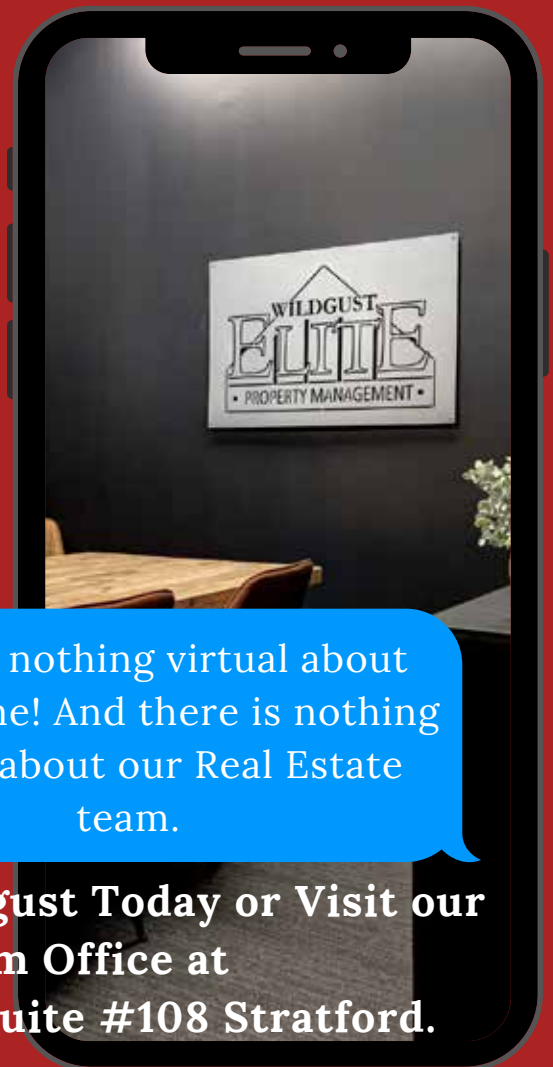


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WE WISH YOU

Merry
Christmas

AND A

Happy
New Year



HOLIDAY HOURS

DECEMBER 24TH – 8:00 TO 3:00

DECEMBER 25TH - CLOSED

DECEMBER 26TH – CLOSED

DECEMBER 30TH – 8:00 – 3:00

DECEMBER 31ST – CLOSED

- WE ARE HERE FOR YOUR WINTER TIRE NEEDS.
- TIRES FOR ALL MAKES AND MODELS.
- CALL STEVEN DIRECTLY @ 519-488-6306
- PRICE MATCH GUARANTEE
- WE HAVE TIRES FOR ALL MAKES AND MODELS
- ON SITE TIRE STORAGE



BUILT TO LEND A HAND



www.stmarysford.com