

STRATFORD TIMES

VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 19

MAY 31, 2024

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Market Square Music returns with homegrown lineup

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stelle & Carter Trio kicked off this year's Market Square Music, but in case anyone missed it, there are plenty of nights to come down and enjoy.

The annual music series shines a spotlight on local artists who perform free concerts just behind city hall on Friday evenings this summer.

Stratford's own Dayna Manning, a Juno-nominated singer/songwriter, produces the show this year, taking on the project after organizing last year's Canada Day event.

Manning said this year she was attracted to it because of its grassroots style, calling it an elevated form of busking.

There is no stage for this concert series, meaning patrons will be on the same level as performers. There is a microphone system, but it's not a huge system, so crowds will have to gather around performers to really hear them.

"It's just meant to bring people together and highlight Stratford's musicians," Manning said. "Anything that unites the community through music is a priority for me as an artist."

Following Stelle & Carter Trio, Laura Neilson and Kaitlyn Famme will perform May 31, Cait and Pete from The Bookends will perform June 7, and Ethan Maac and Maggie Foster will close out the series on June 28.

Manning will also host a community singalong June 14 and Chippewan flautist and storyteller Christin Dennis will perform June 21 for National Indigenous Peoples Day.

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(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

IT'S OFFICIAL!

The 72nd Stratford Festival season got started with a bang – and a pop of champagne – on May 27 with actors, patrons and creatives strutting the red carpet for the first show. See more photos on page 3.

"Political spectacle" ensues as banned resident shows up for public meeting

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

At approximately 7:23 p.m. May 28, nearly half an hour after the scheduled regular Stratford council meeting was supposed to start, the packed gallery roared at Stratford city hall.

Mayor Martin Ritsma and CAO Joan Thomson arrived in council chambers with Ritsma announcing he will not call the meeting to order.

"We are going to postpone the meeting until further notice," he said as boos from those gathered for the meeting erupted from the gallery.

"Cowards!" One angry resident exclaimed as he left.

The May 28 council meeting's agenda was packed with a public meeting and a number of items of note, from special-occasion permit requests to tender awards for a street reconstruction.

That was evidently derailed by the arrival of Mike Sullivan, a Stratford resident who was recently suspended from City of Stratford property.

Sullivan arrived with a baseball cap and a small package of papers, telling the Stratford Times he intended to speak at the public meeting scheduled to discuss a proposed development at 93 Trinity St. and 266 King St.

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Market Square Music returns with homegrown lineup

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"I think (patrons) are going to be really surprised with the variety of talent and the quality of talent that we have in town," Manning said.

Rain dates for each of the Friday evening performances are planned for the

following Saturday morning at 10:30 a.m., with any Friday cancellations to be announced by 2 p.m. that day.

Those wishing to attend are welcome to do so free of charge and are encouraged to bring their own chairs. The concerts last an hour, from 6:30-7:30 p.m.



MARKET SQUARE

Stelle & Carter Trio play to a crowd of people for the summer's first Market Square Music night.

(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

Get ready to feel the Pride in Stratford

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

June is known worldwide as Pride Month, a time in which we honour the members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and their fight for equal rights in the world.

Throughout this month, we acknowledge the strides that have been made towards equality for all, but we also look at what more can be done and what areas still need to be improved. During this month, millions show their support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in a multitude of ways such as parades, events and advocacy, reinforcing a message of love, acceptance and pride.

Stratford is gearing up for the sixth annual Perth County Pride March (formerly the Stratford Pride Parade) taking place Sunday June 2 at 1 p.m.

Everyone from all walks of life are welcome to come together and join in the 1.5-kilometre march, which starts off at the Tom Patterson Theatre and makes its way up to Upper Queen's Park.

After the march, attendees can stay and enjoy the festivities at the Stratford-Perth Pride Festival from 1-4 p.m. The Kids' Zone is an area that will feature several attractions for young participants including lawn games, face painting and other children-friendly activities, creating a fun and inclu-

sive atmosphere.

Ally Alley is where attendees can find community resource vendors so allies or members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community can come together and learn in a positive environment. The Pride Stage lets participants enjoy an afternoon filled with live-music performances, captivating the audience with a lineup of local and guest artists. Lastly, there will be a wide array of food trucks and artisan vendors, so people can grab a tasty treat while they browse the handmade goods of local sellers.

Stratford-Perth Pride is committed to providing a welcoming and open space for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and all of those who are allies. For more information about this event, visit stratfordperthpride.com or search [stratfordperthpride](https://www.instagram.com/stratfordperthpride) on Instagram.



City warns about coyotes in parks

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After numerous social media posts and reports, the City of Stratford has issued a warning about coyotes in the city, most recently being spotted in the T.J. Dolan Natural Area.

While coyotes are usually wary of humans and avoid people whenever possible, they may be more aggressive during mating season – which is typically in spring and summer according to Coyote Watch Canada, a not-for-profit wildlife organization – or when protecting a den.

The city is encouraging residents to be aware of coyotes while using natural areas and to keep pets on their leashes.

If you see a coyote, keep your distance and back away while remaining calm. Never touch or approach a coyote and consider carrying a flashlight at night to scare off coyotes.

Stand tall, wave your hands, and make lots of noises. If you believe a coyote poses an immediate threat or danger, call 911.



72nd Stratford Festival season begins with a bang – and a pop of champagne



Six shows kick off this year's season: Twelfth Night, Something Rotten!, Cymbeline, Hedda Gabler, La Cage Aux Folles, and Romeo and Juliet. Six more shows will open later in the season: Wendy and Peter Pan, The Goat or, Who Is Sylvia, Get That Hope, London Assurance, Salesman in China, and The Diviners.



Festival attendees wait along the carpet for the guest of honour.



Shakespeare himself, played by Jeff Lillico, arrives in style to watch one of his own plays. Twelfth Night opened at the Festival Theatre, kicking off the season. The Bard is one of the stars of Something Rotten!, which opened the following evening on May 28.



Chris Mejaki performs a Grass Dance in front of the Stratford Festival sign. (CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTOS)

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Phoebe the travelling puppy: Taking a dog on holiday

GALEN SIMMONS

Regional Editor

As I write this column, I am sitting in a quaint cottage on the shores of Longbow Lake just outside of the City of Kenora in northern Ontario.

My mom, sister, girlfriend and I made the trip up to Kenora last week to visit family, something my immediate family has done every summer – or every other summer after my dad passed – since I was a baby.

The trip is a somewhat long one. It's about an hour and a half by car from Stratford to Pearson Airport, a little more than a two-and-a-half-hour flight from Toronto to Winnipeg, and then another two-and-a-half-hour drive from Winnipeg back over the Ontario border to Kenora.

This year, my girlfriend, Julia, joined us for the first time on our annual pilgrimage to my patrilineal roots, and we decided, instead of paying for doggy daycare, we would bring her dog – a one-and-a-half-year-old mini cockapoo named Phoebe who looks more like an Irish setter puppy – along for the ride.

Neither Julia or I have ever travelled with a pet in any mode of transportation other than a car, and Phoebe, too, has never known any other way to get from Point A to Point B, so we weren't sure what to expect.

Because of her size, we had to stow Phoebe in the pressurized-cargo compartment of the



(RHIANNA SIMMONS PHOTO)

TRAVELLING PUPPY

Flying with a dog for the first time is definitely stressful, but totally worth it.

plane, so we called the airport well in advance and booked a spot for her and her kennel in the belly of the beast. Even so, the ticket agent said there was no guarantee there would be room for Phoebe in the plane and we would only know for sure on the day of our flight.

Needless to say, both Julia and I were a bundle of nerves when we arrived at the Park 'N' Fly lot at Pearson and boarded the shuttle bus to Terminal 1. Once we arrived, we were told to wait in line to speak with a ticket agent since we

were flying with a live animal and would need to drop her off at the oversized/fragile luggage desk.

So, we waited, and we waited, and we waited. Forty-five minutes later we stepped out from the front of the line and walked up to the counter to speak with a perfectly pleasant and slightly inexperienced ticket agent. With a little

less than an hour before we were to board, the ticket agent and her supervisor did their best to have us fill out the tags, place the stickers, and tie down the hard-top dog carrier we'd purchased somewhat last minute the night before.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly. We had our boarding passes and we brought Phoebe to the oversized-baggage counter to have her carrier scanned for dangers (drugs, weapons, illegal immigrants; who knows what people smuggle in their dog carriers). As another ticket agent was checking out the carrier, she suddenly realized we hadn't gotten a luggage tag and, according to her, Phoebe would not have made it to Winnipeg if she hadn't noticed it was missing, and we likely would have been pulled off the plane, too.

So that was another layer of stress, worrying about what could have been, but my girlfriend quickly ran back to the original ticket agent, explained the situation and had a luggage tag printed and stuck to Phoebe's carrier in no time.

We were then instructed to leave the luggage cart carrying Phoebe in her carrier at the oversized-luggage desk – one of the hardest things I've ever had to do

– and proceed through security to our gate. With all the confusion and chaos of getting Phoebe ready to fly, we only just made it to our gate with less than 10 minutes to spare.

Julia and I worried about Phoebe for the whole flight. Did she make it on the plane alright? Was she hungry? Thirsty? Did she have to go to the bathroom? Where would we find her when we got to Winnipeg?

As it turned out, we had nothing to worry about. A luggage staff member at the Winnipeg Airport brought Phoebe out from behind a door at the back of the luggage-carousel area shortly after we picked up our other bags, Julia took her out for a quick pee and a runaround in the small dog park just outside the airport, and we all loaded into a rental car and headed toward our rental cottage in Kenora.

While the first time flying with a dog was stressful, I don't regret bringing Phoebe at all. She's having so much fun exploring her new surroundings, riding in a boat for the first time, and going off an entirely unintended swim off the dock – and we're having fun watching her experience all of it.

Letter to the Editor

I attended the two meetings of the ad hoc committee of the GTR/CNR buildings.

I was very impressed with the positive message that was shown for the development.

With Dan Matheson and John Kastner at the helm, I feel very positive about the project moving ahead.

At the meetings I noticed a sea of gray and white hair, that the demographic, showing 65% of Stratford is over the age of 55 years of age.

To show some encouragement for the Lakeside seniors, a portable Central Park could be set up on the east end of the main building. There would be trees, plants, benches to sit on and donated books to read. It could be open 8 am to 8 pm.

A static display of ways to combat cO2, would show how we can all help.

Because the park is portable, it could be removed at any

time.

On February 2018 the Lakeside seniors facility was sold, and the seniors were moved to a temporary location, until a location in the GTR/CNR would be developed.

Six years ago the, the Kiwanis property was sold for 5 million dollars.

I suggest that the seniors location be developed along the south side of the main buildings

With 5 million dollars plus 6 years of interest, could be used.

A library partnership could also be investigate along with the seniors development.

*Environmentalist
Lorne Bolton
Stratford, Ontario*

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“Political spectacle” ensues as banned resident shows up for public meeting

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

As the gallery filled with more residents, council was delayed as the mayor, CAO and clerk Tatiana Dafoe were absent. At around the 15-minute mark, some residents began to audibly heckle, with one resident asking, “Do you get paid if you don’t show up on time?”

Ritsma entered the gallery at one point to speak with Sullivan before the meeting was supposed to start. Sullivan later shared that Ritsma had asked him to leave and that he had declined because it was his democratic right to speak.

Two Stratford Police Service officers were in attendance, just outside of council chambers, and Sullivan said that is what he expected.

“I expected the boys in blue to call me out,” Sullivan said. “But they got a letter from our lawyer today saying, ‘If you do, there will be penalties for you.’”

Ultimately, Sullivan was not escorted out and the meeting was postponed.

On April 4, Sullivan and Barb Shaughnessy were among the residents who received notices from the city’s solicitor, Paula Lombardi of Siskins Law Firm, informing them they have been suspended from all city property for three months, stemming from actions

that occurred at the city council meeting on Feb. 26 that violated the city’s respectful workplace policy.

Both Sullivan and Shaughnessy have joined with Get Concerned Stratford and David Donnelly of Donnelly Law to challenge that suspension.

Tim Forster, husband of Shaughnessy, was in attendance at the May 28 meeting and said he was shocked the mayor would “unilaterally” cancel the meeting.

“That, to me, makes no sense – but that’s where we are in Stratford,” he said.

Thomson declined to comment, however Ritsma did share one brief statement, saying there is a process in place and that process must be allowed to move forward, declining to go further into detail on what that process is.

Coun. Cody Sebben, who attempted to pass a motion to rescind the suspensions at the last council meeting on May 13, said he was very disappointed with what occurred, thinking mainly of the items on the agenda that may be time sensitive.

“I think there’s going to need to be a review of our procedural by-law,” Sebben said, “and whether that was followed.”

Sebben went on to say that as some of the gallery members voiced their frustration, he knew where they were coming from, while also stressing that in no way is he attempting to disparage staff or the work that they do.

“I feel their frustration and in some ways I’m as frustrated as they are,” Sebben said. “But I’m also trying to, you know ... I want to follow the procedural bylaw.”

“Quite frankly, I was surprised to see Mr. Sullivan here,” Coun. Mark Hunter said after council chambers had emptied. “And I was surprised – a little surprised – by the response ... Whether he agrees with that process or not, we did determine that he should be staying away from city property and he chose not to accept that and to make a political spectacle by showing up here.”

Hunter said the tenor of the dialogue in the city, coming from a small group of people, is hostile.

“I believe everybody on council was very open to listening to the community. We want to know what the community wants, and anything that gets in the way of that messaging, I think, is problematic.”

He also added that, without “calling anyone out,” the city like-



BANNED RESIDENT

Mike Sullivan sits in the gallery of Stratford city hall council chambers on May 28. Sullivan, who was recently suspended from all city property, came for the scheduled public meeting – before it was postponed half an hour after it was scheduled to start.

(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

ly has not done a good job at communicating with the whole community and that is something that can be improved. How exactly it can be, he does not know.

Coun. Larry McCabe added he recently attended the Ontario Small Urban Municipalities conference and that “volatile” interactions between the public and council and staff are top of mind throughout the province.

“It is very concerning that we can’t come together and at least have conversations in which peo-

ple are civil to each other,” he said.

Joan Bidell, a resident in attendance for the public meeting, said she knew many residents that came out to speak at the meeting, some with mobility issues, made a concerted effort to come and hear about the development.

She did not think the postponement of the meeting was an appropriate response.

“I just think it’s disrespectful,” Bidell said. “It’s very disrespectful.”

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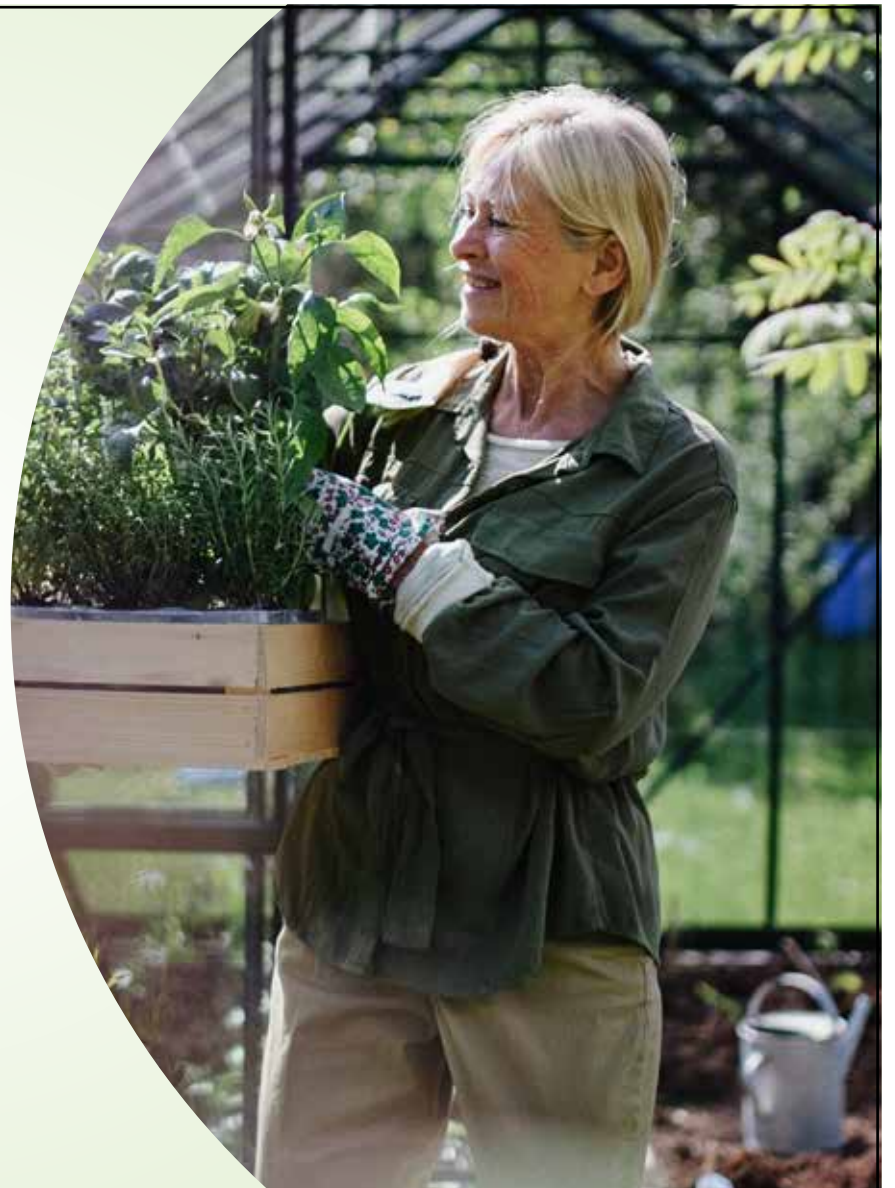
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CIB judges arrive in Stratford this July

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford's Communities in Bloom (CIB) advisory committee will be hosting the 31st national symposium here in the Festival City next year, but there is still a lot of work to do in between now and then.

The community has to prepare for this year's competition, for one, with judges arriving in Stratford July 21 and leaving July 23.

"We're just over, barely, two months away," Coun. Brad Beatty said at the May CIB meeting. "So, it's a lot of work that needs to get done."

Beatty explained judges tend to look at previous critiques from past judgements and see if those elements have been improved upon. In that sense, past comments about Stratford are the committee's homework and will be areas they will want to tackle head-on, ahead of judges coming this year.

Stratford will be evaluated on eight criteria groups: tidiness, environmental action, heritage conservation, urban forestry, landscape, turf and groundcovers, floral displays and community involvement.

"When judges come, they hit the ground running," Beatty said, advising the committee that they should do the same.

CIB is a non-profit organization com-

mitted to fostering civic pride and environmental responsibility through community involvement and beautification. It hosts national and international competitions in the various member municipalities that are a part of the organization.

Stratford has been involved in the Canadian competition since its inception. The late Ted Blowes, a former mayor, was instrumental in making the city one of the founding cities in Canada.

Stratford residents can participate in CIB in their own front yards. They can help by planting a garden, organizing a cleanup day in their neighbourhood, becoming a volunteer with the main charities, service clubs, organizations, schools and churches in the city, working with the city's environmental groups in cleaning the city, and practicing the "three Rs": reduce, reuse, recycle.

Next summer, Stratford will again have CIB visitors, albeit many more. It will host the Communities In Bloom National Symposium for the first time in more than 20 years.

Every year the national organization hosts an awards ceremony in a participating municipality, coinciding with the symposium. It is a space for officials and residents from across the CIB network to gather and be honoured with awards – and is also a chance to show off the host city to CIB's representatives.

Letter to the Editor

Funding Long Term Care In Ontario

For many of us the funding of long term care in Ontario can be a journey into the unknown. And with recent government announcements and media reports about new long term care home construction this journey can be perplexing. From government source documents and media releases this is my understanding of how our current long term care funding model works.

New nursing homes are paid for over a 25 year period with mainly taxpayer money. A home opening today would receive \$329.50 per day funding for each of its beds. This "per diem" rate is comprised of a daily \$65.32 co-payment from each of the home's residents plus a \$264.18 per diem payment from the Ontario government. This amounts to \$120,267.50 per year – 20% paid for by the resident's co-payments with the remaining 80% paid for by the Ontario taxpayer. Over a period of 25 years, the length of the Ontario government's daily construction subsidy, a new 100 bed long term care home (i.e. nursing home) by my calculation will cost \$300M with \$240M of that amount paid for by the taxpayer. This same funding model also applies to private for-profit nursing homes.

This funding model doesn't seem right to me. I raise this matter because at two Stratford City Council meetings over the past five months City Council has made

reference to "long term care" being discussed at an in-camera portion of Council's meetings, resulting in no open discussion. I can understand that certain matters such as land acquisition are placed within an in camera setting so as not to impact the current market value of a land purchase

under consideration. I also understand that Council is adamant in not wanting to add to the tax burden of city residents. But the concern related to private land acquisition may pale in comparison to the long term tax burden placed on the shoulders of the taxpayer from the construction of new nursing home beds; the majority of which are now owned by private for-profit operators. This funding model is a serious concern me.

As an alternative I have been advocating for increased homecare funding (which sits around \$36 per diem in Ontario) combined with additional community owned supportive housing units for Stratford and area. More and more older adults wish to age in place – at home. For many older adults supportive housing makes a good choice for a home, with community owned Woodland Towers being a fine example. And ideally Stratford should locate new supportive housing, along with community driven homecare, as an integral part of a Grand Trunk mixed housing renaissance.

Paul Brown
Stratford, ON

Rotary Hospice is celebrating 10th annual Hike for Hospice this June

AMANDA MODARAGAMAGE

Times Contributor

The 10th annual Hike for Hospice is coming up on Sunday, June 23, 2024, at the Stratford-Perth Museum.

Over 250 hikers are expected to participate this year in total, and about one-third are expected to participate in the "Hike on your Site" option, where anyone can take part in the hike from home, the cottage or even another hiking trail.

"Rotary Hospice is here for the community and built by the community, and I think the fact that the Hike for Hospice has been going on for 10 years now shows the community's dedication," said Lucie Stuart, Rotary Hospice director of fund development and stewardship.

Regardless of how or when participants hike, everyone who participates is invited to come to the museum anytime after 11 a.m. June 23 to join in on a barbecue lunch, games, music and cake to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Hike for Hospice.

Returning this year is the Memorial Hikers' Wall, where family and friends of people who have passed can submit their story and photos to be displayed on the hospice home pre-event page as well as again at the museum.

"We started last year for families to share a bit about their family members. It's a chance for families to share and reflect on why they're hiking. This is a chance to say their name, write down their name and remember them. It's a way for hikers to share those stories with everyone else."

Though government funding is provided for some of the costs of running Rotary Hospice, Stuart says almost \$1 million is needed to keep the hospice operating, equivalent to \$350 per day, per room.

"Every year we must raise approximately \$1 million, which is 50 per cent of our annual operating funds," said Stuart. "The funds keep the lights on here at hospice, also air conditioning and heating, food for the kitchen, soup



A FUNDRAISING EVENT IN SUPPORT OF
ROTARY HOSPICE STRATFORD PERTH

and baked goods for families who visit, sheets, blankets, outdoor spaces. All the elements that make a space a home have a cost and that's why support from hike is so important."

Fundraising efforts from Hike for Hospice from this year's event is expected to be just over \$100,000 and will help supply the hospice with necessary equipment and supplies, but also help to comfort those who call hospice home during their final days by supplying items such as homemade cookies, daily soup, warm blankets and outdoor-space maintenance.

Anyone interested in participating in Hike for Hospice or donating to a team or hiker can visit rotaryhospice.ca/hike-sign-up for more information.

"Remember, however and whenever you choose to take your steps, your actions will impact all of those who call Rotary Hospice home during their final days," said Stuart. "Your donations matter to the residents, their families and everyone else who is impacted by the work we do here at Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth."



Stratford Perth Hospice Foundation (SPHF), the fundraiser of Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth (RHSP), is seeking Board Directors interested in filling future board member and board committee vacancies starting in Fall 2024. Board appointments will be approved at the board's Annual General meeting to be held in September 2024.

Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth provides a peaceful, comfortable home with 24-hour specialized palliative care for those living with a life-limiting illness, as well as support for those in their care circle.

The ideal candidates are well-connected community or business leaders who are passionate about hospice palliative care and can leverage their professional skills and resources to positively impact the work of Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth. Prior non-profit and/or charitable board experience is an asset but not required.

Interested candidates are requested to submit a letter of interest and resume by June 30th to board@rotaryhospice.ca. Candidates selected for a follow up interview with the board recruitment team will be contacted no later than July 7th, 2024.

Stratford and area students earn Skills Ontario medals

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

Students from the Huron-Perth District Catholic School Board (HPDCSB), Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) and the Technical Training Group - Stratford and Area all brought home medals from the Skills Ontario Competition.

The competition was held at the Toronto Congress Centre May 6 and 7. The Skills Ontario competition highlights the students' talents in the skilled trades.

Jenna Meyers, learning coordinator for the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board (HPDCSB), said 24 students from across the board competed in the competition – the most ever for the school board. The students worked on projects in the green energy, construction, mechanical engineering and robotics categories. A team of Listowel's St. Mary's Catholic School students earned a gold medal for their demonstration in the construction section.

"They were so excited and, honestly, they did such a great job of representing Huron-Perth the entire time that they were competing," Meyers said.

Meyers also said that the students were strong in the technical skills to create the prize-winning home, and in their soft skills such as safety awareness.

"They were the only team that kept their hard hats, their safety goggles, their work boots, their safety gloves on the entire time," she said. "They paid attention to their entire workspace, making sure it was clean and organized. They delegated tasks between the four of them so well, so everybody always had a role. Everybody always had something that they were working towards."

A press release from the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) said 37 students represented the school board in green energy, workplace safety, carpentry, robotics, mechanical engineering and animation. A group of grades four to six students from Upper Thames Elementary School in Mitchell secured a silver medal in character animation. Upper Thames elementary's junior students also won a gold medal in the same category in 2023.

"We are very proud of our students for their hard work and dedication in preparing for and competing in this event," said Tim Bickell, AMDSB student success coach, in the press release. "Their achievements are a testament to the education and training provided by our schools, and we are thrilled to see them represent our district on such a grand stage."

Technical Training Group - Stratford and Area announced on their Facebook page May 13 that level two metal fabricator apprentice Dani Desmarchais won silver in the Skills Ontario competition.

"When I got second, I was blown away and very excited," said Desmarchais.

Instructor Jake Debus was thrilled and proud of his student for the second-place finish.

"It's fantastic. She was a very talented individual when I taught her as a student originally and she's grown a whole bunch more," Debus said. "So, it's surprising but it's a really good feeling and after it was all done, I was super happy."

He added that Desmarchais has a sharp attention to detail and aims for a perfect job.

"A lot of people are okay with minor imperfections but Dani, on the other hand, will come up



(JENNA MEYERS PHOTO)

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A group of Upper Thames Elementary School students were happy to win silver medals for character animation.

to me and tell me how bad the piece is that she's making and I'll check it and it's well within the tolerances I've set out, and she's still not happy with it," Debus said.

The Skills Ontario Competition offers lots of learning opportunities. Desmarchais said the competition is a great way to see how other companies manage tasks.

"It's kind of fun to get out, talk to other people, see how the things that you know apply to jobs that other people do and vice-versa," she said. "It's quite interesting to see a lot of people who have the same job description, but how varied the actual work you can do can be."

Meyers said the competition helps the

students in any of their future endeavors by allowing them to demonstrate their soft skills such as following workplace safety protocol and using their critical thinking and problem-solving skills to talk about their projects to a judging panel.

"These are all skills that we know, construction or not in their future, they are going to use those skills going forward," she said. "The idea of thinking about their careers and their next step in high school, it's part of the whole reason why we do this. It's just making sure kids know where their skills actually lie, where their talents actually lie and really being able to demonstrate those."

Accessibility award nominations now open

This is National AccessAbility Week, a time to recognize the valuable contributions and leadership of persons with disabilities in Canada, and to highlight the ongoing efforts to create a more accessible community.

For the past 13 years, Stratford's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) has presented its Accessibility Award to acknowledge one business, organization or individual in Stratford that has worked hard to make their space or service more accessible. Previous recipients of this award are Stratford Business Centre, Stratford Festival, Stratford Northwestern Secondary School, The Local Community Food Centre, Stratford Country Club, Avondale United Church, 27 Market Place, Jobsite Brewing, Romeo Public School, Infinity Dance Studio, The Bruce Hotel, MacLeods Scottish Shop and Nathaniel DeWeerd. We thank these businesses and individuals for their continued commitment and efforts.

"We're proud to have received the Stratford Accessibility Advisory Committee Award for the work we have done to make our space more welcoming and accessible for everyone," said past winner Rob Russell of MacLeods. "Installing a fully automated entry door and creating more space between displays has been a great start, and we look forward to receiving guidance from our customers and community on how we can continue to improve."

The AAC would again this year like to recognize one business, organization and/or individual that has taken measures to make their building or service accessible to all residents and visitors.

We are looking for assistance in choosing and honouring someone locally that supports the idea that all citi-

zens should move freely and without restriction through our city.

This business, group or individual may have made physical renovations or created/improved services to better serve the public. Nominations can also be made for any business, group or individual that has advocated with others to promote accessibility and create equal opportunities for all. Past nominees are also welcome to apply.

The AAC is requesting nominations be made by Friday, October 4, 2024.

Nominations can be submitted to adviscom@stratford.ca

An online nomination form is also available.

A sub-committee of the AAC will review all submissions and tour nominated services to choose this year's winner. The winner will be presented with the award at a Regular Stratford City Council meeting. Please note, all submissions will have equal review and consideration, if they meet the mandate of creating or promoting accessibility for all.

For further information on the Stratford Accessibility Advisory Committee or to learn more about accessibility in the City of Stratford, please visit the Accessibility page on the City's website.

You can also find frequently asked questions about accessibility in Stratford, the Stratford Multi-year Accessibility Plan, and a concern form for any areas that Stratford still needs to address. We look forward to hearing from you as we continue to work toward a fully accessible community.

Optimist Club of Downie Inc.

OPTI-CASH CALENDAR DRAW

May 19 Frank Kinlin, Orton	\$50.00
May 20 Dave Innes, Lakeside	\$50.00
May 21 Liz McNally, Stratford	\$50.00
May 22 Sarah Seddon, St. Pauls	\$50.00
May 23 Garrett Megens, St. Marys	\$50.00
May 24 Donna Johnson, Greenville	\$50.00
May 25 Merle Ruston, Stratford	\$200.00
May 26 Anna & Jo Holland, Port Coquitlam, B.C.	\$50.00
May 27 Rick O'Donnell, St. Marys	\$50.00
May 28 Doug Noble, St. Marys	\$50.00
May 29 Jim McKay Jr., Stratford	\$50.00
May 30 Tom Kittmer, Embro	\$50.00
May 31 Paul Carpenter, St. Marys	\$50.00
June 01 Roger McKay, St. Marys	\$1,000.00

ALL OF THE CALENDARS
HAVE BEEN SOLD



Franklin E. Hinz

196 Ontario Street, Stratford
519-273-1633

Perth County's Jean Aitcheson invested recently as a member of the Order of Canada

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

It's not every day that a farm woman and a retired nurse from Downie Township in Perth County is invested as a member of the Order of Canada by the country's governor general.

Jean Aitcheson, who has a never-ending work ethic and a huge heart and runs the Stratford Mission Depot, has accomplished what most people could only dream of.

Aitcheson was invested as a member of the Order of Canada at a special ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa May 8 by Governor General Mary Simon.

It was appropriate for a person like Aitcheson, who has done so much for the wellbeing of people of all nationalities all over the world, that the ceremony occurred during Mental Health Week.

In commenting on the honour, Jean said she was accompanied by her sons Evan and Brian to Rideau Hall to witness the momentous occasion.

Aitcheson's husband, Ken, other family members and a few thousand medical-mission team members, along with mission-depot volunteers, donors and supporters were not able to view the ceremony as it was not livestreamed this time around, as is per usual.

After the ceremony, Aitcheson said the award recipients and their guests enjoyed a luncheon and a tour of Rideau Hall, the governor general's residence which includes a banquet room for 42, smaller dining rooms, a library, meeting and living rooms, the greenhouses and the park-like



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

ORDER OF CANADA

Order of Canada Recipient Jean Aitcheson, who is pictured recently with her lapel of medals, stands in her most favourite room at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Stratford. It is from here where she and trusted volunteers work tirelessly to distribute donated medical supplies to those in need around the world.

grounds.

Aitcheson said she was given a couple of huge surprises when a fancy Phillips Berlina Coupe made in the same style

as a 1938 Mercedes 540K pulled up and transported her to a private reception, and a bagpiper escorted her, her sons and her two sisters to a Canadian-themed, deco-

rated room.

They were then greeted by family, friends, Rotarians, supporters and some Ottawa Civic Hospital Nursing classmates.

Those same classmates will be celebrating their 60th nursing reunion May 30 in Ottawa, and Aitcheson says she will also be there.

Aitcheson wished to thank her anonymous nominator and those who supported her successful nomination.

She said she shares this great honour with all those who participated in and supported the 37 humanitarian mission teams and all those involved in recycling valuable medical supplies around the world.

That effort continues every Tuesday from 9 a.m. to noon at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Stratford.

Aitcheson said she feels very humbled as an Order of Canada member and she was among very talented and dedicated company.

In the past, she was also awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal by the Government of Canada in 2002, celebrating 50 years of Queen Elizabeth on the British throne.

She was also awarded a Rotary International Service Above Self Award in 2017.

She said all the rewards in the world will not replace the need for locals with big hearts to donate medical supplies to the Stratford Mission Depot.

She urges everyone to contact her at jkhsn@quadro.net to help someone in the world who needs medicines and medical help through the program she established many years ago.

Stratford Perth Community Foundation certifies as living wage employer

United Way Perth-Huron (UWPH) is proud to announce the Stratford Perth Community Foundation is the latest organization to certify as a living wage employer.

"Central to the community foundation movement is a shared vision that no one is left behind," stated Heidi Culliton, Executive Director, Stratford Perth Community Foundation. "Living wage certification upholds our Foundation's ongoing commitment to provide our employees with fair and competitive pay for their important work. We believe that when individuals thrive communities become more resilient and connected."

"We thank the Stratford Perth Community Foundation for certifying" added UWPH Executive Director, Ryan Erb. "An important part of building a stronger region is making sure workers are paid a living wage so they can take part in the life of the community. We appreciate the Foundation's commitment to their employees and the place we call home."

The Perth-Huron living wage of \$22.75 per hour reflects the local cost of living and is calculated annually using local



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER

Pictured (From L to R): Heidi Culliton (SPCF Executive Director), Mindy Aroutzidis (SPCF Donor Relations Coordinator) and Leah Kennedy (SPCF Grants and Community Impact Coordinator)

data. It considers the living expenses of a weighted average of family types including a family of four, a single parent and school aged child, and a single adult, once government transfers and deductions were considered. Everyday expenses in the calculation included food, housing, utilities, clothing, childcare and trans-

portation. For more information about Perth-Huron's living wage, visit perthhuron.unitedway.ca.

About Stratford Perth Community Foundation

Stratford Perth Community Foundation is a philanthropic matchmaker and local funder. With a personalized approach to

building community funds, the Foundation works with donors to create legacies that leave a lasting imprint on their community for generations to come.

As a registered charity, the Foundation operates with a unique forever model. Donations are pooled and invested with earned income distributed as grants to local community service organizations. Through responsible stewardship endowed assets held by the Foundation have grown to 9.5M with over 3.0M distributed in grants with local impact.

Doing good together and building strong and resilient communities forever. To learn more www.spcf.ca.

About United Way Perth-Huron

United Way helps here in the community you care about, tackling pressing issues including homelessness, mental health and access to services. Thanks to United Way, its partners, and donors, vulnerable people across Perth-Huron have the chance for a brighter future. To show your #LocalLove by donating or volunteering, call 519-271-7730 or 1-877-818-8867, mail to 32 Erie Street, Stratford, ON N5A 2M4 or visit perthhuron.unitedway.ca.

Probus Club hosts ALS survivor

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Stratford and Perth county are known as a hub for clubs and organizations that contribute to the betterment of the community.

The Stratford Probus Club meets monthly at the Army Navy Airforce Veterans Hall on Lorne Avenue and, with a large and growing local membership, is proud to be part of the 250 Probus Clubs in Canada and 4,000 clubs world-wide.

The club highlights an informative speaker every month, and this month's talk had to do with the debilitating disease ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease.

The large audience heard from three speakers on the subject, the first being Sheila Dorsch from the ALS Society of Canada. She said there are 1,400 people in Ontario living with the disease and 4,000 in the entire country with a life expectancy of two to five years.

She said it was thought for years that ALS was more of a man's disease, but women and men are diagnosed at the same rate.

She talked about two types of ALS, limb-weakness onset and muscle loss and weakness.

"Most are diagnosed between the ages of 40 and 70 years, and that number appears to be getting younger," she said.

Insomnia, fatigue, muscle stiffness and falls or tripping can be some of the signs.



SURVIVED THE FIGHT

The group who spoke to the Stratford Probus club last week include, in the front row from left, Kim Lincoln and partner Neil McPhee who spoke about his ALS diagnosis. In the back row from left are Katie O'Donovan Rotary Hospice Stratford-Perth, Murray Schlotzhauer from the travelling hospice program, Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma, and Sheila Dorsch from the ALS Society of Canada.

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Research into ALS can only be done through fundraising since, to date, there is no funding coming from government sources.

Stratford Resident Murray Schlotzhauer also spoke about the travelling-hospice program that he has been involved with for many years.

After explaining how he and others in the program visit patients to give their spouses or caregivers a break, he introduced Neil McPhee from Sebringville who has survived in the fight against ALS for 10 years.

McPhee realizes he is lucky to be where he is today with the constant help of his partner, Kim Lincoln, and the assistance of many caregivers from the ALS society and Schlotzhauer.

Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma also spoke and told of his own family's journey with ALS, and how his mother was the first to die in 1967 with the disease, about which they knew very little at the time.

Since then, seven in his family have succumbed to ALS including brothers, sisters and a niece and nephew.

"You can be bitter or better, but you can't be both," Ritsma said.

The mayor said everyone deals with ALS differently and there was a suggestion that everyone read the book, Tuesdays with Morrie, and, to understand more about ALS, a movie to watch is Rudy.

For more information about the ALS society, contact Dorsch at sdorsch@als.ca or 437-703-5417.

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Stratford and District Saddle Club host first show of the season



On Sunday, Richard Murphy (left) presents western rider Ben Bell with a large champion belt buckle for being the top-points getter during the 2023 Stratford and District Saddle club shows, with club chairman Martin Ritsma holding Ben's champion Horse, Comet, in the background.

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The sunny skies and perfect weather conditions was a good omen for the Stratford and District Saddle Club's first horse show of the season, with dozens of western-horse riders, young and older, collecting rosette ribbons during intense judging recently.

Club Chairman Martin Ritsma, who rides horses every chance he gets, welcomed riders to the monthly event at the Schlotzhauer Riding facility east of Stratford on Vivian Line.

The next show will be held June 9 at the same location and western riders and their ponies and horses are welcome to come and compete.

CORRECTION: An error was printed in the story, Students participate in tree planting in North Easthope Township, on page 28 of the May 17 edition of the Stratford Times. While the story stated mulch was supplied by the City of Stratford, it was actually supplied free of charge by Jim Algie Landscaping. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

Parr Mechanical Plumbing and Heating Grand opening on Saturday South of Stratford

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

With new businesses opening up at new locations in Stratford and the surrounding Perth County area, it can only be good news for employment and the local economy.

Parr Mechanical Plumbing and Heating Inc. is one of those local businesses on the move and held its grand opening and ribbon cutting on the weekend with hundreds from the area in attendance at the business' new location south of Stratford.

Everyone in the area would know the refurbished building as the former home of D&S Downham Farm Equipment, which built a new facility across the road.

Andrew Parr and his wife, Jolene, have been in business for 12 years and are proud of their new showroom and facility after a total renovation. They have two children, Jake, 10, and Austin, six.

The ribbon cutting for their new location involved Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma and Mayor Al Strathee from St. Marys along with Perth-Wellington MP John Nater and MPP Mathew Rae, and Perth South Mayor Jim Aitcheson.

Owner Andrew Parr says the company presently has 40 employees and they continue to actively hire.

Parr Mechanical is available at 519-949-1080.



Parr Mechanical was at one time located at S.S.#5 Downie Township where some of the students pictured are still in the area today. The school was built in 1843.



RIBBON CUTTING

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Andrew Parr helps his six-year-old son, Austin, cut the ribbon Saturday while his mom, Jolene, looks on to celebrate the grand opening of Parr Mechanical Plumbing and Heating on Perth Line 26 south of Stratford in Downie Township.

Poole's Cheese at the Stratford Farmers Market a long-held family tradition

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

It's been more than 70 years since the Poole family has been involved in selling farm produce at farmers' markets in Stratford.

Present owner Burnell Poole states his grandparents, Roy and Sylvia Poole, began selling fowl, chickens, ducks and geese along with eggs at the Stratford Farmers' Market in the downtown market square in

1951.

From early beginnings on their family farm in Poole, they also began selling cheese, baked goods and down pillows.

When the market moved to the Old Fairgrounds in 1977, Murray and Muriel Poole continued selling cheese, eggs and summer sausage.

The next generation of Burnell and Shari Poole took over the reins in 2010 and have continued the tradition selling quality, domestic and international cheeses ever since.



CUT THE CHEESE

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Pictured at the popular Stratford Farmers' Market recently are the Poole family, from left, Shari, Murray, Muriel and Burnell Poole, who are the people behind the many varieties of quality cheese they sell every Saturday between 7 a.m. and noon at the longstanding market.

Fly-In Breakfast at the Stratford Municipal Airport this Sunday

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Anyone who has never been to a Fly-In Breakfast at the Stratford Municipal Airport is in for a treat Sunday, June 2 from 8 a.m. to noon.

Organizers from North Easthope Township and many from New Hamburg, Woodstock, Listowel and St. Marys are inviting locals to their fly-in,

drive-in, annual breakfast.

All donations from the pancake, pea-meal bacon and maple syrup breakfast, which includes coffee, tea and juice, goes to the Stratford General Hospital Foundation.

Organizers say those who attend will see planes coming in from all over with all makes and sizes and it will be a real treat to have breakfast with those flying in from a distance away.

Perth South's Maureen Leyser receives Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing, specializing in heart disease

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

A young nurse from Perth South near Stratford has taken it upon herself to better the outcomes of patients living with heart disease and heart failure.

After many years of hard work and study, and after writing her thesis, Maureen Leyser has been granted her Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing.

She would be the first to admit that it hasn't been easy, but her interest in identifying health inequities while coming to the aide of people suffering from heart failure has been her focus and one that she has always held.

Following National Nursing Week earlier this month, we felt Maureen Leyser would be the perfect subject to explore how being a nurse has been such an integral part of her extraordinary life.

Her intriguing story begins at R.R.# 2 in Zürich, Ont., on the Huron County farm of her parents. She was the youngest of six children, and was always interested in nursing and helping people, even from a young age.

Following her graduation from high school, she studied nursing in Stratford at the School of Nursing beside Stratford General Hospital, and graduated as an RN in 1992.

Leyser spent her first 10 years working in the intensive care unit at Stratford General Hospital, but wanted to do more.

In 2001, she graduated with her Bachelor of Science degree and became a Nurse Practitioner, specializing in stroke and renal dialysis in both London and Kitchener.

In 2007, she obtained her Masters of Nursing degree at the University of Toronto.

During her 22 years as a nurse practitioner, she was able to spend 10 of those



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Pictured in her backyard with Penny, the family pet, is Maureen Leyser, nurse practitioner, PhD and director of perioperative and ambulatory care services at St. Mary's General Hospital in Kitchener. She and her husband, Rob Leyser, and family reside in Downie Township of Perth South, on the western edge of Stratford.

years at St. Mary's General Hospital in Kitchener and, from 2017-2022, specialized in cardiac care at London Health Sciences Centre.

Hard work and dedication was part of Leyser's DNA and, after six years spent working and studying, she has now earned her Doctorate of Philosophy in Nursing Leadership and has received many awards along the way. She has been a keynote

speaker internationally and across the U.S., speaking on her research and development of cardiac care, now and in the coming decades.

During her various studies, she has always wanted to identify health inequities. She says we can learn so much from the "address" where a person lives.

As a nurse practitioner, she worked in the highly medical world of chronic-dis-

ease management, with a focus on heart failure for almost two decades.

Her connection to nursing and to nursing practice has been influenced and guided by the philosophy of Florence Nightingale.

She said that the approach from her practice is from a place of curiosity and critical thinking, and she says she is sensitive to the health inequities affecting many patients.

Florence Nightingale, known as the founder of modern day nursing in the western world, provided the model for nurses to critically analyze the care they provide to their patients, while being aware of the patients' social situations.

Leyser says "nursing is the pursuit of health and wellbeing grounded in evidence and compassion, and should be underpinned by an equity lens."

It is her view "that social equity is nursing's social mandate for the 21st century."

She knows through study that the Waterloo Region and Wellington County area is the fastest-growing area of the country, and rural and urban communities should have the same access to health care, with no one in any area left behind.

She feels more nurse practitioners could help solve many of the problems faced in health care today.

As the mother of two grown children and wife to a husband, Rob, who has gone above and beyond to support her study and research, Leyser is one medical professional who really cares about the future and wellbeing of patients in her area of work and study.

Her one hope is to be able to make a difference in the study of heart disease now and well into the future.

If anyone can make a difference in the study of heart disease and heart failure, Leyser will be one the medical profession can look toward.

Perth South residents can still access Stratford Public Library's resources – just with a \$120 non-resident card

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Perth South residents can still access the Stratford Public Library (SPL)'s resources with their municipality picking up the tab.

On May 14, following the St. Marys Public Library ending service with the Township of Perth South, the SPL board voted to offer Perth South residents a non-resident library card for the remainder of 2024.

The non-resident card costs \$120, with the township footing the bill so residents will not be out of pocket.

The cards allow non-residents to access resources owned by the SPL, but not the collections owned by the Perth County Information Network (PCIN)'s partners.

"Residents have been grateful to regain some access to library services and have voiced to us that they are hopeful Perth South will properly invest in full, local-library access for 2025," Krista Robinson, CEO of SPL, said in an emailed statement. "The loss of downloadLibrary, our main ebook and audiobook collection, as well as access to library materials ... outside of our library has been very disappointing for many Perth South residents."

During its 2024 municipal budget deliberations, Perth South council cut the budget for allocating library services nearly in half, going from a budget of \$126,052 in 2023 to \$65,000 in 2024, initiating a review of their library services, which were provided by SPL, St. Marys Public Library and Huron County Library.

According to a release posted on the

municipality's Facebook page, St. Marys had a "significant difference in cost" compared to SPL and the Huron County Library. St. Marys Public Library was priced at \$297.45 per user, whereas both Stratford and Huron County were priced at a little over \$225, \$227.40 and \$225.32 respectively.

The municipality asked the St. Marys board to send a revised budget for consideration, but the board declined and ended service for Perth South residents, citing the fact that St. Marys residents already subsidized library services for their neighbours in Perth South.

In light of that decision, Stratford declined to renew its contract unless a contract with St. Marys was also renewed.

"Perth South residents have been able to access library services in Kirkton, St.

Marys and Stratford for more than fifteen years," Jim Aitcheson, mayor of Perth South, said in that same release. "Council felt a review was required based on St. Marys' submission for 2024. We apologize for the disruption this review has caused."

"We are encouraging Perth South residents to speak to their Perth South council about how an investment in full library service is important to them and their community," Robinson said. "We are hopeful we can reach an agreement to be able to offer full library service to Perth South residents in 2025."

Perth South residents can still use both libraries' space, internet and browse resources inside the buildings free of charge.

Aitcheson is asking residents to be patient as the municipality works through the transition.

Ontario Pork Congress Hog Jog remembers Teresa Van Nes as funds raised for Rotary Hospice Stratford-Perth

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The Ontario Pork Congress (OPC) is getting set for another exciting year, June 19-20, at the Stratford Rotary Complex.

The Hog Jog and Weiner Run is a big part of the first evening of the OPC, June 19, and raises thousands of dollars each year through sponsorships and donations for various charitable organizations in the communities of Stratford and Perth County.

This year, funds raised have been earmarked for the Stratford-Perth Hospice Foundation.

This year's Hog-Jog will be held in honour of Teresa Van Nes who, along with her husband Jack, were avid Perth County pork producers for many years.

Their pork-producing legacy lives on in their three children, Jim, John and Pat (Wouters), who are also proud Perth County pork producers with their own families.

Teresa was a volunteer with the Ontario Pork Congress for many years.

Her Granddaughter, Erin Kollman (Wouters), says in 2015, before the Rotary Hospice was built, her grandmother spent her final days at Sakura House Hospice near Woodstock with her family by her side.

The Sakura House let Teresa's family be together to truly cherish those final memories with her.

Speaking for the Van Nes family, Kollman said they are pleased to have this year's Hog Jog be in their honour as the Rotary Hospice Stratford-Perth is "near and dear to our hearts."

The funds collected from this year's Hog Jog will be going to develop a serenity garden on Greenwood Drive on the west side of the property. The garden will provide a peaceful, contemplative respite for residents and their families, the staff



JOG FOR A CAUSE

Pictured from left are Amanda Modaragamage, Rotary Hospice Stratford-Perth fund development and communications co-ordinator, Pat Wouters, daughter of Teresa Van Nes, Erin Kollman, granddaughter of Teresa Van Nes, and Lucie Stuart, hospice director of fund development and stewardship.

and volunteers, and the broader community.

Lucy Stewart, who is the director of fund development and stewardship at Rotary Hospice, says the serenity garden is meant to be a calming space that can be enjoyed by hospice residents, families and numerous staff volunteers.

"It will provide a peaceful outdoor area where people can find solace during difficult times or just to take a break. The garden is being designed to be accessible and welcoming to all," she said.



IN HONOUR

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Teresa Van Nes is being honoured and remembered at this year's Hog Jog on the first evening of the Ontario Pork Congress June 19. Funds raised will go to Rotary Hospice Stratford-Perth to create a serenity garden in her honour.

To register or for further information about Hog Jog 2024, including a course map, pledge forms, sponsorship and volunteering opportunities, visit www.hog-jog.ca.

Business sponsorship details are also available by contacting Erin or Andreanna at sponsorship@hogjog.ca.

Weekend Quiz

1. What is the birthstone for May?
2. How many milliliters are in a liter?
3. Who composed the Brandenburg Concertos?
4. Who is the Prime Minister of the UK?
5. Where was the 2014 Winter Olympics held?
6. An unintentional error regarded as revealing subconscious feelings is known as a _____.
7. Hz is short form for what?
8. When was the electric guitar invented?
9. Who was the first person to win 2 Nobel prizes?
10. What two countries border Uruguay?

This week's answers are found on pg. 30

Shelf Help

Jay's Gay Agenda

by Jason June

YA Fic (also available in eBook and Audiobook through Libby)

Jay Collier, an organizationally obsessed teenage boy, is the only gay kid in his small-town school. While

he is not bullied at school or home, he feels the lack of other members of the LGBTQ+ community. To help cope, he makes a queer to-do list called "Jay's Gay Agenda," but as he gets older, he fears he will never cross off any items on his bucket list. When

his family moves to Seattle, Jay suddenly finds his horizons have vastly expanded.

Jay is a believable, sympathetic but



flawed character: he is obsessed with losing his virginity, and this leads

him to make some selfish choices, but you cannot help but stay with him and his various lists as he figures his life out. Rounded out with great supporting characters,

Jay's Gay Agenda is a satisfying, realistic teen drama. This story is written with older teens in mind, and assumes readers know about the birds and the bees, and are sexually curious, if not active. Sex is discussed by characters in an open manner and

Jay's romantic activities are also described in an open, matter-of-fact way.

CJ Nyssen
Public Service Librarian

Grapes, goats and good times at Perth Farmhouse Winery

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Perth County's first winery has opened its doors to wine and cider enthusiasts' delight.

The Perth Farmhouse Winery, located a short, 20-minute drive from Stratford, is the perfect outing on a sunny afternoon to discover new wines in a family friendly setting with, who would guess, goats.

The 1860's farmhouse property is owned by Steve and Casey Howanyk who describe themselves as first-generation farmers. Their vision of the vineyard evolved over time as they learned how they loved to live there. Sharing the property with family and friends was a joy and they found they wanted to share even further.

"We moved here in 2018 with zero clue about farming. We just loved the property and the house and when it happened to have barns on site, I saw cute, baby goats on Instagram and the rest is history. Our friends and family really enjoyed coming here and we thought we really wanted to share with others that genuine farm hospitality," said Casey Howanyk, owner.

They launched their goat social signature experience and planted a test acre of grapes in 2022, and then they started on the winery. They took their 100-year-old timber barn and transformed it into a warm and welcoming tasting room with an adjacent patio. There are picnic tables beside the pasture where the goats are.



FAMILY FRIENDLY EXPERIENCE

Pictured from left are Steve Howanyk, Steve Byfield and Casey Howanyk with bottles of their white, red and rosé wines now available at Perth Farmhouse Winery.

"We switched our five-acre hay field to a five-acre vineyard of cold-climate grapes. We have five varieties. We have Vidal, Petite Pearl, Ithasca, Frontenac Blanc and Marquette, so all of the wines that we have made on site have our blend and they all include those cold-climate grapes," said Casey Howanyk

Because they are expecting their first full harvest of their own grapes this year, they also use grape growers in Huron County and Niagara to supplement in the making of wines and ciders. The Sip and Graze experience, just launched, allows guests to sample flights of four different wines and ciders on offer.

"It's an hour-and-a-half-long experience

where you get to taste some of our wine or ciders, and you get a grazing box which is curated by our neighbours at Lynn River Farms. It's all fresh from-the-farm ingredients, then at the end of your visit our goat nanny takes you in to visit the goats and take pictures," she said.

The grape-growing experience has been extraordinary. Their expert winemaker, Steve Byfield, comes with a wealth of experience and knowledge while the Howanyks bring a hard-work ethic and good humour.

"That first, one-acre test plot was planted on a few weekends with our friends and families and our kids, and it was a memory we will never forget. We're

learning how to prune them and what to look for and how to train them up the trellis, and things like when to harvest them, even to weed control. We got some cool, new tools because we don't use pesticides.

"There's a preconceived notion that we can't grow grapes here in Perth County, but I think we've proven everyone wrong," laughed Howanyk.

The grape varieties differ from others grown in vineyard hotbeds like Niagara-on-the-Lake, with the obvious exclusion of Chardonnay. Prince Edward County is another example of where cold-climate grapes are grown.

"We have to give all the credit to our winemaker, Steve Byfield. He makes such smooth, fresh wines and ciders. We've had great feedback on everything including those that are not usually a rosé drinker, but love the rosé and leave buying two bottles to take home. I think it's nice for folks in the area not to have to drive far away to Niagara-on-the-Lake and Prince Edward County for a wine-tasting experience," said Casey Howanyk.

This family friendly experience is open Saturdays and Sundays. There are juice flights for the younger crowd and non-alcoholic mimosas for the pregnant visitors to leave no one out. Reservations are recommended and can be made on their website at theperrthfarmhouse.ca or by calling 519-807-3774. The Perth Farmhouse is located at 4596 Wilmot Easthope Rd. in New Hamburg.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



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Third annual Student Swap promotes reuse and school community at SDSS

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

At 2:10 p.m. on May 22, Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) students lined the walls of their cafeteria, listening as school trustee Nathan Bean thanked them for their patience.

In the centre of the large hall were folding tables filled with clothing, shoes, books and “odds and ends,” all generously donated by the student body – and all was up for grabs in the third annual Student Swap.

“You might not realize it,” Bean told the large crowd, “but this event is so much more than getting some awesome free stuff. This event demonstrates the generosity of your peers and it also reduces fast fashion and consumerism. “... When I say go – so wait until I say go – everyone is welcome to peruse the items available and take what you want.”

Without a whistle or horn, Bean shouted, “Go,” over the microphone and the students pounced.

This year’s student swap might have been the busiest it’s ever been, according to Bean.



(CONNOR LUCZKA PHOTO)

ODDS AND ENDS

Students gather around the tables and tables of donated goods for the third annual Student Swap held at Stratford District Secondary School.

They gave out a little over 350 tickets, he estimated.

The student swap is an annual event organized by a committee of students at SDSS. Participating students donate an item to get

a ticket to the event and a bag. From there, they can take as many items as they want.

This year, Bean said they have made an effort to diversify the selection with wallets, belts, accessories for home and even a sepa-

rate rack for formal events, like prom.

“We do it mainly to reduce (consumerism),” Bean said. “Reducing consumerism is a big one, promoting reuse culture; this idea that thrifting is cool, it’s something you can do.”

“And then also kindness and generosity within the community,” committee-member Elliana Morrison added, explaining SDSS is a small community itself, and these kinds of events help to foster that feeling of community.

After everyone who donated had a chance to go through the selection, doors opened for the whole school, allowing anyone attending SDSS to have a chance to come in and take items.

Any leftover items were donated to St. Paul’s Church this year.

“Year after year, I’m astonished at the generosity of the students,” said Kara Donnelly, a teacher at SDSS that assists the students organizing the event. “And the hard work of the group that puts this together; they say they’re going to do something and they do it every time – their follow-through is incredible.”



Local Flavour

RESTAURANT GUIDE

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Bijou’s 25 years in business filled with returning diners and evolution

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

One of Stratford’s finest culinary gems is celebrating a monumental milestone.

Bijou Restaurant is celebrating 25 years of serving festival goers, couples celebrating their anniversaries and many other diners. The restaurant, at 74 Wellington St., is a contemporary bistro with fixed-price French dishes using as many local ingredients as possible. Mark Simone, owner of Bijou for the past decade, is pleased to celebrate the restaurant’s 25th anniversary.

“For us, to be able to have a time-mark success of 25 years is incredible,” Simone said. “Considering getting through the pandemic and all the circumstances that are challenging restaurants today and the last four years, to be standing with 25 years of legacy business activity is quite rewarding.”

Simone said Bijou changed over the years ever since he took over. The restaurant used to only be open during the Stratford Festival season, but now it is open five days a week from Tuesday to Sunday. The restaurant is open for most of the year with a temporary closure from



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

SILVER ANNIVERSARY

Mark and Linda Simone are celebrating Bijou Restaurant’s 25 years in business. The Simones owned the culinary gem for the past 10 years.

January to Valentine’s Day annually.

The crowd at first was also an older demographic of festival goers of the 55-years-and-older age group, but the restaurant also attracts younger genera-

tions year after year.

Over the years, having many tourists and residents enjoy their experience throughout the meal has been the most gratifying experience for Simone.

“Having so many people, literally thousands and thousands of people that come through the restaurant and are happy with the food, happy with the atmosphere, happy with the entire presentation of what the Bijou brings, it’s wonderful,” Simone said. “And also, to be able to provide locals a restaurant that we’re proud of, and we get that type of patronage as well.”

Bijou had renovations in 2020 so a maximum of 66 people can eat in the restaurant. The restaurant is also featuring live music after 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays with a special late-night menu after a successful trial run in November and December 2023. There were 120 in the hospitality sector running accommodations in Stratford who got to experience live music at Bijou.

The locally inspired à la carte menu also changes so frequently that even customers who come in each day can experience a different dish each time.

“People can come on Tuesday and come back Saturday, and the menu has four or five or six different items that have been changed,” Simone said.

More information can be found by visiting bijourestaurant.com.

W.G. Young Funeral Home celebrates 40 years of serving the community

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

It has been 40 years since Wayne and Joanne Young first opened the doors to W.G. Young Funeral Home.

It was June 1, 1984, when the family began business with the philosophy, “Your wishes tended to in a warm, friendly atmosphere.”

When Wayne Young found himself at a crossroads, having worked in funeral homes since he was a teenager, he thought it was time to take on the challenge of opening his own. He and Joanne Young would spend evenings with their friend and accountant, Jim Henry, coming up with a plan.

“We took it to six banks and they all turned us down. So I went to Josie who ran the Credit Union and she said well let’s talk about this. Then the big manager from London came over and sat at the kitchen table and we talked and finally he said, ‘What are you going to do if I turn you down?’ And I said, ‘I don’t know, but I do know there’s going to be a funeral home on the property.’ So he said, ‘Okay, we’ll take the whole thing.’” Wayne Young recalled.

During construction on the property, the Youngs would often go to Madelyn’s for lunch or coffee, when it was located next door across from The Beer Store. It was

there one day that an old friend dropped in to share a cup.

“I think it was in May and Austin Wake walked in as I was having a coffee and he said, ‘Wayne, I thought I’d come in and have a coffee with you.’ He said he was sick and then said, ‘I’m going to die.’ We talked a bit about that and, as he was leaving, he asked, ‘When are you going to open.’ and I said June 1.”

And so it came to pass that Wake died at home June 1. Young went to the house and Wake’s wife said the doctor had been there and told Wake it was time for him to go to the hospital.

“He said, ‘What day is it,’ and the doctor said the first of June and he said, ‘I’m not going to the hospital.’ And he died that day. He was a Rotarian and had business in town and was the type of guy that just wanted to help people and this was his way of helping me. He was my first customer.”

The family opened their funeral home during a time of unprecedented interest rates and, more importantly, during a time of uncertainty with a new virus leading to death that would come to be known as AIDS. Very little was known about AIDS and all they really had to rely on was the health unit and board of funeral services. Communication was slow because there was no internet available to the public yet.

“I remember in particular a mother’s son had died from AIDS at home. I knew that



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

WARM, FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

Wayne Young reflects on 40 years of service by W. G. Young Funeral Home.

before I went there. Not once during the time when I was there, or at the funeral, did she once mention the word AIDS. It wasn’t talked about. But it is interesting going through those times and what you would learn. And we did learn from it,” he said.

Gloves are commonplace now and understood as global protection.

In 1990, The Everlasting Tribute Tree Planting Program was started with the planting of a grove of trees at Avondale Cemetery. Now in its 35th year, the program is unique to Stratford and allows the parks board to have a long-term tree-planting program that is privately funded. The trees planted are of a size and quality that they provide instant beauty to the area. The mature trees consist of species natural to this area and are planted by the parks board Professionals. The Young family and staff dedicate the trees planted as a living memorial to the life that was lived and shared by those in the community. Not only have they planted at Avondale Cemetery, but also areas like Greenwood Park, Devon Street Park, O’Loane Avenue walkways, the city’s north end as emerald ash borer replacements, and the disk golf course at Marsh Pond, for example.

Forty years on, having found his passion, Wayne Young is grateful to the community and, more importantly, to his family who have supported him while he worked 18-hour days for two months straight back in the early days. Today, his wife, Joanne Young, still does the books using manual ledgers and journals rather than adopting computer software, but that isn’t to say W.G. Young Funeral Home hasn’t adapted

to the times. “There were no copiers. Eventually there was a fax machine, but everything was by telephone or a knock at the door. There were no pagers, so you were by the phone 24 hours. Paperwork was all manual before computers came along. Livestreaming was kind of new to us. We had a decent sound system for the day, but going into COVID we could livestream but it didn’t sound very good so we invested in a new system.”

They have also invested in redecorating the home for the 40th anniversary to bring a more modern look and feel to the environment.

“My wife has been a blessing. She has been right from the day that we built the place to twice we have redone the place in construction and last year we did it all over – all new carpet, 250 chair coverings, painted it all. We wanted to brighten it up for the younger generation.”

The legacy will continue beyond the 40 years in business this year with two sons and a grandson all funeral directors; one son, Greg, works with his father. W.G. Young Funeral Home is a family business and, in addition to their existing legacy, will be making a donation to the Stratford General Hospital as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations. Wayne Young wants to convey how grateful he is for his many years in Stratford.

“I want to say thank you. It’s a great community, a kind and generous community. We want to give back and do that with the tree-planting program. We have probably planted hundreds of trees in the park system,” said Young.

St. Marys Independent The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette Goderich Sun

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PUBLICATION DATES:

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ST. MARYS INDEPENDENT: JUNE 6

WILMOT-TAVISTOCK GAZETTE: JUNE 6

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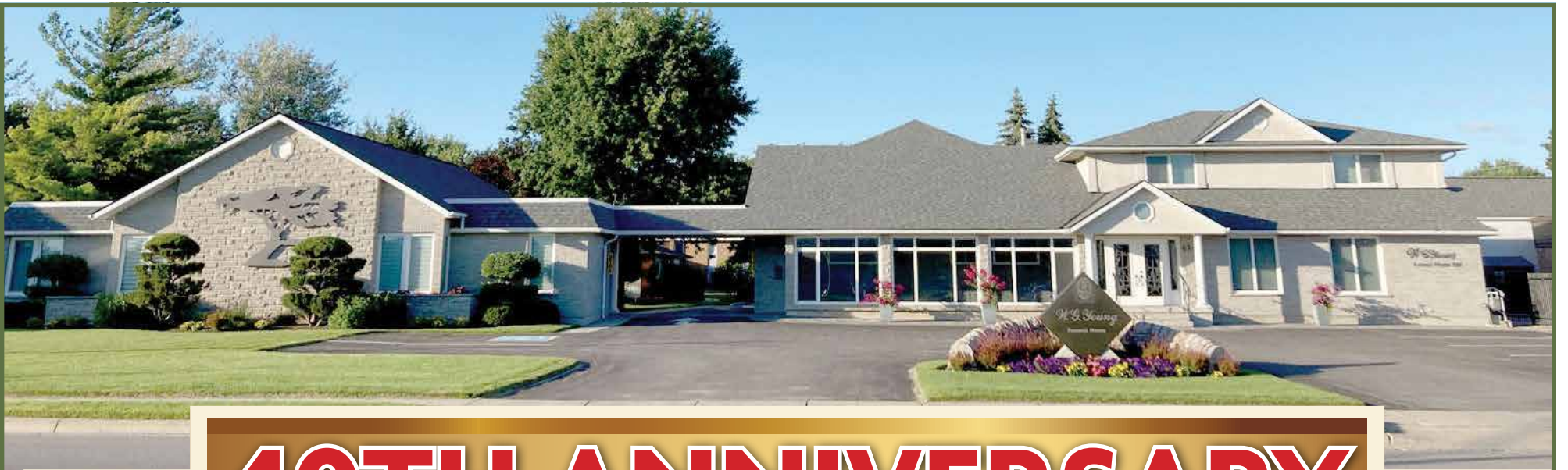
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STRATFORD **TIMES** SPORTS

SDSS sending three tennis duos to OFSAA; dominant at H-P final

SPENCER SEYMOUR

Times Regional Reporter

Three Stratford District Secondary (SDSS) teams are headed to OFSAA after a dominant performance at the Huron-Perth Championships May 16 earned 12 students a spot at WOSSAA held May 23 in St. Thomas.

Coach Stephen Fischer was thrilled with the team's showing at the Huron-Perth tournament, which saw the school represented in four of the five division finals, three of which were all-SDSS matches.

"It's fantastic," Fischer raved. "It's really neat to see this and not all of them came out for the team in Grade 9 and stayed every year. Kids are busy doing other things sometimes and we had some people who hadn't been on the team before or had missed the last few years, but are now back. It's great to see their evolution and to see how successful they are."

Henry Tuer and Aidan Benton met in the boys' singles final, one of three championship matches pitting SDSS students against one another. Ahead of the H-P playoffs, three athletes competed to fill SDSS' two spots at the regional final, with Tuer and Benton coming first and second.

They rematched in the H-P final and, once again, Tuer edged out Benton to take the top prize despite the former being two years younger than the latter.

Fischer attributed Tuer's ability to overcome the more experienced Benton to a clash of styles that, at least on this occasion, favoured Tuer.

"Henry has a steadier game. He plays more of a defensive game. He is in the right spot to get to the ball early. He doesn't go for winning shots all the time. He hits the ball deep and can add some topspin to move his opponent around, whereas Aidan tends to think more about how he can win this point on the next ball. Aidan is more aggressive and I think it played a bit more to Henry's advantage on this occasion."

Despite facing a strong duo representing Goderich District Collegiate, Ava McMillan and Dayna Schieldrop cruised to the H-P title in girls' doubles. They followed this by coming in third overall at WOSSAA and second amongst unranked teams, earning them a birth at OFSAA.

Ranked teams or players have an OTA ranking. Up to two ranked and unranked teams can earn spots at OFSAA.

According to Fischer, both have extensive, high-level high school tennis experience that allowed them to outmatch some very strong competition en route to WOSSAA.

"Ava and Dayna are a powerhouse. Ava has been to OFSAA the last two years in girls' doubles with a different partner who has since graduated. Dayna has been at OFSAA the last two years in mixed doubles. They've both been powerful players for a long time. They came together this year because they both were looking for



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

SECURED A SPOT AT OFSAA

Pictured from left to right are Dayna Schieldrop, Ava McMillan, Liam Benton, Mark Barton, Elliot Barton and Justin Malott. The six students make up three doubles pairs that will represent Stratford District Secondary (SDSS) at OFSAA after strong performances at the Huron-Perth and WOSSAA Championships.

a partner, they're friends and they thought, 'Why not team up for our Grade 12 year?' Considering their pedigrees, having been to OFSAA the last two years, it's no surprise they won."

The H-P boys' doubles final pitted teams consisting not just of schoolmates but brothers against one another as Mark Barton and Liam Benton prevailed over Elliot Barton and Justin Malott.

"That was a really good match," said Fischer. "That's our number one and number two teams. I told the kids that the best thing they could do was play matches against other top teams and so they played each other. They've played each other a few times and just before the (H-P Championship) tournament, they played a match which Mark and Liam won 8-0. But in the tournament, Elliot and Justin decided they were going to make the number one team really work for it and the score ended up 8-5, which I was pleased to see."

Although they lost the gold-medal match at WOSSAA, Benton and Mark Barton will go to OFSAA as the top OTA-ranked boys' doubles team in WOSSAA.

As Fischer explained, Malott and Elliot Barton will also make the trip to OFSAA as an unranked duo thanks to a rare set of circumstances that played out in bizarre fashion at WOSSAA.

"Elliot and Justin played fantastic tennis. They went up against a ranked team and needed to win that one to get to the final four. They played so well coming from behind to force the

tie-breaker and then just lost and were eliminated. However, an hour later, the convenor told me one of the unranked teams that finished in the top four couldn't go to OFSAA due to scheduling conflicts. So, fifth and sixth place was us and a team from London, and both had a win and two losses so we had to do a playoff match.

"The funny thing is that the team from London, who, like us, thought they'd been eliminated an hour earlier, had gone home," Fischer continued. "Thankfully, the coach was still there and was able to call the team to come back for the playoff match."

The H-P mixed doubles final was another all-SDSS clash, this time featuring Ryan Cassone and Nagisa Ando defeating Josh Heaton and Lucy Chung.

Ando is an exchange student who captains the tennis team at her high school in Kyoto, Japan, where they don't play mixed doubles. This made Ando interested in pursuing the more unique experience while she was on exchange in Canada and, according to Fischer, Cassone emerged as the strongest partner with Ando.

"In watching them, they have a good chemistry. They were smiling and laughing and really enjoying one another's company, in addition to playing well together. If you look at their matches throughout the day, they won 6-0, 6-2 and, in the final against Josh and Lucy, 6-0. They were a dominant team and a big part of that is how well they have gelled together."

Though they couldn't defeat their SDSS

counterparts for the H-P title, Fischer credited Heaton and Chung for fighting back and pulling off multiple come-from-behind wins.

"I think one of the biggest stories of the tournament is Josh and Lucy. Lucy was our alternate last year and didn't quite make the team and had to really compete to the last day to make the team this year. They almost lost in their first match and, since it's single elimination, they would have been done. They were trailing 5-3 in a six-game set, but they came back to force a tie-breaker and then they were losing in the tiebreaker but, once again, they clawed back and they won.

"In all of their matches, they were behind at one point or another," continued Fischer. "But somehow, they had that resilience to keep coming back. I asked Lucy how they kept coming back and she said, 'We just got mad that we were losing and we started playing better.'"

When asked what stands out most about this year's squad, Fischer pointed out the high volume of competitors who have been lifelong tennis players in Stratford.

"I think it's the fact that the overwhelming majority of them grew up at the Stratford Tennis Club. They started taking lessons when they were little kids. When you learn the sport when you're five, six, or seven years old, you get the strokes down, you're learning to do everything right and it just gives you an advantage later on when you decide to become a little more competitive."

18U Girls Stingers win Provincial Finals to close off their season

VIRGINIA WILL

Times Contributor

The Stratford Stingers (SWAT) 18U Girls dominated the Provincial Finals on the weekend of April 21 in Waterloo, taking home gold.

“The ladies showed up to play this tournament, their determination and teamwork led them to an undefeated record of ten straight victories. We are so proud of the girls,” said coach Chris Parson and assistant coach Jenna Lange.

The girls started day one of the tournament undefeated, winning three matches back to back. The second day they started strong, winning their first two games. The third game on day two was an epic battle against Hamilton's Mountain Volleyball Club. The girls lost the first set but came back swinging in the second set and won, taking the match to a tiebreak. In the third set, the girls fought hard and came out victorious.

This victory was crucial, setting them up to rank first for the playoff day.

During the playoffs, every girl on the team saw the court, all contributing to the



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

DOMINATED THE PROVINCIAL FINALS

Pictured in back row from left are assistant coach Jenna Lang, Emelyn Collins, Virginia Will, Eva Patterson, Breanna Van Nes, Ella De Graaf, Ellen Thorup and coach Chris Parson. In the front row, from left, are Ella Spicer, Aydrie Groenestege, Lauren McKay, Ella Van Bakel, Milayna Mulder and Pihu Sharma.

gold-medal performance. Emelyn Collins ran a solid offense as the setter, effectively using all of her hitters. Eva Patterson and Ella DeGraaf consistently put the ball away in the middle

position. Libero Lauren McKay had many amazing digs leading to great sets from Collins to her left sides, Aydrie Groenestege and Ella Spicer, and right side, Breanna Van Nes. Pihu Sharma

subbed in, taking over setter duties and leading an amazing offense.

The Stinger's quarterfinals pitted them against the LRVC Snipers, which was a satisfying

victory as the ladies lost to this team earlier in the season. The girls then won the semis, taking them to their final match of the season playing for gold.

The final game against Lake-side went to three sets. It was a well-fought game by both sides, but Stratford came out on top. Ellen Thorup led a great offense. Milayna Mulder teamed up with the Stingers MVP Groenestege, creating an unstoppable force on the left side, consistently putting the ball away with kills and smart tips. Ella Van Bakel took control of the back row leading a solid defense where the ladies dug every ball up. McKay set up many unbeatable blocks alongside the middles, Patterson and Virginia Will. With this lineup, the girls dominated the first set. Lake-side played with true grit taking the second and forcing the game into a tiebreak. The third set was a very intense match well fought by both sides, with Stratford winning the gold.

Parson summed up the tournament and the season stating, “I am extremely proud of all the ladies. What a great way to end off the season, especially for the graduating players.”

For first time in over a decade, SDSS holds all three rugby titles in Huron Perth

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The season isn't over yet, but Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS)'s rugby teams already have a lot to be excited about.

The girls, the junior boys and the senior boys rugby teams hold all championship titles in Huron-Perth after three stellar seasons this year, culminating in victories at the HP Championship Tournament.

Jennifer Zehr, head coach for the boys team, estimated this is the first time SDSS holds all three titles in over a decade.

“They were really excited,” Zehr said about the teams' reactions to winning the titles. “The seniors were very excited because they were kind of the underdogs.”

The seniors had come in second place during the regular league and knew they could clinch the title during the championships when they faced F.E. Madill Secondary School.

“They just needed to stick it

out and play well for the whole game,” Zehr said. “And they did that. They didn't even let Madill score at all. ... They were ecstatic.”

The junior team, on the other hand, went undefeated but were still out for redemption after going undefeated last year and losing the title in the championship game.

Determined not to let history repeat, the junior team “fought hard and stayed on top,” according to Zehr.

Additionally, though the girls rugby team unfortunately lost 55-17 to Laurier at the WOS-SAA Girls AAA match on May 24, the team still had a phenomenal season that saw them win the title in Huron-Perth against Madill as well.

Though having such a successful season is great, Zehr said the team as a whole had three goals for this season: starting training earlier than usual, increasing the number of AAA teams the teams were facing, and to create a larger rugby culture.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

JUNIOR BOYS SDSS RUGBY

Pictured in front row, left to right, are Nic Sippel and Owen Hunt. In the second row from left are Joey Murray, Xander Swartz, Caleb Martin, Tyson Lichti, Cash Gilbert, Rem Hruden, Nolan Trysanaar, Jeremy Longhurst and Ryan Roden. In the back row from left are coach Frank Etwell, Madden Railton, Justin Johnson, Nathan Hill, Owen Chambers, Will McKee, Jash Signh, Ty Camden, Bryer Hargrave, Miles Gilchrist, Nate Spahiu and coach Scott Murray, James Douglas, Cameron Tannahill, head coach Jen Zehr. Missing: Keegan Dona.

“Rugby culture is all about honour and respect for teammates and coaches,” Zehr explained, adding that respect extends to referees and opponents as well. “It's really just about self-discipline and self-determination and self-confidence.”

She added by teaching them to support each other on the

rugby field, that attitude and respect will bleed into the whole SDSS community in general.

This year, the teams started practicing at the very start of February, nearly a month earlier than they would have normally started. To face more AAA teams, the school's teams have been travelling as far as Cam-

bridge, Kitchener and Waterloo to get more experience playing stronger teams.

There are still more competitions this season for the boys team. The seniors hosted WOS-SAA on May 29 and the juniors were invited to the 61st Barbarian Cup on June 9 in Fergus.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 20

SDSS junior boys rugby team to compete in Barbarian Cup for first time



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

The Barbarian Cup is an invite-only tournament for junior teams that won their region. This is the first year an SDSS team has been invited to the cup for a number of years and none of the current players have ever been there before.

Zehr is optimistic that after such a great performance during the season, the team can perform well at their respective matches.

Last year, the seniors went to WOSSAA and didn't score any points against the AAA team they faced. This year, after going out of their way to face more AAA teams, they hope to have a different outcome.

"This year we're looking to score some points for sure and hoping to keep it a lot tighter – a lot more competitive of a game," Zehr said. "But it's always a challenge."

SENIOR BOYS SDSS RUGBY

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Pictured in front row, left to right (ground), are Grady Murphy and Maddox Olivier. In the second row, from left, are Manuel Vasquez-Hernandez, Hunter Gilbert, Trevor Turk, Dayton Pasher, Cardy Reimer and Quinn Elder. In the back row, from left, are coaches Frank Etwell and Darcy Trefiak, Nathan Hillis, Sawyer Ingram, Hugh Dunnem, Liam McEvoy, Nolan Trainor, T.J. Murray, Elliot Barton, Zach Kritzer, Gurveer Singh, Jordan Keane, Mitchell Moore, Jayden Weber, Parker Milford, coach Scott Murray and head coach Jen Zehr. Missing in the photo are Micah Wideman and Blake Hodgson.

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SDSS Huron Perth Track and Field championships

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

The Golden Bears qualified 47 athletes for WOSSAA on Day 1 of the Huron Perth Track and Field Championships. Here's how the local athletes did:

GOLD

- Cole Otten - JB 100m Hurdles (18.86)
- Luke Feltham - SB 1500m (4:14.10)
- Olivia Mark - SG Triple Jump (10.35m)
- Caden Diehl - JB Triple Jump (11.91m)
- Caden Diehl - JB Pole Vault (*3.76m)
- Jashan Singh - JB Shot Put (13.79m)
- Jashan Singh - JB Discus (47.56m)
- Peyton Barclay - JG Pole Vault (2.25m)
- NB 4X100m Relay (50.20) Zachary Clarke, Anadi Mishra, Nolan Tryssenaar, Caden Ollson

*Huron Perth Record

SILVER

- Mckenzie Parsons - SG 1500m (5:53.72)
- Caden Ollson - NB 100m (12.88)
- MJ White - JB 400m (55.77)
- Lucas Mueller - JB 100m Hurdles (20.20)
- Daniel Ogilvie - SB 1500m (4:17.46)
- Sophie Smith - NG High Jump (1.25m)
- Cole Otten - JB Pole Vault (2.65m)
- JB 4X100m Relay (50.95) Owen Chambers, Caden Diehl, Max Campbell, MJ White
- SB 4X100m Relay (48.28) Gabe Emms, Dustin Krahn, Adit Mishra, Aaron Marchanton

BRONZE

- Ailsa Raleigh - JG 100m (14.66)
- Chrissy Rupert - JG 1500m (5:59.31)
- Piper Broughton - JG 80m Hurdles (17.22)
- Joel Gates - NB 1500m (4:49.14)
- MJ White - JB 100m (12.83)

- Noah Feltham - JB 1500m (4:40.55)
- Zachary Clarke - NB Long Jump (5.10m)
- Paige Taylor - JG Pole Vault (2.05m)
- Daniel Bean - JB Pole Vault (2.55m)

4th Place

- Amy Schroeder - JG 1500m (6:06.31)
- Nicole Verhoef - JG 80m Hurdles (18.14)
- Dustin Krahn - SB 400m (56.76)
- Lucas Mueller - JB Triple Jump (10.47m)
- Hunter Gilbert - SB Discus (26.57m)
- Maddox Anderson - NB Shot Put (10.53m)
- Megan Grosse - JG Pole Vault (2.05m)
- Duncan McIsaac - SB Pole Vault (2.35m)

5th Place

- Krista McMahon - NG 80m Hurdles (16.07)
- Maeve Thornrose - JG 400m (1:15.76)
- Maeve Thornrose - JG 80m Hurdles (18.38)
- Gabe Emms - SB 100m (12.51)

- Sean Woods - SB 400m (58.86)
- Sophie Smith - NG Long Jump (4.20m)
- Ailsa Raleigh - JG Long Jump (3.89m)
- Nicole Verhoef - JG Triple Jump (8.23m)
- Hailee Phelan - SG Javelin (23.70m)

- Ewan Mann - SB Pole Vault (1.95m)
- NG 4X100m Relay (58.62) Gracie Radke, Xanthe Marchanton, Krista McMahon, Vivienne Kouwenberg
- JG 4X100m Relay (59.77) Piper Broughton, Nicole Verhoef, Maeve Thornrose, Ailsa Raleigh
- SB 4X100m Relay (50.75) Preston Bailie, Sean Woods, Nate Bannerman, Josh Whittaker

6th Place

- Anadi Mishra - NB Long Jump (4.91m)
- Sam Binns - SB Discus (24.75m)
- Alex Mueller - SB Javelin (35.50m)



(BRIAN DINGMAN PHOTOS)

Far Left: Jashan Singh - Junior Boys shot put and discus gold.
Middle: Caden Diehl - Junior Boys pole vault HP record/ gold, triple jump gold.
Left: Luke Feltham (in the lead) - Senior Boys 1500m gold, Daniel Ogilvie silver.



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SDSS Huron Perth Track and Field championships

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Stratford District Secondary School competed at Day 2 of the Huron Perth Championships at St. Anne's in Clinton recently. Top six finishers below moved on to WOS-SAA at Western University.

GOLD

Amy Schroeder - JG 800m (2:51.72)
Ashton Maxwell - NB High Jump (1.45m)
Owen Chambers - JB 300m Hurdles (45.77)

Owen Chambers - JB Javelin (50.39m)

Caden Diehl - JB Long Jump (5.85m)

Luke Feltham - SB 800m (2:05.44)

Luke Feltham - SB 3000m (9:18.25)

SILVER

Vivienne Kouwenberg - NG Triple Jump (9.48m)

Chrissy Rupert - JG 3000m

Rachael Barber - JG Shot Put (9.34m)

Rachael Barber - JG Javelin (23.83m)

Mckenzie Parsons - SG 3000m (12:46.91)

Caden Ollson - NG 200m (25.58)

Maddox Anderson - NB Discus (38.29m)

MJ White - JB 200m (25.11)

Noah Feltham - JB 3000m (10:03.44)

Gabe Emms - SB 200m (25.26)

Daniel Ogilvie - SB 3000m (9:20.76)

Open Boys 4X400m Relay - Dustin Krahn, Sean Woods, Aaron Marchanton, MJ White (3:52.99)

MJ White (3:52.99)

BRONZE

Krista McMahon - NG 200m (29.61)

Chrissy Rupert - JG 800m (2:53.42)

Madie Costello - JG 3000m

Olivia Mark - SG 200m (27.18)

Olivia Mark - SG Long Jump (4.57m)

Joel Gates - NB 800m (2:14.96)

Joel Gates - NB 3000m (10:24.55)

Adit Mishra - SB Long Jump (5.69m)

4th Place

Amy Schroeder - JG 3000m

Nolan Tryssenaar - NB 200m (26.09)

5th Place

Xanthe Marchanton - NG 200m (31.70)

Piper Broughton - JG 300m Hurdles (58.24)

Peyton Barclay - JG High Jump (1.15m)

Katelynn McMahon - JG Shot Put (8.59m)

Dustin Krahn - SB 200m (27.36)

Alex Mueller - SB Triple Jump (11.50m)

Hunter Gilbert - SB Shot Put (10.17m)

6th Place

Ailsa Raleigh - JG 200m (30.61)

Nicole Verhoef - JG 300m Hurdles (1:00.49)

Hailee Phelan - SG Shot Put (7.03m)

Zachary Clarke - NB 200m (26.71)



SPRINT FOR THE FINISH

(MARCIE STEARS PHOTOS)

Above: Senior Boys 200m Semi-Final. Pictured from left are Aaron Marchanton, Gabe Emms, Dustin Krahn and Adit Mishra.

Right: Amy Schroeder - Junior Girls 800m gold.



11U Stratford Nationals have strong showing on way to Silver at St. Thomas Cardinal Classic

MATT FRANCIS

11U Stratford Nationals head coach

The 11U Nationals were punching above their weight last weekend at the St. Thomas Cardinal Classic facing stiff competition from larger centres.

The weekend started with a solid game against the Chatham Diamonds. After yielding three runs in the first inning, the Nationals battled back and kept the Diamonds off the scoreboard shutting them out for the final six frames. Grayson O'Donnell was lights out on the mound through the middle four innings striking out 10 and only allowing one hit and a walk. The boys got the job done on the base paths with aggressive baserunning, taking advantage of unforced errors by the opponent. Hayes Francis got the save with a three-strikeout final frame to secure the win.

Saturday's game saw the Nationals battle back from an early 5-1



Pictured are members of the 11U Stratford Nationals. In front is Grayson O'Donnell. In the middle row from left to right are Cale Klumper, Easton Mathieson, Randell Everett, Cam Gibson, Bentley Rekker and Hayes Francis. In the back row from left are Jake Hurley, Greyson DeGroot, Zach Hughes, Mason Schwarz, Kohen McLeod and coaches Terry Klumper, Jeff O'Donnell, Barry Everett and Matt Francis. Absent are Mike Gibson and Kyle McLeod.

deficit against the Mississauga Twins. The boys bats came alive

with consistent hard contact tallying 12 hits to support Randell Everett on the mound who got the start, working an effective five innings yielding two earned runs and striking out four. Jake Hurley with three hits and Zach Hughes with two hits led the offence while Mason Schwarz broke the game open with a clutch three run double late in the game. Hurley came in to close, working a perfect two innings and striking out two. The Nationals proved too much for the Twins, seeing the Nationals cruise to a 12-6 victory.

Sunday's semi final saw a tough matchup against a strong Woodstock Wranglers squad. Francis got the start and worked around the Wranglers solid bats, holding them at bay for 5.1 innings, allowing one earned run and striking out four. Everett led the offence with three hits and three RBI while Greyson DeGroot chipped in going three for four driving in two runs on the way to an 11-4 commanding victory for the Nationals. This was a big win for the squad after falling

to Woodstock in the OBA Finals last season.

The finals saw a tough matchup against the host St. Thomas Cardinals. The Cardinals strong bats saw them get out to a daunting 8-0 lead after two innings, which proved insurmountable as St. Thomas' hurler kept the Nationals bats at bay, surrendering only four hits and striking out 10. Hurley stayed hot at the plate tallying two of the Nationals' four hits in the contest. But unfortunately, it was not enough as the Nationals fell to the champion Cardinals 13-1 in the final.

The 11U Nationals had a strong 5-1 start to the season and look to build that momentum through league play working toward their home tournament June 14-16 at the Packham Sports Complex.

Thanks, as always, to WK Financial for your support for the team throughout the season. Follow the team this season @11U-StratfordNationals on Instagram and Facebook.

SDSS Law Team goes undefeated at mock trial

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Keen preparation and dynamic thinking. That's what Stratford District Secondary School (SDSS) teacher Stuart Wilson said is why the school's law team went undefeated at a recent mock-trial competition.

On May 9, the SDSS law team, consisting of students Sydney Taylor, Norah Kevill, Henry Tuer, Laura Sheldon, Christian O'Hearn, Stephanie Tsaltas, Alex Mueller, Atticus Haslam, Ava Cappie and Logan Brein, attended the Ontario Justice Education Network's mock-trial competition at the Ontario Court of Justice in London, winning all three of the cases they prepared for.

"That's quite an accomplishment, to put in that work under such pressure," said Wilson, who heads up the law team. "It's tense, and to perform in the way that they did just speaks to their level of preparation and the confidence that they derive from their preparation.

"It's such a rich experience for the students. They love it."

At the mock trial, all the students play a role. Some play defence lawyers or Crown attorneys and others play witnesses. All of the students who participated took their roles very seriously and did a tremendous job.

As a coach, Wilson said he helps the team during practice and rehearsal through mock trials they put together in their classrooms by shifting and moving the desks around to create the facsimile of a courtroom in school, but when it comes to the actual competition, he lets the students do their own work.

Although the students refined and created different iterations of arguments and strategies again and again, the preparation they did was only a piece of their success. Their dynamism was the other key part of



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

OBJECTION!

Sydney Taylor, Norah Kevill, Henry Tuer, Laura Sheldon, Christian O'Hearn, Stephanie Tsaltas, Alex Mueller, Atticus Haslam, Ava Cappie and Logan Brein in an Ontario Court of Justice for the Ontario Justice Education Network's mock-trial competition May 9.

his opinion, these mock trials held in an Ontario Court of Justice give students a tremendous opportunity.

"Things change," Wilson explained. "Like Mike Tyson's coach (said), 'Everyone's got a plan until they get punched in the face.' And that happens, right? Things come up and they have to be dynamic thinkers and resilient in that way."

Even the students who were not participating as lawyers hit it out of the park.

"We had one witness who took the stand, and all of a sudden he started doing this accent," Wilson laughed. "The judge, on the elevator on the way down, she was like, 'Oh, that's cute, they brought their exchange student along.'"

Wilson has been bringing a team to the mock-trial competition since he was back at Stratford Central Secondary School. In

to analyse and think analytically, make clear, concise and compelling arguments. But she's the expert, so to have that kind of one-on-one experience is great."

Wilson also thanked local firm Monteith Ritsma Phillips, the transportation sponsor for the event.

The mock trial was the last event for the law team this school year, but some students are already thinking of next year's competition. Though the team went undefeated, because of how points were scored during the competition, they did not qualify for the finals, which Wilson said the team was very courteous about.

Wilson thanked Kirsten Van Drunen, the law team's lawyer coach. Van Drunen offered her expertise and hours of her time to work with the students and advise them on matters of the court.

"That's a fantastic opportunity," Wilson said. "I'm not a lawyer and I didn't go to law school, but I try and teach them how

Sebringville woman's butter tarts named best of all Ontario fall fairs at recent OAAS convention

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

There is obviously a "knack" to making grand-prize butter tarts, as shown by provincial grand-champion butter-tart maker Sharon Walsh from Sebringville.

She recently won the giant grand-champion rosette at the annual meeting of the Ontario Association of Agriculture Societies (OAAS) in Richmond Hill, which is now proudly hanging on her fridge in the kitchen.

Her baking journey, with her family's insistence, started with entering her tarts at the Mitchell Fall Fair, earning her first place, after which she entered them in the District 8 competition for Perth and Huron counties, and came home with the top prize there too.

That allowed her to compete at the recent OAAS convention in Richmond Hill where more than 210 fairs are represented.

Walsh says winning grand champion across all of Ontario is quite an honour and it brought a few unexpected surprises.

In April, Family Foundations Institute, a registered charity working to strengthen families, asked her to donate a dozen butter tarts for auction at their gala.

They auctioned the tarts off individually and they sold for a total of \$2,550. She was happy and smiling to know there were a lot of generous people there to help make the auction a big success for a great cause.



Above: the grand-prize-winning butter tarts of Sebringville's Sharon Walsh. A dozen of her tarts sold for a total of \$2,550 at a recent charity auction for the Family Foundations Institute. Right: Sharon Walsh with her butter tarts and her ribbon.



Local university invites high school students to design the next MVP

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

High school students can register for the opportunity to participate in a challenge that will open new doors for business and design.

The University of Waterloo Stratford School of Interaction Design and Business will host its first MVP (Minimum Viable Product Challenge) at their campus on June 7 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The challenge will encourage students to utilize their creativity and problem-solving skills to compete with their peers in designing their big-idea product.

"The judges will be looking for a few different things from these groups. We want to see an innovative take on the idea, we are also looking for viability which is in the name of the challenge," said Noah Pratt, MVP challenge host and digital media instructor.

"Something that could exist or that has a reasonable pathway to success. Just analyzing how all those ideas are brought together. As well as asking those questions like who are the people that we're designing for? What needs do they have?"

Instructors at the university will participate as judges for the challenge and the first-place prizes will consist of Apple gift cards.

High school students from all communities are eligible to register for the chal-



FIRST EVER MVP BUSINESS CHALLENGE

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

Noah Pratt, Challenge Host and Digital Media Instructor is thrilled to have students discover what the school has to offer.

lence though the university's website.

Pratt says the institution is anticipating around 30-40 students to register and divide up into groups of five team members.

Pratt says the challenge will give students a knowledgeable introduction into the design-and-business world.

"We want to bring awareness to students that these programs and resources exist here and show them that there's an excellent program down the street.

"We love to connect more with everybody. We want to engage more with the community, rather it's running these spe-

cific events or others, we are happy to do so," said Pratt. "We're very excited to invite people here and experience what this institution has to offer."

A free pizza lunch will be offered as well as transportation accommodations.

"All resources will be provided," said Pratt. "I think it's an excellent building that we have here, so to have local students come here and find out that an interesting program like this exists right in their backyard is really nice."

To register for the challenge or for additional information, visit uwaterloo.ca/stratford/mvp-challenge for details.



The Stratford-Perth Museum supports Indigenous art and culture with market

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The Stratford-Perth Museum recently hosted its Indigenous Art Market and Cultural Celebration.

For three years, the museum has hosted the Indigenous art market as a semi-annual, free event.

Megan Patterson, manager of education and programs at the museum, said the day was full of friendship and inspiration from local artists. The program is intended to foster the exchange of cultures by providing a welcoming space.

Multiple disciplinary artists and local

entrepreneurs were featured during the single day event.

Patterson said she was pleased with vendors who made and displayed beading, leatherwork, painting, food and much more.

Some travelled from as far as six hours away to showcase their talents.

Vendors were located throughout the entire indoor-exhibit space in the museum.

The next cultural celebration is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 21 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Patterson hopes the public will come to shop, talk, admire and snack, and Indigenous vendors will be glad to delight everyone's senses.



FRIENDSHIP AND INSPIRATION

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Pictured at the Stratford-Perth Museum in front from left are Ava Cappie, Megan Patterson, manager of education and programs at the museum, and Lauren Nelson. In the back, from left, are sisters Stephanie and Stacey-Anne Bryenton, from Guelph and Brantford respectively, showing their handmade wares at the Indigenous Art and Cultural Celebration.

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Avondale welcomes Dennis' return hosting Indigenous Knowledge Circle and Lunch

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

After the success of a previous event, Avondale United Church will host another Indigenous Knowledge Circle.

Avondale United Church will host an Indigenous Knowledge Circle and Lunch June 8 at 10 a.m. The event will be led by Indigenous knowledge keeper Christin Dennis of the Aamjiwnaang Chippewas of Sarnia First Nation. Lunch featuring dishes such as fish salad, the Three Sisters soup with bean, corn and squash, fry bread, and dessert will be provided by Howling Moon Aboriginal Catering in Stratford.

Dennis will be talking about the Seven Sacred Teachings, also known as the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The teachings include wisdom from the beaver, humility from the wolf, truth from the turtle, respect from the bison, courage from the

bear, love from the eagle and honesty from the bigfoot. Dennis will break down what each of these teachings mean and how they can apply to Christianity.

"When we can compare those and have an understanding about the similarities of the same teachings, we can be open to what our teachings are as well, especially for those of the Christian faith," he said.

Dennis is returning to Avondale after leading last year's talk at the church. The discussion was well-received with positive feedback. He also teaches World Religions classes with the Huron Perth District Catholic School Board and will have lessons about the Ojibwe spirit horses, which have been part of what is now known as Canada long before the Europeans came with their horses. There are about 190 horses left and the breed is considered endangered.

Dennis said discussions such as the upcoming Indigenous Knowledge Circle

and Lunch are part of the Truth and Reconciliation process as a learning opportunity.

"The Truth and Reconciliation process is learning about the truth," he said. "The truth isn't a happy truth, it's a dark history of Canada, but sometimes we have to learn the truth first in order for reconciliation, you can call it, for that to happen.

"But also, at the same time, it's important that we talk about how beautiful my culture is and how wonderful and sacred it is and allowing people to know about these teachings is part of that process for understanding."

Aleah Graff, the community engagement coordinator at Avondale United Church, said the community of Avondale understands there is always more to learn.

"We always have ways that we can include, accept and learn from everybody regardless of religious background, spir-

ituality, that sort of thing," Graff said. "We view those things as gifts that we can learn from and try to do better in the future for future generations and for ourselves."

Dennis said, in addition to attending the Indigenous Knowledge Circle and Lunch at Avondale, non-Indigenous people can support Indigenous people by asking questions and not being afraid to make mistakes.

"They're questions that help people understand," Dennis said. "I don't understand, I hope I don't offend you.' We've been offended for 500 years, so to have questions for you to learn and actually grow knowledge and an awareness of Indigenous culture, there are no stupid questions."

Tickets are \$35 in advance. Anyone interested in attending must send an email to avondale@wightman.ca to RSVP by May 31.

INNERchamber reflects on its latest show celebrating its 14th anniversary

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

"Meditations" closes INNERchamber's 14th season with tranquility.

The sixth and final concert took place at Factory 163 this past Sunday. Guests were served a light dinner at 5:45 p.m. and treated with the "Meditations" concert at 7 p.m.

"Meditations was a beautiful concert event and a wonderful way to cap off a season of extraordinary music," said Andrew Chung, artistic director at INNERchamber. "These three musicians really excelled at leading the audience through a program that was as contemplative as it was quirky and fun. I am so grateful for them sharing their gifts with all of us so wholeheartedly."

The performance featured local musicians such as Liesel Deppe playing flute, Julia Seager-Scott strumming the harp and Ben Bolt-Martin on cello.

"We have been doing six concerts a year for the past 14 seasons and we are blessed to have such a loyal following," said Chung.

"For this season, we moved back to Factory 163, which is where we started out

and, over the pandemic, we were at another venue and it's been really wonderful. It's a very special space with a great creative energy in the air and we are really please that it worked out so well on our return back to that space."

Chung has been artistic director since the beginning and says the most rewarding aspect is creating art, working through the creative process and assembling programs with the INNERchamber team.

According to Chung, the ensemble has only repeated two pieces of music over the course of the 14 seasons, keeping all content fresh, creative and lighthearted.

"It's always been the dynamic where I speak to these core musicians and ask them what music might excite them to perform," said Chung. "It's not just my ideas that I come up with. Making music is a very collaborative process. That's how it started out and that's how it is to this day."

Chung said the final concert was designed as a meditative experience and he wanted the audience to listen and experience the specific sounds of the three instruments blending together.

With the 14th season concluded, INNERchamber is prepared to return with more musical melodies in the future.



MEDITATIONS CONCERT

Pictured from left are Liesel Deppe, Julia Seager-Scott and Ben Bolt-Martin on cello performing at the Meditations concert at Factory163 located on 163 King St.

(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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Stratford Concert Choir concludes the season with a summer welcome



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

SUMMER SONG

13 out of 63 Concert Choir members (Left to right, Stéphane Potvin, Brad Stager, Crystal Beemer, Joan McDermid, Ruth Stock, Charlene Delaney, three members no longer singing with the choir, Jill Wright, Susan Laustsen, Bev Wilhelm, Christine Dowdell, Jeff Laustsen.)

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

As the spring months come to a close, Stratford Concert Choir prepared their audience for the summer season with their latest performance.

The Stratford Concert Choir held their “Summer Song” concert at Avondale United Church last Saturday. The event ran from 7-8:30 p.m. and was filled with tears, emotions and rounds of applause.

The choir collaborated with Kathleen Gahagan, a talented harpist from London who lends her musical talents to a variety of concerts, weddings and other functions.

“It went very well. The audience was extremely receptive and the comments

that we received were wonderful. We were very happy with the way we performed, and we felt that we did better than all the rehearsals that we had done recently,” said Christine Dowdell, Stratford Concert Choir board member and director of marketing.

“The collaboration with Kathleen went wonderfully. She had some beautiful solo pieces and when she accompanied the choir, it gave a whole new aspect to the music, and it all fitted really well.”

Dowdell, who’s been involved with the choir for 12 years, said the objective was to have the audience experience the emotions of positivity, joy, hope, excitement, anticipation of the months to come and just feel like their soul is being fed by the music.

Gahagan said it was her first time collaborating with the Stratford Concert Choir and was happy with the experience.

“The seats were very full. There were a lot of very appreciative members of the audience commenting on how they enjoyed the pianist and I accompanying the choir on some of the pieces. We were all very happy.”

This was the third and last Stratford Concert Choir production of the season. Dowdell said the team was thrilled the season ended off on a high note before returning in the Fall.

Marco Burak, composer of the Ave Maria piece, praised the show, stating, “My sincere and heartfelt thanks for all your hard work bringing my Ave Maria

to life. It was a wonderful experience to hear it sung so sensitively and well. Also, to have been able to include Kathleen and her beautiful harp playing was icing on the cake. Thank you all.”

Another audience member commented on the show stating, “My son and I loved Ubi Caritas. It was like listening to a discussion between two very different people. The choir’s parts are in the style of a Gregorian Chant, and the piano interludes are dramatic virtuoso contrasts. They come together to make one glorious whole.”

Dowdell said, in the next season, they will be supporting the Stratford Symphony Youth Orchestra following another singalong Messiah in the first weekend of December.

Jackie Noble Memorial Trophy awarded to local music students

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Music students from various grades at North Easthope Public School west of Amulree brought home the hardware to the school after the recent 96th annual Kiwanis Festival of the Performing Arts in Stratford.

Music teacher Colleen Rothwell said the school entered four choirs into the festival, including a girls choir and three classroom choirs – grades 1, 2 and 3/4.

According to Rothwell, the dedication and focus of each student was evident at the competition and their hard work resulted in first-place standings for each group.

Additionally, the girls choir was awarded the Jackie Noble Memorial trophy in

memory of Jacqueline Candice Noble of St. Marys who died in 1989 of Leukaemia at the age of 14. She was a talented singer and brought joy to her family, friends and to all who knew her.

At the Stars of the Festival evening, North Easthope was presented with two more awards, including the Ida Kollman Memorial Scholarship and the Bottomley Trophy for the highest average score in three or more Elementary School vocal classes.

The winning singers from North Easthope thanked Mitchell area farmer Dave Murray as their dedicated accompanist during this year’s festival.

Rothwell also sends out many thanks to the school’s parent council, which supported this effort by providing funding for entrance fees and busing.



HEADLINE

Music Teacher Colleen Rothwell with award winning musical students at North Easthope Public School with their trophies on full display last week. They were proud to be showing off their four wins at this year’s Kiwanis Festival of the Performing Arts in Stratford.

(GARY WEST PHOTO)

Service Dogs in Stratford

SYDNEY GOODWIN

Times Correspondent

Service Dogs are used all around the country to aid those with disabilities, help make their lives easier and improve their quality of life.

These dogs are trained from puppies to perform specialized tasks and watch for tells to alert their handler to in regards to their disability. For the handler, their service dog is a crucial medical device they need in order to go about their day like everybody else. But what the public knows and how they react to service dogs is vital to ensure an accessible and accepting city.

As hard as it may be, the best way to interact with a service dog is to not interact with it at all. These animals have a very important job to do, and trying to get their attention, petting, talking to it, or cooing about how adorable the dog is distracts the service dog from their owner and this could result in the service dog missing a signal from their handler.

Whether that is a heart murmur, an alarm that a deaf person misses, or a drop in blood pressure, those seconds where the service dog is distracted can make all the difference. Service dogs rarely, if ever, instigate contact with an individual who is not their handler, so if you notice a service dog is trying to get your attention, that could mean there is something wrong with their handler and medical aid may be required.

One of the most well-known organiza-



CANINE WITH PURPOSE

Sydney Goodwin's psychiatric Service Dog, Theo posing to get his picture taken

tions in Canada is the Lions Foundation. The Lions Foundation is a not for profit that has been matching handlers and service dogs together since 1985, starting with seeing-eye dogs. The organization now provides seven different types of service dogs: Canine Vision, Hearing, Service, Seizure Response, Autism Assistance, Diabetes Alert and Facility Support. They are able to provide full funding

(SYDNEY GOODWIN PHOTO)

for these dogs thanks to fundraisers like the Walk for Guide Dogs.

"The walk was started about 35 years ago as a way to ensure we could continue as a not for profit. Pet Valu became our sponsor in 2017, so thanks to them we are able to give back 100 per cent of the proceeds we raise from this fundraising event to the programs," said Maria Galindo, the director of communications for the Lions

Foundation of Canada.

The five-kilometre walk took place in over 200 locations all across Canada, welcoming any and all to participate in the fundraiser.

"Our goal was to raise 1.6 million this year, and we are sitting at approximately 800,000, so we're almost there and people can still donate online until June 30," Galindo said, noting how wonderful of a start this is.

We as people are naturally curious, and seeing something that is outside the realm of our normal can spark interest in many. Seeing a serviced dog in a restaurant or mall can be that change. Wanting to ask questions is normal, and people are free to ask them with the consent of the handler, however this does not mean the handler is required to explain or validate their need for a service dog, much like it is not anyone's business why an individual uses a wheelchair.

It is understood these questions mostly come from a place of genuine curiosity and the desire to learn, and there are no ill intentions with the questions. But for moments like these, it is sometimes best to stop, take a step back and think to yourself, 'How would I feel if someone asked this of me?' And if the answer to that question is, 'Uncomfortable,' then it is not the right question to ask a stranger.

To donate to the Lions Foundation of Canada or to learn more about service dogs, visit the Lions Foundation website at dogguides.com.

Animal adoption event kicks off the month of June

ALEX HUNT

Times Correspondent

The local humane society prioritizes providing our furry friends their forever home.

Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford Perth will host their Adopt-a-Thon at their Stratford and Kitchener locations on June 1 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at both centres.

"The majority of the animals are strays. There might be a few that have been surrendered with owners trying to rehome them, so we have taken them in to help them out but the majority that we have on site here are strays," said Nicole Swartzentruber, animal-care manager at the Stratford Perth Humane Society.

Swartzentruber says most of these animals have been at the facility for around three to four months and are classified as long-term-care residents, while others have only been in care for a couple of weeks.

"Things have slowed right down. People are just not adopting these animals. They are with us longer than we would like to see," said Swartzentruber. "I think the economy has a lot to do with it. The cost of living has increased. People are just not able to take on the responsibility of another mouth to feed and owning an animal is not cheap."

Swartzentruber says the centres care for 170 animals with 51 of them available for adoption at the Adopt-a-Thon. Thirty-five

animals will be available for adoption in Kitchener-Waterloo and 16 in Stratford Perth.

All online-adoption applications will be suspended and replaced with paper copies on site in both facilities.

Swartzentruber said overpopulation has been a prominent issue due to slow adoption rates and hopes that all animals will be brought to their new homes on the day of the event so more can be admitted and cared for.

On event day, cats and other small animals such as rabbits and guinea pigs will



Adoptable dog ready to be brought to their forever home at the Stratford Perth Humane Society



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

ADOPT YOUR FOREVER FRIEND

Previous adoption events at the Stratford Perth Humane Society.

be displayed in the atrium, visible for all visitors.

"Because we have so many dogs available for adoptions, they do not all sit in our canine adoption area and we generally do not let the public go back there because it is very stressful on the animals," said Swartzentruber.

"We will have pictures of all the dogs and if somebody would like to meet a dog, all they have to do is fill out an application and one of our adoption counselors will

bring the dog out to meet them and every member of the household must be present to adopt the dog."

Swartzentruber said if a visitor has a dog and is interested in adopting another, then they must bring their dog with them to ensure both canines are compatible.

"We are not giving up," said Swartzentruber. "We will continue to promote these animals online and continue to have these Adopt-a-Thons until they find their forever home."

Stratford's energy and environment committee works to reduce invasive species at T.J. Dolan Natural Area

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

Stratford's energy and environment committee, which is an advisory committee to Stratford city council, arranged a community event last week during which they identified several initiatives it has prioritized.

One of those initiatives is the creation of an invasive species control master plan to help guide city staff in controlling and preventing the spread of invasive vegetation in the city.

The committee organized a community event in the T.J. Dolan Natural Area north of Spruce Lodge, which involved training participants in how to identify and remove certain invasive species such as garlic mustard and periwinkle.

Twenty-five Stratford volunteers and students from Nancy Campbell School helped remove more than 25 large bags of the plants. After removal, the ground was replanted with a number of plants native to this site.

In addition, native plant seeds were spread to the area to help in the regeneration process.

Organizer Craig Merkley, who worked



(GARY WEST PHOTO)

PULLING THE WEEDS

Pictured from left are Sue Bailey, John Bailey and Felicity Sutcliffe with Anita Jacobson in the background, along with more than 20 others pulling invasive weeds in the T.J. Dolan Natural Area last week in Stratford.

as a conservation specialist for many years with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, says he hopes more of

these events will be held over the summer and fall seasons to continue the progress started last week.

He asks readers to keep an eye on the city's Facebook page for future dates and information updates.

Stratford's Faith Knechtel wins District 8 ambassador competition as this year's regional fall fair ambassador

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The Stratford and District Agriculture Society is the home to many winning fair ambassadors who competed over the years to represent the Stratford Fall Fair in both Perth and Huron counties.

These two counties are known as District 8 under the banner of the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies (OAS).

At a District 8 ambassador competition recently held at the Downie Optimist Hall in St. Pauls and hosted by the Stratford and District Agriculture Society, Faith Knechtel was crowned ambassador for the district.

She competed and won the Stratford Fall Fair Ambassador Competition at last September's Stratford Fall Fair.

The fairs in District 8 include those in Brussels, Clinton, Dungannon, Hensall, Howick-Turnberry, Kirkton, Listowel, Milverton, Mitchell, Seaforth, Stratford and Zürich.

According to Heidi Danen, who is a longtime member of the Stratford and

District Agriculture Society board of directors from Sebastopol and chairs the Stratford ambassador competition, the District 8 ambassador will visit various fairs within the district throughout the summer and fall.

Ambassadors from fairs and districts across the province then compete at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in August, which could include 70-80 young adults representing their own fairs from all over Ontario.

"The District 8 ambassador competition is an opportunity for all ambassadors within the district to compete for another local title. It's an additional opportunity to improve interview skills, public speaking and deal with impromptu questions in front of an audience," Danen said.

The District 8 ambassador competition celebrated its 25th anniversary this year and Knechtel is now Stratford's seventh District 8 ambassador.

Stratford celebrates the 50th anniversary of its ambassador competition this year on Thursday night, Sept. 19, the first night of the 2024 Stratford Fall Fair.



Stratford and District Fall Fair ambassador Faith Knechtel, now newly crowned District 8 ambassador, is congratulated by Heidi Danen, Fall Fair ambassador competition chair, along with Stratford Agriculture Society president Brian Anderson in St. Pauls last week.

Green thumbs without the strain for seniors



IRENE ROTH

Times Freelance Columnist

As June rolls around, we all want to grow our own veggies and fruit. The weather is warm, and we just can't wait to get outdoors because it can be so much fun.

The good news is that gardening doesn't have to be reserved for the young and agile. Seniors can also garden but with an abundance of caution.

In fact, gardening is a rewarding and therapeutic activity that can be especially beneficial for seniors. It provides a perfect blend of physical exercise, mental stimulation, and the joy of nurturing life.

With a few adjustments and considerations, we can all enjoy this fulfilling hobby well into our golden years.

Here are a few known benefits of gardening.

1. Gardening involves various physical activities such as digging, planting, weeding, and watering, which can help us maintain mobility and flexibility. These activities promote cardiovascular health, strengthen muscles, and improve balance, reducing the risk of falls.

2. Engaging with nature has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. The act of gardening provides a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Being in the fresh air and sunlight boosts mood and can enhance cognitive function through the planning and problem-solving involved in gardening tasks.

3. Gardening can be a social activity. Joining community gardens or gardening clubs provides opportunities for us to meet new people, share tips, and enjoy social gatherings. These interactions are vital for maintaining mental and emotional well-being.

ing.

4. Growing your own vegetables and fruits encourages healthy eating habits. We can enjoy fresh, home-grown produce, which is often more nutritious and tastier than store-bought alternatives. Gardening also educates about sustainable living and the importance of organic food.

Given these benefits, we all want to at least try our hand at gardening. However, without a few safety tips, it can be more difficult and frustrating to garden. If we overdo it, we may end up quitting something that has the potential to be so pleasurable.

To avoid disappointment, here are some tips to garden safely.

- Raised beds and containers are excellent options as they reduce the need to bend or kneel, preventing strain on the back and knees. These can be placed at a comfortable height, making it easier to manage the garden.

- Invest in ergonomic gardening tools can make a significant difference. Tools with padded handles and lightweight materials reduce strain on the hands and wrists. Long-handled tools

can help with reaching distant plants without bending.

- Choose low-maintenance plants that require minimal care. Perennials, such as lavender, daylilies, and hostas, are all great choices because they'll come back year-after-year. Also, consider planting herbs and vegetables that are easy to grow, such as tomatoes, basil, and lettuce.

- You may want to use adaptive techniques, such as vertical gardening or using trellises can save space and make gardening more accessible. Installing drip irrigation systems can also help manage watering efficiently without the need for heavy lifting or frequent watering.

- Take steps to protect yourself from the elements. Wear a wide-brimmed hat, slather on sunscreen, and use gloves to prevent sunburn and skin irritation. Also, make sure you stay hydrated is crucial, so keep a water bottle handy while working in the garden.

- Gardening should be enjoyable, and not exhausting. Try to take breaks frequently. Avoid working during the hottest part

of the day and listen to your body. Setting small, manageable goals for each gardening session can prevent overexertion.

Because gardening has so many benefits as we age, from physical exercise and mental stimulation to social interaction and nutritional advantages, we should take steps to ensure we don't hurt ourselves or overdo it.

By making a few of the adjustments to traditional gardening methods and tools, we can continue to enjoy this enriching activity safely and comfortably. Whether it's through raised beds, ergonomic tools, or adaptive gardening techniques, there are so many ways to create an appealing way for us to garden.

Why not continue activities that bring you joy and fulfillment well into your golden years? Embracing the therapeutic aspects of gardening can enhance the quality of life, making each day a little brighter and more rewarding.

I love gardening and try new plants each summer. This year, I will be trying my hand at growing sweet peppers.

Happy gardening!

MUSINGS: Poetry lives in all of us



MARK HERTZBERGER

Times Freelance Columnist

Poetry often gets a bad rap. Sometimes it is trivialized as a "fluffy" literary form, somehow inferior to prose. When many people think of poetry, they think of stuffy, flowery poems from the Victorian era. Understandably the idea turns them off. In fact, poetry has become so much more. Here is a verse from 22 year old Amanda Gorman's powerful poem "The Hill We Climb" which she read at the 2021 US presidential inauguration:

"...When day comes, we step out of the shade of flame and unafraid.

The new dawn balloons as we

*free it.
For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it..."*

Poetry encompasses life and death in all its variations. Consider Emily Dickinson's wry observation on mortality:

*"Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—"*

or the final verse of Mary Oliver's Wild Geese:

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things...*

Poetry is "the art of uniting the inner and the outer worlds..." says poet David Whyte, and "might be the miracle art form we practice every day of our lives whether we are aware of it or not..." We may ask "what does a poem mean?" but the key question is: "what does it mean to me?" What memories

or sensations does it evoke?; what emotions surface?; what images come to mind? "A poem should not mean, but be", says Archibald MacLeish.

Curious about poetry? You are invited to attend A Summertime Poetry Soiree, a free event sponsored by The Ontario Poetry Society. Held at the Stratford Perth Museum, Co-operators Performance Theatre at 2:00 pm, Saturday June 8, it will feature readings by poets from Stratford, Blyth, Ajax, Toronto, Thornhill, and Thorold. There is also an Open Mike portion for poets, new or established, to read their creations. So even if you are a first time poet, you can sign up to read us your own poem, or a favourite poem by someone else. We're a very friendly audience and we look forward to seeing (and maybe hearing) you on June 8!

Mark Hertzberger is a former social services supervisor, human resources manager, conflict mediator, and literacy practitioner. He has since freed his mind and now writes poetry and occasional opinionated columns. Mark has lived in Perth County for 27 years, the last 12

of which have been in Stratford where he resides with his wife, novelist Yvonne Hertzberger.

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Welcoming Ukrainians: Character and compassion

VJ KNUTSON

Times Freelance Columnist

I like to think of myself as an empathetic person. By my age, life experience has afforded me the opportunity to understand loss, grief and hardship. I have endured and overcome. What I am not able to fathom is the horror of war, nor the trauma that accompanies forced evacuation of one's home and country. Helping Ukrainians this past two years has given me an inside glimpse of the human side of war, and I am learning a lot.

"Remember how fearful we all were in the beginning," a mom of three counsels me upon the arrival of yet another family from Ukraine.

She is right. The fear is so palpable, you can see it in the set of shoulders, brimming eyes and a countenance of disbelief. When each of our guests arrived, we were

their only connection to Canadian life. Imagine having to trust total strangers in such a way. Ukrainians are incredibly brave.

While I want to wrap each newcomer in my arms and deliver them to success, they value their independence. Rightfully so. They need to know that war has not defeated them. They are motivated to reclaim the lives they have left behind and are hungry for normality – whatever that looks like. Ukrainians are incredibly resilient.

I have watched Ukrainians receive donations from others and struggle to maintain their integrity. Imagine finding yourself at the mercy of others when all your life you have known autonomy.

"I don't know how to respond", one mother cried when a nine-year-old girl in our community raised money for her family through a lemonade and cookie stand. "I never thought I'd find myself in a posi-

tion to accept money from a child."

The gesture strengthened her resolve to keep pushing. She, like many in her shoes, was determined to give back to the people who had done so much to help her family. Ukrainians are deeply grateful.

The hardest thing, most have told me, is without the ability to converse in English, they feel as if they are perceived as stupid or ignorant. Despite their education and lived experiences, their credentials are brushed off as insignificant. I see that firsthand with our current houseguest. Although she is a highly publicized professor with a doctorate in economics, cybernetics and mathematics, she works at the grocery store making salads. Her story is not unique. Coming to a new country where the language and customs are so far removed from one's own is more than humbling, it can be soul destroying. But the Ukrainian heart is strong and I have been deeply moved by the ability of some

to redefine themselves amidst the hurdles.

Still, it sits heavy with me that doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, engineers and tradespeople – whom our economy is in such need of – are forced to work for what barely amounts to a living wage. That they do so, without complaint, demonstrates humility and grace. I'm not sure I'd be so forgiving in their place.

As I write about the fate and character of the Ukrainian people displaced by war, I am aware that this story rings true for many other refugees. Our global reality is fraught with conflict and suffering. People, like my husband and I, do not have the wherewithal to change the dynamics, but we do have the capacity to remain compassionate and, recognizing the blessings in our own life, offer a hand up.

(I am a grassroots volunteer, who has been helping Ukrainians since Russians invaded in February, 2022. You can reach me at english.knutson@gmail.com.)

Web-Crawling through the native garden



SHEILA CLARKE

Times Freelance Columnist

"Canadians bloom in the Spring," said a friend of mine. Truly we do, we love the warmth of the sun, and the bursting leaves and flowers around us. The plants also welcome the sun, and are so important for the web of life on Earth. As they begin to appear, so do the insects that depend on them.

Last week my yard was filled with a bounty of lovely butterflies, red admirals- What a treat! Red admirals are a wonderful example of the need for inviting more nature into our gardens. Many insects have "host" plants- plants that they need for some stage of their growth. Growing host plants is an important part of keeping nature in balance, so that all parts of Nature's web can thrive- including us!

The host plant needed by the



red admiral is nettle, a plant usually found in Europe. It's called Stinging Nettle, because if you brush against it, it stings! Here in North America, we have a lovely relative of nettle, called False Nettle- more formally, Boehmeria cylindrical. :) False Nettle doesn't sting, and is considered a weed by many folk. Far from it! It's a native plant (meaning it's been in this area for thousands of years) and it's vital for three butterflies, who lay their eggs on it: The Eastern Comma, the

Question Mark, and the Red Admiral - all butterflies that may be in your garden!

The plot thickens. Native plants (the ones that have been here forever and are not hybrids or genetically modified) are needed by many different insects to provide food for their larva, when they hatch from their eggs. Guess what? The insects are needed for food as well! All those wonderful birds that serenade us and bring joy and colour to our lives-? A

staggering 96% of them feed their young on insects (Professor Douglas Tallamy, wildlife ecologist)! And which insects provide the maximum nutrition for baby birds-? Exactly, native insects- the insects that feed on native plants.

It's not just the babies. Over 80% of birds include insects in their diet - and with good reason, insects are high in protein. Many birds have diets based on insects alone, such as the house wren with its beautiful trill, swallows, and chimney swifts, those wonderful birds that help to keep mosquito populations down. Many are called aerial feeders, because they catch most of their insect diet "on the wing," or flying.

Recently alarm bells have been ringing around the world about our declining insect population. Causes cited are agricultural herbicides and pesticides, removal of hedgerows, roadside plants and wetlands, Climate Change and the steady reduction in native plants to nurture the insects. (Damian Carrington, the Guardian, among many). Already we are seeing the effects in aerial feeder birds. According to Cornell University, those bird populations are down by 32% or 160 million birds lost since 1970- with an especially dramatic decline in the last 50 years.

What can we do? One HUGE answer is to help insects and birds survive by planting native plants. You can go big or small- a whole lawn, or just a flower bed, planting as many native plants as possible. Watch for the Native Plant label. There are wonderful assists here in town- The Master Gardeners specialize in native plants. Not only can they help with advice, mark June 1st on your calendar. The Tri-County Master Gardeners are having a native plant sale at the Local on Erie Street, 9-12. Be a native plant hero, for insects, birds- and beauty!

Updates:

1. A remarkable jump in the Carbon ppm (parts per million) in the atmosphere. As of May 2024, the count is 427.7 ppm. (Last month's was 422 ppm)

2. Q. Where does plastic come from? A. Most of today's plastic is made from fossil fuel- and isn't able to be recycled. Oops.

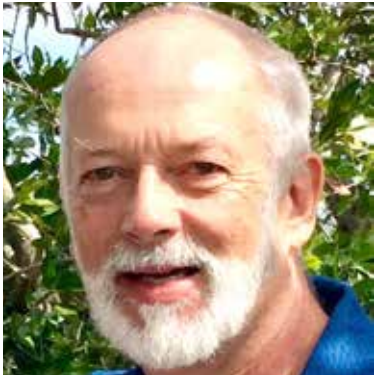
3. Garden Resources: email: stratfordmastergardener@gmail.com

<https://cfuwstratford.ca/native-plants-for-a-sustainable-garden/>

Sheila Clarke is a Stratford advocate for the environment, of our community and of our planet. She is a member of CFUW Stratford, Stratford Climate Momentum, and the Perth County Sustainability Hub.

WWW.STRATFORDTIMES.COM

OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Working to tell the truth at Mount Vernon



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Contributor

It's a stereotype, but one that contains a fair amount of truth; Canadians and Americans are very different from one other. I feel that distance has increased over the course of my lifetime, although that may or not actually be the case.

At any rate, we certainly seem to deal with the problematic issues of our histories quite differently. Here in Canada, we have seen powerful pushback against putting historic figures on pedestals. In the U.S., the misdeeds of historic American heroes have often been swept under the carpet.

Or maybe less than I thought.

So, when we were invited to visit Mount Vernon, I agreed with some considerable trepidation. Mount Vernon was the home of George Washington, hero of the American Revolution and the first President of the United States. He was also a lifelong slave owner. So, which Washington would we meet as we visited his estate in Virginia, only minutes from the United States capital that bears his name?

It turned out, both of them. And that openness to often ugly realities turned my skepticism into a



(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

The striking front view of George Washington's Mount Vernon home.

forthright recommendation that Canadians should, indeed, visit Mount Vernon. Go for the history, for the honest attempt to deal with a horrendous heritage, and for the sheer beauty of the place on the banks of the Potomac River.

The site is huge. You can walk as much as you want – though there is also a shuttle service from the lowest parts of the estate – near the wharf on the river, to the high ground where the house is situated. The highlight may be the house itself, which was occupied by George and Martha Washington for almost 45 years and contains authentic and often original furniture. But there are many outbuildings, some housing farm animals and some with interpreters like the working blacksmith.

There are gardens, a demonstration farm, Washington's tomb and, close by, the Slave Memorial and Cemetery.

I say the house – accessible via scheduled tours – is the highlight but, in truth, the real high point for us was in a small outbuilding where a wonderful actor in costume and character as Martha Washington, regaled us with the story of the place, added an ending supply of personal anecdotes about her “husband” and confronted the terrible reality of being a slave owner.

She told us Washington had personally owned 123 enslaved people at the time of his death. Mount Vernon guides share the information that the phrase, “enslaved people,” has been adopted wherever possible in an effort to acknowledge their humanity. He reportedly treated them humanely and Washington's will freed all his slaves.

Martha honestly noted the irony in this – a man who had lived his entire life owning enslaved people finally set them free only after his death. In fact, they were

to remain in slavery until Martha died, but she freed them early on Jan. 1, 1801, just over a year after George Washington's passing. Martha died in 1802.

And the story is even more complicated because there were actually 317 enslaved men, women and children at Mount Vernon in 1799. Those not owned directly by George Washington were attached to Martha, but she did not own them. She was a widow when she married George, and the enslaved people remained the property of her husband's estate, managed by her, but leaving her no authority to free the slaves.

She appealed to her grandchildren to set them free, but they refused. George even tried to buy them from the estate, but that effort failed. The majority of Mount Vernon's enslaved people remained enslaved after both George and Martha were gone.

All of this is acknowledged at the Slave Memorial and Cemetery – to me, the most moving site

on the property.

Surprisingly, Mount Vernon is not a government-owned-and-operated place. In the mid-1800s, with the place falling into disrepair, it was purchased and restored by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, which continues to own the estate and receives no government funding.

This Ladies' Association made an historic decision in 1929. A marker was placed on the property in the location of the slave cemetery. It honoured an unknown number of enslaved people – certainly well over 100 – who were buried in the area in unmarked graves.

In 1983, the present memorial was added as “a lasting tribute to the memory of those individuals who lived and toiled in bondage here.”

The whole of Mount Vernon is fascinating. And yes, you learn a lot about the first president of the United States, the man who led the American forces to victory in the Revolutionary War. But you also learn so much about the issues that have caused deep divisions in that country, from then to now.

It's a place where there is at least a sincere attempt being made to tell the whole of the story. And it's also an entirely beautiful destination where visitors feel free to stroll, to relax on chairs on Washington's porch or on the nearby lawn, and enjoy the striking view of the Potomac River.

In short, it is very much worth a visit.

Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer, and President of the Travel Media Association of Canada. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email pknowles@golden.net.



An amazing actor who played Martha Washington, and offered deep insight into the lives and thoughts of the first President of the United States.



The Slave Memorial and Cemetery at Mount Vernon.

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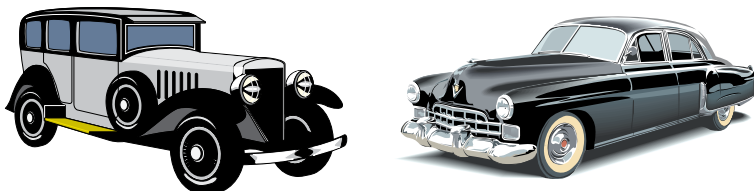
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CAR SHOW



JUNE 9, 2024 • 9:00 - 2:00 P.M.

Entrance gate at Queen and Lakeside Drive
\$10.00 Admission for Car Entry • Spectators Free
50/50 Draw • Music by DJ Gerry Bell
Black Angus Bakery and Catering

To etransfer a donation, send to stratfordkinsmencarshow@gmail.com

AN EVENING OF SUPPORTING VETERANS GALA DINNER

Saturday, June 15; 6:00 p.m.

Legion Branch 8, Stratford, 804 Ontario St B1

Three course meal with feature speaker NHL alumni Tim Taylor and musical performance by Dayna Manning. \$150/person. For tickets call 519-271-4540 or email stratfordlegion008@gmail.com

YARDSALE

GRACE UNITED CHURCH, TAVISTOCK

Saturday, June 1, 2024 • 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Rain or shine | Coffee and Muffins

Large assortment of household goods, books, puzzles, jewelry, toys, yarn, plants
BBQ - Herlicks sausage and hotdogs, cold drinks
Huge Fabric Sale: yardages, fat quarters, fat eighths

SHOP LOCAL. SAVE LOCAL. 

The Coulthard twins are turning 85!



Please join us in celebrating **Norma Howe & Gordon Coulthard's birthday**
Sunday, June 16th
from 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
at the Downie Optimist Hall in St. Pauls

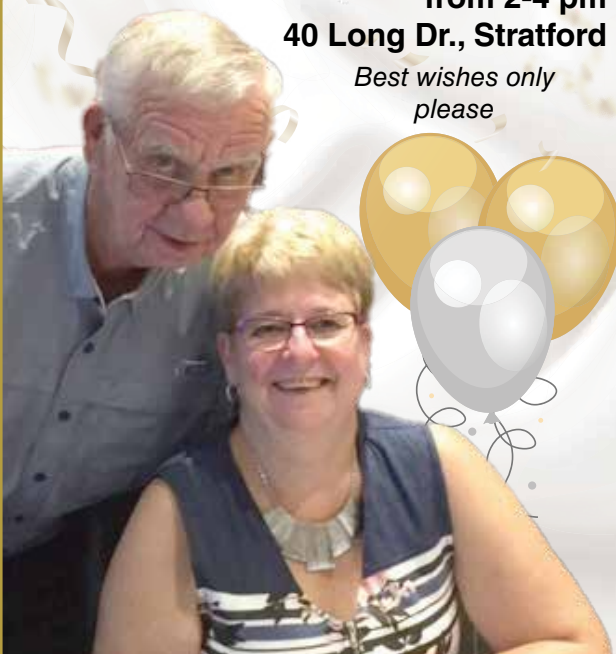
60th Anniversary Open House

LARRY & FAYE CHESSELL

Saturday, June 8, 2024
from 2-4 pm

40 Long Dr., Stratford

Best wishes only please



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Worship with us
Sunday 10:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m. - Fellowship and
Coffee Hour

 We are a Welcoming Community



St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church

115 Cambria Street
519-271-4721
office@stpeterstratford.ca

Pastor - Jack Hetzel
8:45 Bible Class & Sunday School
10:00 am Worship Service

Live Streaming: St. Peter's Facebook Page
The Lutheran Hour over CKNX 920/AM
9:00 am Sunday
Everyone Welcome! 

Worship With Us 

Stratford Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

Quality Inn Festival
(1144 Ontario St., Stratford)

WORSHIP TIMES:
10 a.m. and 3 p.m.
stratfordarp.org



Invite readers to your worship services. Contact stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Riddles

How much is a skunk worth?
One Scent

What did the laundryman say to the impatient customer?
Keep your shirt on

What's the difference between a TV and a newspaper?
Ever tried swatting a fly with a TV?

Why can't your nose be 12 inches long?
Because then it would be a foot

What did one elevator say to the other elevator?
I think I'm coming down with something

Which hand is it better to write with?
Neither, it's best to write with a pen

What makes the calendar seem so popular?
Because it has a lot of dates

What goes up but never goes down?
Your age

Why do sharks only swim in salt water?
Because pepper water makes them sneeze

Sudoku

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

Solutions on page 34



MR. MOO

Are you ready for a bundle of energy and love? Look no further than Mr. Moo! This handsome boy, who is 2 years and 7 months old, is a large mix breed dog with a heart as big as his size. At first glance, you'll notice his striking appearance and playful demeanor, but there's more to Mr. Moo than meets the eye. Mr. Moo loves going on new adventures and being active and would love to be with a family that can take him out on long walks and hikes. It is important to note though that Mr. Moo does not like being by himself and gets separation anxiety! But it's nothing that cannot be managed! If you're looking to add a new member to your family, please fill out an adoption survey on our website at kwsphumane.ca.



Pet of the Month



Word Search

SPRING BIRDS

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

- Robin
- Cardinal
- Bluebird
- Sparrow
- Chickadee
- Grackle
- Goldfinch
- Swallow
- Hummingbird
- Phoebe
- Oriole
- Warbler
- Blackbird
- Martin

CLASSIFIEDS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

WANTED

\$ Cash Paid \$ for your RECORDS and LPs. Jazz, Blues, Rock, Pop, Folk, Soundtracks, and more. Selectively buying CDs, Cassettes, Turntables, and Stereo Equipment. For more information: **DIAMOND DOGS MUSIC** 114 Ontario St. Stratford / 226-972-5750

I WILL PAY CASH FOR ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES – Coca Cola Pepsi any pop company, Brewery items Kuntz, Huether Labatts etc. Old radios and gramophones, Wristwatches and pocket watches, Old fruit jars Beaver Star Bee Hive etc. Any old oil cans and signs Red Indian Supertest etc. Any small furniture. If you are moving or cleaning out stuff please contact me - 519-570-6920.

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WANTED

WANTING TO BUY – All collectibles including sports cards, beanie babies, Funko pops and stamps. Highest prices paid. Free appraisals. Are you downsizing or need an estate clean out? We can help. Call or text Stan anytime 519-868-3814.

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Have you been affected by someone else's drinking? Al-Anon Family Groups could help YOU! Call for time and place. 1-800-706-9833 or App Available

RUN YOUR CLASSIFIED AD HERE!
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 Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com
 or call 519-655-2341

FOR SALE

TREES: Shade trees, Fruit trees, Apple, Pears, Peaches, Plums, Sweet and Sour Cherries, Apricot, Nectarines, Blueberry, Haskopp, Black Chokeberry, Grapes etc. Lots of Spruce, Pine, Cedars for windbreaks and privacy hedges, Sizes 1 to 6+. Flowering shrubs and much more. Come check us out Mon-Sat 7:00am - 6:00pm
 Martin's Nursery
 42661 Orangehill Road
 Wroxeter (1 concession north of Wroxeter on Belmore Line)

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Emerald
2. 1000
3. Johann Sebastian Bach
4. Rishi Sunak
5. Sochi, Russia
6. Freudian slip
7. Hertz
8. 1932
9. Marie Curie
10. Brazil and Argentina

SUDOKU

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

HELP WANTED



Employment Opportunity Senior Property Claims Adjuster

South Easthope Mutual Insurance Company, located in Tavistock, provides Farm, Commercial, Home and Auto insurance to its members in Southwestern Ontario.

In preparation for an upcoming retirement, we are looking for a Senior Property Claims Adjuster to join our team. This position reports directly to the Claims Manager and plays a key role in deepening our member relationships during a difficult time in their lives. Our team is dedicated to providing member-first service, in a company that values Respect, Honesty, Reliability, Loyalty and Community among our members and our staff.

Responsibilities:

- Organizing all aspects of the claims file – from receiving first notice of loss, setting up claim, arranging emergency mitigation if required, to final settlement.
- Evaluating claims by conducting thorough investigations; determining coverage and validity of claims, interviewing and communicating with members, scene investigations.
- Attend loss locations to investigate claim, including taking statements, photographs, and identifying scope of loss.
- Maintain adequate reserves and accurate records based on company standards and procedures.
- Negotiate settlement and issue payments for claim.
- Coordinate with contractors, appraisers, and other experts as required.
- Act as claims examiner on claims assigned to independent adjusters.
- Evaluate liability, salvage and subrogation exposure and potential.
- General support of claims area and special projects as required

Experience & Skills Required:

- 5 or more years experience in claims adjusting
- 5 or more years experience in construction or trades, farming (agribusiness or equipment), or other relevant transferable knowledge
- Highly capable with computer systems/software including Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook, etc.
- Completion of Chartered Insurance Professional (CIP) designation or enrollment in the program
- Proactive and positive approach to customer service
- Interpersonal Skills with the ability to work independently
- Sound decision making and problem-solving skills
- Superior verbal and written communication skills
- Strong attention to detail
- A valid driver's license and reliable transportation are necessary

We offer a competitive compensation package, comprehensive benefits, ongoing education, flexible working arrangements, and a culture that values work-life balance.

If this position is of interest to you, and you feel you have the attributes we are looking for please submit your resume and cover letter by **June 7, 2024** to info@southeasthope.com
 More information about our Company can be viewed at www.southeasthope.com

We thank all applicants for their interest. Only persons selected for an interview will be contacted. Appropriate accommodations will be provided upon request during the hiring process.

HELP WANTED



AORS
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FULL TIME POSITION ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

This is a full-time position, approximately 37.5 hours per week, Monday to Friday.

It is an in-office position located in St. Marys, Ontario.
 Applicants must live within commuting distance.

The successful candidate must have:

- Minimum Grade 12 diploma. Office Administration or a related specialized program would be an asset, as well as some accounting or bookkeeping knowledge.
- Experience in events planning would be an asset.
- Proficiency in computer applications including Microsoft Office Word, Excel, Outlook and familiarity with website administration, social media platforms and database management.
- Excellent customer service and interpersonal skills, with strong verbal and written communication skills.
- Must have excellent organizational skills and time management skills, with a high degree of accuracy.

Competitive compensation package, including membership in a defined benefit pension plan.

Qualified candidates are invited to submit a detailed resume by email to:

John Maheu, Executive Director
 Association of Ontario Road Supervisors
 St. Marys, Ontario
 Email: admin@aors.on.ca

We thank all who apply but only those chosen for an interview will be contacted.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

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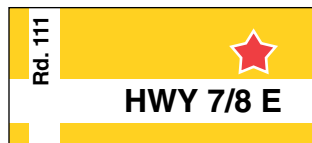
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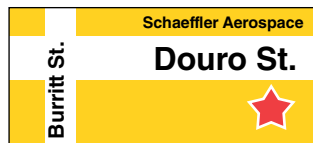
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